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All That Holds Us Together

Kinship and Resource Pooling in a Fishing Co-operative

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ABSTRACT This paper explores the role of networks of co-operation and resource pooling within a fishers' co-operative, the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association. Fifty-plus years after its initial establishment in 1939 the Co-op is the only one of its kind to have survived in an industry dominated by three large vertically integrated fishing companies. By identifying the way in which fishers organize their productive enterprises, their specific forms of co-operation and resource pooling, and the role of the Co-op in assisting the fishers in maintaining and perpetuating their enterprises, this analysis suggests that the co-operation networks of member fishers plays a crucial role in the economic survival of the Co-op.

Introduction

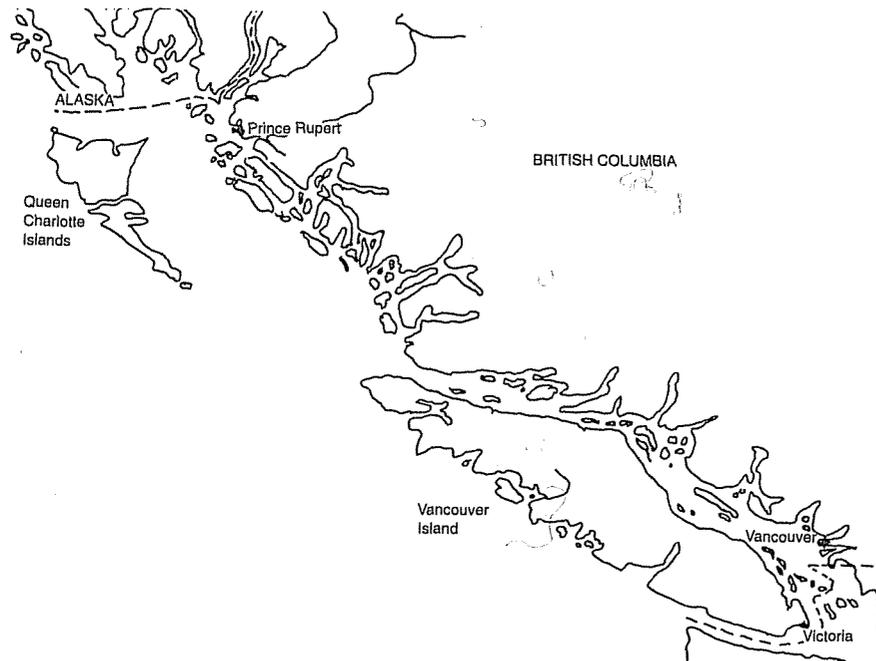
In this article I explore the role of resource pooling networks in the continued success of a commercial fishers' co-operative (Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association, PRFCA) and the role of the PRFCA in the social reproduction of the member-fishers' family-based fishing enterprises. In what follows particular attention is paid to 1) the way in which fishers organize their productive enterprises; 2) the specific forms of co-operation and resource pooling among family-based fishing enterprises, and; 3) the role of the Co-op in providing the institutional framework within which a coalition of small-scale producers can raise financing for vessel purchases and collectively process and market their fish.

Too often analysis of fishing co-operatives situate themselves in terms of either particular attributes of the co-operative itself (cf. Rodman 1989; Clement 1986; Hayward 1984; Suster 1980) or in terms of the attributes of the individuals who belong to the co-op (Pettersen 1980; Poggie 1980; Davis and Jentoft 1989). What is left unsaid is the interaction between the networks of members on the one hand and the organization that they helped to create on the other. By focusing on the narrow aspect of resource pooling among the members of the PRFCA the dynamics of the interrelationships between resource pooling networks among commercial fishers and the economic viability of fishers' co-operatives can be clarified.

The Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-op

The PRFCA is located in Prince Rupert, British Columbia (Canada), a coastal community of about 16,500 people. The local economy is dependent upon resource extraction industries such as fishing and forestry. Prince Rupert is also a major grain and coal exporting port.

Today's Fishermen's Co-op arose out of the struggle between independent small-scale fishers and large monopoly fish processing firms over the price paid for fish (cf. Clement 1986; Hill 1967). The early co-operatives that arose out of this struggle were attempts by coalitions of small-producers to circumvent the private companies control of the market. Their project was simple: sell collectively the fish caught by a coalition of independent fishers direct to the fresh fish market and then divide up the profit. If things went well everyone would receive a better price for their fish than if they had sold through the private companies. These early co-operative experiments formed along lines of co-operation between kin and within geographically bounded areas (for example, North Island Co-op, Clayoquot Sound Co-op, Sontula, etc, see A.V. Hill 1967). Many co-ops failed, but those that survived had at their core interlocking networks of co-operation and resource pooling that had been in existence prior to the establishment of the co-op.



Map 1. The British Columbia coastal area.

As the co-operative movement matured a process of winnowing and amalgamation occurred leaving the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association as the only co-operative active in the British Columbian fishing industry. Over time the Co-op has grown into a successful firm with an active membership of 500 fishers and a member-owned fleet of approximately 200 boats (the difference between number of members and vessels reflects the Co-op's membership structure in which both deckhands and boat owners are members). At its home plant in Prince Rupert the Co-op employs up to 350 shoreworkers with an annual payroll of 10 million dollars. During the ten year period, 1978-1988, the Co-op's average annual production was 38 million pounds with annual gross sales of 67 million dollars (PRFCA 1988).

