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# *Beeliners, Pinkies, and Kitties: Mobility and Marginalization in the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery*

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This paper describes and analyzes the results of anthropological fieldwork carried out to determine the degree and patterns of residential mobility of commercial fishermen based in a small, southeastern US community undergoing rapid transformations. While the study was conducted to directly aid in understanding the issue of mobility for the Census Bureau, the findings are also applicable to the job of improving federal fishery management by making it more responsive to the needs of fishing communities. Such communities, however defined, are currently experiencing great stress from the exogenous forces of tourism, land redevelopment, globalization of seafood markets, increasing property taxes, and environmental degradation. How different groupings in the community respond to or resist such stress is conditioned by the role and class each grouping occupies. In the case of this small grouping of snapper-grouper fishermen, their extremely marginalized position in the community did not afford them the ability to resist being forced out of business and their fish house being closed down in December 2003. This paper explores the marginalization of commercial fishermen in the southeastern United States, and submits that the process and outcome of federal fisheries management can be improved by better understanding the social and cultural context of fishermen's day-to-day lives.

**Key words:** mobility, marginalization, commercial fishing, fishery management, South Atlantic coastal United States

## Introduction

Anthropologists' work is increasingly engaged in policy-making arenas such as NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) where legal mandates such as the National Environmental Protection Act (1985) and the Sustainable Fishing Act (1996) require economic, sociological and anthropological analysis to determine the impacts of new fishing regulations upon fishing communities.<sup>1</sup> In trying to identify these fishing communities and set a baseline for future research, anthropologists and other social scientists often turn to secondary data sources such as the US Census Bureau's demographic data. It comes as no surprise that there are problems with that data. The 2000 Census was not an exception. There were, and are, serious concerns that many

segments of the US population were either undercounted or not adequately accounted for. The homeless, migrant workers, offshore oil workers, and fishing crews often slip through the cracks in the Census process; they are dubbed highly mobile persons or people that change their residence at least once every six months.

The US Census Bureau reports that about 16 percent of the United States population moved at least once between 1999 and 2000. Hoping to develop a better understanding of the nature of mobility and a more precise methodology to enumerate highly mobile people, the Census Bureau, for the 2000 Census, fielded six ethnographers to study patterns of mobility among six different highly mobile groups. The studies ranged in focus from South Florida's Haitian migrant workers to the homeless in the Pacific Northwest. One highly mobile group of interest to both the Census Bureau and the NMFS were small-scale commercial fishermen<sup>2</sup> in the Southeastern United States. I was contracted by the Census Bureau and NMFS to conduct a focused ethnography in order to better understand these particular fishing crews and their families and friends, and how mobility shaped their daily lives. It is hoped that better understanding of mobility among fishermen will help policy makers both inside and outside fishery management make more informed choices when their regulations affect those who "live from the sea," (Smith 1977).

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## Fishing as a Mobile Occupation

Except for Raymond Firth's 1946 study, *Malay Fishermen* (1966), studies of maritime communities were scarce and unfocused until the early 1970's, when the amount of fieldwork conducted specifically in fishing communities increased around the world. In the United States, works by Acheson (1983), Durrenburger (1986, 1996), Fricke (1973), Kitner (1996, 1988, 1996), McCay and Acheson (1987), Orbach (1977), Pollnac (1976), and Spoehr (1980) and many others created a core of ethnographic studies of fishermen and fishing communities. These studies explored the concepts of the ocean as a common property resource ("the commons"), how resources were allocated and competed for among users, and how fishing peoples regulated the use of ocean resources among themselves. More recent works documented how newer global economies, such as tourism, were beginning to transform the local fishing economies and communities (Griffith 1999); more recently others have looked at regulatory impacts (McCay and Finlayson 1998; Smith, et al. 2003) or everyday fishing life (West and Garrity-Blake 2004). Still, no one had looked specifically or critically at one of the defining issues of the fishing life, that is, how does a very transient, highly mobile lifestyle affect those in the fishery?

While a total of three hypotheses guided the original work, for this paper I will explore only one: That fishing crews' high degree of mobility was tied closely to their being the most economically and culturally marginalized workers in the industry. The mobility-marginalization linkage as a social characteristic of many fishing crews ultimately has a bearing on what forms fishery management should take in the future in order to be both fair and equitable to all participants. Furthermore, fishery regulations should not tempt concern over issues of environmental justice with regard to low-income populations; the case to be made here is that fishing crews' sociological condition may indeed pose problems for creating fair, equitable, and just solutions to marine resource management. If fishing crews in the South Atlantic area are indeed marginalized, then they also belong to a lower economic bracket than other fishermen. Marginalized fishermen are less likely to participate in management forums; their lower literacy skills do not always produce convincing written communications with managers, and their less "mainstream" lifestyle make them stand out both visually and verbally at a public hearing (Weeks 2000). Realizing that such fishermen are more likely to be left out from giving stakeholder input, managers should guard against inadvertently getting biased data (only considering input from less marginalized vessel owners, for example) that may not negatively impact one group but would hurt another industry sector that has fewer general resources to draw upon.

Finally, while it is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth stating that even marginalized fishermen can be very knowledgeable about the ocean, weather patterns, fishery stocks, and so forth, even though this knowledge is presented

in a format that is unlike standard Western scientific data (see, for example, Paolisso 2000). Efforts should be made to better gather, collate and analyze this data in order to more fully understand the marine ecosystem.

## Methods

Because fishermen need to leave from a dock where they can load up on fuel, ice, provisions and other essentials, and must return to a dock to unload fish, I decided to make the fish house and its associated fishing dock and boats the ethnographic heart of contact between the fishermen and me.

In the beginning I spent most of my time observing behavior and listening to conversations among fishermen at the fish house proper. This was a place of many people coming and going and no one seemed to mind my presence very much, or think it odd. I was but one more face among biologists, marine patrolmen, truckers, fish buyers, wives, and children that flowed in and out of the fish house through the day. I tried mostly to build rapport by giving fishermen or their girlfriends a ride to the grocery store, hardware store, or wherever they might be living at the time.<sup>3</sup> As the fishermen began to trust me more, I was invited onto their boats.

Both the fish house and the boat offered different benefits for my work's observations. A boat was a more quiet and relaxed setting, and by its nature, it acted as an efficient filter of the non-fishing people ever-present at the fish house. Boats were thus chosen as the preferred observation site not only because of their "filtering" quality but also because they elucidated most clearly who networked with whom.<sup>4</sup> The logic is fairly simple: unless the captain of the boat allows a person on board, they by custom stay off the boat. Captains employed this rule to keep unwanted guests off their boat. If an undesirable person wanted to come aboard, for example, to borrow a tool, the captain would rather get up and hand the tool to the person rather than have him board his vessel. This cultural rule serves to maintain one's privacy in a setting—the marina/fishing dock—where the borders delineating the realms of public and private are difficult to differentiate.

