

PLACE MATTERS? PLACE AND LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR IN NEBRASKA

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Political Science

Under the Supervision of Professor Elizabeth Theiss-Morse

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 2016

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# PLACE MATTERS? PLACE AND LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR IN NEBRASKA

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University of Nebraska, 2016

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The dissertation is a three-part analysis of the impact of place and place attachment on legislative behavior in the 2011-2012 session of the Nebraska Unicameral. The first analysis explores whether place or type of legislative district has an effect on roll-call voting. In the second analysis, the dissertation analyzes the relationship between place attachment (defined as the emotional bond between a person and a place) and roll-call voting. Finally, in the third analysis, the dissertation investigates through content analysis how often senators refer to their place attachment, and then, it examines the link between geographic scale of place attachment and political ambition. Overall, the dissertation found modest results for the impact of place and place attachment on legislative behavior. Place and place attachment are modest but important predictors of voting and floor behavior. This research serves as a novel attempt to synthesize these concepts and provides a foundation for future study.

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank the members of my committee Dr. Dona-Gene Barton, Dr. Michael Combs, Dr. Yunwoo Nam, and Dr. Sergio Wals for their assistance. I would like to especially thank my advisor Dr. Elizabeth Theiss-Morse for her patience and advice. Next, I would like to thank the of the Political Science Department including Dr. John Comer, David Csontos, Dr. John Hibbing, Dr. Sarah Michaels, Dr. Ross Miller, Helen Sexton, and Dr. Kevin Smith for their generous support and help for over the last 10 years.

Also, I would like to thank the following: Roger Anderson, Dr. Eva Bachman, Dr. Robert Blair, Dr. Rodrigo Canterero, Dr. David Dearmont, the Eastern Illinois University Political Science Department, Andrew Eckerson, Libby Elder, Jeff Espineli, Bob Flider, Brian Gaskill, Theresa Glanz, Dr. Ryan Hendrickson, Jay Kaslon, Dr. David Kirchner, Dr. Vani Kotcherlakota, Dr. Farrah Lehman-Den, Mike Den, Dr. Jacek Lubecki, Dr. Andrew McNitt, the Millikin University Political Science Department, Dr. Melinda Mueller, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Dr. D'Andra Orey, Dr. Brian Posler, Chris Stara, Greg Stara, Dr. Michelle Stara, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Community and Regional Planning Program, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Survey Research and Methodology Department, Dr. Richard Wandling, Dr. Tyler White, and many more for their support over the years.

In addition, I would like to thank my family including my parents, Dave and Nancy Trueblood, and my sister, Julie Trueblood, for their love and support. Last, I would like to remember my grandmother, Patricia Cole; Dr. Allan McCutcheon; and Jane Stara- all who left us too suddenly.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“From New York; for New York” exclaimed a bumper sticker supporting Republican United States Senate candidate Rick Lazio, during the 2000 election for New York’s open seat.<sup>1</sup> The bumper sticker was in response to claims that Democratic opponent Hillary Rodham Clinton was a “carpetbagger.” Clinton’s opponents, first Rudolph Giuliani and later Rick Lazio, the media, and even Pizza Hut<sup>2</sup> made much of her loose ties to the state.<sup>3</sup> The charge questioned whether someone who had never lived in New York could represent New Yorkers. In response to her opponents, Clinton stated, “Now, I know some people are asking why I’m doing this here and now, and that’s a fair question. Here’s my answer and why I hope you’ll put me to work for you. I may be new to the neighborhood, but I’m not new to your concerns” (Anderson, 2002, p. 113). Despite the focus on her lack of residency during the campaign by her opponents and the media, many voters were unconcerned about the issue and she won the election (Anderson, 2002, p. 114).

The problems facing Clinton are not new to politics. Throughout history, politicians such as former New York Senator Bobby Kennedy<sup>4</sup> and most recently former

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Anderson (2002, p. 113). Anderson provides a careful analysis of Hillary Clinton’s run for the United States Senate seat for the state of New York.

