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## Re-establishing Community Boundaries in Downeast Maine: Understanding the Roles of Ethnicity, Tenure of Residence, Economic & Environmental Conditions

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# **Re-establishing Community Boundaries in Downeast Maine: Understanding the Roles of Ethnicity, Tenure of Residence, Economic & Environmental Conditions**

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## **Abstract**

Boundary-marking determines not only a community's geographic bounds but also determines who is a member of a community and who is not. This delineation has important implications for access to resources and social stratification. This paper seeks to describe how community boundaries in Washington County, Maine may be contested along lines of ethnicity and immigrant status (both domestic and international) and explores the role of environmental issues and the current economic climate in provoking changes in community boundaries. This paper argues that community membership is correlated not only with tenure of residence but is also a function of ethnicity and class. Data from the 2009 Community and Environment in Rural America (CERA) telephone survey are used to supplement findings from state and federal statistics and contemporary news reports.

Keywords: community boundaries, ethnicity, immigrant status, economic climate, environmental conditions

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## **1.0 Introduction**

A number of rural studies in the last twenty years have examined how newcomers to small towns shape not only the demographic make-up of a community (Domina, 2006; Garansky, 2002) but also the importance placed on various social issues (Jones, Fly, Talley, & Cordell, 2003) and the demand for public resources (Von Reichert, 2006). While changing migration patterns may certainly contribute to social change, I argue in this paper that what determines a community's boundaries between established residents and outsiders also includes ethnicity and class within the larger context of the economic climate and environmental resources at stake.

By operationalizing the term newcomer strictly in terms of length of tenure (most studies use a somewhat arbitrary ten-year cut to demarcate the new from the old) (for a summary of this literature see, Henly & Hamilton, 2009), previous research ignores the extent to which so-called newcomers are able to integrate into their communities while those who have resided longer but who differ with respect to ethnicity or class are excluded. This paper attempts to bridge demographic research on migration and community studies within the context of rural America (Brown, 2002) as a way to understand the ways in which individuals either are or are not integrated into the community. The current study takes a single rural region in coastal Maine (Washington County) and describes how its demographics have changed within the context of changing environmental policy and the recent economic recession. Telephone survey data of a random sample of over 1500 residents in the region also demonstrate the saliency of the economy and the environment to individuals in the region.

The focus on a single rural area allows the reader to consider how the interplay between changing demographics and specific economic contexts create community boundaries. The processes that take place within this specific community, I argue, are exemplary of the ways in which community boundaries are drawn throughout rural America.

Lamont and Molnar (2002) use the term “symbolic boundaries” to explain the ways in which individuals, organizations, or even communities define who is a group member and who is not. This concept is important because group membership often determines access to resources. The authors suggest that incorporating this lens from cultural sociology onto a study of social stratification may offer advances to current approaches of class analysis.

Occupations are often delineated along racial lines and this is particularly true for jobs in agriculture (Taylor & Martin, 1997). But as job opportunities become scarce in the face of recession and environmental restrictions, I expect to find that racial divisions become more salient in the community, regardless of length of tenure. News reports provide evidence of ethnic tensions while survey data measuring community cohesion, important social issues, and relative importance placed on jobs versus environmental conservation demonstrate how Washington County differs from its more affluent, tourism industry-based neighbor to the south.

This paper seeks to understand the ways in which one community in Maine renegotiates its boundaries as economic conditions worsen, jobs become scarce, and choosing between preserving natural resources and using them for potential job growth becomes an issue. This paper asks: How are community boundaries being re-established in Washington County, Maine? What is the role of ethnicity? What is the role of the natural environment in shaping the economy, determining what jobs are available to each group and in influencing public opinion?

## **2.0 Background**

Determining a community’s boundaries depends on one’s definition of community. Social scientists have developed a wide range of approaches to defining this concept, from “traditional” communities that differ from mass, institutionalized society; to a Durkheimian approach of defining community along moral lines; to purely symbolic conceptualizations where a community is defined by individual moments or by participation in specific events (Delanty, 2003; Driskell & Lyon, 2002; Lamont et al., 2002).

By examining how other community studies have uncovered definitions of community, we can understand how community boundaries are negotiated and contested. For instance, in his 2007 study, Corbett finds that the citizens of Digby Neck, Nova Scotia are particularly attached to their communities in a way that is relatively easy to define. Corbett adopts the concept of “socio-spatial identities” to explain how the notion of individual identity is often tied to place and how this shapes one’s decisions about whether to migrate for other job opportunities. In this sense, there are clear boundaries between Digby Neckers and everyone else. However, later in his work, Corbett identifies ways in which locals who want work outside of the declining fishing industry remain part of the community. By expanding the boundaries of Digby Neck to include the surrounding geographic area, native Digby Neckers are able to maintain familial ties and community commitments without living within the geographic boundaries of the towns. This

demonstrates that physical location does not assure community membership: Digby Neckers can live geographically apart yet remain part of their home community *and* residents may live physically proximal yet not necessarily be considered part of the same community.

