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Recognizing Women's Wellbeing and Contribution to Social Resilience in Fisheries

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ABSTRACT

Building social resilience is important for fishing communities, which globally face unprecedented social and environmental change. While women's direct and indirect contribution to fishing economies is increasingly recognized, their contribution to the social resilience of fisheries remains under-examined. Using interview and focus group data, we investigate women's role in supporting the social resilience of UK fishing communities and examine implications for women's wellbeing. Our findings reveal that beyond supporting the economic viability of fishing businesses, women help maintain the social fabric of fisheries and nurture the physical and mental wellbeing of fishing families, often at a cost to their own material, social and emotional wellbeing. Tensions between social resilience at the household or community level and women's individual wellbeing have important implications for fisheries policy, which rarely considers the wider social context of fisheries. We identify ways in which women's roles and wellbeing can be included in decision-making and policy.

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Introduction

The social resilience and wellbeing of fishing communities are fundamental to the future viability of fisheries, and resource management policies that do not consider the social context of resource use could jeopardize fisheries sustainability (Jentoft 2000; Marshall and Marshall 2007). Fishing families and communities globally face unprecedented challenges due to, for example, resource depletion, climate change impacts and regulatory changes (Kilpatrick, King, and Willis 2015; Pahlke, Lord, and Christiansen-Ruffman 2001). They must adapt or even transform their livelihoods in the face of these changes, including by exercising and strengthening their social resilience. Social resilience is understood as the ability of a social unit (i.e. individual, family, community) to withstand external shocks that may result from social, political or environmental change (Adger 2000). In the context of multiple intersecting change processes, the need for fisheries governance to support the social resilience of fishing communities has already

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been highlighted (Carpenter 2017). Yet, to date, fisheries policy has mainly focused on economic efficiency and environmental sustainability, while social resilience and the wellbeing of fishing communities have received little attention as policy objectives (Symes and Phillipson 2009; Urquhart and Acott 2014). In particular, while men and women's lives are embedded within gendered contexts, a focus on fishers and the act of fishing as a primarily male domain means that the role women play in building social resilience in fishing communities remains overlooked in policy decisions (Delaney, Schreiber, and Alfaro-Shigueto 2019; Gustavsson 2020).

A growing body of research highlights women's multiple contributions to the social resilience of fishing economies (Calhoun, Conway, and Russell 2016; Pettersen 1996), which has been found to gain elevated importance during the onset of shocks and crises (Binkley 2000). Women's activities, inside and outside the fishery, often form part of a diverse livelihood portfolio and thus enhance their household's ability to adapt to sudden and gradual change processes (Musinguzi et al. 2018; Ross 2015). For example, fisheries in Norway and Canada both experienced a crisis due to the collapse of fish stocks during the early 1990s that resulted in stricter regulations and fishing moratoria, compromising the livelihoods of entire communities (Neis, Gerrard, and Power 2013). Women, whose work was previously almost exclusively linked to the fishery, sought outside employment and in some cases took on the role of the main breadwinner. In a similar vein, women in US and UK fisheries have taken proactive steps to ensure that their families' fishing businesses stayed afloat following changes in fisheries management (Calhoun, Conway, and Russell 2016; Conway, Gilden, and Zvonkovic 2002; Zhao et al. 2013). Women's incomes helped their families to cope with the economic impact of ecological shocks and policy changes and in some cases allowed their male partners to continue fishing in the face of reduced fishing incomes (Binkley 1996; Pettersen 1996). Emerging research with women in fisheries goes beyond describing their economic contributions and recognizes that women also provide less tangible forms of support by taking care of the physical and mental health and wellbeing of their spouses (Kilpatrick, King, and Willis 2015; King et al. 2018).

