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The Fishing Profession in Quebec (Canada): Structure, Origins and Development of a “Typically Male” Sector

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# Chapter Six: The fishing profession in Quebec: structure, origins and development of a "typically male" sector

Marco Alberio

## Introduction

Fishing is traditionally regarded as a male profession. Due to a strong gendered division of labour, women have mainly held supporting roles within family-based catching enterprises and more broadly in the fishing industry, for example, in the fish processing sector. As Couliou (2010) explains for the French case, "the organisation of work during fishing activities is at the root of the challenges linked to the temporalities of the job. Absence for several days and weeks can itself be experienced as a hardship by fishers and their families" (cited in Alberio & Tremblay, 2020, p. 91, our translation)<sup>1</sup>. For these reasons, the spouses of captain-owners have historically played, and often continue to play, an essential supportive role within family fishing enterprises. They have historically taken care of preparing meals for fishing excursions, as well as the accounting and administration of the business, which some spouses continue to do today. However, especially among the newer generation, women are not always involved in family fishing businesses (Alberio & Tremblay, 2020). As will be observed in this chapter, this lack of participation in the sector may be a choice. Although, it may also depend on the structure of the industry which, because of inherent characteristics, is unable to integrate women, and especially to integrate them into important roles and functions (captains, business owners, etc.). A perspective focusing on social times, work rhythms and, more generally, life courses will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the specificities of this profession and its activities, as well as of its professional identity and ethos. Such an approach will enable us to grasp the various tensions and a relationship to time that has become more and more complex over the years with the struggle between tradition (including fairly traditional and stereotyped gender roles) and the need to adapt to the changes in the labour market and more broadly in society.

In this chapter, we will focus in particular on the gendered dimensions of the fishing industry, specifically the catching sector, by trying to answer, at least in part, the following questions: what are the representations of fishers, both inside and outside the professional community, that reproduce it as a predominantly male occupation? How do the social mechanisms of professional selection affect the structuring of fishing activities as predominantly male? What role do, for example, gender stereotypes, family socialisation, economic and social gendered inequalities, and the current organisational model play in the professional selection and reproduction of this profession?

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<sup>1</sup> "L'organisation du travail à la pêche est au fondement de pénibilités liées aux temporalités du métier. L'absence pour plusieurs jours et semaines elle-même peut être vécue comme pénible par les pêcheurs et leur famille."

## **A relatively traditional sector subjected to transformations and a need for adaptation**

Fishing is a mature economic sector, but one that is currently undergoing change. This transformation allows us to analyse the effects of economic, social, political, environmental, technological and organisational changes on work activities, on the relationship to work, on the temporalities related to work, on the careers of fishers and, more broadly, on all the social temporalities associated with this very particular economic activity. These transformations are also shaping the configuration of the different actors involved, with the relations between the state, the market and families/communities changing at different levels (Alberio, 2020). For example, these transformations can change traditional configurations at the family, local and regional levels, and shape new relationships structured within social spheres – families and communities, markets, and political institutions – and their intersections. Changes in socioeconomic regulation, fluctuations in the profitability of this economic activity, as well as variations in the abundance or scarcity of the resource due to environmental factors can influence family (Alberio & Tremblay, 2020) and community (Alberio, 2020) relationships. The family and the community are central to this activity, which is by nature rooted in its territory (Alberio, 2020). Within this territory takes place the extraction of a natural resource (i.e., fish), but also the social regulation of the fishing occupation and its activities, including gendered socialisation, at several levels. This complexity exacerbates an already challenging demographic situation within the labour and employment market.

This situation requires that the commercial fishing sector be highly adaptive and capable of innovation (not only technological but also social) and of assuring its professional succession. However, as we shall see in this chapter, the fishing sector still seems, at least in part, reluctant to allow women into the profession and imposes (albeit indirectly) several obstacles to them. As a result, women fishers, and especially women captain-owner entrepreneurs, are still very rare.

## **A brief overview of Quebec and Gaspésie fishers**

This section (and the respective tables and charts in the appendix), based on our original analysis of Canadian census data<sup>2</sup> from 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (National Household Survey – NHS<sup>3</sup>) and 2016, will focus on the socioeconomic and sociodemographic characteristics of workers and entrepreneurs in this industry. The Census Program distinguishes three categories of fishers, based on the National Occupational Classification (NOC): fishing vessel masters and officers; self-employed fishers<sup>4</sup>; and fishing vessel deckhands<sup>5</sup>. The captain-owners who participated in

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<sup>2</sup> We would like to extend a special thanks to the Quebec inter-University Centre for Social Statistics (QICSS) at the Université Laval for giving us access to this census data. We would also like to thank Hubert Doyon and Baptiste Beck for their assistance in processing and analysing the census data, and Emanuele Lucia for his work as a research assistant during the last year of the project.

<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the Canadian Census Program consisted of a mandatory short form census questionnaire and a voluntary National Household Survey (NHS), instead of a mandatory short and long form census questionnaires like the previous years. The NHS program was later dismissed, and the 2016 census included once again both mandatory short and mandatory long form census questionnaires.

<sup>4</sup> Following the Canadian Revenue Agency there are several types of fishers. "Type 1" fisher – a) a member of the crew who either: owns or leases the boat or specialised fishing gear used to make a catch b) employs other persons under a contract of service to make a catch. "Type 2" fisher – any self-employed fisher who is not considered "type 1." This category includes a single fisher who borrows a boat and specialised fishing gear and has no employees.  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/t4005/fishers-employment-insurance.html>.

our qualitative study may fall in either the first or the second category. In this section, the term "fishers" will be used to refer to individuals from all three of these categories.

In Quebec, the total number of people working in the catching sector of the fishing industry has decreased from 4,585 individuals in 1986 to 2,615 in 2016, a decline of 43% (Please see Table 1 and Figure 1 below).

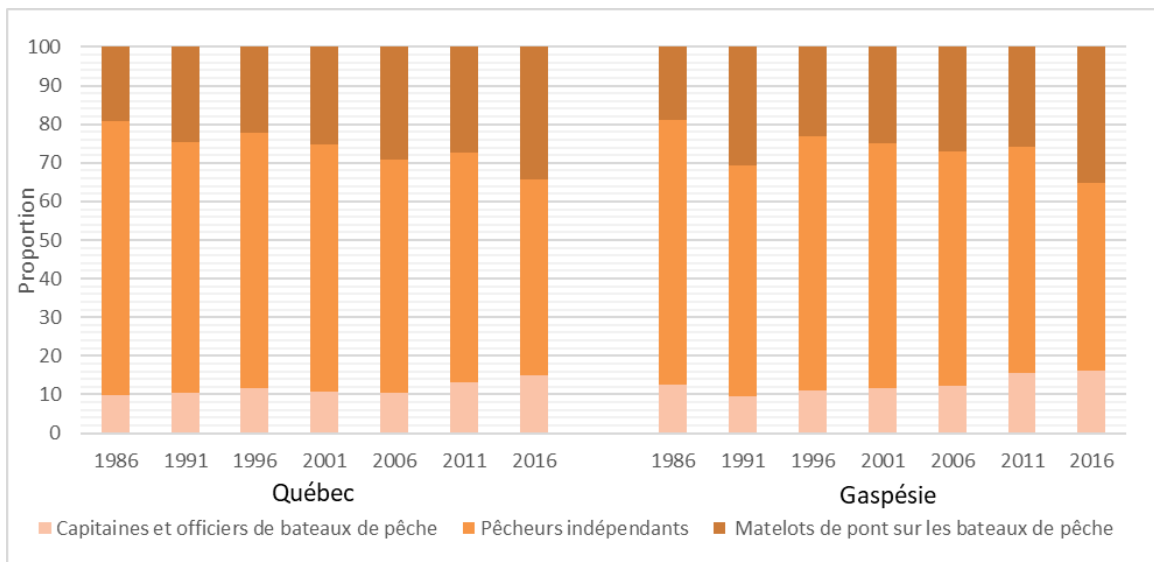
**Table 1.** Number of individuals and proportions by type of occupation in the catching sector in Quebec and Gaspésie between 1986 and 2016.

