

NH Stakeholder Narratives: How Recreation Impacts Place and Community Attachment Among Youth

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Problem Statement

NH has an aging population and youth are the future of NH's civic life and economic productivity. Feeling connected with place and community is important for helping youth see their futures in NH. Recreation may contribute to place and community attachment.

Research Question

What are NH public administrator and stakeholder narratives about recreation's role in supporting place attachment, community attachment, and future orientation for NH youth?

- investigated through qualitative interviews with 32 NH stakeholders. Ask me about my research design and analysis!

Findings

“a lot of them are looking at really targeted subject areas, you know....So it's not like, 'Oh, hey, I don't want to come to UNH and I want to get out of New Hampshire.' It's just that another school might have exactly what they're looking for.” -Participant 1

1 Recreation experiences and opportunities are **less influential** to youth future orientation and migration decisions than perception of **educational and workforce opportunities**.

“major companies, they can't get...workers and Company C pays \$60,000 starting wages...and I think it's because...young people look at that place and...they don't see anything that's attractive and, nor does the region do a good job of packaging and selling its natural amenities” -Participant 2

“it's that quality of life, it's that access to the trails and the amenities, the ability to go out in your backyard and go for a walk in the woods.” -Participant 2

“You could be working in New Hampshire and popping in your kayak...by 4pm” -Participant 3

2 There is a **lack of New Hampshire branding**, and perceptions of possible branding are highly associated with a **narrow focus** on **outdoor recreation** opportunities in the state.

“no programming space, nothing the teens can call their own...Now, there's nothing for teens to do in the summer. And I call them pods. If you watch in the summertime, there's a bunch of them there. They had just got out (aged out) of summer camp. But they're not old enough to get employment yet. And they're just walking around in packs downtown” - Participant 4

When it comes to ethnicity. I hear that at times...[youth]...yearn for more relationships that are cross cultural. - Participant 5

3 There is a **lack of youth community engagement** and **youth driven experiences** in the state. Youth recreation opportunities that are currently available are **not meeting the needs of the population**.

“so they're going to go live in, you know, Massachusetts for a couple of years. But then that's where their friends become...they develop friendships and relationships there, and they don't move back home” -Participant 6

“And then [the youth] go OK, well, I'll just, you know, I went to University of Tampa, I might as well stay in Tampa because it's warm”-Participant 7

4 There is an **assumption** youth will leave the state in pursuit of **greater educational and recreational opportunities elsewhere**.

Further Study

1. How do youth form **community attachment** in NH?
2. How can **recreation** be used as a tool to **enhance NH youth community attachment**?
3. What would NH youth **need in order to develop** a stronger sense of community in NH?
4. How do youth **confirm or expand** on these stakeholder findings?