<sup>2</sup> Pizza Hut aired ads during the 1999 World’s Series that showed a female candidate loosely based on Clinton eating New York style pizza in their ad for the Big New Yorker Pizza. In the ad, the female candidate exclaims, “How do I know so much about New York Pizza? Cause New York, I want to be your next senator!” In response, to the candidate, two New York police officers state at the end of the commercial, “\$9.99! What do they think this is, Arkansas?” (*Washington Free Beacon*, 2015, para. 4). The ads were likely in response to Clinton’s listening tours throughout New York prior to running in 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Place was the paramount issue during the 2000 New York United States Senate race. According to Anderson (2002), who analyzed the rhetoric of the 2000 Senate election in New York, “Place was not the sole media frame for stories about Clinton’s candidacy....But place was the dominant and, I would argue, most important narrative underscoring coverage of the 2000 Senate campaign in New York” (p. 129).

<sup>4</sup> Bobby Kennedy was labeled a carpetbagger when he ran for United States Senate in New York in 1964. Prior to running for office, he had not lived in the state.

Nebraska Governor and United States Senator Bob Kerrey<sup>5</sup> were labeled as carpetbaggers for their tenuous ties to their prospective states. The carpetbagger charge raises questions about these candidates' place attachment to their states. One can argue that the shorter the length of residence in a district, the less time the legislator has to become immersed in the ways of the home district and the less place attachment the legislator has.

Place attachment, or the emotional bond between a person and a meaningful location, is a concept that may help explain whether length of residence matters for representation and why some legislators are more likely to engage in place protective behaviors. These behaviors may include voting against legislation that threatens the district or voting for legislation that favors the district. Another place protective behavior involves engaging in floor debate that uses place attachment to appeal to constituents, fellow senators, and others to gain support for their legislative agendas.

This dissertation explores the effect of place and place attachment on legislative behavior in the 2011-2012 session of the Nebraska Unicameral. It includes three separate but related analyses concerning place and place attachment. The first analysis explores whether type of place has an effect on voting behavior. In the second analysis, the dissertation analyzes the relationship between place attachment and roll-call voting for

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<sup>5</sup> Bob Kerrey is from Nebraska. He served as governor from 1983-1987, and he served as United States Senator from Nebraska from 1989-2001. From 2001-2010, he was the president of the New School in New York City. Although he is a former Nebraskan, opponents labeled him a carpetbagger when sought to replace outgoing Senator Ben Nelson (D) in 2012 after he had been out of the state for a decade. Opponents called him "Big Apple Bob" because he had been living in Greenwich Village (Sulzberger, 2012, p. A21). Comments his wife, who was a former writer for *Saturday Night Live*, made concerning Nebraska and its people in *Vogue* magazine caused him further problems (Sulzberger, 2012, p. A21). In the election, he lost to Republican Deb Fischer. He later sold his home in Omaha, despite saying "I'm not leaving Nebraska" (Camia, 2013, para. 5). He now lives in Washington D.C. Bob Kerrey is not alone. According to the *New York Times*, over "40 percent of former senators live outside of their home states.... Most live in the Washington area" (Sulzberger, 2012, p. A21).

legislation that is tied to place and for legislation that is place neutral. Last, the dissertation investigates through content analysis of floor debates how often senators refer to their place attachment during debate and whether geographic scale of place attachment is indicative of level of political ambition.

### **Relevance of Study**

According to Lewicka (2011), academic interest in place and people-place research has grown dramatically in the past 10 to 20 years. Place research has grown out of the fields of sociology, psychology, and geography. One area in which place research has not been explored adequately is political science. Thus, this dissertation aims to bridge the gap by looking at the impact of place and place attachment on legislative behavior.

Studying the impact of place and place attachment is important to the field of political science for a number of reasons. First of all, despite growing globalization, place is still important to people because people identify with and are attached to places. Throughout time, many conflicts have been fought over places of cultural, religious, or political significance. Also, since people identify with place, they may choose to live in places that are considered high risk such as deteriorating neighborhoods and warzones. In fact, after a natural disaster or war, people will often seek to reinvent or reconstruct places that have been destroyed. When they are able to rebuild, they often do so in a way that preserves the original look of the area.

