

Sharing The Catch: Understanding Women's Roles
And Work In Uganda's Lake Victoria Fisheries

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 2016

For Nicole Drysdale – thank you.

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Abstract

This paper examines the divisions of labour between women and men in the artisanal fisheries of Uganda's Lake Victoria. Traditionally in Uganda gender norms prescribe fishing as a male occupation, while women have generally tended to carry out the activities of fish processing (such as filleting, smoking, and drying), and fish mongering. As a result, women's direct access to financial capital is mediated through men—leading women to engage in a variety of innovative strategies that give them access to financial capital. Based on qualitative interviews conducted in Uganda from August to December 2014, my paper identifies three major livelihood challenges encountered by women: 1) Women's access to fish is mediated through their interactions with fishermen; 2) Women are often cheated by men in business relationships; 3) Some women choose to engage in sexual relationships with fishermen, while others do not. The thesis further explores the use of these adaptive strategies and their implications for female livelihoods. Using Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach Framework (SRF) as my theoretical lens, findings suggest that issues of gender equality do indeed affect women's access to fish and financial capital.

List Of Abbreviations Used

GAD	Gender and Development
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
LVFO	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
NaFIRRI	National Fisheries Resources Research Institute
SFF	Sex-for-Fish
SRF	Social Relations Approach Framework
TASO	The AIDS Support Organization
VDT	Village Development Trust
WID	Women in Development

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who made the writing and completion of this thesis possible.

First and foremost, to my informants – *weebale nnyo*. Thank you for sharing your time and experiences, and for allowing me to share them in this work. I hope I have been true to you in accurately documenting and expressing your insights here.

To Margaret, George, Nicie, and Lillian— thank you for everything. Without you this research project would never have taken shape in the way that it did. I learned so much from each of you, and am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to work with you. Also, to Dr. Sarah Ssali and Sarah Mujabi-Mujuzi—thank you for taking the time to assist me in preparing and coordinating my study.

Thank you to everyone at Dalhousie in the International Development Studies department. Namely, to Nicole Drysdale for your friendship, kindness, and for your assistance with all things thesis-related. To Dr. Theresa Ulicki, for providing me with feedback and valuable insights relevant to the gender-related material discussed in this thesis. To Dr. Owen Willis, for being my external examiner, and for your guidance throughout my time at Dalhousie. And to Dr. Lindsay DuBois, for helping me with the methodological section of the thesis. Further, I am much indebted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, who provided me with the funding for this research project. Without this, my fieldwork would have never been possible.

Finally, to my supervisor, Dr. Matthew Schnurr, I cannot thank you enough for your constant support and patience over the past few years. Your encouragement helped me to continue on throughout the most difficult parts of the writing process, and for that I am sincerely grateful.

Lastly, to my family and friends—thank you for everything. Especially to my cousin, Becky, for your patience and listening ear over the past two weeks.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The fishermen could prioritize those who could sleep with them. [In order] to sell fish to them. They [fishermen] could sell to those who offer their bodies. [...] The benefit is not for only fish, but if you could sleep with him. When you come to buy, you are [a] priority, so he will give it”.

-Informant #2, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014

As described by the informant above, “sex-for-fish” (SFF) denotes practices of transactional sex characterized by the exchange of fish for sexual relationships (Béné & Merten, 2008, p. 875). More broadly, the persistence of this practice reflects the customary gendered division of labour between women and men in many of Sub-Saharan Africa’s inland fisheries. Throughout these fisheries, SFF practices have increased at an unprecedented rate in recent years (Béné & Merten, 2008; Mojola, 2011; Camlin, Kwena, & Dworkin, 2013). SFF is especially prevalent in the fisheries of Lake Victoria in East Africa. According to Béné & Merten (2008), 49 percent of all documented SFF transactions worldwide occur in East Africa, and 47 percent of those were concentrated within the Lake Victoria region (Béné & Merten, 2008). A defining characteristic of SFF that distinguishes it from other types of transactional sex is the exchange of financial capital *and* sex solely in return for fish, or for preferential access to fish (MacPherson et al., 2012). As the quotation shared by this informant has conveyed, SFF can be used by women in order to both prioritize their access to a fishermen’s¹ catch, and to sustain it.

The increased occurrence of SFF practices is largely correlated with dwindling fish stocks in the Lake Victoria region. Within the last decade, Lake Victoria has experienced a

¹ My use of the term ‘fishermen’ in this thesis is not normative. In using this term I am not suggesting that all fisherfolk should be men, but rather in this research, and in the case study communities, only men participate in fishing; this is due to cultural gender norms and divisions of work that deliberately exclude women from fishing.

severe decline in fish populations and species. This decline is thought to be due to over-fishing², and to drastic changes in lake ecology and climate. Despite this, the global market for Lake Victoria's fish continues to expand, and demand for the lake's fish remains elevated, with over one million metric tonnes of fish caught and landed in the year 2007 alone (Nunan, 2010). As a result, the lake's fisheries industry continues to be viewed as a more profitable livelihood than small-scale agriculture and other regional artisanal activities (Nunan, 2010; Camlin et al., 2013). Thus while the supply of fishermen's limited daily catches remains low the demand for it amongst female processors and sellers remains high. Without primary access to financial capital, women often have little power in negotiating the conditions of the transactions in which they engage with fishermen. This in turn leads some women to engage in SFF, as it is a sure way of gaining and securing access to supplies of fish (Geheb et al., 2008; Mojola, 2011; Camlin et al., 2013).

Initially, my research project set out to investigate the practice of SFF in Uganda's Lake Victoria fishing communities, as the literature emphasizes SFF as an increasingly prevalent and problematic system of exchange (Béné & Merten, 2008; Mojola, 2011; MacPherson et al., 2012;

² It is essential to acknowledge from the outset the significance of over-fishing as a contributory issue to the challenges faced by Lake Victoria's fishing communities, and the region on the whole. My use of the term here makes reference to the increasing number of people choosing to enter the fishing industry, despite severely declining fish stocks and weak regulatory enforcement. The fisheries are largely concentrated to three species of fish: the Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*), two varieties of tilapia, and the Silver cyprinid (*Rastrineobola argentea*)—a small, minnow-like fish—known as *mukene* in Luganda (Balirwa et al., 2003; Pringle, 2005; Nunan, 2010). For the latter half of the 1900s the Nile perch constituted the pillar of the fisheries' export economy—contributing to its approximate \$600 million annual value (Nunan, 2010, p.778, citing the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization, n.d.). The Nile perch however, are a non-native species to the lake's waters, are hugely predatory, and grow to be immense in size. Their introduction has been problematic, and has interfered substantially with the biodiversity of the lake—significantly contributing to the decimation of smaller, endemic species of fish (Pringle, 2005; Nunan, 2010; Nyboer & Chapman, 2013). For a comprehensive overview of the history of the Lake Victoria fisheries see Pringle, 2005. The film *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) also provides a detailed introduction into some of the socio-economic challenges faced by the fisheries.

Camlin, Kwena, & Dworkin, 2013). However, upon beginning my fieldwork, it became evident that SFF is an incredibly complex and contentious practice, and gaining an understanding of it would require a broader study of women's livelihood roles within the fisheries. Therefore, this project transformed from one narrowly focused on SFF to one focused on the broader livelihood challenges identified and encountered by women in Lake Victoria's artisanal fishing communities.

Despite of the significance of women's livelihood roles within these fisheries, the body of literature that examines the challenges presented by the gendered divisions of work within the Lake Victoria fishing industry is relatively limited. Of this existing scholarship, the majority tends to discuss this topic within the context of a wider research focus or central theme, while the literature that does explicitly focus on women's roles remains extremely scarce. Because these studies do not focus principally on the issue of women's work and livelihoods, women's perspectives tend to be overlooked. In addition, the vast majority of the existing research has been undertaken in the context of the Kenyan fisheries, highlighting a dearth in the literature that discusses this topic specifically in the Ugandan or Tanzanian contexts. This project intends to contribute to this crucial knowledge gap by concentrating uniquely on the livelihood implications for women in Uganda's Lake Victoria fisheries by critically engaging with women's perspectives. It further seeks to analyze why women tend to be marginalized to the economic periphery, and how and why gendered divisions of labour are so persistent. The thesis's central research question is as follows: "what are the livelihood challenges faced by women working in the case study communities of Uganda's Lake Victoria fisheries?" My aim is to provide an introductory glimpse into the livelihood challenges of women working in these fisheries, and my hope is that this research can act as a precursor for future studies.

The thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter [2](#) will introduce my theoretical framework, Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach, and the literature relevant to the discussion of women's work and the gender divisions of labour within the fisheries. Chapter [3](#) will discuss my methodology and introduce the case study communities. Chapter [4](#) will present and analyze the information and stories shared by my informants, and will focus heavily on the major challenges encountered by them, as well as on the strategies they mobilize in order to overcome them. Lastly, Chapter [5](#) will summarize the thesis findings, and provide potential recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach (SRF) Framework

Introduction

Many of the women who participated in this research spoke of certain common or familiar livelihood challenges they experienced in their day-to-day work within the Lake Victoria fisheries industry. For a substantial number of women, their access to fish—the exclusive income-generating resource and commodity for the community—was mediated predominantly through fishermen. A further point detailed by both the female informants working in fishing activities and by policy personnel, was that it is not considered culturally acceptable for women to participate in fishing in Uganda. As such, it is exclusively a male occupation.

The case study communities fall within the kingdom of the Buganda, where the primary indigent ethnic group are the Baganda people. According to Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2009), gender roles amongst the Baganda are culturally assigned to reflect identity, social status, and power relations. They further involve the assignment of specific roles and tasks in society. However, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2009) also notes that prior to the 1700s, the sexual divisions of labour that characterize women's roles as reproductive (i.e., primarily responsible for child-bearing and the domestic duties associated with the home) and subordinate to men, are historically absent from the literature. Geheb et al. (2008) indicate that prior to the colonial governance of Uganda, most of the fishing done in Lake Victoria was carried out by men—although, a number of specific fishing activities were allocated to and performed by women (citing Asowe-Okwe, 1996; Geheb, 1997).

Today, because so many occupations for those living and working in rural, artisanal fishing communities rely on the use of fish as a commodity, women's ability to access fish is

causally reflective of their negotiations with men. As such, this is a resource acquisition process through which increased effort and work is required on the part of women in order to obtain fish from men, and in order to generate income.

Naila Kabeer's 'Social Relations Approach' Framework (SRF) fits well with the context of this thesis as it focuses on the gendered divisions of labour and livelihoods, and conceptualizes women's self-perceptions of their lives through analysis of access to and use of resources, agency, and decision-making abilities (Kabeer, 1999). The approach is an ideal analytical lens through which to view the empirical material presented in this thesis as it explores women's livelihood challenges, and the strategies they employ for mitigating or overcoming these challenges. As the name suggests, the SRF analyzes the social relations and interactions between people, and the cultural and power dynamics that shape those relations. Using the SRF, this thesis critically deconstructs the ways in which gender and power relations influence women's livelihood opportunities, and the implications of this on their financial and social mobility.

The SRF is outlined in Kabeer's 1999 article, "Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment". Kabeer (1999) argues that Western conceptions of agency and instrumentalist approaches to measuring empowerment are reductionist and fail to situate these ideas within the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts that greatly shape and determine women's social and economic mobility, and decision-making abilities. Figure 1 (below) is a diagram showing the elements that constitute the SRF (Kabeer, 1999, p.437).

resources (pre-conditions)	agency (process)	achievements (outcomes)
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Fig. 1. The elements of the Social Relations Approach Framework (SRF).

Prior to engaging in a discussion and analysis of the framework, I will first provide a brief background on the theoretical context in which the SRF is rooted. While the following literature cited is somewhat dated, it is relevant to this thesis as it highlights why the WID rhetoric was insufficient to address gender inequities within the development context, leading to the development of the GAD perspective, and subsequently, the SRF—a more tangible representation of GAD values. Following this, I will provide definitions of the key terms and concepts that are integral to this framework, and thus to this thesis.

Conceptual Roots Of The Social Relations Approach Framework

The conceptual foundation of the SRF stems from the Women in Development (WID) and later Gender and Development (GAD) discourse of the 1960s – 1980s. Initially proposed by the World Bank and other international development institutions as a solution to women’s exclusion from economic development, WID sought to introduce women to the workforce by proposing women as an unused economic asset, rife with the potential to contribute financially to both family income and well-being, and, more broadly, to the modernization and efficiency of economic markets in developing countries (Boserup, 1970; Chowdhry, 1995). The WID perspective aligned with the mainstream development ideology of the time, where development was largely synonymous with growth, and the shift from subsistence-based agrarian economies, to manufacturing-based, industrialized economies (Rathgeber, 1990). Guided by the tenets of liberal feminism and the dominant neoliberal market consensus (Chowdhry, 1995), WID proposed, “that women are [sic] an untapped resource that can provide an economic contribution to development” (Moser, 1989, p.1800). While novel for the time, WID narrowly assumed increased economic productivity and efficiency to be the optimal way forward for women’s involvement in development (Kabeer, 1994). Furthermore, it was critiqued for its simplification

and homogenization of women's roles within the family, home, and community, and for its assumption that women's 'integration' into the economic labour market would solve the overwhelming majority of problems concerning gender and development in the global south (Moser, 1989).

According to Kabeer (1994) "critiques of WID go beyond its neglect of gender politics in the policy domain; they question its theoretical ability and political willingness to address the systemic nature of gender inequality [...]" (p.38). In short, WID propagated the idea that by simply 'adding' women into the economic workforce, women's socio-economic and cultural statuses would automatically improve. However, as argued by Kabeer (1994), this perspective did not seek to challenge or change the political and social structures marginalizing women in the first place, but rather viewed women's introduction or participation as sufficient. As such, WID failed to consider or address how women's participation was underscored by power relations; in that, much of women's time was already occupied by reproductive roles and responsibilities, and that the thinking of simply adding women to the economic workforce would mean that women would take up the less desirable and less profitable forms of employment; that is, those not already taken up by men. In sum, WID served as a starting point for a place of dialogue surrounding the complexities for women and gender issues in the development discourse. This being said, its reductionist approach toward women's involvement in development—and its failure to include men in that discourse—resulted in harsh critiques.

The Gender and Development (GAD) perspective emerged as a response to WID, and argued that complexities of development issues concerning women were not only women's issues, but issues concerning both sexes and required the participation and involvement of both women *and* men (Alba, 2000). Furthermore, while the WID perspective took a symptomatic

approach to addressing gender-related issues, GAD rather looked to the systemic roots of those issues, and attempted to deconstruct and fundamentally change them (Connelly, Li, MacDonald, & Parpart, 2000). GAD has also been critical of the social constructs of assigned gender roles and has scrutinized the assumption of modernization theory (the mainstream development ideology for the time). Modernization theory asserted that women's needs and responsibilities could be considered identical to those of men, and therefore, could be subsumed within men's needs in the economic sphere. However, their responsibilities in the domestic sphere were distinctly classified as 'women's work'—devalued and devoid of economic worth (Rathgeber, 1990).

GAD takes a holistic view of both spheres and articulates that the economic and domestic do not function independently, but are interdependent of one another. GAD challenges the hierarchical and patriarchal constructs of the household that divide women and men's roles and work. It draws on its socialist-feminist roots, and asserts that there are specific differences between the needs of women and men that must be acknowledged in order to address the structural societal and household-level inequalities that systematically marginalize women's work and worth (Connelly, Li, MacDonald, & Parpart, 2000). One of the ways in which the GAD perspective undertakes this is through articulating the differences between "practical gender interests" and "strategic gender interests" (Molyneux, 1985, pp. 232-233).

While there are certain immediate needs that are essential to basic survival and are the same for both women and men—adequate food and basic nutritional needs, shelter, etc.—the ways in which those needs are fulfilled varies immensely between women and men. But by the same token, 'women' and 'men' are not homogenous groups, and factors such as level of affluence, social status, and cultural identity, determine the social groupings within which

women and men are identified, or self-identify within (Mohanty, 1986). Beyond basic subsistence needs and access to them determined by social grouping, there are also more complex, long-term needs that differ between women and men. These are needs that cannot be immediately acquired, but are rather acquired through a process occurring over a period of time. Such needs include the likes of political equality, equal access to and distribution of resources, and gender equality. In theory, these are needs that both women and men likely desire and want to achieve. However, because women are almost always secondary to men in their social groupings, and subordinate to men in their access to resources and capital within society, the literature tends to refer to this discrepancy between women and men's needs in terms of 'women's' needs.

This concept of differentiation between women and men's needs and interests, and between immediate subsistence needs and more long-term, quality of life and capability-enhancing needs and interests, was coined by Maxine Molyneux (1985). Molyneux refers to the former as "practical gender interests" and to the latter as "strategic gender interests" (pp. 232-233). Expanding in further detail Molyneux (1985) writes,

Strategic interests are derived in the first instance deductively, that is, from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements to those which exist. These ethical and theoretical criteria assist in the formulation of strategic objectives to overcome women's subordination, such as the abolition of the sexual division of labor, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labor and childcare, the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination, the attainment of political equality, the establishment of freedom of choice over childbearing, and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women. [...] Practical gender interests are given inductively and arise from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labor. In contrast to strategic gender interests, these are formulated by the women who are themselves within these positions rather than through external interventions. Practical interests are usually a response to an immediate perceived need, and they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality. (pp. 232-233)

What Molyneux makes evident here, is that women's needs—both practical and strategic—are extensively different from men's, and it is institutionalized societal structures and

values that inhibit women from meeting those needs. In articulating the differences in needs between women and men—and between women and men of different social hierarchies—the GAD perspective is capable of taking a more transformative, bottom-up approach to addressing gender inequities and enacting social change.

