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**WEST YELLOWSTONE:
TOURISM, RESIDENTS, AND SEASONAL WORKERS IN
A GATEWAY COMMUNITY**

by

Casey S. Wilson

B.A. Amherst College, 1991

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

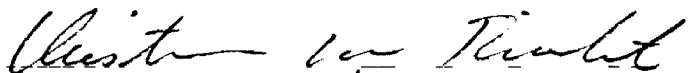
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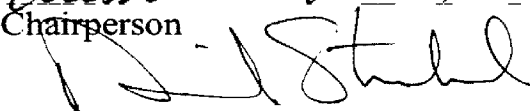
The Department of Geography

The University of Montana

May 2002

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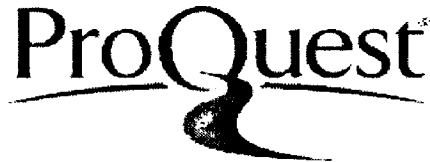


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West Yellowstone:
Tourism, Residents, and Seasonal Workers in a Gateway Community

Director: Dr. Christiane von Reichert 

Gateway communities in the United States have grown over the last 15 years, as migration to areas with a high-degree of natural amenities continues to rise, especially in the Rocky Mountain West. Growth combined with the recent increase of tourism development is straining communities, as traditional core community values and lifestyles are challenged.

To explore this problem, the residents of West Yellowstone, Montana, the western portal to Yellowstone National Park, were studied. The guiding hypothesis is that rapid tourism development has been divisive to the West Yellowstone community and diminished the traditional local identity. The intent of this research is to better understand at the community and human level the wide-ranging impacts of tourism development. Additionally, the little-studied transient seasonal worker population was given special emphasis.

Semistandardized interviews of a cross-section of West Yellowstone's permanent and seasonal residents and transient seasonal workers were conducted. Grounded theory was used to link the interview text to the overriding hypothesis.

The interviews indicate that tourism development has been divisive to the West Yellowstone community, in that residents have become distanced from each other as community values and local identity have changed as a reflection of the present competitive business climate. Secondly, transient seasonal workers are a diverse group that includes college students, retirees, legal foreign workers, and "wanderers".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must thank my Committee Chairperson, Professor Christiane von Reichert for the time and care she took with not only my education, but with me as well. Not only is she a terrific mentor, but an exemplar person and professional. To my committee members Professors Paul Wilson and Paul Miller I am also grateful.

I want to thank my husband, Jody Bramel for his continual love and support and my parents, Marion and Ed Wilson, whose love and good will are immeasurable. The residents of West Yellowstone, the West Yellowstone Foundation, and the transient seasonal workers, wherever they may now reside, made this study possible—thanks.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A GATEWAY COMMUNITY IS BORN

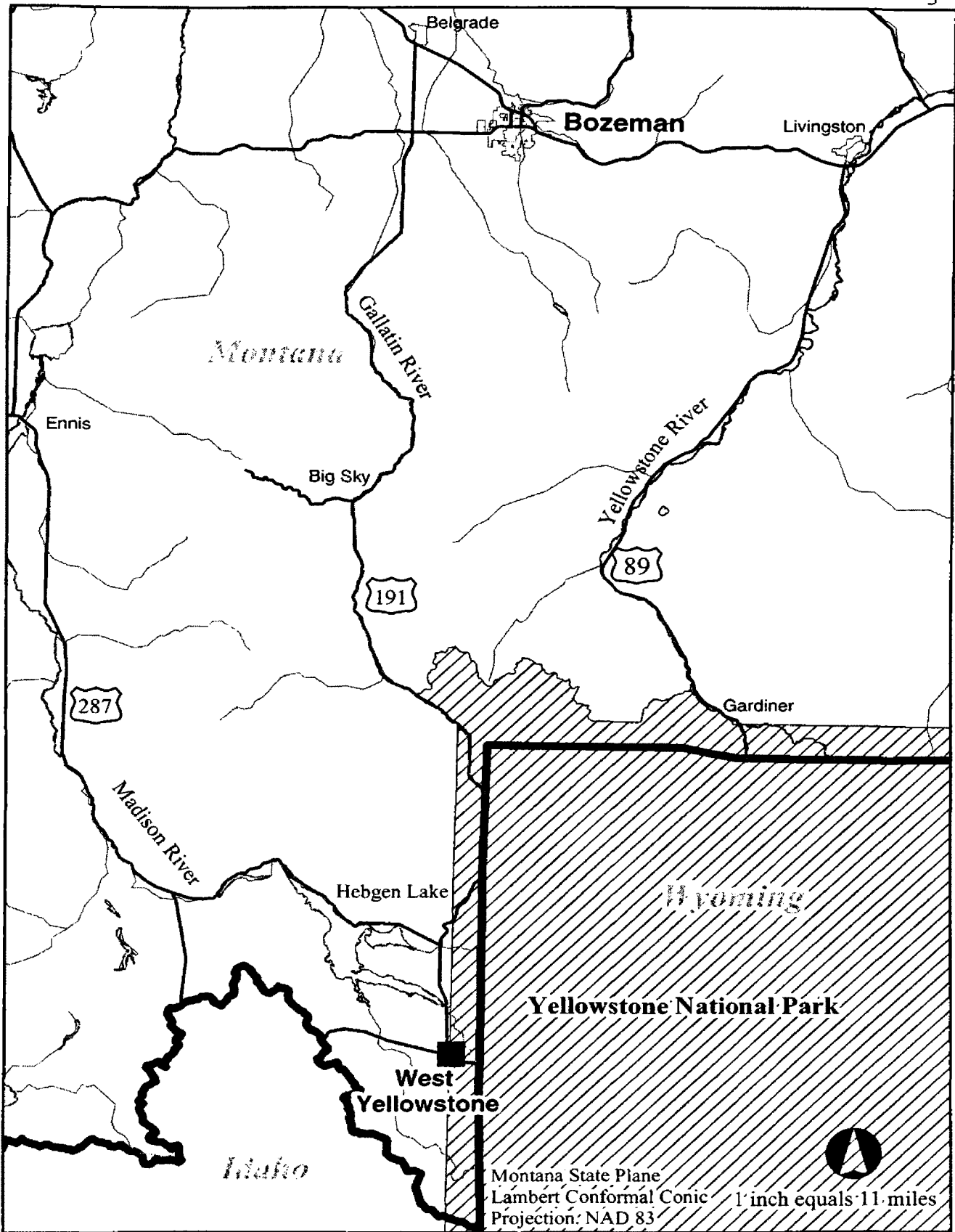
When the United States government set aside Yellowstone National Park in 1872 for preservation and the benefit and enjoyment of all of the people, many rejoiced at the innovative idea and the notion of visiting untrammelled wilderness and natural wonders. Fantastic images of geysers, mountains, waterfalls and wildlife filled people's minds. This was the first time the federal government had agreed to manage wild lands for their inherent wild nature and recreational opportunities. The new Park also opened up business opportunities to intrepid entrepreneurs, who devised ways to make a living from tourists to the remote area. Tourists needed a place to stay as well as food, guides and transportation.

Yellowstone National Park was a remote two million-acre "wonderland" situated in the Territories of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. At first the designation attracted few tourists, approximately 300 people per year for the first five years (Haines 1996, 196). After all, there were few roads or railroads leading to the Park and little as far as respectable accommodations. Gradually, a rough infrastructure and services were established; railroads constructed depots on the edges of the Park; and visitation

increased. By 1908 the northwest and west entrance of the Park boasted railroad depots and fledgling communities; these are what we now call gateway communities. The remote outpost on the west gate of Yellowstone National Park is named West Yellowstone, Montana, the subject of this thesis. Map 1 shows the region.

Gateway communities provide services, which are otherwise unavailable or strictly limited inside the federally protected lands: transportation, food supplies, gas, restaurants, and accommodations. Many gateway towns have supported a tourism function dating back to the preservation of the public land. Until recently, most have maintained traditional extractive economies enabling town residents to subsist independent of their tourism industry. Many are also seasonal communities, with businesses and populations dependent on the changing of the weather.

More than one model exists for the development of gateway communities in the United States. Even communities outside of the same Park have evolved differently (Toolman 1997, 36). However, within the last 15 years there has been a common occurrence; people across the United States have begun to take notice of these diverse towns and migrate to them for the social and natural amenities. In some places this migration has resulted in dramatic growth and development. Towns that were merely portals or way stations for park visitors in anticipation of their park experience have become destinations unto themselves. Museums, educational exhibits and shopping malls have sprouted up, and recreation opportunities and luxury accommodations have been developed to promote tourism inside the gateway town, not just through it. Tourists need not even enter the Park to glimpse wild animals or cultural heritage.



Map 1. West Yellowstone, Montana region

Highways
 Rivers
 State Boundary

Yellowstone National Park

Although community expansion is commonly based on concerted local efforts to grow and promote tourism as a means of economic development, some towns are growing too fast. Most rural gateway towns are not equipped to manage this kind of expansion. Traditional rural communities are losing their unique identity amidst their effort to package their local cultural and historical heritage for tourist consumption; and some towns are growing so that old-timers have become alienated in their own community. Traditional core population and values are at risk, if gateway communities continue their unabated and unselfconscious growth. The situation is serious enough that a nonprofit organization was set up to protect the traditional values of gateway communities. The National Alliance of Gateway Communities was organized to “support policies and programs that enable gateway communities to achieve essential economic growth and vitality while maintaining and preserving the social, cultural, and environmental values of their citizens.” (Machlis and Field 2000, 9)

Gateway communities presently face a conundrum. By developing a tourism industry that requires growth in remote areas adjacent to public lands, these towns risk degrading two of their significant amenities: traditional small-town community culture and the health of the protected public lands. The impetus for this paper on gateway towns is the concern that I and many others have for the gateway communities surrounding National Parks. The loss of character, the changing identity, and growth and infringement on the wilderness inside and adjacent to the protected land is alarming.

The benefits of tourism have been documented, lauded, and embraced by many communities. Tourism is a clean industry that puts many people to work; tourism

development, however, needs to be managed properly in order to attain the community goals without sacrificing community amenities and values. This paper therefore focuses on the shortcomings of tourism development and tourism promotion, rather than the benefits. It is hoped that by understanding the experiences of residents and a community undergoing development, that we can better understand and learn to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism. These unique towns need to develop a self-awareness, which will allow them to guide their own tourism, economic and residential development in a way that is compatible with all of the town residents' values. Development driven by the values of tourists and businesses risks overwhelming the host community.

PURPOSE

The overriding purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the small but growing pool of information about gateway communities through a qualitative study of West Yellowstone, Montana. Until recently, little had been written about this category of small and increasingly popular towns and very little at the local level. What has been written in the United States tends to be geared towards comprehending the growing economy and population of the New West or to addressing specific policy issues in rural tourism development. The intent of this research is to better understand at the local, community, and human level the wide-ranging impacts of tourism development on rural gateway communities.

The first goal of this thesis is to identify and describe the diverse gateway community, which often contains a mix of seasonal residents, transient seasonal workers, recent migrants and old-timer residents. I will describe the cross-section of West

Yellowstone residents and give special attention to the transient seasonal workers residing in the community, because little attention has been given to this underrepresented, but important population.

The second goal is to explore the guiding hypothesis that tourism development over the last 15 years has been divisive to the West Yellowstone community and has diminished the town's traditional local identity. Divisiveness is explored in the context of how residents' regard their community and their place within it. The way that residents' experience West Yellowstone, and how and whether they identify with the local identity, reflects the changing community.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

The background and literature review for this study on West Yellowstone, Montana synthesizes literature from a variety of academic subjects. Literature on tourism development, recreation and travel, the sociology of community, and the experiential perspective in Geography are all drawn upon. Geography is well suited for this study, because it allows for the synthesis of ideas and theories from many disciplines in order to arrive at a better understanding of a 'place'. Within Geography there are many approaches to studying 'place'. One approach is quite broad and subjective; "Geography is concerned with the association of things that give character to particular places" (James 1954, 4). Furthermore, 'place' can be variously defined. For this thesis, 'place' is broadly defined as "a location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon" (Relph 1976, 3).

Another approach, from a humanist perspective, was put forward by Yi-fu Tuan (1991, 99) in *A View of Geography*. Tuan defines Geography as the "study of Earth as the home of people." (Tuan 1991b, 99). What I like about these two approaches is their focus on 'place' as it is understood by humans, and how 'place' is given meaning by humans. It is very subjective. 'Character', as an attribute of 'place', has a distinctly human connotation and quality. In Tuan's approach, he distinguishes the value-laden word

'home' from the inanimate object, house. A house is regarded for its architecture, neighborhood, and number of bedrooms and bathrooms. A 'home', however, is a human construct. Although the definition might include a description of the house, a 'home' readily connotes family and the place where persons sleep, cry, grow, live, and die. 'Home' even evokes distinctive smells, comfort, and warmth.

Similarly, West Yellowstone, the 'place', is not merely the sum of its location, structures, physical geography, and economy; rather, it is the residents that live in West Yellowstone, who have made the town their 'home' and experienced its seasons, its growth, its charm and its isolation that round out the full picture of what it means to understand and describe West Yellowstone, the 'place'. To understand a 'place' is to understand how that 'place' can be understood and experienced by all people. "A landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads." (Meinig 1979, 34)

Humanism in Geography developed as a reaction to the rational, theoretical, and quantitative revolution that occurred in the discipline in the 1950s and 1960s (James 1993, 380). Humanists take into account not only the objective aspects of place and geography, but also the subjective. Tuan (1997, 8) describes qualities of a humanist geographer:

[He attempts] to understand human feeling and emotions, artworks and language, and how, given these feelings and capabilities, human individuals bond with one another and with plants, animals, rocks and stars. The nature of this bonding is at the heart of humanist geography. (Tuan 1997, 8)

It is the bonding of West Yellowstone residents to each other, to Yellowstone National Park, and to the place, which is the focus of this thesis and which is meant to complement much of the objective research that has already been conducted on gateway communities.

The first section of this chapter covers literature from Geography as well as the outside disciplines. It is broken down into a general description of gateway communities, a population overview of gateway town residents, description of the social and economic impacts of tourism development, and the concepts of community and local identity. The second section in this chapter furnishes background on the town of West Yellowstone.

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

The best way to get acquainted with gateway towns is to invoke an image of a small remote town. Perhaps you have driven through a gateway community on your way to a National Park. Before you drove through the Park gate you stopped in the small town outside of its borders to stretch your legs, buy a map, or get some gas. Many people have passed through one of these gateway towns in such a way, perhaps without even noticing the town itself. Remarkably, every tourist season thousands of tourists descend on these gateway communities to overnight at campgrounds and hotels, eat meals, buy souvenirs, and purchase supplies in expectation of their imminent adventure. They may also learn about the adjacent area's natural and cultural resources. West Yellowstone, Montana; Estes Park, Colorado; and Gatlinburg, Tennessee are examples of these towns.

By definition, gateway communities exist adjacent to federal lands or parks and serve as portals to the protected federal lands for the throngs of tourists who visit them each year (Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997, 1). 'Gateway community' is an official



term used by the National Park Service (NPS) to refer to these communities with whom they share a common interest, the neighboring NPS entity (Steer and Chambers 1998, 1). Gateway towns are not necessarily rural, but because of their proximity to protected lands, many are rural, remote, or are situated in non-metropolitan counties.

In addition to the town's role as a souvenir, shelter and supply outfitter, gateway communities can play a vital role in park preservation by providing a tourism infrastructure that alleviates the stresses of tourism from inside of the Park to outside of its borders. However, some towns fail to produce the desired preservation effects. Gateway towns may inadvertently degrade adjacent public lands resources—damaging watersheds, polluting air and consuming wildlife habitat and land through continued land and resource development and subdivision (Machlis and Field 2000, 2). The continual need to grow and draw tourists to the gateway community may not be sustainable for the ever-delicate ecosystems that span both public and private lands.

General characteristics of gateway communities

Rural gateway communities have been susceptible to the same economic and population woes that all rural communities of the same region and economy are experiencing (Jobes 1993) p.159. Generally, these problems stem from the force of the global economy, which have lowered the prices for natural resource commodities and human labor, which, in turn, has made traditional natural extractive industries less profitable (Galston and Baehler 1995). In some cases, the declining profitability of natural resources has resulted in a population decline in rural towns. (Fuguitt 1995, 84). Moreover, retracting extractive industries have created unstable communities, which

Bruce Weber (1995, 162) notes in a brief assessment of the extractive industry in the rural United States. Unstable communities with declining economies, in turn, prompt young people in many rural areas to leave in search of education, employment, and more diverse social opportunities (Fuguitt 1995, 82). Additionally, rural areas, with the exception of the American South, tend to be white (p. 92).

Many towns, however, have attempted to fill this void in the economy left by declining commodity prices by developing tourism. Gateway towns and towns with a high amount of natural amenities have been especially successful on this front, which has resulted in renewed economic and population growth instead of decline.

National Park Service

One unique aspect about gateway towns is the strong influence of the National Park Service land management policies on the local economy and social fabric of gateway communities (Steer and Chambers 1998, 1). This is evident in the gateway communities directly outside Yellowstone National Park, whose residents are employed in tourist-based services, such as hotels and accommodations or land-based services for tourists such as hunting and fishing guides, naturalists or federal employment (Jobes 1993, 153). Residents' livelihoods are largely dependent on the Park, which in turn makes NPS policy a community issue, and a heated issue at that. Patrick Jobes (1993, 154) found that the residents closest to Yellowstone National Park live in a "love/ hate" relationship with the Park:

Permanent residents have wagered their lives on assumptions regarding resource use. Their homes, families, schools, and other aspects of community are realities dependent on how the abstract principles governing resource use are implemented. (Jobes 1993, 154)

Regulations issued by the federal government regarding the length of tourist seasons, recreational vehicle use such as all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles, or geothermal water directly impact the adjoining gateway communities. In a study of the social impacts of National Parks in four Canadian communities, Fortin and Gagnon (1999, 200) found that the Park management played a ‘determinant’ role in the development of the local gateway community. Often times this is a frustrating position for communities, because their destiny lies outside of their control and in the hands of a federal government agency (Achana and O’Leary 2000, 77; Fortin and Gagnon 1999, 207; Jobes 1993, 154). In a focus group conducted by Fortin and Gagnon outside of Sagueny National Park in Quebec, Canada, (1999, 207) residents expressed their dissatisfaction with the federal government when they said they “were no longer masters in their own home.” Uncertainty and a clash of interests between the Park and the neighboring community has been a continual source of contention and animosity in many gateway communities.

Additionally, since gateway communities are by definition adjacent to federal lands, many of these communities face a critical shortage of available private land for expansion or annexation. This creates another unique government-related community problem for growing towns.

