

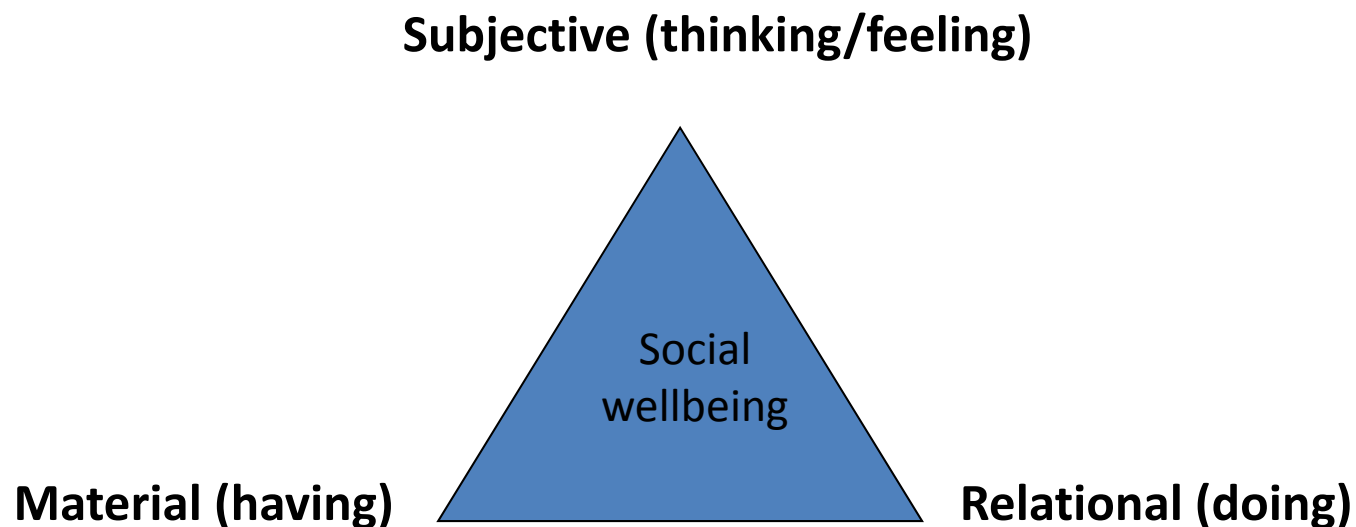
# Women as agents of wellbeing in Northern Ireland's fishing households



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# Social wellbeing and mixed methods approach

- Demographic profile and household survey
- Focus group workshops (temporal aspects of change impacting wellbeing)
- Subjective wellbeing survey (Global Person Generated Index)
- In-depth interviews (household strategies)



The WeD (Bath) conceptual framework of Wellbeing (see: Gough and McGregor 2007; White 2009)

