

**The invisible (woman) entrepreneur? Shifting the discourse from fisheries
diversification to entrepreneurship**

To be cited as: Gustavsson M. The invisible (woman) entrepreneur? Shifting the discourse from fisheries diversification to entrepreneurship. *Sociologia Ruralis* doi:10.1111/soru.12343

Dr Madeleine Gustavsson ^{1,2}

¹⁾ Ruralis – Institute for Rural and Regional Research madeleine.gustavsson@ruralis.no

²⁾ University of Exeter

Abstract

In response to ongoing economic downturns in the small-scale fishing sector, there have been calls for fishing businesses to add value to fishing catches. Whilst such activities would have gendered implications, such proposals often do not consider the gendered contexts in which entrepreneurship is placed, nor how this form of entrepreneurship works for the women involved. The paper draws on in-depth narrative interviews with women in fishing families in England and Wales who have started, initiated or explored entrepreneurial opportunities to examine i) whether entrepreneurship enables a (re)negotiation of gender relations within families and ii) how entrepreneurship develops over the lifecourse. The research is conceptually framed through the literature on women's 'entrepreneurship', family embedded perspectives of entrepreneurship, 'Mumpreneurship' combined with a lifecourse approach. I found that although women's traditional invisibility often became reproduced through their entrepreneurship in fishing family contexts, women's fisheries entrepreneurship challenged traditional gender relations. In becoming entrepreneurs women negotiated their entrepreneurship with other gendered roles, such as motherhood, over the lifecourse. I argue that shifting the discourse from fisheries diversification to entrepreneurship make it possible to take women seriously by fully viewing them as fisheries workers in their own right in both research and policy.

Keywords: women; gender; entrepreneurs; fishing families; fisheries; entrepreneurship

Introduction

In responding to calls for the need to increase the economic performance of fishing businesses, academics and policy makers have suggested that adding value to fish and shellfish products is an important way of improving economic viability (e.g. Farnet 2011; Kirwan *et al.* 2018). Whilst some research to date has explored how recent forms of ‘diversification’ to fishing enterprises can add value to fisheries (Carra *et al.* 2014; Prospero *et al.* 2019), this line of inquiry has yet to fully examine how gender (see West and Zimmerman 1987) plays a role in how value addition is done. Neither has research explored how gender, in turn, shapes such value adding activities and what value addition then means to the women (and men) involved. The literature around value addition in fisheries¹ which is drawing on the concept of diversification has yet to place its analysis within a feminist analytical framework and to take seriously the gendered context in which value-addition is performed.

To allow for a feminist analysis of the gendered context of value-added fisheries², I argue that there is a need to shift the discourse from fisheries diversification to that of fisheries entrepreneurship. The argument here is that rather than assuming one activity to be the main activity (i.e. capturing fish), and any other activities as secondary (i.e. the ‘diversified activity’) – there is a need to attend to how the context of value addition is gendered and how socially constructed gender relations manifests themselves in any observed hierarchies (referred to as the ‘gendered context’ throughout the paper). Such a conceptual shift is also politically important as it facilitates a more nuanced picture of the gender relations and micropolitics which foregrounds women’s independence and autonomy. Only by shifting this discourse can we gain an understanding of how, in

particular, women's entrepreneurialism is performed without positioning it as subordinate to that of men's fisheries work.

I begin the paper by reviewing the current literature and European policy around fisheries diversification and entrepreneurialism. This is followed by a conceptual framing which synthesise the literatures on women/female entrepreneurship (Ahl 2006; Hanson 2003; Hanson and Blake 2007), family embedded perspectives of entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Cliff 2003), 'Mumpreneurship' (Ekinsmyth 2011; Ekinsmyth 2013; Ekinsmyth 2014) and a lifecourse approach (Elder *et al.* 2003; Gustavsson and Riley 2018a). This framing is then developed through an analysis of qualitative data drawn from in-depth interviews with women who are entrepreneurs in the small-scale³ fishing family context in England and Wales⁴. The findings are structured around two main themes. First, I focus on gender relations in families - and in couples in particular - as women perform entrepreneurial work. Second, I discuss the approaches taken to entrepreneurship over the lifecourse of women with life events such as motherhood playing a key role. In the conclusion, I put forward an argument for the value of this approach to entrepreneurship to allow for women to be taken seriously by fully viewing them as fisheries workers in their own right (see Gustavsson 2020).

Reviewing the literature: From fisheries diversification to entrepreneurship

In fisheries research and policy making, the concepts of diversification and entrepreneurship are often used interchangeably. However, I argue that diversification and entrepreneurship are not the same and, in this section, I will be reviewing the literature to highlight how they differ, and how they position women and value-added activities differently. In doing so, I develop a knowledge base which I then build on in

the analysis of my empirical data and in conceptual development. I begin by discussing fisheries diversification before moving on to reviewing and analysing previous research on women's entrepreneurship in fisheries.

Fisheries diversification

Within European Union policy, there has been a push for fishers to adopt fisheries diversification strategies. Specifically, the 2014-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) regulation included support for investments:

“contributing to the diversification of the income of fishermen through the development of complementary activities, including investments on board, angling tourism, restaurants, environmental services related to fishing and educational activities on fishing” (European Parliament and Council 2014, no. 33).

Diversification in the fishing context is, as evident in the European Parliament and Council's regulatory definition above, a broad term implying many varied activities targeted at changing practices to somehow increase profitability. This includes fishers changing their target species, fishing in other localities or fishers complementing their fishing incomes with other income sources (European Parliament and Council 2014; Morgan 2016). Further, diversification of fish products can involve post-harvest activities such as diversifying the selling of fish and processing fish and shellfish. Diversification can also mean going beyond fish and in initiating activities associated with, for example, tourism as highlighted in the quote above (also see Evans and Ilbery 1989; Frangoudes and Escallier 2004).

