


Rural Sense of Place: A Change in Relationship

Senior Project

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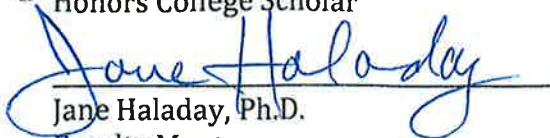
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Abstract

Sense of place research aims to provide reasoning as to why individuals become connected or attached to particular spaces. Multiple disciplines hold their own theories as to how sense of place is developed, determined, and its purpose. In the southern United States, sense of place and place attachment within the region is a powerful aspect of the regional culture. While many studies discuss sense of place and how to qualitatively measure it as a construct, few discuss change of an individual's sense of place emotionally or psychologically, particularly after a natural disaster. In this paper, three participants from Fair Bluff, North Carolina were interviewed to qualitatively note a change in sense of place after the town was devastated by Hurricane Matthew in October of 2016.

Keywords: Sense of place, rural, natural disaster, southern identity, attachment to place, Hurricane Matthew.

Rural Sense of Place: A Change in Relationship

People often define or describe themselves in terms of place, a physical area or space to which one attaches meaning (Trell & Van Hoven, 2010, p. 91). Recently, there has been an interest in exploring what a 'sense of place' means to people within a variety of academic fields seeking to explain why people find geographical places to be special. Multiple theories have found a range of explanations for the reasons people have formed attachments to places, along with factors that may influence these attachments, such as time. Fields of resource management, psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, and landscape history all define sense of place differently within their relative fields of study; however, sense of place is typically defined as being a result of one's beliefs, emotions, and behavioral commitment, also known as attachment (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2005, p. 316). A majority of previous research pertaining to sense of place has been conducted with urban populations and public access lands, whereas few studies focus on rural communities. Additionally, there is little to no research on how an individual's sense of place may change after a natural disaster, which specific local communities in Southeastern North Carolina continue to struggle with in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. This unique situation provides the basis for this research by questioning how communities from rural North Carolina define their relationship to a particular place and how their sense of place has been changed by unforeseeable destruction. Most importantly, information gathered may help inform project managers and revitalization committees for Fair Bluff as to how they can increase the meaningfulness of the place for residents and tourists alike.

Sense of place is an interdisciplinary construct that encompasses emotional, psychological, social, and physical interactions that form individual concepts of sense of place, making it difficult to research (Cross, 2001; Hashemnezhad, Heidari, & Hoseini, 2013, p. 5; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2005, p. 317). Thus, discussions of the sense of place and the attachment to place involve complex relationships between an individual and a particular place that is perplexing to define for research purposes within such a broad definition. A majority of researchers use a framework designed by the focus of their field rather than a comprehensive approach (Ardoin, 2006, p. 113). For clarity, sense of place will be defined for the purpose of this research as an individual's attachment to or relationship with a physical space that has significant meaning, regardless of theory orientation. Experts in the field of geography have also turned toward the creation of place being rooted in individual emotional experiences to give a space meaning in place based theory (Hashemnezhad, et al., 2013, p. 6). Tuan initially suggested this idea of place-based theory in which time and experience strengthen the relationship between a person and a place, and this idea was recently confirmed by Smaldone (2006). In a previous study conducted on public land use by recreational visitors, it was found that people tend to associate certain activities more with a "special place" rather than an activity giving a place a meaning (Eisenhauer, Krannich, & Blahna, 2000, p. 423). Theory regarding sense of place is also constantly changing, as are the people and the places with which they form a bond or attachment (Hashemnezhad, et al., 2013, p. 7).

Sense of place is subjective as it is based on individual perceptions of interactions with a place and an individual's feelings about a specific place (Cross,

2001; Hashemmezahad, et al., 2013, p.7). Essentially, an individual will attribute certain emotions and physical interactions, whether they are positive or negative, with a place, making it meaningful to the individual (Hashemmezahad, et al., 2013, p.7; Semken, 2009, p. 138). This interaction that results in attachment is known as place-attachment, and is often exemplified through the love of a hometown or protecting a specific environmental area or historic building (Semken et al., 2009, p. 138). Place attachment is differentiated from place meaning in that meaning is dependent on the place, but does not necessarily form a permanent bond between the person and the place as one would with place attachment (Semken et al., 2009, p. 140). Both place attachment and place meaning create a sense of place; however, quantitative measurements for these concepts can be difficult to attain and validate, each place being unique and requiring its own measures.

