The fishing lifecourse: exploring the importance of social contexts, capitals and (more than) fishing identities

Abstract

There is an emerging call for social scientists to pay greater attention to the social and cultural contexts of fishing and fishers. A resulting literature is evolving which focuses on individual life experiences, particularly relating to entering the fishing occupation, and what these might mean for the future sustainability of the fishing industry. However, the ways in which these lives are linked and intergenerationally connected remains somewhat of a blindspot. This paper considers the potential of a lifecourse approach to help us better understand how fishers accumulate, utilise and share capital(s) in getting onto and moving along the 'fishing ladder'. Drawing on in-depth qualitative research with fishing families on the Llŷn peninsula small-scale fishery in north Wales (UK) the paper explores how there are multiple social contexts from which 'prospective fishers' can begin their fishing career and which differentially (re)shape how they can accumulate capital over time. Later on in the lifecourse, fishers (re)negotiate their fishing identities in relation to the lives of others, within transitions such as parenthood as well as with older age. The paper's findings offer a much-needed temporal dimension to our understanding of fishing lives and what it means to be a 'good fisher'.

Key words: The fishing lifecourse; the 'good fisher'; capital(s); small-scale fishing; fishing community; Bourdieu.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that small-scale fishing –which is thought to account for 50 of the world's 51 million fishers (Jentoft 2014) –is central to the future sustainability of the global fishing industry.[1] Accordingly, recent research has focused on small-scale fisheries' resilience, potential decline and how they might be reproduced over time (see Johnsen and Vik 2013; Neis *et al.* 2013; Power *et al.* 2014; Smith *et al.* 2014; White 2015). Within this research, Neis *et al.* (2013) have suggested that conventional fisheries management and policy has tended to be 'intergenerationally blind', often ignoring the importance of familial, household and intergenerational relations in shaping the resilience (or otherwise) of small-scale fisheries. In attending to this blindness, and answering the wider call to bring insights from social science into the discussion of fishers and fishing (see Urquhart *et al.* 2011), research has begun to explore a range of issues associated with the [dis]continuance of the fishing industry, especially from the perspectives of younger fishers. This research has explored the ways that younger fishers might gain 'hands on' experience of the fishing industry in conjunction with older, often male[2], relatives as part of a broader succession process (King 2005; Johnsen *et al.* 2004; Murray *et al.* 2006; Power *et al.* 2014; Blomquist *et al*, 2016), how the fishing household and wider community might contribute to such processes of socialisation (Power *et al.* 2014; White 2015; Williams 2008) and how this process is as much about learning and acquiring the cultural codes of fishing as it is about acquiring technical knowledge (van Ginkel 2001).

Whilst these processes of socialisation and succession in the fishing industry have historically been common, recent research has asked, albeit tentative, questions around a possible rupture to such patterns. As White (2015, p.11) has recently observed in the pages of *Sociologia Ruralis*: "the widely held view that docile reproduction in small-scale

fisheries relies heavily on the processes of succession and inheritance occurring within a largely closed network of fishing families is beginning to lose its relevance". For example, several scholars have pointed to the potentially prohibitive costs of entering the fishing industry that have resulted from the introduction of quotas and the attendant fishing licences (van Ginkel 2014; Neis *et al.* 2013; Power 2012). Alongside this, some scholars have suggested that there are reduced opportunities for the fishing employment which had historically been a method of 'learning the ropes of fishing' (White 2015). Others have considered the wider demographics of fishing, with Symes and Frangoudes (2001) noting the importance of partners, particularly fishers' wives, in reshaping traditional cultural expectations relating to issues of work-life balance and familial succession (see also Coulthard and Britton 2015; Power 2012; Sønvisen 2013), as well as how younger people's integration within wider coastal communities may (re)shape how they perceive the occupation of fishing and the other career and lifestyle opportunities open to them (Power 2012; Sønvisen 2013).

Although there are clearly questions around the potentially changing nature of familial succession and inheritance in fisheries, van Ginkel (2014 p.16) notes the continued significance of such arrangements, suggesting that the fishing way of life may encompass more than economic issues and, indeed, notes the potential resilience of family fishing enterprises as they might offer "adaptability not usually found in company-owned firms that operate under the capitalist mode of production". Important, here, is a recognition that being a fisher incorporates more than simply economic imperatives. Implicit too within this research is that being a fisher, particularly within these familial contexts, is about more than just the individual fisher –with occupational decisions often framed in relation to others around them. The following paper seeks to forward this understanding

of fishing lives by adopting a lifecourse perspective. Taking its cue from the wider turn to lifecourse approaches within the social sciences, the paper seeks to move beyond a consideration of individual lives and life events as discrete entities, towards recognising how these lives are interrelated and unfold in parallel and in geographically specific ways (Hopkins and Pain 2007). Drawing on in depth qualitative research on the Llŷn peninsula in Wales (UK), the paper combines this lifecourse perspective with recent Bourdieusian-inspired considerations on how fishers accumulate capital(s) in negotiating their socially-acceptable position of 'good fisher'(Gustavsson *et al.* 2017). Following an outline of this conceptual framing and a discussion of the methodological approach taken, the paper uses the metaphor of the 'fishing ladder' to examine the way that fishing lives unfold and overlap across the lifecourse.

Conceptualising the fishing lifecourse

In seeking a fuller understanding of the lives of fishers and the [dis]continuity of small-scale fishing, the paper brings together a lifecourse perspective with Bourdieusian ideas of capital, habitus and field. Although there has been a growing presence of lifecourse studies in the wider social sciences in recent years (Hopkins and Pain 2007), such perspectives have remained under-utilised in the discussion of fishers and fishing. Our lifecourse framing draws on both of those more longstanding notions put forward by Elder (1994) as well as the more recent refinements within the geographical literature(s). Although the lifecourse perspective is a multifaceted approach to understanding the social trajectories of lives, it is underpinned by four key aspects. The first –'the interplay of human lives and historical times' –takes into account how individuals born in different years are exposed to different historical worlds which present them with specific options as well as constraints (Elder 1994 p.5). The second aspect, 'the timing of lives', refers to

