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**Title:** More than a quick pint: investigating place attachment to an English recreational setting

**Creators:** Baker, A., Tolley, M. and Hill, K. M.

**Example citation:** Baker, A., Tolley, M. and Hill, K. M. (2016) More than a quick pint: investigating place attachment to an English recreational setting. *Social Psychological Review*. **18**(2) 1369-7862.

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work.

**Version:** Accepted version

**Official URL:** <http://shop.bps.org.uk/publications/publication-by-series/social-psychological-review/social-psychological-review-vol-18-no-2-autumn-2016.html>

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/8685/>



# More Than a Quick Pint: Investigating place attachment to an English recreational setting

Andrew Baker, Martin Tolley & Kimberley M. Hill

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*This study used Tumanan and Lansangan's (2012) multi-dimensional methodological framework to examine the emotional attachment to place, as experienced by two hundred and sixty three patrons within eight English public houses. Findings suggest participants view these types of premises as a 'third place', after home and work, and that place attachment is mediated predominantly by social factors. Patrons felt a stronger place attachment to welcoming premises, which promoted a sense of belonging and an inclusive atmosphere. Place attachment was also higher for premises with socialisation opportunities, those visited more frequently and premises in close proximity to home. Findings are discussed in relation to previous research and provide implications for studying these types of complex, recreational settings.*

## **Introduction**

The emotional relationship with place, otherwise known as *place attachment* has been studied since Fried's (1963) work on the psychological bonding of displaced people within Boston's West-End. In the 1970s, different approaches came forth, including the philosophical "love of place" (Tuan, 1974), individually constructed place meanings (Relph, 1976), and the sense of community places (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974).

A more recent definition of place attachment by Altman and Low (1992) suggests that it is a complex, holistic and transactional phenomena "within which interpersonal, community and cultural relationships occur..." (p. 7). However, scholars have questioned whether place attachment reflects a single dimension of emotional bonding (e.g. Fornara, Bonaiuto, Ariccio, Cancellieri, & Rahimi, 2015; Fornara, Bonaiuto, & Bonnes, 2010), or whether other factors are involved. For example, Todd & Anderson (2006) argue that proximity drives attachment formation and, although place attachment is typically difficult to measure, some experimental studies have also suggested that close habituation develops the bond that individuals have to a place (Gustafson, 2001; Backlund & Williams, 2003; Tuan, 1974).

Place attachment research has since focused on whether individuals can be attached to more than one place (Lewicka, 2011). In particular, a focus has been on *non-places*, such as shopping malls and homogenized entertainment sites, and whether these are also capable of eliciting attachment (Augé, 2008). Oldenburg (1999) usefully conceptualises these informal public gathering places as “third places”, following primary home and secondary workplaces.

For Oldenburg (1999), these third places not only have a sociocultural component of acceptance or belongingness, but consist of eight important characteristics: 1. Neutral Ground - people can easily join or depart one another’s company in this place; 2. Leveller – these places are inclusive without reference to positions or ranks; 3. Conversation - Conversation is the main activity; 4. Accessible - one can go alone and is most welcome at any time of the day; 5. Regulars - people see regular customers; 6. Low Profile - the place is visually plain or has a low profile physical structure; 7. Playful Mood - the place has a playful mood or is highly spirited; and 8. Home from Home – the place exudes a “home away from home” feeling.

To consider the distinction between place as a locus of attachment and place as a centre of meaning (e.g. Williams, 2014), Tumanan & Lansangan (2012) utilised a multi-dimensional approach to examine the experiences of Filipino coffee shop patrons. Findings identified key social and physical characteristics which were key to patrons’ experiences. Importantly, most third place characteristics appeared to be typified in the coffee shops surveyed, suggesting that this framework could be used to help understand place attachment within various types of recreational settings.

In England, public houses are unique, popular and habitual gathering places (Fox, 2014; Dunbar, 2016). It is possible that these spaces could also feature many dimensions of the third place, but are often be difficult to study. The current research study aimed to utilise Tumanan & Lansangan’s (2012) multi-dimensional framework to understand the place attachment between patrons and English public houses.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy. Participants were any person (18 years or older) who had used the pub at least once in the past four weeks, or identified themselves as a frequent patron. Sampling took place at eight licenced public houses located in or around a market town in Sothern England. This included five in-town premises, one on a local authority housing estate and two in villages. Location type varied from the Micro Pub to an international chain pub and five of the locations supported team activities.