As a seminal thinker and proponent of GAD, Naila Kabeer provides a tangible representation of the values and process that are intrinsic and integral to this perspective within her SRF. The SRF consists of three components or steps, which together, make up the process of social transformation: **Resources, agency, and achievements**. Each component is interconnected, and dependent on the other components in order to succeed in attaining transformative empowerment through expanded choice. In the context of this thesis, the SRF is a useful lens of analysis as it examines the conditions of the social interactions and dynamics that take place between the fishermen and women working in the fisheries industry of the case study communities. Before engaging in a discussion and analysis of this process, it is essential to define the terms that are frequently referred to throughout this section and the remainder of the thesis.

Defining Key Terms And Concepts

Resources

Kabeer (1999) explains that resources constitute, “not only material resources in the more conventional sense, but also the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice” (p.437). What is particularly relevant to this thesis is the delineation made between the real or finite distribution of resources, access to resources, and anticipated future access to resources. In terms of material and finite resources, these would primarily consist of fish and financial capital. However, this would also be encompassed by women’s

access to fish and financial capital, and their foreseeable access to and receipt of fish and financial capital in the future. Here, future access and claims to resources will be synonymous with control of resources. Future claims to resources imply elements of foresight, planning, and security. If an individual is able to maintain access to a resource, they then (for the period of time in which they have access to the given resource) guarantee themselves an element of control over said resource.

Securing future access to fish further involves the establishment of social relationships. This could include social relationships between family members and friends, economic exchanges, and relationships with wider community institutions including religious organizations or community-level government. (Kabeer, 1999). In this thesis, it is important to differentiate between material resources, and social resources, or social relationships. The table below (Table 1) shows the distinction between the two types of resources referred to in this thesis:

Material resources	Fish, financial capital
Social resources (or social relationships)	Relationships between people (family members, friends, etc.), relationships between people and community institutions (religious institutions, community-level government, community development organizations, cultural institutions, etc.)

Table 1. Material vs. social resources (as discussed in this thesis).

The power dynamics within familial and community-level societal structures explicitly influence material resource availability and distribution. Kabeer (1999) emphasizes that,

Access to such resources will reflect the rules and norms which govern distribution and exchange in different institutional arenas. These rules and norms give certain actors authority over others in determining the principles of distribution and exchange so that the distribution of ‘allocative’ resources tends to be embedded within the distribution of ‘authoritative resources’. (p.437; citing Giddens, 1979)

This point is essential to this thesis and important to emphasize here as it speaks to the different roles that men and women have in the case study communities, and to the power relations that exist as a result of them. Giddens's point, as described above, is exemplified within the economic interactions that take place between women and men in the case study communities. As the women working in the fisheries of the case study communities conveyed, men's role as fishermen means that it is men who hold the rights to the allocation of fish. A direct outcome of this is that men tend to have leverage in negotiating and controlling the distribution and price of the fish; they determine which of the female fish processors and mongers they will sell fish to and at what price. This is further demonstrative of how the concepts of allocative and authoritative resources become effectively one and the same, and how they become systemic.

Since men's work yields direct and sustained access to a limited, and increasingly scarce material resource, men's positions of power in accessing and controlling this resource (fish) allows them to largely determine the conditions under which the resource is shared. In this sense men not only have the ability to distribute fish, but they have the ability to specifically decide who will have access to it, who will be excluded from accessing it, and what will be exchanged in return. Female informants in the case study communities discussed concrete examples of these conditions. They spoke of being cheated by men in business transactions, and who devised resourceful strategies as means of gaining more sufficient and sustained access to fish.

Another helpful perspective on this critical issue of understanding access and distribution of resources comes from political ecology. Political ecology is concerned with the power dynamics that govern and shape human relationships and their interconnectedness with nature and the natural world. In the specific context of access to and use of resources, Watts (2003)

notes that, “[political ecology] seeks to understand the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what one might call the forms of access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods” (p.257). The domain of Feminist Political Ecology departs from this point by further acknowledging the differential and gendered distributions of power and resources between women and men in specific societal and cultural contexts (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996).

In their pivotal fieldwork and paper discussing gendered assignment of land titles and gendered access to and distribution of resources in a variety of locales in Kenya, Rocheleau and Edmunds (1997) discuss that women very often occupy “in-between” spaces (p.1355). They explain that where men’s land ownership is formal, female land ownership is very often informal, or customary. And, while customary female land ownership may be acknowledged in a traditional or hereditary sense within a community, it is common that it may not be respected, or formally recorded. As a result of this, women have formulated strategies for accessing land that is not occupied by men. This type of space may be found along the margins of what would be considered formal land, or crop-growing space. Rocheleau and Edmunds (1997) note,

Such spaces could include the bush growing along roadsides and fence lines, the small garden plots next to the house; the interstices above, below and between men’s trees and crops; or the “degraded” land found on steep, wooded hillsides or in overgrown erosion gullies. (p.1355)

Though contextually different from the experiences of the female informants in the case study communities, Rocheleau and Edmunds’s (1997) findings are relevant to this thesis as they similarly demonstrate that women’s access to material resources are traditionally and hierarchically constrained by male authority over those resources. Furthermore, and as a result of this, women undertake innovative and unconventional strategies in order to gain access to land—just as women in the case study communities comparatively do in order to improve access to

fish.

Agency

According to Kabeer, once an individual has secured access to and sustainable use of adequate resources, they have satisfied the first step, or the “pre-conditions” (p.437) of the transformative empowerment process. Agency is the second component of this process, and the ‘doing’ or ‘active’ step within it. Kabeer (1999) defines agency as “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them” (p.438), though she notes that this element alone does not constitute agency. To a further extent, agency is associated with an individual’s ambitions, desires, and goals, and with their overall sense of self. While agency is often directly corroborated with decision-making, it can also be exercised through a variety of abstract processes, such as through self-reflection, resistance, negotiation, and deception (Kabeer, 1999). This understanding of agency resonates soundly with that demonstrated by the female informants who participated in this research. It was apparent through different innovative and resourceful strategies they undertook in order to improve their own lives, or in order to act in the best interests of the needs of their families.

For this thesis, and in keeping with Kabeer’s definition - “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them” (p.438) – agency will be defined in broad terms, because it is a concept that is context dependent. My own understanding and perceptions of agency may be vastly different from how agency is understood and exercised in the context of Ugandan women living and working in semi-traditional fishing communities.

Critiques in the literature have been leveraged against Western ideas of agency for being narrow and overly simplistic. Saba Mahmood’s book, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject* (2005), challenges Western definitions and understandings of ‘agency’

conceptualized by the progressive Westernized feminist movement. Mahmood (2005) analyzes the historical and contemporary conditions of the Islamist revival in Egypt during the 1990s, where women organized to teach each other from the Quran. Mahmood argues that these teachings arose as a reactionary response to the increasingly secular governance of Egyptian society, and that women's commitment to their religiousness demonstrates both subversion and conformity to patriarchal norms (Mahmood, 2005). On the one hand, the teaching of lessons from the Quran is an activity traditionally carried out by men; on the other, women's commitment to remaining dutiful to their Islamic faith implies their secondariness to men and patriarchal religious structures. Furthermore, women's commitment to their religious principles was often in conflict with the increasing secularization of Egyptian societal norms, and was sometimes in opposition to family and male counterparts' contemporary beliefs. Mahmood (2005) argues that their commitment to Islamic piety should *not* be interpreted as acts of resistance or subversion. Rather she argues,

for [the] uncoupling [of] the analytical notion of agency from the politically prescriptive project of feminism, with its propensity to valorize those operations of power that subvert and resignify the hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality. [...] [T]hat to the extent that feminist scholarship emphasizes this politically subversive form of agency, it has ignored other modalities of agency whose meaning and effect are not captured within the logic of subversion and resignification of hegemonic terms of discourse (pp.153-154).

What Mahmood makes evident here is that other conceptualizations and realizations of agency exist that may not 'fit' with the so-called Western or secular convictions of agency that tend to dominate feminist dialogue. In the case of my research, these 'other' forms of agency were demonstrated by the various strategies women made use of in order to gain and secure their access to fish.

Achievements

The final component of Kabeer's transformative process—'achievements'—is the product of both resources and agency. According to Kabeer, resources act as the vehicle through which action can be taken, and agency can be exercised; together, they result in a process of change and accomplishment. For Kabeer, achievements are synonymous with empowerment. Achievements—or the act of becoming empowered—are less easily qualified than both the previous components as they are entirely specific and unique to the individual or collective engaged in the process. However, broadly speaking, achievements convey what an individual is capable of doing, being, or becoming when they have sufficient access to and use of the resources they need. For the purpose of my thesis, I argue that achievements also be inclusive of the ability to and process of making the best of a given set of circumstances.

Achievements And Normalizing Disempowerment

Kabeer also references the occurrence of what she refers to as "disempowerment" (p.438). Disempowerment relates to the concept of achievement as it poses some sort of obstruction, restricting an individual's agency—or ability to choose—and potentially prohibiting an individual from obtaining their goals. Under certain conditions, and with sufficient access to and use of resources or capital, these challenges can be overcome. But under other conditions these can be obstructions in a broader system of structured inequality. Gender inequality is one such example of structural inequality, and socialist feminists have argued that societies structured according to capitalist and patriarchal constructs, values, and norms, served as the basis for women's systematic subordination to men (Engels, 1884/1972). This is of most significance in marginalized communities where both women and men could be considered

disempowered, where women are therefore disempowered to an even further extent, and where disempowerment is so-to-speak, 'normalized'.

In her discussion of agency, Kabeer (1999) highlights that, "The norms and rules governing social behaviour tend to ensure that certain outcomes are reproduced without any apparent exercise of agency" (p.438). She later relates this to what Pierre Bourdieu (1972/1977) termed the concept of 'doxa'. Doxa refers to the ideas and traditions within a culture or society that have become so ingrained and accepted that they have become normalized. In many ways, such customs and constructs may have become so indoctrinated into society that we fail to recognize them at a conscious level. Doxa is also helpful to understanding the historical and political contexts that influence and characterize what those ideas and traditions might be. In his fundamental work *Outline of a theory of practice*, Bourdieu writes,

Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances of the agents' aspirations, out of which arises the *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*, i.e. the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order. Systems of classification which reproduce, in their own specific logic, the objective classes, i.e. the divisions of sex, age, or position in the relations of production, make their specific contribution to the reproduction of power relations of which they are the product, [...] (p.164)

The concept of doxa is evidently applicable to all cultures and societies, and similarly resonates strongly with the experiences of several informants working in the case study communities of Uganda's artisanal fishing industry. In the case study communities, it was widely known and accepted (by both women and men), that fishing was and is customarily a men's activity, and women's involvement in the fishing industry concerned activities farther up the commodity chain, necessitating that they obtain fish from men in order to make their living.

Interestingly, there is virtually no scholarship that specifically addresses why it is culturally permissible that only men engage in fish harvesting activities in Uganda. Thus, it is the absence of this literature that suggests doxa to be the explanatory factor for this culturally accepted division of labour. Kabeer (1994) comments on this explicitly by noting, “In reality, all labour activities can be analysed in terms of relationships that carry quite different connotations of authority, control, recognition and remuneration for the different social actors involved” (p. 278). This speaks to the gendered divisions of labour between Ugandan women and men in Lake Victoria’s small-scale fishing communities, and the challenges women face in obtaining secure access and supply of fish as a result of the power relations that underpin them.

Conclusion

The material covered in this chapter has illustrated the three components that constitute the SRF: resources, agency, and achievements. Furthermore, the chapter has endeavoured to define each component in terms that are suitable to the ways in which each is operationalized in the case study communities of Uganda’s Lake Victoria fisheries. In this context, resources are defined in two ways: material resources, which includes those resources necessary for subsistence and income-generating activities, and for my purposes, primarily refers to current and future access to fish and financial capital; social resources, refers to the social relationships and interactions that occur between people, and between people and larger social structures, organizations, and institutions. More specifically in this thesis, social resources (and relations) will refer to the interactions and business exchanges that occur between the women and men working in the fisheries industry.

Agency, as defined by Kabeer (1999) and in this thesis, is the “ability [of an individual] to define one’s goals and act upon them” (p.438). The conceptualization of agency defined here

is used broadly, and in the fisheries context, refers to the various adaptive, innovative, and resourceful strategies mobilized by women in order to adapt to their circumstances, and to mitigate and minimize the livelihood challenges they encounter.

Lastly, in this thesis, achievements refers to what an individual is capable of doing, being or becoming, when they have access to and use of the resources (both material and social) that they need in order to act upon their goals and endeavours. The concept of achievements further refers to an individual's resourcefulness, and their ability to adapt to and make the best of a given set of circumstances. Women's roles and work within the fisheries are predicated on their current and future access to fish and financial capital, and their agency, or ability to acquire those resources through fishermen. The connections between the cultural gender norms that divide women and men's work in the fishing industry, and the difficulties women encounter in accessing fish and financial resources as a result helps to address my research question—which looks to specifically identify the challenges experienced by women.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

My interest in this topic stems largely from the research that I conducted for my undergraduate honours thesis, my interest in—and love for—the country of Uganda, as well as from my continued interest in feminist critiques. I wrote my honours thesis in the spring of 2013 on the topic of the sex-for-fish (SFF) economy that occurs on the Kenyan side of Lake Victoria, with an emphasis on the cultural values and considerations that shape this practice. As a result of an internship the following summer in Uganda, I developed a strong personal connection with the people and cultures there. Feminism has also been a lifelong interest and passion of mine, so as a culmination of my own experiences as a woman—and from the experiences mentioned above—the topic of this thesis resulted.

This chapter of the thesis proved to be a difficult section to write, as during the time when the fieldwork was conducted, my methodology frequently changed due to a number of factors: including my (in)ability to access informants, or to access information from those informants. To a greater extent, it was difficult to write as a result of the internal struggle I experienced throughout the process of my fieldwork, as well as throughout the analysis and writing process.

In the methodology I will first discuss the explicit methods of this thesis—in that, the locating of the case studies and my association with the non-governmental organization (NGO), and the methods used in conducting qualitative research. Subsequently I will then discuss the methodological challenges I encountered while conducting the fieldwork for the thesis, as well as the more personal ethical and moral challenges that I experienced. The section that follows is a largely anecdotal account of my fieldwork and the experiences and people that shaped it; my research study was very anthropological by nature, and as it came to take shape, became a more

ethnographic glimpse into the lives and communities of those that participated in my research. My hope is to share the stories and experiences of those people who took part in it as true to them as possible. I further argue that qualitative, or ethnographic, methods were appropriate to this thesis as such methods permit informants *to tell their own stories*. Not wanting to mistakenly ‘other’³—or portray informants as a homogenous group—in ethnographic research, the informant elucidates their own individual experiences and stories. They are active agents, and deservedly, should be portrayed as such.⁴

Locating The Case Study Communities

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted from late August through early December 2014 in two rural fishing communities of Uganda—as well as in the capital city of Kampala. In the end, the informants for my research would consist of government and policy-level personnel, and female, community-level informants who lived and worked within the case study communities.

Unable to secure the contact information of anyone whom I anticipated would be directly connected to the field of my research, I left for my fieldwork armed with the names of a few contacts provided to me by my supervisor, and with the hopes that I would have more success seeking out and locating contacts relevant to my research once I arrived in Uganda. My initial dilemma, and one that proved to persist throughout my fieldwork, was how I—a white, secular, Canadian woman with no prior experience conducting qualitative research or fieldwork—could

³ ‘The Other’ or the process of ‘othering’ is a term coined and first used by Edward Saïd in his work *Orientalism* (1978). It refers to the dichotomy created between the West and the East under colonialism, in which colonial constructs portrayed the people that were colonized under their rule as inferior, different, and exotic (in comparison to Westerners).

⁴ For the purpose of protecting the identities of my informants, the names of the fishing communities, the organization, and its associated members have all been changed.

gain access to informants in a rural Ugandan setting; similarly, my informants would need to both fit the requirements of my research project, and be willing to participate in the research, given the sensitive subject matter.

Once in Uganda, I began to research NGOs that were potentially involved in areas related to women and fishing, women's rights, maternal health, women's work, and microfinance. After more than a week of searching and contacting different NGOs by phone and email, it became clear that there were very few organizations that worked directly with women in the fishing industry, and even fewer that were responsive to my research project. At this point, I used the information provided to me by my supervisor to contact his long-time research coordinator, Sarah, who in turn put me in touch with her former colleague and friend, Lillian. Lillian would become my interpreter, and played a pivotal role in the success of my fieldwork and enhancing the overall quality of my research project.

In my initial meeting and conversations with Sarah and then Lillian, it became evident that I would need to make some sort of contact with a local community member in order to gain access to potential informants.⁵ In one of many tireless Internet searches, I had obtained the name and location of a community organization, the Village Development Trust (VDT), which potentially worked with women in a number of small-scale fisheries; however, I had not yet had success in establishing contact with this organization. Lillian suggested the best way to initiate contact with this organization (and in fact determine if it still remained active) would be to go to the site of their activities.

The following day Lillian and I made the three-hour trip to the fishing community that

⁵ I used opportunity sampling to access personnel at the government and policy-level. As MAAIF, NaFIRRI and the LVFO are all research-oriented organizations, they are familiar with researchers and for the most part, open to providing information relevant to research and research projects.

was the main site of their work. On arrival, we walked down to the fish-landing site in order to see if there was anyone we could speak with. We encountered no one directly, however, Lillian later told me that many people in the vicinity had audibly discussed amongst themselves why there was a *mzungu*—the Ugandan term for ‘white person’ or ‘foreigner’—present in the village, and what exactly might be the purpose of my visit.⁶ We eventually came upon a woman near the landing site, and asked her if she had heard or was familiar with the organization VDT. She was not familiar with the organization, but she directed us to a nearby shopkeeper she suspected might know of it. The shopkeeper had indeed heard of VDT, and he directed us to the traditional birth attendant whom he said would have a better idea of the organization’s exact location in the village. The birth attendant too was familiar with the organization, and directed us to a shop that she indicated was run by the VDT. Upon locating the shop and explaining the intent of our visit to the shopkeeper, he asked us to wait, and exited the shop. The shop itself was small, but constituted the front of a larger compound. The man returned a few minutes later and invited us to enter the larger compound with him. As we entered the compound, the man explained that today the executive director of the organization just happened to be visiting, so he had arranged for us to meet with her. While the inclusion of all of this material may seem merely anecdotal, the sheer happenstance of this encounter with the VDT’s executive director greatly influenced the outcome of my research—both the process and project; without the helpful directions provided to us by the villagers, it would have been extremely unlikely that Lillian and myself

⁶ At the time this was unbeknownst to me as I had little understanding of Luganda, the local language. I later learned that in the months preceding my fieldwork, there had been a number of *mzungus* who had come to the village only to buy up land for tourism purposes. These occurrences were highly controversial amongst the villagers as much of the land ownership in this particular area is customary, and not formally recorded. My understanding of this was that in some cases village land could be sold off without the villagers’ consent, and thus explained their curiosity, and to some extent, suspicions regarding my presence there.

ever would have been able to locate the organization.