While the evidence of women's contribution to the social resilience of fisheries in the face of change is growing, there has been less attention to how women's wellbeing is impacted by such changes (McCay and Jentoft 1996). Little attempt is made to explicitly consider the tradeoffs between women's contribution to the resilience of their households, families and communities and their own wellbeing (for exceptions see Coulthard 2012; Coulthard and Britton 2015). Coulthard (2012) points to examples from the literature on women's adaptation and resilience-building in fisheries, whereby women successfully enhance household resilience at a cost to their own wellbeing. Building on these findings, our paper presents an in-depth analysis of the under-recognized contribution of women to the social resilience of fishing families and communities and examines the implications of resilience-building strategies for women's own wellbeing.

In conceptualizing our study of women's contribution to the social resilience of UK fisheries and implications for women's own wellbeing, the paper employs a social conception of wellbeing which recognizes that people's subjective and objective wellbeing outcomes are embedded in the relationships that exist within particular groups or societies (McGregor 2007). To extend this relational approach, we consider how women's

agency to navigate the tensions between their family's resilience and their own wellbeing can be constrained by underlying institutions and structures that are at play in highly gendered spaces such as fisheries. Agency is conceptualized as people's ability to make free choices when responding to change processes and is embedded in a particular context (Brown and Westaway 2011). Our findings contribute to wider debates about the assumed relationship between wellbeing and resilience, namely, the expectation that they are synergistic (e.g. Adger et al. 2002; Brooks, Adger, and Kelly 2005; Fisher et al. 2014). The paper adds empirical evidence to a growing body of scholarship which highlights that improved resilience can be associated with compromises in wellbeing (Armitage et al. 2012; Coulthard 2012; Szaboova et al. 2018; Chaigneau et al. 2021).

In this paper we examine these issues in the context of UK fisheries. First, we consider how women's economic contribution to fisheries and their non-fishing work uphold the social resilience of fishing families and businesses. Second, we examine how women support the social resilience of fishing families by maintaining the social fabric of fishing families and communities. Third, we explore the implications for women's own wellbeing. In addressing tradeoffs between social resilience at the household level and individual wellbeing, we are able to analyze some of the wider consequences for the ability of women to participate in building the future resilience and sustainability of fisheries and identify opportunities for policy and practice to support women. This research is timely in the context of two major recent events that have deeply affected fishing communities – the UK's departure from the European Union (or Brexit) and the COVID-19 pandemic – and the need for policy responses that support future resilience.

Methods

We draw on qualitative data from two research projects – the 'Women in Fisheries' and the 'Fishers' Health' projects - which both addressed women's experiences in fishing families and communities in the UK. The projects were carried out between 2016 and 2020 and involved two focus groups (17 participants) and 24 in-depth qualitative interviews with women in UK fisheries. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling. The projects, their objectives and opportunities to get involved in the focus groups and interviews were advertised with the help of fisheries forums and organizations, as well as using social media platforms. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Exeters' Medical School Research Ethics Committee (Women in Fisheries) and the College of Life and Environmental Sciences Ethics Committee (Fishers' Health).

In the Women in Fisheries project, 24 women in fisheries in England, Wales and Scotland were interviewed in 2019. The project explored the different roles that women play in fishing enterprises and families in the UK. Participants were women whose male spouses, or in some cases fathers, were actively involved in the UK's small-scale fisheries (i.e. fishing off boats under 10 m in size). They targeted shellfish and whitefish, and their fishing mostly involved day trips, although some women reported that their spouses were away for multiple days at a time. Only two women participants fished; others were involved in the fishery through processing, selling or marketing fish (13) or working in fisheries organizations (2). Seven women were part of fishing families but

were not formally involved in the fishing industry (Gustavsson 2020; Gustavsson 2021). Women took part in in-depth qualitative interviews, which usually lasted between 40 minutes and two hours. The interviews were face to face and were conducted in a location that was convenient for the women, such as their homes or workplaces. Most interviews involved one individual, but some were conducted as joint interviews with multiple women in the same family. The interviews explored women's perceptions about working in fisheries and/or being part of fishing families and how these experiences have evolved over time (Gustavsson 2020; Gustavsson 2021). To protect the identity of research participants, these narratives are reported using pseudonyms.

