

Seafarers' working career in a life cycle perspective - driving forces and turning points

Margareta Ljung

Gill Widell

2014-09-01

Acknowledgement

This report is part of an EU-funded project KNOWME, The European Academic and Industry Network for Innovative Maritime Training, Education and R&D. The purpose of this study is to investigate seafarers' life-cycle-orientation in their experience of their career paths with focus on personal motivations, turning points and competence development.

The report is partly financed by the KnowME project in the 7th framework programme, Grant agreement no: 265966, and partly by the Region Västra Götaland in Sweden. Most of all, we are grateful to the interviewed seafarers who agreed to be interviewed, and other maritime stakeholders who have been involved in this study.

Content

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction, purpose and background	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Purpose	2
1.3 Background	3
2. Literature – an overview	5
2.1 Career systems and training differ between countries	5
2.2 Seafarers' work and motivation	7
2.3 Competence development and employer relations	13
2.4 Working far from home – family and relations	17
2.5 Women at sea – a gender perspective	22
2.6 Short summary of literature review	23
3. Method	24
4. Results and analysis	25
4.1 Work and motivation	26
4.1.1 <i>Family tradition</i>	26
4.1.2 <i>Freedom, adventure, variation, school fatigue</i>	28
4.1.3 <i>Gender aspects</i>	30
4.1.4 <i>Leave</i>	34
4.1.5 <i>Work at sea – a choice for better or worse</i>	35
4.1.6 <i>Analysis: Work and motivation</i>	36
4.2 Career development and turning points	38
4.2.1 <i>Family, relations and life style patterns</i>	38

<i>4.2.2 Working conditions</i>	41
<i>4.2.3 Wishing to develop</i>	45
<i>4.2.4 Analysis: career development and turning points</i>	46
4.3 Competence development and learning	50
<i>4.3.1 Learning at work – development in the job</i>	50
<i>4.3.2 The challenge of problem solving</i>	51
<i>4.3.3 Perception of employers' development offers</i>	52
<i>4.3.4 Sea time and other qualifications</i>	54
<i>4.3.5 Analysis: Competence development and learning</i>	55
4.4 About the future	57
4.5 Summary of results	61
5. Discussion	63
6. Conclusions	66
References	68
Appendix 1:	
Short presentation of the life stories of the interviewees	73
Appendix 2:	
Interview guide	77
Appendix 3:	
About the authors	78

1. Introduction, purpose and background

1.1 Introduction

In 2010, around 1 371 000 people worked as seafarers around the world. Around 18,5% of these came from the European Union and Norway, and those countries contributed with 23% of the officers and 15% of the ratings (Sulpice 2011). European countries with the largest amount of seafarers in numbers were Bulgaria, Romania, Norway, United Kingdom, Poland, and Italy, from 33,000 to 20,000 seafarers per country. Most number of European ships came from Malta, Norway, and Greece, and most officers from Romania, Poland, Norway, UK, and Bulgaria (ibid.). From the beginning of the 21st century, fewer ships and officers are of European origin, which worries ship-owners in Europe and the European Union. Registration under flag of convenience means that both ratings and officers more often now are recruited from countries with lower salaries and with less demand on vacations and other advantageous working conditions.

Trained officers seem to quit sea work only after few years (Weber and Nevala 2006), and young people do not any longer seem attracted by the sea as young people were before. Some estimations show that the medium time an educated sea officer stays at sea is eight years (Swedish Maritime Administration 2010). In addition to efforts to attract young people to shipping, the industry has started to renew its view on and ways of continuous learning and up-dating. When recruiting people to the sea, an often-mentioned career option is the possibility to go ashore after some years into some kind of marine industry. In a circuit from IMO (2010), the seafarer profession is presented not only as a career at sea but also as a possibility, after some years at sea, to start different careers ashore. Recurrent training is offered for staying at sea and for going ashore, but how to re-entry sea after some years

ashore does not yet seem to be offered in acceptable terms. However, different types of distant learning, or e-learning, are on its way.¹

There are at least three common explanations to the staffing problem; that skilled seafarers go ashore after few years at sea, that work at sea does not seem to attract young people of today, and that many skilled European seafarers have retired or are soon going to retire. A fourth explanation might be perceived barriers to re-entry sea work after some years ashore.

Many different projects have started in order to find out how to attract young people to work at sea and to stay working at sea. This article is the result of one such.

1.2 Purpose

The flexible approach of the IMO regarding current and future careers for marine officers brings reason to reflect on seafarers' own thoughts and reasoning on their work in shipping.

The purpose of this study is to investigate seafarers' life-cycle-orientation in their experience of their career paths with focus on personal motivations, turning points and competence development.

Questions:

- What are the driving forces for working at sea?
- Are there special turning points in seafarers' careers? Why have they stayed on board, or shifted to a profession ashore, inside or outside the maritime industry?
- How do seafarers experience learning and competence development within the profession and the organisation?

To gain knowledge about careers in a life cycle perspective, fourteen seafarers with experience of working at sea have been interviewed. The project was included in the

¹https://www.bimco.org/education/seascapes/maritime_matters/2013_10_22_the_need_for_continuous_training.aspx

European Union project “KnowMe”². Our part of this project has been to deliver empirical material on how mariners make their career choices and what make them stay at sea or go ashore. The limited resources for this study delimited the scope of the empirical material.

1.3 Background

The fourth BIMCO³/ISF⁴ Manpower Study, launched in November 2010 at IMO Headquarters, presented a comprehensive investigation of the global supply and demand for merchant seafarers. A lot had changed since the first manpower study, twenty years earlier, and future changes concerning shipping industry were perceived even larger. Except for considerable financial difficulties, caused by the financial crisis in 2007-2008, environmental, safety and security related issues came at focus.

Altogether, these challenges increased the demand on well-qualified staff at sea. The construction of vessels has improved, and ship design and technological equipment developed responding to new demands on environmental and safety work. The staff must now have skills and knowledge to operate the vessels, both on shore and off shore –”the focus now is firmly on the human element” (IMO: c 2014). The Manpower Study coincided in time with the theme for World Maritime Day, approved by IMO after a proposal from IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos in July 2009. IMO wanted to pay a tribute to the world’s seafarers for their contribution to society and for shouldering the risks in executing their duties in a sometimes-hostile world. The Secretary-General highlighted the risks for the seafarers in his proposal, but he also mentioned “the predicted looming shortage of ships’ officers” in claiming sufficient skilled personnel (IMO: b 2014).

IMO had at this time an ongoing campaign: “Go to Sea!” which was launched in 2008 in association with ILO (International Labour Organization), the “Round Table” of shipping

² <http://www.know-me.org/> *KNOWME*. The European Academic and Industry Network for Innovative Maritime Training, Education and R&D. Seventh Framework Programme. Grant agreement no: 265966

³ Baltic International Maritime Council

⁴ International Shipping Organization

industry organisations, and the International Transport Worker's Federation (ibid.). This campaign was also in line with the Manila amendments – adapted to the STCW Convention and STCW Code in Manila in June 2010. These amendments should provide “the necessary global standards for the training and certification of seafarers to man technologically advanced ships, today and for some time to come” (ibid.).

The Manpower Study and IMO's venture paid attention on seafarers' situation from a global perspective. The number of officers around the world in 2012 was estimated to 624,000 while the demand of the same year was 637,000. Supply and demand of ratings was balanced, on around 747,000 (IMO: a 2014). There is thus a worldwide lack of officers. Even if the lack is not that large, it is perceived as a threat for international shipping industry. According to Weber and Nevela (2006), there seemed to be a drainage of skilled labour from developed to developing countries around the world. This doesn't change the total need, but it affects the condition for European maritime transports. Most new officers and ratings now come from Eastern Europe and from the Far East (mainly China and the Philippines).

Another explanation is that not enough young people are attracted to the maritime sector, or more specifically, the sea (Barka 2011). According to a Belgian experiment, different kinds of activities directed to schools and young children did help this attraction raise, and the explanation was that young people today doesn't know enough about the professions in the marine sector. An equivalent experience had the Swedish Rail Administration, around ten years ago, and they managed to solve it by information campaigns in schools⁵. The specific purpose with the “Go to Sea” campaign was to attract young people “of the right calibre, one which can provide them with rewarding, stimulating and long-term prospects, not only at sea but also in the broader maritime industry” (IMO: d 2014).

IMO and the shipping industry thus underline the importance of recruiting more seafarers to the future shipping industry, but the recruited must be “of the right calibre” – a formulation which is not defined and which can be interpreted in different ways. One interpretation is a demand for young people with high motivation to work at sea. The difference with this profession from others is that you stay at sea in long periods, days, weeks and months without

⁵ Interview with Per Thilander, previously HR manager at the Swedish Rail Administration.

the presence of family, children and friends. Work at sea becomes a way of living, a life style. The profession has, however, changed a lot during the last years, which is described in the Manpower study and in the IMO campaigns. The demand on professional competence and skills, technical and non-technical, gets more and more comprehensive. Today's seafarers must plan for continuous learning during all working life. Knowledge and competence gained from the basic education will not be enough for long.

Below, we present some of the current research literature on seafarers' training and careers, on their working conditions on-board and in relation to private life, etc. Then we present and analyse our interpretations from interviewing seafarers. The findings are discussed in the light of relevant literature. Conclusions are drawn mainly with the aim of contributing to the purpose of the KnowMe project, to improve conditions for seafarers and the shipping industry.

2. Literature – an overview

2.1. Career systems and training differ between countries

Historically until only some decades ago, most seafarers learned the trade by practicing, as teenager deck boys, and advanced by different kinds of training and education. Today's system is more formal and, as in other professions, it is more common with an education first and then practical training. To “do time at sea” is mandatory, though, and must be done before and in-between different courses. Some courses must be repeated or renewed regularly during the whole professional life in order to maintain the skills.

A project by Southampton Solent University⁶ gave an overview of career path maps concerning maritime employment in ten European countries. Three areas of interest were

⁶ The Mapping of Career Paths in the Maritime Industries (2004/2005) A project for the European Community Shipowner's Associations (ECSA) and the European Transport Federation with the support of the European Commission.

studied: a) possible and actual career paths of seafarers, b) seafarer manpower requirements at sea and in relevant shore-based maritime industries, where information was available, and c) barriers to the mobility of qualified seafarers between the sectors (2004/2005, p. 148). Career paths varied between countries. Denmark had, for example, a more complex structure, which offered more types of career choices than for example Greece, where the structure was slimmer. In Greece, most seafarers worked until retirement age (which normally has been 58 in Greece), whereas most Danish officers chose earlier retirement (than 65 which has been the legal option there). However, the old kind of salts seemed to be dying out, and new seafarers preferred to flex between sea and shore.

The Southampton Solent University overview also showed that the requirements of the seafarer manpower depended on the socioeconomic and social culture in each country. In Italy, seafarers could hardly work within a port authority, as the system demanded a certain exam for this, which most seafarers had not trained for. "The geography and location of the country, the strength of the family culture, and the maritime education and training system" (ibid. p. 150) influenced career options and how those were perceived and organised. Some maritime skills were, however, the same in all countries, like pilotage.

Hinders for flexibility between sectors were, according to this study, learned helplessness, lack of personal drive and commitment, lack of opportunity (seafarers are away from recruitment and interview circuit which makes it more difficult to respond to advertisements and to be present for interviews), and lack of appropriate management qualifications for seeking shore management positions (ibid. p. 149).

The valuing of exams and competence of staff differed between countries. Samson, Gekara and Bloor (2011) showed how different countries, and also different education organisations in the same country, had different standards on their exams. Some employers had thus chosen to apply a system of "dual control" on their vessels during a probation time, when they were unsure of the standard of the education of the candidate for a job as captain. They let one of their older captains observe the candidate for about two weeks, and then they decided about employment or not. If, however, they trusted the education system of the country where the candidate had studied, they only made an interview with the applicant (ibid).

2.2. Seafarers' work motivation

What motivates seafarers in their work generally doesn't differ from what motivates other professional groups in society. In addition to purely economic factors, work in modern society has increasingly included other values as motivators. According to social psychologist Jahoda (1982), major changes in the view of work have developed since the industrial society's transition to a knowledge and information society. There has been a shift from purely economic incentives towards a number of other motivating factors. Jahoda characterized these non-economic values as the ability to achieve higher status, strengthening the identity and experiences of community and connection.

Shipping, particularly the Swedish, has like the rest of work places in our society, gone through a democratisation process, which probably also is a non-economic factor that strengthens motivation. Gaining more influence over work performance, work environment and new value patterns of leadership and teamwork are examples of this. The historically hierarchical structure with roots in a military organisation has in recent decades been flattened out on Swedish ships (Mårtensson 2006). One thing that distinguishes shipping from many other areas of work is the emphasis on risk and safety. Emergency situations require quick decisions, and an effective organisation on board has a combination of hierarchical and democratic structures. This has also been of interest to some researchers (for example Abrahamsson and Ydén 2005). It can create more dynamic and flexible work. The development of democracy on board ships is not just about officers and crew sitting at the same table, or that social interaction has changed and become easier and more pleasurable. It also means more of self-governance and influence in a clear, structured order. Not least for the younger members of the crew, more self-governance at work is attractive and enhances motivation (Lützhöft, Ljung and Nodin 2008; Ljung 2010).

In a Swedish project, conducted by researchers at Kalmar Maritime Academy in Sweden, Swedish seafarers' attitudes towards work and profession were investigated (presented in Hult 2012). In this study, three types of motivation emerged: labour market motivation, motivation in the work organisation and occupational motivation, resulting in a complex image of what motivated seafarers in their profession. Both a qualitative study with 27 interviews and a quantitative survey answered by 1,309 seafarers were conducted, based on age, gender and professional position.

The specific observations and recommendations were about the strong identity related to the seafaring profession. The seafarers' perception of work content was the key factor here. Occupational motivation tended to become stronger over the years, based on the time they had remained in the profession. However, there were some differences among age groups. The group in the survey called *younger adults* (19-30 years) had a looser relation to both the seafaring profession and the work organisation than the oldest group (+55 years). In addition, there was no evidence in the study that investing in officer training and carrier planning would lead to a stronger connection to the profession. Instead, the crew on deck and in the engine had the highest professional motivation. This was explained through various obstacles in career paths, which caused disappointment and frustration. For the group of younger officers, long time in the same position had a negative effect on the motivation of being in the work organisation. When it came to time working on the same ship, it had a large negative effect on the motivation for the profession. The recommendations given, according to the results, were to focus on work content, interesting work tasks, career possibilities and leadership development.

Other results were; ambiguities in wage setting, and that time off and opportunities to communicate with family and friends could vary between crew members. The youngest age groups (19-45 years) expressed the most dissatisfaction and frustration when it came to experiences of separation from family and friends. These also thought about leaving the profession within the next few years.

The qualitative research part of the Kalmar project was a pilot study to the more extensive survey study, where interviews with 27 sailors were presented (Ljung 2012). In the analysis, time emerged as a relevant factor for professional motivation. Seafarers have of course always appreciated the long periods of leave. It is understandable that after several months or even years at sea, the long leave is welcomed.

Among others, Jahoda (1982), Warr (1982), and Hult (2004) stated that working life is providing opportunities for emotional rewards in terms of social interaction, status, and personal fulfilment that go beyond purely economic values. At least it is not obvious to say that leave or time off is one of the qualities that Jahoda (1982) argued is included in non-economic values. Leave is, however, not an economic value. In the interviews of the pilot study (Ljung 2012), the seafarers expressed, among other things, that the leave means "*time*

to do other things” (ibid:13), a freedom which gives opportunity to dispose one’s own lives and one’s own time. Fuehrer (2010) problematized in his thesis how people in the late modern welfare society were relating to time. He argued that people often have anxiety about their everyday life. They have no power over their own time “*while their dreams of the good life circles around a larger access to qualitatively valuable leisure and opportunities for social interaction, relaxation and time on their own*” (ibid.: 247; free translation from Swedish). Maybe the expressions of the seafarers, at least in the pilot study of the Kalmar project (Ljung 2012), were clear examples of how the values in late modern society have shifted towards a desire for more freedom and the realization of qualitative values of life?

