MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTIONS AND SENSE OF PLACE IN FRANKLIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Abstract

THESIS: Measuring Environmental Perceptions and Sense of Place in Franklin County, Florida

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Franklin County, Florida is widely perceived as one of the last unspoiled areas on the Gulf Coast. This study examines the historical geography, economic activities and socio-cultural aspects of the area which contribute to the construction of sense of place values among residents and visitors. The commodification of nature emerged as a consistent theme of this research from the timber and seafood industries to real estate development and tourism. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze environmental perceptions and sense of place intensity. Results provided an opportunity to compare the two methods and to identify key factors contributing to the construction of sense of place. Informants perceived that the areas unique way of life linked to the natural environment played an important role in sense of place and personal identity construction.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Franklin County, Florida, (Figure 1) including the communities of Apalachicola, St. George Island, and Eastpoint, is an area of historic homes, beautiful beaches, and until recently abundant seafood, especially the famous Apalachicola Bay oyster. In fact, oysters played an important role in populating the area as early as 10,000 years ago (Jahoda, 1967). The Native Americans who originally inhabited the region relied on the abundance of oyster beds in the Apalachicola Bay as a primary food resource. It was these early inhabitants who gave the name “Apalachicola” to the area, which roughly translated to “land of the friendly people.” The term “Apalachicola” is also used to describe a ridge of earth produced by sweeping the ground in preparation for a council or peace fire (Rogers, 1986).

This research focuses on the construction of a sense of place in Franklin County, Florida, by examining the historical geography of the area, evolving economic imperatives, and differing environmental perceptions. The commodification of nature, whether through the exploitation of timber and oysters, or by capitalizing on the area’s unique sense of place in order to lure vacationers and homebuyers, is an underlying theme of this research. An important aspect of the area’s current place image is that it has remained relatively undeveloped in comparison to most coastal areas in Florida. The
Figure 1: Franklin County, Florida
image of a pristine “old Florida” contributes significantly to the construction of a regional sense of place, but contrasts with the area’s history of economic exploitation of natural resources, i.e. the commodification of nature. A 2007 article in *Southern Living* exemplifies this view of Apalachicola and the life associated with it:

> Morning comes gently to Apalachicola. Oyster boats and shrimp boats begin their daily pilgrimages into the seafood-rich bay as the sun rises on the Northwest Florida coast. The lights twinkle on in this fishing village, its residents ready for another day in unspoiled paradise. If you ever wondered if such a place still exists, yes, old Florida lives here. A lone blinking yellow light directs the downtown traffic. Come and stay awhile in this wonderful, walkable, watery hamlet. Try the pace on for size (McKinney, 2007: 1).

Ecotopian ideology, development issues, and sustainability play important roles as current issues in this analysis. The area stirs feelings of a deep relationship with the natural environment for some, and is also viewed as an untouched resource available for exploitation for economic gain. Others feel it is an area that must be protected and preserved to maintain the delicate biodiversity associated with the area’s estuarine habitat. A brief overview of current environmental policy trends and impacts of those policies on those connected to the area are also examined. This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What cultural and natural factors contribute significantly to the areas’ sense of place?

2. How does the region’s history of commodifying nature converge with differing environmental perceptions in constructing a sense of place?

3. How do perceptions of the environment and sense of place vary among long-time residents, recent arrivals and vacationers?
Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed in this study. Given the elusive nature of concepts such as sense of place and environmental perception, a variety of ethnographic methods are used to address the research questions including: participant observation, historical archival and secondary sources, tourism brochures, planning and environmental policy reports, literary works about the region, newspaper articles, and formal and informal interviews with key informants. Key informants include, but are not limited to local businessmen, people involved in the tourism industry, realtors, retirees, visitors, recent and long-time residents, local officials and fishermen. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in 2002, 2003, 2007, and 2008. Individual interviews were conducted in June of 2003 with follow up interviews in the fall of 2007. The interviews were constructed utilizing open ended questions to allow interviewees to express their feelings associated with current economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects of the area.

The second method employed in this study utilized quantitative data obtained through a questionnaire that was distributed at many locations throughout Franklin County including Apalachicola, Eastpoint, and St. George Island during August of 2008. Since an important goal of this research is to measure and compare sense of place and environmental perceptions among various groups, the survey instrument was modeled on a similar questionnaire administered by Nanzer (2004). Following Jorgensen and Stedman’s (2001) research, Nanzer divided the concept of sense of place into three components; place attachment, place dependence, and place identity in an attempt to measure the intensity of sense of place among Michigan residents. The questionnaire
contained twelve questions regarding Michigan and the Great Lakes utilizing the Likert scale. Four questions addressed each of the three subscales: place dependence, place identity, and place attachment. Within each subscale there were three questions designed for positive response (strongly agree or agree) and one question for a negative response (strongly disagree or disagree). Nanzer’s results from the twelve questions were evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, which indicated a “strong, internally consistent scale considered a reliable instrument to measure the level of sense of place” (Nanzer, 2004: 369). The alpha measurement of combined items resulting in $\alpha = 1$ would indicate the highest level of reliability. It is typical to consider an $\alpha$ value greater than 0.8 to indicate a good internal consistency among the responses to the questions, and the Nanzer study resulted in $\alpha = 0.87$.

A similar design was used in developing the questionnaire used to evaluate sense of place of those living in Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. Simple random sampling was used as the questionnaire was disseminated at three locations with the heaviest volume of pedestrian traffic. Apalachicola, Eastpoint, and St. George Island were chosen and questionnaires were handed out in businesses, the town hall, street corners, along the beach, and several other locations. A total of 300 questionnaires were disseminated and 97 were returned.

**Thesis Overview**

Historically, the most important economic activities and sources of livelihoods in the study area, from fur trading and lumber to seafood, have utilized the natural environment in developing a product. The emerging tourism and real estate industries
continue to commodify nature, but have also used the area’s unique sense of place and the cultural landscape to attract homebuyers and visitors to the region. It is important to examine the environmental and cultural factors that have contributed to a sense of place, and to attempt to measure place dependence, place attachment, and place identity, because tourism and overdevelopment have the potential to destroy or drastically alter the natural and cultural resources that attract people to the area.

The literature review in chapter two addresses four themes pertinent to this research: human environmental relationships, environmentalism, place and sense of place. Chapter three examines cultural and historical factors that contribute significantly to the area’s unique sense of place and provide the resources for heritage tourism.

Chapter four examines the natural environment of the county and the commodification of natural resources including the timber and real estate activities of the St. Joe Company and the seafood industry. The seafood industry and the threatened estuarine system that supports it is important economically, but is also vital to the area’s place image and a perceived “way of life.” Although ethnographic material is used extensively in chapter four, a specific discussion and analysis of the questionnaire and open-ended interviews are addressed in chapter five. Chapter six presents conclusions drawn from both quantitative and qualitative aspects of fieldwork.
Chapter 2

Theory and Literature Review

Human Environment Relationships

Most contemporary academic work in human geography represent nature as a social construction. Within this context two approaches have emerged regarding the relationship between society and nature. The Marxist approach consists of defining nature as a mode of production determined by economic systems. The second view is that of cultural geographers who focus on the changing idea of nature, how that idea differs between cultures, and how each culture represents nature. (Whatmore, 1999)

The Marxist view emphasizes the role of a society’s production system (i.e. capitalism) in producing nature. This idea that nature is a product of culture is based upon three modes of production: first nature, second nature, and third nature. First nature represents nature in its original state, presumably unaltered by human activity. Second nature is defined as a state of nature that has been produced by society (i.e. industrialization). An example of second nature or the material transformation of nature would be that of a society with advanced farming techniques and tools. The purpose of this transformation relates back to the idea that nature is manipulated to produce a higher profit. Third nature harnesses the idea of second nature further by artificially creating nature by the use of simulated techniques (i.e. computer models and laboratory
techniques). The overall meaning behind these three stages is that we as humans produce nature and determine its destiny (Smith, 1990). However, these ideas have also brought forth the notion that nature as it is modified and produced by society could be altered in ways that are not beneficial to human beings, such as global warming. Therefore, we can produce our own nature, but we might not exactly know the final outcome of that nature we produce.

The second tradition deals with differing perceptions of nature as a social construction. This view emphasizes that different societies represent nature in different ways. Three primary principles that anchor the perceptions of nature begin with the idea that a representation of nature is not an exact replica of the real thing. It is more a representation of our perception of what nature is. The second principle acknowledges that representations cannot be taken at face value no matter how much they appear to be real (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988). For example, a county government might designate an area as a nature preserve, and therefore, manipulate that area during the planning stages so it appears to be completely natural. However, this “natural state” is only a representation guided by the perceptions of those who planned the preserve. This representation of nature is exemplified by the St. Joe Company, the largest private landowner in Franklin County, designating some of their pine plantation land as a nature preserve to appease the local environmental groups who would normally oppose certain development projects. The third principle states that there are many ways of viewing the same representation. The perception of one person, group or culture might conflict with that of another in grasping a view of what constitutes nature in a given case (Whatmore, 1999). For example, while planners and developers may designate a golf course as a
“natural” area, environmentalists may dispute the designation because of high inputs of water, pesticides and herbicides.

**Environmentalism**

There are many reasons for the emergence of environmentalism since the 1960s. During the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of quantitative research, numerical values were harnessed to measure environmental conditions. Researchers began to understand the factors creating air, land, and water pollution, and were able to determine that environmental problems, such as acidification and pesticide pollution, were often directly caused by human activity. These environmental conditions were noted during a generation of what Ronald Inglehart (1977) described as post-materialists, who had been raised in the prosperous welfare states of the West, and no longer had to spend time striving for subsistence. Post-materialists instead pursued a better quality of life, or what Maslow (1970) termed a ‘higher order’ that places a large emphasis on environmental protection. The publication of the first images of Earth from space also contributed to the social construction of environmentalism by adding perspective to the size and vulnerability of the planet (Jordan and O’Riordan, 1999).

Economic factors including the economic standing of individuals play an important role in environmental concerns. Typically, those who are wealthy and highly educated will have more concern towards environmental conditions because their time is not spent toiling with everyday stresses of debt management and economic planning. This is also true at the state level with historical evidence of increased levels of
environmental concern rising with economic prosperity, and concern dwindling during times of recession (Inglehart, 1977).

The study of human-environment relationships may be divided into two often opposing paradigms: the technocentric approach and the ecocentric approach. The rationalist technocentric view holds that humans have a right to exploit nature and that environmental problems can be dealt with by careful management and rational decision making techniques (Garner, 1996). In other words, technology and human ingenuity will overcome any environmental problem. In contrast, ecocentrism or deep ecology is largely based upon a rejection of this classical scientific paradigm and is a response to the effects of the industrial revolution. According to ecocentrics, mankind and nature are part of a ‘web of life’ with human actions governed by the moral, aesthetic and physical imperatives of being part of that ‘web’ (Pepper, 1996). Thoreau argued that humans should have respect for nature as nature provided people with a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of a ‘chain of being’ on which all life forms, the links, are of equal worth (Thoreau, 1974 [1854]). This organic view of the relationship between people and the environment created a ‘bioethic’ or ecological imperative for people to live within the bounds of nature (Garner, 1996). The debate between these ideologies and their impact on a sense of place is exemplified in the current perceptions and attitudes of those associated with Franklin County, Florida.