In the Fishers' Health project, two focus groups were held in Newlyn and Mevagissey with women from fishing families (10 and 7 participants respectively) as part of a wider project investigating wellbeing in fishing families in Cornwall, south west England (UK) (Turner, Szaboova, and Williams 2018). Focus group discussions lasted two hours and centered around fishers' health and access to healthcare, and women's own health and wellbeing in relation to changes in fishing communities and as a result of supporting the health of their spouses. While the majority of the women who took part in the study were not formally employed in the fishing industry (except one participant who was an active partner in the family fishing business), most were involved through other means (e.g. through keeping the books or providing other forms of support) or engaged in entrepreneurial ventures linked to the fishery (e.g. by running a fish and chip shop).

Both projects aimed to investigate women's experiences of being part of a fishing family and community in the UK, and had similar qualitative narrative approaches. Combining data from the two projects allowed us to develop a broader set of insights into women's roles, wellbeing and resilience-building capacities in UK fisheries. Focus groups and interviews were recorded with permission and subsequently transcribed. Transcripts were coded using NVivo 11 (Bazeley and Jackson 2013) to identify themes relating to women's experiences and contributions toward fishing households and communities. As we were interested in understanding women's lived experiences, situated in and shaped by the wider context of fishing and the fishery, an inductive or 'open' coding approach was used to identify themes that could help us understand and describe women's varied roles (Braun and Clarke 2006). The subsequent themes were grounded in the interview and focus group data around women's role in supporting social resilience and the impact of this on their wellbeing.

Results

Broadly speaking, our data highlighted that women make up a 'support network' in the wider social context of fishing:

It is the women that keep everything moving, keep everything going. (interview *Deborah*)

The women have always been the support network, really. (interview *Linda*)

While we – and our interviewees – use the word 'support', our contention is that these contributions constitute a broad range of paid and unpaid tasks that contribute to fishing enterprises, and which are of equal significance to capturing fish that (often) men do at sea. In the following sections, we analyze three key dimensions of this

support. First, we illustrate how women's support contributes to the economic viability of UK fisheries. Second, we examine how their support contributes to maintaining the social fabric of UK fisheries. Third, we extend our analysis into the implications for women's own wellbeing.

Supporting the Economic Viability of Fisheries and Fishing Businesses

Through their multifaceted contributions, women played a major part in ensuring the economic viability of the fishery and individual fishing businesses. At times, women's 'support' took the form of shore-based contributions to fishing, such as getting diesel, delivering fish, picking up parts or doing the shopping for the boat:

I'm backing up with things like, and this sounds silly, but just doing the laundry all the time, getting that shirt or that set of long johns or whatever ready for when they get out. ... Doing shopping for them as well. Things like that. (FG1)

I would help [my husband] with picking stuff up, picking parts up, I would go and get bait when I was at home with the kids. [...] I'll help out when I can, but I'm more of a taxi service [laughter]. (interview *Karen*)

These often unpaid tasks were perceived as 'help' rather than 'work', and they contribute to the long-term sustainability of fishing as they cut costs associated with the running of fishing enterprises.

Whilst it was evident that women's fisheries-related work onshore sometimes took precedence over seeking other paid work outside of the family business, we also found that women's paid employment has gained elevated importance. Many women had non-fishing incomes that represented an important contribution to family budgets and acted as a source of economic support to fishing businesses:

Well yes, because the boat costs a lot to run and sometimes, they don't earn that amount to run it, so I subsidise that really. (interview *Sandra*)

[M]um has had to work all her life doing whatever she can do – clean and everything – because if there is no money in the fishing or there is no building work going, she has had to try and keep us all, pay for all the bills and things. She has literally worked all her life. Three jobs at one point just to try and keep the money coming in. (interview *Samantha*)

Women's incomes were often more stable monthly incomes that provided security and enhanced the economic resilience of fishing families. These tended to supplement men's fluctuating fishing income and at times "subsidised" - as *Sandra* put it - the running of the fishing business, contributing to the economic sustainability of fishing enterprises.