Similar to this study, I argue that previous research on community-level factors (such as the local economic climate and the way that new housing is physically integrated) and individual-level factors (length of tenure, ethnicity, and class status) are relevant to understanding how in-group and out-group formations are determined in various community contexts.

### ***2.1 How Tenure of Residence Matters***

Because the community under study for this paper consists largely of those born and bred in the region, tenure of residence is an important issue in determining in- and out-groups. The impact on community, politics, and infrastructure needs will vary depending on who the newcomers are and what the town was like to begin with (Glasgow & Brown, 2006; Smith & Krannich, 2000). Among fast-growing amenity regions, ideological boundaries are often not between newcomers and oldtimers as much as they were between who is employed in the tourism industry and who is not (Smith et al., 2000). The context of the economy is an important moderating factor here, as addressed specifically below.

With a substantial shift in the population, communities may experience changing values and priorities. Although previous research suggests that any claim of a “culture clash” between recent migrants and long-standing residents is largely alarmist journalism (Bach, 1993; Smith et al., 2000) and that social interaction does not decline with rural population growth and increased heterogeneity (Greider & Kannich, 1985), there still may be real differences in how newcomers impact their new communities. If newcomers differ with respect to class, race, or ethnicity, then distinctions between newer and older residents may be especially apparent.

For many rural communities that rely predominately on a single industry for economic support, attempts to change modes of decision-making can cause stress in a community. For instance, in the Maine island community of Matinicus, turf wars between long-established, multi-generational lobstermen and relative newcomers have resulted in property damage and violence (Russell, 2009). The discourse of the locals divided newcomers from others mainly because newcomers tend not to contribute to the community by participating in local government or volunteering, as established families do. Even though the law technically allows newcomers to fish the waters, the traditional method of deciding who has access to a given area is determined by consensus of the island lobstermen.

But who is considered a newcomer? Qualitative community studies have noted that, in some rural communities, one is viewed by peers as being an outsider if his parents did not grow up in town (Elias & Scotson, 1994; Salamon, 2007). This type of research has the benefit of considering how locals define newcomers and using this to inform their analysis. Such studies have, for instance, defined newcomers as those who do not have multi-generational ties (Salamon, 2007), while others use geographic boundaries that demarcate new housing development and, therefore, relatively new residency (Elias et al., 1994). However, defining “newcomer” in such an indiscriminate manner ignores the fact that someone who has spent most of his life in the area has had considerably more opportunity to

become integrated when compared to someone who just moved to town in the last year, for example.

Past quantitative research on this topic has employed a variety of definitions (Henly et al., 2009). Some use specific years corresponding with population surges to determine cutpoints for who is a newcomer (Robertson, 2002; Smith et al., 2000). This method is problematic though, as survey respondents who moved to the state as children prior to the cutpoint will be considered newcomers although they may have spent most of their formative years there. Several studies have defined newcomers as those arriving in the last five years (Potter & Cantarero, 2006; Smith et al., 2000). However, the majority of work in this area uses ten years as the cut-off between newcomers and oldtimers (e.g., Graber, 1974; Hunter, Boardman, & Saint Onge, 2005; Smith & Sharp, 2005). Graber (1974) says this “assure[s] a sufficiently long acquaintance with the town to facilitate informed participation in the local political scene” (p. 508).

While it may be true that ten years should allow an immigrant to find opportunities for civic engagement in his new hometown, such a cut-off point ignores the importance of community-specific context such as the proportion of residents born in the region. It also denies the role that race and ethnicity as well as markers of class play in determining access to the political scene.

## ***2.2 How Physical Space Matters***

New migrants often find themselves physically distant from more established town residents because of the use of physical space in the community. Salamon (2007) shows how newcomers are limited in their ability to interact with established residents. Much like Jane Jacobs’ description (1994) of the importance of an urban landscape that fosters interaction, Salamon praises the traditional Illinois street grid system in creating an environment under which small town *Gemeinschaft* is possible: houses are close together and face the street, creating eyes on the road, and encouraging monitoring of youth. However, new development is often in contrast to this. Middle and upper class city dwellers want large yards surrounded by nature (though in a neat, manicured way). They do not want to have to see a neighbor’s house and they would rather have privacy than have people reporting on the whereabouts of their children. Such changes to the physical landscape that results from development aimed at attracting affluent newcomers both contributes to and is a symbol of the culture clash between new and established residents. Oldtimers know everyone; newcomers want privacy. Oldtimers are engaged in their communities; newcomers live in a different part of town and, therefore, lead parallel social lives. It is only in communities where the traditional Midwestern grid is preserved and newcomers move in to existing homes where newcomers are able to effectively integrate socially.

