EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

AND EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Understanding more about relationships between stakeholders and federal agencies are essential for managing protected areas as well as for policy makers, residents, and community leaders. These relationships have gained importance in natural resource decision-making because stakeholders' level of interest increases over time, and they want to be more involved. Knowing how managers and stakeholders work together is also necessary to capture the meanings and feelings that local communities and various groups might have about a park and its ecosystem.

To explore relationships between stakeholders and national parks, Everglades National Park (EVER) was selected as a study site for several reasons: proximity to urban areas, rich biological diversity, largest subtropical wilderness in the U.S., International Biosphere Reserve, World Heritage Site, and its prominence as a tourist destination for the region. The purpose of this study was to examine how local groups are engaged with EVER and how these relationships have changed over time. The objectives of the study were: 1) to understand stakeholders' perspectives about EVER; 2) to investigate the meaning EVER has for stakeholders; and 3) to learn more about their roles and involvement with EVER.

This study conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders interacting with EVER including neighborhood groups, representatives from gateway communities and conservation organizations. A snowball sample was used to obtain a list of key

informants and select people for interviews. This qualitative study analyzed data that were generated from three methods: audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes.

Forty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted ranging in duration from 15-60 minutes. An analysis of interview data generated three research themes: 1) *Attachment to place* (preservation of biodiversity, recreation, home, and financial attachment), 2) *Threats to the natural environment* (loss of native species, urban development, a shortage and contamination of water, hurricanes, climate change, and increased recreation use), and 3) *Collaboration* (volunteering and advocacy, tourism development, and education and sharing information). Data checks were conducted for trustworthiness. The results of this study add to the literature by understanding more about stakeholders, national parks and their relationships. Theoretically, this research helps to recognize the different ways that stakeholders have worked with EVER in the past, present, and how they may be involved with them in the future. Practically, by learning more about the importance of EVER for stakeholders, the results provide useable knowledge in designing strategies that can help develop plans for natural resource decision-making in and around the park and surrounding communities. The study was limited by the use of the snowball sampling procedure and its focus on only one national park. Future research should include a broader range of stakeholders and expand the number/type of national park units.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

   A national park is not an island; it is part of a community and ecosystem. In order to foster a relationship with visitors and local communities, park managers must seek input from the general public, particularly local stakeholders (Tuxill, Mitchell, & Clark, 2009). Since its passage in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has been instrumental in the growth of public involvement in federal agency actions concerning the environment. A growing interest by the public in environmental issues has led to a more educated citizenry, which allows people to be more engaged in natural resource decision-making, creating a sense of harmony between people and the natural environment (U.S. National Research Council, 2008).

   Even though there is considerable public interest and collective action in protecting national parks, less is known about what types of relationships stakeholders have with these protected areas (Tuxill et al., 2009). Examining these relationships is timely given the development pressures that national parks are experiencing. This issue is also relevant given the National Parks Service's Call to Action (C2A) program which marks the 100-year anniversary of the National Park Service (NPS) in 2016 and prepares for the next century of stewardship and engagement. C2A is made up of 36 action items categorized in four broad properties (themes): "Connect people to parks; Advance the NPS education mission; Preserve America's special places; Enhance professional and organizational excellence" (National Park Service [NPS], 2014, p.2). This program

expects to establish the main framework shaping the future of the NPS, which emphasizes a need to strengthen the relationship between the NPS and the public through stewardship and engagement.

The public is a social organization that endorses stakeholder processes (Duhé, 2007). Social organizations organize, facilitate, and constrain the relationships among the members of a community and are defined as embedded values, norms, processes, and behaviors of society (Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005). Public participation often involves social organizations' interactions, social norms with the perceived standards of acceptable attitudes and behaviors (Mancini et al., 2005). Social organizations are important components that comprise public participation, and those are required elements in achieving consensus in planning and development around parks (Dredge, 2006).

In order to build that consensus, managers need to capture the meanings that local communities and various groups might have about a park and surrounding issues (Luloff et al., 2004). A deeply held attachment and meaning is held by stakeholders about their roles as participants in decision-making processes (Jamal, Stein, & Harper, 2002). National park managers can interact with stakeholders in a deeper, more meaningful way when stakeholders' symbolic and participatory engagement evolves from their personal values or emotions; one way by which to strengthen relationships is to utilize stakeholders' symbolic and participatory engagement (Tuxill et al., 2009). Therefore, stakeholders' attitudes and relationships are fundamental to learning more

about what parks mean to local residents and adjacent communities, as well as how this information will increase the stewardship of these distinctive places.

Study Background

This study focuses on the relationship between stakeholders and Everglades National Park (EVER). EVER was selected for this study because it is the largest subtropical wilderness in the U.S., and it is rich in biological diversity. EVER is an International Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site. EVER is also an important tourist destination and economic engine for the state of Florida and its surrounding region. EVER is situated at the southern end of the Florida peninsula. The park spans 1,508,570 acres and was declared a national park in 1947. It has been called "a river of grass flowing imperceptibly from the hinterland into the sea" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015). EVER is the largest subtropical wilderness found in North America. EVER is one of the most popular and heavily visited tourist destinations in the U.S., with 1.1 million recreation visits in 2014 (NPS Visitor Use Statistics, 2015). EVER is one of only three locations in the world to appear on the following lists of protected areas: International Biosphere Reserve (1976), World Heritage Site (1979), and Wetlands of International Importance.

Social and Environmental Changes Affecting Everglades National Park

In 1993, EVER was listed as an endangered property due to "damage caused by Hurricane Andrew and a marked deterioration in water flows and quality resulting from

agricultural and urban development" (UNESCO, 2010). Because of efforts invested in Everglades Restoration and conservation, EVER was removed from the UNESCO endangered list in 2007. However, environmental damage, overpopulation, pollution, water inflow, and natural disasters have dramatically decreased the biodiversity of species, leading USECO to relabel EVER as an endangered World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2010). Growth of population and development have squeezed EVER inland from both coasts. In the 1950s, researchers estimated that the population of Florida in the 21st century would be two million; however, today, is more than seven million, a number that is expected to double in the next 50 years (Everglades Foundation, 2015). The population increase in South Florida has accelerated pollution to the park's ecosystem. This pollution is derived primarily from phosphorus stemming from the use of the agricultural fertilizers in the counties north and south of Lake Okeechobee which is over 100 miles from EVER.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina and Wilma left no structure untouched within EVER. All existing structures were affected by the hurricane, including visitor center, lodge, and restaurant in the Flamingo area of EVER (southern visitor Center area of EVER) (NPS, 2007). Currently, 68 plant and animal species are also threatened or endangered. Thus, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was created in 1999 to deal with the threatened or endangered status of the flora and fauna to restore water, land, and the ecosystem. This effort is the largest ecosystem restoration project in the world, projected to span over 35 years, and the federal government and the state of Florida funded 7.8 billion dollars on the project (United States Geological Survey, 2013).

Numerous stakeholders such as federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, and the public are involved in this project.

Given these impacts to the ecosystem of the south Florida, the vast majority of research conducted on the park has been focused on its natural resources and restoration. Numerous studies have been conducted on vegetation (McCormick, 1999; Ross, Reed, Sah, Ruiz, & Lewin, 2003), exotic invasive species (Dorcas et al., 2012; Li & Norland, 2001), fauna (Pascarella et al., 1999), march (Bruno, Sagnotti, & Perry, 2002), pythons (Dorcas et al., 2012; Rodda, Jarnevich, & Reed, 2009), fire regime (Slocum, Platt, Beckage, Panko, & Lushine, 2007; Slocum, Platt, & Cooley 2003), coastal and estuarine (Marshall III et al., 2009), and water (Todd et al., 2010; Ritter & Muñoz-Carpena, 2006; Poff et al., 2003; Price, Top, Happell, & Swart, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

According to Claire Connolly Knox (2013), there is an increasing need to incorporate interdisciplinary research on the Everglades' restoration in both natural science and social science fields including environmental aspects (Anderson & Rosendahl, 1998; Clark & Dalrymple, 2003), economics (Weisskoff, 2005), socio-political aspects (Gonzalez, 2005; Hollander, 2005; Knox, 2013), and cultural aspects (Hinrichsen, 1995; Ogden, 2008). Among this work, little research has focused on the human dimension of restoration work at EVER (Brennan & Dodd, 2009; Heikkila & Gerlak, 2014; Odgen, 2006; Pryor, 2005). To date, the majority of the research in the national parks area has focused on the impacts on communities (Eagles & McCool,

2002; McCleave et al., 2006), the role of parks (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Byrne & Wolfe, 2009), and factors of participation (Beierle & Konisky, 1999).

Given the complexity of natural resource relationships, it is crucial to understand how stakeholders are engaged with national parks (Dougill et al., 2006). More research needs to examine how these relationships have changed over time in order to understand their interests and to facilitate more inclusive decision-making processes at the park and community levels (Dougill et al., 2006). While previous research has examined the interests of stakeholders and various national parks (Machlis & Field, 2000), this research explores relationships with an array of stakeholders and one national park. This study fills a research gap by exploring who the stakeholders are, the relationship they have with NPS and how this interaction affects the park-people relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine how local stakeholders are engaged with EVER and how these relationships have changed over time. To explore this issue, three research questions will guide this research study:

1. How do the stakeholders living in proximity to EVER perceive changes with the park? (Stakeholders' perception)

2. How are the stakeholders living in proximity to EVER engaged in symbolic ways with the park? (Symbolic engagement)

3. How are the stakeholders living in proximity to EVER actively engaged with the park? (Participatory engagement)

The study objectives are: 1) To understand various stakeholders' perspectives with EVER; 2) To understand the meaning EVER has for stakeholders, and 3) To understand their roles and involvement with EVER.

Need for the Study

This study adds to our understanding of the relationship between stakeholders and national parks by learning more about the different ways that stakeholders perceive and act regarding EVER. This study will contribute to the literature by showing how various stakeholders are engaged with EVER and how these relationships have changed over time. This study will also contribute to the body of knowledge about the importance of stakeholders and their motivations and collaborative efforts with EVER. The findings can be used to foster partnerships and improve collaborative relationships between stakeholders and EVER.

This study's theoretical underpinnings are guided by collaborative planning. The collaborative planning approach examines how stakeholders are involved in the natural resource decision-making process. From a theoretical perspective, this study will explore different ways that stakeholders perceive and are involved with EVER. Practically, learning more about stakeholder participation provides useable knowledge in designing strategies about public needs and future relationships. This study will allow the public land managers to develop collaborative management practices, with a voice that encourages stakeholders' involvement, empowerment, and foster future support for sustainable management.

Limitations

  There are several limitations in this study that need to be mentioned. First, the researcher (interviewee) can have potential bias in conducting the interview sessions. Specific methods (such as triangulation) are conducted to minimize researcher bias and its impact on the study results. Second, as snowball sampling depends on referred subjects, the researcher has little control over the sampling method. Therefore, snowball sampling can limit the representativeness of the sample and result in sampling bias ("Snowball Sampling," 2009). Third, the scope of this study is limited to Everglades National Park. As a result, the findings of this study are not generalizable beyond this one national park or to other regions. Lastly, the study is limited by reflexivity and positionality. Reflexivity is a critical reflection of how the researcher constructs knowledge and how the researcher's role influences the research process. Positionality is defined by considering the elements that contributes to share an individual's "identity, perspectives, worldviews and angles of perception" (Lau, 2004, p.65). According to Malterud (2001), "a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (p. 483-484).

Definitions of Terms

Stakeholder: Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives (Freeman, 1984, p.46).

Collaboration: A group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engaged in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to the domain (Wood & Gray, 1991, p.146); a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1989, p. 5)

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on the importance of stakeholders and their relationships, studies on EVER, and collaboration. First, stakeholders are defined for the purposes of stakeholder engagement. Next, studies that drive stakeholders to be engaged with protected areas and national parks are examined. And then, studies on EVER are explored with attention to how they influence the relationship between stakeholders and EVER. The literature review concludes with the theoretical framework of collaboration theory to frame the study questions.

Stakeholders

Stakeholder Engagement

The concept of stakeholders was brought to researchers' attention as discussed by Freeman in 1984 (Jawahar & Mclaughlin, 2001; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Freeman defined a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (1984, p.46). Stakeholders are individuals or groups with an interest in the outcomes of management decisions. According to NPS (2015), national park stakeholders can be recreation groups, tourism sectors, environmental groups, indigenous groups, media groups, concessioners, adjacent communities, interest groups, visitors and NPS employees.

Building on a strong, existing relationship between stakeholders and government agencies can provide solid trust, making it much easier for stakeholders to address

specific issues and work toward common ground. Inevitably, even if a relationship is good, parks or communities will be affected by different opinions and problems that might arise (Tuxill et al., 2009). Therefore, an understanding of stakeholder participation and their influence is necessary to improve the relationship with stakeholders and protected area relationships (Smith, 2011). Stakeholder engagement with parks and protected area managers encourages individuals' and groups' input and concerns. Stakeholder engagement contributes to the transparency of the decision-making process, supports democracy, empowers participatory communities, and reduces potential conflicts (Yee, 2010).

Participation contains various processes, and methods used to inform, consult and involve the public, allowing those who are potentially affected by the decisions to have a "say" in the process (Smith, 1983). According to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), there are five stages delineated by the degree of their influence (2004):

- Inform — to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions

- Consult — to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions;

- Involve — to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered;

- Collaborate — to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution;

- Empower — to place final decision making in the hands of the public.

According to a manual on the principles and practices of civic engagement published by NPS (2009), "the process of stakeholder involvement can help build relationships with stakeholder groups and neighboring communities that lead to ongoing collaboration" (Tuxill et al., 2009, p.6). It is important that such collaboration can unite around a common agenda through ownership to promote the long term relationship between parks and stakeholders. Thus, stakeholder engagement is important to ensure discussion and possible resolution of mutual concerns of local communities and perspectives.

Why Stakeholder Groups Are Formed

The term **s**takeholder is derived from business management, and it has been applied to natural resource management to understand diverse stakeholders' interests, influence, and the how they are involved with management (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). Stakeholder engagement stems from an accessible process to a whole range of specific stakeholder groups and aims to outcomes reflecting the concerns of a variety of interests (Gray, 1989). Whereas the purpose of stakeholders in business management is for competence to mobilize, neutralize, and manage resources to achieve the objectives

of firms effectively, in natural resource management stakeholders desire specific outcomes in the decision-making and planning process (Reed et al., 2009).

In the late 1960s, the top-down management approach in natural resources had been argued against by overlooking common interests, conflict between stakeholders and management, and lack of trust in federal agencies for managing resources (Yosie & Herbst, 1998). Since the late 1960s, the U.S. environmental movement has changed and several influential environmental organizations made up of groups such as the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, the Izaak Walton League, the National Wildlife Federation, and other grassroots organizations were becoming more frequently involved in natural resource decisions on public lands (Bosso, 1991).

In the early 1970s, dissatisfying outcomes of overcentralized, large scale, and capital intensive management led to community-based natural resource management (CNRM) (Horowitz & Painter, 1986). CNRM enables members to develop the process and improve capability of collective action in environmental, economic, cultural, social, and political enhancement (Phillips & Pittman, 2008). Site-specific interests from agriculture, water, and forestry stimulate local participation through power shifts and active decision-making (Little, 1994). International communities and organizations have worked to develop CNRM on local and transnational NGOs (Grimble & Quan, 1993). One of the core issues of effective nature resource management is balance and cooperation between various stakeholders, organizations, and agencies (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

In 1970, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) mandated federal agencies to involve the public in the decision-making processes by providing environmental impact statements (EIS) when any action is considered to have a significant impact or may lead to controversial issues (NPS, 2015). According to NPS, involving the public is expected to enhance both procedures (NEPA Section 102) and outcomes (NEPA Section 101). Mary Bomar, former director of NPS, saw public participation as a constant and vibrant dialogue that ensured NPS could reach various outcomes while regularly communicating with stakeholders (NPS, 2007).

