

# Place attachment and empowerment: Do residents need to be attached to be empowered?



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## ABSTRACT

Within resident attitude research, place attachment and empowerment are two of the most prominent non-economic constructs used to explain residents' attitudes toward tourism. This research explores the relationship between the two and whether residents' perceptions of place identity, place dependence and nature bonding affect perceptions of being empowered through tourism. The relationship is tested within the rural destination of Choczewo, Poland. Results reveal that place identity, place dependence, and nature bonding directly influence residents' perceptions of psychological and social empowerment through tourism. However, only place dependence predicts residents' ability to feel politically empowered through tourism. Results from this study extend the model of residents' attitudes toward tourism by explaining how societal factors such as resident bonding with the socio-physical environment enable residents to become more empowered through tourism development.

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## Introduction

Within resident attitude research, place attachment and empowerment are two of the most prominent non-economic constructs used to explain why residents support or oppose tourism development (Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014; Kaján, 2014; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017; Styliadis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014). While these two constructs have been independently used to explain residents' attitudes toward tourism, the relationship between them has yet to be explored.

Place attachment concerns the positive emotional bonds that develop between individuals and their socio-physical environment (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Gustafson, 2001; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Stedman, 2002). These attachment bonds are essential in planning for tourism development because of how tourism affects not only the appearance of local places, but also the meanings of places and the connections residents have with others and nature within the places visited by tourists. Tourism can either threaten or enhance special meanings ascribed by locals to these places (Kaján, 2014; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). While place attachment has been shown to predict resident attitudes toward tourism (e.g., Gu & Ryan, 2008; Gursoy, Jurovski, & Uysal, 2002; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Wang & Chen, 2015), the examination of how perceptions of place attachment influence residents' perceptions of empowerment through tourism is an under-researched area, which if

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addressed, has the potential to contribute greatly towards better understanding how residents' bonding with local places enables them to benefit from tourism.

The resident empowerment literature, in turn, describes how the tourism development process can either psychologically, socially, politically, and economically empower or disempower residents depending on how tourism affects residents' self-esteem, community cohesion, agency, and economic development (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Cole, 2006). With empowerment being one of the more important non-economic benefits from tourism (Boley et al., 2014; Scheyvens, 2002), residents' bonds with local places will arguably affect perceptions of tourism development, and thus influence how empowered individuals can become through tourism. Essentially, peoples' positive emotional bonding with their socio-physical environment could be an important prerequisite for empowerment. Tourism's well-documented ability to change destinations' socio-physical environments for the better or worse will either strengthen or weaken the effects of psychological, social, political, and economic empowerment.

With little research focusing on the relationship between these two important constructs, this paper seeks to consider the effect of place attachment on residents' perceptions of psychological, social and political empowerment. The construct of place attachment is guided by Raymond, Brown, and Weber's (2010) multi-dimensional perspective, which considers the construct comprised of place identity, place dependence, and nature bonding<sup>1</sup>. Empowerment is operationalized using the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (Boley, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2015; Boley & McGehee, 2014; Strzelecka et al., 2017).

While place attachment and empowerment currently hold prominent positions within the extended Perdue, Long, and Allen (1990) model of resident support for tourism independently, this study makes an important theoretical contribution by combining the constructs within the same model to see how well place attachment explains residents' ability to become empowered through tourism. Moreover, with residents' empowerment building upon identity, social relations, local politics and economy (Boley et al., 2014; Strzelecka et al., 2017), it is essential to investigate how these societal factors influence perceptions of this form of empowerment.

The hypothesized relationship between place attachment and empowerment is tested within the tourism destination of Choczewo, Poland located along the coast of the Baltic Sea. Choczewo municipality is an interesting locale to explore this relationship between place attachment and empowerment given Poland is a former communist state with a post-collective, farm-based economy, which has most recently considered tourism a highly viable option for rural development.

## Literature review

### *Resident empowerment*

Empowerment occurs as a result of "a process, a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs." (Rappaport, 1987, p. 122). In a tourism context, empowerment may be linked to individual changes, interpersonal changes and social structural changes (Kieffer, 1984; Simmons & Parsons, 1983). While many scholars have focused on empowerment using a unidimensional 'political power' perspective (e.g., Cole, 2006; Moswete & Lacey, 2014), a recent trend in tourism research is developing to view empowerment as a multi-dimensional construct, with psychological, social, political, and economic facets (Boley et al., 2014; Scheyvens, 1999; Strzelecka et al., 2017). Given the fact that reliable scales have only been developed for the psychological, social, and political dimensions of empowerment (Boley & McGehee, 2014), this study will consider hypothesized relationships between residents' place attachment and these three empowerment dimensions.

### *Psychological empowerment*

Psychological empowerment occurs when tourism initiatives promote residents' self-esteem and pride (Ramos & Prideaux, 2013). It can arise from situations when pride and self-esteem are enhanced from visitors who recognize the value of the natural and cultural resources within a community they visit (Scheyvens, 1999). The pride and self-esteem associated with psychological empowerment have been recognized as some of the most fundamental non-economic benefits of tourism (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008) and is an essential element of a successful sustainable tourism destination (Scheyvens, 1999). Boley et al. (2014) also found psychological empowerment to be one of the best predictors of resident support for tourism.

With this in mind, it is of interest to explore how well place attachment explains residents' ability to be psychologically empowered from tourism. It is widely accepted that tourism can affect the socio-physical connection residents have to their local cultural landscapes (e.g., Cohen, 1988; Cole, 2007; Wang, 1999). This positive or negative effect of tourism on residents' perceptions of place attachment is believed to influence residents' ability take pride in their communities.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond et al.'s (2010) place attachment dimensions of family bonding and friend bonding were not included in the study because the scales are currently under-identified, each with only two items, and were found to have marginal coefficient alpha reliability estimates in previous studies (i.e., 0.70 and 0.65 respectively).

