

The Impact of *Twilight* Tourism on Economic Stability and Identity Development in Forks,
Washington
The Colorado College
Hannah Tilden
April 21, 2015

Introduction

This research addresses how the introduction and consequential decrease in the popularity of the film and book series, the *Twilight* saga has impacted the cultural identity and economic security of residents living in Forks, Washington. The *Twilight* saga is a series of popular young adult novels first published in 2005, which were then adapted to film, about vampires and werewolves (Meyer 2005). This research will be framed within larger conversations of tourism, pop culture, and representation, and will take an ethnographic approach to creating a multi-vocal representation of Forks. In doing so, it contests, at least in part, the existing single narrative of the town created by author Stephenie Meyer. The ethnographic approach will include participant observation and interviews, as well as collecting economic data on the town to inform an understanding of economic security over the last decade. The research will contribute to the anthropological discourse on tourism, cultural representation, and cultural identity, and will give the people of Forks the opportunity to create their own representation of their community.

Before the *Twilight* saga made Forks an international tourist destination after the publication of the first novel, Forks attracted local visitors for its proximity to the Hoh, the only rainforest in the continental U.S., which is surrounded by the Olympic National Park, and the Pacific Ocean (Forks Chamber of Commerce 2014). The economy is historically based on the logging and fishing industries, and the year round population is under 4,000 (Forks Chamber of Commerce 2014). Fork's community is diverse, with a large European American and Latino population, as well as a neighboring Quileute tribe.

This research intends to delve further into the frustrations that many residents have with the impact of the boom in *Twilight* tourism on the town of Forks and its residents, as well as explore the positive impacts of the influx of tourism to the town. These areas of impact include

both economic and identity based changes. This research is important because it will contribute to the existing understanding of the single narratives produced by popular culture. While the research will involve an exploratory ethnography, a crucial objective of this research is to create a multi-vocal representation of the town of Forks and to give various residents an opportunity to represent themselves. Before addressing these objectives, it will be necessary to provide a summary of the scholarship of cultural tourism.

The Anthropology of Tourism and Forks, Washington

This research will rely on the existing anthropological frameworks of the anthropology of tourism, multi-vocality, and cultural identity development. In the following section I will provide an overview of each of these frameworks, focusing on the points most relevant to my research, and give examples of how my field research will be theoretically tied to prior works. I will use case studies to support my connections, and incorporate the findings of other authors in the development of my theoretical approach.

Anthropologists became interested in analyzing tourism itself in the 1970's (Stronza 2001) after considering the relationships and similarities between the anthropologist and the tourist. Anthropological study of tourism has since become an academic field in it's own right, and generally divides its focus into two categories, the origins of tourism (tourist focused), and the impacts of tourism, (focus on locals). Some questions that this sub-field strives to answer include the following; what are the cross-universal significances of work and play, what defines the dynamic between tourists and locals, and what impacts do these interactions have, and how are cultural traditions represented to and perceived by tourists (Stronza 2001).

The impact that tourism has on a community, both culturally and economically, is one of

the largest questions in the study of tourism. Scholars in the field originally believed that tourism would be a strong strategic pathway to economic development that communities could take, relying on an infusion of capital from foreigners, but this has become increasingly problematized as the sustainability of tourism as an industry is called into question. Stronza argues that:

Despite the early hopes, tourism as a “passport” to macroeconomic development did not pan out quite as planned. Rather than alleviate poverty, tourism seemed to be introducing new kinds of social problems, including currency black markets, drugs, and in addition, tourism was associated with luxury spending, overcrowding, and pollution, all of which were compounding environmental degradation. (2001; 268)

These social problems that Stronza mentions indicate that cultural tensions are also heightened in communities that rely economically on tourism. I would suggest that these tensions arise from an intense focus by tourists on exoticized cultural traditions.

Forks, Washington will make an interesting contribution to this work because the focus of tourism in Forks is unrelated to any cultural reality in the town. Forks was allegedly chosen as the location for *Twilight* after author Stephanie Meyer looked up the cloudiest place in the United States (Crowe 2013). While the book does draw on some cultural aspects of Forks, like using the nearby Quilleute tribe as the community that produces werewolves (Meyer 2005), most of the story and reference to Forks is fictional and fantastical. As a result of the fictional portrayal of Forks, the town has changed and reoriented to reflect its portrayal in *Twilight*, which I will argue has had an impact on the identity and cultural alignment of residents. This type of cultural impact on tourism communities has been documented worldwide.

Rosemary Wiss (2008) discusses tourism in the Dominican Republic, demonstrating the dehumanizing and identity robbing impacts that tourism can have on a community. Tourism in the Dominican Republic is driven by the sex industry and the sale of “cultural” goods and services (Gregory 2014). The most common goods and services that are offered to tourists are hair braiding and paintings, both of which are actually Haitian practices, which are more popular

with tourists because of their seemingly exotic and pseudo authentic nature. According to Gregory (2014), the sex industry is also driven by exoticism; European and European American tourists go to the Dominican in search of an easily attainable and exotic sexual experience. This obsession with that which is perceived to be exotic and typical of a place has an alienating impact on the natives of the Dominican Republic, and when a place is overtaken by people who come to gawk at what they perceive to be the culture, the focus on reality and depth of identity in that place falls by the wayside.

Just as those outside of the nation have shaped the narrative of the Dominican Republic, the *Twilight* saga has shaped the narrative of Forks. The book opens with a bleak account of Forks:

My mother drove me to the airport with the windows rolled down. It was seventy-five degrees in Phoenix, the sky a perfect, cloudless blue. I was wearing my favorite shirt – sleeveless, white eyelet lace; I was wearing it as a farewell gesture. My carry-on item was a parka.

