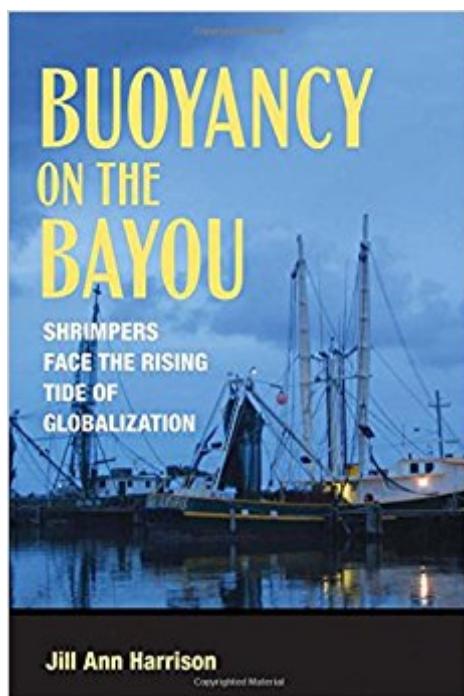


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# Buoyancy On The Bayou: Shrimpers Face The Rising Tide Of Globalization



## Synopsis

Over the past several decades, shrimp has transformed from a luxury food to a kitchen staple. While shrimp-loving consumers have benefited from the lower cost of shrimp, domestic shrimp fishers have suffered, particularly in Louisiana. Most of the shrimp that we eat today is imported from shrimp farms in China, Vietnam, and Thailand. The flood of imported shrimp has sent dockside prices plummeting, and rising fuel costs have destroyed the profit margin for shrimp fishing as a domestic industry. In *Buoyancy on the Bayou*, Jill Ann Harrison portrays the struggles that Louisiana shrimp fishers endure to remain afloat in an industry beset by globalization. Her in-depth interviews with more than fifty individuals working in or associated with shrimp fishing in a small town in Louisiana offer a portrait of shrimp fishers' lives just before the BP oil spill in 2010, which helps us better understand what has happened since the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Harrison shows that shrimp fishers go through a careful calculation of noneconomic costs and benefits as they grapple to figure out what their next move will be. Many willingly forgo opportunities in other industries to fulfill what they perceive as their cultural calling. Others reluctantly leave fishing behind for more lucrative work, but they mourn the loss of a livelihood upon which community and family structures are built. In this gripping account of the struggle to survive amid the waves of globalization, Harrison focuses her analysis at the intersection of livelihood, family, and community and casts a bright light upon the cultural importance of the work that we do.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Jill Ann Harrison's book is a highly readable and insightful account of the hardships faced by Louisiana shrimpers over the last decade. Based on 'ethnographic interviewing,' the empirical focus of *Buoyancy on the Bayou* is the social strategies of shrimpers dealing with the twofold threat of lower prices paid for their product (resulting from cheaper imported shrimp) and soaring costs (mostly more expensive fuel). Harrison skillfully uses this context to extract sociological lessons on the diverse responses of actors tackling the social dislocations caused by economic globalization . . . . Running against accounts of globalization portraying U.S. working-class communities as mere 'victims,' *Buoyancy on the Bayou*'s main contribution is its focus on the agency mobilized by shrimpers. In doing so, the book offers a series of sociological lessons . . . *Buoyancy on the Bayou* should be read by people interested in the impacts of neoliberalism on U.S. industries and cultures, individual strategies in response to changing economic circumstances, and the connections between occupational identities and cultural milieus. The book will be an excellent addition to courses on global sociology, labor studies, qualitative methods, and economic sociology." •Pablo Lapegna, University of Georgia, *American Journal of Sociology* (January 2014)

"*Buoyancy on the Bayou* is an interesting look at the reasons why, given the pressure on the Gulf Coast shrimping industry, shrimpers make difficult decisions about whether to stay and how to adapt to the changing economic environment. Jill Ann Harrison provides a wealth of ethnographic information and gives the reader valuable insights into the lives of shrimpers." •Carl L. Bankston III, Tulane University, coauthor of *Blue Collar Bayou: Louisiana Cajuns in the New Economy of Ethnicity* "There are many chapters in the story of deindustrialization, globalization, and the decline of different industries in the U.S. over the last several decades. *Buoyancy on the Bayou* brings a new, vivid chapter to the table. Jill Harrison expertly analyzes how global forces have transformed the commercial shrimp industry, placing it in a long line of cases of industrial restructuring since the 1970s. Globalization not only changed the market for shrimp and the labor process of independent shrimp fishing; it jeopardized the fabric of the community, family relations, and occupational identities. Harrison demonstrates there is no simple plot line: globalization has produced unexpected, diverse reactions from the people who struggle with it in everyday life. The stories of the shrimp fishers of Bayou Crevette, Louisiana, are moving and told with great compassion. *Buoyancy on the Bayou* should be read by everyone who is concerned with globalization and its implications for our lived experiences." •Vicki Smith, UC Davis

Jill Ann Harrison is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon.

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