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“WE SHARE OUR TERRITORY”: RE-DEFINING SURF LOCALISM AND HUMAN TERRITORIALITY ON THE PACIFIC COAST OF NICARAGUA

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ABSTRACT

Localism is a well-known issue in surf culture. It is territorial behavior whereby resident surfers exclude outsiders from a surf break through threat, intimidation or whatever other means necessary. This form of territoriality not only has negative consequences for visiting surfers, who may be excluded from surfing or injured, but for the host community as well. If a surf destination becomes known as a bad spot for localism, surfers will go elsewhere and the flow of income for tourism-dependent communities can get cut off. This is especially the case in developing countries such as Nicaragua, where remote communities are becoming less reliant on agrarian lifestyles and more reliant on tourism. The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of localism, a form of human territoriality, at Popoyo Reef on the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua.

This ethnographic study was conducted from May to July of 2012. The methods used included participant observation (in the surf and the community) and interviews with 74 local surfers, resident foreigners, tourists, local government officials, and Nicaraguan and foreign business owners and managers. Pictures and video of the surf and the community were also taken. I took field notes to document my participant observation and maintained a research journal of daily life.

The results indicated that while localism is not a problem at Popoyo Reef, many local surfers feel a strong sense of ownership over the surf break; feelings that could be characterized as mild localism. Local surfers are willing to share their space with resident foreigners and tourists, but they want respect from the people with whom they are sharing. Several surfers had witnessed physical fights in the surf, but some had not. Surfers generally did not tell others what to do, but they would give them advice, educate them about the rules, and help other local surfers when they were learning to surf. Surfers knew the basic rules of surfing and expected others to follow them. Resident foreigners and tourists did not seem to think localism was a problem.
Besides citing a few incidents, overall, people were very positive about the locals surfing Popoyo Reef and the encounters they had with them. There was no agreement on who local surfers considered to be “local,” but for many it was only people who had been born in the community. However, some local surfers categorized resident foreigners who had helped them and their community as “local surfers.”

Tourism developers need to respond to the feelings of local surfers if they want to avoid “localism.” In this study some local surfers were frustrated by surf tour operators who disrespected them, mistreated their workers, or did not give back to the community. While they are amiable now, this could change in the future. In addition, the number of people in the water could increase locals’ need to protect their space. Many tourists know about the surf break now; hence tourist numbers will likely increase in the years to come. The destination should be monitored to see what changes take place. In an effort to extend the research on localism, future studies should be conducted in destinations located in the developed and developing world.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The use and meaning of tourism and recreational space has long attracted the attention of tourism and outdoor recreation researchers. Tourism space is the space in which hosts and guests interact in tourism destinations. Recreational space, discussed later, is the space in which people participate in recreational activities. Britton (1991) urged geographers to study tourism by “…recogni[zing] how the social meaning and materiality of space and place is created through the practice of tourism itself…” and the importance of exploring the political and economic forces that drive its development (p. 475). Oppermann (1993) studied tourism space from an economic development perspective. Some of the most well recognized work on tourism space, however, has been produced by MacCannell (1999). MacCannell explored the ideas of a front stage (where hosts “perform” for tourists) and a backstage (where the actual lives of the host community takes place) in the tourism space where hosts and guests interact.

One of the most common conceptualizations of space in the tourism literature is sense of place where there is significant overlap with the recreation literature. Sense of place, generally defined as the set of thoughts and feelings people have about a particular place and the meaning they assign to it (Farnum, Hall, & Kruger, 2005), is often conceptualized as the combination of place attachment (i.e., the emotional connection one feels to a place), place dependence (i.e. activity-related dependence on a space) and place identity (i.e. how one is related to the environment) (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Farnum et al., 2005; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Manzo, 2003). Tourism researchers have examined hosts’ levels of place attachment to their communities, as well as tourists’ attachments to particular tourism destinations (Gu & Ryan, 2008; Hwang, Lee, & Chen, 2005; Kerstetter & Bricker, 2009). Recreation researchers, similarly,
have explored recreational users’ place attachment to particular national parks or other outdoor recreation areas (Farnum et al., 2005). There are limitations to the sense of place framework in exploring peoples’ relationships to space. As traditionally measured, the sense of place construct does not account for perceived ownership or possession of space, the boundaries or limits of a space, and the rules that exist within that space.

Another common framework for examining how people feel when sharing a recreation space with others is perceived crowding. Perceived crowding is someone’s subjective negative evaluation of person density in a recreational space (Manning, 1985; Vaske & Shelby, 2008). Researchers have utilized this conceptual framework to show how recreationists feel about the level of density in different recreational spaces (Vaske & Shelby, 2008). Andereck (1997) and Manning (1985), among others, have shown that recreationists’ feelings about crowding (aka “crowding norms”) are tied to their level of satisfaction. Crowding measures are limiting, however, because they do not address whether individuals are tied to a space, if they view a space as their own, what they perceive to be acceptable behaviors within a space or, like sense of place, the boundaries they attach to a space.

While valuable in their own right, these previous conceptualizations of space and place by tourism and recreation researchers are not appropriate for this study, which focuses on how a distinct group of hosts in a destination (local surfers) claim a particular tourism space (the surf zone) as their territory and how they go about demarcating boundaries in and regulating this space. The framework used in this study is territoriality, which begins with the process of territorialization. Before humans can regulate a territory, they must claim it through certain social processes, and this is known as territorialization. Much of the research on territorialization has focused on how states claim territory within their borders and control people’s actions within that territory (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995; Wainwright & Robertson, 2003). However, another large part of this research is how certain groups that were previously disenfranchised by the state have
attempted to reclaim their territory through social movements and participatory mapping (Wainwright & Bryan, 2006). Another way people claim territory is through their identity: part of who they are is where they are from and how they are rooted in that place (Medina, 1999). Once people claim a space, they will establish that space as their territory. The behavior used to do this is known as human territoriality, which is defined as:

*Behavior meant to control social interactions that involve the establishment of boundaries within a space, perceived ownership of that space by the controlling group or person, and regulation of those established boundaries through whatever means the controlling group or person perceives as necessary* (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1986).

Human territoriality has been studied in many contexts and by researchers in a variety of disciplines. Early on, researchers compared animal and human territoriality, but given the unique nature of many aspects of human territoriality, they moved beyond this framework (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1983). Today, human territoriality is thought to govern much of our lives, from where we live, to the places we feel comfortable visiting, to the resources we use, to what we perceive belongs to us. Sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and geographers have utilized various frameworks or definitions of human territoriality to study behavior such as social interaction in public and private spaces. Tourism researchers have conducted little work on human territoriality, the exception being inquiries into issues over the boundaries of protected area (Kent, 2006; Minca & Draper, 1996). Given the fact that tourism in many areas has social, cultural, economic and environmental ramifications for residents and their communities, this lack of attention to the issue of human territoriality is surprising.

A growing sector of tourism that is impacted by the issues of territorializing and territoriality is surf tourism. Due to spikes in the popularity of surfing, the industry has experienced an increase in the number of surfers (Booth, 2001; Kampion, 2003). This is problematic for individuals who have enjoyed surfing in areas located along the heavily
populated U.S. and Australian coastlines. They have responded to the increased number of surfers by traveling to far flung regions of the globe (Alessi, 2009; Ingersoll, 2009). Over the decades, however, even these areas have become increasingly crowded. Thus, surfers have sought more and more remote areas, attempting to find uncrowded waves and the tropical perfection touted by the popular surf media (Ponting, 2009). Some members of these remote local communities began surfing after the sport was introduced to them. They also have begun to express concerns about protecting their wave resource.

Long ago, “localism,” which is local surfers’ expression of territoriality over a surf break, became a problem in places such as Hawai’i, Australia, and California. Localism was expressed through locals violently attacking visiting surfers (Young, 2000). With the spread of surfing to other destinations around the world, similar types of localism have started showing up (Barilotti, 2002). This is a problem for surf destinations and residents who, in many cases, are dependent upon tourism for income.

Nicaragua is one such destination counting on tourism for increased foreign exchange and employment opportunities for local residents (Hunt, 2011). The country is becoming more popular as a surf destination due to high quality surf conditions year round, foreign-friendly investment and land tenure laws, and fewer crowds than other Latin American countries such as Costa Rica (Hunt, 2011; Matteucci, Lund-Durlacher, & Beyer, 2008; Weisberg, 2010). In particular, the indigenous community of Las Salinas de Nahaulapa (from now on referred to as “Las Salinas”) is located next to Popoyo Reef, one of Nicaragua’s most popular surf spots. Residents of Las Salinas, some of whom surf, depend on surf tourism for income. A previous study I conducted revealed indications of localism within the local surfing community. I had asked about ownership of natural resources and several surfers said they were the owners of the beach. Another older community member who used to surf said he had to sit the young kids down and tell them they needed to share the waves with tourists. This led to the question: What is
the extent of localism at this surf break? To answer this question I investigated localism in Las Salinas and what it could mean for the future of surf tourism in the community.

This study uses the concepts of territorialization and territoriality to explore human’s relationship to a tourism space. In so doing, it fills gaps in the geography literature, where minimal attention has been given to territorialization or territoriality in travel destinations, as well as the surf tourism literature, which has yet to make localism the main focal point of an empirical study.

**Literature Review**

The following is a review of the literature. It begins with a discussion of previous work on territorialization and territoriality from multiple disciplines, including tourism, and is followed by a brief history of surfing and a review of the surf tourism literature. The phenomenon of surfer territoriality (localism) is also explored in the final section.

**Territorialization**

The notion of territory brings to mind political and state territory: boundaries that are legally demarcated by nations and international organizations. Territorialization, which is the claiming of space, has been examined from this perspective, but also the ways in which traditional state political boundaries have been challenged. Cultural identity has also been strongly tied to territorialization. Anthropologists and geographers have explored territorialization from a wide range of perspectives.

State powers primarily claim territory through government regulations they can set and laws they can pass. Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) detailed the ways in which Thailand
territorialized forest resources in order to control people’s actions and their access to resources. The state borrowed models of natural resource control from nearby British colonies and the American National Park system. By declaring forest areas property of the state, they were able to implement regulations on how that state territory was used and who could remove resources from it. The government was not able to enforce some regulations as much as others; unauthorized logging abounded. Permits were required for resource extraction. The Forestry Department, an instrument of the state, organized people into villages who had occupied the forest. The state also did not recognize local land claims and enforcement mechanisms that were already in place to monitor natural resource use. Several years later, the state implemented military enforcement of conservation areas and attempted to remove groups living there. This removal was met with resistance from non-government organizations (NGOs), villagers and academics. The state’s attempts at territorialization were not as successful as it had hoped on numerous fronts.

Wainwright and Robertson (2003) reviewed how the state of Minnesota territorialized American Indian group’s sacred space in order to build a road. Through a “scientifically” derived cultural resource assessment, the state was able to show that the sacred ground the Mendota claimed was not a significant historical or cultural site. Wainwright and Robertson (2003) deconstructed the cultural resource assessment by recognizing the state’s use of colonialist evidentiary claims and its discrediting of indigenous accounts. Their example of the state of Minnesota’s territorialization of the space highlighted how a state can usurp any indigenous claim to land.

While states use laws and regulations to territorialize space and control actions within that space, there is a substantial countermovement challenging state power and claims to space. Indigenous groups all over the world have begun to reclaim territory from the state through participatory mapping. Displaced by colonial land grabs and national park demarcations, academics and indigenous activists are coming together to reclaim ancestral lands. One of the
major difficulties that indigenous groups encounter is that the way in which they territorialize space is substantially different from that of the nation state. Roth (2009), for example, worked with the Karen in Thailand to map their traditional lands, which included a national park. Their traditional land and resource use patterns within the park’s boundaries conflicted with the ways in which space was being used by park officials (i.e., women gathering wild bamboo felt uncomfortable passing by a male operated guard station). Once park officials became aware of the conflict, they were able to find a more appropriate place for the guard station.

Sletto (2009) worked with indigenous groups in Venezuela to map their traditional lands within and near a national park because indigenous elders had difficulties with traditional political boundaries. For them, territory was not something one blocked others from entering; people could come and go from each other’s territory. Resource collection and kinship patterns, not lines on a map, dictated indigenous groups’ territory. Groups in Canada and Nicaragua also share this conceptualization of territory. In Coast Salish communities of Canada and the Awas Tingni of Nicaragua, researchers found that kinship relations and resource use (depending on season) dictated areas these indigenous groups saw as their territory (Bryan, 2009; Thom, 2009). Bryan points out how difficult it is for national governments to translate these concepts of territorialization into land titles and political boundaries.

Geographers Hale, Bryan and Wainwright have worked with indigenous groups in Central America to re-territorialize their traditional lands and negotiate land titles. Wainwright worked with the Maya groups in Belize to define their territory, and Bryan and Hale worked with groups in Nicaragua, namely the Mayangna and Miskitu. According to Wainwright and Bryan (2006), some of the challenges in mapping traditional lands are cultural assimilation (i.e., indigenous groups have to have maps even if they traditionally did not use them); the ability of the nation state to control indigenous groups once they map their space; representation in mapping (women and disadvantaged portions of the community may not be included); and having
to use maps already created by Western institutions. Gordon, Hale, and colleagues (Gordon, Gurdian, & Hale, 2003; Hale, 2006) also question the effectiveness of mapping, and the contradictions scholars face being part of neoliberal projects funded by the World Bank. Despite these limitations, mapping does allow for an element of self-determination: indigenous people demarcate the territory—where they live and have traditionally existed—instead of being subject to the territorialization of the state.

The cultural history of indigenous groups as well as their traditions and identity are a major part of indigenous groups’ territorialization. However, scholars have shown that tying people’s identity to a specific territory can be limiting when trying to understand groups such as immigrants and refugees (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Magat, 1999; Malkki, 1992). In Magat’s (1999) study of Israeli and Japanese immigrants to Canada, both groups had different concepts of a home territory. For Israelis, home would always be Israel, even though they might be living in Canada. For Japanese immigrants, while they retained their cultural identity as Japanese, they had no problem seeing Canada as home. Malkki’s (1992) examination of Tanzanian refugees also was revealing. One group of Hutu refugees who lived in an isolated camp thought of themselves as the “Hutu Nation,” the place from where they had come. They believed the Tutsi who had taken over Burundi (the Tanzanian capital) were imposters and the Hutus’ status as refugees made them even more pure because they were the natives of Tanzania who were in exile. Meanwhile, Hutu refugees that ended up in the town of Kigoma had no collective identity and assimilated into their new town. Magat’s and Malkki’s research suggests that cultural groups have different levels of attachment to the territory from which they come.

While some groups do not have a clear sense of physical territory associated with their identity, others do. At times, this sense of physical territory conflicts with other groups who also claim the same territory. In Medina’s (1999) study of cultural identity in Belize, many groups claim to be “native” to Belize. The Maya groups (Mopan and Kekchi) claim to have been in
Belize the longest, tracing their roots back to the ancient Maya. While some have moved to other areas such as Guatemala and come back, some claim to have been in Belize the whole time. Descendants of British colonists (the ‘Baymen’) also claim native status in Belize because they helped wrest Belize from Spain. The creoles, or descendents of African slaves and the British ‘Baymen’ also use this explanation in their claim on Belize: they bled and worked for the country in its founding stages. Garifuna, a Black Caribbean descent group claims native Belizean status because they are native to the Caribbean, of which they see Belize as a part. Mestizos (mixed Spanish and Maya descent), who immigrated to Belize in the 1980s to escape civil war and strife in neighboring countries, claim native status because of their roots in the Maya culture. These claims are important for the Maya groups because native status is a way for them to reclaim traditional land in Belize. The government has sought to territorialize the Maya through ecotourism, commodifying their traditions and practices as natives to Belize. Hence, identity is a contentious issue in Belize, as all groups seek to claim spaces in the country as their territory.

Sri Lanka has also seen conflict between cultural groups asserting territorial claims to the country (Kleinfeld, 2005). Sinhalese and Tamil groups both claim Sri Lanka as their homeland, but both groups have disputed histories of their arrival in the country. Each respective group’s historical claims have been discounted by scholars, yet the groups have turned to different discourses to territorialize Sri Lanka and gain support from outside groups. Rights-based discourse by both Sinhalese and Tamils helped them to establish external sovereignty and political legitimacy in the international arena. Each group claimed that the other group was comprised of terrorists and incapable of rule. Another tactic both groups have used is the violation of human rights (such as child soldiers) to gain international support for their respective claims on Sri Lanka.

Territorial claims using identity may escalate from social conflict to violence when people attempt to claim territory. The Brazilian Amazon has been home to violent conflict as a
result of territorial claims. Simmons (2005) explored the ways in which social, economic and political conditions across different spatial scales intersected to create a volatile territory which led to the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre in April 1996.

While it is important to acknowledge this work on territorialization and the claiming of space through various means (by the state and cultural groups), the behavior which humans enact once they claim territory is known as human territoriality. Surfers are engaging in acts of territoriality when they practice localism and for this reason, the focus of the study is territoriality, which is reviewed below.

**Territoriality**

Researchers began to study human territoriality in the early 1920s; street gangs were some of the first objects of study. Ardrey (1966) was one of the first researchers to compare animal and human territoriality. Later, anthropologists approached territoriality from a bio-social perspective. Dyson-Hudson and Smith (1978), for example, examined indigenous groups who were heavily reliant upon natural resources. Other scholars moved beyond biological frameworks of human territoriality, claiming that temporary territories, cultural definitions, long distance territories, and social constructions of territory all make human territoriality unique and separate from animal territoriality (Altman, 1975; Gold, 1982; Sack, 1986).

Psychologists and sociologists have studied human territoriality at a more individual level, while geographers have examined the construct from a large-scale governance/global perspective. In these disciplines, human territoriality has encompassed everything from personal space, to group space, to community space, to ethnic space, to nation-state boundaries, and to institutional control. It also has been addressed at multiple levels (individual, group, institutional, state). Some scholars have attempted to create human territoriality frameworks. Lyman and
Scott’s (1967) framework includes public, home, interactional and body territories. Public territories are considered to be places where (almost) anyone can go, but this had been challenged by legislation such as racial segregation. Home territories are not people’s actual homes, but places where they can find others like them, for example a gay bar for people who are gay. Interactional territories, which Rivano-Fischer (1987) also discusses, are the territories created by people who are interacting at a particular point in time. And, body territories are people’s actual bodies. Some researchers refer to this area of research as “proxemics” or personal space (Rivano-Fischer, 1987). Invasion (boundary crossing by the excluded group); contamination (space is literally made impure by something or someone defiling it, i.e. lower caste member walking down a sidewalk in a place with a caste society); and violation (use of space in an improper manner or use by excluded group) are three ways in which these territories can be violated. Lyman and Scott (1967), as well as Altman (1975), recognize that human reaction to violations of territorial boundaries—gestures, violence, expressions, or lack of reaction—can vary widely, but are all possibilities.

Altman’s (1975) work has been very influential in the study of territoriality, which he defines as behavior that demarcates a boundary around a space (perceived as “owned” by a group or person) through personalization and ownership in order to regulate social interaction in that space. If territorial boundaries are violated, some kind of defense response may occur. Altman’s classification of territoriality involves public, primary and secondary territories.

Public territories are spaces that are open to anyone, but groups or individuals may try to mark out territories within these public spaces. Edney and Jordan-Edney (1974) found differences in terms of how much territory on a public beach people attempted to gain control over. These differences were linked to group size, gender and other factors. According to Taylor and Brooks (1980), place markers are one way people try to delineate their territory. On a study of students in libraries they found that students were more likely to ask for a study carrel space back if it was
taken over than they were to ask for a spot at a table where there were more seats available. Hence, availability of space in a public area appears to be a major factor in the likelihood of individuals defending their territory.

Primary territories are people’s homes or private spaces that are not open, and permission must be granted in order to gain access. Several examples of this include patients’ rooms in mental hospitals and a nursing home for older adults (Altman, 1975; Kinney, Stephens, & Brockmann, 1987). Secondary territories are semi-public spaces which fall somewhere between being completely open to everyone or completely closed to everyone. Altman refers to Lyman and Scott’s (1967) interactional and home territories as secondary territories. Neighborhood bars have been studied as secondary territories (Lyman & Scott, 1967). Much like home territories, the regulars that are there all the time may see outsiders as intruders. Other examples of secondary territories include hallways, building entrances, and immediate street areas of urban low-cost housing which were included in Newman’s study of “defensible space” (i.e., links between building design and crime) (cited in Altman, 1975).

Rivano-Fischer (1987) defines human territoriality by the behaviors that people enact in order to establish boundaries. Through interaction, a territory is created and maintained for as long as that interaction may occur. The categories of territories that humans establish include public spaces, private spaces, and personal spaces (Rivano-Fischer, 1987). The unique feature of Rivano-Fischer’s work is the addition of personal spaces, which includes interpersonal space. Interpersonal space, also called “micro territory” or proxemic behavior (Hall, 1963; Lyman & Scott, 1967), is a popular subject of study in human territoriality research (Lyman & Scott, 1967). It should be noted that Altman (1975) makes a distinction between personal space and territory. The former, he argues, “…is close to the self” (p. 105), and the latter is more distant and involves the environment and objects in that environment.
Geographers seem to have bridged the gap between the different levels of territoriality. Malmberg (1980) characterizes territoriality as a “phenomenon of ethological ecology,” which manifests itself as exclusive spaces humans delineate by boundaries, limits, or aggressiveness, due to their emotional attachment. Malmberg categorizes territoriality into primitive territories (early man, hunters and gatherers); urban territories (cities, parks); rural territories (land, farms); and special territories (tombs, play territories). While not citing Malmberg’s work, Gold (1982) also argues that human territoriality is an important ethological framework that more geographers should use. He suggests that human territoriality is most likely a product of culture and that it may fulfill a need for identity, status, recognition by others, and self-image. His framework is also quite similar to Malmberg’s (1980) in that it includes an analysis of territoriality in preindustrial societies and urban territory. Dwelling space, the neighborhood, and Newman’s “defensible space” are included in Gold’s discussion of urban territory. In a study he conducted with Hirschon (Hirschon & Gold, 1982), dwelling space in a Greek community was examined. The home was considered to be a private territory where only the family was allowed. Hirschon and Gold reasoned that this might have been because of the small and cramped nature of the housing units in the study setting. Sidewalks, squares and areas outside of the houses (i.e., the neighborhood) were considered to be social spaces open to everyone.

While Gold explicitly keeps political nation-state territoriality at a distance from his work, geographer Sack (1983, 1986) directly addresses this form of territoriality by referencing Marx’s modes of production and Weber’s notion of organization, along with lower level scales of territoriality. For example, Sack argues that changing modes of production in the workplace have affected the amount of territoriality bosses are able to exert over their workers. He goes on to indicate that territoriality is a social construction, which includes an attempt to control, influence, and affect actions or interactions of individuals within a geographical space. He presents a complex matrix of territoriality that involves the 10 tendencies of territoriality, only the first 3
(classification, communication and enforcement) of which are present in every case. Notably, his examples of territoriality fail to fit in to his complex matrix.

While the majority of the work on territoriality is on land and landscapes, there has been some work conducted on territoriality associated with water. Malmberg (1984) examined territoriality of water for drinking, irrigation, and fishing. An important aspect of the territoriality of water is its rhythmic and cyclic nature. Territoriality shifts with wet and dry seasons, as well as with the tides. At low tide when everyone else is fishing, fisherman must be fiercely territorial to find the best spot with the most fish. Once the tide comes in, the fishing is not as good and there is no need to be territorial. This rhythmic territoriality is unique to a water environment and may apply in this study. Another major difference with water territories is that most water resources, especially the ocean, are public. Private property rights do not apply like on land. There are exceptions to this: in Fiji, villages have fishing rights over certain reefs. The unique nature of these laws has recently opened up a first class surf break to Fijian surfers, since they won a case to make the previously privately held surf breaks of Cloudbreak and Restaurants public (Finnegan, 2011).

Despite more recent work on political territory, much of the work on human territoriality is over 20 years old. Gold (1982) and Sack (1986) have attempted to bridge a gap between other social scientists and geographers, but there is still a considerable void not being addressed between the varying levels of territoriality. Thus, for the purposes of this study, varying levels of territoriality will be considered, and the working definition that will be used (a combination of Altman’s (1975) definition and Sack’s (1983) framework of territoriality) is as follows:

*Human territoriality is a behavior meant to control social interactions that involve the establishment of boundaries within a space, perceived ownership of that space by the controlling group or person, and regulation of those established boundaries through whatever means the controlling group or person perceives as necessary.*
Regulation of boundaries can entail a number of actions: making sure others simply follow the rules in the space, verbal warnings if they are not, asserting dominance in the space by breaking rules non-locals are supposed to follow, and defending the space from outside intrusion altogether.

