

Chapter 1

Designing the Experience

This textbook is about designing space to create the desired experience for participants. Conceptually, this text complements those texts focusing on recreation programming. Designing space to create an experience is embodied in the following quote by Winston Churchill when the British redesigned seating in the House of Commons. Also, it is embodied in the four case studies used in this chapter, and the remainder of the book. We design space and that space influences how we behave. It creates an experience.

"We shape our buildings and they shape us." Winston Churchill
regarding the redesign of the seating arrangement in the House of
Commons. (Hall, 1990, p.106)

In this chapter, these case studies are “barrier breaking.” Their purpose is to be thought provoking and to establish the proposition that people design their environment and in turn, that environment influences their behavior. People design parks and the park delivers an experience. As future recreation professionals, it is important to understand the design of park and recreational resources. In some cases, students reading this book will actually design park and recreational resources, but most likely most future professionals will be working with the architects and park planners who actually design the park and recreation facilities. In either case, it is important to understand the experience that is being delivered so that the space can be designed to deliver the desired experience.

In this chapter, the first example is the case of two park benches. In traditional parks, park benches are found everywhere and taken for granted. The second example is the case of two campfires. It was chosen for two reasons. People assume a type of experience because that is all they have ever experienced. Mention council ring and people envision a large council ring with a bonfire. Enter Steve Van Matre’s intimate campfire to provide an alternative experience. The third example is Disney World. It was chosen because Disney integrated all aspects of the program environment to create the experience. Revisit figure 1 in the Introduction. In a field that often divides itself into the two separate entities of park and recreation, Disney demonstrates the integration and merging of the natural resource, facilities and the activity to create the desired experience. The last example, is wilderness. Wilderness is a park and it too is managed to deliver an experience. Although one experience is contrived and the other is natural, there is little difference conceptually between Wilderness and Disney World. Both are spaces designed to deliver an experience. They are just different experiences.

The case of two park benches

In most traditional parks, the park bench is ubiquitous. They are a staple found everywhere throughout the park. Usually, all the park benches are the same or of the same genre. It is a matter of cost, convenience and continuity of design. It is easier and cheaper to order one type of park bench. Also, continuity is created because the park benches provide a common element throughout the park.

They are all the same, yet they are all different. Some benches are placed to provide parents or care givers supervision of playground equipment. Some provide spectators an opportunity to watch sports activity on a nearby court (figure 1.1). Some benches may be place to overlook an attraction such as a pond or lake. Some benches may be placed facing each other so people can easily converse with each other. Some benches may be placed off by themselves to provide a sense of privacy or seclusion (figure 1.2, figure 1.3 and figure 1.4). And other benches may be placed periodically along a trail simply because it seemed like a good thing to do (figure 1.5). The park benches are all the same, yet they provide very different experiences.



Figure 1.1: Supervision – This park bench provides the parent or care giver with direct supervision of her children. The play of the children is within fifteen feet of the parent. The parent can speak in a normal tone and need not project her voice to be heard. Because of her proximity she is an integral part of her children’s play. Would you use this bench? Why/why not? Coolidge Park, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Source: author – [file:\CoolidgePk019.JPG]



Figure 1.2: Privacy – Located off the main path, the trees and bushes to the right of this park bench provide a partial visual and physical barrier. However, the bench opens up to an open space where the picture was taken. This scene offers some privacy and seclusion, but it also offers opportunities of watching what is going on elsewhere. Consider the trash can to the experience. The smell from something ripe in the trash would quickly deter anyone from sitting on this park bench. Would you use this bench? Why/why not? Coolidge Park, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Source: author – [file:\CoolidgePk016[gd].JPG]



Figure 1.3: Privacy and Seclusion – This park bench is totally secluded and offers no opportunities to watch what is going on elsewhere. Do you feel safe sitting on this bench? Would you sit here? Why/why not? Coolidge Park, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Source: author – [file:\CoolidgePk013.JPG]

In a very real sense, the two park bench activity demonstrates the underlying thesis of this book (Exercise 1). It is designing space, in this case the park bench and its surrounding environment, to create a desired experience. Several examples of park benches are provided in this chapter. Atlanta's Centennial Park was used as the primary example. Any park could be used. Use the instrument in Figure 1.6 to analyze the park bench, its environment, and the experience created. A simple Likert scale survey (e.g. security, solitude, etc), it provides the reader with a tool to analyze the experience provided in each of the scenes (figure 1.6). The simplicity of the two park bench exercise emphasizes the underlying thesis presented (Exercise 1). Find two identical park benches in a park that provide different experiences. The location and design of space can create very different experiences.

