Article

In the Shadow of the Mountain: A Socio-Historical Case Study on Rapid Population Growth in Two Neighboring Population Centers in the Western United States

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Abstract: US Census population estimates show that every state in the Western US reported significant population growth increases over the past two decades. Furthermore, Western population growth represents one of the largest and most significant US demographic trends in recent decades. For many Western US communities, this increase in population growth has resulted in significant changes to its residents' day-to-day lived experience. Dramatic population growth can change the types of services available, economic opportunities, and perceived satisfaction of communities. This change in the lived experience of a community is perhaps most pronounced when small rural communities undergo a rapid increase in population size. To that end, we present a socio-historical narrative case study examining how population growth-historical and contemporary-has shaped residents' lived experience in two neighboring population centers in the modern rural West: Utah's Heber Valley and Park City, Utah.

Keywords: community; population change; socio-narratology

1. Introduction

The Western United States was shaped historically by a series of population growths. New communities emerged and grew as new populations settled throughout the West. Population growth continues to be a significant force shaping not only the American West but regions throughout the world [1]. Rapid population growth in villages, townships, peri-urban, or towns often influences settlement patterns, services available, economic opportunities, and how residents interact with a particular place's social structures, defined here as a community. This change in a community's lived experience is perhaps most pronounced when small rural communities undergo a dramatic increase in population size. Therefore, understanding the historical economic and social forces shaping contemporary communities provides insights into urbanizing areas' future trajectories for policymakers, community planners, and citizens. This paper provides a socio-historical narrative case study of two neighboring communities in the Western US: Park City and Heber Valley, Utah (see Figure 1). Insights from this case study can help other rapidly urbanizing communities better anticipate and address their communities' potential socio-economic changes.

Figure 1. Study Location.

The US Census shows that every state in the Western Census region reported significant increases in population growth since 2000 [2]. Western population growth represents one of the largest demographic trends since the 1980s. For many Western communities, such growth resulted in changes to the lived experience of residents. Additionally, dramatic population growth can change the economic opportunities and perceived satisfaction with communities [3,4]. Generations of social scientists have studied the stages of growth and change communities pass through, debating whether population growth undermines community identity, cohesion, and well-being or if such markers can be maintained if new social connections are rooted in stable population bases [3,5–10]. This research literature focuses on the importance of local communities for individual and collective well-being. Louis Wirth, for example, advocated for the traditional community as a unit of social organization and lamented that the size, density, and heterogeneity of human settlements undermine the efficacy of communities as a mechanism to stabilize and regulate social integration and functioning. With growth in the size, density, and heterogeneity of communities, individuals, Wirth argues, become disconnected and "anomic," thereby undermining individual and collective well-being [8]. Influential scholarship by Kasarda and Janowitz strongly challenged Wirth's presumption and argued, instead, that scale of community is not problematic as long as there is population stability [3]. They conceptualized community as "a complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes" [3] (p. 329). Accordingly, a complex and highly operative social web could continue to be functional-even on large scales-as long as there was a stable population base [5–10]. With this literature in mind, two neighboring Utah "Wasatch Back" population centers in the valleys east of the "Wasatch Front," the Heber Valley and Park City, provide a compelling case study in how population growth in the modern rural West is changing the lived experience of residents and their perceptions of place and identity.

Although first settled in the mid-1800s as an agriculturally based community, the Heber Valley has recently transitioned into a tourist and recreation destination. This is in part due to its proximity to Park City [11,12]. The latter's popularity as a recreational and cultural destination has attracted tourists and new residents to the region, bleeding southward from Summit to Watch County and into the Heber Valley. Due to its proximity to Park City, Salt Lake City, and Provo on the Wasatch Front, Heber hosted cross-country and biathlon events during the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics [13]. These events put the "eyes of the world" on Heber Valley and contributed to rapid population growth [12,14,15]. Other sources make clear that, while the 2002 Olympic Games may have contributed to rapid population growth after the games, the high rate of population growth began about 1993 and has continued well beyond the period of growth associated with the Olympic Games [12,15]. In fact, US census population estimates report that Heber Valley experienced more than a 38% increase in population growth since 2010 [16]. All these forces

have contributed to transforming Heber Valley from a small agricultural community to a globally recognized recreational destination. While these changes brought new services and economic opportunities to the area, they also produced community divisions between "locals" and "outsiders." These perceived divisions in community typically occur over an extended period and can impact how residents identify and talk about their community.

The narratives presented for these two communities illustrate how their shared pasts shape residents' day-to-day lived experience. To address the extended period of time covered in these narratives, the analysis draws on historical scholarship and relevant social science data. Specifically, information presented in this historical case study are drawn from secondary sources-accounts compiled on the basis of primary sources [17] (p. 158) —which were "strategically supplemented by carefully selected primary investigations or reinvestigations" [18] (p. 383) in order to resolve ambiguities, answer novel questions, or supplement the historical record [19–21]. Both types of data sources are central to establishing the sequence of events and range of significant contextual factors that shape these communities' linked developments. Key historical sources were accessed via local public libraries, special collections, and archives, with targeted sampling used to create a narrative while additional social science data extend the narrative to examine the implications of development processes for current circumstances [18–21].

