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Sense of Community and the Bears Ears National Monument

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Abstract: This paper used the communities bordering the Bears Ears National Monument, located in rural Southeastern Utah, USA, as a case study to better understand the impact that potential changes in land management have on gateway communities. Our case study is concerned with capturing changes in the sense of community based on discussions concerning potential changes to the community. We employ "psychological sense of community" measures to assess the effect on community residents. Survey data from three gateway communities are modeled using bivariate regressions and ordinary least squares regressions with control variables to assess the four components of PSC against opposition to the proposed changes to the Bears Ears National Monument. We find that potential changes to the land designation significantly affect the respondents' psychological sense of community. Because public protected areas and gateway communities are linked socioeconomically, environmentally, and culturally, changes in land designations can significantly impact those who live there.

Keywords: sense of community; gateway community; Bears Ears National Monument; rural; land designation; land management; land use

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1. Introduction

With increasing numbers of people seeking and enjoying outdoor recreation sites, such as national parks and national monuments, there are growing calls to protect and conserve them [1]. Close to many of these sites are small rural communities, which are also growing. Known as gateway communities, they serve as entry points to parks and conservation areas and can experience significant pressures of their own as tourists flock to public lands. As the rate of land designations by various presidencies increases over time, more rural communities are affected by the new changes in land designation.

This paper uses the rural communities bordering the Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) in the state of Utah in the United States of America as a case study to better understand the impact that potential changes in land management have on gateway communities surrounding BENM. While this case study focuses on communities around BENM and can only speak to this type of gateway community and the people there, it provides important insights into these residents' connections to land and relevant changes in their overall experience of community.

First, we review the literature on gateway communities and the psychological sense of community that defines them. We then provide a setting for the BENM and surrounding areas. Next, we employ "psychological sense of community" (PSC) measures (e.g., those used by McMillan and Chavis 1986 [2]) to assess the effect of potential changes on the communities. In doing so, we note that our analysis is concerned with capturing changes in the sense of community based on discussions concerning potential changes to the community. The location and the Bears Ears National Monument are intended as a case study only to test the psychological sense of community in gateway communities. Survey data from three gateway communities are modeled using bivariate regressions and ordinary least squares regressions (OLS) with control variables to assess the four components of

PSC against opposition to the proposed changes to BENM. We find that changes to the land designation significantly affect the respondents' psychological sense of community. Furthermore, the residents' experience of and sense of community in rural and gateway communities are impacted by land management changes to public lands. This case study provides important insights into the processes happening within some communities when nearby land designations change, creating ripple effects for nearby areas. As such, we expand upon existing research focused on people's experiences with and sense of community, adding to our understanding about the effects of external changes on the communities as well as the experience of community.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Gateway Communities

Gateway communities are small communities lying adjacent to national parks, wildlife refuges, or other public lands. Within the last thirty years, the populations of these communities have grown up to six times faster than those in counties without designated wilderness areas [3]. Residents of gateway communities often have a strong affinity for public lands and their communities and can feel powerless when faced with population changes. These communities are also characterized by a strong socioeconomic relationship with the protected lands they border, with tourism having an important role in local economies [1]. While increased tourism and population flows can create new sources of income for gateway communities, they can also amplify income inequalities [4]. Additionally, tourism can lead to significant price increases in goods and housing, which anger many long-term residents [5].

Changes to public lands bordering gateway communities can lead to new boundaries and new organizations responsible for their management. When new designations occur without involving residents, there may be unexpected costs and repercussions for both residents and local resource management staff [6]. Successful outcomes usually depend upon the two groups—gateway communities and public land managers—cooperating [3], but a lack of inclusion concerning land designation can lead to tensions and resistance by residents who want to preserve existing regulations, such as restricted hunting or the burning and felling of forests [6]. This occurred in 1996 in gateway communities surrounding the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah. When the park was created that year, there was opposition to its top-down creation. Protecting the area became a vital issue for many residents due to the feared economic loss of a proposed coal mine and the anticipated impact of future restrictions on the land's traditional use [6]. There was also strong opposition to how the designation was created, with local community members believing they were excluded from the planning process. According to McCool, "When people are left out of the decision-making process, it gives them a great incentive to sabotage anything that comes out of that process" [7].