## Study profile: Relationship to fishing ‘way of life’

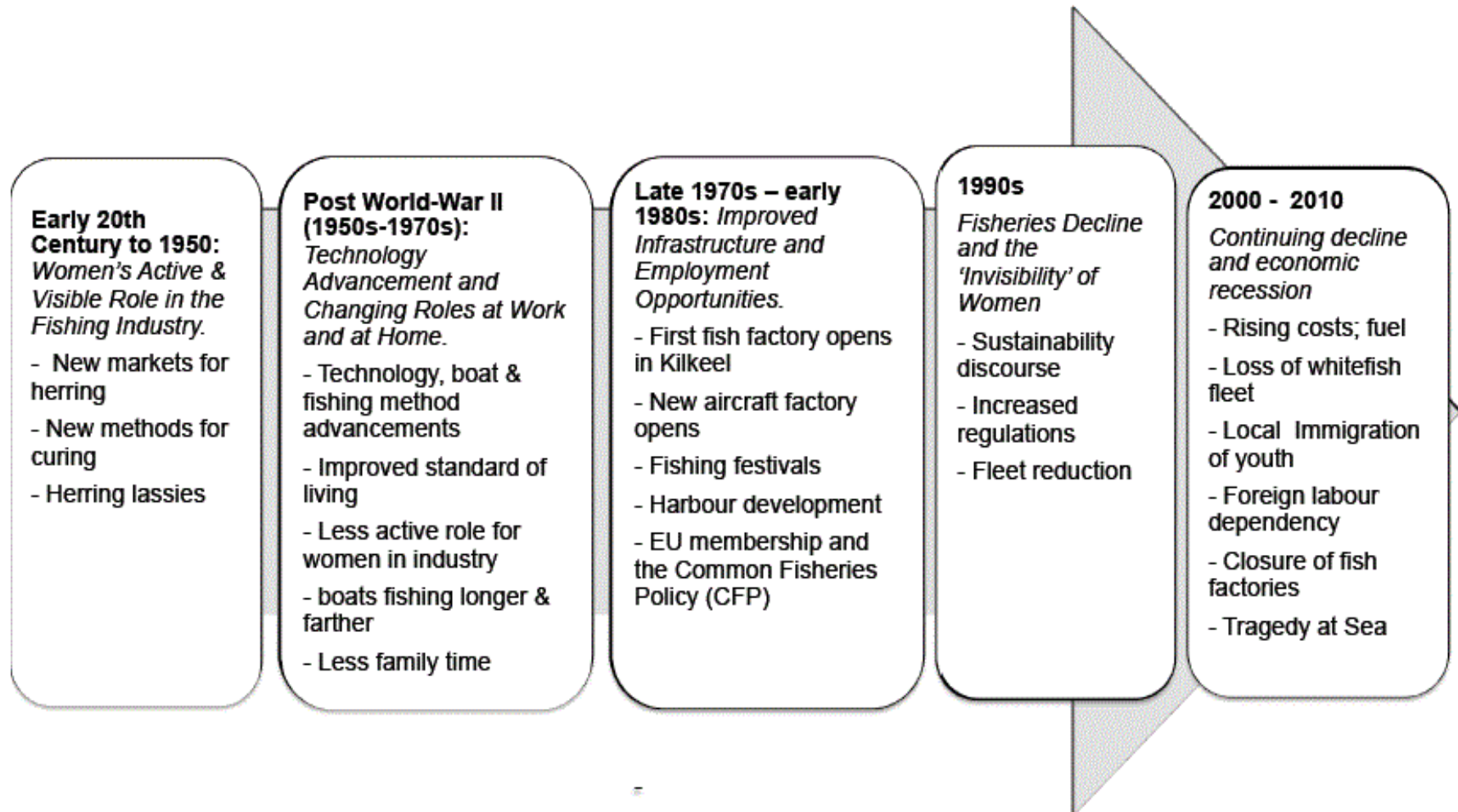
<b>Basic demographics (N=20)</b>	<b>N</b>
Age (median)	55 yrs
Age (median) when left education	19 yrs
Completed 3 <sup>rd</sup> level education	8
Employment outside the home	11
Children <18 years old	8

<b>Factors influencing dependency on fishing (N=20)</b>	<b>N</b>
Children in fishing (12/20 state they DO NOT want their children to fish)	8
Fishing as primary source of household income	9
Wife’s occupation as primary source of income	6
Other sources of income	5
Husband’s status:	
Active fisher	13
Former fisher	3
Retired fisher	1
Deceased	3
Participation/membership in women’s’ support group	8