In addition, in some rural regions that rely on a substantial seasonal labor force (such as the area under study in this paper), those coming to fill these jobs may be sequestered into company housing, even if they intend to remain in the region permanently (Mano en Mano, 2009).

## ***2.3 How Ethnicity Matters***

Ethnicity is particularly relevant to understanding community boundaries because it can serve as an obvious physical, cultural, and linguistic marker differentiating

groups. The most notable demographic shift in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is the growth of the Hispanic population in the United States. Rural agricultural areas have been particularly affected by this change (Allensworth & Rochin, 1998; Taylor et al., 1997). As the ethnic composition of a rural community changes, so too may expectations of what is expected from residents.

Chavez (2005) demonstrates how the community participation of Mexicans in a California town was overlooked because their community activities did not fit the expectations of white residents. In some instances, community involvement of Mexicans was seen as threatening to traditional agrarian values. In this example, an analysis that simply enumerated community activities did not show a difference in community involvement between Mexicans and whites. Because the contributions of Mexicans are not viewed by the dominant group in a manner that fosters inclusiveness and community membership, simple quantitative analysis ignores this important finding.

Dunn (2003) notes that the physical spaces that ethnic minorities build and inhabit are not apolitical, as can be observed from media reports of Muslims and other ethnic minorities in Australia. Dunn's research also notes that the way in which local media portray ethnic minorities can have serious consequences with respect to minorities' abilities to effectively integrate into the role of full citizens. These conclusions could appropriately be applied to rural American community studies as well.

#### ***2.4 How Class Matters***

Class status also matters, but cannot easily be disentangled from ethnicity, particularly in agricultural communities where the division of labor is almost strictly along ethnic lines. In addition, as rural areas divide ethnically, they also divide with respect to economic resources. Rural areas with the highest concentrations of Latinos also have the highest levels of educational, employment, and economic disadvantage (Allensworth et al., 1998). In this respect, talking about differences due to ethnicity also implies a discussion about class differences.

Previous research has also noted the ways in which class serves to effectively segregate newcomers from others by examining how non-compliance with local norms ostracizes newcomers. This distinction seems somewhat minor, but when oldtimers establish a set of norms that dictate behavior on everything from whom to invite into one's home to who is considered an appropriate prospective spouse (e.g., in Elias et al., 1994), then even minor violations of these norms can lead to a bad association placed on all newcomers. In Elias et al.'s study (1994) of working class newcomers to an English community in the 1950's, interviews indicated that even newcomers viewed their neighborhood as inferior when compared to the more established neighborhood. Newcomers were substantially less likely to report that they liked their neighborhood. This view of the new neighborhood as a bad area created a cycle of inferiority, particularly among teenagers. Young people in particular often found themselves intentionally excluded from social activities, which led them to engage in intentionally deviant behavior as retaliation, thus reinforcing the bad reputation of newcomers. This study offers a thorough look into the ways in which members of a community determine one another's position in the local social hierarchy in subtle ways (i.e., through gossip and slander, generalizations, and presumed conformity with local standards).

Established members of a community may also purposefully exclude newcomers

because of newcomers' real or perceived impact on local culture. Daskalos (2007) showed a community of surfers who were protective of their style of life because they viewed newcomers as gentrifying their surfing town. They sought to prohibit access to newcomers, when possible. Although Daskalos' analysis is not on a physical (geographic) community, the sentiment observed could apply to small towns experiencing similar changes, where locals may feel that traditional ways of life may be changing due to an influx of newcomers.

### ***2.5 How Economic Context Matters***

In addition to characteristics of individuals, it is important to consider the role of structural factors – most notably today the economic recession. As Bach (1993) argues:

Research often overstates the extent to which sources of change and lack of advancement are due to characteristics of immigrant groups and differences between them, rather than to broad political and economic restructuring that affects all groups...General conditions in local communities, whether related to housing, jobs, schools, crime, or recreational facilities, constrain not only how immigrants are able to adapt to their host community but also how communities respond to newcomers. (p.157)

As economic conditions worsened throughout the country in the late 2000's, unemployment rose and job scarcity resulted in many regions. When job loss occurs in tandem with demographic change, it is easy to see how community members may look to changes in the demographic composition to explain changes in the economy. Most notably, Hispanic immigrants are often blamed for taking up jobs that U.S. citizens need (Bach, 1993). This framework is also relevant to the region under study in this paper.

## **3.0 Methodology**

This paper draws from a variety of sources, including state and federal census, housing, and labor statistics, local newspaper reports, and primary data collection. Statistics on employment, housing, and demographics characterize the changing labor market and demographic composition of the community. News reports demonstrate the social issues surrounding these issues that are important to residents in the area, or at least important to those residents who are integrated enough to have a voice in the local media. In addition, telephone surveys allow for a representative analysis of the issues important to local residents.