99 the social meaning and 'age norms' attached to particular life stages as well as the timings
100 of specific transitions –such as between childhood to adulthood, leaving the parental
101 home and retirement. Lifecourse scholars seek to examine the social norms around the
102 'appropriate age', which are bound up in a particular context of time and place. The third
103 pillar of the lifecourse approach, 'linked lives', represents the notion of 'interdependent
104 lives' –that is, the observation that human lives are embedded in intergenerational social
105 relationships. Elder (1994) further suggests that the term 'linked lives' refers to the
106 interactions between an individual's social worlds over the life span, that can lead to
107 patterns reproducing themselves across generations. The fourth characteristic of the
108 lifecourse approach is the recognition of 'human agency' which emphasises how
109 individuals make choices within the constraints of their worlds.
110
111 Although its origins are in demography (see Elder *et al.* 2003) geographers have recently
112 sought to develop the lifecourse perspective –seeking in particular to move away from a
113 'fixed' understanding of the lifecourse, as defined by a limited number of events in
114 individual's biographies, to exploring the 'fluidity', 'relationality' and spatiality of
115 lifecourse transitions, trajectories and pathways (Bailey 2009). In particular, geographers
116 have explored the various ways that lifecourses may be situated in particular spatial
117 contexts (Hopkins and Pain 2007). Areas of concern within this more geographically–
118 inflected approach have included transitions such as those into adhulthood (Valentine
119 2003), older age and grandparenthood (Tarrant 2010; Riley 2011) and into retirement
120 (Riley 2012). In assessing the potential areas for further development, Hopkins and Pain
121 (2007) stress the need to move toward a more holistic consideration of the lifecourse –
122 from younger to older age –something taken forward in explorations of the processes of
123 migration and the changing meaning of place over the lifecourse for Irish emigrants (Ni

124 Laoire 2001) and homosexual men (Lewis 2014). Alongside this, geographers have noted
125 the need to examine the importance of intergenerational links and how particular spatial
126 contexts have significance for the lifecourse of different individuals (Hopkins and Pain
127 2007; Vanderbeck 2007). For example, there is now an abundant literature which suggests
128 that children's identities are produced in interactions with individuals of older age from
129 other generational groups (Hopkins and Pain 2007).
130

131 Particular life phases have been studied within fishing, with studies of young people and
132 a considerations of how they 'get into fishing' being most numerous (Miller and van
133 Maanen 1982; Sønvisen 2013; White 2015). Research in this field has highlighted the
134 increased economic costs involved in becoming a fisher (van Ginkel 2014; Neis *et al.*
135 2013; Power 2012) and how processes of learning have changed over time with a
136 changing fishing occupation and society (Johnsen *et al.* 2004; Murray *et al.* 2006; Ota
137 and Just 2008; Power *et al.* 2014). To date, however, there are few discernable efforts
138 within this literature, particularly in the global north, to frame these within a wider
139 lifecourse perspective.[3] Although Symes and Frangoudes (2001) rightly caution that
140 direct comparison between agriculture and fishing is limited due the quite distinct
141 structural differences in ownership and intergenerational transfer of property, the
142 contextually-sensitive analysis of farming lifecourses arguably has much conceptual
143 impetus to offer the discussion of fishers. Here, researchers have highlighted the intricate
144 connections between different farming generations as children are socialised into a
145 farming 'way of life' (Riley 2009a; Riley 2012) and how this may be gendered, with
146 different cultural expectations on appropriate behavior for sons, daughters and daughter-
147 in-laws (Cassidy and McGrath 2014; Pini 2007; Riley 2009b). The centrality of 'keeping
148 the name on the land' in these contexts has stressed the importance of multi-lifecourse

149 and intergenerational decision-making and identity production, with later-life transitions
150 seen to be framed in relation to younger generations, especially those positioned as
151 successors to the farming occupation (Riley 2016; Riley and Sangster 2017). In addition
152 to echoing Elder (1994)'s call to recognise the wider social and temporal contexts in
153 which lifecourses unfold, often in tandem, this recent geographical work highlights the
154 importance too of the specific geographical contexts in which these unfoldings take place.
155
156 An important aspect of the lifecourse approach is how it "relates individuals to broader
157 social context" (Elder 1994, p.6). It is here that we synthesise a lifecourse perspective
158 with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the social world as a "two-way relationship between
159 objective structures (those of social fields) and incorporated structures (those of the
160 habitus)" (Bourdieu 1998, p.vii) which have recently been taken forward in studies on
161 fisheries in the development of the concept of the 'good fisher' (Gustavsson *et al.* 2017).
162 Bourdieu's (1998 p.81) notion of habitus, which he defines as the disposition to act within
163 "a particular section of the world –a field –and which structures the perception of that
164 world as well as action within that world", is a fruitful lens for considering the field of
165 fishing. Particularly important is that such a framing allows us to move beyond a myopic
166 focus on economic capital to also incorporate other forms, most notably social and
167 cultural capital (see Gustavsson *et al.* 2017). Drawing out from the longer-standing
168 literature on the 'good farmer' (Burton 2004; Burton *et al.* 2008; Sutherland 2013;
169 Sutherland and Burton 2011; Riley 2016), Gustavsson *et al.* (2017) have explored how
170 the development of, and access to, different forms of capital shapes fishers' social
171 standing as 'good fishers'. Here, they noted that whilst cultural capital in its objectified
172 form (ownership of boats, machinery and equipment) was important to fishers' status,
173 equally important was embodied cultural capital –"in the form of long-standing

dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu 1986, p.282) –and the ability to demonstrate the skills related to this. Such skills, Gustavsson *et al.* (2017) note, include the ability to work *with* the sea, especially tides and changing weather patterns. Given the less material nature of the sea, and the lack of direct observations of catch, markers such as the positioning of buoys become key proxies for this skill. Alongside this, Gustavsson *et al.* (2017) show that adhering to unwritten 'rules of the game' (after Bourdieu 1984) – such as respecting the territories of fellow fishers, respecting others' fishing gear, maintaining collective safety at sea, and keeping secrets about potentially lucrative catches in the region –allows fishers to develop their social capital, which might give access to the help and equipment of others and more fundamental assurances such as increased safety at sea through the support of others.

