

WOMEN SEAFARERS IN THE EC:

A PRELIMINARY REPORT

BASED ON GERMAN AND UK CASE STUDIES

Minghua Zhao

June 1998

©Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC)

ISBN: 1 900 174 01 9

The analysis presented in this publication is the author's
and does not necessarily represent the
Seafarers International Research Centre

Seafarers International Research Centre

Cardiff University

P O Box 907

Cardiff

CF1 3YP

Telephone: +44 (01222) 874620

Fax: +44 (01222) 874619

<http://www.cf.ac.uk/uwcc/masts/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Minghua Zhao is a Senior Research Associate in SIRC, who has recently joined Cardiff University from Women Studies Program, Hawaii University. She earned her master and doctoral degrees in sociology, in Connecticut State University and Bristol University respectively between 1990 and 1996. While her general research interest is in the economic restructuring and its effect on management and labour, particularly female labour, in Asian industrial sectors, she has recently focused her study on women working at sea world-wide. Her recent publications include: *Women of China: Economic and Social Transformation*, (co-ed.), Macmillan, 1998 and 'Management Control of Labour in State-Owned Enterprises', in Greg O'Leary (ed.) *Adjusting to Capitalism*, ME Sharpe, 1998. Her research at SIRC mainly covers 'women at sea' and 'China Strategy'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her sincere thanks to her colleagues at SIRC, in particular to Alastair Couper and Tony Lane, who initiated the research project and provided their full support at every stage. Also to Torsten Schroeder who played a critical role in the German part of the fieldwork and to Julia Parmar and Maria Goldoni who provided invaluable clerical assistance in shaping the publication. Her gratitude also goes to Sarah Finke who generously shared with the author her Women's File, to Christine Keitsch who played a most important part in helping contact the German women seafarers, and to Captain Ray Hardy who warmly accommodated the author for her meetings with most of the British women seafarers for this study. The author's most special thanks is devoted to those women and men who kindly gave her their time and the opportunity to share their seafaring experiences which has formed the most important part of this publication. Finally, she would like to take this opportunity to thank Huza and her friends in Bristol, Cardiff and Oldenburg. Without the great support of all these people, it would be impossible for the report to be presented as it is here.

CONTENTS		Page
1	BACKGROUND	7
1.1.	Women and Seafaring	
1.2.	A Shortage of Seafarers and an Opportunity for Women	
1.3.	Objective of this Research	
2	METHODOLOGY	10
2.1.	Statistics	
2.2	Interviews	
3	FINDINGS	14
3.1	Women Seafarers: numbers and proportions	
3.2	Women Seafarers: roles and positions	
3.3.	Women Seafarers: experiences	
3.3.1.	Family and Community Backgrounds	
3.3.2.	Recruitment into the Industry	
3.3.3.	Training and Working	
	<i>Training</i>	
	<i>Discrimination Aboard</i>	
	<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	
	<i>Isolation</i>	
	<i>Gender, Power and Nationality</i>	
3.3.4.	Career, Family and Future	
4	MAJOR ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	37
4.1.	Major Issues	
4.2	Recommendations	
5	CONCLUSION	43
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	44
	APPENDIX	46

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Women and Seafaring

In 1924 Frederick William Wallace published *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*, the title of which neatly summed up what he considered to be the salient features of maritime history. For centuries, seafaring has been regarded as a male domain. Maritime history and literature have long been regarded as a series of tales of men, ships and the sea: until recently, women have been excluded from seafaring life. Women certainly have begun to find their way into scholarship.¹ But they appear mostly on the periphery as stiff and objectified as the wooden figureheads that faced the sea at the bows of sailing ships (Creighton & Norling, 1996). The odd few have been recorded as travelling as stewardesses or as companions to captains. On the whole women have not been part of the actual running of ships (Stanley, 1987:1).

It was not until the turn of the century that things began to change. Women started to go to sea in significant numbers, but they remained a minority of workers on board ship, less than 4% (Stanley, 1987). A small number of women have challenged the traditional male domination of the seas. Heroic female seafarers emerged during the Second World War, including a female Soviet captain who commanded supply ships sailing between the USSR, Canada and the USA, and a female British Third Engineer, who received a medal for her valiant service when her ship was torpedoed and sunk (The Telegraph, 1981). Besides such exceptional cases women were extensively employed as stewardesses. After World War II, seafaring by women significantly grew and diversified. But it has only been since 1970 that women officers have served as deck, radio and engineering officers in increasing numbers (Rutherford, 1994:7).

There has long been male resistance to the presence of women aboard the ship. A study completed early this century found vehement opposition to having women at

¹ Women and seafaring have attracted attention since the late 1980's, mostly from women scholars. Publications include, for instance, Stanley's *Women at Sea* (1987), Dugaw's 'Rambling Female Sailors' (1992), Forunier's *Undercurrents* (1993), and Creighton & Norling's *Iron Men, Wooden Women* (1996).

sea, the case in question involving four wives who only joined the ship for occasional voyages. Some seamen refused to sail with women, and threatened to quit if a woman signed on board (Weibust,1976). The first woman deck cadet was employed in Britain in 1969, after tremendous difficulty persuading shipping companies to even consider her application. Of the initial 16 companies she approached, five did not bother to reply, and 10 rejected her simply on the basis of her gender, but one did offer her a job, as a typist (Wiltshere, 1981).² Such male resistance persists, although in a variety of forms, which will be examined later in this report.

