

CULTIVATING SURFERS' SENSE OF PLACE: COMMUNITY BUILDING AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION ON OAHU'S NORTH SHORE

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## **Abstract**

The relationship between surfing and environmental action has been widely debated by scholars of surfer environmentalism, surf ontologies, surf tourism, and through popular surf media. Scholars have argued that while surfing promotes a relationship with the environment, it often fails to lead to surfers' active engagement in local environmental action. However, this body of scholarship has not fully addressed how individual surfers' relationships with surfing and the local surf community impact their engagement with environmental action. In this thesis, I examine how surfers develop a sense of place and juxtapose it against responses by resident surfers and surf tourists, in order to reveal the relationship between community building and participation in environmental volunteering. I argue that surfers' sense of place is increasingly authenticated through participation in environmental volunteering on Oahu's north shore. This is highlighted by a range of environmental programs that have proliferated across the North Shore and, in recent decades, have become increasingly important as community building activities. Today, environmental volunteering activities are central to the local surf community and extend the community well beyond surfers to include non-surfers and non-residents. This thesis sheds new light on the relationship between surf communities and environmental action. In chapter one, I survey current literature of community building, surfer ontologies, sensing place, and coastal development as well as outline my methods. In chapter two, I investigate a range of variables to identify what constitutes the North Shore surf community. In chapter three, I examine North Shore surfers' pro-environmental action, and illustrate how surfing and community recognition are motivational factors for environmental action. In chapter four, I examine how surf tourists on the North Shore immerse themselves in the local North Shore surf community and its implications for their development of an "authentic" sense of place during their visit. In conclusion, I discuss the implications of surfers' authenticated sense of place within the local surf community and its impacts on community building, environmental volunteering, and environmental programs developed by both small surf community and large surf industry organizations.

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## Chapter 1: Surfing, Community, and Environment on the North Shore

### 1.1 Introduction

It was a late Saturday morning near the end of August during the summer of 2018. Although it was summer, the North Shore of Oahu was getting a small swell. As I pulled up to Sunset Beach, I was tapped on the shoulder by a man, who was probably in his 40's, asking me if I could give him a hand. It was obvious, from his leathery tanned skin, hunched, yet muscular upper back, and wet board shorts, that he was a surfer who had just gotten out of the water. I quickly agreed. He led me to the bed of his white, rusty, beat-up pickup truck. He grabbed a 5-gallon bucket that had a waist height post propped up in it by solidified cement, and gestured for me to do the same. We emptied out the bed of his truck, that previously had around 25 buckets in it. I finally had the opportunity to ask him what he and the other people there were doing with those buckets. He pointed to the beach and quickly explained that "some heavy waves wiped out sand and even part of the bike path that we are currently standing on, those posts you just helped us carry over are going to be used as the posts for a fence to protect the dune system that all those people over there are currently planning." With a swift thanks, he quickly went to work digging holes for the buckets and posts that we just carried over. I finally had the opportunity to get a complete look at what was going on, these people were rebuilding a dune system in an attempt to protect the beach and community that they care for so deeply. It wasn't until I got into the water, and paddled out to the point, that I realized there were significantly less surfers in the water than normal. It dawned on me, all the local surfers were on the beach helping with the initiative that was going on. I enjoyed a couple empty waves, and then made my way back to lend a helping hand.

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Popular surf media has developed a general notion that aligns surfing and those who participate in the act of surfing as having a uniquely developed environmental awareness that influences surfers to align their lifestyles with pro environmental ideals (Hill and Abbott, 2009). Many popular books, articles, and films about surfing emphasize that there is an inherent environmental awareness that is created through surfing that dictates surfers and surf communities involvement with pro environmental action. This romanticized vision of surfers and surf communities has also been perpetuated by surf scholars with emphasis on the notion that all

surfers fit the category of “soul surfers” because the act of surfing “enjoins reverence for and protection of nature” (Taylor, 2007). Though this may be true for some surfers and surf communities, surf scholars have also noted that with the development of the surf industry and the accessibility of surfing through travel and technology, surfing is made up of a much more diverse group of people than ever before (Waite & Warren, 2008). Thus, while surf scholars have noted that surfing may encourage a relationship with the natural environment, it is less well understood how that relationship influences surfers to actively participate in environmental action.

Different surf communities around the world have a different amount of influence on surf history and surf culture, and the surf community on the North Shore of Oahu is one of the most well known and most influential surf communities in the world. Because the North Shore is home to the most celebrated stretch of world-class surf breaks on the planet, the North Shore surf community has found itself present in surf media ever since its debut in surf magazines in the late 1950’s (Drent, 2006). Since its unveiling to the world of surfing, the North Shore has become a place for surfers to migrate to in an attempt to ride some of the world’s biggest and most powerful waves (Kotler, 2012; Smith, 2007). It is because of these waves, and the raw skill and confidence required to ride them, that the North Shore surf community has played such an influential role in the advancement of what is understood to be possible on a surfboard, and it is through this that the community has left its mark on surf culture, the surf industry, and surf tourism (Kotler, 2012; Smith, 2017). The North Shore has also felt the growing pains of being such an influential surf destination, and therefore its surf community has provided first-hand knowledge of the impacts of overdevelopment, beach pollution, the introduction of invasive species, and coastal erosion that surfing and surf tourism can have a small island community (Fletcher, 2014).

Although the North Shore is negatively impacted by issues related to surfing and surf tourism, each year, thousands of surfers travel to Oahu to surf the legendary waves of the North Shore and to enjoy the beautiful expanse of beaches (SeaGrant, Hawai‘i. 2017). Due to a lack of early protection plans, Hawaii's beaches were not designated for special protection unlike other areas such parks and freshwater ecosystems. A lack of protection has allowed overdevelopment of the shorelines to have negative impacts, such as destruction of the natural dune systems, introduction of invasive species, and degradation of the fragile coastal ecosystems (Fletcher, 2014). In light of the challenges that the North Shore faces, community run organizations (like

the North Shore Community Land Trust, Sustainable Coastlines Hawai‘i, and One Ocean Conservation) “restore, and preserve” the coastal ecosystems that make up the coastline from Kahuku Point to Ka’ena Point in order to protect its health and beauty for the enjoyment of the public for future generations to come (NSCLT, 2019).

In this thesis, I examine how surfers develop a sense of place and juxtapose it against responses by resident surfers and surf tourists, in order to reveal the relationship between community building and participation in environmental volunteering. I argue that surfers’ sense of place is authenticated through participation in environmental volunteering on Oahu’s north shore. Through a surfers’ environmentalism lens, I look at surfing and the North Shore surf community with attention to local community membership, place connections’ influence on environmental outlook, and local surf tourism, while giving special consideration to how each variable may impact participation in environmental volunteering. The North Shore of Oahu, with its history of overdevelopment and its influence on surf culture and the surf industry, provides a highly influential surf community to frame this study around.

Through a mixed methods research approach using both surveys and interviews, this thesis further examines what constitutes the North Shore surf community, how surfing based place-making impacts the environmental outlook of North Shore surfers, and how participation in the surf community influences resident surfers and surf tourists’ environmental awareness and action. This thesis critically examines surfers’ environmentalist theory that romanticizes surfers as having a keen sense of environmental awareness and developed environmental ethics. Through community analysis of what constitutes the North Shore surf community, identifying key factors in community membership, and place based analysis of surfers and their connection to the environment, I discuss the ways surfing, community building, and environmental volunteering influence North Shore surf community members’ involvement in environmental volunteering, thus contributing to theory on surfers environmentalism. The results of this study aim to shed light on the relationship between North Shore surf community members and their local coastal environment, and whether or not they take on a role as environmental stewards as some surf literature suggests that surfers are driven to do. It also seeks to answer the overarching thesis question of: How does environmental volunteering contribute to North Shore surf community members’ sense of place and perceived community membership?

## *Background*

Community is a general term with no one specific agreed upon definition. Yet, despite this conceptual ambiguity, for this project I draw on Cavaye (2006) who defines community as “a group of people with a shared identity” (p 01). To broaden the definition of community, I also draw on Douglas (2010), who constitutes community a social web made up of meaningful connections and relationships. Most communities are built off of similarities, bonds, and commonly accepted social norms, and can be described as either a community developed because of geographic location of community members or a community based off of choice (Bring, 2001; Douglas, 2010). Literature around community building notes that being a part of a community can lead to a sense of belonging, interaction, connection, as well as develop the urge for community members to participate within their community in order to deepen that belonging, interaction, and connection (Douglas, 2010; Kawachi et al. 1999; Kegley, 1997). Developing an understanding of what constitutes the North Shore surf community is crucial to being able to work in it and gather further information about its community members. By looking through existing information, observing, and learning from current community members, one can gain an overview of the community that will serve both the researcher and the community well.

With the presence and impact that the North Shore has in surf history, it has been assumed that the community on the North Shore is one that is made up of surfers (Kotler, 2007; Smith, 2017). Scholarship on surfers’ ontologies has found that through surfing, the immersive physical and emotional connection that surfers develop with the ocean environment should be a driving factor for surfers to live a more sustainable lifestyle in order to protect the environment they love (Midol & Broyer, 1995). A sustainable approach to life would help to offset the impact that surfing activities can have on the environment (Holland-Smith, 2016). However, literature has noted that surfers often struggle to live sustainably in terms of sacrificing surf gear or transportation (Holland-Smith, 2016; Ormrod, 2007). More recently though, surfer communities have started to make a presence in environmental action and activism (Wheaton, 2007). It is becoming more common in surf communities for surfers to take action to protect the surf environment through environmental stewardship that community-based environmental initiatives provide (Wheaton, 2007). Additionally, literature on community involvement has shown that through being educated on local environmental issues, as well as being a part of the planning,

development, and implementation of restoration projects provides helpful motivation behind increased participation (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999).

However, despite the current literature on community, surfers ontologies, and coastal management, research has not yet identified what constitutes the North Shore surf community. Further, we know very little about the extent of what influences North Shore surfers' care for the environment, or what types of environmental initiatives surfers may see as important to them or the community. Finally, there is very little scholarship that addresses how involvement in environmental volunteering impacts a surfers sense of place. Getting insight on the North Shore surf community is critical for the success of future environmental projects on the North Shore.

## ***1.2 Research Methodology***

The overarching research question of this study is: How does environmental volunteering contribute to North Shore surf community members' sense of place and perceived community membership? To answer this question, I used a mixed method approach of quantitative analysis of survey responses, qualitative analysis of interviews, and GIS mapping. Combining the quantitative analysis of survey data, and the more in-depth research that qualitative methods facilitates, I was able to gather statistical data, and then seek further information through interviews. According to Wagner (2011) a mixed method approach, like the one I used for my study, "produces new interesting and influential insights" in order to add richness to our understanding to the topic at hand. Through surveys, I was able to identify the relationship between demographic variables of different surfers (e.g. land/home ownership, age, gender, income, duration of residency on the North Shore etc.) and surfers level of support (e.g. supports but does not participate, does not support, participates, participates frequently, etc.) of North Shore community-based ecological initiatives. From there I purposefully selected interview participants to identify what the motivating factors were in place for different groups of surfers to involve themselves in community based ecological initiatives on the North Shore. Through the interviews I also asked questions around how those projects have had an impact their perception of community membership, sense of place, and value placed on different initiatives. Additionally, I used GIS mapping techniques to develop a visual aid to where the community-based initiatives that have previously and are currently taking place on the North

Shore. Mapping techniques were also used to highlight the value placed on different initiatives according to responses by different surfer groups' recorded through the surveys.

*Survey*

The first method used for data collection was a surf and ecological restoration survey that I developed to collect information on surfers' demographic information, level of support, and level of contribution in various environmental community initiatives on the North Shore of Oahu. According to Kramer (1991) development of a survey for this intended use is an important methodological approach for three distinct reasons. First, surveys are a good way to obtain a quantitative description of certain ideas and demographics of a targeted population. Second, they allow for the collection of subjective data, as surveys are collected from people and their reasonings for their answers are based on feelings, beliefs, and opinions. Third, survey data collected from a small portion of a population can be analyzed and further generalized to encapsulate a larger population. I based my survey on multiple question categories. The first category included seven questions focused on demographic variables of the North Shore surf community, and the others included five questions looking into surfing, environmental restoration initiatives, community membership, and sense of place (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1: Operational Survey Questions and Categories**

Question	Question Category
What is your current age?	Demographics
What is your gender?	
Do you currently or have you ever lived on the North Shore?	
If you do live on the North Shore, how long have you been living there?	
Which option best describes your residency on the North Shore?	
Do you own your property or home, or do you rent?	
Do you or have you ever surfed on the North Shore?	
The term "sense of place" is used to describe the relationship between people and spatial settings. Given this definition, do you think surfing has contributed to your sense of place or sense of community on the North Shore?	Sense of Place Sense of Community
Have you ever participated in one or more of the community based environmental initiatives on the North Shore?	Environmental restoration initiatives

The term “sense of place” is used to describe the relationship between people and spatial settings. Given this definition, do you think participating in community based environmental initiatives has impacted your sense of place or sense of community on the North Shore?	Sense of Place Sense of Community
How would you rank each ecological initiative that has previously been mentioned (beach cleanups, dune restorations, volunteer work days, invasive species removal etc.) in terms of importance?	Environmental restoration initiatives
What do you feel has had the most impact on your community membership on the North Shore?	Community membership

For each of the questions seen in Figure 1.1, there were an array of possible answers as well as an “other” open ended option for those who felt their answer was not included to ensure the least amount of bias based off the possible answers given. Also, in order to calibrate the meaning of sense of place for respondents, in my survey I defined sense of place as: “the relationship between people and spatial settings.” Per the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, all questions were given the option “I prefer not to say” or were made able to be skipped in the off chance that the survey respondent felt uncomfortable sharing any personal information that was asked for in the questions.

This survey was developed in order to help identify key demographic variables that play into understanding of different groups of surfers on the North Shore and present a straightforward way to analyze the collected data based off of different demographic variables. Finding these distinct groups, based on demographics, allows for the analysis of who the North Shore surf community is, what role surfing plays in their sense of place, and what role participation in environmental restoration initiatives plays in their community membership. The survey was developed using Google Forms, and was distributed to the North Shore community through community organizations (The North Shore Community Land Trust and One Ocean Diving), word of mouth through friends and acquaintances in the surfing community, and social media posts by influencers on the North Shore. All survey information was posted on the same day by all people and organizations, and 52 responses to the survey were between September 1<sup>st</sup>-October 15<sup>th</sup> 2020. All survey data was analyzed using Microsoft excel to pull out demographic information, do comparisons within the data set, and create tables and graphs.

*Interviews*

Following the surveys, I conducted 11 semi-structured, open-ended interviews of survey participants who elected to participate in a further interview following their survey response. To avoid bias in the collection of the interview data, I organized the survey data into different demographic groups and then purposefully selected the participants for the interviews (Bernard, 1988). This is important to note because with qualitative research, the validity can often be questioned, so by using purposeful selection I was able select participants based off demographic data to ensure all surfer groups were accounted for (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). By conducting these interviews, I was able to understand why different surfers on the North Shore are motivated to take part in community-based ecological initiatives. I was also able to understand how involvement in such initiatives invokes the development or continued community membership within the different surfer demographic groups of the overarching surf community on the North Shore.

The interviews conducted sought to further illuminate an answer to the research question: How does environmental volunteering contribute to North Shore surf community members’ sense of place and perceived community membership? Using the survey questions and responses as a guideline, semi structured interviews were conducted to further uncover specifics of four different question categories: the North Shore community, ecological initiatives, sense of place, and community membership (Figure 1.2).

**Figure 1.2: Operational Interview Questions and Categories**

Question	Question Category
In your opinion what is the North Shore surf community?	North Shore community
From personal experience, are there any signifiers of community membership that stand out within the North Shore community?	
What made you feel a part of the North Shore surf community, or the North Shore community as a whole?	
Have you noticed that the North Shore surf community is a significant part in community based ecological initiatives (beach cleanups, dune restoration etc..)? If so, how and why?	Ecological initiatives
When it comes to competition season on the North Shore, do you feel the surf industry has played a role in the surf community and in ecological initiatives within surfers? How about winter surf tourism?	Ecological Initiatives
In the survey you answered that specific ecological initiatives were more important than others to you, whether it was beach cleanups, dune restoration projects, invasive species removal, native plant out planting, or another initiative. Why do you feel certain ones are more important?	

The term “sense of place” is used to describe the relationship between people and spatial settings. Given this definition, what contributes to your personal sense of place on the North Shore, why?	Sense of Place
Has your feeling of citizenship or community membership further developed through participation in events like beach cleanups? How?	Community Membership
Has participation empowered you and made you want to have more community action? How so, and in what way?	
Do you think being a surfer has influenced which ecological initiatives you think are most important? Do you think if you didn’t surf you would find other ecological initiatives more important?	Ecological Initiatives
Do you distinguish a difference between overall community membership on the North Shore, and surf community membership on the North Shore?	Community Membership

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines set in place by the IRB for interviews relating to human studies, the semi -structured interviews were unable to be done in person. Instead, participants were contacted and given the choice to either conduct the interviews via phone call or zoom. All participants were read the approved IRB interview consent form over the phone or via zoom prior to taking part in the interview process and were given the opportunity to review the form themselves (via email). All participants were also sent a copy to sign and return before the interview. During the interviews I used a voice recorder, with the consent of the participants, in order to avoid any transcription error during the interview transcribing process. Some challenges arose in scheduling interviews with participants via zoom or phone call as service is not always of the best quality on the North Shore, but in the end 11 of the 14 respondents of the survey who volunteered for an interview were able to be interviewed. This met my proposed minimum of 10 interviews needed for the continuation and validity of this project.

Following the conclusion of the interviews, all responses were fully transcribed by hand, excluding only pauses in conversation or space holders, including words like “um, like, etc,” that are used when the participant is thinking or trying to figure out their response for the question they were asked. Once the interviews were transcribed, coding for similar themes and messages across interviews was done using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. Sought out themes that were coded for included the four question categories previously mentioned, including: North Shore community, ecological restoration, sense of place, and community membership. Other reoccurring themes that were relevant to the research question were also included to give further depth to the research.

## *GIS Mapping*

All of my GIS mapping for this study was done using ArcGIS Online. ArcGIS online is a “cloud based mapping platform that offers collaboration tools for creating, visualizing, editing and sharing spatial information” (Dore, 2020). ArcGIS online is great for mixed methods studies as it allows for the creating of interactive maps to help highlight and bring further depth to a study or story (Dore, 2020). ArcGIS online offers a “story map” feature that allows users to develop maps and other useful information products in a way that is specifically tailored to an organization or study’s specific needs. I used ArcGIS Online to develop an understanding of the population on the North Shore to compare with the demographic results of my survey. By doing this I was able to gather an understanding of the geography of the North Shore community. I also used basic GIS point and density maps in order to help answer two key questions that pertained to the overarching research question of: How does environmental volunteering contribute to North Shore surf community members’ sense of place and perceived community membership? These questions were: Where are community based environmental initiatives taking place on the North Shore, and by what organizations? As well as: How do different demographic variables of North Shore community members come into play in regards to which initiatives are seen as the most important to different surfer groups?

By utilizing the survey data collected from my survey question: How would you rank each ecological initiative that has previously been mentioned (beach cleanups, dune restorations, native plant out planting, invasive species removal, and volunteer work days) in terms of importance? I was able to create point and density maps to filter through demographic differences between surfers and their values of different environmental initiatives. I did this by mapping out their value placed on different initiatives as noted through their responses to survey question number 11 that asked them to rank the value they placed each initiative at. The methodology used was a simple, yet effective way to create a visual representation of both the locations that the initiatives are taking place, as well as the value placed on those initiatives by surfers on the North Shore.

By using data collected from North Shore community-based organizations and the initiatives they have promoted, I was able to map out where different initiatives along the North Shore were taking place, as well as their importance to the specific ecosystem that they take

place in. Due to COVID-19, there are significantly less new environmental initiatives taking place, and therefore it was important to use both current and former initiatives. Using these mapped out locations and their latitude and longitude points, I was then able to pull the data collected about surfer's value on different initiatives using excel to create a .csv file appropriate that included locations of initiatives, a ranked value that was placed on each initiative by each different demographic groups, the type of initiative that it was, and the number of votes for each initiative based off of the survey data. This layer was then put into ArcGIS online and used to create the multiple point density maps that were mentioned above.

Following this map layer, I was also able to create layers for another map based on locations of initiatives, as well as descriptions of the importance of each initiative to its own ecosystem as noted by the different North Shore Community-based organizations on their websites. Any data that was collected from community organizations was noted, and credit was given within the map. Using this data, I was able to create an aesthetically pleasing map that could benefit people or organizations that are looking to volunteer with environmental initiatives on the North Shore, but are unsure where they are located, which organizations run them, or what each initiative is about.

### *Field Observations*

Lastly, I decided to include field observations into my study because the 2021 winter the North Shore has been dealing with an unexpectedly long run of large surf. It is during winter seasons such as the 2021 season that the importance of community based environmental initiatives are tested. For example, the 2021 winter has highlighted the importance of the dune restoration initiative that has been taking place at Sunset Beach since the summer of 2018. During periods of XL swell I conducted field observations at key restoration sites where I took notes and pictures of any damage that was done, sand that was lost, or changes that had occurred to the initiative sites. This provided me with supplementary information for my results and discussion section as it provided an important comparison when thinking in terms of the initiatives that different surf demographic groups find most important.

## **1.3 Literature Review**

### *Community Participation*

Community is a common term, however understanding community building and community participation is important for any community study. Communities are commonly built around two key groupings: geographic communities and choice based communities (Brint, 2001; Delanty, 2003) Within these two groups exists smaller subgroups such as: communities of place and neighborhood groups, local friendship networks (activity based), communes and collectives, local friendship networks (cultural based), activity based communities, belief based communities, and imagined communities, all of which have the ability to overlap with one another, allowing for individuals to fall into multiple different groups (Brint, 2001; Douglas, 2010). Scholars suggest that being part of a community leads to a sense of belonging, interaction, connection, and communication with others, which indirectly contributes to an overall sense of well-being and fulfillment for individuals and entire communities (Douglas, 2010; Kawachi et al, 1999; Kegley, 1997).

Among sport communities, such as the surfing community on the North Shore, participation and bonding with other community members are important methods to develop “social capital.” Social capital is described by Bourdieu (1986) as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or in other words, membership in a group: (p 249). Scholars have used a social capital lens to examine sport communities to develop an understanding of which members of community are actively seeking social capital through communal networking, and for what reasons.. According to Litwin (2003), certain demographics play a significant role in whether or not a certain group of community members may or may not actively participate within the community. For example, age demographics influence the levels of participation and sought amounts of social capital; older males tend to participate within the community and directly or indirectly gain social capital, while younger community members do not (Litwin, 2003). Scholars have also noted that social capital can have both positive and negative impacts on sporting communities (Smith & Ingham, 2003). On one hand social capital is necessary to sporting communities as it creates an understandable divide upon residents, depending upon their interests and participation levels, but on the other “it can promote division, excessive competition, and unhealthy practices among people and communities” (Dyreson, 2001).

Social capital, however, is most attainable within a community through a term known as “building community.” Building community is the process of engaging, participating, and building connections within a community (Douglas, 2010). Connections through engagement and participation are key when considering social mobility within a community, and those who are able to make such connections then have more influence over any systematic action taken by the community (Douglas, 2010; Kelly & Sewell, 1998). Social capital has been noted in popular surf media as being key to recognition and stature amongst communities of surfers. However, community connection, social capital, and “building community” are all profoundly important when thinking about citizen interest and participation in community programs, like environmental restoration projects.