Technocentrists apply the concept of inter-generational equity, which emphasizes the non-sustainability of current environmental practices. Technocentrists approach environmental sustainability from the premise that in spite of possible and unforeseen environmental consequences of human activities, technological innovations will
eventually benefit humanity and address environmental concerns as well. Ecocentrists, on the other hand, distrust science and technological fixes, and feel that technology can be a major contributor to environmental problems. They feel that a radical social and political change is necessary to promote environmental sustainability, and challenge economic growth and material consumption by arguing that natural limits exist that we must recognize. Therefore, ecocentrists suggest we must begin to restrain our use of natural resources for production and consumption (O’Riordan, 1976).

Environmental policy is different from other policy arenas because of the difficulty of placing a monetary value on the costs and benefits to society of sound environmental management (Hanley et al., 2003). Differing economic, political and social priorities and the need for state intervention to regulate human behavior raise questions of private property rights versus the need to regulate environmental resources for the common good (Hanna et al., 1996). Cost-benefit analyses must take into account the spatial dimensions of environmental policies and consider differing needs on local and global levels (Garner, 1996). Political borders create another hurdle in environmental management. For example, depletion of the ozone layer, acidification, and in this research, the shortage of water and related water quality in the Apalachicola watershed, cannot be administered at the state level, but must be controlled at the interstate or federal if not global level (Jordan and O’Riordan, 1999).

Furthermore, the Earth is capable of only a certain amount of self-repair; therefore, policies must take into account the concept of irreversibility (O’Riordan and Jordan, 1997). Further, political activity has been split between several different organizations at the local, state, and federal level, so producing agreed upon
environmental policies is very time consuming and difficult. To achieve environmental sustainability is to develop regulations that prohibit economic ties between those institutions conducting unsustainable processes and political officials (Jordan and O’Riordan, 1999). Traditional development objectives are to provide for the basic needs of a community without regard to the consumption of resources (Rostow, 1960). It can be argued that these objectives do not always conflict with the objective of ecological sustainability, however, environmental degradation affects millions worldwide and is likely to severely curtail human well-being within the next few generations. Environmental degradation is often caused by poverty since the poor have no option but to exploit resources for short term survival (Lele, 1991).

**Place**

A theoretical understanding of nature as it is constructed by a given society is important in assessing a community’s sense of place. In addition, a locale’s historical development and economic imperatives will also contribute to the construction of place. Mere location is defined by Agnew (1987) as a point in space with specific relations to other points in space. The concept of place includes this objective definition of location, but also includes a definition describing a subjective feeling associated with place. These subjective feelings will be different for individuals within that place compared to outsiders. Therefore, place is a blend of objective and subjective attributes including location, but like representations of nature are culturally constructed (Agnew, 1987).

Categories of place are perceived as natural because they are not thought of as social constructs, but as a means of reproducing the existing order of things. Time and
space are two important dimensions of life which most philosophers feel create all other forms of categorization. Our understanding of space and time are so basic and taken-for-granted in that they seem to “pre-exist our conception and representation of them -- that is to say they appear as nature” (Cresswell, 1999: 227).

Environmental researchers have become increasingly interested in place values as important components of our relationship with and evaluation of the environment (Ehrenfeld, 1993; Sagoff, 1992). While the concept of place is addressed in the literature of several disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and environmental ethics, this concept has been most developed by geographers and is conceived of as a process, continually constructed and transformed. Place is the interaction between global forces, local histories and cultural constructs, and individual human agency. Place is inherently unstable, with displacement a fundamental part of the experience (Oakes, 1997). Place is the location in which people struggle to achieve goals and understand their existence. Through struggle, meaning is built into inanimate objects that give place symbolic significance. This meaning can become a part of social identity, which is a place based identity for groups within society. Place and identity are tied together in the sociospatial dialectic (Soja, 1989). However, places can have many meanings and identities, which are often contradictory and competing.

**Sense of Place**

A sense of place is created from the importance and meaning of a particular locale based on an individual or group’s experience associated with that setting (Stedman, 2003). Sense of place is also contingent on the contexts of race, gender, and class within
society. According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) a place is a center of meaning or field of care which is based on a compilation of social relationships, human experience, emotions and thoughts. Conceptualizing sense of place emphasizes the manner in which humans relate to and feel about their natural and cultural environments and how they experience it whether it be living in or visiting a setting (Hummon, 1992; Shumaker and Hankin, 1984). Places are composed of the physical setting, human activities associated within that setting, and human social and psychological processes rooted in the setting, including meanings and attachments (Brandenburg and Carrol, 1995). A better understanding of place would benefit policy makers and land managers as they deal with issues that concern those associated with these settings. Places are much more than points on a map, they “exist in many sizes, shapes, and levels, and they can be tangible as well as symbolic” (Kaltenborn, 1998: 176). Much of the literature describes current investigations of sense of place loss within traditional communities and the decline of a personal connection with a specific locale (Wasserman, 1998).

Tuan discusses place in opposition to space. Space is described by geometric principles of distance and direction, where place is culturally constructed (Sack, 1997). According to Ryden (1993) we turn space into place through personal experiences. It is very difficult to concentrate on space without soon turning to the related concept of place. Contemplation of a point on a map very quickly invites speculation about what that place looks like, who lives there, and an immediate emotional association with that place is created. The conversion of space to place includes the progression from the unknown to the familiar. Through human experience, “…abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning” (Tuan, 1977: 199). A
sense of place continues to evolve over time as an accumulation of human experiences collectively intensifies place attachment. Taking that concept into account basically implies those associated with a place will have a stronger degree of sense of place over time (Relph, 1976). As Ryden (1993: 66) observes “Extended residence in a place tends to make us feel toward it almost as a living thing. The place has become a shaping partner in our lives, we partially define ourselves in its terms, and it carries the emotional charge of a family member or any other influential human agent”.

This research addresses three components of sense of place: place attachment, place dependence, and place identity (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Place attachment is developed via the personal connection an individual or group has with a certain geographic setting (Nanzer, 2004). It is defined as an affective bond or link between people and specific places (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Place dependence refers to the importance of a place with regards to relying on that place for personal goals and satisfaction. Place identity is described as the “dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment” (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001: 234).

**Place Attachment**

Early studies of place attachment were directed toward the built environment. More recent studies have explored the concept in the context of tourism dependent communities, as well as resource dependent communities (Vorkinn and Riese, 2001). Studies have also included local residents’ attachment to nearby places, attachments to
recreational destinations, and those of second home owners (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Everyday life activities assist in building a place attachment within an individual or group by creating the conditions for individuals to develop a relationship with the environmental aspects of place (Nanzer, 2004). The degree or intensity of place attachment is directly related to the level of experience an individual has with a particular locale. Nanzer (2004: 364) claims that place attachment, “is the result of long-term emersion in and acceptance of an area’s values, beliefs, and cultural systems that help convert individual un-rooted thinking to acceptance of group norms and attachment to the geographic location in which the group resides.”

The literature on place attachment is diverse, multidisciplinary, and spans at least a couple of decades. Tuan (1977) is one of the best known and frequently cited authors on place and place attachment. Tuan discussed several important dimensions of place, including the issue of scale. Both the Earth and an armchair represent places, but Tuan spent considerable time discussing the concept of “home” as a meaningful intermediate scale in terms of place and place attachment. Tuan also described the complex process of space becoming place through experience, cultural transmission of meanings, and other evolutionary or revolutionary defining events or moments (Tuan, 1977). Proshansky described in detail the role of places in the complex process of self-identity formation and laments the lack of attention paid in the psychological literature on non-social determinants of self-identity (Proshansky et al., 1983). Relph (1976) suggests that a key component in the study of place and place attachment is the notion that there is a broad continuum that ranges “from simple
recognition... to a profound association with places as cornerstones of human existence and individual identity,”

Much of the early work on place and place attachment discussed place in rather abstract terms. Geographers such as Goss (1988) were concerned with the phenomenological aspects of the experience of place, and most discussions of environmental influences on place attachment focused on the built environment, as opposed to the “natural” environment.

A more recent vein of the place attachment literature is rooted in outdoor recreation studies. Many of these studies attempt to understand visitors’ emotional ties to, and the symbolic meanings that people attach to specific geographic locales (Williams et al., 1992). This focus on visitors to places stands in direct contrast to the community attachment literature, which focuses exclusively on residents of places (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). Recently, there has been more work done on second-home owners’ attachment to place. This work represents a partial closure in the gap between visitor attachment and community attachment as recreational homeowners spend an intermediate amount of time in place, and likely form complex attachments that involve both ecological, environmental and sociocultural attachments (Kaltenborn, 1998).

The recent literature on place attachment has undergone a gradual evolution from an initial focus on preferences for various attributes based merely on visual perception to broader conceptions of landscapes that involve emotional and psychological bonds such as a sense of belonging and attachment (Jones, 1996). The portion of this literature that is rooted in recreation research also acknowledges the central role that place takes in the recreational experience. The attributes of such places have frequently
been treated as commodities, although some criticize the limitations of this approach (Williams et al., 1992). Cheng and Daniels (1996) argue that attachments to place emerge as groups come together to share common definitions and through the use of common symbols. It is very possible that the most important symbols in many places are landscape features: a mountain, an old-growth grove, a wetland, a bay, or a river (Cheng and Daniels, 1996).

**Place Dependence**

Place dependence as first described by Stokols and Shumaker (1981) reflects the importance of a place in providing features and conditions that support specific goals or desired activities as compared to another potential location. This dependence is embodied in the area’s physical attributes that in our case are identified by Apalachicola Bay and associated characteristics. For example, an oysterman in Apalachicola would have a hard time identifying another location that would include the exact features and conditions that provides for his/her way of life. Place dependence suggests an ongoing relationship with a particular place by establishing a functional attachment to the natural resources of the area (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001). When a particular place is close enough to allow for frequent visitation, place dependence may increase because a consistent relationship with a particular setting develops. Though local natural areas and preserves may be ideal for establishing this functional attachment, such attachments may form with any place that supports highly valued goals or activities (Williams and Roggenbuck, 1989). This research examines not only the dependence established by those who have resided in the county their entire lives, but to a lesser extent the weekend home owners and vacationers that frequently visit the place.
This research does not hypothesize that the sense of place of residents was created only from the dependence on occupational or recreational characteristics of the county. This study more specifically examines the relationship between the geographical setting near the estuarine system of Apalachicola Bay and Franklin County residents. This provides a situation in which the construct of sense of place towards the area can be impacted by place dependence due to its natural environment attributes.