In our initial meeting, Mary,⁷ VDT's executive director, was largely receptive to the broader goals of my project. I explained my interest in women's work and rights, and also explained that I hoped to conduct interviews with women regarding their activities in the fisheries. At the mention of interviews, Mary seemed immediately hesitant, namely because—as she expressed—she worried that conducting interviews would occupy too much of the women's time, and she emphasized that the women were very busy. However, by the end of our conversation she expressed that she would be happy to engage VDT with my project, and suggested that if I could familiarize myself and learn more about the organization and its work, after some time we could begin to coordinate interviews. A few weeks later, I attended a workshop training held by VDT for their members. Mary introduced me to the members as a group, and I was also able to meet with a number of members individually. Following the workshop, Mary and I agreed that before starting my research I would regularly come to the VDT office to assist with activities, and act as an intern for the organization. For the next three months I divided my time between the VDT office in Kampala, and the VDT compound in the village. The figure below (Figure 2) shows the approximate location of the case study fishing villages.

⁷ In order to protect the identity of the organization and informants, I have used pseudonyms.

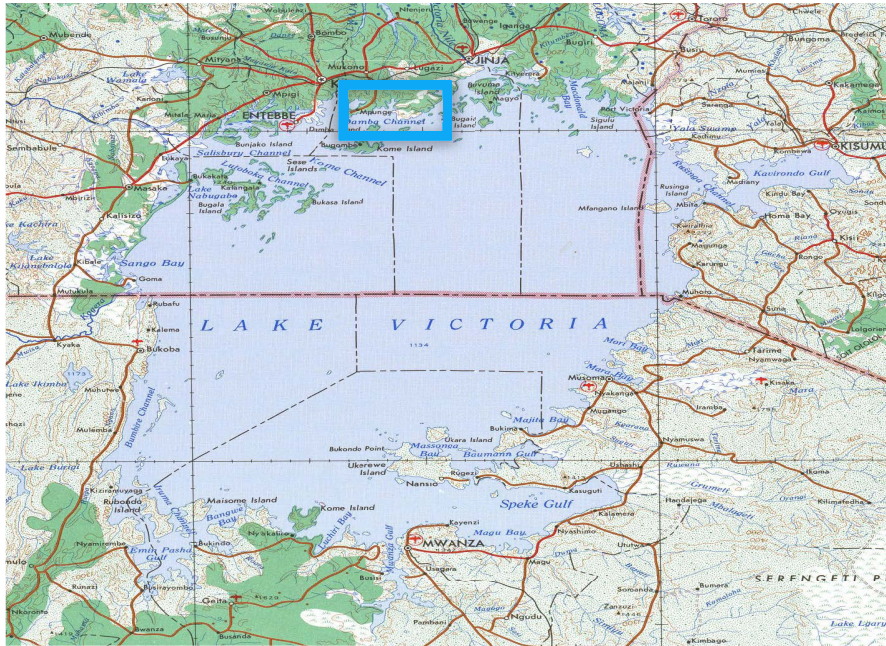


Figure 2. Map of the Lake Victoria region. Uganda (and the Ugandan portion of the lake) is located in the top-left, and top-centre of the image. The case study communities are located within the blue rectangle. Adapted from <http://www.mappery.com/map-of/Lake-Victoria-1968-Map>.

The Role Of VDT

VDT is a grassroots women’s development organization that is based out of the capital city, Kampala, and Fishing community #1. The organization works in the region surrounding Fishing community #1, and engages in projects and activities in the fishing communities and villages within this region. Their primary focus is improving the lives and livelihoods of women. Some of VDT’s activities include: issuing small microfinance loans (for investing in income generating activities), providing access to dairy cows for milk production, providing access to equipment used in fish processing (e.g., grinders used in processing fish into meal, and equipment used for smoking fish), and providing women with training in managing finances, training in dairy value-adding activities (e.g., yogurt making), and training in handicraft production (e.g., soap and candle making, jewellery making, etc.). In total, VDT has over 500

women who participate in their activities and are members of the organization (VDT website, 2016).

VDT assisted me in arranging my interviews, and helped me in facilitating access to informants. VDT approached women who were members of the organization, and acknowledged they sought out women they believed would be both willing to participate in my research, and helpful and knowledgeable research informants. They also acknowledged seeking out a diverse selection of women that were engaged in a variety of different roles within the fishing industry. I owe a great debt to VDT as their organization played a crucial role in facilitating access to informants.

It is essential, however, to recognize that the help of VDT in informant access and selection may have contributed to a bias in participants; participants were therefore those potentially well known to VDT and well liked by VDT. To a further extent, this implies that informants' relationships with VDT may have influenced the information they chose to either share or exclude within their interviews. I myself must also acknowledge that my own close relationship with VDT may have unintentionally shaped the information and perspectives shared in this thesis.

Qualitative Research: What It Entailed

Sampling Strategies – Snowball Sampling

Locating the case study communities, organization, and informants for my research was challenging. In order to gain access to informants I used the method of snowball sampling. Vogt (1999) describes snowball sampling as, “A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (as quoted in Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p.1). Snowball sampling was integral to my research.

While Mary and another staff member at VDT, Henry, introduced me to my initial informants, snowball sampling became my primary means of contacting potential informants. In addition to this, in each village, there was one informant who became the self-appointed so called, ‘fixer’—or the informant who made arrangements and coordinated potential meetings and interviews with other informants. In both of the communities, the fixer was an informant who was a well known, and well-respected member of the community. In Fishing community #1 this informant was the chairperson for the village council, and in Fishing community #2, this informant operated a small health clinic, and worked as a traditional birth attendant.

Interviews

I began my first interviews in Fishing community #1 in mid-October and in Fishing community #2 in early November. The interviews conducted in this research consisted of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, and semi-structured group interviews, that sometimes included up to 6 informants. Overall, I conducted 23 interviews—17 with women working within the fisheries at the village-level in the two case study communities, and six with government and policy personnel (4 from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries [MAAIF], 1 from the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute [NaFIRRI], and 1 from the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization [LVFO]). The interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded (except for one, during which written notes were taken).

For the policy personnel interviews, all were face-to-face interviews, conducted in the informants’ offices, three were individual interviews, while one included a joint interview between two informants who shared an office. While I had initially intended to only conduct one-on-one interviews with each informant in the case study fishing communities, informants’

availability was often limited and it was essential to be flexible in order to accommodate their time constraints. For some informants that worked as fishmongers or fish smokers, their schedules were confined to a few hours (or less) of free time in the mid-morning—after tending to morning household domestic duties, and before fishermen arrived back at the landing site with the day’s catch. Interviews were for the most part held outdoors, where it was inevitable that other informants that had been previously interviewed, or were waiting to be interviewed, could pass by and listen to those that were undergoing interviews at the time. This unavoidably influenced the interview content shared by informants, and it is likely that the presence or absence of other informants shaped the validity of the information presented and discussed in each interview. However, this made for more fruitful, lively, and intimate points of discussion that were raised during these interviews. This type of interview discussion also served as a method of triangulation of informant perspectives amongst present informants and of interview findings of previous interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Rather than the interviews being more structurally rigid and traditional in the question-answer format, informants were able to play off of one another—as was almost comparable to a focus group setting. Creswell and Miller (2000) discuss how this type of research permits for member checking. They articulate that, “With member checking, the validity procedure shifts from the researchers to the participants in the study. [...] It consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (p.127). In alignment with this, the nature of the group interview environment meant that informants were able to both corroborate and refute each other’s perspectives as well as the information provided by other informants in previous interviews.

Beyond this, my time spent both in the village and assisting VDT also permitted for more

informal exchanges with the people that I considered my informants. I engaged in participant observation, and observed them going about their daily interactions and everyday tasks and responsibilities. My relationship with some of my informants became more personal; as I passed days observing and participating in VDT activities, I came to develop friendships with them, and they shared their knowledge of the community and the inner workings of the fishing industry. While certain perspectives towards research methodologies would look upon the closeness of my relationships with my informants—and my connection to them through VDT—as problematic, it relates largely with the anthropological perspective and tradition of ethnography. In his classic text *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz (1973) engages in a discussion of what “doing ethnography is” (p.5), and notes how ethnographic fieldwork often blurs the lines between what is considered the ‘research’ and the ‘personal’. Here he states that,

This [ethnographic research], it must be immediately said, is not a matter of methods. From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. (p.6)

He continues in further detail, noting,

Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior. (p.10)

Although the role of ethnography and of the researcher have evolved substantially since the publication of Geertz’s work, the quotations presented above are explicative of the sentiments I experienced while conducting my research interviews. While the process of conducting the interviews for my research involved many of the methods outlined in the first quotation, the second quotation speaks much more closely to the realities of the actual experience of conducting ethnographic research. The interviews themselves sometimes lacked

clarity, structure, and organization, and though it should be acknowledged that this did make the information shared and collected more difficult to analyze, it brought more breadth to the interviews and created a much more inclusive and informal environment. This, I argue, led to more extensive, in-depth, and fruitful interview discussions.

On the other hand, the quotation from Geertz speaks to some of the challenges encountered in ethnography and qualitative research on the whole. It emphasizes the piecemeal nature of anecdotal research, and the difficulties that come with attempting to assemble a fluid whole out of sometimes seemingly disjointed parts. In this way, the researcher fits together snippets of information in an effort to as accurately as possible, convey the experiences shared by their informants—despite their inability to access all the details.

Methodological Challenges

The interdependence among data, method, and theory are inescapable in the work of anthropologists, even though we must keep on acknowledging that we are mere humans, observing other humans (Mintz, 2000, p.170).

The challenges I experienced while conducting this research are many, and for the most part, are inherent elements of conducting fieldwork and anthropologic research. The quotation above alludes to those difficulties—especially in its latter half—and the relationships, dynamics, and challenges that arise of fieldwork involving human beings. The major challenges I encountered while conducting my fieldwork and the writing of this thesis are discussed below.

Translation and interpretation

Wherever possible, interviews were conducted in English, and though English is one of Uganda's official languages, it is most commonly heard in the capital city of Kampala and other urban centres. This being said, the indigenous language of Luganda is the most frequently spoken language in the country. Especially in smaller, rural communities, it is more common for

indigenous languages to be spoken; in the region where the case study communities are located, the majority of people speak Luganda. While I have some basic knowledge of Luganda, I relied on the skills of an interpreter for all interviews with informants that were conducted in this language.

Lillian translated all interviews conducted in Luganda. She thoroughly explained the significance and cultural relevance of many interview details in context, and helped me to prepare interview questions that would be culturally appropriate. Without discrediting her very comprehensive translations, in research that crosses both languages and cultures, there are inevitably elements and details that remain ‘lost in translation’. Goldstein (1995) highlights the importance of the role of the interpreter in cross-cultural research. She argues that the interpreter translates both linguistic and cultural significance. However, even the most excellent interpreter cannot convey with exact precision the extent of all the cultural subtleties and nuances that are lost, both in the linguistic translation, but also in the very act of the translation itself. Kitchen (2013) emphasizes the problematic nature of the process of translation:

To assume that there is no problem in interpreting and then analysing concepts across languages is to assume that there is only one way of seeing reality, the researcher’s own. [...] [i]t is important to note that language is a significant barrier to research with people who are not like the researcher in various ways and presents unique threats to validity. (pp. 267-268, and as cited in Esposito, 2001)

Goldstein (1995) further underscores this perspective in her own research with Portuguese immigrant workers in a Canadian factory. While she acknowledges the integral role of the interpreter in deconstructing, analyzing, and giving contextual meaning to many—both small and complex—details, she also expresses the tangible limits of the interpreter, and notes, “To understand the more subtle differences between the ways different speakers were using the two languages [Portuguese and English], I needed to know what people were saying” (p. 588).

Without a fluent conversational understanding of Luganda, I was forced to rely on Lillian's translations, and trusted they were as accurate as possible. In an effort to supplement Lillian's translations and ensure their accuracy, during interviews where informants appeared to speak at ease,⁸ I recorded field notes relating to the informant's body language and the interview setting and surroundings. Following each interview (or as soon possible afterward, if not possible directly following each interview), Lillian and I would privately discuss the information each informant conveyed. This permitted us to deconstruct interview details together, for Lillian to emphasize details she felt to be important, and for me to ask questions I felt to be pertinent to the interview process and content. Lillian and I also spent time together on public transport and during meals; this time together further allowed Lillian to share insights with me regarding Ugandan cultural customs and norms.

However imperfect, the process of conducting research itself is innately imperfect, and my hope is that both Lillian and my collaborative efforts helped to ensure an accurate translation and understanding of interview material.

The Changing Focus Of The Research

When I initially set out to undertake this research, I had imagined the focus to be somewhat different. Prior to setting off for Uganda I had drawn up a research proposal and guide of interview questions that centred around the contentious issue of SFF. Upon arriving in Uganda and speaking with a number of Ugandan women with experience in disciplines relevant to my research, it became evident that it would be unlikely that I would be able to recruit informants to participate in research concerning such sensitive subject matter. These women explained to me

⁸ I only recorded field notes during interviews in which informants appeared to be at ease, as in some cases the sight of a field notebook—or actively taking notes during an interview—could make some informants feel uncomfortable. Lillian always obtained informant consent of my note taking prior to the start of each interview.

interview questions that explicitly asked about sensitive personal information and practices would be poorly received by potential informants. Furthermore, they believed that in asking these questions I would not only have difficulty obtaining the information I hoped for, but that I would struggle to recruit informants willing to discuss SFF. This, they explained, was largely due to the reserved and conservative nature of Ugandan society and culture. One woman suggested that I change the focus of my study; she suggested that if I could adapt it and widen its focus, I would be able to more easily recruit informants, and would likely have more productive interviews.

As a result, my research came to be focused on the roles of women and their work within the fisheries industry, as well as on the broader challenges faced by them, rather than a more specific focus on fish-for-sex exchanges. Lillian and I worked together to revise my interview questions, and to create questions that were logical and fluid—as well as mindful of cultural and social considerations. Overall, the information that came to be shared by informants throughout the interview process was extremely rich in both quality and detail. To add to this, many of my informants shared their thoughts and perspectives on SFF practices, and the knowledge they shared concerning SFF satisfied the questions I had previously included in my initial set of interview questions. Although adapting the focus of my study was a lengthy process that required additional secondary research, it ultimately resulted in a more culturally-appropriate, productive, and efficient interview process and research project.

My research project—in that, a project in which the research methods and findings helped to shape its theoretical perspective (Charmaz, 2012)—came to be established using grounded theory. Grounded theory is a methodological approach that is interactive and allows for fluid and reflective inquiry; it focuses on the findings revealed in the data collection, and how

these findings, and their analysis, help to shape the overall perspective and results found in the study (Charmaz, 2012). The use of grounded theory in my research helped me to adapt it to fit better with the cultural setting and research environments. Furthermore, it allowed me to discover a suitable theoretical framework, Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach, to serve as my lens of analysis. Without the use of grounded theory I may never have discovered this framework, as its fit with my findings only became apparent when I had already partially finished analyzing the interview transcripts.

Limitations Of The Research

Choosing To Speak With Women, And Not Men

I chose to approach and interview only female informants for this research, and therefore must acknowledge that my findings are limited in that they express only the views and perspectives of women who participated. While speaking with men would have provided a rich level of comparative perspective and analysis to this research, time constraints, funding, and the viability of analyzing additional interview transcripts, limited me to speaking with women only. A paucity of research concerning women's roles and work in the Lake Victoria fisheries of Uganda led me to want to speak with women. Their work is invaluable, but their voices are often overlooked.

Similarly, my own perspective and bias should be acknowledged—as when analyzing the interview transcripts I only had access to information that related to women's own opinions of their experiences, and did not have access to those of men. In addition to this, I myself am a woman, and my own worldview is strongly shaped by a feminist perspective. While I did my best to be objective when analyzing my findings, I acknowledge that my own views on the issues discussed in this thesis have likely influenced the ways in which the findings are presented and

deconstructed.

Choosing What To Include In The Thesis

Deciding what information to include and what to leave out of this thesis proved to be extremely difficult. When I wrote the initial research protocol and interview guide that focused on the theme of SFF, both had included sections concerning the issue of HIV/AIDS. When I adapted the focus of my research to encompass the broader theme of women's work and livelihood challenges in the fisheries, I removed most of the interview questions concerning HIV/AIDS. While some informants—both those female informants working in the fisheries of the case study communities, and government and policy personnel—still did speak to the topic of HIV/AIDS, I chose to include very little of the insights they shared in the thesis; the issue of HIV/AIDS in Uganda and its Lake Victoria fisheries is a complex one, and I felt I would not be able to engage with the material at the level of detail and analysis that it deserved here.

Equally difficult was the decision to focus more heavily on the material provided by the female informants of the case study communities, rather than on that provided by the government and policy personnel. This decision was a sub-conscious one, and naturally occurred as the writing of the thesis progressed. Since the focus of the research relates directly to the lived experiences of women working within Uganda's Lake Victoria fisheries industry, it should follow that the analysis and writing organically gave way to more strongly emphasize their perspectives via the information they shared. This is not to say that the information provided by the government and policy personnel was not of equal importance and value—it was—however, it was not always directly relatable to the on-the-ground experiences of the informants from the case study communities. Thus, the information shared by government and policy personnel was used to supplement, complement and contrast the perspectives of the case study informants.