As fieldwork progressed and my rapport with the fishermen deepened, I was invited to houses, hotel rooms, and mobile house trailers to continue interviews and observations. A local bar frequented mainly by commercial fishermen was the other venue where many conversations and observations took place.

During twelve one- to two-day field visits, I carried out informal interviews with approximately 45 members of the fishing community, the majority active fishermen. To further contextualize such a short study, I audio-taped five life history interviews with fishermen. While the NMFS keeps records on the number of permit holders in the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic, the vast majority of these permits are held by fishing vessel owners (which could be an individual or a fish house owner), a different entity entirely than the

fishing crew. There were approximately 900 permits held in 2004. Of those, about 50% fish at least once a year. There is no informal or formal accounting of the crew that serves on those boats, and there is no determined or agreed upon method for estimating that number either.

It is important to note that the snowball sampling method employed (in order to trace out social networks) led me to interview a majority of fishermen that were crew members. Few of those interviewed held high-level positions in the fishing industry such as vessel owner, fish house manager, or fish buyer. Thus when fishermen are discussed in the context of this paper, I am almost always (unless otherwise noted) referring to crewmembers in this study and not a prototypical fisherman.

Finally, because of the ever-present suspicion of the ethnographer's work by fishermen and their cohorts, notes were rarely taken while in their presence. Instead, the drive back from the field site was used to recount all the observations of the day into a hand-held tape recorder. Those tapes were then transcribed and elaborated the following day.

It is difficult to say with complete certainty that no one refused talking to me or being interviewed. Perhaps some fishermen simply avoided being around when they saw I was asking questions. However, as the study progressed, more fishermen came to me to discuss what I was doing, ask questions about the results, and give their opinions on the day-to-day life of working at sea. I feel that the sample represented by the interviews completed is fairly representative of the fishing crews in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery.

### The Ethnographic Setting

It's 7 AM when my car turns north onto the two-lane business highway running into Atlantic Harbor.<sup>5</sup> The large live oak trees bend over the road and the sprawling vacation homes on the marsh are still quietly shrouded in mist.<sup>6</sup> A Ford pick-up truck rumbles out and races off into the morning ahead of me. I drive by now-familiar restaurants and bars, small churches and a few seafood retail shops, all still closed, waiting for the late-sleeping tourists to arise. Occasionally I catch a glimpse out over the inlet waters to the strip of land that separates the inlet from the open ocean. That finger of sand is also built up with high-rise condominiums and the gigantic vacation homes so ubiquitous up and down the eastern seaboard. But looking to my left I see something different: smaller, more modest houses and a good many mobile homes, some in "parks" and some sitting independently on private land. There are also established, independent businesses, such as bait and tackle shops, hardware stores, taverns, and the community hall. Most of the locals live right here, close to the fish house, the focal point of the social network of fishermen.

Up ahead I see the signs that tell me to slow down: Deep Sea Dive Charters and Southern Skies Marina, both catering mostly to recreational divers and fishermen. These businesses look neat and trim, and even the early-risers milling about in the parking lots, preparing for sport fishing, look sharp and confident.

But the vision of Brady's Fish House is different, a topsy-turvy reflection of its manicured surroundings. The business has no proper sign, only a small hand-lettered plaque that hangs slightly askew above the loading dock door. An anomaly wedged in between the high-end charter, party and dive boats, and manicured marina buildings, the fish house looks like a piece of an industrial park that got washed up onshore like flotsam lost on its way home. I search for historical clues to explain the clear visual dissonance of the scene. As is the case with many eastern coastal landscapes, there has been a social and economic transformation due to the shifting of local economies.<sup>7</sup>

I pull into the small gravel parking lot already full with late model pickups and some older sedans. Before getting out of my car, I make sure I have plenty of cigarettes to share. I grab the case of cold Budweiser beer out of the trunk and head up to the loading platform that forms the front of the fish house.

Double Oh, Special Ed, Roper, and Kingsie are sitting on folding chairs, already resting from the extreme heat of the southern morning. Special Ed usually rents a room at one of the local, inexpensive motels. Double Oh stays here, then there, sometimes nowhere; last night he slept at the fish house on top of the conveyer belt. Roper rents a room from the elderly lady who owns the trim white house across the street and Kingsie sometimes stays with one of his many girlfriends, but just as often spends the nights on shore at his mother's house five miles down the road.

"Hey! Gorgeous! I see you're looking good today, and that beer's looking better!" shouts Kingsie, as I greet him and hand him and the others "a cold one." It's early, but it is rare to find a fisherman here that won't accept an ice-cold beer. I ask Ed how his leg is doing; while fishing last week he had an accident that could have easily crippled him. Because he has no insurance, he is simply doctoring the ugly wound himself. We chat a bit about his condition and he assures me it will be fine. I then head into the fish house and stash the beers in the ice room, being careful not to fall on the slippery mounds of ice used to pack the fish when it comes in from the boats. I walk to the back door of the building, lean against the frame, light a cigarette and chat with Ken, the dock manager. Ken is about 32 yrs old, married with three children, who used to go fishing but settled down and took a "land job" when his children were born. We look out the door onto the rickety docks and the "bandit boats"<sup>8</sup> tied up, watching one boat, the Forever Foolish V, maneuver into the spot reserved for vessels unloading fish. A long conveyer belt that carries the fish to the packing and weighing floor runs downhill from the fish house to the dock. It is paralleled by an equally long metal pipe that spews the ice from the house into the hold of the boat. None of the boats at this fish house are refrigerated; in fact, I know of no bandit boats in the Southeast that do not have to load ice before each fishing trip. Once the Forever Foolish V is tied up, the crew bursts into activity and begins the process of unloading the catch into large plastic boxes, hoisting it with a large electric winch from the boat to the dock



to the conveyer belt. Each box weighs about 50 kilograms, and is slippery with "fish juice." Once the boxes reach the floor of the fish house, two men will sort the brightly hued catch by species and size, packing it into wooden crates to be shipped off, mostly to the Fulton Fish Market in New York City and various locations in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Sam, the captain of the boat, is about 40, wiry with blue eyes, originally from West Virginia and tough as nails. Sam and his new girlfriend are temporarily staying in the downstairs part of a two-story house rented by other fishermen. He springs onto the dock, barks some directions to a crewmember over the blaring hard rock music coming from inside the cabin, and runs up the steps to the fish house, two by two.

"Hey Sam, howya doing?"

"Just fine, sweetheart! How's your study comin' along? These boys bein' good to you?" Sam jokes. Then, leaning closer, Sam asks, "You got a beer around here?"

"Yep, in the cooler, help yourself! And yeah, Sam, everyone is being real nice. By the way, can we do that little interview I asked you about before? You know, just a few questions so I can get this study done?"

