

The Creation and Maintenance of Sense of Place in a Tourism-Dependent Community

BENONI L. AMSDEN

The Center for Rural Partnerships
Plymouth State University
Plymouth, NH, USA

RICHARD C. STEDMAN

Department of Natural Resources
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY, USA

LINDA E. KRUGER

PNW Research Station
U.S. Forest Service
Juneau, AK, USA

This paper examines the theoretical intersection of place attachment and community through a study of the place attachment of residents who live, work, and play in a tourism-dependent community. Using a qualitative photo-elicitation technique best described as “resident employed photography,” we asked 25 residents of Seward, Alaska, to share images and stories of important places in and around their local community. The findings suggest that place and community are intertwined, as evidenced by the use of community as a frame of reference for describing nearly every example of attachment to place. This suggests that place attachment can serve as a factor in the development “of” community, defined as a heightened engagement in collective actions that help people meet their day-to-day needs. It could also influence one’s development “in” community, directing the behaviors that affect how people both participate in communities and seek to change their position within them.

Keywords community, photographic methods, place attachment, tourism dependence

Introduction

The expansion of tourism in rural areas presents a number of challenges to the natural, cultural, and built environments in which local people experience day-to-day life. Increases in tourism can in turn prompt rapid growth, raise revenues, and provide local residents with amenities such as restaurants, theatres, and retail stores. Tourism development may also change the community’s social, political, and economic landscapes by altering traffic patterns, challenging service providers, and driving up property values. How do local

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Address correspondence to Benoni L. Amsden, Plymouth State University, The Center for Rural Partnerships, MSC 68, 17 High Street, Plymouth, NH 03264. E-mail: blamsden@plymouth.edu

residents perceive these changes to their community? How have these changes altered the ways in which local people respond to each other and the community as a whole? Why does this matter?

The answers to these (and other) questions lie partly in the theoretical intersection of place attachment and community. Place attachment, as part of a larger context known as sense of place, is a complex creation of social and individual interactions and meanings that inform how people perceive the world around them. Community, as a unit of analysis, is a construction people use to organize these social interactions in a meaningful way. Place attachment provides insight not only into how people *feel* about their community but also what people *do* in that community—how they engage visitors, each other, and the surrounding natural resources. Understanding how local residents create place attachment (or have it created for them by someone else) in a community context will ultimately help tourism and natural resource managers respond to the inevitable change that leisure-related growth imparts upon rural communities.

We describe our use of a photo-elicitation technique called “resident-employed photography” (based on Stedman et al., 2004, and replicated in Kerstetter & Bricker, 2009; Dorwart et al., 2010) to examine place attachment among local residents in Seward, Alaska, a high amenity, tourism-intensive community. While place attachment is a common feature of leisure research, the inclusion of community as a variable in the analysis is not (Glover & Stewart, 2006). This is problematic, as tourism development in rural and resource-based contexts requires an understanding of place meanings both in terms of how they are created, and how they drive decision making (Stewart, 2006).

Connecting Community and Place

Place attachment, as a concept, has been thoroughly reviewed in a number of different contexts (for cogent reviews see Beckley, 2003; Farnum & Kruger, 2004; Kyle et al., 2004; Stedman, 2002, 2003). In summary, the idea of place is ultimately constructed around what a particular place *means* and how people evaluate it based on those meanings. It is a complex recipe that includes settings, behaviors (including interactions with others and with the local landscape), and evaluations of interwoven personal and social contexts. Place attachment, as a component of a larger sense of place, can be highly personal, incorporating individual interactions with the surrounding world. Yet because people connect the events of their own lives to the workings of society (Mills, 1959), their attachment to place has a social component as well. Even when built upon shared places, people, or experiences, place attachment will be felt and understood differently by different people.

To date, the geographic boundaries that people use to organize important places and meanings have been the primary focus of research in the areas of place attachment and sense of place. These boundaries, however, encompass many different aspects of people’s lives. For example, place research has focused on natural areas and wilderness, including parks and recreation areas (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Stedman et al., 2004) as well as places germane to people’s day-to-day lives, such as the local community (Corcoran, 2002; Hummon, 1992; Karsada & Janowitz, 1974; Kemmis, 1990; Oldenburg, 1999; Stedman, 2002). Other research connects both; for example, Stedman et al. (2006) proposed a matrix of interaction describing the relationship between sense of place and community in terms of not only the specific setting boundaries but also societal interactions and interpersonal action. By asking questions such as “what sorts of behavior maintains place-based meanings” (p.399), they infer that sense of place is based not only on where people are but also on who they interact with and what they do. Ultimately, there are distinct community contexts with a potential to contribute to place attachment.