While participation amongst a community is key to building community, understanding the various levels at which members of a community participate is important when trying to understand who, or what groups, in a community hold decision making power. Arnstein (1969) explains the concept of citizen participation using a ladder, and clearly maps out how different rungs on the ladder represent different levels of involvement by members of a community. There are three different groupings on the ladder, and at the top of the ladder there is citizen power, in which community members have control over the decision making process for programs, projects, and other decisions that will have an impact on the community. Below this, is tokenism, in which steps towards true citizen participation are made, but these steps are more for personal growth rather than growth of the community as a whole. Last, there is non-participation, where those who fall into these rungs do not have any say in community involvement programs, and it is on these rungs where it becomes obvious that those who fall on the low rungs can have no real influence in any decision making that happens within the community (Arnstein, 1969). The ladder of participation can be a great tool to use in order understand the level of power that community members and organizations on the North Shore have over decision making processes in regards to the restoration initiatives that are taking place within their community.

In combination with the ladder of participation, White (1996) explains the forms and functions of different types of participation, including instrumental participation and transformative participation. Instrumental participation describes community participation as a means towards an end, in which community members knowledge and skill is used in project implementation. Transformative participation on the other hand results in the empowerment of

those involved, breaking down boundaries between the participants and community organizations (White, 1996). It is important to understand the forms and functions of different types of participation within a community to gain a deeper understanding of power holders, their relationship with other community members, and how such relationships can shape further involvement and empowerment. Finding out if North Shore community members' participation is instrumental or transformative can shed some light on how volunteering in environmental action can have an impact on their sense of place and perceived community membership.

The surf community on the North Shore includes surfers from around the world, with some surfers having the ability to transcend different surf community groups due to differences in demographics, beliefs, interests, and levels of environmental action. Therefore, developing a better understanding of how surfers are interacting within the community is key. Such an understanding can help explain the impact that surfing and community based environmental initiatives have on individual surfers' sense of place, and perceived community membership. Also, because of the North Shore's significance to surfing and surf media, the actions taken by its community members has the potential to impact future action taken by other coastal surf communities in both developed and developing surf tourism destinations.

### *Film and Media*

Surf culture and surf media has influenced the world's understanding and perception of surfers ever since surfing made its way into mainstream media between the late 50's and early 70s. Surprisingly though, there are few academic writings focused around the visual and cultural aspects of surfing. This may be in part due to the predominance of surfing's presence in popular media (e.g. magazines, blogs, films, and more recently YouTube). However, along with the increased popularization of surfing in the between the late 50's and early 70s came multiple surf films that further drove the popularization of the sport (Ormrod, 2005). Through such films, surfers and surf communities have been stereotyped in popular surf media as a specific group of people that lacks diversity. Even movies that are unrelated to surf culture have depicted surfers as the "hippies, dregs, or the black sheep of humanity" (e.g. Sean Penn's *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* or viral YouTube star "so pitted guy") (Leary, 2019, Ormrod, 2015). This stereotype tends to follow surfers and surf communities, which can make it challenging for surf

communities who are trying to be taken seriously when coming together for a cause that is threatening their community or the health of their community's environment.

While there is a lack of academic writings around surfing and surf culture, surf magazines, like Tracks Magazine, that have been around since the 70's have thoroughly examined the generational shifts and imagery development of surfing over the last 50 years. Henderson (2001) explains that there are five distinct cultural shifts that have occurred in the history of Tracks Magazine that have outlined the depiction of surfers. Surfers have developed in the magazine from the spiritual "soul surfer," that aligned with early Hawaiian surf culture, to surfing being seen as a competitive sport that is accessible to anyone driven to get involved. While surfing as a whole has seen a generational change through surf media, different surf communities in more remote locations have stood out, like the surf community on the North Shore of Oahu.

On the North Shore, surf media has depicted the surf community as being a heavily localized and exclusive community that is inclusive only to local or resident surfers. This strong sense of localism is noted to have stemmed from the influx of surfers that followed the romanticized depiction of surfing on the North Shore that became popularized by surf media. Films such as "The Endless Summer," directed by Bruce Brown, romanticized traveling to the North Shore and conquering the massive waves that inundate the coastline each winter. However, with more people, arrogant behavior, and the same amount of waves, came the aggressive localism that the North Shore is known for (Smith, 2017).

Surfing's imagery, localism, and exclusivity on the North Shore, however, may be turning a new leaf. Interviews, from both Surfer Magazine and New York Times, with North Shore locals have noted that aggressive action on the North Shore is starting to mellow out as generational changes amongst surfers are occurring (Higgins, 2009). It was noted that while respect in the surf is still demanded for reasons of safety and priority amongst surfers, aggressive physical action is slowing down unless necessary. With the exposure that surfing has gotten over the last few decades, and an increase in surfers world wide, it is starting to be accepted that surfers can vary from the romanticized "hippy" nature loving surfer all the way to the clean-cut corporate professional (Waitt & Warren, 2008). With surfers depiction in media changing, and localism on the North Shore possibly mellowing out, finding out what constitutes the current North Shore surf community is key to understand the current surf culture on the North Shore.

### *Surfers Ontologies and Sensing Place*

Surfing is a lifestyle sport, and due to the affiliations that surfers make as well as the social identity that surfers are known to take on, surfers tend to be considered unlike many other athletes (Tomlinson et al. 2005). Although surfing can be seen as a communal activity, the act of surfing itself is an individualistic endeavor because surfers rely solely on a natural resource that they have no control over in order to practice or pursue the act of surfing (Kotler, 2007). While activities like skiing and snowboarding are also considered individualistic lifestyle sports, surfing stands out in comparison to skiing and snowboarding because it requires a deeper knowledge of the waves and the ocean (Kotler, 2007). Kotler (2007) notes that while skiing and snowboarding require a limited natural resource (snow), once the ski season begins mountains are generally open until the end of the season. Surfing, however relies on swells that originate thousands of miles away, and the slightest variables (wind, tide, current) can impact whether or not there is surf to be enjoyed. Because of this need for a very specific natural resource, surfers, through time and practice of their sport, develop a unique and complex relationship with their environment that differs from that of most other sports or activities (Wade, 2008).

Surfers' relationship with the environment sets community members who consider themselves surfers apart from others because the relationship they develop with their environment allows them to sense place in a particular way. According to Cresswell (2015), sense of place is considered the "attachment that people have to space, fulfilling place's necessity to have some relationship to human capacity to produce and consume meaning," (pg 05). Surfers are often the first to notice environmental hazards that put their sacred surf places at risk. The quality and wellbeing of the ocean and its surrounding ecosystem is not only important to the experience a surfer has while surfing, but also the health and wellbeing of the surfers spending time within that environment (Holland-Smith, 2013; Ormrod, 2007; Wade, 2007). Ormrod (2007) notes that because surfing is such a sensory derived experience, and surfers develop a unique sense of place with their surf environment. In this sense, it is not surprising that surf media has depicted surfers as environmentalists.

There are many environmental challenges that coastal communities face, like storm surges, integration of invasive species, and plastic pollution littering beaches, that are changing the quality of the beach environment (Fletcher, 2014). This, along with the processes and

practices of the local surf community, weigh heavily on the amount of environmental based community efforts different groups of surfers may choose to partake in (Ntloko & Swart. 2008). Another reason why some surfers partake in community projects, whether environmental based or not, is because they want to develop a better sense of place within the local surf community. As previously mentioned, through surfing, surfers have the ability to develop a sense of place at a local surf break or a local beach because of the amount of time he or she spends in the water. It is because of this sense of place with the surf environment that a surfer may have more of an urge to develop a further sense of place amongst the surrounding coastal community (Holland-Smith, et al. 2013). This can be done through many outlets, but the most common seems to be seeking out events put on by the local surf community, which may include viewing surf films, attending local surf meeting, or attending community based environmental initiatives put on by the local community.

On the North Shore of Oahu, for example, due to the high volume of tourism and contest viewers that the beaches and waves promote, community organizations have paired up with the hosts of the surf contests to promote environmental stewardship among surfers, contestants, and tourists alike. It is through these promoted events that locals and tourists become educated about the impacts that all people have on the health of the beach ecosystem (Preston-Whyte, 2002). These events help to lower the impacts of the influx of people due to such events, and promote the development of a sense of place among participants where they are occurring (Holland-Smith, et al. 2013). The success of events like this may have a standout impact on surfers of different groups within the surf community to want to pursue a position of positive influence within the local surf community.

### *Coastal Development on the North Shore of Oahu*

The allure of the North Shore of Oahu, mediated through surf media and seen through social media, calls out to all types of water people: local surfers, surf tourists, body surfers, boogie boarders, divers, etc. This publicized allure is part of the reason why the North Shore is struggles with overdevelopment and the issues that come with an overdeveloped coastline. According to Surfing Macroeconomic Theory: “Waves attract surfers. Surfing attracts energy. Energy attracts people. People attract capital. Investment attracts development. And so it goes.” (Barilotti, 2015). This theory combined with the fact that Hawai‘i’s beaches were never

designated for special protection laws, unlike other natural areas such as parks and fresh water ecosystems, explain why the influx of surfers, tourists, and new residents has had a negative environmental impact on the coastline (Fletcher, 2014). When development on the North shore ramped up, overdevelopment of the shoreline became prominent, which caused serious issues for the natural structures in place to protect the coastal ecosystem. Natural dune systems were flattened so home owners could have better views of the ocean, invasive species were introduced through colonizers and modern landscaping causing harm to native species and taking over the ecosystems that native plants thrived in, and over time this only led to more issues because the natural barriers to protect the coastlines were degraded down to nothing (Fletcher, 2014). As tourism and development continued, the population of the North Shore grew, and so did the amount of pollution and degradation to the natural environment. In recent years storm surges have caused infrastructural damage, garbage and debris being is often left behind by beachgoers, and there is an increased amount of ocean plastic that is being found on beaches due to polluted oceans (Fletcher, 2014). The challenge with surf tourism, according to research done by O'Brien & Ponting (2013), is that:

“Surfing tourism has a history as a colonizing activity. Surfers tend to venture into areas previously unvisited by mainstream tourists, opening up new routes and new systems of development. Surfing tourism has nudged unprepared destinations down the slippery slope to large scale industrialized tourism and its related issues” (p125).

The North Shore is highly developed and exemplify the impacts of surf media, surfing, and surf tourism can have on a small island community. Previous research has illuminated the need for current and future research to examine how surf tourism can be used to help restore the already damaged ecosystems (Chalip, 2004; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013.). This is similar to the approach that local community-based organizations on the North Shore are taking, where they are getting the community to come together in an attempt to document changes, create protection and management plans, and work towards a more sustainable future for the coastal environment on the North Shore (NSCLT, 2019).

#### **1.4 Conceptual Framework**

Throughout this thesis, I focus on sense of place and authenticity to analyze my research and justify my research questions. Since surfing and environmental volunteering are personal

activities, each individual's interaction with these activities can be unique and have varying impacts on them, their lives, and the future actions that they take. It is key to outline the importance of sense of place and authenticity to introduce two very important concepts that impacted my research and data analysis, and to give further insight into their impacts on surfers and the North Shore surf community.

Surfing is often referenced as an immersive activity that connects surfers with their environment and leads to an an depth relationship with their surrounding environment (Borne, 2018). According to scholarship on sense of place, a sense of place forms through experience and is heightened from human interactions with a physical environment (Prohanskey et al. 1983). It is through such relationships and physical connection with place that often helps encourage individuals to act in pro environmental ways to protect those places (Borne, 2018; Prohanskey et al 1983; Vaske, 2001). At the same time, place attachment and meaning is subjective to each individual, and therefore different types of people, environments, and experiences all have an influence on attachment and behavior in regards to those places (Vaske, 2001). Because of this, different individuals' experiences will impact levels of pro environmental engagement and stewardship of different places. At the same time, it has been found that pattered relationships with place often encourage similar results in urgency to protect those places, and therefore it is important to find if a sense of place developed through surfing results in similar patterns of environmental stewardship amongst research participants in my study (Borne, 2018). Recognizing the nuances of place making in surfing and environmental action is highly important when considering different individual's connections and relationships to place and its impact on their amount of environmental action. I take these nuances into consideration while analyzing the results of my survey and interviews.

In this thesis, I also highlight authenticity in a surfers sense of place, as well as in a surf tourists' experience while visiting the North Shore. Because people are often overwhelmed by image, information, and interested of different stakeholders of capital, it is often challenging for them to tell the difference between what is authentic, and what has been created as a means to sell a certain experience or product (Fleming, 2009). Authenticity, in surfing, is no different as different stakeholders in the surf industry often use mainstream popular surf media or surf history to sell a specific experience to the unknowing surfer. Similarly, authenticity in tourism is a well examined topic, and is considered to motivate most tourist experiences (Heitmann, 2015).

In seeking authenticity, a tourist often wants true insight into the heritage and culture of their destination in order to understand local history and culture (Heitmann, 2015). Cohen (1988), however, notes that the more tourism flourishes the more authenticity becomes deceptive to the tourist (Cohen, 1988). In turn, tourist destinations sometimes provide the most mediated expectation of authenticity rather than giving the tourist what is the true insight into the local culture (Dieke, 2015; Heitmann, 2015). However, authenticity is a socially constructed concept and therefore its definition is not given, but instead negotiable (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, an authentic experience has the ability to vary from person to person, and the narrative behind an authentic experience has the ability to change amongst different individuals. Because of these concepts, in this thesis when referring to authenticity, I am noting a perceived sense of authenticity through surfing, environmental volunteering, and surf tourism.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Surfing, the development of a sense of place, and involvement in environmental action are all integral parts in understanding the identity of North Shore surfers and other members of the North Shore surf community. In each chapter of this thesis, I address the themes of community, sense of place, and environmental action in order to understand the impact that surfing and community participation has on individual surfers who make up the North Shore surf community. In chapter two, I focus on developing an understanding of the current surf community living on the North Shore and determine what constitutes the current surf community. Furthermore, I look into how the surf community is changing to be more inclusive and diverse, and how among the newer generation, the community is defined by respect for the environment and the community. In chapter three, I investigate how important of a role surfing has played on community members' sense of place. Additionally I look into whether or not the sense of place that has been developed through surfing has an impact on individual surfers' involvement in community based environmental initiatives. In the fourth chapter, I examine surf tourism and pilgrimage on the North Shore, focusing on what surf tourists are seeking in terms of an authentic surf trip to the North Shore. Moreover, I link the importance of community participation to a surf tourists' ability to sense place on the North Shore during their visit. To conclude, I tie the themes of the chapters together to argue that the North Shore surf community plays an integral role in environmental initiatives and action on the North Shore, and will

continue to be driven to pursue the restoration of the natural environment on the North Shore for the foreseeable future.

For the sake of this thesis, it is important to note two key things, the definition that I use for a surf tourist, and my positionality as a researcher and surfer. I reference “surf tourists” many times throughout the different chapters of this thesis. I define a surf tourist as any surfer who is visiting the North Shore for any period of time that is less than a year who visited with the intention of surfing. I also include people who live on the island of Oahu, but do not live on the North Shore, and surf on the North Shore less than four times a month. Although they may live on Oahu, I consider them a surf tourist because their lack of time spent surfing and being immersed in the local community. For my positionality, I have been a surfer for the past for 5 years, and have lived on the North Shore for the last two and a half. I have a strong passion for surfing, personally know some of my research participants, and in many ways am an “insider” as well as an “outsider” to my research community. To keep this research as unbiased as possible, I did not share this information with survey or interview participants, and kept a neutral standpoint for any important arguments brought up about community, sense of place, and environmental action.

## **Chapter 2: The North Shore Surf Community and the Influence of Geography**

### **2.1 Introduction**

When I first began conducting interviews with members of the North Shore surf community, I thought an easy question to start off the interviews with would be: In your opinion, what is the North Shore surf community? I was under the impression that this question would be a good way to break the ice with participants and get them to think in broader terms of what the community was, what it meant to them, and any descriptive factors that they may associate their community with. Little did I know that this question would stump almost every interview participant. At the same time, although the participants may have gotten stuck thinking about an answer for this question for a couple of minutes, it seemed to get the participants excited, as if they were talking about a feeling that they shared as a community member about their community rather than just sharing an answer to a question. One participant, Jenna, a nearly lifelong resident of the North Shore who had moved from Australia as a young adult and has

lived on the North Shore ever since, took a minute or two to take the question in, smiled and then responded saying:

“The North Shore surf community is the majority of residents on the North Shore. They enjoy the ocean and enjoy the waves to some capacity whether that be on a surfboard, bodysurfing, bodyboarding, or all the other different ways to enjoy riding waves and playing in the waves. As well as those people who are involved in a business capacity like surf lessons or retail, those sorts of things. It means a lot of like-minded people and they all really describe the fabric of life on the North Shore. Like that, it could be families with kids who surf so whether they surf or not they are all drawn to that environment. One of the things I can say, and love, about the surfing community is that they have a daily schedule that revolves around nature and that makes for a very peaceful environment.”

In her response, Jenna simply answered the question, but while describing the North Shore surf community, what it is, and what it means to her, her eyes lit up and it was as if she was talking about an old friend. It was almost as if her love and care for the North Shore was so deeply rooted in her, that while thinking back to what the community meant to her, her emotions and feelings about the community were coming out in her response. In listening to her response, it was as if I were right there within the community, at the beach, and enjoying the sensations that come along with living amongst the North Shore surf community. This theme was commonly reiterated by other interview participants when talking about their connection to the community either, there was a sense of pride and empowerment that came from the descriptions that they were giving of what the community was, and what the community meant to them.

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To find out how the participation in community-based restoration initiatives impacts North Shore surf community members' sense of place, it is important to develop a well structured understanding of the community. Smith (2017) explains that the North Shore surf community is a complex, constantly changing entity with demographics that fluctuate with the ebb and flow of surf tourists and short-term residents (Smith, 2017). Therefore, a well-structured understanding of the current North Shore surf community is needed to highlight new needs of the community, as well as pinpoint old community concerns or structures that no longer serve the views of the community (Faucet, 2000). A current, detailed understanding of the North Shore surf community can be key for community organizations when considering community support for future projects and policy on the North Shore. Furthermore, this could help advance the

current understanding of surf communities in surf media, and be used as an example of how surf communities are complex and continue to develop over time.

In this chapter I investigate different variables to find out what constitutes the North Shore surf community. I first examine the demographic details of the entire population of people who live on the North Shore to compare and contrast the overall population demographics with the demographics of North Shore community members who responded to my survey. Subsequently, through interviews with residents and surf tourists, I then address how participants define the North Shore surf community, as well as the perceived responsibilities and meanings of community membership. Furthermore, through the categorization of participants' interview responses, I find that community members share three major commonalities: a love for the surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment. By delving into what the high majority of surf community members define the community as, I get a look into the perception of the community through lens of its members. Based on the investigative approach above, in this chapter I argue that the North Shore surf community is an inclusive and diverse community of surfers and water people with like-minded views and perspectives. This argument offers a new perspective of the North Shore surf community, as it was once described in surf media as exclusive, and specifically driven by surfers. I also argue that with a generational change, North Shore surf community membership is less defined strictly by surfing and is becoming more defined by members' overall respect for the environment and the community.

## **2.2 Geography of the North Shore Surf Community**

In order to better understand the demographics of the North Shore surf community through the results of my survey, it is first important to get a geographic understanding of the population of all residents currently residing on the North Shore. A comprehensive understanding of the overall population will provide a base comparison to develop further insight into the geography of the North Shore surf community. Using current year (2020) American Community Survey (ACS) census data provided through ArcGIS online, I developed a series of maps to help better depict the current population on the North Shore of Oahu. Because I wanted to create a comparison between overall population data and my demographic data from my survey, I focused on specific demographics such as age, gender, length of residency and home ownership. Unfortunately, length of residency is not a variable of current ACS data, so instead, I

included a race and ethnicities map to include further depth of the population that wasn't included in my survey.

Each of the maps below were developed using ArcGIS online and are a part of a larger story map. Because of this, some of the interactive qualities of the maps are unable to be seen or accessed in the images included for the figures. Each of the interactive maps that are used in this chapter can be accessed using this link to my story map: (<https://arcg.is/1PDifu0>). Each of the maps depicting the geography of the North Shore population were pulled from the different tracts that make up the population of North Shore residents between Ka'ena Point and Kahuku. When accessing the maps online through the link, any information that is not depicted but is mentioned is able to be accessed through interacting and clicking on different parts of the map.

**Figure 2.1: Median Age of North Shore Residents**

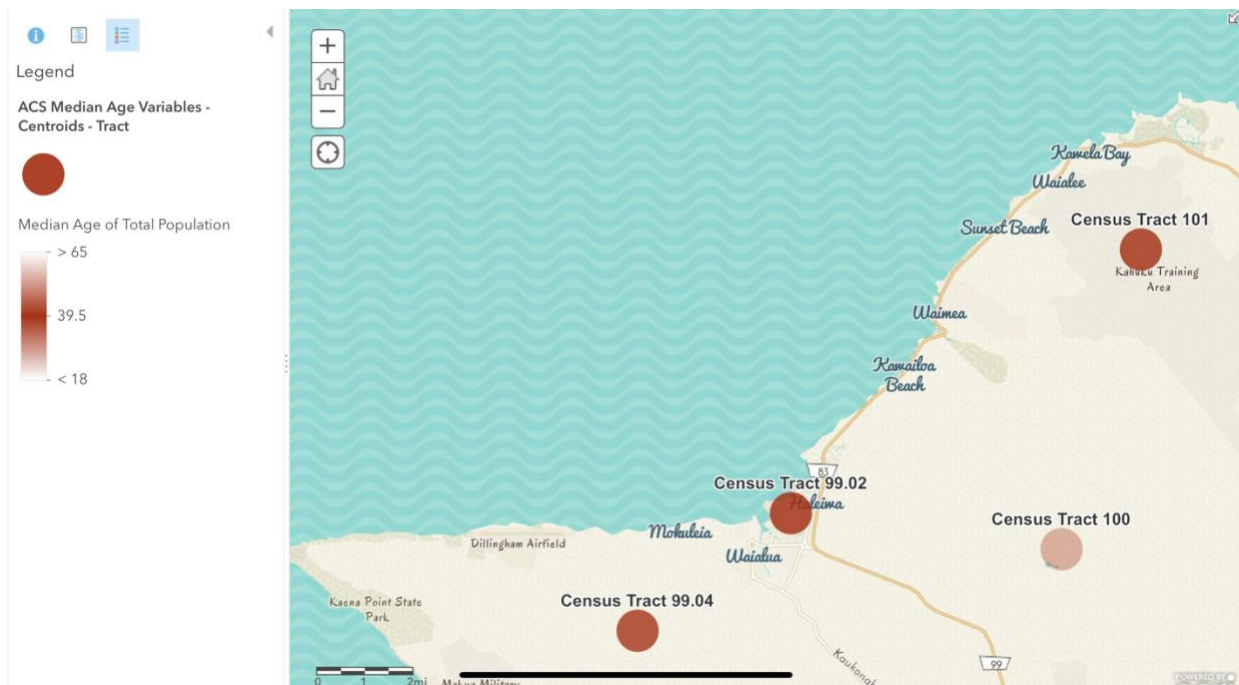
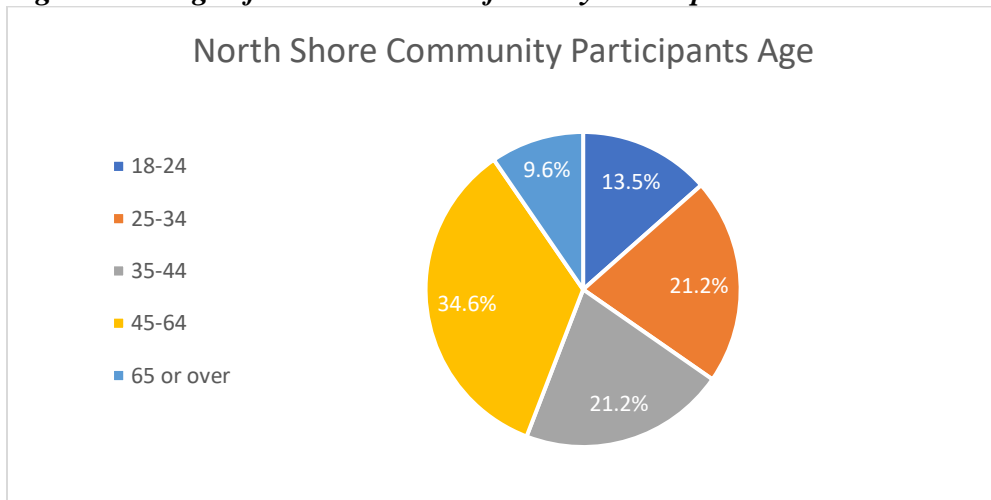


Figure 2.1 (above) shows that the median age of residents on the North Shore is approximately 40 years old. This means that there are equal amounts of residents that are older than 40 as there are residents that are younger than 40. While an overall age distribution of North Shore residents is challenging to calculate due to the ebb and flow of short term residents, the median age of the population shows that there is a wide spread of age ranges of residents. This means that there are multiple generations of age groups of people currently living on the North

Shore. This is important to note as age and generational influences can have an impact of participation levels of community members. With a population median of approximately 40, those younger than 40 and those older than 40 have an equal opportunity of influencing impacts on the local community.