# Household Shocks

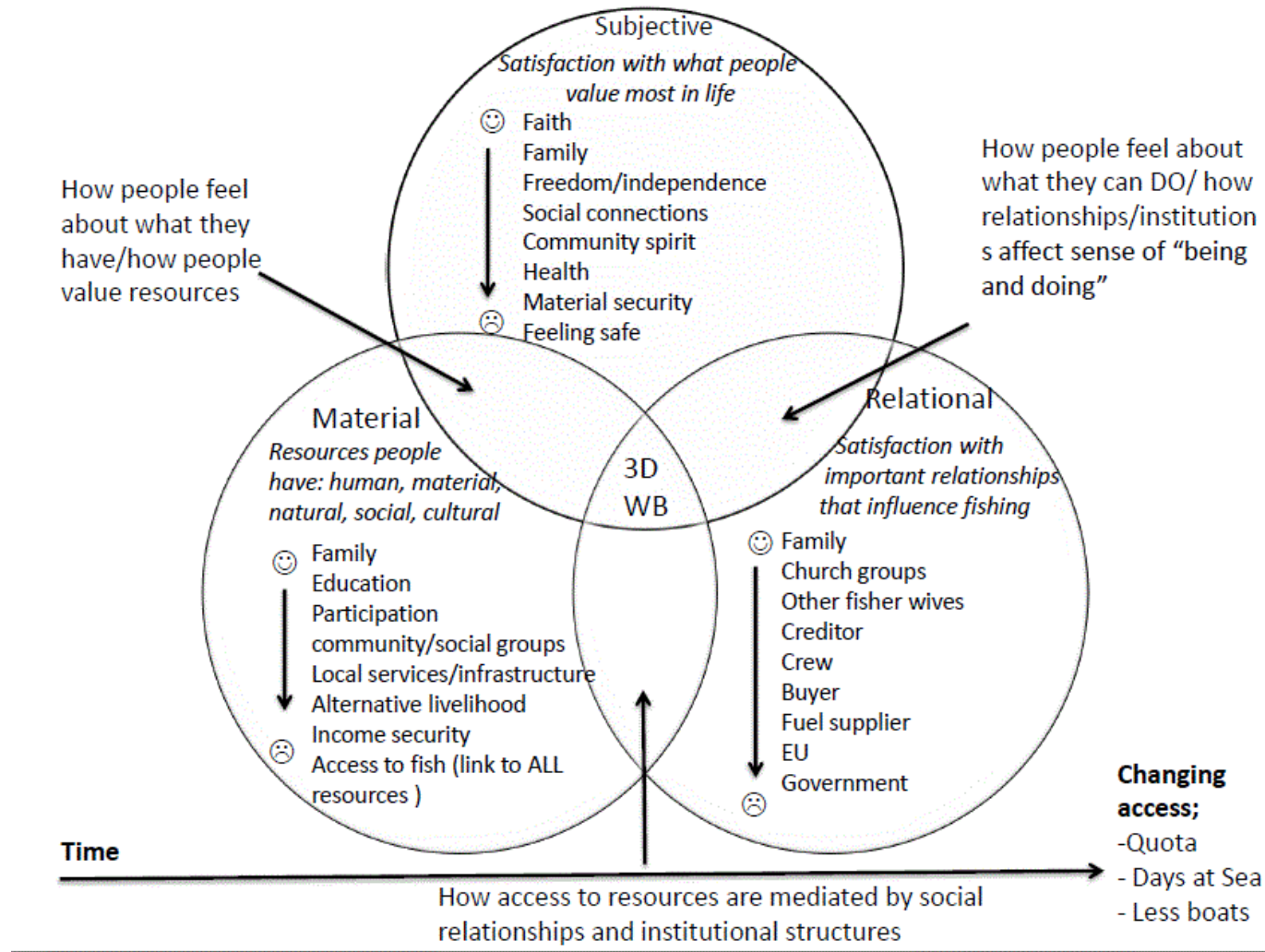
<i>Respondents who reported one or more fishing related 'shocks'</i>	Frequency
Loss of family member at sea	4
Loss of non-family crew member at sea	2
Serious accident/injury of household member (e.g. heart attack/stroke at sea)	3
Loss/damage of boat	3
Fishing related fines/criminal charges	1
<i>Self-reported health problems</i>	9

# Then and Now – the changing role of women in NI fishing society



Timeline of major events influencing the role of women in fishing society identified by focus group discussions with a women-in-fisheries group, Kilkeel, Dec 2010.