**Territoriality and Tourism**

Tourism researchers, much like geographers, have primarily examined territoriality as land rights and legal ownership in protected areas (Kent, 2006; Minca & Draper, 1996). In a study of Canada’s Banff National Park, Minca and Draper (1996) explicitly used human territoriality as a theoretical framework. They recognized that Banff has grown due to more efficient modes of transportation, but also found that maintaining a balance between development and conservation of the park has been difficult. The authors also noted that tourists do not know when they are inside the park boundaries, associate the town with the National Park, and do not seem to recognize the difference between the two.

In 2006, Kent looked at territoriality with the Uros, an indigenous group that lives on floating villages built from the reeds harvested from Lake Titicaca on the national border between Bolivia and Peru. The Uros have clashed for several decades with INRENA (the natural resource governmental organization of Peru that oversees protected areas). At first the clash was over the use of reeds to build their community. In order to get access to reeds they had to possess land on the edge of the Lake. Now the conflict has turned to tourism, as INRENA tries to control the floating villages’ reserve, and the Uros’ attempt to retain control over tourism. The Uros’ floating villages are a national tourism site, and the promotion of their community adds legitimacy to their indigenous identity which could feasibly give them control over tourism if the area is declared a communal reserve instead of a national reserve.
Andereck (1997) addresses territoriality by focusing on tourists’ territoriality. She uses Altman’s (1975) framework of primary, secondary and public territories to classify tourists’ behavior in a historical site, concluding that tourists will express territoriality over a public space. A crowding scale is used to measure territoriality. While Andereck claims she is using Altman’s framework, this measure leaves out any sort of personalization, ownership and defense items, which are key aspects of Altman’s definition.

Clearly, there is a gap in the tourism literature on territoriality, supplemented only by work done by political geographers in national parks. Andereck’s (1997) attempt at social territoriality is little more than a new spin on the crowding scale, which has been present for some time in the recreation literature. Host communities and their attempts to gain control over space as tourists move in has only been addressed in a park boundary context. What is missing is an adequate analysis of host territoriality in a water-based recreational space (i.e., ocean) that hosts and tourists share.

Surfing and Surf Tourism

The origins of surfing are in Hawai’i, where the act of riding a wave had deeply political, spiritual, and cultural meanings; surfing played a vital role in religious worship and festivals (Ingersoll, 2009). With the arrival of missionaries, surfing had to go underground because it was considered to be a sacrilegious and hedonistic activity unbecoming of proper Christians (Ingersoll, 2009; Kampion, 2003). The incorporation of the Hawaiian Islands as a territory of the United States in 1898 sparked renewed interest in surfing as a tourism business opportunity. Writers, such as Jack London, and colorful postcards promoted surfing and the islands to mainland America (Ingersoll, 2009; Kampion, 2003). In response, surfing soon spread to the mainland, Australia, and other parts of the world. While surfing traditionally had been an activity
in which both Hawaiian men and women were engaged (I. H. Walker, 2011), the new wave of surfers in other countries was primarily men (and highly athletic men at that) due to the incredibly heavy surfboards. The commercial production of foam boards in the 1950s and 60s, invention of the leash, and widespread media coverage of the sport led to an explosion in the number of surfers. The popularity of the film *Gidget* and the wave of surf media and music that followed also contributed to the surfing boom (Ormrod, 2005). Beaches from the east coast of the U.S. to California and to Hawai’i saw larger and larger numbers of both male and female surfers hitting the water. By the latter half of the twentieth century, the number of surfers had grown so much that there was crowding on surf breaks. A surf break is the area of the ocean where the geological formation (i.e., a rock or coral reef, sand bar, rocky point) of the ocean floor allows for waves to break. Recent estimations put the number of surfers worldwide at 35 million (O’Brien & Eddie, 2013).

Surf tourism is a relatively new area of research that has emerged in the past 10 to 15 years (Martin & Assenov, 2010). Much of the surf tourism literature focuses on surf events, the growth of the industry, impacts on local environments and cultures, and management. It also is somewhat biased towards research on operators rather than host communities. In one of the few studies of surf tourism, Tantamjarik (2004) surveyed surf tour operators in Costa Rica about the sustainability of the industry. Operators cited environmental pollution, crowding, and overdevelopment as primary concerns, but recognized that the local community was involved in environmental efforts, such as beach clean-ups, and sponsoring local surfers in competitions. Costa Rican surf operators and foreign surf operators who had been there for over 10 years were more aware of local community impacts and environmental degradation as a result of surf tourism. In response to the study results, Tantamjarik called for a more organized effort to promote sustainability among operators in the Costa Rican surf industry.
Buckley (2002b) examined the surf industry and surf tourism in the context of sustainable tourism. He examined crowding and carrying capacity in the Mentawaian Islands, suggesting solutions for surf tour operators who operate in the area, and advocating for surf tourism as an economic option for the local population (Buckley, 2002a). Conducting research in the same geographic area, but focusing on the impact of surf tourism on residents, Ponting and colleagues (2005) found that many local residents feel alienated from the surf tourism industry. They feel as if they have no part in the industry and no control over tourism development in their own communities. In a more recent study, Ponting (2009) found that surfers’ desire for perfect waves, uncrowded conditions, soft adventure, and tropical, exotic locations fueled by surf magazine imagery motivates them to travel to remote places like the Mentawaian Islands. In terms of residents, he argued that they end up being exploited for their natural resources.

Surf tourism scholars have not specifically studied the phenomenon of localism. Preston-Whyte (2002), Buckley (2002b), Tantamjarik (2004), and Ingersoll (2009) all reference it in their work, but with the exception of Ingersoll, whose work is reviewed in the following section, it is only mentioned in passing. A more in depth study of this phenomenon is needed to fill this gap in the surf tourism literature.

**Surfing and Localism**

Localism, defined as, “territorial practice whereby resident surfers in a given area try to exclude nonresident surfers through threat, intimidation, and occasionally violence; a predictable, if rarely defensible, surf world response to overcrowding” (Warshaw, 2003, p. 340), is considered to be a universal surf concept. As a form of *territoriality*, localism is a well-known concept in surf subculture (Sweeney, 2005). In 1995 Scheibel documented the cultural prevalence of the concept by examining the rhetoric of localism in letters to surf magazines. Later, Australian surfer
Nat Young (2000) assembled a book on the topic, titled Surf Rage, with contributions by surfers from all over the world who described their experiences with localism. Many cited incidents that earned media coverage, even legal action.

Crowding is cited as a trigger of localism in most definitions of the concept (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Ingersoll, 2009). While crowding and localism became more widespread after World War II, Hawaiian royals had been demarcating surfing territory since before colonization (Alessi, 2009; Warshaw, 2003). Ingersoll (2009) claims that the Hawaiian kapu system was similar to localism in that it established “pride, a pecking order, security, and etiquette in the water” (p. 254); however, the kapu system also incorporated a spiritual and political order for ancient Kanaka Maoli (Hawaiians). The modern group of Kanaka surfers known as Hui o He‘e Nalu has had to impose localism in order to recapture indigenous space that has been taken from them by the Western neocolonial tourism industry (Ingersoll, 2009).

Alessi (2009) alludes to Hardin’s Tragedy of the Commons when describing how surfers compete for something they all believe they have access to (i.e., waves). He also points out that waves are an inexhaustible resource that is not extracted, which is possibly why laws are not put in place to limit access (Alessi, 2009). Sweeney (2005) proposes using socio-biological, economic, and ethical models to examine localism. According to his socio-biological model, localism increases as the population of an area increases along with the proportion that surfs. Topography and local culture are mediating variables in this model. Localism is a form of maintaining a resource (waves) for a local “tribe.” His economic model suggests that localism increases the personal costs of surfing at a break (safety is threatened) and thus lowers the demand. His ethical model is more of an ethical code of reciprocity: if everyone follows certain rules, this will decrease the likelihood of violence. Through his proposed models, Sweeney begins to explore the idea of ownership, but surfers themselves take up where academics leave off by expanding more on the concept of ownership.
Long time surfer and journalist Nick Carroll (2000, p. 60), whose name all surfers recognize, suggests: “Many surfers who’ve spent years of their lives learning the curves and moods of a powerful and alluring surf spot feel a sense of ownership that makes land-based property rights seem feeble by comparison.” Kew (2000, p. 127) concedes that there are some surfers “who believe they possess some sort of rights to a specific beach.” The rules, or code of conduct, are one way in which surfers can control their behavior or “sense of ownership” within what they perceive to be their territory.

Rules, which revolve around who has the right of way in the surf break, are communicated to surfers as they learn to surf and gradually increase their skill level (Ford & Brown, 2006; Preston-Whyte, 2002). These rules, known as surf etiquette, help regulate the surf zone and, ideally, mitigate conflict (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Preston-Whyte, 2002; Scheibel, 1995). The person at the peak of the wave (i.e., closest to the breaking point of the wave) has priority and anyone who catches the wave in front of that person is “dropping in” on them (Preston-Whyte, 2002). Dropping in on someone may mean that the surfer is inexperienced, or is very experienced and is intentionally breaking the rules to assert dominance as a local (Preston-Whyte, 2002; Scheibel, 1995).

Unfortunately, much of the work by surf scholars on localism is based on their own experiences or anecdotal evidence, not empirical research. Many of the authors do not address the issue of localism in the context of tourism nor do they account for it in the context of developing countries. Several of the surfers who contributed to Young’s (2000) book, Surf Rage, mention localism, and Barilotti (2002) (quite possibly the most cited non-academic in surf tourism research) discusses how younger residents’ adoption of surf culture concepts, such as localism, in remote places like Nias, Indonesia, has led to death threats being made for territorial violations in the surf. Scheibel (1995) also says localism is part of surf culture, and other authors (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006) would have us believe that it is as well. While some take it for
granted that localism emerges in all surfing destinations, one has to wonder if it naturally happens, or if it is introduced through surfers who bring it with them from their Western cultures, as psychologist Dr. Paul Chandler suggests (in Rielly, 2000).

In summary, surf localism is a form of territoriality, not place, crowding or territorialization. As a form of territoriality, local surfers who perceive ownership over a surf break attempt to control the behavior of non-local surfers in the area of that surf break by making sure everyone follows the rules, not allowing non-local surfers to catch as many waves, excluding them from the space initially, or pushing them out of the space through intimidation or violence (i.e., regulation). The boundaries of the surfing area are the waves that are breaking at that particular spot, delineated by the locals as theirs. And, because high and low tides, weather patterns, and coastal geology influence where waves break and how good the surf is, competition for waves can be fierce at certain times, but not at other times. Similar to fishermen, surfers’ territoriality may be cyclical, affected by the rhythm of the tides and the seasons (Malmberg, 1984).

Communities in developing countries who are reliant on surf tourism for employment and foreign exchange cannot afford extreme levels of localism. Local surfers have rights to their surfing space, and increasing numbers of surf tourists will force them to negotiate tourists’ use of that surfing space. Hence, studying what localism is and what it currently means or could mean for a surf destination within a developing country will help to fill gaps in the tourism literature with respect to surf tourism, territoriality, and localism.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to investigate the extent of territoriality (in the form of localism) that exists amongst local residents who surf in Las Salinas, Nicaragua. During a previous research experience in this locale I heard that local surfers have had
confrontations with visiting surfers regarding their use of the popular surf break, Popoyo Reef. This study sought to address the extent of these confrontations, as well as local surfers’, resident foreigners’ and tourists’ opinions on territoriality and the issue of localism at Popoyo Reef. The research questions that were addressed include:

R1: Does territoriality of the surf zone (i.e., localism) exist for residents of Las Salinas who surf?

R2: If localism does exist, how do residents articulate the meaning of their territory and how is it manifested?

R3: What rules exist within the defined territory?

R4: Who is a local and who is an outsider?

R5: Do surf tourists, surf operators and resident foreigners feel local surfers are territorial and express localism at Popoyo Reef?

**Study Context: Nicaragua**

Nicaragua has had a long history of corrupt dictators, interference from the United States in politics and economics, a civil war, and natural disasters (Cuppes, 2004; Hunt, 2011; T. W. Walker, 2003). When Spanish colonizers arrived, much of the local indigenous population was decimated through disease or sold into the slave trade to other parts of the Spanish empire (Dore, 2006; T. W. Walker, 2003). Constant fighting between the Conservatives of Granada and the Liberals of Leon, as well as steps taken towards independence that culminated in sovereignty in 1838, led to a central government that was in a state of chaos and disorder (Dore, 2006; T. W. Walker, 2003). Jose Santos Zelaya, a Liberal who came to power in 1893, instituted many positive reforms in Nicaragua, such as the separation of church and state and education reform (T. W. Walker, 2003). However, he also invaded Honduras several times and abolished indigenous
communities in 1906 (which would later be re-instated by Conservative governments in 1914 and 1918) (Dore, 2006; Membreño Idiáquez, 1992; T. W. Walker, 2003).

Several decades of U.S. occupation and puppet governments from 1912-1933 ended with an unsuccessful rebellion against U.S. forces and the Nicaraguan National Guard led by Augusto Cesar Sandino, who would inspire a more successful rebellion held many years later (T. W. Walker, 2003). Anastasio Somoza Garcia, former head of the national guard, assumed power after the rebellion, and his family maintained power with the help of the U.S. until 1979 (T. W. Walker, 2003).

In 1979, after waging a year of war, the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (i.e., FSLN) succeeded in the overthrow of the Somoza regime. The popular movement had been inspired by the Somoza’s decades of neglect of impoverished Nicaraguans in favor of capitalist development which only benefited the Somoza family and their small circle of national elites (Higgins & Coen, 1992; T. W. Walker, 2003). Despite the negative perceptions of the Reagan Administration, the revolution in Nicaragua did not land the country in a position like Cuba or other communist countries (Higgins & Coen, 1992; T. W. Walker, 2003). Health and educational reforms were the most important advances made during this time, along with community organization (Higgins & Coen, 1992; T. W. Walker, 2003). The Sandinistas tried to maintain a mixed economy (through standardizing food prices while still exporting agricultural products) and even honored the Somoza regime’s foreign debts (Higgins & Coen, 1992; T. W. Walker, 2003). The contra war waged with the help of Caribbean coast indigenous groups, combined with the mandatory draft and the seizure of indigenous land for communal cooperatives, diminished the achievements of the revolution in many Nicaraguans’ eyes who responded by electing the Conservatives back into power in 1990 (Dore, 2006; Hale, 1996; Higgins & Coen, 1992; Membreño Idiáquez, 1992).
In the 1990s and the 2000s neoliberal economic policies were put back into place through structural adjustment programs under the guidance of multinational lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Cupples, 2004; Hunt, 2011; T. W. Walker, 2003). Structural adjustment programs attempted to stabilize the economy by increasing foreign exchange through agricultural exports and tourism (Chok, MacBeth, & Warren, 2007; Cupples, 2004; Hunt, 2011; Schilcher, 2007). Unfortunately, this restructuring of the economy led to decreased government funding of social programs such as healthcare and education, and the privileging of foreign enterprise development over local business (Cupples, 2004; Matteucci et al., 2008).

In 2006, Daniel Ortega, former president during the Sandinista revolution, was elected to power (Lean, 2007). He was re-elected in 2011 (Consejo Supremo Electoral, 2011). His leadership was good for tourism because he encouraged development. One of his advisors even created a series of diplomatic outlets where foreign visitors could pay U.S. dollars for hard to find goods, similar to Cuba’s tourism economy (Wallace, 1991). Even now, the current Sandinista administration is supportive of tourism as a means of generating foreign exchange (Babb, 2004; Hunt, 2011).

Today, due to structural adjustment policies, various laws have been instituted to increase foreign investment in tourism (Hunt, 2011; Matteucci et al., 2008). Laws 360 and 495, for example, provide generous tax breaks (some for up to 10 years) to investors who start tourism businesses (Hunt, 2011; Matteucci et al., 2008). Of particular importance to this study is Law 344, which provides for the equal treatment of foreign and domestic investment and the right of foreigners to own property in Nicaragua (La Asamblea Nacional De La Republica de Nicaragua, 2000). This has made coastal areas especially appealing for foreigners interested in second home ownership (Matteucci et al., 2008).
Nicaragua also is growing as a surf destination because nearby countries such as Costa Rica and Mexico are becoming more crowded and more expensive for surfers (Tantamjarik, 2004; Weisberg, 2010). Since surfers travel to get away from crowds and find the perfect wave, remote areas like Las Salinas, are more and more appealing (Alessi, 2009; Ponting, 2009).

**Las Salinas**

Las Salinas, Nicaragua is an indigenous community of approximately 4,450 people (which includes both Las Salinas and La Virgen Morena) located in the department of Rivas, on the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua (Figure 1-1). La Virgen Morena, which is a part of Las Salinas, is under the indigenous government as well, but some people insist it is a separate community. The only reason it has a different name is because someone found a burned statue of the Virgin Mary along the road and from then on the area was known as The Brown Virgin (i.e., La Virgen Morena). Las Salinas is a two to three hour drive from the capital of Managua.
The area around Las Salinas is experiencing tremendous growth in both vacation home ownership and surf tourism (Matteucci et al., 2008; Weisberg, 2010). It has also drawn the attention of speculators: some investors have purchased land for a very low price from farmers and then sold it to other foreigners (Matteucci et al., 2008). Most of the vacation homes are built a bit further north of Las Salinas. This is due to the indigenous community designation of Las
Salinas. Typically, the community’s board of directors oversees the “sale” of land, which is really a land lease since the sale of indigenous land is not allowed (Membreño Idiáquez, 1992).

Indigenous members of the community can “sell” their land rights to someone else (indigenous, Nicaragua, or foreign). Even though it cannot technically be bought as private property, people still say they are “buying” and “selling.” For example, foreigners can buy land but they still pay taxes into the local indigenous government, so the land is still considered to be “communal land.” As one resident foreigner said: “…Basically, as long as I pay my monthly taxes, the property is mine.” They can even “sell” it to someone else, but that person also has to pay taxes to the local indigenous government. Despite the unique nature of indigenous communal land, it has also become subject to market forces: the land lease is also priced based on how close it is to the ocean. The complex nature of “buying” communal land has kept some foreigners away or hesitant to buy. There are several foreigners that have property in Las Salinas or La Virgen Morena, but very few compared to Playa Guasacate (which will be discussed later). According to one study done in the department of Rivas, written leases associated with or ownership of these indigenous territories have only recently been established (Matteucci et al., 2008). Thus, everyone in the community who has land pays a lease on it, but foreigners pay significantly more than local indigenous members of the community. Due to the communal ownership of land and because residents exert some control, residents of Las Salinas have not been priced out of their community unlike other areas of Rivas (Hunt, 2011).

There are two foreign-owned hotels in the community (but located down a side road leading out to the ocean) and both of these businesses pay taxes (priced per manzana) directly to the indigenous government. Magnific Rock, the newest hotel, was established about two years ago after a change in ownership. The previous owner died and the business was sold to an Australian. The previous owner had not gotten it up and running as a full service hotel before it was sold.
The majority of development is along a strip of land north of Las Salinas, in an area known as Playa Guasacate, and the beachfront area is supposedly leased for 99 years by the municipality. Some of the land located further from the ocean in this area apparently can be bought and sold. Many of the businesses, such as a surf shop and ding repair business, restaurants, hostels, surf camps, condominiums and vacation homes are owned by foreigners. However, a number of hotels, hostels and homes are owned by Nicaraguans; only two hotels are owned by people from Las Salinas, the rest of the owners tend to be from other parts of Nicaragua. Much of this area has not been developed; there are still long stretches of cow pasture, forest or marsh. Inland of this area, across the salt flats, are hills where Americans and other foreigners have bought land and built vacation homes. One of the surf resorts is located at the top of the main hill. This area is known as Gringo Hills. Some foreigners live there all or part of the year. Some have formed close ties with the community. This includes foreigners who have come for various reasons to help or work with the community or who have married a Nicaraguan woman or man.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several Nicaraguan surfers from Managua started coming to Las Salinas and camping out. Other surfers from Latin America and elsewhere were seen around town every now and then, staying in La Tica, the only hotel in or near Las Salinas at the time. As early as 1992, several local men started surfing. About 15 years ago, American surfers started to visit Las Salinas. Several stayed and started their own businesses near the community, taking advantage of inexpensive land and generous foreign investment laws. As a result, Popoyo Reef, the surf break nearest the community and the area that initially attracted surfers, has become a well known spot due to the high quality surf produced by the rock reef.

The indigenous community of Las Salinas has long relied on access to the ocean for traditional subsistence resources; however, some of the hotels near the community are starting to block access to the beach (Matteucci et al., 2008). A large portion of land near the ocean is
devoted to salt production (these are owned by the salt worker cooperatives), and residents are able to walk through these salt flats and cross the river to arrive at the ocean. There are several ways to get to the beach. Some residents on motorcycles or bikes can get to Popoyo Reef down a dirt road going through a property that ends in a parking lot and large rancho with stairs leading down to the beach. Walking down these stairs puts one on the beach directly in front of Popoyo Reef. This was built within the past year (2011-2012).

Las Salinas is a close-knit community divided by a dirt road leading into town from the department capital of Rivas (Figure 1-2). Salt flats take up most of the land nearest to the ocean, and a river runs through the town and empties into the ocean on the north side of the community. There are at least three pulperias (stores with clothes, general goods, and packaged food); several small cafés or food stands that sell fried chicken or grilled meat with plantain chips, or tacos with coleslaw; and four or five bars (establishments that only sell beer and liquor) within the community. There is one store that sells fruits and vegetables. Some of the pulperias also carry bananas, tomatoes and onions. Trucks drive through town on a weekly basis with seasonal fruits and vegetables. Gasoline is sold next to one of the stores, but it is not a Western version of a gas station by any means. Locals own all of these businesses. Men also come around to peoples’ houses selling clothing. Women make bread and tortillas in their homes and send their children around to the houses to sell them. Some people sell phone cards out of their homes and also have snacks and candy available for purchase. There is a pharmacy in town and a public health clinic between Las Salinas and El Limon Dos, the community to the south. But, some residents prefer to travel further south to the private clinic in El Limon, near the resort community of Rancho Santana.

There is one Catholic Church and a Church of the Nazarene (evangelical) in Las Salinas. There are several other evangelical churches in La Virgen, including a church started by one of the surf camp owners. There is also a Jehovah’s Witness Hall in La Virgen. There is a school
with primary (elementary-middle school) and secondary (high school) levels. The preschool uses the evangelical church near the school. Preschoolers and secondary students attend school until midday and then primary students attend from midday until dusk. There is a library next to the school that was funded by Fundacion Aprender. It is managed by an expatriate Argentinean woman and her American husband who live in the community. The most recent project that the Foundation was working on was a sport court that could be used for tennis, basketball or rollerblade hockey. It was still being completed in July of 2012.

In the main part of town there is a small park with playground equipment and fields for baseball and soccer. Another baseball diamond is across from one of the foreign-owned hotels on the side road towards the ocean. Heading north, after passing the school and the library, a right turn leads down towards the hot springs in the community, which were renovated in the last few years. Previously, anyone could use the two large pools (cement siding with dirt bottoms) and three wash areas. Recently, a guardhouse and bridge have been added; one of the pools has been filled with cement; the ground around the bathing pools and wash areas has been covered with cement; and tables, bathrooms and changing rooms have been added. There are now fees to enter the pools; local residents pay 10 cordobas and foreigners pay 30 cordobas.

Each home generally has multiple generations living in one house. Grown children often share the homes with their parents and their spouses who move in with them. Some families who are better off are able to move out on their own. These people are often given parcels of land from their parents so they can build a small room or house to live in. Others buy land from family members that may have inherited it from their parents, but no longer live in the community.

The families are very large, the mother of the family I stayed with had seven children, six of whom were grown and had families of their own. My host “parents” would talk about how their parents had even more children, often between 15 and 20. However, birth control appears to
be readily available to the newest generation. When I was in Las Salinas in 2010, three of my host siblings had one child, while another had two. When I returned in 2012, there was only one new child (to the couple that had the two children) and another of my host siblings was pregnant. In many places in Latin America, this would be very unusual to have so few children born in a span of two and a half years. The oldest daughter told me she did not want more than one and that was all she and her husband were going to have. Not all of the couples who live together are married; two of my host family members lived with the mothers of their children and had never married them.