Certainly, hostility to change can lead to tensions within gateway communities. Members of such communities may worry that their communities will change permanently—and not for the better [8]. Scholars have found that communities can fragment when their social, economic, and political groups separate [9], and such bifurcations can lead to residents feeling highly attached to their community but with little satisfaction in living there. Conversely, it can lead to residents having little or no attachment to their community but to their being highly satisfied with its economic opportunities and access to amenities [10]. Either way, gateway communities are susceptible to major shifts in the way people experience their communities.

2.2. Amenity Led Development

Gateway communities, like those found around BENM, are often characterized by amenity-led developments (ALDs). Amenity-led development refers to demographic and economic growths in a place due to the natural amenities that are found within or nearby the community [11] that are often required when amenity migration happens at an

increased rate [12]. In the past, designations of national parks or national monuments have led to an increase in migration to and development of communities surrounding those parks and monuments [12,13]. This trend of increased development in amenity-focused industries is continuing in the community surrounding BENM [14].

ALD can cause divisions or disagreements within a community between those who see it as a threat to their community or way of life and those who see it as a potential opportunity [15,16]. Disagreements often form about the correct development path a community needs [11,17]. This contention is found in the discourses surrounding BENM, and concerns about potential amenity-led developments held by members of the communities surrounding BENM are a crucial part of understanding the communities surrounding BENM.

2.3. Path Dependency Theory

Given the discussion of the communities surrounding BENM as both gateway communities and communities involved in ALD, the path dependency theory provides a useful framework for understanding how gateway communities are established. The theory was influenced by early ideas in sociology that considered human experience through an ecological lens. According to Brown, "early ecologists used terms more common to biological sciences like 'invasion' and 'succession' to explain the dynamic process that transformed urban morphology" [9]. Indeed, human ecology suggests that communities and societies start simply and become naturally more complex over time [18]. Roderick McKenzie, who argued that social and community changes are a natural history of places, maintained that geographic communities develop through stages created by population movements and advances in technology, among other influences [19]. Because gateway communities usually develop by these or similar means, the path dependency theory can help to explain why people hesitate about whether their community should become a gateway community.

When a community is established as a recreational, tourist, or retirement location, there is often an increase in the number of people moving there [20]. Although history suggests that events at any point are often shaped by historical trajectories [19], tourism areas typically evolve slowly over time. First, there is an exploration stage in which no particular facilities cater to tourists and visitors who pass through without establishing local social relationships. Later development occurs when there are investments in local infrastructure and facilities, and visits increase along with a community's interaction with tourists [21]. Inevitably, development brings changes to the community, which are not always welcomed by residents.

The path dependency theory applies when past actions affect present or future options [22]. For example, communities close to tourist locations can be established as pass-through locations, changing their infrastructure and local facilities to accommodate and attract tourists [23]. However, their actions can also lead to limited options for residents who might have fewer job opportunities or who find that local traditions have changed.

2.4. Psychological Sense of Community

In this case study, we look at how changes in land designation affect gateway communities and evaluate changes in the psychological sense of community in the BENM designation. Here, we use a definition of 'community' recognized by Bender as "an aggregate of people who share a common interest in a particular locality" ([8], p. 5). Furthermore, a 'sense of community' entails a sense, i.e., a feeling "that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together" ([2], p. 9).

To develop a theory of community, scholars have proposed and contested numerous ways of measuring a sense of community and other conceptually relevant variables [24–26]. While anything close to an agreement has yet to be achieved, many scholars rely on the four-dimension conceptualization of McMillan and Chavis [2], which focuses on (1) the fulfillment of needs, (2) group membership, (3) influence, and (4) emotional connection. These components, combined, help us to understand what a sense of community means to

most people, capturing the interactions and connections they have with their community. We will use this conceptualization to measure the effect of the BENM designation on the sense of community for residents in neighboring communities, using each of the four elements to explore a general sense of community.

Integration and fulfillment of needs: According to McMillian and Chavis [2], community integration and fulfillment of needs mutually reinforce each other. They propose that for a community to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, it must meet the needs of and reward people for being a part of that community. While communities meet many needs, the principal goal is to bring people together and meet not only individual needs but also those of others.