# What matters for a good life

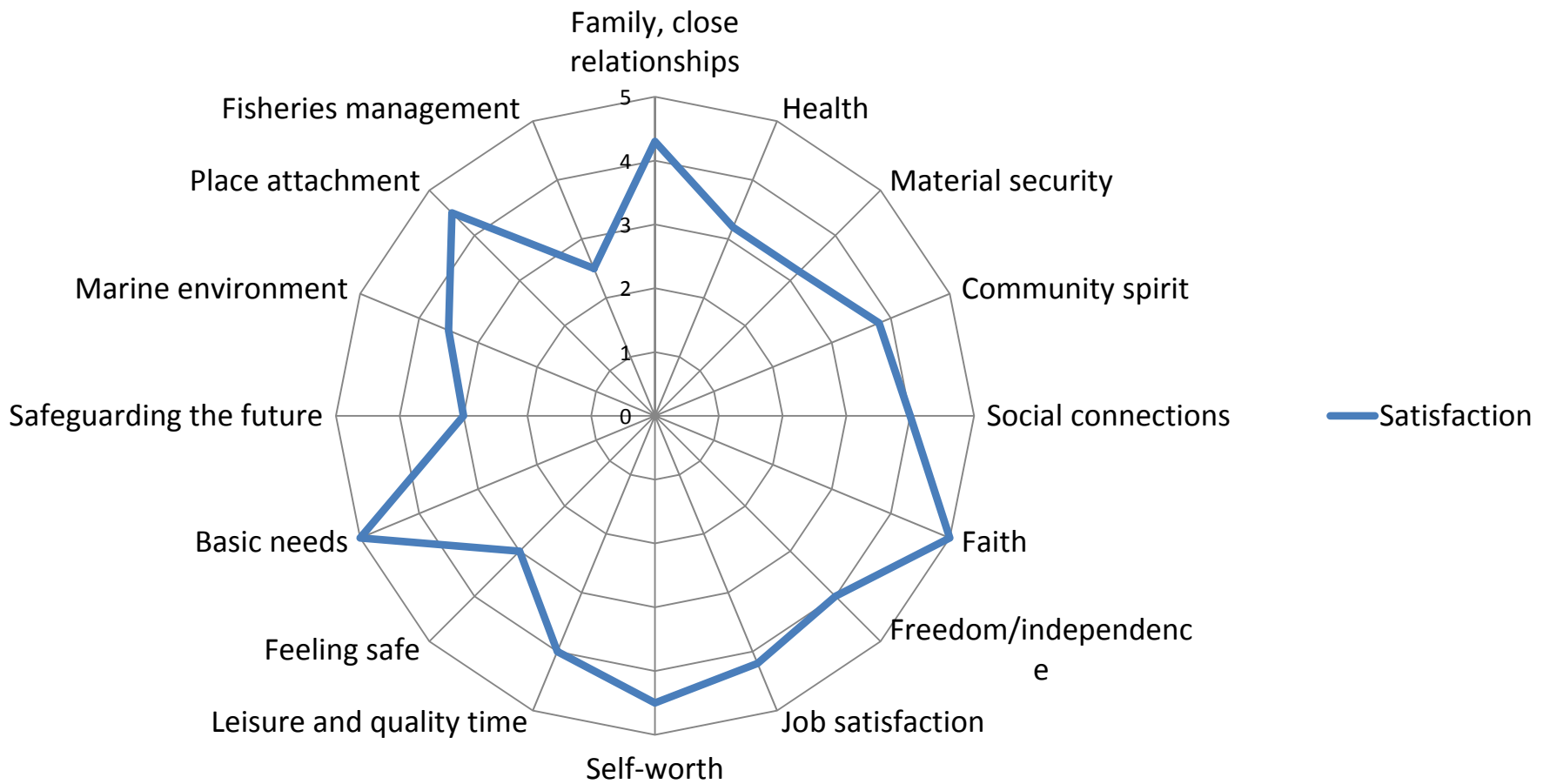


Three-dimensional image of social wellbeing for women in NI fishing households (N=20)