Figure 1-2. Map of Las Salinas.

The rainy season in Las Salinas is from May through October. The dry season runs from November through April. Salt production is the mainstay of the community for the dry season,
with agriculture taking over in the rainy season. Fishing is generally a subsistence activity, but some residents work in Astillero, a community to the north where there are fish markets.

Tourism has become an important activity for Las Salinas, and helped to diversify the local economy. Many of the men are employed in construction, building vacation houses in the resort communities to the south (Rancho Santana and Hacienda Iguana) and Playa Guasacate. They work for a local man who is in business with several resident foreigners. Many also work maintaining properties or guarding foreigners’ houses. Some men work as cooks in the hotels. Some of the women work in the restaurants and hotels cleaning, waitressing, and attending the front desk.

**Study Background**

In 2010, I conducted an unrelated study in Las Salinas. At that time, and without prompting, several residents discussed localism with me. One man told me he could tell visiting surfers when they needed to leave his surf break. Another man expressed his disgust with attitudes like those he saw in the young locals, and how he tried to dissuade them from giving visitors a difficult time. This led me to question whether localism is a problem in the local surf community. If, as the literature suggests, localism leads to violence on a regular basis, it could undermine the important economic contribution surf tourism is making to the community.

Further, if values of “ownership” or defense of resources are transferred from Western tourists, there may be other negative values locals are learning, but have not yet been documented.

According to Ingersoll (2009), localism is an attempt to reclaim indigenous space. If localism in Las Salinas was being learned from foreigners, maybe locals were using it to their advantage as a form of empowerment in the face of increasing tourism development and expatriate business owners. I believed that conducting research on localism in Las Salinas would
not only inform the local situation, but could lead to the creation of a model which could be transferred to other destinations where localism needed to be examined.

Methods

My field work took place in Las Salinas, Nicaragua over nine weeks between mid-May and mid-July 2012. During this time I used ethnographic methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews (see Appendix), to address all of the research questions (Agar, 1996; Dewalt, Dewalt, & Wayland, 2000). These methods were chosen because I wanted to fully immerse myself into the community to understand localism, a cultural phenomenon in surfing (Scheibel, 1995; Warshaw, 2003). The unit of analysis was the local surf community of Las Salinas. By using both participant observation and in-depth interviews, I was able to triangulate my sources and achieve a richer description of the community I was studying. Observations also allowed me to disconfirm or confirm comments study participants made in their interviews.

Pilot Test

My questions were specific to Spanish-speaking surfers from Las Salinas; thus, a pilot test with them was impossible. However, the husband of the American I knew who originally connected me to Las Salinas was also a member of my host family. He was in the U.S. before I went to Nicaragua and I was able to pilot test some of the questions with him. Based on his responses, I modified the questions to make them clearer. For example, in the pilot test I found that the first question, “Do local surfers feel that they are owners of a space in the ocean or the beach?” and the second question “Do they feel they are the owners of the waves?” were difficult
to ask and somewhat confusing. Hence, the order of these questions was switched and became 1) “Do local surfers think they are the owners of the waves?” and 2) “As a local surfer, where is your area or space? Is it Popoyo to Beach Break or where?” In addition, some of the follow up questions such as, “Do some surfers think they are the owners of the waves and some who don’t think this?” got eliminated because they seemed to be redundant and because much of the time the answer would be included in the response to the first question. During the actual interviews, I also realized I needed to ask follow-up questions to clarify certain questions and concepts (e.g., when I asked about the rules of surfing, I sometimes added: “When you’re about to take off, who has the right of way on a wave?”)

**Sampling and Data Collection**

When using an ethnographic approach, “…numerous artifacts, interviews and observations should be collected until the workings of the cultural group are clear” (p. 157). In order to collect interviews, I used a variety of sampling methods. Since the research questions applied to three different groups of informants (local surfers, surf tour operators and surf tourists), it was necessary to interview members of all three groups, along with observing their interactions with one another in the surf and community.

I used snowball sampling (i.e., ask previous study participants to introduce me to surfers in the community) (Kuzel, 1999) to obtain a sample of 23 local surfers from the community. In snowball sampling, the researcher samples to the point of redundancy in the interviews, while searching for sources that provide disconfirming evidence. This is generally achieved with 15 to 20 participants (Kuzel, 1999). A sample of 23 exceeds this requirement, enabling me to achieve redundancy and find disconfirming evidence in the interviews. The large sample was also due to my efforts to speak to as many members of the local culture (surf community) as possible. I
accomplished this goal by interviewing all of the local surfers I observed regularly surfing at Popoyo Reef.

Sampling began with contacting several local surfers I had interviewed in a previous study. I also identified other study participants as follows. One surfer I spoke with the first day I went to the beach told me he would speak to his friend (who also surfed) about doing an interview. When we went to find his friend, another friend was there who also agreed to be interviewed. Second, a member of my host family came with me to find one surfer he knew of and told me how and where to find others (including the first local surfer from Las Salinas who no longer surfed). Third, I met some study participants at the beach and scheduled interviews with them at a different time. Overall, I would meet participants at the library, find them in their homes, or occasionally they would come and find me at my host family’s house.

In order to answer research question 5 (i.e., “Do surf tourists, surf operators and resident foreigners feel local surfers are territorial and express localism at Popoyo Reef?”), I used a convenience sampling approach to access surf tourists. I approached tourists on the beach, encountered them at hotels, restaurants and surf camps, and in the parking area near the main surf break. Some tourists (n=5) declined to be interviewed because they were about to go surfing or were leaving to find waves somewhere else. I interviewed 27 tourists. The surf tour operator category not only included operators, but also “resident foreigners” once I realized how many lived in the area, but did not necessarily own surf businesses, yet surfed on a regular basis. Resident foreigners made up a significant portion of the surf community of Popoyo Reef and needed to be included in the study. Similar to the ethnographic sampling approach I took with local surfers, I also attempted to speak with as many prominent surf tourism business owners as possible in the Popoyo/Guasacate area. These key informant interviews started with surf camp operators, but went on to include foreign surf guides, one Nicaraguan business manager (who spent considerable time in the U.S.) and resident foreigners living there part/most/all of the year.
engaged in other business pursuits. The reason for this was because these resident foreigners surfed and interacted with local surfers on a regular basis and could also address the questions I had.

Other key informant interviews, which helped provide background on Nicaraguan tourism and the community of Las Salinas, were conducted with government officials such as a member of the board of directors (community government) of Las Salinas and the Rivas delegate for INTUR (the national Nicaraguan tourism organization). I also interviewed an Argentinean woman who lives in Las Salinas and runs a foundation that helps children and residents of Las Salinas with education and other projects; a man trying to organize a local surf club for the younger locals of Las Salinas; and a member of a religious organization of surfers based in the U.S. (Waves of Love) who had brought volunteers to Las Salinas for two months to start women’s groups, assist with starting the local surf club, and do other community projects.

Participant observation included engaging in the daily life of my host family and observing host-guest interactions on the beach, in the water, and at various local establishments. I kept a journal to document all of the events that occurred each day when I was not surfing. After I went surfing, I went back to the house and immediately documented my observations through field notes (Bogdewic, 1999). These detailed surfing field notes included an observation column where I recorded the number of surfers in the water and observations of what occurred during the time I was in the water, an interpretation column where I interpreted what I observed, and a reflection column where I recorded my personal thoughts, feelings, and emotions about situations in order to keep perspective on what was going on as well as my position as a researcher (Bogdewic, 1999). Participant observation allowed me to gain insight into a culture, which could not have been achieved through interviews alone (Dewalt et al., 2000). This technique also allowed me to reduce the reactivity of the study participants. By living with a local family and observing me in the community and the surf on a regular basis they became used to my presence
and, as a result, were less likely to change their behavior around me and more willing to engage in interviews. Participants also gained a greater sense of trust and rapport with me since we were interacting on a regular basis (Bernard, 2006).

In order to obtain background information on tourism and surfing in Rivas and Nicaragua, I collected printed materials such as statistics from INTUR; tourist brochures from INTUR, hotels, and surf camps; a Rivas surf guide from 2009; and the tourism development plan for the municipality of Tola (where Las Salinas is located). I also photographed the community, the beach and new things that had been built since the last time I had been in Las Salinas. I also took pictures of people surfing on three different days, and three separate videos of my bike ride to the parking lot close to the surf break, my usual walk to Popoyo Reef through the salt fields, and my bike ride to Playa Guasacate all the way to where it stops north of the river mouth. While I did not take pictures of every local surfer, I made copies of the pictures I did take and gave them to the locals. These materials, along with my daily journal, assisted me in obtaining a rich description of the study site and community.

I used a number of techniques to ensure validity. As I previously mentioned, my integration into the local community and engagement with participant observation helped to reduce participants’ reactivity. Maxwell (2005) holds that intensive and long term involvement, “rich” data, respondent validation, searching for negative cases, data triangulation, and comparison contribute to validity. I spent nine weeks living in the local community and interacted with study participants on a daily basis. My daily journal, field notes from 35 days of observation, verbatim transcripts of interviews in the native language, photographs, and video were sources of “rich” data. In terms of respondent validation, if something had been unclear in an interview, I went back to participants and asked them to clarify what they meant. This occurred with five participants. In three cases, I wrote down what they said in my journal or noted it on their interview transcript. In the other two cases, I recorded another interview with
them. Throughout the course of my study, I tried to find participants with different versions of a story or different opinions on an issue. In terms of comparison, I compared local surfers’ responses. I also observed interactions in the surf zone on different days. Sometimes there were more people, less locals, or bigger waves and this allowed me to compare observations I made under different circumstances and conditions.

**Data Analysis**

Common aspects of ethnographic analysis are “…description, analysis and interpretation of the culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2013, p. 197). The first stage of analysis begins during data collection, not afterwards, because each interview or observation period brings new questions to the fore which need answers and more data in order to refine the story that is unfolding (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This involves looking for negative (or disconfirming) evidence to obtain the full story of what is happening within the culture (Kuzel, 1999; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I did this throughout the fieldwork process by seeking out new informants who would give me further insight into a particular situation or provide me with a different viewpoint; asking study participants about certain behaviors I noticed during my observations; and having many informal conversations (noted in my research journal) with my host family about community elections, land distribution and other current events happening in the community helped me to gain a more in depth understanding of the backdrop of my study.

After data collection, all interviews were transcribed into the language in which they were conducted. They also were analyzed in this language so as to not lose participants’ original meaning. Since ethnography lends itself to narratives and stories of what people said or did (Agar, 1996), this proved to be the best way of examining the data.
I used a deductive approach to coding the data since I was examining it within the context of territoriality. I created a table detailing the five research questions addressed in this study and the specific questions asked of each group of informants (Table 1-1). I coded the responses to each of the questions informants were asked in response to each research question. This step can be understood more clearly by referencing each of the colored rows in Table 1-1. Coding the responses in this way allowed me to compare each participant’s response and to look for similarities and differences between homogenous group members (locals to other locals, resident foreigners to other resident foreigners and tourists to other tourists) (Glaser, 1965).

It is common during in-depth interviews for the researcher to ask follow up questions or modify the order and/or the way in which questions are asked, and for respondents to volunteer information before they are asked a given question (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Thus, responses to the follow-up questions were included in the coding of the main questions and all of the responses were scanned for comments that pertained to each research question. For example, during an interview with local surfers they told me how frustrated they were by American tourists and said something about being the owners of the waves. I included this when coding responses to the question, “Do local surfers think they own the waves?” even though that was not their response to that particular question. Alternatively, two separate tourists sought me out wanting to share an incident that had occurred while they were surfing. I grouped this information in with their responses to questions about issues they encountered with locals.
Table 1-1. Coding of interview items by respondent category and research question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does territoriality of the surf zone exist for residents of Las Salinas who surf?</td>
<td><em>Local surfers</em>: Do local surfers think they own the waves?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>As a local, where is your area, or space?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If localism does exist, how do residents articulate the meaning of their territory and how is it manifested?</td>
<td><em>Do locals tell tourists what to do in the waves?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What rules exist within the defined territory?</td>
<td><em>Are there rules in the waves?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is a local and who is an outsider?</td>
<td><em>Who is considered a local surfer?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My field notes, research journal and photographs provided alternative data sources to confirm or call into question what participants said in the interviews. This approach to data collection is commonly known as data triangulation (multiple sources of data), which helps to provide a more holistic view of the culture in which one is immersed (in my case, the local surf culture of Las Salinas), and to contribute to validity (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003;
By utilizing multiple accounts, documenting observations through notes and pictures, and using different stakeholders as participants (locals, resident foreigners and tourists), I was able to gain a more truthful account of localism at Popoyo Reef than if I had simply relied on interviews with locals or one source of data. I went through my field notes and noted observations that pertained to the research questions. These observations included notes about surf conditions, numbers of surfers in the water on each day, conversations I had with tourists or locals and behavior I observed that would confirm or deny things people said in interviews. Ethnographers also look for patterns in the behavior of the group they are studying and this proved to be important in coding my observations (Agar, 1996). I went through my observations and noted instances such as the times locals would surf, their behavior around tourists, especially if it was crowded, and where they positioned themselves in the surf. My reflections in my field notes on my position as a researcher provided the information for the section below where I discuss my personal bias and reflexivity. A second researcher read my journal, field notes, and some of the interview transcripts. This assisted in the analysis through the process of peer debriefing (i.e., the second researcher challenges the primary researcher’s assumptions and conclusions) and also contributes to the reliability of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Positioning the Researcher**

Many researchers have noted the importance of reflexivity in qualitative inquiry (Agar, 1996; Creswell, 2013; May & Perry, 2011). Ethnographers and qualitative researchers become part of the communities they are studying and, as a result, it is important to reflect on that position and who the person is that is interpreting the data (Creswell, 2013). Researchers are not objective observers who have a privileged gaze on the community of interest, they are a part of it (Agar,
Therefore, it is important for me to be transparent about my position and bias. Following are six different points about my position as a researcher and my potential biases.

I am a pragmatist. I will use the method that best answers the research question, is appropriate for the target population, and is culturally appropriate. In this study, no scale existed to measure the culturally bound construct of localism; thus, I chose to use an ethnographic approach. The study site, Las Salinas, Nicaragua, is home to many people who have a low level of education, are concerned with giving the “right” answer when presented with something like a survey, and have a strong narrative tradition in their own culture. Hence, I used qualitative approaches to collect my data. Conducting interviews gave me insight into how people felt about their surfing experiences and the space, and observing enabled me to confirm or disconfirm what people told me about their and others’ behavior.

I had been in the community before; thus, potential study participants remembered me and appeared to be more willing to trust me than someone they had never met. Further, my knowledge of the community meant that it did not take as long to begin my research because I already knew my way around and already had inside connections to the people I wanted to include in the study. My previous experience living in Central America and staying in the community gave me the cross-cultural experience I needed to conduct this study. The ability to speak English and Spanish (particularly Nicaraguan words), and move easily from one culture to the other, enabled me to speak to a wide variety of study participants, whether they were community members or high power real estate developers.

Being in the community previously helped with the study, but so did my being female, an American, attractive, and able to surf. Men were not threatened by me like they might have been with a male researcher. Local surfers were willing to help me out, do interviews, and be far more honest with me because I was a woman. They would tell me about problems they encountered with American tourists. This surprised me because it was as if they had forgotten I was American.
They also complained about American surfers. It was obvious that they were speaking about the men. They even used the masculine form when they discussed tourists who surfed. One local even confessed to me that if a tourist dropped in on his wave and it was a woman, he would tell her to go! If it was a man, he said he would get angry and possibly yell at the surfer. Their openness with me was surprising at times. Even when talking to me about surf camp or hotel owners, they said things that indicated to me they viewed me more as a community member than an American who would go tell the hotel owners what they had said.

Nicaraguan men have an affinity for American or European women. American women are viewed as exotic. Knowing this from my previous experience in Nicaragua, I made a decision to dress more conservatively than most other women would in a tropical country at the beach. I wore long board shorts and a rash guard (which was either tank top-style, short or long-sleeved) that covered my torso when I went surfing. Realizing the attention I was going to draw as an American woman, I knew I did not need to exacerbate it further by surfing in a bikini. I believe I was invited into people’s homes, given motorcycle rides to and from the beach, and invited to go surfing because I was an American woman. Many times I was told I was beautiful and asked if I had a boyfriend, or if I went out to parties. The more I went surfing, the more the local surfers recognized me and came to know me and why I was there. In addition, the greater the number of locals in the water, the greater the chance I had to get on a wave in a crowd because typically at least one of the locals would call me into a wave. Tourists did not offer the same courtesy; I was just another one of them.

Being an American also was helpful in speaking with tourists and foreign owners of businesses. Initially, tourists would assume I was one of them, so it was easy to start up conversations with them. Most people were willing to talk to me and very interested in my dissertation once I explained why I was there, having never heard of anyone studying surf tourism before. Had I been Nicaraguan, it may have been more difficult to enter a hotel premise or
restaurant and ask to speak with the owner. As an American, I looked like a tourist, and was welcomed at most establishments and granted interviews with people. I received a cooler welcome from some foreign business owners who were suspicious about why I wanted to ask them questions about their business and how long they had been there.

I have several biases that also may have an effect on the results. First, I am biased towards the local community. This comes from the two years and three months I lived in Guatemala as a Peace Corps volunteer. This also comes from the critical perspective on international development I have obtained throughout my graduate education. The global North has a privileged position not only in the world economy, but in the academy as well, and I acknowledge this. However, despite this privilege, I hope that my research contributes to the pursuit of social justice for marginalized groups. I also recognize that I cannot speak for my informants; I can only provide an interpretation of my findings after becoming a part of their community for a period of time.

I also am a surfer, which has the potential to bias my results in that I am an insider to the global surf culture. I was raised in a surfing family. I have been surf kayaking since I was 12 and I have traveled to 3 different countries to compete at a world level in the sport. My board surfing career began 5 years ago, but much of my surfing knowledge has easily translated from one sport to the other. Being able to surf, however, allowed me to observe study participants and tourists “in action.” Surfing also enabled me to understand what the surfers were talking about in their interviews. Someone who did not surf would most likely not have been able to slip into a local surf community and do this study or understand what local surfers were saying.
Chapter 2

Putting the “local” in localism: Surfer identities and territorialization of the surf zone

This chapter represents an article that has been prepared for The Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Thus, it was written and formatted with this particular journal in mind. Also, this article refers to resident foreigners as “foreign resident surfers” and local surfers as “indigenous surfers” since the article deals with identity of surfers and needs to explicitly distinguish between the two groups. The article addresses research question 4: Who is a local and who is an outsider?

Introduction

Surf tourism has been promoted as a viable form of sustainable tourism. It is far more environmentally friendly than industrial logging and agriculture on precious ocean resources, and it provides residents of communities adjacent to surf destinations with employment opportunities as well as potential funding for community needs, education and health initiatives (Buckley, 2002b; O’Brien & Ponting, 2013). Further, many surf destinations have small-scale (e.g., surf camps, boat tours involving overnight stays) not large-scale (e.g., resorts, high rise hotels) tourism development, which appeals to many surfers and creates an environment more conducive to community-based tourism development (Alessi, 2009; Buckley, 2002b; Ormrod, 2005).

The reality of surf tourism may not align with the vision of sustainable development. Surf tourism is highly colonial, tends toward enclave-style accommodations, and can contribute to social and environmental conflict in communities (Barilotti, 2002; Buckley, 2002b; Hill & Abbott, 2009; Ingersoll, 2009; Ponting et al., 2005). As the sustainable tourism literature has
shown, conflict between tourism developers and local communities has a negative impact on sustainable development (Mbaiwa, 2005; Ponting et al., 2005). Localism (a form of human territoriality) is another conflict documented in surf tourism destinations from Costa Rica to Indonesia (Barilotti, 2002; Krause, 2013). Human territoriality is defined as the combined elements of perceived ownership of a space, delineation of the boundaries of the space, and regulating behavior within those boundaries (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1983). These components are seen in localism when surfers who live near a surf break perceive it as theirs (i.e., perceived ownership of space); the waves in the surf break are treated by locals as “boundaries” (i.e., delineation of boundaries); and threats, intimidation, and violence are used by surfers in order to keep non-residents out of their surf break (i.e., regulating behavior within boundaries) (Sweeney, 2005; Warshaw, 2003). Localism has implications for sustainable tourism development including, but not limited to, a reduction in the number of tourists, which could undermine the entire local tourism industry, upon which locals are dependent for jobs.

Prior to determining the range of implications from localism, it is important to document the identity of the “locals” that may be perpetuating localism. In surf destinations it is often not clear who are local resident surfers. They may be members of the local indigenous community or the foreign resident community (i.e., moved to the community for the good surf conditions, bought property, and started surf businesses). While foreign resident surfers may believe they are locals (Krause, 2013), indigenous surfers may not agree with their assessment. As more foreign tourism developers comes in, indigenous surfers have to compete with these foreign resident surfers to territorialize (claim) (Medina, 1999; Wainwright & Robertson, 2003) the surf space. Each group may believe they have rights to the space for conflicting reasons, which may include cultural identity (Medina, 1999).

The overall purpose of this study is to examine how resident surfers (indigenous and foreign) of Nicaragua’s Popoyo Reef use their identity as local surfers to territorialize the surf
space. This will be accomplished by: (a) establishing who indigenous surfers and foreign resident surfers identify as a local surfer; (b) examining the ways in which foreign resident surfers, despite how they may have verbally defined themselves, perpetuate localism through their behaviors; and (c) observing the interactions between the two groups. Sustainable tourism development occurs when foreign tourism developers and other foreigners who live in the space respect the local community’s rights to space on land and in the water. The incidents of unsustainable practice in surf tourism destinations may come from foreign resident surfers’ belief that they have the same rights to space as locals and do not need to take the local community into account, especially in the surf zone. Analyzing these conflicting claims to space is important in determining ways in which surf tourism might be developed in a more sustainable manner.

Nicaragua provides an excellent setting for examining conflicting local identities in a surf tourism destination. Having recently hosted its first world-level surfing competition, it is on the brink of becoming a major surf destination. Not as crowded as its neighbor to the south, Costa Rica, Nicaragua appeals to surfers because of the predominantly offshore winds caused by the large lakes in the western part of the country (Weisberg, 2010). This effect, in combination with swells from the Pacific and rock reefs, creates ideal surf conditions most of the year. The country’s generous tax policies and foreign investment laws also contribute to its popularity amongst foreigners, many of whom have purchased land (Hunt, 2011), opened surf tour operations, and staked claims on land and in the water. Local indigenous residents have begun benefiting by working for these operators as cooks, maids and construction workers. Many have learned to surf and a few have even become surf guides.

Following is a review of the literature on surf tourism, localism and identity. Then, the methods used in this study, the results, and implications the results have for the study of localism as well as sustainable surf tourism development are discussed.
Surfing has a highly colonial past, including efforts by missionaries to rid the Hawaiian Islands of the sport and other traditional activities (Ingersoll, 2009). Many Native Hawaiians ignored missionaries’ advice and continued surfing (I. H. Walker, 2011), but were tested once again by American businessmen who, at the turn of the 20th century, introduced conflicting narratives about the sport. They claimed Alexander Ford Hume revived the sport, robbing Hawaiians of their stake in surfing (Ingersoll, 2009). As the tourism industry grew, Native Hawaiians became some of the most successful businessmen on the islands: they ran their own surf schools and courted American women, reaping the benefits of surf tourism and maintaining control over their ocean territory (I. H. Walker, 2008). However, as time moved on, American investors took over more Hawaiian terrestrial territory and Native Hawaiians became marginalized on their own land (e.g., had to move because of rising land prices and tourism development) (I. H. Walker, 2011).

Americans have colonized the sport and made it their own. This is represented in the classic 1964 surf movie, *The Endless Summer*, which legitimized Americans as colonial ambassadors of surfing in the search for the perfect, un-crowded wave (Barilotti, 2002; Ormrod, 2005). Unfortunately, as Barilotti (2002) points out, most surfers have and continue to travel with little regard for the local cultures around them, viewing indigenous groups as barriers to step over on the way to the beach. His argument has been substantiated. Buckley (2002a, 2002b), for example, documented environmental and social impacts of surfing including: sewage and trash from tourist resorts and accommodations wreaking havoc on nearby reefs and subsistence fishing resources, prostitution and crime in local communities, locals becoming second class citizens through low-level positions in enclave-style accommodations, and access to traditional fishing grounds being denied to locals. Ponting and his colleagues (2005) found residents of local
communities in the Mentawais being ignored by the surf tourism industry. Krause (2013) and Tantamjarik (2004) found residents being priced out of land, goods and homes; facing uncontrolled tourism development and pollution; and experiencing crowding in the waves.