Whilst there has been a push for gender equality within the European Union's wider Structural Investment Fund (European Commission 2015), there is no explicit mentioning

of gender, gender equality or the roles that women play in diversification within the EMFF regulatory text (European Parliament and Council 2014, no. 33). Yet, a report by Farnet (Freeman *et al.* 2018) has highlighted that many women in Europe indeed lead and pursue diversification initiatives funded through Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) funding (by extension EMFF Union Priority 4 funds). However, the money provided by the EMFF is tied to the diversification of the existing fishing business and focus on diversification within, and from, fisheries to a more income diversified economy. The implication of this framing is that women entrepreneurs are primarily only eligible for these funds given their association with a fish catching business and often their relationships with (male) fishers.

In England, the EMFF diversification policy has been translated into a language around job creation, human capital, skills development and innovation (MMO 2017). Whilst most EMFF projects eligibility criteria limit the applicant to fishers (i.e. the professional job title of those that capture fish) or collectives of fishers, projects focused on themes related to job creation and innovation can be “granted to spouses of self-employed fishermen or, where and in so far as recognised by national law, the life partners of self-employed fishermen” (MMO 2017, p. 7). Even if there is an opportunity for women that are partnered with fishers to access these funds, the uptake has been low, with for example Freeman *et al.* (2018) finding that UK designates less of its FLAG funding to project targeting women than that the EU average. Even if women – conditioned by their relationships to (often male) fishers, can access some funds, it can be argued that the regulations supporting diversification, with their focus on “fishermen” (MMO 2017), fail to truly account for the wider (gendered) context in which value addition takes place which goes beyond the job title of the fisher. Further, as I will develop throughout this

paper, it positions these women and their entrepreneurialism as secondary to the main fishing activity. I return to and expand this argument below in my review of existing research.

Similarly, the majority of research focusing on the diversification of fisheries in the European context tends to be largely gender blind. An example of this is Morgan's (2016, p. 9) study on fishermen's responses to change in the English Channel which only mentions women's contribution to fisheries diversification in passing although his evidence points to their important role:

“seven of the 13 fishermen who have developed standalone diversifying activities reported that a family member supported their business. In each of these cases support is provided by the fisherman's spouse, with roles including administrative/office support, marketing, retail and running the diversified enterprise”.

Such studies fail to move beyond a focus on the individual 'main' male fisher and thus tend to ostracise all other actors (e.g. women), and views all other activities (e.g. post-harvest activities) as secondary and existing only to 'support' the viability of the main activity which is fishing. Arguably these studies then further fail to contextualise diversification activities more broadly within families and renders invisible the work of family members. The consequence then is that this type of research fails to fully understand how diversified enterprises operate and how they evolve over time.

Yet, Frangoudes and Escallier (2004), in their important work on women's roles in fisheries⁵ diversification in Europe, has brought women's roles in fisheries diversification under the spotlight in arguing that women have occupied a central position in diversifying fisheries. They found that, traditionally, women used to sell fish as a way to make money

out of fishing, but more recently they have expanded into new areas of fishing income diversification such as processing fish and provide catering and accommodation services. Another ways in which women have sought to diversify incomes is through taking up non-fishing employment allowing families access to a steady and reliable income which do not depend on the fluctuating fortunes of fishing (Binkley 2000; Gustavsson and Riley 2018b). However, adopting the language of diversification, I would argue, tends to reinforce the idea that those ‘diversified activities’ are secondary to the ‘main’ activity of fishing. Instead, I suggest that by adopting the language, discourse and concept of entrepreneurship it is possible to take serious women’s entrepreneurial work in its own right and on its own terms.

Women’s entrepreneurship in fisheries

One of the earliest studies combining an analysis of gender ideology and female fisheries entrepreneurs in a fishing context was by Overå (2003) who, in 2003, studied women fish traders’ ownership of capital (e.g. canoes, outboard engines and nets) in ‘male spheres’ in Ghana. She found that “[t]he place-specific manner in which gender relations are embedded in local fishing economies, is crucial for the opportunities and constraints of female entrepreneurs” (Overå 2003, p. 61). Her early findings highlight how drawing on the concept of entrepreneurship allow for an exploration of how women’s practices are contextualised in places as well as how gender relations matter to how entrepreneurship is done. This, I would argue, differ from the diversification discourse which tend to diminish women’s fishing entrepreneurialism as ‘in addition’ or ‘secondary’ to fishing.

More recently, a small but increasing literature on women’s entrepreneurship and innovation in fisheries is developing (Delaney *et al.* 2019; Fröcklin *et al.* 2018; Locke *et*

al. 2017; Pedroza-Gutiérrez 2019; Soejima and Frangoudes 2019; Soejima and Makino 2018). This literature suggests, for example, that government initiatives targeting entrepreneurship are often “not formed with women in mind” (Delaney *et al.* 2019, p. 293) yet, it is argued that women are commonly entrepreneurs in the fishing context (Pedroza-Gutiérrez 2019) – revealing an empirical gap in understanding with implications for policymaking. Whilst entrepreneurship is mentioned by these authors, the concept of entrepreneurship is not generally well developed and remain under-conceptualised – indeed it is not clear how this is different from the concept of diversification. This is exemplified by Fröcklin (2018) who, in her study of women innovators in Zanzibar, sees entrepreneurship as a ‘resource’ that women develop through their handicraft innovations and Locke *et al.* (2017) who mentions entrepreneurship in their study on women’s innovation in fishing communities in Cambodia, the Philippines and the Solomon Island without expanding on how they understand the term. One of the more well-developed studies discussing women’s economic entrepreneurship is by Soejima and Makino (2018) who researches ‘entrepreneurship groups’ in Japan. They found that through selling and promoting the eating of fish the women’s groups practice entrepreneurship and add value to fish catches (Soejima and Frangoudes 2019; Soejima and Makino 2018). Yet, whilst their study highlights how women organise their entrepreneurship and how they move beyond traditional subject positions – it remains conceptually unclear how entrepreneurship is different from fisheries diversification.