	<b>Type of occupation</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>Quebec</b>	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	450	380	390	365	370	375	395
		9,8%	10,3%	11,7%	10,6%	10,5%	13,1%	15,1%
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	3 250	2 405	2 200	2 210	2 125	1 710	1 325
		70,9%	65,2%	66,1%	64,2%	60,5%	59,7%	50,7%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	885	905	740	870	1 020	780	895
		19,3%	24,5%	22,2%	25,3%	29,0%	27,2%	34,2%
	<b>Total</b>	4 585	3 690	3 330	3 445	3 515	2 865	2 615
		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Gaspésie</b>	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	235	140	140	150	160	185	140
		12,5%	9,6%	11,0%	11,7%	12,2%	15,7%	16,2%
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	1 295	870	835	810	795	690	420
		68,7%	59,8%	65,7%	63,3%	60,7%	58,5%	48,6%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	355	445	295	320	355	305	305
		18,8%	30,6%	23,2%	25,0%	27,1%	25,8%	35,3%
	<b>Total</b>	1 885	1 455	1 270	1 280	1 310	1 180	865
		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

<sup>a</sup> Fishing vessel masters and officers; <sup>b</sup> Independent fishermen/women; <sup>c</sup> Fishing vessel deckhands. Sources: 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (NHS) et 2016 Canadian censuses

**Figure 1.** Distribution of individuals by type of occupation in the catching sector in Quebec and Gaspésie between 1986 and 2016.

<sup>5</sup> In French, in the everyday language of the fishing sector, these workers are commonly referred to as hommes de pont. The use of the term "homme", which means "man" in English, shows the clear predominance of men occupying this function.

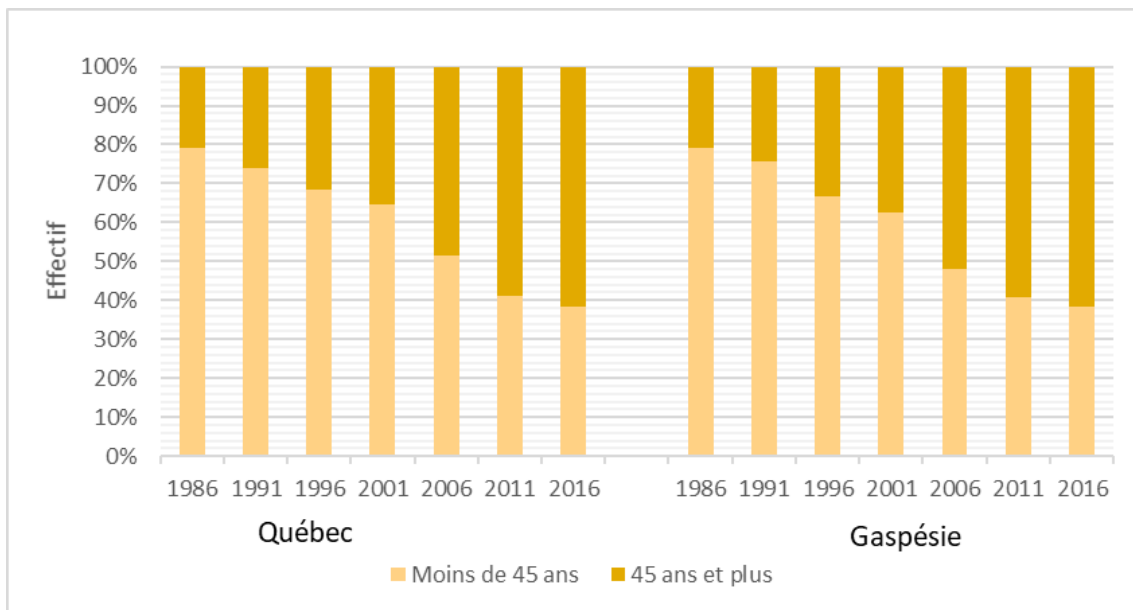


Sources: 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (NHS) et 2016 Canadian censuses.

The decline has been erratic, with two specific periods showing a more pronounced decrease. The decline in cod fishing stocks between 1986 and 1991, and the subsequent moratorium on this fishery in the early 1990s, seem to have affected the total number of fishers in the province. In 1991, there were 895 fewer fishers in Quebec than in 1986. Another significant decrease took place between 2006 and 2011, a period that saw several changes in the regulation of the sector, with a reduction of 650 fishers. This decrease in workers is slightly more significant in the Gaspésie region, with a decline of 54% of fishers between 1986 and 2016.

When comparing the different subgroups, fishing vessel masters and officers tend to have a higher average age than other fishers. This is not surprising given that generally only more experienced fishers tend to become vessel captains and that, to be a captain-owner more specifically, one needs financial capital that generally is developed over the life course. The average age of independent fishers is also higher than that of fishing vessel deckhands. However, the proportion of those aged 45 and over has increased for each category throughout the different censuses. In 1986, in Quebec, the share of fishers aged 45 and over was 30% for masters and officers, 20% for independent fishers and 22% for deckhands (Please see Figure 2 below).

**Figure 2.** Distribution of individuals by age group in the catching sector in Quebec and Gaspésie between 1986 and 2016

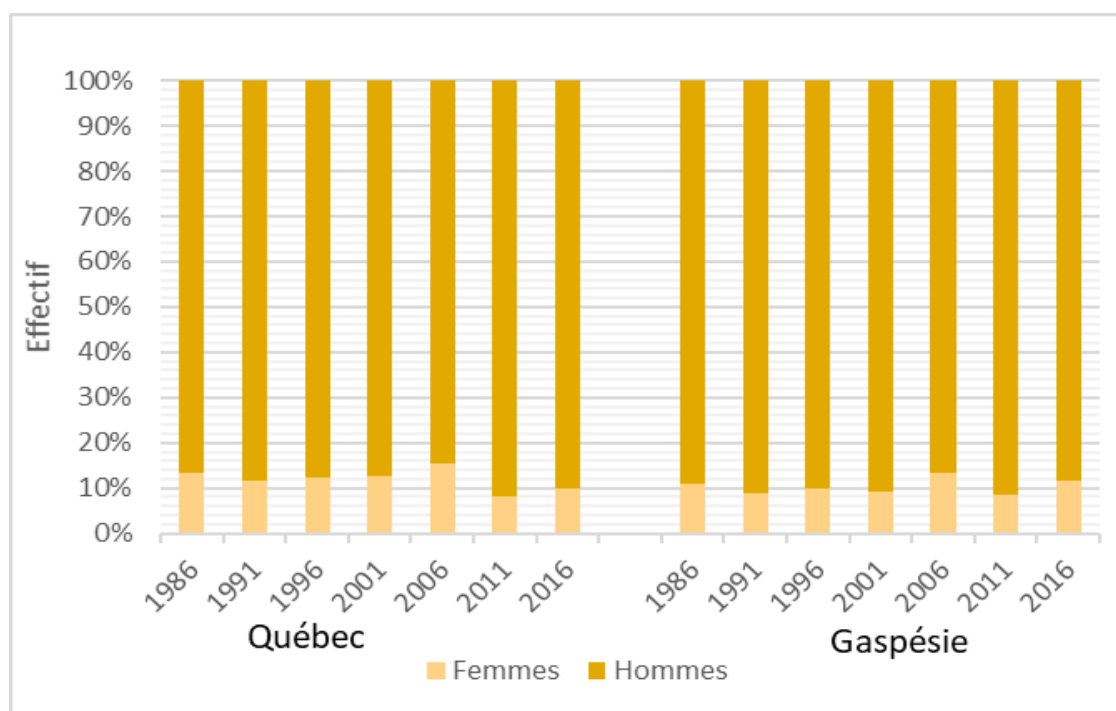


Sources: 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (NHS) et 2016 Canadian censuses.