Women's non-fishing income also provided a buffer against unanticipated shocks or crises, when these earnings may be the only source of income for fishing families. In addition to providing emotional support, women contributed to the wider economic context of the fishery through their non-fishing work, which ultimately underpins the financial and economic resilience of fishing families and businesses. *Amanda* refers to a traumatic fishing accident at sea which rendered her husband unable to work for some time, as both his mental and physical health had been impacted:

When he went down on the boat, he didn't go to sea for three months and we lived off my money, which was tight, for three months it was really tight, but I couldn't force him

to go back to sea. But we just did it, we just coped... we just got by, and that was hard. (interview *Amanda*).

Further, women helped maintain the economic viability of fishing businesses, families and industries by making decisions that enabled their partners/husbands to perform their fishing activities. For example, women described choosing not to disclose bad news to their spouses while they are at sea, so as not to worry and distract them from their activities. In doing so they ensured that fishing income was not lost:

And he's coming from sea and I've been in hospital for week and I haven't told him because there's no point... Well, it just adds to the stress then, doesn't it? The bills won't get paid with him being in with me, you know. (FG2)

Here we observe how women took on responsibilities ashore, while ensuring that their fishing partner continued to fish. Taken together, these experiences of women in fishing families suggest that their 'support' forms part of a wider social *and* economic context of fishing, both in times of need or crisis and in juggling everyday lives. Women's practices help sustain the fishery and enhance the resilience of fishing families.

Maintaining the Social Fabric of Fisheries and Fishing Families

In addition to their multifaceted economic contributions, women's practices, actions and strategies to safeguard the wellbeing of their families played a big part in maintaining the social fabric of the fishery. Women did most of the domestic work, cared for the physical and emotional wellbeing of their children and partners and mediated familial relationships.

Some women expressed feeling like single mothers in their everyday lives as fishing fathers can be largely absent from their children's upbringing. This had multiple implications for fishing families, women and children:

He always said that he was married to the sea and I was the affair because the sea always comes first. You can never plan anything because it all depends on whether the boat is at sea or not and what the weather is like. You could plan to do something for your children's birthday or something like that, but if it turned out to be a fine day, they would go to sea instead because you have to go. You can't get back that day that you miss. That is a missed day of earning and you can't afford to give up days because you know there is going to be rough weather. (interview *Deborah*)

As suggested in *Deborah's* reflection, fishers regularly missed important milestones in their children's lives – and the reference to being 'married to the sea' can be seen as revealing of the masculine identity at play in the fishery. Women's practices, again, become relevant as many of them recounted how they made plans independently of their partners. This points to the need to recognize the roles women play, often independently, in managing households and taking charge of raising the children while fishers are away at sea. Importantly, women do more than child-rearing. Focus groups and interviews highlighted how they also managed the wider emotional and relational landscape of fishing families to contribute to family wellbeing:

If it's windy weather and they go to sea I've got [a daughter] who's 11 years old and she's screeching here heart out because her daddy and uncle [...] are out there, and they're out there in this weather. And I've got her breaking her heart to the point where I've actually rang

[husband] up and gone ‘you’re going to have to speak to her, because she’s in bits here’. Like actual bits. (FG2)

Son: “We just miss him really. We don’t spend much time with him. Just don’t feel like he’s around”

Mother: “You crave that time with him though”.

Son: “Yes”.

