

son. This Shetland folk model helps maintain an egalitarian façade, which serves social purposes.

In his study of Icelandic skippers, Gisli Pálsson shows that their folk model also explains differential success. They say successful skippers get into 'fishing moods,' and follow hunches and dreams. Pálsson says the reason for this mode of explanation is social as well, though the Icelandic folk model does not mitigate status differences (as in the Shetland case), but minimizes personal responsibility, misleads competitors, and emphasizes individual qualities.

M. Estellie Smith enumerates the economic, ecological, and political risks to which Massachusetts and other American fishermen are now exposed. Her central question is how fishermen perceive and cope with problems of environmental degradation, legislative restriction, and market forces. Taking sides with the fishermen, she criticizes fisheries managers for protecting stocks but neglecting people.

James Acheson takes up the issue of gear switching in the Maine fishing industry. Fishermen seldom specialize on one species throughout their careers, and this has important implications for fisheries management. Acheson shows which patterns of gear switching are apt to occur, given certain incentives and constraints. Managers should take these patterns into account when they propose conservation measures, which usually concentrate on a single species.

In their joint paper, lastly, John Poggie and Richard Pollnac consider the personal and economic risks faced by New England fishermen, arguing that personal risks explain why these fishermen observe rituals of avoidance: rituals serve to reduce anxiety. The authors also establish a correlation between the duration of fishing voyages and the number of taboos.

Luck and Leadership

The Management of Decisions in Shetland Fishing Crews

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Burra Isle, Shetland, is a community of about 800 people. Before the oil economy came to Shetland in the mid-1970s, fishing was the chief source of livelihood of 85% of Burra's adult male residents. Although, as a result of oil, the local economy has now expanded and is more diversified, fishing is still the most important native industry in the island. The boats, of 20 to 25 metres in length, are used to fish the waters just offshore for haddock and whiting with seine nets. The boats are owned in joint partnerships by their crews of four to six men who hold equal shares. Perhaps a little unusually, in comparison with other fishing communities elsewhere, the skipper does not normally own a larger share in the boat than his crewmen. The skipper, then, is not able to claim authority by virtue of his proprietorship of the boat, but rather must seek to validate his position through social means: by negotiation and maintenance of his reputation as a skilful fisherman, and by his ability to manage effectively the processes of decision-making. Yet the smallness of scale of Burra society and the complexity of interdependencies between fishermen militate against open assertions of social hierarchy. This paper describes how the idea of 'luck' may be used as a diplomatic way of expressing distinctions between individuals and groups; how 'luck' plays a pivotal role in the legitimation of leadership, and how it serves as a criterion – and an explanation – of differences in the success of fishing crews.

Leadership and Decisions in the Fishing Crew

Every morning, before the boats go to sea, their crews assemble at the head of the pier in separate groups to discuss the day's prospects. If the weather is unsettled, as it often is, the BBC forecast is always the first matter of speculation. If wind and sea are judged not likely to be bad enough to make fishing unsafe, then the other main item of discussion is where to fish. The decision about where to fish may be influenced by the weather. If it is rough or worsening, the crew may choose to take the boat in close to the shelter of the land; if it is improving or fair, more distant and exposed grounds can be worked. Each crew takes these decisions independently, but a certain amount of information about the intentions of other crews is usually available. Other crews, for example, can be seen to have put to sea already, or be seen to be making preparations for doing so. If another crew passes within conversational distance, a vague indication of where they are going may be given; if not, deductions can be made about their probable intentions by a knowledge of where they fished the previous day and

in what direction their boat was last seen heading. By adding together information from radio contacts about a crew's location on previous days with gossip about the amount, kind and quality of fish that was caught, opinions can be formed about the probable distribution of fish on the grounds offshore. Decisions about where to fish are always based on probabilities, and never certainties. The crew have no way of knowing whether fish will be found in the chosen place until they arrive there, and although there is a good chance that if the fish were 'running' on a certain part of the grounds the day before they will continue to do so the next day, there is no guarantee of this. The fish may vanish just as suddenly as they appeared, leaving no trace of their whereabouts. It then becomes a question of examining carefully every piece of information on the behaviour of other crews for clues about where the fish might have gone.