In 2016, the share of those aged 45 and over was 62% for masters and officers, 66% for independent fishers and 54% for deckhands. Both in Québec and in Gaspésie, we can observe a generalised ageing of masters and officers, independent fishers and deckhands over time. While only less than a third of masters and officers were aged 45 years and over (30%) in Québec in 1986, that proportion rose to more than two thirds (71%) in 2011. This trend is also apparent among independent fishers and deckhands.

In Québec, between 1986 and 2016, the proportion of women working as masters and officers, self-employed fishers and deckhands has ranged between 8 and 15% (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Distribution of individuals by gender in the catching sector in Québec and Gaspésie between 1986 and 2016.



Sources: 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (NHS) et 2016 Canadian censuses.

Both in Québec and Gaspésie, women's presence in the catching sector reached its peak in 2006 when close to 15% in Québec and 13% in Gaspésie of fishers were women. In other years, the proportion of women in the Gaspésie catching sector is closer to 10%. Moreover, it should be noted that the number of female masters and officers is below the threshold set by Statistics Canada for each of the censuses, except in 1991, when there were 35 women masters and officers in Québec (Please see Table 2 below).

**Table 2.** Number of individuals and proportions by gender and by type of occupation in the catching sector in Québec and Gaspésie between 1986 and 2016.

		Québec			Gaspésie		
		Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1986	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	240 7,38%	3010 92,62%	3 250 100,00%	65 5,04%	1225 94,96%	1 290 100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	310 35,03%	575 64,97%	885 100,00%	115 32,39%	240 67,61%	355 100,00%
	Total	550 13,30%	3585 86,70%	4 135 100,00%	180 10,94%	1465 89,06%	1 645 100,00%
	1991	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	35 9,21%	345 90,79%	380 100,00%	X	X

			%	%			
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	195	2210	2 405	30	845	875
		8,11%	91,89%	100,00%	3,43%	96,57%	100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	205	700	905	85	360	445
		22,65%	77,35%	100,00%	19,10%	80,90%	100,00%
	Total	435	3255	3 690	115	1205	1 320
		11,79%	88,21%	100,00%	8,71%	91,29%	100,00%
2016	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	180	2020	2 200	60	775	835
		8,18%	91,82%	100,00%	7,19%	92,81%	100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	185	560	745	50	245	295
	24,83%	75,17%	100,00%	16,95%	83,05%	100,00%	
	Total	365	2 580	2 945	110	1020	1 130
		12,39%	87,61%	100,00%	9,73%	90,27%	100,00%
2001	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	240	1970	2 210	65	750	815
		10,86%	89,14%	100,00%	7,98%	92,02%	100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	145	725	870	40	280	320
	16,67%	83,33%	100,00%	12,50%	87,50%	100,00%	
	Total	385	2 695	3 080	105	1030	1 135
		12,50%	87,50%	100,00%	9,25%	90,75%	100,00%
2006	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	295	1 830	2 125	110	690	800
		13,88%	86,12%	100,00%	13,75%	86,25%	100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	190	825	1 015	45	310	355
	18,72%	81,28%	100,00%	12,68%	87,32%	100,00%	
	Total	485	2 655	3 140	155	1000	1 155
		15,45%	84,55%	100,00%	13,42%	86,58%	100,00%
2011	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	155	1 555	1 710	70	620	690
		9,06%	90,94%	100,00%	10,14%	89,86%	100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	45	735	780	15	290	305
		5,77%	94,23%	100,00%	4,92%	95,08%	100,00%

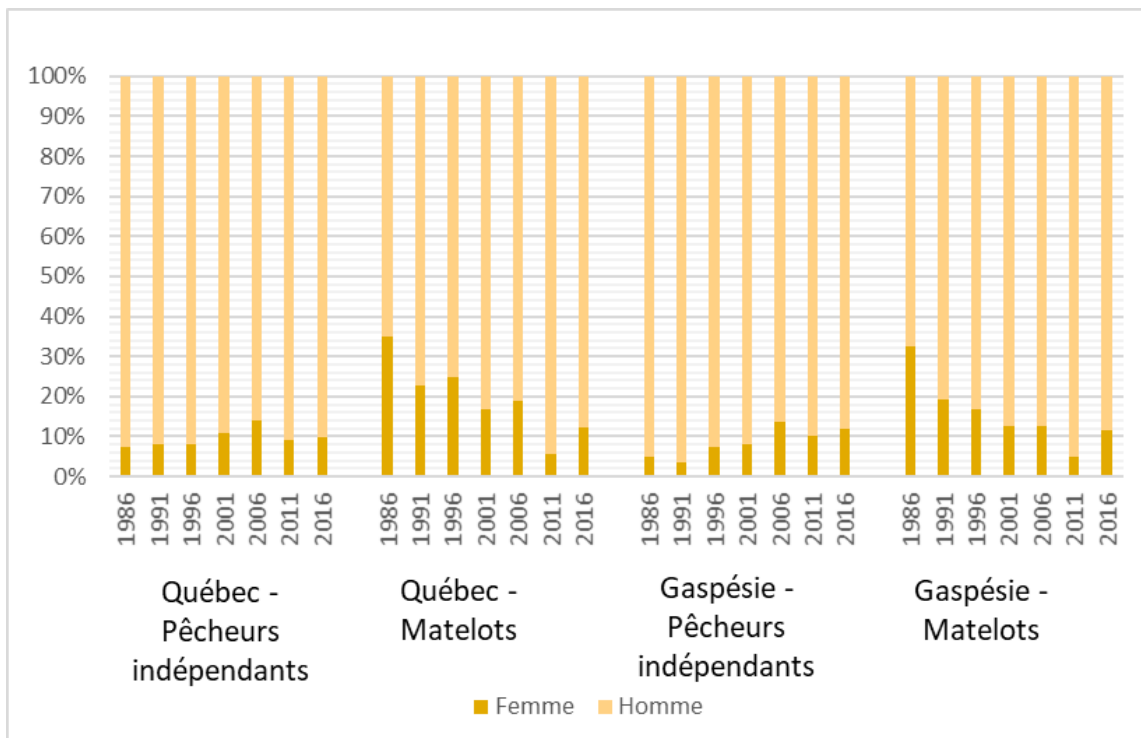


			%	%			
	Total	200	2 290	2 490	85	910	995
		8,03%	91,97%	100,00%	8,54%	91,46%	100,00%
2016	Masters and officers <sup>a</sup>	20	375	395	X	X	X
		5,06%	94,94%	100,00%			
	Independent fishers <sup>b</sup>	130	1195	1 325	50	370	420
		9,81%	90,19%	100,00%	11,90%	88,10%	100,00%
	Deckhands <sup>c</sup>	110	785	895	35	270	305
		12,29%	87,71%	100,00%	11,48%	88,52%	100,00%
	Total	260	2 355	2 615	85	640	725
		9,94%	90,06%	100,00%	11,72%	88,28%	100,00%
<sup>a</sup> Fishing vessel masters and officers; <sup>b</sup> Independent fishermen/women; <sup>c</sup> Fishing vessel deckhands. Sources: 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (NHS) et 2016 Canadian censuses							

The proportion of women tends to be highest amongst deckhands (see Figure 4): the lowest paid and least qualified of the three occupations. This data indicates a certain segmentation of women in the catching labour market<sup>6</sup>.

**Figure 4.** Distribution of workers in the fishing industry by gender and by type of occupation in the catching sector in Quebec and Gaspésie between 1986 and 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Our focus is on the catching sector of the fishing industry, therefore excluding the processing sector where women represent the majority of the workforce, but where wages are generally lower (CSMOPM, 2018).



Sources: 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 (NHS) et 2016 Canadian censuses.

