Sociology of Hawaii Charter Boat Fishing

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Charter fishing is a sector of Hawaii's pelagic fishery that has received little attention on fishery management research agendas. One study in 1976-1978 gathered information on Kailua-Kona charter boat operators,[1] and a more substantial study in 1984 offered a description and economic appraisal of charter boat fishing in Hawaii.[2] The 1978 survey reported 29 boats operating in Kailua-Kona, and the 1984 study estimated the statewide fleet to consist of 119 boats. Currently, the charter fishing fleet numbers some 150 active boats, 95 of which operate out of Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.[3]

This report provides baseline sociological information on the human element of the Hawaii charter boat fishing fleet. The purpose of the report is to describe the Hawaii charter fishing community. This community includes charter boat owners, captains and crew. Specifically, the study focuses on the social structure of the Hawaii fishing community and the individual harbors where charter fishing is concentrated. Additionally, the report examines career patterns in charter fishing: how people enter the fishery, how long they stay, and why and when they choose to leave the fishery. Included in the career patterns is an analysis of various commitments—to charter fishing, to fishing generally, and to fishing in Hawaii. Finally, the report comments on the extent to which Hawaii charter fishing constitutes an occupational community as defined in the sociological literature. This research prefaces a longer study that will assess economic and vessel characteristics of the charter boat fishery.[4] This report focuses solely on sociocultural aspects of the fishery.

1.1 Methodology

I used structured face-to-face interviews and participant observation to collect information from October to December, 1996. In the weeks before I entered the field, I sent an introductory letter to the 144 charter boats that had advertised in a brochure from the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism Ocean Resources Branch (See Appendix A for sample letter). The letter stated the purpose of the study and gave notice of my future harbor visits.

I interviewed participants by using an interview guide (See Appendix B). There were separate guides for captains and for deckhands, based on the position they more regularly worked, recognizing that some of the captains occasionally work as deckhands, and some of the deckhands have their captain's license. The interviews solicited both quantitative and qualitative data. Interview times varied from 15 minutes to 3 hours.

I intercepted captains and crews on the docks as they cleaned or performed maintenance on their

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[1] National Marine Fisheries Service. 1983. *The 1976-1978 Studies of the Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, Billfish Fishery, Part II, Charter Boat Operators Component.* Southwest Fisheries Center Administrative Report H-83-4, Honolulu Laboratory, Honolulu, Hawaii.

[2] Samples, K., Kusakabe, J. and Sproul, J. 1984. *A Description and Economic Appraisal of Charter Boat Fishing in Hawaii.* National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Center, Honolulu Lab.

[3] The true number of active charter boats in Hawaii is difficult to estimate. See section 1.2 for a discussion.

[4] Pelagic Fisheries Research Program, Project 2046. Principal Investigators Sam Pooley and Marcia Hamilton.

boats and requested interviews. Other times, I encountered respondents at the fuel dock, the weigh-in area, the ice house, or the harbor restaurant. In some cases, I met with respondents outside of the harbor—restaurants, shopping malls, and their places of work. In other cases, I was already acquainted with particular fishermen[5] from previous studies and requested contacts or suggestions of whom to interview. In every case except two, charter fishermen willingly gave their time and attention.[6]

Additionally, some of the respondents became key informants and provided longer, less structured interviewing and verification of data. I also went on several charter fishing trips as observer, attended harbor meetings, watched weigh-ins of the fish, and interviewed peripheral members of the scene.

1.2 Sample Population

The entire charter boat population is difficult to estimate. There are 144 charter boats that advertise in a promotional brochure from the State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT).[7] This is likely a fair representation of active charter boats, although it is likely that there are some vessels in the brochure that claim for tax purposes to provide charter services and some vessels which are active but not included in the brochure.

At most, each registered vessel has one owner, two regular captains, and two regular crew. At the least, each vessel has an owner/operator who also serves as his own crew. Averaging three people associated with each vessel, the charter boat fishery can be estimated to involve approximately 400 people.

I interviewed 55 captains and 24 deckhands for a total sample of 79 respondents (Table 1). Although these dockside intercept and snowball sampling methodologies did not produce a completely random selection of people involved in charter fishing, there is no reason to assume that the 79 fishermen interviewed are not fairly representative of the entire population. Time constraints mandated the end of interviewing, but I had already reached 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). That is, subsequent interviews ceased to produce new patterns or insights.

During interviews and conversations, I did not use a tape recorder but instead took notes. All direct quotations in this report are taken directly from my interview and field notes and thus may suffer from an occasional omitted word, a laugh, or a pause.

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[5] In this report I use the term "fishermen" (instead of "fishers") in accordance with local usage.

[6] In introducing the study, I assured fishermen that all information would be reported anonymously. All names in this report have been changed to protect identities.

[7] Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Ocean Resources Branch. 1995. *Hawaii: Like No Other Place: Charter Boat Sport Fishing Directory.*

Table 1. Interview Population

Harbor	Captains	Crew	Total
Kona	36	8	44
Lahaina	10	8	18
Kewalo	9	7	16
Maalaea	0	1	1
Totals	55	24	79

The following sections provide basic demographic information on the sample population:

1.2.1 Location

I conducted interviews at four different harbors where the majority of charter fishing activity takes place: Honokohau Harbor, Hawaii; Kewalo Basin, Oahu; Lahaina and Maalaea Harbors, Maui. The sample size from each of these harbors was representative of the amount of activity that each harbor supports (Figures 1 and 2).

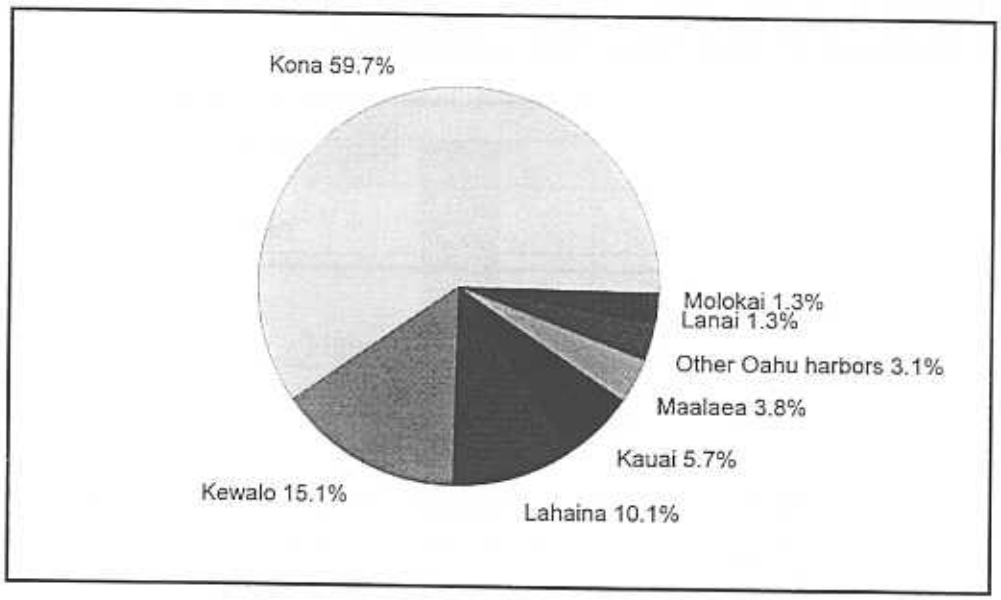

Figure 1. Charter Boat Concentration by Harbor.

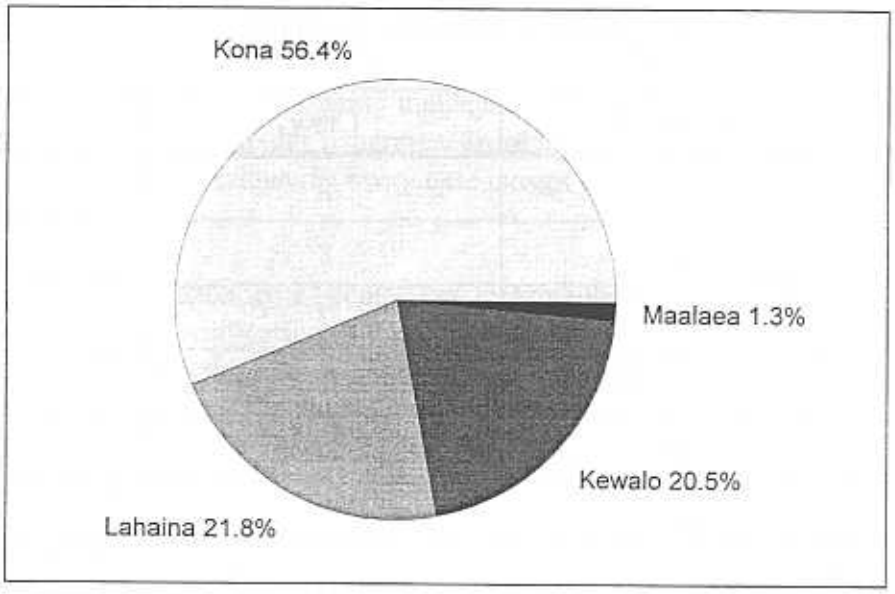

Figure 2. Sample Population by Harbor.

1.2.2 Age

The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 50, with most of the respondents in the 41-50 age group. The average age for captains, 46, was considerably greater than the average age of the crew interviewed, 29 (Figure 3).