The current recession has hit the PRFCA hard. During the past decade the Co-op lost nearly 10 million dollars; mostly as a result of misguided attempts to diversify into areas such as fish farming, fish food manufacture, and a specialty fish processing plant in the United States. As a result the Co-op has been forced to undergo an extensive programme of restructuring over the course of the last several years. The most obvious and explicit change has been the creation of a new company, Pacific Challenger which now owns all of the Co-op's processing facilities and assets. The PRFCA, however, retains majority ownership of Pacific Challenger. In

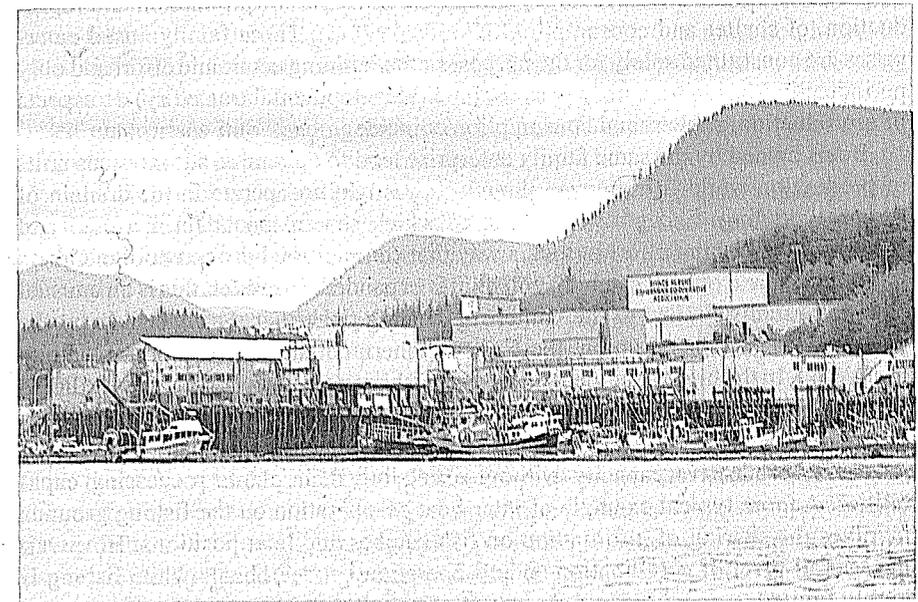


Photo 1. Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association home plant in Prince Rupert.

a series of at times rambunctious and confrontational general meetings the membership of the PRFCA passed a sequence of resolutions that created this new company and opened the door for 'outside' investment (that is allowing non-Co-op members the opportunity to purchase a share in the Co-op's processing enterprise) and expanded its recent policy of processing non-members' fish. Despite all of the changes (perhaps in some cases because of them) the Co-op has maintained a committed core of fishers. As I argue in this paper the commitment of these fishers to the Co-op can be explained in part by their extensive networks of co-operation and resource sharing and in part by the ability of the Co-op to facilitate the development and maintenance of these interlocking networks.

Family Fishing Enterprises and the Co-op

Co-op fishers' primary fishing related economic activities are organized in terms of family-based fishing enterprises (of which there are nearly two-hundred).¹ Each family-based enterprise consists of groups of kin who combine and coordinate their economic effort. In emic terms members of particular enterprises refer to each other as members of the same family. However, one should not confuse this social group whose primary purpose is economic with the anthropological unit domestic group: 'those basic units which...[revolve] around the processes of production and reproduction, of shelter and consumption' (Goody 1972:4). These family-based enterprises are constituted solely for the purposes of combining economic effort and only periodically (during transitory phases of their developmental trajectory) do aspects of reproduction, shelter, and consumption coincide.

Boats owned by the same family enterprise tend to operate as autonomous units of production while fishing even though they might co-operate in the domain of resource pooling. Exceptions do exist in which several boats form a pool and combine their fishing effort in such a way that competition between pool members is eliminated and overall catching potential is expanded. However, this is an unusual situation usually limited to the winter roe-herring fishery or during strikes by the industry's main fishers' union, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU). In the highly competitive herring fishery pools reduce uncertainty. Pools during UFAWU strikes allow Co-op fishers (who do not see themselves bound to tie-up during UFAWU strikes) to co-ordinate their catching potential so as to maximize productive capacity without exceeding their plants processing capabilities. A more typical example of inter-boat co-operation on the fishing grounds involves the sharing of information on fish catches and boat positions. However, the overall level of coordination and co-operation between boats while fishing is highly limited.

Family-based fishing enterprises are constituted in a variety of ways. One enterprise may own a single vessel. A coalition of enterprises may own a single

vessel. A single enterprise may own several vessels. In addition to these possible ownership patterns crew members may also be recruited from members of other enterprises. This degree of complexity makes focusing on the vessel and crew problematic. In fact, the fishing vessel is best understood as a *site of interaction* between several enterprises. This typically occurs in one of two ways: 1) at the level of the crew, or; 2) at the level of ownership.

Ad 1. Labour requirements vary according to the fishery a vessel is engaged in. For example, a typical herring seine crew is six, a halibut crew is seven,² and a salmon seiner requires a crew of four or five. The regular crew, those fishers considered to have security of tenure, is typically the salmon crew. Thus, a vessel which is owned and operated by one family enterprise may at different times in the fishing year require additional crew members.

Extra crew members required for fisheries such as the halibut are often recruited from amongst the owners and crews of vessels which are not licensed for the fishery. Thus the typical halibut crew would include the regular salmon crew, one or more vessel owners and/or one or two crew members off a non-licensed vessel. Since the additional crew members are not members of the family enterprise which owns the vessel in question, but are reinvesting their halibut crew-shares into their own family fishing enterprise, it would be misleading to consider this vessel as representing a single unified fishing enterprise. The point here is that the vessel defines a *place*, a site of interaction where members of different family enterprises co-operate in meeting seasonal variations in labour requirements. One must not, however, lose sight of the fact that co-operation at the level of the crew relies on there being economic differences between family enterprises such that propels some family-based enterprises into sending their members out to work on other boats (or, in certain cases into industries other than fishing).

Ad 2. Whereas co-operation between family-based fishing enterprises in meeting fluctuating labour demands necessitates a degree of social inequality between co-operating enterprises, co-operation in ownership tends to be between enterprises of roughly equivalent economic capabilities. The purpose of combining the capital of several enterprises in the purchasing of a vessel is normally to provide an opportunity for a young fisher to run a fishing vessel. In technical terms this is a form of *expanded reproduction* 'in which income generated [within one or more family-based enterprise] is used to establish a new one on the same scale' (Friedmann 1978:88). The form of expanded reproduction among Co-op fishers differs from that extant under a fully capitalist form of production in that rather than concentrating capital and reducing competition expanded reproduction among Co-op fishers is subject to demographic pressures which result ultimately in the fission of family-based fishing enterprises and increased competition on the fishing grounds. Thus, by combining the capital of several enterprises young fishers are able to run their own fishing vessel and eventually establish their own fishing enterprise.