The contrast between the structured pattern of work in the confined vessel space and leisure is obvious. After a long time off it is for many a freedom to be out at sea again - on the way to other ports, to other environments. The contrasting life at sea and life at home brings a variety in life that has appealed to many seafarers (Ljung 2012). The variation at sea has also been perceived as motivating. There is room for both feelings of restlessness and security in fixed operating procedures and structures - something that can be said to be paradoxical, but which is an attraction and thus motivating for life at sea.

Crew cuts and lack of opportunities to go ashore in ports have reduced the qualities that were previously included in the seafarer's life (Lützhöft et al. 2008; Ljung 2010; Ljung 2012; Ljung and Lützhöft 2014). Manuels (2011) meant that some seafarers could go ashore and some could not, depending on their passports, their papers of identity, and he thought this unfair. It affected work efficiency on-board – it is good for the mental and physical health to leave the vessel sometimes during long trades. To get a break from life on-board results in better work. Manuels referred to a verdict, which he stated is often referred to in these matters:

US Supreme Court 1943, Aguilar vs. Standard Oil Co of New Jersey 318 U.S. 724 1943:

The assumption is hardly sound that the normal uses and purposes of shore leave are ‘exclusively personal’ and have no relation to the vessel’s business. Men cannot live for long cooped up aboard ship without substantial impairment of their efficiency, if not also serious danger to discipline. Relaxation beyond the confines of the ship is necessary if the work is to

go on, more so that it may move smoothly In short, shore leave is an elemental necessity in the sailing of ships, a part of the business as old as the art, not merely a personal diversion.

So, the problem is not new. The decrease of crew on board has brought a rationalization that has led to an increasing fatigue in seafarers, well documented by several researchers, for example Lützhöft et al. (2010) and Leeuwen et al. (2012). It has also led to a weakened community. The reduced crew and a tighter rotation system have led to more isolation at work. Several seafarers indicated a high isolation - for example: *“I feel it is a pretty lonely job”* and *“it's hard to find someone to play table tennis with today”* (Ljung 2012:12).

Being able to go into ports and visit new and old cities was previously a welcome break for seafarers. It was an important feel-good factor that was included in the varied seafarer life. As shipping industry has been rationalized to increase profitability, important motivational factors have been reduced or eliminated, which has had an impact on the seafarer profession.

In light of these developments, it is possible to find explanations why seafarers to such an extent stressed the importance of time-off.

Today the seafarer often works alone, comrades have finished eating when he or she enters the mess, and the fun and excitement of port visits has disappeared. Then, the long periods of leave, which have been unchanged, remained as a motivation-building factor. Perhaps the emphasis of leave expressed that qualities which traditionally motivated the seafarer through various rationalisations have been eroded and lost value?

The motives to become a seafarer have in recent decades changed. The myth of the exciting and free life at sea has largely been cracked. Research on how the major changes that permeated the work content and the organisation have influenced young people's motivation to choose a career in seafaring profession is hard to find. A greater understanding of the motives for choosing the profession could provide greater clarity about recruitment issues and reasons to seafarers' drop out of the profession after a few years.

The maritime author and founder of the *Marine Insight - The Maritime Industry Guide*⁷, Kantharia Raunek (2013), focused the increasing trend of officers who leave the profession after only a few years, despite lucrative job offers, adventurous work environments and opportunities for "globetrotting". He posed the question: What is driving officers to submit a respected and lucrative career? After conducting a survey with a number of marine officers (the author does not specify the number) from different nations who had jobs or were planning to get one, he and his colleagues identified a number of key points that seafarers experienced as problematic.

1. *Unsettled Lifestyle*. Different needs during the career. In the beginning the seafarer appreciated the mobile, "nomadic" life. After a number of years, especially after family formation, a more stable lifestyle was preferred. Raunek believed that this is a well-known reason for mariners leaving the sea, but it is also the primary cause of dissatisfaction in the profession.
2. *Hectic Life*. Through the introduction of more and more maritime regulations for each year seafarer life has become more hectic, laborious and monotonous. The increasing administrative work, advanced training guidelines and rigorous safety and environmental laws have made life on board more and more hectic.
3. *Onboard politics*. Conflicts of various types have made it difficult to both work and socialize within an already reduced crew. The thin line between the professional and the personal life on board makes it particularly difficult to manage conflicts arising from differences in opinions.
4. *Lack of Social Life*. The limited space on board and a reduced social life have often led to feelings of loneliness, homesickness and frustration. Life on board that at the beginning of the career could be perceived as good, eventually turned to experiences of isolation.
5. *Away from the Family*. It is emotionally stressful being away from family, children and friends for long periods, sometimes for several months. Being married, being a new parent, and missing large parts of the raising of children is painful. Many realize a deeper meaning in the sense of being together with family and loved ones. The pain of

⁷ <http://www.marineinsight.com/>

being away from home for several months was one of the main reasons for sailors leaving their job.

6. *Personal/Family Problems.* Being unable to be available when there were problems and difficulties in the family was perceived as extremely frustrating. Concerns over not being able to help or assist with problems led to anxiety, stress and insomnia. The constant unrest made it difficult to stay focused on the tasks. It was hard to work when physically on board a ship but mentally at home.
7. *Rise in Maritime Piracy.* Although many steps have been taken to combat piracy at sea, incidents of piracy attacks occurred almost every month. Seafarers did not want to risk life or put themselves in danger by sailing on piracy-affected areas.
8. *Health Issues.* The medical requirements for seafarers to board had no equivalent to life on board. The irregular sleep schedule, work stress, conflicts on board, lack of fresh food and inadequate medical care strongly affected seafarers' health. Some also complained about the increasing difference between work and rest hours.
9. *Reducing shore leaves.* The opportunity to go ashore, as seafarers traditionally have had, has been greatly reduced in recent times. By faster turnaround time of ships at ports, there was no time to go out in ports, which excluded the possibility of a change of scenery.
10. *Lack of Shore Jobs.* Although the shipping companies and maritime institutes promised good opportunities to work on-shore, it was in fact difficult for those who wanted to shift to go ashore to get a satisfying job there. It required a degree in Masters in Business Administration (MBA) or equivalent in order to get a good managerial position. Seafarers thought it could be hard to go back to study again, especially if they had obligations to their family.
11. *Reducing crew members.* Shipping industry has, because of the global financial crisis, made crew cuts to compensate for the increased costs. Seafarers have got an increased workload - fewer did the same job - but they had not been compensated for this change. The problem occurred in all shipping companies all over the world. Bigger workload with the same salary, or a negligible compensation, was reason why some seafarers left the job at sea.
12. *Stringent Laws.* New stringent maritime laws have arisen which has complicated lives for many in the shipping industry, particularly for those in leadership positions. Many have ended up in prison, got high fines or have been suspended from their jobs

because of these laws. Officers in leading positions are those who most often have been affected by laws, which have caused a lot of stress.

The twelve paragraphs sum up most of the problems and challenges that shipping today contends with. In addition to pointing out the reasons why seafarers are leaving work at sea, they also demonstrate the effects that the fundamental changes have had on those working in shipping. Increased global competitiveness and striving for greater cost efficiency in shipping have radically changed the working and living conditions for seafarers and thus their motivation for staying at sea.

2.3 Competence development and employer relations

Competent employees are demanded from employers and conditions for competence development are demanded by employees. Employers often say there is a lack of qualified people for their offered positions, whereas employees rather miss opportunities for developing their competence the way they prefer. The conditions for sea work are, at large, set by ship-owners, and they have, traditionally, preferred developing technical skills than human. In 2009, an investigation of human resource development within the European marine sector concluded by the following:

- The reason for the staffing problem on today's agenda within the maritime sector is mainly due to the experienced shortage of sea officers, i.e. lack of employees with core competences for taking responsibility for the navigation of the ships, which can be classified as the core activity of the sector.
- There doesn't seem to have been enough effort put in developing the human resource management competence within the sector as a whole, which is why there is now a lack of knowledge about how people working in the maritime sector deal with their work situation, and what career paths they follow and would prefer to follow.
- The offered educational possibilities need expansion, but such an expansion needs demand, and demand may rise only if work and career conditions develop and are made visible in ways which attract the new generations coming.

- A lot of the national and multinational/EU efforts during the last years concern regional and sector development, like promoting clusters of maritime activities. These clusters have produced increased innovation and productivity, and a kind of competition with a ‘win-win-effect’ for involved parties. Maybe, though, this development have increased the rate by which sea officers leave their work at sea, while enjoying land based promotion, close to home and family.
 - HRM competence and strategic development may both gain and loose by the clustering effects. Industrial relations development and more local employer-employee-relations development are crucial for future development in the sector.
- (Widell, Damm, and Gran 2009)

Previous studies have shown that the cause for officers leaving the sea was that they wanted to stay with their families (Thomas, Sampson and Zhao 2002), that the sea-bound salary was not good enough (Weber and Nevala 2006), and/or that working conditions at sea were not perceived as attractive enough in the long run (ibid). Also, the generation shift within the trade has affected the turnover (ibid). Kumar and Hoffman (2002) pointed out that seafarers nowadays more often are contracted by voyage, whereas before a lifetime loyalty between seafarer and ship owner could develop.

A different explanation about difficulties to retain qualified employees in the maritime sector is that staffing problems within this sector so far mostly have been dealt with on an aggregate level, i.e. more as a technical problem than as a human problem, concerning subjective human beings. Studies concerning human resource management practices within the maritime sector have been few, so we don’t know much about how the organisations within the sector deal with their employees. Research within the maritime sector seems to cover technical development, logistics, and regional planning and innovation – but no industrial relations, no personnel management, no HRM. This is also the conclusion of Ruhullah (2003), who is one of very few who have addressed the human resourcing problem as an issue about human beings. A need for such studies and such practices might not have been obvious, if, before, there were long-term psychological contracts between ship owners and their employees. With mutual understanding and respect, on a local level, systematic HRM might not be needed. Then trust between employer and employees develops and organisational and individual learning within the everyday work becomes custom.

Previous and current non-strategies on HRM issues may have contributed to instability of the whole sector. Even if the maritime sector is highly interrelated worldwide, it has not lived up to the work development conditions and standards of industrial relations, as have most other sectors in society developed during the last decades. These are reasons why previously employed leave and not enough from the new generations enter.

Delery and Doty (1996) showed a universally valid relation between profit sharing and performance, which supports both agency theory and a behavioural theory explanation. Employment security is also of importance universally. The relationship between HR practises and financial performance is said to be contingent on an organisation's strategy, as contingency results provides support for strategic HRM, mainly for *performance appraisal*, *participation* and *internal career opportunities*. Contradictory to what one might suppose, talented employees are shown to stay if they clearly perceive possibilities to internal training and career opportunities, but they leave if they don't see attractive career possibilities.

Paauwe (2009) summarized achievements on HRM and performance. He started off with reference to Guest (1987), who assumed that HRM as a new concept would contribute to *commitment, flexibility and quality*. He stated that HR practices clearly have positive effects on organisational performance, the size of which, however, seems to differ between different studies.

These results can be applied on the maritime sector. In those parts of the sector where there is a mutual ownership/partnership among those who work there, as in fisheries and other SME's, people usually stay in the organisation and put effort in developing themselves as well as the organisation. Swedish examples could be the ship-owners and the fisheries at Donsö, outside Göteborg, where the whole life of many inhabitants since long has been related to the more or less mutually owned small maritime companies, combined with a strong loyalty to the local church (Forsberg, 2001). The Donsö maritime cluster is a part of the larger West Coast, or Göteborg, maritime cluster in Sweden (Palmberg et al 2006). The partnership promotes symbioses between the organisation and the individuals' work and the social environment. When people take part in developing strategy, they also tend to develop loyalty for the organisation (Sandoff and Widell 2009). Career paths and organisation development goes hand in hand, both ways, which means that the employer is also loyal to the

employees, by transparency and respect, and by giving opportunities to take part in development processes (Forsberg 2001). There are probably many such examples worldwide.

Possibilities for learning and development of competence is since long recognised as a motivating factor at work. One way is through formal courses, in order to learn certain techniques or to achieve demanded qualifications. In the maritime sector there are strict such demands for certain qualifications.

Another way is learning through experience, within the everyday work, and such possibilities are often regarded as internally satisfying by most employees. Moxnes (1984) summarised the advantages of experience based learning thus:

It gives meaning to what happens and what is going to happen; it is directed to what is now and to the future. The person who is learning enjoys setting his/her own goals, and makes him/her experience the tasks as important and contributing. It gives new, instead of old, problems to solve and makes one put question marks on developed solutions. And, it produces learning processes filled with emotions, which makes one accept the anxiety, which is always combined with learning, for the joy in trying and experimenting (Moxnes 1984:57-58, our translation).

Learning by experience can be illustrated as a process in four phases (Kolb 1974);

1. Action, concrete experience – What happened?
2. Observation, reflection and analysis – Why did it happen? What does it mean?
3. Abstraction, generalisation and valuing – What conclusions can we make? What did I learn?
4. Developing new actions, based on what I learned – How can I use what I learned?
What do I do now?

Learning by experience thus demands some degree of security within the organisation, in order to dare reflect, inquire and experiment (Leijon and Widell 2001). The process of learning by experience can be on individual and/or on organisational level. Argyris and Schön have published a lot of research on organisational learning. They described a “model 1” where organisational processes were designed, more or less (un)consciously, to hinder mutual learning in the organisation, and “model 2”, where organisational learning was promoted

(Argyris and Schön 1974). A difference between the models were, in short, if communication routines were closing or opening, and if people had the courage to speak about what seriously bothered them or if they only talked about what caused least attention. Schön (1993) developed this further on an individual level concerning professionals. He showed how professionally trained people, as for example chiefs and masters in the marine sector are, have certain difficulties to relearn ways of doing things they have learnt through their education and/or been accustomed to work well, behaviours they have so far felt being successful with. When the surrounding context changed, their previous competence then turned into skilled incompetence. With training in and organisational routines for experiential learning, such skilled incompetence can be transformed into continuous relearning (ibid; Argyris 1990).

Within larger organisations, with more formal employer-employee relationships, we can see different ways of promoting or hindering experiential learning in order to improve the organisation. When employees experience a clear relationship between performance appraisals, i.e. feedback systems, and possibilities to develop in the occupation, they tend to stay and to take part in the developing of the organisation, and in that way they contribute to the organisational performance. The capability to contribute to organisational performance is rooted in *clear appraisal systems* and *fair and transparent promotion systems*. These systems are also promoted by clustering, as the competitions within clusters are not only about customers, but, and maybe primarily, about talented employees. The more distant employer, like the pension funds and conglomerates Kumar and Hoffman (2002) described, could develop such relationships if there is a wish and if the strategic HRM is implemented carefully. The smaller organisations, with closer relations between employer and employee, development can, at least theoretically, be communicated easier, within the daily routines.

2.4 Working far from home – family and relations

The long periods at work are at the same time long periods away from home, away from partners, family, and friends. Away from children is perceived as especially important, when the seafarer is a parent. Very often, having a child seems to be decisive for the choice of how to continue the career. Female seafarers traditionally perceive problems to continue working at sea when they have children. The striving for equality, mostly in western countries, and

especially in Scandinavia, has influenced also men striving to be present as fathers. This development results in a complex career issue for the whole shipping industry.

Of course, cultural differences are still significant. The view of work at sea and the relation between work life and family life differ with traditions, norms, culture and sociopolitical conditions. Acejo (2012) interviewed Philippine seafarers on-board a Philippine container boat and in a Philippine village, and also seafarers living in a seafarer home. She described being away from home during long periods as a self-evident norm connected to sea work, and that this fact improved the status for the family. Seafarers can, traditionally, send money home to their families, contributing to their economic power. They sent money to different relatives and friends, who had helped them on their career path with money when studying or with housing. When at home, they perceived it important to be able to invite relatives and friends for a drink or two at the local pub, and to arrange big parties, as well as to be able to contribute to festivals of the village etc. To build a new house or to renovate the family house gave status. In addition, to let a relative move into the house and then move oneself to the United States, gave still higher cachet. Naturally, officers had better possibilities for such arrangements than had ratings, but it seemed important to all. Money was also spent on communication with home, through e-mail and different telephone systems. To afford everything, however, they had to make a budget and plan for it. Otherwise the whole salary could be used up on communication. The communication was as often about financing and construction of the house as about the raising of the children or about love. The wives of the Philippine seafarers cared about informing their spouses about special events at home, as weddings, births, christenings, funerals, etc. Their husbands expressed regret at missing many of these events.

