

FISHING, FAMILIES, AND THE SURVIVAL OF ARTISANAL BOAT-OWNERSHIP IN THE BIGOUDEN REGION OF FRANCE

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Abstract Small-scale, family fishing enterprises manage to persist despite the difficult economic and ecological changes and disruptions they almost constantly have experienced during the past several decades. Drawing upon long-term ethnographic and historical research in the Bigouden region of France, this paper asks why and how family-based fishing enterprises continue in the face of what seem to be overwhelming odds. This is accomplished through an evaluation of the social reproduction of family-based fishing enterprises in the Bigouden region of France. Specific attention is paid to: (1) the factors that contribute to the maintenance of boat ownership from one generation to the next generation, and (2) an exploration of the extent to which boat ownership in one generation can be linked to a family's continued participation in the fishery in subsequent generations. The paper concludes by arguing that continuation in the fishery during a period of overall declining employment has been contingent upon the degree of vessel ownership in the preceding generation.

Introduction

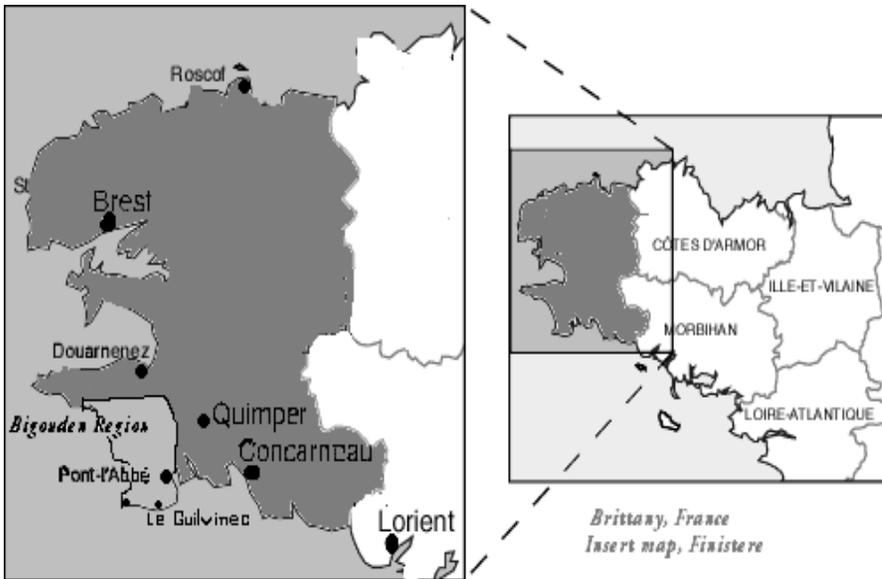
Family-based fishing operations exist around the globe. Small-scale fishers can be found almost anywhere there is room to put down a net or dock a boat. Despite this tenacity the survival of family-based fishing is rarely a certainty. The exponential growth of industrial scale factory trawlers and the concomitant decline of many traditional fish stocks threaten to take away the very economic basis of artisanal fishing. To add insult to injury artisanal fishers are facing increased competition in their homeports from the growing sport fish and recreational boaters. These leisure-time boaters then employ their often stronger economic clout to squeeze the less pristine work-a-day fishermen's boats into rundown corners of harbours or even right out of the harbour all together. Small- to medium-scale commercial fishing persists despite a dominant economic trend toward concentration extant under a capitalist economy, despite the attempts of resource managers to 'rationalize' production, and despite the apparent economic inefficiencies that plague such fisheries (Sinclair 1985; Durrenberger 1993; Griffith 1999; Binkley 2002).

The particularities of fishing for a living offers a unique vantage point from which to examine the ways in which family-based fishing enterprises maintain and reproduce their enterprises through time. With few exceptions, the majority of the world's commercial fishers work on small to medium sized vessels, typically less than 30-35 meters in length, operated by crews of three to six individuals (for the exceptions see, for example: McGoodwin 1990:101-3; Warner 1983; Tunstall 1969). While capital and financing is sometimes provided by large processing firms (Clement 1986; Marchak, Guppy, and McMullen 1987) or governments (Rodman 1989;

Cohen 1987; Byron 1986), for the most part commercial fishers maintain formal ownership and control over the basic instruments of production: their boats, gear, and licenses (McGoodwin 1990; Acheson 1981; Norr and Norr 1978).

