

Fishermen's Wives: Coping with an Extraordinary Occupation

Fran Danowski

Sociology and Anthropology
NOAA/Sea Grant

University of Rhode Island
Marine Bulletin 37

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INTRODUCTION

New England fishermen. You see them in all the tourist gift shops: bearded, pipe in hand, wearing a yellow slicker. Or you hear the barroom legends: hard workers, hard drinkers. When you conjure up the wives, you see them pacing the widow's walk or standing on the rocky shore waiting. The picture is probably of a hardy, capable woman, even tough.

Some romance is bound to color our impressions of the people involved in commercial fishing. In reality, the stereotypes are as farfetched as stereotypes usually are. Just as the majority of fishermen fail to fit the plaster casts in tourist shops, fishermen's wives also fail to conform to expectations. Call it Yankee individualism or human nature, fishermen's wives are as different from each other as all of them are different from other women. At least this appears to be the case in one southern New England fishing community.

Southern Rhode Island has a mild climate in comparison to the rest of New England. The area can be described as suburban-rural; there are no heavy industrial complexes or urban concentrations. John Poggie and Carl Gersuny give a detailed profile of this community, including demographic, historic, and economic background, in Fishermen of Galilee (1974:13-27). The port studied is interesting because of the wide diversity of fishing methods and species sought and because of the independence of fishing operations. There are no unions, and boats are owner-operated. It is also the home of a successful fishermen's cooperative, which assists the independent fishermen in marketing their catch and making supply purchases.

Between January and June of 1978, 50 women were interviewed who are married to men fishing out of Galilee, Rhode Island, on Point Judith. Their husbands were part of the total 79 fishermen used as a random sample in a study by Poggie in 1978. The purpose of this survey of fishermen's wives was to shape a general ethnography of the group and to look

at relationships between fishing and the lives of these women.

The decision to address fishermen's wives stems from various interests. Presently, considerable attention is being given to the New England fishing industry. The implementation of the 200-mile limit and application of government licensing regulations and quotas are new attempts to control access to the limited resources of the Atlantic waters. Advanced fishing technologies, equipment, and training are also changing a traditional industry interlaced with sociocultural patterns. Because fishing is not an occupation which can effectively be isolated from other areas of a participant's life, any changes in a fisherman's job will have a profound effect on his daily habits and life-style. Of the total sample of fishermen interviewed, 74.7% were married. Fishing modifications not only personally affect the fishermen, but also his family and the community around him.

Naomi Quinn and others have urged us to re-examine the roles of women with an appreciation of their multiplicity and complexity (1977:181-225). The roles played by the women in this study are not only complex, involving a variety of skills and sensitivities, but they are very important. Though this group has been chosen for study because of their husbands' involvement in a particular occupation, this in no way implies that the women's status is secondary or subordinate to their husbands'. The roles of these women are not seen simply as being supportive to husbands but are viewed in a wider perspective as being a significant contribution to society. This is an etic viewpoint, however. A few women in this study do appear to see themselves in roles which are purely supportive.

Centering as it does on the fishing business, this study is in a sense one-dimensional, but the women interviewed are not. They have wide-ranging interests, involvements, and abilities which have nothing to do with fishing. Their individuality may have led to their involvement with fishermen or may have been encouraged by it, but it is a difficult population to characterize. There is no one way to be a fisherman's wife.

Wives are involved with and affected by their husbands' occupations to varying degrees. In recent years, as more women shape their identities to make them independent of their roles as wife and mother, the influence of a husband's occupation has probably lessened. However, because the husband is a significant other, whose well-being, activities, and income do concern his wife, we would expect his occupation to have some effect on the way she perceives herself and the world. The more unusual the occupation, the more pronounced the effect is likely to be. As shall be seen, fishing is greatly unlike the usual nine-to-five job.

Because a man is frequently at sea, the responsibility of maintaining a safe and comfortable home life falls largely on the woman's shoulders. Most fishermen's wives feel their home life is different. Not only must the wife maintain effective relationships within the nuclear and extended family, but she must also make the decisions, arrange for family property maintenance, improvement, and replacement, and discipline and guide the children. She often works with her husband besides, keeping the business going in a number of different ways. The amount of energy and single-minded purpose a man can devote to fishing may depend on the degree of confidence he has in his wife's management abilities. In Fishermen of Galilee, Poggie and Gersuny state, "Many fishermen said that the success of a fisherman often depends on 'what kind of wife he has'... the wife's attitude toward her husband's work is very important for fishermen mainly because a fishing family is forced to adjust to the absence of the father/husband during many family activities" (1974:85). The woman in a fishing family maintains the continuity and sees to the day-to-day crises.

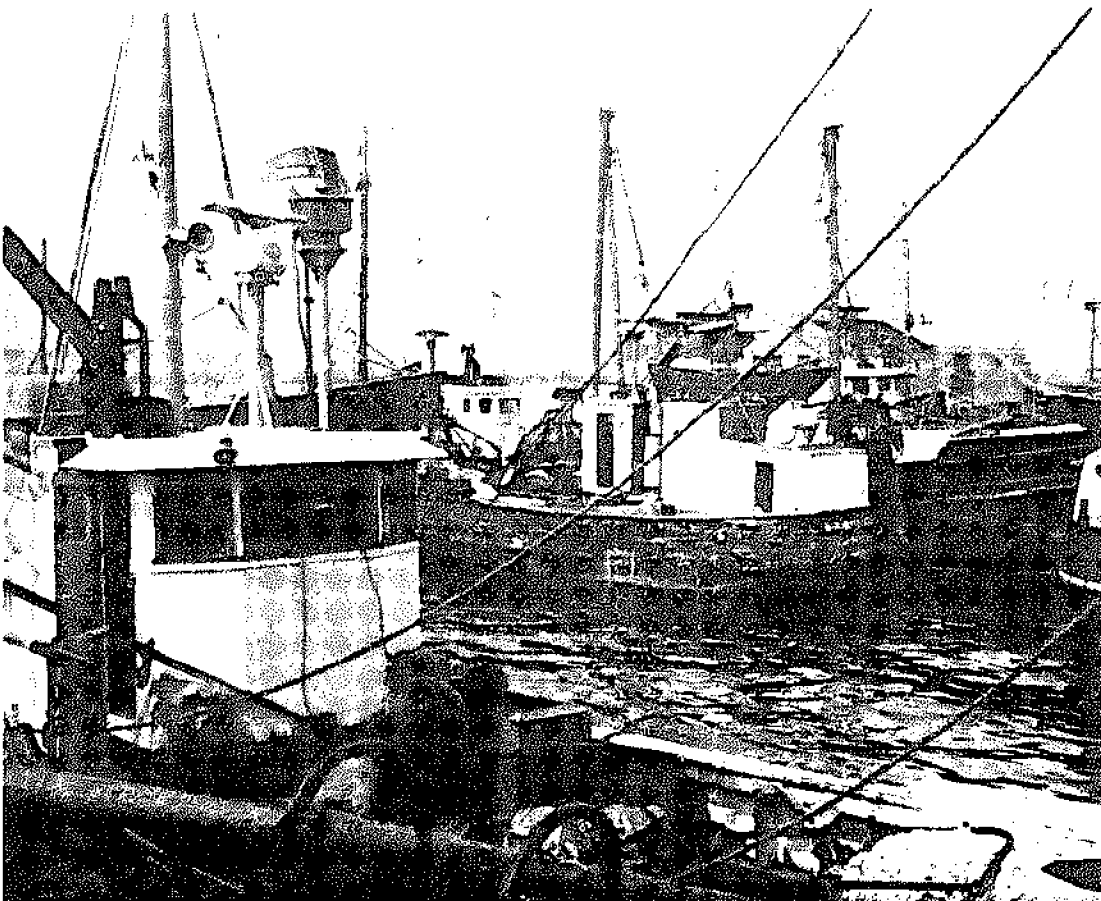
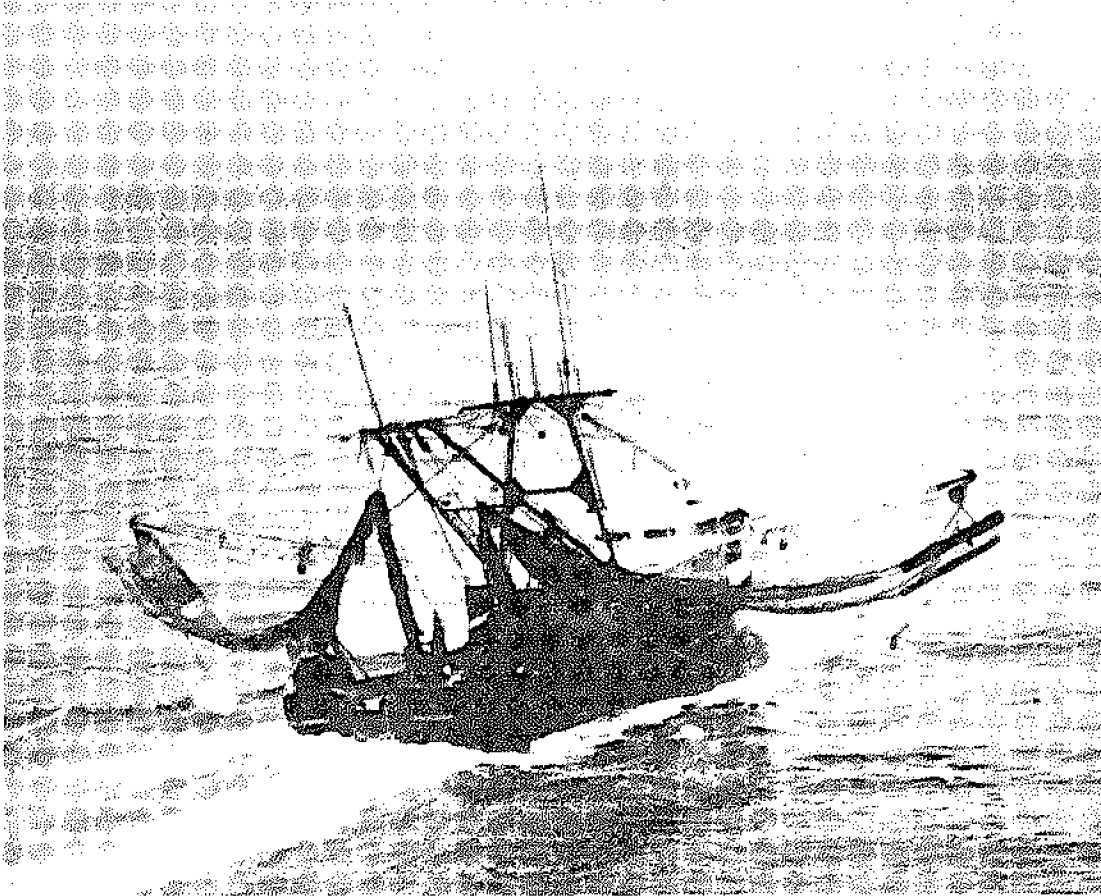
A fisherman's wife must have some understanding of the demands and unpredictability of her husband's job. One woman stated that "a nagging wife could even be dangerous" to a fisherman whose attention should be on equipment and sea conditions.

What the women like best about fishing is its favorable effect on their husbands and on their finances. They find the least desirable aspects of the job the problems it creates with their

friendships, social life, and marriage. As dangerous as the occupation is, more than half the fishermen's wives say they don't worry. About three-quarters of them don't want their husbands in a different job, but only half of them want their children to become involved with fishing. The equilibrium worked out by fishermen's wives is complex and interesting.

A total of 87 items were included in the interview schedule, which was developed for this specific population. Pre-testing indicated that the response time would be one hour. However, response and related discussion averaged 2 1/2 hours. Refusal rate was very low (4 out of 54 contacted), and most refusals were due to understandable circumstances (e.g., advanced pregnancy). Most women were very happy and even anxious to talk about themselves and their husbands' jobs. Those who knew their husbands had been interviewed were pleased to be able to add their impressions and opinions. In his study of mobile military and nonmobile couples, William L. Wilson found that "mobile women appeared quite eager and willing to discuss their lives. The interviews of these women had the quality of a release of tension.... It was often difficult for the interviewer to stay on track with the interview guide with these women" (1977:72). Women married to military career men experience separation from their spouses and additional responsibility which may give them some feelings of isolation and differentness that are similar to what is experienced by the wives of fishermen. The unexpected length of time spent on each interview and the enthusiasm of fishermen's wives were similar to those Wilson encountered with mobile military wives. In some cases, women seemed to have saved up years of reactions, both positive and negative, and were relieved to have the opportunity to share them.

This report on fishermen's wives adds to the studies of women in their varied roles. It is also timely because the fishermen's important contribution to the nation's food supply is being highlighted at the same time that the nature of the occupation is changing. It is important to see this occupation from the perspective of the wife in order to get a complete picture of commercial fishing in New England.





I. THE JOB

THE WORK

Commercial fishing is big business. Complicated technology and terminology are in everyday use. The industry spreads into the community, involving associated businesses and support services such as fish-processing, ice houses, welding shops, etc. An increasing number of fishermen are entering the field with some formal fisheries training. As businesslike as the industry now is, it still retains elements of folk knowledge. Fathers pass on to their sons solid information about favorite grounds and boat maintenance as well as the hunches and superstitions they have gathered over the years. Experience is the teacher that can never replace classroom learning when it comes to things like reading weather signs, getting the feel of sea bottom conditions, and judging safe risks that could make the difference between subsistence and profit.

Imagine a big game hunt in an enormous jungle. A handful of men with the best equipment they can manage approach the prey with all the experience and know-how they can muster. These men hope to earn their living by the volume and regularity of their catch. Also in the jungle are competitive teams, and the size of the catch must be balanced against the most fortuitous market arrival time. Change the image somewhat by picturing the hunting team in a floating vessel that is isolated and dwarfed by the vastness of an environment alien to man. The sea they ride on hides their quarry and can instantly threaten them with harsh winds, sudden temperature shifts, and capsizing waves. This is a modern team and they use airplanes and radar to see what they're after. They rely on the most sophisticated weather equipment to protect themselves from the hostility of the environment. They do their job as efficiently as possible, yet they are still exposed to the caprices of the ocean and the uncertainties of the hunt.