**Place Identity**

Place identity refers to the symbolic importance of a place as a repository for emotions and relationships that give meaning and purpose to life. As such, place identity has been described as a component of self-identity that enhances self-esteem, increases feelings of belonging to a community, and is an influential factor in determining environmental values and policies (Cantril, 1998; Proshansky et al., 1983; Relph, 1976). Place identity is not necessarily a direct result of any particular experience with the place, though it generally involves an emotional investment with the place that tends to develop over time (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993). Individuals construct identity through the interdependent and intricate relationship between the environment and the socio-cultural mechanisms that are associated with an individual (Nanzer, 2004).

The most powerful and lasting memories evolve around places, events and the people populating them for many individuals. It is the intensity of personal experiences and memories of each individual associated with a place that is important in developing an individual’s self identity. The place at which these events occur, and the continued association with the environments and people throughout life further shape that identity (Marcus, 1992). The strength of place identity is based on the emotional investment
made by individuals towards a specific place and their associated length of involvement with that place (Nanzer, 2004). It is possible to develop place attachment after a single visit to a particular place; however, it is repetitive visitation over time that would allow for place identity to evolve. This research suggests that those associated with the county integrated the area into their self identity as a result of being incorporated into and experiencing the area’s culture. An assumption is made that those individuals possessing longer term experience with the area’s culture are most likely to include into their place identity.
Chapter 3

Historical and Cultural Context

The first Europeans to settle the Apalachicola Bay environs were Spanish missionaries, who came to Florida in the early seventeenth century and founded small communities along the Gulf of Mexico and Apalachicola River. For roughly 150 years, Spanish, and later Scottish, traders sold their finished goods in return for furs in the region, both to the local Native Americans and other Europeans who were busy exploring the new frontier (Owens, 1966). A Scottish firm, Panton, Leslie and Company, was licensed to trade in Northwest Florida under the protection of the Spanish government, creating a monopoly on trade. In retaliation, a rival trader hired notorious gambler and agitator William Augustus Bowles to raid the trading posts, in what became known as the “Little War.” In the fall of 1799, a violent storm left Bowles shipwrecked on St. George Island. Soon after, he was captured by the Spanish, who placed him in a Cuban prison. Bowles continues to play a role in the local heritage tourism industry through a legend that prior to his capture he buried a large treasure on St. George Island (Rogers, 1986).

The Adams-Onis Treaty officially transferred Florida to the United States in 1821. Native Americans were subsequently relocated to the American West and new settler families began farming the region (Owens, 1966). To protect the increasing
commercial sailing traffic, a lighthouse, with a government dock and keeper’s house, was built at Cape St. George in the early nineteenth century. In 1823, a customs house was built on the Apalachicola River in order to accommodate the growing cotton trade along the waterway. The Apalachicola River system gave the settlement access to a rich cotton growing hinterland. Incorporated as “West Point” in 1829, the new town at the mouth of the river adopted the name “Apalachicola” in 1831. Only a short time later, Apalachicola would become the third busiest port on the Gulf Coast as the cotton trade boomed (Rogers, 1986).

Between 1828 and 1838, the population of Apalachicola grew from approximately 150 to 2,000 thus creating the cultural landscape that became the basis for Apalachicola’s historic district. However, trade fluctuations and yellow fever epidemics took their toll on the community with the town at its most populated during the cool winter months when the most cotton was shipped, depopulating to only a few hundred residents during the muggy summers when yellow fever, not cotton, was king (Jahoda, 1967). During the cotton shipping season, thousands of bales made their way from Apalachicola Bay to New England and on to Europe. The town was even home to several foreign consulates. The yellow fever epidemics that plagued Apalachicola, while decimating the population, provided the impetus for a local physician, Dr. John Gorrie, to invent a refrigeration system designed to cool the fevers of his ailing patients. Gorrie’s invention led to the development of the ice machine and the modern day air conditioning system (Sherlock, 1982). The John Gorrie Museum State Park (Figure 2), Apalachicola’s primary interpretive center, displays a replica of his ice-making machine.
As an important port, Apalachicola provided a safe haven for ships bearing supplies for the Confederacy. As a result, the Union set up a naval blockade on June 11, 1861, when the USS Montgomery arrived offshore. Although no significant battles took place in Apalachicola Bay, both Union and Confederate forces occupied the strategically significant region at various times during the war, and the opinions of Apalachicola’s citizens remained divided throughout the conflict (Owens, 1966).

As railroads expanded throughout the United States, Apalachicola’s waterways became less significant, and the town’s standing as a cotton shipping port diminished. However, a new extractive industry, lumber, took shape during this time. As home to large cypress forests, Franklin County saw the construction of several lumber mills in the late 1800s. Lumber magnates who moved to the region to seek their fortunes built many of the historic homes that line Apalachicola’s streets and provided the raw materials for heritage tourism in the county (Conrad, 2003).

On the other side of the bay, however, a different motivation lured families to the area. In April 1898, a Quaker named David Brown traveled with his family and several followers from Georgia to found an experimental, cooperative community across the river from Apalachicola. In 1901, the town was christened “Eastpoint” (Figure 1) and Mrs. Brown established the first Eastpoint post office in the Brown home. The Crescent City paddlewheel boat operated between the communities of Apalachicola, Eastpoint and Carrabelle (Eidse, 2006).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the oyster industry was gaining importance in the area, initially on a small scale. Apalachicola became an important base for the Florida sponge industry during this time and by 1895 the town was the third largest sponge processor in
the state. Of the two sponge warehouses in Apalachicola, one still stands on Avenue E in the historic district (Figure 2). In 1907, the new Apalachicola Northern Railroad began running an “Oyster Special” to Atlanta, with cars filled with ice-packed oysters (Rogers, 1986). Seafood remains an important industry in the area, as do heritage and beach tourism. Apalachicola’s historic district boasts several renowned bed and breakfasts (Figure 2), and St. George Island (Figure 1) attracts beach lovers from all over America. Remnants of this colorful past are made tangible through the nearly 900 structures listed on the National Historic District Register (Figure 2). A scenic walking tour of the town highlights many of these places from the Victorian homes among magnolias to the original cotton warehouses, museums and parks that bring to life the bustling river port days of the 1830s.

Franklin County and the Apalachicola Bay no longer see cotton barges traveling its waters en route to points north, but the Intracoastal Waterway and the bay itself are popular for recreational boating and fishing. Tourism has become increasingly important to the region as visitors and second homeowners flock to Apalachicola to, as the travel brochures proclaim, revel in the beauty and tranquility of Florida’s “Forgotten Coast.” “Visitors to Apalachicola immediately know that they are in a very special place,” said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Invoking one of the area’s most persistent place images Moe claims, “Tourism has not changed the face of the town or the lifestyle of its residents. It is Florida as it once was and it’s authenticity is one of the best reasons to visit this charming community” (Wennerstrom, 2008: 1).
Figure 2: Significant Points in Apalachicola, Florida

Legend

Location, Name
- 1. Chamber of Commerce
- 2. Cotton Warehouse
- 3. Sponge Exchange
- 4. Panama Guest Cottage
- 5. Fort Clinch Armory
- 6. Osceola Inn
- 7. Battery Park
- 8. John Perry State Museum
- 9. Columbia House Inn
- 10. Kithompson Inn
- 11. Mile Rocks - Key House
- 12. St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge
- 13. Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
The federal government’s presence in the county expanded during World War II. Apalachicola became the site of a major Army Air Corps landing field, and the eastern part of the county, including St. George Island, hosted over 30,000 military personnel, including a young future General, Omar Bradley, at Camp Gordon Johnson, where regiments performed amphibious training exercises (Coles, 1994). The army left by 1947, and the county resumed its importance in the seafood trade.

In February of 2008 the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) named Apalachicola, Florida, one of its 2008 Dozen Distinctive Destinations. The NTHP selects communities on an annual basis from across the United States that offer cultural and recreational experiences different from the typical vacation destination. According to the NTHP, because of its dynamic downtown and 19th century architecture and its commitment to historic preservation, Apalachicola “boasts a richness of character and exudes an authentic sense of place” (Wennerstrom, 2008: 1).

Apalachicola is also home to a unique estuary ecosystem, as part of the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (Lovestrand, 2003). The completion of the Gorrie Bridge in 1935 connected Apalachicola and Eastpoint, making the region more accessible to road traffic. A new bridge was recently constructed connecting the mainland at Apalachicola to St. George Island. The newly constructed bridge replaced a much narrower bridge built in the early 1970’s. This construction project is the largest in the history of the Florida Department of Transportation, totaling approximately seventy-two million dollars. Cylinder piles were chosen for the foundation because they will cause the least damage to the marine environment. The Apalachicola Bay produces a significant portion of the nation’s oyster crop, and the contract called for oyster biologists
to relocate oysters within the bridge’s footprint prior to construction. The bridge comes with a unique ten year, ten million dollar warranty, which means much less oversight on the project. The warranty will most likely raise the DOT’s standards on future design/build projects (Civil Engineering, 1999). The construction project will create an easier and safer means of transportation to St. George Island, which is needed because of the increase in tourism traffic to the island (Haswell, 2003). The area’s tourist season is primarily from April through October because of relatively low average winter temperatures compared to the rest of Florida. Temperatures in January for example range from an average high of 62°F to a low of 43°F (NOAA, 2009).

In addition to tourism, real estate development has now become the most visible example of the commodification of nature. Many of those involved in the seafood industry are under pressure to sell their properties with the increase in value of waterfront property. Fishermen stand to make more in one day by selling their property than they have their entire lives on the water. The St. Joe Company was the largest timber company in the area and now is the most active developer in the county. Well over half of the privately held land in Franklin County is owned by the St. Joe Company (Figure 4). It is mostly planted in pine plantations, but includes approximately 20 miles of coastline which the company is planning to develop (Currenton, 2003).
Chapter 4

The Environment as a Commodity

Apalachicola Bay is protected by a chain of offshore barrier islands. Home to some of the nation’s finest beaches, Apalachicola also boasts a landscape that includes the Apalachicola National Forest (564,000 acres) and the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (246,000 acres). Recreational activities abound with a focus on the natural environment. From kayaking and fishing to guided tours along the Historic Apalachicola waterfront, there are a variety of ways to explore the area’s wildlife preserves, barrier islands, and heritage sites. Vacationers can also participate in land-based adventures by hiking, picnicking or biking through the thousands of acres of primitive forests (Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce, 2008). Tourism and recreation are only the most recent ways in which the area’s natural and cultural resources are packaged and sold as a commodity.

Commodification of the natural environment is a consistent theme throughout the history of the region. In this chapter the environment as a commodity is addressed by examining the environment, its development as a commodity, and the livelihoods dependent upon these resources. This chapter draws upon ethnographic research and formal and informal interviews, as well as archival material, with residents, visitors, and
key informants. Therefore, the data obtained from these sources are rendered in first person.