Centennial Park in Atlanta, Georgia was used to illustrate the two park bench concept. Any park could have been chosen. In figure 1.7, the park designer placed these park benches in pairs facing each other. Using the survey instrument in figure 1.6, rate these benches in terms of conversation, security, solitude, scenic amenities, and if this is my favorite bench. The benches are placed facing each other. Generally, this placement facilitates conversation. Seating arrangements will be addressed in Chapter 2 with the discussion of semi-fixed feature space. However, people would most likely not have a private conversation on one of these benches since the benches are next to a public walkway. Because it is a public high volume area, most people would rate these benches as high on security and low on solitude. Since the seats don't directly overlook the fountains, most people would likely rate these benches as low on scenic amenities.



Figure 1.4: Contemplation and Reflection – Although this space is open, it provides an area of contemplation and reflection for the person pictured. The two benches where she is sitting are designed for conversation. The bench in the lower left corner offers a different experience. It overlooks a low water fountain visible on the right in the scene. Would you enter this space and sit on the bench pictured in the lower left? Would you sit on either bench? Why/why not? Discovery Park, Houston, Texas. Source: author – [file:\DGP1138.JPG]



Figure 1.5: Classic Promenade – An example of the classic bench lined promenade. Two people are engaged in casual conversation on the bench while watching other people walk past them. Often overlooked as being important is the dense vegetation behind them that creates a barrier and prevents anyone from approaching from behind them. They are protected from behind. Would you sit here? Why/why not? Discovery Park, Houston, Texas. Source: author – [file:\DGP1138.JPG]

Two Park Bench Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help you rate and quantify two similar but different park benches. Ideally, they should be identical park benches found in different locations (can be the same park) that provide very different experiences.

Question:	Strongly Agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
<p>1) Conversation – This park bench provides me with a significant opportunity to have a private conversation with a friend.</p> <p>What makes this a good place to chat or not to chat? _____ _____ _____</p>	SA	a	d	SD
<p>2) Security – I feel very secure sitting on this park bench.</p> <p>Why do you feel secure or insecure? Is it remote or public? Is it because there are a lot of people? _____ _____ _____</p>	SA	a	d	SD
<p>3) Solitude – This park bench provides me significant opportunities to for solitude and moments of privacy.</p> <p>Why? Is it the shrubbery surrounding the bench? Is its location? _____ _____ _____</p>	SA	a	d	SD
<p>4) Scenic Amenities – This park bench offers me excellent opportunities to watch other people doing things.</p> <p>Why? _____ _____ _____</p>	SA	a	d	SD
<p>5) Overall, If I could sit on any bench that I could, I would choose to sit on this park bench?</p> <p>Explain why/why not? _____ _____ _____</p>	SA	a	d	SA

Figure 1.6: Two Park Bench Survey Instrument – Use the two park bench survey instrument to measure the experience provided by different park benches in your neighbor park or in this chapter. Source: author – [file:\DGP1138.JPG]

In Centennial Park, the next park bench examined was situated off the main walkway and overlooks a large field where people will often play games (figure 1.8). Unfortunately, the growth of the shrubs has grown high enough to partially block the view of the large grassy field below where people play touch football and throw frisbees. This changes the experience provided by this park bench from one where a person can watch activity occurring on the field below from afar to one of privacy and seclusion. In terms of the survey instrument, most people would rate this bench as higher than the benches in figure 1.7 regarding conversation, security, solitude, and scenic amenities. The location provides mild solitude and offers a place where two people could have a private conversation. It is still a public area and most people would perceive it as secure. Most people would rate the scenic amenities of this location as reasonably high. There are opportunities to watch people play, and the birds and butterflies playing in the shrubs in the foreground. Also note that there are two benches facing away from each other. This arrangement does not facilitate interaction with anyone sitting on the other bench.