Remoteness

Remoteness is a trait of many rural gateway communities, which generally means they are geographically isolated, less accessible via ground and air transportation routes and less developed economically, culturally, and infrastructure-wise. Remoteness is an

important distinction to make for analyzing the growth and population of gateway towns, because understanding the cause of remoteness can help us to understand why towns grow differently. Take two Yellowstone National Park gateway communities for instance; Jackson, Wyoming with a year-round airport has exploded, while Cooke City, Montana, where the road ends for eight months out of the year, remains small, isolated, and remote.

Remote towns often offer fewer services and fewer highly skilled employment opportunities than less remote rural towns, which means that remote towns are at a disadvantage to attract new residents to the community (Drabenstott and Smith 1995, 188). Instead, migrants have continually moved to communities directly adjacent to urban areas, which is where much of the migration to non-metropolitan areas has occurred (Vias 1999, 20). Migrants seeking amenities like good healthcare, diverse restaurants, and employment in professional services are less likely to move to a remote rural gateway town. Remoteness appears to be a determinant of the type of person that chooses to live or relocate to a remote area, because migrants to remote areas are willing to forgo these amenities.

Remoteness is a characteristic of the towns directly on the edges of Yellowstone National Park (Jobes 1993, 153). Jobes highlights a relationship between remoteness and population make-up. He found that these remote gateway towns had small populations and sparsely located residents, who tend to be very transient, young, white, and childless adults. Additionally, his description of the character of gateway town residents is in terms of people who are attracted by remoteness, he says (p. 155):

The residents who are attracted to such locations [remote edges of urban society] are frequently marginal, too. Many are low-income temporary residents. . . . Whether temporary drifters or extractive employees, they are engaged in activities beyond the purview of modern urban society. . . . Survivalists, religious zealots, and obsessed outdoor recreationists—extremes of unconventionality—move in and soon move on. More conventional romanticists, likewise, move on, as do park employees going to their next assignment. In the end, a few permanent and stationary residents remain to form the skeleton of the community. (Jobes 1993, 155)

Jobes' attention to the residents of remote gateway communities is instructive and illustrates the importance of being remote. The people he describes are unconventional. However, he does not mention two elements of the population, which have become more prominent in the nine years since this study was published. These are the amenity migrants and seasonal residents, which are discussed next.

Amenity migrants

Jobes suggests (1993, 155) that migrants to these remote gateway areas adjacent to Yellowstone National Park are very transient, low-income and marginal. However, the literature also shows that the high-amenity areas of the Rocky Mountain West (Fuguitt 1995, 84), and the areas around Yellowstone Park in particular, are seeing a significant increase in migration of affluent professionals (Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997, 16; Nelson 1999, 33). There is a discrepancy here.

The discrepancy, however, may be partially explained by the finding that the spatial patterns of migration to the rural west are changing (Cromartie and Wardell 1999, 2). While affluent migrants initially shied away from remote and less developed amenity towns, they are now seeking more remote communities that do not offer as many natural amenities and that are more isolated. The well-established movement of affluent

amenity-seeking migrants to scenic rural communities adjacent to urban centers is spreading to small cities and even remote rural areas with fewer natural amenities. They label these the second tier amenity towns. Accordingly, this means that West Yellowstone has recently or should begin to see more wealthy migrants.

When discussing these popular destinations, amenities can be anything from low crime rates, warmer climate, recreational opportunities or scenic beauty (Judson, Scanlon, and Popoff 1999, 25; Reichert and Rudzitis 1992, 38). Amenities more common to urban areas include cultural activities, shopping, medical care, and educational opportunities. Most anything can be an amenity, if it is considered by a person to be one. In reference to migration, researchers claim that migrants trade economic rewards, like wages, for amenities.

Gundars Rudzitis (1999, 10) in his study of the push and pull factors of new migrants to the rural American West found that people were moving to destinations based on their desire for social and environmental amenities, including federally protected lands and quality of life. Traditionally, people have moved in and out of an area solely for economic reasons. On average, however, only 30 percent of respondents moved to amenity areas for employment. The only variation is by age with younger people more often moving for employment. In support of this theory, Jobes (1992, 348-349) found that economic rationale was not enough to explain the migration of all income types to the Gallatin Valley of Montana.

Amenity-seeking migrants are often empty-nesters, well-educated, higher income and moving to the area for the quality of life (Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997, 3;

Nelson 1999, 32; Rudzitis 1999, 9). Migrants are even willing to move to high-amenity areas for lower incomes (Reichert and Rudzitis 1992, 39). Howe, McMahon, and Propst (1997, 2) term these people 'equity exiles' and characterize them as "discontented city dwellers from the East and West Coast that are selling their homes and using the profits to relocate to gateway communities with lower costs of living." These 'equity exiles' are changing the face of many rural towns across the West through population and economic growth—creating jobs in the wake of their arrival (Nelson 1999, 34; Shumway and Otterstrom 2001, 500) and creating a disparity between the thriving high-amenity towns of the New West and the quieter traditional rural agricultural and extractive towns of the Old West. Shumway and Otterstrom (2001, 495) concluded that towns of the New West, which had a high degree of natural amenities, employment and income in services, federal land, and recreation opportunity, had higher per capita incomes, larger populations, and higher population growth rate than traditional rural agricultural and extractive Old West towns, which remained at the lowest rung of per capita income. This disparity is predicted to grow, as it is predicted that people will continue to move for amenities (p. 500). Nelson (1999, 37) found that the self-employment and investment income generated by new migrants gives these communities significant economic advantages over the traditional rural community and thereby suggests that enhancing natural amenities could be a productive rural economic development strategy.

Seasonal residents

In addition to the relocation of people for amenities, people are building second homes in high-amenity areas, aging baby boomers in particular (Howe, McMahon, and

Propst 1997, 3; Marcouiller and Green 2000, 42). Second-home owners generate revenue for the local government through property taxes and spend money in the local economy on construction and daily expenditures. Their beneficial impacts on the community, however, are mixed, because the different values, culture, and expectations they bring into the community can create tension. A study conducted by Green, Marcouiller, Deller, Erkkila, and Sumathi (1996, 442) found that seasonal residents hold different opinions towards land use than year-round residents and had more formal education. Seasonal residents were less likely than permanent residents to want local land put into economic production, which created tension between the land-dependent old-timers and the land-independent seasonals. They found that the more time a seasonal resident spent at their recreational home, and the more interest they had in county issues, the more they supported land-use controls, which conflicts with the prevalent attitudes of year-round residents.

Another example of a rift between newcomers and old-timers was found by Allison Gill in her community study in Whistler, British Columbia (Gill 1996, 634). She viewed the rift between old-timers and seasonals as the creation of social cliques, an “insider” versus “outsider” situation. Income differences between locals and second-home owners can also create conflict as tension mounts through a stratification of social classes where none existed previously.

Second-home owners, along with developers, can also drive up the price of residential property, which increases the cost-of-living, making the town less affordable and less desirable to young families trying to establish themselves. Additionally the new

subdivisions and affluent landowners building on the edge of town burden the local environment with the consumption and development of open spaces (Gober, McHugh, and Leclerc 1993, 12; Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997, 4).

Transient seasonal workers

A seasonal town will not function without seasonal workers. The oft-ignored population group in gateway communities is the transient seasonal worker. Little literature exists on this group, yet their numbers are large, and tourism-dependent seasonal communities rely on these workers to run their businesses during the three to five-month tourist season.

Seasonal work primarily consists of low-paying service jobs in restaurants, gift shops, and hotels; there are also a few recreation-based jobs. Some locals traditionally used seasonal work to supplement their income. But, for the transient worker, after the tourist season ends, the work dries up; they leave town, and the cycle starts anew. I will refer to this group of workers who move in to town and work for three to five-months, and then move on as 'transient seasonal workers'.

Jobes is one of the few researchers to give transient seasonal workers attention in his studies, but his look is brief and marginalizes the entire transient population with gross generalizations about deviancy, zealotry, and obsessiveness (Jobes 1993, 155). Fortin and Gagnon (1999, 207) found transient seasonal workers to be generally younger and lower income and have a different historical perspective than long-term residents, which they found could create tension. However, they also found transient seasonal workers peripheral to meaningful discussions about community.

The only other time this transient population is given attention is when there are problems in the community. These articles are usually published in local newspapers. Either the community cannot find enough seasonal workers to run their businesses, the community has run out of housing (Miller 1999); seasonal workers are living in tents (Grossman 2000); or seasonal workers appear in crime logs or police incident reports (Hagemeier 2000).

Allison Gill (1996, 636) observed that the transient seasonal workers in Whistler are essentially disenfranchised. In her study that took place in a socially stratified gateway community, Gill sought to include all stakeholder groups in the community decision-making process. She discovered, however, that seasonal residents and transient seasonal workers were often excluded from the public decision-making process in their host communities, purposefully or not. Moreover, she argues that transient seasonal workers are essentially disenfranchised.

Little attention has been given to the people who make up this seasonal labor force and how this segment relates to the rest of the host community. While their absence in literature implies these people are peripheral to the community, the economic data suggest that they are essential to its livelihood. In a gateway community, that livelihood is tourism.

Impacts of tourism development

The next subsection shifts to a discussion of tourism in gateway communities—focusing on the economic and social impacts of rapid tourism industry growth on rural communities and their residents. Tourism development as an economic strategy has

become a focus for many rural towns. Communities develop tourism over extractive industries or manufacturing, because tourism is perceived as a clean industry that can strengthen the economy through increased employment and services without degrading the environment (Toolman 1997, 34). Additionally, the initial capital investment in tourism is minimal compared to other industries such as manufacturing. However, tourism development is not without negative economic, social, and even environmental consequences. An understanding of these impacts on rural towns is imperative, because tourism's impacts can permeate all aspects of life. Through the unchecked growth of tourism development, rural gateway communities risk compromising their community and amenities that initially made their town desirable (Machlis and Field 2000, 8).

Positive and negative economic impacts of tourism development

Presently the economies of many gateway towns are thriving with the help of tourism that capitalizes on the town's surrounding geography rich in natural and small-town social amenities. Most generally, the positive economic impacts include increased employment opportunities and labor force participation rates and an increase in small-business opportunities and entrepreneurship (Toolman 1997, 34). Tourism can also ease the suffering of an ailing local economy whose fortunes have dwindled with the decline of local extractive and agricultural industries. Additionally, tourism development's secondary effect, population growth, has resulted in an increased tax-base, self-employment and investment income (Nelson 1999, 34).

However, the positive impacts of tourism are offset by negative impacts. Alex Toolman (1997, 35) found in his study of tourism development in two gateway

communities outside of Smoky Mountains National Park, that increased labor force participation was accompanied by persistently high seasonal unemployment, and the majority of jobs were low-paying, low-skill service jobs with little chance for job advancement. In general, he found that the typical person was no better off financially than the typical person in a neighboring non-tourism dependent county, which means that the enormous tourism development was no boon to the majority of the local population. “The exclusive reliance on tourist development would have limited impact in elevating per capita income...” (p. 35). Other negative economic impacts associated with growth and rapid tourism development are increased stress on the town infrastructure and less affordable housing (Gober, McHugh, and Leclerc 1993, 12 ; Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997, 144). Toolman (1997, 37) found a decline in economic diversity, which leaves a town unstable and the economy susceptible to boom and bust cycles. Additionally, income and social stratification of the community and a higher cost-of-living are also likely results (Marcouiller and Green 2000, 41; Rothman 1998, 351, 362). It has been found that tourism development increases the presence of outside commercial investment can be negative in the long run, as locals lose control of the local business and external corporations control local decision-making (Achana and O’Leary 2000, 81; Rothman 1998, 343, 344).

Franchises have national and international advertising campaigns that present a business identity entirely unrelated to the community and name familiarity that offer them an advantage over small businesses when competing for tourist dollars (Rothman 1998, 338-377). They consistently out compete small local businesses; additionally, the

franchise business establishment structures are often physically larger, and they offer more capacity (p. 343). Moreover, business profits flow out of town; and local control over the economy and community dissipates as these outside companies begin to control the course of town development (p.340).

Positive and negative social impacts of tourism development

Social and economic impacts from tourism development are overlapping. Increased employment, for instance, is not only good for the economy, but for the well-being of community members. However, when those jobs are low-paying with little chance of job advancement, the long-term effects to the community well-being may be negative, as individuals must take on two or three jobs to survive, or residents leave to find better employment opportunity elsewhere.

In general, positive social impacts of tourism development in small rural communities are an increase to the quality of life through more employment (Toolman 1997, 34); tourism can be a viable economic mainstay when the community actively supports and manages it; development of recreation amenities and services for tourists benefits locals; and some residents face less social isolation through the influx of new people who bring new ideas to the community (Ap and Crompton 1998, 48). Sometimes even the community process of tourism development planning can increase the well-being of community members (Cooke 1982, 29; Huang and Stewart 1996, 25).

On the negative side, social discord and community divisiveness is related to rapid growth and tourism development. Seasonal population fluctuations, increased crime, increased noise, congestion, and pollution affect the day-to-day living of

community residents (Achana and O'Leary 2000, 81). During the high season, for instance, residents may avoid town or their favorite bar because of the crowds and congestion (Ap and Crompton 1993, 47). Broader more long-term impacts include the loss of community solidarity and trust (Greider, Krannich, and Berry 1991, 264), the loss of community identity (Fortin and Gagnon 1999, 210; Rothman 1998, 340), and the loss of local control over community planning (Allen et al. 1988, 19; Rothman 1998). In one qualitative study of tourism development's social impacts, Karen Cooke (1982, 26) found a condition of a town experiencing poor tourism development was the uncertainty residents felt about the future and a loss of control over the direction of the community. Additionally, a lack of affordable housing and an increased need for social services place a strain on the community.

Tourism development can also result in social stratification and inequalities that are divisive to the community. A burgeoning economy can create resentment among old-timers, between those who are successful in the new economy and those who are not (Rothman 1998, 351). The common local ethnic background may begin to vary, either from the recruitment of service workers or displacement of local residents. Increasingly, non-U.S. residents have been hired to fill low-paying service jobs. This trend changes the traditional homogenous face of the community and stratifies the community, as the foreign workers end up filling the ranks of the lowest-paying service jobs. Additionally amenity migrants and seasonal homeowners may create the demand for a local economy that only they can afford to enjoy. The changing class structure of residents has a significant and dividing effect upon the community. (Rothman 1998, 363).

Rapid growth alone can create social disruption, which Greider, Krannich, and Berry (1991, 264) gauged in four western rural communities. Measuring residents' sense of local identity, solidarity and sense of trust, they concluded that local identity and solidarity decreased with rapid growth and rapid decline in the population. One manifestation of distrust is the rise of "us" versus "them" and "insider" versus "outsider".

Janet Fitchen notes (1991, 256):

a tendency in small rural communities undergoing substantial population change for locals to compartmentalize residents into broad generic categories to externalize unknown residents and to maintain a vision of the community as close-knit and homogeneous. (Fitchen 1991, 256)

Allen, Long, Perdue, and Kieselbach (1988, 19) suggest that tourism's most detrimental social impacts occur in communities that have the highest development level of tourism development. With significant tourism development, residents perception of community life tend to drop as a result of declining feelings of camaraderie and the waning influence they possess in the community.

How community residents regard or perceive the impacts of tourism is variable. Ap and Crompton (1993, 48) concluded that residents in four Texas towns react to an influx of tourists in one of four ways, ranging from positive to negative—embracement, tolerance, adjustment, and withdrawal. McCool and Martin (1994, 33) found that newcomers to highly developed tourist areas embrace development and seem to become rapidly attach to the community. They suggest that the newcomers are well-attached and regard tourism development more positively, because "they themselves are tourists who have settled in these places" (McCool and Martin 1994, 34).

In addition to the social and economic impacts, environmental consequences of tourism development must not be ignored. Residents risk degrading their environs by air and ground water pollution caused by continued development and population growth. Locals risk losing their favorite private fishing hole to an influx of new residents or losing some of the less tangible qualities of their environment such as wildness and solitude as more street lamps light the sky and the hills become dotted with houses. The nation risks the loss of wildlife habitat, degradation of watersheds, and the irreparable loss of wildness. Yellowstone National Park stops by law at the border, but the animals, the ecosystem, the rivers, and the weather do not. Development of land outside the Park border endangers the life inside the Park. Clearly, the impacts of tourism development are extensive, including foreseeable short-term impacts as well as unforeseeable and long-term impacts to the environment and the adjacent communities.

Community

At this point it is important to define the concept of 'community'. Numerous definitions of 'community' exist and are debated among sociologists. I have, however, incorporated only a basic structure of 'community'. The three conventionally accepted elements of 'community' outlined by Kenneth Wilkinson (1986, 3) are: a local ecology, a local society, and local solidarity, he states:

A local ecology designates the community as a collective organization through which residents of a small territory meet their daily needs. Second, the community, as an organization of social life, contains sufficient structures such as groups, firms, agencies, and facilities to meet all of the daily needs and to express all the major categories of the common interests of people. . . Third, the community consists of a field of community actions—collective efforts to solve local problems and collective expressions of local identity and solidarity. (Wilkinson 1986, 3)

West Yellowstone may not meet all criteria to be considered a 'community'. For instance, West Yellowstone residents may need to travel to Bozeman, Montana for routine healthcare needs and various retail purchases, which would render the town insufficient as a 'community', because the locale is not providing for residents' "daily needs". Nonetheless, Wilkinson's definition of 'community' serves this thesis well by drawing attention to the locale, the place of West Yellowstone, and its residents. However, it is the third element of 'community', "collective efforts to solve local problems and collective expressions of local identity and solidarity" (p. 3), which is fundamental to discussing my guiding hypothesis that 15 years of change through tourism development has been divisive to the West Yellowstone community and diminished the traditional local identity.

Discord, which is antithetical to solidarity, occurs when community actions are not viewed as collective, but as representing the interests of the few (Greider, Krannich, and Berry 1991, 265; Wilkinson 1986, 4). Additionally, conflicting expressions of local identity and an inability to resolve local problems for all residents are manifestations of discord. Divisiveness also expresses itself in the "us" versus "them" and "insider" versus "outsider" mentality, and the growth of inequality in communities. The feeling of not "belonging" to a community is an expression of community division.

Local identity

Local identity is an important concept to gateway communities for the following reasons: (1) One common method of tourism development is local identity enhancement, which may commodify aspects of local culture (Huang and Stewart 1996, 30; Shaw and

Williams 1994, 169) and alienate residents who no longer identify with the predominant culture. (2) Growth in terms of new residents, new values, and new business can transform the common culture and traditional local identity (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001, 492) and create disruption “as uncertainty may prevail about just what it is with which one is identifying” (Greider, Krannich, and Berry 1991, 265). (3) Large-scale tourism can have a homogenizing effect on communities, making one town look like another (Rothman 1998, 343), thereby diminishing people’s sense of local identity.