The number of women masters and officers being too low for statistical analysis, we can only grasp trends in the gendered distribution of the workforce among independent fishers and deckhands. At the provincial level, the proportion of women among independent fishers is around 10% between 1986 and 2016, with a peak of 13% in 2006. The proportion of women among independent fishers in Gaspésie is lower than that of Quebec until 2006 but is then slightly higher than that of Quebec after 2006.

## Women and fishing: a review of scientific literature

Although studies on the role of women in the fishing industry are relatively limited and tend over a very wide range of countries, there seems to be a consensus that women play an important albeit a generally less visible role in the industry. Fishing is characterised, at least formally, as a predominantly male occupation in which men not only represent the majority of the workforce, but they also occupy more significant positions. Women mostly hold supporting roles and tend to occupy the lowest-paid positions in the industry. Internationally, scientific literature tends to characterise women in the commercial fishing sector as invisible (Bennett, 2005; Deb et al., 2015; Harper et al., 2017; Koralagama et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2013). Several studies have focused on the role of women in small-scale family fishing enterprises in countries of the “Global South” where, unlike in Canada and other Western countries, fishing is predominantly traditional and artisanal. Women in these contexts are mainly involved in the activities surrounding fishing, i.e. pre- and post-harvest activities, as well as in the domestic sphere of fishing families. In the case of West Africa, Bennet (2005) observes that “women are involved in many complex networks and alliances that enable them to negotiate access to fish and market successfully. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between the women and men in the fishing industry: neither could survive without the other” (Bennett, 2005, p. 453). Women are the main actors in the processing and marketing of maritime re-

sources and, since they control these sectors, they have privileged access to credit to finance fishing activities (Bennett, 2005). In this context, fishing activities tend to be pre-financed by women. In India, on the island of Vypeenkara, a similar situation exists. Women have historically been responsible for processing, which includes sorting, butchering, salting and transporting catches, and selling the resource in local markets (post-harvest), but also for the acquisition and maintenance of some fishing equipment, such as making nets (pre-harvest) (Srinath, 1987). In a recent study on artisanal fisheries in Bangladesh, Deb and colleagues (2015) highlight a gendered division of labour in the fishing sector along water and land: women's contribution is on land, while men's contribution is mainly on the water (Deb et al., 2015). A similar gender division of labour is found in Mexico, Peru, Senegal, South Africa and Vietnam (Harper et al., 2017).

In the context of market globalisation, commercial fishing is increasingly part of global value chains, even in the countries of the “Global South”. Harper and colleagues (2017), for example, highlight the vulnerability of women to these changes.

This shift toward a global seafood market has potentially significant implications for women who have traditionally dominated small-scale fish processing and trade for local markets. With fish being increasingly processed and shipped abroad, women fish processors and traders have taken a considerable financial hit, as they are often unable to access these markets to sell their fish. (Wade et al., 1997, cited in Harper et al., 2017, p. 97).

As commercial fishing becomes more integrated into global markets, women seem to lose the primary role they used to play in more traditional and artisanal fisheries. There is a progressive exclusion or segmentation of women in specific occupations or labour markets where technology and/or capital are increasingly important. For example, in the case of fish processing (which we did not consider in our analysis), Harper et al. (2017) highlight how offshoring and automation in processing plants disproportionately affect women since they constitute the majority of the workforce in small local plants. Critical studies of globalisation processes have demonstrated how these structural economic changes (related to globalisation) affect women (Falquet, 2008; Falquet et al., 2010). Globalisation tends to transform gender relations and reinforce inequalities in particular sectors or contexts, for example, by pushing women into “care” related occupations (Lautier, 2006). However, evidence shows that women play an important role in new global economic structures, but that their work tends to be devalued. “Through their work, both in global cities and in circuits of survival, women, often devalued as economic actors, occupy crucial positions in the construction of new economies and the development of existing ones.” (Sassen, 2003 cited in Hirata, 2005, p. 398, our translation)<sup>7</sup>

In countries of the “Global North”, women's contribution to commercial fishing also tends to be defined as invisible or undervalued (Calhoun et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2013), although the modalities of the division of labour may be different from those in the “Global South”. In the “Global North”, studies have focused mainly on women's contribution to the domestic sphere within fishing families. Research in “Global North” countries often focuses on small commercial fishing family enterprises, as in the case we studied in the Gaspésie region of the province of Quebec. Women's contribution in this sector is still mainly through the domestic sphere.

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<sup>7</sup> “Par leur travail, tant dans les villes globales que dans les circuits de survie, les femmes, si souvent dévalorisées en tant qu’acteurs économiques, occupent des positions cruciales dans la construction des nouvelles économies et dans le développement de celles existantes.”

The role of fisherman's wife in the home, taking care of the family and maritime household, is perhaps the most recognized role of women in the fishing sector. Although this role too has changed over time, in duties and precedence, one fisherman's wife claims, "The fundamentals of being a fisherman's wife have not changed." (Calhoun et al., 2016, p. 3)

Through the domestic sphere, women may be responsible for certain logistical activities, such as preparing meals for the fishing crew, distributing paycheques and transporting mechanical or technical equipment, as well as the accounting and administration of the fishing enterprise (Calhoun et al., 2016). These are all elements that we also found in our research in Gaspésie (Alberio, 2020; Alberio & Tremblay, 2020). Women's involvement in small fishing enterprises is often seen as an extension of their domestic responsibilities. They often do not have a formal employment status, even though they are responsible for specific tasks within the family business, such as accounting and administration, preparing meals for the crew and participating in official meetings on behalf of the fisher (Zhao et al., 2013, p. 73).

The restructuring of the fishing industry of several countries in recent decades, including the rationalisation of fishing fleets and the introduction of individual fishing quotas, has had a significant impact on small family enterprises, and, by extension, on the women who contribute to them (Davis & Gerrard, 2000; Neis et al., 2005), particularly by pushing women to seek formal employment to contribute financially to the family (and the enterprise).

While money derived from catching and landing from the sea dwindled, many families had to seek a second income, in most cases, in shore-based sectors of the fisheries such as processing and trading, to make ends meet. As a result, many wives and partners have become significant second, or even first bread winners in the households (Zhao et al., 2013, p. 73).

As in countries of the "Global South", where women historically "can exhibit enabling and empowering roles, and be supportive of livelihood functions" (Deb et al., 2015, p. 3), the financial contribution of women in fishing families of the "Global North" is increasingly present and necessary (Alberio & Tremblay 2020). The contribution of women (and youth) is increasingly related to their influence on the dynamics of fishing businesses and their opportunities for employment and access to wealth from outside the business, affecting the resilience and sustainability of small-scale fishing enterprises (Neis et al., 2013). Furthermore, the search for more stable and "interesting" employment for a fisher's spouse can sometimes bring a fishing family to relocate (Gerrard, 2013), thus influencing local fishing territories and communities. Organising small fishing enterprises around the family and the domestic sphere, with the involvement of spouses (and children), offers a certain resilience to these enterprises. Structural changes in the industry pushing women (and children) to work outside the family enterprise affects their resilience (Neis et al., 2013; Alberio, 2020).

