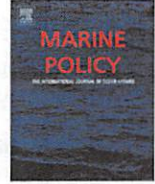




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For generations to come? The privatization paradigm and shifting social baselines in Kodiak, Alaska's commercial fisheries

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results from a study that explored a key threat to fisheries sustainability in Alaska – the graying of the commercial fishing fleet. In the Kodiak Archipelago region this research utilized a political ecology framework and mixed methods ethnography, including 70 semi-structured interviews and participant observation, to further understand this problem. Study results suggest that opportunities for young rural fishermen are increasingly constrained by interrelated socioeconomic and cultural barriers, which have created systemic equity and sustainability concerns. Furthermore, research indicates that the privatization paradigm of fisheries access is a major catalyst of change that has created and amplified barriers, transformed opportunity, and generated lasting inequities and social conflict. Foucault's concept of governmentality is used to describe how some fishermen are internalizing and normalizing privatization discourses to advance further regulatory change. Pauly's concept of shifting baseline syndrome is evoked to argue that current structures of degraded access and equity in the human fishery system are mistakenly assumed to be a natural state, rather than a result of a specific history of public policy choices. Due to the suite of challenges facing fishing people and communities, it is increasingly important to acknowledge the privatization of access as a key threat to sustainable coastal fishing futures.

1. Introduction: graying of the Alaskan fishing fleet

Alaska's commercial seafood industry is the state's largest private-sector employer in terms of jobs and provides sociocultural and economic benefits to coastal communities throughout the year [3]. Alaska is often promoted as a model for sustainable fisheries, and yet fishing communities across the state face a number of challenges ranging from fluctuating seafood markets to the restructuring of access rights [23,32,37,9]. In Alaska, the restructuring of fishing access rights from open access (anyone could fish) to privatized access (only those who possessed a restricted commodity – individual permits or quota – could fish) began in the 1970s with limited entry permits in state salmon fisheries. Beginning in the 1990s, access to various federal fisheries, including halibut, sablefish, and crab, was privatized through the implementation of individual fishing quotas (IFQs; or individual

transferable quotas, ITQs). A key similarity between the state and federal privatization processes was that initial recipients of permits and quotas did not have to pay for these rights, but future users must purchase permits and quotas from private owners. Some key differences are that state fisheries require permit owners to personally fish their permits and permits do not confer a set catch but rather a right to fish for as much as desired within seasons regulated through openings and closures. Federal fisheries do allow for the annual leasing of quota allocations through various mechanisms and do confer a set catch that varies based on the total allowable catch for a fishery.

The switch from open to private access in state and federal fisheries has created significant barriers to new entry because of the very high-start up costs due to permit and quota costs. As pointed out in the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's review of its crab ITQ management program: "A direct and intentional result of the allocation of

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harvesting and processing privileges is an intrinsic barrier to entry in the fisheries” [28]. These barriers for the next generation of fishermen¹ are the most commonly perceived negative impacts of these programs [8]. Coastal youth in Alaska’s fishing communities highly value fishing careers, but they describe minimal opportunities for entry and advancement in this sector given these high entry costs [24,25]. These barriers to entry and advancement in the profession, coupled with incentives that older fishermen have to keep rather than divest their fishing access assets [40], has generated a pressing problem for Alaska’s fisheries – the “graying of the fleet.”

In 2017, the average age of all Alaska state fishery permit holders was 51.1, up over 10 years since 1980 [18]. What this demographic change means for many coastal fishing communities is that far fewer younger people today are engaged in commercial fishing than in past decades [24,7]. In the rural fishing villages of the Kodiak Archipelago, for example, there has been an 84% decline of young salmon fishermen (under 40 years of age) compared to historic highs [14]. The overall decline of Alaskan youth becoming owner-operators of fishing businesses poses challenges for the sustainability of cultural fishing traditions and economies. In 2012, the Alaska State Legislature passed a resolution stating that the graying of the fleet is a pressing area of concern for the entire state [38]. In response, the *Graying of the Fleet* study began in 2014 to better understand and address this problem (see <http://fishermen.alaska.edu>).