Despite this growing literature it has not been clarified how a focus on entrepreneurship is any different from fisheries diversification. Further, research on women’s entrepreneurship in fisheries has not been strongly anchored in the wider entrepreneurial literature that discusses more specifically how ‘the entrepreneur’ is gendered and how

gender relations as well as social – and familial – contexts shape the entrepreneurial process. The current study attends to these conceptual knowledge gaps.

Conceptualising entrepreneurship

In conceptualising the study, and in developing the feminist analytical framework, I draw on the literatures on: i) women/female entrepreneurship (Hanson 2003; Hanson and Blake 2007) – including post-structural perspectives of entrepreneurship (Ahl 2006; Ahl and Marlow 2012; Little 2016); ii) family embedded perspectives of entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Cliff 2003) including the literature around ‘Mumpreneurship’ (Ekinsmyth 2011; Ekinsmyth 2013; Ekinsmyth 2014); as well as iii) a ‘lifecourse’ approach (Elder *et al.* 2003; Gustavsson and Riley 2018a).

To begin with, the literature on women’s entrepreneurship highlights how women entrepreneurs are often marginalised from the individualised, masculine, norms that characterise entrepreneurship (Hanson 2003). Hanson and Blake (2005, p. 179) argue that an “entrepreneur” is often described as, for example, a “risk-taking”, “autonomous”, “powerful”, “knowledgeable”, and “independent” individual – “all words that are more widely associated with being male than with being female”. Going further, Ahl (2006) draws on post-structural feminist approaches to stress that there is a need to understand women’s entrepreneurship ‘in its own right’ and on its own terms rather than positioning women’s entrepreneurship as somehow lacking or incomplete (in comparison to male norms). Drawing on Ahl and Marlow (2012), Little (2016, p. 361) suggests that whilst “initial research had frequently argued for women to be acknowledged as equal in ‘competing’ with men for resources and recognition, more recent work seeks to go beyond the idea that women entrepreneurs should be judged according to male norms”.

Therefore, in conceptualising women's entrepreneurship there is a need go beyond the perspective offered by fisheries diversification in conceptualising women as entrepreneurs in their own right. This necessitates understanding how women are positioned within broader gendered social contexts, such as a family, over the lifecourse – and, in turn, how this shapes their entrepreneurialism.

The focus on individual entrepreneurs has further been critiqued for not understanding the context which give rise to the entrepreneur – and authors suggest taking a broader perspective which includes focusing on the geographical context, place and gender (Hanson 2003). Scholars have also brought attention to how entrepreneurship is 'embedded' in social and economic processes – highlighting how “we need to move away from considering the entrepreneur in isolation and look at the entrepreneurial process” (Jack and Anderson 2002, p. 467). Inspired by such debates, Aldrich and Cliff (2003) argue for the need of a “family embeddedness perspective” that can highlight how family and the family members' lifecourses influence business start-up and development and how the business development in turn (re)shape families. Taking such debates further, by focusing in on mothers who run businesses, Ekinsmyth (2011; 2013; 2014) introduces the concept of Mumpreneurship. Mumpreneurs are a self-defined group of mothers who start businesses from the context of their families – with a “desire to achieve ‘work-life harmony’ through an identity orientation that blurs the boundary between the roles of the ‘mother’ and the ‘businesswoman’” (Ekinsmyth 2011, p. 104). As such, Mumpreneurs embrace the role of the ‘mother’ – and draw on this role both for networks, creative inspiration and recruitment, in developing a business that can be navigated within the time-space constrains of motherhood (Ekinsmyth 2013). Expanding on this, I draw on a lifecourse approach (Elder *et al.* 2003; Gustavsson and Riley 2018a) to understand how

women's lives change over time and with life events such as motherhood, shaping the ways in which women do entrepreneurship. In drawing on these perspectives it is possible to contextualise the 'women fisheries entrepreneur' in a gendered fishing family context which changes over the lifecourse of themselves and their families.

Taken together, I draw on these three strands of literature in exploring the intersections between gender, family, lifecourse and entrepreneurship. I do so by examining how women's particular forms of entrepreneurship emerge, and develop, from the gendered contexts that constitute fisheries and fishing families which shape the ways in which they negotiate their entrepreneurship and gender over the lifecourse. After introducing the methodology, I will move onto discussing my research findings.

Methodology

In this paper, I draw on a wider research project on women's roles in fishing enterprises and families in the UK. In this project a total of 24 women were interviewed in 2019 and the interviewed women had varying forms of involvement in fishing: women worked with fish – either by capturing (2), processing, selling or marketing fish (13), women worked in fisheries organisations (2) – or women were part of fishing families (7). In addition to analysing the larger dataset (Gustavsson 2021) through a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), a sub-set of seven interviews with women who have started, initiated or explored entrepreneurship in England in Wales were analysed more in-depth to inform this paper. This in-depth analysis involved returning to the transcripts and developing additional thematic codes in relation to the entrepreneurial activities.