Changes in the fishing profession and the fishing industry more broadly have, to a certain extent, pushed away women from the catching sector, rather than formalising their role. It is therefore understandable that the fishing sector, whether in the "Global South" or the "Global North", still shows a significantly gendered division of labour. Men still almost exclusively undertake fishing activities at sea, while women's contribution is on land and still tends to be informal and less visible. Some researchers have tried to identify some of the barriers preventing women from becoming more directly involved in catching activities. Mertens de Wilmars (2017) gives the example

of a small fishing community in Spain where fishing permits were explicitly reserved exclusively for men until the early 2000s, where the right to fish was transferred from father to son, de facto excluded women. Even if in most cases, such as in Canada, this kind of formal exclusion of daughters in the succession of family fishing rights does not exist, in practice, as we will observe in our case study, a model of succession from father to son seems to prevail. Mertens de Wilmars (2017) acknowledges "the persistence of material and symbolic male power" that affects the social structure and power relations within the fishing community he studied (Mertens de Wilmars, 2017, p. 74, our translation).<sup>8</sup>

The main obstacles that women face in the catching sector are related to finding a first boat to work on, the lack of appropriate infrastructure for women on boats, intimidation and harassment from other workers, and the persistence of cultural taboos (Zhao et al., 2013). Living and working conditions on fishing vessels are, as we will also observe in our case study, structured around a male-dominated workforce. Women must, therefore, show a high degree of flexibility and adapting to these conditions is a sort of "test" for women who wish to enter this occupation (Zhao et al., 2013). A common example is the sharing of a single sleeping quarter for all crew members, whether male or female. Men tend to explain women's withdrawal from this type of work with the fact that it is physically demanding. However, women's experiences tend to point to the conditions on board fishing vessels and the negative attitudes and behaviours caused by a male-dominated culture. Women may be subject to sexual harassment and cultural taboos on board. They may also face intimidation from their male colleagues or be the subject of jokes and sarcasm (Zhao et al., 2013). Finally, the lack of recognition by public policies of the systemic exclusion of women from the catching sector reinforces acts as an additional challenge (Harper et al., 2017; Koralagama et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2013). "An overall lack of attention to gender dimensions in fisheries policy and management may be compromising the outcomes of valuable efforts to rebuild fisheries and to improve the livelihoods and well-being of all those in fishing communities." (Harper et al., 2017, p. 92) The structure and model for public consultations within fisheries are so that they are mainly directed at men in the catching sector or the management of the industry. Women's voices are not taken into account in these consultations, and by extension, are not reflected in public policy (Zhao et al., 2013).

Women involved in family fishing businesses generally take care of very specific tasks, such as the accounting and administration of the business (e.g., making sure the business respects the regulations put forth by regulatory bodies, etc.). Given the increase in regulation in the industry in recent years (Alberio, 2020; Alberio & Lucia, in press; Alberio & Tremblay, 2020), their role is increasingly important, although not always recognised. Despite making an important contribution to the sector through their involvement in these fishing enterprises, their decision-making power is often limited.

Studies in the "Global North" have also raised the issue of women's presence in the fishing industry outside the catching sector (Neis et al., 2013; Calhoun et al., 2016). Women are active in the processing sector and, increasingly, in other high skilled fishing sectors. Some women from fishing families who decide to become involved in the fishing sector may not necessarily go into the catching sector, but rather seek jobs in management, training, marketing and research (Neis et al., 2013; Calhoun et al., 2016). In territorial contexts characterised by the mono-industry of fishing, young women who decide to make their way in the field often do so in sectors other than catching.

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<sup>8</sup> "la persistance d'un pouvoir masculin de nature matérielle et symbolique"

However, their decision-making power is still limited. For example, in the seafood sales sector:

More women are found holding administrative positions, some as office administrators with significant responsibilities in helping the daily operation of the organisations, and some responsible for data entry and other clerical tasks. Compared with managers and directors, these women have less influence in policy making (Zhao et al., 2013, p. 74).

## Methodology

The empirical research underlying this article was conducted using qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured interviews make it possible to collect data on professional experiences and practices from a micro-sociological perspective. We used a comprehensive approach (Gherghel, 2013; Grossetti, 2006; Demazière, 1995), without limiting our questions to retrospection (the past). Our questions were also related to present and future experiences.

Our methodological objective was to analyse the careers of captain-owners, taking as a starting point the experiences of the individuals themselves (Dubet, 1995). An interview grid organised around different themes, formulated as general questions, was used to conduct the interviews. If necessary, we guided the discussion with more specific questions to focus on the key elements and moments in the captain-owner's career, professional practices and enterprise.

We interviewed more than 40 captain-owners and fishing vessel captains. Please note that their citations are indicated as CP which stands for the French work "Capitaine propriétaire" (Captain owner). The selection of participants was carried out using multi-case sampling within micro-social units. This form of sampling is appropriate for research on life experiences, institutions and social practices. In this case, we wanted to understand actors' positions, roles and the functioning of an institution (the family fishing enterprise), through narratives on individual experiences (Pirès, 1997). Two fundamental criteria also guided our sampling: diversification and saturation (Bertaux, 1980; Pirès, 1997). In our case, we looked for intra-group diversification. We aimed to understand the experiences of a small and relatively homogeneous group, that of fishing captain-owners. The sample was diversified based on age (45 and under, 46 to 55, 56 and over), length of fishing experience (under and over 15 years of experience), gender (although the majority of the sample is made up of men), geographical position (municipality of residence), family status (in a stable relationship or single, with or without children) and type of fishery (crab, shrimp and groundfish).<sup>9</sup>

When spouses and/or children were also involved in the fishing enterprise, individual interviews were also conducted with them. We interviewed a total of 25 spouses (whose citations are indicated as C which stands for "conjoint", meaning spouse in French) and 20 sons and daughters, mostly sons, (whose citations are identified with a R which stands for "Relève" that means successor in French).

The more than 85 interviews were transcribed verbatim in order to carry out thematic con-

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<sup>9</sup> We selected captain-owners in the crab, shrimp and/or groundfish fisheries. These fisheries differ from one another in terms of economic profitability, as well as technical (type of fishing equipment, type of fishing vessel, fishing techniques, etc.) and temporal characteristics (duration of fishing trips, durations of fishing season, etc.).

tent analysis. We then ranked and classified each interview fragment within our central themes, or within related, complementary or divergent themes (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2012, p. 237). This analysis led to identifying different trajectories and experiences and relating them to overlying macro-level structures and issues (e.g., cultural, social, political, environmental, etc.).

Before conducting individual interviews, we conducted two focus groups with approximately ten participants each: three stakeholders at the institutional level (a representative of the *Association des capitaines-propriétaires de la Gaspésie* (ACPG) [The Gaspésie captain-owners' association] and two government representatives from Quebec's *Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation* (MAPAQ) [Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food] and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)); three experts, for example researchers from the DFO's Maurice Lamontagne Institute; and three captain-owners. These focus groups allowed us to identify macro-level elements (institutional, legal, economic, social, environmental, etc.) likely to influence captain-owners' careers, practices and professional status.

## **"A country for (old) men"? Representations of the required skills**

### **Ambition, growth and overcoming challenges**

Among captain-owners, and more broadly among fishers, the collective imaginary and the representations of the skills necessary for fishing are built around certain values and stereotypes traditionally associated with men. Even if today fishing is no longer as competitive as it was in the past, mainly because of the allocation of individual fishing quotas which means that fishers do not have to compete with each other for a part of the global fishing quota<sup>10</sup>, there is still a competitive spirit among fishers. Participants in our interviews often defined a "good" fishing captain as ambitious. A good fishing captain lands large quantities at a time and fishes his quota quickly. Some referred to a sense of satisfaction when their boat is filled with fish. Although the official discourse of the industry focuses on sustainable fishing and a decrease in quantity in favour of a better quality of the product, the narrative of accumulation and quantity is still very much present among fishing captains when defining their profession.

That's it, you're ambitious. And yes, we have individual quotas and all that, but it's our ambition that drives us to bring back fish. When you come back with your boat, with the hold full, you're happy. (R15)<sup>11</sup>

Like it or not, the job of a fisher is... You have to go and you have to put as much as you can in the hold, so we're driven by ambition all the time. It's not like the one who works, let's say in an office, he's paid from 8 to 4, he gets his salary, when he's done his week, he has something to provide at the end of the week. But when we leave land, it's

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<sup>10</sup> "The principle of Total Allowable Catches (TACs or global quotas), which defines the total volume of catches that can be landed within a specific fishery, has existed for several years. One of the first measures consisted in limiting access to the resource through fishing licences. This measure limited fishing effort and reduced competition. The second major transformation was the introduction, in the 1980s, of individual allocations (or "individual quotas"), where each licence holder is allocated a portion of the TAC. The aim was to reduce catching over capacity and eliminate the "race for fish". Individual allocation of groundfish quotas in the Atlantic region were based on principles of equity, proximity to the resource (coastal communities), the relative dependence of communities on the fishery, profitability and fleet mobility. The distribution of individual allocations among fishers within the fishery is usually a reflection of the fisher's historical volume of catches." (Alberio & Brêthes, in press, our translation)

<sup>11</sup> All interviews were conducted in French. The citations in this article were originally in French, but translated to English for the purpose of this article.

not from 8 to 4, it's for 24 hours a day, for 16 days at a time. (CP18)

Many captains highlight the challenge of catching fish as one of the dimensions of the job that they appreciate the most. They describe a sense of "hunting" for fish, especially in the ground-fish and cod fisheries. They feel a sense of excitement when they see fish appear in their sonar after having chased it.