Cross (2001) divides connections to a specific area into six different types of bonds that she observed in Nevada County, California. These relationship groups give a better understanding of the many aspects that create a sense of place, including: biographical, spiritual, ideological, narrative, commodified, and dependent (Cross, 2001). Most individuals when asked the importance of a specific place that is meaningful to them will answer with a combination of these relationships, but the strongest bond was the biographical relationship. As noted by Kyle and Chick (2007, p. 210), social relationships are important for defining sense of place as places provide a context for relationships. In defining biographical relationships as primarily historical and familial, those interviewed by Cross (2001) reported personal histories with a particular place that were characterized by long-

term residency. There is evidence that length of time of an individuals' association with a place increases the likelihood that they will describe an area as a special place or describe meaningfulness of a place (Smaldone, 2006, p. 64). Interestingly, Jorgensen and Stedman (2005, p. 324) reported that lakeshore property owners' attitudes toward retaining native vegetation on their property was the best predictor of sense of place that included place identity, attachment, and dependence. However, it is difficult to say this is actually a result of a sense of place, as other attitudes about maintaining native vegetation in the sample are unknown. Jorgensen and Stedman (2005, p. 323) confirmed that time or number of days spent on the lakeshore property greatly influenced sense of place for property owners. The importance of sense of place has grown with the concern of urbanization's effects on communities. With greater population density in urban areas, it is thought that communities and individuals are at risk of losing a healthy sense of place (Gustafson, 2001, p. 5).

When discussing sense of place and its status as a multidisciplinary, multidimensional construct, it is difficult at times to separate underlying variables that cause the sense of place or attachment. Takahashi and Selfa (2015, p. 860) found individuals to be less attached to their physical neighborhood, but were more attached to social connections using different spatial scales for environment. These findings are relevant particularly for rural areas experiencing outward migration, as longer period of residence correlates to a stronger attachment to place but loss of community members diminishes social attachment and relationships (Takahashi & Selfa, 2015, p. 860). Considering this information, it would seem that a natural

disaster could put a community at risk for a breakdown of social relationships after such devastation. This, however, is not the case with a majority of the residents of the Ninth Ward of New Orleans impacted by Hurricane Katrina (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009, p. 616). Though New Orleans is an urban environment, it is reasonable to ask if this returning and rebuilding might also occur in rural Southeastern North Carolina after Hurricane Matthew. Clearly the urban environment of the Ninth Ward had a different set of challenges in recovery; however, the shared poverty and lack of resources are similar to what many rural North Carolina communities face. In particular, Fair Bluff has sustained significant damage, but the county in which it is located is consistently ranked as having one of the highest poverty rates in North Carolina (Bidgood & Blidner, 2016). The small town of 917 estimated residents in the 2015 census has seen a steady decline in population over the past several years, and those who remain in Fair Bluff are concerned that their town may not be able to recover (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Through a semi-structured interview, the goal of this research is to determine how community members in Fair Bluff define their sense of place in addition to how Hurricane Matthew has changed their attachment to the physical and social dimensions of the Fair Bluff community. Post-interview and the following years of migration patterns will reveal if the sense of place held by residents of Fair Bluff has been strong enough to lead them to return and rebuild their community despite major losses.

Method

Participants in this research from Fair Bluff, North Carolina, are long-term residents of the community and at least 50 years of age. Community members were

approached in person or were recruited via telephone call to inquire about their interest in an oral interview regarding their feelings towards their community and the impact of Hurricane Matthew (see Appendix A). Participants who agreed to be interviewed scheduled a meeting time and place with the researcher for an oral interview. First the researcher explained the consent process in detail and answered any questions the participants had, also reminding them that they could opt out of the interview without penalty at any time (see Appendix B). Participants were also asked if they preferred their real name to be used or a pseudonym to protect their privacy. Once consent was obtained, the researcher began the oral interview, in which the participant was asked several questions pertaining to their connection to Fair Bluff (see Appendix C). A digital recorder was used to ensure accuracy of the interviews, which were transcribed after completion. After the completion of the interview, the participants were also presented the opportunity to share their interviews with the Environmental Oral Histories of Southeastern North Carolina Digital Collection with the Mary Livermore Library at UNCP. The researcher explained that this was not a requirement of the research, and it would be the participants' personal choice to give their interviews to the oral history project. A deed of gifts was provided to document their consent to provide their interview to the Mary Livermore Library, with or without restrictions (see Appendix D and E). Before departing from the interviewee, the interviewer thanked them for their time and sharing their experiences (see Appendix F).