Some negative impacts of tourism development (e.g., skyrocketing property values) can be traced back to surfers who move to surf destinations, build second homes, and/or start surf tour businesses, all in an effort to live in the place where they can practice their sport (Krause, 2013; Matteucci et al., 2008). These “expatriates” or “resident foreigners” (Krause, 2013) also build the tourism infrastructure and name the new surf spots they find. Ormrod (2005) contends that the attitude they display through naming surf breaks is similar to early Americans’ conquest of the frontier: charging through the wilderness and ignoring indigenous naming when assigning names to places. They lay a territorial claim to these surf breaks through naming and a pioneer mentality of being the first to surf them (Ormrod, 2005).

While the situation is challenging for surf tourism destinations, there is hope. Martin and Assenov (2012) have developed a Surf Resource Sustainability Index which endeavors to determine indicators to measure the aptitude of conservation management for a surf spot. In their attempts to refine the measure, they have interviewed surfers to examine the importance of social, economic, environmental an governance indicators for the index (Martin & Assenov, 2012). Ponting and colleagues (2005) have moved away from Western business models and proposed a framework for sustainable surf tourism development that involves long-term formal planning and “systematic attempts at cross-cultural understanding” (O’Brien & Ponting, 2013, p. 164). The Surfing Association of Papua New Guinea has proposed putting communities at the center of surf tourism development by empowering them in decision making, directing tourism benefits towards community needs, encouraging cross-cultural understanding, and involving locals in surfing (O’Brien & Ponting, 2013). Organizations such as Surf Aid International are using participatory community development to address mosquito-borne illness and dirty drinking water (Barilotti,
The Costa Rica chapter of the Surfrider Foundation is sponsoring beach clean-ups and other coastal preservation efforts, and has introduced a permit system to alleviate crowding and mitigate some of the social and environmental issues the country is facing (Tantamjarik, 2004). While these efforts are commendable, in order for surf tourism to be truly sustainable, residents of local communities must be involved in and empowered through the planning for tourism development (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting et al., 2005; Tantamjarik, 2004).

**Localism**

Localism, a well-known concept in surf subculture (Olivier, 2012; Sweeney, 2005; Warshaw, 2003), is a form of human territoriality or behavior meant to control social interactions that involve the establishment of boundaries within a space, perceived ownership of that space by the controlling group or person, and regulation of those established boundaries through whatever means the controlling group or person perceives as necessary (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1986). With localism surfers perceive ownership of a space (the surf zone they live near), define their boundaries (the waves in that surf zone), and regulate the behavior in that space (either by verbally or physically removing non-resident intruders, enforcing rules everyone in it must follow, or demonstrating dominance over the space by attempting to take all of the waves) (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1983; Sweeney, 2005). It is a way for local surfers to maintain the resource (i.e., waves) for a local “tribe” (Sweeney, 2005). However, in some cases, another level of territoriality has been observed: a single surfer may view his territory not simply as all the waves at a surf break, but the wave he is riding. The surfer may consider another local surfer who drops in on that wave to be violating his territorial boundaries and this has led to violent encounters.
between surfers. Due to the potential of this “micro-localism” to affect visiting surfers and resident surfers, some people have dubbed the phenomenon “surf rage” (Young, 2000).

In 1995, Scheibel documented the cultural prevalence of localism by examining the rhetoric in letters to surf magazines. In 2000 Australian surfer Nat Young shared surfers’ experiences with localism and their thoughts on it in his book, Surf Rage. Contributor and long time surfer and journalist Nick Carroll (2000, p. 60) remarked: “Many surfers who’ve spent years of their lives learning the curves and moods of a powerful and alluring surf spot feel a sense of ownership that makes land-based property rights seem feeble by comparison.” This may be because surfers compete for a public resource (i.e., waves) to which they all believe they have access (Alessi, 2009). While waves or the surf zone are of primary concern to surfers, some conceptualize it as rights to a particular beach. Gunter Swoboda, when describing the “tribe” mentality that formed in the early days of surfing, said: “Tribalism meant localism. Your beach was yours and that of the other locals” (2000, p. 75). Swoboda went on to describe how the tribe has territory that must be defended at times.

For some surfers in places such as California, Hawaii and Australia, “defending” has included violence in order to exclude outsiders (Olivier, 2012; Young, 2000). Not all localism is the same, however, some concede there may be different levels of localism (Nazer, 2004). This varies from mild localism (outsiders allowed to surf but must show deference to locals), to moderate localism (outsiders tolerated), to heavy localism (outsiders not accepted at all, may be verbally, physically assaulted or property damaged to discourage them from surfing there) (Nazer, 2004). To date few researchers have defined who the “locals” or “tribe members” are that perpetuate localism.

While many scholars and surfers seem to take it for granted that localism emerges in all surfing destinations (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Olivier, 2012; Scheibel, 1995; Sweeney, 2005), certain evidence calls into question whether it naturally happens, or if it is introduced by
Western travelers (Rielly, 2000). In Costa Rica, resident foreigners who have lived in the country for years have introduced localism to the surf line-up by behaving in an unfriendly manner towards tourists (Krause, 2013). In the Nicaraguan context, indigenous resident surfers may not have thought to enact localism until they observed resident foreigners doing it.

In addition, it is reasonable to suggest that not all locals are the same, especially when they are from two different cultures. This difference in culture would likely increase the likelihood of locals perpetuating localism against one another as they contend for space. Finney (1959) provided early documentation of this as he explored the behavioral and attitudinal differences between local Hawaiian surfers and surfers who had moved there from the U.S. He noted their different approaches to surfing and how Hawaiians resented Californians’ contention that they were the best surfers in the islands. Almost 20 years later, another incident occurred in Hawaii which showcases the conflict which ensues when two groups attempt to claim a surf space (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002; I. H. Walker, 2011). In the years leading up to the incident, Rabbit Bartholomew and other Australian surfers had started spending more time in Hawaii. Many Hawaiian surfers befriended Bartholomew and even encouraged him to think of himself as a local (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002). His privileged designation as a “local” led him to believe he could do no wrong. He dropped in on other surfers and called them off of waves. As the Australians started winning a number of the Hawaiian contests, the surf media played this up and the Australians, including Bartholomew, took advantage of it: boasting of their surfing abilities in the large waves and their aggressive style of surfing. Tensions reached a head when Bartholomew paddled out to a North Shore break and was beaten up by a number of local surfers. After weeks in hiding, local surfer Eddie Aikau brought the two groups together to resolve their differences (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002; I. H. Walker, 2011). Having been robbed of their land through colonization and tourism development, the Hawaiians did not want others territorializing the surf space which was a part of their culture and heritage (I. H. Walker, 2011).
Identity and Territorialization

Cultural identity is strongly linked to the countries or regions from where people come (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). Being “indigenous” typically implies one is native to a particular area of land, or territory. In Belize, multiple cultural groups identify themselves as “native” to Belize for a variety of reasons (Medina, 1999). The British and creole descent groups identify as “native” due to their ancestors’ role in the establishment of the British colony. Maya groups, Kekchi and Mopan, claim to have always inhabited the area. Garifuna claim native status since they are “native” to the Caribbean, of which Belize is considered a part. These conflicting claims make “native” status a contentious issue, especially as the Maya groups try to regain land they have lost through the process of colonization. In other places in the world identity has led to violence. The Sinhalese and Tamil groups both claim to be the rightful inhabitants of Sri Lanka (Kleinfeld, 2005). While scholars have discounted each group’s conflicting claims, both have turned to rights-based discourses to territorialize Sri Lanka: they are discounting each other as terrorists to outside watch groups and establishing their legitimacy to rule. They are also accusing each other of human rights violations. While contentious at times, cultural identity can be a powerful way for groups to claim space/territory.

Identity formation has been studied in surfers (Ford & Brown, 2006; Langseth, 2012). Developing an identity as a surfer means going through a certain socialization process where one learns skills and rules necessary to conducting his/herself in the surf. In a study of surfers in Norway, Langseth (2012) found that acquiring skills, learning the rules, having a local affiliation and a high level of commitment were all part of becoming a member of the surf subculture. In terms of identity, local surfers from the Jæren region saw people from eastern Norway and
Sweden as outsiders and did not consider them locals. They indicated that outsiders should not surf in the region, local surfers were allowed to break rules if it affected an outsider, and that surfers from elsewhere in Norway could become part of the surf subculture if they showed respect to the local surfers. Langseth (2012) did not directly address local identity, instead he accounted for local identity as part of general surfer identity and acceptance into a surf subculture.

In the context of this study, indigenous surfers and foreign resident surfers may think differently about local identity, rights, and the behaviors being exhibited in the surf zone. Understanding the differences in thinking is necessary before attempting to document issues of localism for tourists. These conflicting concepts of local identity may mean foreign resident surfers are subverting indigenous claims to surf space by enacting localism on the indigenous surfers. This disrespect for members of the local community has implications for the sustainable development of the surf tourism destination.

**Methods**

This study is based on an ethnographic study I undertook from May to July 2012. Ethnography, like most qualitative research, is based on rich description (Fitch, 1994). It involves immersing oneself in a culture in order to tell the story of that particular group (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). Specifically, “...ethnographers use multiple methods over an extended period of time while immersed in the everyday life of the culture being studied” (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 29). My goal was to immerse myself in the local surf culture of a small indigenous community on the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua—Las Salinas de Nahualapa (from now on referred to as “Las Salinas”).
I lived with a host family that included host brothers and brothers-in-law who surfed, or had done so in the past; spent four to five hours per day (for 35 days) in the water surfing and observing behavior in the surf line-up; and conducted additional participant observation and interviews. The multiple data collection techniques helped me to understand surfer identity between local residents and resident foreigners.

**Data Collection**

Each time I returned from surfing, I wrote down what I had observed in the water: I organized these notes into observations, interpretations, and reflections on my position as a researcher in that situation (Bogdewic, 1999). I also kept a journal of everything else that happened, including informal conversations I had with community members and other observations from daily life. I interviewed 23 indigenous surfers from the community and 16 foreign resident surfers (i.e., surf camp operators, foreign surf guides, foreign residents, and business owners). I also spoke with a member of the board of directors for the community (i.e., the local indigenous government) about what constitutes an indigenous community and what implications it had for residents. Indigenous surfers were asked about their opinions on resident foreigners and how they defined being a local. Foreign residents were asked to share their opinions on indigenous resident surfers, how they came to live in Nicaragua and, in some cases, if they considered themselves to be locals. These interviews were conducted in whatever language the informant was most comfortable with; with the Nicaraguans it was Spanish, and with most foreigners it was English. I also took pictures and video to further document my fieldwork. This approach to data collection is commonly known as data triangulation (multiple sources of data), which helps to provide a more inclusive view of the culture in which one is immersed, and contributes to validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000).
I used a number of techniques to ensure validity. My integration into the local community and engagement with participant observation helped to reduce participants’ reactivity. Maxwell (2005) holds that intensive and long term involvement, “rich” data, respondent validation, searching for negative cases, data triangulation, and comparison all contribute to validity. I spent nine weeks living in the local community and interacted with study participants on a daily basis. My daily journal, field notes from 35 days of observation, verbatim transcripts of interviews in the native language, photographs, and video were sources of “rich” data. In terms of respondent validation, if something had been unclear in an interview, I went back to participants and asked them to clarify what they meant. This occurred with five participants. In three cases, I wrote down what they said in my journal or noted it on their interview transcript. In the other two cases, I did another interview with them. Throughout the course of my study, I tried to find participants with different versions of a story or different opinions on an issue. In terms of comparison, I compared participants’ responses to the same question. I also observed interactions in the surf zone on different days. Sometimes there were more people, less locals, or bigger waves, which allowed me to compare observations I made under different circumstances and conditions.

**Data Analysis**

Ethnographic analysis takes place throughout data collection. Each interview or observation period brings new questions to the fore which need answers and more data in order to refine the story that is unfolding (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The researcher may look for negative (or disconfirming) evidence to obtain the full story of what is happening within the culture (Kuzel, 1999; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I did this throughout the fieldwork process, seeking out new informants who I thought would give me further insight into a particular situation or provide a different viewpoint.
After my fieldwork, all interviews were transcribed into the language in which they were conducted. They were analyzed in this language as well so as to not lose participants’ original meaning. Since ethnography lends itself to narratives and stories of what people said or did (Agar, 1996), this proved to be the best way of examining the data once it was collected. I examined the transcripts of indigenous informants’ responses to the question of who was considered a local. I analyzed foreigners’ narratives of how they came to Nicaragua and what they did there; along with responses some of them gave as to whether they considered themselves to be locals in the surf. I used constant comparison to look at each informant’s response and how it was different or similar to the previous informant’s response (Glaser, 1965). I used my observational data to confirm or disconfirm stories I heard. I reviewed my field notes and took note of which observations helped me to fill in gaps in the discourse associated with local identity. My daily journal entries were also useful in providing information about indigienity in the community – I analyzed conversations I had with host family members about the indigenous community designation and compared them with the interview I did with the local government official. A second researcher read my journal, field notes, and some of the interview transcripts. This assisted in the analysis through the process of peer debriefing (i.e., the second researcher challenges the primary researcher’s assumptions and conclusions) and contributes towards the reliability of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The Researcher

Because the researcher becomes part of the community s/he is studying, it is important to know the ethnographer’s identity and his/her potential biases (Agar, 1996; Creswell, 2013; May & Perry, 2011). I am a surfer, which helped considerably in accessing the surf culture in Las Salinas. Being in the water with other surfers enabled me to understand what was going on and
what my study participants were talking about. My previous understanding of surfing and the surf culture provided me with the background to conduct this study. So, too, did my ability to speak Spanish. I lived and worked in Guatemala for two years as a Peace Corps volunteer. This experience, combined with my previous research in the same community in Nicaragua, gave me a working knowledge of Latin American culture which helped me to assimilate quickly upon arrival. Several of my informants knew me and trusted me because they had met me before. The family I was staying with knew me and understood, more or less, what I was there to do and even helped me find informants.

My identity as a woman also affected my ability to conduct this study. Surfing is a male sport in Nicaragua: the only women that practice it are foreign residents and tourists. Much like other cultures in Latin America, machismo is an issue in Nicaragua (Stevens, 1973). While this means that men tend to objectify and view themselves as superior to women, it also means that women are treated much differently than men. White women are viewed as exotic and beautiful, and many men try to woo those that come to surf in Nicaragua. This worked to my advantage. As a female researcher, my Nicaraguan informants were much more open with me than they would have been with a male researcher. Had I been a male surfer, they would have viewed me as a threat. As a female I was given much more latitude in the surf and in interviews.

Whenever I was in the water, indigenous surfers would encourage me and call for me to paddle for waves. If there were more indigenous surfers in the water, my chances of catching a wave increased. Tourists did not feel the need to give me the right of way. Indigenous surfers were very open with me in their complaints about resident foreigner surfers and American tourists who had come to surf. Confused by this openness at first, I realized they meant male American surfers. When they think of the frustrations they experience in the water, the predominantly male tourist and foreign resident surfer population comes to mind, not the few females that surf there.
My identity as an American woman also helped to gain access to the foreign resident population. If I walked into a surf camp, private residence, or restaurant, I was treated as a potential guest or visitor. In many of these situations, had I been Nicaraguan, I would most likely have been treated very differently. My identity allowed me to walk between the boundaries of indigenous residents, foreign residents, and tourists.

Some of the information people shared with me is sensitive in nature, so along with changing the names of my informants, some details will also remain vague so as not to implicate anyone in particular.

**Study Site**

The Nicaraguan government has encouraged tourism development through favorable foreign investment laws (Hunt, 2011; Matteucci et al., 2008), which it hopes will bring poverty alleviation to a country known as the second poorest in the Americas behind Haiti (British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2008; Croes & Vanegas Sr, 2008). In 2011, tourism visitor numbers surpassed the one million mark (INTUR, 2012), due in part to the growth in eco- and adventure-based tourism destinations (Babb, 2004). One particular type of eco-tourism that has experienced tremendous growth is surf tourism. The tropical ocean temperatures, Pacific swells, rocky coastline, and consistent offshore winds generated by Nicaragua’s large lakes make it an inviting surf destination (Weisberg, 2010). It is also much less crowded than its neighbor to the south, Costa Rica.

One community that has gained the attention of surfers in the past 15 years is Las Salinas, Nicaragua where Popoyo Reef is located. While Nicaraguans from Managua first surfed the area in the early 1980s, Americans did not arrive until the late 1990s. Much of the tourism development is located north of the community, in an area known as Playa Guasacate. There are
hotels, backpacker hostels, surf camps, restaurants, condominiums and land slated for
development lining the road that runs along the beach. The road ends at a river that runs south of
Guasacate and through the community of Las Salinas. South of the river mouth is Popoyo Reef.
Salt flats, where salt is pumped into and dried and cultivated, lie between the community and the
ocean. Many members of the community are involved in cooperatives that cultivate the salt in
the dry season (November-April), and who now work in tourism caring for foreigners’ property,
working in hotels and restaurants, and building houses and hotels.

The community of Las Salinas is an indigenous community with a population of about
4,450. It consists primarily of the community of Las Salinas, but also includes a barrio
(neighborhood) known as La Virgen Morena. The land in the community is communal;
community members pay a small tax on their land to the indigenous community government (i.e.,
board of directors), which is separate from the municipal government. Foreigners who want land
in the community also must pay tax on their land, and most of the time it is much higher than
what locals pay, not only because they are not indigenous members of the community, but
because their land tends to be closer to the ocean. There are only two hotels considered to be on
indigenous land.

Las Salinas and La Virgen Morena have a school, a library, a Catholic church and
multiple evangelical (protestant) churches. There are several stores that sell clothes, food and
more. One of these stores has a small Internet café. Smaller stores carry a few food items and
cell phone cards to recharge cell phone minutes. There are three bars that serve alcohol; men can
be found there on the weekends when they are not working. There are several cafes and street
vendors that sell typical Nicaraguan fast food (fried chicken, grilled meat, cole slaw and fried
platanos), mainly to locals.
Findings

Exploring local identity is an important aspect of identifying who the locals are that may or may not perpetuate localism. I accomplished this by documenting how indigeneity is determined, who indigenous surfers identify as locals and how foreign resident surfers define themselves. This is important because if indigenous surfers do not consider foreign residents to be local surfers, but foreign residents see themselves this way, conflict already exists and may be reflected in the way they treat and act around each other and how they define being a local in the surf. Hence, the results that follow introduce local identity as defined by indigenous surfers and foreign resident surfers, as well as conflicts that have arisen as a result of foreign residents’ verbal, or behavioral, claims to local identity.

Defining Locals

Due to the unique designation of Las Salinas as an indigenous community, many local residents have a strong indigenous identity. However, there are multiple ways in which residents achieve indigenous status. One way to be considered a member of the indigenous community is through caste membership (Membreño Idiáquez, 1992). Castes are the families that have been registered in the community for generations: if one is a member of one of these families, one is considered indigenous to Las Salinas. If a foreigner, or anyone from outside of the community, has a child with an indigenous member of the community, that child is considered indigenous (Membreño Idiáquez, 1992). Another way in which someone can be considered indigenous is by being born and registered in the community. However, local politics revealed this to be a contentious issue. At the time of the study, the current community president had been born in the
community but her parents were not from there and had registered her somewhere else. Some community members did not agree with her being the president because of this conflict.

Many foreign residents came to Nicaragua looking for surf. They had no intention of staying or even starting businesses, but ended up liking the country and the incredible surf conditions, so they purchased or leased land. Several started off in Costa Rica, but heard good things about Nicaragua and chose to explore it and see what it was all about. The majority arrived between 5 and 15 years ago. In 2005 the real estate market was good and many thought it a smart time to invest. Most started surf lodges, camps, or businesses of some type. Others engaged in real estate, bread making, a sailing school, consulting, and chicken distribution. By some standards, moving somewhere and establishing a home, a job and a family might result in a foreigner being considered “local.” However, in an indigenous community with strict standards of what constitutes “being indigenous,” different standards of being a local apply.

Indigenous surfers (i.e., those who had been born in the community and had lived there all their lives), defined themselves and foreign resident surfers differently. A few of them defined local surfers strictly as people who had been born in the community and who had lived there all of their lives. “Yo he dicho que él puede tener 50 años de vivir aquí pero no es local...Para nosotros locales, solo las personas que nacen aquí que son de esta playa” (I have said that someone can live here for 50 years but he is not a local...For us, locals are only the people that were born here and are from this beach). This definition is remarkably similar to one of the standards by which indigenous identity is measured in Las Salinas. At least one indigenous surfer said local surfers were born in Nicaragua. Many acknowledged that Nicaraguan surfers from other beaches could come to Las Salinas to surf, or indigenous resident surfers could go other places to surf and there were no problems. This is because they all respect one another, even if they consider them to be a different group of Nicaraguan surfers.
Some indigenous surfers said that there were a few foreign resident surfers they would consider, or treat, as locals. How they defined these select few varied. Some considered foreign resident surfers to be locals because they had been there for 10 years or so, but most indigenous surfers only considered foreign residents to be locals if they helped locals out or were friendly to them. Helping could include providing work to people in the community, repairing indigenous residents’ surfboards for much less than what a tourist would pay, or giving them photographs. Speaking about one foreign resident couple who did surf board repair, an indigenous surfer said they were locals because: “…Ellos son buenas personas. Sí, ellos siempre alegre con uno, saludando, hay veces, cuando uno quebrar tu tabla o está mal, ellos siempre ofrecen, ‘nosotros ayudarte a reparar la tabla, no hay problema.’” (They are good people. Yes, they always are happy around you, saying hello. There are times, when you break your board or it’s bad, they always offer, ‘we’ll help you to repair the board, no problem’). Sometimes simply speaking to indigenous surfers and community members, respecting them, or visiting with them were the only actions foreign residents would have to take to be considered a local.

Some foreign residents who had lived in the area for a while were not considered to be locals because they were not friendly, treated locals poorly, and/or did not help out the community. “…No ayudan...No consideramos como local, y también, si ellos fueran más amigables, platicar con uno así, hablar en confianza, pues, se considera, pero ellos no” (They don’t help…We don’t consider them as a local, and also, if they were more friendly, chatted with you like this, spoke with trust, then they’d be considered local, but not them). There was one foreign resident in particular that fought with indigenous surfers in the surf over waves and treated his workers poorly. Several indigenous surfers acknowledged that a few foreign residents had helped out other communities further north, but did not help Las Salinas. Multiple indigenous surfers said that these same people, who were business owners, specifically gave surf gear (boards, shorts, t-shirts) to other communities, but would not help indigenous surfers in Las
Salinas. “Daniel lo que hace a veces es que agarrá patrocinio, y el...no a los locales de aquí, sino es que el agarrá, y va a dar a otras playas” (Daniel, what he does sometimes is get sponsorships, and he…doesn’t give it to the locals here, but he gets gear, and he goes to give it to other beaches). They were frustrated by the fact that these foreign business owners earned lots of money by bringing tourists to surf their waves but did not give anything back to the community. Hence, for some indigenous surfers, this meant foreign residents were not locals whereas for others, the behaviors exhibited were simply an annoying aspect of surf tourism development.

Foreign residents also varied widely on whether they considered themselves to be local. Most of the foreign residents who did not identify themselves as locals were from other countries besides the United States. One reason they provided was that they had not been born in Nicaragua. The few that considered themselves to be locals (mainly from the U.S., with one exception) said it was because they lived there or had put in quite a bit of time surfing there: “People that spend the time here and dedicate- you know they’re surfing here all the time and I mean and really we were the only people surfing- the few of us you know- we were the only people surfing for a really long time.” Another person from the U.S said he considered foreigners who have lived there for more than 10 years as locals because they have been surfing as long as the indigenous surfers from the community.

One foreign resident surfer said that he did not feel like being local mattered; he simply wanted respect because he was a surfer, not because he lived there. Several others said that while they would always be “gringos” (slang term for White people from the U.S., Australia or Europe), they felt as if indigenous surfers treated them like locals when they were in the water: “I think the local Nicaraguans have more local respect towards the local foreigners who live here than they do the tourists as far as etiquette in the water.” Another foreign resident surfer noted this mutual respect between himself and indigenous surfers. In a similar vein, one American did
not like to categorize himself as a local, since localism had negative connotations, but he considered himself “part of the crew.”