The Internal Struggle Of Writing This Thesis

The process of analyzing the information collected during my fieldwork and of writing this thesis has proven to be a difficult experience. Writing this section of the thesis has been a cathartic part of the process, and I both dreaded and longed to write it.

The first three months after returning from my fieldwork left me feeling debilitated and unable work on my thesis at all, other than to transcribe the interview material. I can now see that those feelings were largely tied up in the internal struggle that I felt when I reflected back on the experience of my fieldwork. On one hand, I struggled to make sense of how I could ‘analyze’ the stories and experiences that informants had shared with me, and how I could fit those experiences into a chapter that readers would look upon as the ‘Data analysis’. I felt as though to write about informants’ experiences from a secondary perspective— that of my own—would detract from their value and meaning, and dehumanize their complexity. On the other hand, being back in Canada and in an academic setting meant that I could finally reflect on the experience of my fieldwork from a more detached point of view.

Although I had realized, to some extent, the power dynamics that are inherent to the researcher-subject role throughout the duration of my fieldwork, I had not been able to fully make sense of the dynamics that were shaped by my place of privilege. I am a white, middle-class woman, with the privilege of attending university and completing a Master’s degree. My interest in the topic of this paper comes from an honest and thoughtful place, but the carrying out of my fieldwork, however well-meaning, was a necessary component of satisfying the requirements for me to complete my Master’s degree. Ostensibly, it was a self-interested task that largely only benefited me, the researcher. No matter how I looked at this experience, I could never see the roles reversed. In other words, I struggled to make sense of a situation in which my

informants' sharing of their personal stories and experiences—which was sometimes difficult, and was always complex—could be of benefit to them. Was there such a situation? And if there were, would my informants ever experience it? I could not imagine a scenario in which women from these two fishing communities would come to Canada and interview me regarding my own very personal issues and experiences.

Amplifying this was the personal and often sensitive nature of the research and interview questions. During several interviews it felt as though Lillian and I were 'probing' for further information and details. Sometimes the informants would refuse outright to answer specific questions, or would simply remain silent. Other times they would answer these questions tersely, and without much detail. If this was the case Lillian would attempt to rephrase the question, or attempt to ask it again at a later point during the interview. For a number of these informants it was sufficient to rephrase the question or ask it further on during the interview when they appeared to be more at ease. However, for some others it was obvious when we had made them feel uncomfortable. While we never asked sensitive questions more than twice—and though none of the informants who participated in my research retracted their consent—I felt as though the interviews consistently walked a very fine line between friendly and awkward. Lastly, these experiences forced me to confront my own role as a researcher, and to question whether a project of this nature could truly be meaningful and worthwhile to the informants who took part in it. These are questions I am not yet able to answer. However, I can see that my own privilege and identity as an outsider complicated my experience in the fieldwork, and perhaps complicated the experiences of the informants as well.

Williams and Heikes (1993) corroborate some of the sentiments discussed in the previous paragraph, and suggest that gender, race, and class differences may complicate and obstruct the

establishment of rapport in qualitative research. Jones et al. (2014) further acknowledge the privilege of the researcher and power dynamics that complicate the undertaking of qualitative fieldwork. Here they reflect on the Western-centric ideology that is often characteristic of academic research and its accompanying fieldwork. They analyze the ethical challenges that arise of the researcher's objectives and their incongruous contrast with the lives of the research subjects and participants. Jones specifically refers to herself as "an interloper in others' realities" (p.9). A substantial part of my own struggle in conducting research in a cross-cultural context stems from the difficulty of connecting the academic world to the lived experiences and inequities of my informants.

With reference to the previous point, Ndimande (2012) comments on the problematic aspects of conducting research with marginalized peoples and communities from a position of relative privilege, and discusses some of the dangers of producing research that is beneficial only to the researcher. He stresses the importance of decolonizing approaches in research—where decolonizing methodologies are contrasted with neo-colonial approaches. Neo-colonial approaches appropriate informants' experiences and reproduce the idea of the informant as the 'Other'. He explains that,

[R]esearchers should make it a prerequisite to understand the cultural values of Indigenous communities on such issues as building trust with the participants through knowing your status as "insider/outsider" at the same time, recognizing the community's notions of respect, demonstrating openness and willingness to work with the participants, rather than impose colonial attitudes on participants, and so on. This also means that the researcher's visit with the community not be ephemeral and fleeting but that the researcher be present long enough to be known so that such presence can build a bridge between him or her and his or her Indigenous participants. If researchers can engage in some of these practices with communities, they can begin to understand the situation in which the marginalized peoples experience and learn from that experience. [...] Negotiating these decolonizing "tools" is a good start and a step in the right direction, especially if research is meant to improve marginalized peoples' lives, not vice versa. (p.223)

My hopes are that in conducting this research—and in addressing some of complexities

and flaws that were a part of it—I am better able to attempt to connect the world of academic discourse with the real experiences shared by my informants, and as true to them as possible. As such, perhaps the academic field can act as a window into the challenges encountered by women in the Lake Victoria fisheries, the challenges faced by these fishing communities as a whole, and the need for further studies that focus on the critical roles of women’s work in the fisheries.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Introduction

The informants interviewed for this research consisted of two groups of people. The first group comprised Ugandan women employed in Lake Victoria's artisanal fishery, either formally or informally. Many women worked directly as fishmongers or in fish processing—obtaining fish to sell fresh at markets, or sun-drying or dry-smoking fish to later be sold, as well as grinding the smaller *mukene* (Silver cyprinid) fish into animal feed for poultry and livestock. Others worked as fish fryers, cooking fresh fish that they later sold throughout the day at markets or small kiosks. One informant worked in the fish transport and distribution business. Another worked more peripherally in the industry producing fishing gear and sewing fishing nets or motor covers, carving paddles, or by making fish floats and other buoyancy devices for maintaining fishing nets afloat. Approximately half of the informants that I spoke with had another income generating activity, which supplemented their income obtained through the fishing industry.

The second group of informants consisted of government personnel from Uganda's Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), and individuals employed by the research and policy organizations of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) and the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute (NaFIRRI). MAAIF's role in fisheries' management includes areas of policy development and strategic planning, regulation and conservation, the coordination of various government agencies and departments that share a role in fisheries management (e.g., the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Water and Environment), the coordination of public and private sectors involved in fisheries management (e.g., the LVFO,

The AIDS Support Organization [TASO], and private fish processing and distribution companies), and the coordination of government activities at the federal, regional, and local levels (Interview #1, MAAIF, personal communication, October 7th, 2014). One informant I spoke with worked as a fisheries officer at the local level, as part of the Beach Management Unit.

The LVFO is an umbrella organization comprised of government bodies from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, the three countries that border Lake Victoria's shores. Together, all three countries share in the management, development, and conservation of the lake's resources, and the organization aims to facilitate and coordinate more efficient management and governance practices between the three countries (LVFO, n.d., para.1). The informant I spoke with from the LVFO held the position of the Director of Fisheries Management and Development. NaFIRRI is a government-founded research initiative that carries out a wide array of fisheries-related research activities. Examples of priority focus areas are those concerned with issues of fisheries technology development, environmental management and sustainability, as well as socio-economic issues—such as fisher productivity and access to markets (NaFIRRI, n.d., para.1, 4, 6, 8, 11). The informant who spoke with me from NaFIRRI was one of two socio-economic researchers working in the department.

My analysis is organized based on the major themes that emerged out of my interview discussions. The major themes analyzed here arose frequently throughout the interview discussions, and were identified by the women I spoke with as the most critical challenges to their livelihoods. These revolve around the challenges women experience in accessing or obtaining resources (namely, fish and financial capital), and the strategies they mobilize in order to overcome them. The analysis looks to primarily examine the content discussed with those informants working in the Lake Victoria fishery from the two case study communities, however,

also incorporates—where appropriate—the content discussed with the MAAIF government personnel and the policy personnel from the LVFO and NaFIRRI. The incorporation of both perspectives emphasizes the similarities shared amongst this diverse group, despite occupying very different roles within the fisheries. Both groups speak to the challenges encountered by women in the fisheries, the importance of their roles in the industry, and the innovative strategies women mobilize in order to overcome those challenges. The inclusion of both community and policy-level informant perspectives helps to further elucidate the many discrepancies between both groups, and highlights the knowledge gaps that may exist between fisheries policy personnel and those who live and work in the fishing communities. The chapter will proceed as follows: for each challenge outlined by women working within the fisheries industry in the two case study communities, I will discuss and analyze in detail the nature and complexities of the issues raised as challenges. Then, I will explore and discuss the strategies that women have mobilized in order to respond to them.

Challenges

Challenges in accessing material resources were cited by a number of informants as significant obstacles to their livelihoods. Access to a consistent and sufficient supply of financial capital seemed to be the most inhibiting factor to women's work within the fishing communities; women consistently cited the difficulties they faced when they undertook business transactions with men as one of the greatest challenges they faced in their day-to-day lives. There were a number of key factors that seemed to contribute to informants' constrained access to material resources. Firstly, all of the women I spoke with in these two fishing communities lacked direct access to fish as a commodity. Rather, they obtained fish indirectly, mediated through their interactions with men. As fish is the primary income-generating commodity for those working in

the fisheries industry, mediated access to, or lack of control over fish, translates into mediated access to and control over financial capital. Secondly, a number of informants cited frequently being cheated by men in business interactions. Lastly, a number of women discussed the challenges of an informal system of transactional sex that involved the provision of sexual relations by women in exchange for fish from fishermen. For each of the challenges outlined above I will discuss and analyze their significance, and will also examine the strategies and agency employed by women in order to resist or overcome these obstacles.

Women's Access To Fish Mediated Through Interactions With Fishermen

Occupational divisions of labour are explicitly gendered in the Lake Victoria fisheries. As such, fishing is traditionally deemed a male occupation, while the occupations of fish processing and selling tend to be done by women (Mojola, 2011; Camlin et al., 2013). According to one informant (Informant #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014), women's lack of participation in fishing is related to the traditional gender roles ascribed to women and men in many parts of Uganda. As she suggested, women's participation in fishing may be seen as inappropriate or culturally unacceptable, and would be seen as a challenge to gender norms and expectations. This is partly associated with the fact that fishers often leave to go fishing to catch the *mukene* (Silver cyprinid or *Rastrineobola argentea*) species of fish at night, and it is not culturally appropriate for a woman to leave or be outside the home at night (in more traditional or rural communities). In addition, domestic activities (i.e., cooking, cleaning, laundry, and childcare) all fall under the realm of what is considered to be women's work. In the local communities where my interviews were carried out, it became apparent that women's lack of participation in fishing could similarly be attributed to their assigned labour roles and responsibilities to carry out domestic duties.

In the wider literature this has been previously explained by idea that the divisions of labour between the sexes were determined based on which sex would be the most efficient at certain tasks necessary for survival and reproduction in foraging societies. As women are closely associated with reproductive tasks, they were designated these tasks, and other, loosely related domestic responsibilities. This is in contrast to men, who were considered to be more efficient at the tasks of hunting and fishing (Bliege Bird, 2007). As Bliege Bird (2007) explains, the concept that certain tasks be assigned to the sex thought to be most efficient at completing them serves as a model of an “economy of scale” (p.442). This model also assumes that, more broadly, women prefer domestic duties because of the physical changes they experience during pregnancy (Bliege Bird, 2007, citing Brown, 1970; Burton et al., 1977; Murdock & Provost, 1973). While this model is somewhat dated (referencing literature from the 1970s) and is not entirely applicable to an artisanal fishing community, it does allude to where preconceived cultural notions concerning the stark divisions between ‘men’s work’ and ‘women’s work’ may have come from.

However, Bliege Bird (2007) also discusses a more contemporary model (referencing literature from the 1990s) of foraging societies, in which social relations and surrounding ecology interact with each sex’s ability to access material resources. This model further suggests that men are more likely to risk accessing less consistent supplies of material resources if they have the potential to gain more from them. On the other hand, women are more likely to choose to access consistent material resource supplies, in order to make use of them for household consumption and supporting dependent household members. Again, while not fully applicable to artisanal fishing communities, the model does convey women’s domestic and childcare responsibilities, which are comparable in the Ugandan Lake Victoria context.

In the literature that speaks to the gendered divisions of labour in fisheries in Eastern and Southern Africa, findings in some studies have shown that the direct implication of these divisions is that men generally have immediate access to financial capital (i.e., from the money they receive for their daily catch), whereas women must obtain access to fish prior to gaining access to financial capital (Béné & Merten, 2008). This exacerbates women's socio-economic marginalization within the fisheries and surrounding communities (Geheb et al., 2008; Johnson, 2008; Nunan, 2010; Mojola, 2011).

Geheb et al. (2008) elaborate on this perspective in their case study of Kenya's Lake Victoria fishing communities. Here they suggest that persistent inequalities between women and men are largely upheld by traditional gender roles that not only restrict women from participating in the occupation of fishing itself, but that also allocate domestic, household duties—and for the most part, unpaid duties—as women's work. A number of informants also discussed encountering difficulties purchasing fish from fishers because of some men's desire that women remain inside the home. As one informant explained, some men considered a woman with her own source of income as too independent:

[M]en think that once a woman gets money, you grow wild. So [laughs], it will not be [possible] for him to control a woman with money. So some women can work and make money, but they get in conflicts with their husbands. Some of them end up taking their money from them 'cause they don't want women to have money. (Interviewee #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014)

In rural, small-scale agricultural households (those with small food crops for harvest, small-scale livestock production, or poultry) in the Mbale, Kamuli, and Mubende districts of Uganda, Dolan (2004) outlines similar constraints faced by women in accessing capital for income generation as a result of accepted cultural norms that prescribe and predetermine the gendered division of labour activities. Okonya and Kroschel (2014) found that amongst rural

sweet potato farmer households in six districts of Uganda female farmers lacked access to and knowledge of extension services, farming technology, and membership in farmer cooperatives. While access to these services was relatively low overall, in comparison, male farmers had greater access to and use of these services. Findings also demonstrated that male farmers actively excluded female farmers from participating in farmer cooperatives. This is significant because in many farming communities farmer cooperatives served as valuable sources of agricultural knowledge and farming techniques, as well as sources of access to microfinance initiatives. Okonya and Kroschel's (2014) findings corroborate the information discussed by the informant above, in that, men will similarly make it more difficult for women to access resources of production and financial capital.

The similarities in findings between the informant interviewed above and those in Okonya and Kroschel's (2014) study are explicative of gender-designated household duties. These duties consume the free time that women might have to spend accessing resources of production—including access to services and inputs. In Okonya and Kroschel's (2014) research, this was despite women being the main farmers of sweet potatoes, and the crop being known and commonly referred to as a “female crop” (p.2). While this does not explicitly demonstrate male preference that women's work remain within the home, it does demonstrate that some men feel women should not be included in activities that have the potential to sustain and improve income. By extension, it can be argued that women's inequitable access to services and inputs can be interpreted as a form of protest in relation to women's participation in income generating activities outside of the home. Though this example is taken from an agricultural context, it reflects a similar process of women's exclusion from fishing resources in the case study communities.

Women are permitted to work in both fish processing and mongering activities, but they must first obtain fish from fishermen who have leverage in determining the price that women will pay for fish. It was frequently reported by informants that fishermen acted unfairly by demanding inflated prices for fish within business transactions. It was also explained that it was not unusual for women to be “undermined” or “cheated” by fishermen (Interview #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014; Interview #5, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). Others still reported abandoning their involvement in the fish mongering business altogether due to financial constraints that arose from fishermen selling off their daily catch while still out on the lake, and failing to fairly share their profits with the female boat owner or fish monger who had financed them in the first place (Interview #2, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014). On one hand, this type of behaviour underscores men’s dissatisfaction with women’s participation within what can be viewed as a largely male-dominated economic market. The details discussed by the informants above—as well as the findings presented in Okonya and Kroschel’s (2014) study—convey the notion that men may treat women unjustly in order to force them out of the industry. Hypothetically, if women’s financial investment in a given income generating activity is consistently more than the profits generated by that activity, then they will eventually experience too great an economic loss to continue with the activity, and ultimately be forced out of the industry (as experienced by the informant in Interview #2, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014).

From another point of view, women’s participation in income generating activities outside the home may be perceived by some men as a form of women’s resistance toward the cultural gender norms (discussed previously) that traditionally confined ‘women’s work’ to domestic work. The dissatisfaction some men express towards women’s participation in the

economic market, and here, in the fishing industry, could also be considered one explanation for why women in the case study communities have more difficulty accessing sustainable and adequate financial capital in comparison to men, and why they may experience difficulty transitioning into other types of income generating activities. While the wider literature does acknowledge that women often lack the capital necessary for livelihood diversification activities and inputs that would increase income generation, it does not address why women systemically lack, or are unable to access these inputs.

As a response to this mediated access, women undertake innovative strategies for minimizing these constraints. One strategy to improve their access to fish was gaining access to it through male family members or other male household counterparts. Eleven of my informants discussed obtaining fish from a male family member or friend emphasizing that this was a more safe and steadfast way of ensuring constant access and supply of fish. As one informant explained, “Fish is scarce. So if somebody—a woman is dealing in fisheries—a woman will be the first person to be considered [by her husband, a fisherman]” (Interview #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). Given the current and rapidly decreasing supply of fish stocks, this appeared to be both mutually beneficial and practical. A fisherman choosing to supply his wife with fish guarantees himself a consistent income, and guarantees his wife consistent access to fish. As another informant stressed, “I buy [fish] from my husband because it will develop our home” (Interview #6, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). The benefits of obtaining fish through a male family member or friend not only ensured priority—and therefore reliable—access to fish, but could also mean that women could obtain fish at a lower price than they otherwise would from a fisherman with whom they had no prior relationship. One informant working as a fishmonger described her relationship with her husband

and detailed, “I buy from my husband, because he gives me [fish] at a reduced price. But [I] also buy from others when he doesn’t have enough [fish] for me. Since I sell to exporters, I have to sort out a lot [of fish]” (Interview #5, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). Based on the economic exchanges these informants maintained with their husbands or other male family members, it appeared that capitalizing on familial relations was often the first strategy deployed by women seeking better access to fish.