Places, or meaningful locations, are arenas for social interactions. In turn, these social interactions shape the political attitudes and beliefs of residents. For instance, those living in densely populated urban areas are found to be more tolerant and to have more

liberal political attitudes because they live in close proximity to others with diverse backgrounds (Wolman and Marckini, 2000; Wirth, 1938). In addition, people develop deep emotional bonds to the social assets that place offers.<sup>6</sup> An example of this is residents who opt to remain in a deteriorating inner-city neighborhood because of the importance of preserving the social network of the people who live there. In the past, urban renewal and housing projects have failed because they destroyed the existing social bonds of neighborhoods.

Understanding how someone is attached to a particular place might help us understand how one might try to protect it. Residents may be attached to the social networks and bonds in the place or they may be attached to the place's natural beauty. For instance, a person who is greatly attached to the natural environment might be more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors such as recycling. In addition, attached persons may support laws and join groups that seek to protect the environment. Studying place protective behaviors may be important for understanding not just environmental behavior but also ethnic conflict over areas of historical, religious, or cultural significance, and inner-city gang violence.

Legislators at the federal and state level engage in place protective behaviors too. The place protective behaviors of legislators such as voting and introducing legislation on

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<sup>6</sup> The social aspects of place attachment are similar to the concepts of social capital and sense of community. For instance, place attachment and social capital share many of the same predictors such as participation in local organizations, homeownership, and rootedness. In fact, understanding place attachment may be useful for understanding social capital. However, the three concepts are different. Place attachment includes the emotional bond between a person and a place. This bond may be to the physical or social aspects of the place. Social capital is the invisible glue, that a holds groups of individuals together. It represents social networks and the norms of trust and reciprocity that come from social networks (Putnam, 1995). Sense of community is the feeling of belongingness to a group (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Social capital and sense of community can be important factors in place attachment, especially in the development of the emotional bond to a place.

behalf of their districts may help us understand the responsiveness of legislators toward their districts. Whether the place is a state legislative district in Nebraska or a neighborhood in the south side of Chicago, these locations spur positive emotions in residents, which can trigger place protective behaviors

Despite the importance of place and place attachment to political science, there is very little systematic investigation of their roles in legislative behavior. It is difficult to tease out whether place has an independent effect on voting. For instance, in the case of legislative districts in Nebraska, Republicans held almost all rural districts and Democrats held almost all urban districts in the 2011-2012 Unicameral. Additionally, the concept of place is difficult to operationalize. Most studies operationalize place by using the United States Census urban and rural categories. Those that have included place in the study of legislative voting behavior include Turner (1951), Mullner et al. (1982), and Combs, Hibbing, and Welch (1984). At the state level, such study is even more limited. This dissertation will attempt to fill these gaps.

### **Dissertation Outline**

The dissertation is a set of three separate analyses tied together with a common theme. It consists of two quantitative analyses and one qualitative analysis. All three analyses explore the themes of place, place attachment, and their effects on legislative behavior in the 2011-2012 session of the Nebraska Unicameral.

Chapter 2, "Literature Review," introduces and synthesizes the literature on place, place attachment, and place protective behaviors. The literature provides a theoretical foundation for the dissertation and the hypotheses in Chapter 3. Chapter 3, "Theory,"

highlights the main theoretical currents underlying the three analyses and introduces eight hypotheses.

Chapter 4, “Place and Voting Behavior,” is the first quantitative analysis. The effect of type of place on roll-call voting is analyzed. A number of factors, many of which have been extensively researched by other scholars, influence the legislative behavior of senators. These factors include and are not limited to physical, social, psychological, economic, and political factors. Place, specifically type of place or the settlement pattern of the district, can have an effect on legislative behavior. For instance, Wolman and Marckini (2000) found that at the congressional level, place does have an independent effect on voting behavior after controlling for constituency factors. One of the objectives of this dissertation is to replicate their study at the state level using data from the 2011-2012 session of the Nebraska Unicameral and test the hypothesis that legislators from majority urban area or central city districts are more liberal than those from less urban districts. Furthermore, the analysis includes length of residence, which is a predictor of place attachment. It is expected that length of residence in a central city district would lead senators to be more liberal regardless of party. For example, a central city district Republican senator who has lived longer in the district would be more liberal than a central city district Republican who has lived in his or her district for less time.