### *Materials*

This research study utilised a 56 point self-administered questionnaire developed by Tumanan and Lansangan (2012), which acknowledges the interdependence of attachment and the characteristics of a third place. The self-administered place questionnaire can be viewed in *Appendix 1* and relevant sub-scales in *Appendix 2*. Two focus groups facilitated transcription and adaptation of this questionnaire for use in England. One of these focus groups involved patrons from a Local Pub and the second included third year Psychology students from The University of Northampton.

### *Ethical Considerations*

This research had full ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at The University of Northampton. Data Collection took place within licenced premises, which presented several ethical issues. This included gaining permission from the proprietor or manager; using premises already known to the researcher; and ensuring the personal safety of the researcher, by stopping surveying at around 9 p.m.

## **Results**

### *Sample Characteristics*

Of the 263 participants, 68.7% were male 30.9% female and 0.4% declined to answer. Participant ages ranged from 19-84 (N=48.62, SD=15.43), with 18 not disclosing. 79.1% of participants were self-reported regulars (N=263) and 76.1% expressed a sense of belonging to the premise (N=259). 58.8% lived less than one mile from the public house (N=262) and

32% visited more than seven times a month. Most patrons spent 30-420 minutes per visit (M=137.11, SD=64.33).

An independent t-test demonstrated that self-reported regulars (M=44.55, SD= 6.80) experienced a significantly increased level of place attachment, as measured by the place attachment scale, than non-regular patrons (M=35.96, SD=7.00;  $t(236) = 7.77, p < .001$ , two tailed). The magnitude of the difference in these means (MD = 8.58, CI95%: [6.14, 10.76]) was large ( $d=1.24, r = .528$ ).

### *Proximity and Visit Frequency as an Indicator of Attachment*

A Chi-square test for independence (Yates Continuity Correlation) indicated a significant association between proximity to the pub and self-reported regular patrons,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 256) = 29.11, p < 0.01, phi = .347$ . 95.3% of self-reported regular patrons stated that the current premise was their nearest public house, compared to 66.4% of non-self-reported regulars.

A two-way between groups ANOVA explored the impact of distance travelled to premises and visit frequency on place attachment. While the main effect of distance travelled and the interaction effect between distance and visit frequency did not reach statistical significance, there was a statistically significant main effect for visit frequency,  $F(4,215) = 4.45, p = .002, \eta^2 = .07$ . Post-hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) indicated that those visiting seven or more times in the last month (M = 45.55, SD = 7.46) had a significantly higher place attachment compared to those just visiting on that day (M = 37.04, SD = 8.54), or those only visiting twice in the last month (M = 40.39, SD = 7.05).

### *The Social Function of Premises*

Eight out of the five surveyed establishments had pub teams and supported social functions. Of this sample (N=153), 28.8 % (N=44) of these participants self-identified as a team member. Men made up 81.8% (n=36) of those belonging to a team, with the youngest team member aged 22 and the oldest 72 (Mean 48.03, SD 23.39). 97.7% (N=42) of team members self-described themselves as regular patrons, and 69.77% (N=30) lived within close proximity to the public house surveyed within (*see Table 1*).

Table 1: Proximity to public houses by distance travelled

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Participants

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Distance from home	Sample *	Self-Identified Regular Patrons	Pub Team Members Only
Less than 1 Mile	154 (58.8 %)	138 (89.61%)	30 (19.48%)
About 1 -5 Miles	88 (33.6%)	62 (70.45%)	12 (13.63%)
About 5 to10 Miles	8 (3.1%)	4 (50%)	1 (12.5%)
About 10 to 20 miles	5 (1.9%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)
More than 20 Miles	7 (2.7%)	1 (14.28%)	0 (0%)
Total	262	207 (79.1%)	43 (16.34%)

\* excluding missing data likewise NB. All % are compared with the main sample

### *Place Attachment and Characteristics of Oldenburg's 'Third Place'*

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient identified the strongest positive correlations between place attachment and Accessible,  $r(228) = .588$ , CI:[ 0.496, 0.666], Regular,  $r(231) = .559$ , CI:[ 0.464, 0.641], and Leveller,  $r(236) = .508$ , CI:[ 0.407, 0.596], third place characteristics. Physical characteristics had a limited relationship with place attachment, as demonstrated by the Low Profile third place characteristic,  $r(231) = -0.39$ , CI:[-0.167,0.09]. This suggests that patrons' place attachment to public houses is primarily associated with social characteristics of a third place.

### **Discussion**

By adapting Tumanan and Lansangan's (2012) multi-dimensional methodological framework to analysing factors defining place attachment, this study investigated key psychological variables influencing emotional attachment to place. Similarities and differences between the experiences of English pub and coffeehouse patrons in the Philippines and South Korea (Tumanan, Kim, & Kim, 2014), will now be discussed.