# Self-generated subjective wellbeing domains of women in NI fishing households



# Satisfaction with important wellbeing domains





## In pursuit of the 'good life'

- The Duality of Family Relations and Negotiation of Needs

*Harry missed the birth of our second son because he had to go out to sea – the crew and the boat were his first priority. [wife of fisher, Kilkeel]*

- Adaptation of Expectations

*I cried for fifteen years. My husband was at sea from a Sunday night to Friday. It was awful being the first married to a big fishing family in a small village and not from here and having nobody else. I had absolutely nobody [...]*

- Health, Wealth and the Importance of Security

*Fishermen worked till they were 60 and a lot died in their 60s and 70s...A lot of women live on their own and are frightened, their families had moved on...*

*'we don't even have anywhere to go for a cup of coffee.'*

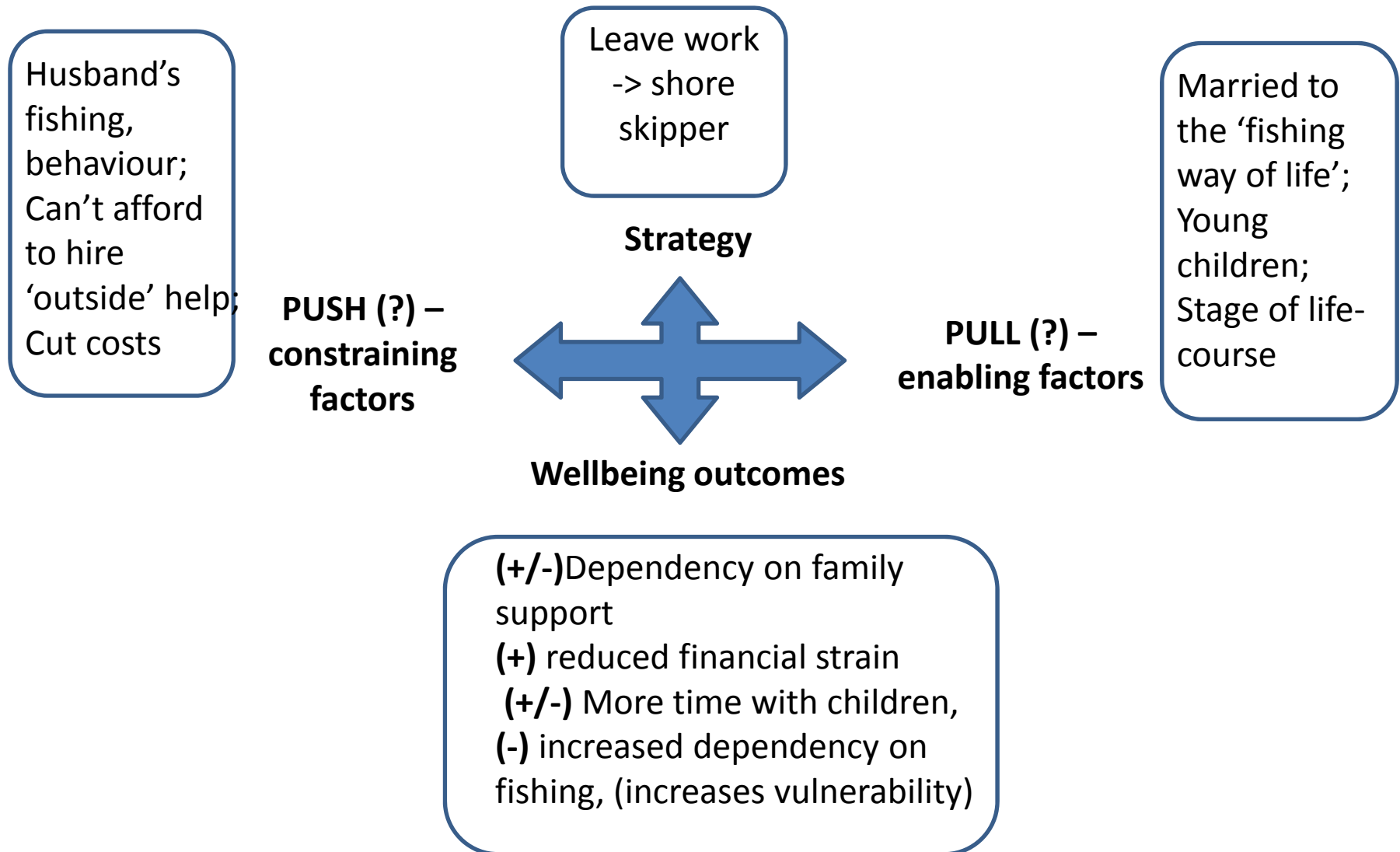
- The Importance of Community, Social and Faith-based Networks