Every member of the crew is entitled to contribute an opinion on whether, and where they should fish. The skipper usually takes the most active part in the discussion, but his manner is not at all authoritarian; it is understated, almost reticent. The skipper skilfully steers the conversation toward consensus by asking the general feelings of the crew and listening to their comments. He weighs their remarks and then off-handedly puts forward his own proposals, usually prefaced by, 'I don't know,' and rounded off by 'What do you think?' If no one actually objects to the skipper's proposals, the crew is presumed to be in unanimous agreement. In practice, the skipper's position as leader in the decision-making process is reinforced by a much greater access than the other members of the crew to the information upon which these decisions are based, such as echo-sounder, Decca Navigator and radio data, the likely intentions of other Burra skippers, and the complexities of the marketing system. All day long the skipper is in radio contact with the other skippers, and so he has fairly shrewd ideas about how much fish they are catching and what they will do under a given set of circumstances. He also has a much more detailed knowledge of the fishing grounds, simply because it is his job to have this knowledge. The other crewmen are aware of these things, and are unlikely to call into question the skipper's judgement in these matters. Although seemingly consensual, decisions of this kind are little more than *pro forma* ratifications of resolutions the skipper has already made.

Once at sea, a number of decisions have still to be taken. The fishing operation itself, casting and hauling the net, is a routine process that with an experienced crew takes care of itself, but decisions may have to be taken on whether or not to move to another part of the grounds if the first couple of shots are disappointing; or whose turn it is to cook, steer or tend the winch; and when to stop fishing for the day. Also, from day to day the crew must choose when, and possibly where, to land the catch and load up with fuel, ice, empty fish boxes, and groceries. Not all these questions may arise on the same day, and the answers to some may be a matter of standing policy. On their return to port in the evening, before they disperse the crew must agree an hour for departure the next morning, allowing enough steaming time for the boat to reach the chosen grounds ready to make the first shot of the net at the break of day. Indeed, the question of whether

or not to go to sea at all the next morning may need to be considered. The fish might be so scarce as to make it not worth the fuel, or some event ashore, such as a wedding or a funeral, may oblige the crew to stay ashore a day or two. Some of these things will be matters of general discussion around the cabin table at the midday meal, the only time of day when all the crew, including the skipper, are gathered together and conversation is possible. It may be decided, for example, that if a member of the crew needs to be absent for a day because of an appointment ashore, how the work can be redistributed among the remaining members of the crew, or whether an extra man should be taken on for the day. On Fridays, the crew often decide to stop fishing early, so that they will be home in good time to enjoy the evening with their friends and families, but a good run of luck may cause them to reconsider this. In other, purely technical matters, like moving to another part of the grounds, the skipper may act on his own initiative, and the crew would not expect to be consulted unless, perhaps, it makes a substantial difference to the hour of their return to port.

The Role of the Skipper

At sea, the skipper acts as foreman in charge of the fishing operations. While the rest of the crew work on the open deck, the skipper stands at the helm in the enclosed wheelhouse monitoring the radio and electronic equipment and deciding where, when and how to deploy the net. His decisions are based partly upon the wishes of the crew, as expressed in policies agreed by all, but for the most part he is guided by his own experience in finding fish and by the data provided by the echo-sounder and scraps of information picked up by listening to other skippers on the radio. Ultimately, it is the skipper's responsibility to catch the fish, and his alone. The skipper is the hunter. The other men in the crew, however essential their individual contributions, play only supporting roles. The success of the entire joint enterprise, the livelihood of each member of the crew and the welfare of his family is focussed in the skipper's ability to assess probabilities, to make consistently correct estimations of where to find fish, and to capture in the net the fish he finds.

During a typical day's fishing, a Burra boat does not voyage out of sight of land. The skipper takes his bearings to establish his general position on the grounds from landmarks, but the electronic navigation equipment enables him to fix his position over the sea bed within a few metres. Occasionally he may glance at an old notebook containing notes he has made correlating navigational coordinates with data about bottom quality, depth and the location of submarine obstructions such as rocks in the sandy sea bed, or wreckage. Establishing the exact location of these obstructions permits the skipper to lay out a course that will permit him to drag the net round them, for the lee of these obstructions are often gathering places for fish seeking shelter from submarine currents. Similarly, he charts isolated patches of sandy ground on otherwise hard bottom where certain species of fish are likely to congregate.