Mother: “That’s another reason why they are taken down [to the harbour]. Well the same reason I used to go down, spend time. And yes I ended up taking my boys down, help land and, you know. [...] It’s a way of getting that extra bit of time and seeing how it works, understanding a bit of what they do as well. (interview *Amanda* and her son who joined the interview)

I think, my husband he gets a bit depressed because obviously the hours he works he doesn’t see his children a lot. So by the time he gets in from sea the kids are in bed, so he misses. Sometimes he goes three, four, five days without seeing them, so then he gets really upset at that because it’s not a nine-to-five job. (FG1)

Women maintained the emotional wellbeing of their children and partners, often by lending psychosocial support and by caring for their families. The extracts above reveal three ways in which women contributed to the emotional wellbeing and resilience of their families. First, women provided support to children who may experience stress and emotional hardship as they worry about their fathers who are fishing. Children in fishing families can be susceptible to stress and emotional unrest due to their father’s dangerous occupation and continued absence from the family home. Second, women mediated the emotional and social relations between fathers and children by keeping emotional bonds alive in their absence and by enabling them to get involved in and get a better understanding of the industry. Third, women looked after the emotional wellbeing of their partners who experience hardships when they cannot be there for their children.

Beyond fostering emotional resilience, women’s practices around caring for the wellbeing of families also extend into the realm of safeguarding the health of their fishing partners:

I think women are more rational about their health and they know when something needs done, because they’ve got the responsibility of looking after the rest of the family. I think men see it as a sign of weakness and they are afraid of what they might find out. (FG1)

Focus groups highlighted that women often liaised with healthcare professionals, and ensured that medications were up-to-date and healthy meals were on offer when fishers return after a fishing trip. Supporting men’s health was not always easy for women, as they stressed that men could be reluctant about pursuing professional help. Taken together, our research finds that women partners of fishing men could be seen as pillars of both the family’s physical health and psychological wellbeing.

Attending to Women’s Individual Wellbeing

While women clearly contribute to the economic, social and emotional wellbeing and resilience of fishing families, it is also important to understand how this support

impacts on women's individual wellbeing. A common thread through interviews and focus groups was that fishing, the sea and the boat were often prioritized by men above other things in life, including family life and partners. This placed additional strain on women who experienced multiple manifestations of hardships as part of fishing families. This was evident in participants' accounts of frequent sentiments of stress and in their descriptions of their way of life as a 'hard life':

It's hard. I'm the master chef, the cleaner. [...] The wife, mum, the dad. [...] Labourer. (interview *Amanda*)

We have a lot of stress as well. We have stress that comes from paperwork and ridiculousness that goes on around all that. (FG 2)

I think that's the other thing I've found that's been really hard through the years, has been lack of financial planning. Because you don't know what they're going to be earning or when they're going to be earning it ... that causes a lot of stress." (FG1)

Men's absence meant not only that women had to do most things around the household and the children, but also that women often had to deal with the stress of paperwork and find ways to make ends meet on often unpredictable budgets. Women highlighted how they independently dealt with problems and difficulties that arose both in the family and the business realm. As a result, they expressed that they could not become ill, because there was no one around to help when their partner was away at sea, revealing a gap in women's own resilience. Women identified this as a cause of everyday stress, which placed additional strain on their mental health and psychological wellbeing. For example, women whose partners spend several days at a time away from home reported experiencing loneliness and social isolation:

[W]hen the children go to bed that's when I get a bit lonely and a bit down because I think, well, just want him home and obviously with the weather and stuff, I worry. (FG2)

Our findings demonstrate that taking sole responsibility for the children and the household, providing support to the family fishing business, having a job of their own and worrying about their partner's wellbeing while they are at sea, takes its toll on women's own wellbeing.

Discussion

The literature describes women in fishing families as highly flexible and adaptable, accustomed to constant changes in an industry where fluctuating incomes and unpredictable working patterns form part of everyday life (Williams 2008). The sentiment that "*you've got to be a strong woman to be a fisherman's wife or partner*" (FG1) permeated the lived experiences of most women engaged in the two research projects behind this paper. By applying a social wellbeing lens, we were able to highlight the relational dimensions of social resilience. In particular, we show how women's agency to navigate tensions between their family's social resilience and their own wellbeing is shaped by socially constructed gender relations in UK fisheries.