**Figure 2.2: Age of North Shore Surf Survey Participants**



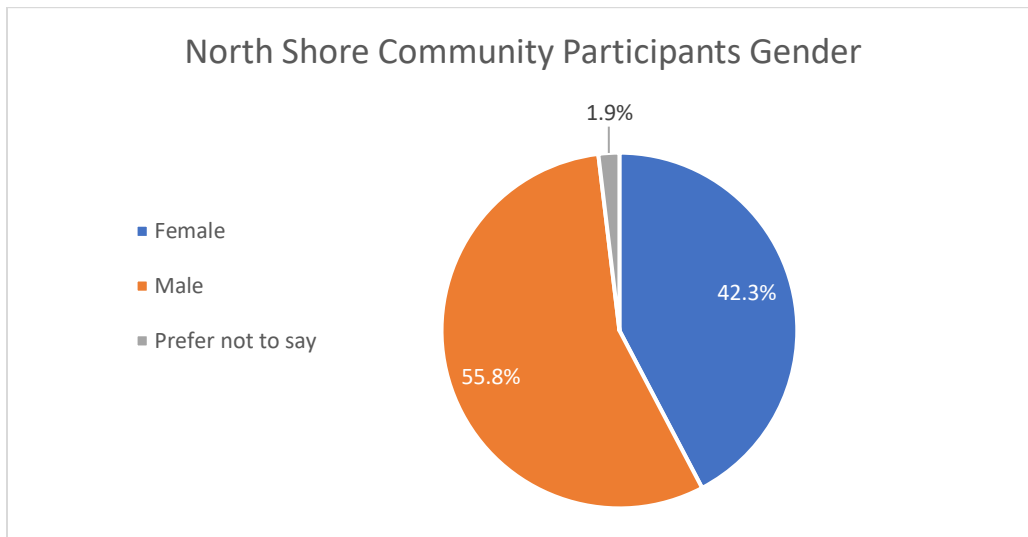
The North Shore surf community survey reached a diverse age range of people when being dispersed around the North Shore (Figure 2.2). From the age data collected through my survey, it is clear that the median age falls in a similar area to that of the entire North Shore population. However, since there were wider age ranges included for my study, the median age of participants falls somewhere between 35 and 44 years of age. More importantly though, with a good spread of age ranges of participants I was able to conduct interviews with multiple participants from each age range with the help of purposeful sampling. This allowed for a more inclusive study sample for my interviews, and allowed for a clear portrayal of how age may influence responses to different interview questions. These results also shows that my study was inclusive of a diverse age group of survey respondents, which is exactly what I was hoping for in order to give a complete portrayal of the entire community.

**Figure 2.3: Gender Variables of North Shore Residents**



Figure 2.3 (above) shows that the total population of North Shore residents who live in the census tracts from Ka'ena Point to Kahuku is 16,515. Of that population, females account for 8,116 (49.2%) and males account for 8,399 (50.8%). This means that there is nearly a 50-50 split of males to females currently residing on the North Shore. The map in Figure 2.3 shows that there is a slightly higher female population in census tract 99.04 and 99.02, a slightly higher male population in census tract 101, and a nearly even split in census tract 100. When interacting with the map in the story map linked above, the user is able to click on each of the different tracts to get an exact number comparison of the male to female presence in each tract along the North Shore.

**Figure 2.4: Gender Variables of North Shore Surf Survey Participants**



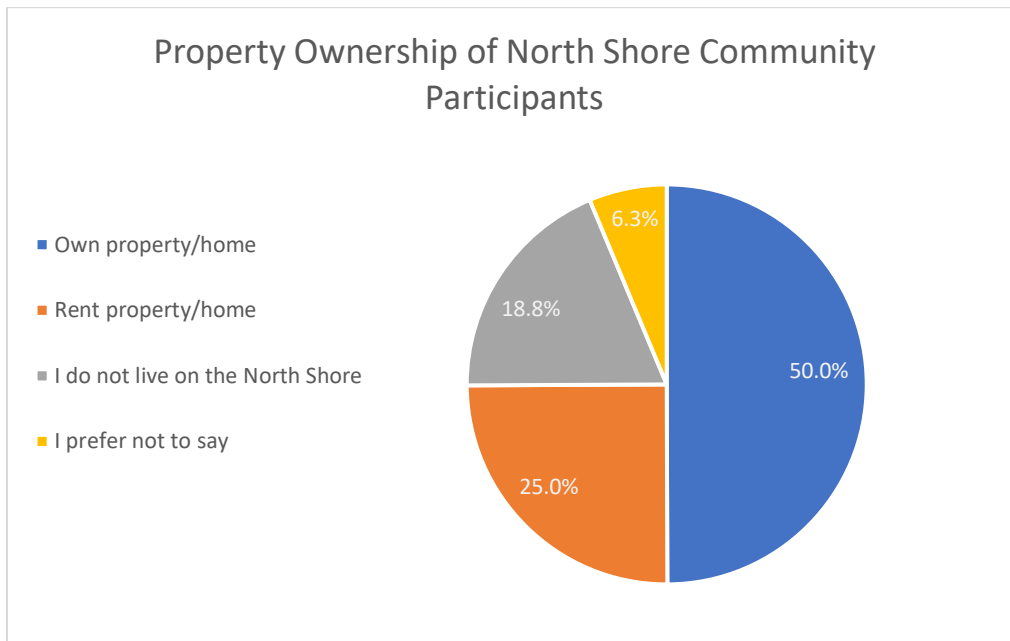
The demographics of gender (seen in Figure 2.3) of the entire North Shore population is similar to the demographics that I had in my survey responses. As seen in Figure 2.4 (above), there is higher male presence in my survey responses, however that variation is minimal. This shows that the representation of females to males in my survey responses were highly similar to the representation of males to females of the entire North Shore population. These results were interesting and important to note because while my results show that there is almost equal representation of male and female participants, this representation is quite different than one would see while surfing on the North Shore. While the female respondents noted that they do surf frequently, field observations illuminated that there are significantly more men in the water at any given time than women. This can be commonly observed at almost any surf break on the North Shore. On average, I have noticed, there is roughly one female surfer in the water at any given time for every 10-15 male surfers. This is not always the case, however more often than not it is.

**Figure 2.5: Housing Unit Variables of North Shore Residents**



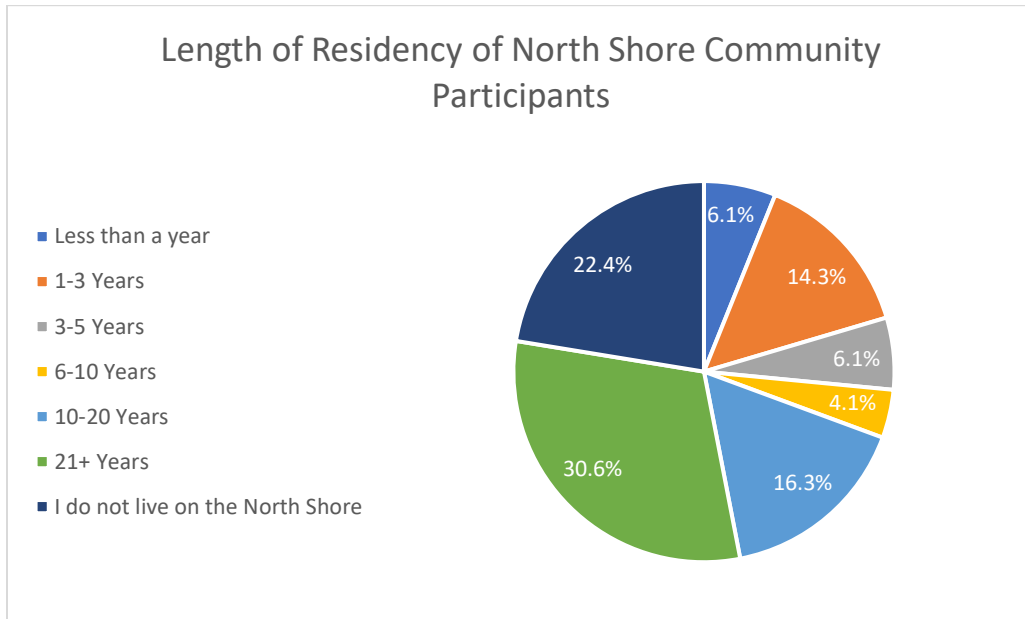
When interacting with Figure 2.5 (above) on the story map on ArcGIS online, the user can see, by clicking each different tract, the number of total housing units in each census tract along with how many units are occupied by home owners or renters. In total on the North Shore there are 5,251 occupied housing units. Of those 5,251, 2,606 (49.6%) are occupied by owners, and 2,645 (50.4%) are occupied by renters. This is nearly a 50-50 split of home owner occupied houses and renter occupied houses. Figure 2.5 shows that the housing units in census tract 100 are predominantly occupied by renters, with some homeowners living in the units, while the other census tracts (99.04, 99.02, and 101) have a stronger presence of home owner occupied units. When interacting and selecting each different census tract on ArcGIS online, the user is able to get further detail, including exact number of occupied units within each tract as well as the number of unoccupied housing units that are also present.

**Figure 2.6: Housing Variables of North Shore Surf Survey Participants**



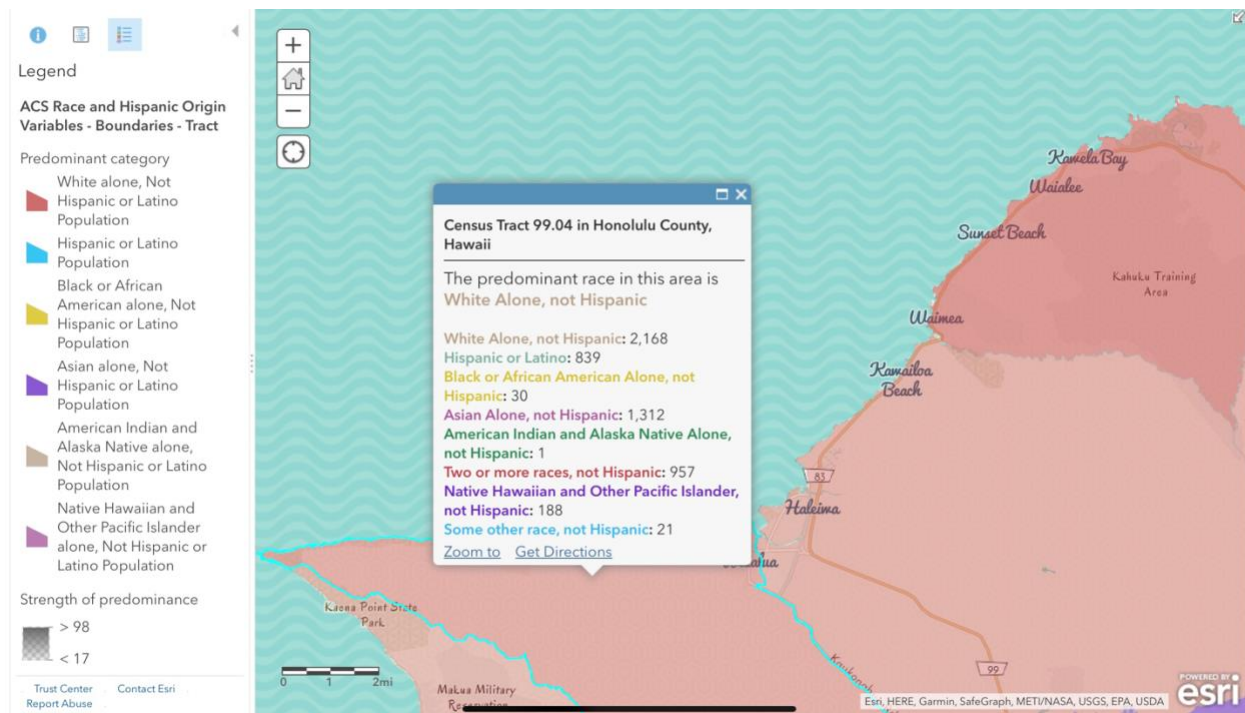
Similar to Figure 2.5 of all the housing units on the North Shore, Figure 2.6 (above) shows that half (exactly 50%) of my survey respondents noted that they currently own and live in their place of residence. I feel homeowners are an important category for my study because according to a study done by McCabe (2013), homeowners are 1.28 times more likely to become involved in a neighborhood group and 1.32 times more likely to join a civic association. Because of this notion, I made sure to take this into consideration when reviewing my survey and interview responses to find out if homeowners on the North Shore fit the category that McCabe's study put them into. Similarly, because of their invested time and money into their home and location of residence, I was interested to find out if home ownership played into higher levels of community based environmental action. On the other hand, only 25% of my respondents noted that they rent their place of residence, which is half of what is noted of the entire population of the residents of the North Shore. The other 25% either do not live on the North Shore or preferred not to answer. Further insight into these demographics show that nearly all of the 25% that either do not live on the North Shore or preferred not to answer fell the category of surf tourists based off of my surf tourist definition.

**Figure 2.7: Length of Residency of North Shore Surf Survey Participants**



Throughout this chapter, length of time spent living on the North Shore comes up frequently. Since the North Shore started to boom with development and tourism in the 70's, and continues to do so now, having participants who have spent various amounts of time within the community allows for a better perspective and understanding of the community as a whole. Understanding the age or length of residency demographics of a community is important, and it helps the researcher understand if there may or may not be generational gaps within answers of people who have spent more or less time within a specific community. This study was inclusive of a wide range of participants who have been living on the North Shore for different periods of time, which allowed for a more accurate representation of the data (as seen above in Figure 2.7). According to popular surf media, there is a significant difference between community membership in the 70s, 80s, and 90s than there is today, so having generational data is key to developing a full understanding of all groups of community members on the North Shore Higgins (2009).

**Figure 2.8: Race and Ethnicities of the Current North Shore Population**



While my survey did not include a demographic section for race and ethnicities of participants, when looking into the geography of a population, seeing how race and ethnicities play into the population can be interesting. According to Figure 2.8 (above), the majority of the population of all census tracts that make up the North Shore are White. This map is also a part of a larger story map of the North Shore, and when accessing that story map, the user can access further information about this map. As shown in Figure 2.8, when you scroll over or click on each of the different tracts, a list of each race or ethnicity pops up along with the number of residents that fit each category. While the majority of residents are White, other ethnicities that have a strong presence are Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and Two or more races. Native Hawaiians, and Black or African American's tend to make up the smallest ethnic demographic of North Shore residents.

The collection of demographic data of a community to understand who makes up that specific community helps in being able to further understand a community (Douglas, 2010). According to the demographic variables listed: age, gender, length of residency, and levels of home ownership, allow for a basic description of who makes up the North Shore surf community. The population studies for this project show a comparison of the overall population

of the residents of the North Shore with the participants who chose to participate in my surf community survey. While race and ethnicities of the overall population of North Shore residents show that the North Shore is not very racially diverse, the other demographic results have shown that population diversity on the North Shore, as well as in my study population, is pretty high. Survey participants in this study are made up of all different age ranges, however middle aged people (45-65 years old seen in Figure 2.2) make up the highest percentage of survey respondents (34.6%). Figures 2.3 and 2.4 also show that my survey results and the overall population is split nearly equally between male and female genders. Homeownership separates the community significantly, with exactly half of respondents noting that they own their home or property. Lastly, according to the length of time participants have spent living on the North Shore, there are multiple generations of surf community members living on the North Shore, which gives depth and different viewpoints to compare and contrast when looking at survey and interview responses. While race and ethnicities of the overall population of North Shore residents show that the North Shore is not very racially diverse, the other demographic results have shown that the population diversity on the North Shore is high. Developing this understanding provides further insight into differences between study participants and the overall population, aiding in a further understanding of who the current North Shore surf community is.

### **2.3 The North Shore Surf Community: Shared loves**

While demographic results showed that the population spread of survey respondents was diverse in some respect, it is important to find further insight into participants views and understanding of the overall surf community. When asked the question, “What is the North Shore surf community, and what does it mean to you? Nine out of 11 participants described the North Shore community as a “diverse” or “inclusive” community. The high majority mentioned that the community was a diverse group of people who come from different geographic areas to share their love for the ocean. It should be noted however, that the two participants who did not describe the North Shore community in the same way as the others were surf tourists who do not permanently reside on the North Shore. John, 45 who was born and raised on the North Shore and is an active community member who volunteers within the community during his free time, expressed his opinion of the current North Shore community:

“In my opinion, the north shore surf community is the entire community that lives up on the North Shore. I feel like even though they may not all surf, or may not all come from the same place, that they are part of the surf community as long as they share the same stoke and respect for the ocean. If they don’t share that commonality, well then that’s a different story.”

John’s response reflects his understanding of the surf community as more than just surfers. In his opinion, it is made up of a group of people who have a shared identity based off of “stoke and respect for the ocean.” This theme of a more inclusive surf community is a common theme that becomes obvious through multiple other community members’ responses. Similar to how John mentioned that all community members may not surf, Jess, a resident of the North Shore who has been living, surfing, and working on the North Shore for around two years, stated that:

“I would say the North Shore surf community is bigger than just a surf community. It’s filled with all different types of people, water men (and women), artists, entrepreneurs, families, and friends.”

It is clear that instead of surfing, which would be the simplest and obvious characteristic to unite any surf community, North Shore surf community members feel the surf community has more depth to it than meets the eye. It is more than just surf, surfers, and the stereotypical community observed in surf media (Higgins, 2009; Smith, 2017). The community seems to be more inclusive one than anticipated. This doesn’t mean that the community isn’t made up of surfers, rather, it includes surfers, but does not exclude those who do not surf. It seems that as long as a person is living on the North Shore and shares a similar identity that relates to the surf, the ocean, or the environment, then they would be considered a part of what makes up the North Shore surf community. Don, 50, a North Shore resident who moved to the island from California when he was 19, has been living on the North Shore in order to “surf the best waves in the world as much as possible,” and feels very strongly about the North Shore surf community said:

“It is a group of people who share a love for the ocean and can’t get enough of it. Seriously, myself and the people I know have built our lives around surfing, and I think that is a common thing among the entire North Shore surf community.”

The idea of the North Shore surf community attracts a diverse group of people, from all around the world, and has been built around surfing, the ocean, and the coastal environment is not only shared by residents and locals of the area, but also mutually seen and felt by surf tourists and short-term residents. Ken, a 1-year surf tourist from New Zealand, who spent just short of a year living on Oahu and surfing on the North Shore, stated that he understands the community as:

“A like-minded, eclectic, group of people that aren’t just locals and surfers, but can come from every corner of the earth for a shared experience that is North Shore surf. It’s funny because even though I only surfed on the small days, after watching the waves and feeling the energy, I understand why people who don’t even surf want to be here. It’s the beauty of the coastline, the drawing force of the big waves, and everything else in between.”

The North Shore, its waves, and the surrounding beach and coastal environment seems to attract people who all share a similar appreciation for the surf, the ocean, and the surrounding coastal environment. Considering the literature surrounding types of communities, it seems that the North Shore “surf” community is a community that transcends both a geographic based and a choice based community (Delantey, 2003). Given the geographical nature of the Indo-Pacific region, which includes warm waters, significant ocean-storm activity topographical and bathymetric structure of the natural landscape, and underdeveloped island communities, the North Shore of Oahu’s geographic location plays a significant role in the weather and the coastline’s ability to pull in world class waves (Buckley, 2002). This makes the North Shore’s geographic location an important factor when considering what type of community it is. Similarly, it is also a choice-based community because as noted by interview participants, it is a personal choice to curate a love for surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment.. A combination of location and choice continuously attracts people to the community, and has influenced what the community has developed into. This data supports my argument that the North Shore surf community is not exclusive to surfers. The people of the community recognize that surfing ties the community together in many ways, but also feel that the community is welcoming and influenced by more than just the surf.

## **2.4 Signifiers of Community Membership**

The North Shore surf community and culture has been portrayed through popular surf media since the 50s, when images of the North Shore's massive and quality waves made their way into popular surf magazines (Lawler, 2013). This unique spot has been written about in magazines, books, and seen through films and pictures as a place of beautiful waves, picturesque barrels, tan skin, and easy living. However, it has also had a darker more cynical side to it, that was known to keep the diversity of surf groups or community members strictly to locals, or a small group of transplanted residents only. With the North Shore being consistently promoted as a surfers' paradise through surf media, came the need for locals to protect, regulate, and enforce respect upon surf tourists who have made their way over to Hawai'i expecting to surf the waves they heard about or saw in surf media (Kotler, 2007; Lambert, 2017; Smith, 2017).

There were two well-known surfer gangs that regulated the waters of Oahu's North shore, the first was "Wolfpack" or otherwise known as "the boys," and the second was "Hui O He'e Nalu" or more commonly known as "Da Hui" or the "Black Shorts" (Higgins, 2009). Both surfer gangs were created to regulate the waters of the North Shore, demand respect where it was expected, and develop and maintain a hierarchy in water to ensure the waves were ridden by those who deserved them, or those who showed respect. In a way, this hierarchy system and a need to give respect to get respect, turned respect received into a sort of social capital system. If a surfer had not gained enough social capital, through respecting other surfers and making a name for themselves in the water, it was not uncommon for them to get chased out of the water, yelled at to go elsewhere, or even get "slapped" and told not to come back (Smith, 2017). Social capital was taken so seriously by surfer gangs, that these rules did not only pertain to novice surfers or surf tourists, but rather to all surfers that came to visit the North Shore, including professionals. For example, during the 2007 Pipe Masters, a regulated World Surf League tour event, surfer Neco Padratz (of Brazil), disrespected Sunny Garcia (local Hawaiian surfer from Wainae), and was chased off the beach by Sunny and other locals to the point where he had to be escorted off the beach by police officers. The North Shore surf community demands respect, in and out of the water, and if that respect is not given, consequences follow (Kotler, 2007; Higgins, 2009; Smith, 2017).