1.2. A Shortage of Seafarers and an Opportunity for Women

The world-wide shortage of seafarers has been the subject of polemical debate since the early 1990s. Compared with world-wide demand, the situation has revealed a shortage of approximately 50,000 officers (ISF, 1991; IMO, 1997). Studies carried out by the industry suggest that while future demand is likely to continue increasing, supply will be unable to keep pace. It has been estimated that by the year 2000 demand will have increased by 15%. This suggests a potential gap between supply and demand of 370,000 and an annual training requirement of 18,000-19,000 for both officers and ratings in order to meet the demand. There is, therefore, a critical need to recruit and train more seafarers for the fleets (IMO, 1997:3). However, the outlook is fairly bleak. Recruitment and training are already inadequate to meet existing needs. The recruitment level of cadets in the UK, for example, remains around 400 per year when at least 3 times that number are required (NUMAST, 1997:7).

It is under such circumstances that women begin to attract attention as a potential remedy for the serious labour shortage in the shipping industry. Only in this context could female seafarers be considered to be 'an under-utilised and underdeveloped resource which could provide part of the solution to the problem of creating the future world merchant fleet (IMO 1997:3)'.

² UK sex discrimination legislation requiring companies to take applications by women did not come into force until 1975.

1.3. Objective of this Research

This study has a three-fold objective. *First*, we attempt to obtain an overview of the female part of the seafaring labour force in maritime industry in EC countries. We would like to know, ideally, how many women are employed as seafarers, and what kind of role they play when aboard vessels in the area. *Secondly*, and more importantly, we aim to learn about women's experience at sea as paid workers. This would furnish a basis from which to identify the major issues concerning women's education, training and employment in the seafaring sector. In particular, we want to pinpoint those factors which stop women from embarking upon or continuing in a career at sea. *Thirdly*, we also attempt to make recommendations to the shipping industry and policy makers with regard to the promotion of women's participation as seafarers.

2. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the above objectives, proper research methods must be adopted and procedures followed within an appropriate time framework. A research project of such a scale would require at least 12 months for gathering and processing data before the findings and analysis could be delivered in a final report. The following, is a summary of the results of initial research conducted from February to May 1998.

2.1. Statistics

There is no single centralised source of information on the number and employment pattern of women seafarers in the EC. Basic statistics such as the numbers and proportion of women working at sea have to be worked out from scratch. Various means have been employed to obtain the data, including literature surveys and information searches initiated by contacting relevant institutions or organisations including Ministries, Chambers of Commerce, Marine Societies, Maritime Research Institutes, Seafarers' Trade Unions, and nautical and marine schools or colleges at various levels.

The search for this kind of apparently basic data turns out to be a challenging task simply because gender has almost never been taken into account in the shipping industry. The recent experience of university researchers in London during their study on British seafarers is only one of many examples. Probably for the first time, the researchers saw fit to include the gender of British seafarers in their survey. However in the Registry of British Seafarers, in some respects a thorough and comprehensive source of information, they find the question of gender conspicuous by its absence. What was delivered to them was a list of the names of more than 20,000 individual British seafarers. They gave up. However, a considerable part of the data needed for this stage of the study has been successfully obtained, mainly through phone/fax contacts with the aforementioned institutions.

2.2. Interviews

Statistics, however, tell us little of the issues that most concern us in this study. To understand why women join, stay, and leave the industry, we must investigate what underlies the figures and numbers. We must gain insight into women's seafaring experiences on several levels. The interviews already undertaken have been extremely useful here. At the most general level, we need as detailed as possible an overview of women's working lives at sea. As most researchers know, however, such global interests need to be focused. The investigator must be selective, deciding which questions are most important and which methods are most likely to yield answers to these questions. Based on a literature review and three unstructured in-depth interviews with women who have served for several years in the shipping industry as seafarers, we formulated five categories of questions to be followed up in detail:

1. Demographic questions on women's age, marital status, nationality, family background, educational qualifications. With this information, we hope to build up a demographic profile of women employed in the seafaring sector of maritime industry in the targeted area;
2. Questions on women's pre-seafaring experiences. Our intention is to understand their motivations in deciding to go to sea, the influence of their family and community upon their career choice and the source of information leading to their recruitment;
3. Questions on women's experiences at sea. The objective here is to learn about their working conditions and to identify issues women consider most central to their employment aboard ship;
4. Questions on their experiences as students in nautical schools. We would like to gain a view from the women's perspective on their training and education as seafarers;
5. Questions on their own view of their future prospects. Their answers, we hope, will provide us with some insight into how they

project their future life and career. In particular, we would like to know how long they intend to stay at sea and the reasons for their stay or departure (see Interview Questions in Appendix).

Constraints of time and resources, however, set a limit on the category of the women to be studied as well as their geographical locations. In this respect, only women cadets and officers in the UK and Germany have been covered (except one from Spain and one from the Netherlands who is employed in German fleets).

In total, 19 unstructured and semi-structured interviews have been conducted in six cities including Cardiff, London, South Shields, Bremen, Bremerhaven and Flensburger between March and May 1998. All the interviews were conducted directly between the researcher and/or her colleague and the interviewee, many at the home of the interviewees. All the interviews were tape-recorded, except on one occasion when the interview was conducted over the telephone.