In reporting on the findings I use pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. All of the women I spoke to were part of the UK's small-scale fishery (that is boats under 10m in size) and most of them had someone in their family who fished for shellfish and/or fish (most often male partners but in some cases also fathers). They were recruited through advertising on social media and in fisheries organisations and forums as well as through chain-referral sampling (Heckathorn 2002). The in-depth qualitative interviews were mostly individual face-to-face interviews but occasionally the interviews were joint interviews with mothers and daughters or mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The interviews lasted from 40 min to 2h and involved visiting participants in a place of their choosing – often in their homes or their place of work. In interviews I focused on understanding the lived experiences of women in fisheries through exploring participant's biographical narratives around what it meant for them to be part of a fishing family, or to be working in the fishery, and how this had evolved over time. My interviews with women fisheries entrepreneurs explored themes related to the business, how it related to their family, and how the lifecourse shaped their business ventures over time.

Women's entrepreneurship within the context of fishing families

My interviews revealed that women's entrepreneurship most often took place in so called post-harvest activities along the value-chain. These activities ranged from small to medium scale processing of crab and lobster; selling of fish and shellfish at local farmers' markets, to national customers, and/or to restaurants; and cooking and selling of prepared food in food vans, cafés and seafood bars. Women also organised educational workshops for children and cookery demonstrations at food festivals.

(Re)negotiating gender relations in the family context

My interviews highlighted that women's entrepreneurial activities often emerged from the context of being part of a fishing family:

“My husband has got a crab boat. So, the crabbing went from being just landed to a previous processor, and then they went under, they finished. And I used to pick a bit of crab at home, and then it was like we got this crazy idea, “Shall we get a crab factory? [...] We would start processing our own crab, because it was financially a gain, so that was like, “Yes, we'll get a little crab factory and we'll do that”. (interview *Tracy*)

As revealed in the extract above, and common amongst all women fisheries entrepreneurs that I spoke to, women primarily bought their fish and shellfish from the catch of family members. Some women had expanded further in that they also bought fish from other local fishers. Women's entrepreneurship evolved from having access to the fishing product through familial connections and place-based social networks. The interrelated nature of the fish capture business (run by their husbands/partners or other family members) and the women's business was often discussed in interviews:

Interviewer: “So you have got three different businesses”?

Mother *Deborah*: “Yes, but they are all connected because the fish goes down there, which is bought from this business. We buy it from the boat. This business buys from the boat and then the cafe buys from this business. They are all run separately”.

Daughter *Amy*: “But all family-run”. (interview *Deborah* and *Amy*).

“So, I don't buy fish in, I only sell what my husband and son catch. [...] I've even got to give [my husband] a receipt for the crab and lobster that I have from him”. (interview *Karen*).

Whilst women tended to refer to their enterprises as ‘family run’ or to their activities as ‘we’ - including their husbands as co-owners and collaborators of their businesses - the women that I spoke to were running, developing and managing these businesses often on their own. Even if women’s businesses often became discursively positioned as ‘secondary’ to the ‘main’ fishing activity through language such as “help” and “we”, it is important to understand how gender relations shape how women and men narrate what they do. As previous research has revealed, the ways in which women downplay their involvement and activities in fisheries is directly related to how they and others perform gender identities in this context (see Gustavsson and Riley 2018b). This is exemplified in my interviews in that women often discursively positioned their own businesses and entrepreneurship as secondary to the ‘main business’ of capturing fishing. Such findings however suggest that by positioning themselves as ‘supporters of’ their partners they perform a dominant form of femininity in this context.

My interviews revealed how becoming an entrepreneur can necessitate re-negotiations of gender relations amongst couples. Nevertheless, such re-negotiation of gender relations was not always a smooth process with *Mary* explaining:

Mary: “We were called [Surname] Seafoods and I was endlessly doing labels and logos to promote it and I’d go to marketing workshops and all sorts of things, about this sort of stuff. And I produced some headed notepaper that said [*Mary*] and [my husband’s name], with our address on it and my husband never wrote a letter on that headed notepaper without crossing my name out.”

Interviewer: “Hmm. Yes. How and why and all the rest of it?”

Mary: [Laughs] “Well as far as he was concerned, he was writing a letter from [himself], not [from me and him]. That says it all really, doesn’t it?” (Interview *Mary*).

The interview extract above revealed that whilst *Mary* saw herself as an equal part of, and a collaborator in, a joint business, her husband did not. Previous work on gender issues in fisheries has suggested that women and their work tend to be ‘invisible’ in the fishing context (Zhao *et al.* 2013). My interviews, such as the interview with *Mary*, revealed that it was possible that even when women were fisheries entrepreneurs their work became seen as an extension of that of their husbands – a gender relation which *Mary*’s husband deeply defended through positioning himself as the independent fisher-man – thus reinforcing, and diminishing *Mary* to, the traditional role of the ‘supporting wife’. My interviews therefore find that even if women do go beyond traditional subject positions when they become entrepreneurs in the fisheries context, this work does not necessarily afford them independent standing nor re-negotiate gender relations.

My interview with women fisheries entrepreneurs however revealed how, through exerting their agency and independence on land (often with partners away fishing at sea), women developed businesses with significance to themselves, their families and family members. In order to gain a more complete picture of women’s fisheries entrepreneurship we need to think about gender and lifecourse. In the sections that follow, I will bring the invisible entrepreneur into sharper focus by exploring the particular gendered ways in which women became entrepreneurs over their lifecourse.