The most important incentive for continuing work at sea is probably continuous good relations to partner, family and children. The clear divide between life on sea and life ashore imply certain challenges and difficulties, not only for the seafarers but also for the partner and the children. According to a study by Thomas (2003), the most problematic periods both for the seafarer and for the family were the transitions from sea to shore and the transitions from home and back to sea. The transitions implied that the couples "had to move between two existences that were sufficiently different for seafarers and their partners to refer to living in 'two worlds' or having 'two lives' or even 'two selves'." (ibid: 106). In a Swedish study,

Suurküla confirmed these results. He found the two worlds of family/private life and sea in a way more integrated by electronic equipment, but, on the other hand, mariners seemed to keep the two worlds apart, in order to save energy. They separated their role as a mariner and their private role because of the emotional strength it took to play both simultaneously while not being able to really be at the other place at the same time. The transitions from the one to the other were perceived as the most energy consuming processes, but when being at sea or ashore mariners more or less closed their emotions from where they were not present at the time being (Suurküla 2010).

Suurküla also showed that seafarers of today did not feel the same isolation from family and society ashore as before, but instead they felt more isolated from their colleagues on board. Isolation from family and society ashore was now partly helped by internet communication possibilities. Instead, the fact that everyone had their own computer and other equipment in their cabins, combined with prohibition of alcohol and shortened turnaround times in harbours, produced social isolation on board. The reduced manning on board many vessels showed the same effects, according to Thomas (2003). When one single person must perform many different duties, relations among colleagues became more superficial – only “on-board acquaintances” (Thomas 2003:107).

Obviously, life on board cannot be viewed as purely work. Human beings perform the work and different feelings are evoked within them, caused both by what is happening during work and by what they hear is happening at home. Tang (2009) referred to Hochschild (1979; 1983) when arguing that the self is an emotion manager working on feelings, or feelings of discomfort, in order to comply with social norms. Those who do not manage their feelings and self-presentation properly face social sanctions.

As said, the seafarer has to struggle to adapt to the partner and to family life again, which could lead to tensions on the relationship. The partner at home had to adapt from being alone as parent or lonely partner to a more complete family or a couple again. Thomas (2003) showed that relations to partners and family were of utmost importance to the seafarers, in spite of the difficulties in the transition periods. The long separations from home seemed to prevent the ability of the seafarer to start and uphold friendships ashore. Very few seafarers had close and durable friendship relations and many told about loneliness during their long periods of leisure time ashore. This implies that seafarers become extremely dependent on

their partners and on social connections at home for their emotional needs. Many seafarers relied only in their partners for sharing their thoughts and for assisting with problems, both personally and professionally. The risk for crises and separations in the relationships thereby becomes considerably, according to Thomas (2003). Thomas found that internet communication was of special significance at moments of stress and other emotional situations.

In a later study, Thomas and Bailey (2009) developed the earlier results when interviewing British officers and their wives. A main finding of this study was that the seafarers missed being present at the special moments of life, events to hold on to and remember, as their and their wives' life was rather divided in periods of "at home" and "away", thus disconnected to the otherwise common pattern at their homeplace. They also found that seafarers meet the same kinds of problems at home as do unemployed people, i.e. trouble to find ones role in the family and in the nearest society. The self-evident professional role then evades in favour of a more unsecure role in family life. The wife mostly takes the double role of mother and father when the husband is at sea, and when the husband comes home, he cannot easily find his role in this pattern. Compared to the unemployed, they do not lose their breadwinner role, but they often experience confusion in their role at home, a sense of displacement. They feel redundant, as not needed, and as outsiders in their family relations.

Tang (2007) investigated the concepts of absence and presence from the perspective of the partners to seafarers. He meant that the partners, when the seafarers are absent from home, experience a strong presence of their partners, throwing a shadow over the relation. During this absence, the partners long for them and feel emptiness and worry. The longer absence and the less communication between them during the absence, the greater the worry and the longing. There is a risk of feeling stigmatised when benevolent people around them show the partner at home support and consideration. This attention strengthens the feeling of the absent seafarer's presence, and it may result in the partner at home isolating herself inwards.

Naturally, periods of separation are impossible to avoid in seafarer relations. Tang underlined that the experience of emotional isolation decreased when the periods at sea are shorter and with frequent internet communication. Living with a seafarer is unavoidably connected to a special lifestyle, which in turn also constitutes a motivating factor for the seafarer. The trouble is the long periods the couples have to live apart. Except for shorter periods of absence and

more intense communication, Tang emphasized more possibilities for those at home to meet other persons with the same experiences. An example was an existing online network, *Home of Chinese Seafarers*, where partners could share their experiences and thereby break their isolation (Tang, 2007; 2012). One of the participants of the network described the cyber space communication possibility as “existing in a sanctuary” (Tang 2012:237). Here, they experienced their partners as virtually present, thus feeling close to them. This exchange of communication contributed to mellow the interruptions and to keep the relation alive. Tang showed that collective collaboration on emotions can support a process by which undesirable feelings transform, and desirable positive feelings are evoked. He used the concept of “collective effervescence” from Durkheim (1893/1984), and he found this to develop within the web-based community of Chinese seafarer partners.

Presumably, culture and other contextual variables vary between different parts of the world. Wissö (2012) concluded a study on Swedish families with small children that those prioritized “togetherness time” most of all, which means time when the whole family is together doing some activity, or just spend time together. This is the most valued “social capital” or “resource” of the families in her study. Other conclusions were:

- Colleagues at work contribute to the social capital of parents, since they form “a source of information and emotional support in parenthood” (p.249).
- There is an overlap between moral practices, emotions and duty – parents have varying degrees of access to the social capital of close relatives who can support when children are ill or the like, and there seem to be a moral norm that close family members have to assist if they can.
- Moral practices are developed within arenas where parenthood is discussed, and parents’ judgment of themselves and others emanate from those arenas, whether personal meetings or websites.
- Parents’ access to formal support is affected by the construction of gender by professional actors – fathers are less visible in those relations. Parents with less social capital have fewer possibilities to explain what support they need.

Wissö suggested “family” as a processual concept rather than a noun, i.e. “family as doing activity and practice”. What can be considered as social capital changes in accordance with

changed routines and changed norms. She emphasized that we should pay more attention to changes of normative structures in surrounding relationships and resources of parents, as well as to which resources are being valued (p.253).

2.5 Women at sea - a gender perspective

Sea work is dominated by men, even though some few women have always taken their place there (for example Kaijser 2005), even as pirates⁸. Sea work has thus evolved during the centuries within a culture of male norms and ways of working. Social and cultural norms continuously create and sustain gender relations within work organisations. Gherardi (2007) used the metaphor “gender citizenship” to describe how organisational cultures are related to gender. She argued that organisational cultures manifest their relation to gender in various ways, for example by claiming to be gender-neutral. People then deny that there is any relationship between organisational structure and processes and employees' gender, and women can practically be looked upon as men and promised equal treatment for equal work done, or women are perceived as a specific resource for the organisation. A gender relationship based on a stereotypical dichotomy between what is specifically feminine and what is specifically masculine is then established.

Finding strategies to find their place and their identity is common for women who are in male dominated workplaces. Female seafarers aspire, according to researchers who studied women at sea (for example Kitada 2010), a good working environment, to be respected as individuals and women and to feel equal with their male colleagues. They are minority in the crew and work in a traditional, male seafarer culture with centuries old traditions and values that largely remain. Female seafarers have, for example, told about the difficulty of finding their own identity, on strategies to become accepted in their professional capacity, not least as an officer, and as a woman, and to even feel good. Kitada (ibid.) described in her thesis how women were socialized into the maritime man's world and the different roles that women went into, often in a process, and eventually, hopefully, reached an identity, where they were

⁸ <http://www.titanic-nautical.com/Pirates-Female.html>; <http://www.katyberry.com/Dorianne/pirates.html>;
<http://www.bonney-readkrewe.com/legend.html>

both confident in themselves and became respected. This usually occurred after a longer period of time at sea.

In her empirical material Kitada found four categories. She termed *negotiator* the woman who took on herself the problems that arose. She thought that “the others are right” and avoided attracting attention from her male colleagues. The strategy for this woman was also not accentuating her bodily forms, to maintain a certain distance and repress her emotions. A *constructor* tried to create a new identity to fit in. She took on a more masculine identity and acquired a more traditional male behaviour such as start swearing or snuffing. Most women who boarded usually began as *maintainer*, i.e. they were completely themselves, which did not work so well in the male environment.

Therefore, women quite quickly went on to become negotiators. A maintainer lived out aspects of herself when she came ashore – aspects that according to her experiences were not really accepted on board. Together with other women she put on makeup, dressed in a skirt or dress. Finally, Kitada found the *reproducer*, a woman who after several years at sea redefined her identity. She often had long experience and had attained a senior position. Often, she discovered that she would no longer be questioned, she had achieved a confidence in herself and felt that she did not need to adapt to fit in. She became more relaxed, confident and was viewed as a person and not as “that woman”.

Most women working at sea went through these different stages. Everyone will not submit to be a reproducer, but might leave the profession or find strategies to move between the other three categories, which often means they never really feel at ease with life on board. Presumably, these characters are equivalent for women in other male dominated professions.

2.6 Short summary of literature review

As we can see, a primary focus in studies of seafarers are the conditions, the long periods of work, combined with long periods of free time, set by the profession. People who love being at sea enjoy the long periods of working at sea, but they also profit from the status it gives at home. In some cultural contexts, however, as in Scandinavia, the status of seafarers has

diminished and the wish to be present as parents weighs higher. Thus, young mariners of today often choose to work ashore when they become a parent. The isolation on board modern vessels contributes to this choice.

3 Method

In-depth interviews with masters and chief engineers were selected as method for the study, which is a flexible and mildly structured format that enables researcher and respondent latitude to explore an issue within the framework of conversation in relation to a given theme (Patton 2002). The analysis of the interviews followed an inductive model based on concepts and a growing classification of material, influenced by Bogdan's and Taylor's analytical model (Bogdan and Taylor 1998).

Fourteen mariners have been interviewed, seven by each of us two authors. Eight are men and six are women. The youngest is born in 1982 and the oldest in 1952. They are all Swedish, except for one, who grew up in another North European seafarer nation. The names used in the report are all fictitious. All Masters have been given names starting with an M, all Chiefs or motormen names starting with a C, and all Pilots names starting with a P.⁹

Males

- Christian - Chief, born 1952
- Morgan - Master born 1956
- Martin - Master, born 1958
- Peter - Pilot, born 1963
- Claes - Chief, born 1969
- Michael - Deck Officer (class VII) born 1977
- Charlie - Chief, born 1980

⁹ A short presentation of all interviewees can be read in Attachment 1.

- Carl - Male Motorman, born 1980

Females

- Maria - Master, born 1962
- Pim - Pilot, born 1963
- Marina - Master, born 1964
- Miriam - Master, born 1972
- Marielle - Master born 1978
- Christine - Chief, born 1982

We chose reflective interviews, during around one hour each - the shortest one was 45 minutes and the longest one three hours. The interview guide¹⁰ was developed from our own and others' earlier studies and from the aim of the larger project.

The interviews were performed at homes, in offices, and in other closed rooms, all without disturbing events, and they were recorded, listened to and transcribed, and read and discussed in-depth by both of us.

The interview data was structured and is presented below in four themes:

- Motives for choosing to work at sea
- Career - development and turning points
- Competence development and learning
- About the future

4 Results and analysis

The presentation of the empirical material is based on the following themes:

¹⁰ See attachment 2.

- Work and motivation
- Career development and turning points
- Learning and competence development
- Future plans

These themes are consistent with the interview questions but are through the interpretation and analysis of the entire interview material slightly revised. Below each theme the content is structured in a number of categories. The empirical material presented is successively analysed within each theme.

4.1 Work and motivation

At a deeper reading of the interviews some phrases and concepts associated with motivation for choosing sea work and work in general recur. These appear in a systematic way from the material, and are presented in the following categories:

- *Family tradition*
- *Freedom, adventure, variation, school fatigue*
- *Gender aspects*
- *Leave*
- *Work at sea – a choice for better or worse*

4.1.1 Family tradition

Working at sea often appears to be inherited. Among the interviewed, several told about how the seafaring profession goes back several generations.

I chose the sea because of the tradition in the family, grandfathers and others in the family. We lived by Öresund and I grew up by the sea. And then I went into the Navy, became a reserve officer. Then I went ahead and read to master mariner. I sailed and studied. (Martin)

Being socialised into the profession by a father, following him at sea strengthened the professional motivation. For Claes it was obvious from start what profession he would choose:

I knew what I would be since I was a child. My father was a sea captain; I went out with him in the summers.

The dream of becoming a sea captain existed in Michael already as a very young boy:

I've been interested in sea all the time, ever, even as a child, from small boats to bigger ones. It has always been interesting. Initially I wanted to come out and try out the profession. I always dreamed of becoming a sea captain when I was a kid. I wanted to drive big boats. Nothing else existed. And we've always talked about the sea at home and we have been a lot at sea. And we've always talked about boats at home on how to do and not to do. All were involved in our family.

Maria's mother had big dreams of sea life but could not realize them. Women at sea were not common in previous generations and traditional family patterns prevented many women from working at sea. For Maria's generation the obstacles became less, and Maria could exceed the limitations that her mother experienced. She was able to realize her dreams, inspired by her mother's dreams and knowledge of vessels and shipping.

I got it through my mother's breast milk. She dreamt of going to sea, and she spent all her free time in the harbour, she knew everything there is to know about sailing ships. I went to sea when I was fifteen for a little more than three weeks, and then I was sold on it, so then I became an able seaman. (Maria)

Some interviewees became trapped by a life at sea through various types of environmental influences.

It was the family of my best friend when I was a child, they were five children and all worked at sea, messmen/women, seamen, masters, they were of a seafarer family. One heard lots of stories about the sea. I wanted to try, and it just clicked ... and I love the sea and the horizon. So, I got a summer job as a deckhand and liked it all the way. (Marina)

My dream was to become a marine biologist, but there were no jobs for such. So, I was asked to work on a Panama registered vessel, and I started off as a deckhand. I was at four of their boats, but after one month, I was sold, I knew I wanted to become a sea officer. (Peter)

Some of the interviewed senior persons talked about how they really did not know what to do when they were young, but having grown up close to the sea, they came into asking older people working at sea about jobs. By entering a boat, they learned the work from those elder people. In parallel, they got into a community of craftsmen, they got colleagues and friends of different ages, and they had fun together, while growing both professionally and personally.

I started as a little deckhand on towboats, when I was 14 years old. It began with the practical work experience periods during high school, and as they liked me and appreciated my work, I got to work there all school holidays, during Christmas, Easter and summer. That's how it started. (Christian)

For these people childhood environment had a significant role in the choice of profession. Through the parents' positive stories and the knowledge of relatives and previous generations and their roots in sea life they got to experience what life at sea meant. For some, the career choice was obvious; others have through people in the environment got a little push into sea life, which led to being trapped by working at sea.

4.1.2 Freedom, adventure, variation, school fatigue

The prior enticement, the reason for choosing to work at sea, was for especially the older respondents the shimmer of adventure, the possibility to come into foreign harbours, experiencing exiting new cultures and people. It was, for many youngsters a way to depart from mother and father and into becoming an adult. The freedom of the sea and the adventure of experiencing new things attracted.

Many speak of freedom, variety, community, a different life and always of the desire to be at sea.

What led me to the sea was the freedom; it seemed exciting and exotic, a little different than the everyday life. (Christian)

I always knew that I wanted to be on deck - as master. I don't know why I wanted that. It's probably freedom and the wide open spaces - sounds a bit romantic, and it's not like that today, but you can always feel a little bit when you're sailing. Nowadays everything is so controlled with paper work and increased reporting work. (Maria)

I have always lived near the sea, always liked the sea. It has probably to do with a little masculine atmosphere and technique, I always had friendships with boys. It was more fun stuff, more adventurous. I felt immediately that it was right. The sea is a bit varied, winter and summer, I like that variety. (Pim)

It was the adventure of being at sea that I liked. But my mother called me home to go to high school; otherwise I would never have come home. (Peter)

The stories we have been told about entering the work of seafarers are also about comradeship, tough weather and physical challenges, and visiting new parts of the world.