The comparative-historical approach used in this study follows a tradition established early in the history of sociology [22], which examines social formation and transformation, identifying patterns in social structures and processes by comparing sequences of events and their effects in a small number of settings or locales. Additionally, these methods are useful for exploring key contextual factors and contingencies that affect changes over time and examining the similarities and differences between the histories of neighboring communities [23]. Discussing the logic of comparative-historical analysis, sociologist Charles Ragin [24] (p. 1) asserts that comparative-historical research supports a fundamental goal of social science "to interpret significant features of the social world and thereby advance our collective understanding of how existing social arrangements came about and why we live the way we do." Therefore, the comparative-historical approach provides researchers and policymakers with a richer, more meaningful analysis of contemporary policies and community outcomes. Following this approach, we begin by presenting historical data on the early development of these communities and then address recent community changes using relevant social science data. In doing so, our purpose is not to provide a detailed historical analysis of each site but rather to use the comparative-historical approach to show the overall trajectories of these locales, including the differences, similarities, and relationship to each other. This analysis contributes to the understanding of key elements of development within both individual and shared community contexts.

1.1. History of Wasatch and Summit Counties: The Heber Valley and Park City

The Heber Valley is located high in Utah's Wasatch Mountain range in Wasatch County. Evidence suggests indigenous peoples used this area as a summer hunting and fishing ground prior to non-Native white settlement [11,25,26]. The first record of non-Native peoples visiting the area comes from the journals of two Catholic priests, Francisco Atanasio Dominquez, and Silvestre Velez de Escalante, who passed through the southern portion of the county in 1776 [27]. Over the next 80 years, non-Native visitors to the region were primarily hunters and trappers employed by the large fur-trading companies in the Eastern United States [11,25]. Without large-scale encroachment, the Heber Valley remained relatively tranquil until the mid-1800s.

In the 1840s, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon) arrived. Persecuted due to religious belief and political differences, the group was forced to abandon their homes and property in Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, and other eastern locales and flee westward for new locations where they hoped to live and worship in peace [28]. Led by the faith's second prophet, Brigham Young, the first Mormon pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 [28,29]. The new settlers quickly established a

permanent settlement known as Great Salt Lake City [30]. The word 'Great' was deleted for practical purposes on 29 January 1868 [30]. Once the foundations of their city were in place, Brigham Young called upon his followers to colonize the surrounding areas to strengthen their society and to provide new farmland for the thousands of fellow worshipers arriving in the area each month. Naturally, this led to their settling of nearby mountain valleys, including the future locations of Park City and Heber Valley.

In 1857, a group of men working at a sawmill in the upper portions of a canyon south of Salt Lake City decided to cross the top of the Wasatch mountain range into Heber Valley to explore the rumored paradise that "lay nestled in the tops of the Wasatch range" [26]. Upon their return, word quickly spread of a place where the grass grew high, and the water flowed freely. Interest developed in pursuing a permanent settlement in Heber Valley, and it was not long before a group from Provo City established several small ranches in the region. Later, Brigham Young commissioned a road through Provo Canyon to connect Provo City and Heber Valley, provide easier travel, and facilitate access to the mountain valley [26,31].

The first permanent non-Native settlers came soon thereafter. In 1859, a group of 11 men, 3 wagons, and several teams of oxen left Provo to settle permanently in Heber Valley. John Crook, who provides the only known record of that trip, recorded the following in his journal on 30 April 1859:

> [W]e camped at a snowslide in Provo Canyon that night. The next morning we pulled our wagons to pieces and carried them to the top of the snowslide, which was about a quarter of a mile wide. Our May Day excursion consisted of traveling on up the canyon from the snowslide to William Wall's ranch where we camped. The next day we crossed Daniels' Creek on the ice. There were heavy drifts of snow behind the willow bushes. [26] (p. 8)

They planted crops, began building permanent residences, and a fort. Once underway, the men traveled back down the canyon to retrieve their families. Although many of the new settlers returned to Provo to spend the winter months with their friends and relative, a handful of the families remained in the valley [26]. As a result of many favorable reports, the spring of 1860 saw a dramatic increase in families settling in Heber Valley. Since more than 200 settlers were living and working in the valley by summer, a permanent name was needed. John Crook recorded in his journal that nearly all these pioneers were converted by, or had direct contact with, apostle (and counselor to Brigham Young) Heber C. Kimball, while he was a missionary in the British Isles. To honor Kimball's role in their conversion to the LDS religion, in 1860, the new settlement was named Heber City [26,30].