Interview Summary

Linda Hayes was interviewed in her home just outside of the town limits of Fair Bluff and provided information in her interview that illustrates the symbolic meaning of place. Mrs. Hayes describes Fair Bluff as her home, a place she has lived her entire life. Cross (2001) typifies this relationship to place as biographical, which is characterized by the relationship developing over time. During the brief interview, Mrs. Hayes displayed a strong sense of place via spiritual, ideological, narrative, and commodified or material types of relationships to Fair Bluff (Cross, 2001). When speaking of her home, Mrs. Hayes identifies the family farm on which she lives to be her home, noting that her family has lived there for at least 200 years; however, the town of Fair Bluff and its community are what truly define Mrs. Hayes' experience and is part of her place identity. For example, the Lumber River is described by Mrs. Hayes as an "asset" by which people made their homes and was responsible for Fair Bluff's existence as a former trading post. Ms. Kathy Ashley also echoed similar sentiments after Hurricane Matthew when speaking to a reporter from *The New York Times* (Bidgood & Blinder, 2016).

Mrs. Hayes' words echo a strong sense of place and an attachment to the home she knows as Fair Bluff. The tone of the interview changes when she discussed the devastation that occurred in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, devastation she describes as "just sad," in part due to the more immediate loss of the town's doctor's office, pharmacy, hardware stores, and computer store. However, Fair Bluff was already changed from her fondest memories and was no longer the same town Mrs. Hayes grew up in, a phenomenon noted by Bidgood and Blinder (2016) who discussed and interviewed locals that viewed the town as being drained even before

Hurricane Matthew. Mrs. Hayes was still hopeful that despite the many losses experienced in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, Fair Bluff would “re-innovate” itself somehow, describing it as an ideal place to rear children and live with little violence. In fact, Mrs. Hayes goes so far to describe Fair Bluff as having been a “Mayberry” town, which Rogers (2016) also describes by saying “Fair Bluff was a sweet little town in the 1950s, a place sort of like Mayberry if you were 10 years old and didn’t look too closely.” Rogers wrote an editorial that related his own memories of Fair Bluff during the 1950s in which he recalls visiting the same Scotty Theater and buying ice cream from the drugstore on Saturdays just as Mrs. Hayes had done. This shared memory and recollection of two individuals who may not have met, is evidence of a strong connection to a specific place, a place that has been incorporated into their identities.

Tony Coleman did not originate from the southern region of the United States, but still considers Fair Bluff his current home as he revealed in an interview in his home also located just outside the town limits of Fair Bluff. Mr. Coleman did not exhibit the same biographical sense of place development as Mrs. Hayes; rather he moved to Fair Bluff in 1997 due to his wife’s wishes to be nearer to her family. The circumstances of Mr. Coleman moving to Fair Bluff typify his relationship with the place of Fair Bluff as dependent, since his choices for relocation were limited due to economic and relationship factors. Mr. Coleman also noted that Fair Bluff had been a thriving small town decades prior to his arrival, likely due his wife having told Mr. Coleman of her own experiences and his wife’s family having lived in the community for several generations. Though Mr. Coleman preferred short and simple

answers, he also provided similar themes to Mrs. Hayes in order to define and describe Fair Bluff. Indirectly, Mr. Coleman refers to the Lumber River when he cites the geographical characteristics of Fair Bluff's location that causes him to say, "I guess the location of where we're at. I can't see any other place being called Fair Bluff." The people that create the community and their personalities also define Fair Bluff for Mr. Coleman, though he did not expound on specific characteristics of the community.

A third interview was conducted with Dr. Ray Lundy, retired pastor of Fair Bluff Baptist Church. Dr. Lundy provided an extensive, detailed account of living through the flooding of Hurricane Matthew during which he weathered the storm in his home a block away from the Lumber River. Emily, Dr. Lundy's daughter, owned Elvington's Pharmacy along Main Street, which has since relocated to Cerro Gordo, North Carolina. At length Dr. Lundy discussed the turmoil his community faced and the fear that he and his wife Linda experienced as the Lumber River began to lap at their doorstep. In addition to his concern for his own residence, Dr. Lundy also assisted Emily during the flooding to salvage medications from her pharmacy as he owned a johnboat that was capable of navigating the floodwaters. The immediate sense of hopelessness at seeing the historic Elvington Pharmacy flooded and the river sweeping away his daughter's life caused Dr. Lundy to comment to his daughter, "Well I'm afraid there goes Fair Bluff. I'm afraid the water has washed Fair Bluff away."

