

Paul Durrenberger pays attention to fisheries policy in the United States. He focuses on the introduction of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in the Alabama shrimp fishery. His detailed case study provides an example of the complexities of fisheries regulations and shows how these regulations can influence the livelihoods of different categories of people. Durrenberger stresses the necessity to understand commercial fisheries in their broadest political and economic contexts.

Usufruct and Contradiction

Territorial Custom and Abuse in Newfoundland's Banks Schooner and Dory Fishery¹

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Introduction

Newfoundland's banks or "deep sea" schooner and dory fishery was displaced by modern groundfish trawler operations in the mid-1950's. Yet its organization remains superficially understood and fragmentary described. This paper draws upon information from published and archival sources, especially those at the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Centre for Newfoundland Studies, and oral historical data about the schooner fishery gathered by the author since about 1967.

In 1967-68 I went to sea with many ex-banks schooner fishermen who were then engaged in groundfish trawling. Over the years I came to know and interview about twelve former schooner captains and about fifty or more ex-dory fishermen. The principal oral historical data for this essay, however, are drawn from the biographical recollections of a particularly authoritative Newfoundland banks schooner master. Information from other men interviewed is used where appropriate. Particular attention is upon my primary informant's recollections of skipper and dory fisherman decisions about territorial use by schooners and dory units.

I will attempt to draw relationships between material and reputational rewards, usufruct customs, their violation, and risk taking in these fishing operations. In this regard, I examine some important consequences of fishing on the 'count' and (average) 'share' schemes, the two major incentive arrangements used in this fishery.

The following discussion therefore bears on an understanding often expressed by Newfoundland's retired banks schooner fishermen that "there were lives and lives lost" in this fishery. In addition to the wholesale destruction of schooner crews in various vessel disasters, perhaps every fisherman I interviewed remembered occasions when individual dory crews were lost, "gone astray." Countless were never seen again. Such strays are usually attributed mainly to storms, errors in seamanship, and men losing their way in dense fog. This oversimplifies the past. One must also recognize how material and reputational incentives helped to shape such events. We will consider the wisdom of the established Newfoundland banks fisherman belief that the 'count' both compelled men to work hard and killed them.

Banks Fishing in Historical and Structural Context

The Newfoundland-based, merchant-capitalist inspired offshore or 'banks'-schooner and dory (also 'banking schooner') fishery is a late nineteenth and early twentieth century development. Newfoundland's fishery was predominantly shore-based and dependent upon inshore and nearshore grounds until well into this century. This was true from the earliest migratory summer cod fisheries undertaken by chartered British, especially West Country (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and Somerset) firms, through the establishment and failure of plantations, to modern trawling in the late 1940's.

Early English government policy sought to retard Newfoundland's colonization. Annually men were sent from England to join a small resident population in a summer fishery. They crewed open, 6-men shallots that fished inshore grounds and landed almost daily. They dried their catch ashore for export during the period from about 1600 to the early nineteenth century in what may be termed a "servant" fishery (at risk of overgeneralizing, "family," and "factory" fisheries came later; for example, see Sider 1976:105-12). The outer banks were left especially to France, Portugal, and Spain.

Despite initial government policy and some English West Country merchants' efforts to restrict settlement, small settler communities gradually spread around the island. Merchant capitalists readapted, proliferated, and found it profitable to obtain their cod supply from sedentary fishermen. In the eighteenth century fifty- to one-hundred-ton square-rigged English vessels gradually "turned their attention to the offshore banks and the catch, instead of being cured on shore, was salted down aboard ship and taken back to England as 'green' fish" (Story 1969:7; see also Fay 1956:138-39). Story reckons that this shift to the offshore banks "... removed the visiting fishermen from direct and continuous conflict with the settlers" for fishing premises and timber. After 1730 it seems there was little conflict between settlers and migratory English fishermen.

Various political and economic changes undermined the migratory English ship fishery as the eighteenth century closed, and it had ceased by 1840 (Matthews 1986:600; 1973:176-85, 228-33). By this time St. John's and its merchants were increasingly dominating the colony's economic and political life. It gained representative government by 1832, and Newfoundland-based sedentary and migratory cod fishing, sealing, and shipping industries developed. Population grew and new settlements appeared along the island and Labrador coasts. Many such new settlements or 'outports' were established on Newfoundland's south coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The south coast is noteworthy as the only area of the province's coast normally free of ice the year round. It was primarily in communities along this coast that deep sea or banking schooner- and, later, trawler-fisheries developed.

The Offshore or 'Banks' Fishery

What many people today refer to as Newfoundland's "traditional" deep sea

fishing communities (e.g., Belleoram, Fortune, Grand Bank, and Burin), all located on Newfoundland's south coast, were originally inshore and nearshore banks fishing settlements. They became offshore fishing centers only in the late nineteenth century or even later. A strong push to compete, perhaps especially with France, for cod out on the Grand Banks began in the 1880's.

Encouraged by government subsidies, Newfoundland's merchants gradually built and bought fleets of increasingly large (up to 150 ton) dory fishing schooners. They were equipped from seven to eleven (or even 20) dories, and crewed by up to about 25 men. Some carried 27 men. Their vessels were capable of "deep water" fishing - usually to about 50 fathoms, as on the Grand Bank. But they fished waters ranging in depth from about five or six (e.g., the eastern shoals and off Labrador) to 100 fathoms (e.g., the grounds off southwest Newfoundland), for weeks at a time. (By contemporary standards, of course, this was closer to our notion of a "middle distance" fishery.)

Smaller dory schooners, or 'jack' boats and 'western' boats, often fishermen-built and owned, of from about 18 to 25 tons, were already well established in the Newfoundland fishery. Equipped with from one to about four dories, and crews of from three to about eleven men, they generally fished the banks near shore (Martin 1938:118) and made port daily.

These large and small schooners used the same catching technology, especially the long trawl or bultow, set from dories (and from the schooner itself in the case of small schooners). Each two man dory normally carried 40 lines of gear, each line 45 fathoms long, with approximately 75 sudlines ('seds'), and a hook on each sudline (cf. Smallwood 1984 II:165). When set, the gear might reach over a mile in length. Handlines and seine nets were also used when needed, as for bait when other sources of supply were unavailable.