In many commercial fishing ports throughout the world, company boats identical in size, color, and

equipment line up at the docks ready to work for owners who live far from the smell of salt water. There is no such uniformity at Galilee. Though this port is known primarily for groundfish trawling and lobstering, there is still much variety in the species sought and the method used. Day fishermen are usually engaged in scalloping, clam dredging, inshore lobstering, or inshore dragging. Fishermen out for two to three days at a time do offshore dragging, offshore lobstering, and purse seining. The long-trip fishermen (six to ten days) are offshore dragging or are swordfishing in the summer. Frequently, a boat will be equipped to take advantage of seasonal changes; i.e., pair trawling in the winter and swordfishing in the summer. Vessel size ranges from small wooden lobster boats to the steel-hulled draggers of 50 to 60 feet. Shellfishermen may have a crew of one or two fishermen, while larger operations may employ three or four men as crew members.

The largest boats out of Point Judith, the trawlers, are after bottom fish, such as flounder, pollack, cod, and haddock. At the fishing grounds the net is set out from the side or the stern and held open by heavy wooden "doors." The net is then dragged along the sea floor at a speed judged appropriate to bottom conditions and species habit. As the net is dragged, the fish are forced to the funneled and closed "cod end" of the net. The net will be towed for two to three hours, emptied, and reset. Between hauls, fish are gutted, sorted, iced, and stored. Generally, the horsepower of the engine rather than vessel size affects the catch and earning potential of a trawler; however, many would say that it is the skill and knowledge of the fisherman that most determines it.

Even on the smallest boat, heavy equipment is in constant use. A saturated wooden lobster pot encumbered with ballast, seaweed, and snails will weigh 70 to 80 pounds even if it does not contain lobsters. The pots may be hand-hauled, or winches and pulleys may be used.

Besides being knowledgeable about engine and boat repair, weather conditions, fish habitats and behaviors, the fisherman must also be familiar with the sophisticated electronic equipment used on some of

the larger boats, such as radar, echo scanners and sonar, radio, etc. Though most crew quarters are cramped, some of the long-distance boats are equipped with color TV and wall-to-wall carpeting.

While commercial fishing requires some sophisticated technical knowledge, the work is still rugged and backbreaking. The job is not well understood by outsiders. Some think of it simply as unskilled labor. Others cannot understand why their fisherman neighbor is so exhausted when they know he has all the latest equipment on board. One fisherman's wife showed me a drawing done by their child:

"My son drew that picture of his Dad's boat in kindergarten. I asked him what this closet here was for. He said, 'That's where they keep the fishing poles.'"

The boy was too young to have observed his father's work first hand and had no basis for visualizing "fishing" other than with a pole. Unfortunately, most adults outside the industry are just as confused about what a commercial fisherman does for a living. Many disparaging comments about the high earnings of fishermen or the high cost of fish are due to a lack of understanding about the job itself.

For graphic descriptions of commercial fishing past and present, consult Jeremy Tunstall and Kim Bartlett for their work on British seamen and Gloucester, Massachusetts, fishermen. There is also John Sainsbury's Commercial Fishing Methods, which offers clear descriptions and photographs.

THE SCHEDULE

"I wouldn't want to be married to a nine-to-fiver. There's a lot of spontaneity in our lives because of the changeable schedule. When the weather turns bad, it's a surprise holiday for all of us. But, at the same time, the worst thing about fishing is that you can't plan anything. You get a wedding invitation months in advance and still you can't let people know if you'll be there till the last minute. I could never ask my husband to

skip a trip for a wedding, especially during the busy time of the year. I used to work before we were married, and when the children are both in school I'd like to work part-time again. But when my husband's home I want to be home. Our family's schedule is just too crazy."

"Last winter he was gone so much that when he came home he was like company. It felt like an outsider had come home and taken over."

"The main difference between fishermen and nine-to-fivers is that fishermen don't have regular free time that they can count on. I wound up going to more than my share of Little League games when the boys were little. And to weddings and funerals alone. It's awkward. I was only 18 when we got married and it was very, very hard for me to accept his schedule. I'd get a new dress for some special occasion and get all excited about it, then at the last minute he'd have to go out on a trip and I'd be stuck home alone. There've been a lot of disappointments. Some wives are real steppers and go out without their husbands. But I could never be comfortable doing that unless it was all family or something. I'd say it took me about five years to finally accept the fact that I couldn't make plans."

"Fishing is an abnormal life. He's gone from home for so long, and then you have to cram in a lot of living when he is home."

The most glaring difference between fishing and other occupations is the irregularity of schedule. It is not simply as irregular as New England weather; it also depends on fishing quotas, the condition of the equipment, market prices, and the whim of the captain. "Normal" households move from breakfast to dinner, from weekend to weekend, with regular stops at holidays. None of these benchmarks work for the fishing family. All that can be predicted about their entire year is that the fishermen will be out more in the good weather than in the bad.

Trip Length

In this study, three distinctions were made concerning the length of the fishing trip. Trip length sets the pattern of activity for both the fisherman and his family and can have a great effect on job satisfaction and family adjustment.

Day Trips. Of the wives interviewed, 48% have husbands who fish days. Depending on the type of fishing, the season, and who they're fishing with, the workday will span hours such as 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., 5 a.m. to 5 p.m., 3:30 a.m. to 7 or 8 p.m., 2 a.m. to 4 or 6 p.m. In the summer, fishing may take up all available daylight hours and include predawn preparation and after-dark cleanup. Inshore shellfishermen tend to have the most nearly "normal" schedules, with more flexibility, because they have smaller operations which involve less travel time to the fishing grounds. Some women who like day fishing want their husbands home every night, no matter how late. One woman states that "as long as he's home at night to sleep, I feel safe." She is probably commenting on her sense of his safety as well as her own. Others say they hate day fishing. It means that their husbands leave before dawn and return exhausted sometimes as much as 15 hours later.

Short Trips. Of the sample, 38% of the women are married to short-trip fishermen. The fishermen will usually leave well before dawn, fish two days, and return late on the evening of the third day. Usually they stay home one or two days between trips. The short trip seems the happy medium for many. The time at sea is balanced with enough time at home for husbands to both rest and be with family.

Long Trips. Of the women interviewed, 14% are married to long-trip fishermen. The long trip will go from six to eleven days out, with about three days spent at home between trips. This is the most extreme pattern of the three, with the longest periods at sea and the most time spent at home. Yet some wives are comfortable with this and find it the most relaxing choice of the three.

 TABLE 1. Attitude by Trip Length

Would you prefer your husband to be in a different occupation?

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Short</u>	<u>Long</u>
positive	19	15	2
mixed feelings	2	-	2
negative	3	4	3

$\chi^2: p < .05$

The wife's attitude toward fishing appears to depend on the trip length, with the shorter trip being preferred. But trip length alone cannot be used to determine the time a man has available to spend with wife and family. In some cases, crewmen are expected to spend many of their in-port hours working on the boat. At-home time must be used first for rest, to allow recovery from very strenuous work, before it can be counted as leisure or family time.

There was no "ideal" pattern of fishing trips for the 50 women in this study. The only ideal that held was that the fisherman not change his pattern radically or frequently.

Living with Unpredictability

The majority of fishermen's wives in this study felt that their family's home life is different from the home life of nonfishing families, as shown in Table 2.

The differences they perceive have to do primarily with the lack of routine and the relative closeness or separateness of fishermen and their families. The question of schedule came up frequently during the interviews. Descriptions of schedule disruption and inability to plan went from the specific to the general:

"I never know how much to cook or when to serve dinner."

"My husband often couldn't attend scheduled Lamaze classes with me."

"My husband misses the children's school events and dance recitals."

"The children's dinnertime and bedtime is always changing."

"Sometimes our 'weekends' are in the middle of the week, depending on the weather."

Respondents often expressed both annoyance with the lack of regularity and enjoyment of the spontaneity in the same sentence. Though they had to struggle with confusion in any long-term planning, they also enjoyed the surprise of a canceled fishing trip and the consequent impromptu holiday: "It keeps things interesting. I like living day by day rather than in the future." For some, the liabilities and the benefits of the unpredictable schedule seem balanced.

A consistent complaint about the husband's absence has to do with problems and emergency situations. It seems that pipes break and flood the house, children fall and break limbs, the whole family simultaneously suffers from the flu only when husbands are out fishing. The women report that crises rarely occur when their husbands are home. Fishermen can be reached by the Coast Guard or by radio contact in case of emergency, but this is often a process too slow to help the situation. Husbands are needed in a crisis primarily to share the burden and responsibility with their wives, not necessarily because they can alter the outcome. Because of this, women are reluctant to alarm their husbands by trying to reach them while fishing. Consequently, fishermen's wives have to react to whatever emergencies occur as best they can. The women generally feel the irony of this rather than feel any resentment. Being alone in frightening situations seems a quirk of fate rather than their husbands' fault. Interestingly, one woman reported that her husband was totally competent in handling anything that happened on the boat, but the one time he was faced with a domestic emergency, he froze. She had to take over and did so with no problem because she was more used to that kind of emergency.

 TABLE 2. The Effect of Fishing on Family's Home Life

Is home life different for families in which the husband/father is a fisherman than for families with a land-bound husband/father? (First two responses recorded.)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
no difference	3
don't know, most friends and relatives fish	1
yes:	
there is no routine or schedule	13
you never can plan social or family events	8
wife has more responsibility for children and home	8
family doesn't see much of father, do much together	6
husband doesn't have much free time, more work hours	4
husband sees more of family	4
husband is closer to family	2
husband/father is appreciated more	1
husband is thought of often during the day	1
fishermen are hardier and braver	1
fishermen are closer to nature	1
husband not available to help with problems	1
husband is away more	1
kids don't have day-to-day contact with father	1
children are more independent	1
fishermen's wives don't get involved outside home	1
thoughts are always on the weather	1
social life is different, often alone	1

The Daily Routine

What kind of day does a woman have when her husband is at home compared to her routine when he is at sea? Tables 3 and 4 report the first three

responses per individual to questions concerning differences in daily activities between husband's time at home and husband's time at sea.

TABLE 3. Daily Life When Husband Is at Home

What kinds of things do you do when your husband is at home that you wouldn't do when he's out fishing?

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
go out together	36
increase in housework, faster home pace	14
socialize with others	13
normal routine is disrupted	9
work together	9
husband, wife, and family are together	8
relax, enjoy ourselves	8
stay home together	5
camping, sports	5
nothing is different	2

The ideal way to evaluate differences in daily schedule would be to have respondents keep a detailed diary of activities for days when husband is at home and days when he is out fishing. The validity of this information depends upon the women's ability to distinguish the differences in routines. Even though this is not totally reliable, there seems to be some agreement. The days when the husband is at home are apparently treated as weekends, regardless of where they appear during the week. These days are unusual, different from the normal routine, and are reserved for activities in which husband and wife and family are together. Specific joint activities mentioned were: eating breakfast and dinner out, going to the beach or to the Point, going to movies, taking short trips, working around the yard and house, playing cards, watching TV, fishing, canoeing, snowshoeing, bowling, camping, going to jai alai games, entertaining friends, visiting friends.

Some responses indicate that the husband's time at

TABLE 4. Daily Life When Husband Is Out Fishing

What kinds of things do you do when your husband is out fishing that you wouldn't do if he were home?

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
housekeeping, errands, yard work	27
hobbies	18
social activities	17
shopping, movie, recreation	12
there is more order in the home	6
there is nothing different	4
sports, outdoor activities	3
child-related activities	2
salaried work	1
stays home more	1
day is more spontaneous	1
peaceful time to self	1
day is very quiet and long	1

home is a break in normal routine that is not totally welcome. Fourteen women reported that the husband's presence in the house means more housework, more shopping, more cooking, generally a more hectic pace. Nine commented that when their husbands are not fishing, they get nothing done in the home, the children stay up later, they spend time catering to their husbands and pampering them. In Table 4 we see that six respondents feel there is more order in the home when the husband is at sea:

"There is a schedule which holds."

"The pace is more relaxed."

"The house is neater."

Normal, ordered activity is thought to occur when husbands were operating in their sphere, and the wives and children in theirs. The same mental separation of normal routine and abnormal routine would probably be reported in nonfishing families when wives speak of weekends or holidays. The difference here is that fishermen's wives do not have the security of knowing

just when the disruptions in their "normal" routine will occur. They have to be ready to enjoy or tolerate the difference whenever weather, quotas, or other unpredictable factors keep their husbands home.

Table 4 shows that husbands' extended time at home may upset wives in another way. Besides catching up on housework and maintaining an ordered home, many women seem to use their husbands' time away as time for themselves as individuals. They do things then which would normally be put aside in favor of spending time with their husbands. They visit friends, have lunch and window-shop, read, paint, play the piano, take voice lessons, play tennis, sew, work at different crafts and hobbies, or just enjoy a "peaceful time." Realizing that fishermen's wives often carry an unusual burden of family responsibility for unusual lengths of time, this allowance of personal enjoyment becomes very important in keeping a healthy balance. Events which threaten to keep husbands home for unusual periods of time not only disrupt "normal" routines; they also threaten to curtail the wives' much needed personal time. Most fishermen's wives have adjusted with some difficulty to coping with many hours alone. Many have turned this adjustment to their advantage and enjoy and need to have a certain amount of time to themselves. Disruption of this pattern would necessitate further adjustments on the part of both husband and wife.

The women were asked what work schedule for their husbands would be ideal from their own point of view. Almost invariably they chose the current schedule. However unusual the work schedule might be, the fisherman's wife finds some consistency in the fluctuating pattern. She can tolerate or even enjoy the day-to-day unpredictability as long as it fits the general flow she has grown accustomed to. Let a day-tripper switch to long trips, or vice versa, and you will find a very unsettled wife. Seasonal shifts are also part of the pattern. "Summer widows" know their husbands will be at home much more in the winter and they adjust their time and their expectations accordingly. The fisherman's wife learns to react to schedule irregularities with great flexibility, but a pronounced variation could cause great discomfort.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

"I don't really have any feeling about it, positive or negative. My husband fishes. It's what I'm used to. I can't imagine anything else."