As a commercial enterprise, small to medium scale commercial fishing often sits on the margins of capitalist development in that the basic process of production operates largely within the medium of kin-based crew recruitment and the apparent economic freedom of the ownership of the instruments of production (Robben 1989; Jorion 1982b; Faris 1972).¹ Thus, the economic viability and success of a family-based fishing enterprise relies both on its economic ability to catch and sell fish within a commoditised market and on its ability to draw upon the labour, knowledge, and capital reserves of its family network. This paper explores how family-based fishing enterprises integrate these two domains and manage to continue in the face of what seems to be overwhelming odds. This is accomplished through an evaluation of the social reproduction of family-based fishing enterprises in the Bigouden region of France. Specifically, this paper asks who stays in a fishery and who must necessarily leave and, to what extent is a family's history of vessel ownership an important indicator of continuance through to future generations. While there is no single answer to why family-based fishers continue, we can analyse how they do so in specific cases.²

The Bigouden: People and Place



Although this paper addresses the general question of the processes of social reproduction, it focuses on one group of people to make its argument. First then, we should meet these people – the skippers, crews, and their families – and the place they call home, the Bigouden Region of France.

The Bigoudenie incorporates the cantons of Le Guilvinec, Pont L'Abbe, and Plogastel-Saint Germain; an area of roughly 150-200 km² characterized by a

strong local culture (Segalen 1991; Hélias 1975).³ Elsewhere I have argued that the terrain of local culture, exemplified by the ‘traditional’ costume, has been an important site of social resistance (see, Menzies 2002). This paper, however, focuses on the specific manner by which property and access to employment are mediated by family relations.

The Bigouden coastline consists of open sandy beaches occasionally broken by rocky outcroppings. The region is effectively demarcated on the west and south by ocean and on the east by the river Odet. The northerly frontier winds along a



Photo 1a. Le Guilvinec harbour. Commercial boats moor against the port side dock. Some pleasure craft and smaller day fishing boat can be seen anchored in the middle of the harbour.



Photo 1b. Le Guilvinec harbour. This view shows the tall gantry for lifting boats onto the slipway on the starboard side of the harbour, while on the port the local fish auction and semi-industrial draggers can be seen.

low-lying stream valley that opens at the sea town of Audierne. The land is not particularly well suited to large-scale agriculture or the new farming techniques adopted in the northern part of Finistère during the rapid modernization of the 1960s and 70s. Prior to the commercial sardine fishery of the late 1880s, generations of peasants eked out a livelihood living near the coastal strip, alternating between land and sea (Segalen 1991; Menzies 1997: 28-30).

Today the Bigouden is the premiere artisanal fishing region in France. The district ranks fourth in terms of overall production. More than fifty percent of the local production finds its way to fresh fish markets in Paris, Spain, and Italy within a day or two of being unloaded in one of the four Bigouden ports (St. Guénolé, Le Guilvinec, Lesconil, Loctudy). The fleet consists of over 450 vessels ranging up to twenty-five meters in length. With the exception of about twenty-five vessels all of these boats are owner-operated.⁴

In preparing for fieldwork in the Bigouden I had noted that a major shift was occurring in the structure of employment opportunities in the French fishing industry. Between the 1950s and 1993, the number of Breton fishers had dropped from 25,000 to 8,000. In order to understand how fisherfolk were surviving – or failing to survive – I planned to compare two groups of respondents. The primary group would be selected from among fishers and their families whose base of operations was in the port of Le Guilvinec. The second group was to be comprised of former fishers and their family members. Part of my problematic was thus to contrast the expelled with the hangers-on. This was initially conceived of in terms of men being pushed off the boats into wage-labour either in or outside the region. To a certain extent these expectations were confirmed by the occupational genealogies that I completed.

My speculations about workers leaving fishing stemmed from the experience of commercial fishers in British Columbia where, following licensing changes introduced in the herring and halibut fisheries during the 1980s, there was an obvious and easily measurable decrease in jobs. Men who had fished since childhood had been made redundant and were forced, if they were able, to seek employment in other areas. However, the shift out of fishing in France occurred long before the men ever reached the boats.

In the post-war period a new openness in the educational system allowed more working-class and peasant families to give their children a post-secondary education. In the context of the expanding welfare state jobs were plentiful. Add to this a dramatic change in family size: in one generation family size dropped from five to nine children to two to four. In the occupational genealogies collected during my fieldwork, a move away from manual labour toward white-collar employment based outside of the region was evident. As my work progressed I realized that those who had kept a foothold in the fishery were predominantly those, whose families had owned fish boats for a generation or more.