✎ The ‘collective local identity’ of a town is comprised of “the shared characteristics and reputation commonly attributed to a particular place, as well as the representatives affiliated with that place” (Wulfhorst 2000, 275). The collective identity is essentially how outsiders commonly regard the community and its residents. Some towns, wishing to attract tourists to their locale, try to enhance, or even manipulate their collective local identity through advertised images, cultural events or unique architecture as part of their tourism development strategy. An improved image can boost town morale (Huang and Stewart 1996, 29). Moreover, according to Ed McMahon of the Sonoran Institute (Jamison 2002), “The image of a community is fundamentally important to its economic well-being. If every place looked like every place else, there’d be no reason to travel. That’s why tourists travel—to see something different.”

However, sometimes a town’s new collective identity may alienate residents, because residents do not identify with the modified image and reputation (Wulfhorst 2000, 275). The new image, for instance, may attract residents with new values, different lifestyles and expectations. Moreover, the community, in terms of residents’ behaviors

and town character, may change to reflect the new collective identity and fulfill tourist's expectations (Huang and Stewart, 29). Additionally, some residents may have liked the community just how it was.

Meanwhile, other towns already in the midst of tourism development are hard at work to preserve their threatened traditional social, cultural and environmental values (Machlis and Field 2000, 8), what I am calling the 'traditional local identity.' The traditional local identity represents how residents identify with each other; and it is based upon common values, behaviors, lifestyles, common goals and close personal ties—a common cultural background. A community with a traditional local identity is likely to be more cohesive; "When residents have a similar cultural background, they tend to identify with and help each other achieve their common goals. Their bonding is cohesive due to the integrative forces of sharing the same cultural background" (Huang and Stewart 1996, 26). Solidarity based upon a shared traditional local identity is jeopardized by the in-migration of people with different cultural values, (i.e. different income levels, backgrounds, and ethnicities) (p. 30). This can create a rift between old-timers and newcomers as varying life-styles and social values could cause disagreements between old-timers and newcomers regarding community responsibilities (p. 28). Additionally, growth may alienate old-timers from each other and alter an identity that is based on shared experiences, hard work, and knowing everyone in town (Rothman 1998, 363).

For example, an old-timer after 15 years of growth considers his rural town as big or "big enough". A newcomer, however, from an urban area is likely to consider the expanded little town quaint and not mind more growth and even welcome new

businesses; because even if the town were bigger, it would still be far smaller than the urban area whence he came. The old-timer and the newcomer perceive the town differently, which is common. Each person has different experiences, memories and intentions toward the place (Relph 1976, 56). It is therefore likely, that in a rapidly growing community, all residents conceive community needs differently. This leads to tension as residents have different views of how the community should develop.

Tourism development is a threat to the traditional identity of gateway communities. Although tourism development can positively affect the local identity through infrastructure improvements and the stimulation of collective community action (Huang and Stewart 1996, 30), changing physical community characteristics, such as expansion, box store architecture and the subdivision of countryside, can negatively affect the way people feel about their community (Greider, Krannich, and Berry 1991, 265). Additionally, franchise businesses are frequently larger, which does not fit with the small-town atmosphere; and they are often architecturally uninteresting (Green 1999, 327), which is inconsistent with community identity and culturally homogenizing (Rothman 1998, 343). Examples of these occurrences are the popular destinations of Aspen and Vail, Colorado. “The individuality of place disappeared as corporations that regarded identity as a selling point took control and developers with cookie-cutter plans followed” (Rothman 1998, 340). By exploring the changing local identity of West Yellowstone, it is possible to gain an understanding of the impacts of tourism development on the place and people, and insight into the discord, which is showing itself in the town.

Tourism development and local identity creation

The following subsections outline some of the ways that communities enhance local identity in order to attract tourists and to fill a community-perceived void in identity. Those ways are through the use of “boosterism”, themes, character enhancement, and the narrative.

Boosterism

Residents may enhance, exaggerate, or even fabricate the local identity of their small rural community in order to promote their community as a tourism destination (Frenkel and Walton 2000, 550-577; Shaw and Williams 1994, 167-173; Tuan 1977, 174). In some cases this involves creating an enlarged sense of identity or boasting a reputation. Tuan calls it ‘boosterism’, which he says runs rampant in the American West (Tuan 1977, 174-175).

New cities, such as the frontier settlements of North America, lacked a venerable past; to attract business and gain pride their civic leaders were obliged to speak with a loud voice. Strident boosterism was the technique to create an impressive image, and to a lesser extent still is. The boosters could rarely vaunt their city’s past or culture; hence the emphasis tended to be on abstract and geometrical excellences such as “the most central,” the biggest,” “the fastest,” and “the tallest” (Tuan 1977, 174-175)

The state of Montana, for instance, uses ‘boosterism’ to promote Montana as “The last best place” or “Big Sky Country”. It is a promotion to bring people into the state, but the boost lends each Montanan a sense of pride and belonging in something that is greater than the individual.

Themes

In addition to creating an identity and reputation through ‘boosterism’, there are theme towns—an extreme example of a community using an exaggerated or even falsified identity to attract tourists. The creation of identity and place in a few towns across the United States occurs through the assiduous use of a theme (Engler 1993, 8). Theme towns strive to create “a unified image, an experience with a central character”. Bavarian Leavenworth, Washington and German Fredericksburg, Texas use unified architecture, period clothing and costumes, and cultural events to create the German town environment for tourists. Other towns use theme districts or historical preservation to create a unified sense of place, but on a smaller and less overwhelming scale than a theme town. The theme town experience may transport a person to a different part of the world, or bring people into contact with original cultures and societies untouched by the modern world, which is what tourists desire (Shaw and Williams 1994, 170). In the western United States popular themes revolved around waterfront-wharf, Wild West, ethnic, and historic themes (Engler 1993, 9). A carnival atmosphere is also prominent through the similar idea of theme parks, but at a scaled down version.

Character enhancement

To decipher identity an acquaintance with the notion of place character is helpful. Relph (1976, 48) suggests that there exists a ‘spirit of place, or ‘sense of place’ which is less tangible than the physical or even mental place, but gives the place a character. Certain landmarks, images or landscape features can evoke identity, character or a sense of place. Many communities carefully invoke or use an array of these features to convey

a thematic identity and place character. False storefronts convey an old western- town feeling. Monuments, museums, and flags communicate a historical heritage, while landmarks such as churches, town squares, and historical buildings may lend character, age, and distinctiveness to each community. Additionally, communities may invoke oceanscapes and wild landscapes in advertising, conversation, and literature, in order to establish an association with these greater identities.

Place character is also important to community residents for its intrinsic value. Ray Green (1999, 319) in his study of community's conception of town character as conveyed through local landscape features, concluded that certain symbols, a statue for instance, and landscapes are reflective of town character and hold much meaning for residents. Residents positively identify with them. However, other symbols, such as a Woolworth's, a franchise store, and large brick hotels and landscapes containing industrial estates and subdivisions hold less importance or are even antithetical to the community character (p. 324). Green suggests these symbols are incongruent with town character due to their large scale and homogenous design. Symbols more reflective of town character tend to exhibit the attributes of naturalness and beauty, secondarily pleasantness, interest, and distinctiveness.

Narrative

Tuan suggests that residents, through the use of narrative, create and define their town's identity (Tuan 1991a, 685). "Speech is a component of the total force that transforms nature into a human place." Media in the form of brochures, locally published books, museums, and Internet web pages are all put forward by the city to deliver a

unified image. Moreover, every time a local speaks to a tourist about the town, his narrative is reinforcing his own thoughts and feeling about the community he calls 'home'; he is influencing how the tourist feels about the place. It has been suggested, however, that "residents may try to fit their behavior into their perception of tourists' images of them and their community" (Huang and Stewart 1996, 29). Either way, the hotel clerk, who describes the attractions and history of the town to the tourist, is creating the town for the tourist, although the town described may reflect more of an ideal, than the reality.

The shortcomings of identity enhancement

While many communities have had economic success by enhancing and exaggerating their identity, there can be repercussions. A theme upon which the community has staked its livelihood can be divisive to a community, if all community members do not support the identity. The new local identity can alienate those who do not want to participate or who do not profit from it. Wilkinson (1986, 4) supports this statement indirectly when he discusses the intrinsic value of community, he mentions "a very thin line between the solidarity that people seek with the relations of those around them and the kind of oppressive intolerance that can prevail when solidarity is imposed or enforced" (p. 4). Additionally, theming may empty local rituals of their intrinsic value (Huang and Stewart 1996, 30) and may even falsify the history it is trying to preserve because it has been packaged for tourists (Shaw and Williams 1994, 169). Any fabrication of identity brings up issues such as the falsification of place, authenticity, and cultural commodification.

Sense of place and local identity are topical issues for gateway towns like West Yellowstone because growth and migration to these areas is changing the identity of these once small and sleepy communities (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001, 492, 500, 501), and this change in identity is often beyond the control of the local residents. Fortin and Gagnon (1999, 210) forcefully state their concern for these communities' shifting identities:

If we do not want to reduce our national parks to nothing more than immense playgrounds for urban residents and tourists needing a change of scene, or worse yet, turn local communities into artificial villages where all visible activity has been emptied of meaning and reduced to temporary simulations for the tourist season, as has happened in numerous tourist towns around the world, major policy corrections are urgently needed. (Fortin and Gagnon 1999, 210)

Gateway communities are indeed facing many challenges; however, each town is distinctively different. The challenges vary because of the individuality of residents, physical geography, economy, history and local issues. The next section describes the town of West Yellowstone and some of the unique issues confronting this community.

WEST YELLOWSTONE, MONTANA

Physical description

West Yellowstone is remotely located in the southwest corner of Montana directly adjacent to the west gate of Yellowstone National Park and inside the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Wyoming sits two miles to the east and Idaho is not far away to the south and west. Situated on the southeast end of the Madison River Valley, the west gate is geographically a natural passage to the interior of Yellowstone National Park by way of the Madison River. The headwaters of the Madison River are in Yellowstone

National Park, and it winds its way two miles to the west of town on its way to the Missouri River. The length of the river is a haven for fly fishers throughout the world.

Wildlife populations including elk, moose, grizzly bear, marten, bald eagles and a multitude of waterfowl are supported in the surrounding public and private lands (Rawlins 1994, 143). The natural vegetation is classified according to the Küchler classification as pine-spruce with an abundance of lodge pole pine (Espenshade 1995, 71). The climate is classified as middle latitude steppe, semi-arid and cool (p. 11). At an elevation of 6,666 feet, high on the Yellowstone plateau, West Yellowstone consistently records some of the coldest temperatures in the United States. Natural hazards in the area include earthquakes, including one measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale centered nearby in 1956, and forest fires with the last major fire to threaten the town in 1988.

Park visitation

West Yellowstone is one of five gateway communities surrounding Yellowstone National Park. The others with whom it must compete are Gardiner, Montana; Cooke City, Montana; Jackson, Wyoming; and Cody, Wyoming. The west gate of Yellowstone National Park is the busiest of the five park gates with over one million tourists entering the Park there annually. That is one third of the approximately three million people that visit Yellowstone National Park each year. In 2001, 1,070,493 recreational visitors entered the Park through the west gate adjacent to West Yellowstone. During the winter of 2000-20001 approximately 348,000 tourists entered the Park, with 66,320 entering at West Yellowstone and 57,200 entering on snowmobiles (*Missoulian* [Missoula] 25 February 2002). The closest city to West Yellowstone with a year-round airport, hospital

and diverse shopping opportunities is Bozeman, Montana (pop. 27,509), which is nearly a 90-mile drive north of town.

The townsite

What is now the town of West Yellowstone started inauspiciously in 1908 with the completion of Union Pacific's Oregon Shortline Railroad depot (Eagle and Eagle 1978, 1:16). To accommodate the projected influx of tourists, the Madison National Forest allowed the clearing and survey of six acres for three business permits—at this point the most minimal definition of a place, then called Riverside, had been created. In 1919, the town site was expanded to 339.73 acres (Eagle and Eagle 1978, 3:16), and in the 1980s the size was nearly doubled through two land swaps with the adjacent Madison National Forest. The town is completely surrounded by federally owned public lands, so it must engage the help of the federal government in order to expand. The name of the town was changed to Yellowstone in 1908 and West Yellowstone in 1920 (Eagle and Eagle 1978, 2:6).

Originally a one-season town with the season lasting from June to September (Eagle and Eagle 1978, 2:32), most West Yellowstone residents boarded up their businesses for the winter, only to reopen when the summer tourist season arrived. Now West Yellowstone has a two-season economy, summer and winter with growing shoulder season attractions. Estimates of the off-season vary by which resident or town official you talk to with estimates varying between six to twelve weeks.

Although West Yellowstone started as a railroad town, the Union Pacific pulled out in the 1960s due to the decreasing popularity of rail travel. The railroad grade still

exists, as do a few buildings from the old depot, which are now the subject of renovation and historical preservation. The *r'aison d'etre* for this community is tourism to Yellowstone National Park, however timber from the adjacent national forest historically provided income and federal employment. The National Park Service has a small presence in town with less than 15 year-round employees (Ring 2002, 12). The town was incorporated in 1966; and it seems there are a good many years where not much happened in West Yellowstone, and no one paid much attention to the town.

Recent history and the 'new tourist economy'

The 'new tourist economy' of West Yellowstone took off in 1984 when the gateway community enacted a 3 percent resort tax. The tax revenue enabled the community to keep pace with growing infrastructure needs that could not be met by a small property-tax base of 735 people in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). The resulting infrastructure development literally paved the way for commercial development, which took off in the late 1980s. The annexation of two previously mentioned land parcels allowed the town to expand commercially and residentially. In the five years leading up to 1996 nearly \$30 million in commercial development was invested in the community (Town of West Yellowstone 1996a, 1). Additionally, the number of hotel rooms grew by 700 units between 1994 and 1999 (Miller 1999). Presently, there are nearly 1,800 units (Ring 2002, 12). Although franchise businesses had existed in the town prior to the building boom, the physical face of the community was transformed with the construction of multiple hotel and restaurant franchises as well as a franchised IMAX theater.

Another important aspect of the 'new tourist economy' is the growth and development of snowmobile industry. Snowmobiling grew from a winter hobby and practical means of getting around to become a mainstay in the West Yellowstone winter recreation economy. What was once a sleepy winter town is now wired with sometimes as many as 1,500 snowmobiles per day entering Yellowstone National Park through the gate at West Yellowstone. The town has dubbed itself the "Snowmobile Capital of the World"

The town recognizes that this rapid growth has created a strain on the community in terms of land use, housing, and social problems (Town of West Yellowstone 1996, 1, 2). The lack of available housing is the most cited problem, and it manifests itself as both an economic and social problem. According to the *Town of West Yellowstone Housing Assessment and Fiver Year Plan* (1996a, 1), the present transient seasonal workforce is in "dire need" of affordable and adequate housing. The situation was created when much of the new commercial development did not produce new employee housing. The second issue is the increased cost of housing for the year-round residents, which is forcing many households to contemplate moving away from the area (1996a, 3; Miller 1999). Other community concerns were the improvement of: medical and health services; retail shopping opportunities; indoor park and recreation facilities; cultural and art events; youth education, adult education, and job training; winter air quality; senior citizen's facilities and services; and the diversification the local economy (Town of West Yellowstone 1996, 2-4).

Government issues affecting West Yellowstone

Presently, there are two significant federal policy issues affecting life in West Yellowstone. The most pressing is the proposed Winter Use Policy for Yellowstone National Park, which has been under construction for the last five years. The main provisions of this policy address winter recreation and the types and numbers of vehicles that will be allowed in the Park. The policy specifically addresses snowmobiles, and in 2000, the Clinton Administration banned snowmobiles from the Park. However, the ban was tabled by the new Bush administration, which cited a need for more research and public input. A new decision on the Winter Use Policy is expected by November of 2002.

The second issue is the Park's policy regarding the migration of bison outside of Park borders. This affects residents in that they must deal with protestors who come to their town to object to the government policy. The Montana Department of Livestock has the authority to haze, capture bison, test them for brucellosis, and slaughter those that test positive. Another issue is that the town of West Yellowstone wants to annex more land. The town continues to engage in a dialogue with the surrounding National Forests about expanding the town's borders.

Economy

The town's economy has traditionally been overwhelmingly tourist-based (Eagle and Eagle 1978, 1:1-4:13); it still is. To determine this, I compared the West Yellowstone economy to that of Gallatin County and the state of Montana in a *location quotient analysis* (Appendix 1). This analysis calculates basic employment in all sectors

of the West Yellowstone economy. Basic employment is an indication of externally oriented market activity—the larger amount of basic sectoral employment, the stronger the sector. The analysis can also identify industries in which the local economy specializes (Klosterman 1990, 132). A *location quotient analysis* of the 1999 economy by two-digit NAICS codes (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999) revealed that employment is strongly concentrated in the following sectors: *Retail Trade, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, and Accommodations and Food Services*. These sectors are the back-bone of the tourist industry (Rasker, Johnson, and York 1998, 114). The town's economy showed little other basic employment, indicating a uni-dimensional economy that is overwhelmingly dependent on tourism.

Population

From 1990 to 2000, West Yellowstone grew 26.7 percent, doubling the Montana state growth rate of 12.9 percent. The West Yellowstone population is 1,177 (U.S. Bureau of Census 2000). A notable change in the character of the population was the increase in Latinos from seven people to 91 people, comprising 7.7 percent of the population. Table 1 shows that the town's median age is 37-years-old, which is roughly the same as the state's rate.

Table 1. West Yellowstone population characteristics

	West Yellowstone		Montana	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Population	929	1,177	799,065	902,195
Median Age	34.5	37.0	33.8	37.5
65 and over	7.0%	5.0%	13.0%	13.0%
Percent Latino Population	0.8%	7.7%	1.5%	2.0%

The number of residents over 65-years-old has decreased in West Yellowstone to 5 percent, while the state remains at 13 percent. It does not appear that people are retiring to West Yellowstone; and retirees may even be leaving. West Yellowstone appears to have a different population make-up than the rest of the state.

Housing and tenure

In 2000 only 38 percent of housing units were owner-occupied compared to 69 percent statewide, a wide discrepancy and a drop of 11 percentage points from 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). A low owner-occupancy rate indicates transience and that residents are being priced out of the housing market—an unhealthy trend. Just over 20 percent of the housing stock is for seasonal or occasional use, which is well above the state average of 6 percent. Of all West Yellowstone households in 2000, 56 percent were family households. The year 2000 statewide percentage of family households was 66 percent. In the context of the gateway town literature that describes Yellowstone National Park's gateway towns as single, white, and childless adults (Jobes 1993, 155), it makes sense that the family household rate is lower Appendix 2 shows these rates, plus more detailed housing and tenure information.