Before and after Hurricane Matthew, Dr. Lundy found that the Lumber River and the community of people are what define and create the magic of Fair Bluff. Dr.

Lundy provided a similar, yet more detailed history of Fair Bluff like Mrs. Hayes did, and also credits Fair Bluff's establishment as a trading post to the Lumber River. As an avid fisherman, Dr. Lundy grew up on the dark river waters of the Pee Dee fishing with his father, something that he also shares with his grandson Ben on the Lumber River. Not only does the river provide resources and a sense of meaning for the community, it is a scenic attraction for many visitors passing through on their way to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Dr. Lundy mentioned a rather common sight in his daughter's pharmacy of tourists who stopped to stretch their legs on the River Walk and buy a cherry Coke or ice cream from the historic soda fountain. The Lumber River often captivates visitors, slowing their pace to stop and observe the natural beauty of its dark waters and drawing these outsiders to spend some time in Fair Bluff.

Having been the pastor of Fair Bluff Baptist Church for 31 years, Dr. Lundy is deeply connected with the community members of Fair Bluff, even those that may not have attended his sermons. In his interview Dr. Lundy demonstrated his connections to his fellow Fair Bluffians by visiting Powell Cemetery near the river, where he counted how many people he had buried: 138 total. Like Mrs. Hayes, Dr. Lundy notes that Fair Bluff is a special place because you can stop in middle of the day on Main Street and talk to just about anyone because almost everyone knows everyone else. Dr. Lundy also has many fond memories of Fair Bluff and shares a great love with his fellow community and church members. This love and connectedness of community results in neighbors helping neighbors, a coming together when another is in need. Even through the trauma of Hurricane Matthew,

community members provided for each other when there were already very few resources. Dr. Lundy and his neighbor had a cookout in Dr. Lundy's driveway as the flooding began to prevent food waste and feed others. Dr. Lundy also used his johnboat to transport people around Fair Bluff, just as many others with boats did to assist in rescue efforts. In very few towns or communities could one find the same stick-together attitude as that of Fair Bluff residents, especially in disaster area, according to Dr. Lundy.

Characteristics of Place

Across these three interviews, two overarching characteristics defined the place of Fair Bluff for these interviewees. Both the Lumber River and the people within the community are what defines Fair Bluff and creates a strong connection to place for these long-term residents. These primary characteristics also have several themes that are important to the interviewees in defining Fair Bluff. The specific features of both the Lumber River and the community are what truly set Fair Bluff apart from the majority of other small towns in rural Southeastern North Carolina.

The Lumber River

Those who live in Southeastern know the Lumber River well with its historical name for the industry that bolstered the population numbers of Southeastern North Carolina in the late 1800s, however it also has another name. The Lumbee tribe of North Carolina, a state recognized tribe and the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River call the river the "Lumbee River," its name being derived from a Native American word for "black water" (National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, 2017). The Lumber River is considered a founding feature of Fair

Bluff, something both Mrs. Hayes and Dr. Lundy agree upon and can recite a similar history for. Mr. Coleman indirectly referenced the geographical location of Fair Bluff, which would potentially refer to the Lumber River as a defining feature of the town. Having a unique and scenic area of historical significance typically strengthens one's sense of place in national park and national monument areas, according to Eisenhauer, Krannich, and Blamah (2000). Fair Bluff is said to have begun as trading post town that formed downstream of Boardman, North Carolina and was incorporated in 1873 (Town of Fair Bluff, 2017). According to Dr. Lundy, at one time Boardman was the largest town in Columbus County due to the Butters Lumber Company, which floated its timber products down the river to Georgetown, South Carolina. The river in Fair Bluff provided a source of income for those that could work in the lumber industry, and though lumber no longer floats down its dark waters, the river still provides for the residents of Fair Bluff. Many families have fished along the banks of the Lumber River for generations, just as Dr. Lundy does with his grandson Ben. Mrs. Hayes' description of the Lumber River as being an "asset" to the residents of Fair Bluff is accurate as it provides for the residents of Fair Bluff in several ways: as a source of sustenance by way of fishing, as a water source in times of drought, and as the reason for the founding of a town nearly 150 years ago. The nature of a scenic river, as it is also designated by the state of North Carolina, seems draw people to stop and admire it, even put down permanent roots in a little town along its banks; however, the Lumber River is not the only reason why people become attached to Fair Bluff.