Membership in the community: A sense of membership is the feeling of giving a part of ourselves to a larger group [27]. By working toward membership, people often feel they have earned a place in the group and that their investment was meaningful and worthwhile [2]. According to McMillan and Chavis [2], membership has five attributes: personal investment, a sense of belonging and identity, boundaries, a common symbol system, and emotional safety.

Influence: Community influence is measured not only by the influence people have on their communities but also by the influence the community has on its people. For someone to be attracted to or feel attached to a group, they need to believe that they can influence what the group does [25]. Again, according to McMillan and Chavis, the influence of the community on its members and the influence of the members on the community operate concurrently, and in tight-knit communities, we can expect to see both working together [2].

Shared emotional connection: In tight-knit communities, residents will feel connected to the community and other people within it, and that level of connection will influence their community satisfaction. When people have a shared history or share events, these may strengthen and deepen their sense of unity and belonging [2]. Such shared connections can be enhanced by the shared importance of events, such as when communities come together during natural disasters. There can also be a connection between individuals who share a spiritual bond, often because of a shared religious affiliation or belief [28]. Strong communities thus offer residents positive ways to interact, opportunities to bond spiritually and emotionally, and ways to invest in their communities and each other [2].

3. Study Setting

This case study evaluates the impact that land management changes have on gateway communities—specifically, it explores the effects such changes have on the sense of community in three rural communities that border the BENM in the state of Utah in the United States (see Figure 1). Residents in those communities were affected not only by the proposed changes to the public lands close to their communities but also by the many speculations that the proposed changes aroused.

In the southeast corner of Utah stand two natural buttes which rise on the desert horizon and are appropriately named Bears Ears. The area is rich in fossils and ancient artifacts, with the latter dating as far back as 14,000 years [29]. The land was once home to the Puebloan people who left evidence of their dwellings, and later to the Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni communities. During America's westward expansion, several settlements were established in the area. In 2016, President Barack Obama declared the land in Southeastern Utah to be the BENM, but the following year, President Donald Trump changed the designation, reducing the designated land by 85% [30]. President Joe Biden issued an executive order to review the boundaries of the BENM in January of 2021, and on 8 October 2021, President Biden issued a proclamation modifying the boundaries of the Bears Ears National Monument again, thus increasing its size to 1.36 million acres [31].

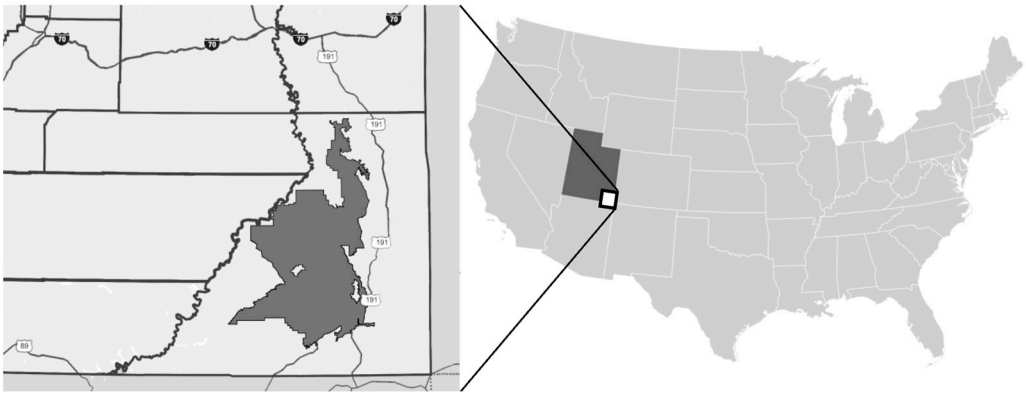


Figure 1. Study location—Bears Ears National Monument, Southeastern Utah, USA. **Note:** The shaded area on the left denotes the boundaries of the Bears Ears National Monument as established in 2016.