"I hate it, can't get used to it. I'm sorry, but I guess I don't make a very good fisherman's wife."

"I like everything about it, from the free fish to the free time in winter."

The 50 women have an average of 14 years of experience living with men who fish for a living. Even a brief introduction to such an unusual occupation would shape strong opinions about its good and bad points. The women were asked "What is liked about fishing?" Their first three responses are coded in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Positive Attitudes Toward Fishing

What is liked about fishing?

<u>Its positive effect on:</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
husband	33
finances	31
myself	9
husband/wife relationship	4
the family	2
generally positive	6
neutral	1

The greatest number of responses had to do with husbands:

"It's healthy, outdoors work."

"He's his own boss."

"He's happy."

"It's good for him."

This makes sense on several different levels. It is easier to live with a man who is happy with his work. If a man spends his working hours in misery or under tension, some of that is bound to go home with him. Similarly, if the job is satisfying and rewarding, the worker should bring home a sense of well-being and equanimity. It is personally pleasing for a woman to see the husband she cares about happy and healthy in his work. We will see that fishermen's wives have an unusual amount of involvement in their husbands' work. Some of the husband's job satisfaction may be experienced as the wife's own job satisfaction because of her active participation and interest, particularly if the wife is not herself employed outside the home. One woman said that her husband seemed to enjoy his work so much more than she enjoyed hers that she became motivated to look for changes in her own work routine.

Secondly, fishermen's wives like the money:

"We have all the comforts."

"It's a good salary."

"You can work for extra money and earn a lot in a short time."

"We are financially secure."

Despite seasonal slowdowns, fishermen generally earn an excellent salary, enabling the family to enjoy a high material style of living. Table 6 gives a sample of an inventory of material possessions for 1972 and 1978. The increase in luxury items in 1978 may reflect the fishermen's increase in salary since 1972.

TABLE 6. Material Life-Style

	<u>1972 (n=26)</u>	<u>1978 (n=50)</u>
Own:		
home	46.2%	76%
color TV	65.4	90
dishwasher	30.8	56
air-conditioner	19.2	32

The women seem convinced that their husbands could not do as well financially in any other occupation. They are probably right. Most of their husbands are self-taught, or they learned by working for more experienced fishermen. Their knowledgeability and their willingness to work hard and take occasional risks results in immediate monetary reward at the end of each trip. So many other occupations require special training or expensive educational preparation and then a slow rise from an entry-level position. Increases may come regularly but slowly, and may not correspond at all to the effort expended. It is difficult for the wife of a successful fisherman to envision her husband rerouting his energy into this kind of job.

Nine women focused on the personal benefits they felt fishing allowed them. For example:

"I like the personal independence, the time to enjoy myself."

"I like living near the shore."

"I enjoy the irregularity, the spontaneity of the unpredictable schedule."

Four felt fishing was beneficial to the relationship with their husbands:

"The wife is more involved in her husband's occupation."

"Husbands and wives appreciate each other more and don't take each other for granted."

"Couples get along better. There's no time to argue, you have to fit a week's worth of living into two days."

"Petty irritations don't have time to grow into full-scale arguments."

Wilson found that mobile military wives had similar reactions:

Short separations of a week or two were seen as giving the couple a little breathing room and letting them get some distance from each other.
[1977:73]

Two women commented that fishing was good for their families:

"The fishing schedule can be worked around the family schedule."

"The family can get involved in fishing."

Table 7 is the counterpart of Table 5, and gives the first three responses from the women when they were asked what they disliked about fishing. It is interesting to see how the positive reactions compare with the negative ones.

TABLE 7. Negative Attitudes Toward Fishing

<u>What is disliked about fishing?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
nothing, generally positive	4
the danger	7
industry-connected (government, prices, weather)	11
Its negative effect on:	
husband	6
finances	10
myself	9
husband/wife relationship	15
the family	7
friendships and social life	19

While 33 women liked the effect fishing has on their husbands, six disliked it. They felt their husbands worked too hard, worked more than their share, or were unable to forget their responsibilities and relax. Thirty-one women appreciated the financial benefits of fishing, but ten disliked the irregularity of income or the insecurity brought about because of the lack of benefits. Health insurance and retirement plans do not automatically come with the job. It is up to the fisherman or his wife to make arrangements for such insurance. Such individual plans are costly and require monthly payments even though the

fisherman's income has no monthly uniformity. Keeping up with income tax requirements is an additional burden.

Nine women disliked fishing for personal reasons. This is equal to the number who liked fishing because of personal reasons. Negative comments include the following:

"The irregular schedule has me always up in the air."

"I hate being alone. I hate waiting."

"The boat always comes first."

"There is too much responsibility."

As opposed to the four women who felt fishing is a positive influence on the husband/wife relationship, 15 women thought it detrimental and made comments such as:

"We have no time together."

"I hate the long hours."

"We are 'summer widows.'"

"He is gone too much. Our time together is too crowded with catching up; it is unnatural."

"Fishing is unhealthy for marriage."

Seven women disliked the effect fishing has on their family. Some of the comments included:

"We can't plan family activities."

"My husband misses all family crises."

"The kids are attached to the mother rather than to both parents."

"My husband does not have enough time with the children."

Industry-related complaints and the issues of personal, marital, and family adjustment in relation to fishing will be studied in more detail in Section II.

Only seven women claimed dislike of the danger involved in fishing. This is interesting in view of the fact that danger is one of the factors that

distinguish this occupation from others. A full discussion of this factor follows.

As with most questions asked in this study, the one concerning likes and dislikes elicited a wide spectrum of responses, some diametrically opposed. Undoubtedly, if asked the same questions today, these women might give a different variety of gripes and approvals. However, there is enough evidence to generalize on several points. Fishermen's wives are happy to have their husbands doing work they enjoy. They like the monetary rewards of fishing, but believe that fishing is hard on a marriage and hard on their social life.

THE DANGER

"I don't worry about him. I never have. I know it's dangerous. I saw a movie once filmed from my husband's boat, about 240 miles out, in March. It was unbelievably rough. I know about some near-tragedies. You have to watch out for whales, submarines, freighters. But, all in all, more can happen to you onshore than out there."

"I used to worry about him when I was younger, but I know this captain doesn't take chances. I don't hear till later, through the grapevine, that there were 12-foot seas. He doesn't want to worry me. My neighbors seem to worry more about the weather than I do."

"I can't sit home for days and worry about the boat sinking. I ignore it."

"See that boat over there?" (She points to a watercolor hanging on the living room wall.) "My husband and three crewmen were off New Bedford in heavy fog when it was cut in half by a freighter. Two of the men went off the front and two off the back. Luckily, somebody from the freighter saw what happened and they only spent a couple of hours in the water before they were picked up. The Coast Guard called me to come and pick him up. The next day he spent looking for another boat. But he liked that one best. No, I don't worry."

"One of our friends was on that boat that went down. He spent three hours in the water and it's still pretty cold this time of year. We were talking with him and he was pretty shook up about it. Said he wouldn't go out again without a survival suit. It makes you think."

"Sure, it's dangerous. Especially at night or in bad weather. Someone could fall overboard and you wouldn't even know. But I know when to expect him home within a couple of hours, and I don't even begin to worry unless he's late. After all, when your time is up, it's up, whenever."

Does commercial fishing justify worry? The media in the New England coastal area report almost weekly on fishing injuries and fatalities, on boats lost in storms or disabled in collisions. Fog, wind, and cold plague offshore New England waters. Heavy equipment carried on board can malfunction or fail in severe weather, posing additional hazards. Fishermen trying to take advantage of a good run of fish or of a high market price may risk staying at sea too long, to the point of exhaustion, increasing possibilities of accident. Poggie and Gersuny compared fishing fatalities to those of the most dangerous land occupation, coal mining. They found that fisheries recorded 21.4 deaths per million man days and coal mining 8.3 (1974:90). There is no doubt of the danger.

There are some measures that can be taken to reduce risk. A fisherman can make sure he works on a well-equipped, well-maintained boat for a responsible captain. Money can be invested in the finest safety equipment. Still, there is little that can be done about a freak storm or a freighter bearing down upon you in the fog. A man who fishes for a living has come to terms with potential danger. He knows the work is largely routine for an experienced and careful worker. He is confident in his ability to handle emergencies. He deals with danger as it occurs. What about his wife, who will not know until some time after the fact just how routine his trip has been? Table 8 gives the first two responses to the question "How do you feel about fishing as a dangerous occupation?" Thirty-three responses involve varying

degrees of worry and 23 responses concern worry on certain occasions. Twenty-seven responses claim no worry, ten of these denying the dangerous aspects of the occupation. There was no significant relationship between the length of fishing trip and the reaction to danger.

How is it possible for so many women to ignore the possibilities of danger? Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (1957) gives us some insight into the problem. When environmental reality is inconsistent with psychological comfort, there is a drive to reduce the dissonance and to achieve consonance. If the threat to equilibrium cannot be eliminated, reality can be reinterpreted, ignored, or counteracted with social support. Since there is little a woman can do to change the dangerous nature of fishing, she may choose to ignore that aspect, focusing instead on the fact that accidents are possible in any occupation. In the newspapers she will notice the number of accidents people encounter simply by driving on the interstate to work. Information concerning incidents at sea will not be dwelt upon. If confronted with such incidents, she may claim the captain was not trustworthy, the boat in poor condition, or cite other explanations which would rule out discussion of general danger and interpret the event as having been caused by obvious mistakes.

If the danger is acknowledged and causes no worry, it may be that the woman is the type that deals with life on a factual, day-to-day basis and is simply not the worrying kind. Or she may have grown up with a fisherman in the home and be thoroughly accustomed to the occupation and familiar with its hazards. A woman whose husband has been fishing for ten years has seen him return safely from hundreds of fishing trips. She keeps this uppermost in her mind, disregarding the storms or near-misses that may actually have threatened him. Certainly, fishermen themselves do not talk as though the next trip might be their last. Women who are married to fishermen must operate under the same assumptions.

Still, there are many women who admitted that they do worry. They commented that they are very relieved when their husbands return after particularly long trips or stormy weather.

TABLE 8. Reaction to the Danger of Fishing

How do you feel about fishing as a dangerous occupation?

	<u>Frequency</u>
worried more when first married/ when he first started fishing	10
worries if it is late, if there are storms	10
it is dangerous, but doesn't worry	9
is dangerous, refers to accidents, incidents, possibilities	8
it is not any more dangerous than other jobs	8
never worries or thinks about it	6
worries, but trusts her husband or the captain	5
it is dangerous, worries	5
it is very dangerous, is very scared, worried	5
worries more now than when younger	4
worries on long trips	3
it is dangerous, but anything can be dangerous	2
it is very dangerous, but doesn't worry	1
worries about accidents	1
has no fear, accepts it	1

The women were asked how they cope with the danger of fishing. Table 9 outlines their coping strategies, giving the first three responses, many of which correspond to Festinger's theory.

Keeping busy, trying or succeeding in never thinking about it, getting used to it and accepting it are ways of ignoring the threat of danger. Spending money on safety equipment is an active attempt to reduce the danger. Making radio contact, listening to the weather reports, calling the Coast Guard, the captain's wife or other crew wives are activities that keep the woman informed and reassured that all is normal. Having faith in God or in the competency of her husband or the captain allows a woman to relieve herself of some of the worry. Occasionally the worry may be so pervasive that watching and waiting are the only possible activities.

From the women's comments, it would appear that many believe it is childish and self-indulgent to

TABLE 9. Coping with the Danger of Fishing

<u>How do you cope with the worry?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
trust the captain or husband's judgment	14
call other crew wives, captain's wife	8
keep busy	7
radio contact	6
try never to think about it	6
never think about it	5
get used to it, accept it	4
watch the harbor, watch at the dock	3
wait	3
spend money on safety equipment	2
listen to weather reports	2
faith in God	1
call Coast Guard	1

spend too much time worrying. Particularly when there are children in the home, it is felt, a woman must keep busy and continue normal activities even though she may be especially worried about her husband's safety. Excessive worry is probably something that a fisherman's wife grows out of as she gradually learns to cope with the idiosyncracies of the occupation. Coping gradually becomes adaptive behavior. Ten women stated they worried more when they were first married or when their husbands first began to fish.

Interestingly, four women stated they worry more now than when they were younger. Having children in the home is a distraction from worry and keeps women occupied and intent on creating and maintaining a normal atmosphere. When children are grown and gone, there is not only more time to think about the dangers, but there may also be more to worry about. In their later years, fishermen have valuable experience to rely on, but they no longer have the stamina or quick reaction time they had in their youth. Women may see their husbands coming home more and more exhausted as the years go by and worry more about their safety.

For the most part, fishermen's wives seem to take the dangerous aspect of fishing in stride. At least most of the worry is kept below the surface so that day-to-day living can proceed unaffected.

CAPTAINS AND CREWMEN

"There is a difference between owners and crewmen. It kind of bothers me because I'm not a snobby person, but I don't feel comfortable with crewmen's wives. I don't feel any better than them, just not comfortable. Most of our friends are owners. Maybe it's because we have more in common, sharing the same responsibilities and point of view."

"Some captains don't mingle. They're kind of aloof. But most of them are regular people. And their wives are always friendly."

"Some of them really like being captain. They keep it a secret when the boat's going out next. When we were dating, my husband told me to be careful about talking with the captain. I wasn't supposed to kid around with him as much as with the others in the group."

One obvious distinction among fishermen is their status on board. In this port, virtually all boats are captained by their owners. Socially, the separation is detectable though not rigid. People generally are more comfortable spending time with those most like themselves.

Several things keep the crew/captain boundary flexible. Fishermen are more apt to separate themselves by the kind of fishing they do rather than by status on board. Thus, the captain from one lobster boat may have more in common with a crewman from another lobster boat than with the captain of a trawler. If a captain has the same crew over a period of years, it is likely they will become friendly. One captain's wife mentioned annual Christmas get-togethers with the crew and their families. This particular port has so much family involvement that crewmen and captains may be distant or close

relatives. Also, a crewman aspiring to boat ownership may form a friendship with the captain from whom he is learning the business. Status distinctions are relaxed because they will soon be working on the same level.