Examining the human dimension can be a useful vehicle to understand various perspectives and directions to engage stakeholders in conservation, building trusting relationships through informal and qualitative ways (NPS, 2015). The increasing concern of environmental values and public involvement has influenced environmental legislation to mandate stakeholder involvement in U.S. natural resource management (Lu, 2010). People have the capability of managing natural resources by collective action, communication and setting up established rules. Participation enables power reallocation from federal agencies to the public (Arnstein, 1969), which is a vital element of democracy and legitimate government (Brody, Godschalk, & Burby, 2003). Since natural resources are public assets and the stakeholders have a given interest in the results of decisions, management decisions in natural resource should include trust (Conroy & Peterson, 2012). Through stakeholder-driven initiatives, natural resources can be managed by comprehensive decision-making processes, minimize conflicts

among competing stakeholders, and earn public support and ownership of the decision (Conroy & Peterson, 2012).

Stakeholder Participation Benefits and Costs

While national parks may be operating within a context of scarce human and financial resources, they should concentrate on meaningful public involvement and stakeholder collaboration through understanding each other, agreeing on shared missions, and exchanging information (DeVries et al., 2003). With proven risks of over-centralized management (Orlove, 2002; Wilshusen et al., 2002), there is rich evidence to show the success of conservation efforts when stakeholders work toward collaborative management (Dukes & Firehock, 2001; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000). The purpose of public participation is to bring clarity and common sense into the process of decision-making. However, there are advantages and disadvantages to this process. Examples of advantages of public participation can be better understanding of projects and issues (Duram & Brown, 1999); improved community support and stakeholder relationships (Committee on National Parks and Protected Area Management [CNPPAM], 2002); and greater community advocacy for biodiversity protection (CNPPAM, 2002). On the other hand, risks of public participation show that it can be time consuming, an expensive process (Vroom, 2000) and can disregard professional opinion (Rood, 2012).

Thus, stakeholder participation is a way of increasing communication between the public and private sectors and between agencies as a warning system for public concerns, information distribution, and sustainable decision-making (International

Association for Public Participation [IAP2], 2015). A significant benefit of stakeholder participation includes the development of fostering an effective two-way process of communicating (Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory [PWCNT], 2002; IAP2, 2004). In optimizing the public participation process, risks must also be recognized since this can be a considerable burden in terms of time and cost, staff training, training needs for capacity building, and leading constructive debate (CNPPAM, 2002).

Stakeholder Involvement within Protected Areas

To date, the majority of the research in protected areas falls into five broad categories: The conceptualization of human factors, stakeholders' environmental values on place attachment, successful stakeholder participation and attributes, significance of protected areas, and the relationship between protected areas and stakeholders.

First, studies have focused on the conceptualization of human factors of protected area management. Kearney and Bradley (1998) investigated how stakeholders perceived collaboration and their roles in environmental management. They found emerging human dimensions of forest management such as intangible assets, people's values and expectations, and decision-making process through public participation, communication, and collaboration. Pomeranz, Needham, and Kruger's (2013) research on the wilderness recreation management looked at what motivates stakeholders to participate, how participation process affects relationships, and how commercial tour operators and locals perceive the role of the U.S. Forest Service. They found that

stakeholders participate in the process due to their voluntary management behavior and opportunity to make rule voluntarily. They also found that U.S. Forest Service is well placed to play a positive role as mediator. The process improves stakeholder involvement and facilitation to develop a trusted and respected relationship.

Second, studies have looked at stakeholders' context of place and place attachment in protected areas. Amsden, Stedman, and Luloff (2011) examined the context of setting and activity focusing on the sense of place. They found the setting model to be stronger than the activity model, suggesting contexts construct sense of place. Petrova, Cihar, and Bouzarovski (2011) studied local perceptions toward the environmental protection and place attachment in two national parks. Their study found that place attachment has an impact on the residents' perceptions of national parks in management practices. Study findings support that locals have strong place attachment to the protected areas, regardless of the restriction of environmental management, the type of activities, and their roles and type of cares.

Third, nature is a symbolic place where people develop strong emotional attachments (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). Williams and Patterson (1996) included the "meaning" concept focusing on ecosystem management. They see place as components that converge at a focal point such as "nature (physical, chemical, and biological), social relationships (social, economic, and political forces), and meaning (ideas, values, and beliefs)" (Allendorf, 2010, p. 417). In addition to this study, Williams (2002) stated that it is important to understand individuals' emotional

and symbolic meanings since they feel loss and conflict when there are changes in special areas.

Special places and their symbolic attachments and meanings have been explained in environmental management (Brooks, Titre, & Wallace, 2004; Williams & Patterson, 1996). Brooks et al. (2004) examined what Rocky Mountain National Park means to visitors. People have attached special meanings to protected areas (Brooks et al., 2004). They explored the relationship between visitors and the resource setting. They found two themes: Dimensions of identity and individual's engagement in the current personal project, such as object-centered /subject-centered experience and spirituality. This study explained the experience of wilderness and the meanings in nature (symbolic, expressive, and spiritual).

Fourth, research has documented the relationship between stakeholder characteristics and attitudes with attributes of protected areas. Vaske, Donnelly, Williams, and Jonker (2001) examined the influence of individuals' demographics on biocentric/anthropocentric values and norms about the administration of national forest management. The findings suggest that the range of environmental value orientation influences individuals' norms. The relationship between the demographics and normative beliefs is mediated by their value orientation. Austin (2004) conducted interviews to understand conservation subdivision of the open space community for residents' perceptions. Residents were satisfied with the close nature access and the social benefits. The study findings revealed that the open space conservation subdivision offers social interaction opportunities, the feeling closeness of the townships

and stewardships to natural spaces, and preservation of natural lands from the residential development.

Moreover, according to Bright, Barro, and Burtz (2002), residents' attitudes toward ecological restoration in Chicago are related to "cognitive (perceived outcomes, value orientations, objective knowledge), affective (emotional responses), and behavioral components" (p.763). They added a fourth component—issue importance. While individuals with low importance attitudes (whom ecological restoration was not personally important) were related to only perceived outcomes, individuals with high importance attitudes (whom ecological restoration was personally important) were related to perceived outcomes, values, emotions, and behaviors. They mentioned that media attention to the ecological restoration may change peoples' attitude. The implication of the study was that natural resource managers need to develop better communication strategies to educate or influence the public.

Liu, Ouyang, and Miao's (2010) examined social context, environmental attitudes, and perspectives of stakeholders regarding protected area and local community conflicts among four stakeholders. Stakeholders showed a significant difference in environmental attitudes. Stakeholders' relationship between protected area and local community showed the state of conflict.

Lastly, researchers have examined the relationship between stakeholders and protected areas. Gray, Shwom, and Jordan (2012) investigated the relationship between stakeholders, institutions and natural resource scientific assessments. They found that high levels of trust increased participation. They concluded that high levels of available,

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healthy resources were related to high levels of trust in state and regional organizations. However, such high levels were not correlated to high levels of trust in federal institutions or scientific assessments.

To reiterate, the five themes that are predominant in past research on protected areas are as follows: The conceptualization of human factors, stakeholders' environmental values on place attachment, successful stakeholder participation and attributes, significance of protected areas, and the relationship between protected areas and stakeholders. Protected area management can be facilitated by incorporating human dimensions, sharing information, and including stakeholders in the decision-making process. Stakeholders' participation offers social interaction opportunities, the feeling of closeness of the townships and stewardships to natural spaces, and preservation of natural lands. Since there are differences between the various settings and types of protected areas, it is necessary to explore various stakeholders' perspectives and environmental values in different settings (Amsden et al., 2011). Despite the growing importance of these relationships in public land management, more research is needed to examine how stakeholders interact with national parks and what these relationships mean for the future of parks.

Stakeholders and National Parks

While the previous studies focused on protected areas in general, this section will specifically review pertinent literature on stakeholders and national parks internationally and in the U.S. The relationship between parks and stakeholders help us to have an

understanding to deal with natural resource management factors as they influence stakeholders, partners, and relationships. The mission of the NPS is to conserve scenic, natural and cultural resources and provide enjoyment. Due to the complexity of this mandate, multiple stakeholders with varying values, goals, and interests work with national parks (Jones, 2006) representing many different areas, e.g., general public, tourism, recreation, rural development, business, and politics.

International National Parks

McCleave et al.'s (2006) case study applied park and people relationship theory to a New Zealand context in Kahurangi National Park. They identified three major relationships: "Lifestyle, recreation, and place attachment; interactions with the park agency; and tourism" (p.547). Allendorf, Smith, and Anderson (2007) examined the relationship between adjacent communities and Royal Bardia National Park in Nepal. This study explored perceived benefits and problems of the protected natural area, perceptions toward government, NGOs, park management, conservation and development projects. Residents were neither completely opposed nor completely compatible with the park, rather they held various perspectives, with some often contradictory. Residents had positive attitudes toward protection of the park management regarding forest resources and wildlife. Residents were dissatisfied with extraction, access limits, punishment, and fines. Residents appeared disconnected between the park and benefits from conservation and development projects. The findings suggest that residents, park management, and NGOs had differing views, but

stressed the importance of communication in order to accomplish community conservation.

A national park can have a particular role in the process of local development (Courtney, Hill, & Roberts, 2006). Campbell (2002) examined community-based conservation tourism in Costa Rica in Tortuguero National Park (TNP). They focused on the economic benefits of the marine turtle harvest. The major benefits of the community's economy came from local guiding and tourism services. Although there are negative environmental impacts from tourism in TNP's natural resources, it can be controlled and minimized via guiding and the remoteness of TNP (accessible by boat or plane). Although tourism in TNP gives economic benefits to the community, local ownership of tourism remains at a low level.

Hall (2000) examined the economic significance of tourism in Australia and New Zealand's national parks. He found that the interaction between indigenous people and tourism can lead to better solutions of indigenous issues, positive images of aboriginal culture, share knowledge, and engage indigenous people in national parks issues (Booth & Simmons, 2000). Also, there are many studies on economic benefits to the community within the Komodo National Park in Indonesia (Walpole & Goodwin, 2000); conservation of the environment reduced poaching in the Khao Yai National Park, Thailand (Brockelman & Dearden, 1990); and conservation of the Komodo National Park (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 1993). The Sherpa community in Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park does always not benefit from visitors to the area due to the lack of cohesiveness or co-operation with these tourism activities (Stevens, 1993).

U.S. National Parks

In 1998, Glacier Bay National Park (GBNP) in Alaska engaged the public to regulate commercial fishing. To identify the best solutions, GBNP incorporated the public in the decision making process in face of the resource degradation due to commercial fisheries in Glacier Bay (Merritt, 2009). GBNP made the decision to close and compensate commercial fisheries, and public involvement resulted in recommendations to the park on dispensing the payments (Merritt, 2009). In 2003, these recommendations led to GBNP implementing a payment plan that resulted from "considerable public comment and several public meetings" (as cited in Merritt, 2009, p.28).

Machlis and Field (2000) examined the role of U.S. national parks and rural development. The research showed various case studies highlighting the challenges managers faced in Cape Cod National Seashore, Alaskan National Parks, Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Canyon, and three national parks of the Pacific Northwest. Machlis and Field (2000) demonstrated that development has often been conducted without any coordination of the national park or the local communities.

National parks have had various management challenges involving numerous stakeholders concerning development and wildlife (wolf, bison) (Yochim, 2013). Yochim (2013) looked at the conflict between YNP's superintendent and business interests over the management of Yellowstone Lake. Despite many struggles for gray wolf restoration, it is hard to find a successful restoration story. Among the uncommon stories, the gray wolf is one of the most famous successful collaboration stories about

"free democracy" and "individual liberty" (Wilson, 1997, p. 462). When it comes to this iconic animal:

> "Wolves present difficult ethical and moral challenges, ones that go well beyond science, biology, and technical wildlife management. This value-based political conflict is over a deeply symbolic animal and is taking place in a controversial political and cultural setting. A policy-oriented approach has much to offer the debate, especially if it is contextual and places human values and ethics at the center of its analysis. It is also important for those engaged in the debate to acknowledge its value-based character" (Nie, 2003, p.26).

On the whole, it is significant to know who the main stakeholders are and how they work collaboratively. Many of the studies examining stakeholders and national parks have identified stakeholders' attitudes and the complex interests/conflicts of these relationships. As stakeholders' interests and influences are impacted by social, economic, environmental, and political factors, more research is needed (Mayers, 2005). Moreover, due to differences between the various settings in national parks, it is necessary to explore stakeholders' perspectives in depth.

Even though Everglades National Park (EVER) has experienced numerous social (overpopulation and urban development) and environmental changes (environmental damage, water inflow, and natural disasters) over the last few decades, a limited number of studies have explored Everglades National Park and its stakeholders (Ogden, 2006). Thus, there is a need to explore the numerous stakeholder groups that work with EVER and explore these relationships.

Studies on EVER

There have been many social science studies done on EVER; however, most have focused on the CERP (Odgen, 2006). The State of Florida (1999) and U.S. Congress (2000) approved the plan to restore and preserve the natural ecosystems in South Florida, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) joint venture with 50/50 state-federal partnership. CERP includes over 50 projects, costs from $8 billion to $13.5 billion, and spans over 3 decades, which covers sixteen counties over an area of 18,000 square-miles (Florida Department of Environmental Protection [FDEP], 2016). The State of Florida implements and funds some of the restoration projects, whereas other projects engage local citizens, state, and the federal government (FDEP, 2016). Among these studies, only a few have focused on stakeholders: The role of stakeholders in restoration (Bransford, Bixler, & Hammitt, 2006; Brennan & Dodd, 2009; Odgen, 2006), collaborative management (Berardo, Heikkila, & Gerlak, 2014; Heikkila & Gerlak, 2014; Pryor, 2005), advocates for the establishment of EVER (Wilhelm, 2010), and stakeholder-management conflict (Bustam, 2009).

For example, Brennan and Dodd (2009) explored public involvement in the restoration of EVER, including individuals' characteristics, attitudes, information sources, social interactions, and resource management options (p. 324). This study found a positive relationship between size of household and citizen participation; the internet and public television were reported as the most effective information sources. The study found that the significant factors related to citizen involvement are social

interaction, information sources, and views toward restoration, which contribute to citizens' active participation in natural resource management.

Odgen's (2006) study investigated the history and changes of Everglades Restoration and importance of public engagement in environmental decision-making. Her research found that people have little or no knowledge about the Everglades Restoration plan, its ecosystem or water problems (as cited in Ogden, 2006, p.65). Clemson University conducted a South Florida Population Study in which 55 % of participants to the survey stated that they were ignorant of the Everglades Restoration plan (Bransford et al., 2006). This study found that people who are unaware of the restoration plan tend to be young, non-White, non-English speaker, low income, recent immigrants, urban residents, and neutral attitude on the environment (Bransford et al., 2006).

Other studies have focused on the relationship between stakeholders and the Everglades Restoration (Berardo et al., 2014; Heikkila & Gerlak, 2014; Pryor, 2005). Berardo et al. (2014) studied inter-organizational engagement in collaborative environmental management to investigate factors that influence stakeholder engagement during a collaborative environmental process. The micro-view of inter-organizational engagement in collaborative environmental management found characteristics of the collaborative process foster or hinder engagement and conflict during dialogue. Heikkila and Gerlak (2014) investigated collaborative environmental management processes in the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force over a 10-year time frame. The study found that three essential factors that influenced successful

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collaborative processes: "internal governance and administration, internal communication, and external communication" (Heikkila & Gerlak, 2014, p. 180). Although EVER is a large public resource, a majority know little about the Everglades Restoration efforts and thus do not feel they have a stake in its management (Conway, 2004; Bransford et al., 2006).