Most people like to be close to the action (figure 1.9). The fountains are the action as they cycle through their water performance. Most people will sit on the wall close to the action and avoid the park bench in front of the tree to watch the fountain. For most people the wall doubles as a good seat to watch the fountain progress. It is worth noting that if the designer didn't want the wall to be used as a seat, the wall could be built higher to make it more difficult to sit upon. Although not visible in this photo, the designer of the park recognized this fact and designed the wall facing the fountain as a seat. It is designed to encourage people to sit on the wall in close proximity to the fountain.

In contrast with the wall, the park bench in front of the tree provides a good view of the entire fountain area (figure 1.10). Taken later in the day, there are two people sitting on the bench watching the action in the fountain area. Close inspection of the two spectators reveals that they are watching the action and are not conversing. Compared with the benches pictured in figure 1.7 and figure 1.8, the designer of the park has provided a variety of park bench positions.

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Figure 1.7: Opposing Benches – The park designer placed these benches to facilitate interaction. Note: Spatial determinants – co-acting, one person per bench. Source: author – [file:\Centennialpk004.jpg]



Figure 1.8: Solitude, Contemplation and Shrubs – The location of this park bench in Centennial park in downtown Atlanta, Georgia facilitates a solitude experience. It is a changed experience. The shrubs have grown too tall and block the view to the field below. The shrubs may need trimming. Source: author – [file:\Centennialpk011.jpg]



Figure 1.9: Sitting on the Wall – People watching the fountain tend to avoid this bench and simply sit on the wall. It's closer. Also, the wall is designed as a bench (not shown). For people who want to be close to the action, it provides a good seat to watch the action. Centennial Park, Atlanta, Georgia. Source: author – [file:\Centennialpk003.jpg]

In contrast with the park benches at Centennial Park, figure 1.11 shows a group of park benches at Lake Artemesia near College Park Maryland. All the park benches are positioned facing the lake. Their positioning demonstrates the park designer's concept regarding the design of space to create an experience. The benches are immovable. They are part of the fixed-feature space discussed in chapter 2. If someone wants to sit and watch birds playing in the trees in the foreground, they can't. The park benches face the lake. If a small group wants to chat with each other, the layout of the park benches makes it difficult to do so. The designer envisioned that the action is on the lake and oriented the benches toward the lake. The designer didn't consider other alternatives. Unlike the benches in Centennial Park, there are no opportunities for different experiences. If a student wants a reason why it is important to understand the design of space to create an experience, the improper orientation of these park benches suggests this need.

In summary, the park benches demonstrate the importance of designing space to create an experience. The park benches in Centennial Park and Coolidge Park were identical. Yet their location and surroundings create very different experiences. In contrast, the park benches at Lake Artemesia demonstrate the translation of the designers preconceived idea of the experience into the brick and mortar of the park that delivers the experience. Again, it demonstrates the importance of understanding the principles behind designing space. It was a missed opportunity.

The case of two campfires

In an experience different from the park benches, most people have experienced a campfire or a council fire. It could be a bonfire on the beach or a campfire as part of an interpretive talk in a council ring in a park. Figure 1.12 presents a typical layout of a council ring. Although the configuration will change to meet the specific needs of the provider, the basic dimensions and layout are similar for most council



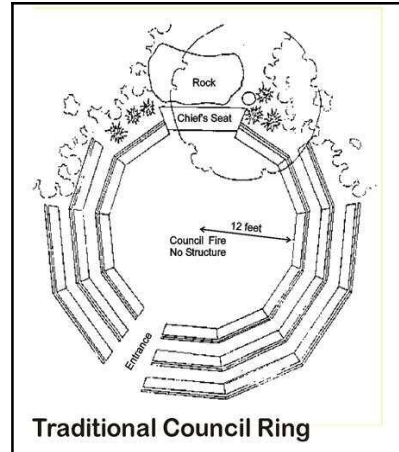
Figure 1.10: Watching the Fountain Area – For people seeking to watch people watching the fountain, this is a good bench to sit upon. Close inspection of the two spectators sitting on this park bench suggests that this is exactly what they are doing. They are watching the action in the entire fountain area. Centennial Park, Atlanta, Georgia. Source: author – [file:\Centennialpk002.jpg]