Mobility

Captains earn more money and risk more. Crewmen have less personal control over their schedules. Twenty-three of the women in this sample are married to captains. Table 10 gives the responses of the remaining 27 when asked if they would like their husbands to become captains.

With captain status comes added financial rewards, plus the possibility of more independence and flexibility. One woman had a very strong opinion of its benefits:

"Fishermen are of a very low caliber. They have no family and they have a fast life-style and think only of themselves. If you hang around people like that, strange values begin to rub off on you. The only way to survive is to become an owner and make enough money to move away from other fishermen."

But many women see ownership as less desirable:

"I'm flattered that he doesn't want his own boat. Owners are married to their boats, and their wives and families take a back seat."

"Boat owning is a tremendous responsibility. The paperwork and expense is unbelievable."

Some of the women who were not interested in captain status may have had doubts about the future of fishing. Owning a boat is a great financial burden. A few bad seasons at the beginning of operation can make it impossible to keep up the stiff payments on a boat and they could lose it. There are also the government quota regulations, which limit the possibilities for profit. Much must be considered before a woman will opt for a change.

 TABLE 10. Desirability of Upward Mobility

Do you want your husband to become a captain/owner?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
not applicable	23
no	37.1%
mixed feelings	18.5%
yes, but too old	11.1%
yes	33.3%

STATUS

The status of fishermen has improved in recent years. Previously, fishermen were stereotyped as men unable to hold down normal jobs and hard drinkers who made poor family men. One woman commented that "fishermen were regarded as social lepers, but now it's the thing to be." There is now more recognition of the skill involved in fishing as well as of the economic importance of the industry and of the resource itself. Presently, fishing income is often higher than local land-based jobs. The approximate median family income in the port area in 1970 was \$10,004 (Poggie and Gersuny, 1974:26). In 1978, crew members on one boat were averaging \$50,000. This was unusually high, but not unrealistic for a top crew and vessel in a good year. Even though fishermen's reputation and economic status have improved, seven women in this study married fishermen without their family's approval. No doubt parents worry about their daughters spending too much time alone, about the dangerous situations their sons-in-law may be stuck in, about the irregularity of the income.

The recent government involvement with the fishing industry has had an interesting side effect. Fishermen are in the news. They are beginning to organize their reactions to new restrictions. Because the government is regulating them, they have lost something of their outlaw image and gained a kind of respectability. The job has become somewhat more

conventional in its public image. It is now possible for fishermen's wives to commiserate with wives married to government-regulated businessmen.

A WAY OF LIFE

His work changes with the seasons in a way that keeps him free from the dullness that comes to people who have always the same occupation. The danger of his life on the sea gives him the alertness of a primitive hunter and the long nights he spends in his curagh bring him some of the emotions that are thought peculiar to men who have lived with the arts. [J.M. Synge on the fishermen of the Aran Isles, in J.M. Synge and His World, by Robert Skelton, p. 54]

Individually, fishermen are as varied as the men in any occupation but hardships ... exposure to danger and the most unremitting labor have bred a sturdy, persevering race, full of resource, essentially non-conformist, recognizably anti-authoritarian, blunt, uncompromising and genuinely sincere.

Yes, to be afraid of the sea's the wrong thing altogether but you've got to respect it. You're only a puny thing, only a small thing there you know. It's much bigger'n you are....I think a lot of people go through life and they don't have anything to bring them down to size, do they? It's the job that counts. If you're a coal miner, I think that brings you down to size in the same way. [S. Festing on North Sea herring fishermen, in Fishermen, pp. 12, 95-96]

"My husband is proud to be independent and self-employed and making good money to boot. And I'm proud of him."

"I think fishermen are friendlier and nicer than most people. They stick together and help each other. A couple of years ago a fisherman lost an eye in a fight. All the other fishermen chipped in to help him. Maybe they're nicer because they're happier with their jobs. They stay

healthy and like what they're doing. I'd be pleased and proud to have my sons grow up to be fishermen."

"Both my family and his have been fishing for years. If his boat goes down or if he's lost at sea, he's told me not to grieve for him because he's doing the work he loves."

Poggie and Gersuny examined the ideational characteristics of fishermen and found that fishermen had a "personal commitment to the occupation" (1974:61). This statement was frequently echoed by fishermen's wives.

When a woman says "fishing is a way of life," she is expressing the sense of pride and the romance of the occupation she shares with her husband. She is also saying it is different. It may sometimes be different in alarming and distracting ways, but it is also somewhat exclusive. Not everyone can fish for a living; the way of life is different enough to make it a bit mysterious to land-bound workers.

When husbands in Poggie's 1978 interviews were asked, "Would your wife rather see you in another occupation?," 72% responded no, 8% in part, and 20% yes. For the majority of the wives who have apparently accepted fishing, comments indicate that their acceptance has a lot to do with adapting and being used to the occupation:

"It seems natural to be married to a fisherman."

"I can't imagine any other way of being married."

In response to the true/false item "I can't imagine being married to a banker," 84% agreed. Many women laughed at this idea and, when questioned, said:

"I'm not that type."

"Bankers are stuffy and inflexible and more educated."

"I'm more outgoing."

"I prefer a more casual life-style."

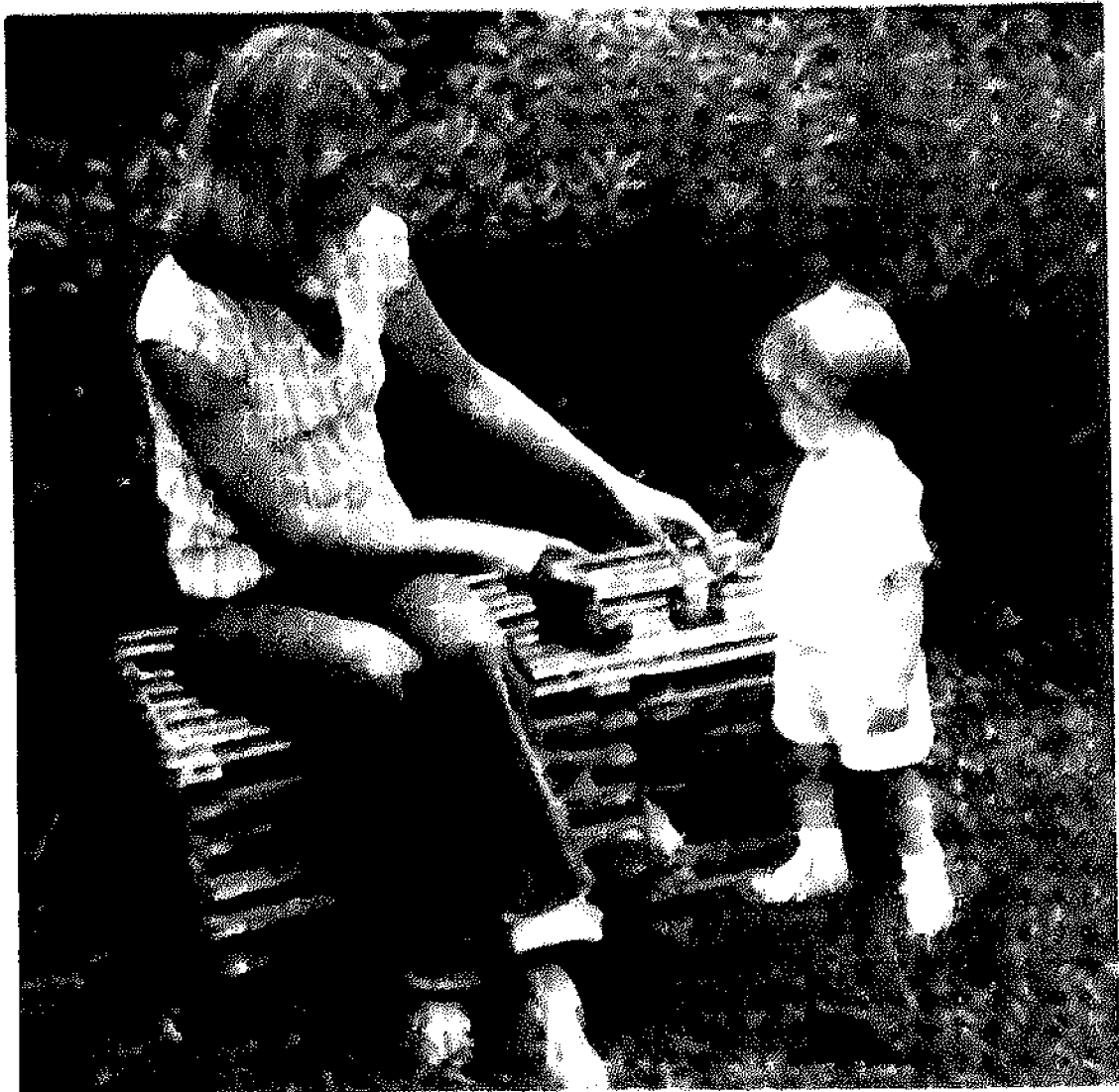
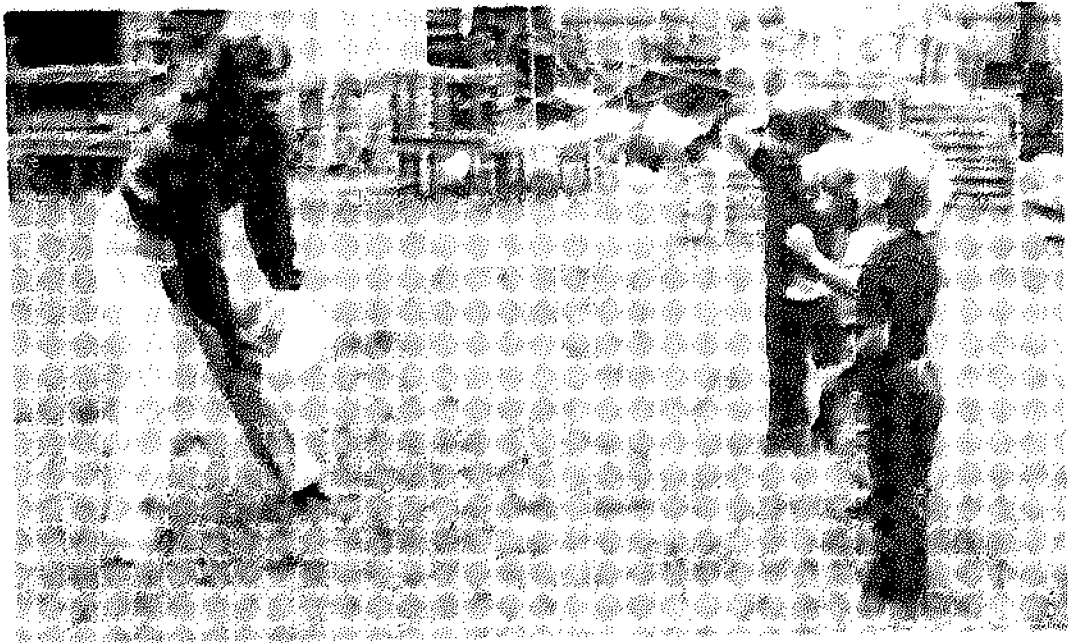
Being married to a fisherman seems to add up to a life-style that is casual and flexible and just the

opposite of what women imagine it would be like if they were married to a banker.

The decor in a fishing family's home often includes items with a fishing or sea motif, including framed oils and photos of previously owned boats, seascapes, ship's clocks, statues of fishermen, anchors, ship models, etc. Though home decor was not a formal part of this survey, this fishing motif was noticed in nine of the homes visited and would probably have been found in more if looked for specifically.

Fishing cannot be compartmentalized. During the fishing season, there is a peculiar quality to the time a fisherman spends in the home. He stays near the telephone, listens to the weather constantly, compares notes with other fishermen. He is on call and waiting. It is difficult for his family to forget that another trip is imminent. There is seldom enough leeway for overnight jaunts, and even dinner dates are cut short in case the next day is a workday.

It is a wrap-around occupation, affecting and shaping a way of life.



II. THE PEOPLE

THE WOMEN

The ethnicity of this group appears to be "Yankee," corresponding to the 1974 ethnic description of fishermen in this area (Foggle and Gersuny, 1974: 52-54). None of the women are foreign-born, and their homes lack the European influence that might be found in other New England ports (i.e., Gloucester and New Bedford). Sixty-six percent of these women were born in Rhode Island, and 16% originate from the county in which they now live. The interviews were conducted in their homes, which were located within approximately a 25-mile radius of the fishing port. The area of their residence falls within one county and seven townships. Sixty percent of the respondents live within five miles of the port. This is an area dominated by its proximity to water. There are summer cottages, seafood restaurants, state and private beaches. Some of the women live within walking distance to where their husbands' boats are docked. From her kitchen window, one woman can look out on the channel to the harbor and actually watch her husband come home.

Two respondents who live on the fringes of this residence area reported that they purposely avoided a location more convenient to the port. These women see closer residence as undesirable or even dangerous to their marriage. One woman whose husband worked day trips disapproved of the way of life of trip fishermen and their families from the port area, saying that wives there were too independent and families and couples were not close enough. Another stated that the physical distance from the port area helped the family maintain a more normal, "civilian" life because her husband and she were able to avoid socializing with other fishermen, socializing instead with neighbors having more "normal" occupations.

The mean age is 35.1, and the average years married is 14.2. Their husbands have been fishing from 2 to 41 years. The women in this study have an average of 12.5 years of formal education. Median school years completed is 12.2 for women over 25 in

this county. Many of the women have had professional training and two are presently college students, one working for a B.S. and the other for a Ph.D. degree. Thirty-five of the women have children under the age of 18 and eight have no children. Some interview questions asked of the women without children were phrased, "if you had children . . ." Because of the wide range of variation in the population, Tables 11 through 14 should be consulted for a clear picture of this demographic information.

Forty percent of the women are presently paid employees, both part time and full time. (Of the total women in the Rhode Island labor force, 43.9% are married.) They have a variety of occupations, as listed in Table 15.