2. Study region

To better understand the graying of the fleet problem, research was conducted within two of Alaska’s vital but distinct commercial fishing regions – Bristol Bay and the Kodiak Archipelago. This paper focuses only on ethnographic results in the Kodiak region to contextualize sociocultural and economic impacts of limited fisheries access in a region that hosts a diversified, year-round, commercial fishing industry (Fig. 1). Here over one third of all jobs are directly connected to commercial fishing and a fleet of large and small vessels representing multiple gear groups pursues over 27 fisheries [22,36]. The Port of Kodiak consistently ranks among the top ten fishing ports in the United States in terms of commercial fishery landings and values [27]. Kodiak Archipelago study communities included the regional hub of Kodiak and the remote villages of Old Harbor and Ouzinkie. The rural Kodiak Alutiiq villages have pursued marine-based livelihoods for over 7500 years and have persisted despite disruptive waves of Russian and American colonization [34].

3. Methods

This three-year study employed a mixed-methods ethnographic approach [5]. In the Kodiak region 70 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Kodiak, Old Harbor, and Ouzinkie with a diverse set of crew, hired skippers, owner-operators, and owners of fishing rights who do not or no longer fish. Respondents were selected through purposeful nonprobability chain-referral (or snowball sampling) where key respondents were asked to suggest fishermen to interview within each community [5]. This sampling allowed for a cross-section of fishermen of various ages (younger and older), genders, backgrounds (fishing family history or not), and fisheries and gear types representative of the Kodiak region. The interview protocol covered numerous topics, including individual and family fishing backgrounds, perceptions of fisheries management, and aspects of community life (see [35] for protocol and more information). Interviews were digitally recorded with informant consent and typically lasted between thirty and sixty

minutes. Interview locations included fishing vessels, homes, and the Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center offices. Six interviews were conducted by telephone. Interview data were then transcribed and over 1200 pages of data were thematically coded in the ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis program using grounded theory [39]. Participant observation involved attending local fishery and management meetings, including the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) meeting held in Kodiak in June 2016. Though not addressed in this paper, the study also included a student survey to assess youth attitudes and experiences regarding commercial fishing and community life [13] and an assessment of policy alternatives to address the graying of the fleet problem in Alaska’s fisheries [15].

4. Results and discussion

Ethnographic data from this study indicate that opportunities for rural young fishermen are increasingly constrained by interrelated sociocultural and economic barriers that have created equity and sustainability concerns. Furthermore, this research illustrates that the *privatization paradigm* of fisheries access rights has acted as a major catalyst of change creating or amplifying these barriers, transforming fishing career and livelihood opportunities compared to decades past, and generating new inequities and lasting social conflict. In our analysis, we employ Michel Foucault’s [16] *governmentality* concept to frame active and ongoing processes where some fishing industry participants are shifting from resisting to internalizing the ideology of the privatization paradigm and promoting new values and discourses. We draw upon Daniel Pauly’s [31] *shifting baseline syndrome*, typically used for understanding biological and ecological aspects of fishery systems, to describe how new social norms of perceived opportunity are emerging in Alaska’s fisheries. Study results suggest that today’s young fishermen have been exposed to a degraded social baseline of expectations and opportunity pathways than that of their recent predecessors.

4.1. Privatization paradigm and access challenges

Although this study did not set out to directly study fisheries access privatization respondents repeatedly discussed regulatory shifts including the Alaska limited entry permit system and federal individual quota fisheries. Throughout our data, the shift from open access to restricted, market-based private access is identified as a catalyst of fundamental change that has restructured Alaska’s fishery systems and is a root cause driving the graying of the fleet. The dispossession of access has spawned social conflict and shifted fleet demographic trends as well as greatly influenced perceptions of opportunity among coastal youth and prospective fishermen. Some interview respondents framed these compounded changes in the context of the “American Dream” of fisheries, referencing a desire to return to an ethos common a generation ago embodying equal opportunity for advancement and prosperity based on hard work regardless of class [12,2]. Many explained that in the past with enough hard work alone fishermen could prosper and become successful, often supporting their families throughout the year solely from fishing income.