Pryor (2005) explored the role of the environmental NGO (Broward County chapter of the National Audubon Society (BCAS)) in the Florida Everglades on the process of restoration. She applied the alternative dispute resolution framework for the collaboration approach to analyze conflict resolution strategies. The findings showed that BCAS was hindered by barriers in conflict resolution because of a lack of funding and authority. Members of the BCAS considered their influence as an effective "voice of reason" on the Everglades decision-making process (Pryor, 2005). Board members stressed the advocacy for the restoration project "by taking an even-handed, problem-solving approach" in the Everglades conflict resolution. Furthermore, Pryor's (2005) findings showed that BCAS collaborated with state office (Audubon of Florida, National Audubon, and other local chapters), other NGOs, and the Everglades Coalitions for the federal-state plan success.

U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General (OIG) audited the Modified Water Deliveries Project (Project) to EVER, which is an ecological restoration project in the South Florida Everglades. The purpose of the Project was to provide natural water delivery to EVER and restore the natural hydrological conditions. Congress authorized the Plan in 1989, but it was delayed eight years (U.S. Department

of the Interior Office of Inspector General [OIG], 2006). There were various

stakeholders involved including residents, local government, landowners, Native

American tribes, and environmental groups. OIG's audit report found that Department

of the Interior Office did not effectively engage in the Project because "it has not

developed and communicated a comprehensive and unified restoration strategy and

clearly defined its consultation role for the Project" (OIG, 2006, p.i)

From an historical perspective, Wilhelm (2010) investigated the creation of

EVER, focusing on the figure of Ernest F. Coe, a long-time advocate for national park

designation. Coe created the Tropical Everglades National Park Association in 1928

(later Everglades National Park Association). The study examined perceptions of nature

and its impact on the social and political facets of EVER's creation. The study

concluded that EVER was created reflecting a fight for its ecological rationale and was

instrumental in the development of American environmentalism.

Lastly, Bustam (2009) explored stakeholders' place attachment, power

mechanisms, and landscape valuation regarding the management of EVER. The study

identified that place attachment led to place-specific attitudes across management of

EVER such as distrust, relevance of local knowledge, and responsibility. Second,

participants' perceived attitudes impacted power mechanisms including compromise,

exclusion, resistance, and withdrawal regarding EVER management. Landscape values

directed toward park management included conflict, distrust, and support. This research

concluded that site-specificity and values are critical to understanding future support

from stakeholders.

Theoretical Framework

While most of the previous studies have largely concentrated on predicting individuals' behavior, management issues or on specific categories of stakeholders in the Everglades area, this research explores relationships with an array of stakeholders to understand their interests, similarities, differences, and interactions on EVER. Furthermore, most of the research on the Everglades area has focused on the "Everglades Restoration project of the CERP program", not the Everglades National Park itself. More studies need to be conducted about the national park's stakeholders, rather than the Everglades Restoration project. Therefore, this study fills a research gap in the EVER literature by exploring who stakeholders are, the interactions between stakeholders and EVER, and how NPS staff work collaboratively with a variety of stakeholders.

This study has its theoretical underpinnings in collaboration theory. Collaborative planning helps to involve stakeholders in the natural resource decision-making process for coordinated action, and legitimacy of the stakeholder participation to solve common problems more effectively.

Collaboration Theory

Since the environmental movement started in the 19th century and flourished in the 20th century, public forest decision making has moved from traditional scientific management (Brunner & Steelman, 2005) to the collaborative management approach (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Collaboration "focused on learning how people have worked

together successfully to solve common problems, resolve conflicts, and build partnerships in order to move their communities and agencies toward a more sustainable direction" (Wondolleck &Yaffee, 2000, p.xi). In order for a relationship to grow, both parties need to work together. Collaboration helps to make better decisions likely to be employed and meet future challenges (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000, p.23).

Margerum (2002) refers to collaborative planning as "an interactive process of consensus building and implementation using stakeholder and public involvement" (p.237). Collaborative planning that opens discussion and allows all interested parties to participate is a chance for people with caring responsibilities to gain new relations, understandings, values and knowledge (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998).

Collaboration theory highlights the need for the process of stakeholder involvement to acknowledge shared interests toward a common goal(s). For successful collaboration, all stakeholders share in its value and commitment (Doherty, 2015). Despite the importance of public involvement in environmental decision-making, there is limited research on the principles that characterize "good" public participation processes (Tuler & Webler, 2010). Successful collaborations help people work on various ideas with a shared vision for common goals, shared power, and the ability to overcome political, economic and ideological differences (Yaffee & Wondolleck, 2000).

This study examines how various stakeholders are engaged in natural resource decision-making processes using collaboration theory. Accomplishing goals at EVER relies heavily on the collaboration of external stakeholders, partners, and local, state, and federal organizations. Collaboration is a growing process through understanding

differences, sharing ownership by involving in decision making processes, and taking

collective responsibility for the future (Gray, 1989). Through the use of this theoretical

framework, collaboration theory can help to better understand the relationship between

an array of stakeholders and EVER in working toward the conservation of this complex

ecosystem.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative method research design explores humans as instruments to investigate how they view the world around them (Given, 2008). According to Given (2008), qualitative approaches are designed "to explore new phenomena and to capture individuals' thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process" (Given, 2008, xxix). For this study, qualitative research was chosen to examine how local groups are engaged with EVER and how these relationships have changed over time. Due to its distinct features, the qualitative study utilizes the inductive approach to explore the breadth and depth of the perceived research problem (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Inductive analysis allows the researcher to interpret the meanings, behavior and experiences of stakeholders who are engaged with EVER.

Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of a variety of stakeholders interacting with EVER. Adapted from Conroy and Peterson's (2013) work, the types of stakeholder groups included consumers/residents, NGOs, federal agencies, state/local governments, business stakeholders, and scientists. These groups represent the various stakeholders who have a connection to EVER. Table 1 illustrates the various categories of stakeholders interacting with EVER.

Snowball sampling was used to select people for interviews and obtain a list of key informants. A snowball sample consists of "participants or informants with whom contact has already been made using their social networks to refer the researcher to other individuals who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study" (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 5-6). This non-probability sampling approach is useful to seek "hidden populations", who are group participants largely inaccessible to researchers via other sampling methods (Mack et al., 2005). The benefits of snowball sampling include cost efficiency and minimal planning efforts. However, this type of sampling approach can be challenging because it relies on referrals and can result in sampling bias ("Snowball Sampling", 2009).

The Everglades Coalition webpage was used as the source for the subjects in the sample. The Everglades Coalition was chosen to identify and interview the key informants of EVER because this organization works "at the local, state, national and even international levels to increase awareness of environmental and conservation issues in the Everglades watershed" (Everglades Coalition, 2015). The email addresses of potential interviewees were obtained through this website. Study participants were included in the study based on the following criteria: serve as an officer or a member of the board of directors; be involved in the organizations; and be willing to participate in the interview. There may be some regional variation in the locations of the organizations in Florida, although most of the organizations are located in South Florida. Both large and small scale organizations were contacted through local, regional, national

and international levels since they have different relationships with EVER, e.g.,

educational programs, volunteers, and workshops.

TABLE 1 Categories and Number of Interviews Interacting with EVER

Stakeholder	Examples of organizations	Number of respondents
Consumers/ Residents	Local residents, Native American tribes (Miccosukee and Seminole), and citizens who participate in natural resource-associated activities	7
NGOs	Arthur R. Marshall Foundation for the Everglades, Florida Division Izaak Walton League of America, Sierra Club Florida, National Parks Conservation Association Sun Coast Region, Florida Wildlife Federation, and Florida Trail Association	15
Federal agencies	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, and South Florida Water Management District	4
State/Local government	Elected members of the City of Homestead, the City of Miami such as city officials and mayors, South Florida Water, and Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources	6
Businesses	Business owners, outdoor businesses, and recreation business groups	5
Scientists	University researchers, technicians, biologist, and ecologists	4

Data Collection Procedures

Potential interviewees were contacted via email to participate in the study. The invitation email provided a brief overview of the study and why they were selected. If participants agreed to participate, they received a follow-up email which described the specific purpose and objectives of the study, along with potential dates and times for the interviews. They agreed to the information included in the consent form email before they participated (See Appendix A).

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format that accommodated an open-ended technique. In conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher used guiding questions that covered key topic areas but also allowed the interviewer to bring up new questions and probe for more detail. The duration of the interviews varied, lasting from about 30 minutes or possibly longer depending on their responses. All interviews were conducted in-person unless other arrangements were necessary, e.g., phone interview.

Although there are no guidelines on the adequate sample size for qualitative research, sample size varies among qualitative studies by the texts of the research (Patton, 1990). Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam (2003, p.84) assert that sample size for qualitative studies often "lie under 50". Green and Thorogood (2009) mentioned that little new data come out after having "interviewed 20 or so people" (p. 120). For this study, the number of interviews was 41. The sampling process continued until reaching the data saturation point, at which time no further information was obtained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data saturation point occurs when the interviewee is repeating what

other interviewees have already said; hence, no new information is being obtained. The interview location was chosen through a discussion with participants and varied from inside to outside of the park boundaries, e.g., rest areas, visitor centers, participants' houses, offices, tourism businesses and so on. Participants and researchers were the only personnel permitted in the interview place.

This qualitative study obtained data generated from three sources: audio recordings, field notes, and transcripts. A digital recorder recorded the interviews subject to the participants' approval. Field notes were taken during and after the interview to write down additional information. These data sources from the interviews were transcribed once they are completed. All interview data were anonymous, and no names were associated with interviewees.

Interview Questions

Based on a literature review on the relationship between stakeholders and EVER, the interviews included ten guiding questions focused on four topics (Table 2): 1) Meaning of EVER to you (Symbolic Engagement); 2) Change over time; 3) Involvement with the park (Participatory Engagement), and 4) Relationship with the park and other groups. The first part of the interview was adapted from several sources (Brooks et al., 2004; Williams & Patterson, 1996), and respondents were asked about their symbolic engagement (meaning) with EVER. The second series of questions were adapted from Odgen's (2006) work, which identifies perceived changes to EVER. The third section explored stakeholders' roles, participatory engagement and involvement which is based

on research from Reed et al. (2009), Odgen (2006), and Uzonna and Budak (2013). The last section of questions came from previous work undertaken by Pryor (2005), which focuses on the relationship between the park and outside groups.

TABLE 2 Interview Guiding Questions

Topic	Interview guiding questions
Symbolic engagement (Brooks et al., 2004; Williams & Patterson, 1996)	1. What does EVER mean to you?
Change over time (Odgen, 2006)	1. How has EVER changed over the last 10 years? 2. How have those changes affected EVER?
Participatory engagement (Reed, 2009; Odgen, 2006; Uzonna & Budak, 2013)	1. In what way(s) are you engaged with EVER? 2. Are you involved in any effort to improve the EVER? 3. If yes, what kind of efforts and with whom?
Relationship with EVER and other groups (Pryor, 2005)	1. What is your relationship with other groups that are interested in EVER? 2. What is your relationship with the management of EVER? 3. Has this relationship(s) changed over time? 4. Where do you see this relationship going in the future?

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using a qualitative content analysis method. It is one of the common methods used by qualitative researchers (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is defined as a research technique in which the subjective interpretation of the content of textual data is systematically classified into themes or categories according to a coding process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis helps classify broad data into smaller units in a systematic approach, categorizing textual domains into small content themes which are subject to the rules laid down in the coding actions (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). This method allows researchers to pay attention to "individuals, groups, institutions, or social" matters (Weber, 1990) and reduce data to identify fundamental meanings and consistencies (Patton, 2002). Through a line-by-line process, transcript data was coded, analyzed and managed using the qualitative analysis software program Atlas.ti version 7. The transcription was based on the characteristics of phenomenology: "What does this line reveal about the phenomenon?" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). To code and analyze these data, transcripts were first imported from Microsoft Word 2010 into Atlas.ti 7. Next, these data were analyzed using a content analysis methodology in which coding categories were generated from the original data of the text. Open codes were generated by reading each transcript across the data set by identifying meaningful units based on line-by-line analysis.

All interviews were audio recorded with participants' approval. All data were transcribed verbatim. To protect confidentiality, handwritten field notes and the recorder

were locked in the cabinet of AGLS 417 office at Texas A&M University. E-mails, raw

recorded interviews, interview ID list and all transcribed interviews were encrypted (e.g.,

documents are password-protected) using encryption software. After the transcription

was complete, any identifiers or field notes that link names to the transcribed or raw data

were destroyed. These data will be kept encrypted on a password protected computer

after the study for seven years. Additionally, all interview data was aggregated; no

names were associated with interviewees for anonymity. The field notes were used to

supplement the transcription data and add to its interpretation when necessary.

An inductive approach was used to conduct the qualitative content analysis.

After the recorded interviews were transcribed, an open-coding approach (Grbich, 2007)

was employed by reading each transcript line by line. Codes were devised within the

data set for the reflection rather than limiting researcher preconceptions (Berg, 2007).

The purpose of open-coding is to build basic concepts and categories (Khandkar, 2009).

Open-coding allows the researcher to decide on preliminary codes (Hsieh & Shannon,

2005). These preliminary codes were based on key words and phrases in the transcribed

data. New codes were added when the text does not fit into an existing code. After that

process was completed, similar codes were placed into these broader categories. The

categories formed the final themes which were checked and modified for exclusivity.

Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative research, it is difficult to judge the quality of qualitative

research since there is no paradigm or measure (Rolfe, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985)

proposed trustworthiness of qualitative research for quality assurance. This study incorporated trustworthiness during the research phase which establishes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Creswell, 2009; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

a) Credibility (internal validity) refers to confidence in accuracy of the study findings. Various techniques were used to establish credibility: Triangulation, persistent observations, and peer debriefings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation uses multiple sources of data, methods, investigators, or theory to corroborate study results. Triangulation was used to "reduce potential bias of single person doing all the data collection and provide a means of more directly assessing the consistency of the data obtained" (Patton, 2002, p. 560). Also, persistent observation identifies relevant characteristics and elements that are pertinent to the phenomenon being investigated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues and fellow researchers to check each other's interpretations during the analysis and in drawing conclusions.