Though localism and surf regulation through surf gangs may seem unnecessary or over the top, it is because of the power, size, and danger of the North Shore waves that make it necessary. When it comes to waves like Pipeline, Rocky Point, Off the Wall, and other shallow

reef breaks, a lack of respect and courtesy for other surfers can lead to injuries or even death. Although localism started off hot and heavy in the 60's, and lasted that way until the early 2000's, Higgins (2009), after talking to members of the "Wolf Pack" and "Da Hui" about the current state of localism on the North Shore, has noted that it has since slowed down.

Considering the North Shore is a community based around the surf, a love for the ocean, and a love for the surrounding coastal environment, it may be assumed that surfing would be the most important signifier of community membership, and the easiest way to build up more social capital within the community. Interestingly, although each of the interview participants selected in their survey response that surfing played a significant part in their sense of community on the North Shore, when interviewed, only the participants who had been living on the North Shore for over 20 years mentioned that surfing was the most important community signifier for them. Those who have been residents for at least 20 years mentioned things like: "surfing is somewhere between 95 and 100% of my sense of community membership," or "surfing is probably the most significant in my sense of community" and a couple respondents even simply said "surfing" or "surfing, that's it." On the other hand, newer community members noted that recognition, participation in the community, and showing respect and love for the were the easiest ways to develop social capital amongst the North Shore surf community.

The difference between perception of community membership between the older generation of North Shore surf community members and the newer generation seems to stem from a new set of social norms. Interviews with members of the older generation of surfers exemplified that it was through surfing that they developed or gained social capital amongst the community. Furthermore, it was through the development of that social capital, that they were able to feel "membership in the group (community)". The development of social capital for the younger generation, however, is more tied to recognition within the community outside of the surf. Interview participants shed light on the importance of the development of recognition and social capital outside of surfing for their perceived sense of community membership. They then note that this connection with the community is able to extend into the water, but only after its foundation has already been developed. At the same time, the new social norms of the community are starting to be recognized by members of the older generation of community members as well. Don, a long-term resident, who mentioned that his most significant sense of

community membership was originally built through surfing, also mentioned that signifiers of community membership on the North Shore today are built around recognition. He stated:

“A key signifier of community membership is getting recognized around the community. Whether it’s in the water, surfing, walking the beach, or just cruising and getting honked at by people who know you. You can tell someone isn’t a part of the community by their actions and the way they present themselves. So, I think recognition is a big signifier of community membership.”

This was very similar to Maddie’s response. Maddie has been a North Shore resident for three years and is a surfer and community volunteer. She mentioned that the main signifiers of community membership, to her, come from a number of things, including being in the water. She said:

“After living North Shore for a little you begin to recognize people at your local beaches, stores, and in the water. Even if you don’t know them by name, the good mornings on the bike path, shaka’s to let you cross the street to the beach, or smiles in the water make me feel a part of the community.”

Jess, a North Shore surfer who has been living and working there for the last two years also stated:

“You start to see the same people out and if you’re friendly and polite you feel at home in no time. Pretty much everyone I’ve met has made me feel at home right away. Once you meet one person it’s like dominos from there.”

Other shorter-term residents, or even surf tourists who have been living and surfing on the North Shore for a year or less, seemed to feel the same way, except they mentioned how meeting people, making friends, and being recognized helped them feel a part of the community and signify their community membership. They mentioned that it also helped their surfing experience as well. Billie, a surf tourist from New Zealand who has lived on the North Shore for one year explained how her development of social capital amongst the community then translated into her experience surfing. She said:

“I started making friends on the beach and meeting other from the area through them. This made it easier to surf because I felt recognized in the water and the vibe just became less competitive. I finally felt at ease and could enjoy the surf the way I was really hoping to when doing a year abroad.”

Foodland, the North Shore’s only grocery store past Haleiwa, was also mentioned in relation to residents and surf tourists feelings of community membership. Foodland is revered as a sort of “Mecca” to the North Shore surf community, and it recognized as one of the only few places to go out and see people on the North Shore, other than partying, and is understood as a gathering place for the community (Smith, 2017). Four out of 11 interview participants mentioned that “getting recognized in Foodland by friends or fellow surfers” plays into their sense of community and is a key signifier of community membership to them. Though the community may develop, and the signifiers of community membership may change with different generations of the North Shore community, it is notable that the landmarks, such as Foodland, that are revered as key places on the North Shore, are still regarded in that way amongst current community members.

Signifiers of community membership, the understanding of what it means to be a community member, and the way to develop and gain social capital on the North Shore have developed over time. It seems much more common, within the more recent generation of community members (within the last 10 years or so), that recognition and making friends, in and out of the water, transcends into their understanding of what signifies community membership. Although surfing is still seen as a key part of community membership by almost all participants, it is now understood that surfing alone is no longer the best way to develop social capital and feel accepted by the community. Generationally, the North Shore surf community has changed and developed, and it is not surprising that it follows the same timeline as the growth of the population, tourism, and the mellowing of local surf gangs.. It seems the newer generation is taking to “Da Hui’s” new sense of commitment to the land and pushing for a more inclusive and environmentally conscious community (Higgins, 2009).

## **2.5 A Community Built Around Respect**

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Strider Wasilewski, current World Surf League commentator, who has spent the last 30 winters on the North Shore was asked about the current North Shore surf localism. He responded:

“Guys aren’t going crazy and beating people in public. It’s just a lot nicer now... You can’t get away with the things you used to get away with because of the threat of lawsuits”

Randy Rarick, director of the Vans Triple Crown of Surfing, including one of the biggest events on the North Shore the Billabong Pipe Masters, agreed with Strider, but mentioned that:

“It’s not as raw” (the North Shore)... and “it’s not as radical. But the essence is still there.”

Although localism may not be as bad, and the North Shore may not be considered “as raw” or “as radical” as it once was, respect, not only to other surfers, but also to the land and the natural environment, still seems to be regarded as some of the most important aspects of the North Shore surf community.. Respect is seen as a key part of community membership, but does not only pertain to respecting elders or respect to locals in the surf. Respect on the North Shore seems to revolve around three different levels of respect: respect for locals in the surf lineup, respect for the massive and powerful waves that travel thousands of miles to break along the “seven mile miracle” each winter, and even more importantly now, respect for the land and environment that encompasses the North Shore surf community. Although showing respect on one of these fronts is bound to help a community member develop some social capital and help them feel more of a connection with the community, responses from interview participants illuminate that having respect across all categories, whether it is recognized or not, is a significant part of being a member of the community (Smith & Ingham, 2003). Even a couple of the older surfers, whose generation noted that respect and recognition in the water was the most important to their community membership, felt that an overall respect is something that the community has been working towards as long as he could remember. John, who is a local to the North Shore, and is also a part of the older generation of surfers in my study sample mentioned that:

“I can think back to the days of when I was a little kid. As kids, of course we were taught to respect our elders, and when learning to surf to have respect for the Uncles, but that just seemed obvious. The things that stood out to me were the lessons about the power of the ocean, and how if you don’t show it respect that it can and will hurt you. Or learning about the Āina, and how if you take care of it, it will always be able to take care of you.”

Through his response, John explains that while the North Shore may be a different place than it was when he grew up, and the community may be filled with different faces, those who tend to stay here and become the new faces of the community seem to share the same respect for the land and the ocean. Currently, at this stage of his life, and the direction the North Shore is going, John finds having respect across all boards to be the most important to him. Responses from other community members also allude to just how important respect for the ocean and āina is in gaining social capital and feeling a more complete sense of community membership. Maddie expressed her feelings about respect, and how it is engraved in the North Shore surf community when she said:

“The North Shore surf community is a place that heavily values respect. Respect for the environment, respect for the older uncles in the lineup, and respect for the dangers that the ocean poses. If you give respect, you’ll eventually get it back. If you don’t give respect, you’ll quickly learn why so many people value it.”

As Maddie mentioned, one of the main reasons the North Shore community is so heavily reliant on respect, is because a lack of respect on the North Shore would cause a domino effect that would cause issues in the surf, safety issues for people and lifeguards, as well as degradation of the natural environment that the community loves and cares for. If respect in the lineup in the surf decreases, so does the level of safety in the water. Surf gangs were in part created to keep non-locals out of, or scared to go into the water, but at the same time they were created to regulate the surf crowd and keep people from making avoidable mistakes that could put others in danger (Higgins, 2009). If that sense of respect and courtesy in the water changed, things would become chaotic, and many people would get hurt. To an extent, this has happened at times of high tourism and heavy crowding in the water on the North Shore, and it does not always turn out well (Smith, 2017). Furthermore, if respect for the power of the ocean were to subside, again, many more people would get hurt or even die on big swell days. On an average large swell day on the North Shore lifeguards save around 15-30 people and warn thousands of others about the dangers of the ocean. That doesn’t only include saving and warning tourists, but also includes resident surfers or water people who found themselves in a bad situation. Finally, if respect for the Āina was not present, as seen in the early developing years of the North Shore surf contests as mentioned by Bill, a local resident who said, “There was a time when the surf industry had

contests and there were terrible amounts of trash, parking issues, and garbage left everywhere. There was blowback about that from the community, and they have been since running a tight ship,” then the beach environment and development of the North Shore would’ve caused even more issues than are present today.

Respect also helps to understand the web of connections that makes up the North Shore. Survey respondents mentioned other themes that came to mind when thinking of signifiers of community membership, and they all tie back to respect in one way or another. Some of those themes were: participation in community events, supporting local artists and businesses, participating in environmental restoration initiatives, environmental advocacy, and education. No matter which theme is picked in regard to community membership, they all tie back to either respecting others (in and out of the water), respecting the ocean, and respecting and caring for the natural environment. Jess explained the inner workings of the North Shore surf community very well in her description of the community and her insights into signifiers of community membership. She said:

“Just show up. If you want to find your own signifiers of community just show up, participate, and over time you will be recognized as a member of the community. Go to the events you hear about, support local shops and boutiques if you have some money to spend, wave hi or throw a shaka to the lifeguards to let them know they’re appreciated, pick up your trash when you leave the beach and then pick up some more that you find while walking to your car, don’t be stand offish in the water even if you are nervous, get out of your element and strike up a conversation. In my opinion, the community revolves around that stuff, show up, pay your dues, respect the community and the people within it, and eventually you’ll feel like you are a part of it too.”

Respect ties the North Shore surf community together in all different ways. Respect for one another has allowed for the development of a highly diverse demographic of people that make up who the North Shore surf community is. Respect for the surf, the ocean, and the āina has tied together a community of people that come from all different corners of the world all for the “shared experience that is North Shore surf.” Respect is noted as one of the multiple significant driving forces of community signifiers and community membership on the North Shore. And, respect, given or received, acts as a form of social capital that creates a perceived level of hierarchy amongst community members both in and out of the water. The North Shore has historically been known to demand respect in popular surf media, and it appears that the

current North Shore community is upholding that legacy (Higgins, 2009). With the information gathered from the limited interview results in this section, I surmise that “respect for the community and environment in and out of the water” is what constitutes the current North Shore surf community.

In this chapter I argue that the North Shore surf community is an inclusive, diverse community of surfers and water people with like-minded views and perspectives. This argument offers a new perspective of the North Shore surf community, as it was once described in surf media as exclusive, and specifically driven by surfers. I also argue that with a generational the North Shore surf community membership is less defined strictly by surfing and is becoming more defined by members’ respect for the environment and the community

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The North Shore surf community is similar yet different than other communities described in the literature about both communities and sporting communities. Similar to other communities, the North Shore community is made up of a “group of people with a shared identity,” and is built through bonds, social norms, and commonalities (Cavaye, 2006; Delantey, 2003). The community also fits into both key community groupings mentioned by Brint (2001), a community built based on geography and a community based on choice. On the other hand, the North Shore surf community stands out due to the complex history that surrounds it in surf culture, the narrative that dictates what a surf community is in surf media, and the overall importance that it holds to the entire world of surfing. Because of popular surf media, the development of the community over the last few generations, and the discourse around the surf community on the North Shore, a clear description of who or what the community is, can be challenging to interpret. However, the data gathered from my survey and interviews demonstrates that the North Shore surf community has become more a inclusive and diverse community in some regards than it once was. This argument is demonstrated with two key points. First, that the community is fluid and changes over time amongst different social groups. And second, that the current social structure on the North Shore is being driven by the younger generation of surfers. This social structure revolves around respect for the community and environment, and has been leading the community to be more inclusive to non surfers who share a love for the surf, ocean, and environment than ever before.

With the current social structure on the North Shore, the terms “North Shore surf community” and “North Shore community” can be used interchangeably. .. While the community is still based around the surf, it is no longer only inclusive to surfers but is also inclusive to non-surfers. It is noted, through interviews with community members, that social recognition (e.g. at Foodland, community events, restoration initiatives, etc.) plays a significant role in the high majority of participants’ perceived community membership. This form of social recognition seems to have taken the place of relationships and connections that used to be curated between community members specifically through surfing. Current community members have expressed that recognition outside of the surf are now the most important as they are able to transcend into the water. This makes for a community relationships that develop into a more welcoming, and overall more inclusive North Shore surf community. Community members feel that while surfing is held to high regard, a love and respect for the surf, the ocean, and the surrounding coastal environment tie the community together more so than just surfing.

Developing this description and understanding of what the community is, who it is made up of, and what connects the community is highly important on the North Shore. Considering all variables that make up the current North Shore community is key when attempting to work in, work with, or become credible when suggesting new policies or initiatives that could benefit the future of the community. The next two chapters will build on the understanding and description of the North Shore community and help to answer the question: How does participation in community based environmental restoration initiatives contribute to NS surf community members’ sense of place and perceived community membership?

## **Chapter 3: North Shore Surfers: A Vision of Environmental Stewardship**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the summer of 2020, I participated in many community-based events on the North Shore. While at a dune restoration and invasive species removal workday put on by the North Shore community Land Trust, I struck up conversation with a fellow surfer, Nick, whom I recognized from the water. At the time, I had only just put together my survey and had not begun the interview process. I thought it would be a good idea to ask him some questions that related to my project in hopes of working through my pre-interview jitters. Conducting interviews was a

new experience for me, so a low-stakes scenario like this seemed perfect. I decided to ask him how he heard about the volunteer workday, and what got him interested in it. He got excited when I asked him and took some time to explain his story about how he got involved with the North Shore community outside the water. He began by telling me about a quote from Timothy Leary that he heard from last year:

“Surfers are the ‘throw-aheads’ of mankind, not the dregs; they aren’t the black sheep of humanity, but the futurists and they are leading the way to where man ultimately wants to be. The act of the ride is the epitome of ‘be here now’, and the tube ride is the most acute form of that. Which is: your future is right ahead of you, the past is exploding behind you, your wake is disappearing, your footprints are washed from the sand. It’s a non-productive, non-depletive act that’s done purely for the value of the dance itself. And that is the destiny of man.”

Nick explained that this quote put a greater meaning to what he has felt his entire life. Surfing is so much more than a sport, he explained, it is a way of actively experiencing nature and connecting to the ocean through the waves. As he exited the water, he noticed a fellow surfer picking up bits of trash as they were walking to their car. A combination of recent events: the Timothy Leary quote, his awesome surf session, and the stranger picking up trash, made him realize that his love of surfing is so much more than just surfing. It’s an environmental experience as well, urged on by his love for the ocean. He explained that since that day, he always collects the trash he sees on his way out of the water. It is a way for him to nurture the environment that gives him so much and he hopes he sparks the initiative in someone else, just like the stranger did in him. He went further to explain that collecting trash eventually turned into other volunteer work, like the event that I met him at. Just like Nick was inspired by the surfer collecting rubbish by the shore, I was inspired by his own unique story that he shared with me. Gone were my pre-interview jitters, which were replaced with an excitement to hear the stories that other community members had to share. I was inspired to hear how other community members and surfers felt would relate surfing to their sense of place and their involvement in community based environmental initiatives.

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Although the North Shore surf community has members that do not surf, it is still widely considered a surfing community. The North Shore as we know it both now and historically, is

built around surfing. Surfing, the surf industry, and surf media have all had influential roles in the development of the North Shore, turning it into the “surf mecca” it is known as to surfers all around the world (Lambert, 2017). With surfers considering this stretch of coast as the sports own “mecca,” this area of the island is inundated with tourists and traveling surfers each winter. With the growing number of visitors, the North Shore has become significantly more developed than it was in the 60s, 70s and 80s. The tight knit, North Shore community is intent on preserving its slower pace of life, revolving around surfing and nature. Therefore, despite the development, the North Shore has still managed to keep its small town, country feel (Lambert, 2017; NSCLT, 2017). The tight knit, North Shore community is intent on preserving its slower pace of life, revolving around surfing and nature. .

Jenna, a long-term North Shore resident previously referenced in Chapter Two, stated, “One of the things I can say, and love, about the surfing community is that they have a daily schedule that revolves around nature and that makes for a very peaceful environment.” Surfing is an immersive experience which has the ability to tie those who surf, or those who are around surfing, to the natural environment that allows them to practice the act of surfing (Holland-Smith, 2018; Hill & Abbot, 2009). It is through that connection between surfers and the environment, as well as a community that is devoted to the surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment, that has prompted the development of community-based organizations on the North Shore. The goal of these organizations is to protect, preserve, and steward the entire North Shore coastline. Organizations like the North Shore Community Land Trust, Sustainable Coastlines Hawai‘i, and One Ocean Conservation were created by community members to “help secure the rural character of the North Shore for future generations (NSCLT, 2017; Sadler, 2015).”

In this chapter, I argue that the development of a sense of place through surfing is highly important for North Shore surfers’ relationships with the surrounding coastal environment on the North Shore. Through this argument, I look into the relationship that North Shore surfers develop with the environment through surfing and how it impacts the the level of care and value they place on the natural environment and coastline that makes up the North Shore. I further argue that it is because of the immersive relationship that surfers develop with the environment through surfing that they are influenced to participate in community based environmental restoration initiatives. Hill & Abott (2009) have noted that while surfing helps surfers build a relationship

with the environment, it doesn't necessarily lead them to actively lead more environmentally conscious lives. This chapter seeks to fill this gap by examining North Shore surfers' pro environmental action and show examples of how surfing is a motivating factor when it comes to North Shore surfers' level of environmental action. I further my argument by addressing the impact that environmental education has on the form of pro environmental action that North Shore surfers choose to pursue. To conclude, I address how both surfing and environmental awareness of North Shore surfers has motivated the surf industry to develop more sustainable approaches to how they now host surf competitions.

### **3.2 Are Surfers Environmental Caretakers?**

Just like Nick connected his passion for surfing with his need to restore the environment on the North Shore, others also mentioning that surfing, surfers, community, and environmental awareness go hand in hand on this part of the island. Surfing also has a way to tie those who surf to their surrounding environment, even if only while they are in the water (Corne, 2009; Holland-Smith, 2013). The feeling that a person gets from the experience of surfing is expressed in surf media, and understood amongst surfers, to be addicting and habit forming regardless of a surfers' skill level. It is because of this feeling of addiction and love for surfing that many surfers find themselves basing their daily lives around environmental factors that impact the quality of the surf. People without meteorology or marine science backgrounds find themselves checking swells, studying tides, monitoring wind direction, and following weather patterns (Kotler, 2012). They do so in order to immerse themselves in the knowledge of the ocean and fuel their next "high" with a surf (Smith, 2017). This connection to the ocean, developed through surfing and being immersed in the ocean has been noted by the high majority of surfers that I interviewed (73%) as part of the reason why many surfers get involved with local environmental restoration projects and initiatives. This furthers the notion, which has been portrayed in popular surf media, that surfers are expected to be considered environmental stewards.(Hill & Abbott, 2009).

These perceptions began to change as the surf industry increased in popularity (Wheaton, 2020). With surfing becoming a frontline sport for sport news and magazines, and became more accessible to non-surfers, the depiction of surfers in media began to shift. Gone were the days of environmentally conscious watermen and women, which were replaced with pictures of athletes. Surfing was no longer specifically seen as a way to connect with the land, it was now something

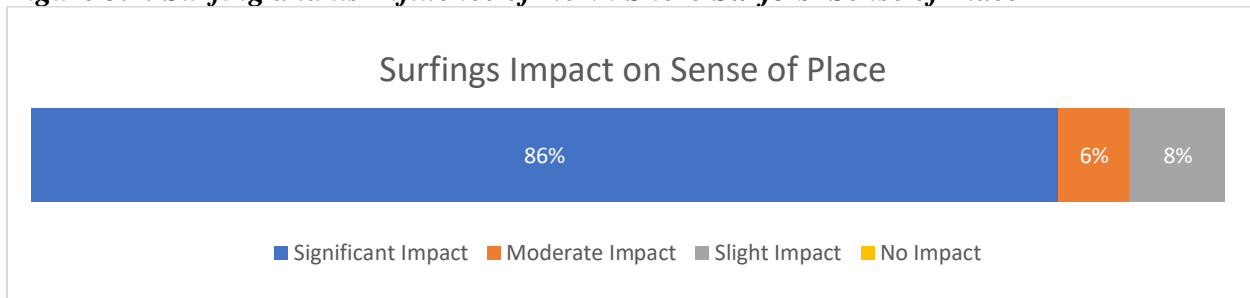
one could pursue in hopes of excelling to the point of sponsorship at a career level (Brisick, 2011; Booth, 1999). With the push of surfing towards a sport, technology developing to predict when the waves would be good, and the surf industry capitalizing on surf-based products and merchandise, surfing, and the way it was seen by the world, started to change. Surfers no longer had to study the tides, monitor the wind direction, and follow weather patterns to know when the surf would be good. Instead, they could simply check online to see if surf conditions were good that day (Thornton, 2012). While people inhabiting beach towns previously had the advantage of being able to check the waves daily due to their proximity, today, surf conditions can be monitored by those who do not live on the coastline. Instead, surfing is an activity that could be pursued by anyone who has access to the internet to check the waves and a vehicle to get to and from the beach. The more accessible surfing became, the quicker the shift of the stereotypical surfer changed from a “hippie environmentalist” to a “corporate professional” (Waite & Warren, 2008).

The development and accessibility of surfing is not necessarily a good or bad thing, but it does lead to an increase in the diversity of surfers. This lends itself to more surfers out in the water who may not be as “in tune” with their environment compared with surfers from past generations (Wheaton, 2020). Increased ease of accessibility can then lead to a lack of care and protection of the environment because ease and accessibility lessen the need for a certain level of environmental awareness that was once required of surfers (Borne, 2018; Wheaton, 2020). For this reason, developing an understanding of how surfing has impacted North Shore surf community members’ sense of place and environmental awareness is necessary in order to understand surfing’s role in environmental stewardship. With the development of an understanding of the surf community on the North Shore, and the idea that the community is made up of those who love the surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment, it makes sense that surfing should be a motivating factor in the North Shore community’s environmental outlook and willingness to participate in environmental based initiatives. Since scholars have noted that there is little empirical evidence to directly relate surfing to an individual’s environmental stewardship, it is important to fill this gap by seeking to find out if surfing does in fact motivate North Shore surfers to engage in pro environmental action.