*It's especially important in fishing. There's a lot of prayer that goes into it, when they go to sea, when they're at sea. Prayer is a very important part of your life.*

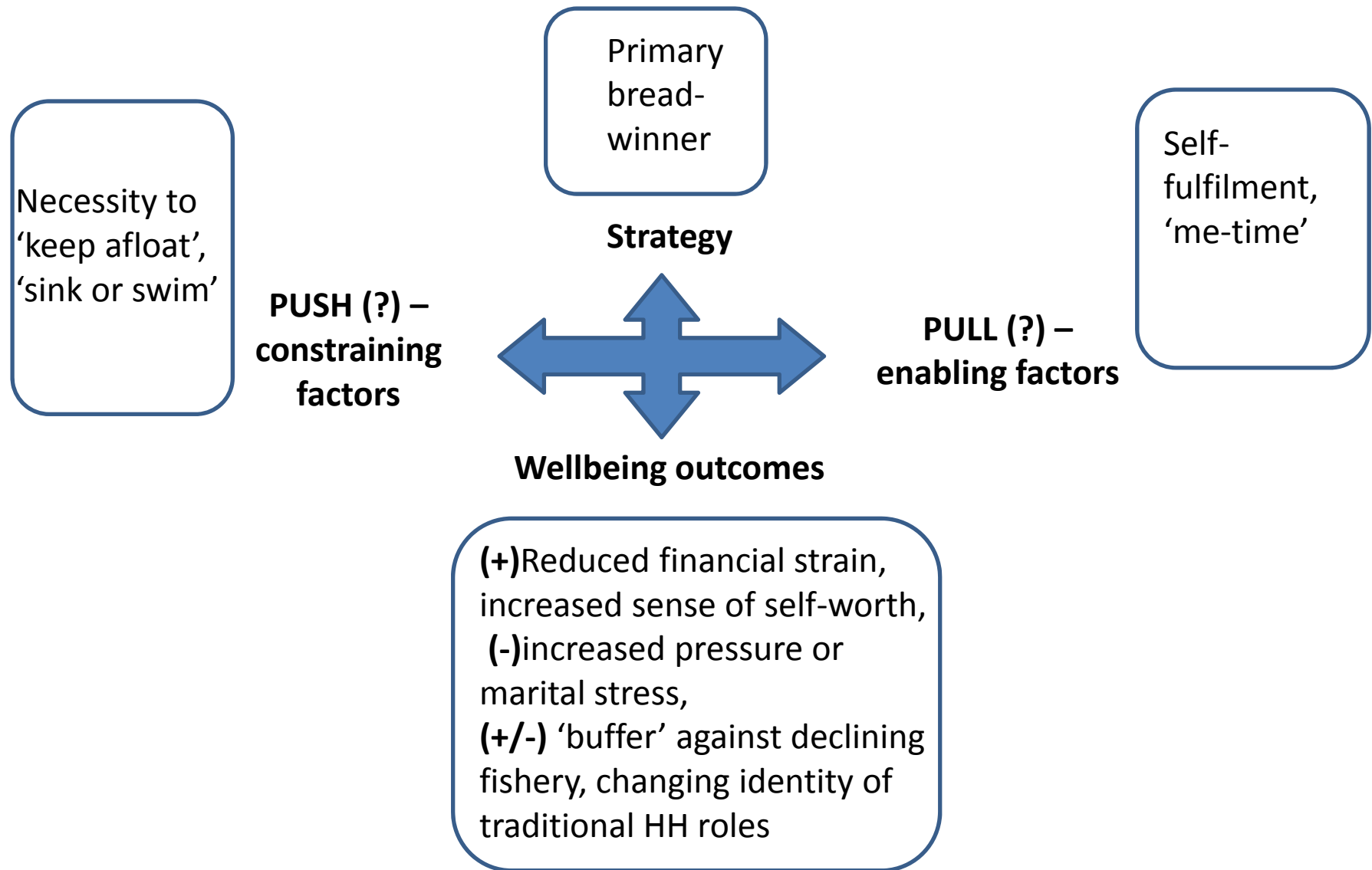
- Freedom and Independence – 'It's not just 'a guy thing.'