The shift to offshore banks fishing was gradual, rather than dramatic or "revolutionary" in respect to change in fishing and sailing technological kit and scale. Aggregate fisheries data in official documentary sources from the 1880's and later often do not distinguish the small from the larger vessel operations conducted from the key banks ports. But these same data do clearly indicate a gradual growth in average schooner tonnage and decline in total vessel numbers. But when my fisherman informants and other older south coast people speak of the dory schooner banks fishery, 'bankers,' 'banking,' and 'bankermen,' they generally refer to the large schooner phase in the province's recent fishery history. The organization of this fishery is the focus of the following discussion.

Newfoundland's banking schooner fishery operated primarily from south coast ports, especially in Fortune Bay and on the Burin Peninsula, from about 1880 to 1955, when the last salt-fish banker made its final journey to the banks. The personal experience of my informants with this fishery especially covers the period from about 1900, arrival of groundfish trawlers in the late 1940's, to the last banking schooner activity in the 1950's.

During this period the bankers produced primarily "green" or wet salted cod. Aboard the schooner, after being gutted, headed, split, and having the backbone



Plate 1. Two-man dory crew from Nova Scotian schooner Fairmorse make for their trawl buoys to retrieve catch (Source: Cyril Robinson, "Deep Sea Fishermen." *The Standard* (Montreal), May 14, 1949).

removed, the fish was stowed under heavy salt (and became 'salt-bulk'). Upon landing in port some was exported in salt-bulk form. But most was washed and sun-cured on flakes and beaches along the coast. Mechanical driers were first used in the area by Nova Scotian plant operators. Artificial drying began in Newfoundland in about 1947 at the south coast banks fishing port of Fortune (Smallwood 1984 II:120). The finished product was shipped to southern European, Latin American, and West Indies markets (see Alexander 1977, for a discussion of this saltfish trade in the twentieth century).

Schooner Ownership

The schooners or 'bankers' were owned by local merchants, although they were often financially beholden to Water Street merchants in St. John's. Some schooner owners had first accumulated capital as successful fishing skippers and traders, and some continued going to sea after becoming owners. Creation of a banking firm usually led to broader merchant activity, however, especially trade with area fishermen.

By the second generation, the successful merchant had a small fleet of schooners, a clientage of fishermen aboard and ashore and their families to supply and

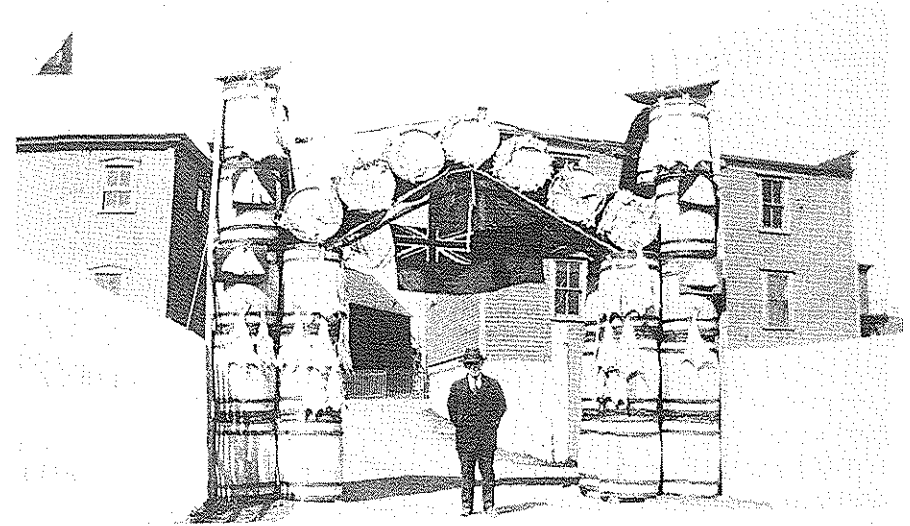


Plate 2. A Grand Bank, Newfoundland schooner fishery merchant stands beneath ceremonial archway of barrels and saltfish, topped with model schooners - key symbols of his trade. The archway probably honours a visit from Newfoundland's Governor General, circa 1920 (Source: Nellie Green).

trade with, and a staff processing and shipping operations. Some merchants became partners, and marriage among and between their offspring and with successful fishing and shipping masters grew. A small merchant, parvenu-aristocratic class, distinctive in political and economic power, separate social place, and lifestyle, emerged in and among the banking centers.

Unlike practices reported for schooner firms in the same period at such Nova Scotian ports as Lunenburg, where shares in bankers were sold and held locally, ordinary fishermen in the Newfoundland ports appear to have had little opportunity to participate in schooner ownership. It seems that only fishing masters might do so. Even this may have been rare, and usually in a minority role. What prevented ordinary dory fishermen from owning shares in schooners? This exclusion probably resulted from a combination of factors. It was difficult to accumulate the necessary capital, merchants-owners may have resisted such ownership participation as inappropriate class conduct, and both merchants and skippers might have found it complicated their exercise of authority.

The Fishermen

Labour for both large and small dory schooner activities came from small, especially south coast settlements. Some men moved back and forth between employment on the two types of schooners, pursuing their individual career strate-



Plate 3. Newfoundland and Nova Scotian schooners in port for bait, laying at anchor, and drying their sails, at Burin, Newfoundland, circa 1929 (Source: Wayne Hollett collection).

gies. Many joined large fishing schooners that arrived each spring from Nova Scotian and American ports, in search of frozen herring bait. Other men from these same outports chose never to go to the banks.

Vessel owners preferred to recruit skippers who came "up the ladder," from the ranks of experienced banks dory fishermen. Steps in the progression were from dory fisherman or dory 'mate,' to dory 'skipper,' mate or first hand, to fishing captain. Many banks fishermen also gained experience on Newfoundland's trading vessels, i.e., those involved in coastal and foreign-going transport. Some went 'freighting' during the winter period between fishing voyages. A captain whose career was primarily in 'traders' was sometimes recruited to command a banks schooner. But such assignments were usually temporary, for want of an experienced reliable banks fishermen alternative.

The 'Voyage'

Men joined their schooners each spring. The first 'trip' in their fishing calendar, or 'voyage,' usually began around April 1st. The voyage involved spring, summer, and fall bait phases or trips built, respectively, around herring, caplin, and squid. The last ended by mid-October, but there was often opportunity for winter fishing on banks off Newfoundland's southwest coast until Christmas.

During the voyage the bankers made harbour frequently to discharge their catch, and for bait, gear, provisions, repairs, and to discharge and replace sick or injured men. Bankers ranged widely: from the banks off the southwest coast in winter and spring, the Grand Banks in summer, and, commonly, to the Labrador Coast in late summer and fall.

