

Bowdoin College

## Bowdoin Digital Commons

---

Honors Projects

Student Scholarship and Creative Work

---

2016

### Looking Ahead With the World in Their Hands: The Postsecondary Aspirations of East Island Youth

Abby E. Roy

*Bowdoin College*, [abbyroy11@gmail.com](mailto:abbyroy11@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/honorsprojects>



Part of the [Community-Based Research Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), and the [Rural Sociology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Roy, Abby E., "Looking Ahead With the World in Their Hands: The Postsecondary Aspirations of East Island Youth" (2016). *Honors Projects*. 57.

<https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/honorsprojects/57>

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship and Creative Work at Bowdoin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of Bowdoin Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [mdoyle@bowdoin.edu](mailto:mdoyle@bowdoin.edu).

**Looking Ahead With the World in Their Hands:  
The Postsecondary Aspirations of East Island Youth**

An Honors Paper for the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

By Abby E. Roy

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Rural Communities .....	1
The Nature of an Island.....	2
Research Site.....	4
Place-Based Education at East Island High School .....	5
Research Framework.....	7
Methodology .....	8
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Habitus, Social Class, and Social Reproduction .....	14
Capital and the Rural Habitus .....	16
The Influence of Community Networks.....	17
Family as a Social Unit .....	19
Rural Youth at School.....	23
The Promise of Place-Based Education? .....	27
<b>Social Groups on East Island.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Social Group Formation.....	30
Youth Perspectives of Social Groups.....	35
The In-Group Situation .....	37
The Out-Group Situation.....	39
Finding Success.....	41
<b>Boats, Buoys, and Traps: The In-Group on East Island.....</b>	<b>44</b>
Taking What They Need: The In-Group At School.....	45
“I Go On My Uncle’s Boat:” The Importance of Extended Family .....	49
The Families You Know: The In-Group in the Community .....	53
<b>Negotiating Shared Space: The Out-Group on East Island.....</b>	<b>57</b>
Making it Legitimate: The Out-Group at School .....	58
Concerted Cultivation on East Island: Out-Group Family Life .....	65
Being an Outsider: Professional Youth in the Community .....	68
<b>Looking Ahead .....</b>	<b>71</b>
Other Narratives, Limitations, and Future Research.....	72
Implications for East Island and Others in Similar Waters .....	75
<b>References .....</b>	<b>78</b>



For my parents  
*I am who I am because of you*

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This project would not be what it is without the support of countless teachers, mentors, friends, colleagues, and family members who encouraged me, challenged me, let me think out loud, and put up with my ever-expanding wall diagrams over the past 11 months. I would like to extend special thanks to my advisor, Professor Ingrid Nelson, as well as Professor Sara Dickey, the other half of my Honors project committee, for their guidance, encouragement, and helpful comments throughout this process. I would also like to thank Sarah Chingos and Professor Charles Dorn of the Bowdoin College Education Department, who were instrumental in getting me connected to East Island; the Bowdoin College Department of Sociology and Anthropology; and the Rusack Coastal Studies Fellowship and Grua/O'Connell Research Award for their financial support as I traveled to and from East Island to conduct interviews and observations. Of course, this project would be nothing without the community of East Island, Maine; I am forever grateful to the teachers, administrators, and students of East Island High School for opening their doors and sharing their experiences. I hope I have told them well.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

I guess I should go to college. I wanna, but at the same time, it's tempting, 'cause I can come back here and just make a living. Right after high school. Just graduate and go on the water. But at the same time, it's like, there's a huge what if? What if the industry doesn't last? So, I guess I should go to college.

Trevor is a commercial lobsterman in the rural island community of East Island, Maine. He is also a tenth grade student at East Island High School. Navigating these identities causes conflict for Trevor in his postsecondary aspirations. Trevor and other East Island youth are engaged in moments of decision-making, weighing the influence of parents, teachers, friends, and larger community forces. As they make these decisions, they are undergoing moments of social reproduction facilitated by the institutions around them. Institutions on East Island facilitate a process of social reproduction for Trevor and his peers.

## RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural communities like East Island are unique in their demographic, physical, economic, and social characteristics. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Services and the United States Census Bureau, a rural area is one with a population of fewer than 2,500 people; places with larger populations are considered urban clusters, urbanized areas, or metro areas, depending on the source (Reynells 2014). Rural communities are physically isolated from metro areas and the amenities that are found in those areas, including increased opportunities for employment, higher education, and cultural experiences. They have historically had economies built largely on natural resources, including agriculture, forestry, mining, and

## 2 • Introduction

manufacturing, and service-sector jobs account for much recent growth in rural economies (Business & Industry 2015).

Absent from rural communities are jobs in the financial, professional, scientific and information sectors. Few employment opportunities in rural areas require formal postsecondary education. Education that is required beyond high school can usually be satisfied by attending community college or trade school. Many jobs require only on-the-job training or minimal apprenticeship before beginning work; attending college for individuals who intend to work in rural communities can be superfluous (Business & Industry 2015). It is not necessarily surprising, therefore, that only 19 percent of adults in nonmetro areas in the United States have completed a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 32 percent of their metro peers (Kusmin 2015). Socially, rural communities are rooted in connectedness steeped in tradition and local histories. Local family and social networks are highly valued (Byun et al. 2003:105). Within rural communities, there are unique networks, values, and moral systems that implicitly influence the lives of individuals and the fabric of the community.

### THE NATURE OF AN ISLAND

Islands are a special category of rural communities; their physical isolation is amplified by bodies of water separating them from the mainland. Of Maine's fifteen distinct island communities, fourteen operate their own schools at least through grade five. These schools range from one-room schoolhouses to larger community schools. School size and population fluctuates largely based on population and migration changes; populations on Maine islands also surge in the summer with an influx of summer residents and tourists and shrink in the late autumn and winter (McReynolds 2014). Much



of the economic base of islands is built on tourist accommodations and services. Beyond the service and tourism sector, Maine islands depend on natural resource extraction mainly through various fisheries including lobster, clam, crab, and eel, but also through granite. These industries sustain the year-round residents of Maine island communities, who are often prideful and even nativist about their island (Gibbons 2010; McReynolds 2014; Rowan 2013). Because of the nature of island life – with few amenities on the island and the effort it takes to get off-island – migration to islands is not substantial, and populations on islands are often families who have resided there for decades. These families and the social networks around them are entrenched in social norms that are not readily apparent to outsiders or newcomers (McReynolds 2014).

Maine's island communities are known in particular for their lobstering industries. While its impact on the social fabric of island communities is not widely studied, lobstering is understood by those operating within and around it to be a particularly unique industry for its impermeability and unspoken rules. Newsletters from the Maine Lobsterman's association indicate that it is common for youth to be on the water by the time they are eight years old and, by high school, to be successful lobsterman who have their own boat, traps, and truck. Youth who lobster have the opportunity to become extremely financially successful even before graduating high school. One respondent from this study, Wesley, had "fifteen hundred dollar paychecks coming in" per day of fishing during the summer months. Lobstermen often continue to work long, steady hours through their sixties.

Little research has been done on how residents, particularly youth, navigate the sometimes exclusive networks and structures of island communities. By studying East

#### 4 • Introduction

Island, my research seeks to fill this gap, to understand how island youth form their postsecondary aspirations in the presence of a thriving natural resource economy, and to understand how such an industry may facilitate social reproduction.

#### RESEARCH SITE

East Island, Maine, is an island community that has been connected to the mainland by a man-made bridge since the mid-twentieth century. East Island has approximately 2,400 year-round residents and two schools, an elementary and middle school and a high school, serving 316 total students in the 2014-2015 school year. East Island High School is majority white: 96.7 percent of students in 2011 were white, with only five being classified as some other race, according to data from the Maine Department of Education. According to the island's webpage, the economy is built primarily on commercial lobster fishing and tourism, both of which surge in the summer months and drop off in the winter, and require little formal education beyond high school. A local newspaper reported that lobstering contributes 200 to 300 million dollars annually to the island's economy, with fishermen often hauling in over 20 million pounds of lobster each year. East Island is consistently one of the top lobster ports in Maine, marking it as an important and exclusive community.

East Island is also an iconic Maine arts community. The vibrant arts culture on the island is anchored by a performing arts center and a hillside artists' retreat and. These two nationally renowned centers for the arts, profiled by a Maine arts and culture magazine, bring artists from New York City, Chicago, and beyond to instruct, perform, and create. The values and norms of the arts are not always compatible or complementary with those of the lobstering community, and East Island residents rarely inhabit both worlds. Though

these two worlds are both far reaching in their own right, the more economically lucrative lobstering community creates strict social boundaries, and occupies a dominant position in the social hierarchy of the island.

#### PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AT EAST ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL

The youth of East Island occupy a tenuous juncture, with some making thousands of dollars per summer as sternmen on lobster boats and others training with theater instructors from around the world. Historically, this divide has been visible in the demographic presence of East Island High School (EIHS). In 2009, 26 students graduated from EIHS, 17 of which were female graduates. The graduation rate at EIHS was a mere 57.5 percent, compared to an 80.2 percent high school graduation rate for the state of Maine in the same year (Data Warehouse 2014). At the time, EIHS was named a “persistently low-achieving school” by the Maine Department of Education. It was common knowledge in the school and on the island that many of the students dropping out were males dropping out to begin full-time careers in the commercial fishing industry. In response, teachers, administrators, and community members came together to develop a model of place-based education, in which the curriculum is tailored and tied explicitly to East Island, to improve the graduation rate. Even before the full implementation of the place-based education program, EIHS worked to tailor the habitus to that of the in-group, in response to the designation of EIHS as a “persistently low-achieving school.” According to the school’s website, this included efforts to improve school climate and student and staff morale through professional learning groups for teachers and clearly defined “focused study” periods during the school day for students to work one-on-one with teachers. Graduation rates have risen, peaking at 93.75 percent in

## 6 • Introduction

2012 and since settling at about 91 percent (Data Warehouse 2014).

The place-based education program, fully implemented in EIHS at the start of the 2013-14 school year, is credited by local newspapers with retaining students and helping students to be more engaged while they are in school. The longest running place-based education program at EIHS focuses on lobstering and marine studies. At the time of its inception, a marine studies teacher remarked to a local newspaper, that “it’s difficult for some students to recognize the importance of their high school education because many students involved in the fishing industry are already financially self-sufficient.” The same article reported that the marine studies place-based education program seeks to allow students to reach the same standards as they would in other high school classes through classes in “English, biology, and algebra...tailored to include marine-related themes.” An administrator at EIHS spoke of the program as empowering lobstermen to “be at the table to talk about issues that will affect their future.” With the place-based education program, along with more subtle culture changes, lobstering youth are staying in school longer.

On the heels of the success of the marine studies place-based education program, EIHS implemented a second place-based education program in the 2014-15 school year focused on the visual and performing arts. This program, described on EIHS’s website, capitalizes on the significant population of artists and community organizations that serve and promote artists in the East Island community. A healthcare place-based education program, drawing on the island nursing home and the significant interest in healthcare among students, is currently in the planning stages.

Outside of the place-based education programs, students at EIHS have the opportunity to take courses standardly offered at most high schools: English/language

arts, French, Spanish, Latin, industrial arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and visual and performing arts classes. EIHS offered three Advanced Placement (AP) classes in the 2014-15 school year, and students also have the opportunity to take AP and University of Maine classes online if they choose. Additionally, due to the small size of the school, students are able to pursue independent studies, particularly in languages. To graduate, all students at EIHS must complete an independent senior research project in a topic of their choosing. Often, these projects are built around career or other aspirations, answering questions like “*What does it take to be a...*”. EIHS is also in the midst of implementing a proficiency-based diploma system, where students must meet certain standards to graduate rather than simply pass a number of classes. The guidance department at EIHS takes students on college visits multiple times a year and also coordinates job shadow and internship opportunities for students. Through these opportunities and others, detailed on the school’s website, students are able to largely personalize their educational experience. Cultural tensions remain, though, and leave youth at an intersection of conflicting values and networks through which they must wade to make decisions about their postsecondary aspirations.

#### RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Youth who live in rural communities are at once inhabiting the networks in their communities and at the same time being confronted by outside forces of a globalizing world. Maine’s island communities – with their small size, resource-dependent economies, and further isolation – are home to youth who must make sense of the values and forces exerted on them from home networks, including families and communities, as well as schools and the linkages to the outside world that schools bring into communities.

## 8 • Introduction

East Island is simultaneously part of the most successful lobster fishery in Maine and home to a school working hard to meet the needs of its population. My research investigates how youth develop their postsecondary aspirations as they navigate the networks and structures that exist on the island. I investigate how youth accept and reject what institutions on the island have to offer and how the skills and attitudes that they have are accepted and rejected by these institutions. I argue that through the social structure of East Island, youth are socialized into roles that lead them either into the lobstering industry or off the island through a process of social reproduction unique to an island community.

Through frameworks of cultural capital, social capital, and social reproduction, I explore the postsecondary aspirations of East Island youth and consider how the postsecondary aspirations of East Island youth are shaped by the family, community, and school networks and structures around them. This research contributes to a body of research concerned with social reproduction and considers whether and how, through the place-based education program it has implemented, East Island High School has disrupted the expected process of social reproduction.

### METHODOLOGY

To examine these issues, I conducted qualitative research in the community of East Island and specifically at East Island High School (EIHS). Before entering the community, I began background research on East Island by conducting a scholarly literature review and scouring newspaper and magazine archives for articles written about East Island and EIHS in particular. From this background research, I was able to understand the transformation of EIHS from a persistently low-achieving school to where

it sits now, with graduation rates often above 90 percent. I was also able to gather information about the place-based education options at EIHS. This background research informed my interview protocol.