*I have to have outside activities. (...) you have to create a life for yourself outside the home otherwise you go stale and when Ben's at home if he's not golfing or not at the harbour there's nothing he likes better than to be in front of the TV. [wife of semi-retired fisher, Kilkeel]*

# Household strategies in response to changing access to fish employed by women.



### 3.5 Household strategies in response to changing access to fish employed by women.



# Conclusions

## Material wellbeing impacts

- *Physical restriction of opportunity* - lack of services or infrastructure supporting opportunities for social - results in a sense of isolation and loneliness in part due to a lack of 'meeting places' for women in fishing communities.
- *Financial burden/adaptation of needs* - Half of the respondents feeling unable to cope if fishing does not improve (perhaps reflected in the rise in the number of fishing households receiving welfare support).

# Conclusions

## *Social and cultural wellbeing impacts*

- cultural limitations restrict the prospects of women challenging the decisions of men, while other norms ensure that women's needs come second to the needs of the fishing business
- shifting cultural identity with women's increasing role as breadwinner.

## *Relational wellbeing impacts*

- can create greater responsibility for women and the erosion of self-worth for men (Narayan et al. 2000), leading to tensions within the home where these roles are negotiated
- major challenges identified by members of NIWIF were issues with bureaucracy and exclusion when trying to access resources, in particular information about fisheries funding, as well as a lack of voice or recognition in policy-making.

## Conclusions

- Dynamic role of women in managing and supporting household finances and contributing to community wellbeing
- Women in fishing households are a diverse group of people
- Gender alone does not create inequity. It must instead be understood in the context of enabling and constraining structures and external factors, as well as individual goals, values and aspirations
- Ability to pursue wellbeing greatly mediated through *resources*, *relationships* and *cultural values*, all of which are socially embedded.
- Priorities: Need for greater livelihood security, income support, community wellbeing, participation in decision-making and the importance of maintaining their sense of freedom and self-worth.

# How can fisheries policy take better account of women's wellbeing?

1. Need to understand how women perceive their own world and ability to meet their needs and fulfil their aspirations (What women value may not match up with the way policies envision what they should value).
  - *How?* Improve mechanisms for an integrated policy framework - viewing fisheries policy in relation to other policy arenas such as social and welfare policy.
  - Careful consideration of the relational dimensions of wellbeing to better connect women's views on wellbeing with policy interests.

# How can fisheries policy take better account of women's wellbeing?

2. Women understand how changes in the fishing industry are intimately linked to the wellbeing of their families and communities and are active agents for wellbeing
  - *Implications for fisheries funding*: Failure to include women in FLAGs (Axis 4, EMFF), which are aimed at promoting a sustainable economy for fisheries areas, and a lack of consideration of the gender dimension in fisheries could potentially result in the inequitable distribution of benefits and impacts.
3. Increased financial pressure and unequal burden of coping:
  - Need to identify equitable access to financial support and appropriate training on income-generating and management activities for women
  - More innovative ways of communicating information about changes in the fishing industry and support for quality childcare services.



# Thank you!

(Paper available at: <http://www.maritimestudiesjournal.com/content/11/1/16> (open access))



*Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries (NIWIF) 'fish presentation' at a local community centre*