Likewise, the concept of community has no precise definition. To some, community is defined by the physical space in which people interact. To others, a community is a flexible construct based upon symbolic, political, or social perceptions. Many definitions make use of all these ingredients. For example, while Agrawal and Gibson (1999) defines community as having a spatial (in addition to social and normative) component, Theodori (2005) distinguishes between territory-free communities (groups of people, i.e., “the Internet community”) and territory-based communities. A third category, occupational communities, consist of people who identify with one another in terms of work (Carroll, 2000; Carroll & Lee, 1990; Jackson et al., 2004).

Most definitions of community are not strict about whether or not one must actually live within a community in order to be an integral part of it. This is clear when considering communities that are nonterritory based, such as Theodori’s example of the “Internet community.” Interactional and territory-based communities, however, have also made allowances for people who interact in ways that contribute to the community, even though they may only spend limited time within their boundaries (Krannich & Luloff, 2002).

The Parallel Structure of Community and Place

Connections to place can be forged through cumulative, direct experiences with features of life such as recreation, home life, or work. They can also rely on symbols of what a particular place represents, for instance, a war memorial or the site of a first date. Community is similar, emerging either through direct experiences with others (e.g., social interactions, formal community development) or symbolic representations (the “academic community”; see also Theodori, 2005). In either case, these connections are created regardless of whether a person has lived someplace their entire life, visited briefly, or has never spent time there (Krannich & Luloff, 2002).

There are, however, important differences between the concept of place attachment and community. Social interactions, required for the existence of a community, are not necessary for the creation of place. While place attachment can indeed be created through interactions with others (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Eisenhauer et al., 2000), it can also be created through interactions with the natural and manmade environment (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Communities, on the other hand, are built upon collective organizations of people who are either territorially bounded or symbolically linked (real or imagined). This creates a theoretical question: If sense of place can be an important ingredient of community, how does community contribute to the creation of sense of place?

The key might rest within the interactional theory of community (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1986, 1991), which suggest that social interactions within a community depend upon 1) the development of basic frameworks through which people can interact to meet their daily needs, 2) the organization of groups to facilitate social growth and development, and 3) opportunities for engagement in community action (Wilkinson, 1986, p. 3). This social perspective of community suggests that community and place could possibly become intertwined—people could use their perceptions of community as a frame of reference when describing their attachment to place. For example, they could use imagined or political boundaries such as a town or city to more easily specify places of importance and provide a geographic and social focus. Place attachment, therefore, might both bind and extend community theory, providing a framework for understanding the effects of direct experience with, and symbolic representations of, multiple special places.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between place and community by understanding the place attachment of people who live, work, and play in a tourism

dependent community. Specifically, we ask: what places in the local community are important? What meanings make these places important, and what community experiences give rise to these meanings? Finally, how do these meanings and experiences contribute to the creation and maintenance of place attachment?

Seward, Alaska

Seward, located 125 miles south of Anchorage, served in 2004 as a “gateway” for nearly 630,000 visitors to the Kenai Fjords National Park and Chugach National Forest (National Park Service, 2005). Choosing a gateway community such as Seward was important for this research because it allowed us to examine the local community and the areas surrounding it as a continuous system. Communities are not isolated from the ecological and social systems in which they are embedded, and so it was important to consider the “buffer areas” surrounding Seward as important spaces in which people work and play. In this instance, these buffer areas include the Chugach National Forest and Kenai Fjords National Park. As with other places in Alaska, these areas are further enriched by having in their proximity communities whose identities have encompassed subsistence fishing, hunting, and harvesting (Bosworth, 1995), as well as a heritage including indigenous peoples who have lived in the area for centuries.

The tourism industry in Seward is geared toward providing access to outdoor recreational resources that are otherwise difficult to visit. For instance, a number of charter boat excursions provide access to several small islands and glaciers throughout Kenai Fjords National Park. These tours, which range in length from several hours to several days, allowed us to observe a wide array of recreation activities such as fishing, kayaking, hiking, and camping, all in a setting that would not be otherwise accessible. In response to such charter operations, the amenities within Seward have grown to include 5 hotels and 21 restaurants.

Methods and Analysis

Resident-employed photography (as applied in Stedman et al., 2004) and in-depth interviews were used to construct a data set based on the participation of 25 residents of Seward. Resident-employed photography is a process whereby researchers analyze photographic images taken by local residents that both show and describe specific details of the places that are important to them. In addition to the photographs, interviews are a critical part of the resident-employed photography process because they allow both researchers and participants to “better elucidate the content of the photo and the degree to which it represents sociocultural and ecological phenomena, and how these combine in potentially unique ways” (Stedman et al., 2004, p. 586). Visual approaches to data collection are beginning to gain traction in both tourism (Kerstetter & Bricker, 2009) and outdoor recreation (Dorwart et al., 2010) contexts.