1.2. Park City: The Metamorphosis of a Mining Town

The history of Park City embodies much of what the early days of the American West are famous for, a story that began when a young Mormon pioneer first grazed his cattle in the green-swept meadows a short distance above the Salt Lake Valley. These meadows blossomed into the "[w]est's best-known mining camp" before becoming just another western "ghost town" [32]. Importantly, the story does not end there. Park City experienced its own boom, bust, and recovery cycle and is today one of the world's leading tourism centers. As mentioned previously, Park City is a short distance to the north end of the Heber Valley, but the city is just "25 miles southeast of and 3000 feet above Salt Lake City" [33]. This geographic location affords easy access from Heber to the south and those traveling east from Salt Lake City and west from the eastern United States.

Park City's roots began with the Mormon pioneers. In July 1847, days before the vanguard company of Mormon pioneers entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Parley P. Pratt, a Mormon apostle, noticed an area of beautiful green meadows to the south and east of where the pioneer company was encamped at what became known as Mountain Dell [34]. These meadows stood in sharp contrast to the desert landscape of the valley floor below. Soon after Brigham Young initiated widespread colonizing efforts, he sent Parley Pratt back to scout the possibility of a permanent settlement in what had become Parley's

Park [35]. Following Pratt's favorable report, the first permanent settlement was established by 1848. For several years, Parley's Park was a remote Mormon farming community like many other Mormon communities. One of the first major developments in this area was a sawmill established in 1853, which was a major supplier of timber for the Salt Lake Valley [36].

It is important to note that leaders of the Mormon Church strongly opposed the pursuit of mining by members of the new settlements. The Mormon opposition was sparked by many non-church members passing through the Salt Lake Valley on their way to participate in the California Gold Rush [36]. The leadership of the Church gave two reasons for their opposition, the first illustrated in the following statement by Brigham Young:

> Take courage, brethren . . . Plow your land and sow wheat, plant your potatoes . . . It is our duty to preach the gospel, gather Israel, pay our tithing and build temples. The worst fear that I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and his people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greatest fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth. [29] (p. 12)

In essence, the Church leaders did not consider it advantageous to pursue the vast mineral wealth that, it was believed, lay in the mountains of the Wasatch Range. The second reason was fear of non-Mormons infiltrating the new settlements:

> LDS Church leaders discourage[ed] the exploitation of the precious metals they knew to be in the Wasatch Range. [because they knew] that in so doing, there would surely be an influx of non-Mormons, Gentiles, into the area which would raise again the prospect of a renewed conflict between these two factions. [36] (p. 6)

These two philosophical stances by the Mormon leadership are the primary reasons for Park City's unique atmosphere. Over the years, Park City developed a personality of its own, which contrasted with the conservative religious settlements surrounding it. However, for the next decade, the mountains above the settlement at Parley's Park remained virtually untouched.

1.3. Utah's Gold Rush

The first sign of gold fever in Utah appeared in 1862 when Abraham Lincoln sent Colonel Patrick Edward Conner and 750 California volunteers to the Salt Lake Valley to keep an eye on the growing Mormon settlement, as well as to protect the mail route between Nevada and Wyoming [36,37]. After arriving and establishing Fort Douglas, Colonel Conner encouraged his troops to pass their time prospecting in the local mountain ranges [37]. Over the next several years, Conner and his men made several small discoveries of gold and other precious metals in the Wasatch Range. As news of these strikes spread across the country, many non-Mormon newcomers began arriving. A report in the *New York Herald* 17 July 1862 reads:

> A body of mineral, said to be the greatest ever discovered, has recently been located by two men from Illinois named McHenry and Hughes in Utah's Wasatch Range about seven miles south of Kimball's stage station in Parley's Park. The ledge is 30' wide and numerous assays have shown values in silver from 250 to 1000 ounces per ton and up to 54% lead. Visitors to the ledge estimate there are 25,000 tons of ore in sight with a value of over $5,000,000. [36] (pp. 10–11)

As new wealth-seekers arrived, "[a] few of these prospectors crossed Big Cottonwood Canyon and the divide beyond. In the shadow of Clayton's Peak and Scott Hill, they gazed across Bonanza Flats to the unknown canyons that would yield Park City's treasures" [36] (p. 9). This mountain pass was the same pass crossed years earlier by the men who discovered the Heber Valley. The difference between the two exploration parties was that

the first searched for suitable farmland, and the second searched for land precious with ore. These differing interests caused the first group to descend into the Heber Valley, and the second to push north and enter the canyons above Parley's Park. Not long after, in 1868, the first claim above Parley's Park was filed [38].

By the mid-1870s, the population grew, and several independent mines operated near Parley's Park. On 4 July 1872, members of the mining camp traveled down the canyons to gather with the farmers traveling up from Parley's Park. During the Fourth of July celebration, someone suggested that a vote be taken to decide on a name, and the overwhelming consensus was for Parley's Park City. Because a majority of the local residents were not members of the Mormon faith, the name of the Mormon apostle was dropped, and the official name became Park City [30,31,36]. Over the next 25 years, Park City grew in population. However, Park City often struggled to gain acceptance with surrounding communities. In fact, Park City regularly found itself in direct political opposition to its neighboring communities. This is in part because Park City's population was overwhelmingly non-Mormon.