Whilst notions of the good fisher offer a fruitful lens through which to recognise the previously under-represented, often more-than-economic, socio-cultural contexts in which fishers operate it has, to date, been somewhat temporally static, with little attention paid to how capitals are formed and (re)shaped over the lifecourse. If we return to Bourdieu's original ideas from which those of the good fisher evolve, useful insight is offered in relation to familiar context, for example, and the lifecourse:

> "initial accumulation of cultural capital […] starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital; in this case, the accumulation period covers the whole period of socialization"(Bourdieu 1986, p.284).

Important, therefore, for our framing here is a recognition that social as well as geographical contexts are important for how capital might be developed across the lifecourse and between different lives.

199

Methodology

The paper is drawn from a wider study which sought to explore socio-cultural contexts of fishing lives on the Llŷn peninsula –a small-scale fishing region in north west Wales (UK). Although it is recognised that there is great diversity in fishing types and locality, small-scale enterprises are still seen as making up a significant percentage of the industry in Europe (Guyader *et al.* 2013) and the Llŷn peninsula offered a suitable locality to explore small-scale fishing. Alongside this, the area has recently been subject to an attempt to introduce Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ), which brought public opposition and was eventually scrapped, and whilst it is not the explicit focus of the current paper, this offered a useful discussion point with fishers through which to explore this potential challenge to their occupation. The Llŷn peninsula fishery is as a multi-species, multi-gear coastal fishery with lobster, scallops, crab, whelks and sea bass some of the main target species. The fishery is seasonal with a combination of both part-time and full-time fishers. In total 47 participants, linked to 16 fishing were interviewed in 2014/15 (the majority on more than one occasion) and included current fishers (F); sons; daughters; and partners of fishers (P) in fishing families –who ranged from 18 to 75 years old (although the majority were between 30 and 60).[4] Amongst those interviewed, all can be classified as lobster fishers who, to varying degrees, engage in targeting other types of fish and shellfish using other fishing gear. Full-time fishers had often employed alternative fishing methods and engaged in diversification of their fishing products to increase their profit margins. Part-time fishers deployed a different strategy to achieve the same financial outcome in that they often had second jobs in areas such as construction, tourism and farming or in the public sector. The fishers interviewed primarily spoke Welsh as a first language, but were interviewed in English.

224

225 To gain access to research participants, initial contact was made with two local fisheries
226 committees, with members providing a first wave of respondents, and chain-referral
227 sampling (Heckathorn 2002) used to locate subsequent waves. The qualitative and semi-
228 structured interviews were used to gain an understanding of fisher's activities, identities,
229 knowledge and life histories. The locations of interviews were chosen by the participants
230 –most commonly conducted in their homes and/or in close proximity to the fishing cove,
231 which made it possible to fit in the interview around the fishing family members' busy
232 schedules. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, were recorded and
233 transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was read through several times and coded manually
234 following the framework set out by Reismann (2008). Several themes were identified
235 using this narrative thematic coding and are discussed in the following sections.

236

237 **Getting on the fishing ladder –the importance of context**

238 Within previous studies of fishing it has been revealed that learning to fish is not only
239 about learning the techniques of fishing as it is also important to generally embody an
240 understanding of the fishing culture (van Ginkel 2001) –or what in Bourdieusian terms
241 might be seen as 'rules of the game'. Initial interview questions focused on early
242 experiences of fishing and entering the fishing industry:

243 > "[How have I] learnt to fish? I don't know. You just do it really. You know there is a saying
244 > in Welsh [speaking Welsh] 'Salt in the blood'. If you know what I mean?! We have been
245 > doing it all our life you know. We have been going with dad since we were small"(F-28).

246 “People say that the sea is in your blood. I don’t know if I believe that or not. Well I don’t in
247 fact. I think it is just the way I got brought up, and my dad got brought up. Obsessed about
248 fishing since [we were] young”(F-4).

249 “A lot of people go into [fishing] through starting helping people onshore or on the boat. You
250 might just get a few days’ work here and there but then you get an interest and [an] insight
251 into the job and then decide if you like it or not”(F-10).

252 The reference to ‘salt in the blood’ is arguably an articulation of the fishing ‘habitus’ (see
253 Bourdieu 1998). Whilst the reference to ‘blood’ infers a type of genetic inheritance, each
254 of the three responses point to their specific social and cultural contexts which shape both
255 the level of expectation and opportunity available to them. For fishers 28 and 4, this is
256 closely linked to their familial contexts, whilst for fisher 10, it is noted that non-familial
257 fishing contexts may shape their experiences. The interviews went on to reveal that what
258 was important here was how these different contexts afforded different possibilities for
259 the accumulation of capital –and hence the position as a ‘good fisher’ –and how these
260 might change and develop as the lifecourse unfolds. All of those interviewed referred to
261 the economic costs of entering the industry, with the partner of a fisher highlighting: “You
262 have got [to have] your boat and your license and all your pots and things… and then
263 [you need to] get your bait. It is quite an expensive thing –to set up” (P-4). Whilst on one
264 level these financial considerations (or barriers) are important to getting on the fishing
265 ladder, the interviews with fishers highlighted the importance of accumulating other
266 forms of capital:

267 “It is very rare now that you get young people going into the industry. Which is probably
268 gonna be a problem in the future. Because [when you start young you have got a few pots
269 and you build your gear up and you learn all the way...] You learn from your mistakes and it
270 is a steep and costly learning curve[…] I learned from my father and his family… [On the

271 other hand] if you sort of decided: ‘Oh I want to be a fisherman’… We have seen it happen
272 so often here. They invest a lot of money and it is not […] half as simple as people think. It
273 is very difficult to make a living”(F-10).

274 “Well you have to start young [and be local to the area]. You can’t just, well you can, there
275 is nothing stopping you jumping into a boat fishing but I would imagine other people having
276 comments and quarrelling. […]I know the Llŷn peninsula is a very small area but it is, as I
277 was saying, territorial. And you have to be part of that community and the area to be able to
278 do it.[…] I learnt as a little boy really. Just going out with my parents[…], and you have to
279 help. You[…] are not allowed to sit [and] do nothing.[…] Just progressed from there
280 really”(F-19).