Some foreign resident surfers kept to themselves and only spoke with one another in the water or on the beach. In Guasacate (where most of the tourism infrastructure was located) I would arrive at a hotel or shop to do an interview and would see foreign residents socializing together; often no locals were present. In the water and on the beach some foreign resident surfers would speak and joke around with indigenous surfers in the water. When I asked one indigenous surfer about a French resident I always saw dropping in on people, he told me they treated him like a local and they all joked around with one another. Sometimes I would see foreign residents visiting with other residents in town at small tiendas (shops) or engaging in other activities in the community. This was particularly true with those who married into the local community.

Some foreign residents had chosen to stay in the community with their spouse/partner, while others spent part of the year in the U.S. or their home country. These individuals were more than likely considered locals, in part because they were more involved in community life, had helped their new family financially, and/or contributed in other ways to the community. As previously discussed, offspring from these inter-cultural couples who are born in the community are considered indigenous.

**Identity in the Surf Zone**

Despite the lack of agreement among foreign resident surfers about whether they would consider themselves local or not, there is evidence to suggest that the impression foreign residents give off in the surf, and around certain surf zones, is that they are locals and people are invading their territory. Thus, when approaching localism, how people define themselves verbally is
perhaps not as important as what is actually happening in the surf, since that is the space that residents are attempting to claim through their verbally or behaviorally defined identity.

When asked about conflicts in the water between tourists and locals, some foreign residents suggested that other foreign residents posed bigger problems for tourists than did local Nicaraguans: “The only people who created problems around here would be...the American...foreigner moving into the area and them having a bad attitude...that's what always brings the bad vibe.” One foreign resident surfer described a surf line-up pecking order that went from locals to foreign residents to tourists: “It’s just priority, I think the locals have the most priority and then the people that live here for a long time, and that way on, like I don’t think somebody can show up here and start getting waves right away.”

Indigenous surfers indicated that foreign resident surfers expressed a localistic mentality in the water: “Ellos pelean con Americanos como que fuera local” (They fight with Americans as if they were locals). In separate interviews, multiple indigenous surfers described a fight they had seen between a foreign resident surfer (the one previously mentioned who treated his workers poorly) and an indigenous surfer. This person seemed to have a habit of fighting with indigenous surfers; one indigenous surfer said, “El cómo tiene mucho dinero, él dice, ‘yo soy dueño de Nicaragua’ y nah!” (He, like, has a lot of money, he says, ‘I’m owner of Nicaragua’ and no!).

While foreign resident surfers’ attitudes in the surf may affect tourists, they also affect indigenous surfers, since resident foreigners seem to perceive of themselves as locals with the same rights to the surf.

One particular conflict that arose between foreign resident surfers and indigenous surfers had to do with a foreign resident surfer (a business owner) who has property rights in front of one of the main surf spots. As far as some indigenous surfers were concerned, the resident foreigner believes he is the owner of the surf spot because it is adjacent to his property. According to one indigenous surfer, this conflict started with a renegade indigenous surfer who was causing
problems in the surf (he had since left to live in another country). None of the other indigenous
surfers confirmed this story, stating simply that the foreign resident did not like it when
indigenous surfers surfed there, and got angry if they did. “Solo porque tiene casas enfrente del
<name of surf break> y el descubrió la ola...no es de él...Nosotros entramos...pero hay algunos
clientes que él no le gusta que entren allí” (It’s only because he has houses in front of <name of
surf break> and he discovered the wave…it’s not his...We go in...but there are some clients that
don’t like that we go in there). When asked about the renegade indigenous surfer or any issues
related to indigenous surfers surfing there, the foreign resident said that he was not sure of the
conflict, did not think it was a big deal, and said that sometimes things like this will come up in
surf communities.

Some indigenous surfers said the conflict about indigenous surfers surfing there had
quieted down in the past six months, but others said that it was still a problem. The indigenous
surfers that surfed most often at the break adjacent to the foreign resident’s property worked for
one of the surf tour operators nearby so they may have felt more at ease surfing there. Other
indigenous surfers were angry that they could not enter the gated neighborhood to surf the wave.
They had to walk around to another access area to get to that spot on the beach: “…El no deja de
entrar a los locales, entonces por eso mala onda, tenemos que ir caminando por la playa para ir
d a <name of surf break>” (He doesn’t let locals enter, so it sucks because of that, we have to get
to <name of surf break> by walking down the beach). The resident foreigner said that people
could walk into the gate, but they could not drive in. However, another person involved with
managing the property told me that the foreign resident did not allow anyone in except property
owners, renters and the indigenous family that lived up the street. While this may not seem like a
big deal to the foreign resident, it is a big deal to some of the local surfers, resulting in tension
between the two groups.
Discussion and Conclusion

The following discussion addresses the findings related to indigenous and foreign resident surfers’ attempts to territorialize the surf space through their identity. It also speaks to the problems that ensue due to conflicting concepts of local identity, regardless of whether they are verbally expressed or expressed through actions.

In general, indigenous and foreign resident surfers did not agree on their conceptualization of the “local surfer.” Indigenous surfers said that locals are people who were born in and have lived in the community (or Nicaragua) all of their life, or are people who have lived in the community awhile and/or have helped or been friendly to indigenous residents. Some foreign residents expressed a similar definition (i.e., being born there), but others deviated and suggested locals were individuals who had lived and surfed in the area for a while. A few foreign residents said that the “local” designation is meaningless.

Indigenous and foreign resident surfers also did not agree on entitlements for locals. For example, both groups had disagreements and conflicted feelings about the land adjacent to the surf zone as well as who has a right to access the land. The same was true with respect to foreign resident and local surfers’ beliefs about their individual rights. This may best be exemplified through the following example: one foreign resident believed property ownership and living in the area meant he could fight with locals over waves; local surfers disagreed. Local surfers looked down on people who disrespected them and the community. They suggested that such behavior was not becoming of a local and did not consider those people to be locals.

Like Krause (2013) found in Costa Rica, some foreign residents viewed themselves as locals. Not only was this evident in my interviews with them about whether they considered themselves to be locals, but also in my interviews with indigenous surfers. These views were substantiated through indigenous surfers’ references to foreign residents’ behavior that caused
conflict as well as foreign residents’ references to other foreign residents’ who exhibited localistic behavior, i.e. defending their territory against intruders. Indigenous surfers said some foreign residents thought of themselves as locals and fought over waves with tourists, claiming they were locals. At least one foreign resident also fought with indigenous surfers in the surf. This confrontational behavior may be perpetuating localism at Popoyo Reef (Krause, 2013). Further, with the sentiments foreign residents shared about the amiable nature of local surfers, the negative aspects of localism may be a Western phenomenon that does not naturally occur without outside influence (Rielly, 2000).

Discovering and claiming places also was documented (Ormrod, 2005). From some of the local surfers’ points of view, a foreign resident surfer who “discovered” one surf break has implied that he is the owner of and controls access to that break. Not only that, but the surf break (and a number of other breaks in the area) now bears a name that even the locals say in English. There is no Nicaraguan name for the wave, subverting any indigenous claim to it. This is reinforced by the unwelcome feeling some locals get when they try and surf that particular surf break. Much like in Belize, different groups are territorializing the surf space based on their identity (Medina, 1999); they claim surf space because, much like their indigenous status in the community, they were born there and surf there all the time, making them the rightful local surfers. In this study, foreign resident surfers have verbally claimed space because they have been living and surfing in the area for years and see themselves as locals, see property ownership as justification to exclude others from “their” surf space, or even fight with other local surfers. Similar to the Australian “invasion” of Hawaii in the 1970s, resident foreigners are using their knowledge and experience surfing Popoyo Reef to claim surf space and local status (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002; I. H. Walker, 2011).

The results of this study have made it apparent that indigenous surfers and foreign resident surfers have different impressions of who is a local and what rights he or she has. Thus,
to understand localism, researchers must assess the issue of local identity before examining if localism is a problem in a destination. The localism literature typically does not make distinctions between locals, stating simply that resident surfers can be territorial (Alessi, 2009; Sweeney, 2005; Warshaw, 2003). Researchers who have examined local identity have done so in the context of a broader surfer identity, yet being local is only one part of that identity (Langseth, 2012).

As evidenced in the study findings, local identity is further complicated when disparities exist between residents. For example, resident groups with different cultural and economic backgrounds territorializing the surf space may generate a contentious environment: a conflict is present before visiting surfers even get added into the equation. Further, locals do not agree upon how the surf zone is to be regulated. Indigenous surfers may not see a reason to become aggressive or violent in the surf zone, but foreign resident surfers may believe such behavior to be justifiable. Hence, mild and moderate localism may be present at the same surf break because there are two culturally different groups of locals with two different mentalities towards each other and visitors (Nazer, 2004; Rielly, 2000). Much like Bartholomew did in Hawaii, foreign resident surfers may abuse the warm welcome they receive from indigenous surfers and claim more surf territory (metaphorically and physically) than they should (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002). To better understand the issue of localism in the surf zone, researchers should also address how tourists feel in the surf space.

While the results enrich the sustainable tourism, surf tourism, and human territoriality/localism literature, I recognize that there were limitations to this study. First, while I had lived in the community previously, spending an extended period of time in the community for this study may have resulted in a more complete understanding of local identity between locals and foreign residents. Second, because I lived in the community, I had fewer interactions with
foreign residents. Had I lived amongst them, I might have been able to conduct more observations and explore their sense of territoriality in greater detail through interviews.

If resident foreigners are the “locals” expressing localistic behavior, their sense of surf territoriality needs to be further explored. Conducting studies in other destinations and with different resident groups is important to learning more about the phenomenon of localism. This is especially true with destinations that are experiencing moderate to heavy localism on a regular basis. Also, Las Salinas and communities like it should be monitored over time to explore changes in: who is considered local, surf identity amongst local surfers, levels of localism, and how localism may be impacting the surf zone and sustainable tourism development. This type of research will enhance our understanding of how local surfer identity develops or changes over time as well as how such change impacts the evolution of localism.

The results also suggest that local identity bleeds into tourism development through supportive behavior and open lines of communication. Foreign residents who have befriended indigenous surfers and helped them and their community are viewed as locals. These outsiders, who show respect to indigenous surfers and community members, have been accepted as part of the local surf community, which is similar to Langseth’s (2012) findings. Indigenous surfers were also grateful when foreign residents would offer them things as simple as low cost board repairs. Much like researchers found in Papua New Guinea, local residents appreciated material support from the surf industry that helped them engage in the sport since equipment can be expensive and difficult to get (O’Brien & Ponting, 2013). Foreign residents who have open lines of communication between locals and the foreigners also have been adopted as local surfers. This finding supports two of the proposed tenets of sustainable tourism models: giving back to members of the local community in an effort to improve their quality of life and listening to what locals have to say (Buckley, 2002b; O’Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting et al., 2005; Scheyvens, 1999). Resident foreigners unwilling to change their views to accommodate the local culture are
violating these tenets of sustainable tourism. If their behavior does not change and they continue to ignore what is important to indigenous surfers and community members, localism and a potential deterioration of the tourism product may ensue (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting et al., 2005).

While foreign residents believe they are helping local communities, they must become more conscious of locals’ perceptions of their actions. One indigenous surfer acknowledged that a foreign business owner had gone to other communities and built houses for people. Others believed that foreign business owners were giving out surf gear everywhere but in Las Salinas. While one local told me he had seen tourists leaving boards and the foreign business owner sending them off to another town and had confronted the resident foreigner about this, based on my conversations with foreign business owners, they were not giving out surf gear, but were doing other projects. One confirmed building houses or providing residents with food. Another had started a project to provide communities to the north with water filters. The foreign business owners explained that communities to the north were very poor and residents did not have as many job opportunities as the people in Las Salinas. Thus, they chose to provide assistance in those areas.

While foreign residents felt positively about their contributions to other communities, their actions were not only negatively perceived, but also misunderstood by local surfers. Locals understand the inequality of the amount of money flowing in via surf tourism and the amount of income and assistance they receive from the industry, but it frustrates them (Ponting et al., 2005). In Papua New Guinea, residents saw that some of the tourism proceeds were going towards village needs and their own participation in surfing (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013). The locals in Las Salinas are not part of such an exchange. Thus, doing small community-driven projects in Las Salinas, which address local needs and are not simply handouts, will foster more goodwill towards foreign residents and may help to quell tensions in the surf zone. Simple gestures may
extend beyond projects for the community to listening to what local surfers have to say about tourism development as well as controlling the number of tourists brought in to surf. As one study showed, community-centered surf tourism development was more successful in achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013). Simply acknowledging and respecting local surfers will also go a long way in improving relations in the surf line-up.
Chapter 3

Re-defining Localism: An Ethnography of Human Territoriality in the Surf

This chapter represents an article prepared for *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Space, Place and Environment*. As a result, some sections in the article are not as extensive as would be required by other journals. This article addresses research questions 1, 2, 3 and 5 and, as such, represents the central focus of the dissertation: the issue of localism as a form of territoriality.

Introduction

Surf tourism has increased dramatically in the past 20 years as surfers have traveled to the far reaches of the globe to find “the perfect wave” (Ponting et al., 2005; Scheibel, 1995). This surge in surf tourism has contributed to the diversification of rural local economies and led to a variety of responses including, but not limited to, feelings of alienation from and lack of participation or interest in the surf tourism industry (Ponting et al., 2005). In some instances, local surfers have felt the need to assert (at times violently) their rights over the surfing space (Barilotti, 2002). This latter phenomenon is known as “localism,” i.e. the idea that surfers who live close to a surf break have certain rights to and privileges in those waves (Warshaw, 2003). Observed in Hawai’i, California and Australia (Young, 2000), local surfers have been seen antagonizing visiting surfers, preventing them from catching waves, and sometimes fighting—even violently forcing—them from the water. These behaviors have the potential to severely impact the viability of a surf destination, particularly in more remote destinations in the
developing world. Localism has serious implications for local residents who depend upon income from tourism for their livelihoods. If surf tourists feel unwelcome in the water, they could stop traveling to the destination.

Human territoriality offers a useful framework with which to examine localism. It is defined as the establishment of boundaries and regulation of a particular space through the behaviors of a group of people that perceive ownership over that space (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1983). Researchers from psychology, sociology, geography and anthropology have studied human territoriality in different contexts, but not tourism. Given the fact that tourism has social, cultural, economic and environmental ramifications for residents and their communities, this lack of attention to the issue of human territoriality is surprising.

Nicaragua is an up and coming surf destination that is ideal for the examination of localism. Surfers are becoming increasingly aware of the excellent surf conditions caused by large Pacific swells and year round offshore winds due to the proximity of Lake Nicaragua (Weisberg, 2010). While it is not as developed as Costa Rica, there are a number of world-class surfing destinations in the country. Recognizing this, The International Surfing Association held its Master’s World Championships in Nicaragua in July 2012. Because surf tourism has become a viable segment of the tourism industry and many residents, particularly those who live in coastal communities, rely on the surf tourism industry for their livelihoods, the degree to which localism exists must be examined. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore whether localism exists at Popoyo Reef, a surf destination in Nicaragua and, if it does exist, what it looks like, how it is manifested, and what types of rules exist, if any. The specific research questions answered were: (a) how residents feel about the space where they surf and how willing they are to share it with visitors, and (b) whether others (i.e., foreign residents) and tourists feel residents are being territorial about the space where they surf.
The following ethnographic case study begins with a brief literature review of surfing, surf tourism, territoriality and localism. This is followed by a more detailed assessment of tourism in Nicaragua and a description of the area around Popoyo Reef, Nicaragua. I then examine three different groups (locals, resident foreigners, and tourists) and their perceptions of the localism expressed by residents who surf (i.e., “local surfers”) of Las Salinas. I go on to discuss what localism looks like at Popoyo Reef and what it means for the future of this particular surf destination. In an effort to extend the literature and make a contribution to the tourism industry, I conclude the manuscript by discussing how the results of this case study can be used to further understanding of territoriality and localism in the context of surf tourism, particularly in its developmental stages.

**Surfing and Surf Tourism**

The origins of surfing are in Hawai’i, where the act of riding a wave had deep political, spiritual, and cultural meanings, including playing a vital role in religious worship and festivals (Ingersoll, 2009). With the arrival of missionaries, surfing went underground (but did not disappear) because it was considered to be a sacrilegious and hedonistic activity unbecoming of proper Christians (Ingersoll, 2009; Kampion, 2003; I. H. Walker, 2008). The incorporation of the Hawaiian Islands as a territory of the United States in 1898 sparked renewed interest in surfing as a tourism business opportunity. Writers, such as Jack London, and colorful postcards promoted surfing and the islands (Ingersoll, 2009; Kampion, 2003). In response, surfing soon spread to the mainland of the United States (U.S.), Australia, and other parts of the world.

The commercial production of foam boards in the 1950s and 60s, invention of the leash, as well as the movie *Gidget* and the explosion of surf music and media that followed, led to an upsurge in the number of male and female surfers on U.S. beaches (Kampion, 2003; Ormrod,
2005). By the latter half of the twentieth century, the number of surfers had increased dramatically and there was crowding on surf breaks. Recent estimations put the number of surfers worldwide at 35 million (O'Brien & Eddie, 2013). This dramatic increase in the number of surfers motivated some surfers to travel in search of “the perfect wave” where they are able to ride a wave alone (Alessi, 2009; Ponting, 2009; Scheibel, 1995).

Surf tourism is a relatively new area of research that has emerged in the past 13 years (Martin & Assenov, 2010). With some exceptions, most of the surf tourism research focuses on surf tourists rather than host communities and surf destinations (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003; Fendt & Wilson, 2012; Orams & Towner, 2013). Some of the literature provides an overview of the history of the sport and describe the characteristics of surf tourism (Buckley, 2002b; Orams & Towner, 2013). Hill and Abbott (2009) present a review of various aspects of surfing and surf tourism and the ways in which surfing can be analyzed using a political ecology framework. Tantamjarik (2004) surveyed surf tour operators in Costa Rica about the sustainability of the industry. When compared to foreign tour operators, Costa Rican operators were more aware of local community impacts and environmental degradation (pollution, crowding and overdevelopment) as a result of surf tourism. Tantamjarik called for a more organized effort to promote sustainability among operators in the Costa Rican surf industry. Krause (2013) and Buckley (2002b) documented the negative impact surf tourism can have on local communities. In a separate article, Buckley (2002a) went on to suggest solutions for surf tour operators, and advocated for surf tourism as an economic option for the local population. Other scholars (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting et al., 2005) have made recommendations for more sustainable practice in the surf tourism industry by using non-Western business models, formal long-term planning and greater attempts at cross-cultural understanding of the host community.
Ponting and his colleagues (2009; 2005) have conducted studies on host communities in surf destinations. In 2005, they focused on the impact of surf tourism on residents in the Mentawaian Islands and found that many local residents felt alienated from the surf tourism industry. They felt as if they had no part in the industry and no control over tourism development in their own communities. In 2009, Ponting found that surfers’ desire for perfect waves, uncrowded conditions, soft adventure, and tropical, exotic locations fueled by surf magazine imagery motivated them to travel to remote places like the Mentawaian Islands. In terms of residents, he argued that they end up being exploited for their natural resources.

In a more recent study, O’Brien and Ponting (2013) uncovered a successful model of community-centered surf tourism development being used by the Surfing Association of Papua New Guinea. Local communities are not only empowered in tourism development decision-making, but also receive benefits that address community health needs. There are even efforts at the village level to develop the sport so more locals can participate. Cross-cultural understanding by surf tour operators is also being highly encouraged through respecting traditional land and the water rights of local leaders. Since communities receive so much from surf tourism, this has given them an alternative to more harmful industries such as logging.

In summary, scholars have not yet made localism the focus of any surf tourism study. Preston-Whyte (2002), Buckley (2002b), Tantamjarik (2004), and Ingersoll (2009) reference the issue in their work, but with the exception of Ingersoll, whose work is discussed in more detail later, it is only mentioned in passing. A more in-depth study of this phenomenon is needed to fill this gap in the surf tourism literature.
Territoriality

Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and geographers have studied human territoriality. Many have moved beyond biological frameworks of human territoriality, claiming that temporary territories, cultural definitions, long distance territories, and social constructions of territory all make human territoriality unique and separate from animal territoriality (Altman, 1975; Gold, 1982; Sack, 1986). There is also a substantial body of work on the territorialization (or claiming) of space (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995; Wainwright & Robertson, 2003). Scholars have developed multiple frameworks on the territorialization of space and human territoriality. For the purposes of this study, I will limit my review to a brief overview of territorialization and the seminal frameworks that have guided studies of human territoriality.

Territorialization primarily focuses on the economic and political processes states use to claim territory in order to regulate the behavior of their citizens (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995; Wainwright & Robertson, 2003). Much of the time territorialization deals with control over natural resources and the utilization of land and area claimed by the state (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995; Wainwright & Robertson, 2003). However, there is a substantial countermovement that has emerged in an effort to help indigenous groups regain territory taken from them by the state through colonization and development (Bryan, 2009; Roth, 2009; Sletto, 2009; Wainwright & Bryan, 2006). Using participatory mapping, researchers have identified the ways in which indigenous residents depict space. Much of the time residents define their territory or space not by lines on a map, but by natural resource collection, kinship patterns, and cultural practice (Roth, 2009; Sletto, 2009; Wainwright & Bryan, 2006). The territorial boundaries they establish do not mean people cannot cross them, just that that space should be used in a particular way by one group (Sletto, 2009). The mapping exercises have assisted indigenous groups in legally regaining land, but these groups continue to face many challenges (Wainwright & Bryan, 2006).
Indigenous groups use their cultural identity to regain land and to claim space. In Belize, as in many countries, cultural groups have used their identity as well as their history to claim native status (Medina, 1999). Similarly, cultural groups such as the Sinhalese and Tamil in Sri Lanka use their identities to claim national territory and discredit conflicting groups, which can reach levels of violence and war (Kleinfeld, 2005). While it is important to acknowledge this work on territorialization and the claiming of space, what people do with the space once they claim it is known as human territoriality and the focus of this study.

Altman’s (1975) work has been very influential in the study of territoriality, which he defines as behavior that demarcates a boundary around a space (perceived as “owned” by a group or person) through personalization and ownership in order to regulate social interaction in that space. If territorial boundaries are violated, a defense response may occur. Altman’s classification of territoriality includes public, primary and secondary territories.

Public territories involve spaces that are open to anyone, but groups or individuals may try to mark out territories within them (Edney & Jordan-Edney, 1974). The degree to which individuals may attempt to gain control over territories has been found to vary by group size, gender and other factors. In terms of how people go about gaining control, Taylor and Brooks (1980) found that they do so through place markers. They found that students in libraries were more likely to ask for a study carrel space back if it was taken over than they were to ask for a spot at a table where more seats were available. Hence, availability of space in a public area appears to be a major factor in the likelihood of individuals defending their territory.

Primary territories are people’s homes or private spaces that are not open to the public, and permission must be granted in order to gain access. Several examples of this include patients’ rooms in mental hospitals and a nursing home for older adults (Altman, 1975; Kinney et al., 1987). Secondary territories are semi-public spaces which fall somewhere between being completely open to everyone or completely closed to everyone. Altman refers to two categories
found in Lyman and Scott’s (1967) framework (i.e., interactional and home territories) and classifies them as secondary territories. Neighborhood bars have been studied as secondary territories. Much like home territories, the regulars that are there all the time may see outsiders as intruders. Other examples of secondary territories include hallways, building entrances, and immediate street areas of urban low-cost housing which were included in Newman’s study of “defensible space” (i.e., links between building design and crime) (cited in Altman, 1975).

Geographers have bridged the gap between the different levels of territoriality. According to Gold (1982), human territoriality is most likely a bi-product of culture that fulfills a need for identity, status, recognition by others, and self-image. Dwelling space, the neighborhood, and Newman’s “defensible space” are included in Gold’s discussion of urban territory. In a study he conducted with Hirschon (Hirschon & Gold, 1982), dwelling space in a Greek community was examined. The home was considered to be a private territory where only the family was allowed. Hirschon and Gold reasoned that this might have been because of the small and cramped nature of the housing units in the study setting. Sidewalks, squares and areas outside of the houses (i.e., the neighborhood) were considered to be social spaces open to everyone.

While Gold explicitly keeps political nation-state territoriality at a distance from his work, Sack (1983, 1986) directly addresses this form of territoriality by referencing Marx’s modes of production and Weber’s notion of organization, along with lower level scales of territoriality. For example, Sack argues that changing modes of production in the workplace have affected the amount of territoriality bosses are able to exert over their workers. He goes on to indicate that territoriality is a social construction, which includes an attempt to control, influence, and affect actions or interactions of individuals within a geographical space. He presents a complex matrix of territoriality that involves 10 tendencies of territoriality, only the first 3
(classification, communication and enforcement) of which are present in every case. Notably, his examples of territoriality fail to fit in to his complex matrix.