Especially when fishing with the longline, for example, when fishing halibut [Atlantic halibut], I would say that it is my favourite type of fishing. It is really challenging. You mount the fish one by one on the boat. You see them come up one by one. It's motivating. (R22)

There's no feeling in the world like when you're trawling and you're chasing fish, and you finally see fish on the sonar, so you know that you're finally in the right place. You know what time of day it is, you've still got a couple of days to go, or a couple of hours to go... All these calculations, it's a challenge. You've understood or figured out something that others haven't. And it's not written anywhere, but it's there, you've figured it out, and you pass it on to your son. It gives you pleasure. I'm telling you, it's huge, it's a huge feeling! (CP07)

Ambition in terms of catching fish is not enough. Captain-owners also highlight the importance of entrepreneurial ambition (the desire to expand their business). For some captain-owners, such an entrepreneurial vision takes precedence over that of the fisher. Several captains use the metaphor of the marine ecosystem to describe the business or industry ecosystem; bigger and stronger businesses thrive, while smaller and weaker business slowly disappear, just like bigger fish feed on smaller fish in the ocean. It should be noted that objectively, the catching sector in Eastern Quebec is still predominantly made up of small or medium-sized family businesses with an allocated individual fishing quota. "The boats [enterprises] that survive, it's because they merge with another business or because they expand. Fishing is increasingly harder, as a business either you get bigger, or you are eaten up. It's going to be one of the two." (R02)

This type of discourse based on competition is more typical of male sectors, for example, in finance. There is no consensus in research on the existence of gender-differentiated management practices. However, some research seems to show that in certain sectors, or in particular contexts, men and women will have different attitudes towards their profession. Constantinidis (2010), who studied women business managers in France, identified four typologies. Of these four typologies of women entrepreneurs, two show entrepreneurial attitudes that differ more from their male counterparts. For example, concerning business growth and expansion, which we discuss here, some women entrepreneurs claim that they have "more limited growth objectives, would develop better relations with their staff and clients, [and] would be more oriented towards the administrative management of the business" (Constantinidis, 2010, p. 134, our translation).<sup>12</sup> Some women also claim to be

more creative, more conciliatory in their relationships, closer to their employees and customers, more cautious in their decision making, and more focused on taking pleasure in their work rather than the growth of the business. Alternatively, they see male entrepreneurs as more hierarchal in relation to their employees, more direct and aggressive in

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<sup>12</sup> "des objectifs de croissance plus limités, développeraient de meilleures relations avec leur personnel et leurs clients,



their relations with customers and suppliers, taking more risks and favouring business development and profit." (Constantinidis, 2010, pp. 136-137, our translation)<sup>13</sup>

Similar observations have been made in the "Global South", where female entrepreneurship is based on economic activities of subsistence (Vossenbergh, 2013) embedded in local communities. In these activities, women acknowledge that they have a responsibility towards their local living environment (Guérin, 2002), which mitigates the entrepreneurial spirit of growth. One could argue that such a phenomenon might also be found in the local economies of the "Global North".

Another important challenge faced by fishers is the unpredictability of the ocean, the resource, the industry, etc. Each fishing trip and even each workday can be very different from the previous one. Work rhythm is often dictated by nature (e.g., storms and bad weather) but also by institutional decisions and regulations (e.g., fishing area closures, etc.).

We never know what's happening. It's never the same. There's never an hour that's the same as the hour before it. (R10.2)

I wouldn't be able to work on land, it's hard working 40 hours a week all year round. We're in nature, on the water. We never have the same day twice. We never know what to expect, and that's the "fun". (R31)

Fishers and fishing captains seem to appreciate unpredictability in their work since it is an additional challenge to overcome, but this forces wives(women) to play a decisive role in facing the unexpected and being resilient. Although the situation has changed, with a generally more equitable sharing of domestic labour within young families, spouses still seem to bear more of the burden of family organisation and domestic labour than their husbands in fishing families (Alberio & Tremblay, 2020). For a woman fisher wanting to reconcile family and work today, the challenges related to unpredictability are an important issue. The unpredictability of the occupation is, therefore, a structural obstacle for women fishers, rather than a positive characteristic that makes the work less routine, as presented to us by the current male captains and fishers.

## Courage

The captain-owners and fishing captains we met also emphasised courage as a necessary characteristic in their work. For example, courage is necessary when making choices related to the business, but also when facing bad weather and storms when at sea. Captains have a responsibility towards their crew. They have to protect their crew and keep their composure while making sure that the boat will return to the dock with enough catch for the fishing trip to have been profitable. The captain is the ultimate authority on board the fishing vessel and is responsible for the safety and protection of the crew. According to the narratives collected, a "good" captain looks after the well-being of "his men".

A good captain-owner is someone who brings his men back to shore safe and sound. Their safety is very important. I often say that my most important cargo on board is my

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seraient plus tournées vers la gestion administrative de l'entreprise"

<sup>13</sup> "plus créatives, plus conciliantes dans leurs relations, plus proches de leurs employés et de leurs clients, plus prudentes dans la prise de décision, et privilégiant le plaisir de travailler plutôt que la croissance de l'entreprise. Alternativement, elles voient les hommes entrepreneurs comme plus directifs par rapport à leurs employés, plus incisifs et agressifs dans leurs relations avec les clients et fournisseurs, prenant plus de risques et privilégiant le développement de l'entreprise et le profit."

men. It's not the fish. When I leave the quay with my men, I have to be able to bring them back to shore. (CP16)

I went into Anticosti [Island] at one point with my boat. We were hit by a storm, it was a storm that hit us hard. We went into a kind of small bay that was behind us, in a corner of the island. One of my men was crying, "what if we get lost". I said, "Don't worry, we won't get lost. I know where to go". We went inside the boat, we dropped anchor, and waited. [...] You have to still like the job during these situations. At the fishing school, the teachers showed us how to manage these situations. But you still have to have this instinct inside of you. (CP17)

The captain-owner and fishing captain is represented as a business and professional figure in the industry and on the boat. He also must have humane skills to manage every type of situation that may arise while at sea. Following these discourses, he has to show strength, confidence, but also calm. Captain-owners, especially those part of the older generation, evoke the image of the "good father" responsible for the protection of his family in their narratives. In the event of a crisis, he must remain calm and react thoughtfully to solve the problem. He should never be impulsive. "Calmness, I think that is the basis for being a good captain. Or at least give the impression of calmness and of being in control of the situation when there is a problem. Apart from that, it's like any other job. But calmness is key" (R16).

We are not suggesting that women do not have the qualities and characteristics, such as calmness, required to be a "good" captain-owner. We do however want to highlight how the narratives on how to be a good fishing captain are still structured around qualities and characteristics traditionally associated with men, based on male stereotypes, like ambition, calmness, courage, quick decision-making and physical strength.

## **Physical strength**

Finally, physical strength is very common in the narratives on the qualities and characteristics needed to become a captain-owner. Many captains consider fishing too physically difficult of an occupation for women. However, there have been some changes over the generations. Younger fishing captains are, at least they claim to be, more open to the idea that their daughters may one day become captains and take over their fishing business. Captains also point out that some fisheries may be more "adapted" to women. For example, they suggest that lobster or crab fishing might be more appropriate for women since they tend to be less physically demanding and are closer to shore (requiring shorter fishing trips, usually less than 24h), yet remain highly profitable and show no sign of a decline in stocks.