Figure 1.11: Bench overlooking lake – The park designer assumes that people sitting on the bench will overlook the lake rather than interact with each other. Lake Artemesia, College Park, Maryland. Source: author – [file:\Artemesia 156.jpg]

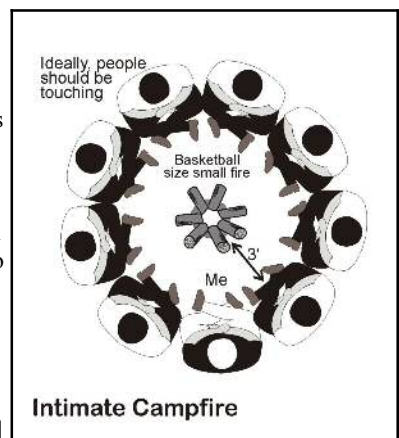
rings. The council ring demonstrates the design of fixed-feature space to create an experience. The differences in experiences becomes evident when compared with the Steve Van Matre campfire in figure 1.13 and figure 1.14.

Figure 1.12 – Traditional campfire – This is the spatial layout of a traditional campfire. The size of the campfire and distance of people from each other affects the experience. Chapter 2 will explain the spatiality in greater depth. Source: author – [file:\Campfire001.JPG]



The traditional council ring is designed in a circle. Essentially, it is a lecture format where the focus is on the council fire and the action going on in the arena. This is by design. Note that the first row of seats is approximately 12 feet from the fire. This can easily place people sitting at the far end of the council ring 25 feet from the interpreter's seat. Assuming the interpreter moves about, people will most likely range from 12 to 25 feet from the interpreter. Although this is discussed again in Chapter 2, this distance requires a slight raised voice to be heard and the formal arrangement of space separates the audience from the interpreter. Most people don't think twice about this layout because it and its variations are typically found everywhere. It is the standard council ring experience.

Figure 1.13: Intimate campfire – This is a diagram of the Van Matre campfire. It is designed to create intimacy among the participants. By design, participants are touching and in physical contact with the person next to them. Positioned no more than six to eight feet away from each other, participants can see in detail the faces of other participants in the flickering light of the small campfire. Source: author – [file:\DSC_0332.JPG]



Juxtaposed with the traditional council ring is the intimacy of the small campfire provided by the Steve Van Matre campfire (Van Matre, 1977). An environmental educator, Steve Van Matre would use this campfire as the concluding experience in his environmental education program. The campfire is designed to create intimacy and reflection among the participants. By design, participants are in physical contact with the person next to them. Participants are positioned no more than six to eight feet away from each other. Because of their close proximity, participants can see facial details of other participants in the flickering light of the small campfire. Creating this experience requires keeping the campfire very small or the participants will become roasted and they will be driven back from the campfire. It is important to keep the fire no larger than half the size of a basketball.



Figure 1.14 – Intimate campfire – Although this is not a true VanMatre campfire, it gets close to it with a very small fire and close proximity of participants. Everglades, Florida. Source: author – [file:\DSC_0332.JPG]

Figure 1.14 provides a close approximation of the Van Matre campfire. It is similar but not quite the same. It is from a backcountry trip in the Everglades. Note the small campfire which allows people to sit in close proximity to the fire and each other. Their distance from the campfire is close to that in the Van Matre campfire. One significant difference is that in the Van Matre campfire, people are kneeling and by design they are in physical contact with the person next to them. The people in this campfire are sitting back which provides some separation from the other participants or they are simply relaxing. There is closeness and intimacy for those people sitting around the campfire although there is more intimacy around the Van Matre campfire due to the kneeling and purposeful touching of the person on each side of everyone around the campfire.

The Van Matre campfire challenges the traditional stereotypical campfire. It demonstrates how controlling the elements of the campfire and how people position themselves around the campfire can create an intimate and reflective experience. This was the experience desired by Van Matre and the campfire created this experience within his overall program. Also, the Van Matre campfire shows how designers can assume a traditional design and experience because that has been the way it always has been. This is not to diminish the traditional council ring and its large spatial layout. It has its purpose and utility. There is a reason why it has been used consistently in designing council rings. Regardless, the two styles of campfires juxtaposed with each other shows how the design of space can lead to very different experiences.