In the Olympic Peninsula of northwest Washington State, a small town named Forks exists under a near-constant cover of clouds. It rains on this inconsequential town more than any other place in the United States of America. It was from this town and its gloomy, omnipresent shade that my mother escaped with me when I was only a few months old. It was in this town that I'd been compelled to spend a month every summer until I was fourteen. That was the year I finally put my foot down; these past three summers, my dad, Charlie, vacationed with me in California for two weeks instead (Meyer 2005: 1)

This passage is extremely problematic, painting Forks as a static, gray place lacking dimension and personality. This has become the definition of Forks for more than 100 million readers (Hardiman 2012), effectively eliminating the opportunity for the residents to represent themselves as citizens of a dynamic place with a rich history.

Gu and Ryan (2007) also provide a case study on the impacts of tourism on permanent residents, focusing on a Beijing hutong called Shi Cha Hai. The authors focused on the impacts of tourism on residential place attachment and identification with that place, arguing that they

were addressing two gaps in the existing literature, one of those being the lack of study on Chinese tourism, the other being a more general lack of focus on place attachment in places with high rates of tourism. Gu and Ryan produced an ethnogram which measured “attitudes toward tourism...based upon attitudes toward heritage, tourism as a source of potential employment, length of residency and perceived intrusiveness of tourism, all of which impact a sense of place identity” (2007). The authors study concluded by raising questions about the role of the government and the role of the individual in managing citizenship in a tourist destination.

While Gu and Ryan found that resident’s connections to heritage far outweighed concerns about tourism, I am interested in gauging similar attitudes in Forks. Through the interviewing of residents, I seek to understand how their personal history as well as current employment has informed their experience of the current tourism boom, and whether individuals note a change in place attachment over the last decade. By place attachment I am referring to the degree to which residents of a place feel connected to their community, potentially quantifiable through emigration statistics. The questions of place attachment and place identity suggest a qualitative methodological approach using interviews and observation, but I also plan to look at population change and emigration patterns in recent history. Due to the economic depression and geographical inconvenience of Forks (visitors from the mainland are required to take a ferry and drive several hours to get there), I suggest that current residents must have a high degree of place attachment to have deterred them from moving, and hypothesize that in recent years there has been a drop in population due to the impact that *Twilight* tourism may have had on place identity.

The aforementioned scholars have used anthropology to contribute to a multi-vocal representation of places heavily impacted by tourism. Multi-vocality is an academic goal aimed at producing a diversity of texts, which better reflect the diversity of a given community, coming

from different and ideally local voices and sources. Multi-vocality can be seen as a strategy to combat uni-vocality, or the production of a single dominant narrative as discussed by Adichie (2012), statically defining a place or group of people.

Anjali Prabhu (2005) discusses multi-vocality by highlighting the irony in providing a representation of a place as a response to the unfair creation of a single narrative. While trying to create a multi-vocal representation of a diverse community is a challenging and confusing task, the resulting knowledge and diversification of literature on a group outweighs the potential danger of furthering the single story. The existing literature on the anthropology of tourism is similarly conflicting, in that it stresses the importance of avoiding falling into the same role - creating a univocal misrepresentation that tourists too often embody. The anthropologist has the potential to create the single story that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie discusses in her 2009 TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, which anecdotally explains how a narrative can be used to represent an entire population and subsequently stagnate a diverse community. Similarly, Kevin A. Yelvington questions whether the anthropologist approaches the ethnography from the same misplaced curiosity of non-critical tourist counterparts (2012). I understand the important reality of this risk, though I believe that anthropologists have a social responsibility to provide multi-vocal narratives. Methodologically, it will be critical to allow the representation of Forks to be guided wholly by the statements and opinions of the residents I work with, to avoid pigeonholing the population once again.

This research will also use identity process theory (or IPT) discussed by Rusi Jaspal and Marco Cinirella (2011) to analyze the construction of identities in Forks. Jaspal and Cinirella state that identity construction takes place universally through two processes, which are “assimilation-accommodation” and “evaluation” (2011). The assimilation-accommodation

process refers to the learning of cultural norms, and adjustment to reproduce those norms by new members of a community, while the evaluation process refers to the assignment of value and quality to the different characteristics of one's identity.

Both of these processes would be interesting to analyze in the residents of Forks, but this research will focus more heavily on the evaluation process because younger residents who may have undergone the assimilation-accommodation process after the introduction of *Twilight* wouldn't have experienced in full the transition from small logging town to bustling tourist attraction. From collected information on value assignment, which will be gathered by asking direct questions, for example which qualities make a good or involved citizen, neighbor, friend, etc., and inferring such value judgments from less direct interview questions and responses, inferences will be made about the shifting identities of long-term residents.

Maureen Mahon discusses the role of popular media production in defining the identity of a community, "viewing these media and popular culture forms as arenas in which social actors struggle over social meanings and as visible evidence of social processes and social relations" (2000). She argues that these forms of media function to reproduce existing cultural practices and values, and sometimes to transform or challenge existing ideals. Mahon focuses on the impact that media produced by locals can have on the culture of that community, which raised the question of how mass media produced by an outsider might differ in its impact on a society. I suggest that both forms of media (that which is produced within and that which is produced outside of a community) function to represent a place, and can be equally impactful dependent on the audience that is reached. Considering the huge audience reached by *Twilight*, it becomes irrelevant to the impact on the town that the majority of cast and crew members complicit in the creation of this narrative have never even visited, because the novels and films function as a

unanimous representation of Forks on a global scale.