For this study, the interviews were triangulated through multiple sources including the transcripts, websites, documents, probing questions, and field notes. Also, persistent observation was done to provide depth and detail emerging from the interviews. Peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues and fellow researchers to check each other's interpretations, propose alternative ideas and interpretations, and enable the researcher to recognize biases, opinions, and preferences during the analysis and conclusions.

b) Transferability (external validity/generalizability) is focused on the applicability of the study findings to different settings, allowing readers to understand it. Transferability deals with "how far a researcher may make claims for a general application of their [sic] theory" (Gasson, 2004, p. 98). Transferability can be achieved by "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), which is a detailed explanation of subjects, field experiences, settings, and methods. The researcher gives patterns of socio-cultural relationships and puts them in direct contact (Holloway, 1973, p.2). By providing thick description, this process allowed the researcher to determine if the results are relevant for other situations or subjects, "in this way, the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible" (Davis, 1992, p.606). For this study, transferability was obtained through offering specific information about the subjects (researcher and respondents by seeing humans as an instrument), areas, field experiences, and methods to help audiences to understand how they can apply the results of the research beyond the study. Also, findings in this study were presented with thick description of the phenomenon, enabling audiences to choose to apply the study results to their own contexts.

c) Dependability (reliability) refers to the consistency and stability of the study process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability can be obtained through an inquiry audit. An outside researcher who was not participating in the study tracked the consistency of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.317). The inquiry audit was done by asking a colleague to review the study process, and the auditor provided feedback to the researcher who considered and evaluated it. Feedback from external

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reviewers such as colleagues, peers, and academics was provided to the researcher at conference presentations (i.e., Rural Sociological Society and Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium) during the research phases.

d) Confirmability (objectivity) refers to neutrality of the interpretations and findings, not swayed by a researcher's bias or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability can be earned by triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through involving any documents such as interview guiding questions, field notes, and transcripts (Denzin, 1994) to confirm the consistency of findings. For this study, triangulation and consultation were conducted to confirm the consistency of findings. For instance, I received feedback from interviewees, an advisor, members, and an external auditor. When I received negative feedback, I determined, in consultation with an advisor and external auditor, whether any themes were contradicted by the evidence. When the advisor, external auditor and I found consistencies in the evidence, the analysis was considered complete. The findings were reviewed by a number of interviewees, and they provided feedback. I incorporated their feedback in the Results and Conclusions' sections.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

The following results section is based on data analyses from 41 interviews. Data from the interviews were triangulated through multiple sources of evidence including the transcripts, websites, documents, probing questions, and field notes.

The quality of the study results or trustworthiness can be improved by comparing and contrasting the findings for credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability methods (Creswell, 2009; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, credibility was obtained by peer debriefing that was conducted with colleagues and fellow researchers to check each other's interpretations during the analysis and in drawing conclusions. Transferability was achieved by thick description, allowing the researcher to determine if the results were relevant for other settings, situations or subjects. Dependability was obtained through an inquiry audit by asking a colleague to review the study process, and the auditor provided feedback to the researcher who evaluated it. Confirmability was earned through reflexivity, a data audit and triangulation from the transcripts with any additional documents, e.g., field notes. Thus, three themes evolved from the analyses: *attachment to place, threats to the natural environment,* and *collaboration*. In addition to the content of these three themes, subthemes are included to elaborate on the findings along with pertinent quotes from the interviewees.

Attachment to Place

Emotional responses to place were the first theme that emerged throughout the data analysis and across stakeholder groups. Within this theme, four subthemes are described: preservation of biodiversity and water, recreation, home, and financial attachment. *Attachment to place* emerged from participants' involvement in natural environment protection and preservation of habitats of ecosystem, biodiversity, and water. Respondents shared the sentiment that they are attached to EVER, as they can enjoy recreation activities and go to EVER to see different habitats. Study results found attachment to EVER as a home, manifested in the sentiment as a place where they lived. Stakeholders' livelihoods depend on EVER since activity, dependence, and work formed their financial attachment to place.

Preservation of Biodiversity

Preservation of biodiversity and water was the most frequently cited subtheme among various stakeholder groups. Since preserving the health of ecosystems was the most important meaning of EVER to respondents, their perceptions of biodiversity were associated with what they attach to natural environment protection of EVER and preservation of habitats of the ecosystem. For instance, several interviewees—one field biologist (I-11), one Seminole participant (I-48), and one professor and conservation chair of voluntary groups (I-29)—spoke of the preservation of biodiversity as natural manifestations of their *attachment to place*. EVER represents the biggest and most vital remnant of native plant communities in South Florida (I-11); it is home to alligators,

native animals, reptiles (I-48), and is a unique wetland ecosystem with several

endangered species (I-29). This perception of preservation of various species was

further described in an interview with one landscape architect from Miami:

> Everglades National Park represents and frames the potential that exists in our
>
> society, to take those actions that will ensure the protection and preservation of
>
> our natural resources and scenic beauty, both for current benefit and for future
>
> generations. In addition, the Park preserves habitat that supports a significant
>
> number of avian and faunal species, many common to and only found within the
>
> Everglades ecosystem (I-23).

From the interviews, it was found that various stakeholders highlighted intrinsic

values of preservation of biodiversity, such as how they appreciated the environment of

EVER and were proud of EVER. Due to stakeholders' attachment to EVER, they

wanted to preserve its biodiversity. For instance, one president of a volunteer

organization mentioned the intrinsic value of preserving the biodiversity of EVER:

> Everglades National Park is the heart of the huge biological system in the driving
>
> force, a repository for life. We have enormous valuable marine fisheries around
>
> here. We have all kinds of upland habitat. It is important to many different
>
> kinds of animals. ... It is important in its own right as it has intrinsic values that
>
> should be protected. ... A dollar value doesn't adequately reflect the reasons why
>
> we need to protect things because sometimes they deserve protection for their
>
> own right (I-6).

In addition, many participants repeatedly stressed the importance of the preservation of biodiversity of EVER; it is a natural and global asset of EVER. This thought was further described in an interview with an education director from a voluntary organization, saying: "It is an incredibly biodiverse area and globally important for preservation" (I-17). Also, one environmental education associate in Miami-Dade County mentioned that "I think the park has become even more important to people. Our county gets more urbanized, and it keeps changing. The pressure is greater, but the pressure will also be there to protect the park" (I-10). In addition, one resident and retired park ranger mentioned that "It is very important because the national park is preserving the native vegetation" (I-19). Respondents mentioned that they are attached to EVER because EVER is an important asset for its preservation of biodiversity.

Recreation Value

With regard to the individuals' recreation activities, participants go to EVER to see different habitats and enjoy outdoor activities. For instance, a chair of the advisory council from the Sierra Club Florida said, "what it means to me is a place of real Florida; a place to get away from the hustle and bustle of stressed life and go hiking" (I-8). This is about creating open space that participants can use for a variety of formal and informal recreation and leisure purposes. Stakeholders appreciated the importance of EVER since it was a place where people can visit to enjoy nature and wildlife during their recreational activities.

Participants shared that they are fortunate to be able go to EVER because it is a wilderness destination that is so close by and is a largely, unspoiled park. One retired senior naturalist from Miami-Dade Parks Department said, "it is right on our doorstep here. It is very close, and the last wilderness experience left in Florida" (I-51).

Informants stated that they are attached to EVER as various recreational activities, which is one qualitative feature of the emotional tie to EVER. As one individual of a voluntary group aptly put it, "we go to the Anhinga trail and couple of other places to feel the activity and nature" (I-13). Another director of an environmental group shared her recreational engagement in EVER, saying: "it becomes even more important to the community for recreation, education, and conservation, birdwatching, boating, bicycle riding, camping, and enjoying the knowledge of Everglades National Park. It is a very big park. It is more than a million acres. We can only visit little part of it. Some of it is being comfortable known as protected by some development" (I-31). One nature photographer participant stated that "I am going out there all the time for fishing and photography, I am out there for watching the birds, kayaking, and just enjoying the nature" (I -35). One wetland ecologist said that "personally, place to seek refuge, way to get outside of the city, recreate kayak on the water. Great place to visit" (I-14). Respondents were associated with EVER where they can enjoy recreation. The recreation value of EVER was developed through a combination of closeness to residence, repeated visitation, and high involvement in EVER.

Home

Respondents from each stakeholder group shared a very strong attachment to EVER as a home, manifested in the sentiment of residents (Native American), volunteers, and business stakeholders. Residents perceived that EVER was a place where they lived (home, hometown, and history) once the park was created. It became an important representation of wild Florida and part of their cultural and natural history. One museum director and local historian expressed her attachment to EVER saying, "my delight is when somebody new to Everglades National Park came in and got to see their roots, their new home, and their new history" (I-45). Furthermore, EVER was perceived as a home of Native American cultural icons having important historical significance for these people. A teacher of culture and language responded thus when asked what EVER means to him, "…home. I am a full-blooded Seminole Native American in South Florida. Everglades National Park, the Swamp, and South Florida is home for the Seminoles" (I-48).

In addition, participants perceived this area to be a hometown. Residents have a long history in and are familiar with this area, leading to their attachment. For instance, one nature photographer participant stated that "I was born and raised in Miami, Florida. I spend a lot of time in Everglades National Park" (I-35). One environmental education associate in Miami-Dade County mentioned that she is highly attached to EVER because of its proximity to her house and its uniqueness, saying: "It is only 40 minutes from the house, a different world entirely. I have a very strong emotional attachment. The more you know about the Everglades, the more interesting it gets and more attached to it" (I-

10). Participants spoke of their perceived comfort and attachment due to proximity and familiarity with EVER.

Financial Attachment

Respondents from each stakeholder group discussed their financial attachments to EVER in the terms of activity, dependence, and work. In particular, business and science groups expressed the importance of EVER to their livelihood since their jobs were connected to EVER. For example, one participant had several positions such as fisherman, fishing guide, guided tour, and research manager (I-40). The primary goal of his work was to restore fresh water flow to EVER to improve estuary habitat. He was also involved in advocacy work with EVER's GMP process for 10 years to improve wildlife habitat through marine zoning areas to minimize human impacts. He had this to say of an example of his livelihood and attachment to EVER:

> Everglades National Park means everything to my fishing business. We are very lucky to have this 1.5-million-acre national park in our backyard. This is the reason why I live here and work here. I would not be here if there was no national park here. So, sound management of that park gives us a good wildlife habitat that can sustain fisheries is extraordinarily important to me, my business, my livelihood, and quality of life (I-40).

Business stakeholders make their home and living (livelihood, dependence), sharing with others through their businesses for a long time. For instance, one owner of a Florida outdoors business said that "I grew up spending much of my life in Everglades

National Park. I have been to Everglades National Park many times. It has been related to my life a long time" (I-39). The owner of a recreation business shared the sentiment about how EVER is home to diverse wildlife which is an incredible ecotourism resource:

We try to promote ecotourism in the park. That means we have wilderness in our backyard that will never be developed. It is going to be a nice place to see birds and sea creatures. If you go to the mainland part of Everglades, there is a chance to see panthers. It is a really important resource for us (I-32).

One airboat tourism captain mentioned what EVER means to him:

I am a proud member of what I do. Because I give show of the sensitivity of the Everglades, there is no other place like it on earth. I give show of the alligators, the native wildlife. And also once in a while, we do see non-native species that belong here. It is nice to show people the world is very sensitive (I-43).

Science stakeholders talked about their interdisciplinary research and education to improve the ecosystem of EVER. Scientists who are engaged with EVER work on a variety of levels. At the managerial level, they helped park managers to develop the Everglades Restoration plans. At the legislative level, they gave tours in EVER to policy makers. At the developmental level, they educated decision-makers about the significance of EVER. Mostly, scientists were involved in affecting the health of the ecosystem for restoration planning efforts and delivering more water to EVER. Researchers conducted studies in EVER, renewed research permits, submitted the annual report every year, and made research understandable. For example, one participant, a senior scientist of the Coastal Engineering Consultants (I-39), worked as a member of

the peer review panel on the Army Corps of Engineers' project working on the restoration of the upstream lands. Scientists were "indirectly helping, but would say directly helping with restoration efforts" (I-26). One biologist (I-28) from the U.S. Geological Survey did research on coastal and brackish water, monthly or bimonthly in the Florida Bay within EVER's boundaries. He believed that his research findings would potentially help EVER's restoration get to a more pristine state.

Threats to the Natural Environment

Threats to the natural environment were the second theme that emerged throughout this data analysis and across stakeholder groups. Within this theme, six subthemes are described: loss of native species, urban development, a shortage and contamination of water, hurricanes, climate change, and increased recreation use.

Loss of Native Species

Participants have seen urbanization in Miami and Fort Myers, which has resulted in more roads, canals, and buildings substituted in for natural environments. Both Miami and Fort Myers are within 80 miles of the park. In particular, respondents described how urban development, pollution, and water shortages had reduced the number of both native and invasive species of plants and animals. Due to urbanization and appearance of invasive species, participants noticed a decline in biodiversity and the disappearance of specific species, e.g., the Florida Wood Stork, Florida panther, the American crocodile, and the West Indian manatee. One volunteer participant describe

that invasive species prevent the spread of seeds from the native species: "They [invasive species] have crowded out the native species because there is no natural pest. For example, the Brazilian pepper tree seeds were spread very rapidly by birds. The birds need to feed then drop about where the Melaleuca tree is so dense little trees and no other plants can grow up through the canopy. It crowded out the native species" (I-47).

EVER was threatened because endangered species were struggling to survive and climate changes were causing invasive species to expand. The issues caused by the presence of invasive species have been devastating to the park. Invasive species issues are "very serious" (I-23) and "the most prominent problem in Everglades National Park" (I-47) as they played a very negative role in the change of the ecosystem. According to a landscape architect from parks administration in the city of Miami:

> The Everglades ecosystem has become a depository for every exotic species that alleged "pet owners" no longer have an interest in maintaining or possessing. The notion that the Everglades is an acceptable "dumping ground" of reticulated pythons, Burmese pythons, and various other exotic species is anathema to sound and informed ecological policies. The federal government should immediately prohibit the import of such species into the U.S. (I-23).

Moreover, various conservation groups have often mentioned loss of native species and ecosystem deterioration as closely connected with urbanization, rising sea levels, and climate change. According to a director from one non-profit group:

Biologically, it (Everglades National Park) has degraded due to ongoing

problems onsite and offsite. The ecosystem can't adapt to the new system. It has

experienced a decline in wildlife diversity due to the python infestation. Its

salinity balance is changing due to sea level rise. It is experiencing peat collapse

(I-4).

Urban Development

Most of the respondents discussed their concerns about urban development,

population increases, land conversion, agricultural runoff, pollution, and loss of wetlands

habitat as visible changes impacting EVER. Respondents have seen an increase in the

number of new farming operations (sugar and related products) surrounding the entrance

of EVER. On the surface farms may appear to be safe cushions for the environment but

increased use of water for irrigation, flooding of fields, additional infrastructure and

construction for these new agricultural operations have been problematic. One public

information officer said:

The farming is to at least serve as a safety for the wildlife between Everglades

National Park and urban world. So, a lot of farming is disappearing and that's

kind of ending that nice cushion that wildlife had (I-33).

A landscape architect in parks administration in Miami responded that the most

obvious changes were the product of undesirable and external forces that have been

brought to bear on the Everglades ecosystem:

Notably, these include the failures to restore the random oxbows of the

Kissimmee River through the total de-channelization of the river, and the

restoration of wetland habitats without compensation to adjacent landowners …

Internally, while energy flows such as water movement within the park, are

desirably impacted by NPS policies, the political interests of key financial

players create adverse, undesirable impacts (I-23).

To manage growth and development in Miami-Dade County, the Urban

Development Boundary (UDB)[1] was created about 40 years ago. The UDB was

designed to also protect the Everglades; however, it has not been as effective as planned.

A retired sergeant (I-3) commented that the purpose of the UDB was to restrict building,

but there are political pressures to revise the zoning, which impacts the Everglades (I-3).

Respondents wanted to "protect Everglades National Park from development, extraction,

and technology" (I-51) and the UDB is not working the way residents hoped it would.

A Shortage and Contamination of Water

Participants from each stakeholder group shared their perceptions of water

shortages and contamination to various aspects of the environment. Respondents

mentioned that in the past EVER did not have water quality or quantity issues. However,

due to the growth of the surrounding population, urban development, and degradation of

the natural environment, intense water competition has evolved between residential,

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[1] The Urban Development Boundary (UDB) is a line in Miami-Dade County's "master plan designed to limit development from encroaching west and south into fragile agricultural lands and wetlands" (Miami-Dade County, 2016)

agricultural, and preservation uses. The challenges with water use have led to more

water-related infrastructure being built and canals to control water and flooding. One

participant, a retired sergeant, who has lived in Miami Dade County since 1975,

described how the park has changed:

> Salt water intrusion comes up into the Everglades; what keeps it out is fresh
>
> water flowing through from north of Lake Okeechobee. ... That river has
>
> narrowed and narrowed because more people are living there. And what is
>
> understood is having a natural flow, they done canals to cut off the natural flow.
>
> What that is done to Everglades National Park is the cut off the supply of fresh
>
> water running into it. And so it has less fresh water that push in the salt water
>
> back (I-3).