### ***3.1 Survey Analysis***

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center administered telephone surveys with 1,518 randomly chosen adults in Washington and Hancock Counties in Maine during the month of August 2009. This survey was part of the larger Community and Environment in Rural America (CERA) survey which selects rural counties across the country for close examination of issues related to respondents' community sentiments, environmental concerns, and similar issues (Hamilton et al., 2008). Interviews lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Demographic profiles of those responding are similar to county-level population profiles compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, though probability weights are assigned to make minor adjustments to account for sampling

design when needed and have been applied to all analyses in this paper.

The CERA survey includes several measures of community sentiment, opinions of residents on how economic concerns compare to environmental concerns, and reports of the importance of various social issues. Summary statistics of these measures comparing Washington County to Hancock County, Maine are provided to demonstrate how the different ethnic compositions and economic conditions may contribute to differences in these measures, despite geographic proximity.

While results of Washington County, Maine are discussed at length, when available I also present comparable data for adjacent Hancock County for reference. While both counties lie along the coast (see Figure 1) and derive a great deal of their economic base from natural-resource based industries such as fishing, lobstering, and forestry, they vary in many other respects. Hancock County is home to Bar Harbor and neighboring coastal towns which attract a large number of tourists and second home buyers. Hancock is smaller geographically but has a larger population. Those residing in Hancock are substantially less likely to be unemployed or in poverty and have higher education and incomes than those in Washington County. Population has declined 4.1% in Washington County since the 2000 Decennial Census, while Hancock has experienced a modest growth of 2.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; see Table 1). Although overall there is population loss in Washington County, this masks the in- and out-migration taking place. Washington County is experiencing a substantial growth in their Hispanic population at the same time they are losing established white residents. This makes it a useful case study for considering how issues of ethnicity, class, and other issues that arose in the literature, are relevant for understanding how community membership boundaries are delineated. The small town of Milbridge in Washington County is noted in Figure 1, as data from this specific community is provided for a richer community-level context, when available.



Figure 1. Location of Washington and Hancock Counties



Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Washington County and Neighboring Hancock County*

	Washington County	Hancock County
Population size	32,499	53,137
Unemployment rate (2009)	10.4%	6.8%
Population growth (2000-09)	-4.1%	+2.5%
Population density	13 ppl/sq mi	35 ppl/sq mi
% Grad H.S.	84.2%	91.3%
% Grad College	18.6%	28.7%
Median hh income (2007)	\$33,171	\$45,822
Poverty rate (2007)	19.7%	9.8%
Median home price (2008)	\$107,200	\$180,000

*Data Sources.* U.S. Census Bureau (2010; 2000); Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009); Maine Housing Authority (n.d.)

#### 4.0 Findings

According to the data collected from the CERA survey, the residents of Washington and Hancock counties have a different perspective on what social issues are important (see Table 2). Almost two-thirds (64%) of Washington County residents see population decline as a problem, while only 37% of those in Hancock view this as an issue. Poverty is an issue for over half of those surveyed (58.7%) in Washington, while issues related to affordable housing are more severe in the affluent communities in Hancock. All of these findings are consistent with county-level census and housing data displayed in Table 1.

As mentioned, the ethnic composition of Washington County has also shifted substantially in the last thirty years (see Table 3). The Hispanic population has grown more than five-fold (560%) during this period of time. This is comparatively large growth compared to the overall U.S. growth in the Hispanic population (211%) and particularly regionally when compared to neighboring Hancock County (174%). It is important to note that Washington County does have a small total population (between 32,600 and 35,500 during these time periods), so the total number of Hispanics is still relatively small.

Table 2. *What are the major social issues to these communities?*

The following is a problem in my community:	Washington County	Hancock County
Population declining	63.6%	36.5%
Poverty or homelessness	58.7%	45.9%
Declining property values	45.9%	30.6%
Lack of affordable housing	45.6%	65.5%
Rapid development, growth, sprawl	10.0%	29.7%

*Data Source.* CERA 2009 Downeast Maine Survey (Hamilton et al., 2008). Note: All differences between counties are statistically significant at alpha=0.05 for each row.

Why would a change in the demographic composition have implications for determining community cohesion and who is considered an outsider? Much like Digby Neck, Nova Scotia (Corbett, 2007), Downeast Maine is largely a community of natives. Over two-thirds of Washington County residents (67.8%) have lived in that county their entire lives and 61.4% of Hancock residents have (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Newcomers may already be viewed as outsiders and with an obvious identifying characteristic such as skin color or language differences, this may add to the extent to which differences are observed. While there are many similarities between Hancock and Washington counties, Washington’s faster-growing Hispanic population, along with its less prosperous economy, result in important differences between these two communities.