We dredged out in the fairway, when they rebuilt them, and then we worked around in Europe, in Russia, in Finland, France, England. We were at sea two weeks and two weeks at home. On a large fishing boat we were in Island and Greenland, and all over the Norwegian coast, and in Africa, Maroc, and It was fun to see many other places, and experience places you had never seen before. (Michael)

Working at sea is generally perceived as a lifestyle. The older sailors in the study who spent many years at sea are in a way a self-selected group. Since they are still in the profession, they early found a love for life at sea and had a strong motivation to remain in the profession.

Other respondents are expressing difficulty in choosing a profession after high school. School fatigue, desire to work with something practical and to feel freedom and have a varied work has led them to choose a life at sea.

Marielle is one of those who were tired of school:

I was terrible tired of school and looked for a practical gymnasium with job possibilities. I thus chose a technical shipping program. I wanted something practical but with possibilities for university studies after.

But even with her, there were more reasons for the choice of occupation:

There were quite a lot of reasons that made me choose the sea profession. Growing up in the archipelago and the proximity to the ocean may have influenced the choice of occupation.

Christine emphasized her restlessness and need for a variable work. She believed it was coincidence that led her to shipping.

It was just chance. I studied the scientific program and when I searched further, I wanted to have some variety and challenges. One university had a drive about working on the platforms. Yes, why not? I had no great thoughts more than it was diverse. I get bored easily and need variety, and this work was completely new to me. I knew nothing about it, I had no knowledge, and there was an entire industry to learn. Things would be repaired and fixed.
(Christine)

Thus, there are different ways, often a combination of different ways, leading into a profession that largely constitutes a lifestyle. Life at sea is different and has special conditions that you have to like and adapt to. There are those who have got a life at sea into the blood by parents and traditions, and there are those who turned to the profession by the need for variety and a particular lifestyle. For many, there were obviously interacting reasons behind the choice of occupation.

4.1.3 Gender aspects

The reasons for going to sea were basically the same regardless of gender, but in terms of staying at sea, to feel comfortable and to be accepted, it required an extra strong motivation for the women. Several women talked about harassment, some very far-reaching. Maria summarized her long experience at sea:

It has not been an easy road - some boats have been horrible. I did not know how I would get weeks to go. I was simply discouraged. ... I was almost always the only woman on board - it has been hell sometimes and sometimes good. I was well seen among the elderly, significantly more attacked by the younger, regardless of position, I guess they felt threatened. Got a lot more support of the elderly, both officers and ratings.

Maria had despite some adversities encountered sympathies about women being on board. She knew since long that most people liked women on board and that it made a difference in the atmosphere. She has never regretted her career choice, she simply followed her heart.

Everyone nonetheless likes that there's a woman on board - it will be a different tone ... I would not hesitate to go to sea ... if I were young again. Would never say not go to sea. The heart says so ... If my daughter would like it, I would support it.

Marina, another experienced master, has as a woman also experienced difficulties and challenges on board.

I actually have always liked to be on board but you are very much checked. But I don't take crap, you have to be twice as good, even as an able seaman. I'm a little cocky and I'm not trying to do anything if I can't, I don't make a fool of myself, I'm asking when I can't, I have always been open. Have been twenty years at sea.

She talked about comprehensive harassment:

On my first vessel, I wasn't allowed to come back again. The skipper didn't want me back because I didn't want to go to bed with him. I know that's true. Everyone on board was terrible intrusive, insinuations all the time ... They came into the cabin without knocking. I could not lock. I had to be vigilant all the time. I was 18 years old and the only girl. ... But I wasn't discouraged. I was interested in my job so I didn't care about them.

Marina continued to tell her about her experiences:

It did not occur on the other vessels then. I didn't want to be spoken of on board as a "bad girl" because I did something inappropriate, so it was just to be very firm. I always had integrity. ... But still other things happened. You loaded and unloaded and suddenly you

were pressed up in the elevator. ... I was cast down from the bridge in Kuwait by the pilot. He became furious when he saw me on the bridge steering the vessel - I was an able seaman at that time. He just yelled to the captain: she must go! ... Later on I was there as second officer but then I said to the skipper; fuck you if you remove me from the bridge! Here I shall stand. He did nothing but I got the evil eye from the pilot, they did not like me standing there. But I have also been in United Arab Emirates, and things have gone well.

Marina has had tough times on board – since her first vessel at the age of 18. Gradually she learned how to handle all the situations aboard. She told about herself that she was cocky and had integrity, and that was probably necessary in order to be respected by some of her colleagues.

Another master, Marielle, has not encountered the attacks and atrocities that Marina and Maria talked about. Yet she has felt of not being taken seriously because she is a woman. She also discussed the difficulty for women to remain in the profession when they have got children.

Being a woman in shipping - it does matter but not much. In relation to my colleagues, it does not matter at all. You may notice a little bit sometimes but it's not much. It is worse with some passengers who believe that all managers must be male. They still don't take you seriously. They can pet me on the head and then I let the male officers, or any other man in the crew, take over the discussion, it's easier than holding on to explain. It does not happen often but it happens. ... Privately, in practice, there is a difference. Women who have children more often quit the profession than men. I know two women with children who remain in the profession but they work in coastal shipping and they have men working ashore. In such a way it works for them.

From the quotations it appears that women at sea have special challenges. A woman in a typical man's world is often patronized, being subjected to harassment and sometimes abuse. Other challenges arise in the context of family and children, which is further discussed under part 4.2.1 below.

4.1.4 Leave

The benefit or the advantage of sea work all interviewees talked a lot about was the leave or the periods of leisure. To be out and work in concentrated periods and then be free for as long, or longer, was seen as the best condition of all, next to the life at sea as a lifestyle. Most felt they did a better job when focusing work for a longer period of time, and that they had the possibility of really accomplishing some project at home, when free from work during some weeks. The weekend, which is the free time for most other jobs, was perceived as nothing – not enough to start and finish something more than cleaning up the house.

The long free time at home is thus the appreciated advantage of sea work – but it does not, nowadays, compensate for being away as long periods during the years when one has small children.

Those who have chosen a work ashore appreciate to come home to their near family every night and to not be away for long periods. They also like the daily habits of work and family life.

I was at home for long periods, full time, and this was the compensation for long times at sea. Of course, it may not be fun to be away on Christmas when the children are small, but then I came home to midsummer instead, and the next year, I could be at home for Christmas. So it was ok anyhow. I think one feels better to be away working and then come home and be free and able to really accomplish something at home. (Christian)

The importance of leave is expressed in different ways. Some seafarers, especially the older ones like Christian above, have worked for so many years and got used to the balance between work and leisure time. Yet Christian expresses: *My free time is much more precious than my working hours.*

Other seafarers expressed that the importance of leave was a major motif, perhaps the greatest, to work at sea today. They related this to the rationalization that shipping in recent decades has undergone. The reduction of crew members, tighter rotation system, globalization leading to increased competitiveness, and the industry's increasing demands for economic profitability are examples of life and work on board having undergone drastic changes. Some,

such as Martin, has worked long and has experienced the difference on board since he started his career.

The reality is a bit different than the brochures. The adventure does not exist today. Today it's just a crappy job It is a bloody job. Going on to ashore? But then you don't have the leave. For my part, it just the leave. I make no secret of that. Before, it was all this stuff with the adventure ... you had the opportunity to go ashore, lay there for a few days. It doesn't work that way today. Today, it's over - it's just a job. (Martin)

Those who had not worked for so long, and therefore not experienced life at sea as previous generations, had leave as a significant motivating factor. The experienced seafarers felt that younger people's attitudes to the profession have changed.

You can see a huge difference with the younger - they have completely different values of the reasons to work at sea. They don't want to get dirty and the leave means almost everything. (Marina)

Times have changed and displacements have taken place when it comes to attitudes and values. Working conditions that were preferred a few decades ago, are not as appreciated today. This is expressed not only in terms of the significance of leave, but also in, for example, the views on family, children and social relationships.

4.1.5 Work at sea – a choice for better or worse

So far, the positive side of the sea adventure. The stories change hereafter. Modern sea transports are organized so that vessels seldom go into harbours for more than a few hours, and while there, the officers are fully occupied with unloading and loading, which means making computer-aided calculations and continuously controlling the balance and safety of the boat, depending on different types of freight and ways of loading and unloading.

The only stories about really entering harbours and meeting people there we have got, are from those working at sea long ago, or the one respondent, Michael, having worked at large fishing boats and at dredging boats abroad. Nowadays, experiences from working in the

“ordinary” merchant fleet are about monotonous work, months and months without any harbour feeling, and loneliness. It was described as dull and unchallenging.

I was on three different vessels. The first one only traded the Pacific Ocean, Japan, North America, and New Zealand. We never came to Europe. Roro vessels. Then we did a trip around the world, over the Atlantic, through Panama, and then out again. And it was the same with the next one, and the next. Mostly in the Pacific. Only occasionally did we get into a harbour, if we were lucky. Sometimes we were three months on sea, without getting ashore It was great fun, but I would not go back to that now. (Carl)

In some parts of the interviews, though, tough weather conditions were perceived as challenging and maybe interesting, but sometimes as causing too much strain. Mostly, young people seemed to cope with it with some excitement, but more senior mariners thought it was too much stress for the body.

Steel. It was horrible in wintertime. There is the rolling all the time. You go in the North Atlantic, but once we were almost at the Azores to avoid the area of low pressure. Otherwise, we always went north. But, there is never good weather there, not even in summertime. Then there is the fog, The low pressure comes all the time. ... It is all right when you are young but it is too much now, for an older body. (Morgan)

The adventure of “seeing the world” seems to be gone, according to our interviewees, and also the comradeship. The staff on-board work and live more individually than before. Communication technology, each has his or her own computer, and also different nationalities and languages, were causes mentioned.

Today, it is very lonely to work out there. Everyone is on his or her own. There is television and computer in each cabin, and there is internet. The spirit of community has diminished. (Christine)

Our stories show that many benefits and much of the joy and fellowship that existed at sea in earlier times have disappeared. Working at sea today is much like any job. Adventures and comradeship seem gone, but long leisure time and variation remain.

4.1.6 Analysis: Work and motivation

There are several different factors that motivate the choice to work at sea. For the individual, a number of factors are interwoven and form the basis for the career choices. It is clear that family tradition and lifestyle reinforces an emotional attachment to the profession and life at sea. Being socialised into the profession at an early age can mean a deep and lasting bond to sea work, to the extent that it is consistent with the individual's personality and taste for the profession. Several of the interviewees talked about parents, siblings and relatives, often for generations back, and their connections to the sea - as mariners, fishermen or service women. To, during adolescence, take part of stories of life and work at sea of close relatives' forms of course the young person. This is probably the strongest motivating force for choosing a life at sea.

This partly emotional motivation can be included in the social psychologist Jahoda's (1982) theory of the profession's non-economic values, although she meant that these values emerged in the transition between industrial society and information and knowledge society. The strengthening of identities and experiences of community and connection are included in non-economic values. As these values are broadly well known, easily identified and embossed as soon as mariners begin their career, they will be enhanced in the coming years in the profession. For many, this early embossing is as strong and deep as to justify a career that can last a lifetime.

Motivators as freedom, adventure, variety and lifestyle which are expressed in the study may also be included within the non-economic values, even if these factors recently have been curtailed by the prohibition of going ashore at ports, crew cuts and partial changes of duties, such as increased administrative work (Lützhöft et al., 2008; Ljung 2010; Ljung 2012; Ljung and Lützhöft 2014).

According to the study conducted at Kalmar Maritime Academy (Hult (ed.) 2012), three types of motivation could be distinguished: labour market motivation, motivation in work organisation and occupational motivation. It was found that the occupational motivation became stronger over the years, based on time in the profession. The older among the

interviewed generally had a high occupational motivation while the younger seemed to have a more flexible and looser relationship to the profession.

It is the younger ones who also talked about the importance of leave as a major motivation, for some perhaps the most important. The value changes occurring in society at large (Fuehrer 2010) are reflected in the interviewees' answers. Life values as closeness to family, children, partners and friends have been given a higher priority. The changing attitudes of the younger ones together with a rationalised professional life at sea seem to have led to a lower degree of occupational motivation. They have less attachment to the professional role and are more flexible in their professional lives.

Life at sea that previously was an adventure and a lifestyle has become like any other job anywhere. As Martin put it: *The reality is a bit different than the brochures. The adventure does not exist today. Today it's just a crappy job It is a bloody job.*

Regarding the female seafarers' motivation to choose and also to remain in the profession, challenges and difficulties are still great, and perhaps even greater. Life at sea is still a heavily male-dominated workplace. Prejudices against women at sea are still widely experienced, especially globally. Besides finding an identity on board, also to manage a rationalised, tough and rather lonely work at sea while having close relationships, children, and perhaps responsibility for elderly parents ashore, a strong and special motivation is needed. The seafarer profession is no ordinary profession but differs in many ways from a life ashore, which is clearly evident in earlier studies (as presented in chapter 2). One must embrace the whole package, that is, it takes a special motivation that requires the entire personality.

Raunek (2013) summarised in his twelve paragraphs difficulties that shipping is facing today and that of course affect seafarers' occupational motivation. Many of these paragraphs are contained in the seafarers' responses in the study, for instance *Unsettled Lifestyle* which means that seafarers have different needs during their career - from the early years of mobile and "nomadic" life, to a change for a more stable lifestyle when it's time for family formation. Raunek believed that this is now a well-known cause of mariners leaving the profession. Other factors which are also affected by the sailors in the study is *Lack of Social Life, Away from the Family, Personal / Family Problems, Hectic Life and Reducing Crew Members.*

The vast majority of respondents in this study remain, however, in the business in some way, if not staying at sea, working ashore and engaging in the maritime sector in different other ways.

4.2 Career development and turning points

What makes trained seafarers stay at sea and what makes them go ashore? Which factors imply changes in the career? We have found three dominating “turning point” factors in the stories from our interviewees:

- *Family, relations and life style patterns*
- *Working conditions*
- *Wishing to develop*

4.2.1 Family, relations and life style patterns

As what counts for the young mariners of today, family conditions seemed to be the major factor for choosing to stay at sea or to go ashore. The older male officers in our sample said that they were grateful they had wives who had been able to keep up with things by themselves during all the years with children at home. Before, there were no possibilities to support from a distance, while they nowadays can email or make a phone call to someone when assistance is needed at home.

Sometimes, it was troublesome when the kids were small. I had only just left for a new trade when something broke at home. And before, one had to wait to get into a harbour to make a phone call, or, along a coastline, we could order a phone call. And it was expensive. Now, we can just email each other. My wife and I are used to it now, and the kids have grown up. We plan what I can do when at home, the house and the boat and bridges, etc. Maybe too much sometimes, but it is more substantial with a longer free period. (Morgan)

I went ashore when the kids were 7-8 years old. When I was out – one closes everything then, and one needs a wife able to take care of everything. ... One can be at sea for years, and

then the first child comes and that is okay, but then one more comes, and then most leave sea nowadays. But, it was okay for us. I was at home for long periods and that was the compensation. I thought it was perfect. It could have been the same with a female chief, with a husband ashore. Everything works fine until a certain point in time. And, if the partner does not fix it, then someone has to go ashore. (Christian)

Also men in their forties have worked at sea when children at home:

It was not that different. Maybe I was at home some more between the working periods, but it was three months out and three months at home. When at home, it was the family and the children. I was hardly out of the garden. My wife said that it did not matter that I was out for three months as long as I was at home as long after. – My wife did a great job. It went well. The most difficult was when I was at home. Then she was working at a hospital, and saved the parents' allowance. I got better contact with the children then. I was comfortable with the situation, but maybe my wife has a different opinion about it. – But, it is a big change to become a pilot, one never knows where one goes next and the family does not know where I am. (Peter)

I don't regret it now afterwards. It is like an ordinary work. It is the free time. My new woman buys it. If she hadn't, I would have been forced to think about it – but I have not needed to. Today, it is not normal to be away for so many weeks. – My father was away for months and I don't want to live like him. I have told my partner to tell me if I start to ... (Claes)

Even if the long free time at home was an appreciated side of working at sea, it apparently was not enough to attract young parents of today for staying at sea. Christine, who worked at a ship-owner's office ashore, witnessed about this in her story from the employers' perspective. To be away for four weeks or more is not an option for young fathers of today, while it was rather natural for earlier generations. Two weeks might be okay, though. Then you can be full time parent when at home.