The women in our study strengthened the economic resilience of fishing enterprises through a variety of unpaid tasks, such as book-keeping, paperwork, and other odd jobs, as well as paid work outside the fishery. Women's paid and unpaid work in

fisheries is increasingly important. For example, recent changes in UK fisheries governance and policy require regular record keeping and reporting to comply with regulations (Gustavsson and Riley 2018). Women's work outside the fishery complements their spouse's fishing income, or even 'subsidises' fishing. This insight confirms findings from research in Northern Ireland and Northern England which showed that women in fishing households use entrepreneurial skills to boost household incomes and in some cases act as main breadwinners (Britton 2012; Britton and Coulthard 2013; Coulthard and Britton 2015; Zhao et al. 2013, 2014). The importance of these activities in providing resilience during unanticipated shocks or crises is also supported by examples of women's paid work in enabling adaptation to policy changes such as the decommissioning of fishing vessels and the introduction of quotas (Zhao et al. 2014).

In addition to economic contributions, women's psychosocial support and caring for their families is critical in the context of a highly stressful industry where poor mental health has been observed amongst fishers (Kilpatrick, King, and Willis 2015; King et al. 2021). Women help maintain the health of fishers who are often reluctant to seek help or struggle to access health services due to their working patterns (Turner, Szaboova, and Williams 2018). Our findings highlight that women's contribution to emotional wellbeing and resilience also extends to the wider family. For example, women were found to mediate emotional bonds between fishers and their children (see also Williams 2008). Women often took on a flexible role in that they continuously adapted to the changing needs of fishing men and businesses (see also Gerrard 1983).

Women's economic contributions and psychosocial support may gain further significance in light of the economic implications of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Both of these still-evolving crises have wide-ranging impacts for the fishing industry and fishing families, including risks to health, disruption of markets and supply chains, regulatory uncertainty and financial insecurity. While initial research on the socio-economic impacts of these changes has focused on fishers, fishing operations and market chains (e.g. Agnisola, Weir, and Johnson 2019; Seafish 2020), anecdotal evidence and media coverage (e.g. BBC 2020) suggest that women have played an important role in supporting the viability of fishing enterprises, including for example through paid work and work related to family-run direct sales initiatives. Given the importance of stressors such as management uncertainty and financial insecurity for fishermen's mental health (King et al. 2021), these changes may also place additional demand on the psychosocial support provided by women.

To date, few studies have explored women's individual wellbeing in fishing families. Our evidence builds on and extends emerging work to point to an overarching theme: emotional hardship forms part and parcel of women's everyday lives as a consequence of their contribution to the resilience of the family and fishing enterprise. Women's commitment to promoting and protecting the wellbeing of their families and communities often leads to 'hard choices' or tradeoffs between their own wellbeing and that of others, as their own needs are rendered secondary (Coulthard 2012). Our findings are consistent with Britton's (2012) research in Northern Irish fisheries, where women in fishing families often experience loneliness and have little time for self-care. These findings reflect experiences from particular contexts that have experienced a decline and marginalization of fishing communities, as a result of economic modernization and a move toward more individualistic lifestyles (Leite, Ross, and Berkes 2019). The apparent

dissonance between women's actions and strategies that foster the social resilience of their families and their own wellbeing experiences has a number of theoretical and policy implications, which we now turn to discussing.