### **3.3 Sensing Place on the North Shore**

Literature on surf pilgrimage notes that it is common for surfers to frequently go to the same surf location or surf break because they develop a relationship with that spot. They become comfortable and have an urge to further understand how the waves break at that specific spot under various conditions (Holland-Smith et al. 2013; Omrod, 2007). This means that surfers, whether they consider themselves connected to the environment or not, are developing a sense of place at their “go to” surf break through their relationship with surfing that spot. In studies conducted by Borne, (2018) Prohanskey et al. (1983) and Vaske, (2001) it is highlighted that a relationship with place, through engagement and interaction with nature, encourages individuals to engage in environmental stewardship and protection that leads to further pro-environmental behavior. Since Borne (2018) mentions that situational variables are important in determining pro environmental behaviors, I was determined to find out if North Shore surfers’ relationships with place led to their engagement in pro-environmental behavior. I addressed the question: *The term “sense of place” is used to describe the relationship between people and spatial settings. Given this definition, do you think surfing has contributed to your sense of place on the North Shore?*

**Figure 3.1: Surfing and its Influence of North Shore Surfers’ Sense of Place**



Looking at Figure 3.1, of the 52 surfers that filled out my survey, the majority (86%) of respondents noted that surfing has had a significant impact on their sense of place and community on the North Shore. Of the other 14% of respondents, all chose that surfing either had a slight or moderate impact on their sense of place and community on the North Shore, and 0% of respondents said that surfing has no impact on their sense of place and community on the North Shore. Demographics of the surfers also played a role in how impactful surfing was on their sense of place. While both men and women felt that surfing significantly impacted their sense of place on the North Shore, women were around 10% more likely to note that surfing only

had a moderate or slight impact on their sense of place than men. This can be attributed to the fact that there are commonly more men in the water surfing than women at most of the surf breaks on the North Shore. Although homeowners and renters were both highly likely to have developed a sense of place through surfing (homeowners 96% significant impact and renters 83% significant impact), renters were more likely to note that surfing had only a slight impact (17% slight impact compared to homeowners 0%). Most significantly, while 93% of North Shore residents felt surfing had a significant impact on their sense of place, only 63% of surf tourists respondents felt they had a significant impact on their sense of place while visiting the North Shore.

Similar to the results of the survey responses, of the 11 interview participants, 10 felt that surfing was what initially helped them develop a sense of place on the North Shore, but only one out of those 10 respondents noted that surfing was the only thing that impacted their sense of place on the North Shore. The other nine respondents mentioned that surfing helped lead them to other pathways that also impacted their sense of place. Some of these other paths were making friends, going to community events, living sustainably, and volunteering in community based environmental initiatives.

In the case of North Shore surfers, the development of a sense of place through surfing allowed respondents to develop a deeper connection with the North Shore, the coastal environment, and the community overall. Jenna, a long time North Shore resident, explained how surfing has always been the “gateway” that helped her develop a sense of place and connection to the coastal environment on the North Shore. In her response, Jenna said:

“Surfing has been the gateway. It has been through surfing that I have developed my understandings for everything. Surfing is the lens that I see everything through, so surfing first. Without surfing I don’t think I would’ve made the ecological connection that I have, nor would I have the environmental interests that I do now.”

Similarly, Billie, a 1-year surf tourist on the North Shore also mentioned:

“Surfing of course was what initially drew me to the area and helped me develop a sense of place on the North Shore, but it is also what motivates me to contribute to the coastal environment. I just want to give back to the source of what provides myself and all surfers the ability to go surfing.”

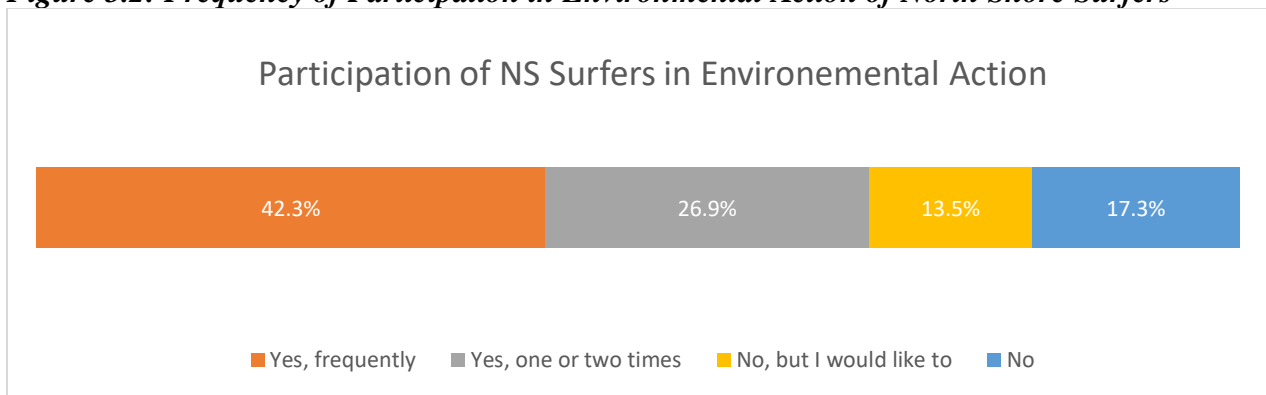
John, a local, and lifelong North Shore resident also echoed Billie and Jenna’s sentiments, when he noted that:

“I feel like surfing has had a huge impact on my sense of place but has also had a huge impact on why I consider myself an environmentalist, and also why I have a need to take care of the environment through the different organizations that I volunteer for.”

While the responses from the rest of the participants were not as clear cut as the three responses above, 10 of the 11 total participants mentioned or alluded to the fact that their sense of place through surfing is what helped them develop their initial connection to the North Shore, the community, and in one way or another led them to either a deeper connection with the local environment or a deeper connection to the community as a whole.

Place attachment has been identified as a key variable in connection with environmental awareness and behaviors towards the environment (Borne, 2018). To find out if a sense of place and relationship with place through surfing has had an impact on North Shore surfers’ participation in environmental action, I asked a follow up question: *Do you participate, or have you ever participated, in one or more of the community based environmental projects that take place on the North Shore?*

**Figure 3.2: Frequency of Participation in Environmental Action of North Shore Surfers**



It turns out that theory around a relationship with place and pro-environmental action holds strong regards to North Shore surfers because only around 30% of surfers on the North Shore had never participated in community based environmental initiatives, and of that 30%, 13.5% of those respondents mentioned that they want to participate in the future (Figure 3.2).

This suggests that the vast majority (82.7%) of surfers either have participated in an environmental restoration initiative on the North Shore, or would like to participate in the future. The largest majority of North Shore surfers (42.3%) noted that they participate in restoration initiatives frequently, and slightly less (26.9%) responded stating that they have participated before but only once or twice. Some of the demographic data was also important to learn exactly who has been actively participating in restoration initiatives. Although the data collection did not include the youngest generation of those under 18, respondents who were 18-24 were 31%-53% less likely to participate in environmental restoration initiatives than those of the older age groups. This result shows that while there is a generational shift and a new social structure in place within the newer generation within the North Shore surf community, the older generation of community members are still leading the way in some sense. Jenna, a long term resident, mentioned that from what she has seen amongst the community, this isn't a surprising statistic. She said:

“Maturity is a big part of it (participation) so there seems to be a very defined decade change where we go from egotistically minded to socially mindful and want to have contributions and give back. So the longer they stay here and live with the community on the North Shore, the more likely they will be to develop a connection with the environment and do their own part.”

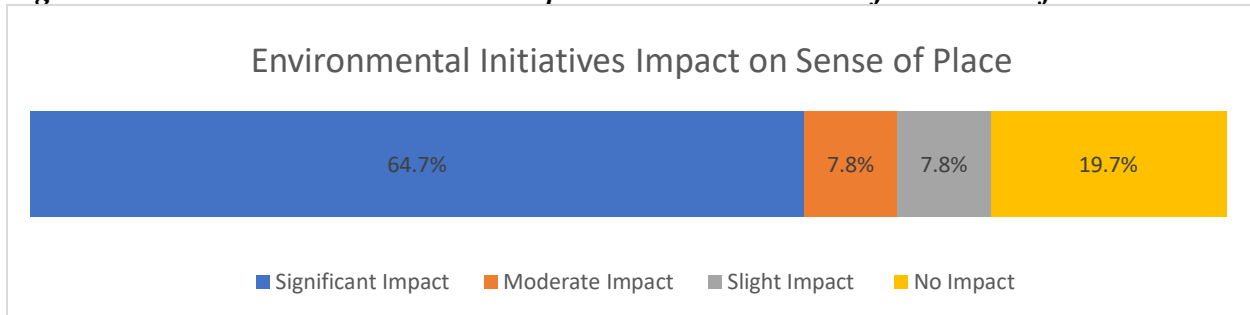
John, lifelong resident, who has seen the generational change on the North Shore multiple times, said:

“I think that the younger group, well a lot younger, (participate the least) because there is a middle group that has stepped up to the plate. Now that they have young families and they live out here so they felt a need to step up. But, I think there is an age that you come to where you start to feel a need to get involved. So yea the surf community pitches in, but there is just certain age groups that play the biggest roles.”

Something that John said in his response resonated with the literature surrounding community, community participation, and the development of social capital. He mentioned that age, as well as having a family, and having new social expectations plays into participation, and according to Litwin (2003) younger members of a community tend not to seek social capital through engagement, active participation, or connections, while older adults were the most likely to develop social capital through diverse networks, connections, and active participation linking

them to friends, neighbors, and family. While levels of participation change generationally, it is important to also understand how those who are participating in environmental restoration are being impacted by it. In order to find that out, I followed up with the question: *Considering the term sense of place used earlier in the survey, do you think taking part in community based environmental initiatives has impacted your sense of place and membership on the North Shore?*

**Figure 3.3: Environmental Initiatives Impact on North Shore Surfers’ Sense of Place**



Community based environmental initiatives have a significant impact on a majority of North Shore surfers’ sense of place (64.7%), as seen in Figure 3.3. While this is less than the 86% of surfers that mentioned that surfing has had a significant impact on their sense of place, it is still important to note that more than half of surfers feel it has had a significant impact. At the same time, 15.6% of respondents also mentioned that volunteering in restoration initiatives has had at least a slight or moderate impact on their sense of place, while only 19.7% of respondents felt that it has had no impact. Additionally, when looking at the demographic response data, of the 19.7% who said no it had no impact on their sense of place only 1.9% (1 participant) had previously volunteered in an environmental restoration initiative only once or twice. In turn, only 1.9% of all respondents who had previously participated in an environmental restoration initiative on the North Shore felt that their participation had no impact on their sense of place or sense of community.

Both surfing and action in community based environmental restoration initiatives have a significant impact on the development of a sense of place for North Shore surfers. Respondents noted that it was through surfing that their sense of place was most immediately developed, but that their care for and need to protect the place that they connected with through surfing lead to a further development of community membership through participation. From a surfers’ environmentalist lens, this section, through survey and interview responses, emphasizes the

notion that surfing has the ability to be the catalyst in a person's life that can lead to increased environmental awareness and action (Holland-Smith, 2013; Omrod, 2007). The increased sense of environmental awareness and action does not go unseen by other members of the surf community, as recognition through community participation is held in high regard when it comes to community acceptance and the development of social capital within the North Shore surf community. Though the North Shore surf community is a diverse community with its own variables, it is still a community, and its inner workings are similar to other communities that have been studied in the past (Douglas, 2010; Kelly & Sewell, 1998). By developing a further understanding of its community members, organizations on the North Shore can have better insight into how to increase participation and develop a more cohesive communal feeling through the implementation of future initiatives.

### **3.4 Community Based Environmental Initiatives: Participation and Empowerment**

Not only is Oahu's North Shore deemed a historically significant surf location for locals and destination for those who visit, it has also been hailed as the "mecca" of the sport by surf media due to the quality and predictability of its surf. Due to this presence, the North Shore also struggles with the cultural and environmental impacts that come along with being such a well-known and accessible area. This could be in part due to "Surfing Macroeconomic Theory. Surfing Macroeconomic Theory states that: "Waves attract surfers. Surfing attracts energy. Energy attracts people. People attract capital. Investment attracts development. And so it goes" (Barilotti, 2015 as cited in O'Brien & Ponting, 2003). Once surfers made their way to the North Shore and recognized the quality and frequency of world class waves, people and capital were bound to follow, and they did. While Surfing Macroeconomic Theory has paved the way for capitalistic endeavors that are good for the local economy and the surf industry, it has its environmental drawbacks. Due to the influx of surfers, the surf industry making a presence on the North Shore, big money corporations, greedy private property owners, and commercial real estate gluttons, surfing has played its role in the over development and degradation of the natural coastal environment.

However, the way of life on the North Shore currently attracts residents who care about the health of the environment around them. As a result, many community organizations that support the North Shore's 'Āina have been created. Some examples include The North Shore

community Land Trust, Sustainable Coastlines Hawai‘i, 808 cleanups, One Ocean Conservation, and other smaller organizations. Their goals all stem from a similar urge to “protect steward, and enhance the natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and rural character... on the North Shore of Oahu” (NSCLT, 2019; Sadler, 2015). Data from these organizations, as well as what I collected in the previous section, supports the idea that community members want to protect the beaches and coastal environment. However, not all community members know where to start. The hope of all these community organizations is that they would provide an outlet and opportunities for community members from all walks of life to participate and provide a way for everyone to Mālama the ‘Āina. The goal is that by lending a hand to help the environment, more and more community members would further develop a sense of community membership which would hopefully encourage future involvement and engagement (Sadler, 2015).

Community based environmental initiatives align with the ideals of the North Shore surf community. They show what kind of people make up the community, as well as what values the community holds in terms of the environment. Figure 6 shows how active members of the community are volunteering their time and participating in the local community based environmental initiatives. Rich (1995) suggests that active participation amongst community members leads to a sense of participant empowerment, which can then lead to further participation and community action. Further participation then leads to empowerment through participation, and this sense of empowerment is noted to be highly influential as it “is a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs” (Rappaport, 1987). Empowerment of different groups of North Shore community members over time has led to the development of the community based organizations that have influenced the North Shore’s coastal environment. Zimmerman (1995) notes that there are differences between empowering organizations which facilitate confidence and competencies of individuals, and empowered organizations which influence their environment, but community based organizations on the North Shore are seemingly doing both. Organizations like the North Shore Community Land Trust provide the outlet for community members to actively participate in restoration initiatives that they have developed, which not only influences the environment but also educates and helps give other community members confidence to further participate and get involved. This then leads to participant empowerment and the cycle can then repeat itself.

To find out if North Shore surf community members feel that participation in community based environmental initiatives has led to a sense of empowerment and an urge to want to get further involved or increase their participation I asked interview participants the question: *Has participation in community based environmental initiatives empowered you in any way or lead to furthered community action?* Of the 11 surfers interviewed, nine of them stated that participation has empowered them. However, only four of the nine that stated they were empowered took steps to act on their newly developed sense of empowerment. Maddie, a three-year resident on the North Shore, surfer, environmental advocate, and seventh grade teacher, mentioned how she implemented the knowledge that she gained through participation in environmental restoration into a yearly class project. She said:

“100% yes. Every time I participate in community events I feel empowered to become more involved in the community, but one day participating in dune restoration really impacted me. During the summer of 2018 I got involved with the North Shore Community Land Trust to help restore the dune system at Sunset Beach. As a science teacher and someone who grew up at the beach, I was pretty well educated on the importance of dune systems, but I had never been involved in restoring one. Being a 7<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher I decided to turn what I learned into a class project that I have used each year ever since.”

Don, a long term resident has also developed a sense of empowerment since volunteering in community based restoration initiatives, and since has developed a new routine each time he goes to the beach. He explained that:

“Yes, I feel like participating in beach cleanups has empowered me to do more for the community and the environment. Now when I go to the beach, I always try to leave the beach cleaner than it was when I got there to go surf. What that means to me is picking up trash and getting rid of it the right way while walking back to my car. That could mean that some days I pick up one or two things, or it means some days I pick up so much that I can’t carry it anymore with my board under my arm, so after putting my board in my car I go back and get the rest.”

Empowerment doesn’t always mean the same thing for all individuals though. Like Rappaport (1987) said “empowerment is a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs,” which in Jenna’s life meant gaining mastery over the social aspect of her life and pushing her to get more involved in community restoration initiatives. Jenna explained:

“I’m actually not a very social and sociable kind of person, like that old school surfer style. So I like to surf by myself and have time alone, so I am not a sociable person and don’t normally seek out volunteer days, but I have found ways to contribute data and photos to NOAA in my own personal way. But through that involvement, I have been working towards being more sociable and working with organizations to get out of my element. So these initiatives have in a way empowered and pushed me towards (further) action.”

Empowerment is powerful as it “is the ability to make decisions that lead to desired future outcomes” (English, 2000). While only some community members noted that the empowerment that they gained through participation has led to different outcomes in their lives, this doesn’t necessarily mean that other community members’ sense of empowerment is any less important. Empowerment starts with awareness, and other community members may simply just starting to feel empowered to have further environmental action. Just as Maddie, Don, and Jenna all had an experience, or multiple experiences, that led to further action, the other participants may find that their empowerment leads to further environmental action down the road. Empowerment through participation is not the same for everyone, and therefore their active participation and awareness developed through participation is a great start in the right direction (English, 2000).

Sherry Arnstein’s ladder of participation is often used as a guide to see who has power over important decisions that are being made within a community (Arnstein, 1969; Collins & Ison, 2009). This is a great tool to use in order understand the level of power that community organizations on the North Shore have over decision making processes in regards to restoration initiatives. When it comes to climate change and local environmental issues, there is no one specific group that is best fit to make decisions. Therefore, allowing community organizations, like the North Shore Community Land Trust or Sustainable Coastlines Hawaii, to have power over restoration initiatives is beneficial to the community and environment (Brooks & Harris, 2008; Collins & Ison, 2009). Currently, through their work with the local and state government, The North Shore Community Land Trust has made its way to the top rung of ladder and have reached “citizen control” (Arnstein, 1969). At this rung, the community organization has the governing control over many environmental management plans, and have therefore delegated the opportunity. For community members to participate and be a part of protecting the environment they love. This has created an incredible feedback loop that has led to the empowerment and

further environmental action of different stake holders in the community, and will seemingly continue to do so into the foreseeable future. Surfing has been the starting point at which a majority of community members have found the urge to participate in restoration initiatives, yet their continued participation and action shows just how impactful a connection and relationship to place can be in empowering North Shore surfers. While further evaluation of citizen participation in the evaluation and decision making process of environmental initiatives on the North Shore is outside of the scope of this thesis, it should be noted that it could be used for future studies on North Shore surfers' involvement in environmental planning.

### **3.5 Surfing's Influential Industry**

The history of surfing on the North Shore and the Surf industry are heavily intertwined. While the surf industry has greatly influenced the development of the North Shore, which lead to negative coastal implications, it has also had positive influences as well (Smith, 2017). In recent years, surf companies have taken an "eco-friendly" stand in an attempt to lower the industry's impact on the environment, and to fit themselves into the environmental movement that has been re-enforced by different surfer groups. The World Surf League (WSL) has been on the forefront of this environmental movement in recent years and has been promoting different programs and initiatives to push the surf industry to give back to communities and help protect coastal environments (WSL, 2019). The North Shore surf community has played their own role in this environmental movement of the surf industry and has been part of the influence that pushed the WSL to have a more environmentally friendly footprint. The WSL has been hosting surf contests on the North Shore since the 1970's, and whenever they would come into town there is an influx of surfers and tourists who joined them in hopes of watching the world's best surfers compete (Smith, 2017). With the influx of people came issues due to parking, overcrowding, and polluting beaches with rubbish. Although the WSL wasn't directly to blame, their indirect influence on the destruction of the community caused the community to lash back. While interviewing community members that have been living on the North Shore for more than 10 years, I asked them about surf contests to see if the surf industry has had any influence on environmental restoration initiatives. In his interview John, a lifelong North Shore resident, explained that:

“The surf industry and the WSL has played a positive role in environmental initiatives in the last.... I don’t know the number of years, but there was a time where they didn’t have a positive role so there was blowback from the community about the trash and parking and when the contest left town there was garbage left everywhere. In the last few years though, they have been running a tight ship. The beaches are cleaner than they left them, they donate to the community and the schools, and things have gotten to the point that when they come to town things get cleaner. It wasn’t always like that though, so that needs to be noted.”

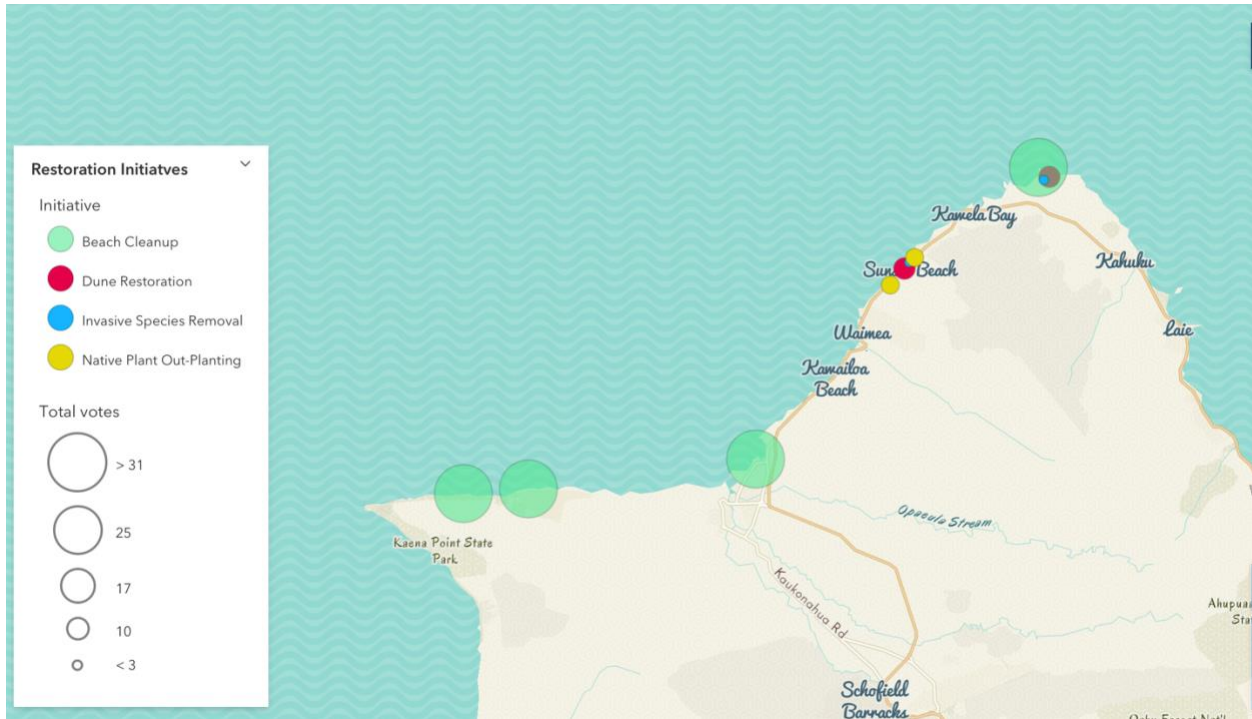
Jenna, another long-term resident and surfer backed up John’s point by saying:

“They’ve played a role to varying degrees, and I think it’s the community that needs to hold them accountable to integrate them to the goals of the community. I think over the years it has been the same brands and companies involved, and I have been involved in it myself so I have seen the positive programs and initiatives develop. I think there are varying degrees within the industry, but they all see why it’s important and why it is necessary. They (the WSL) are newcomers into the community each time they come so they need to see themselves as responsible. With that said, we are at a very interesting time with COVID that there are different visitors coming due to Airbnb and stuff, but now we are getting the mobile worker that is moving to the North Shore for three to six months or more. So we are going to have to do a broader job to integrate and educate those people as well. Unless you have been here for decades, you don’t see the coming and going of the coastline and all the impacts so that community becomes protective of the coastline and the space.”