Jessica Crowe argues that film tourism has the opportunity to bring economic development to impoverished places like Forks, though some towns may be better poised than others to accept and capitalize on the tourism industry (2013). She looks at a variety of metrics targeted at understanding social infrastructure and community connectedness to determine that Forks was, in fact positioned or predisposed to capitalize on *Twilight* tourism. After the crash of the logging industry in the 90's after a federal ordinance protecting the spotted owl went into effect, local officials were attempting to build a tourist industry based on nearby natural destinations and significant Native American cultural influence. In the decade between 1995 and 2005, "two new motels and nine bed and breakfasts opened" (Crowe 2013), indicating that community focus was turned toward tourism prior to the release of *Twilight*. The second piece of Crowe's research looks at how tourism has impacted different demographics in different ways. She provides information on population, poverty, and unemployment in 2000 and 2010 divided by racial group, which I will later include as data on population change.

While the idea that certain aspects of the community and social infrastructure of Forks may have influenced the scale of *Twilight* tourism is interesting, it fails to address the fact that the single largest contributor to the explosion of *Twilight* tourists was the writing of the series itself. While Forks was primed to support a small scale outdoors based tourist industry, the community could not have anticipated the influx of more than 200 times the number of monthly tourists, an increase from 75 monthly prior to the release of the first book to 16,186 at it's highest compared to other studies which Crowe cites that reference a 50-300% growth in tourism as a result of media (2013). A second factor that contributed to the quick turnover from depressed logging town to booming tourist destination is the high rate of unemployment after a national ordinance

banned logging in old-growth forests. This meant that there were unemployed people with some amount of capital to invest in tourism-based businesses (Crowe 2013).

The shift in industry from fishing and logging to supporting *Twilight* tourism can be referred to as a change in means of production. Social theorist Karl Marx suggests that in a capitalist society, industry, or means of production, controls the production of culture (Marx et al. 1992). Marx would argue that this drastic change from blue-collar industry to a small business driven tourist industry must have accompanying sociocultural consequences. In addition to the change in means of production that took place in Forks, there are also cultural implications of the boom and bust economic cycle that Forks is caught up in. Forks has cycled through periods of prosperity with fishing, logging, and now tourism, but had periods of economic recession in between. A Pembina Institute report on the boom and bust nature of mining based economies suggests that such communities experience fluctuation in population, increased crime rates in times of high unemployment, as well as a bump in alcohol and drug usage during times of depression (2008). I expect to observe some of these patterns throughout the course of my research in Forks considering the current lull in industrial productivity.

Each of the above mentioned relevant theoretical frameworks and case studies will contribute to my research design and analysis. I will consider the qualitative ethnographic and quantitative data collection methods used in the case studies on the Dominican Republic and China, as well as in Jessica Crowe's work in Forks (2013) in the following section on methods. I also plan to use identity process theory, multi-vocality, and theories of place attachment working within the framework of the anthropology of tourism in my analysis and discussion of collected research. The consideration of these prior works will allow me to contribute my research to the existing literature, which currently lacks an ethnographic, identity based case study on film

tourism of this scale, while creating a representation guided by the residents of Forks.

Methods

The literature on identity, tourism, and representation emphasizes the importance of the anthropologist avoiding creating the single-faceted representation that the tourism industry and producers of media so often proliferate (Scham 2001). This understanding has informed the research design, which intends to create an accurate and multi-vocal representation of identity and economic security in Forks. The chief method of data collection is ethnographic, with a focus on personal interviews. The analysis was guided by direct quotations from residents, allowing the participants to shape their own representation.

Data was collected on the shifting identity and economic security of the residents of Forks since the publication of *Twilight* in 2005. The research included formal sit-down interviews with 7 subjects, and informal interviews with an additional 6, attempting to capture variability in the people that were interviewed. I am hoping this variability can approach a representation of the present demographics of Forks, by correlating the distribution of my interviews to demographics in town. For example, Forks' population is roughly 70% white, 7% Native American, and 23% Latino (US Census Bureau 2010), and ideally out of ten interviewees, seven would have been white, one would have been Native American, and two would have been Latino. This is a relatively simple example of the variability I have attempted to capture, and other categories of variance included income, employment (tourism industry, other employment, or unemployed), age (though all of my participants were over the age of 18), gender, and time spent living in Forks. I found these interviewees through continued participation and attendance at community events, and connection with employees of tourism

related organizations. The ethnography used recorded interviews and participant observation (on tours or other tourist activities) to create a multi-vocal representation of the town from an anthropological perspective. These interviews have been synthesized with other collected data to produce an ethnographic representation of the last decade in Forks, functioning to address the questions of economic security and identity development after the publication of *Twilight*.

The ethnography is informed by various other sources. I used public information, which included population and demographic changes, employment, tax revenue, visitor statistics, and average income of residents. A map was created to better understand the spatial orientation of Forks, and how the *Twilight* attractions are situated among other notable places in the town. I did this by first compiling a list of local destinations in the town, including a grocery store, bank, post office, gym, and other establishments that locals would be likely to visit daily or regularly, and plot them on a map which includes tourist destinations like major hotels, tour sites, gift shops, and monuments to *Twilight*. Because this was a relatively simple mapping project, I used zeemaps.com to drop pins of different colors indicating tourist or local attraction. Finally, I have included literature analysis on excerpts from *Twilight* itself, focusing on the passages that represent Forks, to understand how Stephanie Meyer represented -or misrepresented- the town. This literature review has allowed for a comparison of the language of the narratives constructed by Stephanie Meyer, *Twilight* tour guides, city officials, and other key players. This information was analyzed using Identity Process Theory and other aforementioned frameworks to produce a thesis aimed at creating a holistic analysis of changes in identity and economic security of residents of forks after the publication of *Twilight*.

Data was collected over a research period of 7 days on location in Forks, and analyzed and synthesized over an additional three weeks during the 2015/2016 academic calendar.