Today, it is not normal to be away for so many weeks. It is extremely abnormal. (Martin)

Carl, a young seafarer with seven years of experience in the merchant fleet changed career when the children came, and he soon after went through a divorce with shared care for the

children. He was planning to begin a new education and stay ashore when he got an offer to work at a rig, two weeks work more or less around the clock and then four weeks free.

Now, I prioritize my children, and with long free periods and a good salary I can do that. I have a totally new perspective on work now compared to earlier. And this is caused by the family situation. (Carl)

Others, as Charlie and Michael, have chosen work ashore full time, in order to be present as fathers:

The family plays an important role, you have to deal with the everyday problems, and sometimes you need to be two. It is good to be at home then. – But I would not hesitate if something exciting shows up, like a research expedition, or a seismic ship, or something like that. I want to learn new things (Charlie)

All our younger male interviewees had chosen to work ashore or at coast vessels when having children, even if the dream of the sea was still in their minds. They worked at some kind of marine related work places, though. There is yet to see if those now young fathers will go back to the sea when their children have grown up.

Women seafarers were also previously more inclined than male to go ashore when having children.

I was expecting a child – she will be 17 this year. If I had not been able to get children, I would not have gone ashore, but stayed at sea. – I changed my life totally, but I have not regretted it for a second. But I still work with what I burn for, though administrating it. (Maria)

It is difficult to come back to work when you have been at home with the children. (Pim)

I don't think I would have liked to be away for such long periods if I had had children. If you decide to have children, you should be there for them. I would not have stayed at sea then. It's the same for men at sea as well (Christine)

The interviewed female pilot went ashore for her children but said she was now longing for the sea again, both for the better salary, and for the challenges. She told that on the riverboats

on the continent, you often saw the woman with a child or two on the knees, controlling the boat, while the husband worked on deck. There, this was normal. So, then the contacts and communication with the family stayed intact. Otherwise, the communication with the family was an important issue, the internet access being perceived as a release or as a disturbance.

We have internet contact with home when we are out, but we don't use it that much. I sms friends and relatives mostly, but Skype is used on longer turns. – When I started, it could be three months between the letters, and a satellite call could cost 70-80 sek per minute. Now, there are more options. But then, you knew that few contacts were a condition, and then you lived with it. Now, you have email and you hardly buy stamps anymore. (Marielle)

I have a button in my head, which I turn off when working – this is why I can stand the situation. It has been an agreement with my wife. (Claes)

In several of the stories we have got, some kind of pain was described concerning contacts with relatives when at sea for long time. Many “shut a door” to their feelings, or “turned off a button”. At the same time internet was greatly appreciated, as one can continuously up-date with what is happening at home, and thus not feel as cut off as before when all news had to be presented during the leave.

The family situation was thus important for the choice of a turning point in the seafarers' careers, but it seemed to be supported by other factors as well, as presented below.

4.2.2 Working conditions

Some of the interviewees were certain that shipping will decrease over the years, at least as what concerns number of staff in the crew. Some thought the education and training was fine, and useful for many kinds of work, but some would not advise their children to choose it. Christian, who left sea many years ago, but still longs for the life out there, said:

Shipping transports ended in 1986, I would say. It stopped. I had to choose something else. Taking responsibility for a lot of passengers did not attract me, but to find something was not easy. I took the decision to go ashore – the alternative seemed to be to take a temporary job

here and there, and unemployment in-between. When applying for work ashore, however, I discovered that the employers were sceptical. They asked: How long will you stay before you will long for the sea again? That was the largest trouble. This was repeated in many places and seemed decisive for their denying me the job. I assume they were scared. The trouble was not my education or experience. With time, I was prepared to take any kind of work – and I thus entered into production technology (Christian)

Another officer close to his sixties said he would not have chosen sea work today, though he has appreciated the work previously. He had chosen to stay at sea, as he believed he can put up with it until retirement age:

If I had to choose anew today, I would not have gone to the sea. Not now, when I can see it afterwards, and how it looks today. The working possibilities are diminishing and our profession depletes. It becomes like any kind of factory, as the car industry. But, those who are trained today, they do not know of anything else. On the other hand, what would I have done instead? I don't know – what pays the most perhaps? (Morgan)

Another factor, which has influenced some respondents to leave the merchant fleet, is the organisation on board, the reason being the large merchant vessels being perceived as formal, hierarchical and dull. Marina left sea but has since worked in shipping ashore. She expressed frustration over the strictness on-board but also over, as she perceived it, the opposite with long discussions at the office ashore. Others were mostly critical to the formality and to the monotony on-board, during long trades:

I got tired of the merchant shipping, the long trades, it was long-winded. Also, I got more and more interested in technical development. And, I needed time to become an officer, more sea time and more formal education. I got tired of the merchant fleet and wanted more development in engines, mechanics, engine development. (Charlie)

The increased paper work on-board and the never-ending hard work, when the previously perceived freedom was now experienced as non-existent, influenced some to leave sea work:

To be honest, I don't believe I would manage work on-board anymore. They put too much pressure on seafarers today; there is no understanding of how life is out there. It is too much paper work and the crew is continuously diminished. They demand more and more from them,

and scold them if they cannot put up with the laws about rest time. But, at the same time, hiring another person is out of question. I would not put my foot on the vessels today.
(Christine)

Michael, on the other hand, who went ashore when the first child came, is not satisfied with the everyday rhythm related to his work ashore, but still longs for the sea, even if he has a job with boats involved:

In this work, it just keeps on and on. Now it is Monday again, and then it is Friday, and it is the same week after week. (Michael)

And, several other respondents thought life on-board attracting, challenging, varied, and free, and they have thus stayed at sea:

I am comfortable with my choice of work. Very much so. It has developed over time. This is a way of working that suits me. I had planned to stay as a rating for some years, but things changed and I had to train to a captain directly, and now I am very happy about that. - I like a profession as broad as this. A vessel is a small society in itself. We have to produce our own power. We must fix everything, medical treatment, food, security, ... everything. We have our own fire brigade. It's a miniature society on-board. (Marielle)

My opinion was that the work on-board, as an officer, contains many subjects of interest. - I like the feeling of working in a smaller team. I must say that the feeling of being on a ship on the big oceans, or small seas, is a kind of satisfaction. Even if it is hard work, the environment is a feel-good factor. It is not so much the possibility to see the world, because that is not what you do, even if you sometimes have the possibility to go ashore. There is also the challenge, to manage with the stuff you have, both in the work and privately. You have to figure out how to solve "problems" and tasks in another way than ashore, where you can go to the store and buy missing things in five minutes. (Maria)

Martin has chosen to stay at sea but for shorter turns:

I stay at sea, because it is what I am trained for. I have chosen this and worked with it, and this is my competence. I was out in concentrated periods and then at home and free for long

periods. I have not worked for very long turns, but tankers four weeks at a time. Well, in the eighties we were out three to four months at a time. That was a coincidence. I met a friend who sailed there and then I participated in a course for tankers, and so I was there. The last time there, I was out two weeks and at home two weeks. – Now, I have chosen differently to be able to be at home more. Now I sail on the coast, since twenty years. I chose this to be at home more. I am not interested to sit at a job five days a week. One has to choose. There is problem solving on coastal vessels as well. (Martin)

Most of our respondents, however, also talked about that they were not appreciated enough, according to the sometimes-rough working conditions. When one officer, for example, took a boat with weapons to a war area, there was no extra compensation, nor any special competence development or safety. Another talked about extreme weather conditions with difficult freight. And, the lack of appreciation from the employer was felt as just that – something missing. When doing a good work under demanding circumstances, one wants some kind of appreciation. Carl, working at a rig, contrasted the conditions in the merchant fleet with his experiences at the rig – at the rig one got feedback both from peers and managers, and he felt appreciated.

At the rig, you are appreciated for your work. It is not only better payment and better conditions, but the people on-board care about appreciating each other for what you do. At (previous merchant fleet employer), they mostly viewed us as a cost, as if our being there was tiresome. On the rig, people appreciate each other. It is more fun. (Carl)

The great benefit, or the advantage, of sea work everybody talked about was the leisure time – as discussed in the previous section about motivation for choosing the profession. The concentrated periods at work and as long or longer time free was seen as one of the most decisive reason for staying at sea. The long periods of leave were used to studying, reading, building and repairing houses and private boats, visiting family, etc, longer projects not possible to complete during a weekend. Our respondents also believed they were more efficient at work when doing this in concentrated periods, and they all appreciated the variety in the work at sea.

The perceived benefits did not, however, compensate for what around ten of our respondents experienced as backside of the working conditions at sea: the strict hierarchy, the growing administrative load, and the lack of appreciation.

4.2.3 Wishing to develop

Most of our respondents have talked about the compulsory courses, some of which they have to repeat about each five years. These are perceived as a fair up-dating for the job, but not as continuous competence development. Striving for continuous development made some seafarers go ashore in different directions, staying within the marine sector or leaving it.

I want to learn new things all the time. From the beginning, I chose sea because of my interest in engines, I want to learn about engines and develop engines. Where I am now (industry ashore), I have the possibility to develop continuously. I can try new things and I get education and training also. I am not afraid of unemployment, there all always things to do. (Charlie)

Opportunity for continuous competence development at work was also perceived as appreciation from the employer and a reason to stay at the job.

On the rig, I got courses in safety and lifeboats, and such. And, to crash with a helicopter, I got a reawakening. You get appreciated in a totally different way. (Carl)

The joy of studying itself became the enticement for Miriam to change her career path. She was, at the time of interview, sharing her time between sea work and research.

Actually, I have always been interested in studying. I like to read and write and have taken courses in these subjects, beside my master mariner program. When working with my bachelor thesis I found a new way to "study", research. It was a real discovery. This was not only to "study", but also a possibility to put both old and new knowledge in a context, with help of all my experience and skills from both life and work. I also, for the first time, have a professional use of my skills in writing and analysing, which had a high satisfactory feeling.

Therefore, my plan is to go ashore and try to make myself a career in the research area.
(Miriam)

Peter has been able to choose continuous changes in his career within sea work of different kinds. He started at sea because he was tired of school, became attracted, and trained and studied successively to captain, later to pilot, and with time he ended up as responsible for the education of pilots.

The education for pilots is now at the Swedish Maritime Administration. I am responsible for that training now. It is six weeks training, very hard tempo, a fantastic training. I have the pedagogical responsibility, and I work hard with it, besides working as a pilot around 80-85%, which is a bit more than I should do. I am MRM instructor, for mostly all. . . (Peter)

In sum, eight of our fourteen respondents had chosen to work ashore when children came into their families. Another three had some kind of turning point related to family and unemployment. At least five think the administrative burden and the hierarchy on board diminishes the attraction of sea work, and six would prefer more obvious appreciation from the employers, in terms of more competence development and/or some words now and then about how great work they are doing.

4.2.4 Analysis: career – development and turning points

Turning points, i.e. reasons to leave sea and go ashore, or to work on coastal vessels, were; firstly, wanting to stay close to children/family; secondly, finding oneself unemployed, being bored of the rigid organisation and the monotonous life in the merchant fleet; and/or thirdly, a wish to develop competence.

Those who had gone ashore were all working within the marine cluster, with businesses related to shipping, and they still longed for going back to sea in some way. One respondent wanted to go into research within the shipping area. One other respondent enjoyed working part-time teaching within his special competence.

Those who were still at sea had found ways of coping with private life and family in spite of long periods of distance. The older ones we have interviewed expressed gratefulness towards their spouses for their capability to handle everything at home while they were far away. They had, on the other hand, been at home for long periods and then worked with the house, engaged in the children, and in different ways been present at home full time. The younger ones, who still worked at sea, either did not yet have a family, but enjoyed friends and other interests during the free periods, or, if they had family, they had a partner ashore who had accepted to care for the daily life at home. One of the interviewed, however, had a husband at sea and she herself had difficulties finding work at sea on acceptable terms for the family situation, though she wanted to.

Young Swedish fathers of today thus more often seem to go ashore when the children come, mostly due to demands from their spouses, but also because they do not want to be away from their children for long periods of time. They want to be there, as one of two parents on equal terms. Before, most women seafarers went ashore when children came, but sometimes also because of harassment (Kaijser 2005). Now, it seems less in-equal (but not equal) for men and women at sea.

While working on board, there are nowadays internet communication possibilities from almost everywhere in the world. This means that the one on board can talk to and even see the family at home, and one cannot be unknowing of what is happening at home (Thomas 2003; Suurküla 2010). Many seafarers, however, both in earlier studies (Thomas 2003; Tang, 2009; Suurküla 2010) and our respondents, said they shut a door when leaving home and entering the ship. It is too hard, emotionally, to see the children and the partner without being able to touch them and hold them. It seems especially hard when there is some kind of trouble at home. Short communication about small everyday matters seemed to be preferred, even though of course they wanted to know what was really happening.

There might, however, be nuances of the experiences of different nations' seafarers. Where seafarers still have high status and earn enough to be able to show up a little in the local community of the family, like for example Acejo (2009) described, differ from our stories from Swedish seafarers. She found that the Philippine seafarers and their families endured thanks to the higher status the work gave them, making it possible for them to build good houses for themselves and sometimes also for relatives, and to give their children higher

education. European seafarers interpret the same conditions through partly the same and partly other lenses. British seafarers missed not being at home for births, weddings, birthdays, funerals, etc., and they had trouble finding their place at home when on leave, as life there seemed to be going on well without them having a natural role in it (Thomas and Bailey 2009). Young Swedish parents, in general, want to take part in the upbringing of their children on a daily basis, and for them “togetherness time” is highly valued (Wissö 2012). Thus, professions like mariners demanding long periods away from home are not appreciated. The older mariners we interviewed had from young age accepted the conditions, as had their wives. The now young mariners had had other preferences, which guided their choice of work. These results are in accordance with the Kalmar study (Hult 2012), which showed that younger seafarers are much less motivated for sea work than older ones. All of our interviewees, except one, who had chosen different jobs ashore, however, expressed an explicit wish to go back to sea, one way or the other.

Many respondents talked about the higher administrative burden put on captains as a negative side of the profession. This seemed to take away a lot of the previously appreciated coping with the sea and the vessel. The salary and other benefits also mattered. The salary was usually perceived as fair, but not compensating for the long periods away from home and the sometimes very tough work. Many as a backside of the work mentioned lack of appreciation, in contrast to the one interviewed working at an oilrig, who there felt very appreciated by all colleagues. He also appreciated the courses and competence development he was offered for the rig work.

Long periods at sea seemed to be ideal for mariners loving their work and loving to be at sea. To have long concentrated working periods and then concentrated free periods were highly appreciated among our respondents. The long time at sea gave possibility to focus work life and take part in professional social interactions, as well as the continuously changing conditions for handling the vessel between ports. The long leave period, on the other hand, made it possible to proceed with larger projects at home, larger than what is possible during a short weekend, which is the regular free time for many jobs ashore (Jahoda 1982; Warr 1982; Hult 2004; 2008). The variance was clearly appreciated by our respondents.

To very seldom leave the vessel can be extremely tiresome and will in the long run reduce the efficiency which was supposed to be promoted by the large vessels with long trades and very

short stops for loading and unloading at harbours far outside any real city or village. One of our respondents (Michael) said: *when you are at sea for long periods of time, you do not work well*. He had seen seafarers from low-income countries, who were not allowed to go ashore, and who generally had worse working conditions than had the Swedes: *“You get nuts if you cannot come home or go ashore now and then.”* This opinion was also stated as a fact in the US Supreme Court verdict of 1943, referred to by Manuels (2011; see p.8 above).

The often-monotonous work, the strict hierarchy, and the lack of close relations make life on board those ships many times hard to endure. Earlier, mariners came to harbours rather often, met people from other nations, learned their language, which all implied occasions for human encounters, with new experiences, new knowledge and emotional interaction – necessary for all human beings (Tang 2009; 2012). The cuts of these possibilities, most often combined with fewer people in the staff on board, have had negative influence on seafarers’ motivation (Lützhöft et al. 2008; Ljung 2010; Ljung 2012; Ljung and Lützhöft 2014).