The potential problem of displaced fishers also seemed to be controlled through the educational system. Like many other occupations in France, one must attend a specialized school to become certified as a fisher. Advancement from deck-hand to mate or mechanic, or from mate to skipper, requires additional certificates.

French fishers can also retire after 37.5 years of work to a full pension (the minimum reported pension was \$US 1.750 per month). The official age of retirement is fifty-five. Understandably, men over the age of fifty-five are rare indeed onboard a French fishing boat. Thus potential surplus labour is siphoned off by a system of early retirement and is further inhibited through restricted enrolments at the special fishing schools.

The Maintenance of Family Fishing Enterprises through the Generations

The family histories related in this article encapsulate and express the difference a family makes in maintaining a foothold in the Bigouden fishing industry. They emphasize how individuals and their kin have made their way through the morass of social transformations and upheavals that have characterized this region while trying to hold on to a way of life in the fishery. However, the ones who have survived have done so in a context of a great many who have not. In the face of a contracting fishing industry those without the support of wider kindred's, those without already owning productive property in the fishery, are at a decided disadvantage.

Family-based ownership in the Bigouden fishery has waxed and waned over the course of the past century and a half. In the 1800s peasant agriculturists living along the Bigouden coast would, when weather and coastline permitted, availed themselves of the resources near to hand. Using small rowboats and sailing craft they would set lines for bottom fish and traps for shellfish. Very few were involved in the sardine fisheries that where, at that time, based in Concarneau to the south and Dournanez to the North (Boulard 1991; Couliou 1997; Guégruen and Le Maitre 1990; Lachèvre 1994; Le Coz 1985, Le Bail and Nicot 1995).

Participation in the pre-industrial sardine fishery⁵ was tightly controlled by merchants who maintained economic ownership over the fishers' instruments of production and control over access to the market for fish and fish products. With the development of industrial canning techniques, however, the sardine fishery itself was transformed. Merchant control over nets and boats became less important as the emerging industrial canners realized that control over processing, as opposed to harvesting, was more effective economically. A report, written by the Prefect of Finistère in 1912, argues in support of the canner's request that the government offers capital (in the form of a credit union) to the artisanal fishers. The underlying idea, as expressed in the report, was to enable the local fishers to become members of the 'modern' economy via boat ownership. The new technologies for preservation, combined with the advent of rail transportation opened the Bigoudennie for development (Menzies 1997:29).

Between 1860 and 1880 coastal Bigoudennie underwent a radical transformation. Agriculturists now began to turn their backs on farming and flocked to the growing coastal fishing communities such as Le Guilvinec (which jumped in population from barely 600 people in the early 1860s to over 6,000 by the late 1880s). The newly established canneries in the Bigouden region were able to draw upon a ready labour force from amongst peasant cultivators. Women were recruited to work in the processing plants and men to crew and skipper the boats. These workers, newly pulled into industrial fish processing and harvesting, brought with them their ideas

and experiences as peasant cultivators and when they became boat owning families tended to adapt mechanisms for reproducing their household enterprises that had been developed over the preceding generations.

Elsewhere (Menzies 2002) I have discussed in some detail the historical development of the Bigouden fishery from the Sardine period to the present. Suffice to say that in the intervening years the industrial sardine fishery was itself replaced by a new mode of fishery oriented towards a fresh fish market and employing bottom trawls. The transformation from canning sardines to marketing fresh fish was necessitated by the withdrawal of industrial capital from the region (the canning firms found it more advantageous to shift their operations to Spain, Portugal, and North Africa). The intervention of the post-World War II French State and later of the European Union created financial incentives for small fishers to invest in the fishing industry. New infrastructure in the form of highways, docks, harbours, and marketing facilities were also an essential aspect of the transition to the contemporary fresh-fish fishery in the Bigoudenennie.

Throughout all of these transformations family-based/operated fish boats have been the norm. Other analysts have noted the tenacity of local fishers in resisting the transformation to a more fully formed capitalist fishery (see, for example Sinclair 1985). This form of fisheries affords certain economic advantages in terms of being able to draw upon un/under paid family labour. Also, it allows large-scale capital certain flexibility in terms of distributing economic risk away from the core operations of large-scale capital. For example, shifting the ownership of fishing vessels to the fishers and their families while maintaining control over processing and distribution of fish and fish products allows companies to maintaining a steady supply of fish without the cost and associated risk of operating the fish boat. It is important to point out that in other fish ports different paths have been taken. For example, in the Irish fish port of Killybegs, a group of family-based fishing enterprises took a turn into industrial scale production in the late 1970s and today a fleet of fewer than twenty large vessels (50-65 m) are the economic mainstay of the economy.⁶ Fishers in Le Guilvinec, however, have steadfastly resisted moves toward greater economic concentration and have instead tried to maintain family-based fishing operations.