Interview respondents explained that the introduction of restricted market-based access profoundly altered pathways to gain entry into and move up in Alaska’s fisheries and that today access rights are the main barrier for young and new fishermen. Opportunities have become constrained and hard work alone is not the deciding factor in fishing success as it was said to have been in the past, while changing social values in fisheries shift importance from hard work and determination to financial savvy and inheritance circumstances (see [9]). Although previous generations had to invest in vessels, gear, and operating costs before privatization regulations were implemented, this research demonstrates how many Kodiak fishermen identify the commodification of access itself as continuing to fundamentally and negatively remake

¹ Following convention in Alaska’s fisheries, the terms “fishermen” and “fisherman” are used as non-gendered terms. They collectively refer to all ages and all genders.



Fig. 1. Map of the Kodiak Archipelago. Courtesy of the Kodiak Island Borough.

fishery systems by creating entrenched social classes and substantially altering rural fishing communities and livelihoods. Below a young fisherman explained these generational differences as well as value tensions embedded in treating fisheries access rights as commodified assets:

My parent's generation...You could show up with a backpack and fifty dollars, enough to buy some hooks and could go out and you could catch your own bait and start catching halibut. It was the American Dream you know. That's gonna be gone if you give it ten years when these guys get out of the fishery. If you're not already rich, you're not gonna get rich. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 02/12/2016)

Overall, study results indicate that today very few fisheries remain open to newcomers to move into owner-operator roles without substantial initial investment for access rights. Interview respondents asserted that one of the most important survival mechanisms in a fluctuating natural-resource industry is to diversify fishing portfolios by participating in multiple fisheries. This research illustrates that the ability to participate in multiple fisheries is constrained by political, socioeconomic, and ecological factors. However, individual circumstances, community constraints, and regulatory programs that commodify access make diversification prospects for current and

prospective fishermen increasingly tenuous. Opportunities to diversify, key to stability for rural fishing livelihoods [37,4], have been so drastically transformed within one generation that it poses a serious threat to the sustainability of fishery systems in Alaska and beyond. One younger study participant explained the precarious nature of trying to balance a fishing livelihood on only one or two fisheries:

Basically on these docks here when you look at the small boats and most of the businesses it's cod and salmon. I think it's [a] pretty risky position to have so many boats in [only these fisheries], especially when cod really doesn't generate that much revenue for most of these boats. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 05/23/2014)

For example, in Kodiak a younger salmon seine owner-operator often has to support debt service on a highly priced full operation package (including vessel, gear, permit, insurance, and moorage) from salmon income alone, unlike fishermen from only a generation ago. Many respondents explained the constraints on diversifying and advancing in fishing careers with new terms that have become common in Alaska fisheries discourse about the effects of privatized access. They describe the gradual removal of “stepping stone fisheries” due to privatization that tends to “plateau” fishermen in “entry-level” fisheries or as “career crew” on other people's vessels, indicating the experience of

“feeling stuck” and “unable to move up” into additional fisheries. Nearly all younger respondents without direct ties to IFQ fisheries viewed them as largely “cut off” from viable fishing business opportunities, while recognizing the substantial advantage that people with family connections have in initially accessing those fisheries. The following excerpts illustrated access-related challenges associated with barriers to entry:

Owning quota? No, it's a lost cause. There's absolutely no reason to speculate on that. It's a losing proposition. (Older fisherman, Kodiak, 02/12/2015)

I think it's only gonna get tougher for the next generation. Guys are still slowly trickling in, but it's a slow process. There's a group of us that kind of all got in at the same time and then there's only been a handful of additions since then and it's just getting harder and harder every year for the next guy that wants to do it, even if he does have the attitude. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 09/17/2014)

The cumulative effects of barriers to entry and constricting upward mobility within the fishing industry were repeatedly discussed by respondents, as younger fishermen are forced to rely on one or two fisheries. This has resulted in continuously consolidated and specialized fleets, which create increasingly daunting entry requiring fundamentally different strategies and pathways than that of many young fishermen's mentors. This closing off of opportunity exacerbates instability within rural coastal fishing communities, as there is often limited non-fishery employment. The typically high cost of access rights, fluctuating markets values for these rights combined with long-term debt service, and uncertainty in earnings makes buying into a new fishery a risky and stressful proposition for non-wealthy young and new prospective fishermen. This risk and uncertainty has resulted in fewer young people initially interested in, and able to pursue, full-time fishing careers, particularly as owner-operators living in Kodiak region communities. Respondents repeatedly cited such risks in reference to privatized access and limited upward mobility opportunities:

I guess one of the scary issues is because the capital costs have gotten so high, because of restricted access to the resources - because of privatization and rationalization² - people are making half million dollar bets on a single fishery and these stocks plummet and they have these loan payments. It could financially wreck people for a lifetime. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 10/14/2014)

4.2. Equity and privatization perspectives

Equity issues resulting from previous fisheries privatization are evident through enduring social class stratification present in interview and participation observation data. Tensions between different user groups vary and range from subtle to overt in the Kodiak region and are often tied to changes in the ability to make a living from the fishing industry. Although the egalitarian ideology of fisheries [26] may still carry weight in the discourse of fishing in Alaska, class entrenchment is visible within the study communities. Absentee ownership and inheritance continue to polarize fishing community members between the “haves” and “have-nots”, where distinct classes of fishermen are able to own, lease, and gift their fishing rights and others are left to rent or purchase rights at great cost. Several younger fishermen explained the creation and entrenchment of social classes resulting from IFQs:

There's sort of this divide between people who have quota and those who don't, and there's not much mobility between there. People sell their quotas; you can go to the non-quota owning class, but not so much the other way around. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 05/23/2014)

That's another thing about IFQs that automatically shuts the door for anybody that wants to do it, pretty much the rich got richer on that deal. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 09/25/2014)

Many fishermen stated that those who were gifted transferable commodity access rights within one generation are seen to have been given an unfair advantage within the fishing industry. Young people with parents who were initially awarded IFQ allocations were often referred to as someone whose “dad has Qs” to reflect the additional advantage that young person has. Those with gifted and inherited access represent a new social class. Ethnographic data show new divisions in communities, especially among the younger generation of fishermen now made up of those who must purchase access and those who inherit or are gifted access rights.

Leasing trends in individual quota fisheries have been an “elephant in the room” (see [33]), but are increasingly being questioned. For example, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council expressed concern about high lease rates in the crab fisheries they manage (e.g., [28]). Leasing of quota share in these fisheries is pervasive with lease fees as high as 80% of total vessel profits [1]. While the Alaska halibut and sablefish IFQ program includes active participation measures aimed at steering these fisheries away from leasing towards quota-owners-as-operators, initial quota share recipients are incentivized to lease annual IFQ allocations by using hired skippers instead of selling quota shares as they age. Furthermore these economic incentives have created a class of absentee quota shareholders who do not take part in the fishery and profit off of others' labor [40]. Our research shows that such controversial IFQ leasing practices continue to spread social and intergenerational conflict and pay inequity among the fishing fleet in the Kodiak region. Many respondents critiqued practices of quota owners charging lease fees, often in excess of the total earnings of the working skippers and crew (see also [9]). Several respondents discussed fishing on crab and halibut quota boats as working in “sharecropper” systems, where labor does not directly relate to individual success (see [11,30]). Quota owners, who are not on boats, or even residing in fishing communities, leasing their annual IFQ allocations provides yet another example of how the privatization paradigm has transformed fishing livelihoods around the Kodiak region and beyond. An older fisherman explained this change:

So that's a serious problem with the kinds of consolidation that privatization brings. And you can see it one fishery after another as they privatize it. It's not really worth it for guys to work on deck anymore. And so you can see it in all the longline fisheries...your pay gets cut immediately in half...half the money [goes to] the guy that owns the quota. That's the reality of it. And so all those crab jobs are gone. I don't think anybody will be able to do what we did. Again, because there's just not opportunity. (Older fisherman, Kodiak, 07/15/2014)

Carothers and Chambers [10] discussed the concept of “Q-teasing” in Kodiak fisheries, where crew are made to dedicate their labor for the promise of a position in a future IFQ fishery, that may or may not materialize. They also noted that some captains may require crew to fish less lucrative fisheries as a precursor to attaining a spot on deck for halibut trips. Ethnographic research in this study revealed that Q-teasing not only continues the entrenchment of class roles and crew being forced to yield power to quota owners, but that such practices also place additional challenges upon young and new captains who struggle to maintain viable operations with full crews. As these already marginalized young captains often participate in entry-level fisheries, they may have a hard time attracting crewmembers who may choose to occupy more comfortable quarters on larger boats that often have quota holdings to prosecute later in the year [35]. As virtually all respondents noted that finding “good crew” was a challenge throughout their fishing careers, this practice of Q-teasing made possible by privatization policies illustrates yet another way that fishery relations between crew

² Rationalization is often used to describe the privatization paradigm in the Alaska context. See [6].

and captains are being remade.