The Financial Incentives to Fish

The financial structure of this fishery changed little from at least 1900 to its conclusion in the early 1950's. The vessel owner received the market value for the processed catch after any brokerage fees. The cost of bait, ice, and perhaps other minor expenses were subtracted from this gross figure. From his 50 per cent of the balance, he covered all basic expenses (e.g., vessel-, fishing-, and sailing- or running-gear, provisions, insurance, cost of processing fish ashore, and shipping), and the following guarantees:

The skipper was entitled to receive five per cent of gross landed value. This percentage varied in practice; a "really good" skipper might get somewhat more, others less. The mate (who fished from a dory with another hand when the schooner was on station) received \$50 for the voyage, and the engineer, if any, from \$.50 to \$2.00/day, depending upon vessel size. \$1.00/day was average. A cook was usually guaranteed \$1.00/day or \$30 per month. That would be his minimum guarantee when fishing on shares; he would receive the equivalent of a share. A 'kedgie' or deckhand and cook's helper probably received a monthly guarantee, earnings from value of minor products (e.g., salted cod tongues) salvaged while processing fish on deck, and from fish caught from the schooner or while in dory when replacing a regular dory hand.

In addition, lay arrangements entitled each dory fisherman – including the mate and engineer – to a portion of the 50 per cent 'crew share' as determined by the merchant. But individual dory crews received substantially different earnings under the 'count' and average share schemes (described below), which were used in this fishery at different times. Moreover, in the case of the count system, the captain and, perhaps, the cook were excluded from receiving a share. It seems that their earnings were primarily based upon their percentage and daily guarantees, respectively.

Under the *count*, each fish taken from each dory was literally counted and recorded by the skipper, cook, kedgie, or mate to the credit of its dory crew.² The tally record was kept in a prominent location at all times so that dory crews were aware of each other's catch progress. Some men kept their own tally for comparison with the skipper's count. The captain delivered his tally to the company office upon arrival in their home port. Captain Arch Thornhill (b. 1901, d. 1976), a Fortune Bay banker who sailed from 1918 to 1948, describes the final steps:

When the fish is discharged, washed, dried, and weighed, the count of fish would be made up per quintal (112 lbs.). When this was done you know how much one fish or one thousand would be worth, depending on the price paid (per quintal). For example, if a dory had a count of 5,000 fish when the trip was finished, and it fetched \$20/1,000, each man for that dory would share one hundred dollars for this trip (i.e., each would receive \$50).

The *average* share arrangement gave *all* crew members, whether in dory or not, an equal share of the 50 per cent landed value. The same share system concept

remains in use today in deep sea trawler fishing in many parts of the North Atlantic, although overall owner/crew proportions and designated guarantees vary.

It seems that both major schemes, and the minimal earning guarantees mentioned above, were at times used on the same voyages. The logic underlying their use and, in some fishermen's recollections, eventual abandonment of the count in favor of the average system (see Andersen 1980), will be briefly clarified later in this paper.

Accounts were usually 'settled up' before Christmas in a private meeting between each individual fisherman and the merchant. Charges to the man's account, as for supplies advanced to his family during the voyage, extra costs he incurred during the voyage (e.g., for boots and clothing), and winter supplies obtained upon leaving for home, were usually deducted from his voyage earnings. But Newfoundland vessel owners typically settled up with their men without providing detailed accounts. As Captain Thornhill recalled,

... when you finished in the fall you never got a detailed statement about how much fish you had, or how much your bait and food bills came to, or anything like that. All you could get down when you settled was your own account (Andersen n.d.:230).

Men sometimes ended the voyage with little more than the merchant's promise to 'carry' them through the winter and following year in return for their commitment to sail on one of the firm's schooners the following spring. There was often little cash exchanged until the 1940's. It is remembered as a time of credit bondage and fisherman exploitation by merchants.

From the time before you start fishing, you'd have to start charging things. Everything, from a needle to an anchor, would be charged to your account. And the price would be higher than if you paid cash. There'd be two or three cents added even to the price of a pound of rolled oats, if you didn't have the cash to pay for it. And the higher the item's cost, the more was charged on *charge* prices! It was clear roguery!

Space Use Customs on The Bank

Skippers

Skippers sought to locate their schooners at fishing "berths." Likewise, they assigned their dories to berths or fishing spaces. In Newfoundland parlance, a berth is "a particular station on fishing grounds, . . . assigned by custom or lot to a vessel, boat, crew or family . . ." (Story, Kirwin, and Widdowson 1982:40).

Berths at the Inshore Interface

Fishing berths, operations and relations discussed in this paper are those out on the banks, away from the important interface between banks and inshore fishermen. This interface is a volatile frontier and theatre where fishermen with vastly different technologies, scale, social relationships, and operational codes

struggle for resources and community destinies. The character of this contention as seen from inshore during the 1930's is suggested by Junek (1937:25):

The sea is really communal. Cod-fishing is carried out independently by each family unit; but each family's success in fishing depends to a considerable extent upon the indirect cooperation it receives from other similarly integrated units. For example, one man may point out to his neighbors the better fishing locations; he may protect fishing gear other than his own, or refrain from disturbing the cod or salmon traps of others. *All work harmoniously together in not permitting Newfoundland fishing schooners - the crews of which are considered foreigners or outsiders - to enter their fishing domain, except when the winds are unfriendly and the trespassers cannot with safety stay outside of the harbour. Even then the schooner is only permitted to cast anchor; all rival fishing must be done away from the immediate territory in spite of dirty wheater* [my emphasis].

Junek speaks of inshore fishing communities at and near Blanc Sablon on the lower North Shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, near the Straits of Belle Isle. He may romanticize the harmony of the small community here (cf. Butler 1983:1819), but he captures the quality of the tension between the banks and inshore sectors met around the Newfoundland coast and on the Labrador. A similar, more serious tension exists between inshore and offshore fishing interests in the context of competing present technologies. This topic merits discussion elsewhere. I confine the following discussion to practices around berths on the banks proper.

Berths on the Banks

Once in place, skippers employed one of two approaches on the ground; they either fished *at anchor* or *under sail*. The first involved deploying the schooner's dories about the anchored schooner or "mothership." Individual dory 'skippers' usually drew for their respective berths or compass positions.

We'd make up so many compass courses, so many points apart, depending upon how many dories we have. Then each dory skipper would draw a ticket with a course on it from a sou'wester. And then you'd go on your course, north, northeast, south, and so on, around the vessel. You'd moor the gear with anchors, take bait and go out and underrun it; when you hauled towards the schooner, you'd pass your gear over the dory and it would be out fishing while you were aboard. Sometimes we would fish seven or eight days like that in one place - if you were lucky and struck the fish.