The echo-sounder shows the depth and bottom contour, and by studying the

density of the trace, the skipper can decide whether the bottom is rock, shell, mud or sand. Given his intimate knowledge of the topography of the sea bed, the fragmentary reports of other skippers, the state of the tide, phase of the moon, the weather, time of day and season, the skipper can compute the probabilities of finding fish in certain places. He steams the boat round the part of the grounds he has chosen to search with an eye on the echo-sounder, looking for evidence of the presence of his quarry. The fish must be at a certain depth, no more than a couple of metres from the bottom, for a shoal that is rising will escape the net. When he sees a promising mark on the echo-sounder, he makes a brief note of the navigational coordinates to fix its location, and then starts to bring the boat into position to shoot the net. Once the net is away, the skipper cannot alter course or in any way pursue the shoal of fish. He has to hope that the shoal stays where it is until the net entraps it. If the shoal of fish is a large one, the skipper will continue to stalk it, renewing his attack with further casts of the net. This may continue for several days. Each morning the skipper will bring the boat back to the same spot, attempt to relocate the shoal, and attack it with the net until the fish disperse. On the other hand, the fish may be less obliging. The shoal may rise just as the skipper is laying out his first shot, and during the two hours it will take to bring the empty net to the surface, the shoal may have vanished from the echo-sounder. The skipper will have to reassess the situation and begin searching all over again. On some days, chance will be against him and he will catch little or nothing; on others his fieldcraft and patient stalking will pay off.

The radio set in the wheelhouse is switched on before the boat leaves port in the morning and is not switched off until the boat returns in the evening. All day long there is a continuous stream of radio messages and the skipper listens, only partly consciously, to all of them. Much of the chatter has little to do with fishing. Lonely skippers who spend much of the day standing in cramped wheelhouses with only the radio for company pass the long hours gossiping disjointedly. Occasionally they compare notes on their luck, but it is thought bad manners to be too inquisitive about what another man is catching. Remarks are laconic, vague, non-committal. When a skipper mentions a place where he is fishing, he gives only a rough indication, such as 'south by Foula.' If he is doing reasonably well, he might offer, 'We're getting a few baskets. Bloody small stuff, though.' If he is catching less fish than he thinks he ought to be, he might say, 'Getting nothing at all' or 'Just a little trash.' On one typical occasion, a skipper told me in the privacy of his wheelhouse that he estimated his last shot at 65 boxes. A few minutes later he replied to another skipper's 'What are you getting?' with 'I don't know. Maybe about forty. I don't know. What are *you* getting?' The other skipper in this case happened to be another Burra man, with whom the skipper was on friendly terms. If he had been asked by an outsider, he would have admitted to no more than twenty boxes, an unattractively marginal catch that would have given the other man no encouragement to relocate. At least, that would have been the skipper's hope. It is a guessing game; for all the skipper might have known, the outsider could have got only ten boxes on his

last shot which he over-estimated by a factor of four or five, a double-bluff so as not to look incompetent when his performance is compared with local fishermen. Skippers listen to the radio and probe others in the hope of learning whether or not fish seem to be running in greater numbers elsewhere. Interpreted and analysed for their true significance, these pieces of intelligence frequently motivate skippers to relocate their boats on another part of the grounds. A skipper who has found a satisfactory shoal of fish deliberately underestimates his catches to keep it for himself for as long as he can, or at least until the end of the day, when the amount of fish he lands will give his secret away to the other Burra skippers. To some extent, these bluffs are a forlorn hope. Skippers who know one another well, as all Burra skippers do, can read a great deal into even the vaguest remarks and assess one another's situations with disquieting accuracy. They may have little to gain by keeping each other guessing, but collectively they have much to gain by keeping outsiders at a disadvantage.