Chapter 5, “Place Attachment and Legislative Behavior,” explores the relationship between place attachment and voting. Voting for legislation can be considered a place protective behavior because senators are either voting for legislation that protects the district or voting against legislation that threatens the district. The second analysis compares roll-call votes on legislation that is tied to place or that has a spatial

component and roll-call votes on legislation that is place neutral or that has no spatial ties. The bills sampled come from major policy areas that span the spectrum ranging from those that have a strong spatial component to those with no spatial ties. In addition, the chapter creates a place attachment index that seeks to capture several aspects of the concept of place attachment. Most studies of place attachment feature one measure of place attachment, which is usually length of residence.

Chapter 6, “Place Attachment and Floor Behavior,” attempts to gain a greater understanding of legislators’ place attachments, specifically to their districts, through content analysis of transcripts from floor debates. In this chapter, I analyze the floor debate transcripts to see if there is any difference between senators with high levels of place attachment and low levels of place attachment in regard to the frequency of place attachment references. Additionally, I investigate whether there is any difference in regards to senators with progressive and static political ambition in terms of their scale of place attachment. Senators with progressive ambition are expected to refer more frequently to global scale places. Those with static ambition are expected to refer more frequently to local scale places.

The last chapter, “Conclusion,” is the concluding chapter of the dissertation. In the chapter, I discuss the main findings of the dissertation, the limitations of the study, the major implications of the study, and directions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

After reviewing the literature, a gap appears concerning the factors that influence legislative behavior. This gap is the importance of place. Many factors can influence legislative behavior, including party (Wright and Schaffner, 2002), ideology (Poole and Rosenthal, 2012), gender (Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Orey et al., 2006), race/ethnicity (Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Orey et al., 2006), interest groups (Nownes, 2013), media (Herbst, 1998), constituency (Seligman et al., 1974; Smith, 2002) and even their own self-interests (Mayhew, 1974; Krehbiel, 1993). While all of these factors can influence behavior, I focus on the importance of place.

### **What is place?**

Lewicka (2011), who synthesized several definitions of the concept in her literature review, defines place in two ways. First, she defines it in a “classical way” where place is considered “a bounded entity with unique identity and historical continuity, a cozy place of rest and defense against the dangerous and alien ‘outside’” (pp. 209-210). Second, she defines it as an “‘open crossroads,’ a meeting place rather than an enclave of rest, a location with ‘interactive potential’...inviting diversity and multiculturalism” (pp. 209-210). Another definition is from Tuan (1977) where “place is a center of meaning or field of care based on human experience, social relationships, emotions, and thoughts” (as cited in Stedman, 2002, p. 562).

Beyond these broad definitions of place, the literature has attempted to further narrow the definition in a number of ways. The literature can be divided between studies of residential places such as homes or neighborhoods, non-residential places such as sacred sites, and even places such as shopping centers (Lewicka, 2011, p. 209). Places

may be local or global, and in most cases smaller places make up larger ones (Low and Altman, 1992; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974). At the local level, place may be a home, a neighborhood, or a city. At the global level, it can be a state or nation or region. Additionally, a new trend in place research is looking at attachment to recreational places such as second homes and natural environment places such as wilderness areas (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Stedman, 2002; Williams et al., 1992).

Much of the previous research has focused on homes, neighborhoods, and cities (Proteous, 1976; Lalli, 1992; Tuan, 1975; Fried, 1963). There is some research on region, state, country and continent place attachment (Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Reicher, Hopkins and Harrison, 2006). For instance, Wolman and Marckini (2000) define place as a congressional district, which they divide into four categories: majority central city, majority non-metropolitan, majority suburban, or mixed. One of the major problems with the literature is that there is no agreement on the definition of place. This lack of agreement makes it difficult to develop theories and consistent frameworks (Scannell and Gifford, 2010a; Lewicka, 2011). I too struggle with the definition of place. In this dissertation, I recognize that a home, neighborhood, legislative district, state or country can be meaningful locations that are the basis of place attachment.