Participants talked about many examples of how development and environmental

pollution has negatively affected the water in EVER. One participant from the Seminole

Tribe of Florida said the loss of quality and quantity of water has impacted the

biodiversity in South Florida in several ways:

> Plants, lives, even the animals, fish lives affected somewhat because the fish
>
> anything that related to water in the swamp, the living species are affected.
>
> Therefore, fish died out in South Florida. It affected all different kinds of
>
> animals, and human being, too. It is not good consumption of the water in South
>
> Florida. Unless you filter it out, it has drastic affect in South Florida (I-48).

Respondents mentioned that EVER is helping supply water in the large urban

area outside the park boundaries. For instance, one landscape architect from the city of

Miami (I-23) said that EVER was not considered relevant before the Everglades Restoration Projected started. Now, it provides domestic water to several million people. This thought was further described in an interview with an education director from a voluntary organization: "important for the quality of the water for us. Everglades National Park will [solve] the water problems within that geographic area" (I-17). Respondents reinforced that timely access to a high quantity of clean water is needed to restore and preserve the park's biodiversity because EVER supplies them with its water.

Hurricanes

Volunteers shared their personal feelings about how hurricanes Andrew (1992) and Katrina and Wilma (2005) devastated EVER. In particular, participants witnessed the destruction of park structures, including the visitor center, lodge, and restaurant in Flamingo (southern visitor Center area of EVER), were destroyed in 2005. One researcher mentioned that "the hurricane Wilma in 2005 impacted Flamingo, also research site, near Gulf of Mexico, damaged equipment". A retired senior naturalist shared similar experiences: "In 2005, Wilma destroyed the hotel and restaurant, here is—what, nine years later? —still no motel or cottages. There are cottages down there too but there was storm. So, here in nine years gone by they don't have the funds to rebuild structure" (I-51).

Few participants felt the hurricanes helped the environment clean out and start over. They felt that restored water flow is not coming down to the Everglades. The water flow is not delivering the same level as it did before the area was settled. The

hurricanes restored the natural water flow, redirecting dammed up water into EVER through canals and flooding systems. An environmental education associate in Miami-Dade County perceived that hurricanes have solved more problems with man-made pollution than any natural cause or cycle, saying: "Hurricanes also restored the water flow coming down the Everglades. The post hurricane changes affected everything fairly" (I-10). One volunteer mentioned that "the hurricane probably improves the environment to help clean it out. It destroyed what man put there. But it did not hurt what Mother Nature" (I-1). While some respondents perceived that hurricanes are destructive natural disasters, few perceived them as natural forces, solving man-made pollution through natural cycles.

Climate Change

Respondents shared sentiments of uncertainty due to its slow implementation and climate change issues. Participants explained that the Everglades Restoration Project has helped to get more water, but it will take a long time, "centuries or decades" (I-51). One participant said "the national park is slow in implementing these [water] changes" (I-46). Respondents perceived that although EVER is getting clean water, the process to implement the Everglades Restoration projects is slow.

Despite the Everglades Restoration efforts, participants worry about how climate change will affect EVER. One entomologist raised an issue regarding the future, "if the climate models are correct, most of Everglades National Park will be underwater in another hundred years or 200 years. What is the point? Keeping it the same, it is not the

same as 50 years ago" (I-18). One professor and conservation chair of several voluntary groups mentioned climate change and rising sea levels, saying "climate change will result in the sea level rises, possibly salt water intrusion that would increase the need for fresh water" (I-29). An education director of an environmental foundation worried that climate change can just become an excuse for not saving EVER, saying: "there are plenty of people who are fearful. They are less likely to be motivated to save it. Climate change allows people to dismiss the importance of the Restoration. So it gives them excuses not to be motivated to save it" (I-17). Although the majority of the participants agreed that EVER has become more positive due to the Everglades Restoration; there are others who doubt this notion due to how long it will take to improve EVER. Some even felt that attitudes about climate change can hinder peoples' motivation to protect EVER.

On a positive note, one participant mentioned that the state and federal government had put a lot of money into the Everglades Restoration and fixed much of the damage caused by humans in the last 100 years. EVER was getting better and healthier because it was starting to receive some benefits from the Everglade's Restoration work, e.g., improving water.

> Last 10 years have been positive time for Everglades National Park. It is cited as the largest project in the world. We have seen restoration begin to happen, projects are being constructed. People are getting better understand the importance of restoration, 10 years have been good. But we need to more. Problem is it will be taken over the 100 years for impact, begin to restore, it is going to take long time (I-14).

Increased Recreation Use

Respondents have witnessed major changes in recreation use over time. The numbers of recreationists, boats, trailers, and cars using the park have increased, and it has impacted the degradation of shallow water and trails. In particular, the vice mayor for the community of Homestead, located closest to EVER, shared his concerns regarding this elevated recreation use:

> We are more than doubled in our population over than 10 years. 10 years ago, we probably had 30 thousand residents, now we have population of 65 thousand residents. So we have grown. We have a lot of groups popped, businesses, and commercials. It turned it from an agricultural community into more of normalized city… I have seen changes dramatically in terms of number of people utilizing Florida Bay fishing and with boats, increase of size of vessels, boating behavior, and increasing numbers of people fishing within Everglades National Park" (I-36).

Not only has increased recreation participation been a problem, but recreation values conflict has seemed to emerge between various user groups. A director of volunteer services of an environmental group shared some of her thoughts on this issue (I-31). She was interested in a pristine environment, not disturbing the natural world of EVER. She had become more opposed to other groups, especially the ATV user groups in EVER. Due to her feeing about motorized recreation, she was becoming increasingly set in her values resulting in a negative relationship over time with other stakeholder

groups. Hence, she became more involved in the environmental group due to this recreation conflict.

Moreover, business groups pointed out that other types of conflict with recreation user groups developed due to the regulations limiting access to resources for recreation. These restrictions affected their livelihood and had major impacts on the numbers of fish and species of fish for recreation. The interviewee said that fish are sensitive to noise, boats, and people. It can be assumed that this sensitivity results in the fish being scared away. This same feeling was shared by a fisherman who was concerned for the fish species but also about his financial future:

> The increasing number of boats and fishermen in shallow water has an impact on them [the fish]. It scares them away. … Currently there are no rules and regulations dictating what size vessel can fish in Florida Bay. I've observed that over the past 10 years, there are less and less fish in shallow area, more and more people fishing, and so it is getting harder and harder bring clients out to be able to catch these fish. … That comes at a cost to both habitats in the fishing boats are large with very large powerful motors not only the noise disturbance but also more damaging to the resources than smaller vessels (I-40).

He added more thoughts about how park management at EVER needs to initiate new policies such as zoning to prevent degradation of the natural environment. He felt specific regulations should be introduced in the EVER's General Management Plan on where boaters can operate vessels no matter their size or speed:

The current management states very few regulations right now, dictating how

and where we can operate vessels. Right now we can take as big boats as we

want and run it across as shallow water as we want, as fast as we want. No rules

saying what we can or can't do. The park is under its GMP review right now,

where a lot of these issues are being addressed and managed. Zoning is a

primary key part within this plan (I-40).

Collaboration

Collaboration was the third theme that emerged throughout the data analysis and

across stakeholder groups. Within this theme, three subthemes are described:

volunteering and advocacy, tourism development, and education and sharing information.

Volunteering and Advocacy

While some changes have been negative, such as the degradation of the natural

environment and urban development, most of the participants felt some positive events

are occurring at EVER that have allayed environmental concerns, inspired volunteers,

and increased partnerships through either advocacy and/or volunteering. People have

been advocates for the development-preservation conflict in EVER. For instance, a

volunteer member of the Florida Native Plant Society, the Tropical Audubon, and the

Urban Paradise Guild described how to be an advocate for EVER:

Developers see an opportunity, the UDB. There is always a battle with

developers. So, we watch out for county commission meetings and zoning to

hinder extension of the UDB. So, we hold the line very well. ... We have to work very hard. We attend government meetings where developers try to move the UDB (I-37).

Respondents stated that making public comments is an effective way for enhancing awareness and knowledge of the issues with EVER. Respondents spoke out for more cooperation to restore EVER, and helped to improve the water and natural resources in EVER. The passages below exemplify directors' of voluntary organization's efforts with EVER in terms of biodiversity protection, describing the outcomes of advocacy for EVER:

Riverwatch coordinates with all regional environmental groups and advocates to local, state, and national agencies and elected officials. … I also have created the Democratic Environmental Caucus of Florida, Southwest Chapter to get existing officials to adopt better policies and programs and to promote the election of eco-minded candidates (I-4).

I did address various aspects in the use and development of the area that ultimately encompassed the Park – prior to its designation by President Truman in 1947 – in the chapter titled "The CCC in South Florida". This chapter may be found in the text "The New Deal in South Florida" (Stuart & Stack, eds: University Press of Florida). I monitor issues and policies related to The Everglades, and an inveterate letter-writer (I-23).

The executive director of the Everglades Association (I-46) stated that engagement with and improvement of EVER was the goal of the organization.

Specifically, the organization-operated bookstores within the visitor centers in EVER to offer educational items as a cooperating association. The mayor of the city of Homestead shared similar feelings about how advocacy and volunteering can motivate individuals to visit the park:

> We are fundraising for nonprofit organizations. I am trying to raise funds for parks to engage in different projects and programs that they are trying to do. Through the Homestead, we work to advocate to get funding for the national park, advocate promote the park, and get more visitors and more people there (I-36).

Respondents have increased engagement with EVER due to the development-preservation conflict in EVER and Everglades Restoration. For instance, one director of an environmental group shared her motivation to be engaged in EVER (I-31), calling on people and the government to be advocates for EVER:

> I think conflict continues to grow between people who want to protect Everglades National Park and who want to use it. They still protect it, and they want to use it more. To me, the more you use it, the more you disturb wildlife. Groups of people who want to use [Everglades National Park] are the hunters, ATV, airboats, and drill for oil. They want to take anything. … We need to protect the ocean. I read the newspaper. Because that is how it is going to be saved. Everglades National Park will be protected from people who want to use it. If you are watching, just watch them [people who want to use Everglades

National Park] and write to governors, congress persons to say "no". We cannot give up any more (I-31).

Moreover, participants said that paying closer attention to the Everglades Restoration Project has led to more involvement from stakeholders through advocacy, volunteering, attending public meetings, and engaging in decision-making processes, e.g., GMP planning and review. One participant who had several positions such as fisherman, fishing guide, guided tour, and research manager (I-40) shared his engagement in the GMP planning and review process:

> I had been very engaged with the GMP process, and help a lot to essentially draw out right out these different marine zoning area and current draft GMP. If they were implemented, it would bring about major changes with in regards to how we operate vessels in that park. And, it's all more environmentally friendly, all to benefit the natural resource. So, I see some big changes coming about. Now this plan has to go through one more public review (I-40).

The GMP and Everglades Restoration instilled a desire in people to actively pursue conservation and better understand the significance of EVER. Particularly, one fisherman and biologist (I-40) said the relationships got closer over the years as the GMP got farther along in the process. He had seen a slight transformation in the management, planning staffs, and law enforcement at EVER. The relationship NPS staff has had with the public seems to be improving because both groups appear to be cooperating and communicating at a higher level. According to one participant who had

several positions such as fisherman, fishing guide, and research manager (I-40), increased interactions and idea sharing are taking place regularly:

I have a very close working relationship with managers in the park such as planners, upper management, law enforcement, the superintendent, and deputy superintendent. Not only are we colleagues, we are friends because many of them live down here. We are interested in the same things. I engage with them about the GMP. We meet with the management to discuss what Audubon feels is the best management for wildlife protection in the park (I-40).

A chapter president of one volunteer organization spoke of the positive outcomes of engaging in the decision-making process and how it shapes the collaborative process:

There are opportunities for public participation in rulemaking. If the public has to be involved in the rulemaking, they are self-enforcing. Even if they know quite well about the opportunity to participate, they accept the rules and enforce regulations themselves, but also diplomatically they see somebody not doing the right thing. They will correct the person (I-5).

Informants described a heighted interest in volunteering, which has led to increased environmental awareness, minimized human impacts, and increased feelings of ownership. In particular, the members of voluntary groups have been involved with EVER in a wide range of activities such as picking up garbage, clearing trails, maintaining the Coe Visitor Center, and hosting events. For instance, one volunteer couple has worked at EVER through the NPS's Volunteer in the Park program since Hurricane Andrew in 1992. One male participant has worked as a volunteer for the

maintenance of EVER after hurricanes. He described that "after Hurricane Andrew, me and other people rebuilt destroyed facilities and pumped out the chemical toilets. Those were the jobs nobody wanted, not even the Park Service people, so they gave it to volunteers. So, we took ownership of it" (I-2). A female volunteer mentioned that she reached out to the surrounding communities to help residents learn more about EVER through the Stone Craft Festival, clear trails, paint the signs, and maintain campgrounds and visitor centers. Volunteer participants perceived that relationships have grown, and a sense of ownerships has strengthened over time in doing volunteering because they earned respect and gratitude from NPS staff and other organizations (I-14, 37).

Moreover, residents perceived EVER as a place where they live and a home for future generations. Participants with similar interests and motivation shared their emotional connections and wanted to engage more in advocacy and related activities. One interviewee backed this up by saying: "it is a place that I need to look after and take care of. We came here to give back what we have taken for free for future generations" (I-2). According to a landscape architect from parks administration in Miami: "Everglades National Park represents and frames the potential that exists in our society, to take those actions that will ensure the protection and preservation of our natural resources and scenic beauty, both for current benefit and for future generations" (I-23).

Furthermore, participants perceived that volunteering and advocacy not only helped to protect EVER but also enhanced their ownership and attachment. Respondents felt a sense of ownership of EVER and pride from what they had done, and they thought that is the fundamental principle of citizenship. A water quality monitoring technician

stated, "it is a sense of pride, ownership because I am a volunteer worker here. We really made differences at the visitor center and southern entrance. It makes us [volunteers] have feelings of ownership" (I-38).

Participants shared that their relationships had improved and changed positively due to considering various stakeholders' perspectives and facilitating stakeholders' input. For instance, one board member of the Florida Wildlife Federation shared his sentiment about how organizations connect with potential volunteers:

It has improved. In the past, the NPS people had a narrow viewpoint, and they did not facilitate inputs from stakeholder groups. The NPS decided to go out to the public, different stakeholders, facilitate their inputs, and ask for their help (I-24).

A director of the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association spoke at the Everglades Coalition conference, which enabled stakeholders to consider broader topics, saying:

Years ago the Everglade Coalition annual conference focused only on the Everglades directly. It now is held in Southwest Florida from time to time, and the conference content includes a more comprehensive consideration of all South Florida water and environmental issues (I-4).

Participants perceived that attending meetings enabled participants to work collaboratively through making public comments, voting for issues, and engaging in the decision-making process. Most of the board member respondents of voluntary groups engaged with EVER in various ways such as recruiting volunteers, producing

information for the public to increase environmental concern, voting for candidates who support EVER, and encouraging people to visit EVER. One Seminole participant who was participating in the culture and language program in the Seminole Tribe of Florida stated his involvement:

> We have representatives to represent the Seminole tribe. They made efforts to stop developing around the reservation in Everglades National Park. We are in the midst of a challenge, the battle of the plans. That might be dangerous to the people and environment. We do get involved to make sure our livelihood is not in danger. We have meetings together to understand what is there. Do picketing with the representatives and whoever with developers, and let them know that we have a voice, with the developers and commissioners (I-48).