Data collection entailed the distribution of single-use cameras to 30 residents of Seward. Residents were chosen based on response to public notices and from “cold contacts,” where individuals were approached in certain contexts (i.e., a coffee shop, street festival, recreation activity). During the course of the study, four residents dropped out before taking their photographs, and one participant returned a camera with photos (which were used in the analysis) but declined to be interviewed. In addition, some cameras malfunctioned, resulting in photos of insufficient quality. In some cases, the respondents could not remember why they took the photos. Finally, the act of taking photos proved too time-consuming for some participants. All told, the final number of participants was 25. A summary of the characteristics of study participants is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Sample Characteristics of Seward Participants (n = 25)

Gender		Length of Residence in Community	
Male	10	0–3 yrs	4
Female	15	4–9 yrs	7
		10–19 yrs	5
		20–29 yrs	4
Born here	5	30 yrs or more	5
Born away	20		
Age		Occupation	
18–24	5	Retired	5
25–34	3	Education	2
35–44	4	Student	2
45–54	4	Self Employed (guide, captain)	3
55–64	5	Tourism	5
65+	4	Food Service	1
		Retail	3
		Other Professional	4

The participants were instructed to photograph things that most attached them to the local area. They were told that their photos did not necessarily need to be based inside the boundaries of Seward, the Chugach, or Kenai Fjords, but they should instead try to capture relatively local elements of their daily lives that provided the most meaning, or that would be most missed if they were to move away. Participants were welcome to add any pre-existing photos in order to capture different seasons or different experiences that were not otherwise replicable.

The follow-up interviews, conducted by one member of the research team, lasted between 45 minutes and 3 hours. Through open-ended discussion, each photo was examined with a focus on getting the respondent to describe the content of their photo, what it was representing, and why it was taken. During the discussions each participant was free to explore tangents, tell stories, bring in other people (several respondents chose to include their spouse in the project), or provide additional materials (usually in the form of notes or additional photographs). In total, the data set from the Seward residents consisted of 341 photographs and 276 pages of transcribed interview text.

Analysis of this data was also consistent with Stedman et al. (2004). The photos and interview text were analyzed using a process known as categorical aggregation, a series of techniques using labels, codes, and categories to organize qualitative data (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002; Henderson, 1991; Mascarenhas & Scarce, 2004; Spradley, 1980). The first step of analysis was to determine places of importance in and around Seward. The research team independently analyzed the photos, assigning each within a series of broad categories, determined a priori from the existing sense of place literature, and presented in Table 2. In many of the photos, the intent of the photographer could not be determined easily. Many photos either contained multiple elements (e.g., a landscape *and* a home) or contained unclear representations of symbols, people, or places. Despite the difficulty of labeling the photographs, the research team (one faculty member and one graduate student) agreed 63.6% of the time. In instances of disagreement, the team engaged in discussion until full consensus was reached.

The second step was to determine the meanings and experiences behind each of these place categories. This required an additional round of analysis using the interview text as a descriptive guide to the photos, revealing not just what the photo portrayed but also

TABLE 2 Important Places Based on Analysis of Photographs (n = 341)

	(n)	(%)
Natural environment	124	36.4%
Home	68	19.9%
Recreation and tourism places	50	14.7%
The community	49	14.4%
Built environment	43	12.6%
The workplace	7	2.0%
	341	100%

what that portrayal *meant* to the photographer. This allowed the research team to determine the specific meanings and experiences behind the broader place categories such as “natural environment” or “the community.” To complete this analysis, the interview text was assigned codes capturing the meanings associated with the places in the photos. For example, one photo of a hiking trail had a corresponding interview statement of “here is the trail, there is all good blueberry picking up there [sic].” The image itself, previously given a place code of “natural environment” (because of its portrayal of an outside place) was now given an additional meaning code of “recreation” due to the depiction of blueberry picking as a leisure activity. This analysis of photos and interviews together raised the level of agreement between the researcher team to 75.4%, thus increasing the reliability of the findings. As with the first round of analysis, the team continuously engaged in discussion to reach full consensus on the coding of the interview text. These results are presented in Table 3.

The third and final step was to organize these meanings and experiences within the initial place categories, to see how each contributed to the creation and maintenance of sense of place. The smaller of the place categories, “man-made places” and “the workplace,” are excluded because they were specific to a small number of participants and were therefore determined to make little overall contribution to the findings.

TABLE 3 Important Meanings and Experiences from Photos and Interviews

	(n)	(%)
Beauty	86	25.2%
Recreation	58	17.0%
Friends, family	40	11.8%
Pride in Seward and AK	34	9.9%
History	31	9.1%
Community interactions	20	5.9%
Home	17	5.0%
Threats to the landscape	15	4.4%
Tourism	15	4.4%
Architecture	14	4.1%
Work	11	3.2%
	341	100.0%

TABLE 4 Connections Between Meanings, Experiences, and Places of Importance

Place Category	Associated Meaning
Natural environment	The beauty of Seward and its surroundings
The community	People, history, and pride in Seward
Recreation and tourism spaces	Recreation activities and interactions with tourists
Seward as “home”	Continuity, friends, and families

Creation and Maintenance of Sense of Place

Determining how the meanings and experiences that emerged from the interview text contribute to the creation and maintenance of sense of place requires an understanding of how those meanings are related to the places of importance in and around Seward. Therefore, the meanings and experiences are organized in terms of the four broad place categories that are consistent with much sense of place research (see Table 4).