Gateway towns are those unique little communities that exist as portals to protected federal lands. They have seen enormous population growth and tourism development, which is changing the community identity, character and residents' ways of live. The first section of this background chapter delivered a general description of gateway communities, a population overview of remote gateway town residents,

description of the social and economic impacts of tourism development, and the concept of community and local identity. The second section in this chapter established West Yellowstone as a remote, but rapidly growing town that has actively promoted itself as a winter snowmobile destination.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To study rural gateway towns, a qualitative study was undertaken in West Yellowstone, Montana. Semistandardized interviews, which are guided, but unstructured interviews, combined with a collection of background materials were used to gather data, experiences and opinions about the community, the residents and the place. Inductive and deductive content analysis with grounded theory was utilized to (1) arrive at a meaningful description of West Yellowstone and its residents and (2) to explore the guiding hypothesis that change brought about by tourism development over the last 15 years has been divisive to the community and diminished the traditional local identity.

The use of grounded theory in this study allowed me to refine and generate theory that emerged from the interviews. At first I immersed myself in the texts in order to allow themes about residents and recent community change to emerge. This is an inductive approach that laid the ground for the deductive approach, whereby I looked to the interviews to confirm the overriding hypothesis and refine it. Grounded theory worked for this thesis, as I suspected there was a causal relationship between tourism development and discord—the decline of “collective efforts to solve local problems and collective expressions of local identity and solidarity” (Wilkinson 1986, 3); however, I did not know the dynamics of the relationship.

West Yellowstone was chosen as the study area for gateway communities because of my familiarity with the town, as I lived and worked as a transient seasonal worker in Yellowstone National Park for four years. Although I did not live in the community, I had a familiarity with its people, development, rhythm and a genuine interest in the town's well being. West Yellowstone is different than many gateway towns, in that it has always been a tourist town with no other significant industrial sectors. However, it is still representative of rural gateway towns, because the transformation of the economy is only one aspect of the transformation taking place in these communities.

THE APPROACH

For this study, I wanted to collect rich and detailed opinions and experiences from all types of residents, permanent and seasonal, and transient seasonal workers. Therefore, I decided to collect this information through face-to-face semistandardized interviews during the high tourist season. This interviewing method allowed me to capture the uniqueness of each person's experience, plus the one-on-one contact helped to familiarize me with the person and the context of their physical place in West Yellowstone. Additionally, I did not expect to obtain adequate results from the seasonal residents in a mail-out or phone survey, even during the high season. Seasonal residents are reluctant to be bothered; many have unlisted phone numbers and may be absent. Transient seasonal workers, on the other hand, would be difficult to reach by phone or mail, because many are in and out of town in two weeks, never even getting a phone or a post office box for the duration.

Additionally, West Yellowstone has come under scrutiny from the National Park Service and local and national conservation groups in relation to the management of Yellowstone National Park's bison herd and the winter use policy of Yellowstone National Park. Permanent residents are tired of the attention and skeptical of outsiders asking questions. Therefore, a personal non-confrontational and a non-political orientation seemed the best way to break the barrier. I steered clear of direct questions about the proposed ban on snowmobiles, as I did not want to antagonize interviewees. However, questions about government policy, community issues, and future growth generally led to the topic, and I found that the topic of snowmobiles could not be avoided and was indeed a symbol of larger community issues.

In preparation for the interviews, I gathered background literature on the community, conducted a sight-visit with preliminary interviews, and prepared a letter of introduction to hand to my potential interviewees. I also had six informational interviews in the first two days of interviewing. The interviewing process lasted two weeks and was spread out over three months in the summer of 2000. The police department, social services, local government, school superintendent, seasonal employers, and the non-motorized sporting community were represented in these interviews.

Additionally, the West Yellowstone Foundation, a non-profit community-oriented foundation, was helpful with an in-town orientation and by opening some doors for me through introductions and referrals. Introductions and referrals were necessary in this small town where locals are reserved and wary of outsiders, who appear to be meddling in

their affairs. The Foundation gave me gas money, and in return, I created and distributed a mail-in survey about a proposed community center.

Sampling method and design

A stratified sampling method of community residents was used in this study, because it allows a researcher to identify the population subgroups and to then independently sample within those subgroups (Berg 1998, 229). However, the number of people interviewed for this study (54) was not great enough to be statistically meaningful for each subgroup, a purposive sample of the community strata, therefore, more accurately represents this sample method. A purposive sample allows a researcher, who is already well informed about the specific population, more latitude in selecting residents that the researcher believes are representative of a subgroup (Berg 1998, 229).

For this study, I set up a stratified purposive sampling method to reach all population subgroups. Those broad subgroups are permanent residents, seasonal residents, and transient seasonal workers. To capture the full spectrum of permanent residents, the category was further divided into old-timers, residents living in the community between 3 and 8 years, and residents living in the community under three years. This stratification of permanent residents was inspired by the town's recent population increase, the literature's reference to a recent influx of migrants to amenity areas, and to see if opinions about the community and desire to settle in the town might differ with community tenure. As the interviews progressed, other subgroups within permanent residents were identified, and were subsequently represented through the purposive sampling method. These subgroups were the 'local elite', the 'working poor',

business owners, federal government employees (identified before the interviewing commenced), and the sporting community. The average resident was not rich, but had devised a comfortable existence by working at an assortment of jobs year-round.

The transient seasonal resident category was also broken down into subgroups: college students, retirees, and “wanderers”. These categories were informed by the literature and my own four years of experience as a transient seasonal worker. An additional subgroup, foreign workers, was added after the informational interviews indicated the need. An increased number of legal foreign workers with 10-month work visas have been brought into the community to fill vacancies that have laid open for months.

There were no subgroups in the seasonal resident category. These residents own at least two residences, one in or around West Yellowstone and one elsewhere. They were contacted with the help of a local resident who gave me the phone numbers of people willing to be interviewed. Due to the manner in which these seasonal residents were selected, this study under-represents seasonal residents, who live completely outside the community circle.

With the exception of the seasonal residents, I had four basic means of acquiring interviews: snowball method, former acquaintances, chance meetings and selective door-knocking based upon my knowledge of the community geography. The snowballing technique means that I asked interviewees for referrals to other potential interviewees (Weiss 1994). I contacted transient seasonal workers primarily by knocking on the doors

of places where I had been told these workers lived, and by walking into their workplace and asking for an interview.

Guiding hypothesis and research questions

The background chapter established that rapid tourism development has positively and negatively impacted many gateway communities, including West Yellowstone. The research focus of this thesis is the description of the West Yellowstone community as a backdrop to address the following research questions: (1) What type of people live and settle in West Yellowstone, and how do they compare to the residents of New West amenity towns mentioned in the literature? (2) What are some of the physical and social impacts to the community as well as some of the less tangible experiential changes community residents perceive? What aspects of change are disruptive? How has the disruption manifested itself? And how has the collective local identity been affected? An additional research focus was on transient seasonal workers, who they are, and do they match the description I found in the literature? Are they disruptive to the community? Are they peripheral to the community? The interviews serve as a local exploration of issues common to all gateway communities.

The interview

I conducted semistandardized interviews with a range of open and closed questions lasting between five minutes and one hour. Each interview consisted of six subjects: place, seasonal workers, tourism development, community, government policy and brief personal information. Not every interviewee was able to comment on each subject or answer every question; subjects were, therefore, broached differently for each

subgroup. For instance, a transient seasonal worker is not able to meaningfully comment on the changes brought around by years of tourism development. However, the transient seasonal worker might say during the course of the interview, “I think this town is over commercialized” or “I like snowmobiling through West Yellowstone in the winter,” which are direct or indirect results of the change from the last 15 years of tourism development. Additionally, I would ask the seasonal worker how he felt about the locals and conversely ask the local how he felt about the seasonal workers. The interview form is attached in Appendix 3. During the interview, rough notes were jotted down on the interview form. Directly after the interview ended, the entirety of the conversation as well as my thoughts was dictated to a tape recorder for later transcription. Interviewees were assured of complete anonymity, which has been completed through the omission of all names, vague references, and altered work-place names.

Open-ended and closed questions were used during the interview to explore all topics. However, in the “community” portion of the interview, closed questions about community involvement, character, acceptance, and trust were asked in order to test people’s sense of belonging in the community. It was hypothesized that people’s sense of belonging would diminish in times of rapid growth and community change. These questions were based on statements that Greider, Krannich, and Berry (1991, 269) used in their community studies in *Local Identity, Solidarity, and Trust in Changing Rural Communities*. They found that that rapid growth is disruptive to a community and that it manifests itself in as a lack of involvement in community, lack of trust, and diminishing feelings of acceptance.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

My tape-recorded notes were transcribed before content analysis could begin. Inductive and deductive content analyses were combined to fully analyze the interviews. To start, I immersed myself in the text. The predetermined categories of place, community, change, and seasonal workers were coded in QSR International's *N4 Classic*, a qualitative analysis software package. Subsequently, more specific categories and themes were identified and extracted as coded interviews were scanned for reoccurring themes or were queried for predetermined research questions. I open-coded all interviews. Background data, such as employment type and population subsection, were relegated to a spreadsheet. In *N4 Classic* the spreadsheet was linked with the textual interview database, and I was then able to query the text in the software package for differing opinions and values based on the population cross-section.

To link emerging theory to the interview text, there was an interplay between extracting a theme and then recoding the interview text in search for information about the newly extracted theme. This is a form of grounded theory. After all potential themes were extracted and analyzed, I reread, recoded, and reanalyzed the interviews in order to further ground and test the themes that had emerged.

As the interviews included a number of closed questions followed up by open probes, results from these questions were deduced from the interview in *N4 Classic*. The resulting analysis is generally qualitative, although a tally sheet of the frequency of a response among the interviewees was kept in *N4 Classic* in order to give a quantitative credence to observations and descriptions.

One last word about content analysis—mostly, manifest content was coded for analysis. Manifest content is derived directly from people’s words; it is “physically present and countable” (Berg 1998, 255). However, latent content was also used in regard to analysis of the community. Latent content is an interpretive reading of the text and what is physically there. For instance, symbols (i.e. the railroad depot, the IMAX theater, or the snowmobile) that people use to describe the character and feel of the community are coded to reflect their opinions about community identity and character. A person that refers to the Grizzly Discovery Center as “the local zoo,” is interpreted to have a skeptical outlook on the recent tourism development and commercialization. Moreover, while exploring the hypothesis of change causing divisiveness, latent content indicating “insiders” versus “outsiders” and community discord became very evident and important to code.

Local and regional newspaper articles were used to establish background for this thesis. However, at times, these articles were coded for their manifest and latent content and used in conjunction with the interviews to describe the community. Editorials and opinions from the *West Yellowstone News* were analyzed for content, and are used to support the content analysis of the interviews. They are clearly referenced.

The results of the content analysis are presented in four sections in the following chapter. Extensive quotes, frequency of opinions among interviewees, and observations are all combined to explore and describe West Yellowstone.

CHAPTER IV

WEST YELLOWSTONE COMMUNITY, TRANSIENT SEASONAL WORKERS, AND EMERGING ‘RIFT’

These results are compiled from the interviews of 54 West Yellowstone residents. The West Yellowstone community, residents, community culture, and who they consider to be “outsiders” are described in the first section. The “outsider” segment is included, because people often define who they are by defining who they are not, and the phenomenon is an indication of the formation of social cliques and lack of cohesion in the community (Fitchen 1991, 256-257; Gill 1996, 634). The second section devotes all of its attention to the transient seasonal worker population, and how those workers fit into the West Yellowstone community. In the last section, the impacts of the ‘new tourist economy’ and community rift are described.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Like many amenity towns, West Yellowstone experienced a significant increase in population between 1990 and 2000. Many amenity-rich communities have found the growth divisive, because new residents bring different values and expectations to the community (Greider, Krannich, and Berry 1991, 264). However, in West Yellowstone I found that migrants’ values and behaviors generally paralleled the old-timers, frustrations included. Old-timers and migrants similarly describe, accept or reject the community, its

values and lifestyle, with only minor differences, as many of the migrants seem to have assimilated the town's local identity. From the interviews, I found that, although the traditional values and culture of the West Yellowstone community are changing, migrants are not the cause. Then ensuing description of the community relies heavily on the words of old-timers, but also represents the general views of migrants.

Old-timers

The 14 old-timers I interviewed have lived in the West Yellowstone community more than twelve years, although the criterion for old-timers is more than eight years of local year-round residency. One-half of them are or were owners of businesses, including hotels, souvenir shops, sporting good stores, and more locally oriented services. Of the remaining six, one worked for the local government, four for the tourism industry, and one was an active retiree who had moved to the area 12-years-ago.

Hard working and resourceful

This group of old-timers ran the scope of the social strata. I spoke to a 30-year-old native, who worked three service jobs, one of which were housekeeping, to keep her family afloat and in town. She is considered the 'working poor'. On the other end of the spectrum is the community-described 'local elite'; they are considered the most wealthy and powerful town residents. From one end of the spectrum to the other, residents consider themselves resourceful and hard working. One old-timer and local elite, described the hard working lifestyle that is part of the local identity:

It is a hard community. Everyone works very hard and it is rewarding. But you can't live here and not work very hard. As far as young people who aren't making it, I think that maybe they don't have the same work ethic that previous generations have had. It is just about hard work being able to stay here. And, that is why the

people who live here don't have much time to be involved in the community organizations.

Most representative of the majority of old-timers are the less affluent business owners and residents who have devised a comfortable, yet lean year-round existence using a resourceful mix of seasonal jobs, hard work, and cost-saving measures to make ends meet from one season to the next. Few people, for instance, held down just one job or one type of business. A bike shop in the summer is a video rental in the winter. Fly-fishing experts in the summer are carpenters in the winter. Construction contractors in the summer are snowmobile operators in the winter. Bus drivers in the summer are snow coach drivers in the winter. Renting out rooms in houses and living in a trailer are a few ways that people save money to make ends meet. These people are resourceful and proud of it.

Resourcefulness and an ethic of hard work are part of the greater community ethos that values innovation and entrepreneurship. This ethos has been the source of local innovations in winter equipment such as snow planes, which brought tourists into the Park in the 1940s (Ring 2002, 11); development of the state's first city-wide resort tax, which enabled the community to develop their infrastructure; and the unique approach to tourism development, which entailed the growth of the winter economy oriented towards snowmobiles. It is a heritage, of which old-timers and migrants are proud.

The overriding assumption is that the survival of the community is dependent on growth and business development. This notion makes itself apparent in comments from old-timers such as, "I think that tourism development and growth, are inevitable—the town's destiny. The only way the town is going to do anything is by developing tourism."

In fact, seven permanent residents said that growth was “inevitable.” Moreover, when people expressed dissatisfaction with recent development, it was expressed towards the type of growth and not the growth itself. One old-timer tempered his dissatisfaction with growth by saying, “It’s not that I’m not pro development . . .”

Solidarity and its erosion

Old-timers are reserved in their demeanor. They were mixed in their reaction to me, an outsider, asking questions about their community. As this town has been the center of controversy regarding the winter use policy in Yellowstone National Park, (i.e. a ban on snowmobiles in the Park), and the hub of activity for the Buffalo Field Campaign’s (BFC) effort to save the lives of Yellowstone bison, old-timers seemed to have wearied of outsiders’ questions and opinions. However, after people warmed up to me, they were receptive and even cordial. Old-timers, nonetheless, showed reserve and spoke conservatively when critical of aspects or members of their own community. No businesses or citizens were ever reproached by name, and I did not ask for any names, wishing to respect their reserve, which I understood as a show of community solidarity, even among hard feelings. Migrants, however, were less reserved.

Traditionally, a spirit of togetherness and cooperation has been an important part of the community, especially in business. Two residents spoke to me of how hotels used to refer tourists to other hotels if they were full. Additionally, the church of Latter Day Saints (LDS) was mentioned as an available resource to help businesses when they needed assistance. And, while sitting at a bar I overheard two small business owners discussing how they could split the employment of one seasonal worker between two

businesses, because neither had full-time work, but they needed help. This is the kind of camaraderie upon which the community is founded. Others described residents of the community as “helpful”.

Despite the show of solidarity, the sense of community among old-timers is waning. One old-timer and business owner, who has lived in West Yellowstone over 30 years, replied when I asked him about the community, “What community? There is none here.” He said that the town council is making community decisions based upon the interests of the few wealthy business owners and developers, at the expense of the rest of the community. Without naming names, he said one prominent local business man at a town council meeting said that he hoped West Yellowstone could become a year-round community for only those wealthy enough to not have to work and the transient seasonal workers that keep the businesses afloat. He is angry and worried that the town is becoming stratified and that people like him or his children will be forced out because they cannot afford to live here.

Another old-timer referred to the marketing efforts of the community, and how they were frustrating to him and many other residents. The Chamber of Commerce has embraced snowmobiling as West Yellowstone’s primary winter economy. However, this old-timer believes the town should showcase, alongside snowmobiling, the other available winter activities, such as skiing and snowcoach sightseeing. He thinks that the interests of a significant number of people and businesses are not represented by the actions of Chamber of Commerce. This old-timer is thinking about leaving West Yellowstone because, “This is not the same town I grew up in.”

The loss of traditional solidarity isn't only witnessed by such animus among old-timers; subtler comments by those less estranged from the community conveyed a feeling of the loss. One old-timer said the town has grown so he does not know many people in town anymore. Another old-timer said that she just isn't that involved like she used to be. Most convincing of this waning sense of solidarity was the frustration of one business owner, who remembered the old days when businesses helped out one another. If a guest arrived and they were already full, she would call up another hotel for the guest and send them over. However, with the advent of large franchise hotels, cooperation among businesses, especially hotels, has virtually ceased, diminishing an important bond that held residents together.