### *Social empowerment*

Social empowerment occurs when tourism-related activities strengthen local relationships resulting in increased community cohesion (Scheyvens, 1999). Simmons and Parsons (1983) note that social empowerment involves changes in a community social structure as well. Tourism can promote those changes by bringing residents together for tourism and community development projects like centers for the arts and farmers markets (Scheyvens, 1999; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2010). Conversely, tourism can also drive a wedge between community members. This social disempowerment has been attributed to local stakeholders competing with each other for limited tourism dollars injected into the community (Davis & Morais, 2004) or if tourism provides some residents with the opportunity to 'buy' themselves out of traditional community obligations (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008).

Given this, it is of interest to explore how well place attachment explains residents' perceptions of social empowerment from tourism. Arguably, place attachment would be an important contributor to this type of social empowerment. One could also argue that if tourism were to infringe upon residents' connection to place, that factions, fighting, and jealousy (e.g., social disempowerment) would arise from negative impacts of tourism development.

### *Political empowerment*

The dimension of political empowerment is probably one of the most-commonly studied aspects of empowerment within tourism planning and development (e.g., Cole, 2006; Moswete & Lacey, 2014; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015; Timothy, 2007). Residents who become politically empowered through tourism exhibit political efficacy and are motivated to employ social and political resources (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Knowledge and information in particular raise residents' awareness of available opportunities and thus help empower individuals to be tourism decision-makers (Cole, 2006; Tosun & Timothy, 2003). In reference to the political environment within a destination, Sofield (2003) noted that political empowerment occurs more often in democratic cultures that facilitate knowledge transfer and promote local leaders. Cole (2006) and Timothy (2007) both recognize that empowerment is not mere inclusion in the participation process, but is at the top rung of Arnstein's (1969) participation ladder where people have the agency to steer and control the tourism development process.

In relation to place attachment, if these socio-physical connections to place are severed through tourism development, it is likely that residents' sense of agency and control over the future direction of the community would be diminished. With this in mind, it is of interest to explore the relationship between place attachment and resident perceptions of political empowerment.

### *The role of place attachment in empowerment through tourism*

#### *Place identity and place dependence*

'Place' is a set of spaces transformed into a meaningful location through peoples' experiences and ideas (Leonard, 2013). In his influential work on place and placelessness, Relph (1976) distinguished three components of place: physical setting, activities and meanings, with meaning being arguably the most difficult component to understand (Tuan, 1977). People make places the center of symbolic meanings, transforming spaces into symbolic landscapes (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Stokowski, 2002). These meanings are then reinforced through local practices and rituals (Cresswell, 1996).

The essential question of place meaning is about 'how' it matters (Agnew, 2011) and the role of place in individuals' everyday lives (Gustafson, 2001, 2014). Research concerned with 'place' has showed, for example, that people self-define through places (e.g., Greider & Garkovich, 1994), thereby developing a place identity (e.g., Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). Such an identity arises from particular values, attitudes, and beliefs about the physical world as well as direct experiences with this environment (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983, p.62). However, the individual is generally not aware of memories, feelings, values, and preferences that influence his or her responses to the physical world or how it changes. Finally, "place identity is developed by thinking and talking about places through a process of distancing, which allows for reflection and appreciation of places" (Tuan, 1980 in Proshansky et al., 1983, p. 61).

While individuals see a place as part of the self, a place can also become a resource for satisfying goals, creating, in turn, a relationship of dependence (Williams et al., 1992). The essence of place dependence is that individuals value places for their functional attributes in supporting individual goals (Schreyer, Jacob, & White, 1981; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989). This type of attachment is "embodied in the area's physical characteristics and may increase when the place is close enough to allow for frequent visitation" (Williams & Vaske, 2003, p.831).

Stokols and Shumaker (1981) proposed that an individual can become attached to certain types of places for functional reasons, defined as generic place dependence. An example of a generic place-dependent individual could be a serious leisure participant who can only achieve his or her goals and activities in certain types of areas. A leisure participant can be attached to areas he or she has never visited because of the potential of such places to provide unique recreational settings. For example, the famous environmental writer Edward Abbey writes "I may never in my life get to Alaska, . . . , but I am grateful that it's there. We need the possibility of escape as surely as we need hope" (Abbey, 1968, p. 129).

Peoples' perceptions of 'place identity' and 'place dependence' have been shown to affect various aspects of life. They can influence individuals' pro-environmental behavior (e.g., Gosling & Williams, 2010; Hernández, Martin, Ruiz, & Hidalgo, 2010) and residents' perceptions of social and environmental conditions in natural settings (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004).

On the other hand, the change occurring because of tourism and available activities may be reflected in the strength of place dependency, place identity or community interaction (Gu & Ryan, 2008). Based upon this past research, it is posited that residents' perceptions of 'place identity' and 'place dependence' will influence their perceptions of psychological, social, and political empowerment.

With tourism's potential to have a positive influence on psychological empowerment, existing effective bonds between residents and community places may influence residents' perceptions of tourism impacts (Wang & Chen, 2015) and can also arguably strengthen these positive emotions and feelings of pride. On the contrary, when residents perceive changes as undesirable, they will be more likely to feel tourism threatens the meaning of local places and the ability of local places to fulfill residents' needs and desires (e.g., Kaján, 2014; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). In terms of social empowerment, tourism can either promote positive community interactions through a shared vision for tourism development or splinter a community (Scheyvens, 1999). It is posited that the more one's identity is tied up in a specific locale and the more one is dependent on a specific location, the more likely a person will be socially empowered through tourism. Lastly, in reference to political empowerment, Manzo and Perkins (2006) noted that residents tend to mobilize when events such as tourism development jeopardize their relationship with local places. In particular, those with strong attachment to their communities should show a strong response to place disruptions threatening their identity and lifestyle (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Residents' attachment to local places have also been linked to engagement in community revitalization efforts (e.g., Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003; Strzelecka, Sorensen, & Wicks, 2010) or participation in tourism promotion (e.g., Zhang, An, & Liu, 2008). Based on this understanding of place identity and place dependence, the following hypotheses are put forward:

- H1a.** Place identity is a significant predictor of residents' psychological empowerment through tourism.
- H1b.** Place dependence is a significant predictor of residents' psychological empowerment through tourism.
- H2a.** Place identity is a significant predictor of residents' social empowerment through tourism.
- H2b.** Place dependence is a significant predictor of residents' social empowerment through tourism.
- H3a.** Place identity is a significant predictor of residents' political empowerment through tourism.
- H3b.** Place dependence is a significant predictor of residents' political empowerment through tourism

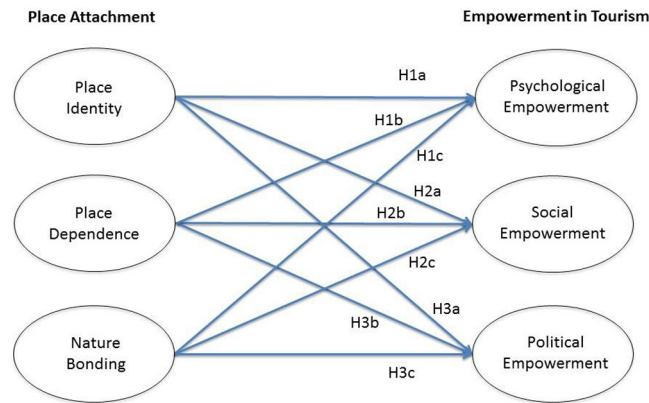
This two-dimensional approach to place attachment not only allows for distinguishing between instrumental and affective bonds (e.g., Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Williams et al., 1992), but it is also one of the most-widely applied methodologies in the study of 'place attachment' (Lewicka, 2011). While this perspective certainly embraces emotional as well as the goal-facilitating aspects of the construct (Williams & Vaske, 2003), it overlooks how the physical dimension of place interacts with those personalized attachments related to place identity and place dependence (Raymond et al., 2010). In an attempt to overcome this limitation, Raymond et al. (2010) proposed an extended model, which considers the interactions between place as a natural setting and how the natural setting supports one's self-identity or functional goals. This integrated model including an environmental (e.g., bonding with the natural environment) dimension of place attachment has not yet been tested in a tourism context.

#### *Nature bonding*

The nature bonding dimension of place attachment is defined as, "an implicit or explicit connection to some part of the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional response or cognitive representation (e.g., knowledge generation)" (Raymond et al., 2010, p. 426). The construct of nature bonding highlights the notion that meanings of places emerge from relationships between self and nature and depends upon an individual experience, time spent in the natural environment or individual capacity to affect their natural surroundings. In this sense, nature becomes meaningful because it offers opportunities for personal development or experiences (Gustafson, 2001). Nature bonding is also linked to the notion of nature connectedness, defined by Schultz (2002, p. 67) as, "the extent to which an individual includes nature within his/her cognitive representation of self." In this context, nature bonding rests on geographical, historical knowledge of the place or familiarity with the surrounding nature (Gustafson, 2001).

Strong nature bonding can arguably strengthen those psychological benefits that occur from tourists visiting areas with unique natural features. In turn, changes occurring in nature as a result of tourism, can arguably inspire residents to engage with each other in order to preserve their connection to nature (e.g., Kaján, 2014; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). Thus, strong nature bonding facilitates community interaction and nurtures relationships between residents (e.g., Hummon, 1990; Stedman, 2002). Relatedly, residents' sense of belonging to the broader natural community may encourage their involvement in various forms of eco-activism (e.g., Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001).

Few tourism scholars have examined the relationship between residents' connectedness with nature and their attitudes toward tourism. In one of these initial works, Uysal, Jurowski, McDonald, and Noe (1994) found that residents with ecocentric views prefer community resources to be allocated in efforts to preserve the natural environment, whereas those with anthropocentric views seek changes in the natural environment that fulfill their needs and desires. Later studies that followed the same line of reasoning found that ecocentric residents perceive the costs from tourism to be higher and benefits lower (Gursoy et al., 2002; Jones, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2000). Overall, past findings suggest that divergent community attitudes regarding the environment may influence residents' perceptions of tourism benefits (Jones et al., 2000). Based upon these suggested connections, the following hypotheses pertaining to nature bonding and empowerment are put forward to be tested within the model (Fig. 1):



**Fig. 1.** The hypothesized model of place attachments effect on resident perceptions of empowerment.

**H1c.** Nature bonding is a significant predictor of residents' psychological empowerment through tourism.

**H2c.** Nature bonding is a significant predictor of residents' social empowerment through tourism.

**H3c.** Nature bonding is a significant predictor of residents' political empowerment through tourism.

### Methods

The proposed model and nine hypotheses were tested using two-step structural equation modeling (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) based on survey data collected from residents of Choczewo, Poland. Choczewo (with a population of approximately 5500 residents; of which about 4400 were above the age of 18) is located along the Kaszuby coastal region within the northern Polish state of Pomerania—a region in northern Poland (Fig. 2). The municipality was chosen for data collection based on its potential for rural and coastal tourism with relatively minimal tourism infrastructure and commercial tourism development. Major local tourist attributes of the destination include direct access to the Baltic Sea, a 17-km long coastline with numerous popular beaches (e.g., Lubiato, Sasino-Stilo and Słajszewo), and a nearly pristine environment with forests and lakes. All of these characteristics have become the foundation of local agro-tourism farm holdings.



**Fig. 2.** Choczewo municipality, Poland.



With more than two-thirds of the Pomerania population residing in urban areas in general, the majority of residents live in the Tri-city conurbation: Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Sopot. Tourism is increasingly contributing to the economic and social well-being of rural and peripheral communities of Northern Pomerania (Hadzik & Hadzik, 2008; Mysiak K., 2007; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015) by providing an alternative that reduces migration of younger and more-educated residents to more affluent rural regions and cities within the EU (Hadzik & Hadzik, 2008). While the premise of economic benefits from tourism motivates many rural residents to engage in entrepreneurial tourism activities, several other important social factors encourage residents to engage in tourism development in Pomerania. These factors include an increase in social awareness among women, renewal or development of social bonds and local identities, increase in civic engagement among rural residents, increase value of rural residents in the eyes of 'urban dwellers,' and the promotion of rural lifestyles among visitors (Mysiak, 2007). These factors coalesce to make Choczewo a relevant place for studying the influence of place attachment on resident perceptions of empowerment from tourism.