Just as John and Jenna describe, the WSL has worked to clean up their act in recent years. The WSL has been partnering up with community organizations on the North Shore to ensure that they are having as little of an environmental footprint as possible and strive to leave the beaches cleaner than when they arrived. The WSL has been connecting with Sustainable Coastlines Hawai‘i and the North Shore community Land Trust in order to promote environmental education, as well as ensure that rubbish is managed and removed daily (Hawe, 2015; WSL, 2019). Compostable rubbish is then sent to the Waihuena Farm nearby to get turned into fertilizer. Events put on through the contest season also hire organizations like Sustainable coastlines Hawai‘i to contribute to “waste diversion education,” through which the collaboration hosts a wide scale beach cleanup. (Hawe, 2015). Environmental education is key when it comes to community-based restoration initiatives, because if community members are uneducated about the importance of different initiatives, they will value them less, or be more likely to avoid them

because they are unaware of their importance, or they are intimidated by an initiative that may sound like either too much work or out of their comfort zone.

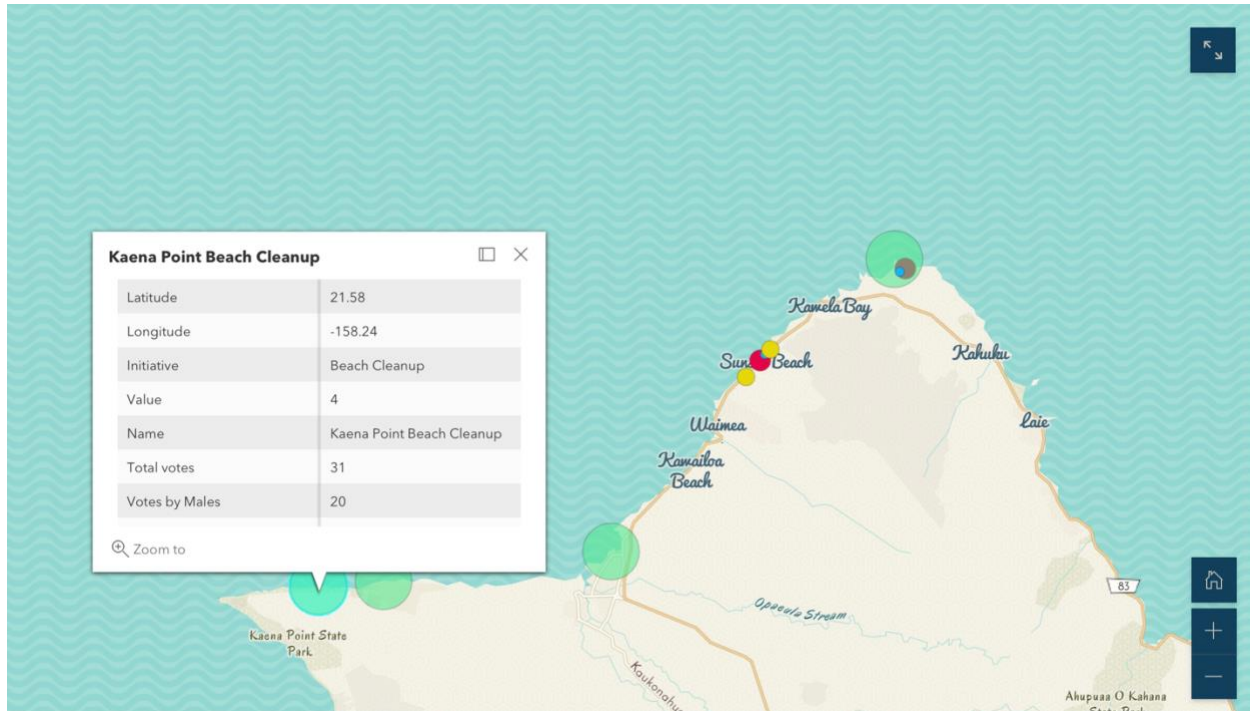
**Figure 3.4: Map of the Levels of Value Placed on different Environmental Initiatives on the North Shore by Survey Respondents**



The map in Figure 3.4 is a part of a larger story map that can be accessed and interacted with with this link: (<https://arcg.is/1PDifu0>). This map shows the most common types of restoration initiatives currently present on the North Shore and the value that is placed on them by all the community members that participated in my survey. I asked participants to rank the different initiatives based off of how important they found them to be. When interacting with the map, you are able to find out how many total participants took place in the vote (52), as well as how different participants ranked their votes. For instance, in figure 3.5 (below) you can see that when the user clicks on a specific point on the map they are able to see the location of the initiative, the name of the initiative, its value (4 being the most valued and 1 being the least values by survey participants), how many total votes the initiative received, and the demographics of the participants who voted for that initiative. This map gives a better context

into the value that community members place on the different initiatives taking place on the North Shore.

**Figure 3.5: Interactive example of the Map of the Levels of Value Placed on Different Environmental Initiatives on the North Shore by North Shore Surfers**



From the map in figure 3.4 and 3.5 it is evident that beach cleanups seem to be the most valued initiative to many North Shore community members, followed by dune restorations, native plant out-planting, and invasive species removal. Because of these responses, I asked interview participants: *In the survey if you answered that specific environmental initiatives were more important than others to you, why do you feel certain initiatives are more important than others?* The diversity of responses was interesting and highly informative. Surf tourist Tyler stated:

“I feel like certain initiatives are more important because the “average joe” can get involved. For example, I could be a part of a beach cleanup, but I would not be the best person to get involved with an invasive species removal because I don’t know too much about that field. Certain initiatives mandate an experienced labor force.”

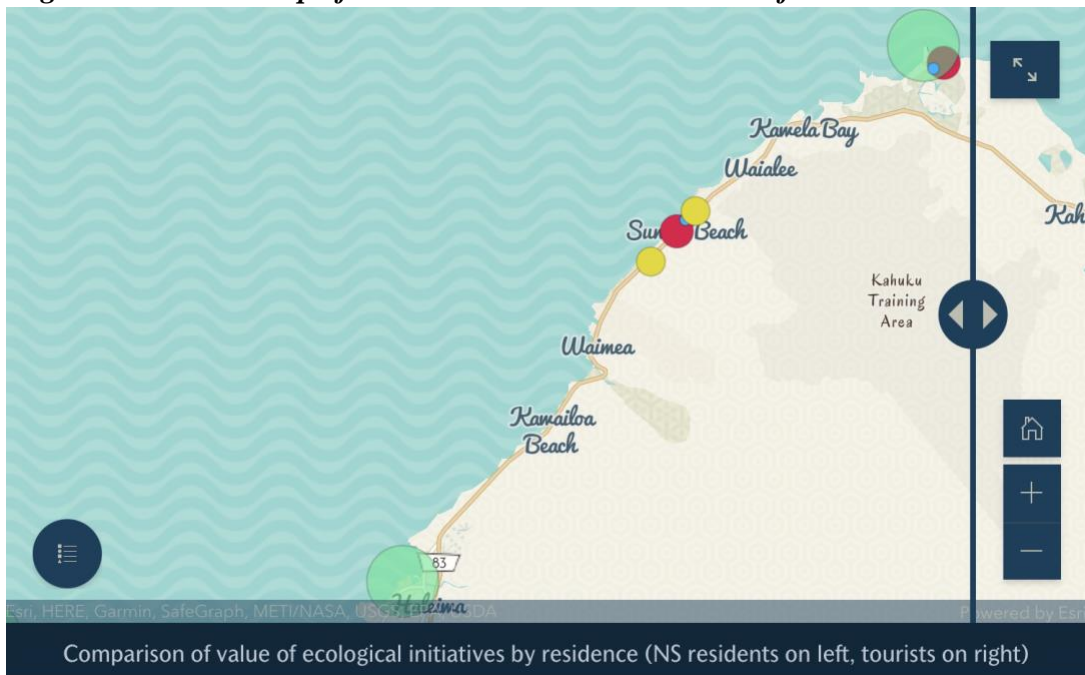
Tyler’s response brings up a common misconception when it comes to environmental volunteering (Misham & Barnett, 2008). While some may be intimidated by volunteering

because of a lack of knowledge, common motivational factors for volunteering stem from a desire to learn about the environment, a care for the environment, and social and environmental learning (Misham & Barnett, 2008). Since volunteers play a key role in the success of many forms of natural resource management, volunteer work managers' jobs are to create and define tasks that are suitable for volunteers of any level (Misham & Barnett, 2008). Without knowing that the organizations putting on these initiatives are expecting inexperienced volunteers, and are ready to educate them before the initiative starts, why would they volunteer for something they think is out of their comfort or knowledge zone. On the other hand, surf tourist Billie, who has a background in environmental education responded with:

“Although all aspects of ecological assistance are crucial, I feel that long term initiatives such as dune restoration and planting native species along the coast need to be at the forefront of environmental protection! We first need to ensure the longevity of the coastline and marine ecosystems, then other actions such as beach cleanups should follow and be a continuous occurrence to sustain the system!”

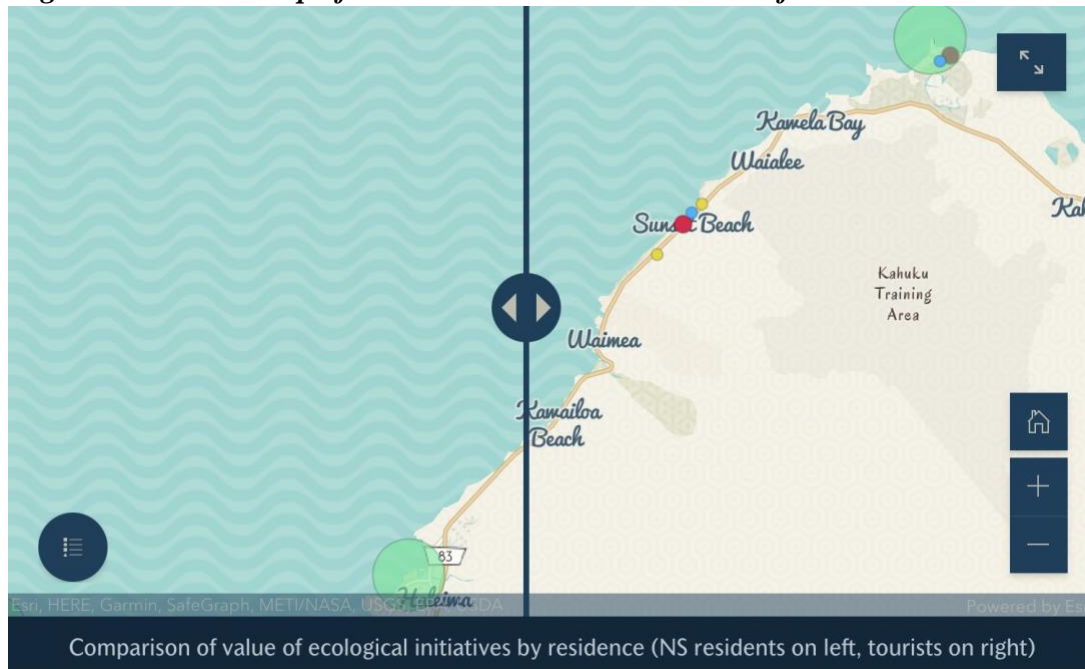
Future studies and local community organizations may be added to a similar map to the one seen in Figure 3.4, but have it compare the value placed on initiatives with level of environmental education. From there a more data driven conclusion could be drawn about whether or not environmental education plays a significant role in determining the value placed on the different initiatives. What has been able to be pulled from the data collected in my survey however, is that gender, residency, and property ownership all impact the value placed on different initiatives. In my story map, I included a sequence of “slider” maps to compare different values of restoration initiatives with different demographic variables. When interacting with these maps (shown in Figure 3.6 and 3.7 below) the user is able to slide a bar across the screen of the map to compare demographics, such as resident vs. tourist responses, to see how demographics have an impact on values. These maps help show that certain initiatives seem to pose more barrier to entry (e.g. The high amount of value placed on beach cleanups and lack of value on other initiatives). Unless that barrier is broken down, certain community members perceptions on certain initiatives will not change. I feel that showing a comparison of values amongst different demographics of residents can be one way to start breaking down those barriers because tourists can see what is important to residents, and in turn may place more value on what is more important to those residents.

**Figure 3.6: Slider Map of Residents and Tourists Values of Initiatives**



Looking at Figure 3.6 (above) the slider bar is the bar on the map with the left and right arrows. Because the map is interactive, the user is able to click on the bar and move it across the screen to the right or to the left. On the left of the bar you have the results of the values placed on different initiatives by residents. The user has the option to open up the legend to see which color stands for which initiative, but I chose to leave this in selected for the phot as it was shown in Figure 3.4 and can be accessed when following the link to the map. As you can see, the green circle (beach cleanups) seem to be the most important to residents, however, dune restorations and invasive plant out planting (red and yellow) seem to be valued pretty highly as well. On the other hand, as you slide the bar to the left, (Figure 3.7 below) you can see that tourists place high value in beach cleanups, and very little value in any other initiative. This shows that demographics and level of education and understanding of the local environments all play into which initiatives will be valued the most by different people.

**Figure 3.7: Slider Map of Residents and Tourists Values of Initiatives**



Similar to how interview participant Tyler noted that he feels he is not qualified to participate in certain initiatives, others tourists seem to feel the same way. Furthermore, while it is the volunteer work managers' jobs to define and create volunteer tasks that are suitable for all volunteers, environmental education barriers are still present. These barriers can limit confidence as environmental education is not keeping up to par with important issues that are affecting surfing communities (Misham & Barnett, 2008; Nijhuis, 2011). To combat such barriers, the WSL has created a new program "PURE" y. Through PURE, the World Surf League (WSL) partners with the North Shore Community Land Trust to spread environmental awareness about the North Shore's natural environment and expose visitors and community members to the current initiatives taking place in the area (WSL, 2019). With the North Shore and the WSL's presence on the main stage of popular surf media, along the impact that they have had on the surf world in the past, the PURE platform has the potential to generate the traction needed to make a serious impact on the future of surf environmental action (Hawe, 2015; NSCLT, 2017; WSL, 2019.).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I argued that the development of a sense of place through surfing is highly important for North Shore surfers' relationships with the surrounding coastal environment on the North Shore. Through this argument, I looked into the relationship that North Shore surfers develop with the environment by going surfing and how it impacts the level of care and value they place on the coastal environment. I further argued that it is because of the immersive relationship that surfers develop with the environment through surfing that they are influenced to participate in community based environmental restoration initiatives. The literature around the history of surfing, surfers' environmentalism, sense of place, and community participation are all interconnected within these arguments. While the outlook and environmental awareness of surfers has been depicted and mediated by surf media in different ways over time, the North Shore surf community has kept with the status quo of being a community that is tied together by the surf, a love for the ocean, and a care for the coastal environment.

From the data collected through surveys and interviews of North Shore surfers, it has become clear that surfing is the most influential variable when it comes to surfers ability to sense place on the North Shore. In coinciding with literature about relationships with place, outdoor recreation, and pro environmental-behavior, the data collected exemplifies that the act of surfing is key for surfers to develop a relationship with the coastal environment (Hill & Abott, 2009). While Hill & Abott (2009) and Holland-Smith (2013) have noted that this relationship does not lead surfers to live more sustainably, interview responses with North Shore surfers have noted otherwise. This adds to emerging literature that is starting to find a significant connection between engagement with nature and pro-environmental behaviors (Borne, 2018) As North Shore surfers' relationships with the environment have led to pro-environmental behaviors, they often develop an even deeper sense of place with the coastal environment through involvement in environmental restoration initiatives. For some surfers, however, there is an environmental education barrier that has kept them from pursuing involvement in pro environmental behavior. Borne (2018) notes that these barriers are common, and that different factors such as age, gender, and level of education are all influential in a persons participation in pro-environmental behavior. To push past such barriers, the North Shore and its influence on the surf industry has partnered up with the WSL to promote increased environmental education for surfers in hopes for a more inclusive and sustainable suture in surf based pro-environmental efforts. This chapter fills a

current gap in surfers environmentalism, and provides a positive outlook for the future of environmental restoration initiatives on the North Shore of Oahu.

## **Chapter 4: North Shore Surf Tourism: The “Authentic” Surf Experience**

### **4.1 Introduction**

When I first moved to Hawaii I lived about an hour’s drive from the North Shore. Even though I lived a bit of a drive away, I found myself making the trip, to experience the incredible power of the waves on the North Shore, multiple times a week. I frequently stopped at a coffee shop about half way into my drive called “Surfers Coffee.” From the first time I stopped in, I was enamored by the relaxed surf vibe in the coffee shop. The walls were lined with surfboards, surf memorabilia, and a few tv’s that were constantly playing surf videos. On one stop into Surfers Coffee, it was relatively empty and I got to talking with one of the baristas about where he was from, and what brought him to the island. He explained that he was part of an organization called “Surfing the Nations,” and that he was in a sense a surf tourist (for the last six months) who, through the work of the organization, was able to experience the surf scene almost as if he was local. I needed to know more, as I had moved to Hawaii about 6 months prior, yet still felt like an outsider in the surf lineup. He explained that through Surfing the Nations he works at the coffee shop, helps underprivileged youth learn how to surf and swim, volunteers with the community, and has the opportunity to surf with a group of people who ave been on the island for a very long time. He expressed that he never would have been able to have the experience or develop the relationship that he did with surfing or the community had he not joined the organization. Although he was going back home in a month, he said that he felt more surf tourists should try to join local community organizations in order to fully experience all that surfing and the community has to offer while they are visiting. He explained that he doesn’t know what his experience would’ve been like otherwise if he hadn’t.

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Surf tourism is a developing industry that, within the last 20+ years, has been finding its way into many new countries, territories, and islands that have the wave quality to support the industry (Buckley, 2002; Krause, 2012; Martin & Assenov; 2012). Surf tourism and surf travel have become central to the modern day surfing through its idealistic surf experience depictionin

popular surf media (Hill & Abott, 2009). Multiple scholars have noted that surf travel has become an integral component in what it means to be a modern day surfer, so much so that they have compared modern surf travel with the myth of the American frontier (Hill & Abott, 2009; Ormrod, 2005; Ponting, 2005). Surf films like *The Endless Summer*, by Bruce Brown, and *Morning of the Earth*, by Alby Falzon and David Elfick, have a major focus on forging new frontiers and discovering new empty surf, often only depicting the idyllic surf travel experience (Hill & Abott, 2009, Ormrod, 2005). In reality, surfing and surf travel are perfect examples of how “surfing, in many ways, is predicated on the consumption of goods, services, and natural resources. (Hill & Abott, 2009 p286; Ormrod, 2005, 44). The idyllic experience of surf travel, mediated by surf media, also ignores the pressures that development driven by surf tourism place on host communities and coastal ecosystems (Ormrod, 2005). While surf tourism is often advertised as an environmentally friendly pursuit, its current inner workings thrive off the consumption and exploitation of natural resources (Hill & Abott, 2009).

Due to the geographical nature of the Indo-Pacific region, which includes warm waters, significant ocean-storm activity, and small island communities, it is an area of the world that has seen a significant amount of surf tourism (Buckley, 2002; Reis & Jorge, 2012). The Hawaiian island of Oahu, is one of oldest and most well-known surf tourism destinations in all of the Indo-Pacific (Buckley, 2002). The North Shore of Oahu, more specifically, is a significant tourist destination because of its historical context in the surf industry, world class surf breaks, presence in surf media, and incidental development structured around surfing (Buckley, 2002; Smith, 2017; Kotler 2012 ). It is also often considered the “Mecca” of the surf world, and therefore has made the North Shore a place for yearly surf pilgrimages (Kotler, 2012). Brisick (2015) explains that:

“I can’t overstate how important it is for a surfer to prove himself in Hawaii[on the North Shore]. Beyond surfing skills, it was manhood, courage, ocean knowledge, character. True colors were shown in the face of a twenty-five-foot wall of vertical water. And like a gold rush, it was all there for the taking. An unknown could distinguish himself, rise to the top of the heap, in the course of a single northwest swell” pg 65).

Evidently, the North Shore is the place to go to test and attempt one’s skill and prowess as a surfer (Waite & Warren, 2008). Many surfers travel to Hawai‘i to test themselves and see if

they can excel into a career in surfing, while others travel to the North Shore a ritualistic pilgrimage to the most recognized surf destination in the world (Brisick, 2015).

Crowded surf breaks and heavy localism on the North Shore have been driven by the influx of surf travelers over the years (Smith, 2017). These are just some examples of the social and physical structures present in the North Shore surf that make it so unrecognized surfers sit at the bottom of the pecking order in the surf lineup (Smith, 2017). Because of these understood barriers as well as other variables that come to play during a surf trip (e.g. wind, swell, ocean conditions, personal expectations), surf tourists on average stay at their destination for significantly longer than the average leisure tourists (Krause, 2012). Krause (2012) has noted that with a lengthened trip some surf tourists have been found to immerse themselves in the local culture through community events and local environmental projects in order to “authenticate” their experience when the surf isn’t ideal. Just as the development of community recognition and sense of place in and out of the water is important for North Shore surf community members’ perceived community membership (mentioned in chapters 2 and 3), it is seemingly just as important for surf tourists who are seeking an “authentic” surf experience. Therefore, it is key for surf tourists to attempt to immerse themselves in the North Shore surf community during their stay. Since the North Shore surf community has a shared love for the surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment, volunteering in restoration initiatives could provide the ideal outlet for surf tourists to cultivate the sense of place necessary for the realization of their “authentic” surf experience.

In this chapter, I examine how surf tourists on the North Shore immerse themselves in the local North Shore surf community and its implications for their development of an “authentic” sense of place among the North Shore surf community. Due to the innate nature of surf tourism, long distance travel, longer than average holiday stays, and the wait for the correct conditions to surf, I argue that North Shore surf tourists are likely to participate in environmental restoration activities to realize an “authentic” North Shore experience and cultivate a sense of place. I highlight that changing the narrative around surf tourism away from the current narrative dictated by surf media, and towards one with a community centric approach could have positive impacts on surf tourists’ experiences and the future health of the coastal environment. Surfing and surf travel will unfortunately always be linked with the consumption of goods, services, and natural resource. However, recognizing the requirements needed to satiate a surf tourists

“authentic” surf experience can be utilized to have a positive impact on the coastal environment on the North Shore. Surf tourism and the impacts that surfing has on the environment have received increasing levels of attention by Hill & Abott (2009) Ormrod (2005) and Ponting (2005) over the last couple of decades. Nonetheless, studies have not completely addressed community involvement of surf tourists, or the “authentic” surf experience. This chapter aims to fill this gap by looking into the importance that community involvement and environmental action have on a surf tourists’ ability to sense place and realize an “authentic” surf experience.