The Environment and Seafood Industry

Apalachicola Bay is a lagoon and barrier island complex and has been classified as a shallow coastal plain estuary oriented in an east-west direction. The estuary is “…one of the continent’s most diverse and productive ecosystems. Its seafood production ranks among North America’s most productive coastal bays” (Horton, 2007, 1). The waters of Apalachicola Bay are among the most productive in the nation yielding seafood worth over $14 million annually in Franklin County. Shrimp, blue crab, and finfish (not including oysters) are important to the area commercially, bringing in over $11 million worth of seafood to Franklin County docks (Gregory, 2003).

Apalachicola Oysters

Apalachicola Bay oysters, the most notable seafood produced in the county, are considered among the most delectable by many shellfish aficionados. They are also a very important part of Franklin County’s economic resources. More than 1,000 people are employed by the seafood industry in the county. In 2000, approximately $3.5 million dollars worth of oysters (2.3 million pounds of oyster meat) were shucked in Franklin County seafood houses (Florida Fish and Wildlife, 2003). Historically, the county harvests more than 90% of Florida’s oysters and 10% of the nationwide supply. Oysters make up almost one-third the value of the commercial marine catch in the county (American Rivers, 2002). Florida’s Gulf Coast oyster industry is based on the prized and once abundant American or Eastern oyster, also known by its scientific name Crassostrea
This species is the principle oyster harvested commercially along the Gulf of Mexico and the Eastern Seaboard and can be found from Canada to Campeche, Mexico. Like all oysters, Apalachicola Bay oysters are mollusks; two shells or valves protect their soft bodies hence they are called bivalves. They are resilient creatures and can endure a myriad of environmental conditions (Wallace, 2001).

Apalachicola Bay encompasses the waters of St. George Sound and St. Vincent Sound, which provide an ideal environment for oysters. This 210 square mile estuary is wide and shallow averaging between six and nine feet deep at low tide. The estuary is fed by the Apalachicola River, which provides nutrient rich fresh water vital to the bay’s natural productivity. Oysters grow rapidly in these waters reaching marketable size in less than two years (Davis, 2003).

Oysters are harvested from more than 7,000 acres of public oyster beds and about 600 acres of private leased bars in Apalachicola Bay. Public bars are divided into “winter” bars, which are harvested from October through June each year, and the “summer” bars which are harvested from July through September (Lovestrand, 2003). Oystermen, also known as tongers, harvest the oysters today in the same manner they have for a century. From small wooden boats 20-23 feet long, tongers use implements that look somewhat like two rakes attached like scissors to bring the oysters to the surface (Davis, 2003). The oysters are brought on board and hand-sorted on a culling board where they are separated by size. Oysters must be at least three inches in length to be considered legally harvestable. The oysters are then stored in burlap bags and shaded until they reach the shore. On shore, the seafood houses employ workers called
housemen who grade the oysters and package them for sale either in bags or boxes, or send them to be shucked, washed and sold by the pint or gallon (Polous, 2003).

The Water Crisis

In recent years, environmental issues, regulations, negative publicity and pressure from foreign markets have caused the Apalachicola oyster business to suffer. Atlanta is located upstream of Apalachicola on the Chattahoochee River (Figure 3) and is a large consumer and polluter of the water that feeds the Apalachicola River system. A combination of over-taxed wastewater treatment facilities, combined sewer and runoff systems, and improper treatment of sewage has caused the Chattahoochee River downstream of Atlanta to be one of the most polluted in the country (Hollabaugh et al., 2004). Within a ten year span between 1990 and 2000 the population of Metro Atlanta grew from 2.9 million to 4.1 million and rose to an estimated 5.1 million in 2006, rapidly increasing demand on the Chattahoochee River water supply (U.S. Census Data, 2006; Bragg, 2002). Metro Atlanta increased water usage from 459 million gallons per day in 1990 to 606 million gallons a day in 2000 (Bragg, 2002). The Army Corps of Engineers reported the Chattahoochee River may be utilized at maximum capacity before long, possibly by 2030 or sooner (Jehl, 2002). Sally Bethea of an environmental group called the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeepers argues that the Atlanta metropolitan area must do better at managing the resource.

“There is simply a limit to the amount of growth that can occur in metro Atlanta and be sustained by its rivers. This is a shallow river. It’s a river that can only provide so much drinking water and wastewater assimilation. The worst-case scenario is that in 30 years, where we’re sitting right now you’ll see nothing but a drainage ditch carrying away the waste of parking lots and sewer lines and sewer plants” (Scott, 2003).
Figure 3: Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River System
Developers in the metro area claim they take water into account when making decisions towards a project, however, it is too simplistic to blame the developers for the water shortage. It is the consumer, even society as a whole that must be willing to change their water use habits. However, the oystermen in Apalachicola feel choices are being made that protect manicured lawns instead of their livelihoods or “way of life” (Scott, 2003). The governors of the three states involved, Alabama, Florida, and Georgia, have been engaged in talks about the water shortage on a regular basis since the mid-1990s, and negotiations ended in August 2003. According to David Struhs (2003), an official from the Department of Environmental Protection, Florida did not accept a proposal that ultimately restricts flows to Florida. The proposal suggests that reservoirs in Georgia be kept full year round to supply Atlanta while Florida would receive a guaranteed minimum flow plus any additional water upstream states could not store or consume. Florida feared these minimum flows would become the norm, and preferred regulations that mimic natural flow cycles.

Another environmental issue that has been widely discussed in the county involves dredging the Apalachicola River by the Army Corps of Engineers for navigation. These activities cause disturbances to natural habitats in and around the river from sand deposited as spoil and erosion caused by unnatural water flow. The large amounts of dredged sand have choked or clogged sloughs, which are small muddy marshlands or tidal waterways that connect other tidal areas and are important to water supply for many habitats. Spoil from dredging cuts off the water supply to surrounding habitat and threatens local Tupelo honey production.
The Apalachicola is the largest river east of the Mississippi in terms of discharge on the Gulf Coast and was recently listed as one of the nation’s most endangered rivers by American Rivers, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and restoration of North American river systems (American Rivers, 2002). Senator Bob Graham of Florida introduced legislation in 2002 to end the Army Corps of Engineers dredging activities in the river from the Florida-Georgia border to the Gulf of Mexico. A Tallahassee Democrat article quoted Graham stating that the, “dredging of the Apalachicola River has done damage to both the economy and the environment of Northwest Florida. It must finally end. With commercial barge traffic nonexistent on the river, the Corps is letting millions of dollars float away,” (Richie, 2002). The Restore the Apalachicola River Ecosystem (RARE) Act changes federal regulation of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River system (Figure 3) to end navigational dredging on the Florida section of the Apalachicola River, and it directs the Corps to complete a plan for the restoration of the river’s ecosystem (RARE Act, 2002). The ACF system is notoriously underused, with barge traffic declining about 10% annually since 1990. River traffic dropped dramatically in the late 1990s with fewer than 200 barges a year using the system. The Congressional Budget Office estimated the average cost per ton-mile from 1995-1998 at 14.1 cents, almost 24 times more than the cost of carrying cargo on the Upper Mississippi River at 0.597 cents. It is the most expensive Corps river project in the South and the last barge company on the Apalachicola ceased operations in spring 2002 (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 2002).

An increasing number of oystermen in Apalachicola state they can no longer count on the industry for steady work. Flooding of the Apalachicola River basin is
increasingly frequent and carries harmful bacteria to the bay forcing state officials to close the bay to oyster harvesting until further water quality data can be obtained. Health scares have occurred in the past two decades involving Apalachicola Bay oysters and have affected their reputation (Davis, 2003). Navarro (1996) reported in the 1990s an annual average of eight Floridians have fallen ill annually from a naturally occurring bacterium, *vibrio-vulnificus*, that is present in oysters harvested in the summer and eaten raw. The bacterium can cause a blood infection, and about fifty percent of those stricken have ultimately died, almost all of them alcoholics or people with liver disorders. Health risks are significantly decreased if oysters have been cooked in some fashion. Despite such precautions, New Year’s weekend in 1995 became a publicity disaster for the oyster industry in Apalachicola. Dozens of people fell ill with nausea, diarrhea and abdominal cramping after eating cooked oysters in the Fernandina Beach area near Jacksonville. These oysters were later found to have originated in Apalachicola Bay. Researchers later determined that the virus had contaminated the oysters when recreational boaters and fishermen in the bay dumped human feces overboard (Navarro, 1996).

The author of this research experienced a similar event associated with illness brought on by Apalachicola Bay oysters. In the summer of 1993 a vacationer from Missouri was sharing a styrofoam cooler full of raw oysters with his cousin on the beach at St. George Island. After throwing down at least a dozen oysters peppered with hot sauce, the two went their own ways. Later that evening, he began experiencing leg cramps and some overall body pains. He decided to lie down, but within a few hours he began experiencing severe muscle twitching and cramps along with a fever and chills. After many hours of thinking he may have the flu, the muscle cramps became
overwhelming and he was rushed to a hospital in Tallahassee. He had experienced the impacts of vibrio-vulnificus first hand and it took many years to heal from the bacterium. He remained in Tallahassee for approximately two months and was transferred to a facility closer to home in Missouri. He was out of work for almost a year and a half. The vacationer did reveal that he had some issues with his liver in the past and did not realize the potential impacts of eating raw oysters.

The seafood industry in Apalachicola has been under stress from seafood farming in other areas of the United States and abroad. Japan has become a major player in shrimp farming, and they are able to market shrimp at a quantity and price that makes it difficult for Apalachicola shrimpers to compete (Gregory, 2003). Commercial fishermen also feel threatened by a net ban imposed by the state of Florida. Amendment Three of the Florida Constitution, known locally as the net ban, was approved by voter referendum in November 1994. The amendment made unlawful the use of entangling nets (i.e., gill and trammel nets) in Florida waters. Protecting fish stocks from unnecessary killing, over fishing, and waste were the primary reasons behind the regulation. A total of 72% of the Florida population voted for the legislation and the courts have upheld the law, however, many in the commercial fishing business have attempted to find loopholes. Expected outcomes of the net ban include healthier fish populations, and recreational fishers would experience greater abundance of certain fish (Florida Sea Grant, 2000). The use of other forms of nets, such as seines, cast nets, and trawls, was restricted, but not totally eliminated. For example, these types of nets could be used only if the total area of net mesh did not exceed 500 square feet. The amendment was implemented in July 1995, and represented the culmination of a lengthy debate between commercial fishermen
and environmental/recreational advocacy groups regarding the harvesting of Florida’s near shore finfish resources (Davis, 2003). Some seafood houses in Apalachicola have began to look elsewhere for oysters since the harvest in Apalachicola has become so irregular due to bay closings. Some seafood houses are bringing in 99 percent of their oysters from out of state beds in Louisiana and Texas (Navarro, 1996).