Sam gives me a big toothy grin, nods his head and says, "Just wait till we get unloaded and cleaned up...you gonna be around for a while?" I nod back, smiling, sure, no problem. Sam moves off to make sure the catch is honestly tallied while I continue leaning, observing all that is going on around me.

The fish house is constructed of cement block and wood framing. The lower level is an open space that at one end serves as the loading platform for the small trucks that buy and distribute the fish.<sup>10</sup> Facing the water, the packing floor is where the fresh fish is iced, packed into boxes and temporarily stored in a large refrigerated room. There is a smaller room for filleting fish (mostly used by fishermen for their own share of the catch), and another room for storage of odds and ends. Much of the floor in the open area is occupied by the wooden shipping boxes used to pack and ship the fish.

The fish house is normally bustling with activity from early morning until the close of official business each day around 5 P.M. There are steady deliveries being made: fish packing boxes, parts for the boats' engines, and numerous other mechanical and fishing necessities. If fish is being offloaded, then two to three men and women stand by the conveyor belt that runs uphill from the docks, grabbing the fish as they come. They toss the fish—some weighing upward of fifty pounds apiece—into boxes to then be counted, sorted, weighed and iced. Often there are law enforcement officials checking for illegal catches, and fishery biologists from the state fisheries department who measure, weigh, and count fish for biological analysis. A loud radio blasts nonstop country western or rock music. Inevitably, a case of beer is being cooled in the ice and drunk simultaneously with the unloading. Fishermen come and go, to check their schedules, to pick up paychecks, to work on engines, or to simply pass the time with friends and workmates. The family members and girlfriends of the fishermen make up much of the crowd

that gathers everyday at the fish house. They often share "cool drinks" and cigarettes while sitting on folding chairs or empty fish boxes on the front delivery landing where the breeze blows away some of the day's heavy heat. Other people will gather in the upstairs office, but most will eventually end up down on the fishing docks where the boats are. It is all a whirl of activity and noise and shouting and the ever-present smell of fish.

I head upstairs, the loud music and men's voices fading as I go. The second story of the building is air-conditioned office space, with a front room fitted with a run-down couch and a few unbalanced chairs, a desk, a phone, a VHF radio, and an older television that is forever tuned to the Weather Channel. The entire back wall of this room is built of windows that look down onto the docks below where the boats are tied. These windows open easily and allow those in the office to yell below to tell someone of a phone call, or that a payment is ready. A smaller room is the heart of all the accounting that is done at the fish house, and it is here where the house manager, Bill, sits and determines where to sell the fish today, writes paychecks, advances, and dispatches with other pressing matters. This room also holds a computer with Internet access, a printer, a fax machine, and another telephone. There is nothing glamorous or elegant about the business; here there are no tourists to impress, and no sales are made based on atmosphere, slick marketing or quaint, fishing village charm.

At my last visit he confided that he and the owners of the fish house have been discussing selling out. Bill tells me that there is a real estate developer very interested in the property, and he is offering a lot of money. "We can't go on like this. Too many regs [regulations], and hell, just look who I have fishing on these boats!" But the end of this fish house, I hope, is still in the future.

This morning the front office is occupied by Wendy and her live-in boyfriend, Jerry, and their roommate, Butter. Wendy is around 50 and has told me she sometimes goes fishing with the men. However, she has not gone to sea in a long time and seems mostly to play a more stable and traditional role of homemaker for Jerry and any other fishing crew that might need a place to stay. The three of them rent a house trailer close to the fish house, so they represent a more stable arrangement than most of the rest of the fishing crews who work from these docks. Now, they have strewn themselves over the ratty furniture of the front office, silently watching the battered TV. Butter shakes his head. "I sure as shit ain't leaving this dock till that storm goes by. Uh-uh, no way!" He stands, slapping his cap onto his thigh before jamming it back onto his head. Wendy and Jerry look at each other and shrug. Jerry goes fishing when he can, and if his captain says "Let's go," he will. I sit down with Wendy and get the latest gossip on crews, boats, fights, arrests, love affairs—all that I missed since my last visit.

Later I pass down the stairs that lead from the back door of Brady's and down to docks. The land between the building and the docks is littered with an enormous array of cast-off

fishing gear, rubber tires, bits of marine plywood, and other unnamable things. Looking to either side of the fish house one sees nothing but docks of other boats, but these are all pleasure vessels, mostly powerboats, but some sailboats bob in their slips. The fish house docks are isolated from that leisured atmosphere by a 12-foot high chain link fence on either side. The fishermen joke that it is hard to decide if the fence is to keep the tourists out, or to keep the fishermen locked inside. The juxtaposition between leisure and work is stark.

I make my way carefully to the Forever Foolish Seven. It is treacherous going, but Bennie, the boat's captain, gives me hand aboard. Because there are only two docks, the boats must tie up both alongside each other and from bow to stern. The fishermen must constantly cross over more than one boat to get on or off their own. This constant "intrusion" onto other boats actually fosters cooperation and sharing of work. For example, if someone has to carry a 100 pound battery onto their boat, and must cross two other vessels, it is usually crew on other boats that help out in the task. It also means that everyone knows everyone else's business and personal matters. It is this close physical proximity to one another that helps to reinforce social ties within an otherwise unstable network.

The boats here are working boats. There is nothing on them that does not serve a certain purpose, and the purpose is all the same, from all directions: to catch fish. The wooden decks are painted but worn, as are the fiberglass hulls. The largest boat in this fleet is about 50 feet LOA (length overall), but most are between 35 to 40 feet in length. There is literally no room on board for nonsense, and those that don't pull their weight at sea shorten their history as a fisherman. The back deck of the boat is for two purposes, fishing and storing fish. Most boats have four bandit reels, two amidships and two at each point of the stern. In the middle of the back deck will be two fish boxes—holds with ice that will be gradually filled with fish as the trip progresses. The holds, when closed, also serve as a work area and a sitting area when the boat is in port. Most vessels have a deck covering for protection from the sun and rain.

Inside the cabin one usually finds the galley area and the helm, with electronic gear such as a "fishfinder" and various navigation instruments. All crew and captains must be skilled mechanics and electricians to keep their gear functioning. This type of activity is what occupies most fishermen when they are in port: constantly repairing and fine-tuning of their boat and all its components so that their mission can be carried out successfully: catching fish. Also in the cabin there is a table and bench arrangement where the crew can eat, read, or just hang out. After all, in between the work are the social activities, the stuff of life that holds their world together.

Belowships are the crews' quarters, small bunks almost always a jumble of work clothes, blankets, socks—all permeated by the faintly sweet-sour aroma of the ocean and working men. When the fishermen come back to port they usually take all their belongings to be laundered or repaired, and then the cabin can be aired out and cleaned. It always reminded me of a nesting area.