The ability to stay in the fishing industry from one generation to the next is not, however, simply a matter of determination and will power. These factors might help explain why they do, but not how. In the two case studies related below the different occupational trajectories of skippers and crews are presented with specific reference to the issue of maintaining property in the fishery from one generation to the next. In these case studies we can see the difference that family makes in staying in fishing or being pushed out. The first case, Luc and Martine Kernevad, is representative of a deckhand's family. The second case is of a boat owner's family.

Case One: Luc and Martine Kernevad

I met Luc for the first time during a fishers' protest in late 1994. As I got to know him, he told me about his life working on the fish boats:

At the age of fifteen I went to sea on the dragger *New Times*⁷, a wooden boat of 17m, equipped for deep-sea fishing. The trips were ten to fifteen days off the coast of England and Ireland. There were seven men in the crew. We

worked between eighteen and twenty hours a day. My job consisted in cooking, stacking the langoustine and filling up the net mending needles with twine. The job⁸ pleases me, but it is hard and very tiring.

Over the course of his working life Luc has moved up through the ranks establishing himself as a respected crewmember and reliable man onboard.

It is important to note that one risks accepting a false sense of continuity in employment when, from the vantage point of the present, we trace backwards a linear progression to some distant ancestor of Luc or Martine. The family past, when constructed from the point of view of the present often obscures the turns, breaks, and deviations that are typical of most families. Understanding the lateral movements in each generation helps to make sense of how fishing families in the Bigoudennie have conserved their property and reproduced their fishing enterprises from generation to generation.

Thus, depending upon whether one considers the progression of the family lineally (from child to grandparent) or laterally (within a generation, sibling to sibling, or cousin to cousin), Luc's family's occupational image changes. To say, for example, that Luc comes from a family of fishers is to privilege the occupation of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather over that of his mother's father or great uncle on his father's mother's side (the first was a livery-man, the second alternated between a variety of construction and day labour jobs). One also ignores his family's peasant pre-history in which family members alternated between sea and land as opportunities arose. In addition, and germane to our argument in this paper, it is also to ignore the lateral shifts out of fishing at each generation in the family's history. It is, therefore, more accurate to suggest that Luc's family is part of the rural proletariat and took up jobs when and where they could. During the period in which the fishery grew, his family members became fishers.

The families of Luc and Martine are native Bigoudennes and have resided in the region for more generations than they can recall. Luc reckons his lineage patrilineally. He is at least the fifth generation of the family Kernevad to have made his living as a fisher and he is likely to be the last. Of Luc's siblings, none currently works as a fisher. Two are in jobs connected with the fishery. Three work in areas completely separated from fishing. Out of seventeen cousins, only five work in fisheries-related jobs (two as fishers, one a ship's carpenter, and two in machine shops).

Position	<i>Fisher</i>	<i>Fish Worker</i>	<i>Other Blue Collar</i>	<i>Professional</i>	<i>Service</i>	Not Known
Relation						
<i>Cousin</i>	2	3	3	2	5	2
<i>Sibling</i>	0	2	0	1	2	0

Table 1. Employment Categories of Luc Kernevad's Generation.

Martine's family comes from an entirely different segment of the social matrix than Luc's. Her family's dominant occupation has been peasant agriculture. Martine

worked on her family's farm as a young child. At fifteen she found a factory job in a nearby town. None of her sisters married farmers, nor did her brothers choose to become one. Of her siblings, she is the only one still living in the Bigoudennie.

Martine and her siblings came of age during a moment of radical transition in French agriculture (see, for example Badone 1989). Following the end of the Second World War until well into the 1970s French agriculture was thoroughly modernized. In some areas the transformation led to an enrichment of local farmers. In nearly all regions the result was an increase in the size of farms and a reduction in the overall number of farmers. In regions such as the Bigoudennie many of the children of the 1950s and 1960s left the land and took up employment in the growing white-collar and industrial sectors of the French metropolitan economy. Many of the farms left behind in the Bigoudennie have been transformed into holiday properties or residential suburbs for the nearby departmental capital, Quimper. What arable land remains has been leased to farming enterprises.