**St. Joe Company**

Approximately twelve years ago, the St. Joe Company, primarily a timber and paper business, announced it was getting out of the paper business and restructuring itself as a real estate company. In the 1920s, Alfred DuPont and Edward Ball began what became decades of land acquisition in Florida, which turned into the St. Joe empire. The DuPonts were one of the wealthiest families in America and land in Florida seemed like a good investment. During the Depression, Ball was able to purchase large amounts of land at very low prices (Allen, 2007a). Ball took charge after DuPont’s death in 1935, and in 1938 the St. Joe Paper Company opened a paper mill in Port St. Joe. The company boosted the local economy following the Depression by employing thousands at the paper mill. However, the paper mill caused serious environmental impacts. Dioxins are used in the paper bleaching process and are released into the air, in addition to sulfurous exhaust. By the 1950s, the company was drawing 35 million gallons of water a day from the aquifer, seriously depleting the water table. St. Joe Paper also caused the destruction of old growth forest by clear cutting millions of acres. These activities destroyed the native longleaf pine stands, reducing the species to two percent of its former range (Ziewitz, 2004). In 1981 Edward Ball died and in 1990 the St. Joe stock
split 350 to 1, which opened the company up to investors who began pushing for a change of direction toward real estate development. St. Joe sold the paper mill in 1996, which subsequently closed eliminating thousands of jobs by 1998. In 1997 “paper” was dropped from the company name and Disney executive Peter Rummell was hired to lead St. Joe into a new life as a real estate development giant (Pittman, 2002).

The company is Florida’s largest private landowner. In the course of a 2007 interview by Greg Allen on National Public Radio (NPR), Jerry Ray, a spokesman and communications expert for the St. Joe Company, explained that the company has reversed its policy of retaining and expanding its landholdings for the purpose of planting timber. He claims the company grew by refusing to ever sell any land. In the 1990s the declining profitability in the paper business and rise in property values throughout the state of Florida led the company to create a new business plan based on real estate development (Allen, 2007a). The St. Joe Company owns a large stretch of the undeveloped coastline in Franklin County (Figure 4). St. Joe’s landholdings are mostly planted in pine forests, but they do include approximately 20 miles of coastline that St. Joe is planning to develop.

Conversations and interviews with residents of the county revealed a widespread realization that water quality in Apalachicola Bay is declining and that overdevelopment is at least partially to blame. St. Joe Company has been actively promoting its development goals through its involvement in the planning process (Currenton, 2003). The county’s latest comprehensive land-use plan passed in 2002 approved five St. Joe Company projects including a housing development called SummerCamp that will consist of almost 500 homes built on stretches of undeveloped coastline in the county.
Figure 4: Franklin County Land Ownership

Legend:
- County
- Federal
- Private
- St. Joe Company
- State
These new projects will be connected to a sewage collection system and wastewater treatment facility (Newman, 2002). Some residents have voiced opposition to these large developments and feel betrayed by the county planners. One resident stated that St. Joe must keep their promises regarding the type, size and number of development projects, and he plans to make sure they do. In spite of some vocal opposition, the St. Joe Company is politically well connected. Their spokesman stated in an NPR interview, “Yes, we have a lot of well-connected people, and they have been charged with taking a leadership role and moving this state to a new level on the development side, but just as importantly on the environmental side” (Allen, 2007b).

Field research presented a difference of opinion regarding development among the subgroups identified through results of interviews. However, whether for or against development in the county, everyone felt that development was inevitable. The majority of those interviewed favored the idea that if development must occur they prefer the St. Joe Company to manage it. Popular opinion seemed to view St. Joe as a company that would look out for the concerns of the locals, as well as place an emphasis on environmental sustainability. Research associated with other St. Joe Company development projects outside Franklin County, such as RiverTown in Jacksonville, Fl., do not completely concur with the popular opinion of Franklin County residents. RiverTown has created many environmental problems linked to clearing too much land at one time causing excessive runoff that has killed plant and animal life associated with creeks in the area. The St. Joe Company has been fined once, and will face heavier penalties if more issues arise (Patterson, 2009).
The company has planned and constructed communities that use innovative architecture and characteristics of new urbanism. New urbanism is a movement in planning and architecture that seeks to bring back traditional urban landscapes and minimize suburban sprawl and inner-city decline. This type of development builds and/or rebuilds neighborhoods, towns, and even cities organized around diverse, compact, mixed use, pedestrian oriented, and transit friendly systems (Bohl, 2000). Nearby Seaside, Florida is one of the earliest examples of the new urbanism and serves as a model for the St. Joe Company and developers and developers nationwide. Seaside won the 2003 Urban Land Institute Award for Excellence and is a pedestrian-scaled beach town that has become a model community for the new urbanism. Built upon traditional town planning principles, the 80-acre town has 479 cottages, town homes and condominiums. Dozens of shopping and dining options are located in or around its thriving town center (Brady, 2003).

An example of what the St. Joe Company is attempting to produce can be seen in the large development located in Tallahassee called Southwood. The development is built around a town center and has retail, schools and a golf course. St. Joe is engaged in a strategy of promoting their development agenda by donating lands to the state in exchange for improved roads and utilities, thereby increasing the property values within the development. Presently, the St. Joe Company has only developed on one percent of the land it owns. Estimates from the company speculate that a potential 12 million people will move to Florida over the next 25 years, and the St. Joe Company intends to bring a large percentage of those newcomers to settle in Florida’s Panhandle (EconSouth, 2005).
A marina has been proposed as part of a large development project at Turkey Point by the St. Joe Company. Allen (2007b) further reported on NPR that Will Kendrick, a state legislator representing Franklin County, is opposed to certain aspects of that development project, including the marina. Kendrick did not present his opposition as a political representative of the area, but as a concerned local citizen. The project would include a marina and a residential area, and would entail the relocation of the Ed Ball Florida State Marine Laboratory. The facility is named for Edward Ball of the DuPont family. Ball donated the land for the marine lab, and ironically worked very hard to preserve the land that is now destined for development (Newman, 2002). Kendrick claims that Ball donated the land occupied by the marine lab with the idea that development would be kept to a minimum due to the operations of the lab. Kendrick felt that parts of the development project were environmentally sustainable, however, the marina and the relocation of the lab accrued solely for the financial benefit of the company and not for the good of the community (Allen, 2007b).

Furthermore, St. Joe Company, is actively involved with a project to construct a new airport near Panama City. The company has donated 4,000 acres and has prepared all the required documentation including environmental impact statements associated with the area’s endangered species. In an effort to placate local environmentalist groups, the St. Joe Company has also agreed to designate 40,000 acres of wetland and forest that border St. Andrews Bay as nature preserve (Capelouto, 2007). St. Joe Company needs the airport to further develop their millions of acres of land along the Panhandle coast, including those in Franklin County. As it stands, construction should begin at any time after the final appeals have been addressed.
Chapter 5

Fieldwork Analysis

Methods

Ethnographic research was conducted in the form of formal and informal interviews in 2002 and 2003. Additional qualitative and quantitative fieldwork was conducted in 2007 and 2008 including the distribution of a survey instrument. Data was collected from full time residents, part time residents, and visitors, and evaluated against demographic variables such as age, gender, race, years of association, regularity of visitation, and level of education. A more detailed examination was performed among three main groups identified as long-time residents, newcomers, and vacationers. Research analysis identified differing views among these groups with regard to economic and environmental conditions, and an overall sense of place.

An important aspect of this study is to measure the intensity of the place attachment of those associated with the study area. This research seeks to determine how strong of a sense of place these individuals have towards the environment of Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. Qualitative interviews were constructed utilizing open ended questions to allow interviewees including planners, business owners, oystermen, fishermen, residents, and visitors to express their feelings associated with current economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects of the area.
The second method utilized quantitative data obtained through a questionnaire that was distributed at many locations throughout the study area during August of 2008. The questionnaire was constructed with reference to a similar study performed by Nanzer (2004) to evaluate place attachment, place dependence, and place identity in an attempt to determine the strength of sense of place. Nanzer investigated the connection between policy development and attitudes toward sense of place in Michigan and developed a questionnaire attempting to measure the intensity of sense of place including three subscales measuring place dependence, place identity, and place attachment. The questionnaire, which consisted of three subscales made up of four questions each, was constructed with twelve questions that were rated on a Likert scale. Within each subscale there were three questions designed for positive response (strongly agree or agree) and one question for a negative response (strongly disagree or disagree).

Nanzer’s results yielded from the twelve questions was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, with an α value greater than 0.8 as an indication of good reliability. One of the most widely used reliability statistics is Cronbach’s alpha reliability measurement (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach’s alpha measurement determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability. Internal consistency confirms similar scores of items that are intended to measure the same general meaning. In this study four questions are presented for each subscale with three of those measuring a positive response and one measuring for a negative response. Cronbach’s alpha score measures the answers for the positive and negative questions against each other to confirm consistency. In addition, a good test assesses different aspects of the trait being researched. If a test has a strong internal
consistency it would typically show only a moderate or average correlation among items. If correlations seem to be low, then it is likely they are measuring dissimilar traits and should not be included in a test meant to measure one trait. When item correlations are too high, then items may be redundant and need to be removed (Bryman, 2001).

Computational software (SPSS) was used in evaluating the reliability of the scales and calculating Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The Nanzer study resulted in alpha coefficient of \( \alpha = 0.87 \). Similar design was used in developing the questionnaire used to evaluate sense of place of those associated with Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. The internal consistency of the questionnaire in this study resulted in \( \alpha = 0.893 \), which shows good reliability.

The questionnaire was disseminated at three different locations around the county that contain the highest traffic of possible respondents. Apalachicola, Eastpoint, and St. George Island were chosen and questionnaires were handed out in businesses, the town hall, street corners, along the beach, and several other points within those three locations. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed 97 were returned for evaluation.

**Analysis of Quantitative Data**

**Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire used the statements as follows:

1. I am happy living in Franklin County.
2. I would like to live in Franklin County for a long time.
3. I feel connected to the Apalachicola Bay and Franklin County.
4. Franklin County provides many opportunities to engage in my favorite activities.
5. As far as I am concerned there are better places than Franklin County.
6. Living in Franklin County has helped make me what I am.
7. Franklin County is a good place for doing the things I enjoy most.
8. I like living close to Apalachicola Bay and other local waterways.
9. Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay mean very little to me.
10. For water related activities no other place can compare to the waters in and around Franklin County.
11. Apalachicola Bay and surrounding local waterways are important to me.
12. I believe some other location away from Franklin County would provide more opportunities to do the things I like to do.

The respondents were also asked to provide the following demographic data: gender, age, racial background, education, and household income. The number of years that respondents were associated with the area, either as residents or visitors, was also an important component of the questionnaire.