Impacts on Cultural Identity in Forks

As previously discussed, changes in the dominant means of production in Forks are directly linked to cultural changes in the community. While most residents of Forks currently earn their living by working as guards at one of the local prisons or by owning or working at a service related business, townspeople still discuss logging as the primary industry of the area. Often when asked about the impact of *Twilight* tourism on the town's economy, residents would shrug off my question and immediately move to discussing logging. I learned time and again about the glory days of Forks, when it was a booming logging capital of the mid 70s, and the depression of the 90s after the spotted owl regulation prohibited logging in old growth forest. The conversation often turned to tales of spotted owls building a nest on a neighbor's roof, in a 3-year-old tree, or on a rafter in a shed, proving that the owl does not, in fact, require virgin timber as a habitat. Residents also often talked about how this industry bred hardworking men who took care of their families.

Glynda, a professor at a small local college, reflects on growing up during the logging boom; "I grew up not having very much with very little; no TV, no computer, we didn't even have a telephone. Wearing clothes that weren't fancy, and that was my life. A lot of work, manual labor, work ethic was really, really strong. I grew up with a dad who was part of that great generation." Glynda's view is consistent with that of other residents, vaguely referring to a time when the logging industry produced a culture of hardworking people, and overlooking the impacts of current economic producers.

In the period between the logging crash in the early 1990's and the influx of tourists to the area in the mid 2000's, Forks transitioned from being the logging capital of the world to the steelhead fishing capital of the world. Some of the people who had previously been employed in

timber became involved in commercial fishing, until regulations controlled steelhead yields by private parties. These regulations produced tension not only because it resulted in lost jobs, but also because members of the nearby Quileute tribe were able to continue fishing using commercial nets. Charlotte, a local shop owner, tentatively explained the impact of this to me, “It would be nice, and sometimes maybe they do cut back a little bit but if they put too many nets in the river the fish can’t get up the river and then there’s not as many fish coming.” She seemed hesitant to discuss this, even stating that “talking about Indians fishing too much is like the third rail it’s just, politically it won’t get you anywhere.” Charlotte’s attitude on regulations of natural resources is consistent with that of most residents I interviewed, she included no mention of why or how these limitations to her community might exist, and instead focuses on those outside factors that qualify the regulations unfair or misguided.

Historically, these events established the culture of Forks today. Residents identify with natural resources as their economic lifeblood, but they have seen access to these resources become limited by outside forces, and some residents believe that this has bred a culture of entitlement among young people. The owner of the local bowling alley explained that in the height of the logging boom, timber companies would come to high school graduation and give competing employment offers to all of the graduating boys, which led to a local expectation of an endless demand for unskilled workers. Consequentially, when those jobs began to disappear, rather than seeking training or other forms of employment, unemployed residents stayed in Forks and took advantage of the low cost of living, family networks, and availability of welfare, resting on the fact that “Forks has been dealt a lot of blows.”

In the absence of industry created by natural resources, townspeople often turned to discussing unemployment rather than current employment opportunities. Only one of the many

people I spoke with ever mentioned employment in one of the local prisons. There are two prisons and one jail, all of which predominantly draw employees from Forks, the largest of which, the Olympic Correction Center, employs 600 people. I was surprised to learn that this industry could employ slightly less than a third of the total population of Forks, but somehow was less a part of local discourse than logging which fizzled out over two decades ago, and unemployment. Residents were also reluctant to recognize any sort of economic benefit from *Twilight* tourism, which to date has brought more than 300,000 visitors, and millions of dollars to the area.

When asking about the impact of *Twilight* tourism on the town of Forks, I received mixed responses. Several people told me that because of *Twilight* they had to wait through multiple cycles at the stoplight, or wait in longer lines at the grocery store, referring to tourists as a benign nuisance. Those same people would also often tell me about the first time they saw a *Twilight* tourist. For example, Christy, the editor of the town newspaper, said;

Well the funniest thing was I kinda knew it was out there I knew this was a thing when I was in the bakery and this girl was on her cell phone and she was squealing like “you’re not gonna believe it! I’m in Forks!” and she was squealing and I’m like what in the hell is this? Because nobody wants to come to Forks you know, in the past they were just passing through, we were awful.

This kind of excitement over tourists wanting to be in Forks came up in every one of my conversations. Many residents mentioned that it just feels nice to have people want to spend time in your town, especially when it’s common for visitors to return to Forks several times. Knowing that Forks was a place that people from all over the world liked to visit has functioned as a much needed a moral boost for the town. Other residents would mention that especially in the winter months, having tourists around broke up the monotony of seeing the same people every day and allowed for exposure to different experiences and worldviews.

I struggled to reconcile excitement over *Twilight* bringing recognition and tourists to the town with the actual portrayal of Forks in the book. The first page of *Twilight* refers to Forks as “inconsequential” and “gloomy” (Meyer 2005), and tourists initially visited Forks to understand just how inconsequential and gloomy it was. What was attractive about Forks to tourists was how well it matched the low expectations set by Stephenie Meyer, pointed out by Lissy, the director of the Chamber of Commerce “I think what makes Forks different is that people had low expectations... they didn’t even know Forks was real.” When I asked the residents about this, the actual portrayal of their town in this hugely popular media source, they would then point to the fictional nature of the book, or reveal that they hadn’t actually read it, and according to Lissy, “the majority of people here have not read *Twilight* just because it’s a certain demographic. So, while they’re familiar or maybe have seen the movies, probably just like any book, the majority of town has not read *Twilight*.”