3.1. San Juan County

To understand the complexity of Bears Ears, we need to understand its context. Bears Ears is located in San Juan County in the southeast corner of Utah. The county has two main communities and many areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as Cedar Mesa, Lake Powell, Canyonlands National Park, and Glen Canyon. The county also has thousands of ancient Anasazi archeological sites. The two largest communities in San Juan County were settled by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, informally known as the Mormon Church, in the 19th century. In these small communities, the highest-paying industries are mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction [32]. The lower portion of San Juan County includes lands belonging to the Navajo Nation. As of our case study in 2017, San Juan County had a population of 15,286 people, with the two largest racial and ethnic categories being Native at 47.4% and white at 44.1% of the county. Other racial or ethnic populations include those reported as Hispanic or Latino, Multiracial, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black, and Pacific Islander. The population was 13.9% individuals aged 65 or older, 17% individuals aged 50 to 64, 16.3% individuals aged 35 to 49, 18.8% individuals aged 20 to 34, and 34.1% individuals aged under 19 [33]. The unemployment rate for San Juan County in 2017 was 6.8% [34], the percent of the population below the poverty level was 28.4% [35], and the per capita personal income was USD 26,145 [36].

3.2. Timeline

The area included in the BENM has been home to many communities for generations, creating a complex web of connections and a sense of belonging for its people. With over 100,000 cultural and archeological sites [37], the BENM is one of the most significant archeological areas in the United States. Archeological evidence shows that people lived at the Lime Ridge Clovis site as early as 11,000 BC, and some Native people claim that their people had been there even earlier.

The most populated areas within Bears Ears date to the Basketmaker period (500 BC to AD 750) and the Pueblo period (AD 750–AD 1290) [38]. The Navajo and Ute, who lived across the entire Bears Ears region, left sweat lodges, tipi rings, hogans, and rock art panels [37]. Historically and currently, the Navajo, Ute, and Paiute use the ancient trails for seasonal hunting and religious ceremonies. At one time, the Zuni also occupied these areas but migrated elsewhere due to climate change, leaving markings that acted as maps as well as songs and prayers [38]. Like people from other cultures who commemorate sacred sites and leave flowers at gravesites, Indigenous Peoples travel to sacred lands to connect to ancestors and revered spaces. Additionally, the land surrounding Bears Ears has ancestral ties to more recent populations: areas next to the mesa were founded by Mormon settlers in the late 19th century, who came to extract the region's natural resources [32]. Tensions

between the perspectives of area non-Native and Indigenous groups and communities have contributed to resistance by some groups to the land designations changes.

In May 2010, the Navajo formed a committee to protect the area's history and cultural assets. They submitted a preliminary land use proposal to protect Bears Ears and the surrounding canyonlands [29]. In 2013, the Public Land Initiative called for protecting Bears Ears, prohibiting oil development and recognizing the Navajo nation as co-manager of the lands. In 2015, Utah's five tribes, the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe, formed the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to advocate the area's Indigenous Peoples' interests. They met with representatives of the US government to discuss a National Monument proposal. In the summer of 2016, a meeting of ranchers, Native Americans, outdoor recreators, environmentalists, and Mormon pioneer descendants met to hear testimonies and opinions of those who would be affected by any changes in the area's land management. In December of 2016, the BENM was established [38], but less than a year later, in December 2017, the BENM was reduced by 85%. Although the reaction was mixed, Navajo tribal president Russell Begaye called the reduction a "failure to listen to the concerns of our people" [37]. In June of 2022, after the monument was expanded, the tribes belonging to the Bears Ears Commission, the BLM, and the USDA Forest Service formalized the partnership that would lead to a collaboration of the management of the Bears Ears National Monument [39].

3.3. Land Management

The Bears Ears issue depends on land management, for which there are four agencies in the United States federal government: the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USFS), the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Park Service (NPS). Although their remits sometimes overlap, each of these agencies covers specific areas of land use, and land designations are typically decided by the federal government. While congress usually establishes national parks and national monuments through legislation, the president can designate a national monument using the Antiquities Act of 1906.

To understand why some groups would be upset with a change in land designation, we need to understand how designations affect people and their communities. Land can be designated as wilderness or a wilderness study area, limiting roads, motor vehicles, or human-made structures in those areas. But this also limits human use [30]. While a national monument is less restrictive than a wilderness area, designating land as a national monument will restrict it from unlimited public use, such as livestock grazing, off-road vehicle use, logging, mining, and oil and gas exploration [40]. National parks tend to have more recreational features and cover large areas, while national monuments are primarily established to protect historic, scientific, or natural features [37].