Today Bennie is working on some part of the engine, and tools are scattered all around. He is sweating, the breeze is barely enough to keep the mosquitoes at arm's length. "Hey," I say, as I get onboard. "How's everything going, Bennie?" Bennie shrugs, wiping his greasy hands on a red dirty cloth. "Ah, damn engine. I don't know what it is... I'll have to get the Swede. He *told* me I'd hafta call 'im, an' he was right. Wanna beer?" I accept, and gaze out on the deep olive-emerald marsh grasses and the azure waters, feeling the day's heat enveloping everything, including me.

We sit in the shade on the back deck, swapping tales. Bennie is 28, wearing ragged blonde hair, tan, and lean, with blue eyes and two cracked front teeth. He lives down the road in a condo that, until just a few weeks ago, he shared with his wife and two year old little boy. His wife was an elementary school teacher, and she left recently, when the summer started, and moved south with Bennie Jr. Bennie sighs and says, "Yeah, she had enough of my shit. She swore I was a drug addict, but it ain't true. Really. A few beers, yeah, a bit of pot. Not much. She said it was bad for li'l Bennie, but I don't know," and he sighs again, squinting out at the water, and then sliding his Oakleys over his eyes. "Maybe I'll go catch up with them soon, ask her to take me back," but before Bennie can say more, JJ arrives.

JJ is happy to see me, and he is holding a biggish plastic-bag covered bundle under his arm, a fresh beer in the other hand. "Hey Katy, I got those pictures I told you I'd show you some day! Gotta minute?" Bennie turns and fakes a snarl, "Trying to steal my action, eh JJ, you sawed-off little mother!" JJ is about 5'4" tall, but muscled and hard looking. Yet he is kind, and always has one more story for me, knowing I eat them up. He and his new girlfriend have recently moved in together and are renting a little house about 10 miles inland. With their old car always breaking down, the trip to the fish house is a daring adventure. But JJ told me they are happy, although broke, because the security deposit and other related expenses of renting a property took all their savings.

JJ clambers aboard, swinging easily down onto the deck, showing his skilled ease built from years at sea. Bennie gets up and goes into the deckhouse, coming back out with a small joint. He lights up, passing it to JJ, and JJ passing it to me. "Nah, thanks," I say, "I'm working, remember?" I have only seen the fishermen drink and smoke marijuana, but tales of heroin and crack use abound at the fish house.

JJ shows me a mountain of photographs, laughing and telling me stories behind each faded Polaroid. There are pictures of family and friends, and of big fish that didn't get away. There are no photos of places, just of people, of actions, of moments at sea. JJ has collected these photos over the years, taking them on small inexpensive cameras. The photos seem to ground him, to give him a history and a place in his world that is constantly shifting and unpredictable.

It is time to go. Bennie has to find the Swede, and JJ said he would meet some friends at the Rusty Anchor, a bar about a mile down the road. I offer to give him a ride since

I know his girlfriend has the car. JJ asks if I can wait about 15 minutes until he changes his clothes. No problem. We all head back up to the fish house. Sam greets me, and asks about the interview. "Damn, Sam, I almost forgot! I am going to take JJ to the Anchor—can you wait till I get back?" I ask. "Hell no, but I can go along, and I'll buy you a cool drink, and talk to you there, how's that?" "Fine by me," I agree, and we ramble out to my old Nissan.

On the way to the bar I am asked to stop by the Greenbrier Inn. A low-slung brick 15-room motel probably built in the 1960s, it is one of the places fishing crews pick to live for the few days they are in port. JJ and Sam jump out of the car, hesitate, and ask me to come along. We go to room 115. JJ bangs loudly on the door; there is the faint sound of a TV coming from inside. The door swings open, and Nicky stands there, burly and bearded, and behind him on the bed sits Bean, his girlfriend of 10-plus years. We enter, and the room is dark, cool, and smoky from cigarettes. They are drinking vodka, smoking pot, crashed out, having returned from a 7-day trip the day before. JJ and Sam flop onto one of the beds; Nicky sits next to Bean, who looks peaked and worn. Beer and vodka are shared, as are the small stories, the placeholders in the shifting lives they lead. After an hour there is no sign that the bar is getting any closer, and Sam is getting drunk. Bean looks like she might nod off any moment, but JJ and Nicky are agitated, talking about someone who did something wrong, something about a pickup truck. The bar is nowhere closer. I'll have to get that interview next time, next trip.

On the way home from the winter South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) meeting in December, 2003, I ponder what the impacts of new, proposed regulations will be on the those who make a living from the snapper-grouper fishery in the south. The meeting was tense, with fishermen arguing that there are plenty of fish, the managers silent, the scientists claiming their numbers show a great decline in a number of species. I decide I should go by the fish house and say goodbye to some of the fishermen. The news I have heard is that Brady's is closing after Christmas. Where will the guys go? Will they keep fishing? What do they think? How do they feel?

I never found out the answers that day. I drive down the same road, but lose my bearings. There are new housing developments, restaurants and a mega-church now crowding the road. Finally I see Southern Skies Marina and look for...but the fish house is gone, razed, and nothing but a flat piece of cold mud sits at the water's edge. The docks and the boats are gone, and so are the fishermen. I sit in my car staring at the emptiness that stretches across the water. A few weeks later I learn they have moved to another fish house further north, and will fish from there until they are again overtaken by forces larger than them.

### **Characteristics of Fishermen's Mobility**

What are the social factors that indicate mobility and are these factors somehow predictive of future mobility? What

will help us to explain fishermen's mobility, and in doing so, can we gain insight into how fishing communities are structured, and then how to better predict impacts of new fishing regulations? I will begin this analysis by describing in more depth who the fishermen are and how these characteristics may relate to mobility. While some sociological factors help to explain this mobile sector of the population, they do not explain all, and in the end I must turn to more complex variables to fully explain mobility.<sup>11</sup> These are the concepts of social and economic class, particularly as manifested in a vocation that is becoming more and more marginalized as we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Traditionally white males have dominated the snapper grouper fisheries of the South Atlantic.<sup>12</sup> Forty-three of 45 people interviewed described themselves as "white." The majority of the whites were born in the southern United States. There were no African Americans identified in this part of the fishery, and only two Hispanics. The percentage of Hispanics in the state where the community is located grew dramatically in the last decade, from less than 1 percent to 12.5 percent. It is not known to what degree this demographic shift has permeated the state's fishing industry, but for the snapper grouper fishery it appears to be low. The two Hispanic participants in the study were Puerto Ricans, having been born in Puerto Rico but later moving first to Miami and then to their current location. The younger of the two, in his late twenties, was fully bilingual, while his uncle spoke Spanish only. While they spoke Spanish to each other, everyone else in the network spoke English only.

The fishermen participants are primarily males between the ages of 21 years to 45 years of age. The rate of participation by women in actual fishing activities has historically been low, although this is changing. The women observed at the fish house included wives, girlfriends, mothers, and daughters of the men in the group. One fisherman was joined by his girl friend while he stayed on a boat at dock, but she rarely accompanied him on fishing trips.