Considering the demographic that *Twilight* caters to is composed mostly of teenage girls, I was curious to know how youth in the area responded to *Twilight* tourism, but given limitations on speaking directly with Forks High School students I chose to speak with a youth-focused librarian and teachers at the high school. The librarian was focused on the reception of the book itself, saying that like any book, some kids liked it and some kids didn’t, and she said that it wasn’t particularly relevant to her readers that it was so intimately connected to their town. The teacher, on the other hand, told me that in high school especially, it is considered taboo to even mention *Twilight*. Several people even told me about a teen who had spray painted “*Twilight* Sucks” on his tailgate. This response was unsurprising to me, in part because of larger trends, for example, liking *Twilight* would be taboo at most high schools in America, but the idea that any mention of *Twilight* is uncommon I found more interesting. The teacher went on to say that he

felt his students were surrounded by imagery from *Twilight* every time they left the house, and that the school was there as a sort of safe-zone, where *Twilight* and its impacts were not to be discussed.

While high school students may choose to ignore *Twilight* tourism altogether, many residents choose to focus on other tourist draws to the area. The fact that so many visitors return for second, third, or fourth visits indicates to the Chamber of Commerce and local residents that tourists “come for the *Twilight*, and come back again for the natural beauty of the area,” referring to the number of natural landmarks nearby. Forks is the nearest town to the Hoh Rainforest and Olympic National Park, rests between three major rivers, and is only ten miles from Rialto Beach in La Push. The influx of nature related tourism has reified the connection to nature as central to the identity of Forks residents. When speaking about this new bump in outdoor related tourists, people would often affect a validated tone, as if tourists to the area were finally seeing what they so closely associated with Forks as a place.

Another way in which the natural surroundings of Forks impact the identity and values of its residents is by encouraging a resilient spirit. Forks was, after all, selected as the location for *Twilight* because of its high rate of annual rainfall and near constant cloud cover. One resident said “I think for the most part the people here in Forks are ... resilient people, you can't live out here if you aren't resilient to the fact that yes I might not be able to be dry for the next three months.” While this basic level of resilience seems to be at odds with reports of entitlement in youth, it is consistent with the overarching theme of outside forces, be they natural or governmental, impacting Forks in a way that requires a response from residents. In this theme a lack of human agency is implicit, and locals have not historically controlled major events impacting the town.

Different demographics of residents seem to relate to nature in different ways. White residents tended to refer to the aesthetic beauty of the Olympic Peninsula more often than Native American or Latino residents did. Native Americans still rely on the aforementioned steelheading industry for economic sustenance, and many Latino residents earn their living by gathering salal (a plant with glossy leaves often used in crafts or bouquets) in the forest and selling it to a local wholesaler. I learned about this trade mostly through conversations with white residents, and they spoke about salal collection much like they spoke about logging, that it produced hardworking people who prioritized family life. This was implied through comments on working long hours and sending money back to family members in Mexico, and Mexican residents were often compared to young white residents in discussions of entitlement and unemployment.

White residents did tend to believe that Latino residents were benefitting financially from their hardworking culture, as one interviewee said “They like to work it’s part of their self esteem to work and provide for their families, plus they send a lot of money back to Mexico.” This opinion, however, is not reflected in data from 2000 and 2010:

	2000	2010
Total population.....	3,120	3,532
Percent white.....	81.5	67.7
Percent Latino.....	15.5	26.0
Percent Native American.....	5.0	6.6
Percent of all residents below poverty.....	20.5	20.4 ^a
Percent of white residents below poverty.....	17.5	6.8 ^a
Percent of Latino residents below poverty.....	40.0	56.5 ^a
Percent of Native American residents below poverty.....	41.4	31.4 ^a
Percent of all residents unemployed.....	8.9	7.0 ^a
Percent of white residents unemployed.....	8.6	5.4 ^a
Percent of Latino residents unemployed.....	12.6	12.9 ^a
Percent of Native American residents unemployed.....	7.5	10.0 ^a

Figure 1: table representing unemployment and poverty amongst white, Latino, and Native American residents in 2000 and 2010. (Crowe 2013)

It is important to mention the timing of these 2000 and 2010 data points, because the peak year of tourism in Forks was 2009. While these data points would appropriately capture the

transition into the *Twilight* craze, we have to consider that Forks is not insulated from larger national economic trends, most relevant to this data of course is the recession of 2008. This table clearly indicates that while the percent of total residents living below poverty stayed fairly constant, in the years between 2000 and 2010, the percent of white residents living below poverty dropped considerably and the percentages of Latino and Native American residents living below poverty both increased by about ten percent.

Jessica Crowe (2013) proposes that Latino residents would have had less capital to invest in a tourism related business, and would be less likely to apply and be approved for a loan from a bank. This is consistent with what I learned from the owner of a Mexican market. When asked what work there is for Latino residents in Forks, he told me you can work as a maid in one of the many hotels, you can collect *salal*, or you can be one of the few employees or owners of the two Mexican markets in town. When I asked him or other Latino residents about the impact of *Twilight* on their lives or their businesses, I was often met with blank stares. One Spanish-speaking hotel employee didn't know what *Twilight* was, and others simply couldn't think of any impact *Twilight* might have had on them. I propose that the lack of connection between *Twilight* and non-white residents could also be seen as a result of the book as source material. *Twilight* depicts a struggle between sophisticated European vampires who are so white they literally sparkle blindingly in sunlight, and animalistic Quileute werewolves who upon getting emotional often explode into animal form while their clothing rips to shreds (Meyer 2005). I believe that the obvious privileging of a European American vantage point by Meyer has translated into the exclusive nature by which *Twilight* tourism has impacted residents of Forks.

Similar to how *Twilight* tourism only impacted certain demographics of Forks residents, the demographic of fans that *Twilight* reached was also limited. Residents were quick to point

out to me the wholesome and family oriented nature of fans, which I found often led to a conversation of religiosity. Charlotte, a shop owner, told me as an example about some fans that had carved kind Christian phrases into trees by the river. Merl, a man who works the front desk at a hotel, also told me that the novels attracted a wholesome group of fans because of author Stephenie Meyer's Mormon faith, and because love interest Edward Cullen refuses to act immorally. Both Merl and Charlotte, along with many other residents I spoke with, would bring this up when talking about how there was a potential for the fans to be a bother, but because of the types of visitors *Twilight* draws, the tourism offers a level of enrichment to the town.