Technological Experimentation

The local fishing grounds are an open and common resource, where anyone is free to hunt for any fish he can catch, and no one can claim ownership over any part of the sea or the fish therein. All fishermen are in competition for the fish which are, in their reckoning, in limited supply. The relations of competition are governed by the zero-sum principle: one man's gain is another's loss. Since no one can claim rights in fish that would be respected by others, the object of fishing strategy is to attempt to secure an advantageous access to resources, to outdo rivals using whatever means are at one's disposal. The way skippers use their radios is one strand of this strategy. Another is technological experimentation.

Burra fishermen are continually tinkering with new equipment: new materials for nets and gear, improved engines, winches and perhaps most importantly electronic gadgets, things that they hope will give them an edge over their rivals. Radar, for example, made it possible for the crews that first adopted it to poach, or fish within the three-mile zone forbidden to boats over 20 metres long. Watching the radar screen, the skipper could 'see' the fishery protection vessel at a distance of 15 nautical miles, giving more than thirty minutes to escape. But without radar, the appearance of the fishery protection vessel on the horizon steaming at 25 knots meant that it was too late to take evasive action. Radar made it possible to work rich but forbidden sea areas and get away with it. Similarly, more sophisticated types of echo-sounders that distinguish more clearly between the sea bed, shoals of fish and inert objects lying on the bottom eliminated some guesswork for the skipper and made the detection of marginal shoals of fish easier and reduced the chances of damaging the net. New electronic navigation equipment enables the skipper to plot the position of a shoal of fish with a high degree of accuracy and allows him to bring the boat back again and again to the same place where good catches were made, and to track the movements of the fish.

Nevertheless, technological experimentation has an inherent limitation. A number of government regulations concerned with ship's equipment, the licencing of ship's officers and qualifications for financial supports have the effect of prescribing an optimum boat size of 20 to 25 metres. Beyond this size, the economic advantages to inshore fishermen begin to decline sharply. Burra boats are therefore approximately equal in size and basic catching-power, and their crews have approximately equal access to government grants and low-interest loans to make improvements to their boats. This means that any innovation offers only short-term advantages. Once an innovation is seen to be successful, it will be taken up by others. The initial advantage of the innovation will be lost, and the others may profit by a wait-and-see attitude, leaving the costs of experimentation to the original innovator and avoiding the risks of failure. Innovations are not always successful, and even when they are, the benefits may be short-lived. No crew is ahead for very long before their rivals catch up. As it appears to the fishermen, the strategy that informs technological experimentation can be compared with a game of Monopoly, in which the players seek to pile gain upon gain, accumulating a corner in the market. But, analytically, innovation more closely resembles a game of leap-frog: after every move, back to square one. While striving to remain technologically competitive is an important part of fishing strategy, it is not really a crucial issue where there are no great differentials in access to investment capital. Crews who are content to avoid unnecessary risk merely by keeping up with their neighbours and no more, will not in the long run lose much against their more experimentally-inclined rivals. Nevertheless, innovation and experimentation are of considerable analytical interest, because they show how fishermen go about solving problems and may provide insights into the organisational processes at work (see, for example, Byron 1980 and 1986).

Luck and Leadership

Although all Burra seine-net crews exploit the same resource with similar boats and equipment, there are many subtle distinctions in the way the crews use their boats. Some have boats that are older and more poorly equipped than others. Some fish longer hours, voyage to distant ports at the weekends to sell their catches, and work on the grounds in weather that keeps others ashore. Out on the fishing grounds, some strike off on their own. Others are content to take a course of minimum risk, following along behind the rest until they find a group to join; at least then they can do no worse than the neighbouring crews. And, at the end of the week, some crews have more boxes of fish stacked on the quay to show for their efforts than others do.

The fishermen explain these differences in terms of 'luck,' a manner of speaking that glosses over the sources of these differences. Luck may indeed be deeply symbolic in the folk consciousness of fishermen, as several maritime writers have argued (e.g. Löfgren 1977). But it is not necessary to give a lengthy treatment of luck as a system of symbols to understand what social goals fishermen use

this concept to serve. This goal is merely a negative one. By characterising differences in terms of impersonal fortune, invidious personal distinctions are diminished. The idea of luck helps to preserve an ethic of commonality in a highly competitive social atmosphere; while competition is potentially antagonistic to cooperation, cooperation is a vital principle in coping with unpredictability. A fisherman never knows when he will need his friends, only that he cannot do without them. Luck keeps in good repair the fences of interpersonal and inter-group relations, and hedges against the unforeseen.