It should be noted that the place categories alone do not offer insight into what is important to the Sewardites who participated in this project—they are broad and common to many resource dependent areas. Instead, it is the deeper look into the associated meanings and experiences that are important and that provide insight into the construction and maintenance of place.

The Natural Landscape: The Beauty of Seward and its Surroundings

To most participants, the natural landscape surrounding Seward was valued primarily for its beauty. Beauty as a place meaning, however, was more complex than just a pretty view or a picturesque setting. It also meant the uniqueness of the area, the appeal of wildlife, and the perceived threat of destruction and encroachment. Peggy,¹ a 56-year-old artist who, at the time of the research, had lived in Seward for nearly five years, described how Alaska's beauty meant a mixture of geography, animals, and activity:



This is by Spring Creek. This is just another place where you drive, and you can sit and glass all these mountains. I didn't have enough pictures but I also like to go sit up on the mountains- Mt. Marathon, Bear Mountain, and look for goats, for hours sometimes. The beauty of this place is beyond... well, we live in a picture postcard place. If you don't look at it, you don't see it, know what I mean?

¹Pseudonyms used throughout.

With her summary of the landscape as a “picture postcard” place, Peggy suggests an attachment to the special and unique beauty of her surroundings. This is also reflected in the following photos taken by Lena, a 19-year-old college student. She suggested that the Seward landscape is beautiful because it is unique, unusual, and free of other people.

The beauty within the natural landscape is easy to see in the images themselves. However, the idea of beauty was difficult for some participants to explain. In many cases, the concept of beauty was represented by what the participant *wanted to see* in the landscape. Even though there is no visible evidence of wildlife in the following photos, it is still of great importance to Garth, a 48-year-old high school teacher.



It's really quiet and peaceful, and oftentimes there are eagles down at the end. It's a glacier fed creek, so there's not a lot of fish, but occasionally you do see fish, and the eagles come in for the fish. Sometimes if you're lucky, early in the morning, about 5:30 or 6 o'clock, you can see a moose crossing a stream, right in front of a beautiful sun bathed mountain. It happens quite often. I saw a brown bear, right over here, just a couple days ago. A 300-lb brown bear.

In addition to natural beauty, Seward's natural landscapes are seen as threatened by a growing conflict between “outsiders” and “locals.” Madeline articulated this conflict, describing how the town's growing status as a tourist destination potentially damages places of importance:

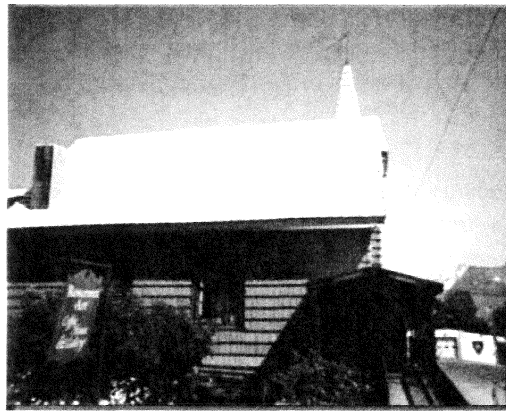


So these are the people there on the 4th of July that we didn't like because, see, a local would never park there. They were parked all around it. And camping, and trashing it out. Pret y much trashed it out.

In Madeline's photo, out-of-towners who have come to Seward for the annual Fourth-of-July celebration are encroaching upon a specific important place. To Madeline, this intrusion represents a growing trend in which favorite places are now being discovered by outsiders. To her, this is a serious problem, albeit one that is an unavoidable result of Seward's reliance on summer tourists who come to fish, hike, boat, and camp. Even though these tourists have become part of Seward's social fabric, they are still not completely accepted by many residents. This duality between residents and nonresidents suggests that the experiences of the participants are based to some degree upon their status as insiders with knowledge of special places and recreation destinations that are unknown to the average visitor. As these hidden places are discovered, the secrets known only to community insiders are threatened.

The Community: People, History, and Pride

The photos depicting community had meanings associated with local people, the history of the community, and pride in what the community of Seward stood for. Much of this was focused on specific places within the community, where participants would often interact with one another. The following photo is of a coffee shop and art gallery, which represented a subculture of unique "artsy" people. Liz, an unemployed 29-year-old, shared the coffee shop as a symbol of her interactions with other like-minded people.



I took a picture of this place because it's funky, it has some culture, and artsy-fartsy people who come here. I love living in a community that has people who are into art, and native art, and area art, using bones, or willow and alder, from the area. It's a nice common meeting place.