I conducted primary research through semi-structured interviews with students who were in tenth and eleventh grade at the time of the interview. This age range, similar to that of the students in the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, ensured that students would remain in high school for the duration of my project and increased the likelihood that students had begun to think about their future plans and aspirations but had not made any definitive plans about life after high school. At the start of my recruitment process, I met during a school period with all tenth and eleventh grade students. An administrator at EIHS arranged and facilitated this meeting. I explained who I was and the nature of my research project. I was careful to frame my research as considering postsecondary plans and aspirations, rather than focusing on college aspirations, to avoid alienating students who did not plan to go to college. At this meeting, students filled out contact forms and received informational fliers, letters to parents, and consent forms to review at home. A number of participants were recruited through this process. I was able to recruit the rest of the participants by speaking to students in the hallway about my project during subsequent visits to EIHS and with the help of administrators at EIHS, who encouraged students to respond to my messages about scheduling and allowed students to participate in interviews during class periods. I am indebted to the openness and flexibility of EIHS students and staff.

In total, I completed semi-structured interviews with ten students at EIHS. I conducted all interviews at EIHS. I began interviewing participants in May 2015 and

concluded my interviews in October 2015, overlapping two different school years but keeping the participation requirements the same; thus, on either end of my interview period, some participants were in ninth grade or twelfth grade, but were all in tenth or eleventh grade at the time of the interview. Participants who were interviewed over the summer of 2015 were deemed eligible based on the grade they had previously completed. Four participants were in tenth grade at the time of their interview; six were in eleventh grade. Four participants were female, and six participants were male. All but one participants were white. The sample of nonwhite participants in the study, then, is disproportionately larger than the population of EIHS as a whole. Six participants were born on the island and have lived there with their family their entire lives. Interviews lasted between 25 and 95 minutes. During the interviews, I first asked participants to discuss their life growing up, including who they lived with, what the adults in their home did for work, and their experiences in the school and community. I then transitioned to ask participants about EIHS, what sorts of classes they took and which classes and teachers they liked best, whether they had a job, and what school and community activities they participated in. At the end of the interviews, I asked participants to think about their future, first by asking them what they dream of doing after high school and what their friends, family, and community thought of their aspirations. I also asked participants to adopt an omniscient perspective and discuss what people in the community think about students' postsecondary aspirations and conceptions of success. I ended interviews by asking participants what success meant to them and where they would be in ten years, if they could go anywhere and do anything. I recorded, transcribed, and coded all interviews, and they serve as the foundation for my research.



I chose to limit my formal interviews to current students at EIHS in an effort to gain perspective on the contexts in which the youth of East Island make decisions about their postsecondary aspirations and how community attitudes, morals, behaviors, and opportunities influence them. By limiting my sample to current high school students, I was able to investigate the goals East Island youth set for themselves, how they interact with individuals and institutions in their community, and how these individuals and institutions interact with them. Through my interviews, I aimed to give agency to youth to share their own thoughts and experiences. In addition to interviews, I conducted informal participant observation at EIHS. Approximately 10 30-minute periods were observed during the school day of students during lunch, in the halls between class periods, and during various classes. I also observed an end-of-year awards ceremony at EIHS, a marine studies field trip, and a hugely attended school board meeting. Occasionally, I spoke with adults in the school and community. These targeted observations fill in pieces of the school-community narrative that may be missing or incomplete in interviews and put interview comments into a larger context to understand how school and community values and ideas influence students.

The community of East Island, Maine, is unique in that it is an island community and has a resource-based economy that continues to thrive during a time when many similar economies have experienced a downturn. Nevertheless, the effects of the intersections of community, family, and school social and cultural structures on youth are similar to those of rural communities across the nation. East Island High School, with its place-based education program, has made efforts to bring aspects of the community into the school to

engage its students.

In the next chapter, I will review existing literature about rural youths' postsecondary aspirations through the lenses of community, family, and school. This literature review frames my research question more distinctly and underlines the place of my own research in existing bodies of research. In the chapters that follow, I will use social class as a framework to consider the ways that youth understand themselves and others on the island. I will argue that two distinct social groups exist on the island: the lobstering in-group and the professional out-group. The existence of and distinctions between these groups heavily shape the experiences and aspirations of youth on East Island. In total, I will argue that through this social group structure, East Island youth are socialized into roles that lead them either into the lobstering industry or off the island through a framework of social reproduction.

## **2** **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social reproduction has clear effects on American society. Data from the Pew Charitable Trusts Economic Mobility Project (2012) reveal that Americans in large part reproduce the social class levels of their parents. Of those who were raised in the bottom quintile of wealth distribution, 41 percent remain there as adults, and 66 percent do not make it out of the lowest two quintiles (Pew Charitable Trusts 2012:15). On the other end of the spectrum, 66 percent of individuals raised in the top quintile remain in the highest two quintiles as adults, and 41 percent never leave the top quintile (Pew Charitable Trusts 2012:15). The United States is not as upwardly mobile as we often believe, and children most often reproduce their parents' wealth and social class. My research will consider to what degree schools function as agents of reproduction, as Bourdieu (1973) has argued occurs.

School, family, and community social networks occupy the same physical space and overlap in many ways. This literature review will consider the value systems of rural communities, families, and schools and the influences the value systems of these institutions have on rural youths' postsecondary aspirations and planning. I will discuss the ways that capital has been shown to influence the postsecondary aspirations of rural youth in the face of these three institutions. First, I will underline contributions to the discussion of community institutions, where researchers including Corbett (2007a; 2007b), Howley (2006), and McLaughlin, Shoff, and Demi (2014) have suggested that rural youth have strong connections to family and place that lead them to value residential aspirations. Then, I will consider the ways that research has shown that youth gain capital from their interactions with family and how these transfers of capital are infused with geographic mobility and local values (Byun et al. 2012; Israel, Beaulieu, and

Hartless 2011; Lareau 2011). Lastly, I examine the work of Carr and Kefalas (2009), Corbett (2007a), and Sherman and Sage (2011), who discuss how the capital youth gain from their families and communities is accepted or rejected in schools. This literature reveals the tensions that have been shown to exist for youth among the institutions of community, family, and school and how social and cultural capital serve to mediate or exacerbate this tension.

#### HABITUS, SOCIAL CLASS, AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Individuals of different social locations are socialized differently (e.g., Bourdieu 1977, Lareau 2011). This socialization provides individuals with a habitus: a sense of what is comfortable and natural and a set of “dispositions” towards culture, society, and one’s future (Bourdieu 1984). It is generally learned at home and then taken for granted in interactions with outside institutions, different habitus provide individuals with varying social and cultural skills, connections, and resources. Within and among institutions, there are differences and inequalities in the way habitus are received that lead to social stratification.

Bourdieu (1986) argues that the skills, connections, and resources that individuals acquire from their habitus – what he calls “cultural capital” and “social capital” – can be used to move within and among social stratifications. Bourdieu (1986) lays out many forms of capital, most relevant here being economic, social, and cultural capital. Economic capital refers to the actual financial resources and individual has that can readily be converted to goods and services. Social capital is the aggregate of supportive interpersonal interactions that links individuals to membership in a group and “provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” (Bourdieu

1986:248-249). Cultural capital is the possession of dispositions, skills, education, and tastes that are valued by dominant society (Bourdieu 1986:243). A key component of capital, Bourdieu (1986) argues, is that economic, social, and cultural capital can each be converted into each other: the skills, connections, and resources can be employed and transformed by individuals to acquire jobs, gain access to higher education, or otherwise take action to gain economic or other productive resources. Social and cultural capital are at once activated by individuals and assessed and interpreted by societal institutions; individuals employ strategies to maintain or improve their social position, and institutions respond to these strategies (Bourdieu 1986). The capital that individuals have and the way that capital is useful in institutions positions individuals within stratified social classes.

Bourdieu (1973:72) argues that capital functions covertly within educational institutions to reproduce existing structures of power and privilege. Although the American Dream is theoretically founded on principles of hard work and effort as the path to achievement – the meritocracy – schools in actuality reproduce the existing social order because they are based on and value dominant forms of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1973:84). Schools, though appearing neutral, promote the “hereditary transmission of power and privileges” (Bourdieu 1973:72). They seek to pass the norms of dominant society to students. The “hidden curriculum” seeks to teach all youth the values and tools to attain school-prescribed success in society; they are socialized to become “good students” by learning the norms, values, and beliefs that schools promote about how to interact with authority figures, how to act in social settings, and how to achieve success (Gracey 2008). In theory, all students have the opportunity to advance

their levels of social and cultural capital. In reality, as this study demonstrates, the degree to which youth embrace this opportunity is dependent on the standards and values they have learned within their habitus (Corbett 2007b).

#### CAPITAL AND THE RURAL HABITUS

While individuals employ their social and cultural capital in their interactions with all institutions, the focus here will be on the institutions of school, family, and community in rural areas. Socially constructed inequalities that emerge from dominant cultural values reinforce social locations and place more value on certain sets of networks and knowledge (Bourdieu 1973:84).

For rural youth, the standards of their habitus are based on family values and community values because of the small, interconnected and physically isolated nature of rural communities (Corbett 2007b). Corbett (2007a) argues that the habitus of rural youth is often not compatible with that of the school. Schools are state and federal institutions that adopt their standards and values from outside any specific community. Rural youth who have high levels of cultural capital in the community, therefore, may be considered to have low levels of cultural capital by schools (Corbett 2007b). Schools are built and operate within communities, but may have different norms, standards, and values than the community they are intended to serve. They promote geographic mobility and a universal sort of knowledge that can ostensibly serve students in any community. Rural families and communities, though, are localized and often have deep histories and traditions and value the continuation of these histories and traditions (Corbett 2010). This value system, then, is in conflict with the values of the school. In rural communities, economic opportunities are largely natural resource-, trade-, or service-based jobs. Instead of formal

postsecondary education, these jobs require on-the-job training or a family history in the industry (McReynolds 2014). College, then, is not always relevant in rural communities because it is unnecessary for success in most available jobs. Public schools, though, typically promote college as the next step in achieving adult success after high school, possibly fracturing the relationship between school, family, and community (Corbett 2010). Rural youth, who must at once exist in schools, families, and communities, employ agency as they navigate among these institutions and work to understand and activate their own social and cultural capital.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Rural youth undergo a process of decision-making that is guided by the influences and values of their communities and their perceptions of their own value in a community (Ali and Saunders 2006; Howley 2006; Shamah and MacTavish 2015). Scholars argue that social and cultural networks of rural communities draw youth into the community rather than push them out, promote values of independence and self-reliance, and impose moral judgments on the decisions of their members (Burnell 2003; Corbett 2007b; Howley 2006; McLaughlin et al. 2014; Meece et al. 2013). Moral structures embedded in the cultural capital valued by rural communities promote specific perceptions of the “real world,” the adult world beyond high school; Burnell (2003) has found that rural youth adjust their postsecondary aspirations to fit within these moral structures. When considering the “real world,” Burnell (2003) argues that many rural youth stress most the expectation to work, the expectation to have a family, and their desire for independence. Continued membership in their community allows individuals to make use of their social and cultural capital to easily and quickly enter the “real world” of their community and

gain personal and financial independence, in contrast to the “real world” that exists outside the community, where their forms of social and cultural capital are not valued as highly (Burnell 2003).

Social and cultural networks in rural communities promote values at odds with leaving the community, forcing rural youth to effectively choose between residential aspirations to stay in their community and other goals and aspirations that would take them elsewhere (Petrin, Schafft, and Meece 2014). Because limited opportunities exist within rural communities for postsecondary education or jobs requiring higher education, the educational or occupational aspirations of youth who value staying are limited. Youth wishing to continue their education after high school almost always must leave the community to do so. Youth who have strong desires or plan to remain in their home community after high school are said to have residential aspirations that come from a strong attachment to place (Petrin et al. 2014). Residential aspirations to stay are a result of strong connections to community networks and place. For rural youth, place “involves the meanings and relationships associated with land, nature, and local history and knowledge,” leading some rural youth to value connections to place above education or occupational opportunities (Howley 2006:65-76). McLaughlin et al. (2014:466) found that of youth with home residential aspirations, three-quarters attribute those aspirations to their desire to live close to their parents and maintain the social networks they currently have. In turn, rural youth with residential aspirations to stay in their community have lower educational aspirations, perpetuating the notion that education is necessary for life outside the home community, but not for life within it (Corbett 2007b; Meece et al. 2013:184).



Few researchers have explored how economic networks, existing alongside social and cultural structures within a community, influence the postsecondary aspirations of rural youth. Indeed, past research has found that economic prospects within a community – the potential to find, secure, and keep a well-paying job – can have more of an influence on postsecondary aspirations than connection to place or community (Byun et al. 2012). Further, some research has considered how an unsteady economy may serve to reinforce the rural “brain drain” by influencing the goals that parents and communities have for their children, leading them to believe it may be better for rural youth to leave than to face a bleak economic future (Sherman and Sage 2011). Such research, though, has in large part focused primarily on how adult community members perceive the economy and its future. There has been little research on economic networks as social structures and in particular, how youth perceive and act within these structures. Existing research would suggest that youth involved in the economic networks of a community would adjust their occupational – and therefore educational – aspirations to remain in these networks. My research will explore the social and cultural networks that emerge out of a firm and impermeable economic network and the ways that rural youth construct or adjust their postsecondary aspirations based on those networks.

#### FAMILY AS A SOCIAL UNIT

As social structures, families operate within and respond to the norms of community social networks but also have their own values and cultural mores: customs, values, and behaviors accepted and promoted within groups. Parents teach youth through the transfer of family social and cultural capital. The processes of transmitting family social and cultural capital have been argued to be particularly influential for rural youth

because these youth are said to highly value their parents' support in their postsecondary aspirations as well as maintaining the close family networks they have (Byun et al. 2012). Israel et al. (2001) argues that rural youth do not always discuss their goals with their parents, suggesting that it is implicit, not explicit understandings of social and cultural mores that guide their postsecondary aspirations (Byun et al. 2012). Family social and cultural capital, combined with the limited opportunities for postsecondary education and work within the bounds of rural communities, make families influential social units for youth, leading many to choose staying close and maintaining family networks over leaving the community to pursue postsecondary education.