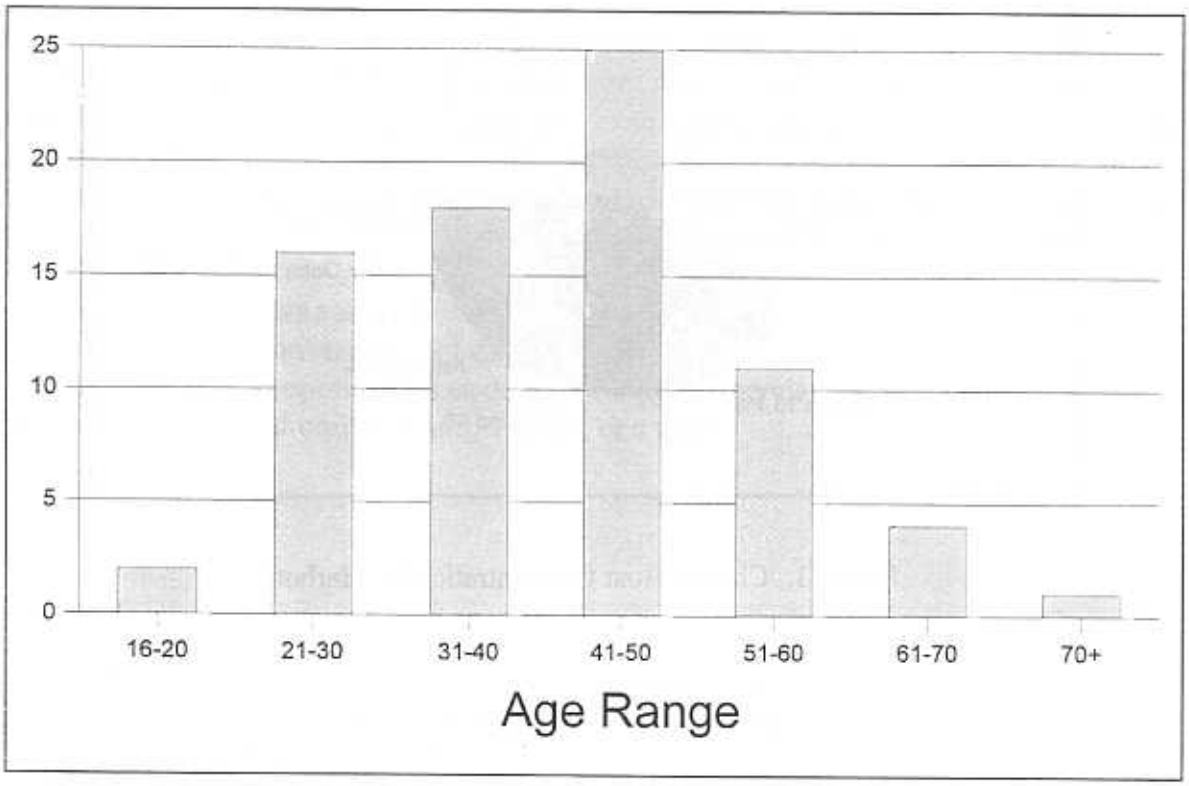

Figure 3. Age Distribution. [Question: How old are you?]

1.2.3 Gender

All of the respondents except one were males. This gender configuration is consistent with reality in Hawaii charter fishing. Currently, there are two known females involved in charter fishing -- one as owner/deckhand and one as part-owner-operator with her husband. Many females are involved in non-fishing activities in the industry, such as marketing and accounting. Boats or corporations that have booths often staff them with women (called *booth girls*) to sell charters[8] to passers-by (Figure 4).

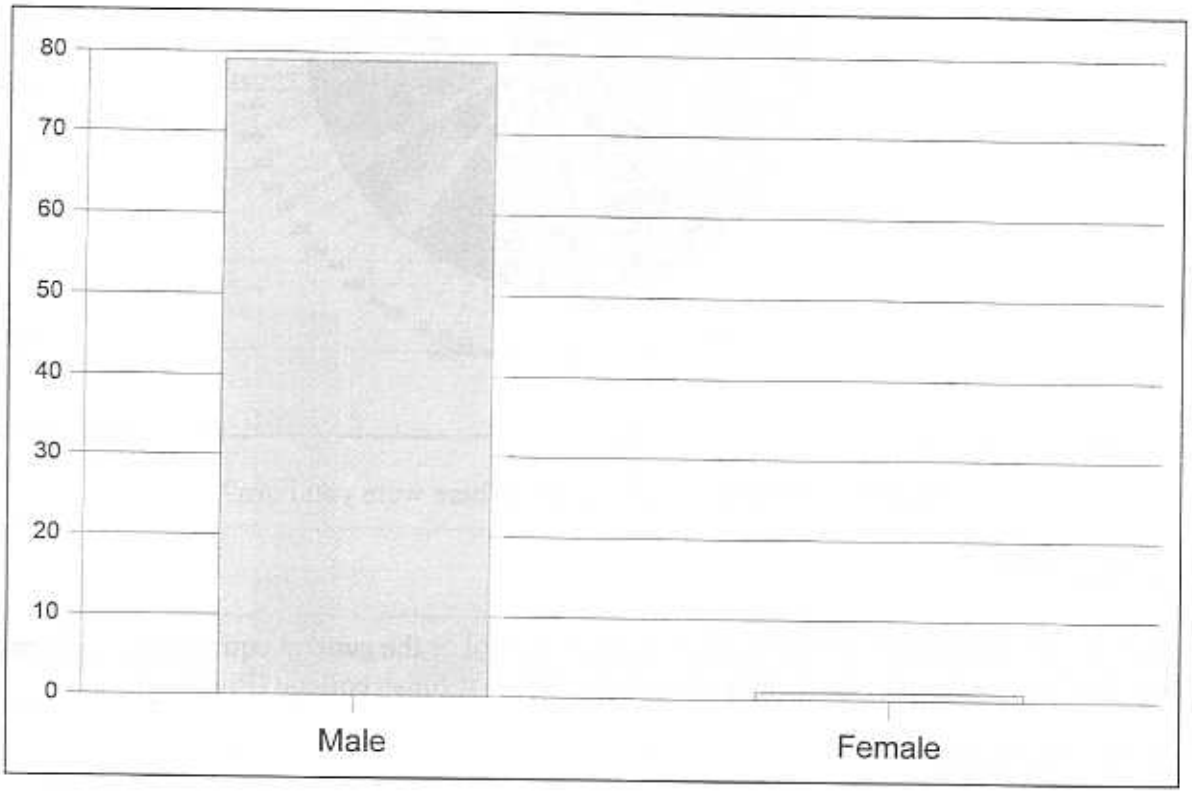

Figure 4. Gender Distribution

1.2.4 Birthplace

The majority of the charter fishermen interviewed were not born in Hawaii. Forty-two percent were born in California, 22% were born in Hawaii, and the remainder were born in 21 other mainland states (See Figure 5).

[8] The word "charter" can mean the product that a charter boat sells ("I booked a charter") or can refer collectively to the actual people that have paid to go fishing on the charter boat ("You wouldn't believe the charter we had today"). In this report, I use the word in both ways, and sometimes refer to the people as the "charter patrons."

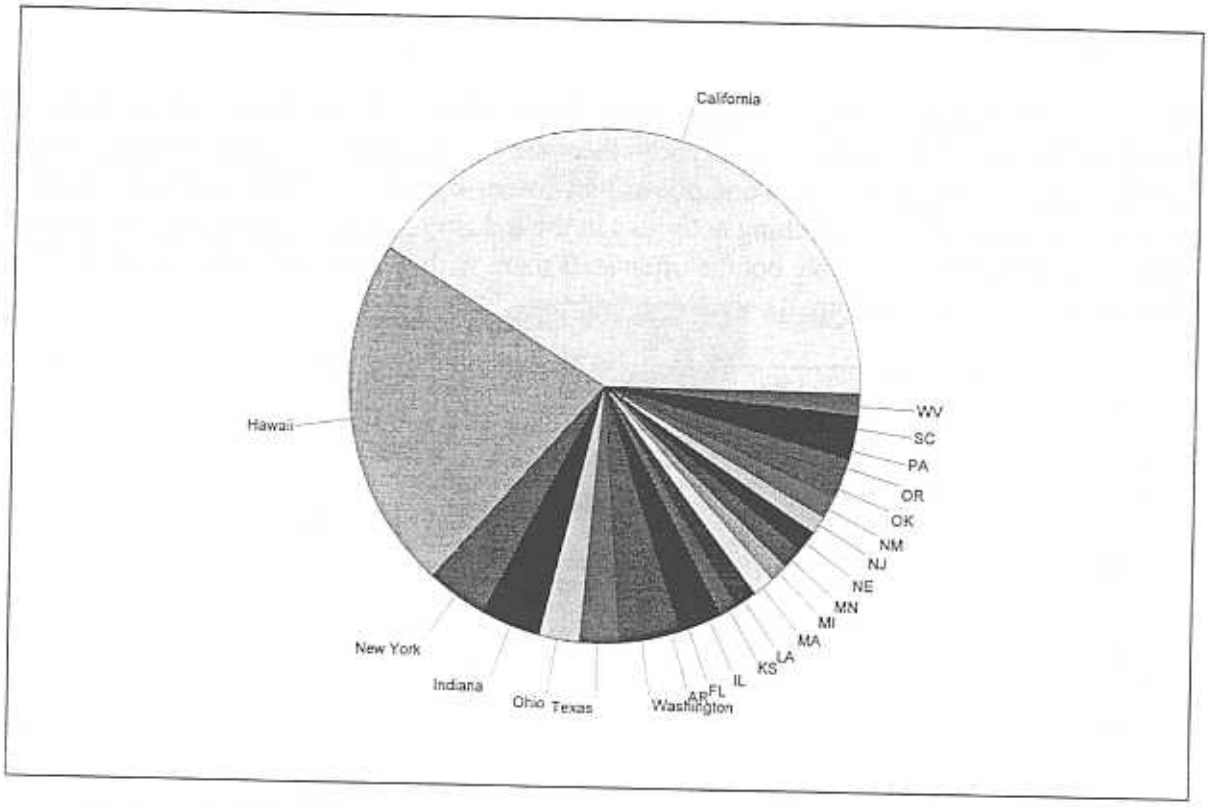

Figure 5. Birthplace. [Question: Where were you born?]

1.2.5 Education

Almost all of the respondents have completed high school or the general equivalency diploma. Many charter fishermen in the sample attended but did not finish college (Figure 6).

1.2.6 Marital Status

Table 2. Marital Status of Respondents[9]

	Captains	Crew	Total
Single	25	19	**44**
Married	30	3	**33**
Total	55	22	**n = 77**

The majority of the sample were single. Additionally, many more captains were married than were crew. It is not surprising that the majority of the charter fishermen are single: I regularly

[9] To analyze the data, I compressed the divorced and single into one category, realizing the likelihood that some respondents who had been divorced considered themselves single and preferred to answer this way.

heard comments that indicated that being a charter fisherman was incompatible with having a family. Reasons for this were financial ("I shouldn't get married, ...[you] cannot support a wife and kids off this job"), long hours ("the hours are hard on the family, I miss my kids growing up"), and lifestyle ("the lifestyle leads to drinking, carousing...guys feel the need to unwind and so they stay at the harbor...and drink").