Becoming an entrepreneur over the lifecourse

Interviews with women in fishing families revealed some specific pathways which they took to entrepreneurship – involving negotiating their entrepreneurship and gender over the lifecourse. Common amongst my participants was that women opted for a local and

small-scale start-up which minimised their initial risks. This was highlighted in an interview with a mother and daughter:

Daughter *Amy*: “We used to do car boot sales before that all started, didn’t we? Car boot sales, farmers’ markets. I can remember the crab cooking in the morning, being five or six years old and could smell cooking crab! I remember that. I can close my eyes and picture being in bed and thinking, mum’s cooking crab again”!

Mother *Deborah*: “That is all where it started really, locally”. (interview Mother *Deborah* and Daughter *Amy*).

Women frequently explained that they started by exploring if it was possible to keep a viable business, how it worked and how it fitted in with their lives before expanding:

“my daughter was only 11 months old, I was still breastfeeding, and I [had a professional job], and then I started this business. So I would work most of the week [in my job], and then on my weekends, I would do this, and I’d still have the kids, and I did that simultaneously until I knew that this business was viable. As soon as it was viable, I [quit my job]. I gave that up” (interview *Rachel*)

This approach to entrepreneurship and business start-up resonates with the parallel literature on women’s entrepreneurship in farming⁶ which, for example, found that Dutch women’s on-farm diversification often started small, and women adopted a multi-tasking strategy which simultaneously involved doing farm work, caring for children and running the entrepreneurial business (Bock 2004). Multi-tasking, in my research, was a strategy deployed by women in order to meet multiple (gendered) demands– that is, being mothers, being wives or partners, being ‘supporters’ of the capture fishing business, and being entrepreneurs - without having to prioritise or compromise these positions.

My interviews revealed that motherhood could be a motivation for becoming an entrepreneur in the fisheries context. This was so because the women I spoke to stressed that running their own business sometimes worked better around family commitments than what their previous employments had done:

“You feel a bit trapped actually, you feel a bit under pressure, a bit guilty, a bit stressed by the whole thing, so this is a much easier way to do it. [...] If my kids aren't well or something, it doesn't matter. I can just not open, or I can bring my children with me, and I don't have to worry about all the expensive childcare. When you work for somebody else, there are all those constraints, and I didn't want that. So I was really lucky that this business did well, and I was able to give up my job and concentrate on this”. (Interview *Rachel*)

Becoming self-employed and running her own business gave *Rachel*, in her own words, “more freedom” which worked better with her family commitments – in particular in a context where childcare was expensive. Further, the extract reveals that this decision was an emotional response to feelings of guilt about not simultaneously being able to be a ‘good mother’ as well as a ‘good employee’. Starting up an independent business, therefore can be seen as providing more flexibility, which can be liberating through allowing mothers (in this context) to fit in work around the space-time limitations of motherhood (similar to Ekinsmyth’s (2011) notion of Mumpreneurship). These findings also resonate with Bock’s (2004) study of agriculture around how the emotion of guilt is present in women’s entrepreneurship as they worry about spending too much time on the business consequently making them ‘bad mothers’. My interviews, however, revealed that sometimes women’s entrepreneurship enabled them to be more present mothers than what was possible when being employed – thus reducing feelings of guilt. At the same time, other women that I spoke to discussed how their entrepreneurial activities made

them “pressed with time” (*Deborah*) and that they, for example, struggled with picking up their children at nursery in time. Yet, as I will discuss more in-depth below, women adopted strategies to keep their businesses at a level which worked with their lives and with their other gendered roles (as mothers, partners/wives etc).

After developing confidence in the viability of their businesses many of the women I spoke to had decided to go on to expand their businesses. At the same time, women entrepreneurs who expanded to larger businesses over time still wanted to keep the business ‘small’ so as to not expand beyond what they could manage themselves. For example, *Tracy*, who was running a small crab picking company, wanted to:

“keep it at a level where we can control it rather than getting snowed under, and you can’t keep up with it then, and then the freshness is disappearing. We keep it small. [...] Because it’s only me and my daughter that picks it, so I don’t want it to be like a – I know it’s a factory – but I don’t want it to be like a big factory then. [...] I don’t want it to be 24/7 seven days a week, constant”. (Interview *Tracy*)

The women I spoke to did not want to grow beyond what time allowed which echoes findings in the literatures around Mumpreneurship (Ekinsmyth 2011). My interviews with women highlighted how the lifecourse of women – in particular life events such as motherhood – shaped (and constrained) entrepreneurial ventures and influenced how they chose to expand their business over time (or not). For example, women highlighted that they waited to expand until their children were older and they had more time. *Karen* stressed that their lifestyle was a “hard life” and involved a lot of “multi-tasking” - running the entrepreneurial business, supporting and helping her husband with the capture fishing business, and being the main caregiver for their children. Nevertheless, in the interview, *Karen* highlighted how her life was particularly stressful “when the kids were

smaller, not so much now. We have got a bit of ‘me time’ now, but it is long hours.” Further, in an interview with *Louise*, it was revealed that she was exploring starting up her own business but that she was waiting a few years for the children to grow up. Such observations highlight that it is important to examine the temporally changing situations for women in fishing families over the lifecourse – and how the expansion of women’s businesses may be more common at times in their lifecourse when it fits better with gendered demands around motherhood.