1.4. The Establishment of Midway

The town of Midway provides a direct link between these broad early histories of the Heber Valley and Park City. Established in 1859 on the west side of the Heber Valley, Midway had a significant Swiss population-still apparent today in local architecture and in activities during the city's annual celebration, "Swiss Days." A series of events cemented Midway's existence while also establishing a significant link between the town of Park City and the Heber Valley. First, high-grade ore was discovered in the Park City mining district in 1864. Although some 15 miles distant and separated by mountain ridges, residents in Heber Valley felt its significance. In 1875, other deposits of high-grade ore were found nearby in the upper elevations of American Fork Canyon. Located adjacent to these mineral rushes, Midway and its surrounding area were soon inundated with prospectors. Their economic networks quickly intertwined. As Park City grew, men from Midway found employment in the mines and while other Midway farmers provided eggs, butter, cheese, vegetables, and other goods to miners and others. "Reports indicate that some of the farmers carried as much as 75 pounds of produce on their backs," records one area history, "following a rough trail over the mountains west of Midway into the canyon to supply the needs of the miners" [26]. The mining boom led to permanent and increasingly large-scale development and settlement of Park City on the other side of the mountain from the Heber Valley, as well as Heber City. The economic opportunities of this new town provided the settlers with many of the goods needed to survive the area's long, harsh winters. In Midway, the historic linkage between Park City mining and Heber Valley agriculture is illuminating. As the decades progressed, the connection continued, and as one community rose or fell, the other did as well.

1.5. Park City Bust and Recovery

As is the case in many mining areas, Park City was prone to cycles of boom and bust. In the early 1890s, US proposals to convert to bimetal monetary policies, which would have been a boom for Park City silver mines, failed. Simultaneously, Park City failed to wrest the Summit County seat from neighboring, and much smaller, Coalville. Economic and political prospects were in decline. The residents of Park City, by far the largest town in the county, considered this choice preferable to paying most of the taxes to a county run by Mormon farmers and sheepherders in the surrounding area. To show their support for this move, residents of Park City raised $10,000 for the construction of a new courthouse within their city limits [36]. Despite strong support, the measure was defeated. The following excerpt from an article published on 9 November 1895 in *The Park City Record* illustrates the frustration among some residents:

> We have often been asked why nothing is done for silver, and reasons have
> crowded thick and fast in explanation, but since the county seat removal was

defeated Tuesday last our vision has been cleared and we can answer it in one sentence—too many mutton-headed fools have the right of franchise. Simple, isn't it? The removal of the county seat to Park City would have had the same effect on this camp and upon the county that the re-monetization of silver would have upon the nation, only in a lesser degree. It would have increased property values, lightened the burdens of the people by reducing taxation, given the county a handsome building free of cost, increased the importance of the town, put money in circulation, saved expense to individuals who will have to attend court, proven a convenience to a majority of the people of the county, and lightened rents by stimulating building, and yet there were enough chumps in Park City to defeat the proposition. Every mother's son of them should be ferreted out and hounded from the town—made to go to Coalville or some other place to earn a living—for they are a menace to the camp's prosperity. It is just such fools that stand between silver and its rights; just such pig-headed idiots as are always found fighting progress; just such shallow-brained asses that are a hindrance and a curse to every community. Just think of it! Park City has 120 such moss-backs within her borders.

For the first 40 years of the 20th century, Park City declined as the price of silver dropped at an alarming rate. The Great Depression saw the closure of many mines, and most were closed by the 1950s when Park City became a "ghost town" [37]. Park City reached its lowest point during this era when the county published an expensive article in the *Salt Lake Tribune* that did not mention Park City or show it on the map. On the other hand, a relatively positive development during this era came in the early 1940s when Park City became a major supplier of strategic metals for the war effort. A small number of military recruits were even stationed in Park City to work the mines.

More significant developments came in the 1960s, when local citizens gathered to discuss the possibility of tourism and recreational development [32]. Almost 100 years after the first official mining claim in the mountains of Parley's Park, the "second bonanza" began. This idea was largely influenced by the increasing number of Utah residents who sought to escape the heat and bustle of the city and would make the short drive to visit the streets of the once-great western town of Park City [32]. These decisions made Park City one of the world's leading winter and summer recreation spots for years to come, with the creation of three world-class resorts. Since the beginning of this recovery, Park City has continued to grow. Today Park City's permanent population exceeds 8300, and a large proportion of the adult population (35.2%) has a university degree [16]. Park City is recognized as a wonderful place to live, as shown by the fact that more than half of the current population report that they lived in another section of the United States prior to 2000 [16].

An analysis of current employment trends in Park City also shows that the area has experienced vast changes since its mining days. Today, only 0.4% of the local industry falls under the heading of *agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining,* while the largest industrial employment falls under the heading of *arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services.* In 2017, the median household income in Park City was more than $105,000, while the median income for the state of Utah is $68,358, and the national average is $61,320 [16]. Information on housing values is also indicative of Park City's turnaround. During the time of the Olympics, the median value for owner-occupied units in Park City was $450,900, while in 2017, the median home value was nearly four times the national average at $793,000 [16]. These data indicate that Park City has navigated the course from a rural agricultural community to booming mining town, then to a ghost town, and finally reestablished itself as one of the "hottest" spots to live in the country.