Following the Nanzer (2004) study there were three subscales included designed to determine the existence and strength of place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. All scale data were collected through five-point Likert scale scoring from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The subscale for place attachment included the following statements:

- I am happy living in Franklin County. (Statement 1)
- I would like to live in Franklin County for a long time. (Statement 2)
- As far as I am concerned there are better places than Franklin County. (Statement 5)
- I like living close to Apalachicola Bay and other local waterways. (Statement 8)

Statements 1, 2, and 8 were designed as positive statements. Answers of strong agreement or agreement were interpreted as representative of place attachment. In opposition, statement 5 was negative and answers of strong disagreement and disagreement were considered to be representative of place attachment regarding Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. The design of the subscales for place identity and place dependence followed a similar approach. The subscale for place identity comprised the following statements:
• I feel connected to the Apalachicola Bay and Franklin County. (Statement 3)
• Living in Franklin County has helped make me what I am. (Statement 6)
• Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay mean very little to me. (Statement 9)
• Apalachicola Bay and surrounding local waterways are important to me. (Statement 11)

Statements 3, 6, and 11 were considered positive for the concept of place identity and statement 9 was considered negative.

The subscale for place dependence included the following statement:

• Franklin County provides many opportunities to engage in my favorite activities. (Statement 4)
• Franklin County is a good place for doing the things I enjoy most. (Statement 7)
• For water related activities no other place can compare to the waters in and around Franklin County. (Statement 10)
• I believe some other location away from Franklin County would provide more opportunities to do the things I like to do. (Statement 12)

The positive statements for place dependence were 4, 7, and 10 and statement 12 was negative. When combined, the subscales for place attachment, place identity, and place dependence constituted the sense of place scale.

Consistent with the Nanzer study the scale data were collected at the ordinal level and coded as 1 through 5 with strongly disagree coded as 1 and strongly agree coded as 5. The question data were coded as 1 or 2 for gender and 1 through 4 or 5 for the remaining demographic items.

Overall Sense of Place

The respondents who participated in the questionnaire reported a fairly strong sense of place associated with Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. Statement 9 (Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay mean very little to me) generated the strongest negative response at 92.8%. Statement 5 (As far as I am concerned there are better places than
Franklin County) and Statement 12 (I believe some other location away from Franklin County would provide more opportunities to do the things I like to do) both recorded the weakest positive responses at 47.4% and were the only statements that did not generate a majority of responses. It must be noted that both Statement 5 and Statement 12 recorded 25.8% neutral responses, so it is not considered indicative of a lack of sense of place.

Response results for the twelve statements measured in the questionnaire are depicted in as a value in percentage form (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of Place</th>
<th>Survey Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy living in Franklin County. (Statement 1)</td>
<td>82.3% n=96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to live in Franklin County for a long time. (Statement 2)</td>
<td>71.1% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As far as I am concerned there are better places than Franklin County. (Statement 5) (Negative Response)</td>
<td>47.4% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like living close to Apalachicola Bay and other local waterways. (Statement 8)</td>
<td>83.5% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to the Apalachicola Bay and Franklin County. (Statement 3)</td>
<td>89.7% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in Franklin county has helped make me what I am. (Statement 6)</td>
<td>55.2% n=96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay mean very little to me. (Statement 9) (Negative Response)</td>
<td>92.8% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apalachicola Bay and surrounding local waterways are important to me. (Statement 11)</td>
<td>90.7% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Dependence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County provides many opportunities to engage in my favorite activities. (Statement 4)</td>
<td>76.3% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County is a good place for doing the things I enjoy most. (Statement 7)</td>
<td>73.2% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For water related activities no other place can compare to the water in and around Franklin County. (Statement 10)</td>
<td>70.1% n=97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe some other location away from Franklin county would provide more opportunities to do the things I like to do. (Statement 12) (Negative Response)</td>
<td>47.4% n=97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both of these statements refer to other places, and even though respondents have a sense of place attached to the study area, a positive response indicates that it is possible to find other locations as desirable.

The study was broken into three subscales of place attachment, place identity, and place dependence in determining the overall sense of place. Analysis of the three subscales reveals place identity as the strongest factor influencing overall sense of place among the three indicators. An average of all responses was calculated for the three subscales coupled with the score for overall sense of place (Table 2). A strong place identity value (82.1%) was clearly the strongest factor, followed by place attachment at 71.1%, and then place dependence at 66.8%. An average of the responses to the three subscales used to construct the overall sense of place revealed 73.3% strength in attitude towards Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. These values are similar to results of the study by Nanzer in Michigan with place identity measuring strongest at 87.7%, followed by place attachment and place dependence at 79.3% and 73.4%, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Overall survey response rates for sense of place constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Identity</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Dependence</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Sense of Place</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All strength values in the Nanzer study are somewhat higher than the study in Franklin County, which ultimately resulted in a higher overall sense of place value of 80.1% in the Nanzer study compared to the 73.3% value in this study area.

**Demographic Comparison**

The questionnaire item regarding the gender of the respondents generated 97 responses, of which 28 were male (28.9%) and 69 female (71.1%). The U.S. Census Bureau 2006 data for Franklin County reported 51.1% of the population as male and 48.9% as female, so female respondents were overrepresented in this study.

Demographic data were collected on racial background of the respondents. The questionnaire provided five categories: Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and Other. A total of 97 of the respondents provided data for this variable. The three subscales and overall sense of place were not generated in association with racial background due to the lack of diversity among respondents. A results of 94.9% of the respondents reported they were Caucasian leaving a very small amount representing the remaining categories. Remaining categories show 3.1% were African-American and 1% for both Hispanic and Native American. The U.S. Census Bureau data of 2006 for Franklin County shows that 87.1% of the population is Caucasian, 11.1% African-American, 1.5% Hispanic, and 0.4% Native American. Caucasian respondents are clearly overrepresented in the survey while the African-American population is underrepresented. The Hispanic and Native American populations were within 0.5% of the census data (U.S. census, 2006).

The questionnaire item regarding age data was scaled 0-18 years, 18-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 51-60 years, and greater than 60 years of age. After dissemination
of the questionnaires an error was found with the 0-18 years and 18-30 years scale. Both contain the age of 18, which created two scale choices for respondents 18 years of age. Only two respondents were reported in the 0-18 range and both stated they were under 18. Therefore, the 0-18 years range is accurately described as the 0-17 years range. The 0-18 years range contained the lowest percent of respondents at 2.1% of the 95 respondents who provided data for this variable. All other ranges comprised between 10% and 30% of the respondents. Members of the 31-40 age group represented 10.5% of the respondents followed by the 51-60 age group at 15.8%, and then the 18-30 age group at 19%. The two remaining age groups reported the highest representation with the 41-50 age group at 23.2% and the older than 60 at 29.5%. The U.S. Census Bureau data from 2006 reported that 20.2% of the Franklin County population was below 18 years of age. Census data also stated that 16.7% of the population in 2006 was above 65 years of age. The data comparison reveals that those in the 0-18 years of age range are underrepresented.

The annual household income demographic was scaled in the following ranges: less than $25,000; $25,001-$50,000; $50,001-$75,000; $75,001-$100,000; and greater than $100,000 per year. 94 individuals provided data for this variable, 16% reported earning less than $25,000; 54.3% earned between $25,001 and $50,000; 6.4% earned between $50,001-$75,000; 13.8% earned between $75,001 and $100,000; and 9.6% earned above $100,000. The reported median annual household income fell in the $25,001 to $50,000 range, which is similar to the 2004 census report of median household income of Franklin County at $30,678.
Demographic data was collected associated with education levels, which were divided into five categories: not finished high school; high school graduates; attended some college; college graduates; and beyond a 4-year college degree. A total of 97 individuals provided data for this variable. Two (2.1%) indicated they had not finished high school, 18 (18.6%) were high school graduates, 47 (48.5%) had attended some college, 23 (23.7%) were college graduates, and 7 (7.2%) reported some college beyond a 4-year degree. The census data from 2004 reported that 12.4% of the population of Franklin County had a bachelors degree or higher. In comparison with the population represented from the questionnaire, 30.9% reported having a bachelors degree or higher. Census data also reported 68.3% of population as high school graduates. The population measured contained 97.9% who were high school graduates. Those with a bachelor’s degree or higher are significantly overrepresented, so are high school graduates. In reference to the relationship between educational background and sense of place values, the sample population representation may impact the outcome of the quantitative results.

Additional data was collected in an attempt to measure the number of years respondents have been associated with the area of Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. These data revealed significant differences among those who have been associated with the study area for a short time versus those that have been in the area their entire lives. Furthermore, data were collected to determine the regularity throughout the year in which the respondents are in the study area. Respondents and interviewees included people who have lived there their entire life, those who retired to the area, those who migrate there for the winter, short term vacationers, and those who have moved there before retirement. Respondents who provided data for the variable regarding years of
association totaled 97. Nine respondents were associated with the study area for 0-2 years (9.3%), five respondents 2-5 years (5.2%), 5-10 years of residency for 19 respondents (19.6%), 10-20 years 22 respondents (22.7%), 20-40 years 29 respondents (29.9%), and 13 respondents had been associated with the area for over 40 years (13.4%). In addition, data was collected regarding the regularity of visiting the area throughout a year. Respondents visiting the subject area 0-1 months of the year totaled 10 (10.3%), 1-2 months totaled 1 (1.0%), 2-3 months totaled 1 (1.0%), 3-6 months totaled 2 (2.1%), 6-11 months totaled 5 (5.2%), and those permanently residing in the subject area throughout the year totaled 78 (80.4%). Statistical analysis of the regularity of visitation did not provide much diversity in resulting data.

### Analysis of Qualitative Data

#### Interview Design

Interviews were conducted County in the summer of 2003 and the fall of 2007. Out of 19 total interviews, four were conducted within a restaurant setting, one over the phone, and the remaining interviews were held at the interviewees’ respective places of employment. While interviewees were asked questions regarding race, occupation, and other demographic details, interviews were primarily anchored by open-ended questions. Interview questions were designed to allow for the interviewees to discuss their feelings and perceptions on many topics, including development issues, economic conditions, environmental conditions, and historical perspectives. These open-ended questions provided a good format to collect qualitative data. Some of the questions are listed below:
• How long have you been associated with Franklin County and the Apalachicola Bay?
• What do you think of the economic condition of the county?
• Do you think there are pressures for development in the area, and if so do you think those in charge will manage development in the best interest of the county?
• What is the best interest for the county with regard to the environment and economic issues?
• In your opinion is the environment being protected?
• What feelings do you have towards the county’s natural and cultural attributes?
• Do you like living or working in the county? Is the way of life in Franklin County changing?

Interviewees were chosen from a wide range of backgrounds in order to obtain a wide representation of perceptions. They were broken down into three main groups consisting of vacationers, newcomers, and long-time residents. The vacationers included annual tourists, weekend visitors, and second homeowners. The newcomers included all who have moved to Franklin County within the past 20 years for permanent residence. The following passages briefly summarize the informants who participated in the study and agreed to answer the open ended questions.