1.2.7 Ethnicity

While I did not ask a question about ethnicity, it was evident that most of the people involved in charter fishing in Hawaii are Caucasian.

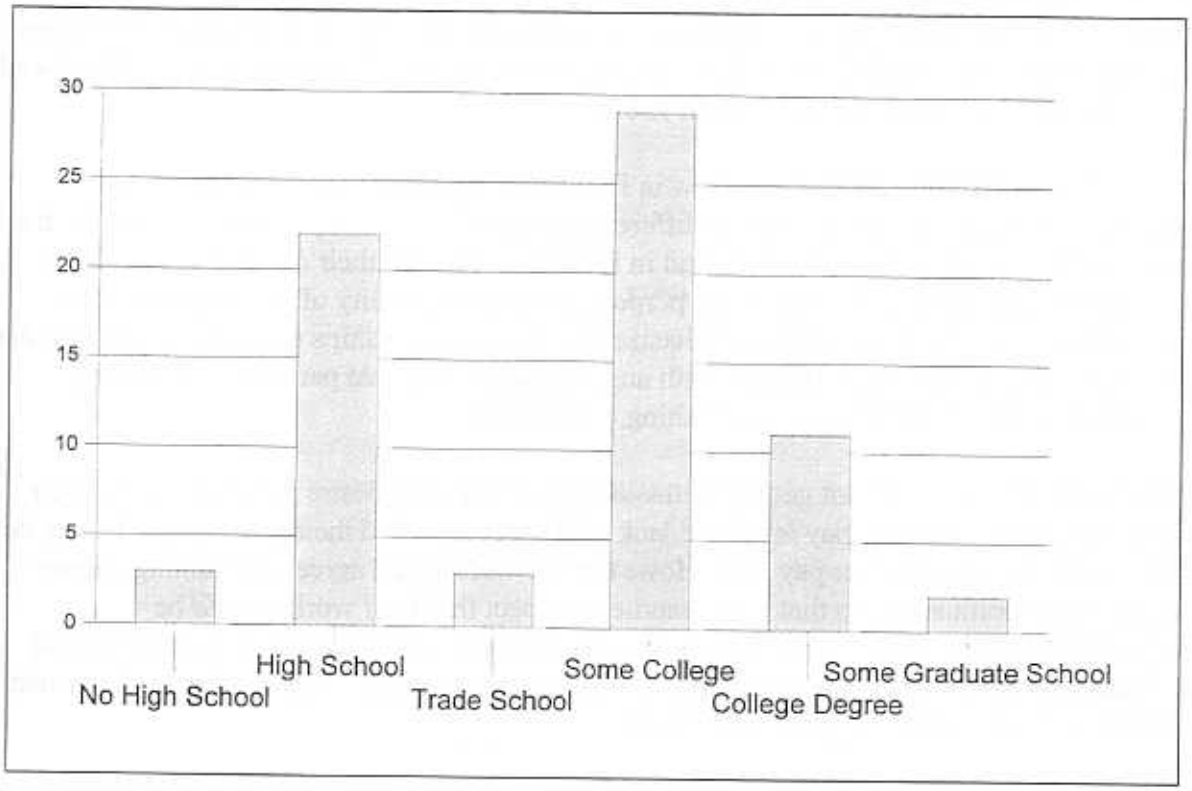

Figure 6. Level of Formal Education . [Question: What is your level of education?]

2.0 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

2.1 Marginal Men

In the modern world, *marginal* is a term used by sociologists, political scientists, social workers, and psychologists to denote a group or individual that simply does not belong. The sociological origins of the concept date back to Robert Park, who applied the term to racial hybrids who find themselves in a status dilemma. Everett C. Hughes expanded on the concept to include non-racial *status protests* or discomfort in the way a human is integrated (or not integrated) into a status system (Hughes 1994). Other sociologists have noted that marginal men are simply on the border between two or more social worlds, but are not accepted as full participants in either (Wardwell, Shibutani, Salaman). In addition, whole occupations, from printers to chiropractors to poker players to tourist guides, have been discussed as marginal. (Lipset et al. 1956, Wardwell 1952, Hayano 1977, Rosenthal 1981, Cohen 1982).[10]

I argue that charter fishing captains and crew in Hawaii are marginal in the sense that their occupation exists on the fringes of several different cultures.[11] For many charter fishermen, the essential components of their status are found in identification with their occupational culture. Thus, charter fishing culture engenders and perpetuates the marginality of its members. The marginal status of charter fishermen is emphasized by daily relationships and interaction with the tourism and fishing industries in Hawaii, with anglers and owners that participate in fishing activities, and with the international sportfishing community.

That the charter fishermen do not get the status or respect that they desire is illustrated by their frequent comments on the low pay level and lack of respect accorded their profession. It may be true that charter fishing does not pay well. However, the widespread agreement among charter fishermen on this point suggests that they assume or expect that their work *should* be compensated at a higher level. This status protest is the result of the decline in prosperity that charter fishing as an occupation has suffered in the past twenty years. One ex-charter fisherman described the evolution from a "hero" to a "bum."

Additionally, charter fishermen occasionally comment on the lack of respect they get—from boat owners, from charters, and from society generally. One deckhand remarked "most of my friends run a normal life...I suppose one day I'll have to get a *real* job." One charter captain spoke of the respect that a charter captain commanded in the old days and contrasted it with the current situation: "We don't get that type of respect...[we're] a dime a dozen." A deckhand told me, "people don't think so highly of fishermen as an occupation...you know what I mean?" A few charter fishermen indicated that prestige was only found within their peers.

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[10] In addition, Hughes has described the role of the social scientist in conducting participant observation as *marginal*. He remarks "the student of human groups must remain willingly and firmly a *marginal* man in relation to those he studies; one who will keep, cost what it will, the delicate balance between loyalty to those who have admitted him to the role of confidant and to his colleagues who expect him to contribute freely to the accumulating knowledge about human society and methods of studying it" (Hughes 1971, 436).

[11] The term *marginal* can have connotations of lower or substandard quality. This use of marginal does not incorporate those connotations, but remains neutral.

Figure 7 illustrates that the world of Hawaii charter fishing operates at the intersection of tourism and fishing systems and at the fringe of the international sportfishing community.

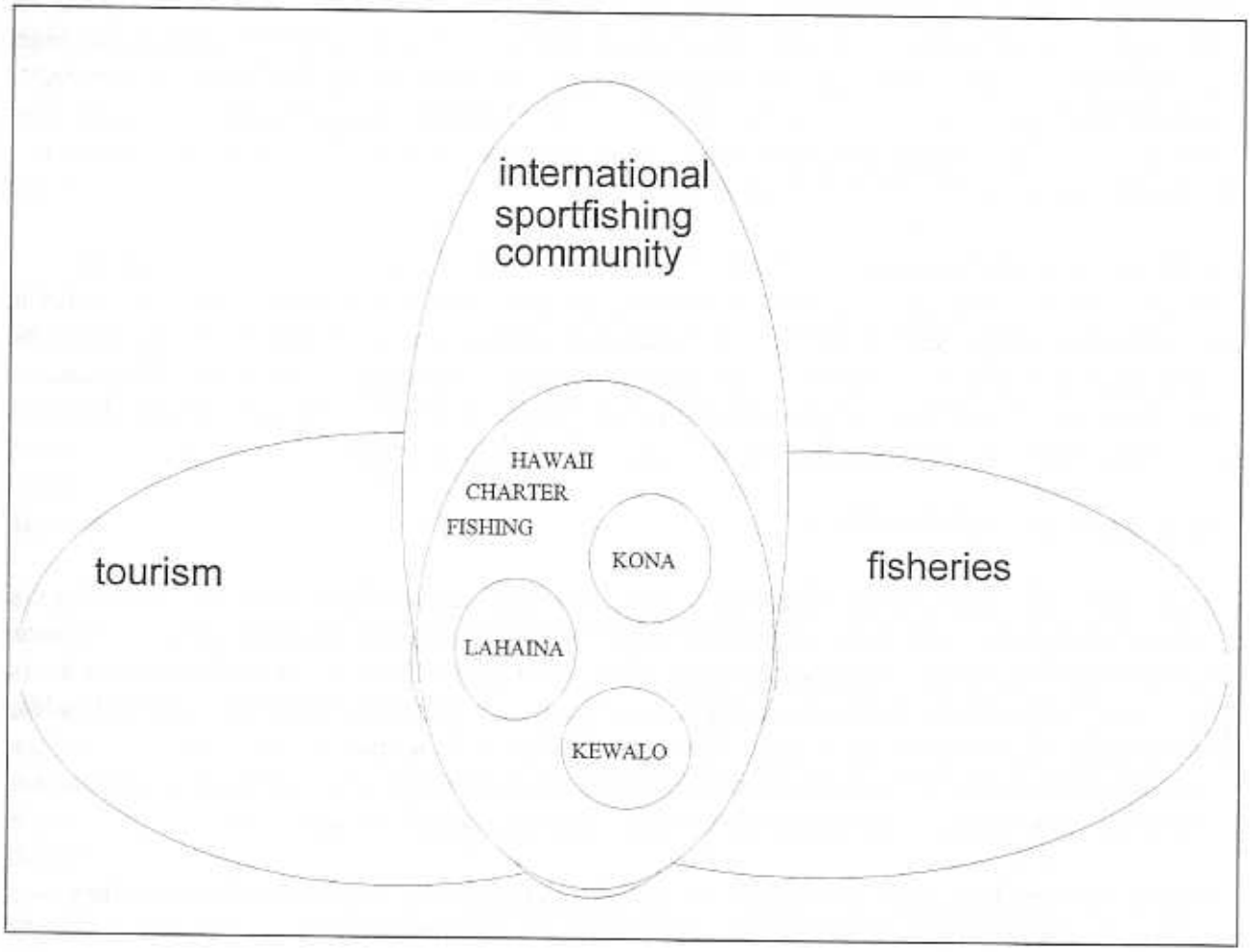

Figure 7. Charter Fishing System.

2.1.1 Marginal to Tourism World

"you see, sportfishing put Kona on the map...now fishing takes a back seat to the Ironman."