Jason White, a longtime Co-op member has been involved in several joint partnerships with kin, former shipmates, and crewmembers. His first boat, purchased in 1961, involved a partnership with his father-in-law and his former skipper. His current seine boat (the Northern Squall) involves a partnership with two other fishers. In addition to this he owns shares in two other seiners and in 1989 sold off the shares he had held in a third. Of the three boats he currently holds shares in he skippers one, the second is a partnership with his eldest son, and the third is a joint venture with an ex-crew member who had fished with Jason White for the ten years previous to their purchasing the boat.

There is a great deal of diversity amongst the fishing enterprises within the co-operative. Most of them (75-80%) operate only one fish boat. A few enterprises are also engaged in non-fishing ventures such as real estate speculation, hotels, marine supply stores, and fish farms. Out of the fleet of approximately two-hundred vessels delivering to the Co-op 99 are licensed to gillnet salmon, 93 to troll salmon, 13 to seine salmon, 38 to longline halibut, 180 to gillnet herring, 10 to seine herring, and 4 with trawl licenses.³

This diversity of enterprises conceals several crucial socio-economic differences which have an important impact on the ability of the Co-op to operate as a viable economic entity. The first is the division between boat owner and crew. The second is between small boat and big boat.⁴ These sets of social differentiation arose in the course of the Co-op's transformation from a marketing co-operative into a processing co-operative. The small boat fishers who initially organized the Co-op operated vessels thirty-five to forty feet long and rarely hired crews; if they did it was from among kinsmen. During the Co-op's expansion in the 1940s fishers owning more capital intensive, larger vessels (fifty to eighty-five feet long), with crews of four to seven men joined the Co-op. While some of these boats' crew members owned shares in these bigger boats, the majority of the crews did not.

The position occupied by the crews of the Co-op's big boat fleet is one of the most perplexing and is the one which most often breaks into open conflict (cf. Menzies 1990a, 1990b). The deckhands on these boats are also members of the Co-op and thus have a say in the running of the plant. However, in the context of the fish boat they are labour. The skipper-owner controls the means of production. In this capacity he has the authority to hire, fire, and set the conditions of work. The skipper thus occupies a position that allows him specific controls and powers that to the crew are denied. Though fraught with tension this potentially volatile relationship is constrained by the crews' and skippers' shared membership in the Co-op.

The distinction between small and big fish boats also contains the potential for conflict. The Co-op fleet is an amalgam of large and small vessels prosecuting a variety of fisheries. These vessels range from a low of \$150,000 for a small gillnetter (the average 'small boat,' with licenses and equipment is worth \$300,000) to \$2.5 million dollars for the most expensive seiner (the average big boat, with licenses

and equipment is worth \$750,000). Even though the Co-op's big boat fleet is relatively small (17 out of about 200 boats) they account for more than 40% of the Co-op's production.

These contradictions between Co-op members have on occasion threatened to destabilize the Co-op's ability to operate (Menzies 1992). One of the ways in which Co-op members have attempted to mediate potential conflicts is through an informal agreement that allocates a fixed number of seats on the board of directors to small boat owners, large boat owners, and crew members. More important for our consideration here is the way in which specific points of conflict, such as between skipper and crew, are moderated and constrained by occurring within a matrix of family-based fishing enterprises.

Family Fishing Enterprises and the Accumulation of Capital

Three types of family-based fishing enterprises can be identified: simple, confederated, and complex. These types correspond with differing structures of the division of labour within the enterprises and to the manner by which capital is accumulated. Simple enterprises involve both the lowest degree of internal division of labour and are the least able to accumulate capital in a manner that allows expansion beyond their basic task of perpetuating the enterprise. In contrast, complex enterprises exhibit a high degree of internal division of labour, rely more heavily on purchasing the labour power of non-family members, and are able to accumulate capital in such a way as allows them to expand and diversify their productive capacity.

Family-based fishing enterprise are typically first constituted as either a simple or a confederated enterprise. This variation is related to the size and type of fishing vessel operated. Simple enterprises usually operate less expensive gillnetters or trollers and are those in which the classic anthropological household coincides with the economic, reproductive, and dwelling units on a one to one basis: a single family owns and operates a fishing vessel without outside labour inputs.

A confederated enterprise links several households together in a joint enterprise which operates the more capital intensive seine and longline vessels (see Smith 1989 for a discussion of confederations of households among Peruvian peasant cultivators). The linkage is manifest in the pooling of operating capital and labour. Consumption and reproductive processes are not inter-linked. Confederated enterprises may own more than one vessel and coordinate their fishing operations or several households may collectively own a single vessel.

In simple and confederated enterprises accumulated capital is shared equally among (in the case of simple enterprises) household members or (in the case of confederated enterprises) the constituent households. In both the social division of labour is minimal. However, in a complex enterprise one or two central households expropriate the bulk of the capital and the division of labour is unequal. Differences

between these forms of fishing enterprises are also manifest in their scale of production and the manner by which the enterprises reproduce.⁵

The social reproduction of most Co-op fishing enterprises occurs at the level of simple reproduction (i.e., the maintenance of the means of production at the current level). Expanded reproduction (the concentration of capital and increased productive capacity independent of technological factors) occurs only to a limited extent. Typically expanded reproduction only occurs when the family-based enterprise needs to accumulate capital to assist a family member in purchasing a fishing boat. The new boat is then either incorporated within the existing enterprise or the parent enterprise splits into several smaller simple and/or confederated enterprises. Enterprises which do not hive off in this fashion are able to make the transition from a confederated to a complex enterprise and break free of the cycle of simple reproduction – hence generating a process of class differentiation in which surplus value is appropriated by a central family-based enterprise or individual.

The PRFCA and the Accumulation of Capital

Though the crucial process of capital accumulation is organized at the level of family-based fishing enterprises it is the Fishermen's Co-op that provides the institutional framework within which the fishing enterprises operate. The Co-op's role in capital accumulation is twofold: 1) the Co-op provides access to inexpensive credit through an affiliated credit union, and; 2) the Co-op's marketing system returns to members a higher price for their fish than they could get selling outside the Co-op. Each aspect of the Co-op's involvement in the family-based enterprises entails some costs and the benefits of the marketing system is not always readily apparent to non-member fishers.