Table 3. *Percentage change in Hispanic Population by decade, 1980-2008*<sup>†</sup>

Time Period	Washington County	Hancock County	United States
1980-1990	115.8%	55.2%	50.0%
1980-2000	297.4%	78.1%	141.3%
1980-2008	560.5%	174.3%	211.1%
<i>Total Hispanic Population, 2008</i>	487	502	45,432,158
<i>Total Population, 2008</i>	32,644	53,183	301,237,703
<i>Percent Hispanic, 2008</i>	1.49%	0.94%	15.08%

*Data Source.* U.S. Census Bureau (2010, 2000, 1990, 1980)

Recent measures of economic conditions are particularly relevant given the current nation-wide recession. The recession’s impact has been uneven across the country and even within the state of Maine. In October 2009 (the time at which the survey data were collected), the unemployment rate was 10.2% for the nation and at 8.2% for Maine. Despite having similar economic bases and being close geographically, Hancock County’s 2009 unemployment rate was just 6.8% while Washington County’s was 10.4% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

With changes in the economy come changes in the way in which jobs on U.S. soil are viewed. During recession, immigrants are seen as displacing U.S. workers (Bach, 1993). Such issues are particularly relevant in Milbridge and Washington County more generally. Many jobs are seasonal, causing employment rates to vary considerably throughout the year (see Figure 2).

<sup>†</sup> Data are displayed through the end of 2008 to coincide with survey data collection field period.

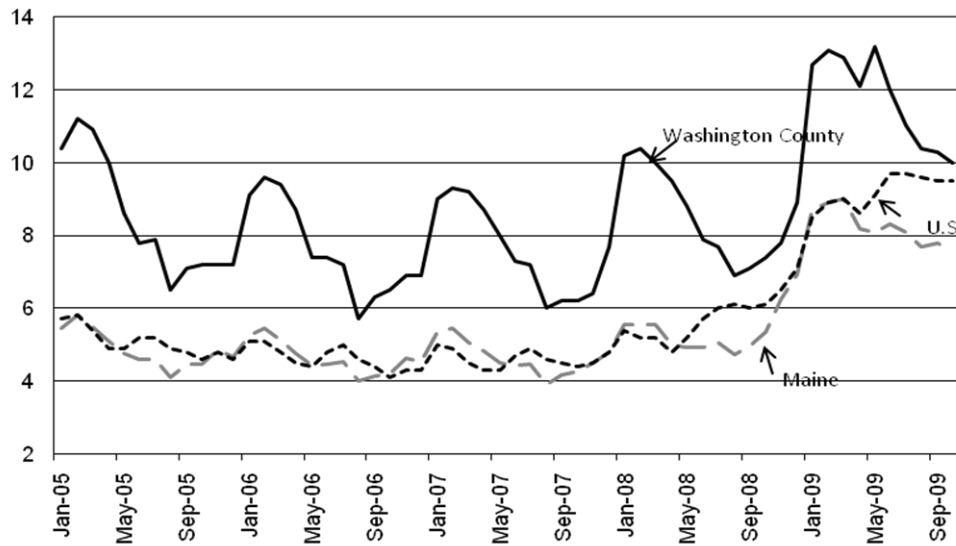


Figure 2. Unemployment Rates for Washington County, the State of Maine, and the United States, Not Seasonally Adjusted (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009)

The unemployment rate is a measure of those in the labor force without a job. To be counted as unemployed, one must be actively job seeking. For this reason, the jobless rate is actually much higher than the unemployment rate, as many seasonal workers do not look for jobs in the off-season. However, it is true that the number of unemployed Washington County residents is relatively low during the months of May through December but higher during the winter and early spring. Given that the unemployment “low” in 2009 is higher than recent “highs,” we might expect changes in how oldtimers view newcomers, how whites view Hispanics, and how out-of-work fishermen view low-wage agricultural workers.

Table 4. Economic concerns that may cause residents to move away from their communities, by county

	Washington County	Hancock County
Loss of fishing jobs	83.5%	81.8%
Loss of forestry jobs*	79.5%	58.2%

Data Source. CERA 2009 Downeast Maine Survey (Hamilton et al., 2008).

\*Note: Differences between counties are statistically significant at alpha=0.05 in row 2.

Table 4 shows the percentage of Washington and Hancock County residents who reported that loss of fishing or forestry jobs would cause them to potentially relocate. Although only 14.9% of Washington residents and 8.3% of Hancock residents reported working in a fisheries-related job themselves, over 80% of those surveyed reported that they would consider moving if the fisheries industry suffered further job loss. Note that a similar proportion of Washington County residents (79.5%) indicated that loss of forestry jobs might motivate them to migrate from the area, yet despite that only 5.5% report working in this employment sector (employment rates are the same for both counties). This is striking considering that the majority (67.8%) who have lived in Washington County have always lived here (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), yet many would

consider a move in the face of further economic changes. This demonstrates the importance of the fisheries and forestry economies to this region and suggests that a further job loss in these two main industries could have detrimental effects to the community. Changes to the fishing industry in particular are due to a combination of economic, environmental, and political changes, summarized below.