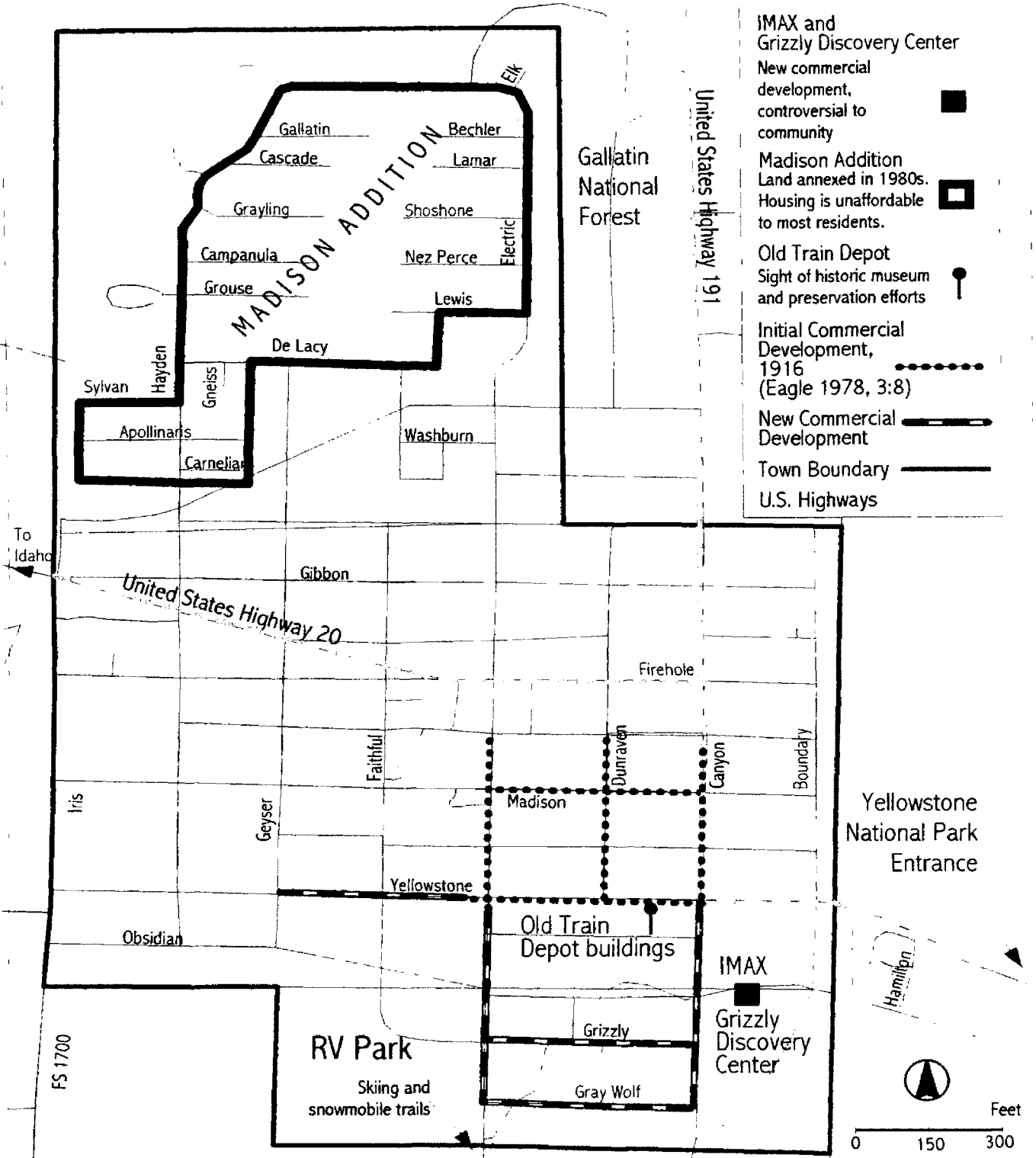
Another old-timer said that the town had become divided by the "haves" and "have-nots", and that the inequality was really a problem. That division can even be seen in the town geography. The Madison Addition, which was referred to as the "right side of the railroad tracks", is where the wealthy live, or they live out by Hebgen Lake. The growing Latino population, along with the other transient seasonal workers, lives in the converted hotel rooms provided by the company for which they work. Stigmatized low-income housing, which many said was still unaffordable, was available to some workers in larger apartment-style housing. Map 2 shows West Yellowstone at a large scale.

'Local elite'

Within the year-round community, there is a hierarchy of old-timers, which was described to me by both old-timers and the migrants. An old-timer told me there are five elite families who own long-standing businesses in town including hotels, gas stations,

Hebgen Lake 20 miles second homes
Bozeman 85 Miles ▲ closest year-round airport

West Yellowstone



LEGEND

- IMAX and Grizzly Discovery Center
- New commercial development, controversial to community
- Madison Addition Land annexed in 1980s. Housing is unaffordable to most residents.
- Old Train Depot Sight of historic museum and preservation efforts
- Initial Commercial Development, 1916 (Eagle 1978, 3:8)
- New Commercial Development
- Town Boundary
- U.S. Highways

Map 2. West Yellowstone, with cultural features. Base Map: Tiger files (U.S. Bureau of Census 2000)

convenience stores, snowmobile fleets and rental housing. These are the old-timer families that have reaped the benefits of the 'new tourist economy'.

In describing this stratification of the community, a 12-year resident said, "There is a group of really active people like me. And then there is the one step up to the business owners . . . Sometimes you see them, the elite, but not too much." A four-year resident described them to me as the "fathers" of the town, and powerful local politicians. She said, "For speaking out against the 'fathers' of the town, you get black listed." The incident she mentioned was spawned because of differing opinions on the potential snowmobile ban. Members of these elite families are long-standing members of the Chamber of Commerce and town council, and influential in directing the economy of the town. On the other hand, the families that founded the community, but are not part of new economy, are not commonly regarded as the "fathers".

Departure of the young

A defining aspect of this old-timer population is the expectation that the children of West Yellowstone's old-timers must leave town once they graduate from high school. Four old-timers mentioned how hard it is for their children to subsist in the community once they graduate from high school. One business owner said, "Kids can't afford to stay here unless they are going to inherit a business." Additionally, "It is difficult to raise a family here, because there is no low-income housing."

One old-timer said that he is the only one of a twelve-person high school graduating class that presently lives in West Yellowstone. Although he never thought he would return to West Yellowstone, he came back to take over the family business.

Another old-timer raised in West Yellowstone, accepts this departure of the children as a matter of course. While some of his kids earn a living through seasonal work in Yellowstone National Park and in town, his other children left the region for the time being as they try to get on their feet. As an adult and father, this old-timer moved out-of-state to provide for his family. He only came back to West Yellowstone recently, because he loves the place that he considers home. He has a year-round job as a cashier, while his wife works seasonally; they make ends meet by renting out an upstairs apartment in their house to seasonal workers.

↳ *Everything is about the “The Park”*

“The Park”, Yellowstone National Park, is the foundation of the traditional identity for this old-timer community, dictating the town’s rhythm, and lending its international reputation as a source of local pride and its harsh winters as a rite-of-passage for year-round residency. Of the ten old-timers who are not native, six said the Park and the surrounding natural and recreational amenities were the major reasons for moving to the area. For the others, employment and family were the most important factor. All residents, however, said they enjoy the Park. A characteristic of most all year-round residents is a proprietary attitude towards the Park, as each person feels they know what is best for it, whether it is protection or feeling that the Park can take care of itself.

Life in West Yellowstone has a seasonal rhythm. The common experiences and images associated with the Park are partially based upon experiencing cycle of Yellowstone’s contrasting seasons. Residents proudly render images of ten-foot snowdrifts and tell stories of the off-season when they are the only ones around to enjoy a

private moment in their “backyard”. The rhythm of life in West Yellowstone, even for those who live and work there year-round, is highly seasonal. Employment is seasonally dependent on hospitable weather for tourists, and less tangible qualities of life, such as the crowds, solitude, noise, and a frenetic pace created by the ebb and flow of the tourist season. In the off-season, the community tries to regain a sense of itself, while many head out of town on vacation (Furu 2000). Estimates by old-timers on the community’s total “off-season” varied between three and five months.

The Park is a symbol of local pride. Residents consider the world’s first National Park to be their “backyard”, a selling point for community business, economic mainstay, and a source of constant consternation. Yellowstone National Park is identified on a map and separated from the rest of the country by a boundary. In reality, however, there is little to geographically and mentally separate the people of West Yellowstone from the Park. Residents share the Park’s seasons, the extreme weather, and migrating animals. A bear perusing the city dumpster, a moose-calf in the basement, and - 40 degree Fahrenheit temperatures are constant reminders of the wilderness and the forces of nature that surround this little town and the town’s remote location.

Residents also take pride in the Park, as it is an international cultural icon; the world’s first National Park is their own. To area visitors and recent migrants, the Park readily conjures up images of grandeur, wild animals, magnificent geyser landscapes, and the last continental American frontier. While the excitement may have worn off for the old-timers, two migrants, who have only been in town one year, convey the vigor of the Park identity.

We have been into the Park and we love it. We love everything about being here. Our friends are all jealous that we made the move from Southern California. . .We plan on staying here forever.

To old-timers, however, the Park has already been woven into their traditional local identity. Reflectively, four old-timers described the Park to me as their “backyard”, where they spent time as a child, or took their children, and hope to take their grandchildren. One old-timer was proud everyday to talk to tourists at his job and show off his “backyard”. From others, especially migrants, I was able to elicit less of a soulful response about the Park. Non-natives and migrants seem to have a more active relationship with the Park, and I would guess a little bit less of the love/hate dynamic, which has evolved from years of second-guessing the weather, the government, and the number of tourists that will arrive on their doorstep. For migrants, the Park is where they work and recreate on the weekends. Many use the park for skiing, hiking and biking. One 12-year resident, said that she and her husband try to see the Park once a week during the summer.

While each old-timer revered the Park, many old-timers seemed unconcerned about the noise and pollution emitted from two-stroke snowmobile engines, which has become a controversial national issue; over two-thirds of old-timers felt that development and current recreational use of Yellowstone National Park had not diminished Park health. One prevalent attitude, conveyed by an old-timer business owner, is that the government data, which detail the threat to the Park, is “manipulated” or exaggerated; moreover the NPS has “not been presenting the information adequately”. Others said that they simply had not seen any change to the Park. Old-timers assured me that their lack of

concern was not for a lack of love of the Park or a lack of recognition that the town needs the Park to survive.

The winter experience in West Yellowstone is inseparable from the identity of all permanent residents and old-timers. People take pride in their ability to endure what the Park metes out in terms of harsh conditions, as they consider their ability to persevere and embrace what makes others grimace a sign of their tough and independent nature. Only a person who has endured a winter may call him or herself a resident; everyone feels strongly about the winters, whether they love, tolerate, hate, or have strong memories about how harsh they were. Surviving the harsh winters is a rite-of-passage among West Yellowstone residents. For one migrant, staying a winter differentiated seasonal residents from the permanent residents; to that old-timers agreed there was truth. One old-timer said, as if to say life is easier now, “winters aren’t as cold as they used to be.” Another old-timer said that the winters were when she was able to hire only quality employees.

Harsh winter conditions accompanied by remoteness, however, are also a source of continual frustration. One old-timer, who grew up in West Yellowstone, and now only lives in the town during the summer, has few fond memories of winter.

We shut down the hotel in October; the date is loose and it depends on business. We return to our other jobs and residence for the winter time. Sometimes, at the end of winter, we come up here to help with the snowmobile racing. Frankly, there’s not much to do up here during the winter time and I don’t like watching TV, so I don’t like the winter up here too much.

Many find the remote location confining during the winter months, when they are relegated to the indoors, because of the wind, cold, and snow. The remote location in combination with harsh weather grows wearisome when they must drive 90 snowy miles

to Bozeman, Montana to go to the doctor, try a new restaurant or shop for clothes. One old-timer said that she travels to Bozeman nearly once a week; many people said, there isn't much to do here during the winter, especially if you are a kid and cannot go to the bars. Others, both migrants and old-timers, have come to enjoy winters less because of the omnipresence of snowmobiles. Noise, rowdy tourists, and the daily disruptions associated with snowmobiles everywhere were cited; "too much" was a common sentiment.

Until the late 1980's when the winter tourism business exploded, winters in West were much quieter, lasting nearly six months until the roads were finally plowed and Yellowstone National Park reopened its gates for summer business. One old-timer said:

People used to board up for the winter and only a few families would stick around. So, that is quite a change. And it is a good thing. My family was one of those that stuck around all winter.

The recent winter development has enabled more residents to live year-round. However, the images, noise, mentality, and activity associated with snowmobiling continually relate less to the town's local identification with the Park. People travel to West Yellowstone to snowmobile in town and in the National Forests, not just to see the Park (Ring 2000, 12). In many cases the Park has become secondary. Moreover, "extreme" snowmobile riding hearkens from West Yellowstone and local riders consider themselves to be the vanguard of the sport. (Furu 2001b)

Frontier town, honkey-tonk bars and mavericks

Although the town does not outwardly proclaim to be a rough-and-tumble sort of place, the reputation accompanies the town's frontier identity in residents' description of

local history. The town's isolated location, rugged geography, local lore, available literature, plus contrived frontier architectural appearance give it a frontier feeling and reputation. The West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce on their website calls it "rustic". However, residents have passed on through their local lore the maverick rough-and-tumble reputation over the years. One old-timer told me about the riots of 1974 with the Hells Angels. She remembered the police chaining rioters to trees because they ran out of space in the local jail. When asked about the town's history, other residents invoked images of pot-holed streets until the 1980s, honkey-tonk bars, and the old bootlegging days of the 1920s.

Presently, the town maintains frontier-style building codes in the main commercial district nearest the Park. According to residents, bars with a family atmosphere have replaced all-night honkey-tonk bars. However, the independent and tough image of West Yellowstone residents is still being perpetuated. There is a new breed of snowmobilers, which were described by one resident, "West Yellowstone attracts mavericks—guys who don't like too many rules and regulations" (Ring 2002, 11). Moreover, the little town is showing its independent and brash nature by asserting its will in the public spotlight. Two of West Yellowstone's 'local elites' traveled to Washington, D.C. to protest the proposed ban on snowmobiles in front of Congress.

Religious

The church is an important community institution. Old-timers are more apt to describe themselves as religious, whereas the migrants said the community was religious, but not them personally. Traditionally, the Latter Day Saints have had a strong and

influential presence in town. Many prominent local citizens are Mormon and their capital holdings in town, according to the residents I asked, are substantial. Through the church, Mormon business owners recruit seasonal workers from outside the community to fill businesses, and the church also serves to help local businesses in tough times, however they can. Additionally, LDS transient seasonal workers can find a peer group and support during their brief summer visit, and appeared to feel more accepted in the community than the other transient seasonal workers. LDS holdings, however, have proportionally decreased in the midst of enormous economic growth, according to the same interviewees. However, the church is still an important economic entity and social institution. The Community Protestant church is also strong and to a lesser extent the Catholic Church, according to respondents.

Migrants

Migrants are year-round residents, who have resided in the community less than eight years. From my sample it appears that West Yellowstone does not attract the extremely wealthy migrants that move to other gateway and amenity towns, such as Jackson, Wyoming. Few of the migrants I spoke to were wealthy, and all of them were engaged in service jobs or employed professionally by the local or federal government. There is no Jerry Spence or Harrison Ford in West Yellowstone. One reason is that West Yellowstone is remote. It lacks the service-related amenities, (Community Needs Assessment 1996, 6, 7) such as a hospital and diverse and upscale restaurants, which are featured in these towns. Additionally, West Yellowstone does not have a local year-

round airport, and there is little vacant land available for large-scale commercial or private development.

West Yellowstone, however, attracts residents for the social amenities related to its small-town feel, remoteness, and the natural amenities provided by its proximity to wilderness and outdoor recreation. One-half of the migrants cited the natural amenities as a reason for coming to the area. Other residents seem to “end-up here”. For natural amenities people listed recreational opportunities such as cross-country skiing, hiking, fly-fishing, biking, 4-wheeling, snowmobiling, and driving through Yellowstone National Park.

I also found that nearly one third of the migrants initially moved here for the employment. However, to determine whether a person moves strictly for employment or for a combination of factors is virtually impossible except for a few cases. The elements of chance, employment opportunity, and lure of natural amenities have significant overlap. I found, for instance, that people place themselves in a geographic area such as the Greater Yellowstone region either for the natural amenities, the remoteness, the small-town atmosphere, or by chance, (i.e. they have friends in the area or because their car broke down). Then they hear of another employment opportunity, get fired, or restless, and look to the surrounding communities for work. Consequently, there is a combination of employment opportunity, chance, and amenities that are the determinant for the location they are living. In fact, four migrants were originally transient seasonal workers. One migrant, who is now a bartender, is an example of this combination of factors. She plans to settle in the West Yellowstone area:

I used to work in Yellowstone for the concessionaire, TW Recreational Services. I left the Park because I just couldn't work for them anymore. I came to West and was only going to stay long enough to make enough money to leave, but I ended up liking West, plus I could stay near the Park. . . .So, I was again ready to leave last year, but I met my boyfriend and so decided to stay. It has been four years now.

Being a bartender or a business owner are the only good ways to survive in town. They are the best two jobs, maybe waiting tables too. Working at a decent bartending job I can make \$28,000 to \$32,000 a year, which is a decent job.

Migrants round out the professional ranks in West Yellowstone. The police officer, representative for social services, and school superintendent, who were all informational interviews, are migrants to the community. Additionally, of the 16 migrants, two worked for the media, one for the NPS, and one at the high school; two were semi-retired, and the other ten worked for the tourism industry, either in restaurants, hotels or with the sporting community. There were no business owners in this group, although there certainly are some migrants who have opened up small businesses. Service workers in this group held the more lucrative service jobs such as bartending, tour guiding, and waiting tables.

One defining attribute of this group is their insistence that they are not "seasonal". A distinction made by one migrant is that she was not a "seasonal worker", despite being laid-off between each season and holding down different jobs for the summer and winter. The term "seasonal" is stigmatized. Seasonal residents are also stigmatized by the word "seasonal". One second-home owner wished to think of herself as a "part-timer", rather than a "seasonal".

Migrants are less reserved than old-timers, and are unafraid to speak their mind and name names when discussing divisive community issues. Migrants described the

community with widely disparate opinions, from “terrific”, “came at us with open arms,” and “embracing” to “conservative”, “expect you to assimilate” and “narrow-minded”. Migrants fingered prominent community members in cutthroat business practices that are eroding community members’ sense of common identity and solidarity. One five-year resident described a local hotel reservation system that cornered out small businesses:

The recent tourism development in West has too many franchises and is really putting the hurt on the small hotels. There is a new central reservation system set up by one of the hotels. . . The small hotels can’t afford to be included in the toll- free reservation system, so it means that tourists are not being directed towards their establishments. Not very nice for the community. It used to be that the Chamber of Commerce would direct people towards available accommodations in town. If there weren’t rooms in that hotel, the hotel would direct you towards another. It is not so good-natured any longer.

Migrants to West Yellowstone are acutely aware of the divided community, even though all residents in the 3 to 8 year cross-section felt accepted. A concern for one migrant is that the community was stratified socially.