To increase background knowledge, the women were asked about the kinds of jobs they had previously held. Their responses indicate a considerable experience at varying levels of professionalism and skill. It is interesting to note that eight women are or have been involved in fishing-related occupations (Table 16).

Personality

What kind of person marries a fisherman? In the personality of the women related to fishing? In an effort to find out something about the personalities of fishermen's wives, a projective section was added to the interview schedule. Twenty-seven Rorschach items were either created specifically to fit the population or excerpted from various projective tests and modified for this instrument. As an example of item design, the statement "I would prefer to try a new restaurant in Providence rather than eat at a local restaurant" reflects the interviewer's prior knowledge of the community and insight gained from previously interviews. Most of the respondents are comfortable with a casual lifestyle. One woman commented that she and her husband would not eat at a place that required dressing up. Even though Providence is only a short drive from most fishermen's homes, long-time residents of this southern county are not characterized by close cultural or social ties to the

TABLE 11. Age

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
19-20	3
21-25	6
26-30	11
31-34	9
36-39	6
41-47	5
50-54	5
57-58	4
n=49	
mean=35.1	

TABLE 12. Education

<u>Years Completed</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
9	3
10	2
11	2
12	31
13	2
14	3
15	1
16	4
18	1
19	1
n=50	
mean=12.5	

TABLE 13. Years Married

<u>Number of Years</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1-5	12
6-10	9
11-15	12
18-20	6
21-29	4
31-38	7
n=50	
mean=14.2	

TABLE 14. Number of Children

<u>Number</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
0	8
1	6
2	20
3	10
4	2
5	3
7	1
n=50	
mean=2.1	

TABLE 15. Present Employment

<u>Job Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
store salesperson	3
secretarial	2
factory	2
beautician	2
student	2
fishing crew*	2
fishing for eel	2
cooking shellfish	1
waitress	1
babysitting	1
nurse's aid	1
X-ray technician	1
bus driver	1
ceramic teacher	1

*Crew work was seasonal or occasional, not year round.

TABLE 16. Previous Employment

<u>Job Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
secretarial	13
store sales	10
waitress/hostess	6
bank teller	3
teacher	3
nurse	2
millweaver	2
teacher's aid	1
nurse's aid	1
dental assistant	1
bookkeeper	1
cook	1
cook shellfish	1
shellfish co. clerk	1
phone operator	1
counselor	1
department store buyer	1
factory worker	1
babysitter	1
fishpacker	1

city of Providence. It was assumed, therefore, that a "true" response would indicate a modern, or adventurous, perspective.

The projective section of the interview was based on personality analyses and theoretical work on modernity, independence, and fatalism by Richard Coan, Joseph Kahl, and Everett Rogers. Kahl analyzes the modern personality using scales of individualism and activism. In his analysis, the modern person is an individualist and an activist who can plan for the future with confidence in his or her ability to bring plans to fruition (1968:133). Rogers describes a modern social system as one that values education, allows system members to see themselves in different roles, and has a positive attitude toward change (1971:32-33).

The results of the projective item responses were subjected to factor analyses. This is a method to determine statistically the independent clusters of related variables into which responses fall. Thus, sets of questions which were planned to address a specific trait may be statistically grouped otherwise. The procedure used principal components analysis with varimax rotation. The number of factors rotated was determined using an eigenvalue cutoff of 1.0. This analysis resulted in four independent clusters or factors, in contrast to expectations of three based on the dimensions of modernity, independence, and fatalism discussed above. The first four factors appear to measure styles and degrees of personal autonomy, and account for 41.8% of the variance.

Table 17 shows the interview items, grouped according to their rankings. The groupings are examined and an attempt is made to name the groupings or factors in a way that is consistent with what the items represent in terms of personality traits.

The first factor concerns self-control and acceptance of responsibility (items 2-5, 7-9). Responses to items 1 and 6 may indicate satisfaction with present life allowing for adventurous choices. Factor II is an ideal-modern factor, indicating a progressive, broad-minded outlook (items 8, 10-13).

While Factors III and IV are comparatively weak, accounting for 8.5% and 7.6% of the variations, respectively, they are still conceptually interesting.

TABLE 17. Factor Analysis of Personality Items

	Factors			
	I	II	III	IV
1. If given \$6,000, I would rather learn to fly a plane than buy a new car.	.62	.17	.05	-.17
2. Most of us are victims of forces we cannot understand, let alone control.	-.60	.10	-.07	-.11
3. In order to be happy, one must behave in ways that other people desire, even if you have to suppress your own ideas sometimes.	-.58	.02	-.24	-.13
4. I'd rather find out about a dangerous situation than not think about it.	.56	-.01	.11	-.06
5. I do not need to buckle my seat belt because "when your time is up, it's up."	-.52	.24	.14	.04
6. I cannot imagine being married to a banker.	-.49	-.05	.06	-.12
7. Some people are born losers.	-.48	-.28	-.36	-.05
8. If income were temporarily restricted, I'd rather get a temporary part-time job than manage the house with limited funds.	.35	.39	-.07	.12
9. Making a lot of money is a matter of getting the right breaks.	-.29	.16	-.04	.20
10. It is acceptable for unmarried young couples not planning to have children to live together.	-.19	.75	.33	.06
11. Being politically and socially active can change the world we live in.	.04	.73	.02	-.25
12. I would like all my children to go to college if possible.	-.09	.56	-.25	-.33
13. Women have as much right as men to sow wild oats.	-.01	.55	-.11	.44
14. If I spend enough time working on it I could become a musician or auto mechanic.	-.13	.14	.69	-.39
15. Fishing boats will never be built to accommodate women.	-.03	.16	-.68	.10
16. Rather than discuss with my husband the purchase of family gifts, I prefer to choose them myself.	-.39	-.01	-.61	-.09
17. When I'm not feeling well, I'd rather have my husband cook dinner than cook it myself.	-.12	.11	.46	.49
18. When something is broken or not working, I'd rather try to tinker with it myself than call the repairman immediately.	.12	.32	.46	-.33
19. I do not want to see the local business area grow any more.	.18	-.18	.24	-.04
20. I would prefer to try a new restaurant in Providence rather than eat at a local restaurant.	.02	-.08	-.18	.60
21. What happens to me is my own doing.	.24	.18	.09	-.36
22. Most things that happen to us are for our own good.	-.36	.11	-.24	.53
23. Because I can count on my family and friends, I don't worry much about solving problems that come up.	-.12	.08	-.05	-.45

I = self-controlling (14.1% of variance)

II = ideal-modern (11.5% of variance)

III = active-modern (8.5% of variance)

IV = oppressed (7.6% of variance)

Factor III concerns active-modernism (items 14-19). Factor IV appears to describe someone who feels somewhat oppressed by circumstances and is desirous of change (items 9, 17, 18, 20-23).

Relationship Between Personality and Other Sociocultural Variables

The four personality factors identified are interesting to this study in terms of how they are correlated to other sociocultural variables, including fishing-related variables. This relationship is illustrated in Table 18.

Table 18 indicates that three of the independent variables are significantly related to Factor I, self-controlling: education, family involvement, and husband's status. Factor II, ideal-modern, is significantly related to trip length. There is a significant negative relationship between Factor III, active-modern, and the independent variables of age, length of marriage, and husband's status. Factor IV, oppressed, is not significantly related to any of the independent variables.

TABLE 18. Relationship Between Personality Factors and Independent Variables

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Factors</u>			
	I	II	III	IV
education	.40**	.18	-.07	.21
age	.09	.05	-.28*	-.05
negative attitude toward husband's job	-.09	.24	-.01	.17
family involvement	-.32*	-.06	.06	.07
length of marriage	-.07	.10	-.29*	-.10
years of fishing	-.13	.05	-.23	-.10
husband's status	.41**	-.06	-.41**	-.13
trip length	-.24	.38**	-.05	-

* P .05 (.273)

** P .01 (.354)

I = self-controlling
 II = ideal-modern
 III = active-modern
 IV = oppressed

Discussion

Factor I, self-controlling, accounts for the largest percentage of the variance (14.1%). Education is positively related to this factor, suggesting that as years of formal education increase so does a woman's sense of self-worth and confidence in her own capabilities. The wife with more than the average education (12.5 years) may feel more in control and able to meet all circumstances with reasonable solutions. There is a negative relationship between the self-controlling factor and family involvement in fishing. A possible explanation for this finding is that having relatives who fish would make the occupation seem less unusual and may leave fewer opportunities for assuming unusual personal and family responsibility. A woman with relatives who fish may be part of an understanding network which offers mutual assistance and support. Additionally, a woman with relatives in the industry might be more willing to accept the status quo and be more passive or agreeable in respect to her husband's work, or to the world in general.

It is not surprising that self-controlling is positively correlated with being married to a captain. There are a number of reasons why a captain's wife might feel in control and satisfied with her life. An established captain can provide more financial security. The captain's wife may actually be a business partner, helping with boat accounting and dealing with land-based fishing operations, such as finding and purchasing supplies or parts for boat repair. This would give a strong sense of active participation and self-worth. There is also a certain amount of status that goes with being married to a captain. Crew wives and girlfriends will call her to find out when the boat is due and may go to her to pick up the paychecks. The captain is also able to exercise more flexibility in setting his schedule to avoid conflict with some family events, so his wife will probably feel less manipulated than might a crew wife with a totally inflexible and unpredictable schedule.

Although not statistically significant (-.24), there is a tendency for trip length to be negatively

associated with self-controlling. This is somewhat surprising if one assumes that a woman left more on her own would score higher on this factor. It is suggested that many wives in this category are married to small boat owners whose trips are not lengthy, but whose in-shore time is often tied up with gear and boat maintenance.

Factor II, ideal-modern, is positively correlated with trip length. This finding can be interpreted to indicate that the more time her husband spends at sea, the more time a woman has to form stronger personal opinions and to become an independent, progressive thinker. There may be fewer opportunities for the couple to share ideas and perhaps less chance that the wife's opinions will be modified by the husband. It is interesting though not statistically significant that persons scoring high on ideal-modern tend to want their husbands in different occupations. They may be unhappy with the status quo because of time-limited marital relationships or because of the amount of family responsibility that must be shouldered alone. This would be an expected relationship. The least satisfied person is often the most radical, and within the limits posed by the instrument, this ideal-modern factor represents progressive, if not radical, thinking. It should be noted that Factor II is ideational in nature, indicating professed philosophy and not necessarily corresponding activism.

Factor III, active-modern, is negatively related to captain's status. This seems unexpected until we see that high active-modern scores also belong to women who are younger and married fewer years to less experienced fishermen. Younger, less experienced fishermen would tend to be crew members rather than captains. Active-modern may simply be a function of youth. The young wife may have a greater sense of future opportunities and personal power. Years of possibilities stretch ahead and there are few disappointments or failures behind. The feminist movement may also have affected the outlook of these young wives and increased their belief in their own potential.

Though Factor IV, oppressed, is not significantly related to any of the independent variables, the highest correlations may indicate some interesting

tendencies. Education is positively related to oppressed (.21). The more educated women may have a wider perspective and be more aware of other possible ways to earn a living. Fishing may be an impediment to her expectations for her marriage or for her husband's status. This logic follows when we note that the second highest correlation is dissatisfaction with husband's occupation (.17). Oppressed also has a mild negative relationship (-.13) with captain's status. In the interview process, several wives expressed dissatisfaction with their husbands' crew status. Some said their husbands were expected to work harder than other crew members, or that their work schedule and therefore their income was subject to the captain's whim.

From the previous discussion, it is apparent that variance in the personality variables may be tentatively explained exclusively by conditions independent of fishing in only one case. Active-modern is clearly related to youth. Self-controlling and oppressed are all involved with fishing-related conditions, as well as with one other external variable, education. Ideal-modern is related totally to fishing-related concerns. This suggests that aspects of a wife's personality are related to her husband's participation in the extraordinary occupation of fishing.

It is interesting to note the relationship of education to the very different self-controlling and oppressed factors. When other positive fishing-related conditions are present (captain status, no relatives in fishing, and, possibly, shorter trip length), more than average education may have the effect of helping a woman find satisfaction in a life she believes she controls. On the other hand, when fishing-related conditions are undesirable (crew status, other occupation desired) increased education may cause increased frustration.

At the present stage, the data show that aspects of a woman's personality are related both positively and negatively to aspects of her husband's involvement in fishing. It is important that proposed innovations be evaluated using the depth of this perspective. The direction of this relationship, however, remains to be resolved. Do fishermen select wives whose personality

preadapts them to their husband's occupation or do the fishermen's wives psychologically adapt to the demands of the occupation after marriage? There may be a certain amount of self-selection operating. For example, independent women may be attracted to independent fishermen. However, it is also possible that personality characteristics are significantly molded in young adulthood, and by marrying a fisherman when relatively young, a woman more easily adapts her personality to the demands of this particular life-style.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

There are a few women who fish as crew or co-owners out of this port. Still, this is overwhelmingly a male occupation. In New England fishing has always been men's work. The men have gone out to fish and face the elements while the women watched the home fires and waited. Does this traditional separation of labor extend to other areas of life when the husband is at home? Do fishermen adhere closely to male roles and not interfere with their wives' home and family management? Do wives steer clear of everything that has to do with fishing? Who makes the decisions in these families? We know from asking about likes and dislikes that some fishermen's wives think fishing is hard on a marriage, while a few think it has a beneficial effect. What kind of adjustment problems do these couples face?

Partners

One of the most outstanding aspects of being married to a fisherman is the amount of communication and the degree of awareness a woman has about her husband's job. If the division between male and female roles were strict, one would suspect the man would keep details about his work to himself, preferring to keep this sphere of his life separate from his wife's involvement. Twenty percent of the women report that their husbands rarely or never talk to them about their work. Seventy percent say that their husbands do discuss their trips, their work, the

crew, boat equipment, etc., and an additional 10% say their husbands "constantly," "automatically," or "always" talk about their work. In one case, the fisherman and his crew were "at home" during the interview via the short-wave radio in the kitchen. The woman responded to the items in the interview with half her attention on the situation at sea, excusing herself to make a phone call to get equipment her husband had mentioned needing.