### **Patterns of Residence and Residential Mobility**

While on shore, most of the owners and/or operators of boats stayed in permanent dwellings such as houses and mobile homes on their own piece of land. Some of the hired members of fishing boats' crews similarly lived in permanent structures. The most common living arrangement maintained by captains and some crew involved ownership of a small lot on which was placed a "mobile home" (tied-down trailer or manufactured housing—"single wide" or "double wide"). Some fishermen and their fellow crew or girlfriends stayed with one or more of the households that other fishermen have established within an approximate ten-mile radius of the fish house.

Fishermen practiced a wide variety of behaviors in order to solve the basic human problem of finding shelter. Three types of arrangements of household composition were found

in almost equal numbers among the land-based households of fishermen: 1) nuclear family households in which the returning fisherman 1a) rejoined his wife or domestic partner and the children whom he left on land while he fished, or 1b) entered as an unrelated guest or tenant for a temporary stay; 2) apparently short lived household groups formed by two (and in one case, three) males, unrelated fishermen involved in roommate/housemate rent-sharing situation in mobile homes, apartments, condos, or motels; and finally 3) couple/ single person households in which the fisherman either rejoined his girlfriend at a place the fisherman and his girlfriend rented, or else the girlfriend secured through her own economic activities, such as by working and paying the rent, house-sitting, or obtaining rent-free quarters connected with resort service jobs.

Notably, there were several fishermen who could not be linked to any landed domicile even when in port. This number varied based on what shape their onshore relationships were in when they came home from fishing trips. These men stayed most commonly rent-free on the fishing boats, sometimes alone and sometimes with another crew-member. It was explained to me that this was an easy solution to the problem of where to stay. However, fishermen claimed that every once in awhile they needed to stay in a place that offered "hot water and clean sheets." At those times fishermen, depending on their financial resources, would either rent an inexpensive motel room (such as the Greenbrier Inn) or stay with a friend who had an onshore dwelling. There were two or three inexpensive area motels that offered weekly rates for efficiencies with cooking facilities. Here fishermen would stay alone or with another fisherman as a roommate. The critical problem with this arrangement was that all of these motels were miles from the fish house, and fishermen would then have to depend on others to drive them to and from the docks. None of the fishermen who routinely stayed aboard boats had any form of transportation.

Staying on board allows fishing crew without access to land quarters to economize their living expenses by paying no rent and optimizing their access to the next fishing trip venture. Boat captains and the fish house managers may permit, encourage, or require fishers to stay on boats as a security element, although none of these reasons were made explicit through conversations with the fishermen. Although only hired captains and crew stayed on board at the dock for sustained periods of time (a week or two), sometimes a girlfriend may also stay aboard a boat with fisherman.

### **Social Characteristics Defining a Mobile Subculture**

When this field site was first chosen, I was warned by numerous people to "be careful of those crazy fishermen." The fishermen were variously described in terms of being wild, lawless, and disrespectful. They were proclaimed to be "crack heads," drunks, and other undesirable types. In general, those

who make a living from commercial fishing (as opposed to recreational fishing) are often described in some derogatory manner by those who don't fish (McGoodwin 2001). If they are not seen as being lost in drugs and liquor, then they are seen as uneducated, or as "too free and independent" and not reasonable about constraints on their profession. Fishery managers sometimes view them as "unmanageable," and being very mobile reinforces this opinion. These perceptions are assumed by the fishermen and used to build their own identities. They see themselves as marginal—as outlaws from the larger community—an identity which helps cement them more tightly together as a subculture.<sup>13</sup> This is particularly true of the fishing crews, who are often reviled by boat owners and captains (Author's field notes, 2000, 2003). The closed nature of their community, strengthened by stereotypical images of fishermen, helps to keep away outsiders and protects their subculture's members.

While women were often present at the fish house, none of them fished regularly. All were somehow associated with the fishermen as a spouse, co-habitant, or girlfriend. Many of the relations between men and women had a long history, and some were short-term relationships. It appeared that the pool of potential sexual partners was limited due to the circumscribed area that the fishermen lived in and that they were so often gone for long stretches of time.

Most of the men had been married at least once, and the majority had children from at least one union. All claimed to pay child support; at least one who claimed this was faced with court action for not making timely payments. Some fishermen had had multiple marriages, followed by multiple partnerships. The lack of stability in interpersonal relationships may be a result of the nature of the work they do, the time absent from land putting a tremendous stress on relationships.

The majority of the fishermen I studied had been fishing in some capacity since they were teenagers. Some had dropped out of high school to pursue fishing as a fulltime occupation. Others began their fishing careers recreationally, and started fishing commercially in their late twenties. Common previous occupations were positions in the building construction trades, such as plumbing, welding, and carpentry. A minority had studied past high school, but none held advanced degrees.

Another characteristic of the fishermen was past experience with the criminal justice system. Most had spent extended time (more than a month) in jail or prison, mostly on charges related to violence or illegal drug use. Because of their past incarceration record, fishing may have been one of the only legal jobs open to them. Some fishermen continue to be arrested frequently, usually for public drunkenness or assault. During the few months of fieldwork, I witnessed on several occasions the release of fishermen after spending a night in jail. They returned like heroes to the fish house, and everyone would gather around to hear their tale of "adventure" again and again.<sup>14</sup>

An additional trait of the fishing crew studied is a high frequency of illegal drug use. Marijuana use is extremely



common among captains, crews, and co-residents. There is little attempt to hide one's consumption of this drug. Some of the crews also admit to smoking crack cocaine, but this is less common and more hidden. There was also quite a bit of discussion about how heroin use is becoming more prevalent among younger fishermen, although I did not see any direct evidence of this.

By far the most common drugs abused are cigarettes and alcohol. Tobacco use is high in the South due to historical reliance on tobacco as a cash crop, and many fishermen regardless of locale tend to smoke. Beer is most frequently drunk at the fish house, but other varieties of alcohol are consumed regularly when not "at work." It is not unusual for the fishermen to begin drinking at nine or ten in the morning and continue until late afternoon or evening. Many times they will go directly from the fish house to one of the local bars and continue to drink long into the night.

Both women and men drink heavily. This high consumption of alcohol leads to both a festive atmosphere on the docks and yet can also lead to increased incidence of violence as the day proceeds. I observed three fistfights between fishermen while conducting this study. Furthermore, it appears that the incidence of domestic violence is common based on conversations with women at the fish house.

It is important to note that beer and marijuana are shared widely among fishermen. For example, if one fisherman has a case of beer, it is expected that he will share it with the others. When the beer is gone, those still drinking will pool their money and buy more beer to share. Marijuana sharing is a little more discriminating, and if one person does not like another, he will deny having any marijuana if asked for some. Because of the aforementioned physical closeness of the boats and crews, anyone lying about their resources will cause tensions to build eventually and usually spill out as a fight of some sort.