Even community features that were viewed negatively by the participants contained an element of community interaction. For example, some participants unfavorably referred to the potential for Seward's new Safeway supermarket or Starbucks to drive out other local businesses. However, the following photo and discussion of the Safeway in Seward acknowledges the negative but also captures the positive contributions that the store makes to the sense of community in Seward:



Not because it's Safeway, because that sucks. Not because it has a Starbucks in it, because I believe that sucks, because they're the big guy coming in wanting to make the little guy go away. But, it's the only store we have, and it is a place where you see everybody. You get to talk to everybody.

Peggy, who provided this photo, wanted it to be understood that only the *growth* of the community has had a negative impact on her sense of place. "I hate the new hotel, because it blocks our view of the boats. You can't walk along there anymore and see any of that. I hate it. I hate the brown building, [that's] caused a huge hassle with our town. I've been to lots of the city council meetings. I hate it. But, the town—I love the town. I love the friendliness of the businesses." These two sentences are evidence that someone's experience with the local community is a careful balance between positives (community places bringing people together, creating community connections) and negatives (sprawl, destruction of beauty).

Sometimes, places themselves are not sites for community interaction but are instead symbols for it. The following example is of the "noon bell," an earthquake and tsunami warning system that is tested each day at noon. It has become a local landmark, as evidenced by the community interactions required to save it:



It goes off every day and they call it the noon bell. This is just part of living in Seward. Somebody tried to remove it, and it was taken away. Everybody was upset, so they had a vote. More people turned out to re-instate the noon bell than any other public vote in history....you never know, we may need the horn someday. How they keep finding parts for it no one knows.

The importance of community interaction was also evidenced by the repeated reference to Seward's recent designation as an "All-American City." This award is based on organized

community activity and is coveted primarily for tourism marketing outside the local area. To Loretta, a 76-year-old who served on the award committee, the place where the sign was located symbolized the importance of promoting Seward through publicity:

We just got the All-American City award, you know. The award is a plaque but the notoriety that you get from something like this, particularly I guess in tourism, people really become interested. You get a lot of publicity out of it.

Participants also revealed a strong connection to places representing the community history of Seward and Alaska. Seward is a relatively young town, founded in 1902 as the starting point for construction of the Alaska Railroad. Despite its relative youth, Seward's history resonated strongly with several of the participants. In fact, many of the photos had one historical event in common. In March 1964, the largest earthquake in North American history struck Seward, measuring 8.4 on the Richter Scale and spawning a tsunami that destroyed much of the town. This event, known as the "Good Friday Earthquake," resonates most strongly with those who lived through the event. Loretta, a 76-year-old retiree who has lived in Seward nearly 50 years, recounted her memories of the earthquake:

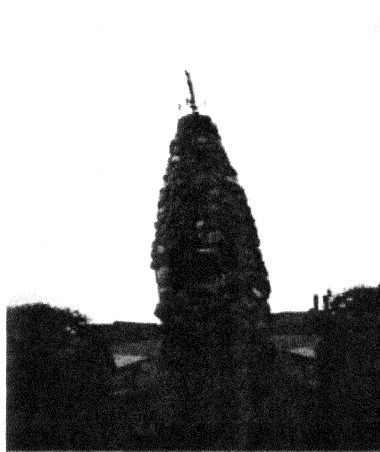
We all met down on the road, and the road was actually—this lasted three minutes, they say four, I don't know—the road was actually heaving. The little one said "stop road, stop road." She was so scared. But you know what I remember the most, aside from my family, were the big cottonwood trees. They bent over, and they touched the ground and then stood again. I was terrified—I thought what if one snaps off and hits the house. So my husband, he's pretty wise, he said lets bring the car up into the driveway, and when it stops shaking . . . remember this is going on for a while, you had time to talk . . . we'll go into town and see what happened. Well, by the time it was over with we could see the flames from the Standard oil pumps and it was really bad.

For Loretta, the earthquake history contains meanings of both family and lived experience in Seward. Other meanings were not just tied to events but were also provoked by historic places in Seward. Her photo of the Jesse Lee home, an abandoned orphanage and tuberculosis ward that operated in the early part of the 20th century, helped her recall happier times with fellow community members:



A lot of the people I know now grew up there. They were children there. Most of them native children, and they told of great experiences many times out, and when our children were taking caroling lessons, they used to have their recitals up there. It had a big, beautiful hall, and a piano. It just represented friendship with the kids. They, of course, went to the churches in town and everything else. I just had to take a picture of it because I have fond memories of people I knew there. I think it's a beautiful location, I'd just love to see something up there. I'd love to see the senior center up there. But, I don't think its available now because the city owns it.