As discussed above, women tended to consciously consider the size of their businesses alongside their other gendered roles. In practice, this meant that the women I spoke to adopted strategies to minimise stress for themselves by, for example, investing in staff to do certain tasks - with, *Tracy* saying: “But it’s getting easier now, because I’ve got someone to cook” (interview *Tracy*). In her studies of Dutch agriculture, Bock (2004) too found that women changed strategies after some time and started to increasingly value their own time and labour which led them to employ others and to pay for external expertise. Expanding in terms of size of operation was arguably something that eased the everyday work life of the women I spoke to. Yet, as many of the women experienced, expanding also meant increasing their activities, becoming more ‘professional’ in their approach, and necessitated them developing new skills, such as marketing and branding which *Karen* talks about in the extract below:

“because I’ve gone to bigger shows and it just looks more professional. And then I won the Great Taste Awards [...] I think [the branding] just finishes the product off. [...] I did most of it off my own back. You just pick things up as you go along, really. [...] but then people like the story behind it. So when I say, “Oh, my husband do the fishing, I do the

dressing and the markets”, they like that story and they know then that it’s local and it’s fresh.” (interview *Karen*).

As revealed by Karen’s story above, becoming an (successful) entrepreneur meant that women had to learn how to market and brand their products by understanding what customers want. These knowledges and skills, my respondents highlighted, developed over time and with experience. Whilst ‘learning by doing’ allowed women to become more visibly ‘entrepreneurial’, in the following extract *Tracy* discusses how developing skills and confidence has made it easier for her to be an entrepreneur:

“In the summer my phone doesn’t stop ringing. [...] And it can be, I could have ten kilos in the shop and I don’t sell them, and the next day or the next weekend, “Have you got any crab claws?” “No.” That is one of those, you never know what you’re going to sell. So now I get people to pre-order them, and I get a few regulars. [...] And if I haven’t got it, I haven’t got it, whereas before I used to think, trying to please everybody, keep everybody [happy]. Now I just go, “It ain’t there, I haven’t got it. If I’ve got it tomorrow you can have it.”” (interview *Tracy*)

Over time the women I spoke to had learnt how to sell their products more effectively – and more importantly on their own terms. This was, for example, done by asking customers to pre-order to make sure they do not overstock on product as highlighted by *Tracy’s* interview. Not overstocking on product is particularly important in the context of fisheries as fish and shellfish products tends to have a short expiry date. Interrelated to developing important entrepreneurial skills were developing the confidence needed to tell customers that they did not have access to products because of, for example, bad weather. What is highlighted through such findings is that, over time, women fisheries entrepreneurs developed and refined their entrepreneurial strategies so that their businesses worked better for them. The wider significance here is that women fisheries

entrepreneurs – whilst sometimes being invisible to the outside world – exert their agency by independently developing a form of entrepreneurship within this gendered context that works for them. Women do so by carefully negotiating other gendered roles, such as motherhood, over the lifecourse of themselves and that of their families. Findings such as these demonstrate that women’s fisheries entrepreneurship is indeed significant and that the entrepreneurial strategies women adopt over their lifecourse has to be made sense of within the gendered contexts of fisheries and fishing families to avoid reducing it to subsidiary to that of capturing fish.

Conclusions

I started the paper by setting out the argument that there is a need to shift the discourse from fisheries diversification to that of fisheries entrepreneurship to more fully understand how women do value-added fisheries. To illustrate this argument, the findings were structured into two main themes. First, by analysing how women (re)negotiate gender relations in fishing families through their entrepreneurship I find that traditional gender relations, where men are seen as the primary economic actor of the family, remain stubbornly intact. Whilst being challenged by women’s entrepreneurship these gender relations are only marginally renegotiated. Instead I observe that women’s traditional invisibility (Zhao *et al.* 2013) can become reproduced within the fishing family context and women thus become ‘invisible entrepreneurs’ hidden behind the label of the ‘fishing family’ and the ‘fisher-man’. Whilst such trends can be observed in fieldwork – it doesn’t mean that such gender inequities should be reproduced in how we conceptualise and frame research or policy. Therefore, there is a need for future research and policy to take seriously women’s fisheries entrepreneurship even if it – on the surface – appears to not be as significant as it actually is.

Second, through an analysis of in-depth interviews with women fisheries entrepreneurs, the paper reveals how women's entrepreneurship is negotiated with gender and the lifecourse of women - including life events such as motherhood and the needs of children which shapes the particular approach women take to entrepreneurship in the fishing family context. As a consequence, women entrepreneurs often started small-scale and intentionally limited their growth whilst considering their other gendered roles in relation to children and families. This is arguably different from how the 'entrepreneur' is often seen as an independent growth focused profit-maximiser (see Hanson 2003). Taking women's entrepreneurship seriously however necessitates exploring women's entrepreneurship from its own perspective, contextualised in the gendered contexts of fisheries and fishing families. Rather than understanding women as 'lacking' and 'incomplete' entrepreneurs (as they do not live up to the ideal of the male 'entrepreneur') (Ahl 2006), focusing on the process of entrepreneurship over the lifecourse of women can help us make sense of why women, sometimes, tend to perform a distinct albeit equally valuable form of entrepreneurship to that of men in the fisheries context.

Taken together, through exploring women's entrepreneurialism from their own perspective – and not *a priori* assuming that their activities are secondary or less significant - it is possible to uncover how the gendered context of value-added fisheries shape the entrepreneurial process with the potential outcome that women's work is positioned as 'secondary'. The wider significance here is that shifting the discourse from diversification to entrepreneurship allow for a fundamental shift in perspective from that of understanding value-added fisheries from the perspective of fish resources, fishermen and fishing economics to that of embodied individual actors embedded in a gendered

fisheries context who work with fish ‘in their own right’ – even if their entrepreneurship evolves from and within the context of being part of a fishing family.