1.6. The Heber Valley: Twentieth Century Growth

The linkage between 20th and 21st-century economic growth in Park City had significant impacts on the neighboring Heber Valley. Throughout the latter half of the 20th

century, Wasatch County (which includes Heber Valley, Heber City, and Midway) grew slowly but steadily. In 1950, the county population numbered a little more than 5500. Ten years later, it had dropped to 5300. By 1970, this small rural county regained its 1960s population and by 1980 grew to 8523. The population surpassed 10,000 only in 1990, and toward the end of the century almost reached 13,000 [16]. However, while it had taken the county roughly seven years from 1990 to 1997 to increase its population by 3000, in the three years, 1997 to 2000, it increased by almost 2000; and by 2003, the population had surpassed 17,500. This trend of rapid population growth continued, with the Heber Valley exceeding a population of 20,000 in 2010, and then 30,000 in 2016. In 2018, the valley was one of the faster-growing areas in the West with a total population of 32,106 [16].

Another way to measure and observe the rapid population growth in Wasatch County is in the increase in the number of housing units. In 1980, there were 2595, and by 1990 3074. These numbers are indicative of steady growth that occurred throughout the twentieth century. However, by 2002, there were 7167 housing units in the county [16]. This indicates that although the county had experienced dramatic changes in population growth even as it was still known, anecdotally, as a small rural locale where many "work the land, ride horses, bale hay, do chores, and sneak off to the Provo River for a little fishing when nobody's looking" [39]. This small farming-town feel in 2002 was reflected in the median household income ($49,612), and the median home value was $185,300 [16]. At the time, both were slightly higher than the national average but still lower than neighboring Park City.

Rapid economic and demographic growth continued and even accelerated after the Winter Olympics, bringing about changes in the economic profile of Park City and Heber Valley. When compared to national averages, these areas now report considerably higher median incomes and home values. By 2017, the median household income of Wasatch County was $74,552, and the median home value was $357,530. In comparison, the median household income in Park City was almost $105,000, with a median home value of $793,000. Even during the recent period of rapid growth in Wasatch County, Park City continued to report higher home values. These higher neighboring home prices also contribute to escalating property values in Heber Valley.

Despite these rapid changes, some aspects of the Heber Valley community closely resemble the first farming families who gathered to establish a permanent Mormon settlement. In Midway, the closeness illustrated by its founders is still apparent in this tight-knit community. Even with the recent population growth, many residents of Heber Valley perceive that their community remains a small and unified community. However, being on the world stage transformed it into something more akin to its neighbor across the mountain—Park City.

1.7. Selecting the Heber Valley as an Olympic Site: The Park City—Heber Interplay

The 2002 Winter Olympic provides the most striking example of Park City's influence on Heber Valley. While not a recognized nationally tourist region like Park City, the Heber Valley has hosted popular recreation activities. Wasatch County has three major golf courses, two large reservoirs popular for water sports and fishing, and large terrain for winter sports enthusiasts who come to snowmobile and ski. This existing recreation base made it a natural selection to hose the cross-country and biathlon venues for the 2002 Winter Olympics. Not only was it already popular with winter sports fans, but it was also a short drive from the major downhill venues in Park City. It was also located halfway between Park City's Olympic venues and the Hockey and other events downcanyon in Provo. The natural location was bolstered by existing state and local organizations. In an article in *The Wasatch Wave* in 1998, the editor asserted that the Soldier Hollow site was ideal because it was located on land that was already owned by the state, and the fact that the land was already incorporated within the Utah State Park organization yielded considerable savings for the state. Compared to what it could have cost to purchase land

and construct roads, the cost for sewer and water services for Midway and Wasatch County was minimal [40].

As the Olympic Games approached, the residents banded together in preparation for the event, as Utah journalist Lee Benson observed:

> The sense of community is keen, which no doubt explains the fervor with which the residents ... are preparing for their chance to host the world. It is lost on few around here that in 17 days in February, probably more visitors will see the Heber Valley than in all its recorded history. [40]