Martine and Luc live in a house built on a section of her family's twenty-hectare farm (a farm that has been held in the family for at least three generations). No one in her family is currently farming the land. Some of the land has been sold for housing, about six-hectare are sitting fallow, and the remaining twelve-hectare or so are leased to a local dairy farmer with a milk quota. Martine's parents literally went to their graves farming the land. However, they actively encouraged their children to find jobs in the fishery or in the towns.

Over Luc's twenty-five year fishing career he has crewed on only four boats.



Photo 2. Small coastal draggers unloading at Le Guilvinec, France.



Photo 3. Small coastal longliners in Loctudy Harbour, France.



Photo 4. Typical Bigouden dragger entering Le Guilvinec harbour to unload after a day's fishing.

After fishing for several years with his uncle, Luc took a job on a modern deep-sea dragger in the 24m class. He switched boats once in the mid-1980s to take a better job and then once more in the early 1990s to a coastal dragger,⁹ wanting to be closer to his children during their adolescence.

Martine worked in the same factory she had started at as a teenager. As the birth of her first child approached she quit her factory job. At points when Luc's income fell off (most notably during the crisis of the early 1990s¹⁰) Martine found employment in a variety of short-term jobs such as cleaning and clerking. Both Luc

and Martine hope their children will find employment outside of the fishing industry: ‘There’s no future in the fishery for a young man,’ they say.

Case Two: Gilbert and Catherine Bazhad

The personal and family histories of Gilbert and Catherine Bazhad are intimately entwined with the history of the Bigoudennie. Gilbert, born in the fishing village of Léchiagat (just across the harbour from Le Guilvinec), descends from a paternal line of fisherfolk, which disappears beyond the scope of living memory. Catherine, born in the village of St. Guénolé, has inherited a patrimony equally as rooted in the maritime milieu. As a couple, they have maintained their kindred’s involvement in the fishing industry and have every intention, as well as the means, to perpetuate their enterprise through to the next generation.

Gilbert’s work history cuts through the period of social transformation following World War II. He started fishing at the age of 14 on his father’s sardine seiner out of Le Guilvinec. After three years of learning the trade, he switched to trawling as a deckhand aboard his uncle’s boat. In the 1950s many young men went to work aboard the growing distant water fleet: Gilbert was no exception.

Year	Position	Owner and type of boat¹¹ fished on
1950	Mousse (inbreaker)	Father’s boat, fishing sardines out of Le Guilvinec
1953	Deckhand	Father’s brother’s boat, side-trawler fishing out of Le Guilvinec
1955	Deckhand /boson	Distant water trawler fishing out of L’Orient
1958	Mate	Father’s brother’s boat, side trawler fishing out of Le Guilvinec
1963	Skipper	Partnership with two brothers, built new wooden boat for side trawling, fishing out of Le Guilvinec
1968	Skipper	Bought out brothers’ share of boat
1977	Skipper	Built new steel stern trawler, sons listed as co-owners
1983	Skipper	Built second steel stern trawler, eldest son operates boat built in 1977
1988	Retired	1977 Vessel replaced with a new steel stern trawler, oldest son runs new boat, 2 nd son takes over boat built in 1983. Gilbert retains ownership interest in both vessels

Table 2. Gilbert Bazhad’s Work History.

When Gilbert left the Bigoudennie in 1955 to fish on the distant water trawlers, his father retired and passed on the running of the family boat to Gilbert’s older brother André. After three years working in the offshore fleet, Gilbert returned to Bigoudennie, married Catherine, and went to work on his uncle’s wooden side-trawler. As his uncle had no sons to take over his boat, Gilbert was hired as the mate. As his uncle

approached retirement age (52-55), Gilbert assumed greater responsibilities on the boat and, by 1960, was practically running the boat as his own (his uncle retired and sold the boat in 1963, causing Gilbert to commission the building of a new wooden trawler).

From 1963, when he bought his first boat, to his retirement in 1988, Gilbert was involved in building four new vessels (one wooden, three of steel). He formed a partnership with his two brothers in 1963. André continued to run the family boat, replacing it with a new vessel in 1964. His youngest brother, Jean-Pierre, who had been working on the uncle's boat, came to the new boat with Gilbert and fished with him until the mid-1980s when he retired early for medical reasons.

Throughout this, Catherine worked primarily in the home. She was responsible for maintaining the boat accounts, arranging provisions, and ensuring that payment deadlines were kept. Often hidden from view, this work is as important in the maintenance and perpetuation of the fishing enterprise as was Gilbert's ability to make deals and catch fish.¹²

According to Catherine, men have a hard time with money: 'They go from their mother's home to their wives home,' she said. 'We do it all for them. They can't even write a check! Without a good women – one who knows that it is important he spend a little in the Bistro, not too much, just enough to waste – he'll waste it all.'