Implications for the Relationship between Wellbeing and Resilience

Women are increasingly described as agents of change when it comes to supporting the long-term resilience of their families, communities and fisheries (Bennett 2005). However, as we argue in this paper, and which has also been noted by Coulthard (2012), a social conception of resilience highlights an important tension between collective and individual needs and interests, which has implications for the wellbeing outcomes of those involved. Collective wellbeing or the resilience of a community does not necessarily guarantee the wellbeing of individuals within it (Leite, Ross, and Berkes 2019). Our findings show that women's wellbeing can be diminished by stress, such as worrying for the health and safety for their spouse, as well as by the emotional and psychological toll of maintaining the wellbeing and resilience of their families. The tensions that arise between the social resilience of the family and women's individual wellbeing have a bearing on women's future ability to support fishing families and fisheries and highlight areas where women need support to safeguard their wellbeing (see also Coulthard 2012; Coulthard and Britton 2015).

Our findings indicate that the ways in which women contribute to social resilience, and the tensions that arise between social resilience and women's wellbeing, are the product of socially constructed gender relations which play out in the context of the family as well as the broader social context of the fishery. The positions of individuals are governed by cultural, social, economic and policy factors, such as the social norms about appropriate gender behaviors and responsibilities (e.g. Gustavsson 2020) or the policies that (re)construct fishing as a male occupational domain (Britton 2012; Delaney, Schreiber, and Alfaro-Shigueto 2019; Neilson et al. 2019). As such, women's agency is embedded within the gendered context of the fishery.

While women in our study made important contributions to the economic resilience of fishing enterprises, both by engaging in unpaid tasks within the family fishing business and by taking on paid employment outside of the fishery, they often perceived their contribution as help rather than work and continued to construct their fishing partner as the 'breadwinner' (see also Yodanis 2000). By doing so, they discursively reinforced dominant social norms about the gendered nature of fishing as a male occupation. These discursive practices and language could be deployed by women to maintain their feminine identity in the masculine world of fishing (see Yodanis 2000). Women's own understanding of their role in fisheries inevitably shapes their agency to navigate tensions between the wellbeing and resilience of their families and communities and their own personal wellbeing. This is demonstrated in our study by women's acceptance of the fishing way of life, which involves taking charge of the home and family, leaving little time for self-care and, at times, leading to loneliness and emotional hardship among women. While not articulated in explicit terms, it is also possible that women derive a sense of pride from their contribution to their family's wellbeing and resilience despite the impact on their own personal wellbeing.

Therefore, while it is important to recognize women as agents of resilience, we should also acknowledge that their agency is embedded within, and constrained by, a landscape of gendered social structures that are at play and that women's practices and representations of themselves are enacted in relation to wider gender structures and hierarchies (Mannell, Jackson, and Umutoni 2016). For example, internalized social and cultural norms that shape gender identities often mean that women readily forego their own needs and aspirations in order to secure the wellbeing of their families (see also Britton 2012; Pahlke, Lord, and Christiansen-Ruffman 2001; Williams 2008). Thus, our analysis demonstrates that a relational view of social resilience can be instrumental for identifying tensions between resilience and wellbeing at different social scales (i.e. individual versus family), as well as for understanding the interplay between underlying structural factors and women's agency to navigate these tensions. Further research is warranted to examine in more depth how women deploy their agency within these relationships and the ways in which it is constrained (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011). The insights gained through this analysis, nonetheless, highlight potential entry points for policy to alleviate the negative impacts on women's wellbeing and have relevance for debates surrounding the relationship between resilience and wellbeing beyond fisheries.

Implications for Policy

Despite their role and stake in the industry, women remain virtually invisible in fisheries policy, including in the UK (Gustavsson et al. 2021). How can policy support the wellbeing and resilience-building roles that women in fishing families take on as part of their everyday life? Based on our findings and insights from existing research and scholarship, we propose three strategies to facilitate policy support for women in fisheries.