Among the few ways that people did openly believe *Twilight* impacted their lives is this idea of exposure to new people with new ideas. I heard several times how excited residents feel to see a new face when they are so used to seeing the same people all of the time. I also heard residents talk about how the influx of tourists means that "windows aren't boarded up anymore," referring to a general improvement in the appearance and functionality of public spaces. I even learned a story about how the grocery store is now able to carry boutique Thai hot sauce because of increased volumes of shoppers. These types of impacts, small day-to-day changes like having a new product at the grocery store or having to wait an extra cycle at the traffic light, are what came up most often in my interviews while larger impacts were typically implicit in a story or statement if they came up at all.

I expected this exposure to new ideas to translate into a greater desire by residents to experience things outside of their town, leading to decreased place attachment, however, I found the opposite was true. Many residents stated that their town becoming a tourist attraction actually helped them feel more connected and excited to stay in Forks. Many residents talked with pride about the community as being tight knit, even bragging about how they went to high school with

their partners, who's parents went to school together, and who's kids will go to school together. *Twilight* tourism has either positively or not at all impacted a sense of place attachment in residents of Forks, as is reflected in the above census data which shows a shallow increase in population over the last decade.

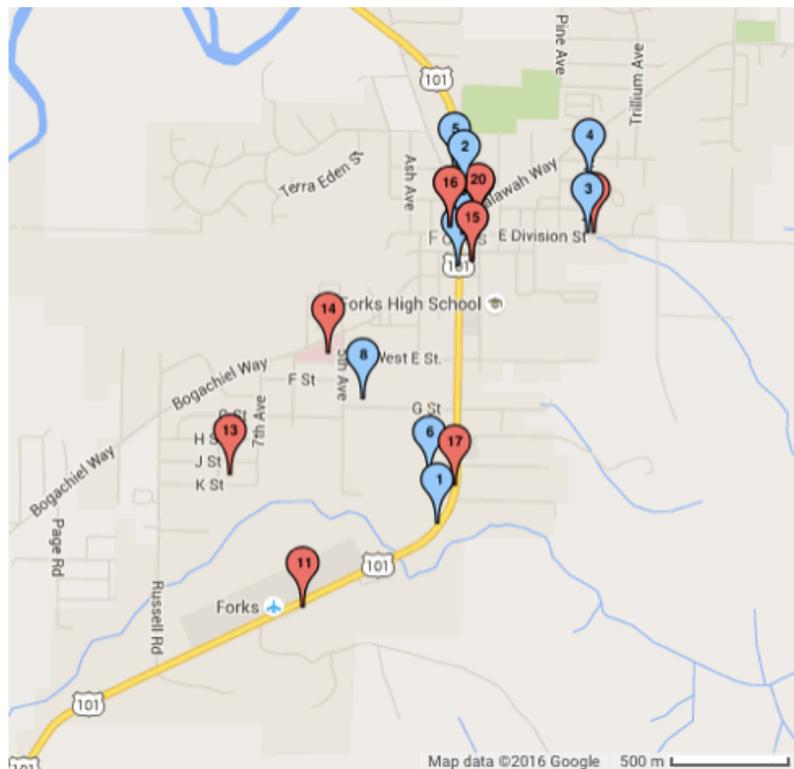


Figure 2: map made on zeemaps.com, where blue points represent tourist destinations and red points represent local destinations (e.g. gas station, grocery store, high school, post office, etc.)

The minimal cultural impact expressed by residents of Forks is especially surprising when you consider the spatial orientation of the town. The map clearly shows that tourist destinations are dispersed amongst local landmarks, which informs the way in which residents experience *Twilight* tourism. Most residents pass a *Twilight* focused destination every day, you can't get to the gas station without passing a *Twilight* gift shop, the high school faces a *Twilight* tour departure site, and the visitor center is across the street from the favorite local bar and restaurant.

Not only are purely *Twilight* focused businesses oriented amongst local destinations, many establishments function both as a local and tourist destination. The police station, hospital, and local hardware store all play a role in the *Twilight* saga, and have all become tourist stops. In fact, the hospital has a parking spot reserved for Dr. Cullen, and the police station retired a vehicle for visitors to be photographed with.

This spatial intermixing of *Twilight* tourism and local needs is symbolic of a larger integration of *Twilight* into the culture of Forks. *Twilight* makes its way into daily conversations and commutes as a principal industry in the town. While residents avoid clearly stating any significant changes to their life or culture as a result of *Twilight* tourism, they encounter it and its impacts daily.

Economic Impacts

Twilight has brought an unbelievable amount of money to the town of Forks. Not only have local business owners and service industry employees privately benefitted from tourism dollars, the city government has collected greater hotel/motel taxes and sales taxes since *Twilight* came out. In this section I will explore how *Twilight* has impacted both private parties and the city government financially, and how these impacts might have further ramifications for the town.

The city of Forks has two tax revenue streams, the hotel/motel tax and sales tax. Hotel/motel tax adds ten per cent to a visitor's bill, and a local sales tax at 0.2% on local retail purchases. *Twilight* tourism impacted both of these revenue streams substantially, in 2006 immediately after the publishing of *Twilight*, the city of Forks collected \$88,469 in hotel/motel taxes, and \$353,837 in sales tax, a total of \$442,306. At the peak of *Twilight* tourism, the city

collected almost seven hundred thousand dollars in tax revenue, a substantial increase over previous years. In 2014, the city collected \$610,000, demonstrating sustained visitation and income from tourism. This information was collected at the Forks Chamber of Commerce in January of 2016. The increase in revenue means that the city government has had additional funds to work with since 2009, and that local business owners have reported increased private revenue in recent years.