#### ***4.1 How Economic and Environmental Context Matters***

Maine's economy relies on a combination of tourism, fishing, forestry, and agriculture – most notably blueberries, of which Maine is the largest producer in the world (Machias Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, 2009). Like many rural communities in the U.S., Maine's industries are particularly sensitive to environmental changes, which may encourage its residents to place a greater value on environmental issues (Jones et al., 2003). Of note is how each of the main employment sectors in the region is divided along class, racial, and ethnic lines.

##### *(i) Tourism*

Tourism took hold as a major industry in Maine in the late 1800s and with real implications for environmental conservation. The coastline was littered with resorts and water bottling companies capitalized on the idyllic image of the Maine coastal resorts by bottling water for consumption throughout the nation (Judd, 1988a). Restrictions were set on fishing and hunting in order to preserve wildlife populations in order to continue to attract affluent tourists. However, these restrictions on natural resources had detrimental effects on year-round residents who made a living off the land at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Judd, 1988a).

Over time though, Maine developed a community-specific approach to environmental regulation with input from local residents. Regions such as Washington County had more lax regulations due to its smaller share of tourists. Balancing economic with environmental sustainability has become an ongoing issue in Maine, the solution to which has been addressed at the local level in order to give those affected the power to regulate their own resources (Judd, 1998a). This community-specific approach has carried over to other arenas of decision-making in the state.

While the tourism industry provides economic support for wealthy real estate developers as well as working class small businessmen, it also has resulted in a new class of newcomers: seasonal residents. Of those contacted during the month of August in the 2009 CERA survey, 9.5% reported living part of the year elsewhere. These seasonal Downeasters are significantly wealthier than year-round residents: over half (52.8%) of them report annual incomes of more than \$90,000 compared to just 18.3% of full-time residents in this income bracket.

##### *(ii) Lobstering and fisheries*

The salmon industry has had its ups and downs in Maine. Restoration efforts have met with varying degrees of success but have not offered a permanent solution to the dwindling salmon population partially resulting from overfishing and pollution (Jenkins, 2003). Recent research also suggests that global warming may be contributing to the depletion of fish in Maine (Barker, 2009).

Local governments have tried various approaches to dealing with the fluctuating salmon population dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most approaches seek to prevent litigation and to keep the federal government out of the decision-making process. Perhaps the biggest threat to this is the potential for inclusion of the Atlantic salmon

under the Endangered Species Act which would, among other things, prevent commercial and recreational fishermen from harvesting salmon in Maine. In the 1990s, Mainers again dedicated considerable resources to improving salmon habitat in order to keep the species off the Endangered Species List. These efforts were not enough for the Fish & Wildlife Services, who placed the Atlantic salmon on the Endangered Species List in 2000 for certain areas of Maine (Jenkins, 2003).

Being able to determine their own preservation practices for salmon and lobsters has resulted in inconsistent outcomes in Maine. As tourism and exporting options encouraged growth in these sectors in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for these products grew. Early lobster preservation efforts in the 1930s were spearheaded by lobstermen in order to prevent overharvesting so that they may protect their long-term business interests (Judd, 1988b).

It is unclear how the results of recent federal restrictions on fishing and lobstering may benefit Mainers in the long-term. For now, the salmon fishing industry constitutes a smaller portion of Maine’s economy than in previous years (Jenkins, 2003). This, combined with other structural changes (e.g., with changes in the economy), may cumulatively impact community boundaries. During the Great Depression, many out-of-work men attempted to infiltrate the lobstering industry. However, due to the strong sense of community and strict territorial lines known only to traditional lobstermen, these would-be lobstermen were outed to authorities for violating conservation rules and excluded from the industry (Judd, 1988b).

The fishing industry in Maine is predominately comprised of white fishermen who have family ties to the practice going back multiple generations. Integration into this economy is closely guarded through information channels (Russell, 2009).

*(iii) Blueberries*

Maine is the world’s largest producer of blueberries. According to the Machias Bay Area Chamber of Commerce (n.d.), the Downeast region encompassing Washington and Hancock counties produces 85% of the world’s blueberries. Little of the picking can be mechanized and, as production has grown in all agricultural industries, so too has need for seasonal employment. But with arduous working conditions and low pay, there is little demand for such jobs. Although no regional data are available on Maine agricultural workers, approximately two-thirds of agricultural workers in the United States are immigrants (Taylor et al., 1997) and news media assessments of this group are consistent with these findings (Goodnough, 2009).