<a>Disney World

In 1955, Disneyland was opened in 1955 in Anaheim, California. Disney and his imagineers created a world, the Magic Kingdom, within the outside world. When they build Disney World in 1966, they learned several lessons from Disneyland and incorporated them into Disney World in 1966. They created a total world where they had as much control over the experience as possible. They brought together most of the elements in the program

environment to create a brand and experience that had a lasting impact on its visitors. In creating the Magic Kingdom, the Disney people indicated that they subdivided the park into five subsystems to create their brand of fantasy: design and facilities, the experience, support services, programs and actors (Disney, 1986).

The first system element in creating the Magic Kingdom was *design and facilities*. It included facilities, environment, visual zones, and grounds and plants. They purchased 43 square miles of land or twice the size of Manhattan to insure that they had sufficient land. They controlled the visual zones so that visitors couldn't see anything outside the Magic Kingdom. It was truly a kingdom separated from the outside world. The airspace was an exception to this control (figure 1.16). Second, they sought to reduce environmental impacts. They built 47 miles

Disney's Five Subsystems Used to Deliver the Magic Kingdom Experience at Disney World	
1. Design and Facility Layout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities • Environment • Visual zones • Ground, plants, etc. 	4. Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rides • Exhibits • Casual activities
2. Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-experience, • Actual experience • Post experience 	5. Actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cartoon actors • Support people • Tour guides • Sanitation people • Vendors • etc.
3. Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation • Food services • Lodging 	

Source: Disney personnel, (1986), Behind the Scenes Tour of the Magic Kingdom. NRPA Off-site Tour, 1986 NRPA Congress, Orlando, Florida.

Figure 1.15: Five subsystems – Disney subdivided the creation of Disney World into these five subsystems. Subsystems will be addressed in chapter 3. Source: Disney personnel, (1986), Behind the Scenes Tour of the Magic Kingdom. NRPA Off-site Tour, 1986 NRPA Congress, Orlando, Florida. – [file:\fig0110-DisneySubsystems.pdf]

of canals, 22 miles of levees, and 24 water-control structures at \$100,000 apiece. They created Reedy Creek Utilities and their own building codes to cover new building materials and processes. They created their own nursery to grow their own plants and topiaries (figure 1.17).

Disney's background was in cartoons and movies. Conceptually, he viewed the Magic Kingdom as a large stage where the actors and guests participated on the stage together. Developed at Disneyland in California, the concept was included in the Magic Kingdom at Disney World. In their book on the first decade after the building of Disney World, Disney (1986, p.11) notes that "Disneyland was laid out like a gigantic outdoor stage, with sets dressed for comedy, drama and adventure. On each set, everything from architecture, landscaping and costumes, to food, music and sound-effects was orchestrated to the smallest detail, creating a totally "themed" environment." Consistent with this approach, (Disney (1986, p.11) notes that "Guests were not just spectators at a theatrical production, they were actual participants in the performance." It was immersion into the theme sets rather than merely viewing them. It was a paradigm shift in the creation of theme parks where the actors and participants were on the stage together.

With the second subsystem, they sought to manage the *experience* including pre-, actual, and post experience. They located the park close to the Interstate (I-4) and other major road systems (Rt 192) to help provide a pleasant pre-experience for people driving to the park. Also, they even attempted to leave little in the post-experience to chance. They identified strategic locations for photo stops to facilitate good picture and good memories. It could be argued that the experience created was the memories of the visitors.