Financing of fishing vessels is a perennial problem for fishers. Though modest government support has been available in one form or other since the late 1960s (primarily in the form of reduced rate and government guaranteed loans for capital improvements) British Columbian fishers have for the most part relied on non-governmental sources to finance their vessels and daily operating expenses. For many fishers this has necessitated seeking out financing from the fish processing companies. This form of financing, however, tied fishers to the company that provided financing. During the Co-op's formative period tied financing was one of the major obstacles that had to be overcome. Thus, the early co-operators saw the need to establish a credit union as integral to the building of a producers' co-operative.

In 1940 Prince Rupert fishers put theory into action. The first general meeting of the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Credit Union (PRFCU) was held in the Deepsea Fishermen's Hall, March 28, 1940. By 1943 the Credit Union was able to cover individual Co-op fishers' operational capital requirements. The Credit Union did so

well that by 1947 it was able to provide the bulk of the Co-op's day to day operating credit requirements as well. With the Credit Union firmly established by the late 1940s the Co-op was well placed for expansion. Fishers who had previously been unable to come to the Co-op due to a lack of non-company financing were now free to do so.

The Co-op's marketing structure is designed to return to the fisher the portion of the value of their fish that would normally be expropriated by the shareholders of the industries private fishing companies. Co-op fishers receive a down payment when the fish are delivered to the plant and the balance after the fish is sold. Historically Co-op fishers have earned between 15% and 30% more on equivalent poundage than have company fishers. There have been many changes to this system over the years but its basic format has remained unchanged.

In the following case histories the concepts of simple, confederated, and complex fishing enterprises are examined with reference to the developmental trajectories of two family fishing enterprises. Central to this discussion is the interdependence of the success of the Co-op and the individual family-based fishing enterprises. Case one traces the history of a simple fishing enterprise. Case two is an inter-generational history of a fishing enterprise that began as a confederated enterprise in the 1920s but has since developed into a myriad of fishing enterprises among which can be found examples of all three forms.

Case One: Stephen Pedersen and Family's Fishing Enterprise

Stephen Pedersen and his brother James joined the Co-op in 1959. Prior to joining the Co-op the brothers had each owned gillnetters. Their boats were sadly in need of repair but the brothers felt it was unlikely they would be able to raise the money needed to rebuild them fishing outside the Co-op. The Pedersens were recruited by Larry Hansen, the skipper of a newly built fishboat the Flying Wave. The Flying Wave had been built for the halibut and reduction herring fisheries by a consortium of Co-op fishers and was jointly financed by the Co-op and the Credit Union.⁶ Shortly after joining the Co-op the Pedersens sold their gillnetters and went to work for Larry Hansen. The Pedersens quit the Flying Wave in 1967 and with their savings and a loan from the Credit Union they each built themselves a combination gillnet/troll fishboat well suited for the British Columbia fishery.

Two points are important here. Firstly, both Stephen and James continued to fish for halibut on the Flying Wave until the Canadian fleet was shut out of Alaska in 1978 as a result of the U.S. declaration of a 200 hundred mile limit. Secondly, the Pedersen brothers formed the core of a co-operation network which shared information, labour, and capital during the summer salmon season and after 1973 in the early spring roe-herring fishery. Like the earlier networks of co-operation among the fishers who came together in the 1930s to form the Co-op the Pedersen's

co-operation network consisted of a small number of fishers united at the core in terms of either kinship or work history. The Pedersens, their brother-in-law, and two former shipmates from the Flying Wave form the core of their group.

The Pedersen's network of co-operation is most clearly demarcated during the course of the roe-herring fishery which begins in late March and rarely lasts beyond the first or second week of April.⁷ Since 1975 Stephen Pedersen has co-ordinated the herring operation of his co-operation network. He arranges leases of licenses from the Co-op and other fishers as is necessary and hires the crews. He prefers to lease licenses from the Co-op because these licenses are offered to Co-op fishers at below market rates. The Co-op also hires boats to pack the herring from the fishing grounds to the processing plant. It is in both the interests of the Co-op and Pedersen's co-operation network to increase the Co-op's overall herring roe production. Thus Co-op distributes the costs of packing fish and licenses leasing among the general Co-op membership as opposed to just the herring fishers.

During the 1970s and into the early 1980s Stephen Pedersen and his family operated their boat themselves with only minimal labour inputs from non-family members. Additional crewmembers were only required during the roe-herring fishery where hired from among Stephen Pedersen's co-operation network. The point at which the Pedersen family's fishing enterprise was able to fulfil all of its

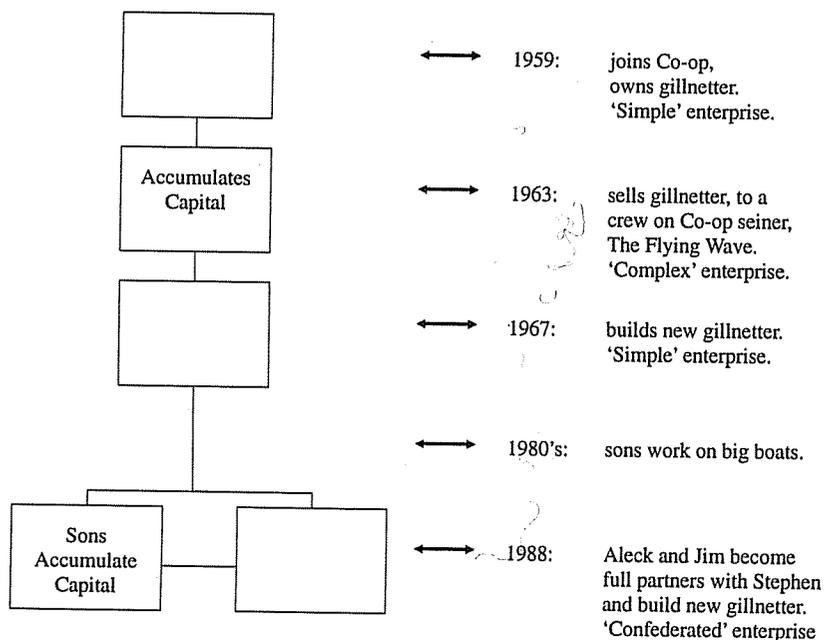


Figure 1. Pedersen Family Enterprise History

labour requirements internally was also the point at which Stephen Pedersen's sons (Jim and Alec) began to desire a boat of their own. However, their ability to purchase their own fishboats was severely limited by the scale of production of their families enterprise. The purchase a gillnetter, for example, requires a minimum of \$150,000. Jim and Alec did not earn enough working on their father's boat to save for a down payment.⁸ Thus, they required an external source of revenue (such as, for example, working on a big boat and/or onshore during the off season).