People from the Madison Addition don’t have anything to do with the people from the other side. I bridge the gap because I have a professional job. . . so I am accepted at that level.

Four out of six residents who had lived in the community less than three years felt accepted by the community. Of the two who did not feel accepted by the community, one was on the verge of moving because he disliked the community residents. The other of these residents had recently moved here for employment and was still adjusting to the community, he said:

I don’t feel that the community is very accepting. They are nice to outsiders, but they then expect you to assimilate—not willing to accept. . . They want the outsider to become a follower.

Many migrants are unsure whether they will or even want to settle in West Yellowstone. All people in this group must contend with how they fit into the local collective identity. Some embrace the identity; while others tolerate it and try to overlook the aspects they do not like. Many migrants, some old-timers and seasonal residents too, have formed tight-knit circles of friends based upon a common activity, such as church, skiing, fly-fishing, work, and the Senior Citizen's Center. Many described their "community" in terms of these small circles.

Other migrants have already made up their minds to move. They are moving are turned off by the community's conservative mindset, the long winter, and the snowmobiles. Two migrants told me they would not want to raise children here. Others are forced away by the town's remoteness, as they search for towns, such as Bozeman, Montana, that offer advanced educational opportunities, more people, and higher paying jobs. Of the migrants, one third were unsure if they wanted to settle down, 40 percent were planning on staying and just over one quarter were definitely leaving. Those migrants that are definitely staying in town are either committed outdoors people with a good circle of friends, or they embrace the small town atmosphere and the identity of the town that is conservative and associated with snowmobiling as well as the Park.

I found that newer residents had more articulated ideas of amenities that the town was lacking. Some mentioned a diversity of restaurants, cultural events "such as those in Big Sky", stores that carried items other than tourist goods, and indoor recreation opportunities for the winter. However, these needs did not appear pressing.

Seasonal residents

West Yellowstone has a long tradition of seasonal residency, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, many seasonal people live outside of town near Hebgen Lake, which is about 15 to 20 miles by road. Many frequent West Yellowstone for services and supplies, and those I talked to were active and involved in the West Yellowstone community through churches, special interest clubs, the outdoors, and community events. A few seasonal residents live inside the West Yellowstone boundary proper, including the new Madison Addition. However, according to one old-timer, much of the prime real estate within the outer ring of the Madison Addition, which became available in the 1980s, was reserved for locals only. Therefore, seasonal residents have traditionally been confined to a smaller area in town and the wider subdivisions out by Hebgen Lake. The local government official I spoke to could not give me any information on the number of seasonal residents in and out of town.

The seasonal residents I interviewed are not a representative cross-section of all seasonal residents in the area, since all but one were acquired through one referral. In fact, many seasonal residents, according to two interviews of old-timers, remain well outside all community circles, only sending their “help” into town. The one seasonal resident interview I acquired by walking into a business and asking for an interview was a business owner and native of the area. She had left the area after high school, but returned later in her life with her husband to take over her ailing parents’ business.

For the most part, the seasonal residents I spoke to were empty nesters, retired or semi-retired, very active, and well-connected to the community. Each seasonal resident

and spouse had vacationed in the area earlier in their lives, and one had even been a transient seasonal worker as a young woman. All had owned their local seasonal residence for at least the last ten years. Seasonal residents came to the area to enjoy the natural amenities; and two had family or an old friend in town. Many had become well connected to other seasonal residents or to year-round residents through their church. The town itself, however, did not impress some seasonal residents. One resident preferred Ennis, Montana to West Yellowstone, because she liked the way Ennis looked and felt. Three seasonal residents did not like what was becoming of West Yellowstone local identity with the recent tourism development: one said the town was “garish” and another was dismayed by the development of franchises and the commodification of Yellowstone through the IMAX and Grizzly discovery center, “the local zoo”. The third person said that West Yellowstone was “a town in search of an identity”.

The majority of seasonal residents were more concerned about the environment than permanent residents, and they were concerned about what the future might bring to the town. However, some tempered their criticism of the town development by acknowledging that were not trying to make a living in West Yellowstone. I also believe that criticism of the town was tempered, because most seasonal residents were geographically far enough removed from the town that the development was not in their backyard; town identity and issues were, therefore, not a paramount concern for them. Additionally, none of the seasonal residents want to settle in the town year-round primarily because of the harsh winters and familial and business obligations elsewhere.

Overall, I found that permanent residents did not regard seasonal residents as “outsiders”, although they were not considered full-fledged member of the community. One migrant and bar tender, mentioned how it irked her when seasonal residents came back into town for the season and “acted like it was their bar”. However, I think the geographic separation from the community combined with the long tenure of many of the seasonal residents allowed for a harmonious relationship between seasonal and permanent people. All seasonal residents felt accepted by the permanent community.

Outsiders

West Yellowstone residents were not asked to identify “outsiders”, but through the range of questions, I asked how they felt about seasonal residents, seasonal workers, the Buffalo Field Campaign, and government policy towards Yellowstone National Park. The remarks about these topics highlighted three main “outsiders” of the West Yellowstone community: “out-of-state, east-coast environmentalists”, the government, in this case the National Park Service, and ‘Californians’. Transient seasonal workers, while they are definitely not considered a part of the community, are in general tolerated or even embraced. Similarly, seasonal residents are not a source of great consternation, even though some of them are from California.

Environmentalists

The Buffalo Field Campaign (BFC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the Yellowstone National Park Bison herd. The group has lived just outside of West Yellowstone since the winter of 1998-1999—two years at the time I interviewed. I found out that after two years of working in the area that members of the

BFC were not accepted within the community, moreover they were considered outsiders. “Buffalo Hippies” or “out-of-state environmentalists” were a couple of names that West Yellowstone folks gave to the members of the BFC. What was interesting, however, is that while no interviewees approved of the antics of the BFC, nearly all people believed in the campaign’s general mission. One old-timer said:

I am antagonized by the people of the BFC and the campaign itself; the BFC is ridiculous. . . . But, I am a hunter and I don’t really think it is sport to shoot a bison that is standing right in front of you. I think the bison should be left to roam.

Another old-timer said, “The environmentalists all come from out-of-town and it is not to say that people here are not environmentalists, but it is to say that the ones that cause the trouble are from out-of-town.” This statement was directed towards members of the BFC and issues related to a proposed ban on snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park, which predominate NPS policy that affects West Yellowstone.

Residents also scoffed at the way that the people in the BFC dressed, their hygiene, and how they composed themselves. One migrant, who originally came to the area as a member of the BFC, mentioned an initial period after she had moved to town when the community did not accept her. She felt that people did not want to get to know her since she was different and perhaps transient. Now, she has been here three years and feels accepted by the community.

Government

Residents of West Yellowstone have mixed feelings about the federal government and the National Park Service (NPS) in particular—there is little middle ground opinion by permanent residents. Many thought they were inept and others were adamant about

simply letting the NPS to do their job. Snowmobiling and winter use of the Park are the main issues affecting West Yellowstone right now.

The NPS, created in 1916, has been a mainstay in West Yellowstone. While town residents say that they value the NPS personnel as good people, residents do not agree with the NPS policy. The animosity is evident enough that one member of the government community feels the animosity towards the NPS personally, he said:

Many people around town don't know that I am affiliated with the Rangers. For instance, I would never write a letter to the editor in the local paper for fear of being labeled as a "Ranger" or as "Park Service" person.

As far as anti-NPS sentiment, there were simple statements such as the one by this old-timer and business owner; He thinks that the people in Washington should "butt out of here". One migrant said, she does not agree with government policy, but thinks there should be some sort of compromise. She feels her livelihood is threatened by the proposed government policy. A seasonal resident with family in town said that, "the government just comes in here and shoots from the hip."

'Californians'

The last category of outsiders is 'Californians'. They are the perennial outsiders of most westerners. One 12-year resident commented on a proposed housing development adjacent to town. She said, " the development was only about money and no one in the community was going to gain from it, except for the developers and the 'Californians' who want to build a house here because they have been up here once or twice." Another example of the dislike of 'Californians' is that they come into the community and "grab up" the better-paying professional jobs, because they often times

have more experience and education than locals. Another old-timer had softened her position on 'Californians'. She said, "at one point in my life, I used to bemoan those damn 'Californians' telling me what to do, but as I have aged, I feel differently; it is less important." In characterizing the community, she agrees that the old-timers and the seasonal residents get along.

'Californians' tend to be a scapegoat name for the classification of an "outsider" that is urban, more affluent, and holds different opinions. People from Bozeman, Montana, may even be regarded with mistrust, similar to 'Californians'

"Out-of-state east-coast environmentalists", the government, and 'Californians' were the identified outsiders, however, two interviewees, a transient seasonal worker and a migrant, were distinctly made to feel as if they too were outsiders. These people either did not conform to the accepted norms and social behavior or had a different ethnic background.

TRANSIENT SEASONAL WORKERS

I interviewed 14 transient seasonal workers, who worked as housekeepers, cashiers in gift shops, front desk clerks, fishing guides, hosts, and cooks. As for the number of seasonal workers in West Yellowstone, the town officials thought it would be great if I could find that out. One local hotel, for instance, has 85-90 transient seasonal workers at one time. I guess there are from 750 to one thousand seasonal workers during the tourist season. That is a conservative estimate, and it does not account for those that come for two weeks and leave. Transient workers do everything and anything that is service work. In contrast to the scant literature, which portrays transient seasonal workers

as marginal or the “extremes of unconventionality” (Jobes 1993, 155), I have come to distinguish between four categories of workers in West Yellowstone: retirees, college students, foreign workers, and “wanderers”.

Retirees

Living in an RV camp for the summer, seeing their friends who have returned, traveling the ruddy and pot-holed roads of Yellowstone National Park; this is adventure to the many retired couples who come to West Yellowstone for the summer time, approximately three to five months. In one discount clothing shop, three retired couples have returned five years in-a-row to minimum wage jobs. Most retirees here return in the winter to the South, either to a home or to a warm-weather adventure. Reasons cited for coming to West Yellowstone were: “We love the National Parks”; “I like talking to people”; fishing; and “I don’t want to get crusty in my old age.” More than one said, “I certainly didn’t come for the money.” These people worked low-paying service jobs, primarily in souvenir shops and some in restaurants.

Hamilton Stores operates three stores in West Yellowstone and a large gift shop concession operation in Yellowstone National Park, for which they just lost their long-term contract—March 2002. They try to hire exclusively retirees for their West Yellowstone operation. Brenda Bagley, who hires employees for the Hamilton Stores explained to be the benefits of hiring retirees:

They bring in a lot of experience. We hire all sorts, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and they are getting younger and younger every year, but we do have some as old as 80 years old. We hire retirees because of their good work ethic. They are excited to be here and they are just good.

Retirees chose not to work winters in West Yellowstone because of the harsh winters. Some were planning to return next summer, but to others Yellowstone National Park was just one of the sundry places they planned to visit or work during their active retirement.

College students

The college students were westerners, and all came for the outdoor recreation: fly-fishing and hiking in particular. Three summer seasons was the longest tenure; for others it was their second or first summer. The college students return to West Yellowstone, because of their strong ties to the environment and the recreation opportunities.

Otherwise, they were bored with the town and unimpressed by the community and the other transient seasonal workers:

They [the seasonal workers] are a bunch of rejects—people coming from Yellowstone National Park who are escaping something, who don't have any ambition and just get drunk every night. I don't even think they go outside.

Clearly, some college students were concerned about distinguishing themselves from “other” transient seasonal workers.

Additionally, business owners within the church recruit heavily from Utah and Idaho. Those college students involved in the community were involved through the LDS, through church services and youth-oriented programs.

Affordable and decent housing was an issue, in that workers really had to search for it. Only one student lived in company-provided housing, which she enjoyed. It had a kitchen and was communal, but she paid one dollar a day in rent. College students, who return for repeated summers, are more likely to have sought out an acceptable living

situation, outside of corporate housing. These next two groups of seasonal workers, on the whole, did not come to West Yellowstone for the outdoor recreation.

Foreign workers

This group in West Yellowstone covers two significant groups, Mexican citizens and eastern Europeans. Most are in West Yellowstone on ten-month work visas. Both groups of people are hard working and well thought of by business owners and residents. The business owners spoke highly of their “willingness to work hard”, be reliable, and to “keep to themselves”. A seasonal worker in the wanderer category, Michelle, an American 20-year-old former college student and buffet attendant, told me about a Russian man that works at her hotel:

They work so hard. He and his wife clean 40 rooms a day at three dollars a room, and they have a job in the evening. The other day he passed out in the morning while working because he doesn't eat breakfast, so I feed them now [from the buffet] in the morning.

Of the Mexican group, some come with families and stay into the winter tourist season—taking their children in and out of the local public school. This has been difficult for the kids and the schools who see social problems in these kids arising from language barriers and from their being taken in and out of school. It is a hard life for these transient seasonal workers, according to one Mexican man, who worked at a local restaurant.

A lot of Mexicans don't speak English and there are no English classes offered. It is a hardship to come here. You don't do it lightly. You leave your friends, family and kids to do it. And you really do it to save money.

As to how the Mexican transient seasonal workers felt in the community, he said, “people will smile at you if you smile first, but otherwise you are ignored.” Additionally,

“the money is okay, but you have to be thrifty to go home with more than you came.”

Unfortunately, I was unable to speak to many in this entire group because of the language barrier. According to residents there has been a large increase in the number of foreign seasonal workers over the last few years. Latinos now make up 7.7 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) of the West Yellowstone population.

“Wanderers”

There is wide range of people in this catchall category. Some are drifting from one place to the next and from one job to the other. Others are taking a hiatus from their previous life—“having a mid-life crisis” and figuring things out, while others are in the process of “trying to escape” something. Most, however, seem to have little to hold them to a particular geographic area. Of all the transient seasonal worker subgroups, the “wanderers” most closely resemble the description of transient seasonal workers put forth by the literature.

There were a lot of cooks in the group—mostly males from 20-to 50-years-old, white and single. The “wanderers”, out of all groups, were most likely to dislike the community and not care as much for the outdoors. “I pretty much just chill out in my room and watch TV,” said one man in his early 20s, who had been in West Yellowstone two weeks. A “chef” at one of the local hotels said, “This town is overrated. Maybe I would work here year-round, but I kind of doubt it. I see people around me burning out; that’s not for me.” For most in this group it was their first season in West Yellowstone and they lived in company housing. Typical company housing was a converted hotel room with a roommate and no kitchen, totaling \$300 per month or \$150 each.

This group of people has been characterized by many, including those within it, as “running from something”. Many are escaping big cities—the small-town atmosphere was a draw to one person looking to deal with a cocaine problem and to another to calm down because he had a “bad heart”. One pattern seemed to be of people dropping out of college and coming to the area because they had friends there and not much else better to do until they figured out their next move. One 20-year-old woman said:

I came to Yellowstone to see some friends and then ended up moving out to West Yellowstone with them. . . I went to college one semester, but didn’t know what I wanted to study; so I didn’t stay in school; that’s how I got here. . . I plan to go back to school once I know what I am going to study.

In contrast to the rest of the seasonal worker subgroups, “wanderers” tend to just “end up” in West Yellowstone. There is a pattern of migration among seasonal workers. Workers come early summer to work or visit friends in Yellowstone National Park, get fired, dislike the situation, or need to earn more money, and therefore come to West Yellowstone to work—maybe just as long as it takes to earn enough money to buy a bus ticket and leave. “Wanderers” are the group most likely to linger beyond the end of the tourist season, through the off-season and end up as year-round employees. Perhaps this lingering is the reason that transient seasonal workers so often are generalized as the wanderer category. Remarkably, one out of five year-round residents I interviewed was introduced to the area as a transient seasonal worker.

Transient seasonal worker housing

Dilapidated housing for transient seasonal workers dotting the town is an eye sore. “Have you seen the employee housing yet? You can’t miss it.” Most residents made a comment to that affect. Much of the seasonal worker housing I saw and entered was

poor. When the hotel-building boom hit in the late 1980s and 1990s, business-owners erected new hotels and converted old hotel rooms into employee housing. Worse yet, some new hotel franchise owners did not build new employee housing with their new hotels, creating a scarcity of affordable and decent in-town housing.

For many seasonal workers and low-income residents housing was expensive, if they chose not to have multiple roommates. In the company housing, rooms were undesirable because they offered little privacy, sometimes no kitchen facility, questionable roommates, and were unsuitable for families. One transient seasonal worker felt unsafe in her accommodations because of a transient seasonal co-worker she found threatening. Another transient seasonal worker had all of his possessions stolen out of his room by his former roommate, who had just left town.

Transient seasonal residents and the community

I learned from talking with transient seasonal workers and year-round residents that year-round residents have adapted to tolerate and even embrace this mobile sector of labor. Seven transient seasonal workers felt accepted by the entire community, which was interpreted as acceptance by any group outside of the immediate work place. Five felt accepted, but their circle of acquaintances was strictly limited to other seasonal workers. And, one seasonal worker, a Latino, was made to feel an outsider in the community.

Of those who felt embraced, two were college students and members of the Church of Latter Day Saints, whose functions they regularly attended; four were retirees,

who were living in their RVs for the summer. One retiree gave evidence of her acceptance, she said:

When we go places in the area, including Yellowstone National Park and Cody, Wyoming and tell them that we work for Hamilton Stores, people are very nice to us, including the old-timers. It seems like the old-timers are excited that we work there. . . At the museum in Cody, we got a discount.

Transient seasonal workers have a reputation for getting in trouble with the law. For instance, according to a police sergeant, the police expect a certain number of felons to be among the annual crop of seasonal workers. Before the tourist season begins, hotels bring in their list of hires to the police department to be run through police computers. The police obtain the outstanding warrants, and one night right after the workers arrive, they hold a “round up”.

Permanent residents were therefore asked how they felt about transient seasonal workers, and if they felt safe in their community. I found that year-round residents feel safe and most do not regard transient seasonal workers as disruptive to the community, although one old-timer called them a “necessary evil”. One migrant said that transient seasonal workers were a nuisance at most. He said, “Seasonal workers, ah, whatever, they get drunk; it’s no big deal.” One 12-year resident, who has little contact with transient seasonal workers said:

I look at the police blotter to see what’s going on. It looks like a soap opera. But none of that has any bearing on me. The crime stays there within the community of seasonal people, and seasonal people are not part of the community.

In fact, according the police sergeant I spoke to, it is the tourists making their way through West Yellowstone, which keep the seven-member police force busy.