281 Within these responses, the intersection of family context and capital was seen to be
282 important in three main ways: through inheriting or sharing equipment, through territories
283 and in the development of fishing skills. The first of these is perhaps the most obvious –
284 where those born into fishing families are able to take on the gear of their familial
285 predecessors (most often their fathers) in order to get onto the fishing ladder. Fisher 10,
286 however, reveals that one of the complexities of accessing the fishing industry is that
287 economic capital alone may be insufficient. As fisher 22 argued in a similar vein “any
288 fool can carry money to the sea […] anyone can invest in a big boat, lots of lobster gear
289 but you have got to return a profit”. That is, even when a fisher has sufficient economic
290 capital to buy necessary equipment, the objectified cultural capital they represent is only
291 turned into symbolic capital when the fisher is able to demonstrate the skill –or embodied
292 cultural capital –to operate it. What such responses reveal is a deeper layer whereby the
293 economic capital passed from, or shared with, parents is only part of this successful entry
294 into the fishing occupation. Whilst fisher 19 notes that anyone can, in theory, get into a
295 boat and start fishing, he follows this with reference to potential ‘comments’ or

296 ‘quarrelling’ that this may invoke. This interview response, and the wider fieldwork,
297 revealed that fishing territories are an important part of the social and spatial organisation
298 of fishing:

> 299 “Every fisherman has their own patch. […] It is not their patch obviously. It doesn’t belong
> 300 to them but it is just respect. It depends on where you have always fished. Most fishermen,
> 301 especially around here, it’s been handed down and it’s been handed down. You know
> 302 generation to generation”(F-28).

303 Although the intricacies of fishing territories have been discussed elsewhere (see
304 Gustavsson *et al.* 2017; Symes and Frangoudes 2001), two important points are raised
305 from these observations from interviews. The first is that it is not only gear and economic
306 capital that can be passed on, but also fishing territories. Second, and interrelated, was the
307 importance, in this process, of what fishers might call “respect” (F-28) or what in
308 Bourdieusian terms we might see as social capital. The linked lives of fishers and their
309 predecessors becomes important here. Working alongside predecessors for a period, the
310 interviews suggested, allowed younger fishers to learn the ‘rules of the game’ and to
311 develop the skills (embodied cultural capital) which would allow them to be accepted, as
312 their own social capital develops, by others fishers in the area –a central process in having
313 access to particular fishing territories. The following extracts referred to how these dual
314 aspects had worked in their cases:

> 315 “I used to do potting when I was a little kid. Just one or two pots. I used to haul them by
> 316 hand”(F-8).

> 317 “Well there were three fishermen here when I started and [with] my father being a fisherman,
> 318 [I was] just helping [the other fishermen my father knew] to begin with. Going out and having
> 319 an interest as a very young boy. I was born and raised to it. I was part of it”(F-19).

320 "When I was [fishing] on my own, I lived [at home]… I didn't have any bills really. So I
321 could experiment more. […] If I did have a bad day it didn't really matter too much. Whereas
322 if we have a terrible week [today] we still have got bills to pay"(F-27).

323 Within each of these responses we can see the interlinking of the presence of the economic
324 capital of their predecessors and the development of the younger fishers own embodied
325 cultural capital and eventual social capital. In each case, the presence of fishing equipment
326 allowed a period of experimentation, where they could both learn and also demonstrate
327 these skills. For fisher 27, as he got older the freedom to live cheaply at home was an
328 important factor in allowing him to experiment and develop his fishing independence.
329 Turing to Bourdieu, we can see how a family with this shared fishing habitus is central to
330 this process:

331 "the length of time for which a given individual can prolong his [sic] acquisition process
332 depends on the length of time for which his [sic] family can provide him [sic] with free time,
333 i.e., time free from economic necessity, which is the precondition for the initial
334 accumulation"(Bourdieu 1986, p.284).

335 In sharing the same fishing habitus, the fishing families of those such as fisher 27
336 recognise the symbolic importance the various types of capital may bring and thus the
337 importance of their development. In this way, the space for experimentation that they
338 provide may be seen as an important investment for the future. In addition to providing
339 space for experimentation during the lifetime of predecessors, it was found that social
340 capital may expand across generations. For those fishers taking on gear and territories
341 from their familial predecessors, it was revealed that they were given 'breathing space'
342 (after Burton 2012 in relation to farming), whereby their initial social standing in the
343 fishing area was high, at least for a certain period, as a result of the pre-existing social
344 capital of their predecessors. Here, any lack of embodied cultural capital was forgiven

345 and fishers had time to make the necessary adjustments and additions to their skills and
346 knowledge.
347
348 Whilst the aforementioned suggests that there was a linearity, between father and son in
349 particular, the interviews revealed that wider familial connections were also significant:

> 350 "[I used to go out fishing] with my father. But we also had my father's cousin [who] fished.
> 351 Friends of the family fished and they taught us. And then you learn from the people here.
> 352 […] [Another fisher's father] taught us a lot of things and helped us. Cause my father was
> 353 [older] and he used willow pots… but by the 1980s [fishermen] had moved to using [pots]
> 354 with an iron frame.[…] My father wasn't like too modern with these techniques… but we
> 355 learnt off friends then. But it was through my father.[…] Without my father's connection it
> 356 would have been much more difficult"(F-22).

357 Alongside the earlier observation that social capital may be to some extent transferred
358 between generations, examples such as those above suggest that cultural capital may
359 change in relation to evolving technologies and that rather than a vertical transfer of
360 knowledge, horizontal networks are also important.[5] Whilst this example shows how
361 particular skills and knowledge that are transferred may become outdated, and require
362 input from horizontal networks, the process of 'cultural transmission' (e.g. Vanderbeck
363 2007) between generations also brought forward knowledge that took on different capital
364 value:

> 365 "It is knowledge of nature, the fishing condition, but it is also anthropology. You know the
> 366 specific names where you are. Ehmm… the status of the tide, that is knowledge that is not
> 367 written anywhere. It gets passed down. It is like that kind of thing. Lots unwritten and will
> 368 never be. You just carry it in your head"(F-22).