However, other informants mentioned that while they could indeed obtain fish from male household counterparts, the conditions of the exchanges were governed by the same terms underlying any business transaction. As one informant noted, “Yes, I have... [often] bought from a relative, and the arrangement is, it’s business [like any other]. Give me cash, take fish. That’s it” (Interview #4, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). Another informant indicated that she would purchase fish from her husband, but only given the price he determined was fair: “Yes, if he has [fish], I do buy [from him]. If I’m giving him the money, he wants. That is a condition. He sets a price. If I’m willing to pay for that, I take. If I’m not, I buy from other people” (Interview #6, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014).

Conditions of how these exchanges take place seemed to vary depending on the informant’s relationship with her husband (or other male counterpart within the household). For some, male household counterparts would provide informants with priority selection or access to their daily fish catches; for others, they would supply fish to their wives at a lesser cost. One informant noted this was because working together her and her husband could effectively sell more fish, and “earn more as a household” (Interview #9, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). Women’s rationale for choosing to obtain access to fish through these male counterparts was primarily and foremost predicated on previously established social relationships and

trustworthiness. Though obtaining fish through a husband or other male household counterpart does not improve women's direct access to fish, it does prove to be a more reliable and consistent source of access than obtaining it via any given fisherman at the landing site (with whom there is presumably less of an established social connection, if any at all). This further implies that women have more control in securing future claims to fish as well.

A significant point of interest that was consistently noted by all informants was that fish was never exchanged freely amongst female fishmongers and fishermen—regardless of marital or familial relations. Why exactly some women were able to obtain fish from male household counterparts in priority, or at a lesser cost—while others were not—is unclear. What is clear is that if female fishmongers and male household counterparts were able to work together in sourcing and selling fish, it seemed to be both an efficient and desirable strategy for both. This being said, out of the eleven informants who acknowledged the possibility of women obtaining fish from their male household counterparts, only four noted that they worked collaboratively together in the buying and selling of fish—or, that they were able to obtain fish from a male household counterpart at a lesser cost.

For one informant, her ability to obtain fish from a family member was strategic beyond simply having preferential access to fish. For this informant the male fisher from whom she obtained fish lived outside the household, but remained essential to her obtaining access. She states, “Some [women] buy from family members because they're in business. [...] I like to deal with family members because then I know where to find them. I know where I can find them in case they cheat me. So I can go for my refund” (Interview #4, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). This statement underscores the power relations that characterize the conditions under which the exchange of fish between fishers and female fishmongers occur. Despite the fact that

women may strategically seek out the most reliable and fair fisherman from whom to obtain fish—ideally a family member or friend—this does not eliminate the possibility that the conditions under which the transaction occurs will still be leveraged to the benefit of the fisherman, and that female fishmongers may feel cheated. This can further indicate why only four informants working as female fishmongers considered their relationships with fishermen to be collaborative. This may also suggest why more female fishmongers did not attempt to establish collaborative relationships with fishermen as a means of increasing access to fish; rather they sought out other, more innovative or resourceful strategies for increasing their access to fish.

This observation—as well as the rationale underlying why fishermen may not always choose to sell fish to wives or other female household counterparts at a lesser cost—could again be linked back to the power dynamics that shape the gendered divisions of labour in Uganda’s rural Lake Victoria fishing communities. This is further emphasized by one informant who worked as an Assistant Fisheries Officer at the landing site in Fishing community #1. Her job involved overseeing the goings-on of the landing site, and she indicated that her responsibilities included law enforcement, the reporting and recording of statistical information, and assuring that the quality of fish brought in satisfied fish size and sanitation regulations (Personal communication, October 15th, 2014). Despite her role in a position of relative authority at the landing site, she maintained a very amicable rapport with the female fishmongers who frequented the landing site. Perhaps because of the relationships she sustained with the women who often purchased fish here, she offered insights into why some fishermen may not choose to sell fish to female household counterparts at a lesser price, or why they may choose not to work

collaboratively in selling their fish to or with women. She was explicitly of the opinion that these types of choices reflect the normalized gender roles in rural Ugandan households. She states,

And even in some homes—you know in Africa here, in Uganda here—some men don't want their women to work. And this business of fish selling... Fishing [activities] involves a lot of work. Like [for example], a woman leaves home at around this time [very early], and she has to wait for fish here—like these smokers [women who purchase fish for smoking, and later smoke the fish]. They have to keep here 'til evening, waiting for fish. So a husband who is not patient will not allow the woman to work. Because she has to spend all the day here. And if that man is a kind of man who wants to see his wife at home, some ladies may fail to engage themselves in what—in fishing activities. 'Cause, they take most of their time [outside of the home]. (Interview #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014)

Her point here describes the customary roles of women and men within traditional Ugandan households. Though in urban centres in Uganda it is generally accepted that women are involved in incoming-generating activities outside the home, in more rural communities it is often the case that men remain responsible for income-earning activities, while women remain responsible for the majority of domestic activities, as outlined by Geheb et al. (2008) in the previous section. This is further indicative of men's belief that if a woman spends too much time outside of the home undertaking income-generating activities, she will not allocate—or be able to allocate—sufficient time to accomplishing necessary domestic duties.

This quotation also relates to how decision-making is conducted in more traditionally organized Ugandan homes, and men's perspectives on how decision-making should be structured and carried out. While the majority of informants noted that men were responsible for decision-making within their households, this was not always the case. A number of informants referenced the fact that decision-making was carried out by their husband because he was the primary income earner. For others—most notably if they earned a higher income than their husband—it was acknowledged that household decision-making was carried out jointly. In this sense, household income earnings could be linked directly to decision-making abilities within the

home. Women who earned more than their husbands seemingly had more leverage within the household decision-making process, and gender roles within their households conformed less to traditionally-structured gender norms. For example, one informant who self-identified as a boat owner (and indicated her husband to be a fisherman), emphasized that she herself was primarily responsible for household decision-making because she consistently earned more than her husband (Personal communication, Interview #7, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). This more progressive household structure was echoed by the fact that she owned her own boat, despite her husband working as a fisherman. The majority of female informants who self-identified as boat owners were generally older, and the heads of single, female-headed households—meaning that they were not constrained by traditional household gender roles in the same way that married women often were.

According to a global study undertaken by the World Bank of gender relations within the household, shared household decision-making between men and women varies considerably depending on the cultural norms of the region (Fleming, Barker, McCleary-Sills, & Morton, 2013). While Uganda was not included in the study, the regional case study countries for Africa—the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda—suggest that men’s views of women’s work should reflect the more traditional domestic role of household caregiver, and that women’s work should remain largely within the home. As domestic household duties constitute work that is not remunerated, this inherently suggests that the majority of men then prefer women’s work to reflect traditional roles and values, rather than generate secondary income and be representative of more gender equitable roles. A core assumption underlying this argument is the idea that men will commonly choose to restrict women’s work to the household; this is because of the belief that income-generating work outside of the home generates a secondary income and

gives women a sense of agency that can be subversive to male-dominated decision-making norms within the household (Fleming et al., 2013).

This view was conveyed by the Assistant Fisheries Officer: “[M]en think that once a woman gets money, you grow wild. So [laughs], it will not be [possible] for him to control a woman with money. So women can work and make money, but they get in conflicts with their husbands...” (Informant #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). Given the potential for conflict—and shifts in power dynamics—that she alludes to here, it would seem that in many cases men prefer to remain the primary income-earner within the home in order to retain power over household decision-making.

While literature concerning how gendered labour is divided in other Ugandan industries is sparse, Bergman Lodin’s (2012) study on how social and gender relations influence access to rice-growing agricultural technology in the Hoima region elucidates the culturally normative structures that prescribe women and men’s work—as well as responsibilities, and designated household tasks. The findings in her study are congruent with those illustrated by the female informants in both of the case study fishing communities, in that women are responsible for all duties and work associated with the household. She describes the gendered household divisions of labour that allocate a disproportionate amount of duties as women’s work as “triple responsibilities” (p.40) and notes that women are responsible “[for] managing food production, the reproduction of the household and that of the village” (p.40). In this setting, women are responsible for all household duties, as well as those agricultural crops that are considered household subsistence crops, such as sweet potatoes and beans. Alternatively, men are largely responsible for household income generation and costs associated with the household, as well as the cultivation of cash crops (Bergman Lodin, 2012). While the industry, ethnicity, and

geographical location differ from those of the case study communities⁹, the gendered divisions of labour and roles in Bergman Lodin's study emphasize the normative belief that women's roles are within the home, or fall within the realm of domestic household tasks and those loosely related to the household, while men are responsible for providing for the household through income generation. This distinction is important as it further underscores the belief that women should not work outside of the home. This is grounded in the belief that women's work outside of the home will detract from the time they have and are able to spend on domestic duties—thus, also challenging men's generally authoritative role within the household structure.

Furthermore, it could be argued that Bergman Lodin's use of the terminology “reproduction of the household” in contextualizing women's roles serves a double purpose; it not only points to women's roles and responsibilities as those associated with domestic, household duties—such as child-bearing, child-rearing, cooking, and cleaning—but also suggests that women are responsible for ‘reproducing’ traditional gender roles, and adhering to culturally accepted gender norms and values. In this sense, women replicate what is, so-to-speak, expected of them, in order to fulfill societal values, rather than challenging or resisting them, which perhaps inadvertently, is a result of women's paid work outside of the domestic sphere.

In other artisanal, subsistence-based societies globally, the gendered dynamics of work and the sexual divisions of labour seem to follow a similar suit. In the Southern Sulawesi region of Indonesia, Colfer et al.'s (2015) study of power dynamics within household gender relations and decision-making found that, “In all sites, men are somewhat more involved in agriculture and agroforestry production than are women; women dominate in domestic work, but are also actively involved in agricultural production, processing and sale” (p.149). Similar to the

⁹ The case study communities are located in Southern central Uganda, whereas Hoima district is located in Central western Uganda.

distinctly separate roles of women and men in the two case study fishing communities, in Southern Sulawesi, women are less involved in the actual primary role of production associated with growing or obtaining the crop or raw resource, are entirely responsible for domestic household tasks, and are also more involved in the secondary steps of processing to add value to the crop or resource, and in distributing or selling the harvested product. While the selling of fish was commonly understood and accepted to be women's work, or a woman's job, in the case study communities, it is the process of actually moving into this type of work—from the purely domestic sphere—that can be seen as subversive.

Colfer et al. (2015) similarly touch upon this issue in their discussion of women's abilities to move freely and unrestrictedly. They note that, "There is widespread agreement that Indonesian women in many areas are free to market produce... Constraints to many Indonesian women's movements come from childcare responsibilities and fears about their safety, though also from a sense that women traveling alone is somehow undesirable, inappropriate..." (p.155). This point emphasizes the contradictory terms upon which women's work and income generation is premised. While it is conceivable and acceptable that Indonesian women sell produce—just as in the case study communities it is accepted and permissible that women hawk or vend fish—it is considered less appropriate that women move or travel to do so. In the case of Southern Sulawesi, and Indonesia more generally, Colfer et al.'s (2015) study does not articulate whether this is applicable to all women traveling or commuting to sell their products, or whether it is more relevant to those traveling greater distances. This being said, from my own observations in the case study communities, it seemed that it was generally acceptable—if not the norm—for women to move around the village freely during the day, or even between several villages, in order to sell their supply of fish. What was not considered acceptable in the case

study communities was women's movement or travel of considerable distances after dark, unless she was accompanied by her husband or another male family member. This was due to the perceived safety risks a woman travelling alone at night could be exposed to, and also due to the belief (in more rural and traditional communities) that, "it's not good for women to leave home at night. Unless she's a prostitute. But a good woman has to stay home at night..." (Informant #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014).

If women accessing and participating in income generating activities is perceived to be subversive by men, their resistance to women's economic involvement may be linked to their belief that women will abandon their domestic responsibilities as a result. To a further extent, this could also be tied to the understanding that a woman's financial autonomy permits her to have a stronger voice within household decision-making and can lead her to be more attuned to men's spending. In a study by Hatley (1990) in Indonesia, men had a negative association with their wives' involvement in household spending. Here, Hatley notes that men were reported to refer to their wives' frugality over spending as "tightfistedness", and complained of their financial autonomy that gave them access to household decision-making (p. 182, as cited in Colfer et al., 2015, p.154).

Regardless, in both of the case study communities, women's lack or limited participation in fishing and crop generation means that their access to fish and agricultural produce is largely dependent on their ability to obtain these resources through men. This, in turn, exacerbates imbalanced power relations between women and men, and men's influence and ability to perpetuate them. The following section will discuss women's sentiments towards and their interactions with men in business relationships in more detail, and will highlight some of the inequitable outcomes that were the result of those gendered power imbalances.

Women Cheated By Men In Business Relationships

The male resistance to female participation in income-generating activities discussed above is the norm in the case study communities. It was reported by those women involved in fish processing, mongering, and boat ownership, however, most frequently and significantly seemed to occur between the *barias* (fishermen) and female boat owners. In a general sense, more than one third of the informants I spoke to reported being cheated by men in business relationships; in particular, female fish processors and mongers spoke of being ‘overcharged’ or ‘cheated’ for the fish they were sold. This took the form of fishermen demanding an inflated or unfair price in exchange for the fish they sold to female fishmongers.

Due to increasingly declining fish stocks in the lake, fish catches have become smaller and more infrequent overall. The implications of this are such that female fish mongers often have few options to obtain fish from a wider selection of fishermen, and without access to a secondary income generating activity, many women have little ability to negotiate a more fair price for the fish they buy. In response to this, some women—those with access to microfinance loans, or with adequate savings—choose to purchase their own boats. According to those informants who had entered the boat ownership trade, the rationale behind this was simple. They believed that in buying their own boat they would have more control over and access to the profits earned from catching and selling fish. This appeared to be a fairly straightforward process as typically boat owners hire a crew of fishermen that carry out fishing on their behalf; the fishermen are generally paid a small wage and a percentage of the day’s catch, and boat owners are generally left with the remaining profits from the day’s catch. However, according to a number of informants, this dynamic is more complex and problematic for female boat owners, and a number of informants owning boats explained that it was common for them to be cheated

by their fishing crews. In the previous section I discussed some of the strategies or responses women made use of in order to respond to the difficulty of access to fish and to ensure more consistent supplies and fair prices of fish. Here I will discuss how some female fishmongers attempted to respond to those challenges by buying boats, and how this frequently resulted in them being further cheated, rather than helping them to circumvent this issue.

Of the 16 women I interviewed that worked within the fishing industry, 7 were boat owners, and one woman had previously owned a boat for a number of years in the past. Female boat owners were often older women (approximately 35 – 50 years in age), the sole income-earners for female-headed households, and were also frequently widows, divorced, or single women who had chosen not to marry. This may be due to the fact that older women and widows, women who had divorced, or chosen not to marry, are not only the sole income-earners for their household, but also take sole and full responsibility for financial decision-making within their households. Furthermore, perhaps based on their age and marital status, it could be the case that older, unmarried women are less constrained by societal pressures of marriage and the traditional gender roles of men and women within marriages. They therefore may have more autonomy to do as they please in terms of livelihood activities and financial decision-making. Literature that considers the breakdown of traditionally ascribed gender roles in the context of single, female-headed households is scant, and in the context applicable here, largely inexistent. However, Dungumaro (2008) has written about the increasing number of single, female-headed households in the global south, and how they tend to constitute the majority of those populations living in deepest poverty. Rosenhouse (1989) analyzed the difficulties women, and more specifically, female-headed households, face in the context of income generating activities. She termed this as the “triple burden” (as quoted in Dungumaro, 2008, p. 430). She explains that the term highlights

the threefold challenges women face in the economic market: they are disadvantaged in terms of income earning equality in the marketplace, they are expected to account for household domestic tasks and duties, as well as generate income, and they typically have more dependents on only a single income (whereas male-headed households generally have two sources of income—their own and their spouse's). Taken together, these studies suggest that single, female-headed households may break out of traditionally ascribed gendered labour roles not as a result of resistance, but out of the necessity to do so. For women who support multiple dependents on one income, boat ownership may be a more viable means of generating income because women have the potential to earn more while spending less time directly involved with the activity each day (in comparison to fish mongering, or various types of fish processing).

In her analysis of women's paid work outside of the household amongst small-scale, subsistence farmers in Tanzania, Bryceson (1985) contends that any form of paid work done by women outside the home in a rural peasant setting symbolizes an act of resistance against the gendered divisions of labour. Because capitalist values designated that women's work should only consist of unpaid domestic work within the home, any form of work that took place outside of the household and involved the payment of a wage was ultimately ascribed to be men's work. Bryceson argues there are varying degrees of resistance to the designated traditional gendered divisions of labour. She puts forth three types of resistance, or what she coins as “non-adherence” to these traditional roles: 1) Married women who are fully subservient to their husbands, yet are permitted to work outside the home due to financial necessity—in most cases, women remain responsible for all domestic household duties and their paid earnings may be appropriated by their husbands; 2) Married women who are not fully subservient to their husbands, and whose husbands are supportive of their work outside the home—the extent of

their husbands' support is most evident in the degree to which husbands assist their wives with domestic duties, and whether the woman has control over her own earnings; and 3) Unmarried women and the absence of male control within the household—these women resist by refuting marriage (at least in the traditional, formal sense), and are the primary income earners in the household, free to work as they wish. In single, female-headed households, women may seek assistance with domestic duties from other female family members (p.131). Through this lens, widows and single or unmarried women who own boats fall into the third category of resistance, and assist in the progression of challenging assigned gender roles that permit and prescribe the segregation of occupational roles between women and men. However, of these 8 female boat owners 5 reported frequently being cheated by men—with 1 female fishmonger also recalling a similar scenario.