The participants also told of community meanings in terms of what *happened* in Seward, and what people *did* in Seward. Others revealed a historical connection based on what Seward *once was*. Specifically, Seward's place in history as a former point of entry for many North American newcomers serves to create place meanings for people today. In addition, community meanings also include a heavy dose of *Alaska pride*. While some residents described community meanings and experiences based on the town of Seward, other participants with shorter tenures in town described similar meanings and experiences based on the broader community of Alaska in general. Rochelle, a 37-year-old volunteer coordinator, discussed her photo of a local monument commemorating the southern terminus of the Alaska Railroad:



I just think it's really cool that Seward, historically speaking, was really a jumping off place. An important jumping off place for Alaska. There's a lot of history there. You know the railroad came down here, we are on the road system. We're kind of remote down here, but still connected, in an important way.

In summary, social interactions, the impacts of community history, and a sense of pride in Seward and the larger "Alaskan" community all contribute to the creation and maintenance of sense of place by giving people outlets through which they can become connected to the local community and its development. This is in keeping with the notion of interactional community theory described earlier, which suggests that true communities are often territorially bounded in such a way as to allow people to interact with each other (evidenced by the descriptions of meeting in the post office), and consist of members who engage in forms of collective action (evidenced by the residents gathering to save the noon bell). In this case, the community is a clear ingredient in sense of place.

The role of community in Seward is also manifested in a "sense of us" that the residents have created through interaction, shared identity, and shared experience. This sense of community is alternatively fostered or threatened by the presence of outsiders. These outsiders also represent a connection to the aforementioned theme encompassing the natural landscape because, as they do for community, outsiders can either foster or threaten landscape-based sense of place.

Recreation Spaces: Their Solitary and Social Importance

Both solitary and social recreation experiences in and around Seward were important ingredients in the sense of place of the residents. Because Seward is nestled among mountains,

glaciers, and the ocean, participants described enjoying a wide variety of recreation opportunities that included hiking, boating, hunting, fishing, and biking in all of the geographic contexts (mountains *and* water) in the Seward area. For instance, with a picture of kayaks, Liz describes her connection to recreation experiences both at sea and on land, while Rick, the 51-year-old proprietor of the local bike shop, framed his bicycle against an Alaskan backdrop:

That was my attempt at a picture of kayaking, and just overall sea activities. The ocean is so close, there are activities, and in Moose Pass I feel like I'm in the mountains. I've got 3000 foot peaks next to me, and bam, now I'm down here in Seward next to the ocean. It's kind of nice.

Yeah, that's my bike up at the top there, still at Lost Lake. It's a nice little getaway to gather your thoughts and enjoy all that Alaska has to offer.

While Liz and Rick were careful to make sure the specific activity (kayaking, biking) was included in their discussion of outdoor recreation, other participants did not show equipment but instead used the setting as a point of reference for recreation. Also, while many participants described how the landscape represents the recreation that they *can* do, some suggested that the landscape represents what they *cannot* do. For instance, Carrie, a 21-year-old college student, talked about how the challenging Alaskan weather prevents her from enjoying the outdoors as often as she might like:

I hit it at least once a week. Lately the weather's been kind of . . . I mean I love hiking in the rain, but at the same time I work 12, 16 hours a day so getting out on the trail and then coming in and drying off is kind of time consuming.

While some participants clearly favored the opportunity to recreate by themselves, others felt that their recreation experiences were enhanced by the *presence of other people*. The following photo and discussion, also provided by Pat, show a fondness for the presence of young people at one of their favorite recreations places:



It's great; it has a beach, with sand, which is ideal for the kids, and the lake. Right here we're just cooking our picnic. Usually, there are a lot of other young people.

Some participants had recreation experiences which were not easily classified. For example, those who displayed a connection to solitary recreation were also attached to the social nature of recreating with friends and family. Overall, the importance of recreation to sense of place involves specific, place-based experiences. Those experiences, such as

biking, hiking, or boating, alone or with others, create meanings of solitude or socializing, reflecting a connection to the natural landscape.

Experiences with tourism have also made important contributions to community meanings. A number of participants described how their life is different (and in many cases better) because of many visitors from around the globe. Jerry, a 61-year-old retiree, described the benefits of interacting with tourists from outside the community: "It doesn't bother me at all. It's actually kind of fun. At this time of year it's actually kind of exciting because there is so much going on and there are so many people coming into town." However, the crowding that results from this tourism has a negative impact on local behaviors. In many cases, the same RVs that some see as delivering new and interesting people are seen by others as traffic clogging nuisances.

Tourism in Seward also has had an impact the local identity. For the most part, participants described a balance between the pros and cons of a tourist-town identity. While some actually embraced the idea that Seward had developed a tourist reputation, others preferred that the community not be promoted to tourists. A good example is displayed by the importance placed on what happens when the tourists *leave*:

Town has been quiet for the winter, which we enjoy. By the time Labor Day comes you are ready for them to go, you're ready to have your town back. You're ready to be able to go to the stores and be able to park. I tried to do that earlier today, and couldn't. You don't get hassled if you pull down the little boat ramp launch. You can park there normally and walk the beach. In the summer you can't because the people from out of state that have some of these kayak places give you dirty looks because you are blocking their way of launching their boat.