In terms of the pre-experience, consider how the monorail or the boat ride are required to reach the Magic Kingdom from the parking lot. From a cost perspective, it would save considerable money to locate the parking lot next to the Magic Kingdom. Consider the monorail and boat ride in terms of the cost of time and money to transport people to the Magic Kingdom. It is not cheap. However, think of Peter Pan flying off to Never Land and how traveling to the Magic Kingdom creates an experience where there is this magical kingdom in its own world. If Never Land was in the backyard, it would be in the real world, and it wouldn't be in a far of place. The monorail and steam boat help to create the experience of



Figure 1.16: Airplane Banner – Disney sought to create a separate world in the Magic Kingdom. They created visual barriers to control the viewshed within the Magic Kingdom. They may be able to control the airspace today, but in 1986 they weren't able to control the airspace and prevent this airplane towing its advertisement banner from flying over the park. Magic Kingdom, Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Author – [file:\fig0111-DSC_0098.JPG]



Figure 1.17: Nursery – Disney created their own nursery to supply the park with a constant source of plants and topiaries. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Author – [file:\fig0112-DSC_0063.JPG]

traveling to a far off place.

Third Disney focused on *support services* including sanitation, food service, and lodging. Although support services are usually behind the scenes and contribute to the experience, inattention to them can easily detract from the experience. Disney went to great lengths to address how support services contributed to the experience and how to reduce them from detracting from the experience.

Servicing vendors was a problem that Disney experienced at Disneyland in California. If a restaurant ran out of an entree, they needed to take the food down the main concourse or wait until the end of the day when the park closed to replenish supplies. To help solve this problem, Main Street and the main concourse in Disney World are located on the second floor. On the first floor or what is now the basement are tunnels, service corridors, and facilities that service main street stores located on the second floor above them. Disney calls the tunnels “utilidors.” Remember that in Florida the water table is near ground level. In order to elevate ground level to the second floor and keep the basement dry, they used the fill from the creation of the lake to raise the ground level and create what became essentially a first floor basement (figure 1.14).

Like a stage where actors pass between the curtains on a stage, the actors pass on and off the stage of the main concourse at points leading off the stage and down into the tunnels below. Often, the entrances to the tunnels are deceptive. In the photo of the exit doors to a theater, there are four doors (figure 1.15). Three of the doors go with the theater and one door is the entrance to the tunnels below. It is the door on the left. It has a handle to open the door. The other three doors are automatically opening doors from the theater. Since most people perceive all four doors as exit doors from the theater, the entrance to the tunnels below is effectively hidden.

The fourth subsystem used to define the Magic Kingdom was *programs*. It included rides, exhibits, and casual activities. When built in the 1960s, the exhibits utilized state of the art audio-animatronics and holographic projection. Typical of most theme



Figure 1.18: Never Land – There are two ways to travel to the Magic Kingdom at Disney World. These are the monorail and the steamship. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Disney (1986) – [file:\fig0113DSC_0097.JPG]



Figure 1.19: Utility Corridors – The “utilidors” or tunnels and other facilities on the first floor beneath main street provide access to the set by actors and support personnel servicing the Magic Kingdom. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Disney (1986) – [file:\fig0114-Tunnels02.JPG]



Figure 1.20: Door to the Tunnels – Behind the four doors, one of the doors provides direct access to the tunnels and facilities beneath the concourse. Hidden as one of the exit doors, it is the door on the left. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Author – [file:\fig0115-DSC_0092.JPG]

parks, the rides corresponded with the theme of the “land” in which it is located.

Even the planning of the casual activities is planned and not casual. The following casual activity suggests an attention to detail in terms of creating an experience. It is a simple casual activity of the bear and the child pictured in figure 6.21. If the Disney people sent the bear out alone into the crowd, there are a multitude of potential problems. Most children have an inherent fear of bears or people in costumes. If the bear has to recruit the children, this can be an awkward task in a bear costume. However, add a Disney host and these problems are easily solved. The bear doesn't have to recruit children nor does it have to speak to them. The host performs these tasks. The host can easily recruit children for the experience, chat with the parents, and move the children efficiently through the experience so that other children can participate also. Meanwhile, the bear can be the bear. If not performed correctly, this simple casual activity can easily be mismanaged and it can create an unsatisfactory experience. However, when planned correctly, a simple casual activity can have a significant positive impact on the experience of visitors.