Heber Valley residents were in for a shock, and the transition from a quiet valley to booming demographic growth provides the key case study for examining the residents' lived experience. As before, events centered in Park City had spillover effects in Heber Valley. For example, the significant population growth of Park City started in the 1970s and continued in the build-up to the 2002 Winter Olympics with more than a 60% increase in population between 1990 and 2000. In contrast, the primary population growth in Wasatch County occurred after the growth in Park City, with the population more than doubling between 2000 and 2017 (see Figures 2 and 3).
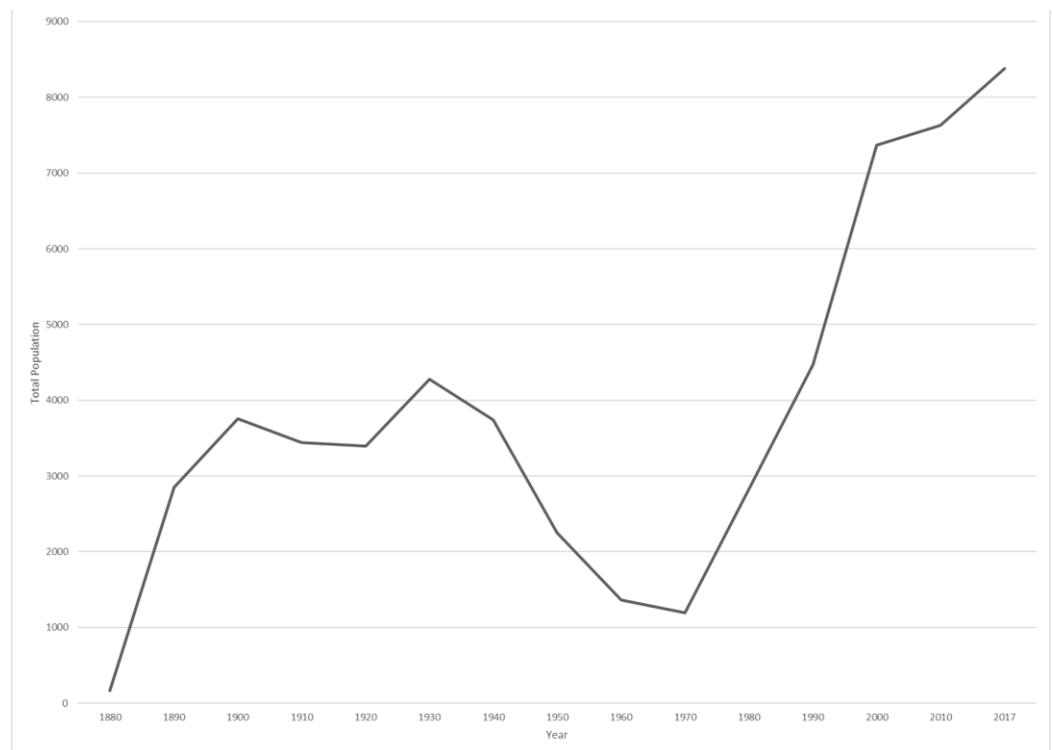
Figure 2. Historical population growth in park city.
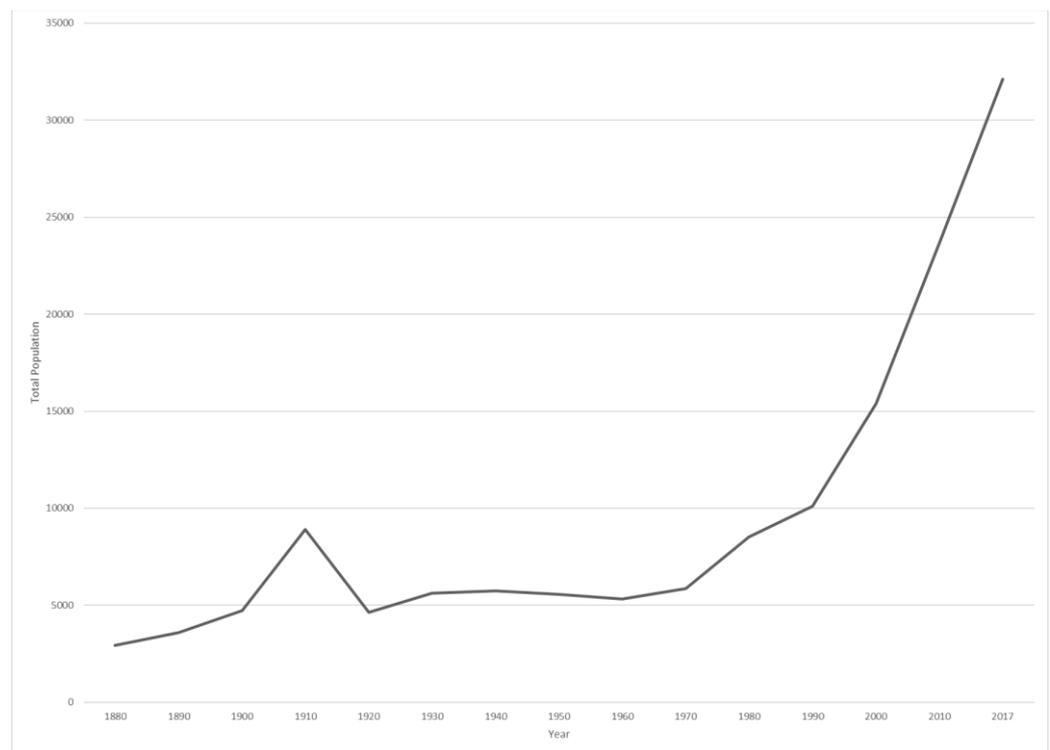
Figure 3. Historical population growth in Wasatch County.