Importance of Family

The term "community" is typically defined as being a group of individuals who lives in the same geographical area or shares something in common. Mrs. Hayes, Mr. Coleman, and Dr. Lundy all separately stated additional characteristics about Fair Bluff that to them make it more than just a community in the typical sense, which in turn has strengthened their sense of place. A point made by both Mrs. Hayes and Dr. Lundy was that Fair Bluff was a "good place to rear children," emphasizing the importance of family and a potential connection between family and a sense of place. Further evidence of this connection is Mr. Coleman's explanation for moving to Fair Bluff, which was due to his wife's desire to be close to her family as she was raising children. Mrs. Hayes said that there was also "not a lot of violence," which influenced her decision to raise her family in the Fair Bluff area and continue living on her family's farm. Dr. Lundy decided to raise his own family in Fair Bluff though he had the opportunity to move elsewhere with his career as a pastor. The strong sense of place Dr. Lundy developed with Fair Bluff is evident as it transcended generations to his daughter Emily who decided to take over operation of the historic Elvington Pharmacy on Main Street. Now, Dr. Lundy continues to create and strengthen his grandson's sense of place through their fishing trips on the Lumber River.

Relationships

With a population of less than a thousand residents, Fair Bluff is extremely small. Many of the residents of Fair Bluff and the surrounding area of the town are related, or "kin," to one another due to many families intermarrying. The interconnected families of Fair Bluff and the importance of familial relationships

also contribute to the relationships of non-related individuals of the community. The relationships formed within the town are visible in daily interactions, as Dr. Lundy gave an example of being able to stop and talk to anyone he sees and speak to them as though no time had passed since last meeting. This same friendliness is extended to those in need, particularly when a member of the community passes away. Mrs. Hayes noted that everyone comes together to care for grieving families, bringing food and sending flowers in honor of their departed loved ones and to ease the mind of their family. Dr. Lundy also mentioned funerals as an important community bonding experience, many of which he has witnessed by conducting funeral services for 138 congregation members during his career, though none of these funerals were for victims of Hurricane Matthew. This same sense of caring for fellow community members was evident during Hurricane Matthew and the following flooding. Many individuals who owned boats assisted others by emptying their businesses and homes, rescuing pets, and rescuing their neighbors. Trying to make the best of terrible circumstances with one another during the flooding of Hurricane Matthew also stood out in Dr. Lundy's interview. Dr. Lundy and his wife Linda knew that they would lose food from their freezers with no power and decided to have a cookout in their driveway with their neighbors as the water of the Lumber River crept closer up their drive.

Acts of generosity are common occurrences within the community and are not often noted by most residents due to the expectation that the same generosity will be extended to them in the future. Hurricane Matthew might have "plunged the town's future into doubt," as the New York Times (2016) believed, but it

simultaneously exhibited the strength of the entire community. Mrs. Hayes, for example was known to drive 20 minutes around the flooding in downtown Fair Bluff to bring her friend on the other side of town food while her friend was still without power. Described by Dr. Lundy as a "sense of camaraderie," everyone worked together during the flooding to help one another, offering showers to those whose power had not yet been restored. Mrs. Hayes also opened her home to her neighbors during Hurricane Matthew's landfall, comforting them when they received news that their home had been destroyed by a falling tree. Dr. Lundy summed up Fair Bluff's community best by stating:

Only in Fair Bluff can you and I stop in the middle of the street and talk. Right? If I see you walking along, I can stop and say "Hey how you doing? Fine!" You know we can talk for five minutes and people'll go around us and if the police go by they'll wave and keep on driving. That's what makes Fair Bluff, Fair Bluff; part of it. And there's a camaraderie in Fair Bluff of, I call it the affection of the people, the love the people have for each other in Fair Bluff. You know because whether you like it or not, most people know your business, and that's good and bad. And if somebody dies, everybody--all their friends and family rally around them and bring cakes and pies and--well you know how it is.

Though the events of Hurricane Matthew were tragic for the Fair Bluff community, they have not tarnished the positive memories of the river town. Memories of a "Mayberry" town almost directly out of an episode of the Andy Griffith Show are some of Mrs. Hayes' most fond ones. The decline of Fair Bluff

between the 1950s and Hurricane Matthew was largely due to the textile industry leaving the area; a familiar story not unlike many other towns of Southeastern North Carolina. Despite the decline of Fair Bluff, it was still very much alive through the support of its residents. Fair Bluff provides the slower pace of life one may find in a small town, something Dr. Lundy shared in his travels to more urban areas. Upon his description of Fair Bluff as a slow paced, river-based, no-stoplight sort of town to a gentleman from New Jersey, Dr. Lundy was told that Fair Bluff was the kind of place the man dreamed of. Currently, the residents of Fair Bluff and even Dr. Lundy himself find themselves dreaming of water rising rather than the peaceful town they once knew. However, many remain hopeful that someday, even in the distant future, that the Fair Bluff they love so dearly will recover.