### **The Nature of Fishermen's Mobility**

An average fishing trip in this fishery lasts between 3 to 7 days. The trip is usually only cut short due to a mechanical problem with the boat, very bad weather, or a full hold of fish. The latter is the least likely.

Most mobility issues stem from the nature of the work the fishermen perform. They must fish preferably when the weather is good, so this necessitates them being able to leave port quickly and return infrequently as long as the fish are biting and the weather holds. This group of fishermen was observed from mid-spring to early fall, 2000. During the summer months it was not uncommon for storms in the South Atlantic Ocean to threaten the southern states' coastal waters where most of the fishermen are working. This happened frequently in September when a few weeks of bad weather kept most fishermen in port. Not being able to fish meant not earning money, and so when the weather finally cleared, the boats were gone again. Predicting where fishermen might be based on weather patterns or lunar cycles may seem an

antiquated method in this time of super fast computers and other high-tech solutions, but it is a necessary component to understanding mobility among fishing peoples.

Shifts in employment are most often changes *within* the industry; the crew is very mobile in switching from one boat to another. It could be a bad fishing trip or two that will anger a deckhand enough to leave one boat for another, or perhaps displeasure with the way the captain has treated him. The first morning of fieldwork one fisherman had just quit his job with one captain and moved on to another boat. He explained that the captain had called him "stupid" and he "could not abide it." He had another crew position immediately, but does not know how long that will last either.

Fishermen that move frequently from boat to boat are called "boat-hoppers" by some of the fishermen on the docks. It is a term also used in jest among friends with only slight negative undertones. The research conducted does not give a good sense of how frequently one must move in order to be called a "boat-hopper." However, both crew and captains moved from boat to boat so frequently during the course of fieldwork that it was impossible to keep track of who was working which boat from trip to trip.

Men, when they shift from working one boat to another, change not only boats, but change whom they associate with both at sea and onshore. Because all boats are on different fishing schedules, when one crew is out fishing, others will be inshore. Therefore, work networks fluctuate in membership. Furthermore, when three or four men have been fishing together on a small vessel for up to ten days, a deeper "bonding" may occur (of course, the opposite is sometimes true, and I heard of several instances where captains cut the trip short and returned to port because a new crew member was "driving everyone crazy"). If a friendship deepens between the crewmembers, it is then possible that they will share a place to stay, for example, a motel room. Even if this bonding is not so profound, a matter of convenience and economy may encourage crew to share a residence.

Another category of fishermen is the "tumbleweed," or someone who just appears one day at the docks looking for work, work for a while, and then moves on down the road. Most fishermen speak of "tumbleweeds" with derision; they see them as more likely to break the law in unacceptable ways (acceptable being drinking, fighting, drug charges, prostitution, and most victimless crimes; unacceptable crimes as being those involving violence against women, children, animals, or violent robbery, and so forth) and as untrustworthy. While many of the fishermen in this study began their careers as tumbleweeds, it is still difficult for a tumbleweed to convince a captain to take him fishing. The tumbleweed must be persistent and make himself available to do menial jobs at the dock before he might get lucky and actually go fishing. If the tumbleweed does get to the point of actually going to sea, he must prove there that he is a hard worker. If he passes this test he is usually kept on as crew. There is enough turnover among tumbleweeds that crew is always needed on the boats. Finally, there are some fishermen who just disappear from



the docks, leaving no word as to where they are going and what they will do when they get there.

### **Conclusion: Fishermen, Mobility and Marginalization**

As stated earlier, I tested the hypothesis, *Fishing crews' mobility was tied closely to their being the most economically and culturally marginalized workers in the fishing industry.* The field study did show that as opposed to boat captains, vessel owners, and others in the industry, the fisherman who works as hired crew on bandit boats in the southeast is marginalized in various ways. One of the first results in this study was the discovery that the geographic area of the fish house did not even exist in Census databases. The vessels they fish from were not enumerated, nor was the fish house, resulting in a majority of the study participants being omitted by the census.

Additionally, in the study area, whole Census blocks were not counted in the 2000 Census. This is a dramatic fact; of the forty-five people counted in this study, only ten were matched to the regular census survey results. The fact that fishermen make up a very small part of the working population both in the study area and in general around the coastal United States, and were severely undercounted in this case, may have serious impacts on how US regulatory agencies decide such workers' fates in the future. For example, if it is believed that the numbers of fishermen are insignificant, or that such small numbers can easily be absorbed by another job sector (such as construction), then perhaps the management outcomes will not be as positive as one would hope. Accounting for a loss of income for a few individuals is not considered a substantial social impact; having to account for a drop in income for 40 workers and their families may lead fishery managers to take a different approach to regulations. It may even encourage some fishery agencies at the state and federal level to seek participation by other agencies that could ease fishermen's economic transitions.

The second result of interest is that those persons in this study that best fit with Census categories and presented "matches" to Census enumeration were those individuals that exhibited more of the markers of "middle class" values and systems in the southeastern United States (N=10). These markers include traits such as home ownership, boat ownership, being currently married, being the owner/captain of a fishing vessel, having young children, holding credit accounts (house or boat mortgages, unsecured loans), having a telephone number, and owning a vehicle. Many of these markers refer to material goods, such as a house, that by its very nature predicts stability rather than mobility.

None of these are common to most of the hired captains and crew interviewed in this study. More than most other groups of "working poor" in the United States—except perhaps migrant farm workers—crews on commercial fishing boats are an invisible population in the United States. They are often strongly disliked and mistrusted by others in the

seafood industry, members of which often complain that it is almost impossible to find good crew anymore. They are seen as shiftless and as criminals, given to unconventional ways and less than desirable values. In a word, they are seen as marginal but as necessary evils to the business of fishing.

The fishermen/crew from the fish house, and the women with them, are constantly on the move. They are either living on the boats they work, or they sleep at someone's house for a few days, weeks, or even months. In some cases a fisherman and his girlfriend will take care of a friend's trailer in exchange for being able to live there for a while. They manifest a pattern of continual movement, of mobility. When the study first began, I saw the fishermen as stable, but learned later that they are not.

Their mobility is, however, circumscribed. Often mobility implies that a person will move from one community to another. In the case of these fishermen, this is not true for the majority. While mobile, the fish house has been the one constant in their lives for the past two or three years, and yet that doesn't mean it will stay that way forever, as we have seen when it closed in 2003. The key to understanding the nature of mobility observed in this study is that the fishermen's residences are not fixed, but their place of employment is. The fishermen did not have much stability in their lives, but they did have the fish house, and it acted almost like a refuge from the storm. The center of most fishermen's lives is the fish house. The majority of those that were employed through the fish house used the fish house as their main address for all correspondence and telephone contacts. Only those that either owned their own vessel or had quit fishing and worked on shore maintained permanent residences away from the fish house.