Expressions of luck are used to play down status differences between crews. Crews exist who are said to be luckier, in a general sense, than others, but luck is relative. There are no absolute standards of luck. Luck is the measure, as well as the thing measured. If there are lucky crews, then by inference there are less lucky ones. Burra crews are ranked by their luckiness. All are assessed in terms of the luckiest, and are often seen to follow their lead. The luckiest crews are those who take risks that consistently succeed. Most visibly, in innovations to their boats they contrive to stay a jump or two ahead in the game of technological leap-frog; less visibly, in their fishing tactics at sea they manage to bring home more fish more often. It is true that the movements of the concentrations of fish on the grounds are never absolutely predictable, and there is always a large measure of chance to be reckoned with, but this is not the whole story. Luck is also gamesmanship. And, as in a game of poker, the right combination of chance, nerve and skill raises the ante for all the other players. Except, in fishing, there is no end to the game. No one ever quite wins the pot.

The luck of a crew is difficult to distinguish from the luck of their skipper, so closely is the one identified with the other. Since the skipper is the one member of the crew whose specific function it is to catch fish, the luck of the crew depends very largely upon how good he is at his job, upon his personal luck. Some skippers are acknowledged as being luckier than others. This is the practised poker player's kind of luck, not a mystical variety. Some skippers simply are better at calculating probabilities, have more experience, better memories for detail, and more flair and confidence in their own judgement. They give stronger and more skilfully managed leadership to their crews. In contrast, those least lucky are crews who, in default of effective skippership, are managed collectively. They tend to have the same problems as any organisation run by committee: the need for continual conferences creating a slowness of response to constantly changing conditions and a proneness to disagreements, factional splits and indecision. These constraints can cripple their performance compared with other crews.

In the years before the First World War, open boats were used in the haddock line fishery. A crew of five manned the boat. The skipper's post was at the tiller, facing the four men at the oars. The men worked within easy conversational distance. The man in the sternsheets had no official status as skipper, in the modern sense. Rather, he was a sort of *primus inter pares*, a first fisherman, a man who had acknowledged skills in finding fish. The main attributes of these skills, as today, were his experience and memory, his ability to correlate details and to calculate probabilities. But other than a leadline with which to take soundings and

a cheap compass, he was without technical aids of any kind. The skipper had no sources of information that were not also shared equally and at all times by his crewmates. The skipper sought consultation and consent for his actions by meeting their eyes and perhaps murmuring a few words. All shared in his decisions and, symbolically at least, in his deliberations.

This began to change in the early 1920s, when Burra fishing crews generally adopted motorboats. A common feature of these boats was a small wheelhouse by the mizzenmast, just large enough for the skipper to stand out of the weather while he steered. The boats were decked; no longer did the men sit on the thwarts looking aft toward their skipper, but busied themselves round the deck forward, midships and aft, often with their backs to the wheelhouse and in the wind and distance out of easy earshot of the skipper's voice. The close continuous communion of skipper and crew was lost, and now was possible only intermittently in quiet intervals when the crew crowded the small wheelhouse or sat round the cabin table below deck.

After the Second World War, the separation of the skipper from his crew was reinforced first by the adoption of the echo-sounder and soon after by the ship-to-ship radio. Physically isolated in the wheelhouse, the skipper now had access, for the first time, to sources of information not shared by the other men. Each increment of electronic technology added further to the specialisation of the skipper's role, and made the possession of fishing knowledge, and therefore the basis of fishing decisions, more one-sided. As the number of gray metal cabinets in the wheelhouse increased with radar, Decca Navigator and sonar, the utility of consultation in matters of fishing tactics between skipper and crew declined. In Burra, this has been a slow process that has extended over sixty years, beginning with the removal of the skipper to an enclosed wheelhouse. Gradually, the gap between a representation of equal participation in fishing decisions among all the members of the crew and the reality of the skipper's leadership has widened as, through increasing technological sophistication, knowledge of the relevant facts has become ever more unequally distributed among the members of the crew. The fishermen maintain this representation of equality nevertheless, to serve social ends. If they attempt to use it to serve the technical ends of catching fish, the result is comparatively inefficient, as the following example demonstrates.