While the majority of the work on territoriality is on land and landscapes, some research has been conducted on territoriality associated with water. Anderson (2012) pointed to this void in geography research when he examined the relationship between a surfer and his/her connection to the wave. Anderson recognized that the relationship does not exist once the surfer stops surfing the wave due to the temporal nature of the water environment (Anderson, 2012). Similarly, Malmberg (1984) found that an important aspect of the territoriality of water is its rhythmic and cyclic nature. Territoriality shifts with wet and dry seasons, as well as with the tides. At low tide, when everyone else is fishing, fishermen must be fiercely territorial to find the best spot with the most fish. Once the tide comes in, the fishing is not as good and there is no need to be territorial. This rhythmic territoriality is unique to a water environment and may apply in this study. High and low tides, weather patterns, and coastal geology influence where waves break and how good the surf is; thus, competition for waves can be fierce at times, but not at other times. Similar to fishermen, surfers’ territoriality may be cyclical, affected by the rhythm of the tides and the seasons (Malmberg, 1984).

Tourism and Territoriality

Tourism researchers have primarily examined territoriality from the perspective of land rights and legal ownership in protected areas (Kent, 2006; Minca & Draper, 1996). In a study of Canada’s Banff National Park, Minca and Draper (1996) explicitly used human territoriality as a theoretical framework. They recognized that Banff has grown due to more efficient modes of transportation, but also found that maintaining a balance between development and conservation of the park has been difficult. The authors also noted that tourists do not know when they are
inside the park boundaries, associate the town with the National Park, and do not seem to recognize the difference between the two.

In 2006, Kent looked at territoriality with the Uros, an indigenous group that lives on floating villages built from the reeds harvested from Lake Titicaca on the national border between Bolivia and Peru. The Uros have clashed for several decades with INRENA (the natural resource governmental organization of Peru that oversees protected areas). At first the clash was over the use of reeds to build their community. In order to get access to reeds they had to possess land on the edge of the Lake. Now the conflict has turned to tourism, as INRENA tries to control the floating villages’ reserve, and the Uros’ attempt to retain control over tourism. The Uros’ floating villages are a national tourism site, and the promotion of their community adds legitimacy to their indigenous identity which could feasibly give them control over tourism if the area is declared a communal reserve instead of a national reserve.

There has also been work done on the territorialization of space by second home owners in Brazil (Oliveira Silva, 2013). Researchers found that second homes encroached upon access to public space (mainly the beach) for local residents but the prevalence of international real estate capital seemed to cause the government to overlook these encroachments despite the law. However, despite the negative effects of second homes observed by researchers, residents did not feel as if second homes had interfered with their access to public spaces. The lack of attention to this discrepancy points to a weakness in this study and begs further study of the territorialization of beach access in developing countries.

Andereck (1997) focused on tourists’ territoriality. She used Altman’s (1975) framework of primary, secondary and public territories to classify tourists’ behavior in a historical site, concluding that tourists express territoriality over a public space. A crowding scale was used to measure territoriality. While Andereck claimed she was using Altman’s framework, her measure
left out any sort of personalization, ownership, boundaries and defense items, which are key aspects of Altman’s conceptualization of human territoriality.

For the purposes of this study, a combination of Altman’s (1975) definition and Sack’s (1983) framework were used to create the following working definition of territoriality:

*Human territoriality is a behavior meant to control social interactions that involve the establishment of boundaries within a space, perceived ownership of that space by the controlling group or person, and regulation of those established boundaries through whatever means the controlling group or person perceives as necessary.*

Regulation of the boundary can include a variety of behaviors from enforcing rules the controlling group believes everyone should follow, asserting dominance in the space by doing certain things in the presence of visitors to the space, or defending the space from intruders at the most extreme.

**Localism: Territoriality of the Surf Zone**

Historical accounts of surfing indicate that local surfers have resisted outsiders’ invasions of their surfing space since the turn of the 20th century. In 1908 Hawaiians resisted wealthy White Americans’ formation of the Outrigger Club on the North Shore, which excluded native Hawaiians. Three years later, as their claims of superiority in the surf escalated, native Hawaiians formed their own surf club, Hui Nalu, to re-capture their surfing space. They also began dominating surf contests against members of the Outrigger Club, opened businesses to teach tourists how to surf, and earned wealth and fame as the originators of the sport. While land had been taken from native Hawaiians when the U.S. unlawfully declared Hawaii a U.S. territory, Hawaiians were able to maintain control over their surfing space (I. H. Walker, 2008).
In 1959 Finney studied differences in surfing style and attitudes between local Hawaiian surfers and Californians surfing in Hawai‘i. He found that Hawaiian surfers’ were irritated with Californian surfers’ desire to be the best. Finney attributed their attitudinal differences to racial differences and noted the two groups did not socialize with one another. Nearly one-half century later, Walker (2005) focused on Hawaiians’ protests in the late 1970s against the International Professional Surfing (IPS) organization’s claims of exclusive rights to North Shore beaches for surfing competitions. The IPS would not allow anyone to surf during their competitions, which infuriated Hawaiians. During this same time period, Australians had started spending more time on the North Shore, winning contests and gloating about their successes in the surf media. In the fall of 1976, it came to a head and a large group of local Hawaiians beat up Australian Wayne “Rabbit” Bartholomew when he attempted to surf at Sunset Beach (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002; I. H. Walker, 2011). Months later, several prominent Hawaiian surfers brought both groups together to help them resolve their differences. Bartholomew later admitted that, at the time of the conflict, he had no idea of all that had been taken from Hawaiians by colonialism and tourism development (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002). In 1977, local surfers formed “Hui ‘O He’e Nalu” to regain power over their surfing space. Negotiations with event organizers led to their employment in the professional competitions which had taken over their surf breaks (I. H. Walker, 2011).

As surfing has spread to other places in the world, many local surfers have realized the need to exert control over their surfing space; much like the Hawaiians did during the early 20th century and since the late 1970s. In Fiji one resort held exclusive surfing rights to two surf breaks (Cloud Break and Restaurants) for over 20 years (Finnegan, 2011). Recently, the Fiji Surfing Association fought and won the right to get the breaks declared public so everyone could surf there. Fijians now have access to two of the best surf breaks in the world thanks to the “Regulation of Surfing Areas Decree” by the Fijian government.
Most surfers do not have to turn to the law to regulate surfing space; they do it informally (Nazer, 2004). Their territorial behavior of maintaining local control over surfing space has been referred to as “localism.” Warshaw (2003, p. 340) defines localism as, “territorial practice whereby resident surfers in a given area try to exclude nonresident surfers through threat, intimidation, and occasionally violence; a predictable, if rarely defensible, surf world response to overcrowding.” As a form of territoriality, localism is a well-known concept in surf subculture (Alessi, 2009; Sweeney, 2005). In 1995 Scheibel documented the cultural prevalence of the concept by examining the rhetoric of localism in letters to surf magazines. Later, Australian surfer Nat Young (2000) assembled a book on the topic, titled Surf Rage, that included contributions from surfers all over the world who described their experiences with localism. Many cited incidents that earned media coverage, even legal action. One contributor, long time surfer and journalist Nick Carroll (2000, p. 60) suggested, “Many surfers who’ve spent years of their lives learning the curves and moods of a powerful and alluring surf spot feel a sense of ownership that makes land-based property rights seem feeble by comparison.” Agreeing, Kew (2000, p. 127) conceded that there are some surfers “who believe they possess some sort of rights to a specific beach.”

Crowding is cited as a trigger of localism in most definitions of the concept (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Ingersoll, 2009). However, Nazer (2004) points to localism at uncrowded surf breaks such as those in Washington and Oregon, indicating crowding may not necessarily need to be present for localism to exist. While crowding and localism became more widespread after World War II, Hawaiian royals had been demarcating surfing territory since before colonization (Alessi, 2009; Warshaw, 2003). Ingersoll (2009) claimed that the Hawaiian Kapu system was similar to localism in that it established “pride, a pecking order, security, and etiquette in the water” (p. 254); however, the Kapu system also incorporated a spiritual and political order for ancient Kanaka Maoli (Hawaiians). The modern group of Kanaka surfers
known as Hui o He‘e Nalu has had to impose localism in order to recapture indigenous space that has been taken from them by the Western neocolonial tourism industry (Ingersoll, 2009; I. H. Walker, 2005).

The rules, or code of conduct, are one way in which surfers can control the behaviors of others within what they perceive to be their territory. These rules, which revolve around who has the right of way in the surf break, are communicated to surfers as they learn to surf and gradually increase their skill level (Ford & Brown, 2006; Preston-Whyte, 2002). These rules, known as surf etiquette, help regulate the surf zone and, ideally, mitigate conflict (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Nazer, 2004; Preston-Whyte, 2002; Scheibel, 1995). Nazer (2004) calls this complex set of rules “norms” which surfers favor instead of legal regulation over their surfing space. The person at the peak of the wave (i.e., closest to the breaking point of the wave) has priority and anyone who catches the wave in front of that person is “dropping in” (Preston-Whyte, 2002). Dropping in on someone may mean that the surfer is inexperienced, or is very experienced and is intentionally breaking the rules to assert dominance as a local (Preston-Whyte, 2002; Scheibel, 1995).

Alessi (2009) alluded to Hardin’s Tragedy of the Commons when describing how surfers compete for something they believe they have access to (i.e., localism). He also pointed out that waves are an inexhaustible resource, which is possibly why laws have not put in place to limit access. To study localism, considered to be a form of Altman’s (1975) notion of territoriality, Sweeney (2005) proposed using socio-biological, economic, and ethical models. Nazer (2004), on the other hand, suggesting focusing on three forms of localism: mild localism (i.e., when visitors show deference to local surfers and observe a few more norms); moderate localism (i.e., when some visitors are tolerated at the surf break); and heavy localism (i.e., when visitors are not tolerated at the surf break). Heavy localism tactics might include the “stink eye” to let visitors know they are not welcome, verbal intimidation, physical intimidation and occasionally property
damage of cars or surf boards (Nazer, 2004). While both Alessi and Sweeney have made great strides towards promoting localism as a form of territoriality, their work is anecdotal, only. Nazer uses published interviews with surfers, reported cases and material on etiquette from the surf community to support his supposition that localism is multi-dimensional.

Surf scholars have not addressed the issue of localism in the context of tourism or developing countries, despite the fact that localism has been documented in the tourism context. In *The Surfer’s Journal*, Barilotti (2002) described younger residents’ adoption of surf cultural concepts, such as localism, in remote places like Nias, Indonesia. Manifestations of localism are death threats being made for territorial violations in the surf. Alessi (2009), Ford and Brown (2006), and Scheibel (1995) say localism is part of surf culture. While some take it for granted that localism emerges in all surfing destinations, one has to wonder if it naturally happens, or if it is introduced through surfers who bring it with them from their Western cultures, as psychologist Dr. Paul Chandler suggests (in Rielly, 2000).

In summary, localism is a form of human territoriality. Local surfers who perceive ownership over a surf break attempt to control the behavior of non-local surfers in the area of that surf break by making sure everyone follows the rules, not allowing non-locals to catch as many waves, excluding them from the space initially, or pushing them out of the space through intimidation or violence (i.e., regulation). The boundaries of the surfing area are the waves that are breaking at that particular spot, which may be delineated by the locals as their spot. Through this conceptualization of territoriality in a surf tourism context, this study hopes to bridge the gaps in surfing, tourism and territoriality literature.
Methods

This study is based on an ethnographic study conducted from May to July of 2012 in Las Salinas, Nicaragua. I lived with a local family and participated in celebrations, casual conversations, meals, tasks and other aspects of daily life with them. I also gained the trust and friendship of several of the local surfers outside of my host family. Ethnography is based on complete immersion into the culture of study and I was immersed in the local surf culture of Las Salinas (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). I conducted interviews with 23 local surfers, 15 resident foreigners or business owners/managers, 27 tourists, a tourism official, and a member of the local indigenous government. Local surfers are indigenous residents of Las Salinas, resident foreigners are foreign surfers who have started surf (or other) businesses and live in the Popoyo/Guasacate area all or part of the year, and tourists are surf tourists encountered in the Popoyo/Guasacate area. I also spoke with other key informants, such as a local man who was trying to organize the younger local surfers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Using constant comparison (Glaser, 1965), I compared each informant’s response to questions about territoriality to the previous informants response and used evidence from field notes to confirm or challenge the findings from the interviews. I kept a research journal, where I documented occurrences in my daily life. I engaged in participant observation in the surf zone. I took detailed field notes each time after I went surfing where I described and interpreted my observations in the water and reflected on my position as a researcher (Bogdewic, 1999). As is common in ethnographic research, I looked for patterns of behaviors in my observations of surfers and searched for additional sources to confirm or deny what I had observed or heard (Agar, 1996). A second researcher reviewed my research journal, my field notes and many of the interview transcripts. She challenged my assumptions and findings through peer de-briefing (Creswell & Miller, 2000).
I documented my time there through photographs of daily life and surfing. I also took video to capture the community, tourist area and the beach.

Surf Tourism in Las Salinas, Nicaragua

Nicaragua has had a long history of corrupt dictators, interference from the United States in politics and economics, a civil war, and natural disasters (Cuppes, 2004; Hunt, 2011; T. W. Walker, 2003). Politics also has been aligned with tourism development in Nicaragua. Ortega’s leadership during the Sandinista Revolution was good for tourism in the 1980s because he encouraged development. One of his advisors even created a series of diplomatic outlets where foreign visitors could pay U.S. dollars for hard to find goods, similar to Cuba’s tourism economy (Wallace, 1991). In 2006 and again in 2011 Ortega was returned to power (Consejo Supremo Electoral, 2011; Lean, 2007). The current Sandinista administration is supportive of tourism as a means of generating foreign exchange (Babb, 2004; Hunt, 2011).

Due to structural adjustment policies, various laws have been instituted to increase foreign investment in tourism (Hunt, 2011; Matteucci et al., 2008). Laws 360 and 495, for example, provide generous tax breaks (some for up to 10 years) to investors who start tourism businesses (Hunt, 2011; Matteucci et al., 2008). Of particular importance to this study is Law 344, which is a foreign investment law that provides for the equal treatment of foreign and domestic investment and the right of foreigners to own property in Nicaragua (La Asamblea Nacional De La Republica de Nicaragua, 2000). This has made coastal areas especially appealing for foreigners interested in second home ownership (Matteucci et al., 2008). Tourist numbers have been steadily increasing over the past five years: in 2011, 1,060,031 tourists visited Nicaragua, up from just 799,996 in 2007 (INTUR, 2012).
During and after the revolution tourists came to Nicaragua for political reasons. They bought postcards of pictures from the revolution and engaged in political tourism. Many wished to express solidarity with the revolution (Babb, 2004). Today, however, tourism has become less political and much more geared towards experiencing the natural wonders of Nicaragua, such as its volcanoes and beaches, including its surf breaks (Babb, 2004). The consistent off-shore winds generated by Lake Nicaragua are appealing to surfers because they produce optimal conditions along with the Pacific swells (Weisberg, 2010). In addition, Nicaragua is growing as a surf destination because nearby countries such as Costa Rica and Mexico are becoming more crowded and more expensive for surfers from the United States (Tantamjarik, 2004; Weisberg, 2010). Since surfers travel to get away from crowds and find the perfect wave, remote areas like Las Salinas are more and more appealing (Alessi, 2009; Ponting, 2009). In July of 2012, Nicaragua hosted its first international professional surfing event—the International Surfing Association’s World Masters’ Championship—at Playa Colorado. This could potentially catapult Nicaragua on to the world stage of surfing.

Las Salinas is an indigenous community, which means that it has communal land ownership overseen by a local community government known as the board of directors. There are two hotels located in the community that “lease” land from the community by paying taxes to the board of directors. Most of the hotels, vacation homes and condominiums are located to the north of the community in an area known as Playa Guasacate. The tourism development around Las Salinas is much different from the other tourism development within the municipality of Tola (where the community is located). Hacienda Iguana (where Playa Colorado is) and Rancho Santana (where Playa Santana is) are both private gated resort communities popular with surfers. The development in Guasacate and Las Salinas has been much less planned and been initiated by Nicaraguan and foreign owners of tourism businesses. Nicaraguan surfers from Managua first came to Las Salinas in the late 1970s because they heard the surf was good. They were some of
the only ones to surf there for many years, with the exception of a few backpackers passing through that would stay at the one locally owned hotel in town, La Tica. In the late 1990s, several Americans visited the area, started a surf camp and began buying up land. Today, there is a wide range of lodging in the area, from hostels, hotels, condominiums, to vacation homes and all-inclusive surf camps. The surf camps provide transportation, including boat trips, to surf breaks all over Tola and points north.

“Localism” at Popoyo Reef

The following results are drawn from the interviews I conducted with local surfers, resident foreigners, and tourists, as well as my own observations in the field. Because it was expected that resident foreigners and tourists might differ from locals in the way they talk about and behave in the surf space as well as their perception of localism the responses of all three groups were included. The results address the purpose of this study, which was to explore whether localism exists at Popoyo Reef and, if it does, what it looks like, how it is manifested, and what types of rules exist, if any.

Locals

It is generally recognized that communities are not homogenous, and this proved to be the case with the local surfing community of Las Salinas. During the course of my interviews, locals expressed a wide range of territorial tendencies and feelings about the surf space. A number of local surfers said that they do not feel like they own the waves, but used the possessive form in discussing the wave or said that they at least wanted respect from the resident foreigners and surf tourists. While many of these surfers did not think they owned the waves, they heard
other locals say this: “...He escuchado muchos de mis compañeros locales decir: ‘nosotros somos dueños y que, que vienen hacer?’” (I have heard many of my local friends saying, ‘We are the owners and what, what are they coming to do?’). Others indicated that the locals of Playa Santana, the community/beach south of Las Salinas, were much worse than the locals surfing Popoyo Reef: “Nosotros somos más tranquilo, más pacientes” (We are more calm, more patient). They said Santana locals tell tourist surfers to leave and if they do not, they take them out of the water. Local surfers called Santana locals “más agresivo” (more aggressive) and said “...Santana muy loco” (…Santana is very crazy).

The local surfers that did think they owned the waves were vehement about the issue: “Es mi ola, es mi playa. Es mi país. Puedo compartir con ellos pero solo por compartir...no son dueños. Somos dueños” (It’s my wave, it’s my beach. It’s my country. I can share with them but only through sharing…they’re not the owners. We’re the owners). Others think they own the waves as well as the beach. However, the majority of these locals are willing to share as long as people (resident foreigners and tourists) respect them. One local compared it to owning a hotel: “Es como que tu tengas hotel y tu aquiles o rentes el cuarto de un hotel. El que alquila hotel no tiene porque mandar en tu hotel” (It’s like if you have a hotel and you rent out a room in the hotel. The person that rents the room has no reason to tell you what to do in your hotel). Another surfer specifically said that “nosotros compartimos nuestro territorio” (we share our territory) with the visitors and resident foreigners. In fact, several surfers mentioned that visiting surfers should be thankful to the locals for letting them surf the waves at Popoyo Reef, again forwarding the idea of respect and deference to the local surfing population.

In terms of the boundaries of their territory, for some locals, it was the area around Popoyo Reef north to Playa Guasacate (where the spot called Beach Break is located). For others their territory was the place where they had learned to surf and spent the most time surfing. A few expanded their territory to include Santana, but the majority did not; they felt there were
“locales diferentes” in Santana. Still others considered all of Tola to be their territory, which included beaches to the south, including Playa Colorado. Finally, some locals said that all of Nicaragua was their territory. One said that he had gone down to Playa Maderas, near San Juan del Sur, and that the locals there gave him some trouble (verbally) since he was not from that area. He did not understand how they could think that way: “…Somos los mismos Nicaragüenses, como vamos a hacer esto? No podemos pelearlo entre nosotros mismos, hacemos algo feo” (We are the same Nicaraguans, how are we going to do this? We can’t fight amongst ourselves, that’s doing something ugly).

As far as regulating behavior in the territory, most local surfers said they do not tell tourists what to do at Popoyo Reef. Exceptions to this will be discussed later. They do, however, offer advice such as not to drop in on the local surfers, that the person at the peak has the right of way, and where to avoid rocks below on the reef. Advice might also include telling other locals what to do (i.e., teaching or coaching) if they were learning how to surf: “…Para que desarrolle mejor en surfing” (…so that he develops better at surfing). These forms of advice also result in safety for all surfers: “Porque si yo te llamo la atención, es por tu bien” (Because if I call your attention to something, it’s for your own good). Locals indicated that they have had to tell tourists to calm down and not get angry when other surfers drop in on them, or not to take too many waves. My own observations confirmed this. I overheard one local telling a tourist that he had dropped in on him. He told the tourist this in a jovial manner and they had a friendly discussion about it. Several said that they had to tell other locals not to fight with tourists and tourists not to fight amongst themselves. One mentioned that he would sometimes tell younger local surfers to be careful when they pulled off surfing maneuvers so that they would not hurt themselves or anyone else.

Another way in which behavior in a territory can be regulated is the establishment of rules. Nearly all of the local surfers agreed on the rules of surfing. Some said there were no
rules; everyone does whatever they want. They do know, however, who has the right of way if
two people are trying to take a wave. The person at the peak of the wave has the right of way.
One local surfer I spoke with, who had only been surfing for nine months, said he did not know
this until he had been surfing for two or three months and other local surfers told him the rule.
Other rules that were mentioned included respecting local surfers, not dropping in on local
surfers, waiting your turn for a wave, and if someone is paddling for a wave from far out, letting
him or her have the right of way, and not fighting amongst yourselves—be that locals with locals
or tourists with tourists. Despite the surfer telling me that the person paddling from far out has
the right of way and a surfer coming back out to the break from taking a wave in cannot turn
around and take another one, I observed this surfer, and other surfers, doing this on multiple
occasions. I also observed locals dropping in on tourists, even though they knew it violated the
rules of surfing. One surfer presented an alternative perspective. He said that local surfers had
preference in the waves over tourists or other foreigners: “…Cuando hay mucha gente en el agua,
locales tiene la preferencia” (When there are many people in the water, locals have preference).

Local surfers generally agreed that most visiting surfers knew these rules unless they
were learning how to surf. Some thought that surfing rules were the same all over the world
while others disagreed. One local surfer said he had seen a video of people surfing in California
where 20 or 30 people could surf at the same time on one wave, but at Popoyo Reef, only one
person could surf on a wave at a time. This is not entirely true; I observed many instances where
two people were surfing the wave at the same time. However, one had to go right and the other
had to go left to avoid colliding with one another. Others said that people who had surfed in the
area before or who had been there for a few months knew the rules, or “the system,” as one surfer
called it. This included a novel rule that girls always had the right of way. One surfer actually
referred to this rule in an interview. He said this rule applied even if a girl dropped in on him, he
would tell her to go and encourage her. My own experience and observations confirmed this.
While I was careful not to drop in on people, and put surfing secondary to observing others in the line-up, my wave catching ability increased greatly if there were more locals in the water. Not only did they know me, but I was treated differently as a woman. Calls of “dale chica!” (go girl!) were common as I was paddling for a wave or riding one. Tourists were not as willing to whistle me onto waves since they viewed me as one of them.

Despite the fact that there seemed to be few problems at Popoyo Reef, a few local surfers indicated that they had told visiting surfers to leave the surf break. This happened when a visiting surfer continued dropping in on local surfers, even when he had been told not to. In a few instances, local surfers got into arguments with visiting surfers who dropped in on them, but this rarely came to blows. Local surfers who had seen physical fights between surfers had been surfing the longest, so they would have had more time to observe the behavior of other surfers. In addition, one surfer said that he had almost gotten in fights but never actually punched anyone and another indicated he had almost come to blows with an Argentinean who had dropped in on him the day before but it just ended up being verbal threats. I never observed a physical fight and some surfers who had been surfing four or five years had not seen one either.

Crowded conditions mean that all surfers have to be aggressive in order to be in the right position to be on a wave (which I observed on a regular basis), but this involves out-paddling other surfers, not being antagonistic. Many surfers would say it is a normal part of surfing in crowded surf spots. The most crowded I ever saw at Popoyo Reef was 27 people. Typically it ranged anywhere from eight to twenty people, even when the surf was small (only on three occasions was I out with one or two other people). Even on a big day, there would consistently be about 18 people in the water. This may not seem like a lot to some surfers, but when that many people are trying to share one peak of a wave, all surfers have to be aggressive.