### *Sample Characteristics*

Both studies share many similarities; characteristics of the sample and the social function of the places studied. However, the studies differed in the prominence of third place characteristics to place attachment. Each sample was also dominated by one single gender cohort and age group, but these differed by geographic characteristics. For example, the

urban coffeehouse study comprised of 26-30 year old females, whereas the semi-rural pub study consisted of mainly 40 year old men. Therefore, male bonding within licensed premises could arguably be a similar social function to that sought out by female patrons within coffeehouses (Fernando, 2004). Importantly, both studies identified the importance of regular customers in stimulating the social atmosphere and giving a place its character and meaning (Altman & Low, 1992; Oldenburg, 1999; Dunbar, 2016).

### *Proximity and Frequency*

While the role of proximity is not immediately obvious in Tumanan and colleagues' previous studies (2012; 2014), the current study illustrated that proximity is a key indicator of place attachment, as suggested by previous research (Todd & Anderson, 2006; Backlund & Williams, 2003; Dunbar, 2016). Additionally, while Tumanan and Lansangan's (2012) coffeehouse research found patrons visited on average 4-5 times a month with a stay of up to 2 hours, the pub study found patrons visited more frequently, up to 7 times a month, but staying on average for only 30-40 minutes. In all cases, more frequent visitors were found to have a stronger attachment to place, suggesting a link to repeated exposure (Backlund & Williams, 2003).

### *Third Place Characteristics*

Each study identified different emergent variables associated with place attachment. For the Philippine coffee patron, having a home away from home, a neutral ground and a spirited or playful environment were important third place characteristics. In contrast, the English patron valued accessible premises, with regulars and an inclusive atmosphere. This may be due to cultural differences, for example, Filipino societies value systems of kinship and extended family support, therefore regarding coffeehouses as a gathering place for family. In contrast, the English pub is viewed as a welcoming place to escape the stresses of everyday life within a different microclimate (Fox, 2000; 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Tumanan and Lansangan's (2012) multi-dimensional methodological framework can be used to analyse factors defining place attachment in English public houses. Similar to previous research, place attachment appears to be primarily social, but also influenced by the physical environment. Key factors related to place attachment within public houses include

gender and age-specific patronage, socialisation opportunities, proximity to premise and frequency of visits. Third place characteristics were related to welcoming public houses, with regular patrons, and an inclusive atmosphere which promotes a feeling of belonging. While there is scope for future qualitative or mixed method work, this research has implications for the application of place attachment principals and for providing methods to study third place characteristics in complex contexts.

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**Appendix 1: Self-Administered Place Questionnaire**

# Your Pub Survey

Participant ID:

Thank you for taking part. Please answer the questions as best you can.

Something about you and this pub.

**Q1:** Gender Male , Female , Other

**Q2:** Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Years

<b>Q3: Is this pub the nearest to where you live?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>

<b>Q3a: How far did you travel to this pub?</b>				
Less than 1 Mile	About 1 to 5 Miles	About 5 to 10 Miles	About 10 to 20 Miles	More than 20 Miles

<b>Q4: In the last 4 weeks how many times have you visited this pub?</b>				
Just today	Twice	3 to 4 times	5 to 6 times	7 or more

**Q5: On each visit about how long are you in the pub?**

		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Q6:</b>	Do you describe yourself as a “regular” at this pub?		
<b>b</b>	Do you have sense of belonging to this pub?		
<b>c</b>	Are you a member of any pub teams, i.e. Pool, Darts?		
<b>d</b>	Do you have a place that is “your space” in this pub?		

## Q7: How Do You Feel About This Pub?

We would like to know your level of agreement / disagreement with the following statements. Please tick the box that best suits how you feel

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, NA = Neither (agree or disagree),

A= Agree or SA = Strongly Agree.

**SD    D    NA    A    SA**

<b>a.</b>	It would affect me if this pub closed.					
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<b>b.</b>	I like to return to this pub.					
<b>c.</b>	I make decisions while I'm at the pub.					
<b>d.</b>	I identify strongly with this pub.					
<b>e.</b>	I feel no commitment to this pub.					
<b>f.</b>	Friendships are made in this pub.					
<b>g.</b>	My dreams are created at this pub.					
<b>h.</b>	I am myself when I am in the pub.					
<b>i.</b>	I enjoy doing the types of things I do in the pub more than in any other place.					
<b>j.</b>	I wouldn't substitute any other place for doing the types of things I do in the pub.					
<b>k.</b>	My ideas are never established in the pub.					
<b>l.</b>	This pub is a part of me.					