## **4.2 Surf Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage is a term that is most commonly found in religious traditions and describes a journey towards a specific destination of significance. (Gucci, 2012; Reader, 2015). These pilgrimages are transient experiences that remove the participant from their home and local environment (Guzic, 2007; Reader, 2015). A search of growth or understanding of self, nature, others, or a higher good is typically the driving factor for pilgrims (Guzic, 2007). While a pilgrimage in religious tradition is connected with faith and the concept of visiting shrines and holy sites for traditions or religious duties, it is also relevant in the secular world and is mentioned throughout history and popular culture (Reader & Walter, 2016). For example, Alexander Moore argued that Disney World in Florida serves as a pilgrimage center for contemporary Americans, while literary devotees have been known to visit, or make pilgrimage to, the locations or houses at which their favorite writers have written their favorite books (Reader & Walter, 2016). While it could be argued that a pilgrimage is just a form of tourism, Victor and Edith Turner stated that “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist” (Turner and Turner, 1978). While the tourism and pilgrimage are considered to have their differences, tourism has been regarded as a form of contemporary pilgrimage because of the similarities that historic pilgrimages have to modern day tourism (Griffin & Razaq; 2015, Doron & Cohen-Hattab, 2003; Timothy & Olsen, 2003). In both tourism and pilgrimage, people leave a familiar land (their home) to pursue a destination (that will be beneficial to their lives), and then return home with a reference-able experience (Reader, 2015; Reader & Walter, 2016; Timothy & Olsen, 2003). Pilgrimage has also been regarded as “more than an ordinary journey” because a pilgrimage “may be filled with risks, its outcome uncertain, and expectations associated with it high” (Reader & Walter, 2016 pg. 40 ). With such definitions of pilgrimage, and its similarities to

different forms of tourism, and the meanings and values placed upon different locations by certain cultures and subcultures, it is not surprising that the term pilgrimage is frequently used in popular culture including surf pop culture.

The term pilgrimage is frequently used in popular surf culture and media to describe a surfer's journey to a well-known surf destination that has historical and cultural significance to surfing (Krause, 2012). There are two narratives mediated through surf media that link themselves to surf pilgrimage and create an urge within surfers to travel to surf destinations in order to fully experience the life of a surfer: the narrative of the surfer as an escapist and the narrative of the surfer as a surf adventure traveler (Krause, 2012). Both of these narratives tend to go hand in hand as they have been depicted in such a way in early surf films, such as *The Endless Summer* (1966) and *The Drifter* (2009). It is through films like these that surf media has created an expectation for surfers to, at one point or another in their life, dedicate time to a "surf pilgrimage" as a sort of "coming of age" trip in order to experience the escapist and surf adventure narratives that are all so well known in surf culture (Krause, 2012).

The North Shore of Oahu is one of the most well-known surf pilgrimage locations in the world. In an interview, George Story explained that: "If you stop any non-surfer on the street and ask them what they know about surfing, most will default to Hawai'i. The Natural Beauty, rich history and culture, tropical water and variety of waves make the islands a well-established mecca for surfing." (Smith & Murrel, 2017). The North Shore, also named the seven-mile miracle, is a surf location with the highest density of world class waves anywhere on the planet (Finnegan, 2016). With the size, power, quality, variety, and consistency of waves in such a small area, the North Shore stands out from any other surf destination in the world. It is because of such waves and such presence in surf history, culture, and media that it has earned the title of surfing's "proving grounds." While there is historical evidence to other ancient wave riding cultures around the globe, there is a direct lineage between Hawai'i and European surfing, thus making it the historical and cultural point of origin for the majority of surfers around the world (Riz & Murrel, 2017). It is because of this connection that surfing and surf pilgrimages have been linked to Hawai'i both through surf history and culture as well as through surf media as seen in the film *The North Shore* (1987).

#### **4.3 Surf Tourism and Sensing Place**

Visiting the North Shore is not the same as other surf tourism destinations. The trip to the North Shore is a pilgrimage of sorts for those embedded in surf culture. There is a socially constructed significance that connects surfers to Hawai‘i, making this a unique destination for surf tourists (Krause, 2012). Whether surfers realize it or not, surf media (i.e. films, magazines, literature, social media) are all a part of a surfer’s habit when deciding upon where they are going to travel to for their surf trip, and what they expect during such a trip (Krause, 2012). These narratives and images mediate a surf tourist's perception of the surf destination even before they arrive, creating an expectation of a particular type of “authentic” surf experience. Surf tourism is also unique because, depending upon the location, one must navigate through different social structures and natural landscapes to have the experience they are expecting out of their surf trip. Vaughan & Ardoin (2014) argue that people-place connections are created and maintained through a connection between physical and social aspects of a place. Therefore the odds of a one-time surf trip, developing into a yearly surf pilgrimage are heightened when surf tourists are able to develop a sense of place at the surf destination they have traveled to (Krause, 2012; Vaughan & Ardoin, 2014).

The navigation of social and physical structures that are present on the North Shore can be challenging. The physical elements, such as stronger than expected surf conditions, crowded lineups, and dangerous rock and reef pose their own challenge, however, navigating social elements can be seen as the more daunting of the two obstacles. There is a strong sense of localism and hierarchy in the waters of the North Shore. There are three major ways to gain respect in the lineup: if a surfer’s face is known by the other surfers who frequent that surf break, gaining respect by showing respect, or being local. If a surfer does not fall into one of these three categories, it is almost guaranteed that they will have difficulties getting into the best waves of the day (Smith, 2017). Studies have shown that attachment to place can create a deeply rooted emotional sentiment that impacts how a person interacts, perceives, and values the community and physical resources of a place (Cheng et al. 2003; Ramkissoon et al. 2013, Vaughan & Ardoin, 2014). Therefore, though it may be more difficult, it is just as important for a surf tourist on the North Shore to develop a social connection with the local community in order to develop a deeply rooted “authentic” sense of place during their stay.

Scholars note that the development of an “authentic” sense of place for tourists could be sped up and increased through engaging in different social activities or environmental learning

through education of the ecological and sociocultural aspects of a place (Ardoin, 2006; Kudryavtsev et al. 2011, Vaughn & Ardoin, 2014). This suggests that surf tourists have the ability to develop an “authentic” sense of place through avenues other than surfing, such as attending social events, talking to other surfers in or out of the water, or learning about the different ecological aspects of their surf destination through volunteering in activities like beach cleanups. Engagement and volunteering in pro-environmental and place protective behaviors not only helps in the development of a sense of place, but also helps in the way a person is perceived by the local community (Ardoin, 2009; Gustafson, 2009; Ardoin et al. 2019, Vaughn & Ardoin, 2014).

Scholars argue that surf tourists' expectations of surf destinations are mediated by surf media and culture, and that a surf tourists' experience when visiting new surf destinations is what will dictate their future decisions and habits when it comes to going on future surf trips (Hill & Abott, 2009; Krause, 2012; Ormrod, 2005). It also suggests that the connections to physical and social aspects of a place are strong determinants of the relationship that is built between a tourist, their destination, and the local community of their destination. When it comes to developing an authentic sense of place for a surf tourist on the North Shore, scholars argue that engaging recreationally, socially, and environmentally are the three key components (Ardoin, 2006; Kudryavtsev et al, 2011; Vaughn & Ardoin, 2014). I build on this scholarship to argue that for surf tourists, involvement in community activities, such as environmental restoration initiatives, would help them achieve the “authentic” surf trip experience during their visit.

#### **4.4 Impacts of Sense of Place on North Shore Surf Tourism**

Based on survey and interview data, it is clear that sense of place has a significant impact on a surfer's comfort level in and out of the water. However developing an authentic sense of place in the water can be difficult for surf tourists because of the social and physical barriers that must be navigated on the North Shore both in and out of the water. Additionally, social barriers in the water do not blend well when it comes to male surfers and their masculinity, because there is almost always a personal drive to prove one's self in or out of the water. Surfers, especially male surfers have been shown to have a need to try to feel “local” in the lineup, which can be extremely challenging as a surf tourist visiting the North Shore (Wait & Warren 2008).

Developing a sense of place can help a surfer develop the urge to turn a one-time surf pilgrimage

to the North Shore into a daily, weekly, or yearly habitus. However, such a habitus is dependent on the feelings or sense of place that a surfer is able to develop with surfing during their visit. One surf tourist, Tyler, who has been living on Oahu for 2 years but surfs on the North Shore less than twice a month, making him a surf tourist, explained this when he said:

“The first time I felt a sense of place or belonging in the surf of the North Shore was the first time I paddled out and didn’t immediately get glared at for paddling into the lineup. I still wasn’t being given any amazing waves, but I felt like the other surfers were letting me feel at ease in the lineup. I’m not sure if it was because I was more of a familiar face, or if it was the way I paddled out that day, but it gave me a new sense of comfort that I didn’t realize I wanted until I got it. Ever since that experience, I often continue to go back to that same surf spot to continue that level of confidence”

It was his need to feel like he belonged in the water and to feel at ease to finally start to develop the “authentic” surf experience and sense of place that he was looking for on his trips up to the North Shore for a surf. It also seems that his “authentic” sense of place at that surf spot will be the driving force that pushes this surfer to continue his surf pilgrimage to that specific break.

Surfing is not the only way to develop a sense of place on the North Shore, as explained by another interviewee who seemed to develop a sense of place through his time spent immersing himself within the local community. He stated that:

“I first visited the North Shore years ago simply for the surf. I got lucky and landed a job on some guy’s property where I would work 10-15 hours a week in exchange for a place to stay. I was mainly maintaining the property, but it was a great gig because it gave me a lot of free time. When I wasn’t working I would either surf, skate, or walk around and get to know people in the community. I still come back to the North Shore each winter for the surf, but I think it was that first experience that got me hooked to come back each winter, even though when I come back now I either stay at hotels or rental properties.”

It seems that the most important aspect for developing a sense of place on the North Shore is opening one’s self up to the idea that the narrative behind an “authentic” sense of place, mediated by surf media and the Hawai’i Tourism industry, may not be the only way to develop an authentic sense of place. Creswell (2015) notes that a sense of place is when people feel a longing of belonging towards a place or destination they are familiar with. Oftentimes, when surfers visit a place like the North Shore, which is known for heavy localism and dangerous surf,

there can be a feeling of anxiety or excitement that comes along with their visit. If there are good experiences or enjoyable memories that they can relate to the place, then they are more likely to re-visit or return to it. Similarly, if they develop a sense of place and a genuine connection with the destination, a surfer's one time pilgrimage to the North Shore is much more likely to turn into a yearly surf habitus, as it has for many surfers, both recreational and professional (Krause, 2012). Like mentioned by the two surf tourists, it is common that a connection and relationship to place is easy to develop through a connection with nature, or through a connection with the culture of a community (Ardoin, 2006). As noted in the literature, but excluded from popular surf media, it seems that there are other, more realistic, realities behind the development of a sense of place that are more viable options for average surf tourists on the North shore to seek out.

#### **4.5 Sensing Place through Community Involvement**

Authenticity is understood to be a socially constructed concept, and therefore its definition and perception is negotiable from individual to individual. Similar to how authenticity is negotiable, different variables impact a surfers values, and therefore the idea of an "authentic" surf trip on the North Shore can range dramatically between one surfer and another. Currently, the hegemonic narrative of the "authentic" surf trip has been dictated by surf media, the surf industry, and the Hawai'i travel and tourism industry. While the "authentic" surf experience can vary, the experience driven by the surf media has hailed the North Shore as a place to rise to glory by surfing perfect waves and partying with professional surfers (Smith, 2012). Conversely, the narrative driven by the Hawai'i travel and tourism industry promotes taking surf lessons, staying at a resort, getting food at the shrimp trucks, then going to watch the pro surfers compete, all before going back to their cozy hotel room (Smith, 2017). These two opposing surf tour narratives can be considered by different surfer groups as "authentic" experiences. However, considering my argument, it is important for surf tourists to keep their minds open when it comes to their expectation of how to truly have an "authentic" surf experience because authenticity has been found to be perceived differently by different individuals. With this understanding, an "authentic" surf trip experience is relative and is determined by the individual, however expectations can play into whether or not a surfer feels their trip has been authenticated. Therefore, the "authentic" surf experience is relative to each individual surfer.

One surf tourist, Ken, who was visiting for one year, shared a story with me about how he finally came to be comfortable on the North Shore after getting more involved with community-based restoration initiatives. Through his story, his “authentic” sense of place only started to develop in and out of the water after his experience, he said:

“I felt very overwhelmed after moving to the North Shore. I felt very alone in the lineup, I didn’t know my place, and I knew that I obviously stood out. I don’t think I stood out as a new surfer, but instead as a new person in the water making an already crowded lineup more crowded. I got the vibe that I wasn’t welcome and didn’t know how to approach anyone in the water to start conversation. I was intimidated and exhausted. I wasn’t sure that moving to the North Shore was the best decision. I was explaining this to one of my co-workers, and she mentioned that “maybe you would feel more comfortable if you showed your face around the community more and made a presence for yourself.” I looked into community events and found local beach cleanups and other events were being held near where I was living. I got out of my element, went to the events, showed my face, and made some friends. I don’t know if this actually had an impact on who did or did not want me in the water, but I think it gave me the confidence to give off a vibe that I should be there. It made me happier in general, and then I started to get more waves while surfing.”

Looking at this response from an environmental viewpoint, it is not surprising that Ken was able to develop a more authentic sense of place through his involvement in the community. While Ken is only a surf tourist, his activity within the community gave him a feeling of belonging outside of the water that was able to then transcend into his entire experience, including surfing, on the North Shore. Such an experience for Ken was a transformative participation experience, in which he was able to change his outlook and value on the importance of community participation. With the North Shore surf community being made up of people who love the surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment, it seems that the connections that Ken made while volunteering were exactly what he needed to drive his new perception of an “authentic” sense of place on the North Shore.

Another surf tourist, Billie, expressed that she often purposefully seeks out community-based projects or events at her surf destinations. She mentioned that because she is a competitive surfer and traveling to different surf destinations is a big part of her life, she volunteers with the communities she travels to as a way to give back. She mentioned that she never thought of it as a way to develop an “authentic” sense of place, but in turn, that is exactly what it has given her. When asked about sense of place and community-based environmental initiatives she said:

“When you participate in things like beach cleanups, or other initiatives, you get that feeling that not only are you all there for one common goal, but that goal is something ethical and beneficial to everyone who is a part of that community present and future”

I further asked if participation in such initiatives has created a sense of empowerment and an urge to have more community action, and she said:

“I think as surfers, there would not be very many people who would participate in such activities and then not want to have more community action. If they did, they probably don’t share the same morals and beliefs anyway so it’s their loss. These opportunities definitely make me feel more empowered, and they enhance my sense of community wherever I am visiting.”

Because empowerment is oftentimes related to participation, it is not surprising that Billie felt empowered to have more community action (Rich, Richard, et al. 1995). Billie was only a surf tourist, yet the connection with the environment from being a surfer helped her to understand that her actions directly affect her ability to partake in the things she loves to do, like going surfing.

The survey data showed that respondents had similar feelings of connection and sense of place that were developed through getting involved in community based environmental initiatives. Though 57% of surf tourists expressed strong feelings of sense of place through surfing alone, this sense of place is specific to surfing and, shown through interview responses, does not transcend well into an overall sense of place and community on the North Shore. Furthermore, when it comes to interacting with the community and volunteering in community based environmental initiatives, 57% of surf tourists had previously volunteered, and 28.5% said they would like to but haven’t had the chance. Yet, 100% of respondents felt that they have or would develop a sense of place and community through volunteering in such initiatives. This is interesting, considering that not all participants had previously volunteered, but it shows that surf tourists recognize that if given the opportunity to volunteer in such initiatives, that they would be able to “authenticate” their experience through a further sense of place and perceived community membership. Finally, 71% of respondents responded stating that it was a combination of activities (including work, volunteering, and surfing) that has had the most significant impact on their sense of place. This further verifies that developing a sense of place only in the water

through surfing does not have as significant of an impact on finding that “authentic” sense of place that volunteering could provide.

This data aligns well with what the literature has noted about community involvement, environmental action, and sense of place (Ardoin, 2009; Gustafson, 2009; Ardoin et al. 2019, Vaughn & Ardoin, 2014). Even though most studies that are focused on the community membership and sense of place of residents, surf tourists seem to be no different and their responses have noted that even short periods of environmental action leads to a better overall sense of community membership and sense of place. This reinforces my argument that surf tourists either do or would like to volunteer in environmentally based restoration initiatives in their off time, and it shows that those who have sought out environmental action have developed a heightened and more authentic sense of place during their time on the North Shore.

#### **4.6 North Shore Surf Tourism’s Possible Future**

While authenticity motivates many tourists experiences, many tourist destinations provide tourists with mediated versions of an authentic experience instead of giving the tourist true insight into local culture and experiences. This can be seen on the North Shore, where the surf tourists’ experiences are initially mediated by surf media where the “authentic” surf experience is one built around surf prowess, partying, and proving one’s ability (Smith, 2017; Kotler, 2012). However, a more realistic representation of surf history and culture in Hawaii would portray an authentic surf experience as a ritualistic and spiritual experience that connects a surfer to the ocean, the land, and the community (Drent, 2006). If North Shore surf tourists are indeed seeking an “authentic” surf experience, then the narrative around surfing on the North Shore must link back to surfing’s history and connecting and participating with the local community.

Based on the data collected from my surf survey, 100% of surf tourists who had participated in some sort of community based environmental restoration initiative felt they were better able to develop a feeling of an authentic sense of place within the overall community on the North Shore. Considering how Krause (2012) explained that during their down time surf tourists often immerse themselves within the local communities, maybe surf tourists on the North Shore simply need more obvious volunteer opportunities in order to “authenticate” their surf experience. The development of a new narrative around surf tourism in which surf tourists are

given opportunities to volunteer with local organizations and connect with the land, the coastal environment, and the community would bring a whole new meaning to the “authentic” surf tourism experience. This could be a goal to reach for by local community organizations as it could have positive benefits to both tourism and the local community.

Changing the way community based environmental initiatives are advertised or spoken about could be beneficial not only to the surf tourists’ sense of place or feeling of an “authentic” surf experience, but also to the community and health of the coastal environment. Making surf tourists a target audience for such initiatives could be a great start that could possibly develop into a sort of surf voluntourism on the North Shore that is similar to the work of Surfing the Nations as explained in the introduction of this chapter. Tyler, a surf tourist who lives on Oahu, but only surfs on the North Shore occasionally explained that:

“I have heard, mostly from social media and word of mouth, about North Shore surf community initiatives such as beach clean-ups and dune restoration but have not not known anyone to take part in them nor have I been aware of when or where they take place. I only surf on the north shore occasionally, and when I do I normally drive up, surf, then drive my way back home right after because I feel there is no reason to linger or spend time there other than to surf. I feel like if those initiatives were more accessible or something I would have something else to do up there other than just surf.”

Out of the four surf tourists that volunteered for an interview, all of them expressed similar feelings towards community restoration initiatives as Tyler did. Although most of them have previously been involved in some sort of environmental initiative on the North Shore, they all agreed that while they were happy to volunteer, it was challenging to initially find the right initiative to volunteer for. Seeking out volunteer opportunities can be challenging as a visitor. It can be challenging for surf tourists to know which program or initiative is best for them, or if where it is located is someplace they could get transportation to. While conducting my research, I discovered that local community organizations were lacking an overall map to outline all of the key information visitors might need. For example, there were no visuals to indicate where initiatives were taking place, what volunteering in each initiative entails, any information needed prior to volunteering, and when the events were happening. Looking at Figure 4.1 (below), by using data collected from community organizations on the North Shore, I developed a map of a majority of initiatives that are taking place on the North Shore, and included all the essential

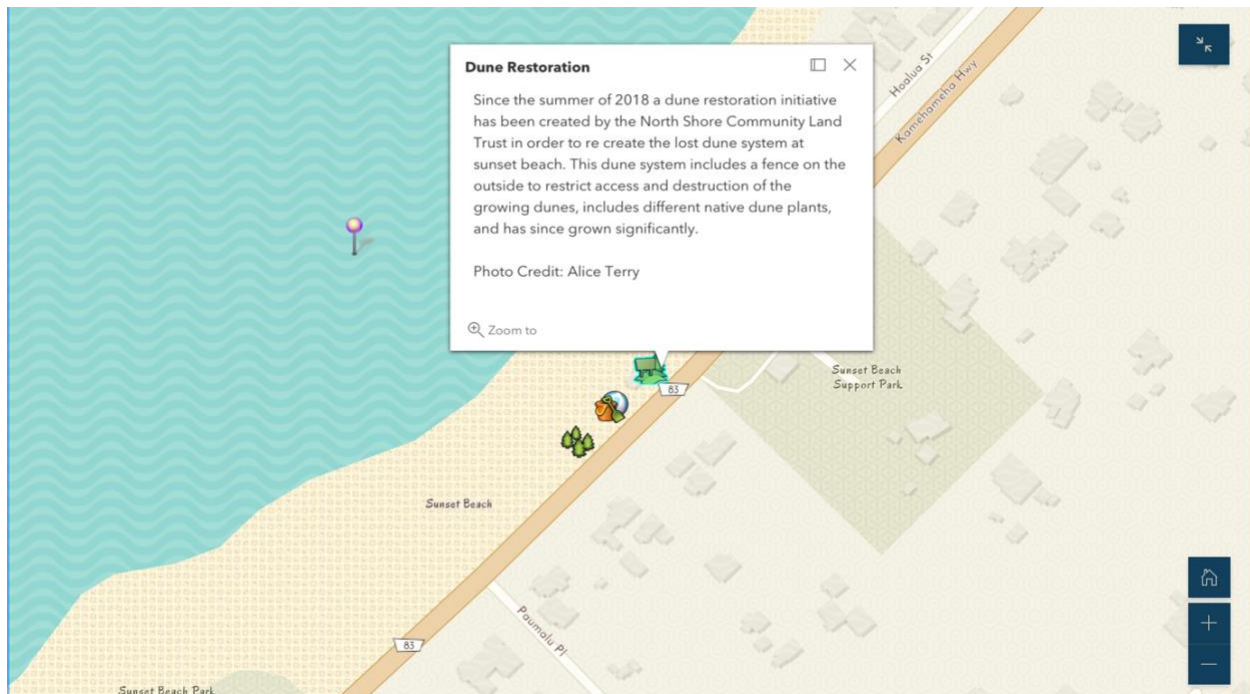
points and information that would be helpful for surf tourists who were seeking out such experiences. I also included an in-depth description of each initiative and why it is important for the North Shore surf community within the map (Figure 4.2 below).