Virtually all the women have been on their husbands' boats in port, and many have accompanied their husbands on fishing trips or local trips on the boat. Often when a man is doing boat maintenance at port, his wife and children will join him at the dock area, to watch or to help, or simply to be near him. Net work and lobster pot maintenance is often done right in the backyard or garage. One woman commented, "The work is tangible." They know about the daily routine and about the potential for extraordinary events such as equipment failures, extra-bountiful catch, weather hazards, accidents.

A woman can carry a mental picture of the fisherman's work activities. Because of this, one would assume that there would be less conceptual distance between the husband's and wife's worlds. For example, a woman married to an office worker may be less interested and less imaginatively and/or concretely involved in that area of her husband's life. This would be an interesting theme for a comparative study which could contrast possible spouse involvement in the husband's tangible/intangible work.

Eleven women cited industry-connected items among their dislikes. Their complaints ran from nature to politics and included the weather, government quotas, fish prices, and licensing requirements. These comments show an active awareness of the problems that plague the industry. A woman who claims to dislike industry-connected aspects of fishing takes industry issues personally.

In addition to job awareness, fishermen's wives can be involved in the occupation in more direct ways. Almost half the sample are married to captains who are in business for themselves. Frequently in self-employed situations the husband's business becomes a family endeavor. One skipper's wife

consistently said "we" when speaking about her husband's boat and about fishing activities. From her viewpoint, fishing was a joint endeavor, his work was her work, his risks were her risks. Another claimed she was "one-half the operation." She was the land-based partner who located and obtained boat parts and checked on supplies. Running a crewed fishing boat is a major financial enterprise. Yearly expenses on an average boat run in the vicinity of \$54,000, with each trip costing between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Boat owners most often have a professional accountant handle their books and assist with tax preparation. It is often the wife's responsibility to keep accounts in order on a day-to-day basis before handing them over to the accountant for quarterly checks. Even crew members' finances are more complicated since the government changed their tax status to self-employed. They are individually responsible for keeping track of their earnings and for putting tax money aside.

The interviews with the husbands in the study conducted by Poggie give information about the extent of the wives' assistance. When asked, "Who helps you with fishing?," 23 men said their wives do. Table 19 records the ways the husbands claimed their wives help.

Occasionally a captain's wife will cook food for the crew to take on their trips. As has been mentioned, she may also serve as a link between crew wives and their husbands, either by relaying messages, keeping them informed of the boat's activities, distributing paychecks, and occasionally reassuring younger wives.

Though fishing separates husband and wife by time, distance, and danger, it also offers unusual opportunities for sharing. The women who feel that fishing has a positive effect on themselves, their family, and their relationships with their husbands may be benefiting from the enthusiasm, interest, and involvement they have with fishing. It is equally possible that these women have simply adapted well to the demands of their way of life and have come to enjoy the life-style their adjustments have allowed.

TABLE 19. Wife's Assistance

<u>How does wife help with fishing?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
does books and settlements	14
keeps tax records	2
helps with books	1
sets up stuff for accountant	1
does all books and records poundages of species and logs where caught	1
pays bills	1
goes with him on days when father doesn't	1
makes flags	1
is deckhand and helps with books and bills	1
n=23	

Division of Labor

The previous discussion describes the woman's awareness of her husband's work activity. Is there a reciprocal involvement by the husband in what is traditionally thought of as "the women's world"? One might expect male participation in domestic activities to be minimal. Fishermen work extremely long hours and can't be expected to run home and wash the dishes and play with the kids. Fishing is rugged work; perhaps men who fish are too "macho" to be bothered with "women's work."

Elizabeth Bott (1971) describes segregation in conjugal role relationships as participation in different activities which are complementary or independent. Integrated or joint conjugal relationships are those in which individuals carry out the same activities together or separately. Bott found the degree of role segregation to change at different points in a marriage and to be related to closeness of social networks. In her work in a London suburb, she also found that for couples with the greatest degree of role segregation, husbands were in manual occupations.

This study attempts to gauge the husbands' involvement in domestic activities in several ways.

The question "Does your husband help around the house?" evoked varied responses, which referred to both the kind and the degree of assistance given. Table 20 gives the first response per individual.

TABLE 20. Husband's Domestic Assistance

<u>Kind of Help</u>	<u>Role-Segregated Response</u>
none	12%
only when has to	6%
with yard work	10%
with heavy cleaning	4%
handyman kind of work	10%
house maintenance	6%
	<u>48%</u>
<u>Degree of Assistance</u>	
never	12%
rarely	22%
with traditional male jobs	16%
	<u>50%</u>

<u>Kind of Help</u>	<u>Role-Integrated Reponse</u>
cooks	10%
general domestic assistance	42%
	<u>52%</u>
<u>Degree of Assistance</u>	
always helps	12%
great help	6%
	<u>18%</u>

helps sometimes (too indefinite a response to code as integrated or segregated) 32%

These responses do not indicate an overwhelming tendency on the part of fishermen to stay within traditional male roles. The responses, however, are very general and do not give a clear picture of husbands' domestic involvement. When specific

activities and decision processes were mentioned, a more accurate picture of participation was drawn (see Tables 21 and 23).

In 1955, Blood and Wolfe conducted a study of 731 Detroit families. In Table 22, some of their data on

TABLE 21. Participation in Domestic Activities

Activity	Person Most Responsible				
	Neither	Wife	Wife Only in Husband's Absence	Husband	Shared by Husband and Wife
have car repaired	1	22	4	10	13
pay bills	1	41		4	4
do income tax	23	13		10	4
discipline children	3	16			31
boast accounting	33	11		4	2
wash car	4	20	1	9	16
transport children to activities, doctor, etc.	2	40	1		7
take care of pets	8	27	2	3	10
mow lawn	16	9	2	15	8
do errands around town	1	33	1	1	13
take out garbage	5	19	3	10	13
clean, straighten house		42	1		7
wash windows	3	36		1	10
paint house interior	13	18		7	12
at night, turn off lights and lock house		28	2	6	14
dress, feed, entertain children	2	31			17
laundry		48			2
act on complaints about consumer goods or services	3	30		4	13
% of possible responses	17.8%	49.2%	1.9%	9.3%	21.8%

n=49

TABLE 22. Performance of Household Tasks: Detroit and Pt. Judith

Partner Who Mostly/Always Performs Task	Detroit	Pt. Judith
wife pays bills	41%	82%
husband pays bills	25%	8%
both share	34%	8%
wife mows lawn	13%	18%
husband mows lawn	75%	30%
both share	6%	16%
wife straightens house	80%	84%
husband straightens house	2%	--
both share	17%	14%

division of labor in household tasks (1960:50) can be compared to the Point Judith population.

This limited comparison suggests that fishermen's wives not only perform stereotypical tasks (straightening the house); they also may take greater responsibility for tasks which are more often shared in nonfishing families (bill paying), and for tasks which are stereotypically men's work (lawn mowing). In looking for determinants of the division of household labor, Blood and Wolfe found that the pragmatics of sheer availability were most significant:

If circumstances arise which make it impossible for the customary performer to do his duty, the "show must go on." In this sense, every husband is a "stand in" for his wife, and every wife for her husband.... Not every spouse rises to the occasion but the moral pressure and the practical urgency are there. [1960:57]

TABLE 23. Participation in Domestic Decision-Making

<u>Decision</u>	<u>Person Most Responsible</u>				
	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Wife Only in Husband's Absence</u>	<u>Husband</u>	<u>Shared by Husband and Wife</u>
to spend \$100 on furniture		11		3	36
to begin orthodontist treatment for child	2	10	1	3	34
to choose and buy new car		3		9	37
to give relatives surprise anniversary party		20			30
to campaign for school committee candidate	17	22		1	10
to purchase set of encyclopedias		18		3	29
to invite new acquaintances to dinner		11		4	31
to give adolescent child permission to date	2	7	1	1	39
to loan car to friend for 2 days		8	1	10	31
to take a new part-time job		18	1	5	27
% of possible responses	4.2%	25.7%	1%	7.9%	61.2%

The well-being of the fishing family depends upon the woman being able to "stand in" for her husband when necessary. The well-being of this marital relationship may depend on the husband's willingness to reciprocate in kind when circumstances allow. Wolfe speaks of the family as a multipurpose organization par excellence. He sees it as maximally efficient for the least amount of cost and maximally adaptive: "labor can be increased to meet variable demands ... without incurring expenses other than exploitation of self" (1960:7-8). Because current data does not show strict stereotypical role adherence among fishermen and wives, it appears that there is reciprocal "standing in" in household tasks which prevents destructive exploitation.

Decision

Stephen Katz has observed that "in most existing studies, decision making has been assumed to be an indicator of power, and the two terms have been used interchangeably" (1974:168). In contrast to the high participation in the activities listed in Table 21 (49.22), the women list themselves as decision-makers in only 25.72 of the ten situations given (see Table 23). This may indicate that some women carry a large percentage of the burden of domestic responsibility but defer some of their decision-making power to their husbands, in favor of mutual decisions. Bloud and Wolfe theorize that the source of power in marriage lies in the comparative resources each partner brings to the marriage (1950:12). The fisherman as provider of financial security may retain more decision-making power than his physical presence and share in domestic responsibility warrant. In her study of sexual egalitarianism among the !Kung, a hunting-gathering band in southern Africa, Patricia Draper states:

Frequent male absence may result in viewing men as a scarce commodity with higher value than women who are constantly present in the household. If men in this sense are a scarce commodity, their homecoming must have greater significance to those who stay at home, and their influence in even routine domestic affairs may be heightened simply

because others are less habituated to their presence. [1975:86]

Fishermen's wives hinted at this when they commented on their children's behavior, which is different when fathers are at home, becoming either more or less disciplined. Perhaps the absence of fishing husbands has an effect on domestic decision-making which is similar to the effect Draper found among the !Kung.

It should be pointed out that one woman commented that she made certain decisions but involved her husband in discussion so that he would believe the decisions were jointly reached. Her rationale is that because her husband is frequently absent, it is important to keep reinforcing his feeling of active participation in family life. This might help prevent his losing interest and leaving things up to her entirely.

It is interesting to note that there are not many activities or decisions taken care of by wives when their husbands are at sea and then relinquished to them on their return. Such practice would probably lead to role friction. One woman stated that she had been asked to choose a car in her husband's absence. When he returned, he vetoed her choice and chose and purchased another car. Another wife mentioned that she had taken care of some home repairs. Upon her husband's return, she was told everything had been done wrong (not according to her husband's wishes or expectations). Such incidents can cause frustration and hard feelings between husband and wife.

Interestingly, Wilson found that mobile military women reported "the worst part of separation for them was when their husband returned and reasserted himself." This was in direct contrast to the husbands, who experienced the worst time of separation at the actual time of departure (1977:73). For fishing couples as well, a pattern of adjustment must be worked out. Husbands and wives must develop an awareness of what is experienced in separation and what is expected when reunited. Assuming total responsibility for most domestic activities and delaying major decisions until the husband can participate is probably the best adaptive response to a situation of periodic absence. The necessary gets

accomplished and the husband and wife learn to trust each other's judgment.

It is unclear whether or not Tables 21 and 23 reflect reality. They may instead represent the ideal or most desirable division of labor and decision-making. When 61.2% of the group say that ten decisions are made by both husband and wife, they may be saying they hope the decision lies equally in their hands. In reality it may not. This listing of activities and decisions might be more meaningful if compared to a nonfishing sample. A more accurate way to gather information on real activities and decision-making would be to request a detailed diary from some of the sample. The actual behavioral information could then be analyzed.

Tables 21 and 23 probably do indicate a belief in sharing family responsibilities and decisions. Assuming some accuracy of response, it does illustrate male involvement in the woman's world. The degree of sharing may be questioned, but strict role segregation is not apparent. In terms of the husband's involvement in the wife's world, there is also the uninvestigated possibility that the husband is involved and interested in his wife's career or occupation.

Though this issue would be clarified with comparative study, it appears that, contrary to expectations, these marriages are not strictly role-segregated.

Quality of Relationship

Something needs to be said about the quality of the husband-wife relationship. It is extremely difficult to delineate such a relationship, let alone judge quality in any objective fashion. Certainly, the task is beyond the scope of this study. However, after interviews with these 50 women, there appears to be a possible pattern of three kinds of marital relationships.

Some women are satisfied and/or happy with their marriages. They enjoy their husbands' time at home but also enjoy the time they have to themselves when they are at sea. They are comfortable with flexible schedules, and enjoy the spontaneity of bad weather holidays at home.

Another group appears to be satisfied with their marriages, but the balance is somewhat more precarious. They find themselves occasionally resentful at having to bear the brunt of home and family responsibility. They are anxious when their husbands are away any length of time and become uncomfortable when the weather has kept them at home too long. The equanimity of the marriage depends on a careful balance of time together and time apart. Concern was raised about changes in this balance. Retirement, for example, loomed as a threat to some women. One woman said it would not be good for a husband and wife to be constantly together after years of alternating togetherness with separateness. Another said it makes her nervous when her husband is around the house too much, and she is apprehensive about the time when he doesn't have to go out anymore.

There is a third possible group of women who seem worried about their marriages. They are unhappy about the amount of time spent apart from their husbands. Irregularity of income tends to trouble them. They worry about the dangers their husbands face. Their life-style feels unnatural and uncomfortable. They express the need for an independent life, but then feel the guilt of leaving children with babysitters too often, or not being home when their husbands are.

Respondents themselves stressed the necessity of adapting to this kind of marriage. As one said, "Some never do." Those women who have not grown up with a fishing relative or who don't have the advantages of close kinship or friendship networks to turn to may have a very difficult time of it. During the time of interviewing, the media reported the suicide of a woman married to a fisherman from another New England port. Though the circumstances of this incident are unknown, one can imagine how a woman bearing too much responsibility for home and young children, worried about her husband, and left alone too often may suffer from the strain.

Stereotypically, fishermen are heavy drinkers. This study did not approach the complicated issue of alcohol abuse among fishermen, but several women alluded to the problem. The most common reference was to drinking among "other fishermen," usually the single or divorced men. No one said they worried

about their own husbands drinking and some counted themselves fortunate in this respect. The fact that drinking was mentioned voluntarily indicates not necessarily personal knowledge of the problem but perhaps a certain apprehension. The two women who purposely want to live a distance from the port may be thinking of the potential danger of being too near fishermen's bars.