My daughters, they never considered going into fishing. In those days, it was rare to see women on board a boat. Today, boats are better equipped. There is a shower, there's everything on board. Then there's the new technology. As a captain, you sit there and you control everything from your cabin. Even a woman can do that. I don't want to come off as backward thinking but working on the deck is more physical. You have to go into the hold. We might catch a thousand pounds of fish, and two hours later catch another thousand pounds of fish. On deck, you have to work with the fish, pick it up, then offload it at the port. Some women can do it, but some wouldn't like it. Nowadays, we can no longer say that a woman won't be able to do this job physically. If she can

steer a boat, if she knows the boat, and is not sick at sea, she can do this job. I don't see why she shouldn't be able to. (CP31)

Well, we see it more and more in our industry, a daughter who took over the business of her father. I think it's beautiful. It means that there are boats, there are several boats, that women captain or fish on. Maybe not that many still, but compared to before... (CP8)

### **A feeling of freedom (and its limits)**

Another valued characteristic of the profession is the feeling of freedom at sea. "For me, being at sea is a quest for freedom. A lot of fishers like that feeling of freedom, feeling the clean air and the great outdoors" (CP05). Going out to sea is often described as a way of isolating oneself, escaping the accelerated pace of life in society on land and taking refuge in nature and its wide-open spaces (Alberio & Lucia, 2020). Fishers also highlight how the rhythm of the sea shapes their professional practices. When they are at sea, the sea imposes its rhythm. This narrative seems to portray stereotypical images of fishing in the same way the profession might have been portrayed in film and literature.

My God! Yes! Yes! On land, we are in a world where everything is fast [...]. When we let go our lines from the quay, we take a big sigh of relief and leave! It's not the same on water, it's not the same rhythm of life. On the water, it's calm, it's a kind of freedom. (CP25)

Captains also mention being free of all social relationships once they are on the water. At sea, captains are alone with their crew on a fishing vessel. They feel a sense of freedom within that solitude. "It's a freedom that you can't experience anywhere else. There's no one to watch us. That's what I like" (CP8).

This vision contrasts, at least in part, with the reality within the catching sector, with significant obstacles and constraints imposed by nature and the environment (e.g., storms, weather conditions, protected wildlife) and regulatory institutions (e.g., regulations, surveillance, administrative and bureaucratic requirements). These obstacles and constraints weigh heavily on the careers and professional experiences of captain-owners both on board the ship and on land (Alberio, 2020; Alberio & Lucia, 2020; Alberio & Tremblay, 2020). When digging deeper into this narrative of freedom while at sea, it becomes clear that this divide between work and life at sea and on land is less clear-cut than originally described. Captains recognise that administrative business requirements and increasing institutional regulation and control are ever more central to their work and the enterprise in general, both at sea and on land.

The contribution of spouses is often essential for overcoming these obstacles and fulfilling these requirements. A captain's wife says:

When you work full time, but you have a thick pile of papers waiting for you on your desk when you get home at night, it's not always fun. Or for my family to see me working on a Saturday, taking care of all that paperwork, updating the books, sending reports, make sure that suppliers are paid, make sure that taxes are paid, that payroll is done on time... It has an impact on the family. (C18)

These tasks and skills (e.g., accounting, administrative) are essential for fishing enterprises but are seldom mentioned as characteristics required to be a "good" fishing captain. As seen in the

scientific literature on the subject, these tasks, related to the business, are often performed by women (mainly spouses) as an extension of the domestic responsibilities and tasks (Alberio & Tremblay, 2020). Since these tasks are generally carried out by women, they are not part of the narratives on the skills needed to be a captain-owner or fishing captain. The support of spouses within family fishing enterprises becomes, paradoxically, one of the barriers preventing them from becoming captains. Women's skills and characteristics, although necessary in the sector, never become an integral and valued part of the narrative on the skills required to be a "good" captain, because spouses, in any case, consistently provide them informally. In affirming this, however, we want to reject any approach that blames women themselves for this situation.<sup>14</sup>

## **Is access to the profession more difficult for women?<sup>15</sup>**

One of the themes explored in this project was career choice (i.e., the mechanisms leading fishers and captains to choose a career in fishing). Fishing is less often described as a choice, but more as an innate calling. Many describe a deep desire to be on the water that dates back to birth and childhood. This feeling of innateness is linked to the nature of family fishing enterprises and the socialisation of children (mainly sons) in these families to fishing life (Alberio, 2020). However, this process of socialisation is taking place at a later age among the younger generation. For example, captains currently retired (aged between 60 and 70) might have been introduced to the fishing trade around the ages of 8-10, but they introduced their own children to fishing at a later age, around the beginning of adolescence. One young captain-owner says: "Fishing always "matched" for me. In high school, even in elementary school, I used to go on fishing trips. After high school, I went to fishing school. Whether to become a fisher or not was a question I never asked myself, becoming a fisher was simply the way that it was" (R2.2). Furthermore, in a context where certified vocational training is increasingly valued (and sometimes mandatory) for practising this trade, the age of socialisation into the fishing trade tends to increase with future generations.

If socialisation into fishing life from a young age plays a fundamental role in choosing this profession, not all the children (and more specifically sons) of a captain-owners become fishers. "My sons have tried fishing. One fished for one year, one summer, and realised he didn't like it" (C17).

Women have been, and often still are, discouraged by family members from becoming fishers, even though as children they may have been socialised to fishing life through their upbringing and by accompanying their fathers on fishing trips. In many families, women are still strongly associated with the role of motherhood, and the fishing profession is described as being difficult to reconcile with the traditional role of motherhood. A captain-owner's spouse relates what her husband used to say to their daughter (now in her thirties): "It's hard, dear, it's hard for a girl to fish. You always say that I was never around when you were young. How are you going to feel when you have children of your own, it will be the same problem" (C24).

In cases when more than one child wishes to take over the fishing business, the decision of which child will take over the business is often made by the family as a whole. It is rarely the captain-owner himself who makes this decision on his own. There is often a family discussion, and the decision might depend on the family's particular situation or other external factors:

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<sup>14</sup> Some feminist theory cautions against holding women themselves responsible for their predicament, or "blaming the victim".

[One of my sons] had tried to buy a boat from a guy who was selling his business, but finally, an already established captain-owner who was "bigger" than him [with an already established business and access to more capital] outbid him. So he said, "Dad, you've got to sell me the boat!" The other brothers all agreed that I should sell it to him. (CP29)

Daughters tend to be excluded or to exclude themselves from this negotiation within the family because they are generally less socialised into fishing as a career, even if they were brought up in a fishing household and introduced to fishing activities as children just like their brothers. Some daughters of fishers might continue to contribute to their father's or their spouse's fishing business in the same way that they would have seen their mom do in the past (e.g., accounting and administrative tasks). Daughters might be more socialised into taking on this type of role, more than that of fisher or captain-owner.

There were three women fishers in our sample: two were spouses that started fishing with their husbands who were captain-owners, one of which ended up buying a boat of her own and becoming captain-owner, and a third who was a daughter of a captain-owner and succeeded her father in the family business. Although the women fishers we interviewed did not speak of hostility as such, they pointed out a certain lack of openness on behalf of their male colleagues to accept them: "There are some men who cannot accept that there is a woman on board. [...] A woman should be home cooking your eggs, your bacon, cleaning the house" (R42, a woman captain-owner).

As with newcomers in general in the industry (fishers not born into fishing families), female captains and fishers are changing the status quo. Their arrival and presence creates tensions and brings changes to the social fishing system. Fishers and captains are adaptive, because of the nature of the industry, and open to technical and technological innovations. However, they seem generally reluctant to changes in social and professional norms.