When asked why the arguments have not turned in to fights, one local surfer attributed it to personality. According to him, everyone is different, whether they are locals or tourists, and
some like to fight and others do not. For the most part, surfers seemed to agree that local surfers are calm and do not hassle tourists; they are unlike the local surfers in Santana or other surf destinations: “Si algunas playas que exige respeto mas, ha exigido para los Americanos si, entrada a la ola de otros y eso ya, como pelear con ellos pero aquí en Popoyo, nosotros no somos así” (Yes at some beaches they demand more respect, demand it from the Americans, entering another’s wave and all that, like fight with them, but here in Popoyo, we aren’t like that).

Local surfers described feeling a sense of ownership over the waves and recognition of territorial boundaries (be that Popoyo Reef to Beach Break or all of Nicaragua). While many did not tell others what to do, behavior in the surf zone was controlled by rules they assumed surfers should know and advice they would offer at times. As my time in the field progressed and I spent more time in the water, I noticed behaviors that seemed to help local surfers negotiate sharing their space with tourists. In later interviews, I ended up asking locals the reasons for their behavior and movements.

I noticed that locals would not surf the main point at Popoyo Reef, they would surf inside closer to the shore or on the inside of Outer Reef. Several said they did this because they liked the shape of the wave better. Depending on the tide, it worked better than the main point: “...Tal vez Popoyo está como un poco lleno de-, mucha marea, entonces, la ola no esta buena...para mí, a veces...entonces, salgo para otra ola que tal vez un poco más rápido...” (Maybe Popoyo is a little full of-, the tide is high, so, the wave isn’t good...for me, sometimes...so, I leave for another wave that’s maybe a little faster). Many local surfers would move to avoid crowds and to find a more tranquil area to surf. One local surfer said sometimes there were so many people on Popoyo Reef, “tu vas a ver las personas como tortugas” (you’re going to see people like turtles) which surfers had to weave around. A few said they would move to other areas to avoid conflicts that could occur when so many people were in the water. For the most part, having to move somewhere else did not bother them, especially when the other spot
might be better. Locals knew the area around Popoyo Reef so well they could surf different waves (and not have to leave the beach) that tourists did not realize were better. Several local surfers did say that they did not like having to move because Popoyo Reef was their wave and they did not have cars like the tourists did, to go find other places to surf.

I also observed that many locals were only able to go surfing during certain times. Sometimes when I was out surfing, only tourists or resident foreigners were present. This is mainly because the tourist season is May through September so most locals have to work the majority of the week. Sundays, a common day off, was when I observed the most locals in the surf line-up. Some local surfers had figured out how to work around their schedules, however. They would go surfing in the mornings because their shift at a hotel or lodge would start in the afternoon. The times I went surfing or to the beach in the afternoon, I did not observe many locals surfing. This may have been due to their work schedule, but also to surf conditions—most surfers like to surf mornings because the wind is lighter. Local surfers who look after property for foreigners had the most flexibility in when they could go surfing. Very few local surfers worked construction because that schedule gave them the least amount of time in the water. Construction workers worked from 7am-4pm Monday through Friday and a half day on Saturday.

**Resident Foreigners**

Most resident foreigners did not think localism was a problem at Popoyo Reef; they said local surfers were calm and did not cause problems. Resident foreigners had rarely seen physical fights or locals telling tourists to get out of the water at Popoyo Reef. In addition, they noted that local surfers would not tell them to leave “...unless you did something really bad.” My own observations matched this. I never saw a local tell anyone to get out of the water.
If resident foreigners did observe localism, they assigned it to other resident foreigners who did not respect the rules of surfing, or got into fights. For example, one South American surfer told me there was an order to who had priority in the waves; priority goes to locals, then the resident foreigners who had lived there awhile, and then tourists. One American told me he had seen more problems between resident foreigners and locals, not tourists. Conversations with locals confirmed this as well; at least four locals described having seen a physical fight between an older resident foreigner and a young local (they all described the same fight in separate interviews). This particular resident foreigner was not well-liked, perhaps for this reason. In addition, resident foreigners suggested that localism exists in Santana, south of Popoyo Reef. In that area locals tell visitors what to do (like to get out of the water) or start fights. This may be because there are more surfers, the tourists at Santana tend to be wealthier, and/or locals have become used to getting handouts (i.e., surfboards, shorts, or other gifts). One person told me that locals would move to a different wave around Popoyo Reef to surf if the main point got too crowded and to avoid conflict. This confirms my own observations and discussions with local surfers.

Resident foreigners also observed local surfers dropping in on people, or catching too many waves. One mentioned that locals would occasionally drop in on people but to him, locals were supposed to do that: “...maybe drop a few times, but I’d do the same thing if I was on my home break, back home.” Another mentioned that a local might purposefully get in a surfing accident with someone in order to get money from him, but that this behavior was pretty rare. Presenting a different viewpoint, another local surfer shared how a tourist had dropped in on him and broken his board and he had made him pay for the repairs, but only because it had been the tourists’ fault. Different people could have different interpretations of this event depending on their point of view as to who was at fault. For example, one American said that surfers move in packs, the younger ones are like a little gang. He said that one thing they do is paddle around
someone who is at the peak so they will be in position behind them and the first person will have to back off the wave. He called it “back-paddling,” a term more commonly known as “snaking.” A tourist also mentioned locals paddling behind him, but said they were able to do that because they knew the wave better.

Tourists

Tourists overwhelmingly agreed that local surfers are nice and localism is not a problem. Much like the resident foreigners, they also mentioned that people from Brazil, Argentina, or other countries cause more problems than the locals. Several people mentioned that if you respect the locals, they will respect you. One tourist I spoke with said if he got into anything with a local, it was “competitiveness” or “passion” more than localism, adding that you could not blame them, it was their home. Some said that the locals caught more waves than everyone else but that seemed to accept that behavior as normal. I observed locals catching many more waves than tourists. One day when I was surfing, it seemed as if every time I turned around one particular local was on a wave. Another time when we were out together, his timing was impeccable; he would always paddle back out right in time to catch the set wave that was coming, even when the set waves were not particularly consistent. He had also been surfing Popoyo Reef for 12 to 13 years.

Tourists mentioned how important local knowledge was and attributed that to the locals’ ability to catch more waves: “You know, they’re more dialed in and I use them as a guide, you know, to like, ok, we got to line up there...and I know what my limitations are and I try to find my spot where it works for me, you know they might be able to take off a little deeper cause they know the wave better and...they live here.” One person said that if local surfers dropped in on you, you just had to let them: “...Cause it’s...you don’t wanna cause any havoc with them, it’s
their beach, they know a lot more people than you do.” This tourist also made the same observation I did: there were more locals on the weekends. Multiple people compared their experience with other surf destinations, such as El Salvador, saying that the locals here were much friendlier.

Several people mentioned specific instances with locals that were indicative of territorial behavior. One tourist said that he was going for a wave and he tried to coordinate it with a local so that he would go right and the local would go left, but when he took off, the local went the same direction he did and got angry about it. A little while later a local tried to tell him there was a larger wave behind the one he was paddling for (there was not) and the tourist ended up taking off anyway realizing the local was trying to trick him. Another guy from California said that he once had a little pack of locals following him around Popoyo Reef (much like the resident foreigner described above): “…You know they put off a little bit of a vibe, like it was their break or whatever but they weren’t, you know, I would try and paddle one direction, away from them and they would kinda follow me and I just couldn’t paddle away from them well enough.” It made it difficult for him to get in a good position to catch the wave. However, he was positive overall about his experience in Nicaragua. To reinforce his positive experiences he referenced a Nicaraguan surfer at Playa Colorado who had whistled him into a wave. While I did not observe the “pack” instance, I observed another instance when two local surfers were near some tourists from Florida at the peak of the wave and while not directly antagonizing them, they were making it difficult for them to catch anything. One local got a wave from the tourist and the tourist had to pull off because the local was at the peak and had the right of way. Another local dropped in on a tourist and should have let the tourist have it, but the local went ahead and the tourist backed off.
Conclusions

Localism exists at Popoyo Reef; however, contrary to the literature, it is not characterized by violent resistance to outsiders’ attempts to also surf in the space. Local surfers’ vehement declarations of ownership and their desire for respect showcased their perceived ownership of the space. Their definitions of boundaries varied, however. For some, the boundaries were limited to the surf zone at Popoyo Reef and for others the boundaries extended to include all of Nicaragua. The establishment of boundaries also involved regulatory behavior. While the local surfers at Popoyo Reef were not aggressive, they did control others’ behavior by following rules (and expecting others to follow them), giving advice, and educating tourists and other locals about what they needed to know in order to function within the surfing space.

Much like the local surfers in Hawaii, the surf zone was a place where Nicaraguan surfers could still exert control (I. H. Walker, 2008). They could not control the land in and around the community, which was rapidly being purchased by foreigners, many of whom also ran the surf tourism businesses that draw surf tourists to Popoyo Reef (Matteucci et al., 2008). A tourist may be paying over $2,000 a week to be in Nicaragua surfing, but when he paddles out, he’s the same as the local surfer who lives with 11 family members in a clay roof house, albeit the local surfer knows the wave better. This is empowering for local surfers in the face of tourism development. Popoyo Reef was where many locals learned to surf and where they surf every day. They knew the waves like the back of their hand and used this knowledge to navigate and regulate the space. Locals, resident foreigners and tourists agree that some local surfers control their space by following tourists around, tricking them about a coming wave, and simply taking more waves than others do. These behaviors and sense of ownership of the space represent one of the tenets of territoriality (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1983). However, local surfers also shared their local
knowledge to keep themselves and visitors safe. This behavior represents a positive way in which localism can work in a surf destination.

One of the ways in which locals regulated their space was by following (and expecting others to follow) rules that they have learned are part of surfing. This finding supports localism research (Ford & Brown, 2006; Preston-Whyte, 2002). An interesting aspect of the rules at Popoyo Reef is that local surfers are more flexible with their enforcement based on gender, challenging Fendt and Wilson’s (2012) finding that localism was a barrier in surf travel for women. In my experience at Popoyo Reef, being a woman (particularly an American woman) actually meant that localism did not apply to me and locals welcomed my presence over male tourists.

As several local surfers and tourists mentioned, the rules were established primarily to keep everyone safe (Preston-Whyte, 2002; Sweeney, 2005). The rules also prevented conflict (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Haley, Snaith, & Miller, 2005; Preston-Whyte, 2002; Scheibel, 1995), which seems to be working at Popoyo Reef. As long as local surfers, resident foreigners and tourists knew who had the right of way and those who had broken a rule apologized, conflict was avoided.

As Sweeney (2005) suggests, not only was safety a positive aspect of locals regulating territory, but localism also resulted in self-preservation for the local group of indigenous surfers (or “tribe” as Sweeney calls them). With more and more tourists coming to Popoyo Reef, local surfers have to be sure they are still able to access and catch waves within the boundaries of their territory. Even locals that did not express a feeling of ownership said that they at least wanted respect from resident foreigners and tourists since they were the ones that lived and surfed there all the time.

While localism at Popoyo Reef has not reached critical levels like it has in other places such as California, Indonesia, and Australia, multiple informants mentioned Santana, an area
south of Popoyo Reef known for incidents associated with heavy localism (tourists being forced from the water). In Santana there is a private resort community which creates a huge economic and social divide between the local community and the tourists. This could explain the escalated tensions in the water locals and resident foreigners claim to have witnessed. In Las Salinas there is no private resort community, only a few gated areas in Playa Guasacate. The open infrastructure and fractured development of tourism around Las Salinas may explain the mild localism at Popoyo Reef. However, this is purely speculative and cannot be substantiated without further research.

Local surfers acknowledged that increasing numbers of tourists have contributed to crowding which, according to Alessi (2009), Sweeney (2005), and Warshaw (2003), increases the likelihood of localism. “Crowding” at Popoyo Reef, however, means around 25-30 people. Local surfers’ response to this level of crowding has been to navigate around and avoid conflict with tourists by keeping lines of communication open or surfing different parts of Popoyo Reef. Physical fights have been avoided by talking things out and, in some cases accessing different parts of the Reef has resulted in higher quality waves for the local surfers. This perception of, and response to, crowding could change as tourist numbers increase and more people (e.g., 50 to 60 people) crowd the line-up.

**Localism as Territoriality**

Territoriality varied with the tide and quality of surf. This result was similar to the one Malmberg (1984) found with fishermen. When high tide came in, some local surfers moved to a different spot, out of the crowd at the peak. This behavior resulted in a better ride because the wave broke in a different way. Local surfers did not have to compete with tourists for, or defend, waves because they knew the area better and could move to a different part of their territory.
Hence, the changeable environment of a water territory makes it unique from land territories in that relationships in the space come and go (Anderson, 2012). If there are no waves, there is nothing to compete for in the surf zone: the territory is temporary. Within hours the territory can change, unlike land, which stays relatively the same physical shape even under different weather conditions. Water space is also different from land in that people are competing over a space which no one can own. In Nicaragua, unlike Fiji (Finnegan, 2011) and other places with historic fishing rights, the ocean is a public space (La Asamblea Nacional De La Republica de Nicaragua, 2009). Local surfers were able to establish their own rules and contend for it among themselves. Because it is an informal system, no government laws regulate the surf space (Nazer, 2004).

Another aspect of the water territory (i.e., the waves) was that local surfers could not occupy it all of the time. Despite claims of on-going ownership, they could only physically occupy their water territory when they were surfing. As Anderson (2012) points out, this temporary relationship is what makes water territories so unique. To my knowledge, nothing on land is like a wave, i.e., there one minute and gone the next. In terms of local surfers who claim on-going ownership of the waves, many cannot occupy the space when they are working during the tourist season; thus limiting their ability to regulate the behaviors of tourists or others considered to be “outsiders.” As a result, the observed lack of problems between the two groups may be due to the limited interaction that took place between tourists and locals.

Other findings that parallel the results of other territoriality studies include cultural differences in defining space, need for identity status, and space as a secondary or home territory. Much like the literature on territorialization has shown, indigenous residents’ concepts of territory are different from those of their Western counterparts. In this study, defining a territory did not mean someone else could not enter the water, it simply meant that local surfers refer to it as their space because they surf it every day and it is a part of their lives and their community (Sletto, 2009). I found indications of territoriality fulfilling a need for identity status and recognition by
others, much like Gold’s (1982) conceptualization of territoriality. Local surfers want respect and acknowledgement from foreign surf tourists and surf business owners because they are native to the community and have grown up surfing there. Also, the surf space was like Altman’s (1975) secondary territory, or Lyman and Scott’s (1967) home territory, in that it was a semi-public space that falls in between being completely opened or completely closed to everyone. The local surfers viewed it as their space, and were willing to share it, but preferred if outsiders showed them respect.

While there are similarities to work on territoriality, there also are some differences between these results and the localism literature. The majority of local surfers at Popoyo Reef did not feel the need “to exclude nonresident surfers [intruders] through threat, intimidation and occasionally violence” (Warshaw, 2003, p. 340); they shared the space with others and tried to inform them of how they should behave in the space since it was not “home” to them. The concept of localism was much more complex than surfers believing they own the waves and not wanting to share. The form of localism found in Las Salinas is more like Nazer’s (2004) mild localism—locals want respect from visitors and to inform them of the rules so they can follow them. Local surfers encourage people to not drop in (however they may exploit the drop-in rule for their own benefit), displaying a desire for additional deference due to their local status (Nazer, 2004; Preston-Whyte, 2002). Further, residents believed that they had rights to a specific beach (Kew, 2000), yet still wanted to share this beach with others. Thus, the existence of localism does not necessarily imply that every local on the beach is gunning for a fight with tourists and outsiders as earlier anecdotal evidence suggests (Young, 2000). This study enables a re-definition of localism for this particular destination: localism is the sense of ownership local surfers feel for the waves from Popoyo Reef to Beach Break, their use of local knowledge to navigate this surf space (through the use of shared information and rules), and their desire to share that space with those that show respect for them. It is also characterized by some surfers’
beliefs that the rules do not apply to them and the occasional use of subtle tactics to ensure they still catch plenty of waves (i.e., moving in a pack).

These results offer a more nuanced understanding of surf localism and territoriality because localism was examined in the context of tourism, not simply surfing (Alessi, 2009; Sweeney, 2005). Also, this study of localism was not simply focused on understanding why surfers express territorial behavior. It also was about localism in the face of specific obstacles, such as the influx of foreign tourists from whom they have to guard their resource.

**The Future of Localism (Popoyo Reef and Beyond)**

In the future the degree to which localism is expressed may change. More people on the waves portends more accidents and more opportunities for conflict, since many people will be competing for a resource that only two people can use at once (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Ingersoll, 2009). And, surf tour operators may have to work with locals in order to negotiate time on the break. This will be necessary to keep local surfers and tourists happy. As much of the sustainable tourism literature suggests, community participation is vital in the tourism development process (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Sofield, 2003). Thus, in the case of Las Salinas and Popoyo Reef, the needs of all members of the local community must be accounted for or conflict with tourists (be it on land and or in the water) likely will occur (Scheyvens, 1999). As one South American resident foreigner mentioned, the lack of control in the area’s tourism development is detrimental to the community and to the surf zone. Foreign surf business operators must recognize the importance of the space to locals by (a) acknowledging that they are guests in Nicaragua and (b) consulting with members of the local community so that local surfers and tourists can share the surf zone.
At the end of my time in Las Salinas, one local man was trying to organize young locals under the auspices of a religious based group. One surfer said that this group was going to tell the foreign business owners they could not bring tourists to the area anymore if they did not respect the locals and sponsor them with surf boards or products. I asked him later how this would be possible and he said simply by talking to the business owners. In order for major changes (e.g., tourism developers consulting the local surfers about when and how many clients they can bring and leaving surf access open to locals as more building occurs) to occur, however, I believe it will take a more concerted effort to involve all local surfers. This might entail forming an organization, which includes surfers of all ages, that focuses on earning respect from tourists and business owners and working to maintain access to the surf zone. Such an initiative would be similar to those employed by Hawaiian surfers in the late 1970s who attempted to maintain access to North Shore surf breaks in the face of foreign domination of the area (I. H. Walker, 2011).

In Hawaii, centuries of colonial violence have provoked local resistance and violence against outsiders’ use of the surfing space (I. H. Walker, 2011). Exploitation of the Hawaiian Islands for tourism has caused a great deal of anger among many Hawaiians, which has bled into the surf zone (Ingersoll, 2009). To minimize the potential for localism in other destinations, continued research on surf destinations like Popoyo Reef should be conducted over time. Conducting longitudinal studies will give researchers insight to the factors that contribute to an increase in and manifestations of localism.

In addition, surf tour operators are continuously looking for new surf destinations and, when they find them, building their businesses often without concern for the local community (Ponting et al., 2005). Future tourism development, such as a private resort, that blocks access to Popoyo Reef, or makes it more difficult to get to, could anger locals and lead to heavy localism. In Brazil (Oliveira Silva, 2013), government officials were willing to overlook encroachment of tourism development on local beach access in favor of economic gain. Similarly, the pro-tourism
stance of the Nicaraguan government suggests there may be little locals can do if such a private resort is proposed, unless they are organized. Researchers need to focus on the impact of surf tourism on communities adjacent to surf zones as well as the local surfers from those communities in order to inform policy decisions. As O’Brien and Ponting (2013) showed in Papua New Guinea, surf tourism is most sustainable when the local community, not the tour operator, is put at the center of everything. Another issue that arises with tourism developers and other resident foreigners is whether they are bringing the negative aspects of localism with them. Locals, resident foreigners and tourists said that resident foreigners caused more problems than did locals. Exploring their sense of territoriality in depth would be a consideration since this group may feel as much of a sense of ownership and the need to regulate the surf break as much as many locals do.

The results of this study have demonstrated how localism as a form of human territoriality works in a surf tourism destination in the developing world. While localism does not seem to exist in a negative form at Popoyo Reef, it is very much present. Local surfers showed perceived ownership, defined their boundaries, and discussed how they regulated the space through rules, more overt defensive moves (such as following others around or tricking them), and giving advice to others. The fact that boundaries were difficult for all locals to agree on is interesting and may require more exploration; maybe surfers that view Nicaragua as their territory give tourists advice in other breaks as well as Popoyo Reef. The results of this study extend knowledge about territoriality in a fluid, water space, and suggest that territoriality and localism could be far more complex than presented in the literature. As tourists indicated, they enjoyed surfing Nicaragua more than other countries because of the friendly locals; this will likely encourage them to return and continue the flow of money and jobs into the local community. Through understanding how territoriality manifests in local surfers, we can understand that strong
sense of ownership surfers feel and that it may not always be the negative thing surfers have always believed it to be.
Chapter 4

Conclusion

In this study I examined localism, a form of human territoriality, in the context of a surf tourism destination in a developing country. In this chapter I provide an overview of the results by addressing the research questions, links to the literature, the contribution of the study to the field, limitations, and how the findings may be applied within the tourism industry. In this chapter, the terms “local surfers,” “resident foreigners,” and “tourists” are used as follows: local surfers are the indigenous residents of Las Salinas who surf; resident foreigners include foreign surf tour operators, business owners, and more who live (and surf) in the Popoyo/Guasacate area part or all of the year; and tourists are individuals who came to surf in the Popoyo/Guasacate area.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Does territoriality of the surf zone (i.e., localism) exist for residents of Las Salinas who surf?

A mild form of localism exists at Popoyo Reef. While not all local surfers believed they owned the waves, some did or had heard others express ownership. Even if they did not believe they owned the waves, they wanted respect from resident foreigners and tourists who surfed at Popoyo Reef.

Research Question 2: If localism does exist, how do residents articulate the meaning of their territory and how is it manifested?
The meaning of locals’ territory was manifested in different ways. Some locals defined their boundaries as being Popoyo Reef to Beach Break (just the area around Las Salinas and Guasacate). Others defined their territory as all of Nicaragua.

Due to the mild expression of localism at Popoyo Reef, none of the surfers felt the need to defend their surf territory from outside intrusion. There were occasional incidences of physical fights at Popoyo Reef, but none of the locals believed that only they should be surfing there. The non-violent ways in which local surfers regulated behavior included giving advice to people; following rules; informing others of rules (e.g., “don’t drop in on a local”); helping young local surfers when they were learning to surf; and talking with others if someone did violate a rule, not automatically removing them from the line-up. They were willing to share their territory with resident foreigners and tourists. Observations confirmed much of what people said in their interviews. For example, I did not see a physical fight break out or hear anyone being told they could not surf at Popoyo Reef. In addition, locals, resident foreigners and tourists would compete fiercely for waves, but in a crowded surf break, they did not have much of a choice if they wanted to catch anything. Locals did know the break extremely well and would catch more waves than tourists who were surfing.

Research Question 3: What rules exist within the defined territory?

The rules that local surfers followed included one of the well-known universal rules of surfing: the person at the peak of the wave has the right of way and no one should get on the wave in front of them (known as “dropping in”). Other examples of rules that locals mentioned were: respecting locals, locals having priority, not dropping in on locals, not turning around and taking a wave when you are paddling out after having just ridden one, and waiting your turn for a wave. Most surfers agreed on the main rules, but there was variability in some of the other rules they believed existed at Popoyo Reef. I actually observed local surfers violating rules: they
would drop in on people or not wait their turn for a wave. I also heard locals talking with tourists if a tourist dropped in on them, politely explaining the rules.

Research Question 4: Who is a local and who is an outsider?

Defining who was a local and who was an outsider was complex. While some local surfers believed only people who had been born in and lived their entire life in the community were local surfers (much like how being indigenous was determined in Las Salinas), not everyone agreed. Some said that resident foreigners who had lived there for awhile were also locals. Some resident foreigners were more ingrained in the local surf community (and community in general) than others; thus, it was easy to tell who locals might or might not consider a “local surfer.”

Others said there were a select few resident foreigners who they considered locals because they respected and befriended local surfers or if they had helped local surfers or the community. Resident foreigners were also divided on this issue: some considered themselves to be locals because they lived and surfed there, others said they had not been born there so they were not locals. Still others suggested the “local” designation did not mean much. Some of the behavior of resident foreigners, however, suggested they did believe themselves to be locals, as they had been known to fight with locals and tourists over waves.

Research Question 5: Do surf tourists, surf operators and resident foreigners feel local surfers are territorial and express localism at Popoyo Reef?