In Island Harbour, Newfoundland (Stiles 1972), seine-net fishing on the modern Scottish pattern was introduced in the 1960s. Until then, fishing was done from open boats with crews of two or three men working stationary cod traps set in the bay. Each boat had an owner, but there was not need for the crew's first fisherman to take the responsibility for hunting the fish on a day-to-day basis because no hunting was done: the work merely consisted of taking the boat out to the trap, hauling aboard the fish that had swum into the net in the preceding day or two, and ferrying the catch ashore. Once the trap had been set in place for the season, catches depended on the behaviour of the fish, not of the fishermen. Luck was identified strongly with chance, and little with gamesmanship. The first fisherman or boat owner had no more ability to influence fishing access

than any other member of the crew. Whether or not the owner gave any leadership had no effect upon the outcome, nor did any unequal distribution of fishing knowledge. The crew's ideology of equivalence and equality was not, therefore, confronted by a divergent reality. To all intents, practice was the same as theory.

The Scottish-type seine-net boats, made available to Island Harbour fishermen by the provincial fisheries agency on generous financial terms, were a technological quantum leap. They were more than twice the size of the trap boats, needing seven or eight men to run them. They were comparatively complicated, because they carried their gear and net aboard, rather than anchoring it in the bay. They were grossly more expensive than trap boats. And they were designed for hunting the fish, not simply transporting the catch from the weir to the shore. However, this technology came to them mainly as hardware. Software was included only to the extent that the fishermen were shown how to perform the technical operations of handling the equipment by the fisheries agency instructors. The rest of the software of seine-netting, such as appropriate forms of social organisation and decision-making, was omitted. Island Harbour fishermen were left to extemporise this for themselves. Having been offered no other model of shipboard social organisation, they applied their familiar open-boat pattern. The state credit schemes made it possible for one man to buy a seine-net boat in its entirety, so preserving the institution of sole ownership. This enabled the purchaser to claim skippership by virtue of his proprietorship. His expertness as a fisherman or his qualities of leadership did not enter into this: in trap fishing, these were relatively minor considerations that affected only trivially, if at all, the luck of the day-to-day catches.

The skipper-owner of a new seine-netter found himself in a highly vulnerable position. He had sole responsibility for the management of the boat, but lacked any socially-accepted basis for exercising authority, however presented or rationalised. He was without the moral support of fellow partners who recognised the legitimacy of his leadership. The skipper had to avoid giving any suggestion of offence to crewmen who, having no financial stake in the boat, were free to leave the crew at any time. Because the skipper's economic position – not least his ability to meet his mortgage payments – very largely depended upon the quality of his crew, he could not afford to alienate them by attempting to assert a degree of authority they were unprepared to accept. In practice, this meant that he has to waive his right to make tactical fishing decisions. Even simple technical decisions, like moving to another part of the grounds, could not be taken without consulting each member of the crew and obtaining his approval. Frequently all crowded into the wheelhouse to look at the echo-sounder or listen to the radio for themselves before giving the skipper their advice. Should the skipper not have taken this precaution, he would have had to accept the blame if the decision in the event proved to have been wrong; but since luck was chance in Island Harbour, and not gamesmanship, there was just no way of doing this without destroying his reputation or risking the loss of his crew, or both. Decisions taken on the basis of specialised knowledge not shared by all the other members of the crew simply were avoided, therefore. A strategy of minimum risk was the

usual outcome, resulting in an extreme emphasis on fishing in places where all the other seine-net boats were fishing. At least then, failure could be blamed on the luck of the draw rather than the way the cards were played.