369 “Cause I can name all the rocks and coves and everything from here all the way down to
370 [fishing place X]. All features and everything, they have all been passed on to me”(F-10).

371 Such intricate knowledge of the sea was, interviews revealed, passed across, and
372 accumulated over generations. Although, in the past, much of this knowledge had been
373 important to orientating at sea, the majority of fishers spoken to now used electronic, GPS
374 technologies (cf Murray *et al.* 2006). Far from being defunct, however, these stories from
375 previous generations took on new importance. On the one hand, the stories contained
376 understandings of sea safety, or patterns of good catching which had direct value to the
377 current fishers. On the other hand, the stories had a performative importance –with their
378 telling allowing a claim to the fishing lineage and heritage which enabled current fishers
379 to enhance their social capital through the claim of long familial history in this area.
380

381 **Non-familial access –‘raising the tiger’**

382 Although, as suggested, there were numerous and intricate ways in which the context of
383 being born into a fishing family may ease the ascent onto the fishing ladder, the fieldwork
384 revealed that routes onto this ladder were available to those without this familial context:

385 “I started hanging around the beach. I grew up amongst them all […] and I started pestering
386 the fishermen asking them if I could go out to sea with them.[…] One of them said ‘yeah
387 come with me’ and then I went. And then I started talking to the others.[…] Just taking it all
388 in like a 15 year sponge.[…] I used to listen and take note and I always remember[ed] how
389 everything was done.[…] What I find now [is that] what I have learnt when I was really
390 young […] is coming back to me every day.[…] ‘How did he do it back then?’… You can’t
391 phone him to ask because he might be dead…”(F-11).

For these fishers, growing up in these areas afforded them a looser fishing network, where social, rather than familial contacts paved the way into the fishing community. For them, showing commitment to getting involved "after school", "after work" and "after college" (F-22) and at the same time "being noisy" and "pestering fishermen" (F-11) –that is, a more proactive role as opposed to the more passive routes that may be taken by fishing sons –allowed them to develop their own forms of formative social capital which gained them access to the more private, insider, spaces of fishing such as the boat. From here, they were able to demonstrate their enthusiasm and 'sponge-like' (F-15) qualities in developing embodied cultural capital which, over time, allowed them to develop social capital which gave them access, as fishing crew, to fishing vessels and eventually to fishing territories in their own right. Their position in the fishing lifecourse –being young –was central to this process of linking to the lives of older fishers. As fisher 16 recalled:

> "[An older] guy said to me…'have you ever heard the phrase'… I will say it in English… 'raising a tiger'. I said 'what do you mean raising a tiger?' He said 'I feel I am raising a tiger, when they are little they are all cute and cuddly, but when they grow up they will eat you.' That is a fair call… [Laughter]"(F-16).

What Elder (1994) refers to as the 'social meaning of age' is important here. Being young –or 'cute and cuddly' –positioned these fishers as unthreatening, and less likely to 'eat you'. As such, the relative age positioning gave the younger men access to the "private transmission of knowledge" (Symes and Frangoudes 2001). This was seen to be in contrast to those later in the fishing lifecourse. As one fisher with his own boat explained:

> "No they wouldn't tell me certain things like that. They might have said 15 years ago, when I was a child and I didn't have a boat. […] I still ask but I won't be told the same. When you are a child and when you ask questions they seem to take more… 'Oh you have got to do

416 this, and you have got to do that', but when you are older and you ask them something they
417 go around the question and don't give you the answer"(F-11).

418 Fisher 11's position later in the lifecourse and, in particular, owning his own boat,
419 positioned him as a competitor –or tiger –and resulted in him being excluded from the
420 secrets and knowledges that had been made available to sons of fishers. Rather than
421 having access to, and benefits from, the capitals of established fishing predecessors as
422 seen in the earlier examples, these older fishers relied on other capital arrangements. For
423 fisher 16, for example, he entered the industry by "purchasing a boat from a retiring
424 fisherman. […] And he offered it to me for 700 in the first year and to pay him 700
425 afterwards in the second year". In such cases, it was pre-existing economic capital which
426 allowed these younger fishers without familial connections to get onto the fishing ladder.
427 This alone, however, did not guarantee their access to fishing territories or acceptance
428 within the fishing community. This was achieved over a longer time period by displaying
429 their good fishing abilities –namely their ability to skilfully land catch and, importantly,
430 to adhere to the reciprocal agreement to remain trustworthy, especially keeping the secrets
431 of catch levels around the Llŷn peninsula in order to keep those outsiders not local to the
432 region away.
433

434 **Climbing and staying on the ladder**

435 The metaphor of a fishing ladder implies a somewhat linear and uniform lifecourse
436 trajectory –but as Valentine (2003 p.48) notes in the more general discussion of the
437 lifecourse, such life transitions "may not be connected and may occur simultaneously,
438 serially or not at all". For all fishers, the movement from being a deckhand (or part of a

439 crew) to becoming a skipper and/or boat owner involved the development of a broader
440 set of skills:

441 "[As a skipper] we have to be welders, we have to be fishermen, you name it we have to do
442 it.[…] Engineers. If the engine conks out you have to be able to repair it […] it is all part of
443 it. So you have to be a mechanic as well.[…] Navigation too.[…] You have to be everything
444 –except a millionaire"(F-19).

445 Such responses illustrate that being in charge of a boat involves the development of
446 embodied cultural capital to include not just the physical strength and fishing technique,
447 but also technical and managerial skills too. The interviews, however, suggested that
448 moving along the fishing ladder in small-scale fishing did not involve leaving behind
449 those previously learnt skills, but instead involved performing these alongside new ones.
450 Moreover, the social and familial contexts were again important here, with those fishers
451 entering the occupation alongside familial predecessors able to learn these skills in a
452 phased, cumulative way over time. As figure 1 depicts, these fishers are able to enter
453 fishing with the social capital of their predecessors, and then work alongside these in
454 develop particular skills and dispositions (cultural capital) before ascending to boat
455 ownership and the associated economic capital that this may afford. For younger fishers
456 taking the non-familial route, they have a more elongated entry where they have to prove
457 their cultural competence (or skills) in order to gain acceptance, before eventually
458 inheriting or being able to afford their own vessel. Finally, those older newcomers may
459 come with economic capital –often from another, or part-time, occupation –but need to
460 become attuned to the fishing habitus of this area and demonstrate their skills in order to
461 gain social capital and acceptance into the community, which then allows them to
462 continue generating income from fishing.