Fishing under sail involved deploying the dories at suitable intervals or berths from the side of the vessel while it was in motion. The dories might be towed for a time until the skipper signaled their release, or simply released when first set over the side. The latter practice was referred to as the 'flying set'. Newfoundland banks fishermen remember it as both risky and exhilarating. It was used because conditions of strong tide and ground made it necessary, and as a quick way to establish the value and character of a fishing location. Charlie Hendrick,

born in 1887, spent 15 years on the banks aboard Newfoundland and American fishing schooners. Interviewed by Kent Martin in 1972, he recalled:

Sometimes we'd make a 'flying set.' That's where you only set a tub or two of gear (from each dory) and you only let it soak a short time. That way you could see what was there and whether it was worth the trouble to set all the trawl. Some places, you know, is spotty. The Gully was bad for that; lot of hit or miss.

Once the dories were set off at their respective berths, the schooner jogged about long enough for each dory crew to set its gear, then proceeded along the same line from its starting point to retrieve each crew. A skipper's explanation follows.

We dropped our ten dories with their gear so far apart (30 to 40 meters) from the side of the vessel. Every dory set down the one course, the skipper told them to sail before they left. Say, 'Set southwest, now, today, boys. Everybody set southwest.' You would tow them along in this direction, each dory would go down, and they'd drop their buoy overboard and tow out their buoy lines. When you got a little distance from one dory, you'd drop the next one and go on until all your dories were out. And when the last dory was dropped, you would sail down the length, the reach of that gear, to pick them up again.

After setting their gear, I'd pick up the first dory I dropped, and go back until I had picked them all up, in rotation, as I dropped them. I'd sail back on the weather edge, and by then the men would be finished with their dinner and you'd drop your dories again. Then they'd haul their gear in the same direction that they set it. That's fishing under sail. (...) When they had their gear set out, I took them aboard the vessel again, and they had their dinner while I beat up on the windward ends. By the time I got up there, they had finished dinner, and I dropped my dories again and they went on to take in their gear (Andersen n.d.:193-94).

Skipper Information Management

Information is only fragmentary and suggestive about how skippers managed their use of space from one fishing ground to another, day to day. The information is in journalistic, and anecdotal-oral history form.

When I first examined this topic (Andersen and Stiles, 1973; and Andersen 1979), I noted the schooner skipper territorial management practices sketched by Rudyard Kipling in *Captains courageous*. Published in 1896, it is based upon his knowledge of schooner operations conducted from Gloucester, Massachusetts, during the 1890's. Granting journalistic license and the possibility that Kipling's portrayal of Gloucester fishing is largely anecdotal in origin, rather than grounded upon his observations on the fishing grounds, his description rings with truth. My oral-historical research with retired Newfoundland and Nova Scotian banks fishermen indicates as much. American, Canadian, and Newfoundland fishing schooner operations were very similar.

New England fishing crews were typically a mix of Americans, eastern Canadians, and Newfoundlanders. American, Canadian, and Newfoundland schooners often baited up at the same ports, fished the same grounds at the same time, and shared similar catching technologies or gear. They used *handlines* from

dories, as in Kipling's description of Gloucester fishing, and the *bultow* or *long trawl*, the primary gear used in late nineteenth and twentieth century Newfoundland banks fishing I discuss elsewhere (1980). And they employed similar reward or lay arrangements.

Their skippers pursued the largest codfish. They brought premium prices. Bait and fishing time were scarce values. Skippers sought to catch as much as possible in the shortest time until bait and salt were exhausted. They sought their quarry in optimal density locations. These varied continuously. Skippers were nothing less than hunters; they shifted their vessels from ground to ground, endlessly dispersing and concentrating.

Preoccupied with location and catching, skippers carefully managed environmental-ecological knowledge and the spacing of their extractive units. Individual skippers varied in their knowledge, as they did in talent for handling men. Kipling tells us that there were those with the reputation of a "master artist who knew the Banks blindfold [sic]" and could always find fish, and others who "scrowged upon" them (Kipling 1961 [1896]:39-40, 45, 71, 80).

Most Newfoundland banks skippers were nearly or totally illiterate by informant accounts. Their success hinged greatly upon extensive experience, keen observation and memory. Regularly kept logs were rare, and much of what a master knew he had to 'find out for himself.' Reason suggests that skippers managed their hard acquired skill and information as scarce values.

Skipper knowledge, like a complex capital asset, was subject to continuous investment, testing, and building. In the company of other skippers and fishermen each eagerly sought its expansion and improvement. For example, they took special care in mastery and exchange of essential coastal navigational lore, as in recitation of old mnemonic navigational song rhymes. An example used when sailing along the Labrador coast follows.

When Joe Bett's P'int you is abreast,
Dane's Rock bears due West.
West - nor'west you must steer,
'Til Brimstone Head do appear.

The tickle's narrow, not very wide;
The deepest water's on the starboard side.
When in the harbour you is shot,
Four fathoms you has got" (Duncan 1905:32-33).³

But they were also highly "individualistic" and secretive about handling much other knowledge. For example, by some accounts, charts aboard the schooner were the master's exclusive property. He might bring them out only rarely, as when instructing his mate, then return them to safety in his cabin. The specific chart location of a fishing position was often unknown to all but the master and mate. Further, most dorymen were reported unable to read the sea chart, although they were able to employ the compass in limited navigation. Many lacked even that skill.

The structure of responsibility and authority tended to exclude free, informative dialogue between the skipper and his men. A skipper was expected to tell his men what he wanted them to know and do. The crew hesitated to ask him to fill in the gaps with specifics believed sensitive, his business, not theirs.

In course skippers developed space-information management techniques to capture first right and/or the most advantageous position for use of desired locations, and left others "to bait big an' catch small." In Kipling's words:

Naturally, a man of Disko's reputation was closely watched – 'scrowged upon' . . . by his neighbors, but he had a very pretty knack of giving them the slip through the curdling, glidy fogbanks" (1961:80).

But Disko, a journalist's archetype skipper, contended with problems faced by *all* schooner skippers. Fish concentrations, and operating conditions – including competition – were always changing. All masters shared uncertainties and the conflicting pressures they inspired. All sought to maintain or build good crews. They did so by bringing them to productive locations, by applying their catching capacity effectively, by holding a productive location as exclusively as the open sea and custom allowed, and by keeping both vessel and men as safe as operating demands required and conditions permitted.