Ten out of the 15 women interviewed are in service. The rest have withdrawn from the seafaring sector but have found employment in shore-based maritime industrial sectors. The average age of these women is 29, the youngest being 21, the oldest 44 and most in their mid and late 20s. Among the 10 seagoing women four are Second Officers, and the rest are cadets or students working towards their First or Second Certificate, except two who have already earned their Master Qualification. Their years of service with merchant navies varies from 11 years, the longest, to six months, the shortest.

Due to the difficulty in locating women seafarers, which is caused, first of all, by their small proportion in the labour force, and secondly, by their high mobility between sea and shore as well as between vessels, the interviewees were not randomly selected. Both formal and informal networks were exploited to organise the meetings between the researchers and the women seafarers. Strictly speaking, these people will not be totally representative of the seafaring work-force in the area. However, we believe that by learning about these individuals' working experiences, we shall be able to gain some insight into the current circumstances of women seafarers' employment in the area.

In addition to women seafarers, we also interviewed four men, British and German teaching staff in nautical science with an average of nine years' seafaring experience. These interviews were non-structured. Our primary intention was to understand the education and training mechanisms in nautical schools in both countries and to have a look at the male perception of women seafarers.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Women Seafarers: numbers and proportions

At this stage, we have obtained the numbers of women seafarers from the following countries, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK (Table 1).

Table 1. The Distribution of Women Seafarers in Part of EC Countries

Country	Total No. of Seafarers	Women seafarers	Women as per cent of total
Belgium ³	1,350	60	4.4
Denmark ⁴	9,809	1,478	15.1
Finland ⁵	5,218	294	5.6
Germany ⁶	17,178	920	5.3
Italy ⁷	25,000	300	1.2
Sweden ⁸	15,117	3518	23.3
UK ⁹	31,392	1,463	4.7
Total	105,064	8,033	7.6%

Expressed purely numerically, Swedish women seafarers (3,518) have outnumbered those from the other countries, with Danish and British women following closely

³ Ministry of Labour (Belgium), 1997, 'Belgian Pool of Seafarers'.

⁴ Keitsch, Christine, 1997, *Women at Sea*, pp.50-51.

⁵ SIRC Information Centre.

⁶ SIRC Information Centre.

⁷ Information provided by Federation of Italian Transport Worker's Union, 1998.

⁸ SSOA Report to ITF 'Women at Sea' Meeting in Singapore, October 1997.

⁹ According to *Chamber of Shipping (COS) Manpower Inquiry, Dec. 1995*, the number of female seafarers on board all COS entered vessels was 1,463, consisting of 4.16% of the total seafarers (31,392) in COS fleet. Unfortunately, this report does not provide information on the number or proportion of female seafarers among British seafarers on board these vessels. Nevertheless, although COS fleet includes both UK and non UK registered vessels and these vessels recruit both British and Non-British (mostly Filipino and Indian) seafarers, the fleet covers nearly 90% of all British shipping companies. The figure, therefore, is significant in that it at least reflects trends within a relatively stable population of British shipping companies.

behind, 1,478 and 1,463 respectively. Proportionally, Swedish women are also ranked high right at the top compared with their seafaring sisters in the other countries. While the proportions of women seafarers in Belgium (4.4%), Germany (5.3%), and the UK (4.7%) are of a relatively similar order, there is a significant gap between the Swedish and Italian figures, 23.3% and 1.2% respectively. Although we are cautious in taking the average proportion of women among the total seafaring labour force in the above countries (7.6%) as an accurate estimate of women seafarers across the EC as a whole, we nonetheless consider the figure to be a useful indicator of women's participation in the industry in the area (Figure 1).

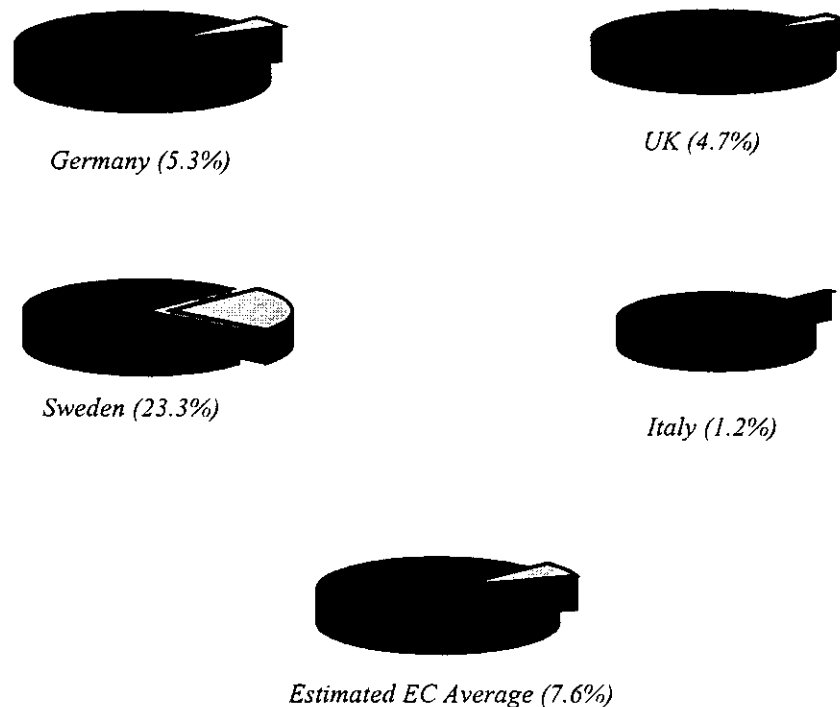


Figure 1. *The Proportion of Women Seafarers among the Total Workforce in Part of EC Countries.*