Prior to testing the proposed hypotheses, the measures to be included in the model were tested for reliability and cross-cultural validity. In order to ensure the constructs were cross-culturally valid and labeled as "construct equivalent," Malhotra, Agarwal, and Peterson (1996) suggests focusing on functional, conceptual, instrument and metric equivalence. This phase of the research began with a rigorous back translation of the RETS (Boley & McGehee, 2014) and the Place Attachment scales derived and adapted from Williams and Vaske (2003) and Raymond et al. (2010) to ensure functional and conceptual equivalence. Two researchers (a native Polish speaker and a native English speaker) rigorously examined each construct item to ensure functional- and conceptual-equivalence within a Polish context. The bilingual Polish researcher translated the questionnaire directly from English to Polish with a bilingual professional translator then translated said version back into English. Both researchers were able to oversee the translation of the scale back and forth between English and Polish to ensure translational equivalence. They also checked for translator errors and made any necessary corrections before administering the translated questionnaire.

Following a pretest of the translated scales at a local university, the scales were administered to 17 of the 29 rural towns and villages within the boundaries of Choczewo municipality during the summer of 2015. Distribution of the survey instrument corresponded with the actual number of residents in each village provided by Municipal Office-Choczewo, with the goal to use a census-guided systematic random sampling scheme following the previous work of Boley and McGehee (2014) and Woosnam (2012).

Starting in randomly-selected locations within each village, every household in those selected locations was visited by the research team until the quota was met. The head of the household or their spouse was asked to participate in the study, and if the resident agreed, a survey instrument was left with the participant and picked up later that day or the following day by the research team (i.e., two returns), following Boley and McGehee's (2014) and Woosnam's (2012) methodology. Data collection occurred throughout a three-week period (on weekends and weekdays), beginning the last week of July 2015 and concluding on the second week of August 2015. Of the 400 distributed survey instruments, 301 were returned and utilized in the analysis.

The sample from Choczewo municipality was representative of the area based upon comparisons with 2016 Gdansk Statistical Office Census data. A slight majority of the sample was female (57%) compared to 48% based on Census data, with a large majority (82%) married or in a partnership. Only one of three respondents had at least some college education. The same percentage (33%) were employed within the tourism industry. The mean age of respondents was 44 years of age.

## Results

### CFA results

Prior to determining the role that place attachment plays in explaining variance in residents' empowerment (from the structural regression model), an initial measurement model was formulated (using confirmatory factor analysis) that included all of the Place Attachment (PA) scale items and all of the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) items. Such a measurement model aids in examining the factor structure of the items within the two constructs and must be established prior to considering the structural paths between latent measures (Kline, 2015). With knowledge that the Place Attachment scale has resulted in three unique factors as the RETS has resulted in three distinct factors, each of the six factors was added (using LaGrange Multipliers in EQS v6.3) to subsequent models with the inclusion of each error term (i.e., cross-loading items and error covariances both within and across factors). Following nine iterations of model development, 57 error terms (48 error covariances and nine cross-loading items) were identified.

So as to address each of these error terms, the model at that point was trimmed using Wald tests in such a way as to not compromise the standard established by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) (i.e.,  $\Delta\chi^2/df$  no less than 3.84) (see Woosnam, 2011; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2013). Each of the 57 items was successfully removed, with the exception of one cross-loading item ('I would feel less attached to the Choczewo region if the native plants and animals that live here disappeared') within the *nature bonding* factor had to be removed.

The final measurement model (Table 1) was significant with a Satorra-Bentler scaled  $\chi^2$  (362,  $N = 301$ ) = 552.17,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.04. Each of the model fit indices is considered acceptable per Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham's (2010) recommendations. This is further supported by Hu and Bentler's (1999) claim that a CFI exceeding 0.95 indi-