The development of Hawaii as a sportfishing mecca occurred simultaneously with the development of the tourism infrastructure in Kailua-Kona.[12] Presently, however, charter fishermen feel that the tourism industry in Hawaii has turned away from promotion of sportfishing to support the many other tourism activity industries, such as golfing, diving, and snorkeling, that have developed in recent decades. This newfound distance is particularly hard to

[12] In 1950, Kona offered one major hotel and two charter boats. By 1958, there were four large hotels and eight charter boats. As of 1994, there were approximately 100 charter boats and 3,960 visitor hotel and condominium units in the Kailua-Kona area alone. (Sources: Biehl, 1958; Department of Research and Development, 1994).

swallow, since many of the same people in sportfishing today feel that they or their families worked hard to enhance the tourism potential of the Hawaiian islands in the 1960s and 1970s by establishing Kona as an international sportfishing destination. Since the majority of the charter fishing business is based on tourism, charter boat owners and operators often rely on travel desks at hotels and kiosks to book charters. Common complaints of charter fishermen include the high commissions that the hotels charge, the fact that certain hotel desks only book their "favorites," and that the larger resorts encourage their tourists to participate in other activities in lieu of sportfishing. Additionally, charter fishermen express concern that the Hawaii Visitors Bureau underrepresents sportfishing to potential tourists.

In the sociologist's language, a tourism system is composed of *tourists, locals,* and *brokers* (Miller 1989). Locals are residents at tourism destinations, and brokers "are directly interested in recruiting tourists to destinations or in protecting the rights of locals." Charter captains are in the category of 'private-sector brokers' who provide services and products for tourists. They are simultaneously locals and brokers: experts in local fishing and the ocean environment, they must tailor their skills to serve the tourists' less-evolved fishing needs.

2.1.2 Marginal to Fishing World

In the world of fishing, charter fishing is caught between commercial and recreational fishing. A charter fishing trip is simultaneously a recreational trip and a commercial fishing trip: the charter patron has a recreational fishing experience at the same time that the captain and crew have a commercial experience. The captain and crew make money from the charter fee, from fish sales, and from the mounting commission.[13] However, the charter fisherman's activity is fundamentally different from commercial fishing because it is focused on chartering more than on fishing. The charter fishermen must be entertainers first and fishermen second.

On the other hand, charter fishermen are sometimes categorized as recreational because they participate in the so-called sport fishery. However, they are professionals in sportfishing, working in a world others call sport.

2.1.3 Tourism-Fishing Tension

This position in the intersection of tourism and fishing prevents the charter fishermen in Hawaii from becoming complete members in either system. This ambiguity provides for a visceral tension in everyday operations and explains the different operating styles of the charter fishermen. In his role as a broker in the tourism system, he provides basically an entertainment service for the charter. It is this service which ultimately reflects on his business reputation, and determines the viability of his future business. As one charter captain said, "the key to a successful business is showing charters a good time." Another remarked, "This is a show—we don't work hard here...this is a tourist oriented service, not hard-core fishing. The right attitude is key."

In a business sense, then, fishing is secondary to tourism. This is problematic since most charter

[13] Charter captain and crew sell mounting services for taxidermists in exchange for sizable commissions.

fishermen find their greatest happiness in fishing and not in entertaining. They feel that their fishing skills are under-appreciated by their anglers, especially on *skunk* days when no evidence of fishing skills is immediately obvious to the angler. "[The tourists] have no [$%&@ing] clue, they are pissed off when we don't catch fish." In addition, the constraints of having a charter on board thwarts the charter fisherman's fishing efforts, such as when the charter is seasick and wants to return to harbor just as the boat reaches a *bird pile* or when angler error prevents the boating of a large fish.

2.1.4 Angler Interaction

"The only problem with charter fishing is the charter"

This tension is highlighted by the charter fisherman's daily interaction with anglers, who are generally of a higher socioeconomic status than the captains. This interaction with the wealthy clients is a constant reminder of their lower socioeconomic status. Charter fishermen regularly boast about the fame and fortune of their clients that they have managed to turn into repeat customers and form friendships with, as if they are then members of the higher status group by association.

Indeed, the captains do wield considerable power and status within their domain. The wealthy angler, who in his everyday world exercises considerable financial and managerial power, gives up all authority upon boarding the charter boat. The captain is formally licensed and liable for all activity on his boat and is informally licensed as a professional charter boat fishermen. He is master of this domain. As one captain tells his charters, "by law, I'm the boss...while you are on the boat, we'll do things my way." Thus, the existing status differential reverses once the anglers board the boat. This power balance results in incidents and stories regarding who is in charge on the boat. Often, charter fishermen tell stories of the audacity of charters who wish to use their own gear, even if it is declared substandard or defective by the professional captains and crew. Charter fishermen are incredulous at anglers that come on their boat and try to tell them how to fish—the correct trolling speed, the regulation length leader for a tournament, and which lures work in Kona waters. Stories reveal that these disagreements can be fairly tense and heated. As one charter captain says, "We're professional fishermen....even people who think they know more than me don't."

Although anglers generally think that they catch the fish on a successful charter trip, charter captains and crew feel that the contribution of the angler is minimal. "Reeling in the fish is only 10-20 % of the deal" and notes that the captain and crew handle the boat, provide the gear, provide instruction, leader and gaff the fish, and get it into the boat safely. One captain remembering a particular angler says, "oh yeah, I caught him a marlin." The lack of recognition that charter fishermen receive is a sore point for many. Describing a fishing tournament, one charter captain commented that "these friggin idiots come and use your boat, your gear, your experience, and win the tournament, and all you get is a wooden bowl." There are numerous stories which highlight the charters' general lack of knowledge about big game fishing in Hawaii, and their accompanying refusal to admit their ignorance.

2.1.5 Marginal to Sportfishing World

> "*Marlin* magazine—that's all East Coast stuff...they don't like us because we cut sport-fish."

Another domain to which the Hawaii charter fishing community is marginal is the international sportfishing world. Because Hawaii is the only place in the United States where the commercial sale of recreationally caught marlin is allowed, there is some feeling of not belonging to the global culture of sportfishing. Established sportfishing organizations and publications, such as the Billfish Foundation and *Marlin* magazine, promote the practice of tagging and releasing sport-caught marlin. Although some Hawaii charter fishermen tag and release (mostly depending on the angler's preference), many will boat and sell the fish to supplement their income.

2.1.6 Decline in Status

> "Back then, sportfishing was prestigious and lucrative, if you were a captain, you were on top of the world."

An occupation is marginal when members identify and wish to associate with members of a higher status group, and when these associational ambitions are unsuccessful (Salaman 1974). These aspirations result from the feeling that the status level of their occupation is worthy of greater social honor than nonmembers afford it. Studies of other fisheries have found fishing in certain communities to be a marginal occupation (McGoodwin 1980, Miller and Johnson 1981). One charter deckhand said to me, "people don't think so highly of fishermen as occupation...you know what I mean?" In Hawaii charter fishing, this fundamental marginality seems to have intensified in the past 20 years. Many charter fishermen commented about the "golden days" of charter fishing in Kona and the decline of the industry in the past 20 years. The general feeling of those operators who have been in the business for 25 years or longer is that charter captains are now "a dime a dozen." The decline in status is often attributed to the recent influx of new charter boat operators and the decline in 'quality' of these new people. As one well-paid captain remarks, "there are not enough high-paying jobs for the talent level in town." When asked about the prestige level of charter fishing, one licensed deckhand replied, "well...nobody calls me sir." Other captains note the lack of appreciation or respect from the charters and owners.

2.2 **Relationships and Distinctions**

The Hawaii sportfishing community involves captains, crew, and owners that are geographically spread throughout the Hawaiian islands. They share circumstances that unite them and produce similar views on international sport fishing situations. Yet, the diverse settings around the state produce dramatic differences that separate the state fishing communities by harbor. This section discusses the relationship of the Hawaii charter fishing community to the international sport fishing world and then the differences between each major harbor setting.

2.2.1 International Sport Fishing Links

Charter captains and crew in Hawaii are linked to the international world of sportfishing by direct experience in other sportfishing destinations and friendships and information sharing between destinations. Some 30% of the captains interviewed and respondents had worked outside Hawaii in sport fishing. Some even reported "working the circuit" for a number of years, or "seasons." One Kona captain described his yearly migration: "I go to New Zealand in January and February, then Mexico, then Florida in April—I have lots of friends, and I go run those boats." Others claim to have "been everywhere" while others "freelance year round." One captain said that his experience working four seasons in Australia was "basically like going to college for a fisherman." These international experiences result in friendships, contacts, and future travel possibilities for Hawaii charter fishermen.

2.2.2 Interharbor Links—Hawaii Charter Fishing Community

"the Hawaii charter fishing industry is a big family."

While charter captains and crew worldwide identify with each other by their shared profession of charter fishing, Hawaii charter captains and crew identify with each other by their shared waters, specific fishing techniques, and knowledge of each other. First, there is the solidarity that results from the unique cultural, environmental, economic, and political circumstances of fishing in Hawaii. Cultural traditions in Hawaii fishing include use of *koa*, or secret fishing spots determined by currents and landmarks, and the consumption of sport-caught blue marlin. As one Hawaii fisherman says, "the East Coast is ....a totally different scene...mindset." Additionally, fishermen take pride in the environmental factors that allow year round fishing close to shore. The slow business of the past 4-5 years has affected every charter fisherman in Hawaii and generates a sense of solidarity. Political and regulatory circumstances unite charter fishermen, as the viewpoint is common that the charter fishing industry is overtaxed and overregulated by what they feel is an inept harbor management system.

Besides sharing cultural, environmental, economic, and political circumstances, charter fishermen in Hawaii periodically come into contact with one another, resulting in friendships and acquaintances that link harbors. The mechanism for contact is through fishing tournaments. There are two annual Hawaii tournaments that regularly attract fishermen from different harbors: the Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament, held in Kona in August, and the Lahaina Jackpot Tournament, held in October. Both tournaments involve 70-100 boats, drawing from at least the three main harbors.

Of the 80 captains and crew I interviewed, 25% (20 of 79) had actually worked charter fishing in another harbor and thus knew others in the Hawaii charter fishing scene from working in proximity to them. The majority of the respondents had at least visited other harbors for tournaments or short term work. In addition, there are strong friendships between harbors which facilitate information transmission and stimulate socialization during visits. Several charter fishermen asserted that they knew "everyone" at the other harbors.