My primary informant, Captain Arch Thornhill, a man with more than 40 years experience fishing the banks, recalled two cases of skipper action relevant here. Both involve the conduct of two other skippers. One, Morgan (or Mawg') Mathews, was a reputed 'highliner' or top skipper among Newfoundland fishing masters. The second captain remained unnamed in each case because the events described reflected unfavorably upon his reputation. The first case strikes me as anecdotal, based upon a story Captain Thornhill heard. But he was clearly present during the events described in the second case. These cases, and the two that follow, are taken from Captain Thornhill's biography, a document being prepared for publication (Andersen, n.d.).

Case 1: Once skipper Mawg' Mathews was fishing at anchor on the Grand Banks. It was toward the end of the caplin trip, about when the squid struck the Grand Banks, and the whole crew would jig their own bait. Fresh squid would get two or three times as much fish as the last of your iced caplin. Mawg' was getting a lot of fish on his last caplin when this other schooner came along to speak to him. When he saw it coming, he placed some men on the stern quarter and had them pretend to work their squid jiggers, to make the other skipper believe he was getting squid. But there wasn't a squid in the water, and I don't think they came in at all that year.

Mawg' told him there was a lot of fish there, but he didn't say he was getting it with caplin. So this fellow anchored a berth away from him and put his crew to work with their jiggers too. And he never set his gear that day with the caplin he had, because he thought the fish weren't taking it. By dark, he had no squid and hadn't set his gear either. And there was Mawg', catching away with caplin.

I'm not an angel, but my conscience wouldn't let me do that. You didn't *have* to do things like that to make a living."

Case 2: Another time when I was in the dory with a skipper I won't name, we were fishing about 120 miles off on the banks on a small patch of shoal ground called the 'Hump.' There was always a lot of fish there. It was Sunday night and we'd already taken about 200 quintals while anchored there on Saturday. But another Grand Bank schooner was anchored nearby and our skipper thought it was taking more fish. He called us out to bait up that Sunday night, and first had us heave up the anchor, to jog around this other schooner until daylight, so he'd drop us off in just the right spot while the other men would still be heaving up theirs. We'd head them off and be on that spot of fishing ground. Normally, you'd bait up, wait for light, and then heave up to change your position.

But the other skipper (Mawg' Mathews again) was too smart for him. He saw us jogging around, dodging back and forth, baiting up our gear at the same time so we'd be ready to set our gear before his. At daylight he was still there, anchored, we thought. But this man was cute enough that he told his men to heave the anchor just so many fathoms from the bottom. So she was drifting off while we were joggin' around her.

At daylight, we clapped our eleven dories out and set our gear. Then our skipper asked, 'How come he be so far away from us as this, now?' We didn't bother to sound before. And when we went out and took in our gear, there wasn't a cod fish on it. Just some black dogfish and other, old, queer fish.

Meanwhile, the other skipper anchored up there, fished, and had the biggest kind of day. I don't think our skipper ever forgot that, ever forgave him for that. Because it made him a laughing stock. It was a mean thing to do. I couldn't do it, and I know many other men wouldn't either. There was no reason for us to heave up that night after we had taken the bait off our gear. But our skipper said we'd be there to set our gear first, just in the right place, when the other skipper was only heaving up his.

In these anecdotes, Skipper Mawg' is a Newfoundland Disco. But Disco is every fishing master. Fish catch was always uncertain, performance always competitive. No skipper, acting alone, could be certain of success. The risks all constantly shared dictated the customary expectation that every fisherman might at times be aided by others. Skippers relied upon each other for direct and indirect information on fish location and appropriate technique and action, from ground to ground, day to day.

Dory Berths and Disrespect

What did Kipling say about how individual dory fishermen respected fishing berth customs? He described an estimated thousand fishermen in dories and schooners gathered one mile off the Virgin Rocks or Eastern Shoals. Dense shoals of cod were visible in the shallow water,

. . . swimming slowly in droves, biting steadily as they swam. Bank law strictly forbids more than one hook on one line when the dories are on the Virgin or the Eastern Shoals, but so closely lay the boats that even single hooks snarled (1961 [1896]:103).

A man caught doing so might be struck with an oar, knocked over the gunwale into the sea, to become the butt of amusement in slack times.

In the Newfoundland banks schooner fishery, my primary informant, Cap-

tain Arch Thornhill, recalled two occasions from his time aboard unpowered schooners. The first, *Case 3*, concerns two 'stunts' when winter fishing on the count system in 1924 off Rose Blanche, on Newfoundland's southwest coast, when he and a cousin were dorymates. The second, *Case 4*, describes events in the early 1940s, when fishing under the average share system off the Labrador coast in the late summer and early fall months.

Case 3. We had some of the best fishermen onboard, but we had made up our mind to try and keep up with them. To be highliners you had to work and use all kinds of stunts. If the captain gave orders to use 40 lines of gear, and I'm smart enough to get up to the cabin in the morning and can be finished baiting my gear half an hour ahead of the rest, I'm going to put on two or three extra lines. But no one, especially the skipper, is supposed to know that.

When our vessel is anchored and the gear left out overnight, and we're underrunning it, if I'm on watch at night, I'd sneak down in the cabin and get a couple of extra lines of gear. You'd haul open your dory and roll the lines up in it. Then, when you go out, you put up your sail to sail down, and while the dory skipper is steering along, his dorymate is baiting up the extra lines. You'd put them on the outside end of your gear and catch more than double what you'd get near the schooner. I've seen a fish on every hook on the outside end! But if you put on extra lines and were behind coming back aboard, or behind baiting up your gear, you're not able to handle your gear. If you can use it and be on time with the rest of them, it doesn't matter to anyone.

I remember another stunt my cousin, Frank, and I used . . . , and a good many other *good* fishermen used too. One day we were fishing out on Mizzen Bank and caught 800 fish for our dory. Five or six of the other dories had scattered fish on only half of their gear, while the other half of it went out over the shelf into deep water and caught only black dogfish. That evening, when all the dories were onboard, the skipper hove up and anchored again on the outside edge of where Frank and I were that day. Now, when you weigh anchor, even if it only comes off the bottom, you have to draw new courses for your dories and can't go on the course you had just before. We drew a course further up and knew that some dories will still go into deep water, but we didn't say anything to anyone.