2. Current and Future Challenges Associated with Linked Communities

The link between the two communities has not come without challenges and has not always been symbiotic. Some residents in Wasatch County expressing a desire to maintain a distinct, if not separate, identity. For example, during the 2002 Winter Olympics one resident commented in the local newspaper:

> We know we are not Salt Lake, we know we are not Park City, and Provo and Ogden are always letting us know we are not them. What we intend to do is be ourselves. [40]

Even the post-Olympics population and economic growth experienced in Wasatch County are often viewed through the lens of an inequitable relationship. For many Wasatch County residents, the attention from the Olympics was not desired. They valued living in a small agricultural-based community. Wasatch County Community Surveys were conducted at several time points from 1998 to 2018. Survey data collection efforts were undertaken in part by the Brigham Young University Survey Research Center and in part by the Brigham Young University Community Studies Lab. Analyses of residents' responses indicate that the critical factors for decisions about living in Wasatch County were the beautiful location and its small-town feel. Additional data on community resident opinions were obtained a few months before each community survey from the local Wasatch Wave newspaper. A content analysis of information on the editorial page, comments by the editor, and residents' letters to the editor identified several relevant themes: Community sentiment, Olympics, overall development, and growing pains [41]. Of particular interest are comments discussing the feeling of community across the 20-year period. Comments reveal an appreciation of the small town as well as concerns about the impact of the Olympics and population and economic growth. For example, the community feeling residents perceived in the late 1990s was reflected in an editorial comment about local traditions: "This Christmas ballet has become an exceptional tradition in our small town" [42]. Other aspects of community are exemplified by a letter to the editor, which issued a "call to anyone in the valley who has benefited from the prosperous building economy to get involved and donate your skills and/or materials . . . to help those in our community who

are in need" [43]. On the other hand, evidence of perceived changes in community are reflected in reminders to local residents in a 2006 editorial about snow etiquette: "we [all] need to be diligent in keeping our sidewalks clear of snow. It's not only courteous to our neighbors, it's the law. One of the worst things we've seen so far this season is homeowners failing to shovel their sidewalks driving children into the streets to walk to school" [44].

Comments about the Olympics indicate more sharply the shift in community feelings that local residents anticipated would result from hosting Olympic events in the local area. For example, a comment in a 2001 editorial states, "No matter how we experience this force *d'major*, called the Olympics, we will never be the same after it sweeps us into the whirlwind of games, celebrations, and comraderies" [45]. Following the Olympics, residents' comments reflected a continuing desire for both community *and* development. For example, one resident commented, "I feel having the market in the central part of the city is a great idea, because it becomes more of a 'gathering place' for the community" [46]. A resident's comment in 2007 also indicated support for change: "I love it here, but perhaps there are some areas where change might be healthy" [47]. In contrast, other residents' comments reflect concerns about the potential negative impacts of additional economic growth. For example, a comment in 2000 responded to a proposal for building an asphalt plant: "Heber already has an air pollution problem, and an asphalt plant can only make it worse. That's why the asphalt plant must be stopped-it can only make a bad situation worse" [48].

Community and an individual sense of belonging was also a central theme for residents addressing the economic development of Heber Valley. In a 2003 editorial comment, the local paper suggests the need to recognize the complexity of economic development: "We cannot 'plan' or 'legislate' Midway into commercial prosperity" [49]. Additionally, an editorial comment in 2002 suggests support for development of a commercial center in Midway which was believed to promote community: "'Cha-ching'. The sound of cash registers ringing up sales translates into a healthy community" [50]. In a 2007 letter to the editor, a Heber resident addressed the continuing divisions in local opinions about development: "Why all the fear? Fear freezes the mind, imagination, and creativity. If Heber City had these big box stores, whoever they are, there would be folks driving from all over the area to shop in Heber City" [51].

Another local source provides additional evidence of the complexities and potential problems associated with rapid growth. Specifically, it addresses the impact on housing prices of the influx of wealthier home buyers into Heber Valley because of its natural beauty, recreation opportunities and rural farm feel. A 2019 story by KUER (local National Public Radio affiliate) journalist, Nate Hegyi, reveals that recent population growth has resulted in skyrocketing prices, pushing out local residents, such as teachers and police officers, who can no longer afford to rent or buy a home in the town [52]. Additionally, local farms that were a central part of the community landscape and an attraction for some new residents, are being replaced by construction sites. A local retired couple who bought a second home in Heber City in 2015, for example, commented on their reason for moving to Heber Valley, "Best groomed skiing in all of America." However, they also acknowledged the role of recent in-migrants in the housing problem, stating: "Absolutely, we are part of the problem."