For some this may be accurate and, at the least, everyone in Hawaii's charter fishing harbors

knows *who* everyone else is and what they are up to. Indeed, "harbor scuttlebutt" travels quickly, whether via the newspapers, the grapevine, or the "coconut wireless." *Scuttlebutt* covers all topics—concerning fish locations, fish stories, drug busts, personal dramas, and even the presence of female interviewers in the harbor. I was amazed at the speed and detail of the information flow. For example, after having a constant presence in one harbor for 4 days, I took a fishing trip for the morning, and returned around 3 pm. The first two people I passed on the dock had already asked where I was, had been told whose boat I was on, and the third even knew that we had hooked up and lost two marlin.

2.2.3 Interharbor differences

Although charter fishermen in all Hawaii harbors are linked, each harbor has its distinct charter fleet, harbor size, geographic setting, business policies, characters, legends, lore, and fishing grounds. When I asked one longtime charter fisherman who had worked for long periods of time in Kona and Lahaina to compare the two harbors, he laughed and replied, "that's a ridiculous question!" The primary differences that set the tone for each of the harbors is number of boats in operation and amount of business. Following is a description of the factors that make each of the three harbors unique.

2.2.3.1 *Kona*

Honokohau Harbor in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, supports the largest number of charter boats in the state. There are 257 slips total in the harbor, with 120 of these reserved for boats with commercial permits. Commercially permitted vessels include sailing yachts and boats designed to take out dive charters, but the majority of commercial permit holders are charter fishing vessels.

Before Honokohau Harbor existed, nearby Kailua pier was the site of world-renowned sportfishing activity. Celebrities and sportsmen from all over the world came in search of first rate big game fishing experiences, and the resulting fish weigh-in ceremonies were a daily tourist event. The front basin of Honokohau harbor opened in 1969, and the back basin was completed in 1978, more than doubling the number of slips. The Kailua-Kona area has a long history of sportfishing fame and has been home to many internationally recognized sportfishermen—Bobby Brown and Henry Chee, to name two. In the 1960s and 1970s, Kona was the world's premier sportfishing destination, setting numerous billfish world records. Evidence can be seen at the "granders wall" in Kailua-Kona, documenting all Kona-caught marlin over 1000 pounds.

With the opening of the back basin, many new boats joined the fleet, and steady business supported the larger fleet into the mid 1980s. With a downturn in the economy and tourism in the late 1990s, the charter fishing fleet saw their business decrease and dwindle to its current all-time low levels. The large number of charter boats and the lack of charter business have conspired to produce intense interharbor competition. Coincidentally, recent development on the north Kohala coast of the big island of Hawaii has displaced the tourist base from the Kailua-Kona area to larger and inclusive resorts. Lower cost tourist activities such as golf, helicopter rides and snorkel trips are offered and encouraged at these resorts, adding to the sportfishing industry's decline. Another factor contributing to slow business is the geographic location of the

harbor. It is 3 miles north of Kailua-Kona, and its gravelly roads, obscure signs, and collection of 'harbor rats' are not conducive to strolling tourists looking to charter a fishing boat. One captain reported, "Kona is more derelict than [Lahaina].

Of the three harbors, Kona tends to generate clientele that is more knowledgeable and experienced in sportfishing than the average tourist. As such, many of the charters are repeat customers who return to fish with the same captain as they have for years. Additionally, Kona is unique in that more of the boats are owned by absentee owners, many who live on the US mainland.

2.2.3.2 *Lahaina*

Lahaina harbor is dramatically different from Honokohau in numbers and atmosphere. The harbor has 100 slips total, 30 with commercial permits. In addition, there are moorings outside the harbor that allow for 15 more commercial permits. Many of the permits are held by whale-watching, sailing or sightseeing boats, leaving 15 charter fishing boats in the harbor. Geographically, the harbor is located in the middle of Lahaina Town, a tourist attraction in itself, and adjacent to several significant tourist and historical destinations. There is a steady stream of pedestrian traffic strolling the docks, and several charter fishing boats have booths staffed with booking agents. Additionally, there is a popular surf break just outside the harbor and the town elementary school is next door, making for steady flow of students and surfers. Even after sunset, there is considerable pedestrian traffic on the docks. The boats are seemingly on display at all hours, reducing the unsavory traffic that inhabits other harbors.

With sizable tourist exposure and so few boats, the Lahaina charter fleet stays very busy. Many boats are booked weeks in advance, and they typically provide overflow business for other boats. As such, there is not as much competition for business and not as much free time. Even when captains and crew are not out on fishing trips, many work part-time as captains or crew on sightseeing boats. One charter fisherman said of his experience in Lahaina, "I was blessed to come to the best setup." Another echoed this sentiment by saying, "in the rest of the state, charter fishing sucks."

The structure of the fleet is also unique in Lahaina, as there are four corporations that own 11 of the boats. Captain and crews often associate or work for the 'corporation' and may fish on any of their corporation's boats. So, although they may fish on several different boats, many Lahaina captains and crew have a loyalty to one corporation. Because they may work regularly with any of the corporation crew, there are group relationships that form within-corporation.

2.2.3.3 *Kewalo*

Kewalo Basin is unique in its setting in the urban tourist center of Honolulu. Located between the Honolulu airport and Waikiki beach and near Ala Moana beach park and the Ala Moana mall, the harbor is visible to tourists. Visitors often stroll down the newly renovated sidewalks along the pier and the Waikiki trolley cruises through every 30 minutes. Despite the concentration of tourists and central location, Kewalo Basin boats seem to have failed to attract large numbers of tourists to charter fishing. Most boats have booths with signs, pictures, and statistics of their

latest catch, and some have a booking agent in their booth.

Kewalo has 22 working charter fishing boats that sit next to various other sightseeing boats. Many of the Kewalo boats are operated by their owners, with two corporations owning five boats. Kewalo's business tends to be from tourists who are not experienced anglers—thus they are more likely to book 'share' charters.[14] Some Kewalo boats work with others to fill spots on share trips, while others cooperate only with certain boats.

2.3 **Interharbor Dissension**

"There's no harmony and cooperation ...
it's me, me, me."

Certainly all three harbors constitute their own social worlds. All three harbors have distinct social distinctions, cliques, hierarchies, rules of conduct, personalities, and informal and formal networks of communication. While the charter fishermen in each harbor share a particular identity, throughout the state they are united by perceptions of overregulation and mis management by the State and a concern for the continued welfare of sportfishing and the resource.

Despite this fundamental commonality, the divisions and social distinctions between different charter boat fishermen are more salient than their unity. Similar to Miller and Johnson's findings in their study of Bristol Bay salmon fishermen, the charter fishing is a scene which "paradoxically bonds fishermen, while, at the same time, it pits them against each other" (Miller and Johnson 1981). The factors that divide the fishermen are much stronger than those that unite. In typical fisheries, competition for fishery resources causes conflict between users. However, in this fishery the strongest competition is for charters. Some boats are connected to hotel travel desks that book charters for a 15-25% commission, some boats advertise in tourist brochures, and some boats rely on walk-up and repeat customers. Physically, the boats are adjacent along the length of piers—piers where potential customers stroll in search of the right boat to charter (this is more true in Lahaina and Kewalo than in Kona). This close proximity breeds direct competition for charters, the life blood of these boats. If they don't get charters, there is no chance of even getting a chance at the fish. Several charter fishermen told me of shouting matches and bidding wars to give the tourist the best price on charters. Another related competition is the one for reputation. Prestige brings business, and it is achieved by big fish stories, visibility in the top ranks of tournaments, and taking home large money prizes for fish.

Competition and dissension rule the harbors, and none of it is hidden. One observer of the scene remarked about the charter fishermen, "You can't get them together, even for the benefit of themselves." Another observer noted "you couldn't get three people in this harbor to agree on anything." Strong personalities and a wide range of backgrounds produce differences of opinion on harbor issues. Subsequently, there are various fishing styles in each harbor that separate and divide charter fishing communities.

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[14] "Share" charters are less expensive than exclusive charters, because they are booked per person, assuming enough individual anglers sign up for a given day (generally a boat requires four shares to cover costs).

2.3.1 Types of Fishing

Fishing style is a combination of several factors that allow the fishermen to categorize or stereotype one another. Surely there are physical factors, such as boat size, and qualifications, such as captain's license, that determine how people are partitioned. Additionally, there are more subjective or personal dimensions that determine fishing style. These factors are business configuration, experience level, location of boat, geographic origins, deviance level, and level of boat activity.

2.3.2 Business Style

Owner Operator: On any given day, a charter boat will have an owner, a captain, and a crew. On some boats, the owner is also the captain, typically referred to as the owner/operator. Owner/operators tend to work the hardest at getting charters and feel like they have the "right" to fish more often, since they themselves are struggling to put a business together. One observer noted, "you have to be brave to get in as an owner/operator." An owner/operator described himself as "a different animal...it means I am mechanic, accountant, advertiser, captain..."

Sugar Daddy: On other boats, the owner is absent (lives on another island or the mainland), and pays the captain a salary to maintain the boat and run charters. This is often referred to as a "sugar-daddy boat." Salaried captains are often envied for their financial stability and lack of financial responsibility over the boat. Absent owners seldom last more than 5 years, producing steady turnover in the fleet.

Freelancer: Still other absent owners may pay a captain a daily wage when he takes out a charter. Other captains are not attached to a particular boat and may "jump around" or "freelance" on as many as 20 different boats in a harbor.

2.3.3 Experience

Oldtimers: Because the charter fishing industry began with an exclusive community of people who knew each other, the expansion that began in the 1970s has dramatically altered the community structure. Those that have been around since the 1960s take great pride in calling themselves an "oldtimer" or "one of the originals." Of course, the primary mechanism charter fishermen have for establishing themselves as oldtimers is a derogatory comment about all the "newcomers." There is no hard and fast rule for distinguishing oldtimers from newcomers—it is largely relative. As one oldtimer remarked, "there's only a handful of us who have been around since the 60s," and they know who they are.