If we went in the direction of our new course, we also knew we'd get no more than half of what we had yesterday while the dories fishing on our old course would come in with 800 or 1000 fish. When we got in our dories again, everyone else went on their courses. We gave them a chance to get a bit ahead of us and then moved in between two dories, going right back on our old course. The skipper could see us, because there was no fog. And when Frank and I came aboard, he said, 'Arch and Frank, what did you fellows do today? Your course was up there, wasn't it?' 'Oh, yes, sir.' 'Well, why didn't you go up on your course? You was down there between two dories, takin' up more space. You fellows had no business to do that!'

The other men, when they came onboard, were wild about it too, especially the two dories we sat between. We were taking a lot of fish they were going to get. 'Well, sir,' we said, 'perhaps you'll see this evening, when we get our gear in, that there is nothing to get mad about.'

After we had our snack, we took in our gear and brought aboard exactly the same amount of fish we had the day before. Sixteen hundred fish for two days! And, work! You had to work, by God. If you didn't work, you wouldn't get any fish. That's all. The other fellows got fish, but we happened to have the most. Six or seven dories had 780-790, but we had 800 and were top dory. About half the dories had a good day's work for the vessel. But that's

it, countin' fish. There were some dories that had less than 200 fish that day. When we came aboard that night, they had to do the same work, putting down all the fish, and that's how it went on.

Case 4. Most schooners fished on a big patch of ground down there called the Round Hill (island), about three or four miles off Salmon Bite, where we harbored. It has about 10 or 12 miles of ground, and was better than any other place off the Labrador for fish in the fall. The *Florence* was almost the only dummy (unpowered) schooner around then. The vessels with power could steam in and harbor in Salmon Bite, while we were always the last schooner to come in. I couldn't hang on in the harbor the way they did or they'd head me off and have all the good ground, so we anchored outside, and left again at about twelve o'clock at night to have our gear out on the good grounds before they did.

But this one fellow (a much reputed top fishing skipper in another schooner owned by the same firm), his crew cut us up bit by bit, morning after morning, day after day. And we had to get out of it and get new lines from someone else. And that was only us. This went on for a long time. With a small patch of ground and a lot of schooners, whoever got their dories there first, they'd get their gear all cut, cut, as the others went along. They've been down there and wiped one another out. You would try to be the first to get there, otherwise, cut and get the gear and fish. It was a hard racket. But we weren't counting fish then.

There was plenty of cutting lines from one schooner to another. Not so much on the Western Shore, where you fish in about 100 fathoms, but a lot on the Labrador where you have shallow water, from seven to ten fathoms.

And sometimes it was your own fault. You would set your gear a little too close to another schooner. Perhaps you knew the other fellow was trying to hit it big where he took a lot of fish the day before, and you squeezed up as close to him as possible, then two or three of your dories got tangled up with some of his. If you weren't there first, someone would cut you up, because you had no business going there.

But was anyone culpable for this destructive action? The skipper or his dory fishermen, or both?

Discussion

Contradictions and Fisherman Initiative

Wherever fishermen compete for fish we may expect to find them using information management. Practices used by Newfoundland banks fishing captains had their parallel among east coast Newfoundland 'floater' schooner fishermen who fished the Labrador coast each summer, with cod traps and handlines. Finding a good fishing berth at the start of each season was a key concern. Being first to exploit the location was an advantage to protect. One observer (Cabot 1920:42-43), recalling a run he made with a Twillingate captain along the Labrador coast from Hopedale to Davis Inlet in 1907, wrote of the floater's captain:

He was watching everywhere for fish. Here and there along the islands or in far bays were lying other schooners. Off he would go in the rising breeze, for a speck of a hull or a masthead

showing over some low island, down overboard into the boat towing behind, and away for a talk and a visit. His purpose was to find out that the other skipper was getting fish, if he was; the latter's, as a rule, to conceal the fact if he could. No crew on fish wants neighbors. Boats coming in from traps were scanned, boats jiggling vainly to find a "sign" of fish were noted. Nothing escaped observation.

A boat lying low down with fish would be a certain find. But it was early in the season, fish were scarce, and all the schooners floated high. (...) 'What's the use of talking with other skippers?' I asked, 'They won't tell you the truth.' 'I can tell pretty well by the way they talk,' he answered. Almost always, I think, he could tell; there were a good many indications to go by.

The cases cited above from Newfoundland banks schooner fishing illustrate common fisherman knowledge about actual practices. Such anecdotes stand as models for and interpretations of custom and action. They inform us that skippers sometimes purposefully sought to prevent encroachment upon "their" fishing space and at other times to arrogate another vessel's space to themselves by information management and other tactics, even aggressive intrusion. But fog, sea conditions, and the nature of a specific ground often enabled encroachment, even invasion and seizure, without clear evidence of manifest destructive intent.

Skippers felt compelled to act competitively to protect themselves, their commands, and their crew's livelihoods. Each schooner crew was a corporate entity despite its membership in a fleet of company schooners. In *Case 1* a skipper enlists his crew in action designed to mask their success and actual fishing at a productive berth to which they had first claim. The newcomer follows the false lead and lands no fish that day. The captain narrating the incident holds that he couldn't do what the first skipper did because one "didn't *have* to do things like that to make a living."

In *Case 2* the skipper, misled, is made a "laughing stock," a "mean thing" to do that the narrator and many others supposedly wouldn't do. Actions that were obviously intended to harm another crew's living and/or their captain's reputation are claimed undesirable from this standpoint. A captain's reputation was important to his ability to recruit able men. Whether or not morally justified, such actions might endanger future helpful reciprocities, e.g., information exchange, between captains.

These cases indicate that information management practices among schooner skippers were as much custom as were first use rights. But the anecdotes also tell us that deception, harmful skipper action, is "mean," undesirable, and unnecessary "to make a living."

Just as each schooner was a separate corporate unit whose landings alone determined its crew's earnings, whether fishing on the average share or the count, each dory crew stood more or less alone in respect to its reputational and income rewards. Thus dory fishermen had reason to ignore their skipper's orders and were sometimes 'smart enough' to crowd or intrude upon the space assigned other dory crews. In doing so they emulated their eager captain's own behavior. Sometimes their action resulted in destruction of each other's gear, but this was not always intentional.