**Table 1**CFA<sup>a</sup> for PA and RETS items.

Factor and corresponding item	$\bar{X}^b$	s	R (t value <sup>c</sup> )	MWA <sup>d</sup>	AVE
<i>Place Identity (PA<sub>place identity</sub>)</i>	4.28	0.81		0.92	0.63
I identify strongly with the Choczewo region/Mocno utożsamiam się z tą okolicą	4.15	1.03	0.88 (16.22)		
I feel the Choczewo region is a part of me/Czuję, że ten obszar jest częścią mnie	4.05	1.08	0.87 (16.96)		
The Choczewo region is very special to me/Ten obszar jest dla mnie miejscem szczególnym	4.32	0.98	0.85 (13.10)		
The Choczewo region means a lot to me/Okolica, w której mieszkam wiele dla mnie znaczy	4.41	0.89	0.74 (10.48)		
I am very attached to the Choczewo region/Jestem przywiązany/a do okolicy, w której mieszkam	4.47	0.86	0.73 (9.02)		
I have a lot of fond memories of the Choczewo region/Mam wiele dobrych wspomnień związanych z Gminą Choczewo	4.26	1.00	0.65 (11.25)		
<i>Nature Bonding (PA<sub>nature bonding</sub>)</i>	4.27	0.84		0.91	0.66
I am very attached to the natural environment in the Choczewo region/Jestem bardzo przywiązany/a do przyrody w mojej okolicy	4.32	0.95	0.89 (13.33)		
When I spend time in the natural environment in the Choczewo region, I feel at peace with myself/Przebywanie na łonie natury w tej okolicy uspokaja mnie	4.40	0.93	0.85 (11.55)		
I learn a lot about myself when spending time in the natural environment in the Choczewo region/Przebywanie na łonie tutejszej przyrody pozwala mi dużo dowiedzieć się o sobie	4.02	1.05	0.79 (12.15)		
When I spend time in the natural environment in the Choczewo region, I feel a deep sense of oneness with the natural environment/Gdy spędzam czas wolny na łonie przyrody w mojej okolicy, czuję jedność z naturą	4.35	0.99	0.72 (9.71)		
<i>Place Dependence (PA<sub>place dependence</sub>)</i>	3.36	1.11		0.94	0.69
Living life in Choczewo is better than living anywhere else in the world/Życie tutaj jest lepsze niż życie gdziekolwiek na świecie	3.20	1.27	0.85 (21.91)		
Living in Choczewo satisfies my needs better than any other place could/Życie tutaj bardziej odpowiada moim potrzebom niż gdziekolwiek indziej	3.31	1.26	0.85 (21.67)		
I would not substitute any other area for the activities I do in the Choczewo region/Nigdy nie zamieniłbym/zmieniłabym tego miejsca i tego czym się tutaj zajmuję na inne	3.51	1.36	0.84 (22.89)		
Doing my activities in the Choczewo region is more important to me than doing them in any other place/Robienie rzeczy tutaj jest ważniejsze niż robienie tych samych rzeczy gdzie indziej	3.49	1.28	0.84 (22.31)		
The Choczewo region is the best place for the activities I like to do/Gmina Choczewo jest najlepszym miejscem do robienia rzeczy, które lubię	3.43	1.28	0.84 (20.25)		
No other place can compare to the Choczewo region/Żadne inne miejsce nie dorównuje tej gminie	3.41	1.30	0.79 (18.40)		
There is no other place I would want to live than in the Choczewo municipality/Nie ma lepszego miejsca od Gminy Choczewo, w którym chciał(a)bym mieszkać	3.16	1.36	0.79 (18.83)		
<i>Psychological Empowerment (RETS<sub>psychological</sub>) Tourism in Choczewo...</i>	3.77	0.97		0.89	0.59
Makes me proud to be a Choczewo Resident/Turystyka sprawia, że jestem dumnym/dumną mieszkańcem/mieszkanką tego atrakcyjnego obszaru	3.84	1.21	0.83 (19.03)		
Makes me feel special because people travel to see my county's unique features/Turystyka sprawia, że czuję się wyróżniony/a, że moja gmina jest atrakcyjna turystycznie	3.68	1.25	0.80 (16.84)		
Makes me want to tell others about what we have to offer in Choczewo/Turystyka sprawia, że mam ochotę opowiedzieć o tym co mamy do zaoferowania w gminie	3.60	1.20	0.79 (17.02)		
Reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors/Turystyka przypomina mi jak wyjątkowa jest lokalna kultura, którą mogę podzielić się z turystami	3.61	1.16	0.73 (12.49)		
Makes me want to work to keep Choczewo special/ Turystyka sprawia, że chcę by wyjątkowy charakter tej gminy został utrzymany	4.14	1.08	0.70 (12.92)		
<i>Social Empowerment (RETS<sub>social</sub>) Tourism in Choczewo...</i>	3.48	1.05		0.89	0.62
Makes me feel more connected to my community/Turystyka sprawia, że czuję się bardziej związany ze tutejszą społecznością	3.52	1.23	0.86 (19.99)		
Fosters a sense of 'community spirit' within me/Turystyka sprzyja mojemu wewnętrznemu poczuciu wspólnoty	3.42	1.23	0.83 (17.73)		
Provides ways for me to get involved in my community/Turystyka stwarza możliwości zaangażowania się w tutejszą społeczność	3.51	1.20	0.65 (12.03)		
<i>Political Empowerment (RETS<sub>political</sub>) I feel like...</i>	2.52	1.03		0.84	0.57
I have a voice in Choczewo tourism development decisions/Moje zdanie liczy się przy podejmowaniu decyzji rozwoju turystyki w gminie	2.60	1.28	0.79 (17.14)		
I have access to the decision making process when it comes to tourism in Choczewo/Mam dostęp do podejmowania decyzji dotyczących rozwoju turystyki	2.31	1.23	0.78 (14.97)		
My vote makes a difference in how tourism is developed in Choczewo/Mój głos kształtuje rozwój turystyki w gminie	2.37	1.20	0.73 (14.05)		
I have an outlet to share my concerns about tourism development in Choczewo/Mam możliwość podzielenia się moimi obawami co do rozwoju turystyki w gminie	2.81	1.29	0.71 (13.61)		

<sup>a</sup> Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$  (362, N = 301) = 552.17,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.04.<sup>b</sup> Place attachment and empowerment items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*.<sup>c</sup> All t tests were significant at  $p < 0.001$ .<sup>d</sup> Maximal weighted alphas provided in EQS v6.3.

**Table 2**

Discriminant validity analysis from PA and RETS CFA.

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. PA <sub>place identity</sub>	<b>0.63<sup>a</sup></b>	0.46 <sup>b</sup>	0.37	0.26	0.24	0.04
2. PA <sub>nature bonding</sub>	0.68 <sup>c,d</sup>	<b>0.66</b>	0.26	0.24	0.25	0.01
3. PA <sub>place dependence</sub>	0.61	0.51	<b>0.69</b>	0.17	0.26	0.05
4. RETS <sub>psychological</sub>	0.51	0.49	0.41	<b>0.59</b>	0.44	0.03
5. RETS <sub>social</sub>	0.49	0.50	0.51	0.67	<b>0.62</b>	0.08
6. RETS <sub>political</sub>	0.20	0.11	0.23	0.18	0.27	<b>0.57</b>

<sup>a</sup> The bold diagonal elements are the measures of average variance explained (AVE) for each factor.<sup>b</sup> Above diagonal elements are the squared correlations between factors.<sup>c</sup> Below diagonal elements are the correlations between factors.<sup>d</sup> All correlations were significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

cates good fit as well as Browne and Cudeck's suggestion that an RMSEA below 0.05 also indicates good fit. Only two of the 29 items within the measurement model had a standardized factor loading below the critical value of 0.70, which Fornell and Larcker (1981) consider a robust threshold. Even still, the loading exceeded Hair et al.'s (2010) suggested critical value of 0.50.