Year	Position	Comments
1954	Cannery worker	St. Guénolé, seasonal work
1958		Moved to Le Guilvinec following marriage to Gilbert
1959	House wife	Following the birth of their first child, Catherine, stopped working in the paid workforce, working instead in the home
1963	Book keeper/ manager	Following the purchase of a new boat, Catherine was responsible for keeping the vessel's accounts. As the enterprise developed, she became the virtual manager of the family enterprise
1988	'Retired'	Ceased active involvement in the fishing enterprise, much of her work having been taken over by her eldest son's wife in the course of the 1980s

Table 3. Catherine Bazhad's Work History.¹³

Catherine began work as a cannery worker in her hometown, St. Guénolé. She worked there for five years. Like many other young women, she had worn a *coiffe* but, by the early 1960s, had traded it in for a 'modern' hairstyle. 'My mother and grandmother wore a *coiffe* everyday of the week,' Catherine said. 'I did as a young women, but stopped when I started doing our accounts. It just didn't seem practical anymore.' Her daughter, Anne, belongs to a local folk group. She now wears the *coiffe* to special events, festivals, and the occasional performance.

To locate an occupation other than fishing in either Catherine's or Gilbert's family tree once must descend back beyond the 1860s. Of the eight 'ancestral-house-

holds' economically active in 1860, two involved peasant agriculture with small-scale fishing and one unambiguously derived its livelihood from peasant agriculture. Of the generation immediately prior to the 1860 generation, Gilbert and Catherine say about half of these households were peasants. The others combined fishing and agriculture.

Family Ties and the Persistence of Property

Several observations about patterns of marriage and their relevance for keeping vessels and workers 'inside' the fishery can be suggested. In her study of kinship in the Bigouden, Martine Segalen carefully describes a system of linking marriages, which, over the course of several generations, knit kindreds together and conserved property ownership through the generations. Segalen suggests that these linking marriages (which have no emic designation) function to maintain property within the 'family' (1991). The density of fishing occupations within Gilbert and Catherine's family suggest the possibility that linking-marriages such as those identified by Segalen were being used to keep boats within intergenerational groups of related men. This conclusion is supported by my data collected over the course of ethnographic research stretching over a decade in the region. Amongst families who remain in the fishery today, by far the majority of them deploy marriage patterns similar to Catherine and Gilbert.

In terms of work opportunities and partnerships, the typical relationship in the Bigouden Region is between agnatic kin, specifically Father-Son, Uncle-Nephew, or Brother-Brother. Up until the mid-1980s most crews were agnatically based groups of fathers, brothers, and uncles. A second important link is that between a man and his father-in-law, perhaps representing a transfer of a women's share of the estate from father to son-in-law.

First Fishing Job, Skipper's Relationship to ego	Number of occurrences in sample, n=21
Father	7
Father's Brother	5
Father's Father	3
Brother	1
Cousin (Father's Side)	2
Cousin (Mother's Side)	0
Mother's Brother	2
Mother's Father	1

Table 4. Skipper's Family Connection to Young Fisher on his First Fishing Job.

Based on three generations of men from Gilbert and Catherine's family, I examined the kin relationship between a young man and the boat skipper on his first fishing trip. Based on twenty-one 'first trips' it is evident that the preferred situation is to first go to sea on one's father's or uncle's boat (see table 'First Fishing Job'). To

further refine this picture, I then compared the kin relations between boat-partnerships. Here the picture shifts somewhat. Joint investments are almost as common with one's father-in-law as with one's agnatic kin (see table 'Family Relationship of Boat Ownership Partner'¹⁴).

Family relationship of boat-ownership partner	Number of occurrences in sample, n=11
Father	2
Father's Brother	1
Father's Father	0
Brother	3
Cousin (Father's Side)	0
Cousin (Mother's Side)	0
Mother's Brother	0
Mother's Father	0
Father-in-Law	3
Brother-in-Law	2

Table 5. Boat Owning Partnerships and Family Relations.