Oldtimers were charter fishing in the 1960s. They learned ways of fishing without modern technology such as fish finders and GPS. They relied solely on knowledge of old *koa* and use landmarks to return to their favorite fishing places. Oldtimers generally associate newcomers with a lower level of experience and knowledge. It is a common remark that the "level of professionalism" dropped markedly when the industry experienced such an expansion in the 1970s. As one captain remarked, "nowadays, there are more crappy captains, more boneheads, a lotta amateurs....In the old days, everybody knew what they were doing."

Newcomers: One oldtimer spoke of newcomers, "these guys think 15 years is a long time...heh, they don't know what it used to be like, they just read *Marlin* magazine and think they can fish...these guys are all jokers." Newcomers have generally moved to Hawaii from the mainland. No one boasts of being a newcomer. One captain who has been charter fishing in Kona since 1979 observes that "most of these people come from elsewhere and don't blend in with people who have been here." One self-proclaimed newcomer (fishing in Hawaii 10 years) complains that "as a newcomer, you get no respect." Another reports, "there's cliques here...it is hard to get to know those guys [oldtimers]. If you haven't caught a 700 to 800 pounder, then you're not worth talking to."

2.3.4 Location of Boat

Although there is considerable mobility of captains and crew from boat to boat, often one captain or crew comes to be associated with one particular boat. (At least two Kona captains have worked on the same boat for 18 years.) The boats are also associated with a certain geographic area within the harbor, and the area can gain a certain reputation.

Front row/ Back Row: In Kewalo and Lahaina, the most frequent geographic distinction is whether a boat is on the front row or the back row. Front row slips are desirable, as they attract more business and can have booths. Front row boats are either lucky, patient, or have paid money under the table to obtain and retain their slips. They are also in full public view. Back row boats, on the other hand, do not see regular pedestrian traffic and thus tend to operate less regularly. One owner/operator of a back row boat told me that some of the 'front-row boats" gave him their overflow business. (Figures 8, 9, and 10).

Alphabet Docks: In Kona, the boats and their associated captains and crew are sometimes referred to by their state-designated location in the harbor. The harbor is broken into the front basin, the outer boats, and the finger piers. Some groups of boats, designated by their dock or row letter, take on certain characters. An example of this is the "G-dock guys," known for sitting above the G-dock after hours and socializing. Other rows or docks do not necessarily have an attached character, but serve as a way to distinguish people who work in the harbor. At a harbor meeting, people were designated to spread information to their harbor neighbors: "Timmy was here from the B-dock...Rex, you can work the front basin, I'll do the G-dock." (Figure 8).

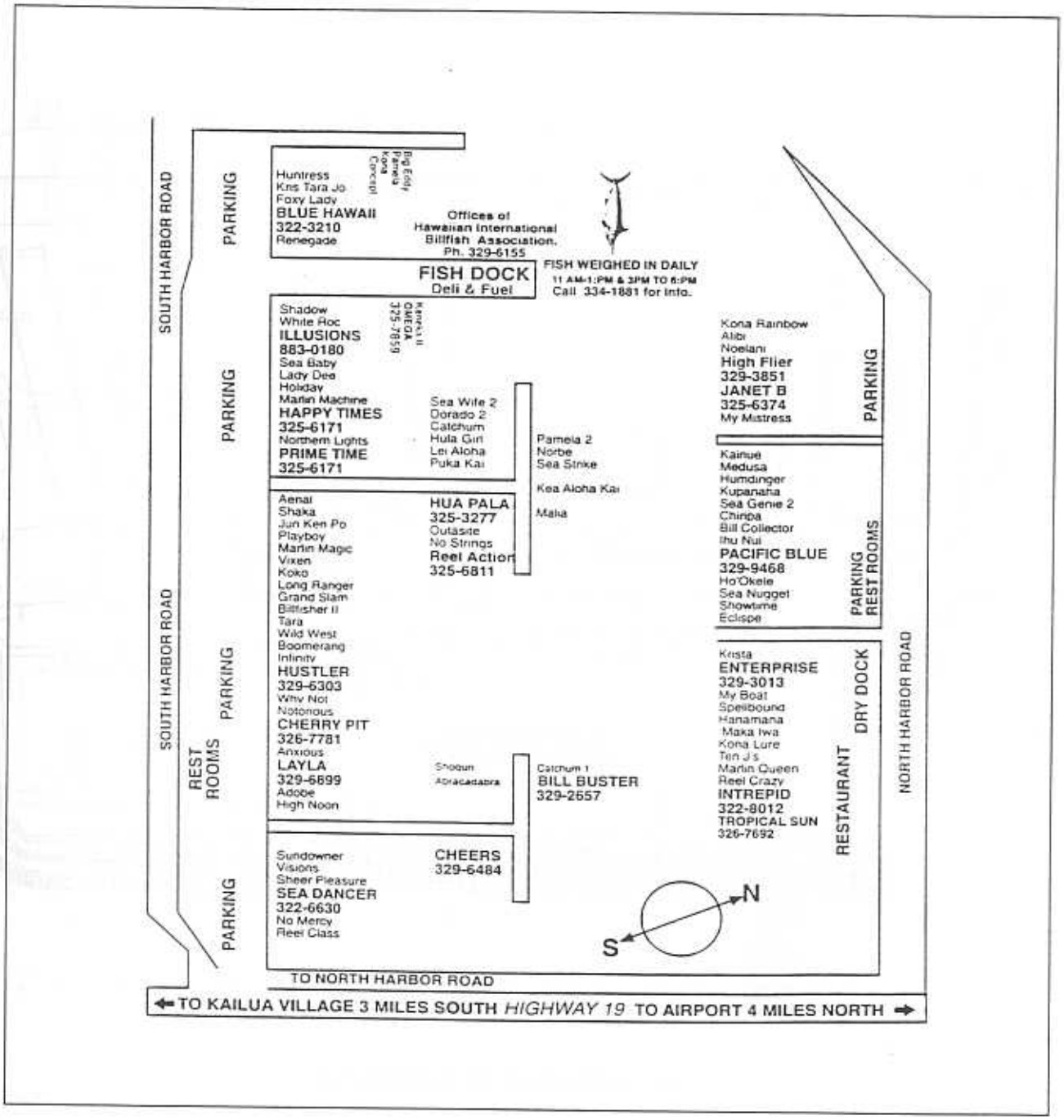

Figure 8. Map of Honokohau Harbor.

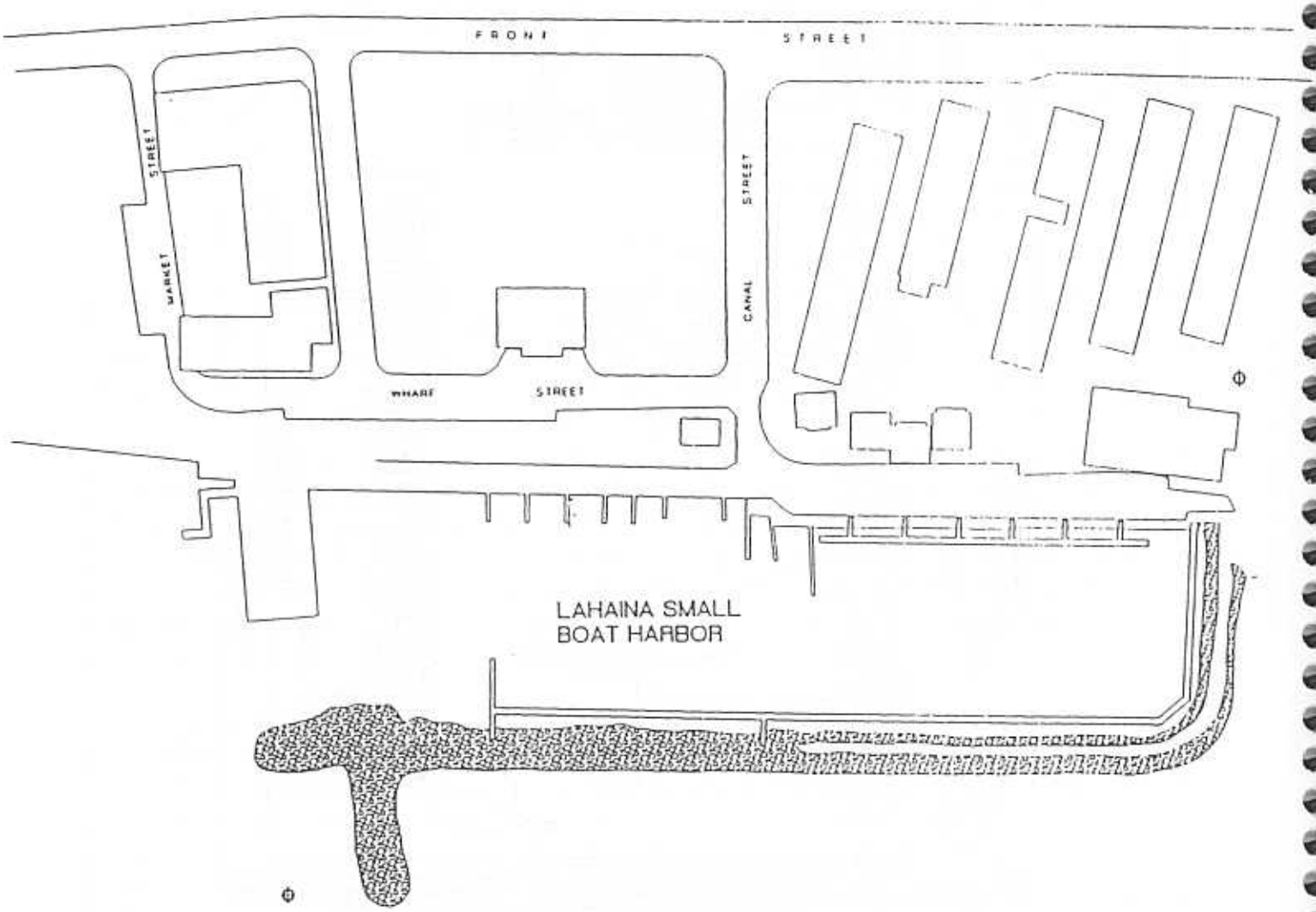

Figure 9. Map of Lahaina Harbor.