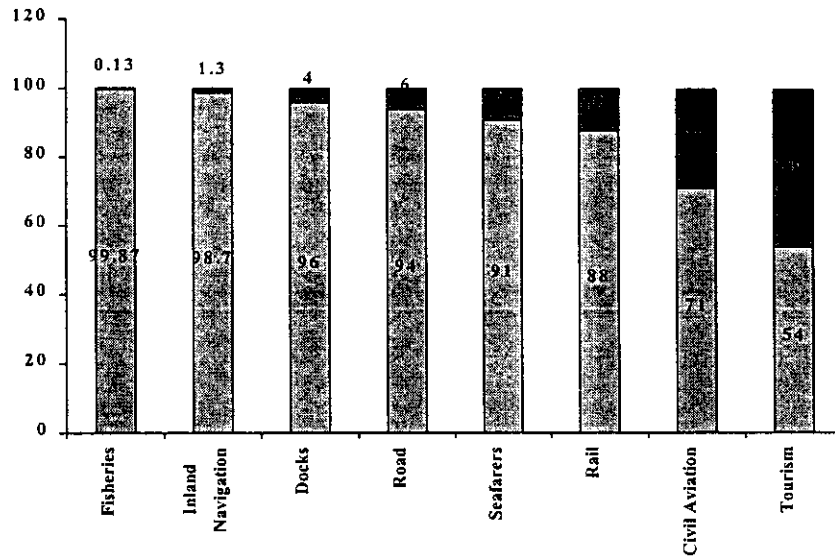
Women's membership of seafarers' unions affords us a similar picture. In the UK, women only take 4.1% of the membership in the country's two major seafarers unions. In Italy the Seafarers Section at the Federation of Italian Transport Workers

(FITW) claims to be the major seafarers trade union in the country with 6,130 members. It has 10 women, sharing 0.16% of the total. Although the union register may not necessarily cover all the women and men in the seafaring workforce, the low proportion of female members mirrors the extremely unequal gender structure of the labour force in the industry. The number and proportion of women cadets or students recruited in *nautical schools* confirms the equally low participation of female recruitment in the maritime industry. According to our survey, the ratio of male to female students at nautical schools in the Netherlands is 95:5, while in the UK it is 96:4 and in Germany 97:3.

The gender composition of the teaching and research staff at the schools of nautical sciences reflects the overwhelming predominance of men in the maritime labour force. Of the 12 schools and colleges we surveyed in Germany and the UK women make up only an average of 7.2% of the total teaching staff. For comparison, the proportion of the full-time and wholly institutionally financed female academic staff takes 38% of the total of all UK higher education institutions and the proportion of women teaching in the further and higher education institutions, the 'new' colleges and universities in the country, is estimated as 48% of the total (HESA, 1997; NATFHE, 1998).¹⁰

Internationally, women's share of the total seafaring workforce, for example, is 5% in Latvia, 2.6 - 3.0% in Australia and 0.03% in New Zealand (Latvian Seafarers Union, 1997; AMIS, 1994; Effective Change Pty Ltd, 1995). World-wide estimates of the number of women working aboard vessels vary. While the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) estimates that 'one to two percent of the 1.25 million global workforce of seafarers are women', a survey conducted by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) finds nine per cent of their members in the Seafarer's Section were women (IMO, 1992, 1997; ITF, 1996). Figure 2 illustrates women seafarers' position in the transport industry at the international level.

¹⁰ The information from NATFHE was provided through phone contact.



*Figure 2. Percentage of Women Seafarers Compared with Other Women Transport Workers in Trade Unions.*¹¹

3.2. Women Seafarers: roles and positions

Although women's participation rates in the industry vary internationally, occupational segregation is a consistent feature of the seagoing workforce. For example, the proportions of women among seafarers in Denmark and Germany vary, 15.1% and 5.3% respectively. However in Denmark as well as in Germany, the majority of the women are employed in the service and catering sectors. Many Danish women are employed as service personnel. Women comprise over 21% of the catering personnel as cooks and waitresses (Keitsch, 1997: 50; SIRC, 1997). In the UK, the COS Manpower Inquiry (1995) finds 81% of female seafarers aboard all vessels fall within the category of ratings, whereas cadets and officers account for only 19% of the total (Figure 3).

¹¹ Reconstruction of the graph provided in 'Survey Result', *ITF Women*, 1997, p.6.

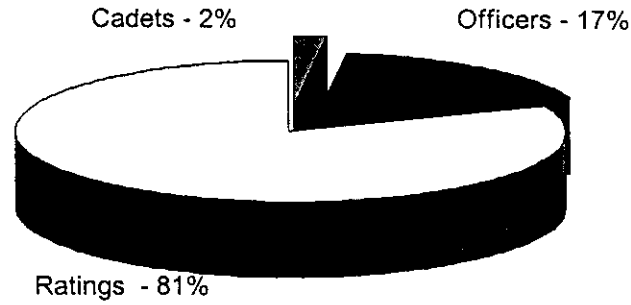


Figure 3. Women Seafarers in the UK..¹²

Such a severely segregated labour force is also reflected in the gender composition of union membership. For example, while National Union of Maritime, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers (NUMAST) and National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) stand for the country's seafaring officers and ratings respectively, women seafarers' share of the seafaring sector in these unions is only about 1% with NUMAST and 7% with RMT (Figure 4).