First, we argue for an improved knowledge base on women's contributions to UK fisheries. Women's invisibility in fisheries policy is partly due to the way in which research in the fisheries sector often fails to collect gender-disaggregated data and/or data that captures the experiences and activities of women (Frangoudes and Gerrard 2018). The poor integration of women's experiences into fisheries research perpetuates their absence from decision-making and policy (Kleiber, Harris, and Vincent 2015). Women's low representation in statistics is arguably associated with existing conceptualisations of fisheries employment as tied to fishing at sea (e.g. Seafish 2019), which has implications for how social data on fisheries is collected and can lead to an underreporting of women's contributions (e.g. STECF 2019). This is particularly true when women's involvement in the fishery is through supporting roles as opposed to employment. These forms of support are not necessarily measurable and are often unaccounted for in existing fisheries statistics, rendering women invisible or considered 'outside' of the fishery. This calls for the expansion of scope in existing fisheries data collection to support realistic, gender-sensitive and inclusive knowledge on the fishing industry as a whole.

Second, our analysis supports the argument that fishing policy should explicitly recognize the broader social and relational context in which fishing takes place (Jentoft 2000; Pettersen 1996; Symes, Phillipson, and Salmi 2015). Our findings reiterate the urgent need to bring women's needs into fisheries policy and decision-making at this

crucial time when Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic are set to leave their mark on the UK's economy and will inevitably lead to policy changes, potentially exacerbating existing stressors and uncertainties (Phillipson et al. 2020; Phillipson and Symes 2018). For policy to better reflect women's interests, women should be encouraged and supported to participate in policy discussions and in developing a vision for the future of their fisheries and fishing communities. While there are positive examples of women's participation, especially through women's groups and organizations which have taken proactive steps toward shaping the future of fisheries (AKTEA, n.d.; Conway, Gilden, and Zvonkovic 2002; Soejima and Frangoudes 2019; Zhao et al. 2013), more work needs to be done to bring women's voices into the policy arena. Funding directed at fisheries development and coastal communities should actively involve women in fisheries and support their needs and wellbeing. An analysis of EU Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAG) funding found that FLAG boards with women members were more likely to develop projects to address issues experienced by women in fisheries (Freeman, van de Walle, and Budzich-Tabor 2018). Such forms of engagement offer the potential to build social networks and to create spaces where women can use their agency to enact changes that benefit women and fishing families.

Third, as wellbeing is experienced across multiple dimensions, different types of policies are likely to be required to meaningfully support women in fisheries, which might reach beyond the remit of fisheries policy. For example, women's (and men's) mental health and psychological wellbeing might be best supported through health policies. Whereas, tradeoffs relating to their social security as a result of supporting their fishing spouses might be offset by formally acknowledging women's contribution such as in the case of France's 'collaborative spouse' initiative, which protects women's access to social security benefits in the context of fisheries (O'Doherty and Frangoudes 2004). This will, therefore, require improved coherence between fisheries and other policies.

Conclusion

At this crucial time when fishing communities globally are grappling with the challenges of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other social, economic and environmental changes, building social resilience is more important than ever. Securing the social resilience of families and communities that make up fisheries is crucial for enhancing the overall social, economic and ecological sustainability of fisheries.

Our findings highlight the significance of the wider social context for underpinning the social resilience and sustainability of fisheries over time. Women are central to the social and relational context of fisheries and act as agents of resilience through their diverse contributions to the social resilience of fishing households and communities, often at a cost to their own wellbeing. Women are not only direct economic agents of the fishing industry but also important sources of other forms of support which are often unaccounted for. These findings call for improved consideration of women and their wellbeing in decision making and policy in order to enhance the resilience of fisheries to future shocks, changes and uncertainties.

While recognizing women's contributions to social resilience in fisheries is important, caution needs to be exercised with regard to placing additional burden and

responsibility on them without ensuring that their wellbeing is safeguarded (Turner, Szaboova, and Williams 2018; Williams et al. 2016). The true inclusion of women's needs and interests into policy will need to move beyond tokenistic 'mainstreaming' efforts to meaningfully support women in fisheries and to address the deeper structural factors identified in this paper, that currently lead to tensions between women's resilience-building roles and their own wellbeing.

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