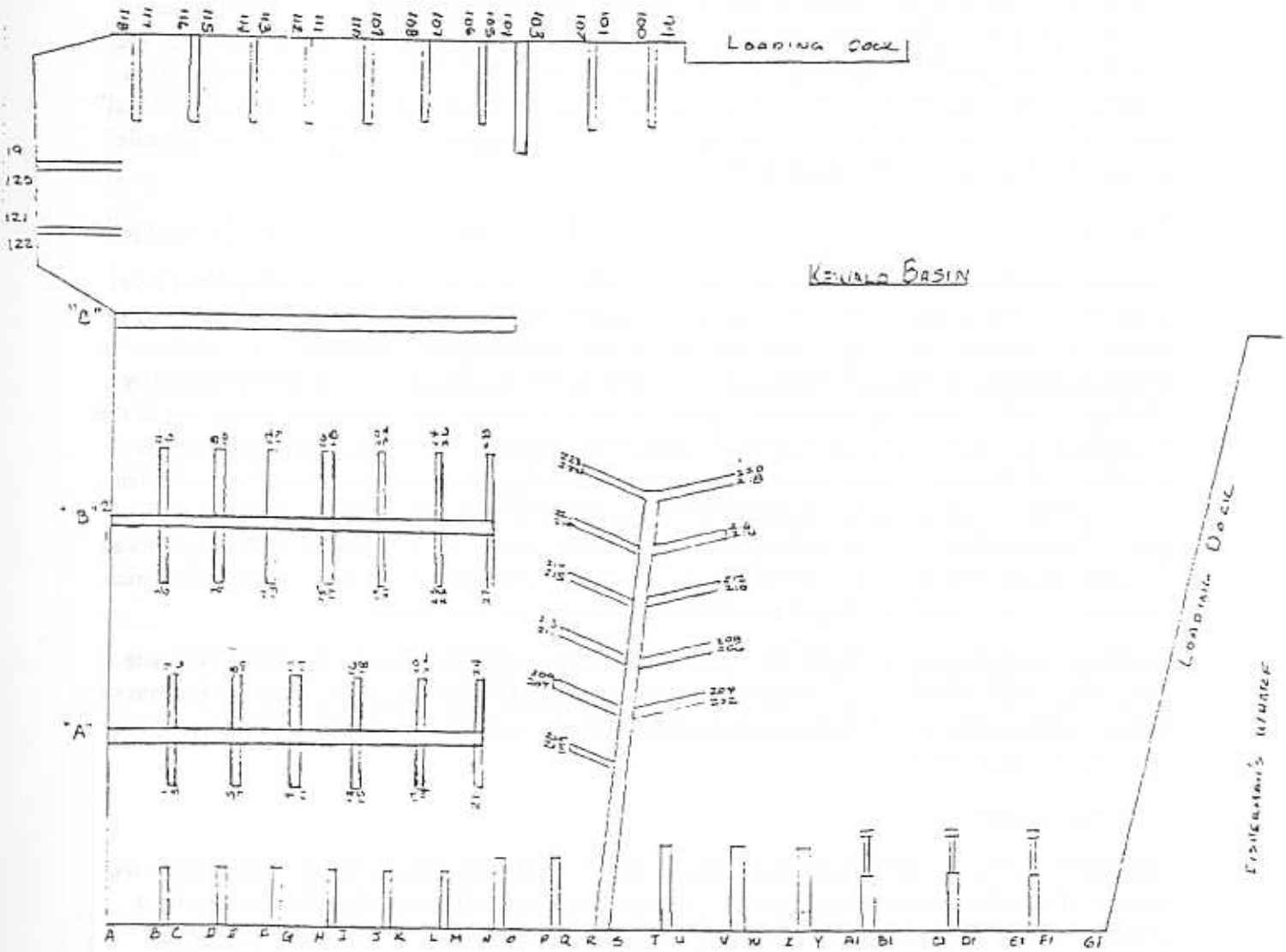

Figure 10. Map of Kewalo Basin.

2.3.5 Geographic Origins

The charter fishing industry has many newcomers. Besides being a newcomer to fishing, they may also be a newcomer to Hawaii. Often, newcomers will be grouped according to the state from which they moved or from their previous occupations. Some distinctions heard were "the Alaska salmon guys," "the Texas guys," and "East Coast guys." The alternative to being from somewhere else, obviously, is to be locally born and raised. Since the distinction of being "local" can imply being of native Hawaiian descent, more often in charter fishing the term "local haole" is used. Most oldtimers are "local haoles."

2.3.6 Deviance

"This whole industry is inhabited by lowlifes."

Another way that different charter fishermen describe and categorize each other is by their level of deviance. Many charter fishermen relate to and identify with the stereotype of a fisherman as an outsider in society or, as discussed earlier in this report, *marginal* to mainstream society. Different charter fishermen embrace this stereotype to varying degrees. Some are described as "hotshots" while others are "straightshooters." One charter captain is described as an asset to the boat owner this way: "with someone like Ernie, the owner has a worthwhile investment in the boat, because Ernie is a character, always creating a humbug about something, so the owner has stories to tell." One ex-charter fisherman in Kona described one captain as a "real decent person" and another as "on a macho deal." One former charter captain described the captains as "colorful characters." He said, "the initial draw is being around the characters, that's why it such a cowboy scene...there's a cultural motif these guys are trying to emulate."

Besides these variations in 'character,' there are also those captains that are legendary for their deviant behavior. Stories of cheating in tournaments, horrifying charters, and gun-waving run rampant at the harbors. "Well, we get some real hotshots ...some people really give the profession a bad reputation."

2.3.7 Ghost Fleet

Particularly in Kona, there are many absentee owners. Although they have commercial permits, some of these absentee owners do not charter their boats very often, and thus there are quite a few boats that are known as the "ghost fleet" or the "derelict boats." On the other end of the spectrum, there are boats known as "busy boats" or "working boats" that remain active year round. There is resentment towards these owners who don't have the financial necessity to run their boats—" a lot of these owners don't care, they just want a tax break."

2.3.8 Wealth

There is also a division between people who depend on charter fishing for a living and those who participate in charter fishing as a fun or retiree activity. The distinction is clear when some refer to themselves as "career fisherman" or "professional deckhand" as opposed to the "fly-by-nighters" or "transients." One ex-charter fisherman laments that "rich people got into the industry, who didn't *have* to fish....I tried to stay with the people who had to do it for a living." There seems to be a resentment towards people who aren't experiencing financial duress or people who have the option to leave the industry: "Mikey and Rick, they don't need the money, they are trust babies, they are secure, they got the money." Or, "we need to get rid of the people who are just playing for a year or two."

3.0 CAREER PATTERNS

This section addresses the steps in the progression of becoming a charter fisherman in Hawaii. The charter fishing industry in Hawaii is a diverse group of people, hailing from various states and socioeconomic backgrounds. How people come in contact with, come to join, and how they stay in the charter fishing world in Hawaii is explored here. First I discuss how people come to be in the charter fishing world. Then, I look at how long people stay and what makes them want to leave. This section also includes data on differing levels of responsibility and status, how those levels are achieved and regarded within the industry, and what effect these have on the participants' commitment to the industry.

3.1 Fishing Histories

Over 90% of the respondents reported having contact with fishing before the age of 10. Many participated in recreational fishing with a parent or grandparent at a very young age. For the most part, their exposure to charter fishing occurred at a later date, although some reported working for tips as young as 7 years of age. The average age at which the charter fishermen started working in charter fishing is 22.

3.2 Getting In

"You can't just apply...you gotta find someone who knows what's going on."

When asked whether they started out as deckhands in the charter fishing industry, the majority of captains (67%) reported yes. Of the captains that did not start as deckhands (18), 90% entered the business upon buying their own boat (Figure 11).

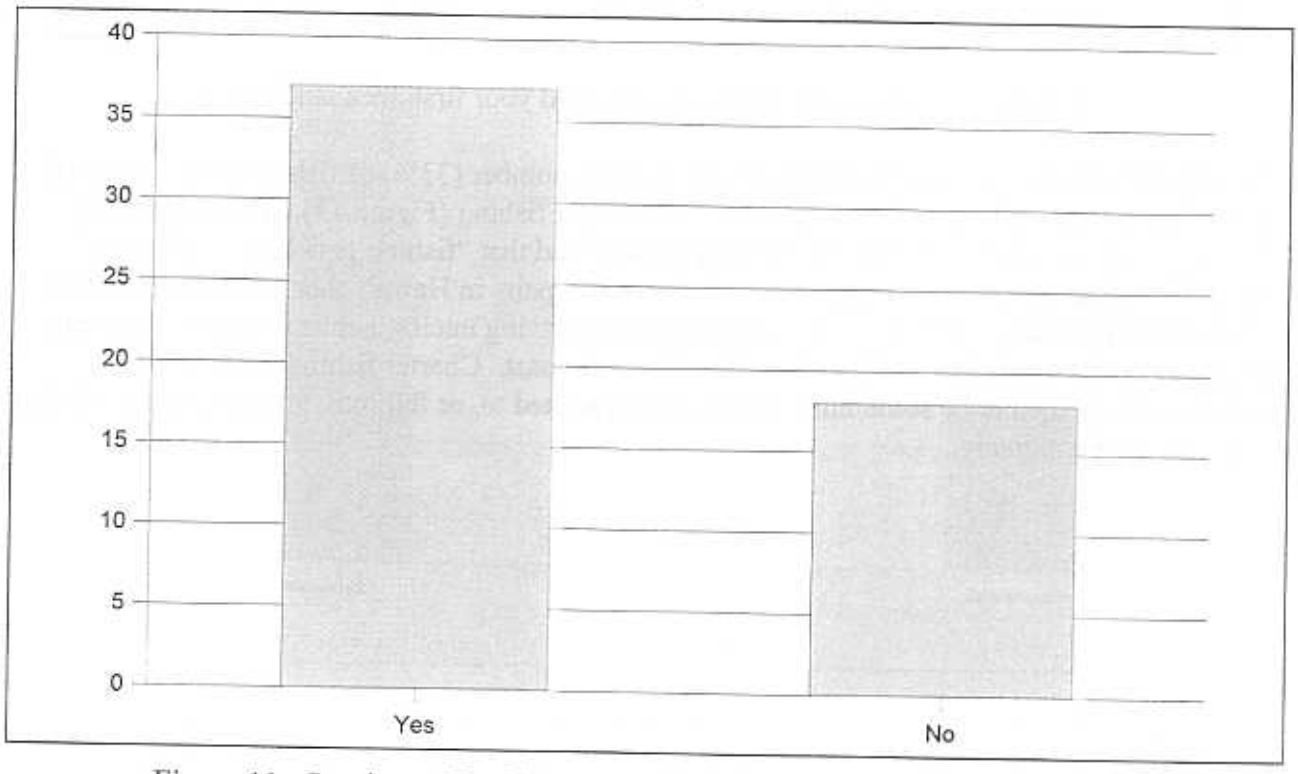

Figure 11. Starting as Deckhand. [Question: Did you start as a deckhand?]