Environmental groups or groups associated with issues surrounding federal land use are usually more aware of land designations than other groups are [41]. Large conservation groups and companies supported Bears Ears' becoming and remaining a national monument through lobbying and boycotting the 2021 Outdoor Retailer convention usually held in Utah. These groups argue that establishing the land as a national monument will halt oil and gas development in the area, improve visitor education, increase tourism, and protect sacred Native American sites [41]. However, there was active lobbying on both sides of the issue, as some other large groups were concerned about access to resources and the potential for economic benefit to the surrounding communities with expanded economic opportunity based on resources from the land.

The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, with support and input from the Utah Diné Bikéyah group, were large proponents of the creation of a national monument to help protect sacred Indigenous sites located throughout the area now within the BENM. Part of that proposal put forth by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition is that the tribes would be able to help manage the monument as a way to help protect the archeology of the site and the historical connection local Indigenous Nations have with the land.

While local groups who live close to a designated area may have differing opinions, the research shows that geographic proximity to a designated site affects awareness and attitudes toward the designation. Those who live close to restrictive land designations tend to have more negative attitudes because their lives are directly affected by them [42–44].

Negative feelings toward federal land changes can also arise in those who live there. Residents see and experience the negative impact that changes may have on livelihoods and the environment [30,42,43]. The more time spent in an area, the more likely people will develop strong opinions about federal land designations, and the more attached and involved they are to their communities due either to heritage, birthplace, family, or occupation, the more likely they are to have negative feelings toward outside forces changing their communities [45]. According to Peng, Chen, and Wang [46], increased tourism in rural communities often leads to dissatisfaction with tourism. In the case of the BENM, much local opposition comes from residents who say they do not want to become "another Moab," a city in Eastern Utah and a gateway to massive red rock formations in Arches National Park. Becoming "another Moab" refers to the fear of an increase in tourism after an area becomes a monument, even though increases in tourism typically occur over time for gateway communities. While tourism can increase economic activity in an area, it also brings outside traffic [47,48]. However, this does not inevitably disrupt a sense of community [46]. In communities close to Bears Ears, retail is among the area's top three industries [32]. Still, Nelson [49] found that when land management changes occur in small rural communities, there is restructuring and often a loss of identity as economies change. For additional information regarding the historical and sociocultural contexts surrounding the BENM, see, for example, the study by Asay et al. [50].

4. Data and Methods

4.1. Sample

We use a subset of data gathered from a larger survey sent to 26 rural communities across the state of Utah in 2017 to investigate the community's well-being and its support/opposition to the BENM, as well as other considerations. Specifically, we rely on a subset of data restricted to three communities adjacent to the BENM. The specific communities used in the analysis are not further identified due to concerns about protecting the confidentiality of the respondents. The principal unit of analysis is residents of the rural communities in Southern Utah that border the BENM. The surveys were completed by the residents and mailed to the researcher to capture their responses at the time it was administered. The survey asked questions to assess the psychological sense of community, making it straightforward to conduct a comparison with the literature on the psychological sense of community. Data collection efforts for the larger survey effort resulted in a response rate of about 63% in 2017, with response rates for the three communities adjacent to the BENM ranging between 43 and 57%.

4.2. Modeling Strategy

To address our research questions, we specify ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models that predict the four components of the psychological sense of community: needs fulfillment, membership, influence, and emotional connection. Our goal is to measure the effective opposition to BENM on the psychological sense of community. All models include a measure of opposition to the BENM as our key independent variable. Additionally, we include several control variables as suggested by the systemic model of the community opposite the community sociology research conducted by Kasarda and Janowitz [51]. Respondents with missing data were dropped from our analyses using listwise deletion. Data weights were created and used in the analyses to correct for differential probabilities of selection attributable to higher levels of non-response among some population segments, thereby adjusting the sample ratios to be proportionate to the population. The data were weighted by age and sex based on the ratios of the distributions for these groups in the dataset versus the data from the relevant zip codes based on the American Community

Survey (ACS) from 2017. Therefore, the weighted data represent a proportionally accurate sample of both age and sex from the population.

4.3. Dependent Variables

The case study's measures of a sense of community assessed the dimensions of needs fulfillment, group membership, influence, and emotional connection as defined by the model developed by McMillan and Chavis [2] and elaborated by Peterson et al. [28].