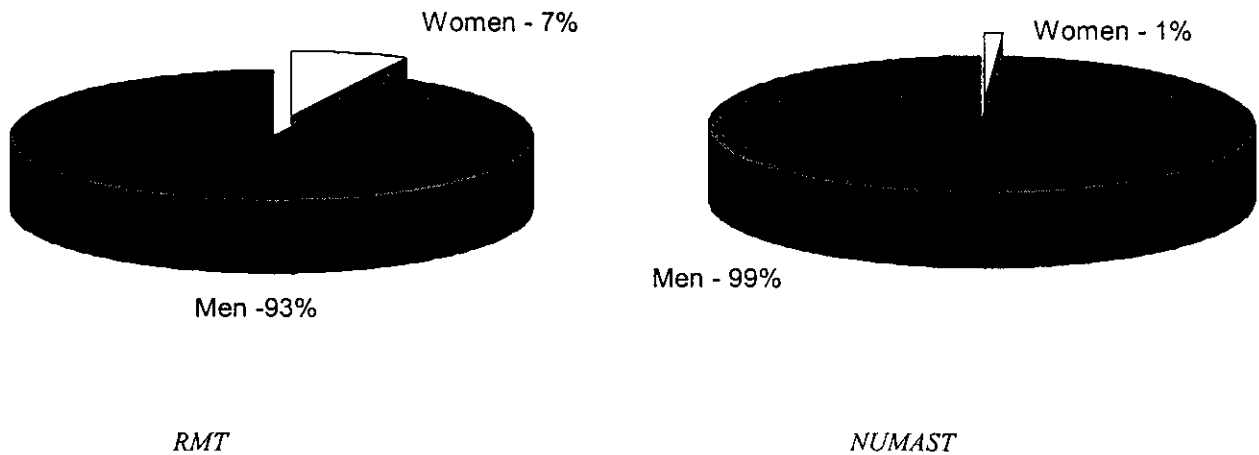


Figure 4. Proportions of Unionised Women Seafarers in the UK.

¹² Reconstruction of the graph provided in *COS Manpower Enquiry, 1995.*

This imbalance mirrors the general gender construction of the seagoing labour-force internationally. For instance, 62% of Australian women in the seafaring workforce are employed as catering attendants and 86% of Swedish women seafarers are hired in the commissariat/ supply service on ferries (Effective Change PL, 1995; SSR, 1997). According to the report by Latvian Seafarers Union (1997), '(All) our women members are employed on merchant ships as cooks or stewardesses'¹³.

There are of course, 'successful' women in the industry. But their number is very small. Among 1,603 German captains and ship leaders, for example, there are only four women, constituting a tiny proportion of 0.24% of the total. Radio Officer is normally accepted as a job women can do, although the number of Radio Officers has continued to decline in recent years largely as a result of the technological change aboard. However, there is only one woman among 84 German Radio Officers. In the UK, the strong BP Shipping Fleet has only one woman Chief Officer¹⁴.

3.3. Women Seafarers: experiences

The description and analysis of women seafarers in this section are largely based on our interviews with women seafarers in Germany and the UK. While there is no such thing as a 'typical' woman seafarer, we hope that the information provided here will afford us some insight into women's experiences in the seafaring labour force in the 1990's. To get a view from their perspective, and to listen to their voices, we deliberately included a considerable number of direct quotations from our interviews with the women seafarers in this section.

3.3.1. Family and Community Backgrounds

In his study of British seafarers between 1935 and 1975, Tony Lane finds 'as in many other occupations the most common influence on seafarers' choice of job is family (Lane, 1986: 29).' This has been found true in the late 1990's among women seafarers. All these women, except three, were born in areas characterised by close family or community connections to shipping industry. 'We always had boats in the

¹³ ITF internal document.

¹⁴ The figure is provided by BP Shipping in its internal correspondence with SIRC, November 1997.

family. My father was in the marine, as well as my brother and my husband. I grew up with boats and ships (Interviewee No.3)'.

The occupation or hobby of the father, or other male relatives in the family, such as uncles or grandfathers, seems to have had a strong influence on the women's choice of career at sea. As shown in Table 2 two thirds of the women interviewed come from families with fathers, uncles or grandfathers in occupations connected with the sea.

Table 2. Occupations of the Father or Male Kin

Cases	Father's / Male Kin's Occupation
1	(Uncle) a seafarer
2	(Father) shipyard worker
3	(Father) ship owner
4	(Father) Captain in Merchant Navy
5	(Grandfather) officer in Navy
6	No family link to seafaring
7	(Father) having sailing hobby; (two uncles) seafarers
8	N/A
9	(Father) engineer in Royal Navy
10	N/A
11	(Father) farmer
12	(Father) shipyard worker
13	Seafarer
14	N/A
15	No family link to seafaring

Relatively, mothers seem to have played a minor role in influencing their daughters' career choice, except in one case where the mother herself had a strong desire to go to sea when she was young. About two thirds of these women's mothers are after all housewives.