In considering family social capital, described as the norms, social networks, and relationships between adults and children that are valuable for children while growing up, researchers have noted a difference between process and structural characteristics of family social capital, as well as the importance of both (Israel et al. 2001). Structural characteristics of family social capital are quantifiable characteristics that measure how often and to what degree youth may garner positive social capital from their family. It includes characteristics like the number of parents and siblings in a household or the education completed by siblings in the household, which influence the occurrence and quality of process characteristics. Process characteristics include meaningful conversations with parents or siblings, discussions of future plans, parental involvement with school and community activities, and assistance with homework (Byun et al. 2012). Byun et al. (2012) found that the largest influence on postsecondary educational aspirations for rural high school students was that their parents expect them to attend college, followed by discussing careers and work with their parents, the number of

siblings they have, and talking with their parents about how to pay for college. These findings affirm the importance of process characteristics in rural youths' postsecondary aspirations. The same study found that family social capital matters more than background characteristics that would be classified as socioeconomic status like parent education or income (Byun et al. 2012). Scholars argue that the process characteristics of family social capital have much more influence on the postsecondary aspirations of rural youth than a traditional framework of socioeconomic status, which by itself is unable to fully measure the qualitative process characteristics integral to the transmission of capital (Byun et al. 2012). Thus, the traditional framework of family social capital offers a strong starting point for considering the influence of family on rural students' aspirations, but it does not offer a complete perspective.

Rural youth construct their postsecondary aspirations within family networks with strong cultural mores, leading them to be heavily influenced by the support of their families and parents. They may be more concerned about maintaining connections to family than individualistic goals like making money or gaining status (Byun et al. 2012; McLaughlin et al. 2014; Meece et al. 2013). McLaughlin et al. (2014:466) found that three-quarters of youth who aspired to stay in their community as adults said it was important to live close to parents. Researchers have found that rural students consider most heavily their parents' educational expectations and goals for them, rather than their own educational aspirations; what is perceived to be parents' educational aspirations for a student become the student's own educational aspirations (Byun et al. 2014). McLaughlin et al. (2014) concluded that few youth talk to their parents about postsecondary plans, suggesting that the cultural mores of family social networks are so strong that youth

assume or know what their parents want for them without explicitly speaking to their parents. Through everyday transfers of family social capital, youth internalize the cultural mores of their family networks and construct their aspirations around them.

Researchers who have investigated how families influence rural students' postsecondary plans have done so in large part through the lens of family social capital, but traditional frameworks considering family social capital cannot be effectively applied in rural communities because family is defined differently by local social networks. Traditionally, researchers consider family to be the nuclear or household family that includes an individual, their parents, and their siblings. This framework functions well in suburban or urban areas but is less clear in rural communities because it does not include the extended family like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as other non-related adults that live near, support, and influence youth in rural communities. Rather than a gap in researchers' understandings of social networks in rural communities, though, this is indicative of the ways traditional models of life and family do not transition seamlessly to describe rural communities. As such, traditional frameworks of parental support and family social capital do not consider how families act within larger community structures and institutions or the impact of non-nuclear family networks and social capital on youths' postsecondary aspirations. Family social capital is transformed in rural communities because family extends beyond traditional nuclear understandings. Little research has studied the place of the non-nuclear family within rural social networks and, indeed, the relevance of the non-nuclear family as a distinct social network in rural communities. Lareau (2011), for example, would argue that, while parents' involvement with and direction of children is highly influential regarding the way youth

interact with institutions, the larger network of individuals and activities with which youth regularly interact also plays a significant role in their development. A more complete perspective of the influence of family social capital, therefore, would consider the influence of larger family networks and how they operate within social, economic, and cultural traditions of rural communities, as well as youths' integration into larger family networks. Such a perspective is attempted in my research.

#### RURAL YOUTH AT SCHOOL

Michael Corbett's (2007a) research argues that schools in rural communities best serve the academically brightest and most engaged students and alienate those most ambivalent to school, facilitating the process of social reproduction where the most academically successful students go on to life beyond the community and others remain rooted to the. Rural communities, with strong traditions and local histories, have unique value systems that operate in contrast to the geographic mobility orientation of schools. Schools, then, are detached from rural communities, and youth are taught that they cannot exist in both the school and the community. Youth with strong community connections disengage from the school while their more academically-successful peers engage more deeply (Corbett 2007b).

Existing community-specific research on rural schools conducted by Michael Corbett (2004; 2007a; 2007b; 2010; 2013) and Patrick J. Carr and Maria J. Kefalas (2009) provides frameworks helpful for considering social networks in schools in the context of rural communities. These researchers focus on single rural communities and develop frameworks to understand how youth interact with their schools. Corbett's (2010) research is based in a rural Atlantic Canadian fishing community and includes

interviews with both youth and adults. He considers the ways that schools promote geographic mobility and concludes rural youth are “learning to leave” because rural communities are teaching youth for a world outside their community (Corbett 2010). Carr and Kefalas (2009) conducted qualitative research based in northeastern Iowa and argue that rural schools are dedicating the most attention to youth who do well academically while simultaneously teaching them that the best route to success is out of the community, leaving community-connected youth effectively neglected by the school. Both models suggest that rural schools play a substantial role in the postsecondary aspirations and outmigration of rural youth.

Corbett (2007b; 2010) and Carr and Kefalas (2009) also present frameworks for classifying youth. Carr and Kefalas (2009) label most youth either “achievers” or “stayers,” the former being the youth who are embraced by the school and in turn pushed out of the community and the latter being those neglected by schools and remaining in the community. Corbett (2007b; 2010) develops his classifications within the framework of geographic mobility but focuses on the ways that youth interact with the social space within the school as an indicator of their success in school. His two groups, “floaters” and “localized” youth, employ different forms of social and cultural capital. Floaters most value capital that functions outside of the community, and localized youth most value localized capital. Floaters, according to Corbett (2007b; 2010), are able to see social space in the school through a naïve sociological perspective, but they do not strongly identify with any one social group; localized youth lack the ability to see social networks beyond their own and are tied closely to the specific network with which they identify. Corbett (2007b; 2010) suggests that having floater status is indicative of high academic

achievement and a likelihood to leave the community after high school. Localized youth have lower levels of achievement and are much more likely to remain in their home community after high school graduation (Corbett 2007b). These frameworks demonstrate the ways that youth experience school differently based on the social and cultural capital they possess.

As institutions that operate within state and federal frameworks, schools come from the outside with little regard for the norms and values of specific communities (Corbett 2010). The language used in schools also comes from and reflects state and federal, not local, trends. Textbooks and novels that rural students read and discuss in their classrooms, for example, are written in Standard English, and their teachers, having been institutionally trained in this version of English, enforce its use and condemn community vernaculars as less sophisticated or educated (Corbett 2010). Language use, therefore, detaches and separates schools from their community (Corbett 2010). A dissonance between the way youth speak in their homes communities and the way they are instructed to speak at school leads youth to understand that they cannot exist in both the school and the community at once. Language, Corbett (2010) reminds us, implies belonging, and schools must engage with and embrace community vernacular if communities are to engage with schools. Until then, rural schools will continue to alienate the youth with the deepest connections to the community through the language they use.

Youth who value school membership – Corbett’s (2007b) floaters and Carr and Kefalas’s (2009) achievers – demonstrate the most willingness to engage with teachers and other aspects of school. Carr and Kefalas (2009) suggest that few youth with strong

community connections become engaged with the school enough to be labeled achievers. Schools are seen as connections and conduits to the outside world, so for youth strongly connected to their community, schools are sites of tension and conflict. They push out rural students who don't meet school-prescribed measures of success, leading to school ambivalence or even rejection of the school (Sherman and Sage 2011; Petrin et al. 2014). In the end, youth who engage with and achieve in the school pursue further education outside of the community, leaving behind in the community the school-disengaged non-achievers. (Carr and Kefalas 2009). This framework has been adopted as an explanation for the substantial outmigration of school-successful youth in rural communities and the resulting rural "brain drain" (Sherman and Sage 2011).

Research has extensively considered the relationships between schools and the rural communities in which they exist and the ways in which schools facilitate social reproduction by putting most of their effort into the most academically engaged youth. Researchers have less considered the impacts on youth and the process of social reproduction when schools seek to actively engage with communities and integrate community values into their education through embracing community vernacular, capitalizing on community strengths and resources, and creating curriculum that is built on community values. Existing research on this practice, called place-based education, suggests that bringing the community into the school promotes increased engagement on the part of community-oriented youth by softening the schism between school and community. Place-based education has been shown to improve high school graduation rates, but little research has considered its influence on the larger process of social reproduction (Smith and Sobel 2010). Do students who become more engaged in their



school as a result of place-based education become geographically mobile and more likely to pursue postsecondary education? This research will in part investigate the influence of place-based education on the postsecondary aspirations of rural youth.

#### THE PROMISE OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION?

Research suggests that in rural areas, family and community standards and values have the largest impact on youths' postsecondary aspirations (Byun et al. 2012). Rural communities value cultural and social capital that connect individuals to the community through knowledge, social connections, and skills tied to local social, cultural, and economic networks (McLaughlin et al. 2014). Rural communities place little value on geographic and instead value deep histories and roots in the community. Rural youth are best able to maintain the social and cultural capital they have by remaining in the community and tied to community networks. Youths' aspirations will be influenced most by what allows them to maintain or improve their levels of capital (Sage and Sherman 2014). In order to maintain or improve their social position, rural youth activate their capital within their existing networks. Often the most salient aspirations for rural youth are residential aspirations to stay in their community (Corbett 2007b; Wilcox et al. 2014).

Unlike rural families and communities, schools are institutions connected to state and federal networks that value geographic over local capital. In rural communities, youths' habitus are compatible with community and family standards but not with the standards and values of schools, setting schools up as tension-laden institutions that best serve the least community-connected, most academically successful youth and in turn alienate community-connected, localized youth (Corbett 2010). Schools in rural communities facilitate social reproduction, stagnating youth at their levels of social and

cultural capital. Research suggests that to disrupt this process, schools should adopt the standards and values of the communities they serve, thereby implicitly placing more value on the social and cultural capital with which youth enter schools (Corbett 2010). Because school-connected youth have been shown to be more likely to aspire to postsecondary education, placing value on the social and cultural capital of the community may also influence the postsecondary aspirations of community-connected youth (McLaughlin et al. 2014). Place-based education has been shown to have positive effects on the relationship between a school and its community (Smith and Sobel 2010).

The effects of place-based education on youths' postsecondary aspirations have been studied little, as there are few schools that have integrated place-based education into their school long enough to study its impacts. The research on place-based education that has been done suggests that implementing place-based education brings the community into the school as it was not before, theoretically bringing school and community values more closely together (Smith and Sobel 2010). If this is indeed true, youth with the most community social and cultural capital might be valued in schools at levels comparable to their peers with high school cultural and social capital. Through place-based education, then, social stratification in schools may become less salient or dissolve altogether. Place-based education, by bringing values of the community into the school, may disrupt the school's role in social reproduction that leads youth into predetermined paths of postsecondary aspirations.

My research considers whether, through place-based education and community engagement in schools, the process of social reproduction in schools can be disrupted in the context of strong economic and social networks. Using data from interviews and

observations in East Island, this research considers the interactions between school, family, and community as well as the interactions of youth with these institutions to understand the influences of school, family, and community on the postsecondary aspirations of the youth of East Island. How do the youth of East Island navigate the forces and value systems exerted on them by various social institutions, especially lobstering? Are they undergoing a process of social reproduction through school, or is this process disrupted by place-based education?

### 3 SOCIAL GROUPS ON EAST ISLAND

Dad owned a boat when I was little. He lobstered, but he's not from around here. Which, when it comes to [the] fishing industry, it was not good. And everyone in the general vicinity was not approving of that [he and his brother] weren't from around here. He fished with his brother but he owned the boat. Uh, and they eventually ended up stopping for fear of what [local lobstermen] would do in retaliation. If the, uh, molestation of gear continued.

- Toby, 11<sup>th</sup> grade professional class youth

Individuals not from families who have long fished on East Island face significant barriers to entry, even to the point of having their gear maliciously damaged, or “molested,” as was the case with Tony’s father. His trouble was not limited to one instance of gear molestation. Toby’s father, who is not from East Island but has lived there since before Toby was born, “eeled for a long time. He got his license revoked. He won it back in the lottery.” Despite the fact that Toby’s father entered into the industry legally by attaining his license, he has run into trouble with others on the island who were “fighting each other for their spots and stealing from one another. He actually got beaten with clubs a couple of years ago,” demonstrating the difficulty that off-islanders face in accessing the island industry. Because of the difficulties he has encountered as an outsider in the East Island fishing industry, Toby’s father, who “didn’t really appreciate the, uh, the merits of...just going to school” now supports Toby’s college aspirations.

#### SOCIAL GROUP FORMATION

Although Bourdieu (1977) would categorize lobstering as a low status occupation due to the low levels of formal education needed to enter the industry and the physically demanding nature of the work, the financial importance of lobstering on the island and the impermeability of the industry have positioned the lobstering class as the in-group.

The lobstering industry is regulated formally by the state and informally by the members

of the lobstering class. Entry into the industry requires significant economic capital – including the license, boat, traps, and rope to fish – as well as the social capital that lends an individual legitimacy within the lobstering class. As Toby discusses, even when an individual is able to acquire the economic capital to enter the industry and secure the proper licenses with the state, they are also subject to the social regulations sometimes violently enforced by other fishermen. These codes require that only individuals born on East Island are entitled to lay claim to area on the ocean floor where they can place their traps. All others who attempt to fish, even with legal permission, are subject to penalty at the hands of the lobstering class, often in the form of damage to their gear and physical violence. An in-group is formed whereby those with access to lobstering via birthright have a social status inaccessible to non-members. This in-group includes youth with a parent immediately tied to the lobstering industry, through lobstering or by serving the industry through an essential function, such as mechanical work, small-engine repairs, welding, or employment at the lobster buying station or co-op. The lobstering class enjoys in-group status on the island because of their ties to the most financially successful industry and because of the impermeability of their group.