I was curious about how this increase in tax revenue was being used by the city to impact programming and public services, but when asked about this, neither city officials nor citizens of Forks could think of any way in which the government had bumped up their service to the constituency using this additional tax income, so I began asking more specifically how certain programs were funded. There is a beautiful new facility downtown called the Rainforest Arts Center, which is used to host public events and display local art which was fully funded by the insurance money collected after the public building that had occupied the lot prior burned down. The town also has a public athletics complex with a pool, which is sustained through collected usage fees, a beautiful library that is supported by a peninsula-wide network, and a well maintained park downtown that was built just before *Twilight* was published. No citizens or officials indicated that welfare or community enrichment programs had been better funded as a result of *Twilight* tourism, despite increased poverty and unemployment rates in some demographics.

On a mission to track the spending of additional tax income by the city government, I walked through Forks High School after classes let out and asked teachers about how the school was funded. Two of the teachers I met were in their first year of working at the high school, so I thought maybe additional funding provided for additional teacher's salaries, but one of the

teachers told me that they were hired to replace teachers who had left because they “didn’t know what it was like to live in Forks,” indicating that the school has high teacher turnover for this reason. She also explained to me that she lived in Port Angeles and endured the commute to Forks High School because she got the best of both worlds, working in the best-funded school on the peninsula and living in a more developed city. When I asked why Forks High School might be better funded than other neighboring schools, she explained the funding of the Washington state school system;

“So, the Washington State Supreme Court this year called the Washington state school system unconstitutional, the way they’re making the localities fund schools when it’s the state’s job to pay for it. So, there’s a reason why there’s so much local funding. I hadn’t looked into it but I know there’s something about like tax increase stuff.”

Learning that the school is in large part locally funded helped me understand one major city expenditure that I had not accounted for, because the school should have been funded on a state or district level, but I still have trouble understanding how funding for the school might account for the *increase* in tax revenue by the city. The school was built and running long before *Twilight*, and as an expense to the city, it shouldn’t have changed substantially over the last decade.

One city official suggested to me that rather than investing in unrelated programs like schools or public services, the city government had decided to reinvest all tourism based earnings to promoting more tourists,

“Well, but what it did was so there’s real strict rules on it, but I’m not exactly sure how it goes, but the hotel/motel tax is collected and the city has to decide how to divide it up to promote more tourism. So you have to show how you’re reaching out to new tourists for the area and so that’s something that the chamber is able to show probably better than anybody else”

It’s worth mentioning that this structure to reinvest in tourism was never mentioned to me by the director of the Chamber of Commerce, instead she focused on a long-standing partnership Forks

had had with the Olympic Peninsula Tourism Commission, which had consistently advertised using print materials, allowing Forks their fair share of print materials and public ads which were distributed along the I5 corridor in Seattle. Fork's other main avenue for advertising is online, through the Forks Chamber of Commerce website, which is fairly rudimentary and features a list of *Twilight* friendly businesses.

In summary, the additional funds collected by the Forks city government have actually not been reinvested in provided public programming or services, despite increased unemployment and poverty amongst non-white residents. Instead, the local government has likely been forced to spend funds on public education, a responsibility that is supposed to fall on the state level government, and has decided to reinvest revenue made from tourism to advertising the area as a vacation destination.

Considering the increase in tax revenue to Forks, any ballpark estimation of increased earnings by private business owners comes to millions of dollars. In a normal economy this infusion of money would trickle down, and business owners might take that money, hire more employees or pay higher wages, and spend more money at local businesses, which would result in cash being infused to all levels of the local economy. Limited availability of goods and services, attitudes of entitlement, and success of local charity events, however, are some of the factors that contribute to the localized failure of trickle down economics, allowing some demographics to prosper while unemployment and poverty increase in others.

Due to the drastic decrease in jobs for unskilled workers in Forks, there has been a division in the population between people who seek new skills to obtain employment, and people who don't seek higher education, who are then either unemployed or working low wage jobs. This division leads to the aforementioned perception of entitlement in lower class residents, and a lack

of sensitivity from upper class residents. Merl, who retired from a lumber mill to work the front desk at a local hotel, replied somewhat incredulously to my suggestion that trickle down economics had failed in Forks, “Who should it trickle down to? Why should I share? If I owned this building and I built everything that’s here why should I share?” Those residents that I spoke with who had the resources to change their situation believe that others should be able to do the same, and therefore don’t feel a responsibility to reinvest in the local economy for the benefit of lower earning residents.

High earning residents of Forks do make charitable contributions to two annual fundraisers, one of which works to provide scholarships for graduating high school seniors, the other focused on getting Christmas gifts to children of low income families. These charities combined raise almost \$150,000 annually in a town of less than four thousand residents. Any time I asked about giving back to the community, residents told me that they saved up all year to contribute to these charity events, which for some residents means that their responsibility to investing in their community is limited to these two events, rather than making intentional changes to spending habits, and consistently making choices to buy locally, which would consistently benefit local business owners and employees.

Finally, what I consider to be the principal cause of the failure of trickle down economics in Forks is the lack of luxury goods and services in the area. Those residents who have made enough money from *Twilight* tourism to have a considerable disposable income don’t have the option of spending at local businesses for nicer products, so they spend their extra money in Port Angeles, Seattle, or online. This means that extra money brought in by tourism goes into business owners’ pockets and then gets spent outside of Forks, disappearing from the local economy. Rather than considering how *Twilight* tourism has had unequal impacts on the

community of Forks, all of the residents I spoke to have chosen to focus on a handful of success stories, like the fact that one couple who owns a motel has been able to keep their doors open, or a local person who was able to buy a shop on main street eliminated an eye sore and is now making a living, ignoring the 59% of Latinos living below poverty, increasing unemployment rates, and lack of jobs for employable young people.