Born and brought up in the families and communities with seafaring features and traditions or under the influence of their seafaring friends, most of the women began to 'dream of going to sea' in their childhood or teenage years. As one woman recalls, 'I began to dream of going to sea as a captain when I was nine after visiting a handsome tall ship at the port with my Grandpa. It was a beautiful white ship against the blue sky. I told Grandpa and pointed towards the top of the ship and said "Someday when I grow up I'll wave towards you from there" (Interviewee No.11)'. A Second Officer studying for her Master's Certificate remembers 'I began to dream of going to sea at 14 when two of my friends had gone to sea, although I was born in Berlin (Interviewee No.6).' Another woman with Master's Qualification says, 'My father took me to see the Sir Winston Churchill when I was seven. It was a schooner, a tall ship. I had a look around the ship and my dad told me that when I was older, if I wanted to I could have a go on it' (Interviewee No.7). Only two of the women interviewed did not recall such a dream. They joined the shipping industry initially 'only for the sake of the job'.

When these girls grew up, around the age of 17 or 18, they began to explore the means to realise their dreams. By this time they would have finished high school, with qualifications at O-level or A-Levels. Four of the women got A-levels while the rest got O-levels except two who obtained university degrees before joining the seafaring workforce. Reflecting upon their initial motivations to join the industry, they consider their 'desires to go to sea' and their 'desire to see the world' as well as their inclination 'not to do 9-5 office work' as major reasons for choosing seafaring as their occupation. Although about one third of the women interviewed consider the relatively good wages was part of the incentive, most did not think money was an important factor in the initial decision. However, there is a shared opinion among the women that decent pay is important to attract seafarers, women and men, into the industry.

In most cases parents supported their daughters' career choice, especially those with connections to seafaring themselves. A German female ship mechanic recalls,

My father was very supportive and suggested that I should do some apprenticeships before going to sea as a ship mechanic. I then found a

shipyard in Hamburg and worked there for three and a half years. My mother was also quite encouraging. She found a newspaper article about a shipping company. She figured out the address and sent out my C.V. and paper. I was accepted by the company and got a contract for six months to sail in the Mediterranean. (Interviewee No.2).

But women from families and communities without seafaring experiences or traditions tend not to get so much support. Indeed all the three women in this category were misunderstood and discouraged by their parents. A woman born in a farming village in Germany remembers, '(When) my parents learned that I wanted to go to sea, they thought I was crazy. The villagers also said that they should stop me from doing so.' Another woman born in Berlin recalls, 'my parents called me insane when they found out that I wanted to become a captain.' However, these women have gained their parent's understanding after proving themselves as successful seafarers.

3.3.2. Recruitment into the Industry

Local job centres, shipping agencies, newspaper advertisements and family/friends connections are the chief sources of information for women to learn about employment opportunities in the shipping industry. Although they eventually managed to get jobs through one or more of these channels, there is a shared opinion among the women that the profile of the shipping industry is too low to attract enough attention from either men or women and the advertisement is sexist. They say,

It's not well publicised at all. I only found out from my father. The careers advisor at school didn't even know about it (Interviewee No. 10).

Only by chance one of my girl friends mentioned that a girl friend of hers was working at sea and how much she had travelled etc. etc. That was how I got the idea to apply to study here (Interviewee No.5).

Indeed, when women do eventually get access to the information they need, they always find that 'the little booklets and leaflets are all made up for male applicants.'

These women's experiences with recruitment are widely divergent when viewed as individual cases. However, two patterns can be identified when measurement of

discrimination is introduced. While about half of them did not feel discriminated against when they applied for jobs, the rest recall clearly how hard it was initially for them to find a job with shipping companies. The following accounts are from women in three countries, Germany, Spain and the UK.

I began to apply for a job in shipping companies in 1980 when I was finishing school. I asked for application forms when a Job-Centre man came to visit my school. A few days later, the form came through post. It was a form for stewardesses. I was very disappointed and phoned the man in the Job Centre and asked him to send me a form for captains. The man couldn't believe me (Interviewee No.11).

This German woman sent out 21 applications and eventually was given a job at an oil tanker. She stayed at sea for two years between 1980 and 1982.

It was very difficult, as soon as they smelled that I was a female. I tried Spanish companies first. But Spanish companies were not interested. So I had to forget about Spanish companies and decided to go to foreign flags. And I knew in certain Scandinavian countries there used to be females on board. So I decided that foreign owners would have a more open mind about having females. It took me a long time. I don't know how many application forms I filled out for crew agencies who hired people for foreign-owned vessels. Only one I recall really seemed interested. But they told me plainly that they had to talk to their principals in Norway to see whether I was acceptable. They said they would get back to me. But it took them a year. Did they tell me plainly that it was because I was a female? Yes, they did. I went to a company and said, 'Can you hand me one of the application forms please?' The secretary was very pleasant. But she said, 'I am very sorry. But you have no chance. Because they don't hire women (Interviewee No.14).

The Norwegian shipping company eventually hired this Spanish woman after she had successfully passed an English language test. They told her, 'In order to get the job, you must be able to speak English, because the service is world-wide'. When she joined the ship, however, she found nobody speaking English. She realised that it was a necessity for her, but not a requirement for anybody else.

I finished school with 11 O-levels and 3 A-levels. Then I began to apply for cadetships. I sent applications to 30 to 40 shipping companies. It was between October 1987 and June 1988. Many replied. But they all said 'Sorry, we don't support cadets.' There were so many negative replies that I really despaired. But eventually I got one positive reply. It was from P & O Container (Interviewee No.9).