This lack of permanence in a fisherman's life is intertwined with all other areas of their lives. The high frequencies of both illegal drug and alcohol use, high divorce rates, past involvement in illegal activities and often a history of jail time, weak familial ties, and weak social ties all push an individual to lead a less stable life. Here the term "less stable" means less connected in tangible and less tangible ways to traditional social institutions such as marriage, religious ritual participation, bank accounts and credit cards, and property ownership. The lack of connectivity or marginalization results in, or is a result of, a high rate of personal mobility.

For commercial fishermen, particularly the crews, mobility and marginalization are closely linked. Griffith (1993:12) argues that workers in food producing sectors are less likely to be protected by "high labor standards" due to the importance of basic food production. He defines marginalized labor as including:

...large proportions of unskilled workers, women, minorities, illegal immigrants, temporary legally imported workers, refugees, students...and prisoners on work release programs. Most such workers are considered marginal primarily because they enter wage labor markets seasonally, irregularly, and at a distinct disadvantage. Usually



they have little education, or inappropriate language abilities and limited employment opportunities... They may be forced into unemployment and homelessness by shifts in immigration policy, welfare reform, and the low-wage industrial recruitment policies pursued by local and federal governments all over the world. Also, many marginal workers move among low-wage labor, domestic production, petty commodity production, unemployment, and informal economic activities. This movement entrenches their status as marginal workers.

While the fishermen of this study cannot be said to fit definitively into the description above, they share many of the same traits. While there are few studies addressing this issue, it is hypothesized that many fishery management regulations have displaced thousands of fishermen and others who worked in the seafood industry. Overlaying this displacement is the employment hierarchy of vessel owner or owner/operator (where the owner is also the captain) at the apex of the structure, then the hired captain, then the hired fishing crew. The most current belief is that working as hired crew is such a distasteful job (uncertain hours, dangerous work, no employment benefits), that finding responsible, non-marginal crew is next to impossible (Fieldnotes, Kitner 2004; Gilden and Conway 2002:17). In general, the current working conditions for commercial fishing in the South Atlantic breed the marginalization of the working class. The fishing crews are the most marginalized and the most mobile members of the social network.

What does a marginalized and mobile fishing workforce mean for the future of coastal communities? In the United States at the beginning of the new millennium, the social construct known as a fishing community or a fishing village is experiencing a demise similar to what has occurred to small family farms or other businesses. Commercial fishing communities' very existence are being challenged on many fronts: increasing state and federal regulations aimed at reducing what is known as *capacity* (a measure of the harvesting capability of fishermen), and a decreasing number and amount of fish stocks to be exploited along with environmental degradation. For example, in 1998, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and the NMFS implemented what is known as Snapper Grouper Amendment Eight, which through a limited access permit system, has effectively reduced the universe of South Atlantic snapper grouper fishermen from over 2000 vessels (each permit goes to the boat) to fewer than 900 fulltime active permits. There has never been a complete evaluation of the impacts of this management measure, however reports from fishermen and others close to the fishery point to serious economic and social impacts felt in their communities. Such impacts include closing of fish houses dues to decreased product crossing the docks, and then the ripple effects of such closures, in particular changed seafood distribution routes and changes in land use (working docks to recreational marinas).

Related to the changes wrought by state and federal regulations are these impacts felt in coastal communities by unprecedented growth and development of the nation's

shorelines (see US Census, <http://www.census.gov/population>). As the numbers of commercial fishing operations decline due to effort reduction measures imposed on the fisheries, the viability of the fishing community shifts and in many cases communities barely exist where they once thrived. This is particularly true with the fish house.

The fish house only has limited ways to respond to decreasing amounts of fish due to regulatory cutbacks. They can: 1) substitute local fish with imported seafood products in order to be able to satisfy customer demand; 2) diversify the fleet that lands seafood at their facility (adding shrimp and crab, for example); or 3) sell their highly-valued waterfront land to developers for the best price possible. The last option has become more popular as the population in the commercial fishing profession age and face a future with no pension. The increasing gentrification experienced by fishing communities leads to deepening changes in a community's cultural and institutional nature, and a loss in infrastructure (fishing docks, processing areas, cohesive neighborhoods) augments the loss of a material manner. Hall-Arber, et al (2001:44) notes that:

The concomitant loss of local institutions and knowledge could have serious consequences for fisheries management. Co-management and community-based fisheries management show promise for building sustainable fisheries. However, fragmentation of fishing communities (the loss of social capital) could hamper such efforts.

Hence, fishermen (and those closely associated with them) tend to live a tautological existence. They are marginal, thus mobile, and because of their mobility, they are also marginal. To paraphrase Griffith (1993) again, their mobility entrenches their marginality. The aspects of economic and social marginalization, lack of permanence, and the tendency of fishermen to be physically mobile is discussed at length by McGoodwin (1990). McGoodwin attributes these characteristics of fishermen to the nature of their work, which is physically dangerous, often poorly remunerated, uncertain in its outcome, and less appreciated as an occupation by the rest of society (1990:34):

There is a curiously unique and dichotomous character to their patterns of social relations... This dichotomy entails, on the one hand, intense relationships between men at sea, strong male bonds, cooperativeness and camaraderie achieved during prolonged periods of virtual isolation in close quarters while sharing physical and economic risks, and on the other hand, tenuousness, conflict, estrangement, and ephemerality in important interpersonal relationships ashore.

Of these relationships ashore, McGoodwin goes on to note that when fishermen come home, not all is well and not all involved are happy. To quote again (1990:35):

When fishers return to their home communities after prolonged absences, their presence is often disrupting to

the established, ongoing social order. Returning home, they greatly desire rest, relaxation, and immediate intimacy, but they are out of sync with the rhythms of daily life in their communities. They recount their sea stories as a means of underscoring for their family members that they indeed had an existence while they were away, but soon the family members tire of hearing them. They may indulge their children, breaking down established patterns of household discipline, or make extravagant purchases for themselves or other family members while little appreciating the household's overall financial situation. As the primary producers of household income, they may attempt to assert their dominance as the head of the household, oblivious to the established patterns of daily life in which other, permanently resident adults have been the day-to-day managers. Thus as household discipline breaks down, as the children's behavior becomes more problematic, and as arguments erupt with spouses and other household members, fishers often feel alienated, betrayed, and perplexed by the difference between the images they had of their homecoming during their long time away and its reality.