Table 1: Distribution of Gross Fishing Incomes, 1984

Gross income	Seine	Gillnet/Troll
<\$10,000	1%	15%
\$ 10,000 - \$ 19,999	2%	26%
\$ 20,000 - \$ 49,000	20%	43%
\$ 50,000 - \$ 99,999	38%	13%
\$100,000 - \$199,999	25%	3%
\$200,000 +	14%	0%

From: the DPA Group Inc., British Columbia Salmon Fleet Financial Performance 1981 - 1985. Vancouver: Government of Canada, Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans (pacific Region), 1988.

Several factors are at play in limiting the potential for capital accumulation in the gillnet and troll fishery: 1) government regulations concerning gear type and access to fishing grounds; 2) the resultant small scale of production, and therefore; 3) a restricted catching capacity. These factors are not completely independent of each other. For example, while the scale of production in the gillnet fishery has always been small (with respect to the individual harvesting units --the boats), government regulations in recent years have served to inhibit any potential expansion in the scale of production. The government limits the gillnet fishery by placing restrictions on the length, depth, mesh size, and number of nets a gillnetter may use. It would, however, be remiss for me to claim government regulations are the sole limiting factor. The small scale of production is also the product of a river fishery in which a larger boat and net is not practical. This set of factors thus combine in such a way as a gillnetter/troller is only able to generate sufficient income to maintain their means of production (boat and nets) and provide for the subsistence needs of the immediate household.⁹ Any expansion beyond this basic level requires external inputs of capital.

In 1987 Jim, Alec, and their father built a larger fibreglass gillnetter. The Pedersens solved the inherent problems of capital accumulation in this scale of production in two ways: 1) as with the boat built in 1967 the Co-op and credit union played a major role in providing financing for this new vessel, and; 2) Jim and Alec found jobs on the larger Co-op seiners. First Jim (in 1986) and then Alec (1989)

went to work on the larger vessels during the salmon season. Both sons first found employment on the *Virago*, a seine boat owned by a longtime friend and former shipmate of their father, Robert Bruce. When Jim mastered seining he took a job on a boat in which Robert Bruce held a 30% interest (the *Wayward*) and Alec took over his job on the *Virago*. Jim and Alec's partnership arrangement with their father and their jobs on the larger boats are the means by which they hope to achieve their goal of owning and operating their own gillnetters.

The Co-op has played a crucial role throughout the history of the Pedersen family's fishing enterprise. By joining the Co-op Stephen and James Pedersen gained access to employment in the highly lucrative reduction herring fishery. Their eight years on the *Flying Wave* allowed them to accumulate sufficient capital for a down payment on new fishing vessels of their own, to build a reputation as 'steady and hard working' that facilitated the approval by the Credit Union of financing for their boats, and ultimately provided access to employment for their sons in the 1970s and 1980s.

Case Two: Jake Hendrickson and Family's Fishing Enterprises

The history of the Hendrickson family enterprise is really the history of a succession of enterprises. The first in this series was a confederated enterprise (1920-40). Following which was a brief phase (1940s) when the Hendrickson's household and enterprise coincided in a one-to-one relationship (simple enterprise). Subsequent manifestations have oscillated between simple and confederated enterprises as kinsfolk pool and withdraw their labour and/or capital from the enterprise. Several of the family's contemporary enterprises are complex, or partial confederations involving an asymmetrical division of labour and capital between constituent households.

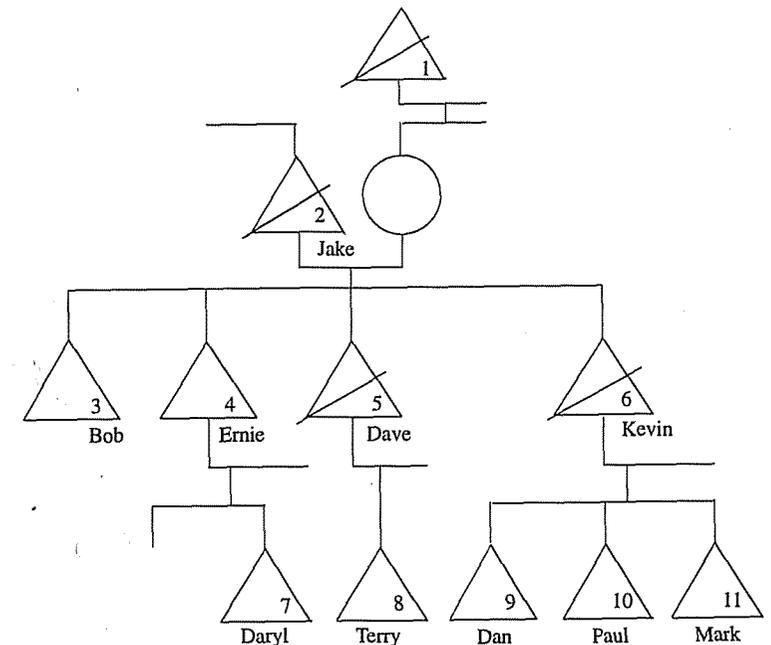
The Hendrickson family's involvement in the British Columbia fishing industry spans four generations (see figure 2) and dates back to the earliest days of the industry on the west coast - Jake's father-in-law brought one of the first halibut longliners around Cape Horn to Prince Rupert. Jake and his two brothers came to North America from Norway in 1911. Jake worked briefly as a lumberman before taking up fishing. He then worked a few seasons on the halibut steamers as a dory fisher. In the early 1920s Jake and four other dory-fishers purchased the halibut longliner *Vagabond*. Their purchase of the *Vagabond* corresponded to changes British Columbia's halibut fishery was then undergoing.