A majority of our respondents criticised the strict hierarchical structure on board, even if they also found functional advantages of this. On some ships the hierarchy has flattened out (Mårtensson 2006), and effects of more democracy and mutual exchange of experiences have been appreciated (as for example was concluded by Abrahamsson and Ydén 2005, in their study of the Swedish Armed Forces). Especially young mariners have been proved to be motivated by less strict hierarchy and more ownership of and more flexibility in organisational processes (Lützhöft, Ljung and Nodin 2008; Ljung 2010; Hult 2012). Our respondents mostly related adaptation to a hierarchical structure to stagnation of competence development for the individual mariner. Those who had chosen to go ashore, said the reason for this choice was to get the possibility to develop, both their own competencies and by this, their work organisation. Developing and part-taking were motivation factors.

The third factor we have described as influencing career choices, the wish for continuous competence development, might be somewhat related to culture, as does choices related to family conditions. In countries where job position and salary counts (like in the studies by Acejo 2009), this strive does not stand out, as it does in our material. Presumably, in Nordic countries, and maybe in more European countries, wealth is on a level where one can “afford to” demand continuous competence development at work.

4.3 Competence development and learning

Learning to become a good mariner was before a process of working and getting advice and support on the way from senior colleagues. Now, there are much more formal regulations, which naturally have their cons and pros. As mentioned above, some of our respondents strived for continuous competence development, rather than formal qualifications. The continuous learning at work is still appreciated, and learning possibilities, or lack thereof, offered by the employer were by some described as crucial for their decision to stay or to leave. Sea time and other compulsory demands are often perceived as difficult to uphold.

4.3.1 Learning at work – development on the job

When at work, seafarers learn from each other, both as young and when more experienced.

It just happened that, when I was young, I started off at the towboats, in the 1970's. It was there that my career as a seafarer started. It was special. Many young guys were there, around ten or twelve, and we were around the same age. We had great fun. We went, as they said, on the quay. We were young, we waited for the towboats. Sometimes we could jump on a long pilot tour, once all the way from Karlskrona to Gothenburg, or to Breivik in Norway. It was adventurous and I learned the craft. (Morgan)

Good seamanship – comprises a lot. I am grateful for the older experiences, that I was trained on old vessels. New vessels lack the old manoeuvring qualities. But, to listen to each other, those with lower rank listen to those with higher, humbleness for the different cultures on board, not insult anyone, respect for all, irrespective of ranking, and use everyone's experiences. One learns every day, all the time ... (Pim)

Some employers were said to offer on the job training successively and some not, and differences were perceived by those who have worked for many years:

(Large merchant ship-owner) had a good supply of courses, which one should use. And, you were allowed to do it. I did it on my free time, but they did not count it as free time, but as working time. But after 2008, there was a stop for education and training because of lack of money. ... You get thrown into the technology – technology was imputed to you. Only if you start working on a new vessel, you get training in the new systems, but those who came as second or third there, they didn't get any training. They invest in the beginning, and then they hope that we shall train those who come after us ... (Marina)

For some, the solution was to develop other possibilities, like work on smaller vessels, work at an oilrig, creating their own establishment, work ashore on sea related businesses, etc.

I want to learn new things all the time. From the beginning, I chose sea because of my interest in engines, I want to learn about engines and develop engines. I would rather experience something technical scientific, like a research expedition. Otherwise, an oilrig could be an alternative. But engine development is what comes first. The Swedish and the world economy are somewhat rickety, and this makes one think about what to do. At the moment, however, focus is on the family and the house, and a boat my brother and I are renovating. He is trained officer, so we might do some charter expeditions and such. We will see. (Charlie)

4.3.2 The challenge of problem solving

All our interviewees seemed to appreciate the challenge of constant problem solving within their work. The vessel is described as a society in itself, and both the vessel, its staff, its load, whether people or material, and environmental conditions, as weather and different harbour conditions, cause varying and not always predictable situations. The officers are responsible, and so they have to manage the solving of problems. The challenge of being the boss is mainly about this problem solving.

The interviewed who were not officers also talked about problem solving, and those also talked about the work within the merchant fleet as unchallenging and monotonous. It was perceived as a work, but not as a work where they could develop any further competence, neither as motormen nor as able seamen. One of our older respondents, a master with several

years of experience on very different vessels and trades, was, however, of the same opinion about the current situation on merchant vessels. He detested the heavy administrative work, to calculate how to load and unload, etc., several hours by the computer when in harbour, and having to change the calculations over and over again. Another respondent, having worked ashore for many years, confirmed this situation:

.... and it's not like that today, but you can always feel a little bit when you're sailing. Nowadays everything is so controlled with paper work and increased reporting work.
(Christine)

As we listened to our respondents, all of them appreciated the challenges of problem solving in the work, but many of them missed the fun kinds of problem solving they either had experienced in earlier years, or the kinds they strived for in their future career.

4.3.3. Perception of employers' development offers

The responsibility of any employer is recruiting, retaining and developing, and releasing staff. Especially recruitment and development offers of ship-owners were criticised by some respondents, as reasons for their choice of leaving sea work.

Maybe an effect of sea work being perceived as less attractive nowadays is that ship-owners recruit staff without as much experience as before:

I think the older system was better than the current one – today one recruits from (the park in the city centre), if I might be critical. People who have watched “The ship-owner” at television and think uniforms look good. But, it does not work that way – it is dark and hot in the machinery, and people coming directly from high school or college don't know that. Reality is not like in the brochures. There is no adventure anymore, only a crappy job. (Claes)

I think they give young people high positions too early nowadays, they do not have enough experience but they get promoted. It is no fun then, even dangerous. (Charlie)

Then, there is the development offered at work. When working as an officer, there are some courses which have to be repeated within a five years' period, and some others more often or

more seldom, depending on type of work, type of vessel and load, etc. Such courses seemed to be perceived as self-evident and were appreciated for contributing to their being able to do the job.

One has to keep up with new laws and regulations and such. We have to be very alert about security, with regular training. There is a demand on weekly exercises of different kinds. It is a rather heavy responsibility to drive around with 1500 passengers. Freight traffic is something different, but then, one carries large values. We have a rolling schedule so that we train different kinds of events in suitable dosages. At least once a week. Fire, medical treatment, to abandon the ship, etc. Then, there are certain courses you have to take on a personnel level, to be allowed to continue in this profession, like the course I am attending right now, it was five years since last time. (Marielle)

Another officer experienced diminishing resources for the training and occasions when training was not performed but entered in the books:

It is the captain who is responsible for the safety training to be carried through. But the ship-owner can say that it is too expensive. They can say they have done the exercise without having done it in reality, The demands on the captain are very high. There are controls, different in different countries. The Swedish Transport Agency has controls, and the Swedish Coast Guard controls. But they can do it on different levels and write it in different ways. But, if one has the responsibility, one has to do the training, one has to get the team to function. And, you might be responsible for 4000 people (Martin)

Appreciated work places, employers, are those where possibilities for learning, for developing, some kind of competence development are provided. Formal courses are of course necessary, but the challenge of being given tasks where one's own capability is tested, combined with freedom to try and retry, seems to be the ideal for many. To get the formal education to become a Master or a Chief, to get a better salary, is not that attractive to everyone:

For me, it is not an option to train to an officer, four years at university and study loan debts, and maybe two thousand more salary – no, why? But, salaries are better in the merchant fleet. So many years at university and then such a tough work and long duties. (Carl)

As described in the previous section (4.2.2.), Carl was extremely satisfied with the competence development he was offered at the oilrig, and felt he had got “a reawakening”.

The long periods of free time is thus, as stated above, not any longer regarded as compensation for being away from the everyday life of small children and family. Those who have chosen to work ashore appreciate to come home to their near family every night and to not be away for long periods. They also like the daily habits of work and family life. Those who have stayed at sea still think the leave compensate for the long working periods. The offered time periods of work–leisure are different at different employers, different trades, and for employees from different nations.

The respondents in our sample diverged a little on this issue. Some are satisfied with the compulsory courses and training. Some have experienced that those are not offered as often as before – one even argued that ship-owners make believe they are given even if they are not. Some wanted to improve their knowledge and competence all the time, with constant challenges, and have thus either continued within shipping, two in our sample all the way to pilot, or, have left the sea and found other ways of developing.

4.3.4 Sea time and other qualifications

One formal demand which seemed to be problematic for the development of competence is “sea time”. Respondents perceived it unfair and tricky to calculate and to keep account for. It counts different depending on which type of vessel you manage, and depending on pauses in between periods at sea and ashore, interchangeably. Those interviewed who had chosen to go ashore while having small children were the ones the most troubled by this. They wished to keep up with sea time in some way, not to ruin their possibility to come back to sea work later on, but they felt a bit desperate about it.

Seafarers must keep so many certificates alive, but I did not manage to hold them alive. It is different today, but I was not offered ... , so it's done for me. It is totally another world today. It is disappointing, but I don't know if they would want to see me at sea after all those years. To me, it is a sorrow that I did not manage to keep all my papers alive. (Maria)

Now, if I can keep up with all papers and so, maybe I can go back to the sea when the children are older. – I think that sea time is a little vicious to keep track of. So many papers that must be sent to the Swedish Maritime Administration, and if you happen to put a cross wrongly, papers must go back and forth a few times. Now, it is the Swedish Transport Agency, and I believe it is a little smoother. I think the administration of all information would gain from a change. The handling of all papers and all information – if it went smoothly, it would be more acceptable. (Charlie)

... if you stay away too long, you have to catch up. Five years after the last assignment, you have lost your certificate. I know some officers who work as teachers, and they work at sea summertime to keep their qualifications. ... I believe I could work at a lower level, but no. This is the hindrance. There are some catch-up courses, but I have only five years left. Maybe, if I could only go on board as second, perhaps. It is still in the head, so it would be easy to find my way back again. After a few days, I think I would be able to do it. It is in the spine. The basic competence is always there. (Christian)

The three mariners behind these quotes all long for the sea, and they wish there were some shortcuts to come back when they have possibility to. It is a knot that keeps harping in their minds.

4.3.5 Analysis: competence development and learning

Almost all our respondents who had chosen to work ashore longed for the sea. Those with small children talked about that they would be able to go back to sea when the children were old enough. The greatest obstacle they perceived was either that there were no handy courses to take to get the formal qualifications back and/or that they had not enough recent sea time. Most respondents in this group thought they could manage to come back to the work rather easily, with shorter recapitulation training.

Those of our respondents who worked ashore all expressed annoyance with the competence regulations at sea. To get enough sea-time was seen as one great obstacle, and lack of compressed and cheap “come-back-to-sea-courses” was another. Those who were still at sea were partly satisfied and partly very dissatisfied with the given possibilities for competence

development. Some told about a sudden stop for competence development possibilities a few years ago, whereas others meant there were demands and options for relevant such but short of time to fulfil it. Respondents with certain interests, such as one who always had been interested in marine engines, and one who had discovered a fascination for research, had gone ashore to find ways to develop those interests better.

A comparison could be the kind of recapitulation training used for people working in other areas, as air-traffic controllers (even if the work cannot be compared in many other ways). When air-traffic controllers have been away for sick-leave, parental leave or something else, they have to stand by and watch for some hours up to days and weeks, depending on length of time they had been absent, before going alone into the work again. If the leave was long, they might have to catch up with a formal course as well (Andreas and Bålhjelm 2008). The strive for up-holding a safety culture is the same on vessels, on aircraft, on trains and buses, and other transport systems, as well as in nuclear and chemical industry etc. There are many reports on practices of safety culture, also in the marine sector, for example one by Håvold (2010), who concluded that the relation between individual attitudes and behaviours and the “system” was of utmost importance, but also that employers who did not really care for their ship or their staff seldom answered surveys or took part in mutual development projects within the industry.

Safety systems are made by rules, and rules are made for following but they are made for following in situations anticipated by the rule makers – and it is assumed that professional people know when to break the rules, by their own initiative when experiencing unforeseeable situations (Gustafsson 2010). One purpose of professional training is to develop competence for formulating and solving new problems, daring to disobey the rules. To be able to do this, experiential learning is necessary, learning by doing and working in an organisation where experimenting is stimulated (Moxnes 1984; Argyris and Schön 1974; Leijon and Widell 2001).

Problem solving and daily learning from ones experiences are challenges our respondents appreciated. When hindered to do this, they have searched for other work opportunities. On the other hand, those who have found such challenges within the work at sea have stayed on board.

As mentioned before, there has been a tradition of loyalty between ship-owner and employees. Employees, especially officers, stayed for many years, if not lifelong, with the same employer (Kumar and Hoffman 2002). This loyalty seems to be diminishing, from both sides. Working together over the years contributes to trust building and mutual part-taking in problem solving and decision processes (Forsberg 2001; Sandoff and Widell 2009).

In several stories from our interviews, employers not really caring as much as the employees would prefer were described. Carl, for example, experienced being appreciated for the first time in his professional life when he started to work at an oil-rig, Morgan did not know for sure which conditions he will have for his retirement, in case the ship-owner would sell off the fleet to a company of another nation, and Christine said she would not enter a ship again, as an officer, as she believed the ship-owner put too much workload on their shoulders nowadays. Etc.

As shown by Widell et al (2009), the lack of strategic human resource management from the side of ship-owners may have as large an effect of the current problems with manning as have the global competition. The major part of research on people management within the marine sector concerns man-machine interaction, i.e. how people interact with the technical equipment on board. In many stories from our respondents, a lack of systematic concern for retaining qualified staff is described. For the seafarers to be able to stay with or come back to sea work, when interested in competence development, some possibilities must be opened up by the employers. This concerns both some kinds of “shortcuts” for being able to return to sea after some years ashore, and the freedom and trust to formulate and solve experienced problems on a local level, in cooperation with the work group and with the employer.

4.4 About the future

Thoughts and plans for the future are different, of course, for example depending on where people are in their career, the experiences so far in the profession and the ideas they have for their lives.

Some younger ones had plans for continuing their current professional directions.

I like my choice of career. It suits me well at the moment. I have no other plans right now. I am currently not interested in working ashore. I am a little spoiled by the working schedules. Or, the free time. I enjoy being with friends, maybe I visit my parents a few days, I read books. I read a lot. (Marielle)

The future? I don't think like that because I personally do not work that way. I have a great job that I really enjoy, and that's very challenging and I am happy with that. (Christine)

The dreaming about the future varied with age. The older officers interviewed were looking forward to their retirement but also to pass the last years of their working life as good as possible.

I have hoped for no more than four years left, but only last week I received an email about the possibility of the ship-owner changing to foreign flag. We have an agreement and there it says that we can go at 60, and I have paid all those years. But, if they choose foreign flag, this possibility will disappear. It is valid only under Swedish flag. Then I will have to work until 65. (Morgan)

Well, I only work part-time now, but I have lots of interests so I can do other things. I have a lot of exciting stuff to do. And, I would like to work on a lower gear, but not phase out totally. If I can decrease my expenses, then I can do a lot more of other things. My interests take a lot of time but do not give me any income yet. With time, they might be more profitable. (Martin)

But, the longing for the sea was still there for one who went ashore many years ago:

With an ordinary job, one might have been able to walk in and out, but not in this profession. That is one of the obstacles. There are catch-up courses, but I have only five years left now. Maybe, if one just could have gone on-board as second. Probably, it is all there, in the head, so that one could easily find it again. It is in the spine. I have the basic competence and this does not get lost. (Christian)

Maintaining skills, certificates and further education occupied many respondents, especially when, for various reasons there had been interruptions in the work situation. The big challenge when it comes to planning and organizing the career was when they started a family and got children.

I still want to do the education to become a captain, but I have difficulties to arrange it. I had a good offer once; they were going to pay my education. But then we got a child, and then one more, so I have stayed working where I am. If I should start now, I would have to take loans, and such. And three years of studying (Michael)

Some wanted to switch between working on board and ashore while developing their competences:

I would rather experience something technical scientific, like a research expedition. Otherwise, an oilrig could be an alternative. But engine development is what comes first. The Swedish, and the world, economy is somewhat rickety, and this makes one think about what to do. At the moment, however, focus is on the family and the house, and a boat my brother and I are renovating. He is trained officer, so we might do some charter expeditions and such. We will see. (Charlie)

Some younger ones would rather stay ashore with their children.