Board members of voluntary groups participated in the Everglades Coalition to work for the Everglades Restoration and develop partnerships with various stakeholders. For instance, one professor and conservation chair of a voluntary group (I-29) attended the Everglades Coalition conference and participated as a moderator, panel member, and chair of the organizing committee. A president of a voluntary group had joint chapter meetings every year and invited people such as the superintendent of EVER, the Sierra Club, the Audubon, the NPCA (National Parks Conservation Association), and other NGOs. He elaborated about the meeting:

> Everybody has a couple minutes to talk about what issues are important to their organizations. We have 40 or 50 people there, and they all have opted learn about what's happening. Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park

have been reviewing GMP and take public input on developing GMP, so we have

been able to work with them (I-6).

In addition, participants discussed a growing concern about budget cuts, which

are related to recruiting volunteers, regulations, staffing, community outreach, and

politics. As a result, respondents mentioned that they were dependent on volunteer work

and fundraising to improve EVER. Due to the budget issues, voluntary groups were

working with various organizations and the public to fundraise. The citizen groups

helped EVER to protect the resources of the Florida Bay, hired seasonal rangers to help

the patrols of the Florida Bay, and cleaned up the Florida Bay.

Tourism Development

The business and local government stakeholder groups shared sentiments of how

the community benefits from and integrates EVER into their tourism and economic

practices. Specific action within various stakeholder groups created tourism

opportunities near EVER by using local knowledge and resources in the community.

Respondents identified local opportunities to increase tourism revenue and employment,

develop new businesses, improve quality of life through cultural programs, and improve

local infrastructure. Particularly, these stakeholders spoke about how the collaboration

between Homestead and EVER has improved tourism in the local areas. An executive

director of the Main Street Homestead (I-44) said that having a successful relationship

with the NPS was an important factor in drawing tourists to EVER. For example, the

downtown area of Homestead has benefited from tax revenues which have been used to

improve its infrastructure. The recent introduction of the trolley program has been a success story between EVER and the city of Homestead. The original concept of "the Trolley to the National Parks" program was created from communication between two national parks (Everglades and Biscayne) and in partnership with NPCA, and Homestead about a need for public transportation to the park by using an existing public trolley system. It is the first national public transportation system to connect two National Parks with a free park admission and guided tour provided by rangers and volunteers. The trolley offers free park admission and transportation to residents, neighbors, and visitors (City of Homestead, 2016). According to the vice mayor of the city of Homestead:

> It is a good partnership, at the city side from the tourism aspect. There are 1.5 million visitors to these national parks every single year. We are trying to find a way to get us to gateway. As you visit the park, you always come here, shop here, stay in our hotels, eat at our restaurants, and really connect us from an economic standpoint (I-36).

Various business stakeholders shared various examples of how increased tourism has benefitted the local area for outdoor recreation, infrastructure, and employment. One recreation business owner (I-32) took customers on a paddling trip to the creek for eco-tours, teaching about the mangroves and birds, and doing low-impact recreation, e.g., kayaks, sailboats, nature observation, and photography. She was engaged with EVER through joining meetings with the Florida Bay Committee, discussing the resources of the Florida Bay, and creating improved signage on the waterway so people would take

the correct route. One nature photographer said, "I incorporated a business to guide people in Everglades National Park because of my love and passion for it. As a business, I want to share and educate people about the unique environment habitat" (I-35). Moreover, one regional representative from the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) (I- 20) talked about the ranger academy in the local community. They had been working to establish a seasonal ranger law enforcement training program for the NPS at Miami-Dade College. After students finish the approved curriculum by the state, they have an opportunity to be hired at EVER and other national parks as well.

Moreover, upon the communities' requests for cultural programs about EVER, a downtown museum provided cultural programs, played a role as an information center and a waiting area, and improved tourism opportunities in Homestead. An executive director of the Main Street Homestead (I-44) program worked to bring people the story of Homestead and encouraged visitors to come to Homestead and EVER. In particular, Main Street had a Public Book Fair about EVER to let people know about the history of the community and how people were connected to EVER. According to a public information officer from the city of Homestead:

> We are trying to benefit from the visitors that go to the parks. We are trying to make the image of the city interesting and protecting our natural resources and education and conservation. And economically, we are trying to connect our branding and culture to both of the national park that are surrounding us (I-33).

EVER gives back to the community showing how partnerships between national parks and communities can be successful. For instance, EVER opened the Nike missile

site[2] and actively pursued conservation and interpretation of cultural resources (I-20); became even more important to the community for recreation, education, and conservation (I-31); improved the Coe Visitor Center (I-2); and held events such as a Public Book Fair and Stone Craft Festival and operated the trolley program in the Homestead (I-33).

Education and Information Sharing

Participants agreed that it is important to provide educational opportunities about natural resources and conservation to the public which leads to a better relationship between communities and EVER. Everyone benefits including the park, residents, and visitors. Stakeholders shared that there is an increasing demand for education programs to protect and manage the area. Scientists and voluntary groups stress the importance of sharing information and educating newcomers. For instance, a regional representative of the NPCA (I-20) has focused on protecting Florida Bay through boater education so EVER understands its vulnerability to damage from boats and can develop ways to minimize it. She spoke of her educational engagement with the NPS for Florida Bay protection work:

> My work has focused on Florida Bay protection and the creation of boater
>
> education. So that anyone in Everglades National Park understands where
>
> they're boating and how to do as little damage as possible. A lot of work has

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[2] The Nike Missile Site offers an experience where visitors can "step into the Cold War for a 1.5 hours" via a "guided tour of the historic Nike Missile Site A/2/52 where U.S. Army soldiers defended the nation from the threat of attack" (NPS, 2016)

been put into making public comments on EVER's GMP and calling for cultural

resource support (I-20).

One environmental education associate in Miami-Dade County (I-10) worked

with a variety of people from park management, the fire management department,

wildlife biologists, and environmental education offices on various educational programs.

She was involved in the Everglades Restoration through developing full-time programs

and training individuals to learn and distribute information about EVER. She worked

closely with the NPS staff by sharing expertise, documents, and new information. A

retired senior naturalist in Miami-Dade Parks Department worked as a member on the

board of directors, instructor, and fieldtrip leader for a voluntary organization (I-51). He

used to help EVER with seasonal training, plant identification, and educational programs.

He helped with several management plans and wrote four books about EVER

wildflowers, Florida Keys wildflowers, exploring EVER and surrounding area, and

Florida icons.

A public information officer from the Homestead mentioned about educating the

community to minimize environmental impacts, saying:

> Everglades National Park tries to bring more people and the Hispanic community,
> which for long time have not received any information about conservation or
> importance of natural resources. … We are reaching out to different groups such
> as farm workers' coalition, NGOs, those have after school programs for low
> income children. So, we are trying to have people out there, they see it, love it,
> and then they will help us to conserve it (I-33).

One participant (I-38) said that "there has been more demand for the park, which continues to protect and manage the area, but also there are more visual relationships between tourists and the park. I think a need for a lot more about education and understanding about the people is to go to the park". An environmental education and communication associate in Miami-Dade County said "the national park has done more outreach; trying to become more of an asset to the community. Before they were just out there and so many people never even go there, even thought about it" (I-10).

Respondents witnessed that various events had been conducted for the purpose of education, which built positive relationships and provided learning opportunities about issues affecting EVER. They explained that after people learned about EVER, they advocated for preservation of natural resources in EVER, shared information with others, and wrote letters in support of restoration to decision makers. Participants perceived that sharing information enabled stakeholders to work individually through posting information about EVER on social media such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, and Instagram. If people did not actively participate in voluntary groups, respondents engaged in other ways such as writing newsletters and sharing articles. Respondents also contributed by educating the public and advocating for local, state, and national policies to protect EVER.

The comments below exemplify some of the actions taken by directors of voluntary organizations to educate and share information with the public about EVER:

We support if there is an issue that they sent out the press, something that post in the internet. We have hundreds of people on our mailing list, we send out issues,

we have monthly newsletter that covered whatever issues with the park especially the interaction of the Keys community (I-5).

I put in the newsletter of the National Park website on their GMP part. I urge our members. 200 people who receive our newsletter include other environmental organizations, local governmental representative with County commissioners, members of the Florida legislature, members of Congress, elected politicians, and mayors, but also, just ordinary citizens (I-6).

Participants highlighted that communication between the public and NPS staff has improved over the last few years. The vice mayor of Homestead described this relationship best: "there was no open line of communication and so they were just operating in separate fields. Now, we work so closely together. Now, we have a pretty good open line of communication. We help promote the park and the park helps us" (I-36).

Initially, one regional representative of the NPCA (I-20) communicated the idea of declaring the city of Homestead as a Gateway Community by connecting two national parks. This representative brought the idea to the city council and began working with a group of community members from the city of Homestead to make this transportation system a reality. Everglades and Biscayne National Parks, the NPCA, city of Homestead, downtown Homestead, and other Everglades associations accomplished their communal goal, opening the trolley for operation on January 4, 2014. The trolley program was achieved through effective collaboration and communication between the city of Homestead, NPCA, NPS, and various Everglades groups. The vice mayor of the

city of Homestead mentioned that "through the trolley system to accomplish that goal, we were able to work together and make it work" (I-36). An executive director of Everglades Association said "Typically, the park and the city never really talked to each other. We are neighbors, but we did not talk. The trolley program puts the park people with the city people together" (I-46).

Some respondents had more involvement as they developed partnerships with other organizations. By having the Interagency Science Center in Key Largo, scientists could communicate to share information for ongoing monitoring and research in EVER. One scientist mentioned about the partnerships through the Interagency Science Center of the NPS:

> Strengthened every year, especially the research aspect is very supportive. Most of the researchers support each other in really benefit from be in group efforts. For example, the Key Largo Interagency Science Center huge benefits for all researchers trying to work out for the park, as well helps ongoing monitoring and research in the park (I-38).

Informants expressed the fact that improved communication has led to better collaboration in responding to public input and concerns. They felt that this outcome has been a positive change that NPS administrators and staff have worked with various stakeholders and will continue in the future.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined the relationships between stakeholders and EVER and their symbolic and participatory engagement in national park management. The study objectives were: 1) to understand various stakeholders' perspectives with EVER; 2) to understand the meaning EVER has for stakeholders, and 3) to understand their roles and involvement with EVER. For this study, a qualitative research design was chosen, reflecting input from forty-one stakeholders engaged with EVER and the Everglades Coalition. This chapter summarizes and discusses the study findings, theoretical and practical implications, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Findings

The most dominant theme identified was *attachment to place*, whether it was living in close proximity to EVER or having an emotional connection with the park. Next, was stakeholders' genuine concern with the real *threats to the natural environment* that they perceive change the park or its surrounding area. *Threats to the natural environment* can be defined as social and environmental changes perceived by those with who have attachment to EVER. Third, was *collaboration* reflecting how active participation in matters concerning EVER led stakeholders to engage with the NPS and other individuals who are connected to EVER in various ways. Examples of *collaboration* include attending meetings, interacting with NPS staff, seeking informed knowledge on the park and learning more about how changes are affecting the park's

ecosystem. We concluded that stakeholders were actively involved in the management

of EVER, in both symbolic and participatory ways; they remained attached to the

national park as a place for recreation and commerce, and remained concerned with the

ongoing threats to EVER: urban sprawl, ensuing pollution, and hurricanes, etc.

Stakeholder concerns for park resources have led to the establishment of diverse

relationships with and amongst agencies, organizations and bodies, as manifested in the

ever-expanding collaborative activities, e.g., volunteering and public education

programs.

Attachment to Place

This most dominant of the three driving themes greatly helped us to understand

the relationships developed through stakeholders' symbolic engagement with EVER: we

infer such engagement to mean stakeholders' "ownership" of EVER, the place.

Understanding people's emotional connections with the environment emerged from

experiences and interactions that specific meanings became connected with physical

places (Eisenhauer, Krannich, & Blahna, 2000). Specifically, individuals develop

attachment to places, developing in their psyche emotional connections and caring for

such areas (Eisenhauer et al., 2000).

In exploring the symbolic ways how the stakeholders, when living in proximity

to EVER, engaged with the park, emotional response to place was the most dominant

theme. *Attachment to place* consisted of four subthemes: (1) concern over the

preservation of biodiversity; (2) enjoyment and recreational offerings made available to stakeholders; (3) a place (locale) where they lived and called home, and (4) interdependence developed through financial attachment.

In reviewing related research, Eisenhauer et al. (2000) concluded that the reasons places have special meanings are the "environmental features/characteristics of place", "site for recreational activities", "family/friend related reasons", and "economic/consumptive issues"; they further state that appreciating the environmental features of a place can involve different activities and experiences. In a similar study, results have shown that *attachment to place* develops from multiple meanings, all of which connect and involve other activities (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010).

In this study, we found various categories of meanings labeled as *attachment to place*. First, stakeholders' symbolic engagement with EVER was associated with preservation of biodiversity. The findings of this study add evidence to support existing research on the emotional connection to the preservation of biodiversity and how it influences symbolic meanings and *attachment to place* (Kals, Schumacher, & Montada, 1999; Perkins, 2010; Raymond et al., 2010; Schultz & Tabanico, 2007). However, this study found that various stakeholders emphasized intrinsic values of preservation of biodiversity, specifically expressing their appreciation of the environment through volunteering, advocacy, sharing information, and engaging in decision-making processes.

Second, stakeholders' symbolic engagement with EVER was associated with places (locales) where they can enjoy recreation, supporting past research that stakeholders may create attachment to a specific park because of its recreational benefits. This suggests that recreationists' social attachment to the setting increased their emotional connection to it (Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham, 2004). Furthermore, proximity to residence, frequency of use, and active involvement may create further attachment to a park (Farnum, Hall, & Kruger, 2005). For example, stakeholders' close proximity to EVER was one factor for recreation visits, which increased repeat visits. In addition, recreationists' repeat visits to a place may result in high place dependence due to the specialized use and better appreciation of its natural setting (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004a & 2004b). Overall, the current study's findings reflect that recreation value as *attachment to place* is caused by recreational benefits, proximity to residence, repeated visitation, and participatory involvement in EVER.

Third, stakeholders' symbolic engagement with EVER was associated with the third subtheme: "home", shared specifically by residents (Native American), volunteers, and business stakeholder groups. The current study supports distinguishable properties of home, such as local knowledge and lived experience (Bustam, 2009) as well as shared history, interests, and concerns (Perkins & Long, 2002). For instance, this research found that EVER has the meaning as a "home" and a place of historical significance for Native Americans, which is consistent with past research showing ancestral and cultural connections (Hay, 1998; Raymond et al., 2010; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983).

EVER was perceived as "home" by these stakeholders, as a locale where stakeholders were born, grew up, and lived much of their lives (Raymond et al., 2010).

Fourth, stakeholders' livelihoods depended on EVER in terms of activity and dependence which formed their financial attachment to EVER. Business and science groups have ongoing financial attachments through jobs at EVER. Recreational business groups develop an attachment to it because of its natural resources for ecotourism. This research found evidence of financial attachment, which is consistent with previous work which showed the functional *attachment to place* for recreation or work (Williams et al., 1992). We concluded that through developing these bonds with the park, stakeholders also become financially attached to EVER.