British Columbia's commercial halibut fishing began in the late 1880s as a dory/tendership fishery financed and controlled by large capitalist firms. There was, in the 1880s, 'a small group of two-man sailing slops that could carry about 3,000 pounds of fished halibut to supply the local markets of Victoria, Nanaimo, Vancouver, Port Townsend, and other Puget Sound points' (Bell 1981:77). However,

these small independent' fishers consisted of a very small segment of the fishery. Independent fishers did not become a dominant force in the halibut fishery until the mid 1920s. The New England Fish Co. entered the halibut fishery in 1894 and by 1911 was producing 80 per cent of the Canadian halibut catch (McMullen 1987:40). In the period between 1911 and 1926 the dominance of company control and the dory/tendership technique was undermined by the development of a storage and transportational infrastructure and the removal of territorial barriers to markets.¹⁰

Like Jake Hendrickson, many dory fishers reinvested their earnings from the dory fishery in smaller (40-50 foot) longliners. The 'steamers employed salaried crews of eleven to thirteen, as well as the dory fishers. This meant high fixed wage costs at a time when the halibut stocks were declining' (McMullen 1987:40). In contrast to the capitalist form of production of the large steamers, the smaller, family-run longliners were able to suppress their subsistence needs and exploit family labour without the need of monetary remuneration.

Jake ran the *Vagabond* until he retired in the late 1950s. Over the course of owning the boat Jake bought out his partners. Thus, by the time his four sons were

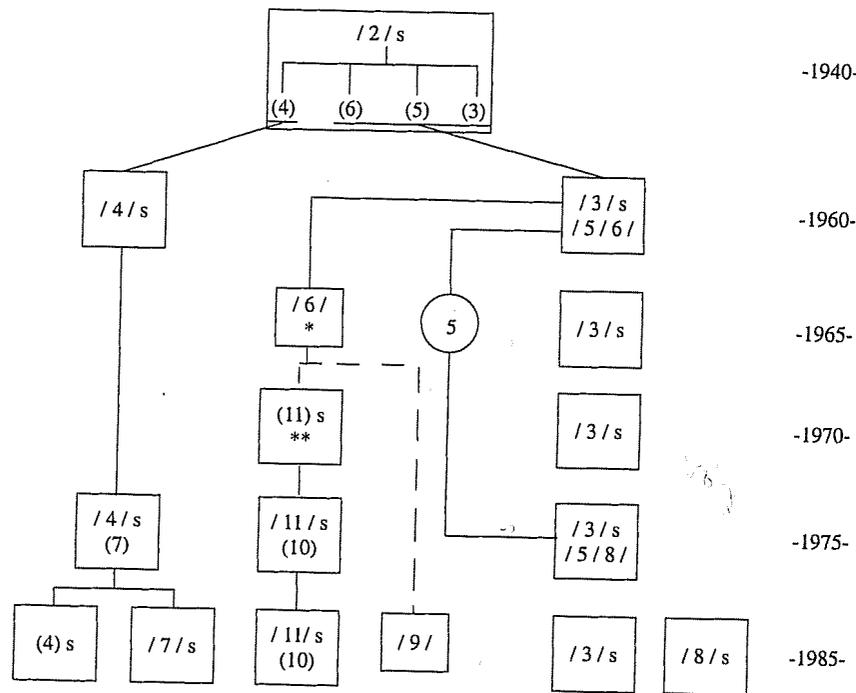


N.B. Only family members who have worked on a fishboat are noted in kinship chart.

Key: = Non-fishing link
 = Deceased

Figure 2. Hendrickson Family Kinship Chart

old enough to work on deck the Vagabond belonged solely to the Hendrickson family. During a brief period in the 1940s the fishing enterprise directly corresponded to the household unit; production, reproduction, and consumption was constrained within a single household entity. However, as Jake's sons grew older and established families of their own they began to establish their own fishing enterprises (see fig. 3).



* Left bigboat fleet in mid-1960's and bought a gillnetter. Sold this boat in early 1970's and took job on non-family seine boat.

** Learned to fish on uncle's (4) boat in early 1960's.

Key: /./ = Boat owner
 () = Crew or Non-Owner
 s = Skipper
 □ = Boat
 ○ = Not fishing
 — = Primary Link Capital
 --- = Primary Link Kinship

Figure 3. Hendrickson family enterprise history.

Jake Hendrickson joined the Co-op in 1941 as part of a wider move among Prince Rupert halibut fishers to join-up. The halibut fishers, represented by the Prince Rupert Vessel Owners Association (PRVOA) and the Deep Sea Fishermen's Union (DSFU), signed an agreement with the Co-op to open a halibut liver plant. As their part of the deal the Halibut fishers put up half of the cost of the new plant and agreed to market all of their fish through the Co-op.

All of Jake's sons began their fishing careers on the Vagabond. But by the early 1950s they began to crew on other vessels. In 1958 Bob, Kevin, and Dave Hendrickson built a combination herring-seiner/halibut-longliner, the Lady Jane with the financial assistance of the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Credit Union and the Co-op.¹¹ Ernie Hendrickson first ran, then purchased a salmon seiner the Credit Union had repossessed. During the intervening three decades these brothers and their households have continually co-operated in a variety of ways and have produced a number of different fishing enterprises. A detailed description of the particular histories of each fishing enterprise generated by the Hendrickson family is beyond the scope of the current discussion. What follows examines the crucial aspects of their co-operation and the manner by which the Co-op facilitates co-operation and resource pooling.



Photo 2. Dressing halibut on the deck of a halibut longliner 20 miles offshore, just west of Prince Rupert.

Resource Pooling

Over the course of the Hendrickson family's involvement in the fishing industry several types of resources have been shared among enterprises: labour, capital, licenses, and knowledge. Though the pooling of resources occurs among most of the fishing enterprises in the Co-op in one form or another, it is most pronounced amongst groups of family enterprises such as the Hendrickson's.

The pooling of labour occurs in two situations: 1) on a short term basis to fulfil the labour requirements during specific fisheries, and; 2) on a long term basis for the purpose of accumulating capital. Among the Hendrickson family enterprises labour is pooled in conjunction with the roe-herring season and on the Argonaut where the skipper's brother is also a crew member. While both forms of labour pooling represent asymmetrical divisions of labour and access to capital, the case of the Argonaut is most pronounced.