The interest in going to the sea has vanished, as one now wants to be at home with the children, also the fathers want that, and the workload increases. The salary is no longer worth all the work one does. Ashore, there will always be ship-owners and other jobs, if one is prepared to move. (Christine)

Miriam wanted to pursue a scientific career:

My plan is to go ashore and try to make myself a career in the research area. I will start with the doctoral candidate stuff, and work extra as a rating now and then.

Maria who has had a long career reflected on what has been achieved and what lies ahead of her. She had fifteen years left in her career and put it in proportion to the rest of her life and expresses what she really finds important in life:

I have successively realised that this is it. I have taken courses in mental training and know that the most important is to become a good human being. ... But I am a bit of a coward too, I knew what I have. But, I have 15 years left so one never knows Fifteen years at sea, and fifteen ashore, and the future fifteen ?

The seafarers in the study had clear views on the Swedish shipping prospects for the future. They had virtually a unanimous view. This view seemed to be mostly dark among our respondents.

I feel a sadness over what happens in shipping ... why loose our knowledge in shipping in Sweden? But there are no Swedish vessels so I do not see how we can have commercial organisations in the long run. It's knowledge that we can compete with. Why should knowledge be lost? One can control this ... (Maria)

The Swedish interest for shipping will always be there but as long as our government don't want to invest in it For example, there are only two schools. Shipping is not profitable in Sweden. The ship-owners are taxed upon heavily. (Claes)

Shipping is on its way away from Sweden, that's for a fact. The ship owners have had new issues all the time; they have not got what they have wanted, about conditions for competition against other countries. They have not the same rules for sailing and then they cannot compete and then they change to foreign flag. They want the same rules in the whole of the European Union, and there are not. ... It's the damned money - they have to think ahead ... it's very gloomy - it's the truth. (Martin)

This old seafarer profession and the ship-owner trade will disappear if things continue as they are now. The fine old ship-owners will move out. In ten years there will be no-one left. Where will we get pilots and inspectors? (Peter)

Christine had the same opinion as those above, but she also expressed distrust about the profession's attractiveness based on a change in family patterns and value systems:

I have no hope for Swedish shipping. The Swedish Navy barely exists today. ... Interest in working at sea will no longer be present because they now want to be home with the family, also the fathers, and workload increases. Wages are no longer worth all the work you put down. Ashore there will always be companies and jobs if people are prepared to move.

Seafarers obviously have many things to consider when it comes to career choices in shipping. Changes that have occurred in society leave imprints even in everybody's thinking. The most evident points in all the seafarers' stories were the difficulties they encountered with

family, when they got children. Parents of today, both mothers and fathers, want to be close to their children, follow their progress and take responsibility for their upbringing. It becomes particularly difficult to plan for the future when working at sea and spending much time outside of home. Moreover, many had ambitions and desires to improve their skills, something which today generally becomes more and more obvious. To schedule studies of various kinds, and to maintain the certificates, often becomes a rather complicated project when having to be coordinated with work and family life. The globalised shipping also undergoes radical changes. Not least, this is evident when it comes to the Swedish shipping industry where Swedish flagged vessels are continuously decreasing. There is a strong pessimism about the prospects for Swedish shipping. Most seafarers argued that the outlook could be much brighter if the government and the politicians had acted more proactively to retain the Swedish fleet.

4.5 Summary of results

Our respondents mostly enjoyed being at sea and had chosen to stay at sea when the total of their offered conditions supported this. The reason for going to sea varied from a sort of self-evident choice developed through childhood experiences, through having landed up on some kind of vessel as a teenager, and/or to getting tired of school. For some, there was no other choice, they “had it in their blood” from previous generations. For others, they happened to like it when they tried and came to stay.

Motives to start working and to stay working at sea seemed mostly emotional; the freedom of the oceans, the adventure, and the variations. The older mariners seemed more loyal to their employer and to sea work than the younger ones, who chose more flexibly according to upcoming conditions and possibilities. Female seafarers had the same motivations as male, and they seemed to stay as long as they were treated with the same respect as men, or at least not harassed more than they could cope with.

When seafarers got children, many chose to go ashore, to coastal ships or to the marine industry. Some of our respondents chose the same because of unemployment or boredom from long trades and/or hierarchical organisation on board large vessels. All of our

respondents had stayed within shipping, one way or the other. And, all except one who had left sea longed to get back to it someday.

Private life and family was the most influential factor for career choices. Older officers were grateful to their wives having been able to cope with children and the home on all their periods at sea. Young fathers nowadays rather left sea for work ashore when the children came. They wanted to be a parent on equal terms with their partners, and follow their children in their childhood.

Those of our respondents who had left sea were troubled by how to get enough sea time and to maintain their certificates in order to be able to go back to sea work. All were satisfied with the formal regular training but more or less discontented with possibilities for learning at work, experiential learning. The search for such had made some of our respondents leave the sea.

The work itself at sea was mainly described as heavier, with a growing administrative burden, fewer staff on board, and less adventurous freedom and challenges. There was also dissatisfaction with employers' lack of appreciation, both regarding salaries, time at sea versus time on leave, competence development, and face-to-face comments.

In short, the motives for staying working at sea, according to this empirical study were: enjoying the freedom at sea, the variation with the work and the challenges of problem solving, the long leave periods, and that the salary was perceived as fair. However, other factors made some of our respondents leave sea: wishing to be at home with the children, as well as getting tired of monotonous and hierarchical work organisation, lack of training and learning possibilities, lack of appreciation, and lack of fair HRM strategies.

Future plans for our respondents varied. The older ones looked forward to retirement, but maybe also to spending the last years at sea, and the younger ones long for being able to come out at sea in some way, when the children grow up a little. Only one of our respondents denied wishing going to sea at all.

5. Discussion

The changes that shipping in recent years has undergone, and still is undergoing, have had impacts on Swedish seafarers' professional motivation and their relation to different stages of their occupational life. The career that older and retired sailors experienced in earlier times is now strongly altered (Hult 2012). Going into the profession as a young deckhand, often with emotional support from parents, relatives or neighbours, sometimes perhaps the entire district, which also devoted themselves to a life at sea, is today not common. Admittedly, the connections with shipping via family and relatives are common even today, and this is common also in other professions, but training requirements are different. Today's seafarers are not beginning as apprentices, advancing upward in the professional hierarchy; a precondition to begin a life at sea is studying. If they want to become an officer, higher education is required. The actual entrance to a life at sea has therefore changed.

Society as a whole has undergone major changes. The profit requirements and increasing competition that exist in most industries have in a global perspective had major effects on work organisations and working conditions for all employees. In shipping, the effects among other things are great crew cuts, increased demand on those left to do the work and changed work content, including a large proportion of administrative work.

These changes can be traced in the stories of our respondents. In accordance with earlier studies (Jahoda 1982; Hult 2012), our respondents told about the influence their childhood had on their choice of profession, a childhood close to the sea and/or with families and friends working at the sea. The emotional impact of such childhood experiences was and still is the prime factor for choosing to work at sea. The younger seafarers have, however, a more flexible relation to the profession than had the older ones, who most often loyally stayed in the business for a lifetime. The average time officers stay working at sea is since some decade only 7-8 years.

Those who have chosen a seafarer career do, however, most often stay within the maritime industry, which shows in our study. When leaving sea, they chose to work ashore within some kind of sea related business, as suppliers for vessel production or the like, or they have chosen

higher studies, and/or teaching. Work at oilrigs is also included among the areas of work that seafarers choose as alternatives.

The career turning point is clearly related to family and children. Societal values concerning the coping with family relations and children have during the latest decades, especially during the beginning of the 21st century, changed. Many seafarers, both men and women, now prioritise a life close to ones dearest. Being away from home for weeks and months is associated with emotional pain, in spite of the communication possibilities internet and telephone offer.

The traditional seafarer doing long trades, for months and sometimes years, is not an ideal for seafarers today. Most want to be close to and part of one's family. These values strongly contradict the traditional seafarer's life and challenge a desired recruiting for today's vessels. Young seafarers nowadays try different ways of coping with the dilemma between their professional life and the family life, by, for example, choosing to work at coast vessels, shore based industries, or with education and training.

One way employers could facilitate the careers of seafarers would be to offer a career plan where having a family is included. This means a strategy with a lifelong perspective, and might lead to seafarers staying in the business, also at sea.

Such a strategy would obviously benefit also female seafarers who have always found it difficult to resolve the dilemma between family, children and work. Having children has often meant that women had to interrupt their careers at sea. In individual cases, for example if the husband also worked at sea, the pair tackled the dilemma by working in shifts, which in the long run cannot be considered to be an ideal solution. If there is a divorce, and the woman becomes a single parent, the problems for the woman become even worse. This study includes women of both these examples. In both cases, the women did very reluctantly leave their jobs at sea - one stayed at home with the children while the man continued to work at sea, the other could not as a single mother solve her dilemma and chose a job at a shipping company. In the study there was also an example of a divorced seafarer with shared custody, which of course also complicates the career at sea.

When today's male seafarers now also prioritize being with their children, the dilemma becomes even more clearly highlighted and the issue comes to a head. How will future careers look for today's young people, women and men, who have flocked to shipping? To initially let the students discuss, during the education, but also in the recruitment processes, these important issues not only with teachers and education management, but also with ship owners, trade unions and other stakeholders in shipping should be a way to raise awareness and to adapt to today's societal changes. And, ship owners should be encouraged to develop career plans suited for today's seafarers' demands on their working conditions.

Women are today increasingly seeking maritime education and training, although progress is slow. To support these women who go into a highly male-dominated world where the risk of abuse and harassment is imminent, as stated by most female interviewed in the study, should be particularly essential for shipping companies and other stakeholders in the shipping industry.

The second important factor from the study is the desire for continuous and thought-out competence development. Many sailors express a willingness to constantly learn new things, get new challenges in the profession and develop. Continuous learning is a demand in modern working life, both from employees and employers. In addition to purely technical skills, there is a demand for non-technical skills, as ability to communicate, to take responsibility and initiatives, leadership and teamwork skills, etc. The development in shipping is fast and the growing regulations are requiring constant updating and implementation of new knowledge. Offering such development possibilities within work seems to be necessary to keep up efficiency and safety among seafarers, along with motivation and well-being on board.

The recent years of rationalisation, reduced crew and increased administrative burden have markedly affected work content and work conditions on board. The excitement and adventurous working life earlier experienced by seafarers are not there anymore. Life on board nowadays is experienced more like any other work, as a couple of our respondents formulated it. The life of a seafarer thus does not have the attraction it used to have. The importance of the free time periods, as expressed by our respondents, could represent this change of attraction. This is in line with studies of the kind of value changes in the postmodern society, implying a high desire for individual freedom and possibilities to decide about one's own time (Fuehrer, 2010).

Nevertheless, in Sweden the interest in nautical professions remains high. This can be seen in the large number of applications to the marine officer training courses each year. The marine officer students' expectations of the profession should probably be further investigated. In this study the motivation factor is focused which is related to but not the same as expectations.

When people choose a professional career, they have expectations and hope that these will be fulfilled. When seafarers in this study talked about the motivational factors of their profession, they were described not only before the actual career choice, but also as changing at different times during their careers. The motivation may therefore vary over the working life. The factor that initially motivated the choice to work at sea may have been the idea of a free and adventurous life, but after a number of years, the dominant motivation often changed to, for instance, the long leave. Motivation is probably flexible in a lifelong career, which could be studied more closely.

6 Conclusions

The main conclusions that can be drawn from this study are:

- Occupational motivation as a seafarer is high and fairly stable in older experienced sailors while among the younger ones it is somewhat looser and more flexible.
- Virtually all seafarers want to work at sea, but if not possible, in some kind of marine industry. There is a demand for better possibilities for working on board and ashore interchangeably.
- Long leave periods as a motivating factor is today very high among seafarers.
- Rationalisation in shipping industry, cost efficiency, and reduction of crew are factors that have affected the profession's attractiveness negatively.
- Turning points in the career are often caused by family formation or by a wish to develop competence related to the profession.

- Value changes in family patterns and lifestyles have a major impact on the career development. Above all, young people today want to be close to family, children and friends.
- Female sailors are today still in minority. Many have been victims of violations and harassment aboard. It appears that women need to have an extra strong motivation to remain in the profession.
- There is a general dissatisfaction among seafarers with opportunities for skills development, experiential learning, and possibilities for pursuing studies of different kinds.
- An organizational learning integrated in professional life is largely lacking in shipping.
- The seafarers perceive a lack of acceptable HRM strategies from the employers' side, concerning recruiting, training and development, promotion, and benefits of different kinds.

References

Abrahamsson, B, and Ydén, K. (2005). Co-ordinated Actions and Network Based Defence. In Ydén (ed.) *Directions in Military Organizing*, pp. 169-184. Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.

Acejo, I (2012) Seafarers and transnationalism: Ways of belongingness ashore and aboard. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 33 (1), pp. 69-84.

Andréas, E. and Bålhjelm, C. (2008) *Undersökning av lärandet inom flygledning – för säkerhets skull* (Investigation of learning within air traffic controllers – for the sake of safety). Bachelor thesis in Business Administration. Gothenburg: Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University.

Argyris, C. (1990) *Overcoming Organizational Defences. Facilitating Organizational Learning*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Argyris, C., and Schön, D. A. (1978) *Organizational Learning. A Theory of Action Perspective*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Baltic and International Maritime Council and International Shipping Federation (2010) *BIMCO/ISF Manpower Study Update: The Worldwide Demand for and Supply of Seafarers, Main Report*. London, UK: BIMCO/ISF.

Barka, N (2011) *Sjöfartsyrkets attraktionskraft* (On the attraction of the seafarer profession). Unpublished manuscript for PhD thesis. Gothenburg: Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University.

Bogdan, R., and Taylor, S.J. (1998) *Introduction to qualitative research methods: a guidebook and resource*. New York, N.Y.; Chichester: Wiley.

Delery, J.E., and Doty, H. (1996) Modes of theorizing in strategic human resource management: tests of universalistic, contingency, and configurational performance predictions. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 39, No 4, pp 802-935.

The Mapping of Career Paths in the Maritime Industries (2004/2005) A project for the European Community Shipowner's Associations (ECSA) and the European Transport Federation with the support of the European Commission.

Forsberg, P. (2001) *Berättelser och omdömen i en redares vardag* (Stories and judgements in the everyday life of a shipowner). Göteborg: BAS. (in Swedish only)

Fuehrer, P. (2010). *Om tidens värde: En sociologisk studie av senmodernitetens temporala livsvärldar*. Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. (In Swedish only)

Gherardi, S. (1995) *Gender, Symbolism and Organizational Cultures*. London. SAGE.

- Gherardi, S. and Poggio, B. (2007). *Gendertelling in Organizations: narratives from male-dominated environments*. Liber. Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Guest, D. E. (1987) Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(5): 503–521.
- Hult, C. (2004) Hult, C. (2004). *The way we conform to paid labour: Commitment to employment and organization from a comparative perspective*. Doctoral theses at the Department of Sociology, Umeå University.
- Hult, C. (ed) (2012) *Sjömän och sjömansyrke 2010: en studie i attityder till arbete och yrke under olika skeenden i sjömanslivet* (Seafarers and seafarer profession: a study in attitudes to work and profession during different stages in seamen's life). Kalmar: Linnaeus University. (In Swedish only)
- IMO: a (2014) "Go to sea!" A campaign to attract entrants to the shipping industry. Retrieved on <http://www.imo.org/OurWork/HumanElement/GoToSea/Pages/Default.aspx>. 2014-02-17.
- IMO: b (2014) *2010: Year of the Seafarer*. Retrieved on <http://www.imo.org/OurWork/HumanElement/GoToSea/Pages/2010-YearoftheSeafarer.aspx>. 2014-02-17.
- IMO: c (2014) *Launch of BIMCO/ISF 2010 Manpower Study*. Retrieved on <http://www.imo.org/MediaCentre/SecretaryGeneral/SpeechesByTheSecretaryGeneral/Pages/BIMCOISF-2010-Manpower-Study.aspx>
- IMO: d (2014) "Go to sea!" A campaign to attract entrants to the shipping industry. Retrieved on <http://www.imo.org/MediaCentre/HotTopics/GoToSea/Pages/Default.aspx>
- Jahoda, M. (1982) *Employment and unemployment: A social-psychological analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaijser, I (2005) *Kvinnliga sjömän – finns dom?* (Female seafarers – do they exist?). Stockholm: Statens maritime museer. (In Swedish only)
- Kitada. M. (2010) *Women Seafarers and their Identities*. Cardiff: Cardiff University.
- Kumar, S., and Hoffman, J. (2002) Globalisation: The Maritime Nexus. In Grammenos (ed) *The Handbook of Maritime Economics and Business*. London, Hong Kong, LLP.
- Leijon, S., and Widell, G. (2001) *Globalisation – taking diversity seriously or fading away*. Paper for the EURAM's Founding Conference, Barcelona, April 2001.
- Ljung, M. (2010) Function Based Manning and Aspects of Flexibility. *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* 9 (1): 121-133.