463

464 [Figure 1 somewhere here]

465

466 Important to understanding what has been termed the 'mid-course' (Moen and Fields
467 2002) among these fishers, and their progression through it, is a recognition of how wider
468 life events, and other linked-lives, start to shape the fishing lifecourse. Touched upon in
469 previous research (Coulthard and Britton 2015; Gerrard 2013), the research found that
470 parenthood (re)shaped trajectories through fishing lifecourses:

471 "I have always fished since very young age. Full-time to begin with and, obviously, when we
472 got a family and a mortgage and all the rest of the things that come with it, we kind of had to
473 do other things as well just to make a living more than anything. You can make a living out
474 of fishing. I am not saying you can't, but it is a very hard living. So, that is why I do other
475 things as well.[…] And once [the children] have grown [up] I will probably be a full-time
476 fisherman again"(F-19).

477 "There was a point that I thought I liked to up[scale] the whole operation to stay out for four
478 or five days at a time.[…] It would have involved a lot of investment and […] time. But then
479 I thought that is not really fair on anyone.[…]The family decision did make me say no, don't
480 do that, it is not really the right thing to do.[…] If I would have been on my own, I would
481 have taken that decision I think. Stayed out there for as long as I could"(F-16).

482 "If I reduce my pot numbers […] I wouldn't make a living for myself and the family and pay
483 my bills"(F-10).

484 The very practical issue of caring responsibilities brought about by having children was
485 seen to be significant for the small-scale fishers, where the nature of their occupation
486 meant that their partners often had to take on employment to supplement the household
487 income. Fishers 19, 16 and 10 illustrate that having children may differently shape the
488 speed and nature of progression along the fishing ladder over the lifecourse. For some,

489 such as fisher 16, increasing economic capital through investment was delayed as a result
490 of having a family, whilst fisher 10 highlights that having a family becomes a reason for
491 not being able to let the level of capital accumulation fall, with fisher 19 bringing an
492 extension to this –noting how a family brings the need for a more secure and constant
493 income derived from outside of fishing. In the same way that living life in tandem with
494 parents allowed the younger fishers discussed earlier the freedom to experiment, the
495 linked lives of their own children were important in directing and/or constraining the
496 opportunities open to fishers later in the lifecourse.
497

498 **Older age and stepping down the ladder**

499 In considering the latter part of the fishing lifecourse, the theme of retirement was
500 something considered within interviews:

501 “The day will come when you can’t and that is it I should think. When you are ill or when
502 your hips or your back goes too bad. Cause we lift pots full-time. You know we [fishers] get
503 a lot of problems.[…] Back and hips. That is just fishing ain’t it?! […] Age doesn’t matter at
504 all.[...] As long as you can keep on doing it you carry on, that is it”(F-18).

505 Important here is the idea of age as relational (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Wyn and White
506 1997). As a largely self-employed occupation, fishing is not subject to the institutional
507 age markers –such as retirement age –as seen in other occupations and, as such, “age
508 doesn’t matter” (F-18). Instead, physical capabilities were reported to dictate when
509 someone stops, or is “forced”(F-12) off the fishing ladder. As the wider lifecourse
510 literature highlights, the spectre of occupational retirement can provide a significant
511 identity challenge (Price 2000). Utilising a similar Bourdieusian framework, Riley (2016)
512 noted how in agriculture older farmers were able to maintain their ‘good farmer’ status in

older age through remaining present on the farm - even where their overall contribution to farm work may be reduced. The fishers spoken to were working out of small fishing coves without access to ports. This meant that their ability to compensate for reduced bodily capability through the use of labour saving equipment or technology (such as tractors or quad bikes used in farming) was less. As such being forced into retirement could be an abrupt life event for fishers, rather than a gradual winding down process as seen in agriculture. Where bodily capabilities, albeit often reduced, did allow fishers to continue several approaches were evident:

> "Now in the latter years, because he is over 65, [he doesn't do] as many hours. Say he goes out at eight o'clock in the morning and could be back at two or three in the afternoon. But there were times he was going four or five o'clock in the morning and came back sometimes at five o'clock at night.[…] He doesn't do as much but he is still doing too much"(P-21).

> "One day will come when I can't lift this amount of pots. But I want that day to be my decision. 'Oh I am tired now I can't do this many [pots] I've got to cut down'"(F-18).

> "I was doing 40 [lobster pots] a day, all by hand. Yeah. It was heavy. But when I was 17, 18, 19 [years old] that was nothing, you just fly through them. Great fun"(F-16).

For fishers such as partner 21's fishing husband, their approach to remaining on the fishing ladder was to remain active, but to be selective in how they do this. Their lifecourse position, and their past history within fishing, was seen to be central to this process. For fisher 18, it is the economic capital accumulated over time which allows him to be selective in how he engages with fishing. Here, he maintains the good fisher status, especially through his continued demonstration of fishing activity and associated skills, but his accumulated capital means he is able to choose the hours he works. Remaining 'in place' is important to this aspect. It is through being on board the fishing vessel, and being seen in fishing-related spaces, that fishers are able to maintain their status within their

538 fishing communities. Cutting across the interview excerpts above is the way that symbolic
539 capital enables a (re)configuration of good fisher status in older age. Noted in interviews
540 with many fishers, and articulated specifically in the quote of fisher 16, is reference to
541 their past activities. At one level, this past work is linked to economic capital accumulated
542 and the choice to 'slow down' that this may offer. At a second level, their demonstrations
543 of good fisher abilities in earlier life become discursively utilised in older age as they
544 (re)narrate them to other fishers to (re)affirm their good fisher status. Linking together
545 this theme of remaining in place and discursively drawing out past activities and
546 achievements was the process adopted by some fishers of continuing fishing as a hobby:

547 "But even if we had all the money in the world he wouldn't stop fishing.[…] Okay, maybe
548 not going out every day as he is now, [only] when the weather is okay. But he would never
549 [stop fishing].[…] He has got [a] retirement boat,[…] so that he can pot around a few.[…]
550 So he will never retire properly,[…] because he just loves being on the sea"(P-9).