According to Disney, the last subsystem factor in facilitating the Magic Kingdom experience was the *actors* including cartoons, support people, tour guides, sanitation people and vendors. Mickey Mouse and other characters are never seen out of costume. Even tour guides, sanitation people and vendors are considered actors in costume and part of the experience (figure 6.22). The rides can be great. The experience memorable. The facilities can be clean and well designed. If a visitor asks a disgruntled employee a question, all else can go for naught. The disgruntled employee results in a bad experience for the visitor. The Center focuses on training personnel how to work with people including how not to let a bad day affect the visitor's experience (figure 6.23).

Disney went to great lengths to design the Magic Kingdom in Disney World to create a desired experience. The Disney experience is an experience with which most people are familiar. Most families have made the pilgrimage at least once with their children. The Disney example reemerges at different points throughout this book. It is in the tradition of creating theme parks discussed in chapter 6, and as part of that tradition, it advanced the tradition of theme parks itself, particularly in creating the experience. In terms of the model presented in the introduction, it demonstrates bringing together the



Figure 1.21: Casual Activities and the Bear – Often children have a natural fear of bears or people in costumes. Add a Disney host and the bear doesn't have to recruit children nor does the bear need to speak. The bear can be the friendly bear. The host can easily recruit children for the experience, talk with the parents, and move the children efficiently through the experience so that other children can participate also. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Author – [file:\fig0116-DS2000-012.JPG]



Figure 1.22: Sanitation Person– In the Florida summer heat, trash cans can quickly become ripe and their stench can adversely affect the experience of nearby visitors. Sanitation workers in color coordinated costumes clean the streets and pick up the trash before it has a chance to become ripe. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Author – [file:\fig0117-DSC_0066.JPG]

elements of the resource, facilities, and activities to create the desired experience (see figure 1 in the Introduction).

<a>Wilderness

The Wilderness Act of 1964 exemplifies the concept of designing the landscape to create an experience. In describing wilderness, the legislation of the Wilderness Act of 1964 defines Wilderness as “*where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.*” In describing the wilderness experience, the legislation utilizes phrases such as “untrammelled,” “primeval character and influence,” and “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” All these descriptors in the legislation are attempting to create an experience. Chapter 5 explores history and philosophy of wilderness in greater depth. This section simply raises the issue of Wilderness as a park designed to create a wilderness type experience for visitors.



Figure 6.23: The Center – The last link in creating the experience are all the people who come in contact with the visitors. The Center helps to train employees how to effectively interact with visitors. Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Source: Author – [file:fig0118-DSC_0090.JPG]

For the purposes of this discussion, the issue is one of translating the descriptors used to describe a Wilderness experience in the legislation into actual management practices. Conversely, the management practices need to support both the intent and letter of the legislation. The management practices seek to articulate the Wilderness experience. Management decisions are made regarding the size of the trips, the equipment that can be used, and the facilities allowed. Three examples are discussed in this section. The first example juxtaposes the experience with safety issues. It asks if the bridge across the river is appropriate? The second example examines the degree to which the experience should be managed. Is providing gourmet meals appropriate in a Wilderness? The third example, examines the size and boundaries of a Wilderness area necessary to create a wilderness experience.

When translating the concept of wilderness into actual practice, consider the bridge across the North Branch of the Salmon River in the Frank Church Wilderness Area (figure 1.19). From an aesthetic perspective, is this bridge consistent with a wilderness area that is “*untrammelled,*” and “*where man and his own works [do not] dominate the landscape?*” Using this definition of wilderness, most people would conclude that the bridge is inconsistent with a wilderness experience. However, consider the bridge from a logistics and safety perspective. Without the bridge, how do people safely cross the river? They would need a ferry or everyone would need to fend for themselves. In addition, the crossing would be severely affected by high water. How many people would drown attempting to cross the river at high water? Regardless, it could be argued that a ferry or even fending for yourself would be closer to the “*primitive and unconfined type of recreation*” experience described in the legislation. How many drownings are acceptable to provide a true wilderness experience? These are the types of issues facing planners and managers in translating the intent of the legislation into management practices and policies to create a Wilderness experience.