Once the tourist season is over, the lack of visitors allows the participants to reconnect with their fellow townspeople. Because everyone is busy within in the short-season tourist economy, they often have little time for socialization:



You don't see anybody all summer because we all have to work. If you want to survive the winter you have to work the summer. It's not uncommon at all in Seward, once the tourists leave, for people to stop in the street, car to car, and talk to one another.

Seward as "Homeplace": Continuity, Friends, and Families

For many participants, sense of place was built upon a sense of home, including friends, family, and a sense of continuity. While many of the images themselves were obvious depictions of home, some of the meanings revealed in the interviews were more subtle. One

example of Seward as “home” invokes the longevity and unchanging nature of Seward’s manmade landscape. To Harriet, a 23-year-old law student who often leaves Seward for extended periods of time, the unchanging nature of the manmade landscape creates meanings of security and home:



I think, to me, what I was trying to get across with the photo is that the landscape is very familiar. It’s impossible to get lost, and things just don’t change. That hardware store, and the Peking restaurant, it’s been the same since I was a kid.

Not everyone, however, sees the landscape as unchanging. Peggy, the 56-year-old artist who has lived in Seward four years, feels that tourism is changing her home, threatening the quiet ‘Seward lifestyle’ to which she has become accustomed:

The campgrounds fill up, the grocery store fills up, you’ve got to be really careful driving because [the tourists] don’t understand the 4-way stops. You can’t get on the computer down at the library. At any time there can be 5 to 7 thousand people down at the boat harbor. Bicycle riding becomes a special skill. After the tourists leave we feel that the town is ours.

In addition to these community-based representations of home, several participants discussed their home in the context of the elements of their life, such as love, work, children, and community. Many of these stories emerged organically, without special prompting, when participants were asked what was important to them about Seward.

Well, let’s see now, my dad ran fish between Dutch harbor and Seattle and he was a king crab fisherman and he operated a 185 foot freighter and when I was 22 I was hired on board as his head cook. Then I worked 10 years out on the Bering Sea and I got married and we kept our boat—my ex-husband was a fisherman in the port of Anchorage but during the winter we would freeze up so we started making trips in the early 80s to Seward. I just fell in love with the Seward highway and the mountains. So I made Seward my home.

I came here 5 days before the 1964 earthquake. I came here at the asking of a company known as the Alaska Scallop Fleet. I came up here to refit a vessel up here, to go out and do towing for scallops. They were just doing a survey to find out if there were enough here to bring some boats around. I came, and started working on a boat, and the boat was lost in the tsunami. I stayed on because I was a welder and a fitter and a burner, and they needed a lot of that. I stayed thinking it would only be a few months, and it wound up being forever!

I grew up here in Seward, I'm a 3rd generation Sewardite. My grandparents moved here from Norway in the early immigration in the 1900's. My father was born in the goldmine, Kinnecott, and when he was a year old his family moved back here, so he grew up here in Seward. He graduated from Seward high school in 1936. They left and came back to Seward when I was a year old. I essentially grew up here in Seward. I graduated from Seward high school in 1965. I lived for about 9 years, got married right here in this very location (referring to the coffee shop located in the old church), 32 years ago. We had our first two children here. We moved stateside for about 12 or 15 years, then came back 10 years ago. We moved back because we like the quality of life here, and job opportunities, and the opportunity to raise our children in such a setting.

This text follows a progression, beginning with the lives of parents and grandparents and moving forward toward the time of participant. This suggests that the participants do not see the notion of Seward as a home place as simply stories from the distant past, but instead as something more interactive existing within their daily lives. While these social connections were not strongly located in any particular community context, they demonstrate a strong connection between place, people, and history.

Discussion

The photographs and interviews revealed meanings and experiences which represented the beauty of the landscape, social elements of the local community, solitary and social recreation, friends and family, home, and tourism. They also revealed some parallels between the development of place attachment and community in terms of how people interact with both the landscape and each other. As stated earlier, attachment to place is created through 1) cumulative, direct experience with a place and 2) the use of symbols. Community is created through a similar process—people develop and maintain strong connections based on direct experiences with others and symbolic representations of what their community means. While social interactions are not needed for the creation of sense of place, they are a requirement for the existence of community.