These eight women had chosen to buy boats on the premise that they would earn more in the long term. A number of them had taken out micro-finance loans in order to do so. According to estimates by informants and other community members, a boat could cost anywhere upwards of one million shillings¹⁰. Artisanal fishers in Uganda's rural Lake Victoria fishing communities use boats constructed of wood. In some cases, the bow and stern of the boat are fitted with a metal overlay for protective purposes. Because Lake Victoria is vast and fishermen are often forced to frequent different fishing areas due to overfishing, most boats are also equipped with an engine. Similarly, informants and community members estimated the baseline cost of an engine to be four million shillings, but often much more¹¹. Though purchasing a boat and engine requires a large initial financial input and commitment, it should, in theory, be a sustainable

¹⁰ At the time of writing, one million Ugandan shillings was equivalent to approximately 415 Canadian dollars.

¹¹ At the time of writing, four million Ugandan shillings was equivalent to approximately 1670 Canadian dollars.

investment over the long term. This is because boat owners typically have the upper hand in artisanal fishing communities—in terms of the profit generated from their boat and crew’s daily catch of fish. In most cases, boat owners provide their fishing crew—called *barias*—with the boat, boat engine, fuel, and fishing gear (e.g., nets, hooks, etc.), and also with a small daily allowance for food. The costs for fuel and food are determined and negotiated on a daily basis between the boat owner and fishing crew, and then a percentage of those costs (i.e., that are agreed upon between the boat owner and crew) are subtracted from the total amount the crew receives as their commission from their daily catch. As such, the boat owner is responsible for providing these inputs in advance for their crew; and in turn, the crew is expected to return from the lake, bringing their daily catch to the boat owner (Interview #3 – 4, MAAIF, October 21st, 2014). According to two government informants, the process should function something like this:

So these persons [*barias*] normally return the fish, and I think that means that when the catch has landed, the fisherman—the boat owner—first brings the money for fuel, money for food—they normally before they go to work, they agree on an advance—for food, maybe for some more beers, some what—so, he [the boat owner] first knocks off those costs. Then the remaining [profits] they share. So if he has landed about 30 kilograms, maybe 10 kilograms go for those advances, then they share [the profits for] 20 kilograms. (Interview #3, MAAIF, October 21st, 2014)

But even the catch, after they have removed the money from fuel, for food, then the profit usually—the boat owner, the owner of the fishing boat—takes 60 percent [of profits]. And the crew, takes 40 percent. So if the total cost—that day after costing, they have removed off the money for fuel, money for food for the *barias*—and they have got a hundred dollars. The boat owner is going to take 60 dollars and the crew will take 40 dollars. (Interview #4, MAAIF, October 21st, 2014)¹²

In theory, this should imply that boat owners are entitled to a larger share of the day’s profits. However, in practice, female boat owners reiterated a similar – if not identical—pattern

¹² According to a number of informants, for small wooden boats (approximately 3-5 metres in length) in the artisanal fishing industry, it is common for 2 *barias* to be hired to work on one boat. Describing this process, one informant stated, “The men—you hire two men who go for fishing when you are owning a boat. So those people who go for fishing, when they are two in the boat they are called *barias*” (Interview #2, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014).

in the nature of these transactions: female boat owners upheld their part of the deal, but their male *baria* counterparts failed to return with the daily catch of fish. In the case of the female fishmonger, the circumstances under which she had been cheated had been similar; the woman had arranged with *barias* that she would provide them with an advance for fuel, and some sort of daily allowance, on the premise that when returning from the lake with their catch, the *barias* would give her first priority (in access and selection) to their fish (Interview #5, Fishing community #1, personal communication, October 15th, 2014). Nonetheless, on numerous occasions the situation had played out the same—the *baria* fishermen would simply return and tell the woman that they had not caught any fish.

The difficulties faced by women in their business relationships with fishermen are emphasized in a quotation from an informant in Fishing community #1. A widow with 13 children, and the sole income provider for her household, this woman divided her time between her duties of owning three fishing boats, buying fish to sell, and growing vegetables on her small farming plot. She had taken out microfinance loans from a local women’s organization in order to purchase her boats and their respective engines. Her main challenge and focus was paying the school fees for her children. Here she notes, “Fishing is not easy—especially when it comes to women. I own a boat, I send out men to go for fish, they come back with empty [nets]. They sell it—the fish—while they are still out on the lake” (Interview #1, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014). When asked if she was still required to pay them under these circumstances, she replied, “Yes, so you have to get trustworthy men. It’s not easy”.

A few weeks later this informant faced further difficulties when one of her boats mysteriously disappeared. The body of one of her hired *barias* was found in the lake, where he had evidently drowned. However, the other *baria* and her boat were still missing. There was

speculation amongst many in the community—namely, amongst female fishmongers, boat owners, and fishermen—regarding whether the boat had capsized in rough waters and both *baria* fishermen had drowned, or whether one *baria* had pushed the other from the boat, stolen the boat and engine, and moved to another part of the lake. Because the majority of artisanal fishing boats on Lake Victoria are made of wood, it would be easy enough for a stolen boat to be repainted—covering up the boat’s identification number—and registered elsewhere on the lake under a new identification number. A few days later one of the woman’s sons was contacted and informed that fishing nets from her boat had been found in the lake. This raised further speculation regarding the whereabouts of her boat; while there was the possibility that the nets had been lost overboard in rough waters or during a storm, a number of community members felt that the nets had been thrown intentionally overboard—as the nets’ colour and pattern are often recognizable as belonging to a particular community member. Community residents’ speculation was further fuelled by unanswered questions: if the boat had really capsized during a storm, then why had wreckage from the boat or the body of the other *baria* fishermen failed to be found in the vicinity of where the body of the drowned *baria* had been discovered? If the other *baria* had lived, why had he not returned to the community since the boat had disappeared? Why were the woman’s nets found very far down the lake in an area that was not ordinarily frequented by her *barias*? While these questions were left unanswered, the unfortunate reality was that a man had died, and community members reported that due to the structure of Ugandan labour laws, a person who hires others to work for them is responsible for the well-being of those that they hire (International Labour Organization, 2013). As a result, the woman that owned the boat was

imprisoned, and only released on bail after paying several million shillings¹³, in addition to the losses related to both the boat and its engine.

The outcome of this situation was never resolved during my time spent in the community, leading a number of community members to assume the worst—that the woman’s boat had indeed been stolen by the other *baria*. And, although this labour law clearly applies to anyone hiring another person to work for them, there were a handful of female community members who stated plainly that if the woman’s boat had in fact been stolen, this sort of situation would never happen to a man. While it should be acknowledged that this anecdote lacks supporting factual evidence and is purely based upon community members’ word-of-mouth and personal opinions, it does exemplify a very real situation in which female boat owners may be taken advantage of in their business relations with men. These anecdotes underscore the power dynamics that play out between women and men in Uganda’s Lake Victoria fisheries, and the resistance that men harbour towards women’s participation in the industry. In the discussion in the previous section, women responded to the mediated and sometimes limited access to fish via fishermen by attempting to instead access it through male household counterparts, or other male family members and friends they personally trusted.

Here, the nature of the business interactions follow in the same vein, but in a more severe and directly impactful way. While obtaining fish as a female fish processor or monger indirectly challenges men’s roles through female participation in the fisheries industry and through their income generating activity outside of the home, fish processing and mongering were generally accepted to be ‘female’ jobs, or women’s work within the case study communities.

¹³ At the time of writing, one million Ugandan shillings was equivalent to approximately 415 dollars Canadian. As this informant estimated her daily income to be approximately 10 000 shillings (or just under four dollars Canadian), the scale of loss financially was quite substantial.

Another informant who had formerly owned a boat also recalled experiencing challenges as a result of male *baria* fishermen failing to return with fish. She expressed that she had ultimately chosen to leave the fishing industry because of it:

Long ago—like in 1996, 97, 98—I had a boat. But because I could stay here at the shores, men could go for fishing. When men see that they get a lot of fish they have to sell that fish from there [from the boat], they come back and they tell you that there's no fish. They get the fish, they sell the fish, nets are growing old—they tell you there's no fish. 'Til the nets [had] grown old and then I had to get out of fishing (Interview #2, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014).

The woman now has a shop in which she peripherally works in the fishing industry—selling fishing supplies such as handmade and hand-woven fishing floats, engine covers, and nets, however she no longer owns a boat or works in the fish processing business. The anecdote recounted by this informant describes the systemic challenges women face in boat ownership, and the nature of the financial interactions that women working in the fishing industry encounter frequently in their dealings alongside men in the industry. This woman was the only informant I spoke with to reveal that she had formerly owned a boat, and while her experience was highly personal, it conveys her subjective treatment by fishermen and their perceptions towards her as undeserving or unworthy of business transactions with men. Furthermore, it alludes to the prolonged period of time over which these interactions took place; her recount of the degraded physical condition of her nets conveys that this experience took place over a number of years, and the cyclical and repetitive course of events is indicative of her inferior status amongst fishermen (consequently explaining her rationale for finally leaving fishing).

Perceptions of the issues female boat owners encounter in their daily business interactions with fishermen was further corroborated by an Assistant Fisheries Officer, who worked at the main landing site of Fishing community #1. Though her job was primarily concerned with regulation and law enforcement, and the quality of fish, its handling, and

processing methods (Interview #3, Personal communication, October 15th, 2015), it was evident she had an understanding of the interactions that took place between women and men. In relation to the challenges faced by women in fishing she stated,

When—like I've told you some women engage themselves in fishing—selling eh, like taking to the market—you know, at times—it's common that you have to put in something... Those inputs—like the nets, the hooks, the boat, the oars—even engines. If somebody goes using an engine, and fuel—so you have to put in. But being a woman—when you're a woman and you put in those things in that business, and the man goes fishing, those people [fishermen] have a tendency of selling fish before they come back [from the lake]. [They sell the fish] on the waters, to other fish mongers [presumably men] on the waters. So being a woman who cannot go on the waters, you face this challenge where the people can sell your cash [fish] there, and they come and tell you that they have not got fish, when they have sold it away. Because you are not involved in that process of what? Going [fishing] for the fish from the waters. (Interview #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014)

Perhaps due to her time spent at the landing site observing these interactions take place, her perspective is also keenly aware of the issues that explicitly arise from the fact that women do not themselves participate in fishing.

She further continues, also noting,

And being a woman, you are undermined. At times they [fishermen] can cheat you, and take that fish away knowing that, being a woman, you will not do much to him [in terms of repercussions]. [...] There's nothing you can do to him. And you end up losing and you end up giving up. (Interview #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014)

This perspective is important as it notes not only the gendered divisions of labour that exist between women and men in these two fishing communities, but also because it underscores the inequitable power dynamics that exist between women and men in a society that is patriarchal in structure. In contrast, female boat ownership more explicitly challenges and competes with men's own access to fish, and is considered to be a male occupation. Women who own boats also find themselves in charge of the *barias* employed to work on their boats. This too challenges gender roles, as the boat owner would be in charge not only of delegating tasks to the *barias*, but in determining their wages.

Of further crucial significance is the distinction that these types of unfair and dishonest interactions are only done to women *because* they are women. In their critical discussion of gender relations and disparities in the global fisheries, Weeratunge, Snyder, & Poh Sze (2010) link the devaluation of women's work to entrenched societal and cultural values, emphasizing that,

Customary beliefs, norms and laws, and unfavourable regulatory structures of the state reduce women's access to fisheries resources and assets and confine them to the lower end of supply chains within the so-called informal sector (FAO, 2006; Porter, 2006; Okali and Holvoet, 2007). The constraints on their participation in fish value chains results in disparities between men and women's incomes and often in women being relegated to positions of poverty. (p.406)

Therefore, as a direct product of culture and traditional gender norms and values, women's economic activities are devalued and perceived as competition to men—despite women's already marginalized starting positions within household income-generating activities. Implicit in this dichotomy is the suggestion that this same interaction would not take place between a male boat owner and his hired *barias*, as a male boat owner could actually 'do' something in terms of repercussions for this dishonest behaviour. Where it would be acceptable for men to settle such a dispute through verbal exchanges and arguments (often involving the mediation of uninvolved, older and well-respected men from the community, and sometimes—though less acceptably—through physical fighting) until the issue was resolved, it did not seem to be acceptable for women to attempt to resolve these sorts of disputes in the same way. Rather, women were simply expected to accept that they had been cheated (as noted in a discussion with my interpreter). With this in mind, in the hierarchal socio-economic order of societies or communities where occupational divisions of labour are segregated by gender, it is not simply random or construed that women often fall at the bottom of this economic order.

The gendered divisions of labour between women and men in Uganda's Lake Victoria fisheries, though stark and inequitably favourable of men, do not differ widely from the divisions of labour between women and men occurring in other regions of Lake Victoria and Eastern Africa, greater Africa, and even other regions globally. On the Southern side of Lake Victoria, in Tanzania, the fisheries are structured much the same with women excluded from participating directly in fishing (Medard, 2005). The anecdotal evidence of the poor reception and treatment of women working in fishing raised and discussed above is corroborated in research conducted by Modesta Medard (2005). Medard's study was undertaken in the Kagera region of Tanzania where she found women in the fisheries there faced a multitude of challenges compared to men. Her explanation for why this occurs is articulated in her discussion of the breakdown of labour and occupations in the Nile perch fishery there, where the majority of occupations are dominated by men:

Most fish harvesters in the Nile perch fishing industry are men. In 2000, male suppliers made up 84 percent (ninety-seven) of those providing raw material to the processing sector (Medard et al. 2002). Men also largely control the new harvesting technologies associated with the Nile perch fishery (Medard and Wilson, 1996). Fish factory owners attribute the dominance of male fish suppliers over females to men having access to more of the capital needed to buy collector boats, provide seed money and hire labourers. Men can also travel more frequently, have better access to business collateral and are reported to be more aggressive than women in persuading owners to give them loans or advances for fish procurement payments (Medard, 2005, p.80)

In the case study communities, of my informants frequently cited a lack of access to financial capital—or a lack of access to sufficient financial capital—as a barrier to their ability to participate in their preferred fisheries occupation. For example, a number of informants who would have preferred to sell fresh fish to larger markets, instead worked as fish processors—smoking and drying fish to sell locally. Interestingly, no informants expressed their preference in boat ownership, perhaps because they had seen and heard about the poor standing of female boat owners from those that already owned them.

There are also marked similarities with the Zambian Kafue River fisheries, where women again, do not participate in fishing, but take on the majority of drying and mongering activities. And like in the case study communities, Béné and Merten (2008) note that, “Contrary to fishermen where patron-client relations do exist between draw-net masters and their workers, fish traders (men and women) are independent ‘entrepreneurs’ who set up their own trading business” (p.877). This is comparable to the case study communities, where women’s mongering activities are generally separate entities from the fishermen from whom they obtain their fish—regardless of whether that individual is a relative or not.

Ghanaian coastal canoe fisheries in West Africa have demonstrated similar circumstances; though these are the result of very different social conditions and traditional values. According to Overå (2005), while fisheries occupations are distinctly gendered with men engaging in fishing and women engaging in fish processing, it is women who tend to provide the financial inputs necessary for boat ownership and other entrepreneurial investments needed by fishermen and others working in the industry. Ultimately, women’s stronghold on capital in this industry was a result of their innovative supplemental income generating strategies first undertaken in the 1970s, in which they gleaned the by-catch—usually consisting of fish that were too small to meet regulation size for market sale and distribution—of industrial fishers for artisanal sale locally (p.136). Different from Uganda where the fish-harvesting sector remains largely artisanal (Informant #3, MAAIF, October 21, 2014), in Ghana, the fish harvesting industry is two-tiered—with both artisanal and industrial, or more commercial-level fishers. Overå also recognizes that in Ghana, women were not traditionally restricted to the domestic sphere—a point of contrast with the case study communities where women traditionally were, and continue to challenge those norms by working outside of the home.

Even in some traditionally matrilineal fishing communities in India, fishing remains a gendered activity. Nayak (2009) writes,

[T]he sexual division of labour is clear cut. Men do the harvesting and women do the post harvest work. Both men and women are generally involved in the pre harvest activity of preparing the nets and tackle for work. Women also prepare the food for long fishing trips. This is achieved on top of all the services that village women render gratis to their husbands and family. With this division of labour, women have access to markets and are in control of cash, because it is they who convert the fish into money. (p.112)

While this division of labour is very comparable to those in the case study communities, informants' experiences and accounts of their own access to financial capital do not reflect this scenario. A main difference between the two cases could perhaps be that the case study communities are traditionally patriarchal ones. And, in fact, Nayak goes on to explain that in the Indian context, over the past few generations, customary values have shifted away from the matrilineal, and are now more reflective of patriarchal values. She argues this has largely resulted from changing religions and the influence of neoliberal development and globalization. Despite these changes, she notes that even within matrilineal societal structures, much of the decision-making and decision-making processes were not inclusive of women. This parallels the decision-making settings in the case study communities; the majority of household decision-making was and is done by men. Thus, reflecting the household's primary income earner—usually men.

Though the examples outlined above have all been drawn from the global south, divisions of labour between women and men in fisheries work in the global north are not uncommon. In Canada, in both the Prince Edward Island oyster fishery, and Newfoundland's former groundfish industry, fisheries processing work was largely carried out by women, whereas fish harvesting was to a much greater extent done by men (Lewis, 2005; Power &

Harrison, 2005). On Prince Edward Island, “For the most part, women, often the spouses of the oyster fishers, have done the task of cleaning and sorting. To do this, they must possess a commercial fishing registration card, which costs Can\$50. The fisher who owns the boat and gear either pays them a nominal fee, or, by special agreement, gives them a share of the catch. The latter is more lucrative, and not many women are paid that way” (Lewis, 2005, p.114). This was much the same in Newfoundland, prior to the collapse of the groundfish industry in the early 1990s. Here women made up the majority of fish processing factory workers, while men participated in fishing—either on the fishing crews of large commercial trawlers, or through owning their own smaller boats (Power & Harrison, 2005).