Needs fulfillment. The needs fulfillment variable was created based on two statements from the survey and intended to measure how well a community meets personal needs: "I can get what I need in my community" and "My community helps me fulfill my needs". The scale for both statements was an ordinal scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The new needs variable has the same scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree. These measures were combined into a composite variable scale based on the mean of the variables. The measure had a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.62, indicating that the separate measures have a strong relationship.

Membership in the community. In the data, two survey statements were combined to create a membership measure. The combination was between "I feel like a member of my community" and "I belong in this community." It was measured on an ordinal scale of 1 to 7, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 7 denoting strongly agree. The responses were cleaned and coded to follow this scale. These measures were combined into a composite variable scale based on the mean of the variables. The measure had a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.88, indicating that the separate measures have a very strong relationship.

Influence. The data have two survey statements that were used to measure influence: "I have a say about what goes on in my community" and "people in my community are good at influencing each other". Both of these statements were measured on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The responses to these statements were cleaned and coded to create an influence variable that captures both community influence on an individual and the individual's influence on the community. These measures were combined into a composite variable scale based on the mean of the variables. The measure had a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.38, indicating that the separate measures have a moderate relationship.

Shared emotional connection. The emotional connection variable was generated by combining two of the statements from the survey: "I feel connected to this community" and "I have a good bond with others in my community". Both were measured on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The responses to these statements were cleaned and combined to create a variable that captures people's emotional connection to their community and other residents on a scale from 1 to 7. These measures are combined into a composite variable scale based on the mean of the variables. The measure had a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.84, indicating that the separate measures have a very strong relationship.

4.4. Independent Variable

The independent variable for these models is in opposition to the BENM. This variable is based on a survey question in which respondents were asked "How much do you support the creation of Bears Ears National Monument in San Juan County?" This variable was reverse-coded to make the regression outputs easier to interpret. The responses range from 1 (strongly favored) to 7 (strongly opposed).

4.5. Control Variables

To further identify the mechanisms that influence the sense of community, we include additional control variables commonly used in community studies (e.g., Kasarda and Janowitz [51]). We control for the respondent's age by including a continuous-level measure in years. We control the respondent's length of residence, which we measure as the proportion of time living in the community. Studies often use the raw number of years of

residents in a community to measure the length of residence, although that can conflate the effects of length of residency and age. Accordingly, the length of residency was calculated as the quotient of the number of years residents lived in the community divided by age, with the length of residence ranging from 0 to 1 being rounded.

Additional control variables include the number of children living in the respondent's household, which we truncated at seven or more; a dummy variable for marital status (married/widowed = 1); an ordinal level measure of educational attainment, ranging from 1 (less than a high school education) to 7 (graduate degree); a dummy variable for religious affiliation, where respondents who indicated membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) are in the reference category; a dummy variable for race (white = 1); and a dummy variable for the respondent's sex (male = 1) [52–54]. Table 1 presents the weighted descriptive statistics for all variables used in our analysis.

Table 1. Weighted descriptive statistics.

	Mean	Percent	Standard Deviation
Dependent variables			
Needs Fulfillment	4.44		1.28
Membership	5.38		1.57
Influence	4.64		1.25
Emotional Connection	5.21		1.53
Independent Variable			
Opposition to BENM	5.86		1.87
Control Variables			
Age	52.61		17.97
Length of Residence	0.53		0.34
Children	1.00		1.48
Married/Widowed		87.43%	
Education	4.73		1.77
Latter-day Saint		72.32%	
White		88.89%	
Male		44.23%	

Note: N = 294.

4.6. Analysis

The literature has investigated concerns about land changes and how attitudes vary with changes in designation or the decision process and shows that host communities are important stakeholders in decisions related to tourism and development [46]. They also show that outside influences can affect community sentiment [51]. Additionally, negative attitudes can increase when stakeholders are excluded from decision making [41]. While the existing data cover host communities and general sentiments behind changes in designation, many communities remain understudied or not studied at all. The communities surrounding Bears Ears are often built on a sense of place and proximity to open or restricted lands. However, with boundary changes, the way people experience their community may change for better or worse.

This research aims to fill this research gap by capturing changes in the sense of community based on discussions concerning potential changes to the community. To achieve this, we use the location and the Bears Ears National Monument as a case study to test the psychological sense of community in gateway communities. This research addresses the following question: how does the notion of a national monument change the way people experience their community? To answer the question, we collected data from a survey asking residents of rural communities about their community experiences in the context of the proposed National Monument land management changes. The dependent variables include the four components of the systemic model of community, while the independent variable is opposition to the creation of the BENM. We will also control for various identifying components.