One must be born into the lobstering class, as four interview participants were: Dennis, Rebecca, Trevor, and Wesley. Dennis is the only participant of the lobstering class who did not grow up with lobstering in his immediate household; Dennis's father is a caretaker and it is his mother who has lobstering in her family. Because of this connection, Dennis secured a role on a neighbor's boat and before long owned his own boat. Rebecca was born on the island but spent a good deal of time off-island throughout her childhood because of her divorced parents. She just recently moved back to the island

full-time to live with her father, who has been a commercial fisherman since his teenage years. Trevor has always lived on the island and has fished since before he was ten, beginning by fishing with his father and uncle and now owning his own boat. Wesley also grew up in a fishing family and has spent his entire life on the island, save one year in early elementary school when his family moved to Texas and then back. Together, Rebecca, Trevor, Wesley, and Dennis demonstrate the ways that in-group status influences interactions between lobstering class youth and school, family, and community.

The individuals who operate outside of the lobstering class are conferred out-group status, despite their relatively high levels of education and involvement in industries and occupations that often require formal postsecondary education and training. The social and cultural capital possessed by this professional class are valued less on East Island than they would be elsewhere, primarily because these jobs are not as essential to the island economy. Furthermore, the professional class is more permeable than the lobstering class because there is no hereditary capital required. For example, members of the lobstering class could enter the professional class by continuing their education after high school and then entering a non-essential, professional industry on or off the island. Through this process, the individual can disrupt the transfer of social capital within the lobstering class, thereby exiting the lobstering class and entering the professional class. Anna, Brooke, Megan, Logan, and Toby are all members of the professional class.

Within the professional class, there are varying level of detachment from the lobstering class. Anna and Megan both have lobstering in their families, but it was not

continued by their parents and passed on to the children. Brooke grew up in Pennsylvania and moved to the island only in her ninth grade year. Logan's extended family has long lived on the island, but neither of his parents are involved in an industry related to the fisheries. Toby's father participates in other fisheries on the island but has repeatedly run into trouble because he is not from the island. Together, Anna, Brooke, Megan, Logan, and Toby demonstrate the ways in which out-group status influences the ways that professional class youth interact with school, family and community and are ultimately guided off the island to pursue other opportunities.

The social reproduction that lobstering facilitates contributes to an environment in which few individuals achieve social mobility. Social mobility, when it is used here, refers to the ability of individuals to use their social, cultural, and economic capital to change their relative social status. The more relevant form of mobility on East Island is geographic mobility. Geographic mobility is the relocation of individuals from one place to another. Geographic mobility will be referred to hereafter as simply "mobility." Lobstering class youth have little desire for mobility because they are anchored by the lobstering industry and its networks. Professional class youth, though, strongly desire mobility and seek to achieve it by pursuing postsecondary education off-island. Mobility is a particularly relevant concept on East Island because for either group, achieving it would disrupt their in-group or out-group status, as these groupings do not transfer off-island. For members of the professional class, off-island mobility would likely position them in the in-group and is something they tend to aspire to. For members of the lobstering class, off-island mobility would render them part of the out-group, and it is therefore undesirable.

Social reproduction happens as youth are taught the values and codes of their social position and come to occupy the same habitus as their parents. Bourdieu's (1977) model of social class and social reproduction suggests that youth from lobstering class families would enter a lower status group after high school because of the low levels of parent education and the manual labor their parents participate in. This explanation, though, fails to consider the in-group out-group dynamic on the island and the value of social capital within the lobstering class. Social reproduction within the lobstering class allows those who have access to the industry to maintain their level of in-group status on the island. As Tony's father's experiences demonstrate, members of the out-group do not have the capital to join the lobstering class.

The professional class also undergoes a process of social reproduction. Professional class occupations require off-island education and training, are based off-island, or both, and consequently are infused with a sense of mobility that lobstering class occupations are not. By pursuing this mobility through education and occupations, professional class youth reproduce their out-group status on the island, but seek to attain in-group status off island. Social reproduction functions within this class by preventing youth from accessing entry to the in-group lobstering class on the island and simultaneously pushing them off-island to pursue educational or occupational mobility, where their forms of capital are more valued and can be transformed into higher social status.

In sum, social boundaries on East Island are formed by the impermeability of the lobstering industry. The in-group lobstering class forms the social core of the island and all out-group members form the conglomerate professional class around the lobstering



class. The existence of these distinct social groups disrupts Bourdieu's (1977) traditional classification of social status, and the manifestation of this disruption creates a social space on the island that is distinctly stratified and constantly reproduced. Despite these distinct groups, though, members of each group think that their respective group is in the best position and has the best opportunity for success.

#### YOUTH PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL GROUPS

Youth in both groups recognize that they operate within larger structures, yet each group sees itself as having relatively more opportunities because of its status by choosing different social markers to measure against. Lobstering class youth recognize that they are members of the in-group by virtue of their involvement in the lobstering industry. Rebecca, knowing that she is an in-group member because of her father's fishing and her own, remarks of her family: "We've been here for a while, I'm pretty sure. We're pretty well known around. 'Cause there's certain, like, last names that there's certain families you find on the island, and you know them all. And we're one of them." Rebecca does not mention the others, those who have not been on East Island "for a while." As a member of the in-group, Rebecca enjoys the privilege of not having to recognize the situation of the out-group. This is true of other lobstering class youth as well, such as Wesley, who recognize the fortune of their position because they "have the world in our hands, pretty much, with what we got." As Wesley suggests, most lobstering class youth have little desire to exit the lobstering class and enter the socially stratified atmosphere of life beyond the island.

Although they recognize their out-group status on East Island, professional class youth position themselves and their environment into larger sociopolitical contexts to see

themselves as having better opportunities than their lobstering class peers. Anna, a member of the professional class admits that the island community is “very centered around the fishermen, and it’s very...how can we fix this, this, and this for the fishermen. Or, how can we change this, or how can we support them more?” Anna places herself outside the “fishermen” and suggests that she operates on the periphery of the community’s concern. She recognizes that on the island, she is in the out-group due to her lack of inclusion in the fishing industry. To resolve their out-group status on East Island, professional class youth look beyond the island to opportunities in which they will be able to make use of the capital that they have acquired from their parents. They view continued life on the island with distaste, as Toby describes: “I’ve always kind of just looked at the way of life on the island where you just, you grow up, you turn sixteen, you start fishing, and then you fish for the rest of your life, as rather grotesque. And, I’ve always wanted an alternative. And while I don’t have an, I’m not exactly sure what I want to do, I know it’s not that, and I know it doesn’t reside here.” Similarly, Megan discusses the way that she feels as though she is “a big flower in a tiny little pot” with “not much room to grow,” going on to say that she feels she would do “so much better...in a bigger pot.” While Megan, Toby, and other professional class youth view their current social situation with distaste, they deliberately distinguish themselves as having better options in the future through college and professional work opportunities. Toby sums up the professional class view of the way lobstering class youth operate and think about the future: “I feel like there’s a general attitude of...almost like, contentment with inferiority.” Although not explicitly stated, professional class youth believe that

they, not lobstering class youth, have the world in their hands due to the educational and occupational opportunities that they will pursue off-island in the future.

### *The In-Group Situation*

To adopt the characterization of Michael Corbett (2007b), lobstering class youth are “localized” youth on East Island. They have strong social ties that embed them in the local community through extended family networks as well as lobstering networks. As localized youth, they are largely disengaged from formal education because formal education does not typically reflect their values or prepare them for their future in the lobstering industry (Corbett 2007b). These youth have strong peer networks formed during childhood from inherited social networks. Trevor, Wesley, and Dennis spend a majority of their time at school – before and after school, between classes, and during lunch – with other male youth from the lobstering class. Each of them references others by name in their interviews as people with whom they spend time. Further, not only are they embedded in networks with peers, but they also have close relationships with older lobstermen. These relationships come from and reinforce their in-group membership.

The lobstering class peer group is unified and localized by language, dress, and, most importantly, interests. As the in-group, they have put little consideration into the nuanced characteristics of their own and other peer groups. Not only does Dennis, for example, see few social groups in the school, but he also doesn’t readily name his own group:

*[Are there different cliques or groups?] I guess. [What are they?] There’s like, I don’t really know how to explain it. It’s like the sport people. And there’s like fishing and four wheeling and them. Stuff like that. The nerds. And music and all that stuff, I don’t know. [Who are your friends?] I don’t know. Like, you want names? [No, like what group would you say you are?] The fishing and four wheeling.*

Dennis is more able to offer names of his friends than a name for his group because they operate as the default social group. Their unity is clearly visible through their virtually matching outfits: steel-toed work boots, Carhartt work pants, and sweatshirts and hats that are adorned with the name and logo of their boat. They speak the same language, not only in their Maine accent but also in the way they describe their experiences. Above all, lobstering class youth are united in their love for fishing.

These youth casually discuss future plans and activities with one another and root these conversations in their connections to fishing. Not all members of the lobstering class speak to each other about their future plans in the same way. Although most brush off the possibility of college, others have begun to consider it as a contingency plan to use if the fisheries dry up. According to Wesley, he and his friends “talk about [college] all the time. Like, every day we’re like, yeah I don’t even know if college probably...it just doesn’t seem interesting to us. You know?” Wesley adds, though, that they talk about college so much in part because “we have to go to all sorts of these college trips. We have to, like, do these college tests.” Other respondents see college as fitting into their future and suggest that college can help them to remain localized. Trevor, who thinks that he should go to college before he begins lobstering full-time, interprets the same messages differently. As previous fisheries in Maine have collapsed, so might the lobstering industry on the island, and this does not go unconsidered in the decision-making processes of lobstering class youth. Lobstering class youth are influenced by the efforts of East Island High School to introduce them to college, but within peer groups they seek to retain their localized identity. They consult with their peers to affirm that they are interpreting the messages of the school in the same way.

Trevor says that he talks about college with his friends only “a little bit” and that “some of ‘em swear against college, and some of them are like, yup, going to college, nothing’s gonna stop me.” He demonstrates the importance of retaining the lobstering class identity in peer interactions. While Wesley says that he and his friends talk about college “all the time,” Trevor says that he and the same friends talk about college only “a little bit.” Trevor retains his in-group identity by limiting his discussion of college. Trevor also suggests that “some of them” in the lobstering class are determined to go to college, which allows him to keep himself in alignment with his friends. Above all, in these conversations, lobstering class youth seek to retain membership in their class by putting their own aspirations in alignment with their peers’.

#### *The Out-Group Situation*

To again adopt the characterization of Michael Corbett (2007), professional class youth operate as “floaters:” youth who are disengaged from the social fabric of the community and are focused on opportunities outside the community. They are focused on mobility and the opportunities they will have when they become mobile. Toby, for example, recalls that he “never really had very many friends” growing up and Megan adds that she may have “thought that everyone liked” her, when in reality few people did. As members of the out-group on the island, professional class families don’t have access to the extensive kinship networks that lobstering class youth have, leaving little room for natural social connections. As they have grown older, they have continued to identify outside the social in-group; Toby suggests that on the island, he “can’t really act how I might want to without people being...not nice.” As she looks toward the future, Megan sees more opportunities for social connections off the island: “getting off the island is

going to be nice. Getting away from this group of people I've been stuck with for eleven years now, would be nice." The transformation from having few friends as children to looking beyond the island for social connections in high school is a result of their out-group status. They are social floaters oriented towards mobility and the opportunities it brings.

The peer groups of professional class youth are fluidly defined, as these youth see themselves first as individuals and then as group members. They are more able to describe the peer groups of which they aren't members. Megan describes the social makeup of the school as "kind of like divided in half, between like, the hallway people and then everyone else." The "hallway people" that Megan refers to are largely members of the in-group: "the marine studies boys. They wear the camo and the boots and they talk with their accents and they're disrespectful." "Everyone else," then, includes the "really, really sportsy people" and "a really small portion of like, not artsy but smartys kids," youth who are high academic achievers and also involved in theater or drama. Later in the interview, Megan aligns herself with this group, but she is unable to succinctly describe it and its characteristics. Similarly, Anna describes her friend group as an "interesting mix" of people. Anna is unable to see herself as fitting in with one distinct social group. As a social floater, Toby has a "very small" group of friends within the school. He and other professional class youth socialize more with youth off-island through arts, theater, and other activities. Further, professional class youth are not heavily influenced by their social groups when it comes to postsecondary decision making. Anna and her conglomerate group of friends, for example, have "talked about college a couple times, and what we want to do or where we want to go;" beyond that, they "just kind of

don't talk about it". Unlike lobstering class youth, who prioritize continued membership in the lobstering class, professional class youth continue to operate outside the social sphere and focus on future mobility rather than island connections.

Professional class youth see East Island within its larger sociopolitical environment and through this framework are able to see themselves not as outsiders, as they may be on the island, but as members of the mobile, educated in-group that moves between communities. This framework allows professional youth to see themselves as having more potential for success than their lobstering class peers. Toby distinguishes himself from lobstering class youth by suggesting that they could not attempt to achieve his level and understanding of success:

Not everyone needs college. I'd say probably eighty percent of people who attend this school should not go to college. It's rather ridiculous, saying that, I mean, some of them aren't college-bound people. They're like...working on a boat or doing some sort of skilled labor would be better. I feel college is, it should be for someone who is actually, honestly academically inclined.