In the section on danger we saw that peak worry times may occur in the beginning of a marriage and later, when the husband nears retirement age. These times correspond with stages of difficult adjustment in all marriages, and may cause additional tension when it is least needed. In the beginning of his career, when the fisherman is most enthusiastic, is enjoying the challenge, and is beginning to make some financial headway, his wife is probably going through her most difficult period of adjustment.

"His first year in fishing was my worst. We hadn't been married too long and I was pregnant for the first time. It was a terrible strain. He was working like crazy, making as many trips as he could, two days and three nights out. I was stuck at home with all the housework and no one to talk to at night. It was a bad time. We had a lot of fights."

Many women talked about having a hard time adjusting in the beginning. They remember resentment, strain, and loneliness:

"While we were dating, he would fall asleep on the phone all the time. The night he gave me my engagement ring, he had to leave early to go fishing."

"Our honeymoon was even on his fishing boat."

"In the middle of my labor pains he left for a while to work on the boat."

"When our second child was born, someone else had to bring me to the hospital."

"You almost have to be brainwashed into this kind of life."

"There is an art to being a fisherman's wife and some people never learn."

"Their [fishermen's] motivation is so strong, it's almost obsessive."

"Before the children were born, I was very depressed to be alone so much."

"It's very difficult and hard on a marriage until you adjust to it. You have to learn to live separate lives. This was never my idea of what a good marriage would be like, but still we have a good marriage."

Later, when he is reaping the rewards of experience and risk and hard work, his wife has more time to worry, and is more worried than ever because of her husband's age.

"There is a lot of stress in being married to a fisherman. You have to be made for this kind of life. You've got to be able to be independent. I've been comfortable with this life for about 21 years now. But now I'm beginning to worry."

If she then wishes him in another occupation, she regretfully realizes it is too late for him to learn a new way to make a living. While fishing causes daily worry, with which a woman must cope in one way or another, the worry itself can put a strain on a marriage at different times.

In any marriage, there is a period of adjustment when expectations meet reality. Perhaps being married to a fisherman forces an earlier adjustment which settles more quickly into a way of life.

CHILDREN

The question of closeness and separateness of fishermen to their families is interesting when thought of in terms of quality and quantity. Quality vs. quantity of time spent with children has often been an issue discussed in relation to working mothers. It would be revealing to compute the actual and potential time a father working nine to five spends with his children -- not simply being in the

house, but interacting with the children. This could be compared to the actual and potential time father and children spend together when the father is spending two to ten days at sea and two to four days at home. What the father/child relationship suffers in terms of continuity could be made up for by more concentrated time together. The man who is at home 48 hours during the week may get to know his family in a different way from the man who is home at 6 p.m. weekdays and every weekend.

Other family members were not interviewed, so it is difficult to determine accurately their reactions to fishing. However, women were asked what their children think of their fathers' occupation. Because it is impossible to discount impression management when mothers are asked questions about their children's attitudes, these responses can be also seen as an additional indicator of the wives' opinions concerning fishing.

TABLE 24. Children's Attitudes Toward Fishing

What do your children think of their fathers' occupation?

<u>Attitude</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
somewhat negative	4%
neutral	20%
somewhat positive	18%
very positive	42%
no response (inappropriate)	16%

Sixty percent reported that their children have varying degrees of positive attitudes toward fishing. The ten neutral responses were given when children were too young or when mothers felt their children had no strong opinions because they had no basis for comparing fishing to any other occupation. Some of the "very positive" responses indicate that children too may share in the romance of the occupation:

"They're proud their father's a fisherman."

"They want to become fishermen themselves."

"They're always wanting to go down to the boat."

"They think it's exciting."

Younger children may see fishing as a form of recreation. As one respondent said, right now it's the thing to be. Telling your friends your father is a fisherman is more interesting than telling them he works in an office. Two women spoke of their children talking about fishing in school and drawing many boat pictures, obviously proud of their fathers' occupation.

It may be comfortable and enjoyable for women to say their children like the kind of work their fathers do. There may be reason to reconsider when they think about their children actually being involved in fishing. Jeremy Tunstall (1962) reports that in the years of unregulated labor on the British high seas, fishermen would throttle the sons they heard even hint at a fishing career. They demanded something better for their progeny. Table 25 shows responses when mothers were asked whether they would like their sons to be fishermen or their daughters to be married to fishermen.

While 72% of the sample indicated that they didn't want their husbands in a different occupation, only 50% of the women expressing an opinion would be pleased to have their children involved in fishing. This may indicate that some women have adapted well to fishing but still have reservations about the occupation. It also may indicate a pessimistic viewpoint about the future of the industry.

FAMILY

New England fishing is connected to kinship more than most American occupations. Eighty percent of this sample have relatives who are involved in fishing. Twenty of the husbands have fathers who were or are fishermen, as compared to five wives whose fathers fish. Husbands have 125 relatives who fish, while wives have 18. Because kin fishing links are

primarily through the husband, and because only 66% of the women were born in Rhode Island, one might expect the women to have more geographic accessibility to their husbands' families than to their own. However, Table 26 shows that women's parents and parents-in-law are almost equally accessible.

Several studies have suggested a matrilateral bias in kinship interaction in American families (Poggie and Pelto, 1969:2-3). If the American family generally interacts more with the wife's relatives, what happens in a group which has occupational links predominantly with the husband's relatives? Several

TABLE 25. Desirability of Children's Involvement

Do you want your children involved in fishing?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
not applicable	2%
neutral: no opinion, it's up to them. I wouldn't object	42%
no: it's dangerous, there wouldn't be enough fish, it wouldn't pay, I don't like it, not a trip fisherman, no future, I wouldn't encourage it, would prefer something else, hours too long	10%
mixed feelings: o.k., but fears for them, would prefer a more normal life for them, it's hard work, o.k. for son but not for daughter	14%
mixed feelings: they are fishermen, but I'm not pleased, daughter doesn't like being married to fisherman, would have preferred him to have more education	4%
positive: they are fishermen, it's a good life	6%
positive: I would be proud, they like the way of life, it would be fine	22%

interview items addressed the question of kinship interaction. These items concern only the woman's interaction and do not necessarily indicate the whole family's kinship orientation. However, the traditional affective role women have in the American family frequently includes the initiation of kinship contacts. For this reason, and because the responses to these items concern both ordinary events of the immediate past and generalized attitudes, it may be feasible to assume that the women's kinship interaction is, to a certain extent, representative of the family's interaction. The women were asked who they had spoken with on the phone and visited with in the last few days. They were also asked who their closest friends were personally and as a couple. A list of approximately three names was given in answer to each question. At the end of this section, the interviewer went back over the lists with the respondent to label the names, first according to relationship, and secondly according to whether or not the person has a connection with fishing (i.e., person has fisherman in family). Responses pertaining to nonrelatives will be addressed in a later section.

Tables 27 and 28 indicate closer interaction with husbands' fishing relatives than with wives' fishing relatives. This is not surprising, since husbands have many more fishing-connected relatives. It is interesting to see that, without occupational connection, matrilateral asymmetry is clearly evident; women are closer to their nonfishing relatives than to their husbands' nonfishing relatives. For this issue

TABLE 26. Geographic Location of Parents

<u>Residence Relative to Respondents</u>	<u>Wife's Parents</u>	<u>Husband's Parents</u>
different state	26%	28%
same state	36%	38%
same township	14%	14%
same village within township	6%	10%
within 1/2-mile radius	18%	10%

In particular, a comparison group would be valuable, including both fishing and nonfishing relatives, given comparisons to husbands' relatives will seem high, but there is no comparative data. Also, it would be interesting to determine whether fishermen's wives are more likely to mention relatives in response to these questions when other respondents would mention friends. Because of their husbands' frequent absence, fishermen's wives may have more interaction with relatives than would another population.

One would expect that, given equal access to both her family and her husband's family, a woman would choose to interact more with her own family. Table 27

TABLE 27. Wife's Kinship Interaction

Type of Interaction	Wife's Relatives		Husband's Relatives	
	Fishing	Nonfishing	Fishing	Nonfishing
phone conversations	8/16*	28/36	17/20	6/7
visits	5/3	23/33	9/10	7/10
closest friend	0/10	6/6	2/10	2/2
couple's closest friend	4/6	7/8	8/11	6/6

*number giving his response/frequency of mention in list

TABLE 28. Total Kinship Interaction

Wife Interacts with	Fishing	Nonfishing	Total
wife's relatives	21/40*	62/95	83/135
husband's relatives	23/31	21/22	44/53
total	44/71	83/117	

*number giving his response/frequency of mention in list

indicates that most of the fishermen's wives in this sample feel closest to their own relatives. This appears to be the overall pattern of association. However, family involvement in fishing does seem to influence this tendency in kinship interaction. Of the respondents, 23.3% do list their husbands' relatives as being among their closest. Further research may show the connection between fishermen's

TABLE 29. Three Closest Relatives

mother	28
mother's sister's daughter	2
mother's brother's daughter	1
father	14
father's brother	2
father's brother's daughter	2
father's sister	2
father's sister's son	1
sister	25
sister's husband	2
sister's daughter	1
brother	17
brother's wife	2
brother's daughter	1
family of origin = 74.4% of response	
husband's mother	10
husband's father	1
husband's sister	12
husband's brother's wife	5
husband's brother	1
husband's sister's husband	1
husband's family = 23.3% of response	
son's wife	3
family of procreation = 2.3% of response	
"no one"	1
listed only 1 relative	3
listed only 2 relatives	13

wives and their husbands' families to be relatively strong when compared to populations with less familial occupational involvement. This is expected not only because these husbands have a considerable number of relatives who fish, but also because of the nature of the work. Where there is heavy family involvement, fishing may blend instrumental and affective roles. There may be greater interdependency throughout kin networks in terms of both practical and emotional support.

FRIENDS

Because of the unique nature of the business, it is expected that fishermen's wives have a friendship network that relies more heavily on people connected with their husbands' occupation than would be the case with another occupational group. Fishing families generally live in the same area, they may meet if their husbands are crew on the same boat, they have many common problems to share, and they have the comfort of knowing they need not explain their husbands' frequent absences.

When asked, "What do you dislike about fishing?," the largest number of responses concerned friendships and social activities (19 responses in Table 7). One woman stated that she and her husband had lost many new friends over the years because the friends couldn't understand why she and her husband could not accept invitations and make plans in advance. Another commented that friends were very important to her and her husband but, because of her husband's schedule, she felt it had become her responsibility to make all the arrangements, find compatible people, begin the friendships. She was not comfortable having sole responsibility for this area of their lives.

So many social activities are planned around couples. A woman who is married but is often lacking a husband as a social partner is likely to be invited mostly to gatherings of old friends who are understanding of her life-style. Because her husband can seldom plan to accompany her, she may eventually be excluded from joining new circles. She would be the odd person at the card game or dinner party or theatre trip; her status would be somewhat suspect.

Feeling uncomfortable with the constant necessity of explaining or defending her husband's occupation, a woman may stop bothering to extend her friendship network but still feel a loss of social activity and companionship. If some men become fishermen because they are strongly independent or are "loners," their wives might be the ones most needful of establishing social contacts, although they are in a very difficult position to do so.

Contrary to expectations, Table 30 illustrates that fishermen's wives do not limit their social interaction exclusively to those who are involved in fishing. Of the 353 responses that mentioned nonrelated friends, 59.5% concerned friends who are not connected to the fishing industry in any way.

TABLE 30. Social Interaction with Friends

<u>Type of Interaction</u>	<u>Fishing-connected</u>	<u>Nonfishing</u>
phone calls	25/36*	30/55
visits	17/20	26/40
closest friend	27/37	36/66
couple's closest friend	33/50	32/49
Total	102/143	124/210

*number responding/frequency of mention in list

A few women indicated that they purposely chose friends who were not connected with fishing:

"I wouldn't want to be getting together with other fishermen's wives. The fishing business is best kept on the boat."

"We knew some fishermen but it didn't work out. They had different schedules, different life-styles, and different standards. We wouldn't want our daughter exposed to them."

"My husband gets enough of fishing during the day; he doesn't want to talk about fishing while he's socializing."

One wonders whether the unusual life-style of fishermen and their families affects the wives' involvement in the community. Do fishermen's wives tend to stay within a small network of friends and acquaintances rather than get more actively involved in their community? Table 31 outlines the community involvement of fishermen's wives.

Though a comparison group would better define the community involvement of fishermen's wives, their community involvement does not seem particularly limited, considering that 84% of this sample have children, that the sample varies greatly in age and

TABLE 31. Community Involvement of Fishermen's Wives

<u>Memberships in Clubs/Organizations</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
yes, in more than 2	2
yes, in 2 or less	15
used to belong	2
no membership	31

Kinds of organizations include community service (4), social (4), sports (2), child-related, religious, hobby, professional, political.

<u>Church Work</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
yes	18
used to	1
no	31

Note: 12 of the women spoken to were Jehovah's Witnesses and had considerable involvement in religious work.