**Figure 4.1: Map of Community Based Restoration Initiatives on the North Shore of Oahu**



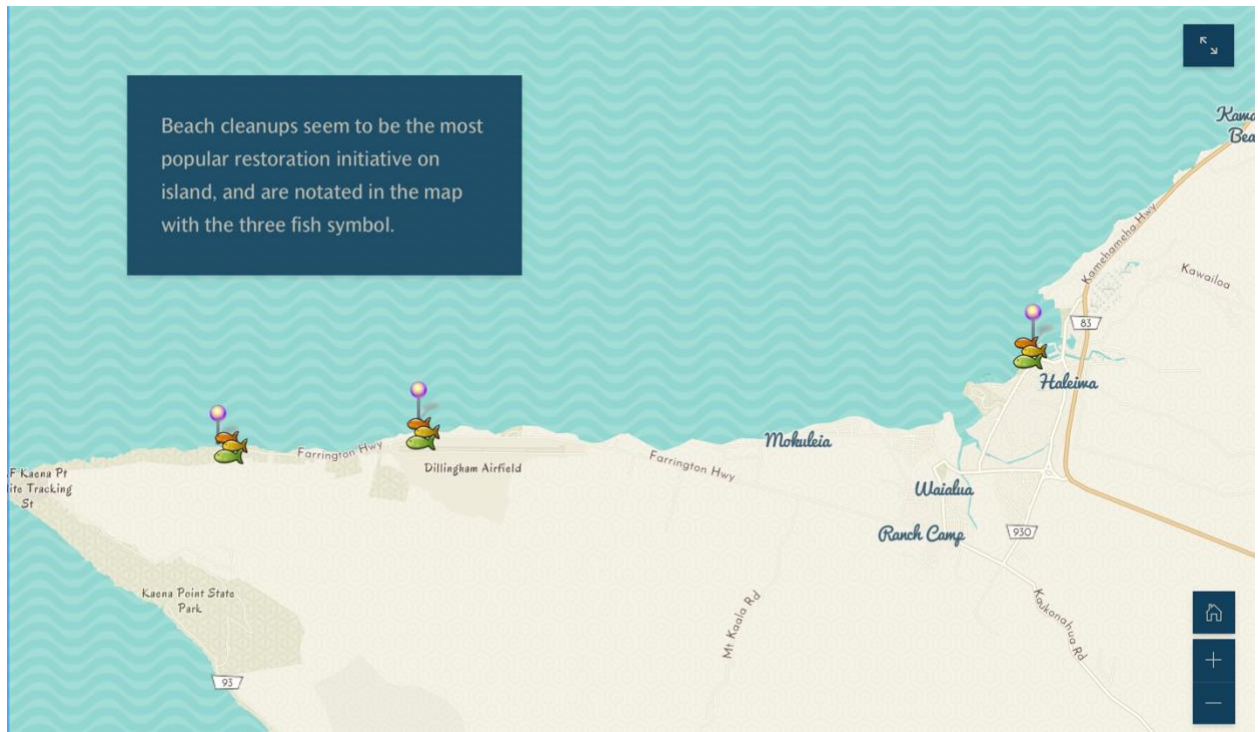
This map was developed to showcase the local environmental initiatives taking place on the North Shore, their locations, why they are important, which ones are most present, and the organizations that are currently at work putting them on for the general public. When the user first accesses the map, that is a part of a larger story map that can be accessed using: (<https://arcg.is/1PDifu0>), (shown above in Figure 4.1) they are looking at an overview map of all the current restoration initiatives being put on by different community run organizations on the North Shore. Each site is marked by a pink push pin, as well as different images that note different types of restoration initiatives. When the user clicks on each push pin, a pop up screen opens with an outline of the importance of that site to the overall ecology of the North Shore, a description of the location, as well as image to get an overall understanding of the location.

**Figure 4.2: Example of Key Information Points Built into the Map**



As the user zooms closer into each area, for example Sunset Beach (as seen above in Figure 4.2), they will see different graphics (e.g. three fish, four trees etc.). Each graphic stands for a different type of restoration initiative, and when the user clicks on each a pop up window opens providing a description. Within the pop up window is an overview of the restoration initiative, the organization(s) that are responsible for hosting them, as well as why the initiative is important for the community. With a visual reference like this, the user can scroll through the different initiatives, find the one they find the most interesting, see what organizations are in charge of putting them on, and then continue to the organization's website to find out when they can possibly get involved.

**Figure 4.3: Overview of Popular Initiatives Along the North Shore of Oahu**



Volunteering with the local community as a surf tourist seems to significantly influence whether or not a surf tourist will be able to leave the North Shore feeling that they were able to develop an “authentic” sense of place and community on their trip or stay. Volunteering with the community and giving back to the land exemplifies the traditional actions and rituals held sacred in early Hawaiian surf culture (Drent, 2006). Similar to how Heitmann (2015) notes that tourists seek “authenticity” and want true insight into local cultural practices, changing the narrative around the “authentic” surf experience on the North Shore from its depiction in surf media to a connection to the land and community is actually bringing surf tourists closer to what they are seeking. At the same time, some surf tourists may not accept this as an “authentic” surf experience because “authenticity” is deceptive and can be depicted in many ways by different individuals (Heitmann, 2015).

Changing the local discourse of the North Shore surf community away from the “impact” that surf tourists have on the congestion of their local surf breaks, and instead moving towards realizing that surf tourism can be used as leverage for positive coastal restoration initiatives is something that the health of the coastal ecosystem could benefit from (O'Brien & Ponting 2013). Changing the narrative around the “authentic” surf experience on the North Shore, and

providing surf tourists with volunteer opportunities in which they can connect with the community could change the image of surf tourists in community members' minds. According to data collected from my interviews, nearly all of the North Shore residents expressed that they do not differentiate between leisure tourists and surf tourists, and felt surf tourists do not play any role in local environmental action. They felt that while tourism is important for the economy on the North Shore, it becomes seen as more of an inconvenience in their eyes. A few participants noted that the rubbish left behind by tourists as well as the congestion they bring to the roads and surf breaks are what bother them the most about North Shore tourists. While changing the narrative around an "authentic" surf experience for surf tourists may not change the amount of congestion on the North Shore, it could help differentiate surf tourists from leisure tourists. With Huff (2012) noting that 28% of tourists visiting the North Shore are participating in surfing each winter, such a high number of tourists actively engaging with the community and volunteer initiative could put a new perspective on the "impacts" that they have on the community and the local environment. With a change in the narrative, residents may start to see surf tourists as a tool to protect the coastal environment they love instead of seeing surf tourists as a mere nuisance. Since surf tourism on the North Shore isn't going anywhere, with it being considered the surf "Mecca" of the world, this could be an effective way to implement a positive change for the future.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined how surf tourists on the North Shore immerse themselves in the local North Shore surf community and its implications for their development of an "authentic" sense of place. Due to the innate nature of surf tourism, long distance travel, longer than average holiday stays, and the wait for the correct conditions to surf, I argued that North Shore surf tourists are likely to participate in environmental restoration activities to realize an "authentic" North Shore experience and cultivate a sense of place. With a focus on "authenticity" in tourism, I used interview and survey responses to develop an understanding of what dictates an "authentic" surf experience to surf tourists on the North Shore.

North Shore surf tourists expressed that the "authentic" surf experience dictated by popular surf media is not as realistic they thought when planning their stay. Through interview responses, surf tourists mentioned that the way they spent their time out of the water, and

whether or not they engaged with and got recognized by the community, had a significant influence on their experience in and out of the surf. Multiple respondents mentioned that they were able to cultivate a sense of place while surfing only after engaging with the community through local environmental restoration initiatives. By engaging in an activity that is highly valued by the surf community, they were able to realize a more “authentic” North Shore experience than the one presented by popular surf media. However, finding the correct outlets to engage with the community brought about its own challenges to surf tourists. With the information gathered, I feel that it would be in the best interest of the community and the tourists for community organizations to advertise more obvious and inclusive initiatives around the North Shore. By doing so, surf tourists would have the opportunity to more easily cultivate a sense of place and “authenticate” their North Shore experience. At the same time, the community would gain more volunteers who could have a positive impact on the local coastal environment that is cherished by both the community and the tourists.

While surf tourists are seen by locals as a nuisance to the North Shore surf community, surf tourism has been interwoven into the fabric of what makes up the North Shore. Surf tourists accounted for approximately 25% of my survey responses (which were conducted outside of peak North Shore surf season), and surf tourism on the North Shore has had a significant impact on the depiction of the North Shore in surf media as well as the economic and developmental growth of the North Shore. Whether they are seen as a nuisance to the community or not, understanding how surf tourists perceive the “authentic” North Shore surf experience and interact with the community can influence their future “impact” on the community and coastal environment.

## **Chapter 5 : Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

While conducting my research and digging into the history of the development of the North Shore, I started to garner a deeper understanding of why the surf community on the North Shore is built around respect for both environment and community members. Surf history and popular surf media mediates a certain picture of the community and its members, but unless you actually immerse yourself within the community and talk with community members you don't

get the full picture. During one of the early interviews I conducted, I got to talking with a long term resident who had moved to the North Shore over 30 years ago. We got to talking about her experience living on the North Shore and if she ever noticed any “growing pains” that are associated with significant development of a small island community. She immediately started talking about the impact that development has had on the coastal environment. She expressed that the quick development of houses, businesses, and rapid influx of people has really taken a toll on the overall health of the coastal ecosystem. She also noted that:

“unless you’ve been here for decades, you don’t see the coming and going of the coastline and all the impacts. Because of that the community becomes protective of the coastline and the space.”

This helped me understand why there has been a generational change in overall respect of North Shore surf community members. The older generation has been teaching the newer generation of community members to focus on taking care of the community and the coastal environment. If they don’t, with the influx of tourists and new residents each year who will?

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Surfing, the development of a sense of place, and environmental action are all integral parts in understanding the identity of North Shore surfers and members of the North Shore surf community. In each chapter of this thesis, I addressed the themes of community membership, sense of place, and surf tourism in order to understand the impact that surfing and participation in environmental action has had on the surfers who help make up the North Shore surf community. In chapter two, I focused on developing an understanding of the current surf community living on the North Shore and determined what drives their perceived community membership. I also included how the development of a sense of place and community impacts the amount of value community members place on the environment, the ocean, and the surf. In chapter three, I investigated how important of a role surfing has played on community members’ sense of place, and whether or not their sense of place, developed through surfing, has an impact on their involvement in community based environmental initiatives. In the fourth chapter, I examined how surf tourists on the North Shore immerse themselves in the local North Shore surf community and its implications for their development of an “authentic” sense of place.

North Shore surfers are a diverse group of individuals that include locals, transplanted residents, and tourists who all reside on a small stretch of land that holds incredible significance to the surfing world. The North Shore surf community sits in an integral location which intertwines community, surfing, environmentalism, and tourism. The data collected for this thesis clearly shows that surfing, environmental care, and community participation all play a significant role in the development of a surfers sense of place and perceived community membership. Through a surfers' environmentalism lens, this thesis contributes to scholarship on environmental action of surfers. This thesis adds to environmental stewardship theory by showing that surfers' sense of place is increasingly authenticated through participation in environmental volunteering on Oahu's north shore. This argument is highlighted by a range of environmental programs that have proliferated across the North Shore and, in recent decades, have become increasingly important community building activities that surfers use to authenticate their sense of place within the local surf community. The North Shore surf community is made up of environmentalists, and participation in environmental volunteering not only authenticates surfers' sense of place amongst the community, but it also has a direct impact on the health of the local coastal environment.

## **5.2 Learning About the North Shore Surf Community**

Communities are bound together for varying reasons (Faucet, 2000; Rabinowitz et al., 1995). Some are bound simply by geographic locations, while others are tied together through interests or further similarities (Faucet, 2000; Rabinowitz et al, 1995). The North Shore surf community, although complex, is no different. It is surfing that brought rise to the current history and culture on the North Shore, and it is surfing that continues to tie many members of the community together. Time and development have brought new challenges to the North Shore including more people, increased infrastructure, and environmental degradation. The growing pains the North Shore felt from development, due to the surf industry and real estate growth, all contribute to the current outlook and values that are held by the surf community. While the community once revolved solely around surfing, it is found to no longer be exclusive to surfers, and now includes all of those who have a connection or tie to the surf, the ocean, and the coastal environment.

Community membership on the North Shore is noted to be developed by community members through the interactions and time they spend interacting and participating within the community. It is noted, through interviews with community members, that social recognition (e.g. at Foodland, community events, restoration initiatives, etc.) plays a significant role in the majority of participants' perceived community membership. Just as Litwin (2003) has noted is often the case within sporting communities, interaction and participation within the North Shore surf community is highly valued as it develops further recognition amongst other community members. Interaction and participation also help individual community members develop social capital within the community, giving them further recognition and a sense of membership in and out of the surf. The most important characteristic for the development of social capital on the North Shore was found to be respect. Not only respect for other community members in and out of the water, but most importantly respect and Mālama of the 'Āina through participation in environmental volunteering. Respect has historically been a key part of the North Shore surf community, and while respect was only earned by the early generations in the water through surfing, it is now gained both in and out of the water through participation within the community and through showing care and respect for the environment.

In my research I placed high value in diving into the North Shore surf community through its history and presence in popular surf culture, along with conducting mixed methods research which included both surveys and interviews. This allowed me to develop a thorough understanding of the North Shore surf community. I found that since the North Shore surf community has been present on the main stage of surf media since it first made its debut in the 1950s, the values and inner workings of the community can often be misinterpreted and mediated through different perspectives shown in the media. The North Shore surf community has been portrayed in many ways throughout surf history, yet it has always been viewed as a community who holds surfing as the most important aspect of the community. I found, however, that because the surf community on the North Shore is always developing and changing with the ebb and flow of surf tourists, short term residents, and continued development, that the surf community is starting to evolve with the new generation of surfers. These surfers don't only focus on surfing, but also hold environmental protection and awareness to a high regard. I also found that the surf community is no longer simply made up of surfers, but rather has developed into a community that is made up of people who hold high value in the surf, the ocean, and the

coastal environment. This means the North Shore surf community has developed from exclusive and surf centric into a more welcoming and overall diverse and inclusive community.

### **5.3 North Shore Surfers are Environmental Caretakers**

This thesis highlights the importance of North Shore surfers' sense of place on the North Shore. There are a number of variables that influence a surfers' sense of place, but a relationship with surfing and participation in environmental action both seem to play the most significant roles. The relationship that a surfer develops with the community and the environment begins with surfing. It is through the immersive nature of surfing that helps many North Shore surfers to develop a connection and relationship with the ocean and surrounding natural environment. Through this relationship, and the understanding that the community is built around a general sense of respect for the community and the environment, many North Shore surfers have made being environmental caretakers a part of their daily lives. Similar to what early literature on surfers' environmentalism suggests, surfing has been the driving force that has pushed the majority of North Shore surfers and North Shore surf community members to lead environmentally conscious lives (Hill & Abott, 2009).

While a sense of place through surfing has pushed North Shore surfers to be environmentally conscious, it is participation in environmental volunteering that continues to authenticate sense of place and perceived community membership. North Shore surfers' participation in initiatives has shown to lead to further levels of empowerment, which then leads to more environmental action. It is through this kind of empowerment that community members have been motivated to develop organizations like the North Shore Community Land Trust in the past. And it is through such empowerment that North Shore surf community members feel inclined to participate in further forms of environmental action.

While the majority of North Shore surfers are active environmental caretakers, this is not always the case amongst other surfing communities. Surprisingly, North Shore surfers being active environmental caretakers is in contrast to what more recent literature about surfers' levels of environmentalism has noted. Recent literature has made strong criticisms about surfers, noting that while surfing may be an immersive activity and many surfers have good environmental intentions, the majority of surfers are not actively participating or taking conscious steps towards environmental action (Holland-Smith, et al. 2013). The North Shore surf community, who have

developed a sense of place through both surfing and participation in community based environmental initiatives, provides an example of surfers as environmental caretakers. Therefore, this thesis furthers current theory around surfers environmentalism and action by noting the physical and social relationships all come into play when considering an individual surfers' participation in environmental action. Despite the research about surfers in other locations, North Shore surfers are setting a precedent that environmental action is key to community membership and a furthered sense of place. With the North Shore's presence in surf media, the North Shore surf community's participation in local environmental action has the potential to set a good example for other surf communities around the world.

#### **5.4 Pushing an Influential Industry**

The importance and influence that the surf industry has had on the North Shore, as well as the importance and influence that the North Shore has on the surf industry was of important note throughout this thesis. With the issues that came with the early competition days of the surf industry and the WSL (garbage, overcrowding, rubbish left all over beaches), community members lost their trust in the organization of surf events and pushed back for the sake of their community. With a community devoted to the care and protection of the environment, this does not come as a surprise. Their pushback led to the WSL teaming up with community organizations to host events with the wellbeing of the community and environment in mind. They wound up leaving the beaches better than they found them, teaming up with local businesses to boost the North Shore economy, and donated back to local organizations and schools. Because of the pushback from the North Shore surf community, this has become commonplace action for the WSL, not only on the North Shore, but also at its other destinations for surf competitions.

Without the development of a sense of place and community that starts through surfing and makes its way to citizen participation and empowerment, the industry may have continued to use and abuse the resources of the North Shore community. Instead, community members' levels of participation, empowerment, and further action significant citizen control over outside influences that would potentially benefit or harm the rest of the community. Professional surfers on the North Shore have also been doing their part in recent years by partnering up with the WSL and leading the surf industry towards a more environmentally friendly and sustainable future.

Since the North Shore is known to be home of some of the best professional surfers in the world, surfers like John John Florence are getting involved in this partnership and are stepping up to the role of environmental stewards. This is relevant to the bigger picture of environmental action in the surfing world, and could have a strong impact on the up-incoming generation of surfers. . A quote that I found on social media from a professional North Shore surfer beautifully explained just how impactful the community and the land is to surfers on the North Shore. They said:

“My community has shaped me to be aware. Not only aware of myself but aware of what surrounds me and how it can be affected. Hawai‘i is so lush and full of vegetation and good energy that it is important to implicate Hawaiian culture and practice of Mālama (taking care of) into our ‘Āina (land) and people. I have learned to hold value in working and connecting with nature and all very different types of people that are in my community. Here in Hawai‘i it is taught at a young age that community is almost like family. We all have to transcend for the betterment of our little oasis that we are so incredibly lucky to live on and in doing so, it is the act of getting along and working together that makes things work.”

Community is something that is not taken lightly on the North Shore, and it is surfing and environmental action that ties the community together. Surfing, the surf community, and environmental action have all influenced the values many surfers from the North Shore place on participation in environmental action. In this way, surfing, sense of place, and participation in environmental action on the North Shore have reverberated, and will continue to, throughout the entire surf world.

## **5.5 Future Policy Implications and their Influence on the Surf Community and Surf Tourism**

With the presence of COVID-19 and the uncertainties that this virus has placed on communities around the world, it is not surprising that people, businesses, and organizations are going about their daily routines in different ways than they have in the past. Federal, state, and local governments have been placing different restrictions and guidelines around how communities, businesses, and organizations are allowed to operate in order to do their best to ensure the safety of all people. This has caused the surf community and community-based organizations on the North Shore to rethink the way they are able to have a continued positive influence on the environment. The North Shore Community Land Trust, for example, has limited volunteer groups to reservation only and has unfortunately had to limit the number of volunteer

work days that they are able to put on. 808 cleanups, on the other hand, had an idea to create a choice based calendar. On this calendar, volunteers would select a stretch of beach to agree to go to for a certain period of time to clean it up while social distancing and keeping groups down to the limits of guidelines. Both of these are good temporary solutions, but with an unforeseen end to the current COVID-19 situation, it is important to think about future policy implications that can be set in place to make sure to maintain the involvement of both the community and surf tourists in environmental restoration initiatives on the North Shore.

The development of new, forward thinking, environmental education based policy could also be utilized by the future of surf tourism. With COVID-19 the tourism industry in Hawai'i took a significant hit. Uncertainties arose, and new ideas around the future of tourism in Hawai'i are being developed and implemented. A recent survey from the World Tourism and Tourism Council noted that the future of tourism will be looking at sustainable solutions to benefit host communities and tourists alike ([www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)). A GIS based environmental initiative map could be used by the surf tourism industry to promote ways to give back to the community the tourists are visiting. Such an initiative could be promoted by both surf tourism and community organizations to mediate the discourse around what is expected of surf tourists when they visit the North Shore. As noted in chapter 4, surf tourists are often seeking opportunities to develop an authentic sense of place within the community while visiting, so maybe now is the time to push for a new way to make that happen, all while promoting the success of community organizations as well as the health of the local coastal environment. There is no better time than now to change the discourse around the impacts that surf tourism has on the North Shore.

## **5.6 Final Thoughts**

With increasing environmental issues presenting themselves to different coastal environments, surf communities around the world are facing more challenging decisions than ever before. Surf communities, and in particular the North Shore surf community, are threatened each year with more development, increases in tourism, and the unknown of what is to come with each winter's coastline threatening surf. With North Shore surfers' sense of place and community on the North Shore depending heavily on surfing and participation in environmental action, their future connection with the coastal environment is significantly reliant on the health of the coastal environments. At the same time, the current state of the world (primarily the

COVID-19 pandemic), is infringing on their opportunities, efforts, and ability to surf and volunteer safely. How will the community respond if this continues? And, will future participation and empowerment of community members be impacted?

Limitations that presented themselves while conducting research for this thesis were linked to the safety restrictions and protocols set in place by local and state governments due to Covid-19. Due to such restrictions, interviews had to be conducted through phone call, video call, or through a written questionnaire based off of the interviewee's comfort level. It is also worth considering that when conducting my survey and interviews, there were less surf tourists on island due to travel restriction set in place by local and state governments. This impacted the distribution of my surveys, and made it more easily accessible to residents rather than surf tourists. In the future, I would like to compare where surf tourists are coming from, their background in environmental work before visiting, distance from the beach where they grew up or are currently from, and their level of education. Exploring how surf tourism comes into play within these extra demographic categories would add further depth to this the implications of surf tourism on the North Shore.

Future scholarship may address the range of surfer groups on the North Shore. In this thesis, I chose to avoid setting parameters to multiple different surfers groups due to limitations that presented themselves while conducting this research. Because of Covid-19 and the safety restrictions and protocols set in place by local and state governments, interviews had to be conducted through phone call, video call, or through a written questionnaire based off of the interviewee's comfort level. It is also worth considering that when conducting my survey and interviews, there were less surf tourists on island due to travel restriction set in place by local and state governments. This impacted the distribution of my surveys, and made it more easily accessible to residents rather than surf tourists. In the future, I would like to compare where surf tourists are coming from, their background in environmental work before visiting, distance from the beach where they grew up or are currently from, and their level of education. Exploring how surf tourism comes into play within these extra demographic categories would add further depth to this the implications of surf tourism on the North Shore.

Also, because of the issues present from Covid-19, the sample size of the study was smaller than I was hoping for. Since the sample size was too small, it was challenging to have enough data from specific groups of surfers to show any true significance of specified surfer

groups. Instead, this thesis focused on the entire North Shore surf community and the individual surfers who make up that community. On the North Shore there is in a way a form of “caste system” that is used to understand the different surfer groups. There are the professional surfers who come only by winter for the waves and competitions, the local surfers who have been surfing the North Shore their entire lives, beginner surfers who either just moved to the North Shore or are visiting, and everything in between. While this thesis covers an overview of the North Shore surf community and its surfers, and breaks them down into two basic groupings (surf tourists and North Shore surfers), future research on this topic would benefit from a larger sample size that dives into the complexities of the different surfer groups that are present on the North Shore. In finding out the ins and outs of the different surfing groups within the community, community organizations would be able to have more insight into future possibilities for effective environmental initiatives and projects for targeted for certain groups of surf community members.

There is an implicit need for community-based organizations to adapt to the unknown future of surfing and the ability of the community to volunteer in environmental action on the North Shore. Such adaptations will be imperative for both the health of the coastal environment and the place making and participation levels of community members. The themes of perceived community membership, sensing place in and out of the surf, and surf tourism add to an important understanding of what constitutes the North Shore surf community. These themes also highlight what authenticates North Shore surf community members’ sense of place and what motivates their participation in environmental action. The organizations on the North Shore have been doing an incredible job so far at making impactful changes to their initiatives to meet current requirements, but if what we are facing is the “new normal” this thesis and further research into the community could lead to even more impactful ideas for future policy, as well as a new way to approach different initiatives as new challenges arise.

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