Our study therefore identifies and establishes the meaning given by stakeholders to EVER, and also how these stakeholders choose to engage with EVER. Their symbolic engagement is intertwined with their interests, activities, involvement and caring through their participatory engagement and this is why places have meanings. Results from this study showed that stakeholders' place meaning can differ as through their processes of activities and involvement such as promoting recreation experiences, protecting natural resources, preserving historic resources, maximizing financial resources, or a combination of multiple reasons. Our results are consistent with previous studies that illustrate the human-to-place relationships which highlight the complexities of this phenomenon by individuals, groups, or cultural interactions (Kaltenborn & Bjerke, 2002).

Understanding of the specific place meaning in the individual's psyche is therefore a pre-requisite to motivate and further engage the stakeholder in the participation processes (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Wolf, Krueger, & Flora, 2014). This helps to better incorporate social factors important to the values of the stakeholders in the management practices of protected areas at EVER.

Threats to the Natural Environment

We investigated how stakeholders perceive the changes in EVER (stakeholders' perception), and the emergent theme of *threats to the natural environment* became evident. These concerns showed how changes in and around EVER were viewed in conjunction with the meaning EVER holds for stakeholders. Stakeholders discussed specific threats to EVER resulting in six subthemes: (1) loss of native species; (2) urban development; (3) a shortage and contamination of water; (4) hurricane; (5) climate change, and (6) increased recreation use.

Changes in and around EVER were associated with the first subtheme, loss of native species. Our findings showed that development, pollution, and water shortages have reduced the number of native species of plants and animals and increased the threat of invasive species. Recent reports about EVER have also found that EVER faces challenges to its ecosystem (Everglades Foundation, 2015; FDEP, 2016). Respondents have noticed a decline in biodiversity with the disappearance of specific species, e.g., the

Florida Wood Stork, Florida panther, the American crocodile, and the West Indian manatee.

The presence of invasive species, such as Burmese pythons, and exotic plants, such as Brazilian pepper and Australian pine, have been devastating to the park by preventing the spread of seeds from the native species. Also, these invasive species played a very negative role in the disruption of the ecosystem balance. For instance, exotic fish consumed native fish and melaleuca trees prevent native plants from receiving sunlight. Since invasive species have less predators, they have a competitive advantage over native species, consuming water, sunlight, and nutrients (NPS, 2016).

Urban development was identified as the second subtheme of *threats to the natural environment*. The study findings focused on urbanization in Miami and Fort Myers which has resulted in more roads, homes, and buildings replacing the natural environment and eliminating habitats. Urban sprawl and agricultural expansion have resulted in an increased need for water, canal construction and water control structures. Respondents have seen an increase in the number of new farming operations (sugar and related products) surrounding the entrance of EVER. On the surface, farms may appear to be safe cushions for the environment but increased use of water for irrigation, flooding of fields, runoff, additional infrastructure and construction for these new agricultural operations have been problematic. Furthermore, even though the UDB was designed to also protect the Everglades, the UDB has not been as effective as planned because of political pressures to modify existing zoning rules which has hurt the Everglades' environment and its surrounding areas (Torres, 2015).

The third subtheme of *threats to the natural environment* was focused on the shortage and contamination of water. Respondents reported that farmland was disappearing due to increased infrastructure to control water and flooding for agricultural lands, hence increased infrastructure has reduced water availability and added to pollution levels. In the past, EVER did not have a water quality or quantity issue. However, over the last generation population growth, urban development, and degradation of natural areas, has intensified water competition between residential, agricultural, and preservation uses. Respondents reinforced the idea that access to a high quantity of quality water is needed to restore and preserve the biodiversity of EVER; however, this is a challenge given the demands on its current use and no new sources becoming available. The challenges with water use have negatively impacted the quantity and distribution of fresh water entering the Everglades. The CERP, one of the world's most extensive Everglades' drainage systems, mimics the natural functions of a plumbing system, including "more than 2,000 kilometers of levees and canals, 150 gates and other water-control structures, and 16 major pump stations" (Water Encyclopedia, 2016). The CERP will help solve the shortage and contamination of water, even though according to respondents, the loss of quality and quantity of water has impacted the entire ecosystem in South Florida.

Hurricanes were the fourth subtheme of *threats to the natural environment*. Stakeholders' discussed how Hurricanes Andrew (1992), Katrina (2005), and Wilma (2005) devastated many aspects of EVER and the surrounding communities. In particular, participants in the current study witnessed the destruction of park structures,

including the visitor center, lodge, and restaurant in Flamingo (southern Visitor Center area of EVER), in 2005. Most respondents felt that hurricanes are destructive natural disasters, and only a few perceived them as a natural force that can help the environment clean out and restore water, solving man-made pollution through natural cycles.

Climate change was the fifth subtheme of *threats to the natural environment.* Most of the participants agreed that the Everglades Restoration Plan has helped raise environmental awareness about how climate change will affect EVER in the future. Respondents expressed feelings of uncertainty about the ability of Everglades Restoration to overcome obstacles and challenges of climate change. As the Everglades Restoration Plan will take 100 years to implement, they felt that a number of continuing factors may undermine progress to combat climate change such as the slow progress being made by the federal government, lack of funding, and inaction by other government agencies. Moreover, some respondents believed that EVER will be better in the short-term with more money to achieve solutions; however, in reality EVER has already suffered from sea level rise in the long-term. Participants mentioned that the negative impacts of future natural disasters may be minimized with proper planning and the development of research programs to possibly reverse or even prevent further damage to EVER. There were others who supported the notion that EVER can serve as a venue for adapting to and reducing sea level rise. They thought EVER can be used as a model area in developing an overall strategy for dealing with climate change and its impacts upon humans, wildlife, ecosystems and landscapes in general.

Increased recreation use was the sixth subtheme of *threats to the natural environment*. The majority of stakeholders felt growing recreation use from many types of outdoor activities is impacting the park's natural resources. The number of visitors, boats, trailers, and cars in the park have increased, and this has degraded the shallow water areas and trails. For instance, local government stakeholders expressed concerns regarding the size and frequency of vessels in Florida Bay. Others discussed negative boating behavior and higher numbers of anglers inside the park over the last 10 years.

Not only has increased recreation participation been a problem, but recreation values conflict has seemed to emerge between various user groups. Environmental groups have become more resistant to various recreation user groups, especially ATVs. Volunteer groups have become concerned about the environmental degradation and noise impacts ATVs can have on other recreation user groups and wildlife. Hence, many volunteers have become involved with environmental groups in opposing motorized recreation activities in EVER.

Moreover, business groups pointed out that other types of conflict with recreation user groups developed due to the regulations limiting access to resources for recreation. Business stakeholders perceived resource use conflict with increasing number of boats, recreationists, and the size of the boats. These increased recreation activities have affected business (fishermen) stakeholder groups' livelihood and had major impacts on the numbers of fish and species of fish by increased recreation use. As fish are sensitive to noise, boats, and people, this sensitivity results in the fish being scared away. For instance, some fish species, such as the goby species, use sound to detect predators or

prey and their communications are masked by ship noise (Pucylowski, 2013). Furthermore, big boats with large powerful motors damage to the marine resources in shallow water than smaller boats. Nevertheless, the current management plan states very few regulations about boating policies regarding how and where people can operate vessels, limiting fishermen's access to the marine resources. Thus, business stakeholders have been engaged in providing input into EVER's General Management Plan (GMP) about how park management should initiate new boating policies about where boaters can operate vessels, e.g., zoning to prevent degradation of the natural environment. Due to stakeholders' varying environmental values, recreation user groups and recreation business owners have become more polarized leading to some negative relationships.

Overall, EVER has undergone social (urban development and increased recreation use) and environmental changes (loss of native species, a shortage and contamination of water, hurricane, and climate change) and these changes have become drivers for conflict among stakeholders. This view corresponds to what Williams (2002) found that individuals feel loss and conflict when there are changes in special areas. Recreational use conflict was also identified in Lu (2010)'s study that the tensions are prevalent between non-motorized and motorized groups in recreation areas. Prior research has shown that social values, goal interference, and contextual differences can yield recreation conflict (Hunt, Lemelin, & Saunders, 2009; Lu, 2010).

We concluded in our study that stakeholders living in proximity to EVER perceive man-made threats as major culprits in the degradation of the park's natural

environmental. Our findings concur with recent research which documents population increases in urban areas as being the driver for many of the negative changes impacting protected areas (Radeloff, Hammer, Stewart, Fried, Holcomb, & McKeefry, 2005). Threats to the EVER ecosystem from urban sprawl, demands for clean water, and loss of biodiversity are well-documented in some very recent studies (Everglades Foundation, 2015; FDEP, 2016). Our own findings support this research and suggest too that climate change and natural disasters, e.g., hurricanes, adversely affect EVER and its environs.

Since most of the adverse environmental impact is driven by humans, social scientists have highlighted the inclusion of the human factor to help mitigate environmental issues (Oskamp, 2000; Ramkissoon, Weiler, & Smith, 2012). Changes in stakeholders' values and attitudes may help to move their positions from conflict to collaboration (Mattesseich & Monsey, 1992). We support arguments for stakeholders, in these relationships, to continue to understand and change their perceptions, and to facilitate a more inclusive decision-making process at the park and community levels (Dougill et al., 2006). We found evidence of conflict caused by different values and changes occurring in and around EVER, but the potential for all parties to resolve some of these conflicts can be facilitated through a willingness to engage and collaborate.

Collaboration

The overall theme of *collaboration* became most evident in discussing how interviewees work with EVER and other stakeholder groups. Threats to EVER's natural

environment have taken center stage in recent years, prompting stakeholders to attend meetings, interact with NPS staff, seek informed knowledge on the park and learn more about how changes are affecting the park's ecosystem. Under the theme of *collaboration*, stakeholders' responses were divided into three sub-themes: (1) volunteering and advocacy; (2) tourism development, and (3) education and the dissemination of pertinent information.

Volunteering and advocacy remained the most prevalent subthemes of *collaboration*. Many positive outcomes of volunteering and advocacy at EVER were discussed such as clearing trails, maintaining visitor centers, and hosting events. Such efforts have allayed environmental concerns, inspired volunteers, and increased partnerships amongst all stakeholders. Through volunteering and advocacy, voluntary groups, such as the Everglades Restoration, and the Everglades Coalitions, and Urban Development Boundary have made restoration a reality. Stakeholders' volunteering and advocacy for the Everglades Restoration group has increased environmental awareness and support, resulting in an increased freshwater supply in the backcountry by providing substantial new water flow to the central Everglades. This amount of freshwater is equivalent to approximately two-thirds of the new water envisioned in the CERP (National Academy of Sciences, 2014). Stakeholders shared that both the state and federal government have invested heavily with their time and effort to restore the Everglades (through Everglades Restoration) (FDEP, 2016). The findings of our study add evidence to support Pryor's (2005) study on the volunteering and advocacy for the Everglades Restoration Plan by taking an even-handed, problem-solving approach.

Additionally, through this collaborative work, respondents in our interviews perceived some positive changes for the protection of the natural environment in EVER. Volunteering and advocacy improved relationships between the stakeholders and protected areas (Conroy & Peterson, 2012). Through volunteering and advocacy, there is now an increased awareness of the changes to the ecosystem, which has created a desire in the community to return the ecosystem to what it was like years ago.

Tourism development represented the next subtheme of *collaboration*. More pointedly, in this study, we sought answers as to how the community benefits from, and integrates EVER into their tourism and economic practices. Respondents identified opportunities to bolster tourism revenue and employment, develop new businesses, improve quality of life through cultural programs, and justify increased spending on the infrastructure in adjacent communities. Various business stakeholders cited examples of how increased tourism has benefitted the local area through the trolley program, outdoor recreation, infrastructure upgrades, and increased employment through a seasonal ranger law enforcement training program. Moreover, in response to communities' requests for developing cultural programs relating to EVER, some programs have been sponsored in the recent past by the Coe Visitor Center (art shows), Public Book Fair, and Stone Craft Festival. These programs help create awareness of EVER with the local community. This view is consistent with the past research that opportunities of stakeholder involvement in tourism around national parks contribute to economic opportunities for surrounding communities (Eagles, McCool, & Haynes 2002; Goodwin, 2002). Overall, such collaboration in protected areas has been known to produce economic development

in adjacent communities, too. EVER has actively pursued conservation and interpretation of cultural resources and gained popularity in the community for recreation, education, and conservation. Locals as well as visitors to the area learn more about the park and better understand about its role in the region. As a result, EVER continues to give back to the community showing how partnerships between national parks and communities can be successful.

Education and the sharing of relevant information was the final and third subtheme of *collaboration*. This study helped establish the fact that respondents were very willing to work on many levels with the NPS, local, national, and international organizations. Many groups of stakeholders from different backgrounds come together to participate in park meetings, vote on issues, give feedback to the staff and actively engaging in the decision-making process. For instance, scientists share information on the ongoing monitoring and research in EVER at the Interagency Science Center, Everglades Coalition conference, and other gatherings. Voluntary groups produced newsletters for distribution to the public in order to increase environmental awareness, encourage visits from the public, and rally support and votes for officials and candidates who support EVER. Stakeholder involvement in park activities has been an important factor in both educating the public and drawing attention to the park, affecting even those citizens who have limited knowledge about the park. Most respondents felt that with their increased involvement, communication between the stakeholders and NPS staff has improved over time. These data are consistent with work by De Haan (2008) which showed that communication between the stakeholders and the public and private

sectors contributes to information distribution and sustainable decision-making (IAP2, 2015). Information sharing by parks has also generated civic pride and fostered community cohesion which can increase environmental concern from the public (Tuxill et al., 2009).

Collaborative relationships can be improved by stakeholder participation in park management through volunteering, advocacy, sharing information, and education (Brockelman & Dearden, 1990; Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 1993; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000). Through collaboration, relationships have improved between EVER and stakeholders. Participants felt that they were privileged to live so close to EVER, and had an obligation to engage in the environmental decision-making process. This interaction helped stakeholders earn respect and improve relationships with EVER. On the other hand, there are several studies that show that the national park does not always benefit local stakeholders due to the lack of cohesiveness or co-operation among various cohorts (Stevens, 1993). For instance, misunderstanding, caused by lack of stakeholder participation, is one of the main problems of cooperation that can threaten collaborative processes (WWF, 2000). Thus, it is necessary for stakeholders to continually work together to discover what they have in common (Vanni, 2014). Shared understanding in particular is the key when local cohesiveness and networks are combined with place-based meanings and relationships (Castillo & Titus, 2015). However, finding mutual priorities and goals can be challenging. For example, EVER staff can only manage what lies within the boundary of EVER, thus it can be difficult to collaborate with other institutions or federal agencies on issues impacting the Everglades outside the park.

Since the Everglades are highly dependent on what happens elsewhere in South Florida, this relationship between EVER and stakeholders needs to become integrated. In addition, collaboration with other national parks in the area such as Biscayne National Park is necessary. EVER and Biscayne National Park, which are the only two national parks near the community of Homestead, should engage in community outreach and education together in order to build a cohesive partnership.

This study showed that the current NPS management staff at EVER is developing joint efforts with stakeholders, such as volunteering and advocacy, tourism development, sharing information, developing education and interpretative programs, and engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process. These findings support Yaffee and Wondolleck's (2000) claim regarding stakeholder engagement is one of the supporting strategies for collaboration, thereby strengthening and enabling stakeholders to work on ideas with a shared vision of common goals and representation. In this way, collaboration improves community support, stakeholder relationships, and community advocacy for biodiversity protection (CNPPAM, 2002). Accordingly, collaboration contributes to encourage inclusive decision-making and to better cope with future challenges (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

This study model identified a phase between "involve" and "collaborate" in the level of participation between EVER and the stakeholders within the public participation spectrum (IAP2, 2004). The five stages are: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. While involvement means working directly with stakeholders on the GMP, collaboration means partnering with the stakeholders in each aspect of the process to

develop alternatives through shared understanding (IAP2, 2004). The "coordinate" stage between "involve" and "collaborate" refers to purposefully working with stakeholders for one particular project, and this relationship is supported by an organizations' mission and goals for compatibility (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001). An example that illustrates the "coordinate" stage from this research is the Trolley program. This ongoing program between the NPS, NPCA, the city of Homestead and other stakeholders requires continual communication and coordination in order for it to be successful. In order to proceed to the collaboration and empower stages, this positive relationship must continue and be maintained over for the long term.