4.3. Governmentality and inter-fleet issues

The creation of new expectations of fairness and inter-fleet equity issues regarding fisheries access rights and the next generation of fishermen has surfaced in the Kodiak region. Ethnographic data suggests that discourses of fishing cultural values and norms are continuing to polarize and shift. Participant observation data collected during the federal North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) meeting held in Kodiak in June 2016 provides a good example of this (see [29]). Formal and informal public comment observed at this meeting revealed two opposing philosophical perspectives on how to address bycatch, or incidental catch, in the Gulf of Alaska groundfish trawl fishery. Outspoken members and some representatives of the trawl fleet supported a individual quota (or catch share) program with cooperatives that allocated directed and incidental prohibited species catch. Proponents of this discourse reasoned the need for market-based tools for trawl fishermen to better utilize bycatch and increase the profitability of the groundfish fishery. However, others resisted this framing and referenced the need to learn lessons from past privatization programs that monetized quota access of a public resource prohibiting future participants from enjoying the same opportunities that initial recipients of quota experienced. Some expressed worry that creating a quota system for trawl gear would set a precedent in the Gulf of Alaska region for additional privatization.

These inter-fleet equity issues that surfaced through public comment and arguments for opposing alternatives at the 2016 NPFMC meeting in Kodiak included in our research analysis illustrated various perspectives from current trawl participants, including that the Gulf of Alaska groundfish has been “left out” of privatization restructuring for too long. One respondent explained this situation in a 2015 interview:

Whatever is gonna happen at the Council in the next couple of years is pretty critical I think. My [family member] was working on - I guess you could call it Gulf rationalization right after AFA [American Fisheries Act] came in. We were supposed to have this 12 to 15 years ago and it's tough, we really need a better management structure. We could be doing so such a better job [with bycatch]. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 04/15/2015)

Furthermore, discourse shifts evidenced in two posters displayed in Kodiak during NPFMC meetings in Kodiak in 2006 (Fig. 2) and 2016 (Fig. 3) illustrate a growing prevalence of pro-IFQ, or catch share language, as well as a broader shift towards normalizing and popularizing

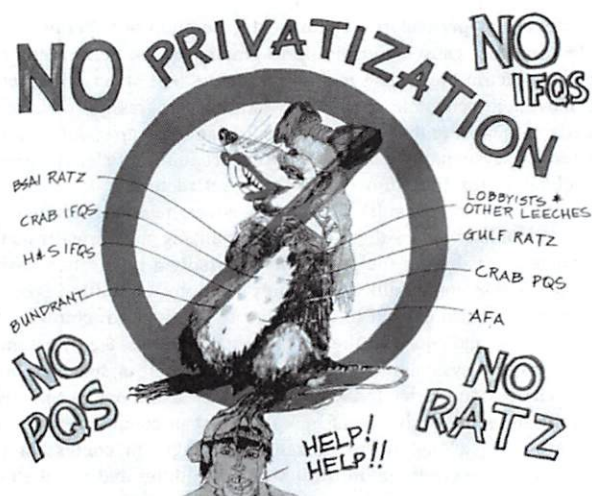


Fig. 2. Anti-privatization poster by Ludger Dochtermann from 2006.



Fig. 3. Trawl groundfish parade posters during the NPFMC meeting in Kodiak, June 2016. Photo by Danielle Ringer.

the privatization paradigm within just a decade.