Reliabilities for the six factors were high as demonstrated through all maximal weighted alphas (MWA) yielding values of at least 0.80. Construct validity was determined by testing for both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was shown by the fact that all  $t$ -values associated with each factor loading was highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Discriminant validity was demonstrated through average variance extracted (AVE) estimates exceeding the squared correlations between each factor (Hair et al., 2010) (see Table 2). This test of discriminant validity in essence ensures that each factor is unique by testing to see if the amount of unique variance explained by each factor (i.e., AVE) is higher than the amount of variance shared between different factors (i.e., the squared correlation). With sound demonstration of convergent and discriminant validity estimates, it can be said that construct validity was established among the six factors within the measurement model for residents of Choczewo.

Following the CFA, composite means were calculated by summing item means and dividing by the total number of items within each factor. Such a procedure is acceptable given factor loadings within CFA carry equal weights (Kline, 2015). Among the place attachment factors, place identity ( $M = 4.28$ ) and nature bonding ( $M = 4.27$ ) yielded the highest means as place dependence had the lowest ( $M = 3.36$ ). Collectively, mean scores for empowerment factors (e.g.,  $M_{\text{psychological empowerment}} = 3.77$ ;  $M_{\text{social empowerment}} = 3.48$ ; and  $M_{\text{political empowerment}} = 2.52$ ) were noticeably lower than those for place attachment factors.

### SEM results

To determine whether level of place attachment explains the degree to which residents feel empowered through tourism, structural equation modelling (SEM) was undertaken. The model revealed good fit: Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$  (368,  $N = 301$ ) = 620.19,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05. Bentler (1990) considers a CFI between the range of 0.90 and 0.95 to demonstrate 'acceptable model fit' whereas Hu and Bentler (1999) argue an RMSEA to close to 0.06 or below indicates reasonably good fit.

In assessing the particular paths between place attachment factors and the first RETS factor (psychological empowerment), place identity ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), nature bonding ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and place dependence ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were all significant within the model (See Table 3). The squared multiple correlation ( $R^2_{\text{SMC}}$ ) was 0.36, indicating that the

**Table 3**Structural paths<sup>a</sup> examining relationships between PA and RETS factors.

Regression path	$\beta$	$p$	$R^2_{\text{SMC}}$
H1a: PA <sub>place identity</sub> → RETS <sub>psychological</sub>	0.31	<0.001	0.36 <sup>b</sup>
H1b: PA <sub>place dependence</sub> → RETS <sub>psychological</sub>	0.13	<0.001	
H1c: PA <sub>nature bonding</sub> → RETS <sub>psychological</sub>	0.30	<0.001	
H2a: PA <sub>place identity</sub> → RETS <sub>social</sub>	0.18	<0.001	0.37 <sup>c</sup>
H2b: PA <sub>place dependence</sub> → RETS <sub>social</sub>	0.28	<0.001	
H2c: PA <sub>nature bonding</sub> → RETS <sub>social</sub>	0.33	<0.001	
H3a: PA <sub>place identity</sub> → RETS <sub>political</sub>	0.16	0.11	0.06 <sup>d</sup>
H3b: PA <sub>place dependence</sub> → RETS <sub>political</sub>	0.18	<0.001	
H3c: PA <sub>nature bonding</sub> → RETS <sub>political</sub>	0.09	0.10	

<sup>a</sup> Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$  (368,  $N = 301$ ) = 620.19,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05.<sup>b</sup>  $R^2_{\text{SMC}} = 0.36$ ; all three paths explaining 36% of variance in RETS<sub>psychological</sub>.<sup>c</sup>  $R^2_{\text{SMC}} = 0.37$ ; all three paths explaining 37% of variance in RETS<sub>social</sub>.<sup>d</sup>  $R^2_{\text{SMC}} = 0.06$ ; all three paths explaining 6% of variance in RETS<sub>political</sub>.



three place attachment factors uniquely explained 36% of the variance in the first RETS factor. An identical pattern was demonstrated for the paths explaining the second RETS factor, social empowerment, as place identity ( $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.001$ ), nature bonding ( $\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$ ), and place dependence ( $\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$ ) were once again found to be significant predictors in the model. In this situation, the three place attachment factors explained about the same variance (i.e., 37%;  $R^2_{SMC} = 0.37$ ) in the second RETS factor. In looking at the final RETS factor (political empowerment), only place dependence ( $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.001$ ) served as a significant predictor, explaining a modest 6% ( $R^2_{SMC} = 0.06$ ) of the variance in the RETS factor.

## Discussion & conclusion

With residents' empowerment in tourism development being a central tenet of the sustainable tourism literature (Choi & Murray, 2010; Cole, 2006; Moswete & Lacey, 2014; Ramos & Prideaux, 2013; Scheyvens, 1999, 2002; Sofield, 2003; Strzelecka et al., 2017) and the growing interest in place attachment among tourism scholars (e.g., Kyle et al., 2004; Um & Crompton, 1987; Woosnam, Aleshinloye, Strzelecka, & Erul, 2017), surprisingly little research has focused on the relationship between these two important constructs. With this gap in mind, the study explored the influence of Raymond et al.'s (2010) three-dimensional interpretation of place attachment on residents' psychological, social and political empowerment from tourism.

The first set of hypotheses proposed significant relationships between dimensions of place attachment and psychological empowerment (H1a, H1b, and H1c). All three of the hypotheses were supported with the relationships between nature bonding and psychological empowerment as well as the relationship between place identity and psychological empowerment being especially strong ( $\beta = 0.31$ ;  $\beta = 0.30$ ). The positive support for these three hypotheses suggests that the more residents identify with their local community and the more they depend on the local environment for their lifestyle, the greater the potential will be for them to psychologically benefit from tourism which forges pride and self-esteem. Conversely, the results suggest that some residents are less likely to psychologically benefit from tourism because they either do not identify with local community or they do not think the local environment supports their desirable lifestyle. In essence, residents that are more invested in the place in which they live have more to gain or lose psychologically than other residents who are less attached.