5. Results

OLS regression estimates predicting a shared sense of needs fulfillment are reported in Table 2. Model 1 is effectively a bivariate regression between needs fulfillment and the opposition to the BENM. Greater opposition to the BENM is positively associated, although small in effect, with a stronger sense of needs fulfillment by the community. Model 2 analyzes the same relationship but includes control variables. We find the same positive association between opposition to the BENM and needs fulfillment. Additionally, the model shows that Latter-day Saint respondents report a higher sense of needs fulfillment.

Table 2. OLS regression estimates predicting sense of needs fulfillment.

	Model 1			**Model 2**		
	b		**S.E.**	**b**		**S.E.**
Key Independent Variable						
Opposition to BENM	0.204	***	0.050	0.133	*	0.058
Control Variables						
Age				0.008		0.006
Length of Residence				0.145		0.314
Children				0.064		0.080
Married/Widowed				0.171		0.298
Education				0.100		0.056
Latter-day Saint				0.656	*	0.256
White				0.149		0.295
Male				−0.307		0.184
Intercept	3.241	***	0.310	1.995	**	0.652
R^2	0.090			0.199		
Adj. R^2	0.086			0.155		
F	16.46			4.41		
p	<0.001			<0.001		

Notes: N = 294. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3 presents the regression models for the sense of community membership. Using the same approach as above, Model 1 assesses the relationship between community membership and opposition to the BENM, which shows opposition to be positively associated with a stronger sense of community membership. Model 2 analyzes the same relationship but includes control variables. We find the same positive association between opposition to the BENM and sense of community membership. Additionally, the model shows that married and Latter-day Saint respondents report a higher sense of community membership.

Table 4 presents the regression models for the influence of sense of community. Model 1 shows a positive association between opposition to the BENM and a sense of influence. Model 2 confirms this relationship in the presence of the control variables, showing that Latter-day Saints report a higher sense of community influence compared to their community counterparts.

Lastly, Table 5 presents regression models for the sense of emotional connection. Models 1 and 2 show a positive association between opposition to the BENM and a sense of emotional connection. Additionally, Model 2 shows a higher sense of community influence reported by Latter-day Saint residents.

Table 3. OLS regression estimates predicting sense of membership.

	Model 1			**Model 2**		
	b		**S.E.**	**b**		**S.E.**
Key Independent Variable						
Opposition to BENM	0.309	***	0.060	0.200	**	0.067
Control Variables						
Age				0.007		0.007

Table 3. *Cont.*

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b		**S.E.**	**b**		**S.E.**
Length of Residence				−0.113		0.353
Children				−0.002		0.091
Married/Widowed				0.857	*	0.345
Education				0.002		0.063
Latter-day Saint				1.035	**	0.294
White				−0.053		0.336
Male				−0.328		0.211
Intercept	3.579	***	0.369	2.608	**	0.747
R^2	0.135			0.279		
Adj. R^2	0.133			0.241		
F	26.46			6.95		
p	<0.001			<0.001		

Notes: N = 294. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. OLS regression estimates predicting sense of influence.

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b		**S.E.**	**b**		**S.E.**
Key Independent Variable						
Opposition to BENM	0.220	***	0.050	0.131	*	0.056
Control Variables						
Age				0.002		0.006
Length of Residence				−0.077		0.293
Children				−0.025		0.076
Married/Widowed				0.345		0.286
Education				0.097		0.052
Latter-day Saint				0.897	***	0.244
White				0.220		0.278
Male				−0.156		0.175
Intercept	3.369	***	0.305	2.297	***	0.619
R^2	0.104			0.245		
Adj. R^2	0.099			0.205		
F	19.66			5.88		
p	<0.001			<0.001		

Notes: N = 294. * $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5. OLS regression estimates predicting sense of shared emotional connection.