The most taxing aspect of the town's reliance on seasonal workers is the difficulty business-owners and managers have in staffing their businesses. Residents told me that the town would not function without the transient seasonal workers and that hiring, training and keeping seasonal workers is one of the hardest parts of their job. One hotel-owner said,

Staffing is really difficult. It is one of the hardest parts of running the hotel. To have to hire every summer new people, and to then feel like you can never leave your business in the hands of those who are so new is tough. I would be open year around if I could. I know of places that have adapted to being open year-round, because of the seasonal hiring difficulties. They do not have to keep re-training people, which is such a problem.

One general manager at a hotel restaurant said, that hiring seasonal workers is a cutthroat business and is the hardest aspect of his job. "The problem is that we bring people in to the hotel and then they are working for the guy down the corner a week later." There is no community effort to hire.

The arrival and departure of seasonal workers is part of the annual rhythm of tourism in West Yellowstone. Workers have come and gone with the seasons for so many years that their arrival and departure seems natural and has been incorporated into the character of the community. Since the economy of West Yellowstone has been entrenched in tourism since its inception, seasonal workers are part of the traditional way of life. They are not disruptive to the community, although a constant reliance on their labor is straining the community.

TRADITIONAL LOCAL IDENTITY AND THE 'NEW TOURIST ECONOMY'

The common cultural background of West Yellowstone residents is that of resourceful and hard working people, who help each other to survive. Residents have a proprietary attitude towards the Park; and the Park is the traditional keystone of the residents' and the town's identity—a symbol of pride, a source of frustration, and a testament to the people's ruggedness, as they endure and even enjoy themselves in the harsh and unforgiving Park winters. The identity also includes the community ethos oriented towards promoting growth, which enables residents to eke out a year-round existence and fosters the notion that no tourism opportunity should be turned away. The community is stridently independent, which even means taking on the government in order to assert the little towns will.

This is the traditional identity, rooted in values and behaviors, upon which the modern tourism development of the 1980s and 1990s was supported. This recent development, the 'new tourist economy' is still tourism, but at a different scale. This development was rapid, geared toward the development of snowmobiling, and included the creation of larger scale franchise accommodations: Holiday Inn, Kelly Inn, McDonalds, Best Westerns, and a Days Inn are examples. Presently, residents are divided about community growth, although most consider it "inevitable". Many view growth as "inevitable", but positive and a necessary result of development and embrace continued expansion. Others also see growth as "inevitable", but largely out of their control and regard more of the same kind of development with caution.

Residents hold mixed views about the development of franchises. While nearly 50 percent of interviewees thought the town was over commercialized, the other half embraced the franchises as a sign of progress, even if they did not like the franchises. “After all, McDonalds never put anyone out of business” was one comment. Another quip by a migrant, who dislikes the franchises said, “What do you expect? This is a tourist town, of course it is over-commercialized.” People also pointed out to me that many of the franchises were locally owned. In fact, four franchises are owned by out-of-state interests (Ring 2002, 11).

Positive changes

With this development, there have arisen significant positive and negative impacts to the community. Three categories of positive changes arose out of my conversations with seasonal and year-round residents: growth of the year-round community, dramatic improvements in infrastructure and the respectability of the community, and increased business competition and job opportunities. These categories were deduced from people’s answers to questions about how the town has changed.

Year-round

The most cited positive improvement is the increased ability for residents to live in town year-round: the advantages include personal, community and economic benefits. One resident who has lived over 35 years in West Yellowstone said, “I like the growth here because it gives me something to do. It was boring when there were so few people in town during the winter. Now there is a lot more going on.” Another old-timer and business-owner, is enthusiastic about the change to a year-round economy. She said,

“You don’t have to board up for the winter anymore, so there can be more of a community.” In fact, the vitality of the year-round community is so important to residents, that government and political actions that can be construed as jeopardizing the year-round community are highly controversial. The fate of the year-round community is a key factor in the community debate surrounding snowmobiles.

The second tourist season, the winter, has also presented new problems.

Vacancies for transient two-season service workers have been difficult to fill. College students return to school after the summer and retirees head for the warmth of the South. This leaves the “wanderers” and the foreign workers to fill the winter seasonal work, and many of them cannot afford to be laid off for at least six weeks in between seasons, especially in an increasingly expensive town. The hiring, therefore, of seasonal workers for two seasons has been increasingly difficult. To improve the situation, businesses have started to offer health insurance, rental housing discounts, and off-season employment in order to entice seasonal help to stay on. Some year-round residents who work seasonal jobs also collect unemployment during the off-season. It is one dynamic that prompts transient seasonal workers to become year-round residents.

Infrastructure and respectability

Residents were unanimously positive about the town’s upgrade in infrastructure. Dramatically upgraded infrastructure not only enabled large scale business development, but paved roads, storm drains, sewers, and a beefed up police department, created a better town environment and made West Yellowstone more respectable in the town’s eyes. One old-timer said:

The town of West has grown and become a lot more respectable. I think that they have done a good job making it more respectable. I remember people being chained to trees next to the jail when there wasn't enough room in the jail.

Another said, "With the development of the curbs and gutters, people began to take more pride in where they live, so really the whole town started taking on a better face."

Business competition and job creation

The last positive category of change is in the increased number of job opportunities and business competition, which has increased service standards around the town. Four residents mentioned the increase in jobs as positive, while three people said the emerging business competition was positive. The growth of new businesses is creating a more competitive atmosphere that is compelling older and often smaller businesses to increase their level of service.

Negative changes

The increased level of business competition in the 'new tourist economy' transports the discussion into the negative changes experienced by West Yellowstone residents. From the interviews two main categories of negative change emerged: concern about the cutthroat business climate and the loss and change of community character related to a loss of identity and camaraderie.

Cutthroat business climate

Large-scale tourism development increased business competition, employment opportunities and the level of service, but it has also put pressure on low-income residents and the smaller local businesses, especially motels. The cutthroat business climate has left some residents feeling resentful of the 'new tourist economy', because commercial interests have come before low-income housing concerns and businesses that run counter

to the prevailing business climate face obstacles; three separate residents gave an example. Additionally, residents are concerned about the long-standing “ma and pa” businesses. Residents think the accommodations market is saturated, and two residents even predicted that the smaller motels would begin to fold in four or five years.

One resident, who owns and runs an older hotel, is ambivalent about the increase in business competition and describes the new way that businesses operate:

The main drawback of the big hotels is that they put a lot of pressure on the smaller hotels. When things are good, everyone is doing good. When things are slow, the big hotels slash their prices and really put the hurt on the smaller folks. The larger hotels offer the best amenities and what the smaller places have to offer are better prices, so when the larger hotels slash their prices, I cannot compete. . . The pressure is good for us and keeps us up to snuff. But, by the same token, it is tough.

One long-term business owner, for instance, is thinking about giving up the family business and leaving West Yellowstone for good. Two others have thought about it. These statements express some of the community’s ambivalence towards the growth in tourism. While unfettered growth has been the town’s traditional growth strategy, after years of extreme growth residents are beginning to wonder if this growth isn’t too much. Another business owner also expressed some ambivalence; she said:

The growth and development took place maybe a little bit too fast. It could have been paced out. The town is certainly bigger, but I don’t see that as a drawback. I worry a little bit about the mom and pop places hurting, but that’s the way things go. . . I hope that no more hotels will be built. There have been rumors about a Ramada Inn coming in, but I haven’t seen it.

By small-town principle, competition and growth are good. On the other hand, the competition and growth may squeeze out the people who have lived their lives in the community.

Changing character

The change in business climate is interrelated to the second category of changing town character. It can be generalized by three categories: loss of identity, more snowmobiles, and loss of community cohesion.

Fading of the traditional collective local identity was most keenly observed by old-timers and long-term seasonal residents. In terms of character, residents were concerned about the loss of West Yellowstone's unique western frontier feeling. One long-term resident said, "It's not that I am not pro-development, it just makes the town look faceless. The heart of the city is gone." He said that he would like the town to grow, but not in the direction that it is growing. Other words and phrases people used to describe the town were "ugly", "looks like any other town" and "losing the town's small western feeling." There was also mention of the "local zoo", which is the Grizzly Discovery Center with bears and wolves. The irony of traveling to a National Park to view the Park on the screen of the IMAX and the wild animals through iron bars was not lost on this crowd. Some residents object to the commodification of their wilderness.

Snowmobiling is at the center of the community's year-round 'new tourist economy'. The growth of the snowmobile industry is not only tied to the changing character of winters in West Yellowstone, but represents a broader change in community character. To describe and advertise itself, West Yellowstone has adopted the slogan "Snowmobile Capital of the World", when previously "Yellowstone" had provided the foundation of an identity and reputation. One migrant views all development centered around snowmobiles as "bad" for the community. Another wants to see snowmobiles

curtailed or eliminated which stems from their “discourteous nature in town” and their disruptiveness within the community. Three migrants thought that West Yellowstone, and in part snowmobiling, attracted undesirable tourists. On the other hand, one old-timer was not adamant about ridding the town of snowmobiles, but she thought their growth in town was “extreme”.

The loss of community cohesion is a result of the increasingly competitive business climate, which is more cutthroat than communal, increasing inequalities among residents, and shifting community identity. A 30-year-old native, holding down three jobs to support her family said about the growth, “some of the big hotels that have come to town have forgotten about the little guy and forgotten about the community.” This loss of community cohesion can be witnessed in the growing rift that is dividing the West Yellowstone community down the middle.

THE ‘RIFT’

For the town’s ‘new tourist economy’ oriented towards snowmobiles to work, the community united to support the development, as did the National Park Service and adjacent National Forests. The town incorporated in 1966 to allow snowmobiles on city roads (*High Country News* 1 April 2002, 10). The National Park Service groomed trails inside Yellowstone National Park and the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce groomed miles of trails inside the Gallatin National Forest. According to the Chamber of Commerce, “it took 25 years to build what we have.” (Missoulian [Missoula] 25 February 2002) Town residents also built up a reservoir of over 1,300 rental snowmobiles and an advertising campaign to bring people to the area. With the advent of snowmobile

tourism, residents had a reason and means to live in the town year-round, and maybe even a way to get ahead. Presently, the town has over 1,800 hotel rooms, boasts more snowmobiles than residents, and the community's rallying cry has become West Yellowstone, "Snowmobile Capital of the World."

"Snowmobile Capital of the World"

Businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, the local newspaper, and local residents have endeavored to propagate and advertise this new collective identity and reputation. The West Yellowstone image sports a carnival-like atmosphere based on fast and fun snowmobiles—replete with snowmobiling on every street, except the state highways, snowmobiling inside and outside the National Park, on and off trail, and an annual snowmobile Expo. To keep snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park, the West Yellowstone town council even considered entering into a lawsuit against the National Park Service with the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (Furu 2001a). On some days 2,000 snowmobiles drive through the Park's west gate. Besides the descriptions of the loud noise and blue haze created by snowmobiles, more colorful depictions of the community in winter compare it to a "dodge city atmosphere" (Furu 2001c) or "like a beach town during spring break—people come here to party with their toys" (Ring 2002, 11). One councilwoman compared it to a theme park, "even Disneyland has to close at some point." (Furu 2001c)

Many West Yellowstone residents are clearly proud to hearken from the "Snowmobile Capital of the World" and have stopped at little, even sacrificing their quality of life to embrace this unique identity. For others, however, this increasingly

snowmobile-centric identity has little in common with their lifestyle and has even estranged them from other residents. The community has become increasingly polarized. Four major public conflicts of interest permeate the community, according to the interviews; they are between snowmobilers and skiers; snowmobile-oriented businesses and the federal government; big businesses and small businesses; and between the predominant business culture and those who consider themselves Park stewards. These antagonisms are a result of the wider rift that has emerged out of changing community values, lifestyle and collective identity. The symbol for this rift is the snowmobile.

Two camps inside the community have developed around the rift. In one camp is the “Snowmobile Business Community”—composed of the larger franchises, snowmobile-oriented businesses, and concerned citizens; they are the ‘local elite’ and those who support them. In the other camp, there is the “rest of the community”, consisting of no single overriding interest. The town is about evenly divided on either side of the rift, if the interviewees’ opinions on the town’s growth are used as an indication, as well as the vote on the local snowmobile curfew. In November of 2001, residents voted on a community generated referendum to limit snowmobiling from 11:15 P.M. to 5:45 A.M. in order to stop the noise, which has been a continual disturbance to residents. The curfew referendum lost by six votes.

Camp 1 – The Snowmobile Business Camp

The ‘local elites’ initiated the development of the ‘new tourist economy’; they have large financial and personal ties to the community and have invested significant capital in the expectation of ongoing snowmobile tourism. Those that support the ‘local

elite' are other small business owners, old-timers, and migrants. Many rely on the 'local elite' for their employment, housing, and even politics. After all, members of the 'local elite' are the town's described "fathers". Many in this camp, with the help of the 'local elite', are simply doing their best to survive in the 'new tourist economy'. For instance, one old-timer, who rents out a small snowmobile fleet during the winter, said he earns between \$6,000 and \$20,000 per winter on snowmobiles. His disdain for government, mixed attitude towards snowmobiling, and pro-growth opinions are representative of the pro snowmobile camp, he said:

I am a property owner, pro growth, and pro development. I don't see any draw backs to growth. I have my own slice of the pie, which keeps getting fatter with progress. . . . There is nothing bad about the growth. If local businesses are going under, it is their fault because they must not be upgrading with the times. . .

I don't see that very much environmental damage has been done by the snowmobiles. . . I think that the "green machine," a four-stroke snowmachine, would be good to have and that there should be some sort of halfway meeting point. I think that the people in Washington should butt out of here. . . I don't fight the battle of the snowmobile by myself; I let the big guys do it, who are richer.

In referring to the "big guys", he is referring to two local franchise owners, 'local elite', who testified before the United States Congress protest the proposed ban of snowmobiles.

Another common sentiment was expressed in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. It is indicative of the traditional local identity, which has long supported growth at all costs, even with personal sacrifice, and the new unique and boastful local snowmobile identity. This letter to the editor by an eight-year resident was prompted by the proposed snowmobile curfew (Naisbitt 2001). Her opinion is indicative of many in this town's caution when limiting any individual liberties.

Although I sometimes get irritated waiting at a stop sign for seemingly endless strings of snowmobiles, I nevertheless feel honored to be a part of a community that's known world wide for being one of the few to allow snowmobiles to operate in and around town.

. . . I always remind myself how wonderful it is to enjoy the unique freedom offered here that sets us apart from other places in the country. (Naisbitt 2001)

The writer is also afraid the gesture of limiting snowmobiles will “impose and undesirable domino effect” initiating a decline of the economic success snowmobiles have enjoyed. Other pro-snowmobile opinions are similar. Many acknowledge that snowmobiles are loud and polluting, but are concerned about the long-term well-being of the community. One old-timer said, “I won't even get one of those machines, but if you take them away from Yellowstone you will kill the community.” Many in this Camp consider themselves Park stewards and are excited about the “green machine” that will cut down noise and air pollution.

These people are pro-snowmobile development, and have therefore situated themselves against the government. They feel the government does not represent their interests. One migrant said, “the NPS just makes policy, they don't actually come here and find out what is going on.” Most importantly, these migrants and old-timers feel that a ban on snowmobiling threatens the year-round community, since it is the promotion of snowmobiles that has enabled the community to reach the long-term community goal of a strong year-round community. Many residents, therefore, worry that if Yellowstone National Park closes its doors to snowmobiling, that West Yellowstone's winter business will dry up and the town will once again become a summer seasonal community. One old-timer said:

I think they (NPS) are making decisions without considering the community—banning snowmobiles will hurt the town, as people won't be able to stay here year-round. The community will become disjointed and will lose the families. It will be a problem. The NPS may be shooting themselves in the foot by closing the Park in the winter time, because the town and the park depend on each other.

Some in Camp 2 say that the 'local elite' in Camp 1 "are only whining because they make so much money from snowmobiling."

Camp 2 – Rest of the Community

Old-timers and migrants, including former snowmobile supporters and people who still think that snowmobiling has a place in the economy, comprise the camp opposite the "Snowmobile Business Camp". People in this group do not embrace snowmobiling and the tourism that has developed around it, as the only and best development option, and certainly not at the costs that it is imposing to the community.

One 4-year migrant said:

I don't like the winters as much. The town feels overrun with snowmobilers, who are disruptive to the community. They drive through alleys, make a lot of noise at night—not thinking about the people that have to get up and work every day or the kids that have to go to school the next morning. . . I hope snowmobiles are curtailed or eliminated in the future.

Others in Camp 2 would like to see a compromise. They would have the town focus on the promotion of other business alongside snowmobile business. However, they have taken issue with the predominant snowmobile culture, because they do not feel their interests and businesses have been given a fair chance. One old-timer said:

I think that this should be a winter play ground not just for snowmobilers but for everybody. I hear the argument that skiers don't spend as much money, but I think they are just not catering to the right ski crowd.

Primarily, this Camp resents the agenda and control exerted by the 'local elite', which many say controls the town council and the Chamber of Commerce. People in this

camp do not feel represented by this new snowmobile identity and business orientation, and feel the town identity has strayed away from its original association and value of Yellowstone National Park. After all, the Park and its accompanying natural amenities are the reason many people live in the area. Another letter to the editor (Lamuth 2001) sums up well the line being drawn by the community against the ‘local elites’:

I would agree with Mayor Jerry Johnson that the curfew referendum translated itself into a much broader spectrum - reaching perhaps to the snowmobiling vs. YN Park level. . . I saw this referendum as a forum to voice my opinion on the larger issue, and I believe a lot of people were thinking the same thing. I was getting fed up with the prevailing attitudes of snowmobile businesses, the chamber, and even the town council (didn't they consider joining into a lawsuit against the Park- the audacity!) formulating snowmobile policies as if everyone in town were in lock-step agreement with them. (Lamuth 2001)

I am not anti snowmobiling but I am pro Park and I would rather not see business of any kind try to dictate to the Park how they should run the Park.

The main issue is that community actions do not represent wider community interests.

The West Yellowstone community presently lacks ability to take collective actions. The expression of the local identity is not collective, as one-half of the residents resist the transformation of the collective local identity from the Park to the Snowmobile. This rift is not just about snowmobiles, rather it is a battle for the control and identity of the community.

A new attitude

A new attitude about tourism development among residents is emerging out of this discord. Some in both Camps have become more reticent about promoting tourism development in recognition that unmitigated development was not indeed the panacea it was thought to be. One ‘local elite’ acknowledged that perhaps the growth happened “a

little bit too fast.” The predominant local paradigm of growth and development at all costs may be changing.