From a global perspective, women have made up the processing sector in these industries under a comparable rationale. In many fishing industries worldwide, predominantly female workers comprise the bulk of fish processing activities. The analysis of women’s roles and work in the examples discussed above demonstrate geographic diversity; however, they also articulate similar social processes that have produced, and continue to reproduce, the gender divisions of labour between women and men that exist in many fisheries globally. Furthermore, the inequitable treatment of women within these economies—and the inequitable distribution of or access to fisheries and financial resources within them—can, at least in part, be connected to the patriarchal structure of familial and societal arrangements (and to both pre-capitalist and neoliberal modes of work and production).

According to Uganda’s Assistant Commissioner in fisheries, Uganda’s Lake Victoria fisheries are no different, where women have and continue to account for the lion’s share of work in the processing sector in Uganda:

The industrial fish processors—the ownership of the factories—is purely men. But the actors in the filleting, packaging, most of them are women—who do the

filleting and the packaging. Because they feel women are more careful. This is a delicateness—like you work in the [operating] theatre. [...] In most processing aspects in the industries you find these labour intensive activities—the sorting, the what—it's mainly done by women. (Informant #1, MAAIF, October 7, 2014)

Her explanation emphasizes the dichotomy that exists between the types of work that men and women are expected to carry out, and alludes to the challenges faced by women in the Lake Victoria fishing industry. By raising the point that in many processing sectors women's work often comprises the more labour intensive activities, she again brings attention to the difficulties women experience when balancing domestic household work with income generating activities. Labour intensive activities are often also time-consuming, meaning that women are required to stretch their time to account for this, while simultaneously protecting the time they need to carry out all domestic-related household tasks and responsibilities. These responsibilities are more deeply compounded for female-headed households where there is only one sole source of income.

The insights provided from both the literature discussed above, and the Assistant Commissioner, help to underscore the roles that capitalist, neoliberal economies have in shaping the gendered divisions of labour, and those that patriarchal familial arrangements also play. While the situational context of both the experiences shared by my case study informants and those expressed in the examples above are independent, in conjunction, they shed light upon the underlying themes of capitalism and patriarchal familial values which play a role in undervaluing all types of women's work. As such, this helps to situate and address my research question—*what are the livelihood challenges faced by women working in the case study communities of Uganda's Lake Victoria fisheries?*

These types of family structures largely governed women's roles and activities in terms of work and reproduction, at least in the Sub-Saharan African context (Gordon, 1996). In her

book, *Transforming capitalism and patriarchy: Gender and development in Africa* (1996), Gordon discusses the ways in which the fabric of pre-capitalist African societies also work in conjunction with capitalist structures, and further embed patriarchal societal hierarchies and social conditions. She argues,

It is my contention that the differential impact of capitalism on women and men reflects the particular ways capitalism intersects with patriarchy within each society and is therefore conditioned by both historical and contemporary forces. Before colonial capitalism, African economic, social, and political institutions were to varying degrees patriarchal, and promoted male-dominated societies. Although women held considerable influence and status within their communities, land tenure systems, formal political institutions, and cultural norms typically accorded more authority, status, and control of wealth and other resources (including women) to men. (Gordon, 1996, p.5)

With this background, she refutes the idea that patriarchal societal structures and their accepted gender norms and roles are purely the result of capitalist constructs and values introduced by colonial regimes. However, this being said, it is also crucial to acknowledge the substantial influence of colonialism and its introduction of capitalism that shaped, valorized, and further entrenched patriarchal structures and values. A similar perspective is shared by Claude Ake (1987) in his work on employment and the informal sector in Africa. Ake argues that colonialism not only worked to institutionalize capitalism in African societies, but that it dissolved and devalued indigenous social structures in the process (p.100). Further stemming from this argument is the history of institutionalized racism and sexism that propagated colonial ideologies. Because sexism was at the root of colonial societal structures, it would naturally follow that under colonial rule African women would also be relegated to the bottom of social hierarchies (Moyo & Kawewe, 2002).

This can perhaps also be extended to the nature of the economic relations that have taken place between the female boat-owning informants and the *baria* fishermen they have employed:

if the gendered divisions of labour within these fishing communities proscribes that the act of fishing itself is appropriate only for men, then it could be further suggested that female boat ownership challenges these historically embedded gender roles and norms by disrupting accepted social hierarchies.

In owning boats, women are not participating in the actual act of fishing itself; however, because boat owners generally have higher socio-economic statuses than their fishing crews (e.g., more wealth, respect, and therefore, power) female fishing boat ownership invalidates the accepted positions for women in this social hierarchy by subverting the power dynamics established by men's dominance over their access to fish, and thus over their access to the resource base. It could then be argued that fishermen refute this shift in women's potentially increased social and economic standing, by dealing unfairly with female boat owners in their business relationships and attempting to revert to or maintain the historically accepted socio-economic order—in that, male dominance over access to fish, and by extension, to financial capital.

The pervasive male dominance over access to fish and financial resources requires women to be strategic and innovative in order to gain access to those resources. In some scenarios, this can lead to non-conventional means of exchange. In certain situations, these exchanges might involve brokering deals where women pay in advance for future access to a fisherman's catch, or where they may offer a subsistence good in conjunction with money to improve their bargaining conditions. Finally, in some cases women may engage in sexual relationships with fishermen in order to guarantee their access to, or ability to purchase fish. The conditions surrounding the practice of this last scenario will be discussed in the following section.

Some Women Obtain Fish Through Sexual Relations With Fishermen, While Others Do Not

Sex-for-fish (SFF) is broadly described as an informal economic practice whereby fishermen solicit sex from women, in exchange for supplies of fish and consistent or priority access to fish (Béné & Merten, 2008; Mojola, 2011; MacPherson et al., 2012; Camlin et al., 2013). According to the literature, the practice of SFF and the conditions characterizing these exchanges vary widely depending on the geographic and cultural setting of where the practice takes place. A common theme, however, to all case studies of SFF discussed in the literature is the correlation between the occurrence of SFF practices and elevated rates of HIV/AIDS amongst fisheries communities (IRIN, 2005; Béné & Merten, 2008; Mojola, 2011; International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, 2016).¹⁴

While none of the informants in this research self-identified as participants in this practice, multiple informants acknowledged they had heard of the practice and articulated how and why it was a strategy used to access and obtain fish. This section will attempt to provide some insight into the complexities tied up in this practice, though it is important to recognize and address that what is discussed about SFF here is based on the information provided by the informants, and reflects their knowledge and perceptions of SFF in their own particular contexts. As not all informants could speak to being aware of the practice's occurrence, not all informants were able to provide information pertaining to this discussion. What is important to distinguish is that in the case study communities, SFF is not considered the same as transactional sex where sex and money are typically exchanged. SFF was not considered as transactional sex at all by some informants, as they viewed transactional sex solely to be the exchange of money for sex. The understandings of how SFF was contextualized or characterized varied broadly—from being

¹⁴ Although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS transmission and infection rates in fishing communities cannot be attributed to SFF practices alone, it is considered a significant contributing factor.

understood as purely the exchange of sex in return for fish, to the exchange of sex in return for priority access to a fisherman's catch. Several informants noted that in years past, some fishermen had used SFF as a pre-condition before considering selling their fish to a woman.

Some women may engage in these strategies in order to improve their access to fish and to secure a more steady supply. Women who chose not to participate felt disadvantaged in terms of their comparable potential for income generation. Two informants believed the practice to be problematic for those women who chose not engage in this type of relationship. The comments of one informant who was familiar with the conditions of these types of exchanges are expressed below:

They [those who participate in sexual relations with fishermen] could get a lot of fish. Those who never gave in could never get any fish. So it was like an arrangement. Fishermen who do that—they have their fish, they don't want money, they want a woman. So those who accept, they go sleep with them, and those who don't, they don't give them fish. (Interview #4, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014)

From this woman's perspective, women who chose to participate in SFF relationships disadvantage those women who chose not to participate in SFF practices, as some fishermen would prefer to exchange fish with those women that would offer them sex in return.

The informant continued in support of this view and referred to a woman she knew who participated in SFF practices. She noted, "You know that Nakasero, those fishermen come and they call her. You see this one calling her, the other one calling her—because they know she does it" (Interview #4, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). The quotation provided here illustrates the demand that could be generated by or amongst certain fishermen for services that

only some women would choose to participate in.¹⁵ Here, the woman referred to as “Nakasero” would be sought out over other woman also looking to buy fish, as she may be willing to offer SFF, whereas other women would not.

Another informant spoke of the ways in which she also viewed these practices as restrictive to her access to fish, and emphasized that they had been more prevalent in the preceding five years. Like the previous informant, she noted that fishermen would prioritize exchanging their daily catches of fish with those women who were willing to engage in sexual relations (Interview #2, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). The informant viewed SFF as, “a challenge, a big challenge—like in 2012, 11, 9...” and that, “They [fishermen] could sell to those who offer their bodies. The benefit is not only for fish, but if you could sleep with him. When you come to buy, you are [a] priority, so he will give it” (Interview #2, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014).¹⁶

Despite the comparative advantage that women willing to engage in SFF relations may have, no one other than these two informants explicitly expressed the view that SFF represented a threat to the livelihoods of those women who chose not to participate in the practice. In contrast, many informants actually considered SFF as a viable and logical entrepreneurial strategy women could make use of to personally gain more consistent and frequent access to fish. While these informants were not necessarily supportive of the practice’s occurrence, they were understanding of why some women may choose to participate in it. Something of particular

¹⁵ While some fishermen may be inclined to participate in SFF practices, it cannot be assumed that all fishermen would engage in these relationships, especially if they were aware of the risks involved—such as contracting HIV, or other sexually transmitted infections.

¹⁶ Many informants articulated that SFF had been more of a frequent and problematic challenge in the five years preceding than it was at the time when I conducted my fieldwork. Curiously, though many informants could confirm this to be true, no informants could speak to why exactly SFF had become less of a contemporary issue.

significance, was the arbitrariness with which some informants could, or chose to, speak to the topic of SFF. Yet other informants could not, or chose not, to address it altogether. Furthermore, SFF was always referenced by my informants at arm's length. They discussed it as a sort of distant concept—something they had heard of, or noted that they knew of community members who participated in the practice; they themselves could never personally speak to participating in the practice, nor did they speak to directly knowing someone who had.

This came as a surprise to me, as the majority of these informants worked in close proximity with one another in the case study communities, and many had longstanding personal friendships with one another. To add to this was the size of the case study communities—which were relatively small—and the population of those working regularly within the fisheries industry further compounded this size. Many people working within the fisheries industry knew of one another, at least peripherally through a family member or acquaintance. A provoking question that arose of these discrepancies between informants, was how could one informant be knowledgeable of the topic of SFF, yet another informant working in close proximity with her could not? Would knowledge of this practice, its prevalence and occurrence not be passed between community members? Or would it not at least be passed amongst those women working in the industry?

Roberta Sigel (1996) offers one explanation relating to this, and explains why some women may choose not to disclose more detail when discussing sensitive subject matter that closely or personally affects them. In her book, *Ambition & Accommodation*, Sigel (1996) refers to this concept as the “Not-Me” Syndrome (p.62). Sigel's own study of women's self-perceptions of gender relations and sex discrimination in the United States conveys that women are acutely aware of and likely to view issues of sexism and harassment as issues that affect

other women, or ‘women’ in general, but not as something that specifically affects them themselves. Sigel emphasizes that,

From their statements, we have to infer that these women think of themselves as exceptions to the general rules they had just proclaimed. [...] The majority of telephone respondents distinguish between their own situation and their perception of how women in general are faring. They consider themselves fortunate in that they never or rarely have been the victims of a discriminatory pattern they believe to be so common in the population at large (pp.62-64).

According to Sigel (1996), individuals may view gender discrimination as a problem external to themselves because “Individuals are reluctant to think of themselves as victims. Ample evidence in the literature suggests that people will deny victimization, at times even to themselves, in order to protect their self-respect” (p.65). Indeed, it is possible that this rationale explains why some women were not able or willing to speak to the topic of SFF, or why they viewed it as irrelevant. It is also possible that due to the reserved nature of Ugandan social norms, some informants viewed it inappropriate to discuss a topic of such sensitive subject matter—especially with a person, such as myself, who was foreign to those norms. Or, those women simply had not heard of the practice of SFF, and truly could not speak to its occurrence.

Nonetheless, responses from informants who could speak to the topic reflected nuanced and complex understandings of how SFF practices impacted their communities. One informant referred to SFF as strategy used by some women in order to improve accessibility to financial capital. She stated that, “[I]t’s mainly because some girls or some women want to get easy money. Because it’s the easiest way to earn. You give in your body, they give you fish, you sell, and that is it” (Interview #1, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014). According to this informant, sex was exchanged—but only for fish—without the use of money. She further added that, “You give in your body, you get fish, but the fishermen also give you rejects. What they call rejects—the small fish—which can be taken by these ones who are in transit [on their way to

the market]” (Interview #1, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014). The so-called “reject” or “2nd grade” fish are fish that would be considered under-sized according to government regulations. Due to their small size, they cannot be sold at commercial markets or to buyers selling to commercial markets or exporters. Why fishermen land under-sized fish is unclear, considering the risk of being fined by fisheries officers; however, declining fish stocks in the lake suggests that there are consistently fewer fish available that would meet government size regulations. This may also depend on the type of fish being sought. For example, the local minnow-like *mukene* fish are caught using kerosene lamplights and nets. This can attract other species of fish—such as juvenile Nile perch and tilapia—and often results in significant by-catch of these other species (FAO, 2016). A possible outcome is that fishermen choose to keep these small fish in order to sell them illegally, in smaller, informal markets or perhaps less commonly, as a means of leverage in SFF transactions.

While the price received for under-sized fish would be significantly less than that received for fish meeting legal size regulations, in this period of time the case study area had experienced a decline in fish catches. As a result, it became apparent that a ‘better-than-nothing’ attitude had been adopted by fishermen regarding the potential retail viability of under-sized fish. On one particular day in Fishing community #2, the collective catch for the community that met regulation size standards consisted of only four fish. The scarcity of fish on this particular day was not an isolated occurrence, and was symbolic of just how scarce fish has become for those working in the industry.

Even those women who were able to obtain supplies of fish from their husbands usually obtained smaller, under-sized fish. This is because it was cheaper for them to buy, and they were able to make more profit out of it—especially for those women working as fish smokers

(Personal communication, Interview #1, Fishing community #1, October 14th, 2014). All this taken into consideration—women’s tendency to purchase undersize fish given their general lack of capital—implies that the ability of some women to obtain fish via SFF transactions can be viewed as both logical and resourceful. By obtaining fish in this way, women are able to secure the fish they need without spending unnecessarily from their limited capital.

In his study of the uses of transactional sex amongst people in the town of Mandeni, South Africa, Hunter (2002) found that relationships constructed around transactional sex permitted women a sense of agency. This was especially the case when relationships of transactional sex were used for fulfilling subsistence needs. In Mandeni town, Hunter (2002) found that women would engage in transactional relationships with “boyfriends” in order to satisfy both subsistence and material needs. More marginalized women living in more informal townships were more likely to use transactional sex to access subsistence-related resources (e.g., food or money for food, rent payments, etc.), whereas more affluent women and women in more urban townships would use transactional sex as a means of access to material desires (e.g., gifts, money for spending, clothing, etc.). In one case, one young woman unable to find work even used the money obtained from her boyfriends to support her family’s household food needs. Hunter (2002) notes that,

Indeed, women typically see multiple-boyfriends as a means of gaining control over their lives, rather than simply acts of desperation—although the two of course are linked. The very vocabulary of sex – centred, for women, around the verb *qoma* (to choose a man) – is suggestive of women’s agency. Certainly, unlike the *lobola* system that is based on male-to-male transactions, transactional sex does grant resources directly to women themselves. (p.112)

What this quotation, and Hunter’s (2002) study more generally, make evident, is that transactional sex can prove to be a strategic method for accessing material resources—especially when other inputs, such as time and money, are limited or constrained. A significant challenge to

women in the case study fishing communities was gaining consistent and adequate access to fish, in order for them to make and sustain their livelihoods. Hunter's (2002) quotation emphasizes the ability of transactional relationships to provide women with required resources, in stressing that transactional sex gives women direct access to the material resources they need.

Some informants in my own study did in fact concede that the appeal of participating in SFF practices was pragmatic; many female fishmongers lack the capital necessary to purchase regulation-size fish, they frequently deal in the purchase of under-sized fish and sell them on informal markets. According to a number of informants, most female fishmongers deal in the buying and selling of "young" or the "unrecommended" sized fish. This is due to the fact the most women lack the capital necessary to purchase the regulation size fish. One informant highlighted that in Fishing community #2, SFF activities were fairly common, and she emphasized, "Women participate [in SFF] because of needing more capital. Here it's common—that they go, they give in to men, and after they get more fish. And it's one of the strategies to combat the challenges of less fish" (Interview #3, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014).

SFF practices are, however, also characterized by a number of risks. The risks of participating in SFF relations are many, ranging from social stigmatization and domestic violence to health risks. While not explicitly discussed by informants, it was frequently implied that their awareness of these risks influenced their choices not to participate in SFF.

Social stigmatization was consistently mentioned by informants as a repercussion of participation in SFF. Informants noted that community members, including fishermen, would 'talk' about those women suspected of participating in SFF. They noted that it was evident which women did participate, as certain fishermen tended to 'call on' certain women more frequently

than others. Informants explained that participating women were stigmatized as being ‘not good women’, or promiscuous.