Professional class youth distinguish their status on the island by situating the island in the context of the larger world, where they can use their mobility to enter the in-group, and making distinctions between life on the island and life in the larger world. Thus, seeing themselves as individuals operating not only on the island but also in a larger sociopolitical environment, they are able to reconcile their out-group status on the island with their potential for in-group status when they establish themselves beyond the island.

#### FINDING SUCCESS

Just as professional and lobstering class youth alike recognize the social structure that exists on the island, members of both social groups share common understandings of the way that success is defined by members of the community. Conceptions of success,

though, are based largely on lobstering class values, demonstrating again the place of the lobstering class as the core of the social structure on the island. When asked to reflect on what others in their community think about life and success on the island, lobstering and professional class youth alike stress that they believe that others on the island want them, and other high school students, to do what makes them happy, whether this means continuing membership in the lobstering class or continuing their education off-island. Doing nothing – not continuing their education or entering into a productive occupation – is perceived as the one pathway that is discouraged by the community, as Logan describes:

The one thing that I think is very common is if you were to be done with school and then do nothing. Meaning that you do not have a job, and you're just kind of sitting and living off of something, someone or something else. Um, then yes. That would be very frowned upon. As long as each person is determined and is trying their own way. That is very big with success, I think. I think an easy way to phrase it is just, as long as you are working as hard as you can. That's all that matters. That's success. As long as you're working as hard as you can in whatever you're doing.

Wesley validates this opinion from the lobstering class: “If they're working, [the community is] just as proud. If you're not, well, what good are you?” Youth are able to find community support and validation in their aspirations that transcends in-group out-group lines.

Lobstering and professional class youth differ, though, in the way they define the “something” of success and in their expectations and aspirations for their own success. Understandings of individual success are based in large part on social group membership. Trevor's aspirations are simple: “Just something that I can do on the island. ‘Cause I wanna stay here.” Wesley and Dennis, the other male members of the lobstering class, give virtually identical answers, both responding that in ten years, they still hope to be



“here [the island].” Further, these youth define success for themselves largely in economic and material terms: having a boat and large collection of traps, being able to provide for themselves and their families, and having the money to do what they wish. Professional class youth, on the other hand, define success in more abstract terms: in ten years, they want to be happy in whatever they’re doing (notably, they do not have a firm idea of what they will be doing), able to travel and see other parts of the world, and continuing to learn. The aspirations of professional class youth thus appear to be influenced largely by values of mobility and education, while lobstering class youth seek to retain their membership in the lobstering class. All youth aspire to be successful, but success is not uniformly defined.

Nearly all youth recognize the existence of the in-group, out-group structures on the island and seek to validate their places within these structures. Through this process, they apply judgments to the other social group to assert that their social position is the better one. In reality, both groups occupy social spaces on East Island that help them to achieve their aspirations. As will be seen in the coming chapters, though, their aspirations are inevitably tied up with their social positions.

## **4** BOATS, BUOYS, AND TRAPS: THE IN-GROUP ON EAST ISLAND

On one visit to East Island High School, I joined the marine studies class on a field trip to a local lobster buying station, where they were to learn about the process of packing and shipping lobsters and about lobster boat safety from a well-known commercial lobsterman. I was excited about the opportunity to see students in the class engaged in an academic setting outside the walls of EIHS. What I saw, though, was that few students were engaged with the work they had been assigned by their teacher to complete. Instead, they were engaged more with the hold tanks, picking up lobsters and teasing each other with them. Outside, they spoke about the impressive upgrades of the boat they were on rather than drawing and labeling the safety features on the worksheet they had been provided. They were clearly engaged with the topic, but less so with the academic questions they were exploring.

As students loaded the buses to return to EIHS, I spoke casually to a few of them about the field trip and about their experiences in school as a whole. One male student told me that he could think of five or six people off the top of his head who dropped out in the ninth grade and have since become successful fishermen. Another told me proudly that his uncle had customized the boat we had been on. Others told me about how they come to the lobster buying station regularly, both to sell their own catches and to socialize with the men who work there. These short narratives demonstrate that when they go on a field trip like this one, they are the experts in the classroom, more so even than their teachers. Though they seemed disengaged throughout the field trip, it was better than being at EIHS. This was a field trip to their domain.

What does it mean that few students were academically engaged in a field trip, lesson, and class designed to make them more engaged in school? In this instance, is the

place-based education program or EIHS achieving its goal? Is it disrupting the reproduction that lobstering class youth undergo in the school? These questions were raised for me as I observed students in the marine studies class on their field trip, and continued to be raised as I completed further participant observation and interviews.

Economic structures on East Island are such that a distinct in-group forms around the boundaries of the lobstering industry. Members of this in-group begin fishing as young as five and most certainly by age eight, growing up in the culture of lobstering and being socialized into its norms. East Island youth who are members of the lobstering class place high value on their membership, their access to lobstering, and their deep ties to the community. At times, though, these ties are in contrast to school values, and youth use agency in deciding when to assert their capital and when to cede to institutional norms.

#### TAKING WHAT THEY NEED: THE IN-GROUP AT SCHOOL

Paul Willis (1980) asserts that students of families engaged in manual labor will see little value in the offers of formal education and consequently disengage from the school, and this has long been true on East Island. Wesley, speaking of his father, recalls, “School wasn’t much for him, ‘cause it didn’t teach him nothing that he was interested in or anything. And it just wasn’t the place for him. So he didn’t finish high school. He only went to, like, his freshman year.” It’s understood that lobstering class youth, males in particular, do not belong in school because the habitus they occupy does not have the same values that the habitus of the school does. This truth is taught to lobstering class youth by their parents, like Wesley’s father, who often did not have positive experiences during their time in the island school. The lesson of parental experience functions in a

socially reproductive way: male youth, who ultimately plan to enter the industry of their lobstering fathers, are taught that traditional school “isn’t the place” for them.

Social reproduction happens for lobstering class youth in EIHS because of their in-group status. While lobstering class youth are raised to understand that schools do not provide the social and cultural capital required for full participation in the lobstering industry, EIHS makes a concerted effort to create a habitus that matches that of the lobstering class. EIHS caters to the in-group. Lobstering class youth do engage with the school, but only so much as it matches their habitus and interests. Social reproduction occurs because these youth hold firmly to their lobstering identity and continue to engage with EIHS in only the ways that benefit them.

The place-based education program at EIHS makes use of community resources that are enmeshed in the lobstering class to make learning relevant to lobstering class youth, thereby altering the habitus of the school. Adult members of the lobstering class have reengaged in schooling by participating in meetings and corresponding with teachers, sending a message to youth that education may indeed have something to offer them. Wesley summarizes how EIHS has transformed its curriculum in a way that engages lobstering class youth, speaking of the marine studies program: “it teaches us pretty much about what goes on, the history of the island, uh, what we do for a living. ‘Cause a lot of people in this school go out, and they go fishing.” As Trevor notes, school now lines up with his identity: “I like how the marines trades place-based education program works...Because I’m a fisherman I thought it was cool that our class is kinda helping us...letting us learn in a way that we want to.” These youth recognize that they have opportunities to engage in education that is relevant to their future plans and

aspirations, and because of this, they engage with the place-based education program. For Trevor, this is the case even though the program has not yet lived up to his expectations: “they told us anyways that it was gonna help us get our captain’s license, towards lobstering. Towards our future. But it hasn’t really happened much yet. So I’m still waiting for that. *[Do you think it will help you?]* Yeah. *[Are you glad that you’re in it?]* Yeah.” Trevor’s continued hope demonstrates that lobstering class youth have evolved their expected relationship with the school; instead of resisting educational opportunities from the school, they maintain relationships with the curriculum in the school when they think it will be beneficial to them, because they expect that the school will provide them with capital that will eventually allow them to be more successful in the lobstering industry. It is because the habitus of EIHS has deliberately been altered to reflect the habitus of the lobstering class that lobstering class youth begin to engage with the school in new ways.

As EIHS has altered its habitus to accommodate the lobstering class, changes in the lobstering industry have made aspirations promoted by school more acceptable in the in-group community. With a lurking fear that lobster may someday – in the not-so-near future – fail to bite, Trevor expresses uncertainty about his future and feels as though he should go to college. Of a school-sponsored campus visit, Trevor remarks, “Well I went to community college the other day and that looked pretty, pretty neat. They got all the motor sports and power sports, welding, and I thought that was something that’d suit me.” Although Trevor is the only male of the lobstering class who is actively planning on attending college, Wesley acknowledges that the school supports all students in exploring options for postsecondary education, telling them that “if you want to go to a college all

you have to do is talk to Ms. Myers, and she'll sign, she'll like, make slips and stuff and you can go." Both Trevor and Wesley demonstrate the degree to which changing relationships between the school and the lobstering class have influenced relationships between lobstering class youth and college; college has become a reasonable and even encouraged aspiration.

Despite their evolving relationship with the school, lobstering class youth continue to operate within a habitus distinct from the school's and therefore make decisions independently of the school. Within the lobstering class sample, there are examples of the ways that lobstering class youth take advantage of and make sacrifices for opportunities through the school that will help them in achieving their future plans and examples of the ways they opt out of such opportunities for some personal benefit. Trevor, who ultimately aspires to lobster, took the place-based education program prerequisite class, normally a semester-long class, over one week in the summer – which, in addition to school vacation, is the height of lobstering season. Trevor discusses the sacrifices that he and his classmates made to take this class and be able to enter the marine studies place-based education program in their first semester of high school:

I was able to join right in the first semester 'cause I took class in the summer for a week. It was eight to five or something. And, we had to skip out on a whole week of fishing... That kinda shows a lot that we wanted to do it. So, we took a week off, did a whole week of school, got all of the content and stuff that we need to get down at the class in a week rather than having to take a whole semester for it... I guess if somebody came up to you in high school and said, you wanna get a credit in a week instead of a whole semester, I mean, kinda makes you wanna do it.

Not all youth are so inclined to make sacrifices for such opportunities. Dennis, who plans to be a welder after high school, applied for and was accepted into a vocational program at the nearby off-island vocational center. Upon beginning the program, however, Dennis

realized that nearly half of his day was spent being bussed to the vocational center. He opted not to continue the vocational center program because of the extensive bussing and returned full-time to EIHS. Further, Dennis also opted not to continue in the advanced option for the marine studies place-based education program this year because, he says, the program required him to “stand up front of groups of people and, like, do speeches and stuff.” The skills required for this are not promoted by or heavily valued in the lobstering class. This moment was a clashing of habitus.

Lobstering class youth also often abstain from organized school activities, preferring to spend time informally with peers or family. Rebecca remarks on the support she receives from her family and siblings and indicates that she would rather spend time with family than in organized school activities. Dennis suggests that he has “got better stuff to do” than organized school activities. These youth only engage in the parts of schooling that benefit them – namely, the marine studies program. In this way, school for them retains its singular purpose of serving as a sometimes helpful placeholder until they are able to pursue their interests full-time. The way that EIHS has altered its habitus to accommodate the lobstering class does not disrupt the process of social reproduction.

#### “I GO ON MY UNCLE’S BOAT:” THE IMPORTANCE OF EXTENDED FAMILY

The parenting style of lobstering class parents involves targeted and structured activities. Lobstering class youth, while not enrolled in scheduled activities, are brought onto their fathers’ boats from a young age and soon after are given traps of their own. They are taught how to act, think, and talk like a member of the lobstering class. These youth are also left to entertain themselves when not on a boat; they are encouraged to spend time with their neighbors and cousins instead of in formal social settings. Further,

lobstering class youth are socialized with individuals of varying ages, as traditional age hierarchies are disrupted in the lobstering industry when young boys work on boats alongside middle-aged or older men. And, perhaps most noticeably, lobstering class youth are spoken to in distinct accents and mannerisms that they then pick up. Lobstering class youth are deliberately socialized by their parents into semi-structured activities, in a way that fits into neither of Lareau's (2011) categories in large part because of her suburban focus. The lobstering class demonstrates the importance of "rural" as a factor in child-rearing and socialization. In East Island, it produces an in-group with distinct practices.

Family networks for the lobstering class go beyond the nuclear family, and youth frequently live or spend time with extended family members and close family friends. Often, the physical living arrangements of these youth can make it difficult to classify nuclear and extended family as different structures. Trevor, for example, grew up in a house with his mother, father, and brother, but their home was directly adjacent to Trevor's grandparents' home, where his uncle and cousin also lived for much of his childhood. Trevor makes little distinction between the physical houses of his nuclear family and his extended family, suggesting that perhaps these divisions are more arbitrary than not. Rebecca further illustrates the fluidity with which extended family can become nuclear family, explaining that she has been staying at her uncle's house lately. Rebecca adds that she is "more of a family oriented person...I really don't hang out with friends, or stay after school for sports or anything like that. I usually go home." These large and complex family networks provide support and guidance to lobstering class youth and connect them more deeply to the social fabric of the island in-group.



Family networks of lobstering class youth provide them with the opportunity and physical capital necessary to participate in the lobstering industry and maintain their in-group position. All lobstering class youth recall going fishing with family members from a young age, and the processes through which they acquire their own equipment – including traps, boats, ropes, and haulers – is enmeshed in their family networks. Trevor, who acquired his first boat at age ten, relied on not only his nuclear family but also his extended family to get his start fishing independently. After his parents divorced and he ceased most contact with his father, Trevor was able to maintain active membership in the lobstering industry because of his extended family:

Eventually my dad gave me some buoys and ten traps and enough rope to fish ‘em. And, within my first haul, my aunt and uncle had an old boat that they didn’t really want anymore...And so they told me...they’d give me the boat. And I just have to give them lobsters every year. So, I started out in that eighteen foot skiff with fifty traps, and I had to hand haul ‘em. And then after that, I would still go with my Uncle...every other week. ‘Cause he’d take my cousin...And every three or four days, I’d go out and haul my traps, my fifty. And after I had enough money, I bought a twenty-one foot boat that had a hauler and stuff on it...And then I got a twenty-four foot...boat with a hauler and everything on it already.