On the whole, this study examined the relationships between EVER and stakeholders that exist among meanings, changes, and engagement. Initially, this study can help determine why and how stakeholders interact with EVER. Stakeholder's goals may vary depending on whether they are engaging with EVER because they appreciate its natural environment (Austin, 2004), recreational activities (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005), proximity to EVER (Austin, 2004), their jobs being connected to EVER (Williams et al., 1992) or a combination of all these. Secondly, the study shows continued support by stakeholders to minimize changes to the park to prevent the loss of native species, slow urban development, improve water quality, or increased recreation use. Thirdly, the findings of the study showed that as stakeholders' meaning and awareness of environmental concerns increase, stakeholders' collaboration through volunteering and advocacy, tourism development, and education and sharing information

also increases. Thus, stakeholders who expressed attachment to EVER and perceived negative changes to it are more likely to engage in collaborative activities in the park.

However, there were stakeholders who have disengaged with EVER due to their frustration with its management and lack of knowledge about the park. This group believes that the management staff at EVER has failed to reach out to the community. These findings are consistent with the past studies in which some members of the public who have little or no knowledge about the Everglades Restoration Plan, its ecosystem or the general water problems (Bransford et al., 2006; Ogden, 2006) have become frustrated with a lack of results. For instance, Bransford et al. (2006) found that people who are unaware of the restoration plan tend to be young, urban residents who are non-White, non-English-speaking, from low income households, or are recent immigrants. Although EVER is a large public resource, a majority of Florida residents know little, if anything, about the Everglades Restoration efforts and do not feel they have a say in its management (Conway, 2004; Bransford et al., 2006). While collaborative management depends on how well the stakeholder groups are represented, the process of decision-making requires increased support and engagement from all stakeholders (Pujadas & Castillo, 2006). Furthermore, it is important to educate stakeholders who do not have sufficient knowledge about EVER to make them more aware of the significance of EVER and encourage their engagement. As knowledge of environmental concerns within EVER increase, stakeholders' engagement in the collaboration process will also increase. Our research then underscores the need to learn more about stakeholders'

perceptions, meanings and relationships in any study on protected areas in order to facilitate meaningful collaborative management practices.

Implications of the Research Findings

Theoretical Implications

This research helps researchers' understand stakeholders' relationships with national parks and different ways stakeholders interact with the parks. This study filled the void in existing research by identifying the specific stakeholders in EVER and their perceived relationships with EVER and identified changes over time. This study determined stakeholders' participation and collaboration symbolically through their multiple meanings of attachment to EVER, by looking at social factors in the protected area management practices. Study results showed how stakeholder relationships could become more collaborative and provide the theoretical support for stakeholder engagement in differing settings.

First, this research filled a gap in the literature by exploring stakeholders and their relationship with the park. Previous research has studied individuals' behavior, management issues, and specific categories of stakeholders in the Everglades area. However, there is a need to conduct more studies about the relationships between EVER and stakeholders. By incorporating various stakeholders' relationships with EVER from residents, business owners, federal employees, researchers, and NGOs, we can

understand multiple stakeholders' interests, similarities, differences, and how EVER works with an array of stakeholders.

Second, this research helps to recognize how changes impact relationships between various stakeholders and EVER over time. Stakeholders' collaborative efforts improved relationships through volunteering and advocacy, tourism development, and education and sharing information. Consequently, stakeholders expect better relationships with the management of EVER in the future. Also, study findings showed that lessons learned from the past can help guide stakeholders' relationships with national parks and future collaborative relationships, particularly with Native Americans. Because relationships (stakeholders, parks, and/or groups) morph with time, stakeholder relationships need to be examined at different stages (Mayers, 2005).

Third, this study revealed the significance of relationships between stakeholders and EVER based on *attachment to place* and how these relationships made efforts to solve *threats to the natural environment*. The three themes (*attachment to place, threats to the natural environment,* and *collaboration*) that emerged from this research highlighted the significance of studying collaborative management. The outcome of collaboration remains consistent with findings presented by Gray (1989). By understanding the stakeholders' differences in shared ownership, stakeholders can actively engage in decision-making processes.

Fourth, this study contributes to the literature by incorporating social factors (*attachment to place*) into protected area management which helped to identify reasons

why places have meaning. The study findings clarified multiple meanings involved in attachment to EVER that have emerged from four sub-themes. Our findings added emotional connections to the physical context of EVER, which act as a motivator for stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

Finally, the collaborative planning activities that were identified in this study also showed how stakeholder relationships could become more effective. Stakeholders worked together to create tourism and interpretive programs through communication and by engaging in joint decision-making efforts. "The Trolley to the National Parks" program is a positive outcome of the collaborative approach undertaken by two national parks (Everglades, and Biscayne) in partnership with the NPCA and Homestead. These stakeholders worked together to achieve a shared objective.   These relationships boosted tourism in the adjacent community by naming Homestead as a "Gateway Community". Past studies allude to such stakeholder participation offering benefits, leading to a better understanding of projects and issues (Duram & Brown, 1999). Tuxill et al. (2009) found that partners become more collaborative when they share objectives; partners may collaborate at the community level; parks and stakeholders with aligned missions can better work toward cooperative agreements.

This study suggests that the NPS needs to incorporate Native Americans more in the decision-making process with EVER. For example, recent studies point out results of meaningful dialogue between indigenous people that can lead to better solutions of indigenous issues, generate a favorable perception of aboriginal culture, share knowledge, and engage indigenous people in national parks' issues (Booth & Simmons;

2000; Hall, 2000). According to LaVeaux and Christopher (2009), Native Americans have traditionally suffered from a long "history of neglect, exploitation, and deceit" that had led to "a legacy of mistrust of outside interference in Tribal affairs" (p.1). By engaging more with Native Americans, collaboration can lead to an improved understanding of the different meanings and perceptions Native Americans have about national parks.

Managerial Implications

Many practical implications can be drawn from this study. The findings imply that protected area managers need to consider the significance of improved relationships with stakeholders and understand how perceived changes can affect engagement with the park. First, by understanding these three emergent factors (*attachment to place, threats to the natural environment,* and *collaboration*), the study's findings provide useable knowledge in understanding the relationships between EVER and stakeholders. Improved relationships can be achieved by incorporating *attachment to place* in protected area management, involving various groups in decision-making processes, encouraging advocacy, and sharing information. For instance, park managers can work with researchers to identify stakeholders' attachment to place in a regional study in South Florida through using public participation geographic information systems. This approach can help park managers incorporate spatial and psychological data by identifying the spatial boundaries of stakeholders' place meanings and attachments

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(Gunderson & Watson 2007) into natural resources management, thus personalizing the public's connection to the protected area.

Second, this study identified how managing threats that EVER currently faces, e.g., urban development, increased recreation use, can best be accomplished through education and interpretative programs. For instance, faced with a growing population in the Homestead and South Florida areas, this study found that increased recreational use impacted the natural environment of EVER and neighboring communities. To mitigate the increased recreation use, we recommend that park management focus on educational programs to raise people's environmental awareness so stakeholders understand EVER's vulnerability and develop ways to minimize it. Managers can target such education programs to youth, seniors, new residents, recreational groups, and voluntary groups, thus incorporating their myriad needs, interests, and values. Interpretative programs can also gain attention and interests from visitors who are more involved with education and conservation (Conrad & Hilchey, 2011), such as the Citizen Science, Girl Scout Ranger Program, Artist-In-Residence, and Trolley programs.

Third, an adequate budget is critical to the management of any protected area and its programs. Public land managers need to work with partners to support EVER with human and financial resources through fundraising for educational programs, membership programs, publicizing to benefit EVER, "friendraising", and recruiting volunteers within and beyond boundaries of the park (NPS, 2009). For instance, public land managers can create partnering relationships to train volunteers as seasonal rangers from community colleges or other institutions of higher education. Additional examples

include volunteers used to maintain and monitor trails (O'Neill, 2016). EVER managers are encouraged to work with trails groups, i.e., Florida Trail Association, to help support EVER's hiking resources.

Fourth, this study also suggests that the park managers actively communicate with stakeholders to incorporate viewpoints, respond to meet future demands, gain input, and keep abreast of current stakeholder needs. One way this can be done is by creating various advisory groups. These groups made up of key stakeholders can enhance communication and participation to improve the dissemination of information from the park to the public and vice versa.

Fifth, park managers need to understand how to communicate with stakeholders (Clark & Stein, 2003) according to stakeholders' *attachment to place*, e.g., messages, channels of communication, etc. For instance, managers can apply indirect communication channels to less attached stakeholders by sharing information via websites, brochures, community events and Web 2.0 tools (SNS, video-sharing sites, wikis and blogs). Also, after park managers can listen to stakeholders' input; they can send thank you letters, post cards, and emails to express the appreciation of their opinions and consider their input in future management policies. Managers can communicate to highly active stakeholders through organizations, meetings, conferences, and NPS events. These modes of communication help to establish other outlets for information including discussion groups, workshops, and conferences. Furthermore, managers can review whether the communication process is open,

transparent, and legitimate. This approach allows managers to target audiences that need specific types of information, e.g., boating regulations.

Finally, this study can inform and guide other national parks and land managing agencies to understand how different groups can seek greater collaboration with various stakeholders. By incorporating input from multiple stakeholders as an adjunct to the decision-making process, greater stakeholder engagement will ensue (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008). Incorporating less involved stakeholders in planning activities helps managers consider diversity in the park such as Native Americans, Hispanics, and African Americans. By recruiting diverse individuals, encouraging participation, creating educational exercises, and implementing volunteer programs for less involved stakeholders, other land managing agencies can create an environment that will hopefully mirror a more representative workforce and visitor base.

Recommendations for Future Research

We have offered empirical insight into the relationship between protected areas and stakeholders. We have made suggestions to guide future studies based on the study results; however, the scope of this study is limited to EVER, and may limit the generalizability of the findings. First, future studies should be conducted with stakeholders from more national parks in other states and include a more diverse set of stakeholders located beyond the park boundaries.

Second, a researcher may have a bias in conducting the interviews because of a lack of objectivity based on individual environmental values and specific value orientations toward nature (FAO, 2016). As a Korean woman living in Texas, my perspectives are limited in understanding local issues, e.g., Florida's national parks and/or Native Americans' perceptions on EVER. In addition, respondents can have a bias because of poor memory, exaggeration, a lack of relationship with the interviewer, or a misunderstanding of the interviewer's purpose. In future studies, different research methods can be employed for collecting data to enhance the study findings such as more diverse interviewers, mixed-methods, focus groups, and expert panels.

Third, snowball sampling can limit the composition of stakeholders in any sample. The initial source for the subjects in this sample was from the Everglades Coalition webpage. This group allowed the researcher to identify and interview many key informants working with EVER. However, future research should include different types of groups for a more representative list to identify those groups or individuals that are less involved with the park such as minorities. Further investigation can also provide additional perspectives by including internal stakeholder groups, e.g., NPS employees or vendors.

Finally, the interview questions developed in this study explored how various stakeholder groups were engaged with the park and how these relationships have changed over time. Future research should incorporate additional questions about stakeholders who are involved in the collaborative process, e.g., role, power, influence,

and the political environment. Other areas of inquiry could focus on the length of time

stakeholders have been working with parks, those who have stopped working with parks,

and interactions between stakeholder groups (social network analysis).

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INTERVIEW EMAIL

Date: 1/14/14

To: Potential Study Respondents

From: Texas A&M University Researchers

Subject: Everglades National Park Research Project

Dear:

I am writing to you about a research project Texas A&M University is conducting which is focused on stakeholders' perceptions of Everglades National Park. My name is Yunseon Choe, a doctoral student at Texas A&M University working with Dr. Michael Schuett in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. We are contacting you to ask your participation in this study and have obtained your email address from the Everglades Coalition webpage, http://www.evergladescoalition.org/membership.html. This research will investigate the relationship between communities and national parks by learning more about the different ways in which stakeholders perceive and are involved with national parks. From a practical perspective, a better understanding of the Everglades National Park is important for the surrounding communities because it provides useable knowledge in designing strategies that will guide future development in and around the parks and nearby communities. Some of the anticipated outcomes of the project are increased knowledge of civic engagement and stewardship at the park.

I would like to request a brief interview with you. The study overview has been sent with this same email. All interview data will be anonymous and reside in Dr. Michael Schuett's office at Texas A&M University (979-845-0872); no names will be associated with interviewees. We have obtained research permits from the National Park Service as well as Texas A&M University for this project (IRB# 2013-0388). In brief, the study questions touch on the following areas: 1) Meaning of Everglades NP to you; 2) Change over Time; 3) Involvement with the park; 4) Relationship with the park and other groups, and 5) Future of Everglades NP.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please respond by email and I will follow-up with a potential date and time while I am in Florida (1/17-2/4). I am staying in Key Largo, and maybe be able to meet with you personally if you have the time. Thank you very much.

Best regards,

Yunseon Choe

Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences

Texas A&M University

Agriculture and Life Sciences Building

600 John Kimbrough Boulevard

College Station, TX 77843-2261

Email: lois1110@tamu.edu/ yschoe1110@gmail.com

Cell: 765-610-9090

SAMPLE I FEEDBACK EMAIL

Date: 9/12/16

To: Study Respondents

From: Texas A&M University Researchers

Subject: Everglades National Park Research Project

Dear:

I am writing to you about a research project Texas A&M University conducting on stakeholders' perceptions of Everglades National Park. My name is Yunseon Choe, I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University working with Dr. Michael Schuett in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. We are contacting you to ask for your participation in the data check in this study and have obtained your email address from the interview in January, 2014.

This research investigated the relationship between communities and national parks by learning more about the different ways in which stakeholders perceive and are involved with national parks. From a practical perspective, a better understanding of the Everglades National Park is important for the surrounding communities because it provides useable knowledge in designing strategies that will guide future development in and around the parks and nearby communities. Some of the anticipated outcomes of the project are increased knowledge of civic engagement and stewardship at the park.

We would like to request a brief data check to confirm the consistency of findings through triangulation and consultation obtained from the interviewees. The study results have been sent with this email. We would like to incorporate trustworthiness during the research phase, which establishes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This study conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders interacting with EVER including neighborhood groups, representatives from gateway communities and conservation organizations. A snowball sample was used to obtain a list of key informants and select people for interviews. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were coded and analyzed using the qualitative analysis software program Atlas.ti version 7. This qualitative study analyzed data that were generated from three methods: audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes.

Forty semi-structured interviews were conducted ranging in duration from 15-60 minutes. An analysis of interview data generated three research themes: 1) Attachment to place (preservation of biodiversity and water, recreation, home, and financial attachment), 2) Threats to the natural environment (loss of native species, urban development, a shortage and contamination of water, hurricanes, climate change, and increased recreation use), and 3) Collaboration (volunteering and advocacy, tourism development, and education and sharing information).

If you are willing to participate in the study for the data check to confirm the consistency of findings, please respond by email if you have any comments on the themes generated from the results. Thank you very much.

Best regards,

Yunseon Choe

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