551 Statements such as these have parallels to the case of farming, with Riley (2012) noting
552 how farmers may stay busy during retirement by engaging in activities such as gardening.
553 Such insights suggest that fishing as a hobby is a way to attempt a smooth transition from
554 that of work to retirement as it facilitates "moral continuity: how to integrate existing
555 beliefs and values about work into a new status that constitutes withdrawal from work"
556 (Ekerdt 1986, p.243) as well as minimal need for reconfiguration of fishers' identities.
557

558 Relating to the theme of linked lives, the presence of a fishing successor was central to
559 the pathways taken and activities performed in older age:

560 "I am not completely ignorant but if it has got to be bought it has got to be bought hasn't it?
561 As long as he doesn't want a new boat [Laugh]. Not at his age. That will become completely
562 different"(P-21).

563 Partner: "[Our daughter] was going out with a fisherman […] well, third generation fisherman
564 isn't he? Oh [you] were made up, [my husband] was like 'oh it is going to be lovely'. […]
565 [But] it only lasted a couple of month. [Laughing]."

566 Fisher: "I thought it would be nice to sort of give it all to somebody, who are gonna use it
567 sort of thing.[…] If none of my family or […] partners of my family wanted to do it I would
568 like to take somebody [on]… maybe as I get older.[…] There will come a point when I can't
569 physically do it and you could share the workload and maybe bring a [young person] into it.
570 Maybe sell everything on to them…"(P-17 and F-16).

571 For the partner of fisher 21, the presence of a successor shaped the business decision of
572 whether, or not, she and her husband would invest in a new boat, whilst fishers 16 and
573 partner 17 note how retirement decisions in older age are intricately linked to these
574 successors –not only in terms of passing on the various forms of capital, but in order that
575 the opportunity, through co-working, is there for fishers to remain in fishing as they reach
576 older age and reduced physical capabilities. Within the responses, and linking back to our
577 earlier discussion of getting onto the fishing ladder, the extracts reveal a ranking of
578 priorities for succession where the first option would be to pass on experiences and
579 material possessions within the family (son or son-in-law), followed by "taking somebody
580 on" (F-16) from the local coastal community –to pass on both material possessions and
581 embodied knowledge. Such observations reveal the importance of linked lives to older
582 age in fishing in several ways. First, it can facilitate a shared practical context in which
583 fishers may remain busy and visible through sharing their work with successors. Second,
584 and interrelated, it allows their own contribution to become indivisible from the wider
585 collective and hence allows them to maintain an identity as a good fisher. Thirdly, such
586 connections had a more practical relevance in relation to the engagement with activities
587 such as v-notching schemes[6]. The fieldwork found that whilst younger fishers generally

588 supported and engaged in the programme for safeguarding the future lobster stocks, older
589 fishers without successors did not participate in such voluntary conservation schemes to
590 any great extent, as “it wouldn’t benefit them” (F-8). However, engagement increased
591 when a successor *was* present:

592 “I do it because of [my son].[…] If I was fishing by myself maybe it wouldn’t be worth
593 throwing them back because I wouldn’t benefit. I would be retired in ten years’ time
594 probably. So the older men usually keep [the berried lobsters] you see”(F-8).

595 Such examples are relevant to our wider understandings of fisheries management,
596 illustrating how management actions are more than just present-cantered decisions and
597 need to be considered across longer generational and time horizons.

598

599 **Conclusions**

600 This paper, drawing out a lifecourse perspective, has considered how fishers may accrue,
601 develop and use capital over the fishing lifecourse. This approach has allowed us to
602 illustrate how those within different parts of the fishing field have access to different
603 forms of capital, which in turn shapes how they are able to access the fishing ladder and
604 position within the fishing community. As previous research has intimated, familial
605 succession is particularly important within small-scale fisheries and this paper has
606 unpacked this issue further. Whilst inheriting or sharing economic capital with
607 predecessors, either in the form of boats or fishing gear, is a crucial way that fishers may
608 access the fishing ladder, the paper has shown that the backdrop of familial context and
609 support is important in subtler, but equally crucial, ways. Accessing and maintaining
610 fishing territories relies on social position –or ‘good fisher’ status –within particular
611 localities (Gustavsson *et al.* 2017) and the paper has seen how fishing families facilitate

612 this through providing social capital on which new entrants may draw and share as they
613 become fishers, as well as providing space and time for them to experiment and develop
614 their own embodied cultural capital.
615
616 The lifecourse perspective taken here, in paying attention to linked lives, sees how
617 accessing and moving along the fishing ladder is closely choreographed with the
618 lifecourse(s) of other fishers. Whilst previous research has focused on the potential
619 advantages of this relationship for younger fishers, the paper has seen that older fishers
620 too may benefit –using it to remain in fishing, sometimes modifying the extent of their
621 direct involvement, and allowing them to maintain their occupational identity into later
622 life. Such insights are relevant for the wider study of fishers. Specifically, it highlights
623 the need to shift the scale of focus –both in policy and academic research –away from a
624 singular concern for the individual fisher. Policies that seek to change or regulate fishers'
625 activities too need to recognise that decisions are often collective and spanning across
626 several generations.
627
628 The paper has seen that whilst familial connection offers the most clearly defined route
629 onto the fishing ladder, this is not the only pathway. Capital may be accumulated in
630 different ways, and at different points across the lifecourse, to allow non-familial access.
631 First, through 'hanging around' as youngsters, potential fishers may get invited into the
632 private space of the boat and, once there, develop their social and cultural capital, with
633 their relative age and geographical location being important precursors to this. Second,
634 fishers may accumulate economic capital prior to becoming a fisher and then, later in the
635 lifecourse, use this to develop their good fisher status in order to gain the support and
636 acceptance of other fishers. Taken together, such examples illustrate the paper's wider

finding that fishing lifecourses are not necessarily linear or uniform. Different points of entry may be taken onto the fishing ladder at different stages in the lifecourse. So too movement along the ladder may progress at different rates, with life transitions such as parenthood differentially shaping fishing activity and the ways that fishers accrue social capital. The recognition that decisions by fishers are made in the context of linked and unfolding lifecourses has relevance, beyond our specific study here, to recent attempts to introduce more sustainable fishing practices. Neis *et al.* (2013) have suggested that most fishing policies have been 'inter-generationally blind' and our observations show that fishers' willingness to engage with practices such as v-notching is closely dependent on the presence of a fishing successor.