The context for understanding the impacts of growth in rural recreation areas such as Heber Valley is provided by a 2019 report by Headwaters Economics. Examining in-migration into areas like Heber Valley, the report shows that rural recreation counties grew faster than other rural and urbanized counties between 2010 and 2016. Turning to the impacts of this growth, the report reveals that in-migrants brought higher household incomes, which contributed to higher earnings per job in recreation counties. However, the rapid growth of these rural recreation counties also required trade-offs. These include such challenges as cost of living increases for current residents, urban sprawl, high infrastructure costs, and more people living in fire-prone areas. The report asserts that, "In some places, the rise in cost of living has outstripped the benefits from growing income." Despite the

potential for substantial benefits from growth and development in rural recreation counties, the report concludes with a word of warning for counties considering an investment in recreation as an economic development strategy:

Promoting a town's amenities without anticipating population growth-and its associated housing and infrastructure needs-can reduce the quality of life for current residents [53].

Community survey data for Heber Valley support the overall patterns included in the 2019 national report. They show that population growth and its impact on the community have negatively affected those who valued the small-town feel of Wasatch County. Figure 4 shows longitudinal data for the survey questions, "How well do you feel you fit in your community?" and "How satisfied are you with your community?" Respondents were asked to report their fit and satisfaction with their community on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not very well/much and 5 means very well/much. The initial trend of both measures shows an increase in the average value provided by survey respondents. However, after 2010, the average value declines in both fit and satisfaction. This suggests that the broader changes in population growth and their community have not been positive for Wasatch County residents.
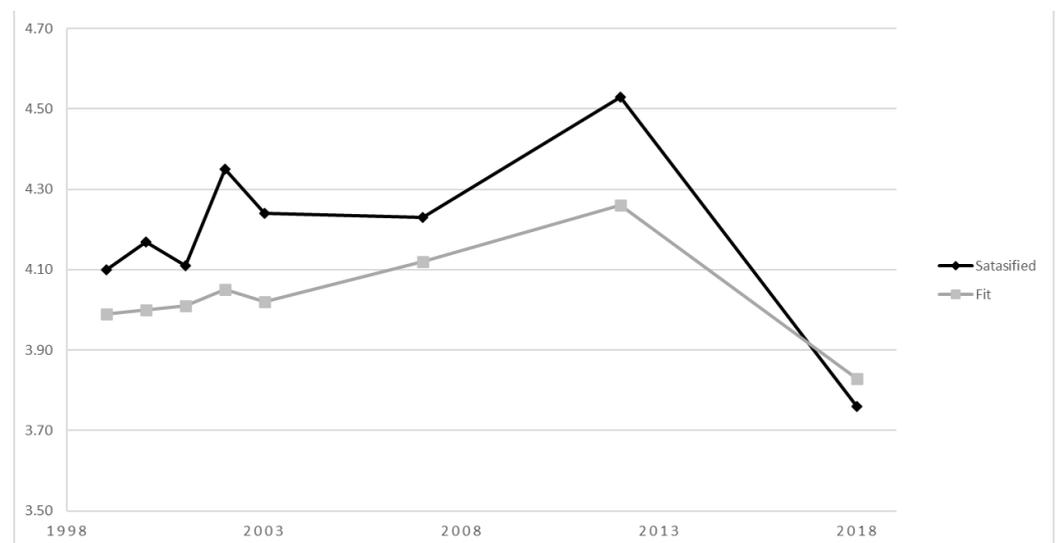
Figure 4. How Well Respondents Fit in and are Satisfies with Their Community, 1999–2018.

This decline can be associated with the population growth in both Park City and Wasatch County. For example, many respondents in the 2018 Wasatch County Community Study Survey expressed their concern with the overdevelopment and growth of their community. Furthermore, this growth is seen by many as linked to Park City. With the average home price in Park City higher than $700K, people wanting to move to Park City are looking for cheaper alternatives. As a result, the perceived association of population spillover from Park City into Wasatch County has become a substantial concern for many Wasatch County residents. For example, when asked about the problems facing their community, one respondent of the 2018 Wasatch County Community Survey said:

The wealth gap between people here. Lots of people have their second homes here or really nice first homes on the outsides of the valley and there are low-income people who live toward the center of the valley, that work in Park City but can't afford to live in Park City. Seems like there is a very small middle class here in Heber. Either you're poor or wealthy.

3. Conclusions

Heber Valley and Park City are historically linked. Today these communities face challenges associated with increasing populations and rising home prices. As Park City

continues to embrace and market itself as an international cultural and vacation destination, Wasatch County grapples with how to retain its small-town agricultural feel while being one of the fastest-growing areas in the United States. The community-level data presented indicate that Wasatch County residents fear the possible loss of community that comes with such growth, as suggested by Kasarda and Janowitz's argument. Although these two communities can be seen to be on different paths, their shared histories will continue to link and influence these Western communities. That said, the analysis presented above is, by methodological design, retrospective and inherently tied to post-hoc explanations. To that end, additional research is needed to understand how this particular set of historical events influence contemporarily lived experiences. The narrative presented above can, therefore, guide future researchers in their methodological conceptualization and operationalization. Moreover, Heber Valley and Park City are not alone in having shared histories and futures. Across the US and the world, rural–urban interfaces abound. Many towns, villages, or peri-urban areas might look to their shared pasts with neighboring communities as a way to chart out their continued shared futures-strategizing how to balance and develop their community heritage and identity.

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