When creating a wilderness type experience, how much of the experience needs to be managed in order to create the desired experience? As already noted, Disney went to considerable lengths to create the desired experience in the Magic Kingdom. Consider the following example regarding the type of meals served by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) at their huts in the White Mountains. There was a time when the AMC huts in the White Mountains provided gourmet meals in the backcountry (figure 1.20). There was competition between the huts to provide the best meals. Comparison was easy to evaluate because hikers would travel from hut to hut through the White Mountains. The competition was fierce. Eventually, the AMC asked if providing gourmet meals and the extreme competitiveness were appropriate to the type of backcountry experience that they were attempting to provide. Eventually, they decided that casseroles and similar types of menu items were more consistent with a backcountry type experience they were seeking to provide. They provided meals that were good and tasty, but less than gourmet. It illustrates that even the meals in the backcountry can be designed to help create a desired experience.

The third example focuses on the size and boundaries of a Wilderness area needed to create the experience. In the White Mountains it is called the “hoot and toot effect” (figure 1.21). The smoke in the background of the picture is from the Cog Railway. Completed in 1869, the Cog Railway was technologically equivalent in its time to sending a man to the moon in the 1960s. Today the Cog Railway is a National Historic Engineering Landmark. It lies outside the boundaries of the Great Gulf Wilderness pictured in the valley below. At 5,658 acres, the Great Gulf Wilderness is not a large Wilderness area.

Although the Cog Railway lies outside of the Wilderness area, it impacts on the Wilderness area and the wilderness experience is obvious. Every time the steam engine hoots and toots, it can be heard in some parts of the Wilderness area. In addition, the smoke from the steam engine passes over the watershed. Its biggest effect is most likely its visual impact. However, it demonstrates that Wilderness areas aren’t isolated ecosystems and that they are affected by factors external to its system.



Figure 1.24: Frank Church Wilderness Bridge – A bridge across the Middle Fork of the Salmon in the Frank Church Wilderness Area. Although there are many reasons to build the bridge, is it really an appropriate structure in and experience for a Wilderness Area? Frank Church Wilderness, Idaho. Source: author – [file:\fig0119-DSC_0235.JPG]



Figure 1.25: AMC Hut Experience – There was a time when the AMC Huts in the White Mountains provided gourmet type meals in the backcountry. Eventually, they asked if this was appropriate to the type of backcountry experience and they went with casseroles and similar types of menu items that were good but not gourmet. Zeland Hut, White Mountains, New Hampshire. Source: author – [file:\fig0120-DSC_0105.JPG]

Also, consider the “hoot and toot” effect in terms of Disney’s design of the Magic Kingdom. Disney sought to design the Magic Kingdom so that there was minimal visual or sensory impact with the world outside the park. The planners and managers of the Great Gulf Wilderness face exactly the same issue in creating a wilderness experience. How do they limit visual and sensory influences from outside their park so that they can create a wilderness experience.



Figure 1.26: Great Gulf Wilderness – Lying outside of the Great Gulf Wilderness, the “hoot and toot effect” of the Cog Railway impacts the experience of those in the Wilderness area. Source: author – [file:FW409-GreatGulf.JPG]

In summary, designing wilderness is similar to designing any park. It involves designing space to create an experience. It is no different for wilderness, a regional park, or Centennial Park in Atlanta, Georgia. In addition, it is important to design the activities that go on in the park as part of creating the experience. The meals provided in the AMC huts and the “hoot and toot” effect exemplify this point.

<a>Summary

The purpose of this chapter was primarily “barrier breaking.” How space is designed affects behavior. Space is designed to create a desired experience. A staple of most parks, the ubiquitous and benign park bench illustrates this principle. Identical park benches located in different locations within the same park can provide very different experiences. The campfire was included because many people have experienced it. However, by changing its elements, a totally different experience can be created from the traditional council ring. In this case, the alternative Steve Van Matre campfire is designed to create a more intimate and reflective experience. The Magic Kingdom at Disney World demonstrates on a grand scale how the resource, facilities and activities within the Magic Kingdom merge together to create a totally contrived but magical experience. At the other end of the scale is Wilderness. Wilderness was included because it demonstrates that even when creating a naturalistic and biocentrically oriented park, the park planners are creating an experience also. Conceptually, the Wilderness planners are no different than the Disney people who designed Disney World. Last, knowing how to design space to create the desired experience is the topic of the remainder of this book.

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