This British woman is still active with seafaring at a senior position in a leading shipping company in the UK.

The difficulty for women in applying for jobs in the industry still exists in the 1990s. A 22-year-old German woman now with six months' seafaring experience recalls that when she sent applications to many shipping companies for an apprenticeship she could not get a place from any of them. Despite the hard start, this determined woman decided to enter a course at the nautical college 'in order to realise my dream to go to sea (Interviewee No.8).

3.3.3. Training and Working

Training

All the women interviewed have received training or are undergoing training in nautical schools, except one who received only company training and served for two years on oil tankers as an ordinary seawoman. Although always in a minority, the women recall their days as cadets or students with many positive memories. They particularly feel proud of themselves for their good grades and show the confidence that brought them success in all the competitively marked courses. Such confidence and pride are well grounded. A German professor in nautical science confirms 'I find that classes with girls tend to do better, because they work harder and the boys don't want to lag behind'. Such positive evaluation of female students is shared by other lecturers in nautical science we met during the research, German and British.

Despite their recognised top grades and performance, about one fifth of the women interviewed also have negative memories of their training in nautical schools. A German female student complains, 'Teachers in my school sometimes make remarks which show clear prejudice against women seafarers' (Interviewee No.8). A 21-year-old British cadet admits 'I got a lot of stick in the class' although she considers 'most of it I think just to see if I could live on board with the men' (Interviewee No. 10).

Our interviews with lecturers in nautical science in both countries confirm our impression that there is a lack of gender-sensitive course material designed to address 'women's issues', especially issues that most concern women seafarers. Neither in Germany, nor in the UK, among the nautical schools we contacted, have gender issues been considered an integral part of the curriculum. When asked if it is necessary to restructure the course by introducing gender issues, such as education on professional interaction between men and women in the work place, some male lectures expressed strong resistance without hesitation. They believe that men and women are the same and that there is no difference between men and women when they come to study or work. In their opinion, 'students should not be taught about the problem before the problem appears'. Some lecturers also openly expressed their own confusion about having women cadets/students in nautical schools: 'I honestly don't understand why they should decide to do this'. In their view 'many women seafarers have become very laddish ... i.e. have lost many of their feminine features which men really like (Interviewee No. 16.)'. Most of the lecturers are ex-seafarers, carrying with them a clear prejudice against women seafarers which they have inherited from their years as seafarers aboard ships. As is the case across all sectors in Western society, the traditional patriarchal image of women as wives and mothers is considered antithetical to the image of women seafarers.

Discrimination Aboard

All the women reported cases of discrimination during their years at sea. They feel that they were constantly watched and compelled by their male colleagues to work to the limits of their endurance. They regard their position on board as quite special and therefore have to strive to do well and to prove that they are the equal of their male counterparts.

Two patterns of discrimination can be identified. One is *hidden discrimination* where women are not given normal shipboard tasks, most of the time with good intentions to spare them from dirt, grime, or danger. For example, 'when we needed to climb down and clean the trailer, the other officers would not allow me to do it. It was a 20-metre ladder. No matter how much I wanted to do it, they didn't allow me to, because they

didn't consider it as a woman's job (Interviewee No.11). Another woman recalls similar experiences. Although it is always well intended, this form of discrimination prevents women from gaining experience in the work place.

But what happens in most cases is *open discrimination* where women are challenged to prove their capability by having to work harder or conducting more demanding tasks.

Well, if a man comes on board with, say, a Second Mate's License, everybody expects him to be able to do it. With a woman, they check if you can do it. It's the same in every ship, although on some ships it's a bit more and others it's less. For example, during my AB training, they gave me a very heavy drop which was really getting on my back. They deliberately gave me jobs where they could expect that it would be very hard for me. (Interviewee No.15)

Many women have similar experiences in coping with this kind of what they call 'male-created problems'. This is supported by research on women seafarers in Germany which finds 'women were more intent on their work and made 150% of their efforts. The finding also tallies with the same study which finds that 77% of women seafarers in the study have encountered this kind of male prejudice and it makes no difference whether these women have been at sea for two years or twenty years (Keitsch, 1997:56-59).

Doubtless, men also have to 'prove themselves' when newly aboard ship. But the test they go through is different. As men, they find it much easier to identify with their new colleagues on the vessel. Their shared sexuality helps bring them closer and more quickly. A 28-year-old woman married to a seafaring husband notes,

My husband said for him it's much easier. Also for the first day, they are looking because there is a new man on the ship. But this only lasts for a few hours. There is not much distance between them. They just go and say 'hello' and then they have a talk, very quickly, very good. But for me there is distance. It takes much longer time and you never know if you can be accepted at all (Interviewee No.1).

According to these women's experience, the trial period for women on board ship was 'normally a few days'. Once they have proved themselves physically and/or technically, they would then begin to be able to interact with their colleagues on

relatively easier terms. Circumstances change with each new ship to which the individual woman is assigned. Therefore the problem is repetitive and likely to begin all over again. The test is thus not a once-and-for-all test: many women and men have to put up with it when they start new jobs in many other industries. To women at sea, the test is constant and repetitive with each vessel 'there are new seamen, new captain, new officers, new crew, new men. And you are always tested by them!' (Interviewee No.1) Some women also report their experiences on 'good vessels'. But 'these were rare and you never knew what would happen on the next ship.' They think that to have good or bad experiences, 'it really depends on the crew, not the ship.'