The Argonaut is a 65 foot seine vessel with a crew of five. There is a clear division of labour in the work process between skipper Mark Hendrickson and his crew. This division of labour is reflected in rights to the catch, sleeping quarters, and control over the work process.¹² The antagonisms created by the different social interests of crew and skipper are modified by Mark hiring his brother Paul. Paul, however, receives the same share of the catch as the non-kin crew members, despite investing a greater share of labour for his brother than the other crew members.



Photo 3. Skipper overseeing hauling back halibut gear from the top of the wheelhouse.

The pooling of capital (including instruments and means of production) engenders partnership arrangements and is the most common form of co-operation among the various Hendrickson family enterprises. Coalitions among family enterprises has been commonplace. Two of the four contemporary fishing enterprises involve the pooling of capital. Bob Hendrickson, for example, has had a long history of joint ventures. Most recently he and his nephew Terry collectively own and operate two seiners.

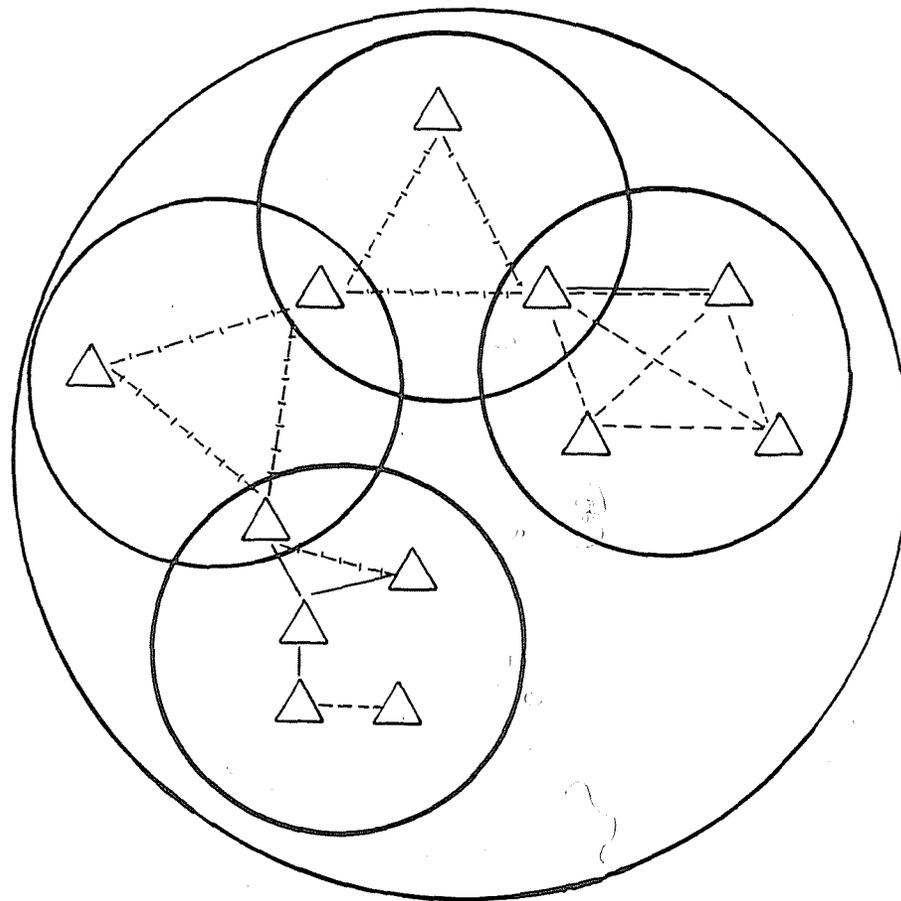
With the exception of labour, the pooling of licenses is the major point of co-operation between households of different families. The sharing of licenses form part of a larger pattern of co-operation which also involves sharing of knowledge and reciprocal exchanges of equipment and gear. Though the individual enterprises do attempt to maximize the license rent, their ability to do so is modified by these pre-existing networks of co-operation. Licenses are most commonly pooled during the roe-herring fishery. Fishing enterprises enter into limited agreements (rarely for longer than one season). One enterprise rents its license to another for an agreed upon share of the catch and other considerations such as jobs for family members and preferred rights to other resources (such as equipment).

Though the pooling of knowledge is a more ephemeral process than the pooling of capital or labour, it is the most crucial in the creation of co-operation networks. Knowledge sharing takes two forms: 1) learning the technical skills involved in running a fishing boat, and; 2) collecting information on fish location. The first form of knowledge sharing generates dyadic relationships between an experienced skipper and one of his younger male relatives (father-son, uncle-nephew). The sharing of information about where fish are extends beyond basic kin relationships and provides the basis to the larger networks of co-operation.

Co-operation networks have at their core dyadic kin relations (brother-brother, father-son, uncle-nephew) and friendships generated between former crew mates. Beyond the central core relation these networks are informal and ill-defined. Network membership is best visualized in terms of a sequence of concentric and overlapping rings that include and exclude fishers and their household enterprises in accordance to the immediate context (see fig. 4).

John Gatewood has noted the existence of similar networks of co-operation at work in the Alaskan seine fishery: 'information-sharing cliques' (Gatewood 1984:350-370). However, Gatewood argues these 'cliques are very small, exclusive, temporary groups' (1984:357) based on 'relationships [of an]...enduring and diffuse nature' (1984:356). The information cliques are 'formed in advance of some seine periods to share scouting reports on the numbers of fish and other boats seen in the various areas' (1984:355). As soon as the opening begins, says Gatewood, these cliques disperse. The co-operation networks co-op fishers engage in are, however, of a more enduring nature and extend the realm of co-operation beyond the pre-opening period of the fishery and also include resources other than knowledge.

The pooling of resources is an important unifying feature of the enterprises which make up the co-operative. As we have seen three classes of resources are pooled: labour, capital (including instruments and means of production), and; knowledge (an important component of the forces of production). The enduring nature of these interconnections between enterprises, which serve to reduce the uncertainty of fishing, strengthen the individual enterprises and unites them as co-operators.