Table 5. *Opinions on value of environmental conservation during an economic crisis, by county*

	Washington County	Hancock County
We should be conserving natural resources for the future	39.7%	48.4%
Environmental rules are a good thing	29.5%	46.9%
Local govt. should encourage economic development over preservation	67.0%	36.9%

Source. CERA 2009 Downeast Maine Survey (Hamilton et al., 2008).  
 Note: Differences between counties are statistically significant at alpha=0.05 for each row.

*(iv) Public opinion on the intersection of economy and environment.*

Table 5 shows the percentage of CERA survey respondents reporting opinions on balancing environmental conservation with economic development. Note that there are large (and statistically significant) differences between Washington and neighboring Hancock County. Only 30% of Washington County residents view environmental rules as a good thing. Over two thirds favor development over preservation, compared to 37% of Hancock County residents.

Given that many environmental regulations in Maine are geared towards preserving natural beauty and, therefore, its appeal to tourists, it is not surprising that Hancock County residents are more likely to support conservation efforts. Although Milbridge is just an hour's drive from Bar Harbor (see Figure 1), Bar Harbor and the rest of Hancock County is much more reliant on tourism than is Milbridge and the surrounding communities in Washington County.

As other traditional forms of employment in lobstering, fishing, and other sectors suffer, there is little importance placed on environmental conservation. Restrictions on use of natural resources may mean limited job opportunities and income. Changes in each of the resource-dependent industries combined with the current economic climate may have implications for determining who should have first rights to available jobs and in dictating who is a true community member and who is not. Resentment towards immigrants may grow, despite the unattractiveness of the work they perform (Bach, 1993).

#### ***4.2 The Role of Social Capital***

Social networks and the trust that is implied in these long-standing relationships work to allow community members to pursue shared goals. Social capital is the result of these social relationships and networks. When community sentiment demonstrates that citizens are trusting and willing to work together, this is indicative of social capital.

The rural U.S. is diverse with respect to its economies, population trends, and economic inequalities. Some rural communities are characterized by deep poverty of most of its residents which may be attributed to low social capital (Duncan, 1999). By contrast others, such as rural Maine and New Hampshire, demonstrate room for social mobility, little racial tension, and a high degree of cooperation and social inter-mingling across classes (Duncan, 1999; Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990).

By analyzing recent media reports in the community of Milbridge, Maine in Washington County, I note that residents were generally accepting of Hispanic agricultural workers but that the recent economic crisis coincides with increasing reports of ethnic tension.

In the past, town leaders have been quoted as saying that it is a “very open and receptive and accommodating” community in the face of continuing Latino immigration (Goodnough, 2009). One local community organization has offered ESL courses to immigrants as well as Spanish-language instruction to area businesses for the past decade (Mano en Mano, 2009). This cultural immersion is impressive when we consider that two-thirds of residents in the larger county (and, presumably, this community though town-level data are unavailable) have lived there their whole lives and that this group of residents from “around here” are demographically homogeneous with respect to ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Local newspaper reports do allude to ethnic tensions at the same time as unemployment rates were rising substantially in this region (Goodnough, 2009; Mack, 2009). Seasonal agricultural workers are often housed in company trailers which close during the off-season, leaving them without housing for several months of each year. Plans to build a housing complex that would predominately serve Hispanics began to face opposition in 2009 just as unemployment had exceeded 12% in the county (refer to Figure 2).

To qualify to live in the proposed housing complex partially funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, applicants must be agricultural workers who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Because of the sharp ethnic divisions in employment sectors, this means that Hispanics would almost exclusively be served by the new housing. Opposition to the proposal by town residents cited the fact that children of the farmworkers have “overburdened the schools” and that “jobs should be saved for *local* fishermen...not given out to minorities that [sic] may move into these units” (Goodnough, 2009, emphasis added).

Despite that the farmworkers are also “local” in that they may have worked and lived in the community for a number of years, and that they must be U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents to qualify, they are still viewed as outsiders by the white community. The blueberry picking jobs are viewed as “given out” to Hispanics during times of economic hardship.

Survey data available on community sentiment in Downeast Maine shows that social trust is high and that people in the community help each other (see Table 6). However, it is worth noting that reports of trust, while high, are ten percentage points lower in Washington than in neighboring Hancock County—a difference that is statistically significant. This difference may be attributable to the changing demographic composition of Washington County, as evidenced by community-level issues as the one described above.

Table 6. Public *opinion on community sentiment, by county*

	Washington County	Hancock County
People here are willing to help their neighbors	95.7%	98.2%
People in community trust one another & get along	87.1%	96.6%

*Data Source.* CERA 2009 Downeast Maine Survey (Hamilton et al., 2008).  
 Note: Differences between counties are statistically significant at alpha=0.05 for each row.

While previous research has shown that newcomers to rural towns differ from more established residents with respect to age and other demographics (Glasgow & Brown, 2006; Johnson, 2006), education (Domina, 2006; Garansky, 2002), and opinion on the environment (Jones et al., 2003), among other issues, it does not demonstrate how the demographic changes themselves may contribute to differences in public opinion or in defining community boundaries.