The fisherman's life becomes a vicious circle: they go home to escape the rigors and difficulties of life at sea, but when home they feel uncomfortable, so they again return to the docks or the ocean to go fishing again. After a time at sea, they again long for home, and the circle continues. This was true of a majority of the men in this study, both those stable and marginal. While some came ashore, went home, stayed home and had seemingly happy and engaged lives, others were in no hurry to leave the fish house, or else after being home for a few hours, returned to the fish house and stayed. This vicious circle creates an unspoken angst in the lives of many fishermen. McGoodwin puts it succinctly (1990:36):

Over the long term the difficulty fishers have in integrating themselves into social life ashore, and particularly into family life, often prompts the development of chronic psychological problems. These are manifested in a variety of ways, including antisocial behavior, ambivalent feelings regarding close social ties, distrust of significant others, feelings of guilt at being away so much, alcoholism, drug abuse, and so forth.

These processes—the increasing burden of regulations, a climate of social isolation, and the related loss of community infrastructure and social capital—are hypothesized to intensify southeastern commercial fishermen's marginality and so increase the incidence of mobility experienced by them. The loss of fish houses such as the one discussed in this paper is occurring throughout the southeastern coastal states. This loss only exacerbates the economic and social problems in fisheries to where today many of these fisheries are experiencing a significant downturn. If managers are interested in maintaining healthy and sustainable fisheries in the future, they should begin to work to mitigate (not only lessen in some sense) the impacts on the fishermen and their fish houses in the communities. Fishery managers should not shy away from these social problems in the fisheries they

manage; if they do not know how to approach the social structural problems and challenges in the communities, they should turn to other agencies or individuals that do possess the necessary expertise. In my experience, it is too common for a manager to claim that something like unemployment or drug use among the fishermen they manage is not a problem for fishery management and that it is not in their sphere of influence. Unfortunately, it is this reluctance to try something different that often allows for the same mistakes to be made repeatedly.

Finally, this research shows that there are more problems in US fisheries than just overfishing of the fish stocks. Commercial fishermen, particularly those that work as fishing crew on small boats, suffer from many of the same work-related problems as marginalized workers do on land. Yet, for commercial fishermen, mobility runs deep through their existence. Mobile at sea, moving between land and sea, shifting on land from boat to house trailer to a friend's couch, their lives are as transient as the ocean's waves.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The analysis of social and economic impacts on fishing communities is required under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) to document impacts on the "human environment," as well as cumulative impacts of regulations and issues of environmental justice (Executive Order 12898). Furthermore, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the amending Sustainable Fisheries Act both require that social and economic impacts on fishing communities be taken into consideration in the creation of new fishery legislation.

<sup>2</sup>This paper departs from recent social science usage of the word "fisher," in deference to what the fishermen and fisherwomen asked me to call them. It is undeniable that the majority of fishers in this study were male, and the few women who participated on a part-time basis asked to be referred to as fishermen, also.

<sup>3</sup>Because of who the fishermen were, and because I was a government official, I began the fieldwork at a disadvantage. Even though I was careful to explain who I was and what the work was about, I was variously seen as working for the National Marine Fisheries Service (an oft-despised agency by a majority of fishermen), the IRS, the state's Department of Natural Resources, or as a newspaper reporter. Of all of those roles, the role of the reporter was the one least likely to draw a negative response from fishermen.

<sup>4</sup>Part of the objective and results from this study were to create a social network analysis of the fishermen. This was done by counting their interactions with each other and collecting demographic and residential data from each actor in the network. A full discussion of this can be found in Brownrigg 2003.

<sup>5</sup>I have used pseudonyms for all places and people represented in this article.

<sup>6</sup>Prices for this type of real estate average around \$250,000 to over one million dollars, making them far out of reach for most of the year-round residents of the area (the 1999 median household income was a little over \$39,877, the 1999 per capita income was \$28,197).

<sup>7</sup>Post-plantation farming and some coastal fishing in the early 1900s defined the area's economic history. Though some nascent tourism

started in the 1920s and '30s, it wasn't until after WWII that tourism development began a bit further north, drawing visitors from in and out of state, some southern but many from the North and Midwest. Since the mid-1980s, at least two small rural towns along the coast and south of the field site have been eaten alive by golf courses and shopping malls, themed franchise restaurants and time-share, beachfront condos. Currently the tourism/service-dominated economy is expanding southward and has already encircled but not yet consumed the community where the field study took place. Land prices, real estate values and rents have increased dramatically, and continue to do so. The population too has increased, with a measured growth between 20.5% and 36.5 percent since 1990 (Census 2000, <http://www.census.gov>). Still, with all the changes, Brady's Fish House continues on as it has since the 1970s.

<sup>8</sup>Bandit boats, or bandit rigs, refer to a type of bottom fishing gear used by fishermen in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico to catch groupers and snappers. Most boats have two to four large electric reels that fish a baited, weighted hook or hooks down to depths over 100 meters. Their name refers to the "one-armed bandits," or slot machines played in casinos.

<sup>9</sup>The "high-dollar" catch for the fish house is snapper and grouper fish. The "beeliners, pinkies and kitties" referred to in the title of this paper are three different species in this bottom-fish complex (beeliners = vermilion snapper, pinkies = red porgy, kitties = kitty mitchell); each one has recently been heavily regulated and are an emotional flashpoint for many fishermen as they feel the regulations are unfair and overly harsh.

<sup>10</sup>Very little of the fish landed at the fish house goes to local businesses. Most catches are landed, iced, boxed and sold to larger markets in New York City or in Canada. I noted two instances of catches being sold locally, and it was clear that in both instances this was done as a personal favor between the manager and owner of a local seafood retail outlet. It is also common practice for charter and party boats to sell catches to local restaurants. The cost of locally caught fish is too high for most restaurants in the area; it is much more cost efficient for restaurants to buy imported fish at a dollar or more a pound less. Fishing boat crews and captains will set aside a small portion of the boat's catch for themselves and for family members. Other than those small amounts, the rest of the catch is shipped away from the local community.

<sup>11</sup>Some have suggested that the fishing crew's marginalization is due to psychosocial problems, and that these problems cause their marginalization and thus their mobility. I believe it is more complicated than this; for example, the homeless or migrant workers would be found to be mentally unstable if this were true, and the data does not bear that out.

<sup>12</sup>This demographic is most prevalent in the snapper grouper fishery. In the shrimp, blue crab and oyster fisheries a greater percentage of African Americans participate. As the shrimp fishery has become more technologically intensive, this percentage has been reduced due to capital wealth disparities and historical discrimination in the south.

<sup>13</sup>I also noted this same process among illegal drug users and dealers in Miami, Florida. They took the public's perception of them as "bad" and "scary" and used it to bind themselves together and keep the uninitiated out of their closed community.

<sup>14</sup>It was rumored that the owners of the fish house had a business understanding with one of the county judges (they were tobacco farmers and the judge a buyer). If a fisherman from the fish house was arrested in that county for drunkenness or another minor charge, that judge could be summoned and the fisherman would get out of jail in a short time with no charges being filed. If the fisherman got arrested in the other county, he might languish for days in the county jail.

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