These results align with previous investigations of the effect identity has had on perceived tourism impacts (e.g., Wang & Chen, 2015). Previous literature has discussed how location type contributes to self-perception (e.g., Hummon, 1990; Lewicka, 2013; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Thus it should come as no surprise that place attachment has an effect on residents' perceptions of tourism's psychological benefits because of the industry's ability to change the character of communities and indirectly affect how satisfied residents are with physical and social attributes of the community (e.g., Mesh & Manor, 1998). With tourism's ability to transform spaces for the 'better or worse', it means those residents who are more attached to place will have amplified perceptions of tourism's psychological benefits or costs compared to those who do not feel attached to their community and environment. Communities are heterogeneous and usually consist of a wide spectrum of residents. On one side of the spectrum, the population of Choczewo consists of long-term locally born residents, who never moved outside of the area. On the other end of the spectrum, some residents moved to Choczewo because they value the local environment. The two groups will likely differ in terms of what places they perceive as meaningful and why (Gustafson, 2014; Lewicka, 2013). Given the qualitative difference in how they bonded with Choczewo communities they should differ in how they perceived psychological benefits from tourism.

The second set of hypotheses pertained to relationships between dimensions of place attachment and social empowerment (H2a, H2b, and H2c). Again the same three dimensions, place identity, place dependence, and nature bonding explained residents' ability to become socially empowered through tourism. The relationships between nature bonding and social empowerment as well as place dependence and social empowerment appear to be especially strong ( $\beta = 0.33$ ;  $\beta = 0.28$ ). In other words, place attachment (as measured through place identity, place dependence and nature bonding) strengthens the perceived effect of tourism on community cohesion. This relationship between place attachment and social empowerment mimics the effect of place attachment on psychological empowerment, which means attachment to the community amplifies residents' ability to work together for tourism development. The proposed scenario is plausible because residents who are more engaged within their communities have more to gain or lose from tourism development, thus they would be encouraged to work together. These residents would be willing to work together for the benefit of tourism when tourism supports their local identity and personal goals (Schreyer et al., 1981; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989). The finding concerning the link between nature bonding and empowerment arguably relates to the studies from Gursoy et al. (2002) and Jurowski, Uysal, and Williams (1997) who found a reversed relationship between ecocentrism and perception of tourism costs and benefits. It is plausible that ecocentrics develop stronger bonds with the natural environment and therefore their empowerment experience is amplified.

The final set of hypotheses postulated that place identity, dependence, and nature bonding predict residents' ability to be politically empowered from tourism (H3a, H3b, and H3c). This study supported only the hypothesis pertaining to the relationship between place dependence and perceived political empowerment through tourism (H3b,  $\beta = 0.18$ ). To take this discussion one step further, it could be suggested that as long as local places continue serving residents' personal goals, they are motivated to politically engage in tourism. In contrast, when residents feel places in their community solely serve the pur-

pose of tourists, weakened dependence on those places in everyday life can foster political disengagement and isolation from tourism decision-making.

The aforementioned argument contributes to [Manzo and Perkins' \(2006\)](#) discussion about residents' ability to respond to threats disrupting the community and how this ability relates to residents' attachment to the community environment. The importance of one's functional relationship with their surroundings to become politically empowered was also highlighted by [Gustafson \(2001\)](#), who argued that the local physical environment can be perceived as meaningful because it offers various activities (place dependence), and for those who develop a functional relationship with it, it becomes an arena to express one's citizenship in a locality (political empowerment) ([Gustafson, 2001](#)).

However, the results that only place dependence can predict residents' ability to feel politically empowered through tourism in Choczewo is somewhat surprising because the literature suggests place identity and nature bonding should also have an influence. Moreover, while place dependence appears to be a significant predictor of residents' ability to be politically empowered from tourism, the relationship is moderate and only explains 6% of variance in why residents perceive themselves to be political empowered. One plausible explanation for this surprising result is the very low levels of political empowerment found in Choczewo ( $M = 2.50$ ), which could be attributed to the region's communist past ([Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015](#)). Indeed, a number of scholars commented on this lack of enthusiasm towards political engagement among the post-communist residents connecting it with a permeating social and political distrust in local and state institutions (e.g., [Michalska, 2008](#); [Mularska, 2008](#)). With low trust in officials, residents tend to withdraw from the tourism development process initiated by local authorities (e.g., [Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015](#)). Likewise, 'missing' social capital (e.g., [Paldam & Svendsen, 2000](#); [Rose, 1999](#)) and weakening local bonds ([Howard, 2003](#); [Mihaylova, 2004](#)) hinder community mobilizations in support or opposition of tourism. Thus the possibility exists that residents can be strongly attached to their community yet have low expectations of meaningful participation in tourism decision-making.

The low level of political empowerment among the residents of Choczewo exemplifies how unfulfilled governmental promises made at the beginning of political and economic transformation have shaped residents' beliefs in their inability to facilitate desirable social and economic changes and execute control of development of rural tourism ([Budzisz-Szukała, 2008](#); [Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015](#)). The political apathy of post-communist rural communities can be arguably weakened by an increased focus on bottom-up tourism development initiatives that incorporate the best practices from the political empowerment literature ([Howard, 2003](#); [Michalska, 2008](#); [Strzelecka & Wicks, 2010](#)).

Of additional important to the explanation of these findings is the cultural and economic influence of state collective farms which became home for families moved to the Choczewo area as a part of the national post-WWII mobility to recovered territories. State collective farm workers were usually impoverished and shared different customs than traditional local communities in Pomerania (e.g., Kashubs). While the farms closed after regime change in Poland, workers of the state farms and their families stayed in the Choczewo area. With an opportunity to economically benefit from tourism, these residents of Choczewo share a goal to make Choczewo a source of lifestyle they desire. This is precisely why functional dependence on the area, has become the catalyst for residents to engage in tourism decision-making.

### *Managerial and theoretical and implications*

These findings are of interest to both tourism scholars and practitioners. First of all, results show that tourism planners should promote a form of tourism development that takes into account residents' connections to the socio-physical environment. Place attachment can be used to understand the extent to which changes in the socio-physical environment can occur without having negative effects on resident perceptions of empowerment through tourism—a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable tourism ([Cole, 2006](#); [Scheyvens, 1999](#)).