Future Planning

In recovery efforts as of the writing of this paper, very little progress has been made in cleaning up, let alone in restoring Fair Bluff. Some townspeople say that they were forgotten as soon as the water receded and news reporters left. Dr. Lundy mentioned that while he received some assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), those that lost the most did not receive adequate assistance and there is no help for business owners whatsoever. FEMA offers a "buyout" program for flood-prone areas, something that a few residents in Fair Bluff have taken advantage of. The stipulation of this "buyout" is that the property purchased by FEMA will be turned into "greenspace." Considering the stipulation of FEMA's buyout program will be important to planning the future of Fair Bluff. Mrs. Hayes wishes for a "re-innovation" of Fair Bluff, something to

revitalize the town and bring back the essential businesses that provided for the town. However, Dr. Lundy views the state of Fair Bluff differently six months after Hurricane Matthew, as he does not believe the town will be able to recover in the near future. Emily, his daughter, like many business owners, do not have the means to make the repairs to their businesses, and the contents of these businesses have gone mostly untouched after the destruction of Hurricane Matthew's flooding.

Capital is necessary in moving Fair Bluff forward; however, the concept of what Fair Bluff will become must change in order to survive in a modern world where the threat of urbanization looms over small towns. Grants from the state of North Carolina would be optimal to begin the cleanup efforts and help business owners recover from their losses and allow them to move forward. Yet even if the capital means were available, the question remains as to what Fair Bluff would become without many of the businesses on Main Street. Despite the loss of businesses, residents must look to resources still available, especially the Lumber River. Dr. Lundy mentioned the allure of a slower pace of life to urbanites and the pull of the river for individuals just passing through on their way to Myrtle Beach. Clearly there is an appeal to the Lumber River, and marketing this appeal could provide a basis for the local economy. With a boat ramp, a scenic riverwalk, and several places to park and fish, Fair Bluff could become an ideal stop for outdoorspeople. The Lumber River State Park in Orrum, is not far and boasts campsites and fire pits, with Fair Bluff being the nearest town for those in need of supplies. Canoeing and kayaking are popular recreational activities and the roadways from Fair Bluff follow the Lumber River downstream, creating a niche

opening for a potential business ventures to guide adventurers down the Lumber River.

Expounding upon the idea of outdoors-based business ventures, marketing the town of Fair Bluff as an ecotourism destination could bring Fair Bluff a pioneering economic concept. Urbanization is correlated with higher incidences of mental health problems, which has been theorized to result from stress of urban city living. Offering an escape from the rush and constant pressure of urban life, Fair Bluff's scenic Lumber River could be a solution. Dr. Lundy mentioned in his interview that the navigability of the river was dependent upon the weather conditions of each year, as it is not cleared or changed by any state agency. The Lumber River is a natural river and the sandbars that become visible during drought periods are unchanged by humans; rather, they are more often used to fish from or to provide a resting spot for swimmers.

Though Fair Bluff is rural, it is not far from larger, metropolitan areas in North and South Carolina. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina is less than an hour's drive from Fair Bluff and is the primary source of summer traffic in the town. Being a short distance away from Myrtle Beach or Fayetteville may provide a reason for new residents to become part of the Fair Bluff community. Homes in Fair Bluff are far less than those in urban areas as a result of slow home sales, and there are several available near or on the riverfront. Flooding in the area is a concern after the record setting flood levels of all major rivers in eastern North Carolina, yet many homes are of older construction and can be lifted above the designated flood safety levels. Access to a river for recreation in a small, friendly town with access to metropolitan

areas is an attractive offer to new families. Dr. Lundy could name several individuals that commuted to Myrtle Beach, Fayetteville, and Florence for work, but had made Fair Bluff their permanent home. The community is also welcoming to newcomers, though there have been very few in recent years.

Conclusion

Sense of place is a vital construct in understanding human behavior and decision-making, especially in helping individuals recover after a natural disaster. Residents of Fair Bluff noted losses they endured as a result of Hurricane Matthew, which were physical alterations to their place with emotionally traumatic circumstances. Individuals who endured the storm in Fair Bluff still carry the weight of the events with them, dreaming of rising waters and experiencing PTSD-like symptoms according to Dr. Lundy. Describing Fair Bluff prior to Hurricane Matthew, interviewees provided imagery of a close-knit, ideal community of a scenic small town where the river and the people of the community were a part of every answer. Every interview question was answered in the form of a story, biographical and historical experiences and information merging together to create a scene to illustrate interviewees' feelings about the place they called Fair Bluff.