In understanding how the gendered contexts of fisheries and fishing families shape how women become ‘the entrepreneur’ it is possible to, not only make visible (invisible) women entrepreneurs but also, begin to identify ways in which women could be supported in being fisheries entrepreneurs. As a first note, any policy efforts to promote and support value-added fisheries activities needs to move beyond its focus on diversifying income away from fishing – to broaden its definition of fisheries to include other actors in fishing places, and to promote entrepreneurialism and innovation more widely to ensure economic sustainability. Encouraging entrepreneurship include having to pay close attention to how gender shapes the entrepreneurial process. Interrelated to this, such efforts have to identify, target and understand the particular - albeit equally valuable - ways in which women tend to perform entrepreneurship without omitting them as incomplete or lacking entrepreneurs. And as a final note, women fisheries entrepreneurs have to be taken seriously and be understood as fish workers in their own right.

Notes

¹ Fisheries here is defined in broad terms – that means it include the act of fishing, fishers as well as the household and intergenerational basis (Neis *et al.* 2013) of fishing economies fishing places and fishing communities.

² Here I am drawing on Wright and Annes’s (2016) concept of value-added agriculture.

³ In the UK context small-scale fishing is defined as boats smaller than ten meters in size.

⁴ The data that informs this paper was collected prior to Brexit when the UK left the European Union and its fisheries policies (including the EMFF). Nevertheless, the

discussions of the paper are informative for any future policies in the UK fisheries context, as well as for EU fisheries policies.

⁵ Although the current study focuses on women's roles in fisheries diversification and entrepreneurship, there is a need to recognise the longstanding tradition of work on the topic of 'women in fisheries' (see e.g. Porter 1985; Neis *et al.* 2013). For a recent review on this topic please see Gustavsson (2020).

⁶ Whilst farming and fisheries are different contexts, I argue that there is a lot to be learnt from similar studies within the farming context as this literature is often more developed in terms of the scope of the empirical issues studied, the number of studies conducted, and the theoretical approaches used.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all participants whose valuable experiences, time and patience informed this research. I am grateful to my mentor Professor Jo Little, as well as valuable comments from Dr Mark Riley, Dr Karyn Morrissey, and Dr Richard Helliwell. I am also grateful to two anonymous reviewers whose insightful comments strengthened this paper. The support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), under grant reference ES/R00580X/1, is gratefully acknowledged.

Data availability

The data that support the findings will be available in the UK Data Services' ReShare platform under "Exploring the changing roles, identities and wellbeing of women in small-scale fishing families, 2018-2020" (doi: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-854502) following an embargo from the date of publication. The data is anonymised, and data access is subject to review due to the ethics protocol which underpinned this work.

Conflict of interest disclosure

The author does not have any conflicts of interest.

Ethics approval

Ethics approval for the research project reported on in this paper was secured by the University of Exeter Medical School Research Ethics Committee under approval reference 18/B/160.

References

- Ahl, H. (2006) Why Research on Women Entrepreneurs Need New Directions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 30 (5) pp. 595–621
- Ahl, H. and S. Marlow (2012) Exploring the dynamics of gender, feminism and entrepreneurship: Advancing debate to escape a dead end? *Organization* 19 (5) pp. 543–562
- Aldrich, H.E. and J.E. Cliff (2003) The pervasive effects of family on entrepreneurship: Toward a family embeddedness perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing* 18 (5) pp. 573–596
- Binkley, M. (2000) ‘Getting by’ in tough times: coping with the fisheries crisis’. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 23 (3) pp. 323–332
- Blake, M.K. and S. Hanson (2005) Rethinking innovation: Context and gender. *Environment and Planning A* 37 (4) pp. 681–701
- Bock, B.B. (2004) Fitting in and multi-tasking: Dutch farm women’s strategies in rural entrepreneurship. *Sociologia Ruralis* 44 (3) pp. 245–260
- Braun, V. and V. Clarke (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative*

- Research in Psychology 3 (2) pp. 77–101
- Carra, G., Peri, I. and G.A. Vindign (2014) Diversification strategy for sustaining small scale fisheries activity: a multidimensional integrated approach. *Rivista di Studi Sostenibilita* 4 (1) pp. 79–99
- Delaney, A.E., Schreiber, M..A. and J. Alfaro-Shigueto (2019) Innovative and traditional actions. *Maritime Studies* 18 (3) pp. 287–295
- Ekinsmyth, C. (2011) Challenging the boundaries of entrepreneurship: The spatialities and practices of UK ‘Mumpreneurs’. *Geoforum* 42 (1) pp. 104–114
- Ekinsmyth, C. (2013) Managing the business of everyday life: The roles of space and place in ‘mumpreneurship’. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research* 19 (5) pp. 525–546
- Ekinsmyth, C. (2014) Mothers’ business, work/life and the politics of ‘mumpreneurship’. *Gender, Place and Culture* 21 (10) pp. 1230–1248
- Elder, G.H., Johnson, M.K. and R. Crosnoe (2003) The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory. Pp. 3-19 in J.S. Mortimer and M.J. Shanahan eds., *Handbook of the life course* (Boston: Springer)
- European Commission (2014) EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS 2014-2020: Official texts and commentaries. Regional https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/blue_book/blueguide_en.pdf Accessed 17 February 2021.
- European Parliament and Council (2014) REGULATION (EU) No 508/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/blue_book/blueguide_en.pdf Accessed 17 February 2021.