Social interactions, however, that represented both experiential and symbolic forms of community, were clearly an ingredient that emerged when the residents of Seward were asked to describe their place attachment. Examples of this are community-oriented meanings surrounding friends and family, interactions with fellow townspeople in community settings (the post office and grocery store), and engagement in collective action (the July 4th celebration). Perhaps, then, place attachment is a factor in the development “of” community, defined as a heightened engagement in Wilkinson’s (1991) idea of collective actions that help people meet their day-to-day needs. This attachment could also factor into a more personal, individual development “in” community, predicated on behaviors that could not only impact how people participate in communities, but potentially change their position within them. In Seward, development “of” community is evident in the photos and discussions involving tourism, specifically the repeated references to the large amount of effort that went into achieving “All-American City” status for Seward. This suggests that meanings surrounding Seward’s identity as a tourist destination could be causing people to engage in actions that further develop that tourist identity.

This process also suggests implications for resource management and the development of recreation and tourism policy. By playing an active role in resource management, residents could be attempting development “of” community, by working to ensure Seward’s position as a natural resource town. Finally, an additional example of development “of”

community could be the public outcry and organized vote to reinstate the noon bell. In this instance, the people of Seward came together to engage in collective action that saved an important community symbol—possibly enhancing the power of their community in the process.

To make use of place attachment and community, future explorations of rural tourism development require an understanding not only of the experiences that go into one's attachment, and how they create meanings, but also *evaluations* of those places, such as place satisfaction, place dependence, or strength of attachment (Stedman, 2002). Assessing how much a place means, or what it is important for, can greatly aid in understanding how places can move people to action. For example, volunteers in high amenity tourism settings could create meanings that emerge from the places they work, the activities they are engaged in, and the institutions they represent. These meanings, in turn, contribute to the construction of a sense of place. Through their work, these volunteers could in fact be "making place" by directly changing the landscape through restoration work, or communicating important environmental messages to visitors.

It should be noted, however, that interactional community building is a complex endeavor, of which attachment to place is only one ingredient. Outcomes such as community activism or expressions of community identity that reflect the development "of" community may be based on more than just people's connection to the location. They may be based on the specific issue at hand, the cast of characters involved in the issue, or the nature of the existing society. Likewise, outcomes such as increased skill or heightened authority that reflect development "in" community may depend in part on attachment to some heretofore undiscovered component of the community, the setting, or the creation of a particular identity.

Methodological Limitations

The resident-employed photography protocol allowed the respondents to use their own images and words to elucidate otherwise complicated notions of sense of place. In addition, the participants were enthusiastic about the act of taking pictures and then talking about them, which resulted in a deep, rich set of data. With the exception of a few minor problems, data collection went smoothly, as the participants were able to successfully follow both the directions and the suggested timeline. Most importantly, they had fun with the project.

While people spoke clearly of important places and meanings, however, they did not always photograph the places they ended up discussing; in many cases, their meanings and experiences were based on something (or someone) else. This suggests that different people interpret sense of place differently: a church represents friendship to some people and represents history to others. Important places, then, are more accurately described as triggers which help people access deeper meanings and attachments, suggesting that the characteristics of the place itself are only one piece of the puzzle. The thing itself (i.e., the mountain or the store or the trail) was often most relevant, in this data, in terms of what took place there once upon a time.

While we have great confidence in the veracity of this data, it is still subject to the familiar cross-examinations endemic to qualitative research. First, the research took place in only one location and involved only 25 people. Therefore, there are limitations surrounding the inferences and generalizations that can be made from our findings. This limitation, however, is offset by the depth to which we feel we were able to investigate the meanings, experiences, and attachments of each of the participants. Second, our analysis could be minimally influenced by preexisting biases and gaps in knowledge on our part. Admittedly,

we are not Alaskan, and do not share any innate cultural understandings that permanent residents may hold.

Summary

This research confirms the complexities of attachment to place in a tourist destination where senses of community and identity are constructed around an amalgamation of the state's remoteness, community interactions, recreation opportunities, and social relationships. This complexity is critical: on one hand, participants described valuing community relationships, perhaps formed in part from Alaska's common bonds. Other participants, however, greatly valued the ample freedom, isolation, and anonymity that are important features of their Alaskan community.

This complexity also illuminates subtle distinctions in how people, especially those who live in tourism-dependent areas, create and maintain place-based meanings in their lives. These meanings, which include beauty, recreation, friends, family, home, and community, all reflect the variety of social interactions among people in place. Because many of these "social landscapes" have local natural resources at their core, those who are tasked with tourism development face a tremendous opportunity to add place attachment and community to traditional metrics such as visitor satisfaction and ecological quality.

The 25 people who participated in this project created a variety of multilayered mosaics describing how meanings, experiences, and behaviors were important parts of their attachment to the community that Seward represents. This suggests that people are indeed aware of the multiplicity of roles that tourism areas and community spaces play in their lives. People's perceptions matter, whether they are perceptions of the land around them, perceptions of the people with whom they interact, or perceptions of activities in which they engage. Hopefully, further work with the perceptions of place will inspire and create a body of knowledge that further elucidates the social connections of place, community, and tourism.

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