A total of 19 interviews were conducted between the two field trips in 2003 and 2007. Newcomers and long-time residents made up a majority of the interviewees with nine (47.4%) and eight (42.1%), respectively. Only two vacationers agreed to participate in the open-ended interviews (10.5%). Among the newcomers four had migrated to the area after relatively short vacations and immediately felt that this place would provide a better way of life, four migrated for employment purposes, and one was conducting
research. One newcomer stated that “Alexander Key [Key was an author/illustrator who in 1930 moved to the Key House in Apalachicola] said ‘When you come to Florida you get sand between your toes and I feel when you come to Apalachicola the sand gets in your blood and permeates your soul.”’ The long-time residents included four involved with the seafood industry whether as an oysterman, shrimper, or seafood house owner. Two were local business owners, one was a beekeeper, and one worked for the county. The two vacationers stayed on Saint George Island and one owned the vacation home. One was from Dothan, Alabama, and the other from Atlanta, Georgia. The interviewees were asked open-ended questions regarding issues and conditions within the county, and the three groups responded with varying degrees of concern.

Questions regarding current economic conditions, development issues, and environmental concerns were deliberately broad and undefined in order to allow interviewees to express their own opinions and perceptions without being guided by the researcher. These questions are consistent with the theme of the commodification of nature in Franklin County, whether it is through real estate development, the seafood industry, or tourism, and directly impact the sense of place held by residents and visitors alike. Therefore interviewees’ perceptions regarding economic growth and the environment are discussed below, while responses directly concerning sense of place are reserved for the concluding chapter.

**Perceptions of Development and Economic Conditions**

All three groups, newcomers, long-time residents and vacationers, generally perceived that until now economic growth and change had proceeded relatively slowly in Franklin County compared to most other coastal regions of Florida. Not
surprisingly, newcomers who had moved to the area seeking employment opportunities felt that the county commissioners and planners had not done enough to stimulate economic growth apart from the recent approval of the St. Joe Company’s projects. For example one interviewee stated, “out with the old and in with the new,” referring to the county commissioners. This newcomer subgroup felt that well managed development would economically benefit the residents in return for a loosening of environmental regulations and preservation efforts. Several newcomers who had moved to the county for jobs mentioned that additional septic systems and waste water treatment plants could be installed with very little detriment to the environment. This subgroup also suggested that zoning regulations could be changed to allow construction projects extending above the height limitations now in place. “We don’t need sky rises, but we could use some newer more functional facilities,” claimed one newcomer. These newcomers believed changes in zoning regulations would allow for future development and the potential for some large retail stores, such as a Wal-Mart, to locate in the area, which would give people more options for jobs.

The newcomer subgroup who relocated because of the perceived quality of life insisted that a certain way of life has been preserved in Franklin County that can no longer be found in other parts of Florida. The one interviewee who was conducting research on the education system in the area fits in with the perceptions of this subgroup. The remaining newcomers, although concerned with preserving this seemingly idyllic fragment of “old Florida” were concerned with providing better healthcare in the county. In addition they believed that to attract physicians, the county must have a greater population and an increase in average household income. They also felt that better
schools would benefit the area, but that would mean pay increases for teachers and school infrastructure improvement. Because of their involvement in the tourism sector they generally endorsed a policy of controlled growth as long as the current way of life in the county was maintained. However, there is fear of increased development in the future. As it stands, the St. Joe Company is the only major developer in the area and these newcomers felt that the company was a preferable alternative to a large number of smaller developers pursuing their own projects. They agreed that St. Joe will continue to develop in areas that are environmentally sensitive; however, they felt most other developers would not take the environment or the opinions of local residents into account at all.

Diverse responses to the interview questions also characterize long-time residents. Those involved with the seafood industry are understandably dismayed by the economic decline of their livelihoods. However, most of them would never quit their current occupation purely for financial reasons. Some have begun working a second job so they can continue to work on the water at least part of the time. The expression “way of life” is most often heard from these long-time residents. They express frustration with what they perceive as uninformed media coverage of tainted seafood and market pressures from other locations in the United States and abroad. Development is a double edged sword for this subgroup because their catch value may increase at the local level if development increases. However, development could increase stress on the estuary, which could impact catch size and quality. Furthermore, according to respondents development would increase property values to the point that waterfront property owners engaged in the industry may have to sell.
Other long-time residents are ready and willing for a change in economic conditions, as well as development philosophy. This subgroup, made up primarily of local business owners, feel that the county commissioners are not nearly aggressive enough in promoting economic growth in development, tourism and/or population. The county commissioners realize the county’s land is in demand and seem to be slow at deciding the land’s future. They feel the current economic status of the county can be rectified if commissioners and planners would begin utilizing and exploiting the resources, including land, that are available to them. These long-term residents view construction of the new bridge to Saint George Island was a major step forward in building the economy of Franklin County. They believe that development can be managed and must be a part of the county’s future. They also feel that those lands available for development are in good hands with the St. Joe Company. They feel that St. Joe offers an avenue of development, such as new urbanism, that would benefit the local economy, while attempting to preserve the current way of life for locals.

The small sample of vacationers expressed the opinion that the local government and business community probably needed to do be more aggressive in bringing in jobs, or needed to exploit commercial fishing to a greater degree. Only two vacationers consented to an interview, therefore, their perceptions of economic issues cannot be regarded as representative. However, they expressed an opinion this researcher often encountered in casual conversations with other tourists that St. George Island and Apalachicola were ideal vacation destinations and they hoped that economic growth would not cause major changes to occur in the county for a long time.
Perceptions of the Environment

Newcomers as a group perceived the study area as a fairly untouched landscape with pristine waterways. Those newcomers who relocated for a better quality of life rather than for employment tended to take a more active voice in the controversy over water rights with communities upstream along the Chattahoochee River (Figure 3). It should be noted again that most of the subgroup is made up of individuals directly involved with eco-tourism. The current state of the environment in Franklin County is much better than most places on the Gulf Coast, but they felt it could be improved if the Army Corps of Engineers would reduce dredging activities, and if additional controls were placed on upstream water use. The perception of the region as one of the most diverse fish and wildlife areas in the United States played an important role in bringing members of this group to Franklin County. In addition, most newcomers referred to oystermen as exemplifying a special way of life that would only thrive with enhanced environmental conditions; furthermore, this group expressed its feelings towards the health benefits of living in such place. They suggested that finding the quality of the natural environmental in Franklin County was exceptional and that these conditions were linked to a higher quality of life. Some even went as far to suggest the ecotopian idea that this place had the ability to heal the mind, body and soul.

The newcomers migrating for employment purposes were happy with current environmental conditions, but would like to see more controls placed on upstream water users. Though current environmental regulations are appreciated by this group, they feel better employment opportunities are more important for the community even if the natural environment were to be compromised.
Long-time residents in the seafood industry want to continue doing what they have done their entire lives. This subgroup is very disgruntled about upstream water use and discharge that pollutes the river because of storm drain and sewage overflows into the bay during high rainfall events upstream. The bay is continuously monitored for water quality. During high rainfall it is very typical for the bay to be closed to the oystermen due to poor water quality. They do not want to have too many environmental controls, however, placed on the estuarine system in fear that strict regulation may impact their daily work. They feel this bay has created their way of life and want to see it managed and protected, but feel the bay is in good condition at this time, except for when there are heavy rains upstream. Long-time residents who make up a subgroup consisting of business owners perceived the pristine environment as a resource that can be exploited for economic gain. One member of this subgroup claimed, “We must move on from this sedentary life and utilize the resources that have been given to us to enhance our economic status.” They have an interest in managing and maintaining the reputation of a high quality natural environment because of the tourism and real estate industries, however, this subgroup feels it would take a lot of negative impact to jeopardize current environmental quality.

A very small sample of two vacationers participated with the interviews; however, they did voice strong concern for environmental preservation because the natural landscape was one of the determining factors in choosing the area for vacation. They appreciated wildlife refuges and parks like St. George Island State Park that preserve beaches and habitat for wildlife. They informed this researcher, however, that if environmental conditions deteriorated they would go elsewhere. Generally, they felt that
current environmental conditions were good, and hope that they would remain so, but
they felt they had other options available to them.

Ethnographic data gathered from these interviews is relevant to two of the
research questions posed in chapter one concerning what cultural and natural factors
contribute significantly to the areas’ sense of place, and the convergence of
environmental perception with the commodification of nature. In spite of their diverse
opinions on the environment and the drive to commodify nature through real estate
development, tourism or fisheries, informants from all three groups were nearly
unanimous in their perception that the natural features of the study area were either
“pristine” or relatively unspoiled. Sense of place is composed of both natural and
cultural elements. The elusive phrase “way of life” was the most common reference to
local culture, and oystermen and shrimpers seemed to be tangible symbols for many
informants of this way of life. They expressed more diverse views on environmental
preservation and real estate development, but most informants expressed various degrees
of trust in the St. Joe Company as a responsible developer, or at least as the best option if
economic growth is to proceed. Sense of place entails more than natural, cultural and
economic aspects. Interviewees were also asked how they felt about the area to gain
some idea of the subjective feelings are that bound up with the concept of place. These
findings will be presented after the discussion of survey results in order to augment the
quantitative data.
Chapter 6

Results and Summary

Environmental perception, economic imperatives, the legacy of the past, presence of family and friends, personal experiences and feelings, and what many informants referred to as a way of life, all contribute to the construction of a sense of place. These aspects of place have been examined through an overview of the historical and economic geography of the area and qualitative data obtained from open-ended interviews. The analysis of ethnographic data addressed how environmental perceptions vary among long-time residents, recent arrivals and vacationers. Results from interview questions relating to the varying intensity of sense of place among the three groups, as well as the results from the questionnaire modeled on Nanzer’s study of sense of place conducted in Michigan are presented in this chapter. Following Nanzer, the questionnaire provides a strength value to three subscales, place attachment, place identity, and place dependence, designed to compile into a total sense of place value expressed as a percentage for comparison among demographic groups and the length of time survey participants have been associated with the area either as residents or visitors. The last variable will be referred to in this discussion as years of association (YOA).
Sense of Place Measured in Relation to Demographic Data and YOA