- Evans, N.J. and B.W. Ilbery (1989) A conceptual framework for investigating farm-based accommodation and tourism in Britain. *Journal of Rural Studies* 5 (3) pp. 257–266
- Farnet (2011) Diversifying Europe's fisheries areas
http://thekey.farnet.eu/library/magazines/FARNET_Magazine_04_EN_Diversifying-fisheries-areas.pdf Accessed 15 August 2020.
- Frangoudes, K. and C. Escallier (2004) Innovative diversification of fishing units through women initiatives. Pp. 1-12 in IIFET 2004 Japan Proceedings
<https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/downloads/8p58pf35h> Accessed 15 August 2020.
- Freeman R, van de Walle G and U. Budzich-Tabor (2018). FLAG support to women in fisheries and aquaculture. (Brussels: European Commission). Available at:
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/sites/farnet/files/publication/report_women-in-fisheries.pdf Accessed 23 July 2020
- Fröcklin, S., Jiddawi, N.S. and M. De la Torre-Castro (2018) Small-scale innovations in coastal communities: Shell-handicraft as a way to empower women and decrease poverty. *Ecology and Society* 23(2)
- Gustavsson, M. (2021). Exploring the changing roles, identities and wellbeing of women in small-scale fishing families, 2018-2020. [Data Collection]. UK Data Service ReShare. doi: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-854502
- Gustavsson, M. (2020) Women's changing productive practices, gender relations and identities in fishing through a critical feminisation perspective. *Journal of Rural Studies* 78 pp. 36–46
- Gustavsson, M. and M. Riley (2018a) The fishing lifecourse: exploring the importance of social contexts, capitals and (more than) fishing identities. *Sociologia Ruralis* 58 (3) pp. 562–582

- Gustavsson, M. and M. Riley (2018b) Women, capitals and fishing lives: exploring gendered dynamics in the Llŷn Peninsula small-scale fishery (Wales, UK). *Maritime Studies* 17 pp. 223–231
- Hanson, S. (2003) Geographical and feminist perspectives on entrepreneurship *Geographische Zeitschrift* 91(1) pp. 1–23
- Hanson, S. and M. Blake (2007) Changing the gender of entrepreneurship. Pp- 179-193 in L. Nelson and J. Seager eds., *A Companion to Feminist Geography* (London: Blackwell Publishing)
- Heckathorn, D.D. (2002) Respondent-driven sampling II: deriving valid population estimates from chain-referral samples of hidden populations. *Social Problems* 49 (1) pp. 11–34
- Jack, S.L. and A.R. Anderson (2002) The effects of embeddedness on the entrepreneurial process. *Journal of Business Venturing* 17 (5) pp. 467–487
- Kirwan, J., Maye, D., Chiswell, H., Bundhoo, D. and M. Vigani (2018) SUFISA Summary fishing report: a case study of Cornwall’s inshore fishing sector. https://www.sufisa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/D__2.2-UK-Summary-Fish.pdf Accessed 15 August 2020.
- Little, J. (2016) Gender and Entrepreneurship. Pp. 357-366 in M. Shucksmith and D.L. Brown eds., *Routledge International Handbook of Rural Studies* (London: Routledge)
- Locke, C., Muljono, P., McDougall, C. and M. Morgan (2017) Innovation and gendered negotiations: Insights from six small-scale fishing communities. *Fish and Fisheries* 18 (5) pp. 943–957
- Marine Management Organisation (MMO) (2017) *European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691057/Support_for_partnerships__information_sharing__advisory_services__job_creation_and_training_applications_2018.pdf Accessed 17 Feb 2021.

- Morgan, R. (2016) Exploring how fishermen respond to the challenges facing the fishing industry: a case study of diversification in the English channel fishery. *Regional Studies* 50 (10) pp. 1755–1768,
- Neis, B., Gerrard, S. and N.G. Power (2013) Women and children first: the gendered and generational social-ecology of smaller-scale fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador and Northern Norway. *Ecology & Society* 18 (64) <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-06010-180464> [online].
- Overå, R. (2003) Gender Ideology and Manoeuvring Space for Female Fisheries Entrepreneurs. *Research Review of the Institute of African Studies* 19 (2) pp. 49–66
- Pedroza-Gutiérrez, C. (2019) Managing Mercado del Mar: a case of women's entrepreneurship in the fishing industry *Maritime Studies* 18 (3) pp. 335–346
- Porter, M. (1985) "She was a skipper of the shore-crew": Notes on the history of the sexual division of labour in Newfoundland. Pp. 105-123 in *Canadian Committee on Labour History* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press)
- Prosperi, P., Kirwan, J., Maye, D., Bartolini, F., Vergamini, D. and G. Brunori (2019) Adaptation strategies of small-scale fisheries within changing market and regulatory conditions in the EU. *Marine Policy* 100 pp. 316-323
- Soejima, K. and K. Frangoudes (2019) Fisheries women groups in Japan: a shift from well-being to entrepreneurship. *Maritime Studies* 18 (3) pp. 297–304
- Soejima, K. and M. Makino (2018) *The Development of Women Fishery*

- Entrepreneurship Group in the Japanese Marine Products Distribution Sector. Pp 31-51 in G. Bulian and Y. Nakano eds., *Small-scale Fisheries in Japan Environmental and Socio-cultural Perspectives* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca'Foscari)
- West C and D.H Zimmerman (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society* 1(2) pp. 125-151
- Wright, W. and A. Annes (2016) Farm Women and the Empowerment Potential in Value-Added Agriculture. *Rural Sociology* 81 (4) pp. 545–571
- Zhao, M., Tyzack, M., Anderson, R. and E. Onoakpovike (2013) Women as visible and invisible workers in fisheries: a case study of Northern England. *Marine Policy* 37 pp. 69–76