When I bought my first boat, most people I talked to said: "You're going to fall and break your face!" [...] Well, it was true. I had a lot of hardship, some of it was just "bad luck". I even thought of stopping sometimes. But, no, I didn't! There was always a voice inside of me telling me: "Look, you've got nothing to lose by continuing!" I kept on going, and over the years the situation stabilised itself. The company got stronger and more stable. (CP1)

The importance of family socialisation into fishing makes it difficult for newcomers to access the field, and to thrive once they are in it. In fact, all of the newcomers that we met, although their fathers weren't fishers, had at least one family member or very close acquaintance working as a fisher or a captain (e.g., an uncle, a grandfather, a close neighbour, a spouse) leading to a form of socialisation into the profession, albeit to a lesser extent than if their fathers were fishers.

Even if today the industry is more open to newcomers than it might have been in the past, a lack of socialisation into the trade is still an important barrier. The profession of captain-owner specifically is still primarily passed on from father to son, and any form of deviation from this model is still perceived and felt as a disruption of the norm.

Like the male newcomer to the industry, the female fisher or captain disrupts the status quo and "has to prove herself" before being taken seriously by her counterparts. Following this dis-

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<sup>15</sup> Some of the citations and paragraphs in this section were taken from Alberio (2020).

course, she must take her place and prove that she has the necessary skills and physical capacity to do the job. The female fisher or captain does not only have to demonstrate that she has the skills and the capacity to do the job like any other fisher. She also needs to prove and show, more generally, that women have their place on a boat. She is put to the test even more so than her male counterparts because of her gender. The young female captain-owner we interviewed relates her experience when succeeding her father in the fishing business:

Maybe it was more difficult because I am a woman. Or maybe it was because other captains would have liked to buy dad's fishing licence to expand their own business, they would have liked to get rid of my dad's business altogether. But I was already in the industry, fishing with my dad. I decided to go straight ahead, to continue. It hasn't always been a pretty picture. (R42)

Women captain-owners are less likely to be taken seriously by their male counterparts at the beginning of their careers. For example, their voice and opinion might not be taken as seriously during captain-owners' association meetings or consultation committees. A captain-owner's spouse who went on to becoming a captain-owner of her own relates:

The hardest part was during meetings, during consultation committees. You get a funny look from the other. You know that they're thinking: "She's only there because she's an informal licence holder for her husband. He already had too many licences, so she put her name on this new licence. She's nothing more than a figurehead." [...] I was seen like that. When you're feeling embarrassed, you don't talk too much at these meetings. It took a while before it came out in my case. It took another captain to push me, he said: "Hey, if you don't talk, no one is going to talk for you. Take your place!" So I took my place! (CP38)

Regulation of fishing licences makes access to the profession of captain-owner even more difficult<sup>16</sup>. When a spouse becomes herself a captain-owner, the presumption within the professional community (and within the local community of small fishing villages in general) is that she is nothing more than a figurehead so that her spouse can access licences that he would have otherwise been prohibited from buying himself because of current regulations. The reactions can be harsh and may have a significant impact on the professional experiences of these women, especially in the first years as captain, which are fundamental for establishing the business.

In that meeting where I finally took my place and spoke, I was no longer perceived as the woman who was there simply as a figurehead for her husband's licences. I had proven that I was the true operator of the licences, that I was a real captain, and that I spoke in my own name. (CP38)

In the original French version, this citation shows even more, by the use of masculine nouns, how this woman identifies herself as captain in masculine terms.

When considering social relations in this profession, it is important to look at informal socialisation and moments of camaraderie between captains and between captains and their crew. Although ships are more comfortable today, for example, in newer boats, captains often have their own sleeping quarter that is separate from that of the crew, space is still limited on a boat, and crew members and the captain tend to share tight living spaces (e.g., for showering, for eating, for resting, for socialising). During fishing trips, crewmembers and the captain are not only work col-

leagues, but they also live together. A captain-owner describes the living situation on board and some of the changes he has made so that crewmembers are more comfortable:

This is the new and improved kitchen that we renovated. The guys sleep over there. That used to be a shared room for all of us, but I now have my own room on the deck. It's comfortable, and it's bigger than some other boats. But believe me, after a month and a half, it feels very small! (R07)

A fishing crew shares a very small space (that of the fishing boat) for several days, sometimes weeks. If not adequately adapted, it could be difficult to share such a restricted space with individuals of the opposite sex. Previous studies have shown how the lack of adaptation of the physical infrastructure is an important obstacle to the integration of women on fishing boats (Zhao et al., 2013).

Moreover, in this context of physical proximity between individuals on board, a certain camaraderie forms over time. "We do about 50 hours of work per week because we don't work in the evenings. In the afternoon, we stop working. We take a shower and then play videogames together in the evening" (CP40).

This type of informal sociability is inevitable when sharing such a tight work and living space. One could argue that it makes the situation, living and working on a boat, more bearable. Many captain-owners highlighted how they aim to make sure that all crew members have a good time together and get along when on the boat, both while working and outside of work, because everything else would make the situation unbearable. However, this traditionally male camaraderie, which is typical of the fishing trade, might act as a barrier for women wanted to enter the trade. It might be difficult for a woman to penetrate and integrate this informal male camaraderie, consequently preventing her from integrating the profession in general.

## Conclusion

The aim of this book chapter was to show the mechanisms at play in the catching sector of the fishing industry that tend to undervalue women's work, assigning them secondary and often invisible roles, and that act as barriers to women's access to other roles. Our analysis is based on a review of the international scientific literature and our own original data (both quantitative and qualitative) from a research project in Gaspésie, Quebec. Previous studies on the role of women in the fishing industry describe an involvement that is often less formally recognised than that of their male counterparts, but still fundamental for the industry on several levels. Women are present in the sector, but their contribution is less visible or valued. Scientific literature, specifically focusing on countries of the "Global North", emphasises women's involvement in the sector through their contribution in small family fishing enterprises (which represent the majority of fishing enterprises in Gaspésie) which are often perceived as an extension of the domestic sphere. Our statistical data on fishers in Gaspésie and Quebec, in general, shows that women are marginal in the formal labour market in the catching sector.

Our qualitative analysis of the narrative around what it means to be a "good" captain-owner shows that the main values and skills identified as necessary tend to correspond to traditionally male stereotypes, such as ambition, calmness, courage, quick decision-making and physical strength. Cultural "taboos" on what it means to be a woman or a man and the current representation of what it means to be a "good" captain in the collective professional imaginary act as obstacles to

gender diversity on fishing boats. Furthermore, when describing their occupation, fishers and captains refer to the unpredictability of daily life on the water and unpredictability in the fishing industry in general. While this unpredictability is often perceived as a positive and attractive feature of the job by current male fisher and captains, it may make it more difficult for newcomers to the trade, especially women, to balance work and family life. This unpredictability acts as another barrier for women. Finally, the catching sector and the fishing industry in small fishing communities tend to be particularly "insular". The traditional model of transmission from father to son is still the norm, and any form of deviation from this model is sometimes perceived as a disruption or rupture. Just like the male newcomer in the industry, who does not come from a fishing family, women entering the field change the status quo.

The need to "prove oneself" towards colleagues and to gain experience over time is typical for any trade. However, in the catching sector, sons of fishers seem to boast inherent credibility within the professional community, due to the heritage left to them by their fathers, whereas newcomers and women tend to undergo more scrutiny on behalf of their colleagues. Furthermore, the size of the environment (generally small fishing villages) influences, both positively and negatively, these social relations. "Everyone knows everyone", so when a newcomer or a woman enters the fishery, others find about it, they might have an opinion of that person, and might scrutinise that person's work more easily. Taking one's place and proving they have the necessary skills to carry out the trade is therefore not always easy for young fishers and captains, especially when they are women. This context within the professional community and fishing communities acts as an additional barrier for women. As other authors have also pointed out, the recognition of these structural barriers by public policy officials and local development actors would be the first step towards gender diversification on fishing boats.

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