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b		**S.E.**	**b**		**S.E.**
Key Independent Variable						
Opposition to BENM	0.283	***	0.058	0.202	**	0.066
Control Variables						
Age				0.007		0.007
Length of Residence				−0.194		0.347
Children				−0.031		0.090
Married/Widowed				0.584		0.334
Education				0.092		0.062
Latter-day Saint				0.955	**	0.287
White				0.331		0.328
Male				−0.382		0.206

Table 5. *Cont.*

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b		**S.E.**	**b**		**S.E.**
Intercept	3.572	***	0.356	2.071	**	0.732
R^2	0.121			0.262		
Adj. R^2	0.118			0.224		
F	23.94			6.56		
p	<0.001			<0.001		

Notes: N = 294. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

6. Discussion

In this paper, we set out to determine the effects that changes in land management have on gateway communities, using the BENM as a case study. We were interested to see how the four elements of the psychological sense of community were affected by discussions surrounding the creation of a monument. We found that, overall, the weaker the public support was for the BENM, the stronger residents felt a sense of community. Specifically, we found that opposition to the BENM statistically influenced the way people sense that their needs are met. According to table [2], needs fulfillment means that for a community to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, people must have their needs met or see a benefit in belonging to the community. Additionally, we found that the less support there is for the BENM, the more likely residents believe they belong to their community, which suggests that an individual's sense of belonging is enhanced when people come together in opposition to change.

We found that the more people support the BENM, the more likely they are to believe they influence their community. As with an emotional connection, if the majority of residents share similar feelings, they believe they can influence outcomes. This aspect of community refers both to the influence people have on their communities and to their ability to influence each other. This is significant because it shows that even when outside influences are considered a threat, residents will believe that their influence on the community is strengthened.

Last, we found that opposition to the BENM is associated with a stronger emotional connection to the community. This is important because, despite disruptions to the community, residents shared a close emotional connection to it. This finding echoes previous research, which suggests that outside forces influence a sense of community [10]. In 2017, for example, outside influences proposing changes to local land management seemed to rally opposition from many community members and strengthened their emotional connections to each other.

Overall, these results show that even considering land management changes in rural areas can affect the way community members experience and interact with others. The results suggest that the more people feel attached to and satisfied with their communities, the less likely they are to support the creation of new land designations, such as the BENM. They believe that they have more influence, and those who do not support Bears Ears feel a greater sense of membership in their community. These findings contribute to the existing literature by helping to capture a moment in time and show that the rhetoric that surrounds the creation of national monuments affects the way people experience their communities opposite the surrounding areas. As such, this case study provides important insights into the processes happening within some communities when nearby land designations change, creating ripple effects for nearby areas. To that end, this study expands upon existing research focused on people's experiences tied to place, adding to our understanding about the effects of external changes to communities as well as the experience of community within these locations.

Despite these contributions, the data collected for this case study have several limitations. Most of the sample is white and consequently fails to represent the views of many non-white respondents. Few respondents self-identified as Native American. The

demographics of the data mean that the results capture changes specifically for white rural gateway communities. Future research might include case studies in non-white rural gateway communities. Researchers should also consider addressing this limitation by surveying those who live on reservations close to public lands and studying the effects of community on other minority groups. In such locations, support/opposition for the BENM may well be associated with the opposite pattern of results shown here.

Additionally, at the time of data collection, Bears Ears was not a designated monument, although there was talk about it becoming one. Therefore, the data have time limitations as they capture a specific moment in time. Our case study analysis is concerned with capturing the sense of community in the context of discussions concerning *potential* community changes related to land designation. Future research should consider investigating the same community to measure whether those changes have remained after the monument was reduced or returned to its original size. Moreover, additional case studies and other approaches to research are needed beyond the BENM context. Such studies can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the social phenomena that occur as new land designation sites are considered and created, as such changes have the potential to profoundly affect the people and communities tied to these areas.

7. Conclusions

We share the opinion of Mendez-Contreras: "When people feel excluded from the establishment of an NPA (natural protected areas) in a territory that, for historical, customary or legal reasons, belongs to them or they perceive as being theirs, they assume the 'outsiders' establishing it forms part of a group external to their community, with contrary objectives and interests" ([55], p. 112). Because public, protected areas and gateway communities are linked socioeconomically, environmentally, and culturally, changes in land designations can significantly impact those who live there. In light of the case study presented above, we argue that it matters, then, how people feel connected to their communities and places, and we need to consider how changes to the surrounding areas will affect them before recommending that the designation of nearby protected places and natural lands are changed.

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