Case 3 describes 'stunts' used by two dory fishermen who strive to be high-liners among their crew. They secretly exceed their skipper's orders when they add several extra lines to the outside end of their gear. They disregard the outcome of the customary draw for new course positions required when their schooner shifted its anchorage, and returned to their previous course. (The draw was probably integral to fishing under the count, as it distributed positional and fishing opportunities equitably.) Their skipper saw them squeeze into the space between the other dories, which angered their crews. The transgressors believed the fishing circumstances justified their action, and it seems their catch proved the point to the captain's satisfaction. This case reminds us that violation of the space use custom should be practical and opportunistic. It should mean no certain harm to other men in the same crew.

A skipper would tolerate his dory crew's occasional transgressions of space use rules and his orders if that led to profitable landings. Such occasional infractions are consistent with every captain's desire to have eager, resourceful and enterprising hands for his crew. At the least, rigid obedience to orders risked lost fish production. Likewise, a smart skipper knew when to be flexible. And, once again, there was the lesson of his own competitive practices in relation to other schooners. They contradicted rigid conformity to custom and command.

But there was risk in permitting such transgressions, perhaps especially berth abuses among his own crew, particularly when fishing on the count. The count placed high priority on fairness in all work and deployment orders, so every dory crew had a fair chance to succeed and disruptive crew jealousies were avoided. Suspicion of preferment had a fertile ground in the kin and/or community relationships found on most vessels; a captain and his dorymen were often kin and friends. They often had to return to the same small community at year's end. Arbitrary skipper action was likely to have been somewhat restrained by this network of personal relationships.

When fishing under the count at times the preoccupation with fairness in all decisions made it difficult for captains to make best use of fishing and task division opportunities. Where a simple redeployment of dories might improve the overall catch of all of his dories, under the count he was often compelled to haul anchor, move the vessel, draw for new berths, and only then redeploy them. When fishing and processing tasks might have been divided among the crew to everyone's advantage, all fishing hands had to either fish or process at the same time. In consequence, fish that might have been caught were not, and fish processing was delayed and fish deteriorated. Diminished fish quality risked lost earnings.

Captain Jim Harris (b. 1894), speaking of schooner fishing around 1917, observed:

There wasn't a happy man aboard when you're fishing 'highlow' (on the count). Because you always thought the skipper was doing someone a favour. Now, you tow your dories out in a string, and the dory on the slab set - the first and the last ones to drop off, had the open ocean (on one side). But the other ten dories on the 'fence' would be surrounded,

wouldn't get so much fish. So you always thought the skipper was doing this man a favour for giving 'em the most slab sets.

Under the count crew relations were often highly competitive, tense, bitter, uncooperative, and conflict-ridden. Arguments over count accuracy and suspicion of skipper preferment were common.

Dorymen, for their part, concentrated upon maximizing their catch *numbers*; fish of size, quality, and value suffered, or so it seems. The following quote captures the opposition of interests between captain and dory fishermen when fishing under the count. It is from Waterfield Green, a retired dory fisherman from Grand Banks, on the South Coast. He recalled an occasion in 1934, when winter fishing in the first week of the herring baiting:

Twas a bad day. But, fishing count, you get it how you can. We took all the big ones, and hooked them on our gear for the next day, and took all the small ones in dory, for to get the one haul, and could 'a been the high dory. (When they came alongside their schooner,) the skipper said, 'You got the small ones today.' And I said, 'Yes. There's two reasons for that. You're goin' to take the small fish, 'cause that's what countin' dooz. And you're gonna take the small ones so you wouldn't have your dory so much loaded so you could pull alright to the bitter end.' And we got aboard.

This maximizing also drove fishermen to, by their reckoning, often fatal risk-taking, e.g., by staying out too long against bad weather indications and overloading their dories to make up for bad catch days. Waterfield Green, speaking of the same occasion in 1934, continued:

Skipper always gave us to understand, when it gets too bad, come on board. And, fishin' count, it drives you to stay out when you wouldn't. So, the skipper, he fired away the board and said, 'B'ys, there's no more fishin' count. I'll be expecting every one to come aboard when the other fellow goes.' We got the best kind of a summer out of that. Things were scarce those years. I came home that year, and had \$82. That was *thousands* for the winter!

Beyond these problems, vast differences in dory crew earnings unfairly and enduringly stigmatized *good* men at the end of a voyage when they were ranked "low dory" despite equivalent work and risk-taking. Individual work reputations were affected.

Case 4 recounts fishing in shallow water on the Labrador, where "there were plenty of cutting lines from one schooner to another." This was because one schooner tried to squeeze up as close as possible to the other's position when the latter seemed a more productive one. The anecdote tells us that cutting lines was unjustified, "if you weren't there first...because you had no business there." Here violation of first claim justifies destructive action, but, as indicated earlier, first rights were not always clear.

Whether or not a fisherman knew who had first claim to a location, when gear became entangled its destruction was often a practical necessity. There was no time to consult higher authority. Besides, berth assignments were a captain's

responsibility. The dory fisherman held rights to the berth by his captain's command. Anyway, it took precious time to disentangle a gear snarl met while retrieving gear and catch. Time constrained dory fishermen in respect to sudden weather changes, returning to one's vessel when expected, and producing fish necessary to earnings and reputation. Moreover, the other gear's ownership was often uncertain. It might be from one's own or another vessel. It might be lost and long forgotten. Its buoys might indicate ownership, but seeking them out, if still attached, meant to haul away from and neglect one's own gear and catch.

'Dory Gone Astray': Incentive, Risk, and Death

When you left the vessel to haul the gear, one third of the dories went to leeward the length of all the gear - sometimes two miles, but at least a mile and a half. There is thick fog on the Grand Banks ninety per cent of the time, plenty of wind and a big sea running, and all you had to run for was a small buoy on the end of the gear with a little marker called a 'black ball'. Lives depended on that; if you missed that little ball, there was only one thing to do: row back to the vessel. And many lives have been lost. Some men have been astray for days and have rowed 100 or even 200 miles before reaching land. Many lives have also been lost by overloading the dories, especially when counting fish (Andersen n.d.:72-73).

A thorough history of banks fishing in the Northwest Atlantic would acknowledge that during the schooner and dory fishing era countless dories and crews went astray, and an unknown number of them were never seen again. Why? Our literature offers no systematic record or interpretation of such strays. I recently attempted to construct one from microfilm archival records of U.S. Consular Dispatches from St. John's during the period 1834 to 1912 (Andersen 1986).