Key: \triangle = Skipper
 --- = Linkage by kinship
 — = Linkage by joint-ownership
 - · - = Linkage by friendship

Figure 4. Co-op seine skipper co-operation network.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that the success or failure of a co-operative derives in good part from networks of co-operation between fishers. From the case studies we get a glimpse of some of the detailed interlinkages between individual fishing enterprises, their networks of co-operation, and their co-operative. The Co-op plays a crucial role in the reproduction of family-based fishing enterprises. Through the affiliated credit union co-op fishers have access to affordable credit for operating expenses and vessel purchases. By processing and marketing their own fish Co-op fishers also earn more than if they sold 'outside.' For their part the networks of co-operation act to cement individual fishers to the Co-op since access to important resources such as labour, capital, and knowledge are accessed through these networks.

Over the past fifty-plus years the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association has provided those British Columbian fishers who so choose an opportunity to fish free from the economic control of the private fish companies and banks. It has continuously expanded its sphere of activities to include the processing and marketing of most commercially harvested fish species in British Columbia. Though its membership has fluctuated a dedicated group of members linked in networks of co-operation and resource pooling based on links of kinship and work history has continued to belong to the Co-op and advocate the co-operative way.



Photo 4. Salmon seiner preparing to 'brail' fish out of a big set (5,000+ salmon).

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Notes

1. Membership in the Co-op, however, is on an individual basis with each fisher having only one vote irrespective as to whether a fisher is an owner, a deckhand, or has more money invested in Co-op shares.

2. The structure of halibut crews is currently in flux as the result of a new regulatory regime based on individual vessel quotas (IVQ). Data from a preliminary analysis of the impact of the IVQ system seems to indicate that crew sizes are being reduced (for a comparable case in the New Jersey sea clam fishery see McCay, Gatewood and Creed 1989).

3. These numbers are somewhat misleading as they refer to the number of licenses, not vessels or fishing enterprises. This discrepancy is the result of an economic strategy in which a vessel is equipped to fish more than one fishery. Thus a family-based enterprise may own a forty foot vessel licensed to gillnet and troll salmon and to longline halibut.

These figures were provided by Robert Strand, PRFCA production manager. Overall production during the 1989 season by gear type was: gillnet: 2.5 million pounds, \$3.8 million landed value to fishers; troll: 2.6 million pounds, \$3.6 million; seine: 5.3 million pounds, \$4.5 million; halibut: 1.1 million pounds, \$1.8 million, and; trawl: 7.4 million pounds, \$3.5 million. As a result of the Co-op's current financial problems these dollar values are down significantly from previous years. For comparison, total landed values to fishers in 1978 was \$23 million versus \$16.2 in the 1989 season. The difference in these figures reflects two factors. Firstly, prices for fish products declined significantly on the world market. The second factor is that Co-op fishers voluntarily reduced their earnings in an attempt to keep their co-operative enterprise solvent.

Since the 1989 fiscal year the Co-op's production fluctuated around 26 million pounds peaking at 28.7 million pounds in 1991. This compares with an average production of 35 million pounds during most of the early 1980s. Decreases in overall production since 1991 reflect the change from member to non-member status of the trawl fleet. In 1992 the majority of the Co-op's trawlers opted out of the Co-op but agreed to have their fish custom-processed by the Co-op in Prince Rupert. In effect, the Co-op leases out its trawl-fish processing plant to a consortium of trawlers, some of whom who were Co-op members some of whom who were not. The end result is a more cost-efficient plant and a shifting of the economic risk off the majority of remaining Co-op members. Production figures for the bulk of the Co-op membership who fish salmon have remained relatively stable (taking into account fluctuations in fish stocks).

4. Big boat and small boat are emic terms used to designate a particular class of fishing vessel. Big boats typically employ three to seven crew and are larger than forty-five feet in length. The big boats are seiners, druggers, and some longliners. Small boats are shorter and employ fewer crew. They are usually gillnetters and trollers.

5. The productive capacity of many of the fishing enterprises in the Co-op has expanded during the past twenty years. Ironically, this increase in productive capacity and its concomitantly higher degree of capital investment is a product of the interaction between resource depletion and government policies ostensibly designed to restrict catching capacity by limiting the number of vessels permitted to enter a particular fishery. In contrast with unregulated fisheries where competition between fishing enterprises results in the expansion of the number of harvesting units (i.e. fish boats), competition between fishing enterprises in situations of limited access results in greater levels of capital investment and the expansion of the existing fleet's catching capabilities. However, once increases in productive capacity resulting from technological change and government regulations (such as license limitation) are factored out the relative scale of these fishing enterprises has in fact remained relatively constant over time.

6. Until 1968, when the herring stocks were nearly destroyed, the winter or reduction herring provided the major source of winter employment for British Columbia's commercial fishers. The reduction herring season began in September and ended in February or March. The fish was used solely for the purpose of making fish meal. Today's herring fishery is oriented toward a luxury roe market and does not commence until early March when the herring begin to spawn.

The halibut fishery has also gone through a major change since the early sixties. As early as the first world war halibut has been one of Prince Rupert's major fisheries. However, stock depletion and changing international agreements effectively reduced the halibut season from five months to five to ten days.

7. The roe-herring fishery is relatively new. It began in the early 1970s shortly after the collapse in the late 1960s of the reduction herring fishery. It is tightly regulated by the federal government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans and is renowned for fishery openings of short duration that are announced with little advanced warning. Most fishers attempt to minimize their risk in this fishery by forming pools with other fishers and/or by leasing additional licences.

8. For example, between 1981 and 1985 the average gross income of a gillnet vessel was \$32,300 (The DPA Group Inc, 1988:15). During the same period a gillnet crew member earned, on average, \$4420.00.

9. The reader is cautioned that not all trollers are small boats with limited capacities to generate capital. There is also a highly capitalized fleet of offshore freezer trollers with crews of four or more costing in the neighbourhood of \$1 million. They are, however, a minority of trollers.

10. See McMullen (1987) *The Organization of the Fisheries*, for an expanded explanation of this process.

11. The Prince Rupert Fishermen's Credit Union was established in the 1930s to help fishers finance boats. The credit union played an important role in providing capital to fishers who wanted to be independent of the large fish companies.

12. The divisions amongst crew and skipper and the implications for the Co-op are discussed in greater detail in my paper 'On Permanent Strike: Class and Ideology in a Producers' Co-operative' (1992).