The normalization of privatization discourse and the values it embodies may be illustrating overall systemic change. Foucault's [16,17] theory of governmentality suggests that governance power itself has the capacity to dictate particular human values and behaviors without obvious coercion in ways that favorably impact certain stakeholders over others [21]. As Foucault suggests, the hegemonic nature of neoliberal discourse has deeply influenced the uptake of seemingly common-sense framings of fishery systems (e.g., the “race for fish” inevitably leads to inefficient outcomes in the absence of privatized access rights, outcomes like the graying of the fleet are the result of inevitable economic progression), which in turn impacts the next generation of fishermen. Opportunities to gain entry are now astronomically expensive and those who were not initially awarded access rights or who are not in line to inherit such rights often become disenfranchised from fishing livelihoods. As market-based access regulations become more widely accepted and globally promoted, adaptations to external influences means that more people increasingly internalize the norms, values, and discourses of the privatization paradigm (e.g., fisheries suffer from a property-rights problem, too many fishermen lead to inefficiencies, privatized access is good for consolidating fleets and increasing aggregate profitability) and subvert other ones (e.g., fishing is about hard work, and the investment of hard work, rather than the investment of money should dictate success). This performative yet subtle process influences people's behaviors, values, and local fishing dynamics through self-governance evidenced in changing fishing community rhetoric regarding privatization (see [19]).

However, the normalization and internalization of the privatization paradigm is not universal among commercial fishermen, particularly among young, rural, and Indigenous stakeholders. Evidence from our semi-structured interviews and participant observation illustrate the persistence of fishing community members who continue to resist the discourse and values of privatization instead pointing to ongoing negative consequences in sociocultural and economic aspects of commercial fisheries and fishing communities. Many community-based and younger interview respondents challenged the assumptions implicit in the privatization paradigm and rather articulated support for more traditional fishing values that they do not want to see change, such as hard work equating to advancement and fair compensation. Seemingly common-sense tropes, such as the property-rights problem of fisheries and race for fish, assume particular sets of individual values and behavior that those who resist privatization continue to reject or question:

Just this last month I did halibut and that's an obvious example of the

way quota diminishes the amount of money returning to communities cause the [quota] shareholders were getting 50%, then the boat owner was getting 25% and then all the costs were taken off and then the shares were split five ways. I think there's misconception when people talk about regulating a fishery. They say, 'It's being overfished so we need to regulate it', but the actual method for determining the total allowable catch doesn't change. The race for fish ends, I guess, but I mean we were still working 22 hours a day and I don't know what we would have done differently if you were racing for fish. You're still setting thousands of hooks a day...We're not more conscientious of the fish that we're catching because we're fishing a quota system. If anything, when you diminish the percentage of pay that a deckhand gets you get lower quality deckhands and that increases danger on a boat because you have a less qualified person working in the same position. I don't think it really makes it safer in that regard. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 05/30/2014)

It is unclear how these competing narratives between privatization discourse and identification of economic restructuring consequences can or will reconcile in the context of the inherent complexity of fisheries [20]. Younger respondents in particular expressed irritation about the discourse heralding privatization as the inevitable solution to natural resource management issues and the importance of "holding off the tidal wave" of further programs. Many pointed to the cultural, economic, and social problems stemming from such dominant discourses and several young fishermen were eager to see policy alternatives to the commodification of access rights while linking net fishery benefits with the availability of entry points:

It's frustrating when you get the people that are supposed to be looking out for our federal fisheries, and there's no other discussion. They're just saying, IFQs, ITQs, rationalization as if it's the only way to go. And it's not. We've had twenty years of evidence that it doesn't accomplish what they're saying it accomplishes. There are other options. It doesn't mitigate overcapitalization of the fleet. It doesn't mitigate any kind of environmental issues. All it does is literally pulls boats, and with boats comes jobs, away from small communities or states for that matter...They say it's an efficiency thing. There is something intrinsically valuable in the inefficiencies of our fisheries, because those inefficiencies are what create jobs and that's what keeps small communities like this one vibrant. (Younger fisherman, Kodiak, 02/12/2016)