In conducting occupational genealogies I realized early on that there is an important difference between the history of crewing and joint ownership within families such as the Bazhad's and the histories of families of crewmembers like the Kernevad's. Crewmember families display a greater heterogeneity in employment terms than do boat owners, a situation, which can be traced over several generations. Furthermore, there is a lower rate of retention in the fishery from amongst the crewmembers' families than in the boat-owners' families. This tends to suggest that some of the maneuvers of families with respect to conserving property had the impact of creating social barriers between crew and skipper which are, to a large extent, 'masked' by the relative egalitarianism of shipboard life. It was occasionally noted in interviews, for example, that skippers' wives and crewmembers' wives did not associate and that, in times of crisis, this intensified the social problems in the community. There has clearly been a difference in income between skippers and crews and their social interests are indeed different and at time antagonistic.

Conclusion

One of the more revealing aspects of the two family histories is the difference between families, which have managed to maintain vessel ownership through several generations and those, which have not. As property owners in control of a rather tenuous and risky enterprise, families worked hard to conserve the capital necessary for vessel ownership within the family. This is not a feature of vessel ownership unique to the Bigoudennie. In my earlier work with British Colombian fishers

(Menziés 1991, 1992) I have discussed the perpetuation of ownership in terms of the difference between simple and expanded reproduction.

Under conditions of simple reproduction the fishing enterprise maintains one unit of production. The capital investment may necessarily increase, but the effect is the same: an enterprise sufficient to support a fisher and his family. Under conditions of expanded reproduction, the fishing enterprise increases not just in terms of capital investment, but also in terms of the number of productive units.

What is interesting about artisanal-scale fishing is that typically, even under conditions of expanded reproduction, there eventually comes a point at which the enterprise either hives off into two or more smaller ones or makes a qualitative leap into becoming a 'fully capitalist firm'. Thus, it is quite likely that at some time in the near future, Gilbert Bazhad's sons will formally separate their enterprises and concentrate on accumulating sufficient capital to assist their own sons' move into the fishery. It is possible however that the Bazhad fishing enterprise will, on the contrary, jump the barrier between simple commodity production and become a firm. There are currently only a handful of such enterprises in the Bigoudennie. The largest, Armenant Bigouden owns nine 24m draggers and the smaller firms between two and five boats.

The crewmembers' families move through a field of employment opportunities simultaneously more tenuous (owning productive property does make a difference) and more open. It is more tenuous than that faced by their boat-owning neighbours because they are solely reliant upon being able to sell their labour power in order to survive. It is more open in that their concerns have less to do with maintaining control within the kindred over productive property but more with locating employment for kindred members.

The social transformations, which have swept through this region, have inscribed themselves into the tissue of family histories. Families without access to or ownership of productive property have watched their children leave the region and move into careers outside the fishery. Those with productive property favour marriages with other boat-owning families. Even the fact of owning a boat in the current generation might only be able to guarantee a life as a deckhand for one's sons and the eventuality of one's daughters marrying out of the fishing industry.

In the face of these difficulties boat-owners such as Gilbert remain optimistic. His two sons recently (2002) built a new 24m dragger to fish off the coast of Ireland to complement the coastal dragger they already own. The eldest son runs the new boat while his brother runs the coastal dragger. 'I look forward to seeing my grandsons and their grandsons fishing,' he says.

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Notes

¹ While examples of corporate ownership of small-scale vessels can be identified, the defining feature of artisanal fishing is family-based ownership of the boat and gear.

² The research that this paper draws upon was conducted between 1991 and 2002 (see Menzies, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002). Throughout the early 1990s artisanal fishers in the Bigouden Region in particular and France in general suffered an acute economic crisis in which the price of fish dropped nearly 40 percent. While this situation has improved somewhat in the intervening years, the net result has been such that even with family support young fishing skippers are finding it progressively difficult to enter the fishing today.

³ The region is noted in travel guides and local histories for the unique lace *coiffe* worn by its women (Cornou 1993; Cousinié-Kervennic 1994; Douigou 1997). The *coiffe*, a cylinder of lace fixed to the top of a small black bonnet, can be as high as 30 cm and was worn as an item of everyday clothing for most of the 20th century (Cornou 1993:30). Today, only a few hundred women over the age of 65 continue to wear it on an everyday basis. Amongst younger women, it is occasionally worn for special holidays, folk festivals, and pan-Celtic celebrations.

⁴ Since the crisis of the early 1990s a growing number of small boat owning companies have begun to emerge. Elsewhere I have suggested that the likelihood of family-based fishing in the Bigouden to thrive may well be contingent upon boat owners acting more like fully formed capitalist enterprises than peasant firms (Menzies 2002). The rise of these new small companies may well indicate an emerging trend.