A second implication is that managers interested in empowering residents through tourism development need to first gauge residents' connections to place. If residents are not invested in the community, then it is unlikely that tourism initiatives aimed at psychological, social, or political empowerment will bear fruit. Therefore, managers desiring to empower residents through tourism and ultimately win their support may need to tailor messages on the benefits of tourism and tourism development initiatives towards residents based on the degree and type of place attachment (see [Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002](#); [Gu & Ryan, 2008](#); [Lewicka, 2013](#)).

Understanding the role place attachment plays in how residents perceive changes within their community will likely also help manage locally-emerging conflicts within rural communities where residents possess differing levels of place attachment. These conflicts of place identity are likely to occur between long-time residents and newcomers ([Salomon, 2003](#)). Such a distinction proposed by Salomon is highly relevant within Northern Pomerania communities with ongoing renegotiations of those residents' identities that settled in Choczewo following World War II ([Strzelecka et al., 2017](#)). Both groups tend to differ in terms of attachment to local places and expectations of the future character of local villages. Tourism can either contribute to this vision or destroy it. With empirical evidence suggesting that length of residence influences place attachment ([Anton & Lawrence, 2014](#); [Knez, 2005](#)), those having lived within the community will arguably exhibit a stronger place attachment, and therefore the effect of tourism (whether positive or negative) will be stronger.

The identified link between place attachment and resident empowerment has theoretical implications for the resident attitude literature that has begun to migrate away from social exchange theory towards more holistic theoretical perspectives such as Weber's Theory of Formal and Substantive Rationality (e.g., [Boley et al., 2014](#); [Strzelecka et al., 2017](#)). For example, the support for a relationship between place attachment and resident empowerment provides further credence to look

at substantive (i.e., non-economic) factors that influence resident support or opposition to tourism development in addition to the traditional formal (i.e., economic) ones. Along these lines, both place attachment and empowerment have been independently included within extensions of the [Perdue et al. \(1990\)](#) model of resident attitudes towards tourism ([Boley et al., 2014](#); [Gu & Ryan, 2008](#); [Jurowski et al., 1997](#); [Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012](#)), but they have yet to be combined within the same model. Based upon these findings that suggest resident empowerment to be dependent on place attachment, it is suggested that the model be modified by including place attachment as an important antecedent of resident empowerment when modeling resident attitudes towards tourism.

### *Limitations and future research opportunities*

Although this study is the first to look at how place attachment explains perceptions of psychological, social, political empowerment, it is not without limitations. One limitation is that this research did not include a measure of social bonding within the model. [Raymond et al.'s \(2010\)](#) original interpretation of place attachment included the dimensions of “family bonding” and “friend bonding.” The decision to exclude these dimensions from the model was made for multiple reasons. First, [Raymond et al.'s \(2010\)](#) own research found the reliability of the scales to be marginal with coefficient alpha estimates in the 0.65–0.70 range. Second, both scales are currently under-identified with only two items representing the latent construct. Lastly, the wording of the items focused on friendships, developing out of ‘sporting activities’ and ‘volunteer activities,’ did not fit within the Choczewo context. Future researchers interested in the relationship between social bonding and empowerment need to work on developing scales for each of these dimensions so that the relationship between each individual dimension of social bonding can be included in revised models.

Relatedly, the presented conceptual model only examines the relationship between Raymond's three dimensions of place attachment and [Boley et al.'s \(2014\)](#) three dimensions of empowerment. There are likely other salient constructs to consider when modeling resident perceptions of empowerment such as level of civic engagement. Including constructs such as civic engagement may help increase the low percent of variance explained in the political empowerment construct. It is suggested that future research add to the model and test the relationships between other constructs that are believed to influence resident empowerment. It would also be beneficial for researchers to develop an economic empowerment scale to see how place attachment influences economic empowerment. [Timothy \(2007\)](#) and [Scheyvens \(1999, 2002\)](#) both acknowledge economic empowerment as an important dimension of empowerment, but there has yet to be a reliable and valid scale developed to measure the construct.

The third limitation pertains to studying the relationship between place attachment and empowerment solely within the context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). For various reasons including the CEE's past, tourism in CEE countries and destinations like Choczewo, Poland has lagged behind other areas of Europe. It should also be noted that Choczewo is just one rural municipality engaged in tourism development in post-communist settings. To more fully understand the influence of place attachment on dimensions of empowerment, similar studies should be conducted in a range of communities with varying levels of tourism potential and social political conditions.

Lastly, the census-guided systematic sampling process following the work of [Woosnam \(2012\)](#) and [Boley and McGehee \(2014\)](#) research was met with some challenges. While over 300 Choczewo residents participated in the study, certain locations within the region proved difficult to survey individuals. As a result, some of these areas could resultantly be underrepresented because the number of respondents did not line up perfectly with the percentage of residents living in the area according to the census. Relatedly, the ability to calculate a true response rate was limited because the survey team was not tracking the number of individuals who declined to take the survey. Some of the residents were simply not in their homes whereas others decided not to respond. In some cases, it was impossible to access a household because of an unleashed dog within the yard or some other similar form of potential danger to the survey team. The team visited roughly 600–650 households and distributed 400 surveys to residents. While the survey completion rate was high at 75% (i.e., 301 of 400), the response rate could not be calculated.

In conclusion, empowerment has long played a pivotal role in the sustainable tourism literature ([Scheyvens, 2002](#); [Sofield, 2003](#); [Timothy, 2007](#)), but it is only recently that the rhetoric behind empowerment has been operationalized into testable hypotheses to see how it influences residents' attitudes towards tourism. This research demonstrated that the dimensions of psychological and social empowerment are in fact influenced by residents' emotional bonds with places and nature within the Choczewo municipality. While this is only one study to investigate the relationships between place attachment and empowerment, the results provide credence for the future inclusion of place identity, place dependence and nature bonding constructs when considering residents' ability to be empowered through tourism.

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Marianna Sthelecka's research examines ability of host community to become empowered through tourism. Her recent studies are focused on gateway communities and protected area tourism.

Bynum Boley's research focuses on sustainable tourism and how tourist preferences and resident attitudes can converge to create a profitable and well-supported sustainable tourism industry

Kyle conducts research in the area of social relationships between residents and tourists and how that contributes to sustainable tourism planning.