Family social, cultural and economic capital are key to the development of lobstering class youth as members of the in-group.

Lobstering class youth are socialized to maintain their membership in the in-group through family and fishing and to recognize that they are a member of the in-group on the island. They are also taught how to speak and act as members of the in-group. It is easy to recognize male members of the lobstering class in particular, through everything from the clothes that they wear – steel toe boots, Carhartt work pants, and hats and sweatshirts with the name of their boats – to the way that they talk – with a distinct Maine accent – to their mannerisms and habits. These characteristics serve a twofold purpose:

they create a sense of unity among lobstering class youth while also reaffirming that if you don't dress, talk, or act like them, you are not a member of the in-group, drawing strong lines of exclusion.

Lobstering class youth are socialized by their parents and larger social networks to value membership in the lobstering class more than engagement with institutions, which allows lobstering class youth to reconcile societal norms with the realities of their parents. Recall the ease with which Wesley remarks that "school wasn't much for" his father, because "it didn't teach him nothing that he was interested in or anything," leading his father to drop out early on in his high school career. The fact that his father has less than a high school diploma is simply a fact for Wesley, not a source of shame or embarrassment. Instead, these youth understand it to be acceptable because of the dominance of the in-group.

The value lobstering class youth place on the family and social structures that have been cultivated for them leads them to reconcile their personal goals with their parents' goals for them and to value their parents' support for their goals. Rebecca, for example, attributes her aspirations to go to college to her parents' continued insistence that she will:

They've always said, you're going to college. You know, they've always said that...once I graduate high school, I'm going to college. ...I mean I know why they said it. Because they want you to succeed and...nowadays you can't really do much without a college degree. ...So, they've always, if they just keep telling me, oh you're going to college, then, you know...now I want to go to college.

Wesley, though, remarks that his parents "kinda want me to go to college, but they don't really have a career they care for me to go into." In other places, Wesley has asserted that his preference is to go lobstering after high school. He is able to reconcile this with what

his parents want: “I mean, they, they set me up so I can go lobstering, so that’s probably what I’m going to do...I pretty much said, the most likely I’m just gonna be fishing. And they seemed fine with it.” Although Wesley recognizes that his parents may want him to go to college, he also recognizes that they have prepared and groomed him to enter into lobstering. Lobstering class youth seek to maintain their networks on the island and adapt their goals to maintain these networks. Rebecca recognizes an expectation on the part of lobstering class parents and older family members that youth maintain their status: “They, um, expect most of us, or at least half of us to get out of high school and go fishing. And follow in our father’s footsteps, you know?” Family relations in the lobstering class, then, are complex, useful, and laden with connections.

#### THE FAMILIES YOU KNOW: THE IN-GROUP IN THE COMMUNITY

Lobstering class youth engage in few organized school or community activities. They have rich social networks, but not as a result of clubs or sports teams. Their networks are instead formed by their involvement in the lobstering industry and are sustained by the act of lobstering, as well as the capital that is valued in the lobstering class.

Although youth and community members express their belief that gender roles on the island have become more fluid, lobstering class youth discuss and unknowingly enact gender socialization. Though the sample size of the lobstering class is small and includes only one female, Trevor and Rebecca both make explicit statements about gender differences in the community. Rebecca articulates:

The boys are just boys. They’re like, oh, I don’t want to graduate, I’m gonna drop out. Or, you know, some of the boys are like, oh I want to become a mechanic or I want to become, you know, I wanna be a fisherman. ‘Cause most of them are just like, oh, I’m gonna go fishing

anyway, why bother. But some people, uh, wanna go to, you know, Maine Maritime, or they want to go to college, or they want to start families when they get older, you know. But, the girls definitely, we, most of us know what we want to be. We know what we want to do.

These distinctions highlight the gender differences that permeate the lobstering class.

Above, Rebecca dispels the notion stated by some professional class youth that gender no longer matters on the island. Although Rebecca speaks in terms of youth in the school, the perceptions and opinions of lobstering class youth cannot be taken in isolation.

Female members of the lobstering class – who often lobster themselves – aspire to and are perceived to aspire to highly gendered forms of work. In the same breath as her comment above, Rebecca acknowledges that “a lot of women do, like, nursing, health care, child care, and a lot of men lobster.” Trevor also comments on the gendered divisions that persist in the lobstering class; he projects them as characteristic of the entire school, and not just the lobstering class, demonstrating the pervasiveness of the in-group mentality:

Really I think we have two major paths here. The fisheries and then there's, I guess a lot of the girls are like really into nursing and stuff, so. And I know a lot of people in my class and a lot of upperclassmen, underclassmen, they all talk about, like, nursing. So I guess that's a big thing with girls. Fishing is a big thing with guys.

It is clear from interviews with the professional class that not all females in the school are interested in nursing – and not all males, for that matter, want to become involved in the fisheries. Trevor's comment, then, demonstrates the position from which lobstering youth see themselves as the in-group in the community.

Lobstering class youth are not deliberately tracked into these gendered occupations by their parents and family networks but rather arrive there through unspoken rules and codes. Rebecca, who regularly lobstered with her father as a child and

continues to do so occasionally, offers a female perspective on the possibility of lobstering as a career:

I think at one point, I wanted to be [a lobsterer], but then I, that didn't last long. It's like, I couldn't do that all the time. Like, I've worked on a boat since I was eight. I worked on my dad's boat since I was eight. And, I mean, I'm the master lobster bander, I can tell you that much. But, uh, no...I've never wanted to own my own boat and make a living out of it.

Rebecca illustrates a significant division between genders in the lobstering class; although both she and her male peers in the lobstering class were socialized into the industry as children, only the males plan to continue to make a life of it. Rebecca, following the pattern that Trevor suggested for the school, wants “to either become a midwife or a neonatal nurse.” She attributes this to her love of children, and predicts that it will help her achieve other goals as well:

I love newborn babies, and I love taking care of them, and I love, you know, and just being able to know the things that I would know, I guess. And, try to wait to have my own kids...It'll definitely help, with holding off to have kids of my own.

Nursing, like lobstering, is a highly gendered line of work. Here, though, Rebecca also hints at the unpaid labor in which she will be expected to engage if she maintains her membership in the lobstering class. Not only will she be expected to manage the bulk of household labor, including raising children, but she will also be expected to manage the financial accounts of her lobstering husband even if she does work outside the home. There are significant and unspoken rules in the lobstering class that track men into lobstering and women into gendered work of household management and nursing.

Lobstering class youth are aware of the structures on the island that lead to in-group and out-group distinctions. They recognize that social status matters and that social reproduction occurs, even if they do not explicitly name it as such. According to

Rebecca, there are “certain families you find on the island, and you know them all,” and these families, usually distinguished by last name, are “pretty well known” and have been on the island for a while. Further, Rebecca emphasizes, this is how social reproduction occurs: “all these families that live there, and usually just keep passing it down to their kids. And so each family is pretty well known.” Members of the lobstering class, then, recognize the in-group, out-group structures on the island and even recognize the way that they themselves benefit from them.

East Island lobstering class youth gain significant capital from being raised in the lobstering class, and through social reproduction, they engage most with institutions where their capital is highly valued and well received. These youth are deeply entrenched into extended family networks, and seek to sustain these networks and also develop their own family networks; for them, being successful means being able to provide for one’s family. The aspirations of lobstering class youth are localized and centered on the island, even for youth, like Rebecca, who may also want to leave the island. Lobstering class youth on East Island are heavily influenced by the community and family networks around them and less influenced by school networks, leading them to aspire to stay connected to family and community networks in the future.

# 5

## **NEGOTIATING SHARED SPACE: THE OUT-GROUP ON EAST ISLAND**

As students at East Island High School filled the bleachers in the gymnasium for an end-of-year awards ceremony, students self-segregated and sat distinctly within peer groups. Lobstering class youth lined the back rows of the bleachers. Professional class youth filled the front rows. Some students sat around and between the two groups. I wasn't surprised by their seating choices; I had seen the ways that students divide themselves in the cafeteria and the hallways. What surprised me was the degree to which both groups were represented in the awards assembly. I had expected that professional class youth would take home most of the awards because of their engagement with and success in school. Instead, awards were nearly split between professional and lobstering class youth.

Professional class youth take honors, Advanced Placement, and even college classes. They are almost always the valedictorians and salutatorians of East Island High School. Many of these students received academic achievement and character awards. Lobstering class youth, though, were also recognized for their participation in the place-based education program. Few professional class youth participate in this program. That the awards ceremony made space to recognize the participation of lobstering class youth in school demonstrates the degree to which EIHS has tailored its habitus to make room for lobstering class youth.

As demonstrated by the awards ceremony, professional class youth are not recognized as the dominant and favored group in East Island High School. They share the space with lobstering class youth and may even feel pushed out of the school by their lobstering peers. How is the process of social reproduction in school influenced by this changing habitus? To what degree are professional class youth able to successfully share

space in the school with their lobstering peers? As I watched the awards ceremony, I questioned the place of professional class youth at East Island High School. Through further participant observation and interviews with professional class youth, I came to understand how their out-group experiences influence their postsecondary aspirations.

The impermeability of the lobstering industry on East Island leaves all who were not born into lobstering in the out-group. To support themselves in other industries, out-group members tend to pursue education off-island and hold professional jobs. Some parents have lived on East Island since childhood, while others moved there in adulthood. Professional class values include an ability to work, learn, and live off-island, and thus a sense of mobility is infused in the habitus of professional class.

#### MAKING IT LEGITIMATE: THE OUT-GROUP AT SCHOOL

Scholars of social reproduction, namely Annette Lareau (2011), argue that youth raised in the style of concerted cultivation gain social and cultural capital that is rewarded by dominant institutions and allows them to be successful in a school environment. On East Island, however, the out-group status of the professional class complicates this relationship because the habitus of East Island High School is tailored to the in-group. The place-based education program rewards the social and cultural capital of the lobstering class and pushes professional class youth to look for educational and occupational opportunities off-island, completing the process of social reproduction.

Professional class parents make deliberate decisions about the educational experiences of their children, beginning in the first years of schooling. Both Megan and Logan have strong memories of their preschool experiences. Megan was enrolled in an off-island Montessori preschool and describes it as “an enriching school” that was



“really, really great” for her. Logan’s parents deliberately enrolled him in not one but two years of preschool “to make sure that at a young age I could create connections with some of the people before I got thrown into actual school.” These early educational experiences allowed Megan and Logan to learn the rules of school, so that by the time they entered EIHS, their habitus and the school’s habitus were virtually the same. Their parents’ decisions, then, were moments of social reproduction that influenced the trajectory of their schooling.

As the out-group on the island, these youth value capital and mobility that will allow them to access opportunities in the off-island world. They have been taught that school is one of the foremost institutions on the island through which they can acquire social capital and are comfortable seeking out school resources and taking the advice given to them. Anna, who has always wanted to leave the island for work and travel, attended a college visit during her sophomore year that solidified her decision to go to college. She demonstrates the ease with which professional class youth employ school resources when they recognize their significance:

I went to talk to my guidance counselor and changed my classes for junior year all around so I’m taking better classes and I was, uh, when I picked out my classes at first, I was like, oh, I’m not going to take any more math. I’ve taken all of the required math. Got that out of the way. Done taking math. And she’s like, well, if you want to get into college, you might want to take more math. And I’m like, no! So I signed up for another math class. Not super jazzed about it, but I’ll take it.

Although Anna is “not super jazzed” about the path that her guidance counselor has set her on, but recognizes it as necessary to achieve her goals. She is willing to do something she doesn’t want to do because her guidance counselor told her she should if she wants to attend college. Anna recognizes that she needs certain capital to attend college and that the school can help her to acquire this capital. Brooke provides another example. She

wanted “to get everything done as soon” as possible for college in order to focus on her academics and work. She recognized that the school could help her to achieve this goal and made use of both her guidance counselor and her Maine College Coach during her junior year.

Like Brooke and Anna, Logan approaches school with college in mind. He seeks to align his habitus with that of colleges in his decisions about how to engage with school: “while I do think academics are really important, I feel that co-curricular pieces just help enrich a lifestyle. It’s the whole, all work, no play makes you very dry. A dry, dry person. And not necessarily very attractive to colleges.” Logan recognizes that co-curricular activities can also help him to achieve his goal of attending college off-island. Professional class youth engage with school in a way that grants them the social capital to succeed in an off-island environment, opting to operate within the habitus of schooling because of the benefits – capital – they seek to gain from it. Brooke, Anna, and Logan recognize the importance of working within the bounds of school because of the capital it can provide to them, and, therefore, they adjust their course of action to meet what school administrators think is best for them.

Professional class youth recognize that their lobstering class peers approach school differently. Ultimately, professional class youth distance themselves from the stigmas with which they associate the lobstering class by asserting the legitimacy of EIHS. They recognize that they can only get the capital they need to achieve their aspirations from a school that functions legitimately. As a relative outsider who lived off-island and out of Maine until ninth grade, Brooke offers a description of the way that

professional class youth view, understand, and judge the aspirations of lobstering class youth:

What other students want to do is that a lot of them are dropping out and going fishing. Or, a lot of them are not doing anything and not going to college, and then going and fishing with their parents. And, granted, you work and you make a lot of money, but what if the lobster don't come and they don't bite or anything? And you need that plan b, and they're not really thinking of the plan b part...there're already kids that have like, know exactly what they're going to do, and have it all planned out. And then there are kids that are like, I'm just gonna be fishing for the rest of my life, and nothing's ever gonna go wrong and I'm gonna be rich and happy. But, that's mostly because the, uh, lobster has been biting, I don't know how to correctly say that, I don't know. But, um, and that they're getting a lot of money now, and a lot of the kids are dropping out. It's just their parents wanted them to finish middle school.