4.4. Shifting social baselines

As the discourses and values change among some Kodiak region fishermen, so do expectations for what it takes to become involved and move up in the industry, hence a shifting baseline within fisheries structure and participants themselves. Daniel Pauly's pivotal work on shifting baselines syndrome suggests that, "each generation of fisheries scientists accepts as a baseline the stock size and species composition that occurred at the beginning of their careers, and uses this to evaluate changes" (1995: 430). This concept of shifting baseline syndrome has been largely discussed in terms of biological and ecological systems, but this concept has utility in describing the shifting norms of reference in the social system. For example, the privatization paradigm has restructured, and continues to substantially restructure, coastal Alaskan fishing communities and solidifies the class-based nature of the past several decades tied to limited entry permits and IFQs. As the next generation of fishermen embark on their careers as seafood harvesters the now very narrow window of opportunity to enter and diversify appears to be the natural state. As policy makers review and assess their programs, the intrinsic barriers to entry appear to be normal and to have always existed. As Pauly asserted, the result of gradual shifts in baseline perceptions leads to inappropriate reference points for evaluating fishery systems.

Decades after implementation of privatized access in Alaska's

fisheries these policies continue to be discussed by fishermen and community members as highly controversial and fundamental concerns have not changed since the 1990s. However, shifting baseline syndrome theory suggests that people in the current era cannot accurately perceive and assess the difference between intact and degraded ecological systems; evidence of this is seen in the social system as well – managers, fishermen, and the general public are beginning to see the current "degraded" landscape of opportunity, one where inequities and exclusions persist, as the natural state of affairs that existed in the past and exists today. Public discourse reflecting traditional values of access and upward mobility within the commercial fishing industry dissolve into nostalgia among those who lived through those historical periods (or are completely absent among younger generations who view the current system as the only baseline).

The concepts of shifting social baselines and governmentality are helpful to document and better understand how ideological shifts are becoming normalized over time and through discourse. Why is this concerning? These cultural and regulatory shifts raise key concerns about the sustainability of the Alaskan fishing industry and fishing communities. Many respondents referenced the cyclical and uncertain nature of fishing livelihoods, but the privatization paradigm, degraded access, and increasing inequities within fishery systems compared to the recent past illustrates a fundamentally transformed system. Access and opportunity have been so restructured and engineered within a relatively short timeframe that a younger person today has no realistic way to do what their recent predecessors did by thriving off of a seasonal round fishing and managers increasingly view this as a normal baseline of expectation.

5. Conclusions

This article explored a key threat to the sustainability of Alaska's fishing industry – the graying of the commercial fishing fleet. Research from this study illustrated how severing access to fisheries resources from the next generation of coastal residents through the privatization paradigm undermines viable coastal livelihoods as well as discounts the deep connections to place, tradition, and sociocultural dimensions that characterize commercial fishing practices. Respondents continually explained that the closing off of fishing opportunities, which serve as the economic and social backbone of coastal Alaska, poses a long-term threat to the industry by diverting enthusiastic and innovative youth away from place-based careers. In describing diachronic fishery changes respondents tended to frame shifts towards privatized access at the heart of the complex graying of the fleet problem. This research indicates that these demographic and cultural changes are largely a result of the privatization paradigm, which has created a crisis in fisheries access particularly for the next generation of fishermen. This underlying root cause contributing to graying of the fleet trends and social conflict in the Kodiak region is therefore best understood, not as the inevitable economic outcome of industry progression as is often stated or assumed in the privatization paradigm discourse, but rather as the result of systematic policies promoting economic efficiency through consolidation resulting in overall industry restructuring.

In this paper Foucault's concept of governmentality framed the discussion of how some fishermen are internalizing and normalizing the discourse and values of the privatization paradigm to advance further systemic access commodification. Pauly's concept of shifting baseline syndrome was also evoked to argue that the current structures of degraded access and equity in the human system are mistakenly assumed to be a natural system state, rather than as a result of specific public policy choices. In Alaska, today's fishing career access points embody a radically different landscape of opportunity than compared to the recent past. Unpacking the privatization paradigm in context of the shifting baseline syndrome illustrates how inequities and social stratification issues become further entrenched and normalized within privatized fisheries as the changes with program implementation fades

further back into history. Therefore, management policies that treat these issues carelessly or superficially only create further sociocultural problems that become further deep-rooted and difficult or even impossible to address as time goes on. Due to the suite of challenges facing fishing people and communities, it is increasingly important to acknowledge the privatization of access as a key threat to sustainable coastal fishing futures.

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