Although there are so many differences as to make a fair comparison difficult, it seems highly likely that Scottish seine-netting in Island Harbour is less efficient than in Burra, and that its failure to reach its economic potential is to be found in the way that luck is conceptualised. As luck was identified with chance by Island Harbour fishermen, the skipper was not considered to have any greater ability to influence the outcome than any other member of the crew; beyond the fact that he owned the boat, there was no moral basis upon which the skipper's authority could be legitimated. The beliefs of Island Harbour fishermen about the nature of luck, while suited to a passive form of fishing, were inappropriate to a regime that required active hunting techniques.

In Burra, changes in the technology of fishing that have occurred in gradual increments over a long period of time have played a large part in shaping, and re-shaping, the social relations of fishing. As little as possible is left to chance in the organisation of Burra fishing crews. In the long run, a skilful skipper and a cooperative crew who work together smoothly are felt to be the most important asset in fishing, next to the boat itself, and the paramount factor in determining success. Beyond a certain level of technological sufficiency, no matter how new or well-equipped their boat, if the crew cannot agree how to work together to use it to best advantage, they will lose ground to rival crews with fewer domestic problems and even may be forced into eventual bankruptcy.

Each member of the crew occupies a social position within it by virtue of his skills, temperament, kinship status and age. Yet there is no immediately perceptible command-structure in the crew, and the skipper's authority at first sight seems minimal. No one shouts, no one gives orders, no one has to be told what to do, and no one asks what he should be doing. Each man knows what is expected of him, and does it without a word to anyone. Knowing one's place in the crew is a central value in the moral code of teamwork. This code is largely inarticulate and unspoken, given expression only as a sense of wrong when it is broken. A fisherman is not recruited into a crew unless he understands and accepts this code, and his place in the society of the crew. The only way of ensuring this is for the prospective crewman to be known 'in the round' by the others. Most Burra crews are composed of men who have known each other since childhood. Many crewmates are also kinsmen: skippers' sons, younger brothers and brothers' sons. Potential command-rights arising from inequalities of social status within the crew can then be maintained in a muted state, without the necessity to be given voice, so minimising a serious source of potential friction in interpersonal relationships. Burra crews are highly stratified and hierarchical, but the way social relationships are played out gives a superficial appearance of equality. Perhaps misleadingly, crews similar to those formed by Burra fishermen quite commonly have been described as 'egalitarian' (see, for example, Barth 1966, Norr and Norr 1974, Acheson 1981). Analysts of fishing societies, it would appear, have taken the lack of open assertions of status and authority as evidence

that the members of such crews do not recognise differences in status, or expectations of behaviour arising from these differences. In Burra crews, effective leadership and teamwork are coupled with styles of social interaction that minimise the occasion for disputes about relative social rank and the legitimacy of the skipper's leadership. Although I have used the imagery of games in this essay, fishing is not a game. It is a real-life struggle against an inhospitable environment, unstable resources and intense competitive pressures: these things are beyond the control of individual crews. What they *can* control, however, are the choices they make about organising themselves socially to take maximum advantage of their technical means.

Luck and Reputation

The luck of fishing crews is a major subject of public interest in Burra. News about fishing is just as avidly sought by friends, neighbours, parents, wives and children ashore as it is by the fishermen at sea. Most fishermen's wives have radios with ship-to-ship channels in their homes and can hear some of the radio exchanges between the boats while they are fishing. The main staple of everyday village gossip is news about the boats that have made lucky catches. The semantics of this gossip reveal the way crews are conceptualised by the people ashore. A fisherman's immediate family refer to the crew by his name, regardless of his standing in it, as 'Jimmy's having no luck at all this morning,' Jimmy being anything from the most junior crewman to the skipper. Other people refer to crews in either of two ways: by the boat's name, or by the name of its skipper, i.e., 'Have you heard how the *Southern Star* is doing today?' or, 'George Smith's fishing out by the Fair Isle.' Although the same speaker may use both forms interchangeably in reference to the same crew, certain people tend to identify certain crews by the skipper's name more often than by the boat's name. There are three reasons for this. First, there are strong loyalties to family and neighbourhood in Burra. While a speaker may be socially related to several crews that contain kinsmen or neighbours, the crew most closely allied to him through family ties or residential proximity he tends to identify by their skipper's name, as a way of emphasizing his personal attachment. Second, the crew might have a skipper who is especially noted for his personal luck. Third, there is the simple fact that it is the skipper's voice, and his alone, that is heard on the radio. For whatever reason, the use of the skipper's name is a marked feature of island gossip. And, overall, some skippers' names are heard far more often than others. The mention of a skipper's name, as a way of identifying a crew, can be taken as public acknowledgement of his leadership of it. The number of times a skipper's name is mentioned in the general run of gossip can be taken as a measure of his luckiness, for it is the skippers of the luckiest crews who are the most talked about; their luck is the subject of endless speculation. These skippers are, by island standards, public figures. Their reputations are known, and discussed, in every household in the island. Skippers, then, are the public personification of their crews, and embodiment of their luck.