### **Place Attachment**

People often form emotional bonds to places. This bond is referred to as place attachment (Williams et al., 1992, p. 31). If place “is a center of meaning or field of care” (Tuan, 1977, as cited in Stedman, 2002, p. 562), then place attachment is a bond between people and place. The literature on place attachment seeks to do several things. First, the literature attempts to understand how and why people become attached to places (Tuan,

1975; Williams et al., 1992). Second, the literature investigates how attachment influences behavior (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Stedman, 2002; Scannell and Gifford, 2010b). Third, the most recent literature attempts to build stable definitions and constructs of place attachment, which will be useful for developing theories of place attachment (Scannell and Gifford, 2010a).

A review of the literature suggests that there are numerous definitions of place attachment. To promote conceptual clarity, Scannell and Gifford (2010a) developed a three-part definition of place attachment to capture its multidimensionality. The three dimensions are *person*, *process*, and *place*. The *person* dimension asks, “Who is attached to the place?” The attachment between the person and the place may be individual or collective. At the individual level, the connection between person and place is rooted in the place’s ability to invoke memories and experiences that create meaning, which in turn contributes to the sense of self. At the group level, “attachment is comprised of the symbolic meanings of a place that are shared among members” (Scannell and Gifford, 2010a, p. 2). Meanings may arise from historical and religious experiences of the place.

The second dimension is *process* or how individuals and groups relate to place. There are three psychological processes involved in place attachment: affect or the emotional connection to place, cognition, and behavior. Those who have higher levels of place attachment are more likely to refer to place with “positive emotions such as pride and love, often incorporate the place into self-schemas, and express their attachment through proximity-maintaining behaviors” (Scannell and Gifford, 2010b, p. 289). Proximity-maintaining behaviors include trying to stay as close to the place as much as possible. When a person cannot be near the place to which they are attached to, then he or

she may show signs of homesickness. Tuan (1974) developed the term *topophilia* or love of place to describe the positive emotion involved in the bond between person and place. These positive emotions reinforce bonding, and people will try to recreate these emotions by creating memories of the place. Creating memories is an important part of cognition. In turn, cognition is integral for understanding why specific places are important enough for people to develop bonds. People will create schemas, which organize their beliefs and knowledge about places.

Behavior is the physical indicator of place attachment. Above, I mentioned homesickness. Homesickness is a manifestation of place attachment. Because a person is deeply attached to a place, he or she wants to be near it as much as possible. Another important proximity maintaining behavior is the reinvention or reconstruction of a place especially after a disaster or war (Lewicka, 2011). Even on a small scale, people may try to recreate environments that are meaningful to them such as decorating workspaces with personal effects from home (Lewicka, 2011).

The final dimension is *place* or the aspects of the place that makes us connect to it. Place can be at any scale. Geographic scale may range from local such as a home to global such as nation (Lewicka, 2011). And, place can consist of physical and social aspects. For instance, “some people feel attached to a place because of the close ties they have in their neighborhood, generational rootedness, or strong religious symbolism of the place, that is, because of social factors; others may feel attached to the physical assets of place, such as beautiful nature, possibility of recreation and rest, or physically stimulating environment” (Lewicka, 2011, p. 213).

Scholars do not agree as to whether people are more attached to the social or to the physical aspects of place. Those who favor social attachment see that the bonds between people and place are due to social relationships (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Authors who are in favor of the attachment to the social aspects of place such as social ties, neighborhood, or culture include Fried (1963), Lalli (1992), Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) and Woldoff (2002). Some authors see the bond as between physical assets and individuals (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981; Manzo, 2005; Clayton, 2003). However, others see the combination of both social and physical aspects as targets for emotional bonds (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2004; Mesch and Manor, 1998; Uzzell et al., 2002; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001).

In their study of the relationship between place attachment and pro-environmental behavior, Scannell and Gifford (2010b) delineate the social and physical aspects of place attachment into civic and natural place attachment. The authors see that civic attachment is an aspect of social attachment. Under civic attachment, people are attached to the community. Natural attachment to place is part of physical attachment, and it is the attachment to nature or the natural aspects of the environment. To test whether civic or natural place attachment leads to pro-environmental behavior, the authors conducted a survey, based upon Stedman's (2002) 12-item Sense-of-Place instrument, in two towns. They found that natural place attachment predicted pro-environmental behavior after controlling for length of residence and other socio-demographic variables.