Sense of place data with respect to gender revealed males possess a marginally stronger indicator of place attachment and place dependence than do females while females reported a stronger level of place identity (Table 3). Among males place attachment is the strongest of the sense of place indicators, and that place identity is the strongest for women. Place attachment and place dependence are relatively low in females in comparison to the overall questionnaire results. The data seem to show that sense of place is impacted by gender. It appears that gender plays a role in the development of a sense of place among questionnaire respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 Percentage of responses to sense of place indicators by gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Sense of Place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographic data associated with racial background in connection to sense of place data was not thoroughly investigated due to lack of diversity in the respondent population. A total 95% of the respondents were Caucasian, so no comparisons were made with respect to racial background. However, analysis of the sense of place data and
education were calculated and revealed that respondents who had obtained an education beyond a 4-year college degree reported the highest level of sense of place at 90.5% (Table 4). The same respondents also reported the strongest level of place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. A review of the results shows that the strength of sense of place increases with education in every category other than respondents with a college degree. Only two respondents reported to have an education level less than high school, but those two reported fairly strong place dependence in comparison to the total respondent population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of responses to sense of place indicators based on educational achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents’ sense of place indicator was tabulated with regard to annual household income (Table 5). Respondents earning less than $25,000 per year and those earning between $50,001 and $75,000 per year reported the strongest level of all three sense of place values, as well as an overall sense of place. Respondents earning above $100,000 reported a weaker place attachment (68.8%) and place dependence (62.5%) in relation to average the results of the entire sample population (Table 2).
Since the study area is a vacation destination and a locale for winter homes for non-residents, data was collected in regard to regularity of visitation. Only 20% of the randomly distributed questionnaires were returned by respondents who were vacationers or had weekend homes in the county, which seemed relatively low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Percentage of responses to sense of place indicators based on income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
<td>Annual Household Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$25,000 n=15</td>
<td>$25,001-$50,000 n=52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Identity</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Dependence</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong place attachment (82%) and place identity (91.4%) averages were noted for the two categories encompassing those in the area over six months of the year. An unusual result was identified in place dependence for those in the area for short periods up to one month. A result of 72.5%, which is higher than any other category for place dependence, is above the overall average of 66.8%. This is unusual because one would think more time in an area would develop a stronger value of place dependence, however, visitors who stayed in the area more than six months per year clearly demonstrated a higher value for overall sense of place than short term visitors.
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of Place</th>
<th>Regularity of Visitation Throughout the Year</th>
<th>Survey Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-1 Months n=10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 Months n=1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Identity</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 Months n=1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Dependence</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-6 Months n=2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-11 Months n=5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permanent n=78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sense of place values and age cohorts were tested and calculated as percentages (Table 7). The data suggest that age and the strength of sense of place are related. This data agrees with the findings of other sense of place research that suggest length of time in an area is related to developing a sense of place, especially in regard to place identity (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Questionnaire respondents above the age of 60 reported the strongest level of sense of place. The data revealed that sense of place consistently strengthens with age other than a small decrease in the age range of 19-30 years. The average of place identity within the two cohorts under 30 years of age (65.7%) was significantly weaker than the average of those 31 and above (87.3%). Place dependence in respondents between 19 and 30 years of age was extremely weak in comparison to the other categories and total respondent results. To further investigate this claim the research included a summary of data in connection to years of association with the subject area.
Place attachment and overall sense of place strengthens as years of association increase, except for those with 2-5 years of association (Table 8). The 2-5 year range respondents reported a very strong sense of place (88.3%), as well as very strong indicators of each of the three subscales of place attachment (100%), place identity (85%), and place dependence (80%).

| Table 7 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sense of Place         | Place Attachment      | Place Identity        | Place Dependence      | Sense of Place        | Survey Totals         |
| 0-18 years n=2        | 25.0%                 | 62.5%                 | 75.0%                 | 54.2%                 | 71.1%                 |
| 19-30 years n=18      | 54.2%                 | 68.9%                 | 34.7%                 | 52.3%                 | 82.1%                 |
| 31-40 years n=10      | 72.5%                 | 85.0%                 | 62.5%                 | 73.3%                 | 66.8%                 |
| 41-50 years n=22      | 76.1%                 | 83.6%                 | 70.5%                 | 76.7%                 |                      |
| 51-60 years n=15      | 69.9%                 | 95.0%                 | 63.3%                 | 76.1%                 |                      |
| >60 years n=28        | 82.1%                 | 85.7%                 | 82.1%                 | 83.3%                 |                      |

| Table 8 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sense of Place         | Place Attachment      | Place Identity        | Place Dependence      | Sense of Place        | Survey Totals         |
| 0-2 Years n=9          | 61.1%                 | 44.4%                 | 47.2%                 | 50.9%                 | 71.1%                 |
| 2-5 Years n=5          | 100.0%                | 85.0%                 | 80.0%                 | 88.3%                 | 82.1%                 |
| 5-10 Years n=19        | 60.5%                 | 76.9%                 | 71.1%                 | 69.5%                 | 66.8%                 |
| 10-20 Years n=22       | 67.5%                 | 86.4%                 | 72.7%                 | 75.5%                 |                      |
| 20-40 Years n=29       | 77.6%                 | 88.8%                 | 54.3%                 | 73.6%                 |                      |
| >40 Years n=13         | 82.7%                 | 98.1%                 | 82.7%                 | 87.8%                 |                      |

Survey Totals
The length of time respondents have been associated with the area is clearly among the most important variables tested. Those who have resided in the area over 40 years had the highest place dependence, place attachment, and place identity, therefore a higher overall sense of place value at 87.8% compared to the total survey average of 73.3%. An unusually high value (88.5%) was recorded for the 2-5 years of association category. Although only five respondents fall into this category, this value may reflect a similar view as newcomers who stated in interviews that they relocated to the area seeking a better quality of life. The place attachment indicator for this group was the highest in the survey at 100%, although it must be remembered that this is a very small sample.

Sense of place values consistently increase with age except for the 19-30 years of age category. This anomaly may reflect the mobility of this age group of young adults and their readiness to move elsewhere for economic opportunities. Nevertheless, respondents over 60 years of age received one of the highest sense of place values recorded from the survey at 83.3%. This cohort may also overlap with two groups identified through interviews: long-time residents and retirees (newcomers) who chose to move to the area for quality of life reasons.

**Qualitative Perceptions of Place**

Characteristics of two ideological currents within environmentalism emerged from the qualitative findings of this research. Among the groups established through analysis of the interview results there were both technocentric and ecocentric attitudes expressed toward the environment. Technocentrics stressed human control over nature
and believed that technological innovations could overcome environmental challenges while also benefiting society. Ecocentrics prefer to minimize society’s impact on the natural environment and view human beings as part of the environmental web. They place mankind on a level playing field with nature.

Quantitative results that calculate numerical values for such intangible concepts as place identity, place attachment, place dependence and overall sense of place have obvious limitations. For example, several categories in the results for non-resident visitors tabulated consist of only one or two respondents, making any conclusions unreliable (Table 6). Although qualitative results concerning sense of place among the three groups identified through interviews consist of subjective conclusions drawn by the researcher, they tend to be consistent with the quantitative results.

Newcomers who migrated for a better way of life were asked to describe their subjective feelings for Franklin County and Apalachicola Bay. They responded with many references to oystermen and their way of life. The term way of life is mentioned so often among this group that it appears to be directly connected to sense of place. Several informants implied that this way of life could only be achieved by immersing oneself in the local culture. One newcomer remembered visiting the area before relocating and regarding the local people with envy because of the supposedly simple way of life. This subgroup of newcomers was very interested in the preservation of this way of life and the environment that supports it. Members of this subgroup often seemed to know more about local history and culture than long-time residents. A sense of place, especially place attachment, is a feeling that these newcomers are attempting to acquire, and qualitatively seems to be strengthening over time. The majority of this subgroup is
involved in small scale tourism and is willing to forgo the possibility of increased profits in return for maintaining tourism at a sustainable level. Their environmental ideology seems ecocentric and they feel development needs to remain minimal in the area.

The newcomers who migrated for employment qualitatively did not seem to have as high a level of sense of place. They agree the area is unique and beautiful, but feel it would be better off if it became more like other seaside resort towns on the Gulf Coast. They are concerned about excessive water use by urban areas upstream on the Chattahoochee River (Figure 3) and pollution problems in the estuary but feel that planning restrictions need to be removed or at least loosened for potential development opportunities. Although this group showed some concern for environmental problems they believed that problems could be solved without restrictions on growth. This view reflects a more technocentric philosophy toward the environment.

Long-time residents working in the seafood industry gave interview responses indicating a very strong sense of place. They are dependent on the estuary for their livelihoods and have a close connection to the water. One informant stated, “The water is like a bank, whenever you need a little money you go out and tong some oysters to cash in.” These long-time residents were generally born and raised in the county and their families have a history with working on the water. This group showed great concern for environmental policy, especially with management of upstream water users, and protecting the estuarine environment in spite of netting and catch restrictions they would like to see reduced. Over time one’s sense of place typically grows stronger than those who were not originally from the community and this group most strongly confirms the
quantitative results indicating that years of association is the most important variable in
the construction of sense of place.

Long-time residents whose businesses are not directly connected to the seafood
industry also seemed to exhibit a strong sense of place perhaps due to the length of time
they have lived in the area. Qualitatively these residents did not appear to have quite as
strong an attachment to the area as those in the seafood industry, but they still regard
work on the water as emblematic of the local way of life. They all seem to be very
pleased with being associated with Franklin County, but feel the county could be doing
better economically. They tend to view nature in the form of real estate as a commodity
and are much more open to change brought about by growth and development than the
other subgroup of long-time residents.

Vacationers seemed to exhibit the weakest sense of place in the quantitative
results. The qualitative results agreed with the quantitative although it must be cautioned
that the sample size was extremely small with only two respondents. The tourism
industry is important to the study area, but this research was directed more toward the
perceptions of residents toward place and the environment rather those of tourists.
Through interviews and informal conversations, vacationers expressed their appreciation
of the natural environment and the area’s way of life, and would like to see both of these
attributes of place preserved. They demonstrated little understanding, however, of the
environmental and economic pressures the county faces.

The quantitative and qualitative results of this study are consistent with more
humanistic approaches to place in cultural geography in that topophilia (love of place)
seems to increase over time (Ryden, 1993; Relph, 1976). Place identity implies the
merging of place and personal identity. The quantitative study YOA values for place identity consistently increase throughout the age categories. This study agrees with Nanzer’s results indicating that place identity provides the strongest values in constructing sense of place. The connection between way of life, identity and sense of place is exemplified by informants who were long-term residents, especially those who worked on the water. Long-time residents have provided inspiration for newcomers by exemplifying a perceived special way of life. These newcomers have made a conscious effort to immerse themselves in the local culture of what they perceive to be the last piece of old Florida.

This area of “old” Florida, however, has long been shaped by human activities. The timber industry clear cut native species and planted pines in neat rows over large parts of the county. St. Joe Company, now the largest real estate concern in Florida, plans to reshape the landscape once more. Development appears to threaten the two most important local factors that shape sense of place in Franklin County: a valued way of life and natural environment. Most informants voiced a degree of trust, perhaps mistaken, in the St. Joe Company to shape the environment responsibly. An examination of the historical geography of the area, however, demonstrates that the St. Joe Company historically provided economic stability through timber and the paper mill, and has embedded itself within the community’s identity from its own long years of association. The company seems to have won the support of most locals and represents itself as an environmentally friendly corporation although its record has not been consistent with that claim. The St. Joe Company hopes to aggressively develop along the Gulf Coast and has suggested that the tourism marketing name for the region, “Forgotten Coast,” be changed
to “Florida’s Great Northwest” (Jackson, 2001). The recent sharp decline in Florida’s real estate industry may give Franklin County’s residents and visitor’s time to reassess possible changes to the local way of life and environment.
Bibliography


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