Ljung, M. (2012) Vem älskar sjömansyrket – varför, hur och när? (Who loves the seafaring profession - why, how and when?). In Hult (ed.) *Sjömän och sjömansyrke 2010: en studie i attityder till arbete och yrke under olika skeenden i sjömanslivet* (Seafarers and seafarer profession: a study in attitudes to work and profession during different stages in seamen's life). Kalmar: Linnaeus University. (In Swedish only)

Ljung, M., and Lützhöft, M. (2014) Functions, Performance and Perceptions of Work on Ships. *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs*. Published online: 06 March 2014.

Lützhöft, M., Ljung, M. and Nodin, K. (2008) *Funktionsbaserad bemanning. En förstudie.* (Function based manning – A pilot study). Gotheburg: Lighthouse, Chalmers University of Technology. Report no. 09:109. (In Swedish only)

Lützhöft, M., Dahlgren, D., Kircher, A., Thorslund, B., and Gillberg, M. (2010) Fatigue at sea in Swedish shipping - a field study. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 53 (7): 733-740.

Manuels, Michael Ekow (2011) *Maritime Risk and Organizational Learning*. UK: Ashgate.

Momoko, K. (2013) Code of behaviours at sea: women seafarers' shipboard identity management. *Journal of Maritime Affairs*, Vol. 12 (2), pp. 213-227.

Moxnes, P. (1990) *Att lära och utvecklas i arbetsmiljön* (To learn and develop within the work environment). Stockholm: Natur och Kultur. (In Swedish only)

Mårtensson, M. (2006). *Sjöfarten som ett socialt system. Om handelssjöfart, risk och säkerhet.* (Shipping as a social system. About commercial shipping, risk and safety). (Doktorsavhandling. Luleå tekniska universitet, Institutionen för arbetsvetenskap. (In Swedish only)

Palmberg, J., Johansson, B., and Karlsson, C. (2006) *Den svenska sjöfartsnäringens ekonomiska och geografiska nätverk och cluster* (Economic and geographic networks and clusters of the Swedish maritime industry). Jönköping, Internationella Handelshögskolan i Jönköping. (In Swedish only)

Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Paauwe, J. (2009) HRM and Performance: Achievements, Methodological Issues and Prospects. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 46, No 1, pp. 129-142.

Raunek, K. (2013). *Marine Insight – The Maritime Industry Guid*. Retrieved on <http://www.marineinsight.com/marine/life-at-sea/12-main-reasons-seafarers-quit-sea-jobs/>, 2014-01-13.

Ruhullah, A. (2003) *The supply chain management of maritime labour and the role of manning agents: Implications and research directions*. Paper for the 4th IAMU General Assembly.

Samson, H., Gekara, V.O., and Bloor, M. (2011) Water-tight or sinking? A consideration of the standards of the contemporary assessment practices underpinning seafarer licence

examinations and their implications for employers. *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 38(1), pp.81-92.

Sandoff, M., and Widell, G. (2009) Freedom or docility at work – is there a choice? *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Volume 29, issue 5/6, pp.201-213.

Schön, D. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

Sulpice, G. (2011) *Study on EU Seafarers Employment*. Final Report. European Commission. Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport. Directorate C – Maritime Transport. MOVE/C1/2010/148/S12.588190.

Suurküla, J. (2010) *Closing open waters – a study on modern communication and social life at sea*. Master thesis No 2010:104. Gothenburg: Graduate School, School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University.

Swedish Maritime Administration. (2010) *Handlingsplan för ökad rekrytering av personal till sjöfartssektorn* (Action plan for the recruitment of personnel for the maritime sector). Norrköping: Swedish Maritime Administration. Retrieved on 2014-02-01, from http://sjofartsverket.se/pages/25929/08-03114_Rekryteringsuppdraget.pdf

Tang, L. (2007) *The “presence” of the absent seafarers: predicaments of seafarer-partners*. Cardiff: SIRC, Cardiff University.

Tang, L. (2009) Shaping feelings in Cyberspace: the case of Chinese seafarer-partners. *Emotion, Space and Society*, Vol. 2(2), pp. 104-110.

Tang, L. (2012) Waiting together: Seafarer-Partners in Cyberspace. *Time & Society*, Vol.21(2), pp. 223-240.

Thomas, M. (2003) *Lost at sea and lost at home: the predicament of seafaring families*. Cardiff: SIRC, Cardiff University.

Thomas, M., and Bailey, N. (2009) Out of time: work, temporal synchrony and families. *Sociology*, Vol. 43(4), pp.613-630.

Thomas, M., Sampson, H., and Zhao, M. (2003) Finding a Balance: Companies, Seafarers and Family Life. *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 30, No 1, pp.59-76.

Van Leeuwen, W. M. A., Kecklund, G., Dahlgren, A., Kircher, A., Lützhöft, M., Barnett, M., and Åkerstedt, T. (2012) *Fatigue, Sleepiness And Sleep In Maritime Watch Systems: A Series Of Simulator Studies*. *Sleep*. Gothenburg: Chalmers University of Technology.

Warr, P. (1982) A National Study of Non-financial Employment Commitment. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol 55. 297-312.

Weber, T., and Nevela, A-M. (2006) *An exhaustive analysis of employment trends in all sectors related to the sea or using sea resources*. Final report for the European Commission, DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. Birmingham: ECOTEC Research and Consulting.

Widell, G., Damm, M. and Gran, S. (2009) *Maritime transport human resources and education & training*. SKEMA Consolidation Study D2.2.3 Human resources – education and training. European Commission; Directorate-General for Energy and Transport.

Wissö, T. (2012) *Småbarnsföräldrars vardagsliv. Omsorg, moral och socialt kapital (The everyday life of parents of small children. Care, moral and social capital)*. Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, Department of Social Work. (In Swedish only)

Appendix 1

Short presentations of the life stories of the interviewees

Christian (born 1952) had worked as a chief for many years when the ship-owner he worked for went bankrupt and he was forced to look for other work. At that time, sea work was hard to get, and when he applied for work ashore, it was hard because many employers thought that he would not stay for long – as they believed he preferred working at sea. He finally got a job where his technical competence was used and he has since continued to work with production technology and development in different companies. Now, since around ten years, he has worked with a company developing and selling technical equipment to vessels all over the world, so he can use both his technical knowledge and his sea experience, and he travels sometimes, to adjust equipment on vessels, but can mostly come home at night. Christian appreciated the free time when he worked at sea, as he then could accomplish larger projects at home, for the house and with the family. He thinks he had more time at home before than now. If there hadn't been a bankruptcy, he would still be a chief at sea, but now he prefers to stay where he is until retirement – if not possible to come back for a few years as a chief.

Morgan (born 1956) is sailing as a captain, and he has always worked at sea. Though he started as a rating – on many different ships on various trades - he got the possibility to formally study to captain during a period of unemployment, during his forties. He likes the work, as a work, though it has developed into a heavy load of administration at ports, calculating on and managing the loading and the unloading, and the adventure is all gone, according to him. He looks forward to retirement, to enjoy some good years with his wife. He is grateful to her having been capable to be alone with house and children while he has been at sea for long periods of time.

Martin (born 1958) grew up at the coast in a family with long traditions of sea work. He has been working as an officer of many diverse vessels in several countries, and is still sailing as captain, but on coastal ships. He chose this when the children were small, to be able to come home most nights. He has been employed on many different kinds of vessels, and he appreciates to have free time on weekdays, in order to engage in other things than work. His plans are to stay on like this until retirement, maybe while also starting up some kind of technical side business.

Maria (born 1962) comes from a family of seafarers and has master education. She worked in different positions at sea during several years and loved it. However, she did not reach the time at sea required to get the master certificate. When her only child was fairly young, she divorced the father, and she had to quit sea and go ashore to be able to take care of their daughter. She would have loved to stay at sea but she does not regret having a child – on the contrary, she loves her and would never have lived without her. The career ashore has so far been okay as a living, working with logistics at the office of a ship owner, but not enough challenging, and the longing for the sea is still there.

Peter (born 1963) has wandered the long way, from the lowest rating successively until pilot and now, also, responsible for the education of pilots. He started off already as a teenager, working as a deckhand and later as an ordinary seaman. He trained to officer but he, also, was troubled by the strict demands on sea time and papers at the right times, as well as by the hard eighties when sea work was scarcity. He managed to work all the time, however, in Norway and England, on different kinds of vessels. Peter and his wife got six children in few years, and when he was at home for leave, he took care of the children full time, while his wife worked. Successively he started to work almost full time as a pilot and since some years, he is also responsible for the training of pilots in Sweden. In addition, he works as a pilot, studies part time at the university, and is active locally where he lives in tourism arrangements – as a future retirement activity.

Pim (born 1963) has worked on boats “all her life”. She started off as partner to her previous husband on the channels of North Europe, and later on, after having met a Swede, who she lives with now, she works as a pilot within and around Sweden. She loves her work and appreciates the free periods – now she works one week and has one week free. She has successively trained to officer, to radio officer, and later to pilot. She has worked in the canals of Europe and in Scandinavia, and enjoys the challenges of the narrow passages of the canals and the comradeship on board. There are always interesting experiences when coming to new vessels and meeting new captains and other staff on the boats. There are also continuously new courses offered, to pilots. Pim has, however, experienced more fatigue now than before, and thinks about how long she will manage the relatively hard, with constant demand on attentiveness, and irregular work.

Marina (born 1964) has worked abroad as a captain for several years, as has her husband, and they have taken turns with the children. In-between, she has also worked ashore for the same ship-owner. When the family moved back to Sweden, as the abroad work ended, she has not been lucky enough to get the sea job she would have liked, whereas her husband has started to work at an oil rig since some time. Marina has, however, been able to take some courses, to keep her certificate, and she has worked for a shorter period, on a vacancy, and loved it. She applies continuously for many kinds of work related to the sea, also abroad. As her husband has the same profession, they both understand what it is about and are able to support each other.

Claes (born 1969) grow up with a father who was a master mariner. He likes the work at sea, but has experienced that relations at home does not always work while being away for several months. He has worked on different vessels, several rigs, in different nations, as motorman and as chief. Claes is very critical to the arrangements of today, where newly trained without much experience get promoted, and courses on new technology and new systems are not offered. He means employers of sea work are far behind other industries. His suggestion for solving the man-drop when officers become parents is to let them work at the office for a while, and then get support to be able to come back to sea when the children are older. Now, Claes has a new girlfriend, and he works at on oilrig, two weeks at a time, and he is then free four weeks in between. This works well for his private life and he can use his technical competence and develop, so currently, he believes this is what he will continue doing.

Miriam (born 1972) works as a captain. Before she has worked in other types of industries. She started her studies in her thirties, and now “loves to study”, so she takes both basic and advanced courses of different kinds, when she has time free from the work as captain, and she

also assists maritime researchers in some projects. She enjoys the varying work and to be able to work intensively and then be free to do her own choices other periods, which so far has been to study. She also enjoys the challenges of problem solving on board, to be a small team on their own out on the sea, having to manage together what ever comes up. Her wish is to start a doctoral program and become a researcher within the maritime area – and intervene with working as a rating in her free time, now and then. She believes the practical experiences she has from her working as a master can be of great use in her research career. Her children are older now, and she feels she can plan her time as she wants to.

Michael (born 1977) has dreamt of becoming a Master since he was a very small boy, and he still dreams of it. He has become a Deck Officer (class VII), and he has sailed as captain on smaller vessels, as fishing and dredging boats, internationally, where he has experienced the challenges of different cultures in different ports, and also the challenges of doing all kinds of work. On small vessels, the staff is small in numbers, and so one has to learn to do everything. Now, with two small children, he has chosen to work with testing boats and motors for a shore-based marine company, and he can usually come home every night, with some exceptions when he has to travel for the work. In the future, he hopes to study more, but not to work on large merchant fleet vessels, but rather on smaller coast vessels, maybe owned by himself and his family.

Marielle (born 1978) is working as a captain on a coastal passenger ship since some ten years. She has grown up close to the sea, and when she was tired of school, sea work sounded tempting to her, as it is both practical and theoretical. She has no children, and has recently broken up from a long partnership. She presumes she will continue working the same way in the foreseeable future. She likes the work and appreciates her free time. What stimulates her is the challenges of problem solving, to have to choose and to manage all varying events, together with the team of colleagues. She likes that the vessel is like a small society in itself, containing all kinds of competences and challenges, and the continuous up-dating. Marielle also works as a union representative, takes union courses and negotiates for herself and her peers.

Charlie (born 1980) has a chief education but has only worked as such for short periods. His experiences of working in the merchant fleet as well as on passenger vessels were that it was dull and without any challenges. He enjoys most being challenged with engine development problems, and he has since eight years worked with engine development, in different positions, in a shore-based marine industry. He would like to work at sea, but rather on some kind of research vessel, or maybe an oil-rig. The sea is tempting, but development projects are most prioritised by Charlie. And, currently, he prefers to have a job where he can take equal responsibility as his wife for their two children. Other priorities come later on, maybe, he says.

Carl (born 1980) is a motorman and has been working for several years in the merchant fleet, especially in the Pacific Ocean. He has experienced some adventure, but also the monotony of months and months without seeing any land. Now, divorced with two small children, he has chosen to work at an oilrig, two weeks work and four weeks free, so he and his previous wife have the children three weeks each at a time. Had he not got the job at the oilrig, he would have quit sea to study history, which is his great interest, and become a teacher instead. Maybe he will successively use his free time for some studying anyway. He does not find it worth the time and the money to study to chief or master.

Christine (born 1982) is a trained sea engineer. She worked at sea for a year, and was then headhunted to the office of a ship-owner, and she has since never applied for any job, but has got new offers she has accepted, both private and in the national administration. She enjoys what she does and will probably continue as long as she meets the challenges she wants. She has worked as a ship-surveyor, but is now more of a technical support for the boats, at a ship owners, controlling and ordering material and maintenance, keeping the budget, etc. She does not long for the sea again; she likes coming home to her boyfriend in the evening, and believes that the burden on the officers on board is much too heavy nowadays.

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Respondent:.....

The main question is: Describe your work life so far, and the choices you have made, the choices you will make in the future, and how you think about it!

Examples of more specific questions:

Why did you originally choose to work at sea?

How come you chose to train as an officer?

What fascinates you at sea?

Why have you chosen to stay at sea/ to go ashore?

What kind of training/education have you chosen in between the different jobs? - as well as such you wish you could follow or choose (or wish you have had the opportunity to follow or choose).

Which obstacles have you perceived and which possibilities?

How have you coped with combining family/private life with this work?

What would make you come back to sea work, as an officer? (if gone ashore)

What wishes do you have?

How could training and education facilities change in order to better suite your career wishes?

Future plans and desires?

Appendix 3

About the authors

Margareta Ljung is associate professor in sociology at University West where she is researching on risk and safety on passenger ferries from service staff's perspective. She has also been working at Maritime Human Factors Group at Chalmers where various research projects have been conducted. Her research and teaching have focused on shipping and Human Factors, especially organizational change, work functions and work conditions on ships. E-mail: Margareta.Ljung@hv.se.

Gill Widell is associate professor in business administration and now retired senior lecturer. Her research and teaching has focused on organizational learning and development, and management and leadership in various work organizations. As retired, she works with writing, leadership development and university pedagogics. E-mail: widell.gill@gmail.com.