Professional class youth recognize that the way lobstering class youth interact with EIHS largely dictates how EIHS is viewed by residents of the island because of the lobstering class's in-group status. According to Megan, the dominant narrative of EIHS is that "it's really looked down upon by a lot of people, including people who go to this school. They think of it as a really crappy school...there are people who will say something stupid, they'll be like, 'oh, sorry, I go to East Island.'" Because professional class youth understand that they need the capital EIHS can provide them with to achieve their aspirations, they defend and seek to legitimate EIHS. According to Megan, "You can get a really great education at East Island. You really can. And people who say that you can't are stupid. The education...is what you make of it." Professional class youth do their best to create an educational experience for themselves at EIHS that allows them to acquire legitimate capital to use off-island.

The place-based education program that EIHS developed to engage lobstering class youth altered the habitus of EIHS in such a way that professional class youth no longer see it as fully aligned with their own habitus and seek to defend its legitimacy.

This conflict emerges through harsh criticisms of the place-based education pathway by professional class youth. Toby acknowledges that he and his peers say “terrible things...about the place-based education classes and their inadequacy.” The place-based education program, Megan says, is for students who want to “skate along,” because the classes in the place-based education program “aren’t academically challenging” and, according to Logan, allow “abuse by students who are low achieving, in order to pass classes without actually learning anything.” Most starkly, Megan declares that “people take place-based education when they don’t want to do school.” By making a clear distinction between the place-based education program, which exists within the school and is taken for school credit, and what they see as legitimate schooling, professional class youth distinguish themselves from the in-group on the island and attempt to regain EIHS’s legitimacy.

For professional class youth, education is the way for them to overcome their out-group status and become a member of the world beyond the island. Because professional class youth operate within the context of larger society, they seek to distinguish themselves from the in-group by distancing themselves from the place-based education program, as Megan discusses:

So if you don’t want to do something super above and beyond and you don’t want to do too terribly you’ll take, you know, mostly art classes, you’ll take gym as much as you can. You might take place-based education...but then if you wanna, exceed...you can take college classes. We offer college classes to juniors and seniors. You can take AP classes online or in school. You can take honors classes. You can really get a great education if you try.

Professional class youth cope with the changing habitus of the school by criticizing the place-based education program and distinguishing their own academic path as different and more legitimate.

Anna's personal experiences in and perspectives on the place-based education program demonstrate how closely linked the professional class youths' college aspirations and their criticisms of the place-based education program are. Anna is unique in that she is the only participant from the professional class who is enrolled in a place-based education program class; she is "taking the art focused place-based education program." When Anna enrolled in the art focused place-based education class, she had unclear future aspirations. Midway through the semester, though, Anna's school-sponsored visit to college transformed her aspirations. Now, Anna is dissatisfied with the place-based education class: "I wouldn't say it's one of my favorite classes. I really don't like it that much." Anna cites the proficiency-based grading system as her primary source of discontent, because it allows students to "just slack off" – and Anna herself admits that she has "slacked off all semester" but then remarks that the class is "not really helping me do anything" and that it's not a class she'd want to do again. For Anna, the class is not helping her do anything that will translate into college and off-island success. The college visit, along with pressure from her mother who has always wanted her to attend college, altered Anna's aspirations and created a disjuncture between her habitus and that of the place-based education program. Anna does not see a way that the class can align with her college aspirations. Ultimately, Anna recognizes the divergence of the place-based education program from the capital she needs school to provide and decides that it is not something that she will continue as she works to achieve her college aspirations.

Professional class youth recognize, largely through their reflections on the place-based education program, that EIHS's habitus is transforming to look less like what they

have experienced in school until now and more like the habitus of the in-group on the island. Logan remarks that at the school:

The people here definitely reflect a large part of the community, which is the fishing...and then we also get some off-islanders who I don't feel always best reflect those communities, but tend to be lower achieving students...as East Island tends to be looked upon as the lower achieving, easier school on the peninsula.

Thus, although the out-group is a large part of the island, Logan sees the school as aligning itself with the in-group on the island. According to Logan, the school tends to “market to the largest population, because that’s what we need to do. And at East Island it tends to be the lower achieving group of people, which is disappointing.” Logan’s description of the largest population of the island – the in-group – as “lower achieving” demonstrates the degree to which he and other members of the professional class place value judgments on varying educational experiences on the island. Megan discusses this “lower achieving” pattern on the island as simply the way it is:

I mean, of course [teachers and the school] discourage dropping out. But they can understand why kids drop out to lobster. And it’s understandable why kids drop out to lobster. If this isn’t gonna apply to you, you know, you don’t need to take AP calculus if you’re gonna spend the rest of your life on a boat. You don’t need to go to college and rack up student loans if you know what you’re doing already. So it, it makes sense.

Through characterizing the in-group as “lower achieving” but also suggesting that “it is understandable” that they might drop out or not attend college, professional class youth apply more value to their own college aspirations. In doing so, they attempt to regain the power of the narrative in EIHS. Their strategy for doing this is to position themselves in a society beyond the island to legitimate their educational choices and overcome their out-group status.

For these youth, school's main role is to transmit capital to students through courses and relationships with teachers and students. In their eyes, however, through the place-based education program and other ways that the school caters to the in-group lobstering class, the habitus of EIHS is changing to disregard them. From their perspective, the school is pushing them out as it invites the lobstering class in. The school, then, effectively detaches professional class youth from the school and the community, pushing them out of the community and facilitating social reproduction.

#### CONCERTED CULTIVATION ON EAST ISLAND: OUT-GROUP FAMILY LIFE

Professional class youth attend school early, participate in many extracurricular activities, and are taught to speak and act in certain ways because of deliberate child-rearing decisions made by their parents. These child-rearing patterns form the habitus within which professional class youth interact with all institutions. They are aligned with Annette Lareau's (2011) "concerted cultivation," in which children are involved with organized, enriching activities, encouraged to develop their reasoning and vocabulary through productive talk, and taught to advocate for themselves within institutions. Lareau (2011) would assert that because of these child rearing tactics, these youth are better able to interact with societal institutions. On the island, however, the in-group out-group social structure disrupts the interactions prior research would expect, because local institutions tend to reward the social and cultural capital of the lobstering class. This creates a mismatch between the concerted cultivation that professional class families practice and the institutions that they operate within on the island.

Parents of professional class youth reject the island in-group notion that children will naturally "raise hell," as a member of the lobstering class put it, and instead model

their parenting on off-island, middle-class values, teaching their children to value behaviors normalized off-island and therefore socializing their children to fit better into off-island institutions. Logan, who has three older sisters, described that his mother

Never really liked taking us out of the house because there were...four of us, and we were kind of crazy. And she always liked upholding, you know, a good image, I guess. And not having the kids that are running around through the aisles in the stores and what not. So, she was very big on making sure we behaved ourselves out in public. And if we were distracting, we, we left.

Similarly, Megan emphasized that she and her older brother were very well behaved children and stresses the importance of this in contrast to her younger half-brother, who acts out more. This pattern of professional class behavior is also in significant contrast to the childhood lifestyle of lobstering class youth, who were able to “have fun without getting in trouble,” according to Dennis. The child-rearing patterns of the professional class, then, are markedly different from those of the lobstering class and demonstrate the out-group’s association with off-island, middle class values, further distancing them from in-group status on the island.

Although parents have less agency in what their children do as the children get older, professional class parents continue to encourage their children to find and take opportunities that will give them greater status in the outside world. Anna’s mother, for example, “doesn’t like it when” Anna just barely passes a class, and wants her to “get good grades” to eventually go to college. Megan’s aspirations have always fallen more in line with her mother’s aspirations for her; her mother wants her “to go to a really nice college. But she’ll be supportive of whatever” Megan chooses to do. Through concerted cultivation, Lareau (2011) asserts, children are taught to be comfortable questioning authority figures, and as youth grow older, this includes their parents.



Professional class youth employ this agency when making decisions about their future; they are comfortable making decisions for themselves that may run counter to what their parents desire for them. They also have a desire for mobility that has emerged in part through concerted cultivation, where they are regularly exposed to life beyond the island through organized school and community activities. Because they have been socialized by their parents to see life beyond the island, these youth are able to conceptualize and assert a desire for life outside of other family expectations. Logan, who plans to pursue a career in theater, is comfortable operating outside of his parents' aspirations for him and is able to rationalize his decisions in a way that draws on the values he was taught through concerted cultivation:

They would be very happy if I just went into some, like, math, science field...something related to that, that financially is going to be more stable than theater. And I think this is partly due to how they were raised. Because their parents were raised, um, a job's a job...And you needed to get money, and to live and survive. And, so my parents bought into that for the most part. And my father is not very happy with his job, nor is my mother...it's like a double layer. In some sense it's their old traditions telling them that I need to go into engineering or math, a math-science field. Whereas, sort of their hearts are being like, don't do it, though. Because I want you to, I want you to do what you love, because it's pointless to do something you hate. And even if they aren't saying that, I'm gonna take it as that. I'm gonna take it as an invitation to go and do what I want.

Logan and other professional class youth are able to distance themselves from their parents because they are able to visualize themselves independently in life beyond the island. Through institutional engagement, professional class youth have become comfortable charting their own path and adapting, regardless of whether that includes obvious familial support, as it does for Anna, or not, as is the case for Logan:

I think my parents are still trying to, like, condition me to not need approval, which is good. And I've definitely come more towards that, where before I needed a lot of approval. I think I'm sort of moving to a

sense of where I don't need as much approval. Which is important in life, because you're not always going to get approval, and you need to learn how to function without getting it.

Professional class youth, then, are comfortable operating without distinct approval because they have been taught through concerted cultivation to stand up for themselves and assert what they want. Further, their status as a member of the out-group on the island has socialized them to function without the approval of the community or their family.

#### BEING AN OUTSIDER: PROFESSIONAL YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY

Professional class youth recognize the existence of the in-group and their exclusion from it. In response, they find social subgroups through involvement in extracurricular and community activities where they can become an in-group of sorts. They don't identify as being part of the lobstering class and thus recognize their out-group status on the island. Brooke aptly discusses the difficulty of accessing any part of the island economy as an out-group member:

It's kind of like you're an outsider, we don't know you, we don't know anything about you. And, you're not really gonna get hired anywhere 'cause nobody knows anything about you. And, everybody is related to everybody, and there are cousins that are like, two or three times removed, sometimes five removed, and they're like, second cousins, third cousins...it's just very confusing. And it's probably uncomfortable being, like, outside and trying to get a job, because the first year here, I did not have a job at all, 'cause I applied and nobody knew me at all. They just knew, like, this new person. And, I couldn't get babysitting. I didn't really know anybody at all...It's definitely hard trying to get started on the island, but once you do, it's, like you just need to continue it. ...But, there's still, like, that kind of like, we don't really know you that well, so we don't know if we want to hire you. And then, like, if one employee was like, oh I met her, I really didn't like her, they won't hire you. And if one person's like, oh yeah, I love her, she's so nice, then they'll hire you. And it, it's based on, like, so much emotional and stuff, and I understand that, 'cause like, you don't have any other, you don't have anything else to go on...It's weird being an outsider on the island.

Brooke is describing the barriers that out-group members face when they try to access in-group economic structures.

Instead of working to enter the in-group lobstering class, professional class youth look to options that transcend the island in which they can use their capital to shed their out-group status in ways they can't on the island. They explore possible alternatives through their involvement in school- and community-sponsored activities including drama, Odyssey of the Mind, chess, cheerleading, and community theater programs. These activities are not island-specific and can be continued beyond the island. They also often involve spending time off-island or interacting with people from off-island, exposing youth to opportunities off the island and providing youth with skills and connections that function as social capital in their efforts to increase mobility and further connecting them to communities beyond the social community of the island. In the instance of theater, professional class youth are able to make social connections with individuals in the community who have high off-island status. For these youth, these relationships and the networks that result from them are significant. Logan has developed the deepest of these relationships through his involvement with Performing Arts Center:

I would say my experiences at the Performing Arts Center are huge, because I've been able to create so many connections with directors, set designers, lighting people, costume people. Other fellow directors who do regularly get really good jobs. And I still communicate with a lot of them today, even though they're much older than me. And even in that they have their own connections, and that's really all life, most jobs or life is. Is connections. And, being able to have the correct connections to get what you need. Because it's not necessarily that you have the most talent, it's just if you know the right people often. Because a lot of people have the talent, but they don't know the right people. So I am hoping in that sense, I have that one step forward, compared to a lot of people who didn't. And there are a lot of people who also have that, or have even more, but at least I'm not at the end of the, the train.

## 70 • Negotiating Shared Space: The Out-Group on East Island

Logan recognizes that connections that he makes on the island will serve him as he navigates off-island social communities. Further, the permeable theater and arts community on the island allows professional class youth to find a way to gain a unique form of status on the island: still out-group, but consisting of a more defined and purposeful out-group.

Professional class youth who live on East Island hold values that they believe are transferrable to a life beyond the island. They were taught these values throughout childhood from their parents and, through social reproduction, now hold those values for themselves. They see the island within a larger sociopolitical environment, which influences their actions in all institutions on the island. In developing their aspirations, these youth look beyond the island and rarely indicate that the island may play a role in their future. Professional class youth activate their capital most within school and are less influenced by family and community structures, leading them to aspire to follow the traditional path of postsecondary education off-island in pursuit of greater social status and mobility.

## **6** LOOKING AHEAD

Most people know that fishing's not going to be around forever.

-Dennis, 11<sup>th</sup> grade lobstering class youth

Lobstering and professional class youth share space on East Island. They grow up, attend school, and make decisions on the same streets, in the same hallways, and on the same small island. Within the same space, though, two substantially different social groups emerge – different in their interests, family life, approaches to school, and postsecondary aspirations. I have used interview data from East Island youth along with existing scholarly research to argue that in the community of East Island, distinct social groups are formed on the basis of inclusion in and exclusion from the lobstering industry on the island. Youth within each group acquire different forms of social and cultural capital from their parents, extended family, and community networks. Then, youth activate certain aspects of their capital within school and community structures to attain the benefits that they have been socialized to expect from these structures. At its core, this process is social reproduction, wherein lobstering class youth become lobstering class adults and professional class youth become professional class adults.