### **Predictors of Place Attachment**

According to the literature, there are numerous predictors of place attachment. These predictors reflect the social and the physical aspects of place attachment. Some

common sociodemographic predictors of place attachment include age, social status, education, home-ownership, size of community, presence of children, and mobility. Social indicators include strength and size of neighborhood ties and involvement in neighborhood. In some ways, social predictors of place attachment overlap those that predict social capital (Putnam, 1995).

One of the major predictors of place attachment in the literature is length of residence; however, there is some debate over its overall effect on place attachment. The traditional view is that the longer one has lived in the environment, the more attached one will become to it. Authors who support the traditional view include Tuan (1975), Relph (1976), Proteous (1976) and Hay (1998). On the other hand, some authors argue that length of residence does not matter for attachment due to a lack of empirical findings (Kaltenborn and Williams, 2002; Stedman, 2006). Another strain of research sees the relationship between time and attachment as being more nuanced, such as Stedman (2006), McHugh and Mings (1996), Rowles (1990), Kaltenborn and Williams (2002), and Bricker and Kerstetter (2000). The literature finds that newcomers may be attached to the place for different reasons than locals. For instance, Stedman (2006) finds that type of attachment differs between tourists and locals in the North Central Region of Wisconsin. He finds that the newcomers or tourists may be more attached to the natural environment of the place and locals to the community. Overall, the findings in the literature are empirically mixed.

Physical predictors are harder to operationalize, and from a review of literature, these predictors could be anything. Physical predictors might include architectural features, natural features of wilderness areas, amenities, and size and age of buildings.

Some authors argue against including physical factors because they believe that they are socially construed and cannot be studied independently. Because of the difficulty of measuring physical factors, empirical findings are mixed. Lewicka (2011) bemoans the lack of theory that connects people and the physical side of places. Despite the difficulty in measuring physical characteristics, there is great value in doing so. For instance, Kaplan (1984) sees there is more to understanding how people relate to places beyond economic and social variables. Instead, focus should be on intangibles or physical aspects that facilitate attachment. Examples include spatial diversity, mapability, and congruence between person and the setting.

### **Methods of Studying Place Attachment**

Place attachment has been measured in numerous ways, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Most of the research is heavily quantitative. These studies rely on carefully constructed measurement scales that are administered through surveys (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Stedman, 2002; Scannell and Gifford, 2010b). In fact, many scholars use Stedman's 12- item place attachment scale.

One of the problems with the quantitative scales is that they are most often designed to learn about place attachment to a specific place. For instance, Stedman's (2002) instrument centers on a lake in Wisconsin. These instruments do not take into consideration different levels of attachment. For instance, a person who had fond memories of camping as a child might have a sense of attachment to wilderness areas in general and not just one particular camp ground. Qualitative studies or mixed methods studies have more flexibility when it comes to letting the respondent define his or her place attachment because they ask why and what places are important to them.

Qualitative studies include methods such as focus groups (Bow and Buys, 2003), map based measures (Brown and Raymond, 2007), and in-depth interviews (Brehm, 2007; Van Patten and Williams, 2008). Nicotera (2007) conducts an extensive review of verbal and nonverbal measures of neighborhood from the census and archival data. Overall, there are many ways to operationalize and study place attachment.

### **Consequences of Place Attachment: Place Protective Behaviors**

One consequence of place attachment is that greater levels of place attachment are associated with greater willingness to engage in place-protective behaviors (Stedman, 2002). According to Stedman (2002), “place protective behaviors are especially likely to result when attachment and satisfaction are based on preferred meanings that are threatened by potential changes to the setting” (p. 567). This protective behavior may result in someone becoming a recycler or an avid pro-environmentalist.

Much of the literature on place attachment focuses on environmentally friendly and ecological behaviors (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001; Stedman, 2002; Clayton, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2010b). For instance, Stedman (2002) found that those with greater levels of place attachment were more likely to engage in place protective behaviors in the North Central Region of Wisconsin. In his survey, he had residents of a lakeside community respond to several hypothetical changes to the neighborhood. These changes included adding more housing, changes to the water quality of the lake, increased number of tourists, and increased number of condominiums. He found that those with greater attachment to the lake were more likely to support laws and join groups that would defend against these threats.