Women suspected of engaging in SFF relations were not only stigmatized by fishermen. Another informant noted that, “They [fishermen] brag about it while they are out on the lake, and then some of the men who are friends to myself and others, they tell us, ‘Hmm, your fellow woman is not so nice’” (Interview #3, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). Here she was alluding to the explicit social stigmatization that could result of SFF; however, she also discussed a different, more cautionary form of social stigma. She described that if some fishermen knew or suspected a woman of participating in SFF, they might approach another woman in the community that is known to be her friend—in order to give warning that the woman in question might be at risk of contracting HIV. The informant notes, “they come and tell you, ‘you, you caution your friend. She’s doing this. This so-and-so said [he] was with her—even this one [man], even the other one [man]. We know—talk to her’. So that’s how they get to know” (Interview #3, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). In this way, women at risk of contracting HIV were stigmatized for being sexually promiscuous, and for therefore failing to uphold traditional Baganda cultural norms that expect women to behave in a socially conservative manner. Though simply being known to be at risk of contracting HIV, or to be HIV-positive did not always come with the weight of social stigma, in this context it most certainly did. In their study of transactional sex amongst women and perceptions of feminine ideals and values in Swaziland, Fielding-Miller et al. (2016) found that women who engaged in transactional sex purely for subsistence purposes were socially stigmatized for not conforming to

Swazi ideals of “good behaviour” and “good character” (p.26).¹⁷ In comparison, those women who engaged in relationships of transactional sex that were longer-term and of a more romantic, ‘girlfriend-boyfriend’ nature, were less likely to be socially stigmatized. Similarly, participants in the study also felt that those women who were stigmatized for being sexually promiscuous would be likely to receive assistance—and less deserving of it—should they become ill.

Another sort of social stigma associated with women’s presumed engagement in SFF practices was their consistent access to fish from specific fishermen. Other women working alongside these women noted that fishermen would consistently and simply ‘give’ certain women fish—without the exchange of money. Several informants discussed this as a form of exchange that they occasionally witnessed, and one particularly emphasized, “And then, the other way we get to know, it’s when the man comes—the fishermen come with fish—and they just give it to someone. A particular person. All the time they sell to *you* [one specific woman]. You know that *mhhh...*” (Interview #3, Fishing community #2, November 6th, 2014). This informant explained that herself and other women within the community felt this sort of exchange—involving no financial exchange—implied a woman’s participation in SFF relations.

Throughout Uganda, the culture of bargaining and negotiation in the process of conducting financial transactions is prevalent, if not universally essential to such exchanges. Therefore, for this to take place without at least some discussion of the financial conditions of the transaction was very out of the ordinary, and other women felt that this could demonstrate pre-determined conditions of the exchange as a result of SFF relations awkward.

This informant further recalled that there are specific areas within and nearby the community where witnessing this type of exchange was more common. She emphasized that

¹⁷ Others have revealed similar findings on transactional sex and culturally acceptable feminine behaviour and ideals. See Stoebenau et al. (2011), and Strebel et al. (2013).

these types of transactions did not occur at the community's formal fish landing site, but at smaller—and what informants referred to as more 'informal'—landing sites nearby. They often described these landing sites as small, 'bay'-like areas, where only one or so fishing boats could be moored, and where women would often frequent to buy the "2nd grade" fish that could not be sold at the community's formal landing site. This informant's example referred to one particular informal landing site where she had witnessed this type of exchange occur.

Of the two case study communities, informants of Fishing community #1 did acknowledge they had heard of the practice occurring, yet were generally of the consensus that it was not common within the community. They did however note that SFF was a common system of exchange within the 'island' communities. Informants frequently referred to "those islands", in reference to small, island fishing communities located offshore in Lake Victoria and a short distance from Fishing community #1.

In contrast to this, informants from Fishing community #2 acknowledged the practice to be fairly common. They frequently mentioned that use of SFF practices had at one time been more common, however, in the past five years it had become much less infrequent. Neither this informant nor others was able to specify why SFF had been a more prevalent practice only a few years previous. When asked if the scarcity of fish had been particularly bad in the waters nearby Fishing community #2 during these years, the informant replied that the decline of fish catches was actually much worse now. This is significant as it implies that in Fishing community #2 and the surrounding region, increasing reliance on use of the SFF system is not correlated with declining fish stocks or catches.

Also of interest are the varied views illustrating informants' knowledge of and familiarity with the occurrence of SFF practices. Fishing community #2 is located approximately 30 minutes

away by motorcycle taxi from Fishing community #1; and in size, Fishing community #2 is substantially smaller than Fishing community #1—both in population and community infrastructure. While Fishing community #1 is considered ‘semi-traditional’ by Ugandan standards, Fishing community #2 is smaller, more traditional, and depends on Fishing community #1 for access to a larger, more formal fish landing site, markets, larger shops, and other more formal services—such as transport and health services. However, both communities are largely reliant on the rural, artisanal fish trade, and many of the informants from both communities were familiar with one another—especially those who were involved in the same or similar occupations.

A point of particular significance, and one that could perhaps be explanatory of why informants from Fishing community #2 were more open to discussing the subject of SFF, is that many of the female inhabitants residing in Fishing community #2 had emigrated from the North of Uganda. Different socio-cultural customs or standards could feasibly be more open to or permitting of the discussion of SFF—which was something considered to be generally taboo according to the more reserved cultural and social norms of the majority of Bugandans I spoke with in the Southern/Eastern regions. Not all women living in Fishing community #2 were from the North, however these informants on the whole seemed to be considerably more open to discussing the occurrence of the SFF system than informants of Fishing community #1.

Other differences potentially accounting for informants’ familiarity or knowledge of SFF practices could be linked to informant occupation and age. According to informants in both communities, use of SFF practices was considered to be more prevalent amongst fish smokers and mongers, and 7 of the 10 informants in Fishing community #2 self-identified as fish smokers or fish mongers (1 fish smoker, 6 fish mongers). Age also seemed to be linked with informant

knowledge of SFF, with most informants that were familiar with SFF being older in age (approximately 40 years or older).

Conclusion: Making The Connection With The Social Relations Approach

This chapter has aimed to describe the major livelihood challenges encountered by women working in the fisheries industry. Through the narratives and stories provided by women, it has identified three major themes as significant livelihood challenges to women: 1) Women's access to fish mediated through interactions with fishermen; 2) Women cheated by men in business relationships; and 3) Some women obtain fish through sexual relations with fishermen, while others do not. For each of those challenges, women also identified adaptive strategies that they mobilized in order to mitigate and circumnavigate them whenever possible. Adaptive strategies mobilized by women include: obtaining access to fish through a male family member or other household counterpart, purchasing their own fishing boats, and for those women who chose to participate in the practice, SFF. Both the challenges women face and their adaptive strategies are highly complex, and those challenges are not always easily mitigated, nor are women's adaptive strategies necessarily successful in mitigating them. What this analysis does highlight, however, are the ways in which women make use of social resources (male family members, other household counterparts, or friends) in order to gain access to material resources (fish and financial capital). It also shows how larger social structures (accepted cultural gender norms) shape the power dynamics at play within social relationships, and disadvantage women from more easily accessing and controlling those resources.

To a further extent, the chapter demonstrates how women make use of their agency by mobilizing adaptive strategies (familial or other close personal relationships with fishermen, purchasing boats, or engaging in SFF) in order to attempt to better establish and secure access to

fish. Alternatively, the chapter suggests that where women's adaptive strategies are unsuccessful, the power dynamics (shaped by patriarchal cultural values) that are innate and influential to the gendered divisions of labour—and men's direct access to and control over fish and financial capital—attempt to constrain or limit women's agency. However, overall, and despite these disadvantaging factors, women remain resourceful and committed to sustaining their income-generating activities, and to the process of improving their own, and their families', livelihood conditions and circumstances.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

“So, our women in fisheries, we see them as very important—playing a role. Because there are many women-headed households, and these women are able to make, to provide for their families from what they get in fishing” (Informant #1, MAAIF, October 7th, 2014).

The above quotation summarizes the overarching themes identified in my paper. My thesis explored the roles and work of women in the two case study fishing communities situated on the shores of Lake Victoria, Uganda. It sought to uncover how the gendered divisions of labour between women and men within the fisheries industry influenced the challenges and issues women experienced in their income generating activities.

On the whole, my study found that women make up an integral part of the many roles that constitute fisheries industries operations in the case study communities. While it is difficult to draw specific conclusions from this research that could be generalizable to other fishing communities, in other locales, analysis of interview discussions with informants revealed three broad themes. These themes relate to the major challenges and issues women experienced as a result of social relations with men, and of the gendered divisions of labour within the case study communities.

Women’s Access To Fish Mediated Through Interactions With Fishermen

In both of the case study communities, informants discussed a challenge they frequently experienced of obtaining fish from fishermen at a fair price. Declining fish stocks have resulted in the demand for fish being much higher than the available supply (Nunan, 2010). This has further resulted in fishermen negotiating inflated prices for fish. The rigid gendered divisions of labour within the fisheries industry designates women’s participation in fishing as culturally inappropriate, and therefore constrains women to undertake fish processing and mongering

activities (Béné & Merten, 2008; Mojola, 2011; Interview #1, MAAIF, October 7th, 2014; Interview #3, Fishing community #1, October 15th, 2014). The result is that women are largely economically dependent on fishermen in order to gain access to the material resources they need for their own income generating activities.

Many of the informants responded to this issue by choosing to obtain fish through a male family member or household counterpart working as a fisherman. In one sense, women's mediated access to economic resources via fishermen meant their agency, in terms of financial independence, was limited. Alternatively, their ability to make use of personal relationships in order to circumnavigate this issue is equally demonstrative of the value of social resources, and strongly indicative of a strategic and innovative form of agency.

Women Cheated By Men In Business Relationships

According to informants, this issue is both bound up in the structural constraints of the gendered divisions of work, and in the cultural constraints that prohibit women from directly participating in fishing. Informants discussed that men would frequently demand excessively inflated and unfair prices for fish. While fish shortages have meant that prices have become inevitably inflated to a degree, many informants felt that the prices fishermen demanded were simply unobtainable. As a result, some women attempted to evade the process of negotiating fair prices for fish altogether by purchasing their own boats. Hypothetically, boat ownership implies the owner of the boat takes the largest share of profits from daily catch brought in by their fishing crew. But in reality, female boat owners often reported being further cheated by their crews. Ultimately, their crews would sell the day's catch of fish while still out on the lake and inform the female boat owner that they had failed to catch any fish for that day. In this respect, female boat owners miss out doubly—they lose out on their monetary investment in the boat, as

well as on paying the fishing crew's daily wages, while earning nothing to compensate for these costs.

In terms of cultural constraints, these extend to the patriarchal norms that permit men to treat women unfairly in economic transactions—where men's behaviour in these transactions may be justified by their beliefs that women's work should remain within the household, and that they should not have financial autonomy. A number of women's organizations—including the VDT—have developed programmes to assist women financially. VDT, for example, offers micro-finance loan programmes and educational trainings to women in order for them to have better access to the financial inputs they need for livelihood generating activities, and in order for them to learn methods for increasing the values of the products they sell. In a study of women working in the fisheries in Goa, India, women working together in small business cooperatives proved to be more financially secure than those women working independently. According to Rubinoff (1999), “The most successful fisherwomen today tend to be leaders of small, cooperative groups of female vendors who share the expenses, risks and profits of their marketing business” (p.641). In Rubinoff's (1999) study, women divided tasks and responsibilities amongst themselves, while also sharing costs and profits. Introducing a similar cooperative approach in the case study communities could potentially benefit women in a comparable manner. The most effective long-term and sustainable solutions, however, should ultimately incorporate changing men's attitudes towards women's involvement in fisheries industry income generating activities.

Women Use Innovative Strategies To Secure And Ensure Consistent Access To Fish

One of the over-arching conclusions of this research is the resourcefulness and innovation employed by women working in the fisheries in order to acquire the resources they

need. They made use of strategic methods as means of gaining consistent and sufficient access to fish and financial resources. One of the unconventional methods discussed was the exchange of SFF. While informants noted that only some women chose to use this strategy, the majority knew of the practice and the conditions under which it occurred. The women choosing to engage in this practice could frequently be prioritized over other women as recipients of fish. These relations could be used to access fish more frequently and consistently, could be used to access larger quantities of fish, and could also be employed as a means of guaranteeing future access to a fisherman's catch. A further difference noted was that though SFF could be used to obtain fish, it would be of lesser quality—referred to by informants as “second grade”, or “reject” fish. These catches of fish were comprised of smaller fish that failed to meet regulation size, and therefore could not be sold fresh for mongering purposes. It could alternatively only be used for smoking or drying purposes.

Informants who spoke of SFF practices acknowledged that the occurrence of these transactions made it more challenging for women choosing not to participate in these practices, such as themselves, to secure consistent access to and supplies of fish. They cited risks associated with SFF—such as the risk of transmitting HIV/AIDS, and potential social stigma amongst community members—as deterrents from participating in the practice. Both MAAIF (2005) and the Uganda AIDS Commission (2012) have indicated that fishing communities comprise one of the social groups most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Uganda, and according to MAAIF (2005) “infections rates are estimated to be more than three times higher [...] than the national average” (p.5). Identifying why some women are deterred by the risks of participating in SFF while others are not could be of significant value for future research looking to address the elevated infection rates of HIV/AIDS in fishing communities. Furthermore, exploring in greater

detail why some women may choose to participate in SFF, yet do not self-identify as participants in the practice would provide much needed insight into determining the true frequency and prevalence of the practice; it could also help to uncover whether or not some women downplay the severity of the livelihood challenges they face.

Recommendations

As a result of the information collected through the interviews carried out with my informants, a number of recommendations can be made that would assist in addressing the challenges faced by women working in the fisheries industries, and could assist in improving the livelihood conditions of many working in the Lake Victoria artisanal fisheries industry.

Because Lake Victoria's waters are shared by Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, its management is overseen by all three countries. The LVFO serves as the governing body that coordinates and implements management efforts undertaken between these three countries (Interview #1, MAAIF, October 7th, 2014). While the LVFO does its best to implement these efforts, more could be done to address issues of sustainability and to more efficiently coordinate those efforts. In order to do this, more funding should be allocated to the LVFO and the national government bodies that constitute it. Directing more funding to addressing corruption within fisheries management—locally, at the Beach Management Unit community-level, regionally, and nationally—could be a key factor to improving use of funding already available and allocated for use within the fisheries, and could help to discourage the use of bribery amongst fisheries officers.

Developing and implementing plans and policies that specifically address long-term use and sustainability of the Lake Victoria fisheries, as well as initiatives for fisher livelihood diversification could help to address issues of overfishing more efficiently. Investing more time

and funding into creating programmes or initiatives that work to educate on shifting male perceptions and attitudes towards understanding the crucial roles and values of women's work within the industry is essential to making the fisheries more equitable. A programme encouraging or benefitting women and men to choose to work in partnerships together could also be of value in helping to redistribute financial incomes more fairly. At this time there is no evidence from my study that supports women becoming involved in the activity of fishing itself, as their involvement would only further exacerbate the multiplicity of complex problems that are causally the result of extensive overfishing.

While there are currently plans to invest in cage-based aquaculture, more could be done to assist those working in the fisheries to diversify and transition into other livelihood activities. Some NGOs, such as the VDT, have already begun assisting women working in the fisheries diversify their income generating activities into other types of activities (such as small-scale agriculture, dairy farming and production, beekeeping, and handicrafts). Greater funding and assistance from government could help them to improve and scale-up their activities in order to benefit more people that subsist off the lake's shores.

HIV/AIDS persists to be a prevalent and problematic health and social challenge in fisheries communities. It was discussed by many informants as being a complex and relevant problem that they encountered in some facet or another in their day-to-day lives. While the government has developed—and continues to work on—strategies for addressing the epidemic of HIV/AIDS in fishing communities, much more could be done in order to assist those affected both directly and indirectly by the disease. Fishing communities are often rural, and geographically isolated, or hard to reach. They frequently lack infrastructure and access to government services. Similarly, the case study communities lacked adequate healthcare facilities,

and access to mobile healthcare units that test for HIV/AIDS was limited to a few days every three months (Interview #10 – 11, Fishing community #2, November 26th, 2014). Without permanent accessible healthcare facilities, it is unlikely that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS within fishing communities will be alleviated any time soon. Increased efforts should be made by government to improve accessibility and encourage use of healthcare services within fishing communities.

Future Research

The exploratory nature of my research project led me to raise more questions than it did to determine answers, and my hope is that others may address some of these questions in future studies. Further research addressing the role of SFF and the connection with the transmission of HIV/AIDS could help to assess just how prevalent SFF is in Ugandan artisanal fishing communities. By extension, it could also help to justify the allocation of more government funding towards community development of rural fishing villages.

In connection with this is the need for future research on the subject of women who acknowledge they are familiar with the occurrence and practice of SFF, however do not self-identify as participants in it themselves. Is it the case that these women know the risks involved in the practice and therefore choose not to participate? Or, is it the case that they choose to participate, but choose not to admit to participating in the practice? Would a Ugandan researcher have more success in answering these questions?

Specifically considering why and how fishermen choose and work to preserve an all-male fishing culture would also be of significance in order to deconstruct some of the issues linked to the very rigid gendered divisions of work and labour within fisheries industry activities.

Finally, two informants spoke of their distrust for The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), the national government unit dedicated to responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They questioned the authenticity and reliability of HIV/AIDS test results provided by TASO, and questioned why a substantial number of TASO tests show false results. Research investigating this query in more detail could be of use in shedding light on assumptions, beliefs, and stigmas made towards HIV/AIDS and its transmission within fishing communities—as well as on the quality, trustworthiness, and politics tied to government HIV/AIDS testing services.

Concluding Remarks

The rural and artisanal fishing communities of Lake Victoria's shores in Uganda are disadvantaged on the whole, and this thesis only provides a glimpse into some of the issues that these communities face. More generally, these communities constitute some of the most marginalized in the country (International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, 2016), and are further burdened with complex socio-economic challenges that result of this marginalization. Women are further disadvantaged within fisheries communities as they frequently lack fair and adequate access to the material resources necessary for livelihood activities and are additionally responsible for unpaid domestic household tasks. All of this being said, however, women make use of innovative and capable strategies for gaining and sustaining access to the material and financial resources they need, and their work is fundamentally essential to the functional operations of the fisheries industries, processing, and distribution activities. Looking forward, the challenges faced by women are considerable, but not insurmountable. However, to make the fisheries a more equitable industry for all those involved will require a shift in thinking towards the value and worth of women's work—and ultimately, will require women's equal access to their fair share of the catch.

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