⁵ Prior to the developing of canning fish in the early 1840s sardines were pressed, smoked, dried, and cooked in a variety of different ways to preserve them. Processing facilities needed to be near major shipping ports and/or within reach of carriage routes (Boulard 1991).

⁶ The data for this information comes from the author's fieldnotes June/July 2002 collected during a preliminary field trip as part of a new study, *Flexible Fishing in the Global Economy: A Study of the Re-organization of the European Fishing Industry*. The objective of the Flexible Fishing Project is to understand how local level fishing enterprises based in Le Guilvinec, France (the major French artisanal fishing district) and Killybegs, Ireland, have re-organized their enterprises and systems of production in the context of the deregulation of the European market for fish and fish products within a global economy. The local level differences between Killybegs and Le Guilvinec, despite many superficial similarities in terms of their respective histories, are striking.

⁷ The skipper of the boat was his father's brother. To respect the anonymity of the respondents, the name of the boat has been changed.

⁸ Luc used the French word *métier* to refer to his job or work as a fisherman. Strictly speaking *métier* translates to craft. I have used job in my translation as it strikes me as being closer to Luc's sense and use of the word, even though the English word job has a more neutral and distant connotation than the way in which Luc referred to his work as a fisherman.

⁹ The coastal druggers, 12-23m in length typically fish day trips (out early in the morning and back into port by about 5:00 p.m.). During certain seasons, some of these boats switch to three to five day trips.

¹⁰ In the early 1990s artisanal fishers were rocked by a serious crisis in the fishery. An unfortunate confluence of factors resulted in a massive drop in fish prices, which in turn precipitated a crisis of profitability amongst the artisanal fleets. Through out the winters of 1993 and 1994 French fishers, many of them from the Bigouden fishing ports, engaged in a running battle with police on one hand and Government bureaucrats on the other in the hopes of saving their fishery. The French government met the crisis with emergency funding support. They also introduced legislation to allow for a form of limited liability companies to be established in the fishery to ensure that some of the more serious financial problems artisanal boat owners faced during the crisis might be avoided in the future (see Menzies 1997; Chatain 1994; Chaus-

sade and Corlay 1988; Couliou 1997).

¹¹ For those familiar with fishing gear and vessels an explanation may seem superfluous, nonetheless such a description is necessary and, as my students often remind me, fish and fishing isn't the sum total of the entire world! So, a short description of boats and gear. In the Bigouden there are three basic gear types: nets, lines with hooks, and traps. Net gear can be broken into a further three categories: seine, gillnet, and drag/trawl. Seine: an encircling net set around schools of fish and drawn closed on the bottom by a rope called a purse line, thus giving an alternative name, purse seining. Gillnet: a net set out in the water into which fish swim and become entangled by their gills, hence gillnet. Drag or trawl: a cone shaped net that is towed or 'dragged' behind the vessel and across the ocean floor scooping up fish in its path. This is the most common gear type in the Bigouden Region. Drag gear has gone through a number of variations. The most critical for our considerations is that from side trawling to stern trawling. This is a distinction related to how the fish caught in the drag net is hauled onboard. In side trawling the catch is hauled onboard over the side of the vessel amidships. This technique typically required more crew. The change to hauling the net inboard over the stern allowed boats to operate during more inclement weather and with fewer crew. Hook and line fishing in this region is more typical of small one or two crew boats. In this method long lines with hooks attached at regular intervals by shorter pieces of cord are set from the tubs on the deck of the boat. Trap gear is used to fish spiny lobster and crab.

¹² For an expanded discussion of women's role in the Bigouden fishery see Menzies 2001. For work dealing with the more general issues of women in fisheries globally see, for example Nadel-Klein and Davis 1988; on Portugal, Cole 1991; eastern Canada Binkley 2002; for Alaska and the Pacific Northwest Fields 1997, 2002, Allison, Jacobs, and Porter 1989; for South Asia, Ram 1991.

¹³ In addition to running a household and managing a fishing enterprise, Catherine also crocheted items that she then sold at the local markets.

¹⁴ The data are limited by the manner in which they were collected. This limits, to a certain extent, the ability to effectively generalize beyond the specific cases described. Information was collected from amongst the core group of fishers with whom I worked. No effort was made to generate a 'random sample'. Instead, I employed a 'snowball' technique in which the fishers' own social networks were used to recruit respondents. Although I am reasonably certain that the data represent an accurate overview of the social world within which Bigouden fishing skippers operate, they do not necessarily represent a statistical description of the world of French fishers.

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