### Q8: What Is Your Opinion about This pub?

Please tick the box that best matches your level of agreement / disagreement with the statement below; SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NA = Neither, A=Agree or SA = Strongly Agree

**SD    D    NA    A    SA**

<b>a.</b>	This pub's facilities are high quality.					
<b>b.</b>	This pub's facilities are easy to use.					
<b>c.</b>	The facilities at this pub are among the best.					
<b>d.</b>	The lay-out of the furniture and fixtures is appropriate for the things I do in the pub.					
<b>e.</b>	This pub has the type of drink I like.					
<b>f.</b>	The price is not reasonable.					
<b>g.</b>	The beer at this pub is always kept well.					
<b>h.</b>	The variety of drink selection is important to me.					
<b>i.</b>	I appreciate the staff talking to me.					
<b>j.</b>	The employees in this pub are like family.					
<b>k.</b>	I am not willing to go to another pub because of the relationships I have with the employees.					

<b>l.</b>	I have a bond with the employees in this pub.					
<b>m.</b>	The mood is always suitable for the regular activities I do.					
<b>n.</b>	I do not join activities/gatherings organized by other patrons.					
<b>o.</b>	I join activities/gatherings organized by the pub					
<b>p.</b>	I enjoy hanging out alone in this pub.					
<b>r.</b>	I visit the pub to socialize with other customers.					
<b>s.</b>	The customers in this pub are like family.					
<b>t.</b>	I have a bond with the customers at this pub					
<b>u.</b>	I am not willing to go to another place because of the relationships I have with other customers.					

### Q9: Thinking about this pub's character / appeal

Please tick the box that best matches your agreement / disagreement with the statement.

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NA=Neither, A=Agree or SA=Strongly Agree

**SD    D    NA    A    SA**

		SD	D	NA	A	SA
<b>a.</b>	I can easily join in another's company.					
<b>b.</b>	The customers are willing to have open discussions with no one acting as host.					
<b>c.</b>	This pub is accessible for me.					
<b>d.</b>	I can easily initiate a discussion with another crowd/group.					
<b>e.</b>	I identify with the values and lifestyles of the other customers.					
<b>f.</b>	I feel like I do not belong in this pub.					
<b>g.</b>	This pub opens at times that suits me.					
<b>h.</b>	This pub does not have a joyful mood.					
<b>i.</b>	I believe having conversations with others is the main activity in this pub.					
<b>j.</b>	I know other regular customers visiting this pub.					
<b>k.</b>	Communicating with people in this pub has always been a problem for me.					
<b>l.</b>	I can relate to the customers frequenting this pub.					
<b>m.</b>	I feel welcome every time I visit this pub.					

<b>n.</b>	I see this pub as having a low profile.					
<b>o.</b>	I always find an acquaintance when I'm at this place.					
<b>p.</b>	I behave in this pub as if I own the place.					
<b>q.</b>	I visit this place because of my fellow customers.					
<b>r.</b>	I feel happy when I am in this place.					
<b>s.</b>	The physical structure is visually plain.					
<b>t.</b>	This place is an integral part of the community I live/work in.					
<b>u.</b>	The things I do in this place, I would enjoy just as much at my home.					
<b>v.</b>	I feel alienated in this place.					
<b>w.</b>	This place is a "home away from home."					
<b>x.</b>	Coming to this place is one of the most enjoyable things I do.					

## Appendix 2 - Sub-Scales Associated with 'Third Place'

### **Characteristics of 'Third Place'**

#### *Neutral Ground*

The customers are willing for open discussions with no one acting as host. Q9b

I feel alienated in this place. \* Q9v

#### *Leveller*

I can easily join in another's company. Q9a

I identify with the values and lifestyles of the other customers. Q9e

Communicating with people in this place has always been a problem for me. \* Q9k

#### *Conversation*

I can easily initiate a discussion with another crowd/group. Q9d

I believe having conversations with others is the main activity in this place. Q9i

#### *Accessible*

This place is accessible for me. Q9c

This pub open at times that suite me Q9g

This place is an integral part of the community I live/work in. Q9t

I can relate to the customers frequenting this place. Q9l

#### *Regulars*

I feel like I do not belong in this place. \* Q9f

I know other regular customers visiting this place. Q9j

I always find an acquaintance when I go here. Q9o

I visit the place because of my fellow customers. Q9q

#### *Low Profile*

I see this place as having a low profile. Q9n

The physical structure is visually plain. Q9s

#### *Playful Mood*

This place does not have a joyful mood. \* Q9h

I feel happy when I am in this place. Q9r

Coming here is one of the most enjoyable things I do. Q9x

The things I do here I would enjoy just as much at my home. \* Q9u

#### *Home from Home*

I feel welcome every time I visit this place. Q9m

I behave here as if I own the place. Q9p

This place is a "home away from home." Q9w