When asked how they go their first job in the industry, the majority (70%) of those that had started as deckhands responded that their first job came from a friend or family contact in the charter fishing business. Others reported walking down the docks, starting as 2nd crew, or using their experience from commercial fishing (See Figure 12).

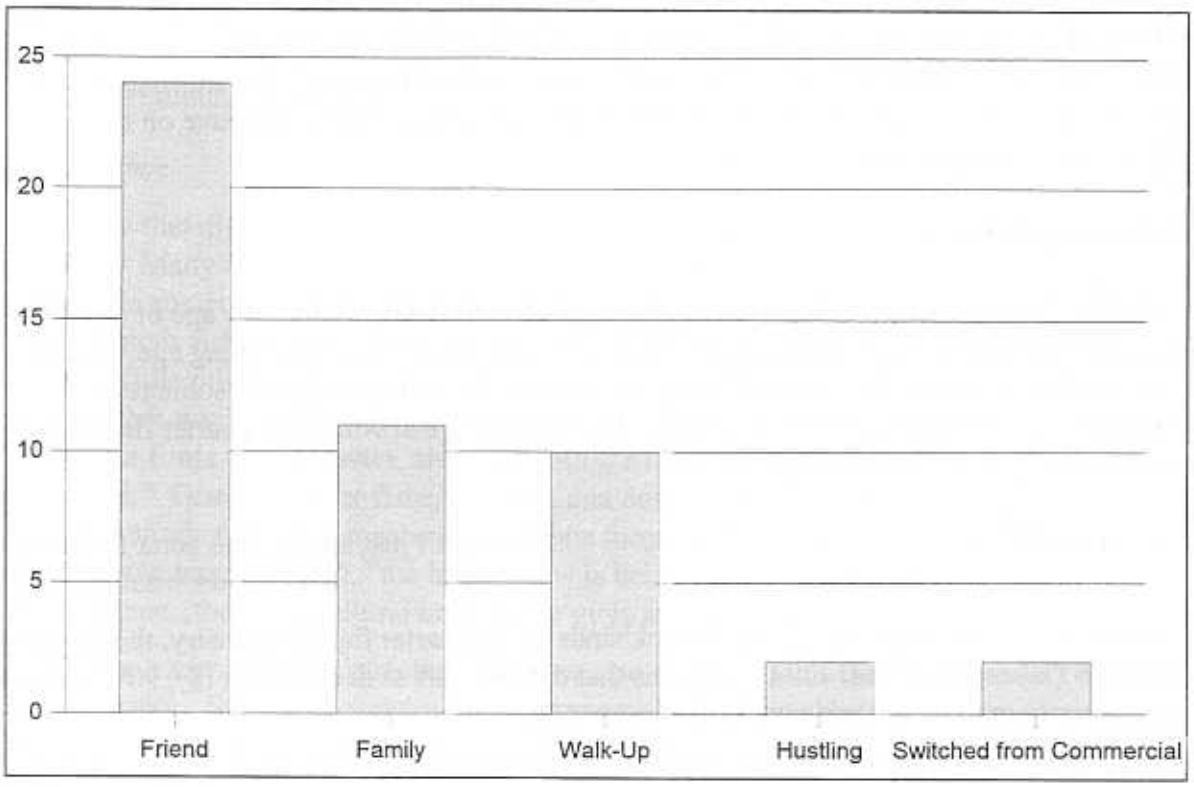

Figure 12. Getting In. [How did you find your first deckhand job?]

Fishing families deserve a certain note as a significant number (33%) of fishermen interviewed reported having family members who worked in charter fishing (Figure 13). Sons of charter fishermen report being "born into the fishing family" and that "fishing gets into your blood." From field note data alone, I encountered 15 father-son pairs in Hawaii charter fishing and five brother pairs in charter fishing. Many others reported having uncles, nephews or grandparents involved in charter fishing in Hawaii and the US west coast. Charter fishing for many respondents seemed to be something they became addicted to, or fell into, after a meaningful first exposure to the industry.

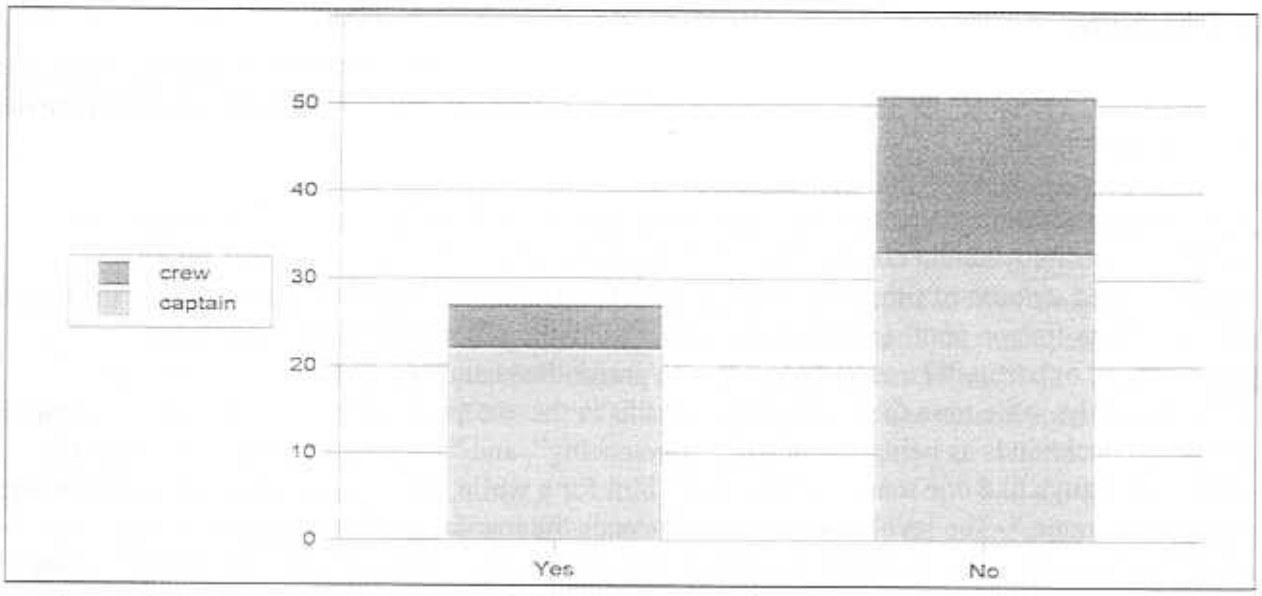

Figure 13. Relatives in Charter Fishing. [Question: How many (if any) of your relatives fish for a living? Charter fish?]

Most charter fishermen, when asked if they would encourage a son or daughter growing up right now to enter the charter fishing industry reported that they would let their offspring do what they wanted. Most respondents indicated, however, that they would not encourage participation in the charter fishing as the sole means to making a living (Figure 14).

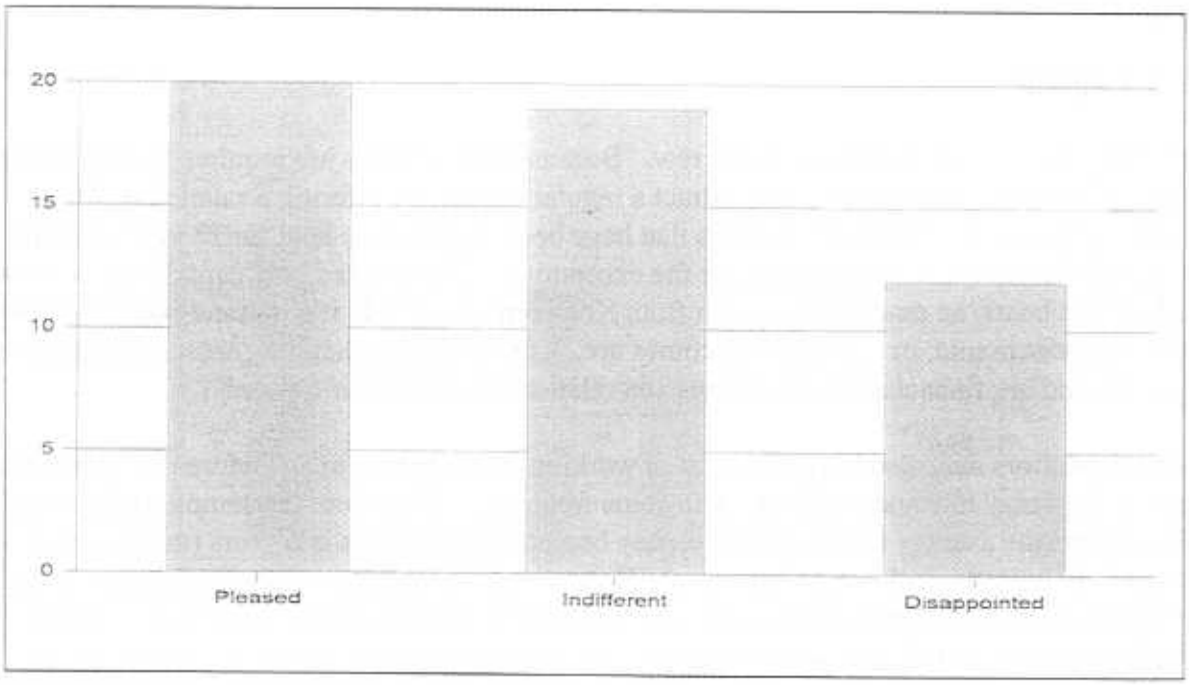

Figure 14. Encourage Family Protection? [Question: If you had a son or daughter who showed ability and interest in becoming a charter fisherman, would you be pleased indifferent, or disappointed?]