My research considered whether East Island High School disrupts this process of social reproduction through its place-based education programs. Through their engagement, or lack of, with the marine studies place-based education program, lobstering class youth demonstrate that they will only engage with school money if it gives them capital that they can use in lobstering – in other words, if it will help them to make. Thus, my research suggests that the marine studies place-based education program does not actually engage lobstering class youth with school based on the merits of

education and instead perpetuates social reproduction by giving lobstering class youth the skills and training they need to enter the lobstering industry.

The place-based education program also promotes social reproduction for the professional class. These youth are socialized by their parents to expect EIHS to provide the social and cultural capital they will need when they become mobile and experience off-island life through work and education. The position of professional class youth is unique because they seek to become mobile through their experiences in school and are simultaneously alienated by the values that EIHS promotes through the place-based education program. Students in this program are educated for life on the island, not life beyond it. The out-group status of professional class youth is further exacerbated and they undergo social reproduction whereby they pursue opportunities off-island as their parents have.

#### OTHER NARRATIVES, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was limited in its size and scope, and a more thorough study would include a larger sample size to gain a deeper understanding of the nuanced perspectives of youth at East Island. Undoubtedly, few students fit perfectly into the molds of lobstering class and professional class, and a larger sample size would allow for more refined categorizations of social groups. More participants would bring a wider variety of perspectives, which would help to better understand the networks and structures of East Island. Further, East Island High School's place-based education program has been fully implemented for only three years, so it is early to make judgments about its impacts.

The small sample size made it difficult to consider two key aspects of identity: gender and race. These identities are largely taken for granted on East Island, where the

high school is 96 percent white and lobstering remains a male-dominated industry. They are often ignored in the lobstering and professional classes and hold more salience for youth who operate on the outskirts of these groups. Two interview participants, Rebecca and Gus, demonstrate the ways that gender and race function subversively on East Island. Rebecca offers only one narrative of the female experience in the lobstering class, and few claims can be made about the female experience in the lobstering class based solely on her experiences and what the male youth of the lobstering class have to say. Remarks from professional class youth about the gender dynamics of the island also cannot be taken as absolute because of their out-group status and understandings.

Gus can be classified as neither professional nor lobstering class, largely because of his race and his status as a first-generation immigrant. Gus migrated to East Island with his family from Southeast Asia when he was in fourth grade. Both of his parents were college-educated and held professional class jobs in their originating country. When they came to East Island, though, his father found work in the fisheries, though not in lobstering, and his mother found work at various restaurants. Their professional class status did not migrate with them, and they are also not lobstering class on the island because they do not have the hereditary connection to fishing. Gus's parents support his aspirations to attend college, but because they were not educated in the American college system, they lack extensive social and cultural capital with which to help him navigate these structures. Despite the fact that English is his second language, Gus takes mostly honors level classes and is highly competitive in his academic work.

Although it is his family's immigration that keep him from being in either social category, it is Gus's race that marks him as different from other students. When Gus

arrived on East Island, his first thoughts were, “To be honest, I was thinking like, everyone is white. [*Laughs*] Like, o-o-o-kay. And then I was like, huh, I’m the only brown kid in the school. So like, okay.” He recognizes that he is “the only person whose second language is English.” Even with these observations, Gus describes the school and community as “really, like, accepting of people and diversity.” He has little negative to say about his experiences as one of few nonwhite students in the school. His race and the accent with which he speaks English are noticeable in EIHS and contest the way that most youth are able to ignore race. Gus shows more complexity in the narrative of EIHS, and his presence throws open issues of race. Further research could consider the experiences of nonwhite youth and their families on East Island.

Future research should consider island communities beyond East Island, communities both with and without place-based education programs. An extension of the current study could follow up with youth interviewed on East Island in a number of years to see whether their aspirations and expectations played out and if their conceptions of success have changed. Such an extension would also explore narratives repeated by a few students, for example that individuals frequently leave East Island to pursue work or education, only to return within a few years. While this study has no data to confirm or deny this perception, Megan remarks that “a lot of people come back. When they leave the island. Unless they’re really big flowers.” Trevor confirms this perception from the lobstering class: “I’ve never really known anybody that’s gone and never come back, I don’t think.” Finally, Anna elaborates on what she sees as the community perception:

I think a lot of them are like, well, okay, go to college, but you’re gonna end up coming back here, and you’re never, ever going to leave the island. I know a lot of people think this island is basically like a death trap, and



you're gonna be here for the rest of your life, and there's no getting out of it. So, I think they're like, ok, go to college, do that, but you'll be back.

A few participants, then, perceived that many people come back to the island. More extensive research could explore whether this is indeed true, and, if it is found to be true, why individuals return to East Island and what they do when they return.

More in-depth research on EIHS could also consider the arts-focused place-based education program. An interesting trend is that while Megan, Toby, Anna, and Logan were all involved in drama or theater in some capacity, none of them planned to pursue participation in the arts-focused place-based education program at EIHS. In interviews, they attributed this to the illegitimacy of the program. Further research could consider how the arts-focused program could be adapted to meet their expectations of school. Until such research can be undertaken, this research stands in the company of research on the aspirations of rural youth and contributes a needed perspective on island communities.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST ISLAND AND OTHERS IN SIMILAR WATERS

It is likely that lobstering will continue to dominate East Island's economy until professional jobs are abundant and essential to the economy, or until the lobster no longer bite. Beyond teaching and nursing, which already exist, professional jobs are not likely to come to East Island because of the small population. Social groupings will continue to persist and be reproduced in youth until lobstering fails to be economically sustainable. On East Island and in other similar island or rural communities that rely on a successful natural resource industry, the social structure of the island will likely be built around that industry. These industries, though constituting in-groups in their specific locations, do not have status as ascribed by Bourdieu (1977) and larger society because they require little

formal education and much manual labor. Thus, in places where these in-groups exist, institutions will function differently because of the way they are shaped by the in-group. This is seen in East Island High School but also applies to other institutions on East Island and beyond. Youth who are traditionally school-successful, here the professional class, will be resistant to changes in the traditional model of schooling, suggesting that schools, like East Island, who attempt to incorporate new methods of teaching and learning, like the place-based education program, should do so in a way that will include and draw in school-successful youth.

My research also brings into question the relevance of college as an understood next step in rural communities with significant place-based economies. The marine studies place-based education program, from the school perspective, gives students a critical understanding of the fisheries in which they work so that they can go to college before coming back to the island, theoretically assuring youth options should the fisheries collapse. From the student perspective, though, college is unnecessary because of the immediate possibility of fishing, suggesting that teachers and administrators need to work further to reconcile these differences in a way that may promote college as a more reasonable option, if it is deemed to be such.

Social reproduction will likely continue for the youth in this study after high school because of college, work, and marriage. Often, colleges facilitate social reproduction as much as high schools like EIHS do (Armstrong 2013). When professional class youth get to college, they may find themselves losing their out-group status because they are no longer operating within the island's habitus but still stagnant at their relative level of class. Not all members of the out-group who move off-island will

become upper class, and likely few members of the in-group will retain their in-group status should they go off-island. Ultimately, this suggests that traditional understandings of social structure, like that put forth by Bourdieu (1977), are merely starting points, especially in rural and island communities, and that social structure and class must be considered on a place-by-place basis.

This research is not intended to be an evaluation of East Island High School's place-based education program; rather, it is intended to consider how rural island youth make postsecondary decisions in the context of the networks and structures around them. While the place-based education program indeed has some influence in the way that both in-group and out-group youth at EIHS perceive social groupings and operationalize their aspirations, it is by no means the only force. Fishing networks on East Island strongly influence social groupings, which in turn influence youths' aspirations, and family and community networks are in large part built within and around these fishing networks. Above all, this research demonstrates that youth do not make decisions about their postsecondary aspirations in a vacuum. They are influenced by a multitude of community, family, and school networks and structures. As they look ahead, they will be forced to confront these structures, even if they do indeed have the world in their hands.

## REFERENCES

- Ali, Saba Rasheed and Jodi L. Saunders. 2006. "College Expectations of Rural Appalachian Youth: An Exploration of Social Cognitive Career Theory Factors." *The Career Development Quarterly* 55(1): 38-51.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1973. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." Pp. 71-112 in *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change: Papers in the Sociology of Education*, edited by Richard Brown. London: Tavistock Publications Limited.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc.
- Burnell, Beverly A. 2003. "The 'Real World' Aspirations of Work-Bound Rural Students." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 18(2): 104-113.
- "Business & Industry." 2015. Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Accessed December 11, 2015 (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/business-industry.aspx>)

- Byun, Soo-yong., Judith L. Meece, Matthew J. Irvin, and Bryan C. Hutchins. 2012. "The Role of Social Capital in Educational Aspirations of Rural Youth." *Rural Sociology* 77(3): 355-379.
- Carr, Patrick J. and Kefalas, Maria J. 2009. *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and what it means for America*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Corbett, Michael. 2004. "'It was Fine, if you wanted to leave': Educational Ambivalence in a Nova Scotian Coastal Community 1963-1998." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 35(4): 451-471.
- Corbett, Michael. 2007a. *Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community*. Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada: Fernwood Publications.
- Corbett, Michael. 2007b. "Travels in Space and Place: Identity and Rural Schooling." *Canadian Journal of Education* 30(3): 771-792.
- Corbett, Michael. 2010. "Wharf Talk, Home Talk, and School Talk: The Politics of Language in a Coastal Community." Pp. 115-131 in *Rural Education for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by K. A. Schafft and A. Y. Jackson. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Corbett, Michael. 2013. "'I'm Going to Make Sure I'm Ready before I Leave': The Complexity of Educational and Mobility Decision-Making in a Canadian Coastal Community." *Journal of Rural Studies* 32: 275-282.
- Data Warehouse. 2014. "Data Tables: Graduation." *Maine Department of Education*. Accessed March 9, 2016 ([http://dw.education.maine.gov/DirectoryManager/WEB/Maine\\_Report/GraduationDTViewer.aspx](http://dw.education.maine.gov/DirectoryManager/WEB/Maine_Report/GraduationDTViewer.aspx)).

- Gracey, Harry. 2008. "Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as Academic Boot Camp." Pp. 131-36 in *Schools and Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, edited by J. H. Ballantine and J. Z. Spade. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Gibbons, Michael Stephan. 2010. "Islanders in Community: Identity Negotiation through Sites of Conflict and Transcripts of Power." *Island Studies Journal*. 5(2):165-192.
- Howley, Caitlin W. 2006. "Remote Possibilities: Rural Children's Educational Aspirations." *Peabody Journal of Education* 81(2): 62-80.
- Israel, Glenn D., Lionel J. Beaulieu, and Glen Hartless. 2001. "The Influence of Family and Community Social Capital on Educational Achievement." *Rural Sociology* 66(1): 43-68.
- Kusmin, Lorin. 2015. "Rural America at a Glance, 2015 Edition." Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Accessed December 11, 2015 (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib-economic-information-bulletin/eib-145.aspx>).
- Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- McLaughlin, Diane K., Carla M. Shoff and Mary Ann Demi. 2014. "Influence of Perceptions of Current and Future Community on Residential Aspirations of Rural Youth." *Rural Sociology* 79(4): 453-477.
- McReynolds, Samuel A. 2014. "Community Sustainability in the Year-Round Islands of Maine." *Island Studies Journal* 9(1):79-102.
- Meece, Judith L., Bryan C. Hutchins, Soo-yong Byun, T. W. Farmer, Matthew J. Irvin and Margaret Weiss. 2013. "Preparing for Adulthood: A Recent Examination of

the Alignment of Rural Youth's Future Educational and Vocational Aspirations.”

*Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology* 3(2): 175-192.

Petrin, Robert A., Kai A. Schafft and Judith L. Meece. 2014. “Educational Sorting and Residential Aspirations among Rural High School Students: What are the Contributions of Schools and Educators to Rural Brain Drain?” *American Educational Research Journal* 51(2): 294-326.

The Pew Charitable Trusts. 2012. “Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility across Generations.” The Pew Charitable Trusts Economic Mobility Project. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Reynnells, Louise. 2014. “What is Rural?” Beltsville, MD: USDA, National Agricultural Library, Rural Information Center. Accessed December 11, 2015 (<http://ric.nal.usda.gov/what-rural>).

Rowan, Hope. 2013. “Maine's Year-Round Island Communities.” ArcGIS. January 23. Accessed April 20, 2016. (<http://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=0b45364ae6fb47f6b33a07d182db2c8b>).

Sage, Rayna, and Jennifer Sherman. 2014. “‘There Are No Jobs Here’: Opportunity Structures, Moral Judgment, and Educational Trajectories in the Rural Northwest.” Pp. 67-93 in *Dynamics of social class, race, and place in rural education*, C. B. Howley, A. Howley, and J. D. Johnson. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Shamah, Devora and Katherine A. MacTavish. 2015. “Purpose and Perceptions of Family Social Location among Rural Youth.” *Youth & Society*, 1-23.

- Sherman, Jennifer, & Rayna Sage. 2011. "Sending Off All Your Good Treasures: Rural Schools, Brain-Drain, and Community Survival in the Wake of Economic Collapse." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 26(11): 1-14.
- Smith, Gregory A and David Sobel. 2010. *Place- and Community-Based Education in Schools*. New York, Routledge.
- Wilcox, Kristen Campbell, Janet I. Angelis, Linda Baker, and Hal A. Lawson. 2014. "The Value of People, Place, and Possibilities: A Multiple Case Study of Rural High School Completion." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 29(9): 1-18.
- Willis, Paul. 1980. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.