My search found 57 cases of men (many native Newfoundlanders) who strayed from their American schooner motherships somewhere on the Grand Banks in the period from September 1873 to June 1902. Forty-four or about 77 per cent of these strays occurred in dense fog and/or storm conditions. One man may have deserted. The rest were unexplained. Forty-seven or 82 per cent of the strays occurred from June through August, 92 per cent from June through September. One case was reported for February; it is a classic illustration of the extreme hardships dory fishermen faced, especially in winter on the Western Banks off southwest Newfoundland, and was the basis for a moving story about Gloucester dory fishermen (Connolly 1930:130-49). Beyond mention of fog and weather conditions, no other causal factors are suggested in these reports.

I have suggested that the design of economic incentives involved in this fishery played a special part in these misfortunes in Newfoundland banks fishing. In particular, the count incentive system drove men to take heavy risks with their lives, as in overloading their dories. The count was intended to drive men to work hard. It was perhaps most often used by skippers when they were unfamiliar with the men recruited. This may have been the case especially during the war years (1914-1918, and perhaps 1939-1945), when, according to the late Captain Jim Harris,

... good crews were hard to find because so many had joined the army or navy to fight in Europe. Since skippers did not know the men they were shipping, they reverted back to the *count*. If... the man was lazy and not a hard worker, the only wages he affected were his own and his dory mate's.

Skippers, how many we will not know, who commanded men under the count knew its dangers. The late Captain George Follett, one of Newfoundland's great banks skippers, held, "The count was a killer." And, as suggested earlier, the count system, if held to for an entire voyage, could leave some men with no earnings at all at its conclusion, while others went home with plenty. Yet all had shared the same burden of risk and work.

By contrast, the share or average share system, whether used for all or part of a voyage, spread uncertainty evenly over the entire crew. No dory crew need feel compelled to take greater risks than their comrades despite their dory's run of poor fishing days. This arrangement also enabled the master to deploy and redeploy his catching capacity as he saw fit, to maximize situational fishing opportunities, without having to shift anchorage each time to maintain equity among his men. In the bargain crew tensions were reduced and cooperation encouraged. This is not to say that the share arrangement pleased all hands. Indeed, some felt it meant having to carry lazy and ineffectual fishermen on the backs of good men. As my primary informant recalled fishing in the 1920's:

In a crew of 11 dories and 25 men, you get some peculiar characteristics. Some are very energetic, another dependent on the other and inclined to be sick on a bad (weather) day. So, fishing count, you *had* to get your livelihood. I'd never let myself down small. I'd sooner go out and drown than I'd give in. Afraid at times, but I only knewed that my ownself.

Logic suggests that the count increased pressure on dory fishermen to take chances with their lives, and that it must have made them more willing to try stunts that transgressed customary understandings about the use of fishing berths on the grounds. This view is consistent with how Newfoundland's surviving banks dory fishermen viewed their history. How they remembered it would seem our best authority in the absence of other historical evidence.

But I can point to no specific occasion when the count and it alone shaped fateful risk-taking and loss of life in the fishery discussed. Early in their lives boys and young men internalized the value of pursuing a reputation for eagerness and resourcefulness as big fish-killers. It was always involved, whether fishing under either the count or share systems. And overwhelming bad weather, boating skill-, navigational-, and gear-accidents add further uncertainties to any single cause argument.

What became of the count labour incentive system in Newfoundland's fishery? The memories of old fishermen give different views. Depending upon port and who one asks, the count "ended" or was summarily - even dramatically - abandoned, and gave way to the average share system as early as 1917. Or it ended in 1934, when earning conditions were at their worst and crewing vessels at all was difficult. Or it continued in use until the late 1940's, when the introduc-

tion of groundfish technology removed the possibility and need to measure individual men by the fish they landed. There is some truth to all of these views.

The count was one of two basic incentive schemes that skippers applied to mobilize their men's labour effort. I believe that skippers applied or removed them as circumstances required. When their performance or commitment to effort was uncertain or unsatisfactory, skippers applied the count. A wise crew soon saw the wisdom of "pulling together" under the average share.

We may be sure that there was a running dialogue among the crew, every day they fished, about their catch, individual dory crew performance, earnings, and work conditions. And their skipper closely watched them, urged them on, and sought to stifle their grumblings by suggesting the best way for all hands to work. For many fishing masters, that meant working hard, together, and on shares.

Notes

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2. Rewarding fishermen on an individual production basis is an old and widespread practice in the fisheries of many nations. For example, Innis (1954:328) writes that in the New England mackerel line fishery of the 1830's, "The skipper and other officers usually took one fish in every sixty-four, and credited every man with his individual part of the catch."

3. The rhyme given here may be a fragment of the "Wadham's Song," a coasting song possibly written in 1756. According to an anonymous source, its author was Erasmus Wadham, an English Royal Navy officer. Wadham's composition may have been approved by the Admiralty Court in London, and used by pilots as a coasting guide. It seems the song has many versions.

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Job Satisfaction and the Culture of Fishing

A Comparison of Six New Jersey Fisheries

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ABSTRACT New Jersey's marine fisheries exhibit unusual diversity within a small geographical area - contrasting in terms of prey species, gear size and type, trip duration, seasonality, regulatory policies, and income levels. One might expect these differences to engender different patterns of job satisfaction. Based on a survey of several hundred fishermen, the paper compares clammers, scallopers, oystermen, druggers, longliners, and baymen with respect to thirty-three components of job satisfaction. Results show significant group-group contrasts in the nonmonetary rewards derived from fishing, even though all those surveyed were clearly 'commercial fishermen.'

For the past few years, we have been doing a survey on job satisfaction among commercial fishermen in New Jersey. The project has several potential applications in the realm of fisheries management, but here we relate our findings to more general concerns within anthropology. In particular, we consider whether participation in the subsistence activity of commercial fishing gives rise to a stable core of subjective responses or whether the particularities of different fisheries engender diverse patterns of response.

We introduce our study by situating it within the context of maritime anthropology. Then, we turn to our principal subject, which is comparing and contrasting the specific nature of job satisfaction in six New Jersey fisheries. Finally, we conclude with some general observations about the nonmonetary correlates of commercial fishing.

Fishing Cultures and the Culture of Fishing

In the literature dealing with fishing as a way of life, there are two kinds of ethnographies or approaches or emphases (Acheson 1981:275-76). On the one hand, there are *community studies* of fishing peoples, such as those by Firth (1946), Faris (1966), and Taylor (1983). On the other hand, there are studies that focus on the *activity of fishing* itself, such as those by Davenport (1960), Orbach (1977), Zulaika (1981), Pálsson and Durrenberger (1982, 1983; Durrenberger & Pálsson 1983, 1986), and Gatewood (1983, 1984). These two styles of research