Some are also reexamining their community and its values. Historic preservation of the old railroad depot, for instance, has taken on a new life in the last few years, as residents are looking to alternative means to give this community identity. The town has also sponsored a ‘visioning’ process to engage all residents in the active development on their community. Zoning and the stricter regulation of business development have been mentioned, but the fear of repelling development has prevented action. Others may be questioning the frenetic pace of life that has overcome this community. From old-timers, I repeatedly heard, “I am not involved as I used to be.” Many of the long-standing businesses donate money to community events, in lieu of time. One resident said that most LDS residents do not have the time to attend LDS Ward meetings, which she said is unheard of in other communities.

What does the future hold for the community of West Yellowstone? There is much uncertainty. The people of West Yellowstone, however, pride themselves on their hard work and resourcefulness; this part of the identity has not changed. If snowmobiles are banned, how will the community cope? If they are not banned, what will happen to the community? Hopefully, they will turn their resolve towards solving the greater issues that now threaten the community.

This analysis of interviews with West Yellowstone residents yields a rich description of the West Yellowstone community and the impacts of tourism development

on individuals as well as the whole community. Residents draw a picture of the traditional community identity as hard working, independent-natured, helpful, and possessing an identity strongly tied to Yellowstone National Park. Migrants seem to have much in common with old-timers, and many are willing to assimilate the community culture. The migrants are not the force that is changing the community. Rather the tourism development, which is changing the community, has been propelled from within the old-timer population.

The second section of results, which devotes all of its attention to the transient seasonal worker population, and how those workers fit into the West Yellowstone community, shows that there are four distinct groups of transient seasonal workers: “wanderers”, college students, retirees, and foreign workers. While transient seasonal workers are not part of the community, they are accepted, but kept at arm’s length. In the last section of results, the significant impacts of the ‘new tourist economy’ and community rift are described. While recent tourism development has increased the year-round population and funded infrastructure development, the price to community solidarity and camaraderie is substantial.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

This study presents the community and residents of a rural gateway town that has become increasingly divided by years of rapid business development and growth. Once merely a portal to Yellowstone National Park, this town is now a two-season destination. West Yellowstone and its residents are undergoing changes and facing issues similar to many gateway communities around the United States. This chapter starts by summarizing my findings from the interviews; it concludes with a discussion of relevant gateway community topics that were highlighted by the research.

The community

I found that West Yellowstone old-timers collectively consider themselves to be a hard working resourceful people, independent-natured, helpful and possessing an identity strongly tied to Yellowstone National Park. Many also considered their year-round community to be stratified, with the 'local elite' on one end and the 'working poor' on the other. Increasingly, old-timers have seen the camaraderie that underscored their traditional identity erode in the growing rift between the business interests related to snowmobiling and those interests of residents who have become wary of the direction this

type of business is leading. The change in the collective local identity and the resistance to the change seem to be an outward expression of changing community values, behaviors and lifestyles. The new values of West Yellowstone place the business of snowmobiles over Park Interests, commercial interests over community concerns, and business competition over camaraderie.

Unlike schisms in many other New West amenity communities undergoing tourism development, the rift in West Yellowstone does not follow the paradigm of old-timer versus affluent new migrant or seasonal resident, although West Yellowstone fits many of the criteria for a New West amenity town (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001, 496). The town has a high growth rate, nearby natural amenities, changing identity and growing economy. However, in West Yellowstone the dynamic is a little different; migrants generally fit the town's overall socio-economic profile and seem to have adapted to the main elements of the local identity: ruggedness, the Park, and a hard work ethic. Living by Yellowstone National Park is a real draw, and migrants have an active relationship with the Park through employment and outdoor recreation. Migrants have taken sides in the community rift, but not necessarily against the old-timers.

On the other hand, seasonal residents do not fit the overall socio-economic profile and are removed from community identity. They are generally wealthier than the year-round residents, and neither the changing business climate nor the snowmobile identity of winter directly affects them. Although they maintain somewhat different values, including an overt concern about the welfare of the Park, seasonal residents are also not the impetus of change and cause of the rift.

Rather, it is old-timers and their business interests that have initiated development, a change in values, and a transformation in the collective local identity of West Yellowstone. Changes in traditional community culture have divided the community, pitting the business and culture of snowmobiles against an amalgamation of wider interests. The 'local elite', snowmobile-related business, town council, Chamber of Commerce, and residents, who are worried about losing their way-of-life, have focused on maintaining growth and the continuation of snowmobiles in the Park and West Yellowstone. The counterpoint to these interests revolves around the notion that many residents no longer feel represented by their local leaders, and they are uncomfortable with community goals that discount community needs and the stewardship interests of the Park. West Yellowstone appears to be lacking Wilkinson's crucial third aspect of 'community' (Wilkinson 1991, 3), "a field of community actions—collective efforts to solve local problems and collective expressions of local identity and solidarity." Two groups have emerged in West Yellowstone, when there was previously one community.

Another change to the local identity stems from the corporate franchise architecture, which has diminished town character and the large corporate business practices, which have created a cutthroat business climate. Outside franchise businesses acted outside the norms of the community culture by ignoring the common protocol of setting up housing for seasonal workers; they disregarded the communal business climate, which enabled all businesses to get by when time were tight and to celebrate when times were good. Business in West Yellowstone has escalated out of control of the small-business person, as they cannot compete with national corporations. The small

businesses have become even more dependent on the hope that record numbers of tourists will drive through West Yellowstone. Otherwise, their doors will be the first to shut, while the franchises keep operating.

Transient seasonal workers

This study found that transient seasonal workers in gateway communities are not a one-dimensional group, as they have been portrayed in preceding literature. While there is a group of people, “wanderers”, who partially fit the profile described by Jobes (1993, 155), the transient seasonal workforce in West Yellowstone consists of four distinct groups with very different agendas for working in the area. Foreign workers, mostly Mexicans and eastern Europeans on 10-month work visas, earn their money to use in their native country. Retirees and college students seem to have the most in common with each other, in that they have chosen the area for a measure of adventure and outdoor summer recreation. None in these three groups were in contemplation of staying. The diverse group of “wanderers” is, however, the most likely to make the move from transient seasonal to year-round resident.

Transient seasonal workers are significant to the community in that business is dependent on them, and they have become part of the culture. However, the hiring and maintenance of the seasonal work force is one of the hardest issues facing all employers. Worker-housing along with affordable housing for the entire community is a large issue, and if the town wants to improve its image, it will need to better the poor and unattractive living conditions of its transient seasonal workers.

Transient seasonal workers, however, are peripheral to the gateway community, in that they are not involved in the town politics or with the town residents. Transient seasonal workers are not disruptive to the community, despite the crime that is attributed to them. However, such a large dependence on all categories of transient seasonal workers is not ideal for the community.

DISCUSSION

Although, this study is specific to West Yellowstone, some observations are helpful in consideration of all rural gateway communities. It is hoped that other communities can learn from the experience of this town.

Uncertainty

The uncertainty of tourist visitation, government policy, and the seasonal business cycle are difficult on the psyches and purses of business owners and residents in many gateway towns. Businesses are hard to staff, and it is not easy to make ends meet on eight to nine months out of the year. This tenuous way-of-life can bring people together in the common interest of getting by. At the same time this uncertainty can place a strain on the community, making residents sensitive and resistant to any change that might hinder tourism, whether imposed from within or by the federal government. This uncertainty makes it difficult for a community to direct tourism development in a way that looks beyond the short term.

Community relationship with the Park

In West Yellowstone, the relationship between the Park and the community is presently antagonistic. The antagonism is exacerbated by a seemingly anti-government

sentiment, based on a concern for individual rights and the feeling that the federal government does not represent their interests. The sentiment is even more exaggerated because West Yellowstone has no other major industry besides tourism; it is therefore especially sensitive and susceptible to regulations imposed by the federal government. A more diversified economy would likely reduce the tension between the town and the Park. The town also has a history of taking local issues to the federal government, which has previously resulted in collaboration, but recently it has resulted in confrontation.

A collaborative approach between the government and the community might alleviate some animosity and create solutions that do not have to be resolved in court. The NPS could play an active role in aiding these communities to plan for tourism development. Additionally, the NPS could show these communities how to fulfill their role of park steward, which could alleviate some uncertainty and serve a vital interest to the Park, preservation. The sustainability of the Park and its surrounding communities will be an ever-pressing issue.

Impacts of changing collective community identity

Huang and Stewart (1996, 30) propose, “rural tourism development (particularly in a destination that has been ethnically homogeneous) shifts the basis of solidarity from a shared cultural background to a shared image of community.” This appears to be the paradigm in West Yellowstone; only the solidarity around the new image is waning. The new identity and the business interests associated with it have alienated residents, accentuated community inequalities and diminished key aspects of the traditional local identity—camaraderie and the Park. Expecting residents to conform and embrace an

identity that does not represent them and from which they do not directly profit does not appear to be realistic, even when the new identity may not seem so far from the traditional identity.

The cultivation of identity has been shown to empty the identity of some intrinsic value. For example, the IMAX and Grizzly Discovery Center are used to boost the identification of West Yellowstone with the Park, but for many residents, it deprives the Park of its inherent wild value.

Solidarity

Solidarity is a waning quality in this gateway town. This is a result of new values, business practices, lifestyles, and their resulting new collective identity. Old-timers and migrants have become divided, as many do not feel represented by “supposed” collective community actions. Residents envision community responsibilities differently.

Camaraderie, a sense of belonging, and helping each other should not be discounted when taking inventory of community assets. These small remote communities need the solidarity of individuals to cope with obstacles, such as the continual uncertainty of government action, business competition, Park tourists, and the weather. Solidarity is a value that people do not readily articulate, but it is needed in order for communities to successfully control their growth and development.

Remoteness

Remoteness matters. Many people are attracted to a place, such as West Yellowstone, for its remote qualities, its small-town atmosphere, frontier reputation, and close proximity to natural amenities that include recreation and wilderness. Residents

have decided that well-paying jobs, diverse restaurants, a healthcare network, and a year-round airport are secondary. While most residents would like to see more service and social amenities, the community should assess before hand what aspects of the remote identity are important to residents. Remoteness is a special and endangered quality. West Yellowstone has not attracted abundant wealthy year-round migrants and second-home owners because of the lack of amenities and isolated location in combination with harsh winters.

Plan for growth

Unmitigated growth and development turned out to have unexpected negative consequences for West Yellowstone. More studies need to be done, so that communities can anticipate all consequences of development in order to counter their negative impacts. Maybe communities should not court franchise businesses, even if they are locally owned. Perhaps new housing and business development should subsidize affordable housing. With a finite amount of available land in these gateway towns, the price of land will inevitably increase as the communities gain in popularity. Small communities need to carefully plan their future when they embark on tourism development; know the repercussions of altering an identity. Additionally, pay attention to the needs of the community and not just to development. By ignoring community needs, support for business development may suffer and in the long run may not be sustainable.

CLOSING REMARKS

The place of West Yellowstone was created by strong-willed and hard working people. They transformed wild and remote terrain with a harsh physical geography into

their home nearly 100 years ago. However, the cold winters, wild animals and wild splendor still have a hold on the town, which creates both reverence and frustration on the part of town residents. The interplay between humans and nature is evident in this remote community, and the transformation of the place is ever-evolving as West Yellowstone residents continually strive to develop their town in a way that most resembles their collective idea of 'home.'

APPENDIX 1 – LOCATION QUOTIENT ANALYSIS

On first impression the West Yellowstone economy appears to be overwhelmingly tourist based. To gauge whether this impression was grounded, I conducted a *location quotient analysis* of the town's economy using 1999 County Business Pattern (CBP) employment data broken down by zip code (U.S. Census Bureau 1999) and divided into two-digit NAICS codes. A *location quotient analysis* can be used to calculate *basic employment* and identify industries in which the local economy specializes (Klosterman 1990, 132). The presence of *basic employment* indicates externally oriented market activity—the larger the amount of *basic sectoral employment*, the stronger the sector.

The analysis revealed that, indeed, the economy of West Yellowstone is overwhelmingly tourist-based. Basic employment is strongly concentrated in the following sectors: *Retail Trade, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, and Accommodations and Food Services*. These sectors are the back-bone of the tourist industry (Rasker, Johnson, and York 1998, 114). The economy showed little other basic employment and appears to be one dimensional.

For analysis, the town was compared to Gallatin County and the state of Montana. My analysis calculated basic employment in all two-digit NAICS sectors of the West Yellowstone economy for three scenarios, a minimum, mean, and maximum-number estimate of basic employment. Three scenarios were needed because the CBP employment data available by zip code only reveals sector employment by ranges, instead

of precise numbers. The three scenarios account for the entire range of employment.

Table A1 shows the results of the *location quotient* analysis by sector in the West Yellowstone zip code of 59758. Crosshatched cells indicate only non-basic sector employment. Cells with numbers indicate the basic employment in the corresponding sector. West Yellowstone is compared to Gallatin County (gal) and Montana (mt).

Table A1. West Yellowstone basic employment by sector

Industry Code Description	west/ mt minimum	west/gal minimum	west/mt mean	west/ gal mean	west/mt maximum	west/gal maximum
Utilities		4		5	2	6
Construction			3		15	
Manufacturing						
Wholesale trade						
Retail trade	5		85	76	119	113
Transportation & warehousing						
Information			1	7	6	10
Finance & Ins.						
Real estate, rental & leasing	5		12	7	15	12
Management of companies & enterprises						
Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation services						
Educational services						
Health care & social assistance						
Arts, entertainment & recreation					4	2
Accommodation & food services	300	241	355	318	379	353
Other services (except public administration)					4	5
Auxiliaries (exc corporate, subsidiary & regional mgt)				1	1	1
Unclassified establishments	1	1	2	2	2	2

 Non-Basic

Tourism is not recognized by one single sector in the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) or Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Codes, which

therefore leaves subjectivity in definition of the tourism sector. Commonly recognized sectors are service (hotels, amusement, and recreation) and retail (restaurants, and miscellaneous retail). Other sectors may also include construction, real estate, and aspects of transportation and utilities (Rasker, Johnson, and York 1998, 114). It depends on the community. The NAICS, a more recent classification system, makes the separation of the tourism sector far easier, however it is still subjective.

APPENDIX 2 – POPULATION, HOUSING AND TENURE DATA

Table A2 shows census data from 1990 and 2000 for both West Yellowstone and the state of Montana. The statewide census figures are shown for the purpose of percentage comparisons. These data are drawn from the on-line 1990 *Summary Tape File 3 Sample Data* (U.S. Bureau of Census 1990) and the 2000 *Summary Tape File 1 General File* (U.S. Bureau of Census 2000).

Table A2. West Yellowstone population, housing, and tenure data, 1990 and 2000

	West Yellowstone		Montana	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Population				
Total	929	1,177	799,065	902,195
Male	532	650	395,769	449,480
Female	397	527	403,296	452,715
Latino total	7	91	12,174	18,081
Percentage Latino	.8%	7.7%	1.5%	2.0%
Occupancy and Tenure				
Total Housing Units	675	806	361,155	412,633
Occupied housing units	408	518	306,163	358,667
Vacant housing units	267	288	54,992	53,966
Owner occupied	199	195	205,899	247,723
Renter occupied	209	323	100,264	110,944
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	152	162	20,481	24,213
Vacant	115	126	34,511	29,753
Percent of owner-occupied housing units	49%	38%	67%	69%
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	3%	2%	3%	2%
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	27%	24%	10%	8%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use as percentage of housing units	23%	20%	6%	6%
Persons per owner-occupied unit	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.6
Persons per renter-occupied unit	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.2
Household by Type				
Total households	408	518	306,163	358,667
Family households	234	289	211,666	237,407
Non-family households	174	229	94,497	121,260
Percent Family households	58%	56%	69%	66%

APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW FORM

	<u>Notes</u>	Name
<p>How long have you lived in West? _____</p> <p>Where is your permanent residence? _____</p> <p>How many months per year do you live here? _____</p> <p>Where did you live before here? _____</p> <p>PLACE</p> <p>What brought you to West Yellowstone?</p> <p>What do you think about the town of West?</p> <p>What do you do on your free time, fish, hike?</p> <p>Do you visit NF/YNP regularly? _____ this summer? _____</p> <p>SEASONAL WORKER</p> <p>How many seasons have you worked in West? _____</p> <p>Where do you work? _____</p> <p>Do they provide you housing? _____ How is it?</p> <p>What do they pay you? _____</p> <p>How and where do you make a living during the off-season?</p> <p>Are you in school? _____</p> <p>Would you like to work in West if given the chance to work year-round? _____</p> <p>Do you like the seasonal lifestyle? _____</p> <p>How about the next season?</p> <p>Would you like to settle in West? _____</p> <p>TOURISM DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Is the nature of your work related to tourism? _____</p> <p>How do you feel about recent tourism development in West Yellowstone?</p> <p>What do you see as the benefits to West of tourism development? Drawbacks?</p> <p>Do you think West is too commercialized? _____</p> <p>How would you like to see future tourism in West Yellowstone developed?</p> <p>COMMUNITY</p> <p>How would you characterize the West community?</p> <p>Do you consider yourself to be a part of it? _____</p> <p>Do you feel accepted within the community? _____</p> <p>Can you trust most people in the community? _____</p> <p>Has the community changed since you have lived here? _____ How?</p> <p>Are you involved in the community? _____</p> <p>Would you like to be more active in the community? _____</p> <p>(What issues do you think the community should make top priority?</p> <p>GOVERNMENT POLICY</p> <p>Do the policies of the federal government affect your livelihood? _____</p> <p>Do you agree with how the NPS manages YNP? _____</p> <p>How do you think a ban on snowmobiles in YNP will affect West Yellowstone?</p>		
<p>Education _____ Children _____ Age _____ Sex _____ Race _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Income level? low medium high</p>	C-name	

APPENDIX 4 – LIST OF INTERVIEWS

General information about the 54 interviewees is listed in table A3. To protect each person's privacy, residences, ages, and employment have been generalized. The subheadings indicate the population group, which are determined by length of community residency and whether residents are seasonal or permanent. Columns show the type of employment, age range, whether they are retired, and their last residence before moving to West Yellowstone. The last column lists the substrata of residents within the cross-section.

Table A3. Interviewees

Employment	Age	Retired	Last residence	Strata represented
Old-timers				
Business owner	30s		West Yellowstone Native	
Tourism	30s		West Yellowstone Native	
Business owner	50s		Greater Yellowstone	
Business owner	50s		Non-native	
Business owner	50s		Non-native	
Business owner	50s	Semi	Montana	Former transient seasonal workers, 'local elite', 'working poor', empty nesters, sporting community, skiers, snowmobilers
Tourism	50s		Utah	
Business owner	60s	Retired	West Yellowstone Native	
Business owner	60s	Retired	Montana	
Tourism	60s	Semi	Montana	
Tourism	60s		West Yellowstone Native	
Volunteer	60s	Retired	Montana	
Business owner	70s	Retired	Midwest	

continued

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