Conclusion

This essay does not seek to deny that luck, or abstract ideas about impersonal fortune are unimportant in an understanding of the world-view of fishermen; rather, it seeks to demonstrate that fishermen's expressions of luck may be considered in a sociological as well as a cosmological sense. In Burra, the concept of luck is used to serve social ends, as an idiom in which evaluations of rank, prestige and success may be made without giving offence to neighbours and kinsmen. Fishermen of different crews and their families ashore interact not only in the context of fishing, but also in other social fields involving a wide range of face-to-face exchanges which are a function of the smallness of scale of Burra society. People who are competitors and rivals in fishing may be helpmates and allies in other social settings. These cross-cutting ties ensure that the relations between crews, and within them, are tempered by a comparatively broad range of mutual interests and interdependencies. The maintenance of these intricate networks of interdependencies requires careful management and diplomacy. Explanations in terms of luck are a tactfully neutral way of speaking about social differences.

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Models for Fishing and Models of Success

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Introduction

The following account is based on fieldwork in Sandgerði in south-west Iceland. According to the dominant Icelandic folk model of fishing, some skippers catch more fish than others because they follow other procedures when making decisions about the locations of prey. Successful skippers are said to follow hunches and get into a particular 'fishing mood'. Durrenberger and I have shown that differences in success are not explained by differences in skipper behavior, since, statistically, the size of the catch is largely determined by boat size and fishing effort (Durrenberger and Pálsson 1983, 1985; Pálsson and Durrenberger 1982, 1983; Pálsson 1982). We argue that the prevailing model of success is a response to the competitive nature of modern fishing. Here I describe the folk model and test its authenticity in the light of information on the actual behavior of skippers. The analysis shows that 'good' and 'bad' skippers are not significantly different in terms of their fishing profiles. This supports earlier analysis based on the same data (Durrenberger and Pálsson 1986). I conclude that hunches and dreams are independent of success, and that the logic of such practices is largely contained within the realm of social relations.

There are many anthropological accounts of folk models of fishing, native theories of production and fishing success. In many instances success is attributed to the personal capabilities or fishing tactics of leaders of fishing operations (see Acheson 1981). Good skippers are said to have a particular expertise (Wadel 1972), independence (Barth 1966), good 'hearing' (Firth 1946:99), or 'good eyes' (Orbach 1978:82). In many other instances, however, success is not regarded as a personality attribute but rather as a matter of luck or supernatural forces. This is the case in Sri Lanka (Alexander 1977:238), Newfoundland (Stiles 1972:41), France (Jorion 1976), the Shetlands (Byron, this issue), and the Cape Verde Islands (Pálsson, in press). Further examples, provided by the *Human Relations Area Files*, are Alaska (Inuit), Bahrain, Brazil (Bahia), Estonia, Jamaica, Java, Korea, Koryak, Marshall, Micmac, Rif, Seri, Trobriand, and Yurok.

While much has been said of models of fishing, there are very few accounts of what skippers actually do while at sea — their models for action (Geertz 1973:93) — and most concern navigation rather than fish finding (see, for example, Gell 1985). Acheson's study of the lobstermen in Maine (1977) is rare in that it attempts to describe both the folk theory of success and the actual behavior of skippers. Acheson observed a group of 33 skippers and argued that his evidence supported the folk claim that success is largely a matter of knowledge of