Conclusion

This project had several limitations, without which the impacts of *Twilight* tourism on Forks could have been more holistically explored. In addition to the limitations of time and money, I was limited in my own education. I didn't feel equipped to fully explore the impacts of tourism on conceptions of gender, or on racial tensions, though I believe that both of these areas have been substantially impacted by the introduction of *Twilight* to Forks, Washington, due to the gravity of change in the dominant means of production in the town and the ethnic composition of the population. I also would have liked to further explore economic trends, specifically the boom and bust cycle, to develop a more clear understanding of the economic situation in Forks. Additionally, I believe I could have gained more information from residents on impacts to cultural identity if I had more time to build relationships and rapport with residents, and had interviews focused on less superficial information regarding *Twilight's* impacts. Considering research limitations, however, this paper has made a significant contribution to the anthropological literature on film tourism by shedding light on this unique case.

I believe that given more time I could have explored the seemingly minimal cultural impact that *Twilight* has had on the town, or even explored why that impact is, in fact, so minimal. I

believe that the question of why the town of Forks has been so minimally impacted, both economically and culturally, is more complex and nuanced, as well as potentially more relevant, than my original research question of how *Twilight* has impacted the residents of Forks. Under that original question, however, I observed two major trends; residents reporting that impacts of *Twilight* tourism were limited to daily inconveniences, and residents focusing on major success stories of local residents who have had financial success as a result of the influx of visitors. This consistent yet limited response indicates a reluctance of residents to recognize significant community impacts of *Twilight* and instead, a desire to focus on past events impacting the town like the Spotted Owl ordinance and other industrial regulations.

The focus on events like the publication of *Twilight* and their impact on Forks is consistent with a larger trend in how residents discuss the town, as if outside forces have complete control over the culture and economy. “Forks has been dealt a lot of blows, I mean just even right now we’re dealing with the steelhead issue so...whether it’s the spotted owl, the lack of trees being cut down right now, our mills are closing, we’ve got fishing issues, whatever the issue is it tries to knock Forks down.” I encountered this type of language often, where residents discussed things happening to Forks, and the roll of the city government and it’s residents being purely reactionary. For residents, the publication of *Twilight* is just another event in a series of many that has altered the way that residents of Forks earn a living, and perceived lack of local responsibility for town climate has insulated the community from larger cultural changes.

I asked many residents what they saw as the future of Forks, and answers varied. Some residents saw the logging industry making a comeback, some assumed tourism would continue to grow as past visitors would continue returning for the natural surroundings, and others predicted another complete change in industry. All residents, however, mentioned that resilience and hope

would continue to be cornerstones of the culture of Forks, and were convinced that residents would respond and adapt to changing tides.

References Cited

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. The Danger of a Single Story. *TED Talks*.
- Crowe, Jessica. 2013. The Twilight of Forks? The Effect of Social Infrastructure on Film Tourism and Community Development in Forks, WA. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences* 28(1):1-25.
- Forks Washington Chamber of Commerce. 2014. Discover Forks Washington. <http://www.forkswa.com>. (Accessed October 29, 2014)
- Gregory, Steven. 2014. *The Devil Behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gu, Huimin, and Chris Ryan. 2008. Place attachment, identity, and community impacts of tourism- the case of a Beijing hutong. *Tourism Management* 29(4):637-647.
- Jaspal, Rusi and Marco Cinirella. 2012. The Construction of Ethnic Identity: Insights From Identity Process Theory. *Ethnicities* 12(503).
- Jovanovic, Verka. 2008. The Application of GIS and It's Components in Tourism. *Yugoslav Journal of Operations Research* 18(2):261-272.
- Mahon, Maureen. 2008. The Visible Evidence of Cultural Producers. *Signo y Pensamiento* 27(52):42-67
- Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, Samuel Moore, and David McLellan. 1992. The Communist manifesto. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mcbride, Sarah. 2009. In the Real "Twilight" Town, Not Everyone is Swooning for the Supernatural. *The Wall Street Journal*. November 27.
- Meyer, Stephanie. 2005. *Twilight*. Perfection Learning.
- Pembina Institute. 2008. Boom to Bust, Social and Cultural Impacts of the Mining Cycle. <http://www.pembina.org/reports/boombust-final.pdf>. (accessed October 29, 2014).
- Prabhu, Anjali. 2005. Representation in Mauritian Politics: who speaks for African pasts? *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 8(2).
- Reporter, Daily Mail. 2012. How the Twilight series has brought 200,000 visitors to a tiny Washington town... but now it could come to an end as final movie is released. Daily Mail Online.
- Ritchie, B.W., P. Burns, and C. Palmer. 2005. *Tourism Research Methodologies: Theory and Practice*. Oxfordshire: CABI Publishing.
- Scham, Sandra Arnold. 2001. The Archaeology of the Disenfranchised. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 8(2):183-213.
- Stronza, Amanda. 2001. Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Ground for Ecotourism and Other Alternatives. *Annual Reviews Anthropology*. 30:261-83
- United States Census Bureau. 2000-2015. www.census.gov.
- Washington State Government. 2016. Olympic Corrections Center. www.doc.wa.gov/facilities/prison/occ/.
- Washington State Government. 2016. Department of Revenues. www.dor.wa.gov.
- Wiss, Rosemary. 2008. Whats Love Got to Do With It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic. *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 19(1):98-100.
- Yelvington, Kevin A. 2012. Tourism and Applied Anthropology in Theory and Praxis. *Anthropology in Action* 19(3):1-4.