By using a standard ten-year cut-point to define someone as being an “oldtimer,” many

of the Hispanics in Milbridge would be considered established residents<sup>‡</sup>. Yet, it is apparent from reports over the proposed housing complex that lines are being drawn in this community along lines of ethnicity (Hispanic or not) and class (seasonal agricultural worker or not), divisions that are certainly not mutually exclusive.

Regardless of length of tenure, community membership in Milbridge appears to be related to ethnicity and class status. Newcomer status, as measured in previous studies, does likely account for some differences, but only to the extent that newcomer is an inexact measure of community membership.

## 5.0 Study Limitations

Acknowledging the symbolic boundaries that determine community membership is essential to analysts who are prone to define regions based on counties or cities because that is the area for which data are available. The data presented above display the opinions and demographics at the county-level. This is a limitation of this study, as ideally comparisons would be made within individual communities rather than within the county. County-level summaries will mask community-to-community variation. By using county as a proxy for community, I miss a degree of detail likely only obtainable by conducting field research in the community of interest. However, it is likely that the findings presented above would show even stronger differences if I were to examine only residents of Milbridge, Maine (for instance) compared to others, as it is likely that the variation within the county is masking stronger opinions in individual communities such as Milbridge.<sup>§</sup>

In the absence of in-depth interviews with residents, it appears that community cohesion is still very high in Washington County, though perhaps not as strong as in neighboring areas. Differences may be attributed to different demographic and economic profiles: Washington's economy is weaker, more of its residents are unemployed, and environmental regulations may be impacting what work is available. Latinos constitute a small, but substantially larger share of Washington's population compared to neighboring Hancock County. Within certain communities such as Milbridge, the Hispanic population may be as high as 10% (Goodnough, 2009) though decennial census counts for 2010 suggest that the Hispanic population is 6.2% for this town (US Census Bureau 2010)<sup>\*\*</sup>.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This paper argues that community boundaries are driven not only by tenure of residence (where newcomers are less likely included than more established residents) as previous research suggests, but also by other factors—specifically the ethnicity of those seeking to integrate. A difficult economic climate may be

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<sup>‡</sup> Due to the small number of Hispanic respondents to the CERA, estimates on the proportion of this region that have moved here in the last ten years by ethnicity is unavailable. Similarly, due to Washington County's small population, accurate estimates of length of tenure by ethnicity are not available in the American Community Survey.

<sup>§</sup> Note that CERA data are available at the town-level. However, small sample sizes prevent any meaningful statistical analysis.

<sup>\*\*</sup> The Hispanic count in the 2010 Census for the state of Main was 10.2% below what U.S. Census Bureau demographers projected it would be (Passel & Cohn, 2011). It is not known if Hispanics are underrepresented in the decennial count because of fear of participation, or if the April 1 reference date meant that seasonal workers were residing somewhere else at the time of the census, or if this is an unbiased estimate.



heightening such divisions in a region such as Washington County, Maine, where unemployment affects 1 in 10 residents. Additionally, reliance on natural resources has heightened the tension between job creation and environmental preservation in these communities. Evidence suggests that government regulation, economic transformation, conservation efforts, and a changing demographic profile all contribute toward shaping community boundaries in Downeast Maine. Further field research could establish these relationships more specifically.

This analysis demonstrates that demographic change in small, rural communities can have important practical implications for its residents. Despite efforts to integrate Hispanic newcomers through efforts such as English language courses, the results may be limited and may not extend to full community integration. Although the media reported finding very little ethnic tension prior to the proposal that housing be constructed for Hispanic agricultural workers, the fact that this effort faced opposition (where discourse on race became prominent) demonstrates that cultural and linguistic differences between groups may trump tenure of residence when determining sides in community struggles.

Blueberry farming has been a part of this region's economic and social fabric for generations. Because of the lack of mechanization available to pick the crop, low-wage Hispanic immigrants have played an important part in sustaining this economy. Despite the fact that many Hispanics have lived in the community for more than a decade, they are unlikely to be considered community members in the same sense as White residents with similar tenure. Given the role of environmental regulation and economic hardship in negatively affecting the community's fisheries industry, Hispanic residents may expect to encounter discrimination in other aspects of daily life. Rural towns with a growing number of Hispanic agricultural workers in other regions of the country may face similar issues, particularly as the economic downturn has impacted some places much more severely than others. However, the analysis provided in this paper is unique to the specific environmental, economic, historical, and political context of the county under study. What this paper does offer as a general conclusion is that each rural community's position in the intersection of changing race/ethnicity of residents, economic changes, and politics surrounding environmental regulation will serve to define who is considered a full-fledged community member and who is not *and* that a resident's position may be defined irrespective of how long he has resided in his community.

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