Overall, surf tourists and surf operators (along with other resident foreigners who surfed), did not seem to think localism was a problem at Popoyo Reef. Tourists noted the amiable nature of the local Nicaraguan surfers compared with other countries to which they had traveled. Resident foreigners were quick to blame other resident foreigners for any problems in the line-up before local surfers. Several tourists and resident foreigners described incidences with local
surfers (people following them around, paddling behind them to get a wave, fights), but indicated that those incidences were rare.

Links to the Literature

Localism at Popoyo Reef most closely resembles Nazer’s (2004) categorization of mild localism. Mild localism occurs when locals simply expect deference from others in the surf lineup. The locals at Popoyo Reef expressed this when they said they just wanted respect, even if they did not believe they owned the waves. One said this specifically when he said that locals should have preference. Another indication of mild localism is not always following the rules, especially when it means dropping in on an outsider (or tourist) (Langseth, 2012; Nazer, 2004). This was apparent in my observations of local surfers in the surf zone – locals would encourage others not to drop in on them, or to wait their turn for a wave, but would occasionally do it if it benefitted them (much like other studies have shown) (Nazer, 2004; Preston-Whyte, 2002).

Localism is also not necessarily viewed negatively at Popoyo Reef. The strong sense of ownership some surfers felt motivated them to advise others for the sake of everyone’s safety. As Sweeney (2005) suggests, not only was safety a positive aspect of locals regulating territory, but localism also resulted in self-preservation for the local tribe. With more and more tourists coming to Popoyo Reef, local surfers have to be sure they are still able to access and catch waves within the boundaries of their territory.

The results of this study suggest localism is much more complex than previously thought. Residents believed they had rights to a specific beach (Kew, 2000), yet still wanted to share this beach with others. Thus, the existence of localism does not necessarily imply that every local on the beach must defend their territory by keeping tourists and outsiders completely out as earlier anecdotal evidence suggests (Young, 2000). While localism in Las Salinas has not reached
critical levels like it has in other places such as California, Indonesia, and Australia, more surf tourists are arriving every year which could eventually strain the amiable relations between hosts and guests (Barilotti, 2002; Young, 2000). Local surfers acknowledged that surf tourists have contributed to increased crowding which, according to Alessi (2009) and Sweeney (2005), increases the likelihood of localism. While locals have been able to cope with tourism thus far by surfing different areas around Popoyo Reef, or advising tourists and others for safety reasons, it will be interesting to see what happens in the future as crowding becomes more of an issue.

Another way in which locals regulated their increasingly crowded space was by following (and expecting others to follow) rules which they have learned are part of surfing (Ford & Brown, 2006; Preston-Whyte, 2002). This finding coincides with work from other surf researchers who have discussed certain rules that surfers follow. As several local surfers and tourists mentioned, the rules were established primarily to keep everyone safe (Preston-Whyte, 2002; Sweeney, 2005). The rules also prevent conflict (Alessi, 2009; Ford & Brown, 2006; Haley et al., 2005; Preston-Whyte, 2002; Scheibel, 1995), which seems to be working for now at Popoyo Reef. As long as local surfers, resident foreigners, and tourists knew who had the right of way and those who had broken a rule apologized, conflict was avoided.

In terms of the territoriality and territorialization literature, there are indications of territoriality fulfilling a need for identity status, and recognition by others, much like Gold’s (1982) conceptualization of territoriality. The locals want respect and acknowledgement from foreign surf tourists and surf business owners because they are the natives of the community that have grown up surfing there. The surf space was like Altman’s (1975) secondary territory, or Lyman and Scott’s (1967) home territory, in that it was a semi-public space that falls in between being completely opened or completely closed to everyone. While there were people that were not “regulars” in the space, the majority of the local surfers did not feel the need “to exclude nonresident surfers [intruders] through threat, intimidation and occasionally violence” (Warshaw,
they shared the space with them and tried to inform them of how they should behave in the space since it was not “home” to them. Much like the literature on territorialization has shown, indigenous and Western concepts of territory differ. Defining a territory does not mean someone else cannot come in; it simply means a certain group (local surfers) consider it their space because they surf it every day and it is a part of their lives and community (Sletto, 2009). Other parallels to the territorialization literature are the ways in which some local surfers use their identity as indigenous residents and some resident foreigners use their residency or property ownership to claim the surf space. Similar to resident groups in Belize, multiple people claimed “local” status in the territory for different reasons (Medina, 1999).

The examination of territoriality within a waterscape parallels Malmberg’s (1984) findings. The territoriality of surfers varied with the tide and quality of surf. Once high tide came in, some local surfers moved to a different spot, got of the crowd at the peak, and even achieved a better ride because the wave broke in a different way. They did not have to compete with others for waves, or defend them, because they knew the area better and could move to a different part of their territory. Hence, the changeable environment of a water territory makes it unique from land territories in that relationships in the space come and go (Anderson, 2012). If there are no waves, there is nothing to compete for in the surf zone: the territory is temporary. To my knowledge, nothing on land is like that, i.e., there one minute and gone the next. This suggests that future studies of territoriality of water spaces may need to include questions about the time period or conditions during which people feel most territorial. Within hours the territory can change, unlike land, which stays relatively the same physical shape even under different weather conditions. The other way in which water is different from land is that people are competing over a space which no one can own. With the exception of Fiji, and other places that have had historic fishing rights to certain parts of the ocean, no one can own the ocean. In Nicaragua, the ocean is a public space (La Asamblea Nacional De La Republica de Nicaragua, 2003, p. 340).
Surfers are able to establish their own rules and contend for it among themselves. Because it is an informal system, no government laws regulate the surf space (Nazer, 2004).

The results suggest localism may be a Western phenomenon (Rielly, 2000). Similar to Krause’s (2013) findings in Costa Rica, resident foreigners seemed to bring the localism with them, causing more issues than locals in the surf. Local surfers generally believed they should share with visitors. While some resident foreigners may have thought of themselves as locals, and were justified in regulating the surf zone, some local surfers disagreed. Local surfers did not believe all resident foreigners were locals, and some had been subjected to the aggressive behavior of resident foreigners. This example of competing claims to the surf territory may make for a contentious environment in the future between resident groups (Bartholomew & Baker, 2002; I. H. Walker, 2011; Young, 2000). However, resident foreigners that respected local surfers were more easily assimilated into the local surf culture, much like Langseth (2012) found in Norway. This shows that it is crucial to examine the resident surfer population before determining whether localism is an issue in itself. Conflicts between locals could be present and two different groups could be enacting different levels of localism (Nazer, 2004) on visitors in one destination.

Las Salinas not only shares certain parallels with Costa Rica, but with other destinations surf tourism scholars have studied. The frustration with the lack of attention the community received from some of the surf tourism operators was similar to what Ponting and colleagues (2005) found in the Mentawaian Islands. Mentawaian villagers felt ignored by the surf tourism industry. While surf tour operators provided jobs to residents of Las Salinas and did projects with other communities in the area, some local surfers still felt ignored and unsupported; they were not reaping the benefits of all of the income they saw flowing in from tourism. For some, this made a difference in terms of which foreign business owners they considered to be local.
Overall, the results of this study offer a more nuanced understanding of localism because the construct was examined in the context of surf tourism, not simply surfing in general (Alessi, 2009; Sweeney, 2005). In the context of surf tourism, the study of localism should not be about understanding why surfers express territorial behavior. Instead, it should be about localism in the face of specific obstacles, such as the influx of foreign tourists and resident foreigners. While not specifically examining localism, Walker’s (2011) analysis of Hawaiian surfers’ resistance movements in the 20th century against tourism development more closely resembles the issues local surfers are facing in Las Salinas than does the general localism literature.

Contributions to the Literature

Localism, which Warshaw (2003, p. 340)(2003, p. 340) defines as, “territorial practice whereby resident surfers in a given area try to exclude nonresident surfers through threat, intimidation, and occasionally violence; a predictable, if rarely defensible, surf world response to overcrowding,” is considered to be a universal surf concept. The findings of this study suggest that localism might be more appropriately defined as:

The sense of ownership local surfers feel for the waves from Popoyo Reef to Beach Break, their use of local knowledge to navigate this surf space (through the use of shared information and rules), and the desire to share that space with those who show respect for them. It is also characterized by some local surfers’ beliefs that the rules do not apply to them and the occasional use of subtle tactics to ensure they still catch plenty of waves (i.e., moving in a pack).

The major contribution of this study has been the use of empirical data to document the existence of localism as a form of territoriality in a surf tourism context. While surf tourism
scholars have alluded to localism, it has never been the focal point of a tourism study (Ingersoll, 2009; Krause, 2013; Preston-Whyte, 2002; Tantamjarik, 2004). Surfers and surf scholars have primarily used anecdotal evidence to discuss localism or accounts from prominent surfers (Alessi, 2009; Nazer, 2004; Sweeney, 2005; Young, 2000). Scheibel (1995) studied localism through an analysis of surf media, but did not collect data from surfers in a surf community or destination. Thus, my research is the first to explore localism as a phenomenon, and an acknowledged part of surf culture (Ford & Brown, 2006; Olivier, 2012; Scheibel, 1995) at a specific surf break in a tourism context. This seminal work fills a large gap in the surf tourism literature and is hopefully the first of many to explore localism and its social and economic consequences for surf tourism destinations.

The results reveal that localism is more complex than many surfers and scholars have acknowledged. Nazer (2004) argued, and this study confirms, that there are varying levels of localism (mild, moderate and heavy). This highlights the importance of studying localism as part of a multidimensional (mild to heavy) not a one-dimensional concept. There are also different groups of locals, not all of whom may be from the destination. Also, this study showed that locals can feel ownership over a surf break, but still be willing to share it and let people into their boundaries. Thus, before addressing the problem of localism, researchers must define who the locals are and what they think of each other.

Another important contribution of this study was the study of localism in a developing country. While other surf tourism researchers have focused on developing countries, once again, none had specifically examined localism. This study shows that localism in a developing country may take on different forms for a variety of reasons. Surfers in Las Salinas rely on tourism for income and surf gear handouts from visitors. So, for them, behaving aggressively towards tourists is not to their advantage since they would lose income from clients they work for everyday in the surf lodges and not receive handouts from surfers they meet on the beach. One
resident foreigner echoed the same sentiment about the surf gear handouts. In other destinations, such as Indonesia, there have been incidents where local surfers have reacted violently to invasions of their surf territory (Barilotti, 2002), but this does not seem to be the case at Popoyo Reef. Perhaps the mild form of localism at Popoyo Reef is due to the fact that the destination is not fully developed like places in Hawaii, Australia, or even Costa Rica. Some of the places with surf gangs and heavy localism tend to be major tourism destinations that are extremely crowded (Young, 2000).

This study also contributes to the territoriality literature, much of which has not been updated since the 1980s. While geographers have kept up the study of nation-state territories and indigenous boundaries, few scholars in recent years have explored the frameworks proposed by sociologists such as Altman (1975). Alessi (2009) uses Altman’s work in his conceptualization of localism, but his efforts are theoretical and no effort is made to collect data. This study also extends Malmberg’s (1984) and Anderson’s (2012) work on water territories and the unique temporal nature of these areas that differentiate them from land territories. Surfers are competing for waves that are not always there. When there are no waves, there is no territory to regulate. A wave is also extremely temporary in space, it is there one minute and gone the next. The tide and the size of the surf affect when surfers use their territory and what part of it they use. For some locals, high tide simply means moving to an area other than the main wave peak at Popoyo Reef. However this also extends the work on waterscapes as a changeable territory. Not only can the territory change in a matter of hours, but it is different in that no one can own it. In Nicaragua, the ocean is public space. There are no regulations governing the ownership of space, definitely not waves, which is why the surf zone has always been subject to informal regulations by surfers, not law (Nazer, 2004). No one can legally own this space: it is not subject to private property laws, or even communal property laws, because it is a public space.
Despite the fact that only a mild form of localism exists at Popoyo Reef, it should be monitored. As tourism development continues, relations in the surf line-up may change. For example, the feelings and opinions foreign residents have about the surf territory may change. This is mainly due to the fact that they seem to be the ones perpetuating the negative aspects of localism and in this study I was not able to explore their notions of territoriality as in depth as I might have. Instead, I focused on how they viewed locals and if they considered themselves to be locals. This could have yielded different results. Another concept that could have been explored more in depth with local surfers was their notion of boundaries. I had a preconceived notion that they would say their boundary was the area around Popoyo Reef (including Beach Break) so my questions about how they regulated behavior in the surf and what the rules were at Popoyo Reef just focused on that area. It would be interesting to find out if local surfers feel comfortable regulating behavior at other surf breaks as well, since some of them said all of Nicaragua was their territory. Another unexplored aspect of territoriality that I observed was the timing of their territoriality. Depending on the time of year, as well as the surf conditions, surfers may not feel the same sense of ownership and this was not addressed in the interviews.

Future studies should explore localism at other destinations. I was able to provide a revised definition of localism based on my results, but findings in other destinations (or even comparative studies) could help to further refine and re-define the concept of localism. Studies in developed countries and surf destinations would most likely reveal different results, especially in places of heavy localism. As this study showed, even several miles up the road from Popoyo Reef, locals and resident foreigners thought localism was worse than what it was in Las Salinas. So, results in other developing countries could be quite different. Studying it in these places may uncover underlying issues in the destination unrelated to what is happening in the surf. Much like Hawaiian surfers at the beginning of the 20th century (I. H. Walker, 2008), some surfers may feel that territorializing the surf zone and asserting dominance there is the only place they still have
control. In many developing countries, foreign tourism developers come in with no concern for the local community. In such cases, localism may be a sign of lack of care for the local community.

Localism in developing countries also takes on a different characteristic from developed countries because there is a larger gap in economic status and cultural difference between tourists and local surfers. This could mean any number of things, but localism is likely worse in the developed world because local surfers are not as economically dependent (for handouts or jobs) upon visiting surfers as local surfers in the developing world. The large cultural difference between groups could also mean that certain behaviors towards others are culturally acceptable to one surfer, but not to another. Comparative studies between the developed and developing world should be conducted to explore this relationship further.

In some more developed destinations, a quantitative measure of localism could be developed. In the U.S., levels of education are higher and people are more accustomed to filling out surveys. Preliminary qualitative working could lead to the development of items for scales of ownership, boundaries and regulation.

**Limitations**

Limitations to this study might include the time spent in the research site, the time I had to speak with tourists, and researcher bias. However, I was in Las Salinas for nine weeks and, as a result, I do not know that my results would have been all that different had I been there for a longer time. I did not have to spend much time adjusting to the culture or the community because I had been there before and spent a considerable amount of time previously in Central America. I spoke the language and I knew people, including local surfers, in the community. While I did not see any fights break out in the surf, other people who lived there had not seen them either. The
people who had seen things like that had been surfing for a long time there. The impression that
localism was not a problem was confirmed by people I spoke with and my own observations.
Hence, even if I had been there a year, I may not have observed a fight since even locals and
resident foreigners who had been surfing for several years had not seen fights or people told they
could not sure there.

I also scheduled my time there during the busy tourism season. My reasoning was that if
there were conflicts between locals and tourists, they were going to happen when the most
tourists were there. In the off season, while many locals may have more time to go surfing,
because they are not working, the surf is also not as good and sometimes there are no tourists out
surfing. This is somewhat of a catch 22: had I gone in the off season, I might have observed more
local surfers while they were surfing, but I would not have been able to observe their interactions
with tourists. I had been to Las Salinas in the off-season before (December to January) and all of
the lodges are closed, many resident foreigners have gone home (the U.S. or Europe) to see their
families, and there are very few tourists. To study localism, I knew I needed to go when the most
tourists were there.

In terms of the number of interviews I conducted, I could have spoken with more local
surfers, but every time I went surfing, I recognized and had interviewed the locals that were
surfing. I also could have made a more concerted effort to speak with more resident foreigners,
but the focus of the study was on the indigenous local surfers.

Another limitation was the tourists that I spoke with. I found it difficult to find good
times to interview tourists or places to intercept them. Quite often they were either getting into
the surf or would not be coming out of the surf for awhile. Some of the tourists had not been at
Popoyo Reef for very long when I interviewed them, so their interviews focused more on
Nicaragua in general. Since I was trying to ingrain myself in the local surf community, I felt
awkward speaking with tourists when locals were around in the surf. Often I would look for them
in Guasacate, but there would not be many people around or I did not feel as if I could bother them. Had I had a research assistant focused on tourists only, it might have made this task much easier. However, even if I was not able to do formal interviews with some tourists, I did speak with them and record the conversations in my field notes.

In ethnographic studies researchers must minimize their bias or their resulting data is suspect. I was able to minimize bias through interviewing a large number of individuals with different stakeholders and informants, diligent field note and journal keeping, knowledge of the local language, and staying with a host family (that I had previously stayed with) in the community. I also tried to constantly reflect on my position as a female intermediate surfer from the East Coast so as not to bias my results. Being a surfer gave me an “in” to the local surf culture, even if I was not very good. Not being able to surf at all, however, would have put me at a much greater disadvantage because I would not have understood what surfers were talking about in the interviews or what was happening in the line-up. I often wondered if I had been doing more surfing instead of simply sitting in the line-up, if I would have gotten different results, but I noticed whenever I did focus more on surfing, I observed much less. Not being able to go out on several of the big days may have affected the results but I tried to go and take pictures at that time. That actually gave me a different perspective on what was happening because it was much easier to observe surfers dropping in on one another from the beach. Having someone else read through my interview transcripts, field notes and journal also helped to minimize this bias. Being a female ended up being an advantage because it seemed as if my informants were much more willing to be interviewed and more open with me than had I been a male. It also meant they were much more forgiving towards me in the surf.

My East Coast bias basically means that, like surfers all over the world, I have a different concept of what is small and large surf. Interestingly enough, about halfway through my time there, I figured out the local scale of wave measurement. “Pequeña” generally meant that it was
what I would call knee to head high (where the top of the wave is on a surfer’s body as he/she is riding). “Buena” meant anywhere from 1 foot overhead to double overhead. “Grande” meant double overhead and above. Despite my own bias, I was able to describe surf conditions to locals once I figured out this system.

Practical Application

This study of localism has a number of implications for surf tourism development. Good relationships and respect for local surfers and communities goes a long way in gaining respect from local surfers and residents. Resident foreigners who observed these practices were respected, and even adopted by local surfers as locals. Positive relationships between different groups of residents tend to create an atmosphere conducive to sustainable tourism development. Resident foreigners, some of whom are business owners, were more likely to listen to local residents because they are their friends, and in some cases, their new families. Hence, giving local residents a voice in tourism development appears to be an important strategy in sustainable tourism (Scheyvens, 1999). Resident foreigners, who disrespected or mistreated locals, did not help the community and, in one case, barred people from entry on their land. This behavior was looked down upon by the local surfers. Tourism operators unwilling to listen to or work with local communities also are not in line with sustainable tourism practice and resulting conflict may make things worse.

Currently, localism is not affecting surf tourism development in Las Salinas. Tourists stated that one of the reasons they enjoy coming to Nicaragua is because of how friendly the local surfers and residents are. Previous research has shown that residents view tourism as a positive contribution to their quality of life (Usher & Kerstetter, in press). Local surfers seem to understand the relationship between getting along with tourists in the line-up and the importance
of tourism for their livelihoods. The advice they give other surfers is to keep everyone safe. Tourists are not told to leave because most local surfers work in tourism and angry surfers do not give away free surfboards. However, it is important to remember that Las Salinas is a surf destination that is only in the beginning stages of development and it is still fairly remote despite the infrastructure that has been put in place. Thus, the great sense of pride and ownership locals feel for their surf space could mean that, in time, they may more fiercely defend it as it becomes more crowded.

It is important for tourism developers to realize how important Popoyo Reef, and access to it, is for the local surfers. They see the break as part of their community: it is “their beach.” As indigenous residents of Las Salinas, they have every right to maintain access to the surf break and be able to surf there. Future tourism development, such as a private resort, that blocks access to Popoyo Reef, or makes it more difficult to get to, could anger locals. In Brazil government officials were willing to overlook encroachment of tourism development on local beach access in favor of economic gain (Oliveira Silva, 2013), so there may be little locals can do if such a private resort is proposed. While one man was organizing young local surfers into a group (mainly to keep them out of drugs and doing positive things for the community), local surfers may need to form a group with a broader base that incorporates younger and older surfers. A group like this could give them a place at the table to negotiate with tourism developers, surf tour operators and government officials over what is being done in their community and at Popoyo Reef. Many of them work for the surf tourism operators and may not feel as if they can speak up to their bosses, so organizing would be one way of giving them a voice in tourism development. It could be an effective political means of guarding their surf space and making sure they always have access to it. It likely would also give them greater decision-making power in tourism rather than getting angrier as the numbers of tourists in the line-up continue to increase, which may fuel the development of heavy localism.
By studying localism, we can discover the roots of it and help to mitigate problems that may arise in some destinations. Even in destinations where localism is not a problem, such as Popoyo Reef, it is still important to investigate the connection locals feel towards the surf space because it is also an indication of what they are willing to do to maintain access to the space. Sustainable tourism development will only work with open lines of communication between developers and local communities. At Popoyo Reef, surfers were amiable and respected resident foreigners and tourists that respected them as well. Even if the break becomes crowded, as long as people are respectful and follow the rules, local surfers do not resent resident foreigners and tourists sharing the break with them. If they continue to be frustrated with some of the surf tour operators and owners, because they are not respectful and do not help the community, this could get channeled into how they treat others in the surf. Localism generally goes much deeper than simply coping with crowded conditions in the surf. Much of it is tied to what is happening on the land and the results of who locals consider to be outsiders and who they consider “local” are evidence of this. As O’Brien and Ponting (2013) found in Papua New Guinea, the most sustainable approach to surf tourism develop is centered around local communities. Surf tourism business owners need to respect local surfers and their opinions, along with involving them in decision making so that they feel their voices are being heard.
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Appendix

Interview Questions

These are sample interview guides that were used in the interviews with local surfers, resident foreigners and tourists. While not all interviews were the same, and may have varied from these questions or included additional questions (depending on the informant), these were the basic guides. Questions also were sometimes followed by additional prompts (not shown) to explain their answer – which varied from informant to informant.

Locals

What type of work do you do?

What things have changed in the community (Las Salinas and Playa Guasacate) in the past few/5/10 years?

What do you think about the tourists that come here to surf?

Do you know the foreigners that have businesses here? What do you think of these people?

Do you think that the government supports tourism?

- Do the local surfers think they are the owners of the waves?
  - (If yes) Why?
  - (If no) Do they think they have rights to the waves that others don’t have?

- As a local, where is your area, or space? Is it Popoyo to Beach Break or where?

- Do locals tell tourists what to do in the waves? (In Spanish this literally translates as: “what they should do”)
  - What do they tell them?

- Are there locals that tell other locals what to do in the waves?
  - Give me an example.

- Are there rules, or a code, in the waves?
  - What are the rules?/Give me an example of a rule.
  - Are these rules specific to Popoyo?
  - Do other people that come here know these rules?
- Have you ever seen a fight between a local and a tourist?
  - Can you describe it? What happened?

- Who is considered a local surfer here?
  - For example, there are foreigners that have lived here for a long time, are they local surfers?
  - What about surfers from other parts of Nicaragua?

- When did you begin surfing? How old were you? Who taught you how to surf?

**Resident foreigners**

- How did you come to live in Nicaragua?

- What do you do here?

- (If applicable) When did you start your business? What types of services do you offer tourists?

- Have you ever seen any problems between locals and tourists in the water?
  - Locals dropping in on tourists or anything like that?
  - Give me an example.

- Do you consider yourself to be a local? (This question was a follow-up one that was not asked of all resident foreigners)
  - Why or why not?
  - Do locals treat you differently than tourists?

**Tourists**

- Where are you from?

- Why did you come to Nicaragua?
  - Had you been here before?
  - How long are you staying/have you been here?

- Do you speak any Spanish?

- What have your experiences been like at Popoyo?
  - Are the locals friendly?
o Have you had any problems with them dropping in on you or telling you to leave?
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ACCEPTED
Usher, L., & Kerstetter, D. (in press) Residents' perceptions of quality of life in a surf tourism

SUBMITTED
Kerstetter, D., Usher, L., Iarmolenko, S., Lin, K., Mitas, O., & Nawijn, J. Emotions experienced
over time during a pleasure travel experience. Submitted to Journal of Travel Research, October 2012.

Research Presentations

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Association Conference, Kansas City, Missouri.

Usher, L. (presenter), Zinn, H., & Gomez Molina, P. (2012, April). Local values and beliefs
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