Post-hurricane, those stories turned into experiences of strength and survival in a place considered as home to the interviewees. The interconnectedness of the community was put to the test, but residents of Fair Bluff immediately thought of one another first even before their own wellbeing. In doing so, the community members strengthened their sense of place by reinforcing their connections to one another in Fair Bluff despite the circumstances. After the

floodwaters receded, Fair Bluff as a physical space was changed. Interviewees described a change in their sense of place, no longer feeling Fair Bluff was the same place as it was prior to Hurricane Matthew. Though their connections to Fair Bluff were still strong, interviewees were not as enthusiastic speaking about the present state of the town. However, there were glimpses of optimism for the future of Fair Bluff: the interviewees knew that their place would further change if it were to succeed in the future, but keeping Fair Bluff and its memory alive appeared to be the primary goal. Though no residents that were displaced by Hurricane Matthew were interviewed, previous research suggests that loss of community members weakens the community as a whole, but this does not necessarily seem to be the case based on the interviews conducted (Takahashi & Selfa, 2015, p. 860).

With the acceptance and navigation of a changing sense of place, interviewees are prepared to move forward for Fair Bluff to recover. The recovery process is slow; however, the possibilities to create a unique place for others, like tourists, are present for the Fair Bluff community. The same sense of place that residents of Fair Bluff have can be created for others, potentially drawing outside individuals or families to visit every year, in turn strengthening their bond with the place of Fair Bluff. Ecotourism provides the vehicle to do so, by benefitting the economy of the town and preserving the Lumber River that so many hold dear. Only time will determine if Fair Bluff will remain an incorporated town or if outward migration patterns will continue in the future. Regardless, current residents maintain their sense of place in hopes that someday Fair Bluff will recover and their stories will continue to be told.

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Appendix A

Greeting

Hi, my name is Mary Grace Curiale and I am conducting interview-based research that will be used for a larger project for my senior thesis. In my research I am interested in investigating the relationship between people and particular places, especially when the place has been changed by a natural disaster. Would you be interested in participating in an interview? The interview should take you no more than one hour to complete.

Thank you.

Appendix B

Consent Form

**University of North Carolina-Pembroke
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB Study # 17-03-003

Consent Form Version Date: 3/16/2017

Title of Study: Rural Attachment to Place: A Change in Relationship

Principal Investigator: Mary Grace Curiale
UNC-Pembroke Department: American Indian Studies
UNC-Pembroke Phone number: (910) 840-6237
Email Address: mgc009@bravemail.uncp.edu
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jane Haladay
Funding Source and/or Sponsor: Not Applicable

Study Contact telephone number: (910) 840-6237

Study Contact email: mgc009@bravemil.uncp.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn about the relationship and connection a person has with a particular place. Previous research indicates that people form attachments to spaces that effect how individuals interact with their environment. With the recent impact of Hurricane Matthew and the lack of research in rural communities, this research study aims to expand upon previous research to involve rural and changing perspectives and relationships to place.

You are being asked to be in the study because you have lived in the Fair Bluff area

on a long-term basis and are 50 years of age or older.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?

You should not be in this study if you are under the age of 50 or have not lived long-term in the Fair Bluff community.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately five people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher of no more than an hour. There will be only one interview session.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

You will be asked to meet for approximately one hour with the researcher for an interview. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions regarding your perspective and relationship to your physical space and your community. The researcher will record your responses during the interview with an audio recorder, which may be turned off during certain points of the interview if you ask for something to not be recorded. At the conclusion of the interview, your responses will be transcribed to ensure accuracy of information. Your name will not be associated with your interview at your request, and a fictitious name will be given to protect your identity.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There may be minimal risk to you in this interview, however you may experience some discomfort when being asked certain questions regarding relationships to place and the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. If you are uncomfortable with a question, you are not required to answer it and may proceed to the next question. You may also choose to end the interview. You will also be provided contact information for local resources for emotional discomfort experienced.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

How will your privacy be protected?

Your privacy and confidentiality will be protected throughout the course of this research. Your interview will be associated with a fictitious name if you choose to protect your identity. The audio recording of your interview will be saved digitally on a password protected laptop. An additional hard copy of your interview will be kept in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher will have access.