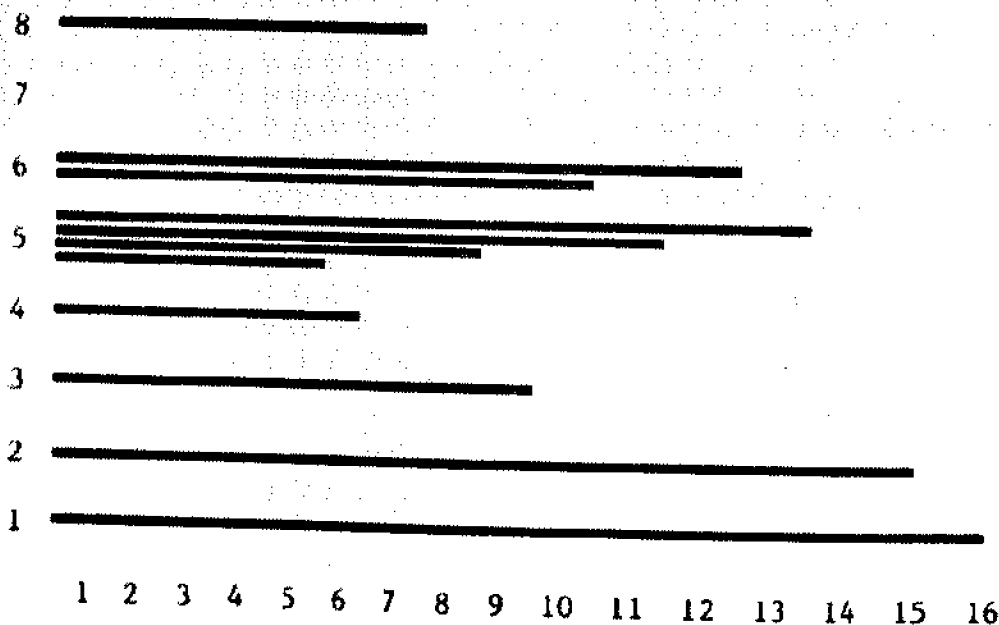
<u>Volunteer Work</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
yes	7
occasionally	2
used to	3
no	38

marriage length, that 40% are employed outside the home, and that the group has more than average responsibility for home and family. As a group, fishermen's wives could not be considered isolated from their community. Blood and Wolfe found that community involvement is reflected in more active participation in family decision-making (1960:38). Because their situation frequently forces them to make more family decisions, fishermen's wives may be potentially more likely to take on leadership roles when they do become involved in their community.

Another interview item attempted to measure the dimensions of the social networks of fishermen's wives. Respondents were asked whether or not they were casually acquainted with any individuals employed in 16 varied occupations (e.g., millworker, policeman, administrator, restaurant worker, etc.). Figure 1 indicates variety in the occupational background in the social networks of fishermen's wives.

FIGURE 1. Occupational Breadth of Social Acquaintances

Number of
Respondents



Number of People in Dissimilar Employment Known to Respondents
mean=10.3

Thus, we have a social sketch of fishermen's wives. They are involved in their community to a reasonable extent, they are acquainted with individuals from other walks of life, and a little over half their friends are not involved with fishing at all.



III. THE FUTURE

POLITICAL AWARENESS

At the present time, women married to Point Judith fishermen do not constitute a cohesive political force. There are no active fishermen's wives' organizations such as exist in other New England ports. The one activity that brings fishermen's wives together is the annual scholarship fund-raising dinner. Otherwise, there are a few ideas, but little action. During 1977-78, two women began a campaign to organize fishing families to adopt a group health insurance plan. Though some of the women spoke positively of the idea, nothing has ever come of it. Another woman strongly feels that fishermen should be required to be trained in life-saving techniques and wants to see someone organize such training.

The lack of organization among the wives has to do with the independence and diversity of Point Judith fishermen. Boats are privately owned and most often operated by the owners. Unionization has not yet occurred in this port. Also, the considerable variation in the kind of fishing done out of this port (different boat size and gear, species sought, trip length, crew size) does not encourage cohesiveness or unification of purpose. There is, however, a new factor which may alter the political passivity of fishermen's wives, and that is government intervention. During interviews, 22 of the 50 women volunteered comments on the new government regulations such as quotas or new licensing requirements. Five women specifically mentioned government involvement as one thing about fishing they disliked. Specific comments include:

"The government never gives [200-mile limit] unless it takes away [quotas]."

"The fish don't know the quota rules and get in the net anyway."

"Excess fish caught can't even be given away, they have to be thrown overboard. It's a terrible waste."

"Foreign vessels are given permits, while our fishermen are restricted. Then the fish we buy in the market is marked 'imported from Canada.'"

"Fishing is a political football."

"Fishermen's personal laws of privacy and confidentiality [of territories, charts, records] are being violated by the government's requests for detailed information."

Generally, there was a strong awareness of the situation. Many husbands discuss their opinions on the subject at home, and some families have been financially affected by the quota regulations. Previously, a man waited for weather and sometimes the market price before he could fish. Now government catch limitations may also stop him from fishing. This alteration not only has financial effects but, as we have seen, can affect a precarious marital balance.

Some of the women are optimistic and feel that the government and the fishing industry will learn to get along and understand each other. But there are some who feel threatened by this interference and see the need to do something about it. At least eight of the women are beginning to become actively interested, keeping track of hearings and government action. As one stated, "I'm as much involved as he [her husband] is. He fishes; I stay home and fight." A fisherman must take advantage of weather opportunities and seasons; he cannot afford to stay home and give steady attention to the increasing numbers of meetings and hearings at which he could represent himself and defend his livelihood.

Opposition to government policy could be an organizing force that will move fishermen's wives to unified action. We have seen a similar development in the farming industry since 1977, when farmers' wives demonstrated and lobbied concerning government farm policy. Interestingly, two women compared fishing to farming:

"Like farmers, you have to be big to survive. You have to get bigger boats, more modern equipment."

"Like farmers, fishermen never have a day off."

It has been noted that fishermen's wives appear to be involved in their husbands' jobs to a considerable extent. They help with bookkeeping, take care of land-based details and errands, occasionally crew or work on the boat, and, to a certain extent, share in the demands of the occupation. They are strong and capable individuals who have learned much through dealing with the exigencies that go with this extraordinary occupation. It would not be surprising to see fishermen's wives more involved in the future. There are, of course, obstacles to increased activity. The wife is still largely responsible for the home and family in her husband's absence, and the unaccustomed fishing industry is not an easy world for a woman to become involved in, even as an observer. Still, farmers' wives have managed, with the same kind of difficulties, and it would not be surprising to see fishermen's wives do the same.

SELF-ANCHORING SCALE

Malley Carroll's self-anchoring scale (1963) was used in Poggie's interviews with the husbands as well as in these interviews to determine past, present, and future levels of optimism. Respondents were given a ten-level ladder scale on which 10 represented the best possible life and 1 the worst. They were asked to place themselves on the scale according to where they are at the present, where they were five years ago, and where they anticipate being five years in the future.

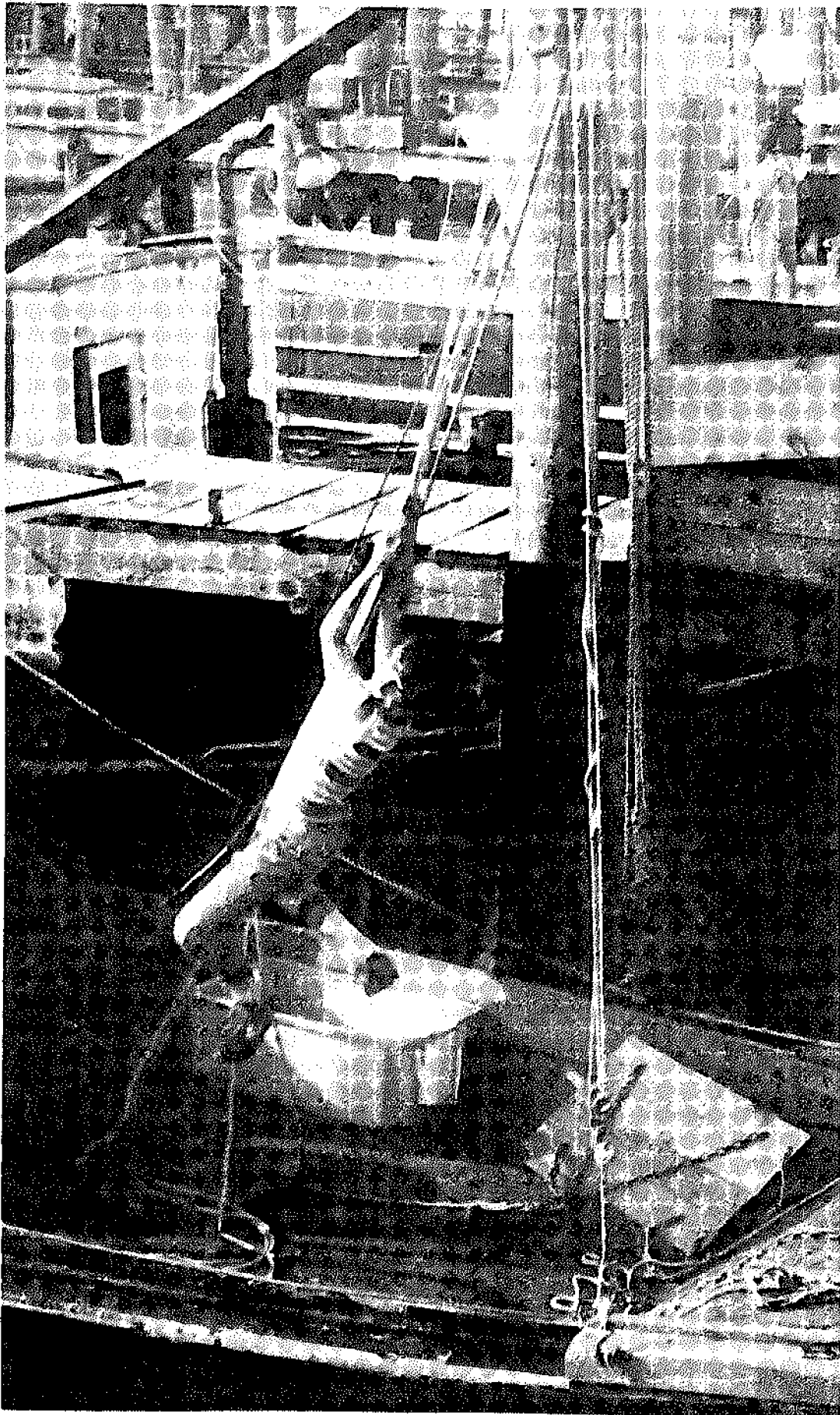
Figure 2 illustrates the means of both the husbands' and the wives' responses. Because crew and captain status present such different sets of rewards and demands, a difference in ladder rankings was expected between these two groups. However, there are no significant differences between the way crew members and their wives and captains and their wives view their past, present, and future. Generally, wives are slightly more conservative in their rankings than their husbands, and captains' wives are more optimistic in their rankings than crew wives. For both groups, wives see a greater improvement over the last five years than do their husbands. The

well-being, and no emphasis was put on a connection to fishing, 50% of the women mentioned fishing in their responses. Thus, for half the fishermen's wives, ideas about the future are tied up with such things as completing boat payments, getting a new or bigger boat, the fishing business staying the same, improving, or deteriorating. Excluding specific mention of fishing, Table 32 gives their rationale for their estimated ladder positions.

TABLE 32. Rationale for Future Position on Optimism Scale

<u>Why will you be at that point in 5 years?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
things should stay the same	12
money, material life-style will improve	11
generally optimistic	7
familial, marital relationships are good	4
things get harder with age	4
children will be older	3
personal: health, career, self-knowledge	3
because of belief system	2
with age comes more security and common sense	2
no guess	2

One woman reported that she felt it was her responsibility to remain optimistic and boost her husband's morale. None of the respondents predicted that their ladder position would decline in five years, though seven felt that their position would be the same and nine reported an increase of only one step or less (this excludes individuals who presently rank themselves at 9 or 10). Some of the reservations expressed about the future include comments on age, cost of living, desirability of another occupation, the possibility of retirement, increased expense of boat upkeep, and three specific mentions of government quotas.



IV. CONCLUSIONS

In 1973, Poggie and Gersuny cautioned fishing communities about the possible family repercussions of industry regulation and change. The research at hand certainly confirms the validity of their warning. The fishing family operates on a delicate system of learned adaptive behavior. In a business with little regularity or predictability, whatever routine does exist is responsible for holding together the household and providing continuity and stability. In fact, the fisherman's very chances for success in his job may be diminished or enhanced according to his wife's understanding and adjustment to the idiosyncracies of the work. The woman's contentment with the situation depends on her husband's job satisfaction, the financial reward, and the opportunity to enjoy regular time for personal pursuits. Fishing is more than a job; it is a way of life that "is catchy." Family involvement spreads, and many sons expect to follow in their fathers' footsteps. Quotas and limitations on issuance of license appear to be more immediate threats to the delicate balance than the problem of dwindling resources that these measures are meant to correct.

The most difficult times in the life of a fisherman's wife seem to be at both ends of their marriage span. Coping with the burdens of a young family with only sporadic assistance from the husband can be overwhelming. Added to this is the intense worry about the husband's safety, which is not yet familiar enough to be handled well. After some years, behavior and life-style adjust and settle. Then comes the ambivalence of retirement.

These are vulnerable times in the life of a woman and of a marriage relationship. Survival may be very difficult without access to the support of family, friends, or social services. While the husband is going through problems of his own at the beginning and end of his fishing career, it is extremely important that he be sensitive to his wife's well-being. These are the hazardous times natural to the cycle. Introduce other hazards, such as a particularly bad

fishing season, disappearing fish stocks, government regulations, and offshore oil exploration, and there is more potential for problems.

But this is a population that has learned to roll with the punches. They should be able to adjust to change better than most. Perhaps. It has been traditional for many married women to "find themselves" only after their children have grown and left home. Relieved of their child-rearing tasks, they are forced to find replacements for filling time and giving their lives as individuals new meaning. Because fishermen's wives are so dependent on themselves for regulating and filling their time, some of these developmental issues may be resolved more naturally, without reaching the proportions of a personal crisis. Some of the independence forced on fishermen's wives may be very healthy. One woman said a fisherman's wife would be better equipped to handle sudden widowhood than anyone else. But there are limitations to everybody's flexibility. One more strain may be too much. Fishing communities and government regulatory agencies need to be aware of the far-reaching effects of change in this industry.

Kurt Finsterbusch (1976) comments on the usefulness of small-sample surveys in defining a population and mapping parameters for future study. It is hoped that this work can serve the purpose by encouraging more specific research with fishermen's wives and for comparative work with other occupational groups.

Although this study clarifies our picture of fishermen's wives, there is still the lingering impression of the romance of the business. The women interviewed were interesting, welcoming, energetic, and obviously capable individuals. So many of them were enthusiastic about their way of life despite all the drawbacks. Their positive outlook and openness are admirable, a credit to themselves and an asset to their husbands and the industry of commercial fishing.

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