The findings presented in this paper open up avenues for future research. The paper has focused predominantly on the lifecourses of boys and men and there is a clear need for more research on women in fishing generally, and from a lifecourse perspective specifically. More work is needed to better understand women's opportunities to accumulate symbolic capital (that is social and cultural capital) within the fishing field and how these processes change through the lifecourse. Our research has focused on the reflections of fishers and the perspectives of parents to consider their experiences of socialisation within the industry. Future research could usefully work with children themselves to examine their experiences of this process. Allied to these agendas, future work might examine whether geographical and social contexts different to those considered here differently (re)shape these processes. For example, we call for more lifecourse research on fisheries with different policy contexts – such as quota dependent fisheries, different scales of fishing enterprise and in light of ongoing demographic and societal changes. Alongside this, fishing governance is rapidly evolving in light of issues

662 such as climate change. It is possible that the more experiential understandings, or forms
663 of capital, that we have examined here may become outmoded in light of a changing
664 climate (and associated governance changes). Future longitudinal research might examine
665 whether fishers are able to trace the changes in the marine environment already seen and
666 predicted in the future and whether notions of good fishing become updated accordingly.
667 Further examination is needed of how a successful dialogue may be developed between
668 fishers and policy-makers to share understandings and, where appropriate, more formal
669 systems of (co)education developed.
670

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674 the research, and the anonymous reviewers and Bettina Bock for their constructive
675 comments on the paper.
676

677 **Notes**

678 [1] Whilst there is a lack of standard definition on what constitutes 'small-scale' fishing, boat size and engine
679 power, type of gear and capital and labour inputs are taken as more structural indicators, whilst other
680 commentators point to the specific livelihood and diversification strategies that they may employ (see Salmi
681 2015).
682 [2] Although there are myriad ways in which women make contributions to fisheries in many geographical
683 localities (see for example Zhao *et al.* 2013) the literature on socialisation and fisheries succession remain
684 largely focused on young men (with Porter 1991 being an important exception).
685 [3] Hapke and Ayyankeril (2004) has previously deployed a lifecourse perspective in exploring gender
686 ideologies amongst fish traders in a southern Indian fishing context. Whilst they, like Elder (1994), use the

687 term 'life course' we employ 'lifecourse' as used in the more recent geographical writings on the term (e.g.
688 Hopkins and Pain (2007)).
689 [4] Whilst the fieldwork observed the multifarious contributions of women to the fishing industry, it was
690 found that the actual practice of fishing was still dominated by men and hence they provide the primary
691 focus of the ensuing analysis.
692 [5] Our interviews focussed primarily on the intergenerational transfer of these more technical knowledges.
693 Future work might usefully consider how fishers engage with (or not) more formal, institutional sites of
694 learning and how new technologies become understood and adopted more broadly.
695 [6] Fishers can voluntarily 'v-notch' berried lobsters (female lobsters with eggs). In practice, this means that
696 they make a v-shaped cut in the lobster tail which indicates that the lobster has been caught and released.
697 Fishers who might re-catch v-notched lobsters are not allowed to land or sell them (Welsh Government
698 2016). This conservation scheme was used to ensure the future vitality of the local lobster stock as the eggs
699 which the female lobster carried would hatch into and ensure future breeding stock (see also Acheson and
700 Gardner 2011).
701

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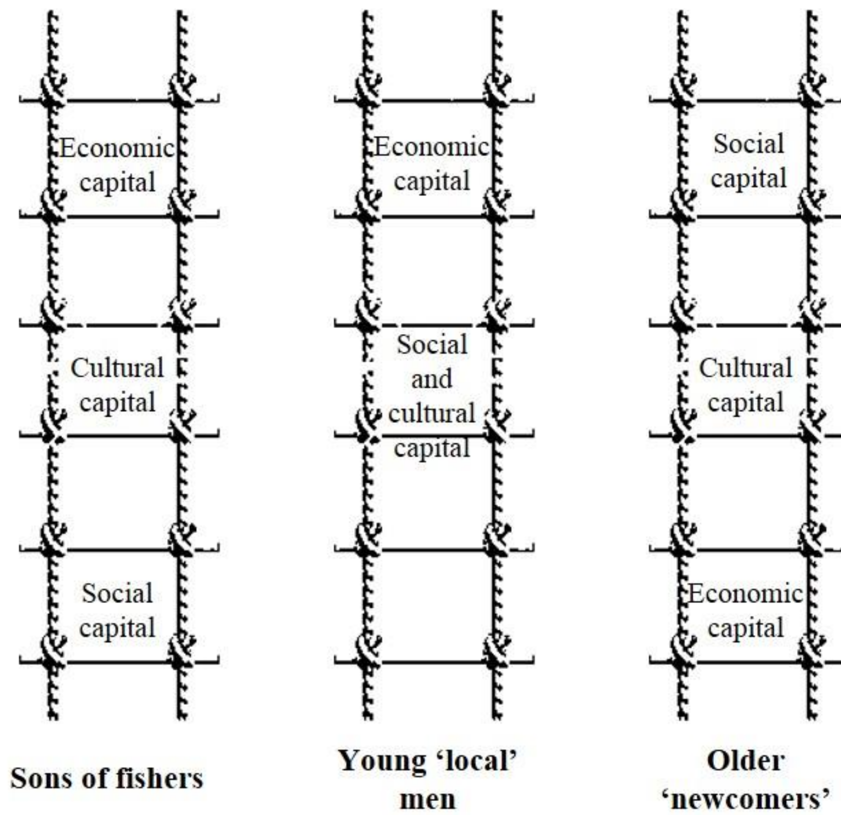

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854 Figure 1: *The different trajectories in which prospective fishers, from different initial*
855 *positions, accumulate fishing capital to become 'good fishers'*

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