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-

Pembroke will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

The audio recording of your interview will be reviewed for themes related to your connection to a place. You may request that the audio recorder be turned off for certain portions of the interview if you do not wish for your response to be recorded. After the interview, the recording of your interview will be saved both to a password-protected laptop and a physical disc copy will be kept in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access. The recording of your interview will be transcribed and also kept on a password-protected laptop. The transcription will be reviewed and compared to other interviews performed for this research for similarities. The recording of your interview will be kept for one year after research has been completed.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 910.775.4359 or by email to irb@uncp.edu.

Title of Study: Rural Attachment to Place: A Change in Relationship

Principal Investigator: Mary Grace Curiale

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Where is home for you and what is it like?
2. What are some of your favorite memories of Fair Bluff?
3. How long have you or your family lived here?
4. What has changed, from your perspective, since Hurricane Matthew?
5. How have your feelings about Fair Bluff changed since the flood?
6. How would you describe Fair Bluff to others?
7. What makes this place Fair Bluff?

Appendix D

Deed of Gift with Restrictions

This interview is being conducted for a senior thesis project by Mary Grace Curiale, a student in the Esther G. Maynor Honors College, at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Audio recordings, video, transcripts, and photographs resulting from the interviews conducted ("Material") may become part of the UNCP's Digital Collection titled "Environmental Oral Histories in Southeastern North Carolina" in the Mary Livermore Library, where they will be made available for use consistent with the University's mission. In order for your Material to be deposited in the Mary Livermore Library's Digital Collections archive, it will be necessary for you to sign this gift agreement. Before doing so, you should read it carefully and ask any questions you may have regarding its terms and conditions.

I, _____, herein permanently donate and convey my oral history interview/s and/or other Material to the Digital Archives of the Mary Livermore Library at UNCP. In making this gift, I understand that I am conveying all right, title, and interest in copyright to the University. In return, UNCP grants me a nonexclusive license to utilize my interview/s and/or other Material during my lifetime. I also grant to the University the right to use my name and likeness in any promotional material for publication of projects.

I further understand that I will have the opportunity to review and edit a transcript of my interview before it is made available for research. Future uses may include quotation and publication or broadcast in any media including the Internet. The University will then make my interview/s available for research subject to the following restrictions.

Restrictions

_____ I wish that my interview and other Material not be made available until (circle one) 5 / 10 / 15 years from the date of this interview.

_____ I wish to be identified by a pseudonym and have all references from which my identity could be known redacted until (circle one) 5 / 10 / 15 years from the date of this interview.

[Any additional restriction must be discussed with Program staff prior to implementation.]
The Mary Livermore Library agrees to take all reasonable steps to honor my restrictions. I understand that the Mary Livermore Library may not be able to uphold them against a freedom of information request or subpoena.

Interviewee signature

Interviewer signature

Date

Date

Street address

Street address

City, State, Zip code

City, State, Zip code

Appendix E

Deed of Gift

This interview is being conducted for a senior thesis project by Mary Grace Curiale, a student in the Esther G. Maynor Honors College, at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Audio recordings, video, transcripts, and photographs resulting from the interviews conducted ("Material") may become part of the UNCP's Digital Collection titled "Environmental Oral Histories in Southeastern North Carolina" in the Mary Livermore Library, where they will be made available for use consistent with the University's mission. In order for your Material to be deposited in the Mary Livermore Library's Digital Collections archive, it will be necessary for you to sign this gift agreement. Before doing so, you should read it carefully and ask any questions you may have regarding its terms and conditions.

I, _____, herein permanently donate and convey my oral history interview/s and/or other Material to the Digital Archives of the Mary Livermore Library at UNCP. In making this gift, I understand that I am conveying all right, title, and interest in copyright to the University. In return, UNCP grants me a nonexclusive license to utilize my interview/s and/or other Material during my lifetime. I also grant to the University the right to use my name and likeness in any promotional material for publication of projects.

I further understand that I will have the opportunity to review and edit a transcript of my interview before it is made available.

Interviewee signature

Interviewer signature

Date

Date

Street address

Street address

City, State, Zip code

City, State, Zip code

Appendix F

Debriefing Statement

Thank you so much for assisting my research. Your interview will help me tremendously. There were no wrong or right answers to the questions asked. This interview was only designed to investigate the relationship between people and specific places that they may form an attachment with. I appreciate you dedicating your time to help further my understanding of this topic.

If you would like a copy of the transcript of your interview, you may contact me to receive a copy for your personal records and/or review. Additionally, your interview and transcript may be used in future research and publications with your consent.

Enjoy the rest of your day.