The attitude and behaviour of male seafarers have a significant impact on the morale of their women colleagues. Recalling the discrimination they have encountered, the women say, '(This) kind of stuff made me feel that I was not wanted on the vessel. It was the strongest feeling I've ever had (Interviewee No.12).' 'It doesn't matter how you are behaving, it always turned out to be wrong (Interviewee No.6).'

I am annoyed at the fact that I have to prove myself constantly, I always anticipate difficulty my male colleagues might set for me. Why can't I just be accepted, like everybody else and do the same amount of work as everybody else?! The only one who actually suffers in the end is yourself. If you are up for twelve hours whereas everybody else is up for eight hours, you feel as if you're the one who is getting yourself tired out. And you are more likely to make mistakes (Interviewee No.7).

Sometimes men's resistance can be 'nicely' expressed:

One day I came to the bosun and ask him to do something. Actually, it was an order from the Captain. The man was a huge Spaniard. He lifted me up, put me aside and said, 'OK, little girl, now, you can show me how to do it.' (Interviewee No.11)

Many times, men's fear of and resistance to women's advance into their territory is expressed without the slightest disguise. One of the women reports, 'I learned from the crew that the Third Mate, before my joining in, received a telex from the Company. He then told everybody aboard that they were sending me to prove that a female could do the work. When I went aboard the ship I could tell clearly that I was not wanted' (Interviewee No.12).

A German woman was told baldly by the captain that 'he didn't want me on board because I would take his job away. He knew that I was doing a Master's Certificate'. Indeed, '(They) just didn't think it fits for a woman. It must be difficult for a man if he sees a woman can do the same job and as properly as him. It's just competition (Interviewee No.15).

Of course, not all men are against women and the material cited above has only involved a minority of male seafarers. But, this is enough to create a hostile working environment for women seafarers, reducing their morale to work and stay at sea. Indeed, this kind of male resistance to women's participation in the seafaring sector clearly mirrors the male fear of a woman's challenge to the established power order in the maritime industry where men have always been in control. True, seafarers nowadays, women *and* men, find it increasingly difficult to cope with the hard labour on board ship as a result of ever intensifying competition in the market. However, these male-created problems in the work place only make a woman's work and life aboard even harder.

Sexual Harassment

Tremendous social-economic change has taken place since World War II. Throughout the world, women have joined the paid workforce across industrial sectors in increasing numbers, with a significant part moving into jobs traditionally held by men. Men's reaction to such a change is split. Whereas many men welcome and adapt to the change, there has been a strong male resistance against the trend. The resistance takes various forms including, for example, the 'test' imposed upon women seafarers as noted before. However, sexual harassment has proven to be the strongest form of resistance against women, particularly in traditionally male dominated sectors including the merchant fleet.

There are many definitions of sexual harassment. The definition which is increasingly held to be the most definitive is that which is set out in the EC's 1991 Code of Practice with regard to sexual harassment: 'Sexual harassment means unwanted

conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work (EIRR 287, December 1997:13).’ This kind of behaviour has more to do with power and a will to embarrass colleagues and ‘keep them in their place.’ As sexual harassment is linked to power and the perceived vulnerability of the victim, typical recipients would be new recruits, those in junior positions and those in a minority such as women in a predominantly male workplace or employees from ethnic minorities.

Sexual harassment has been identified as a major problem for female workers in transport industries, particularly the maritime industry. The problem has begun to draw attention from some trade unions. For example, ITF has recognised that conditions on board a ship, where a limited number of people are together for long periods of time with little contact with the outside world, can lead to an atmosphere that breeds sexual harassment or bullying. Women seafarers are particularly vulnerable to this kind of working environment in the industry (ITF Seafarers’ Sections Steering Committee, 1997).

This study confirms this understanding. Nearly all the women mentioned this problem during our interviews with them. A 24-year-old German woman says ‘Many times, I feel quite intimidated by their strong-language, bad jokes, and teasing. They want to see how far they can get (Interviewee No.6). Women have to take extra care to protect themselves, especially when they are alone in their cabin. They must remember to lock their door. Otherwise they may find men in their cabins as midnight intruders, as they sometimes did. ‘One night I woke up and found a drunken officer by my bedside. I tried but couldn’t bring him to reason. I had to kick him out’ (Interviewee No.4). Similar events were reported by several other women during the interviews. To protect herself, a German AB had five locks on her door.

Pornographic posters, videos, and computer screen display also contribute to the harassment women have to endure aboard a vessel. ‘Each time, when I came into the bar and found they were watching that kind of stuff, I had to withdraw very quickly. They even invited me to watch porn with them. I said, don’t bother me’(Interviewee No.8). Women do not like pornographic material. They find it offensive and

degrading. They feel 'uncomfortable', 'embarrassed' and 'disgusted' to have these materials displayed in the work place.

When asked how they dealt with this kind of harassment, all the women say that they had to 'ignore it and keep it to yourself'. 'You have to put up with them, because if you protest, you only cause more hassle and it can only lead to more trouble,' as the women said. None of them has ever formally filed a complaint because they do not believe that they can get help from any party involved. In their opinion, trade unions are overwhelmingly male dominated themselves and women's issues have never been included in their agenda. On the other hand, they do not want the shipping companies to know the problems. 'The companies are watching for problems with us. If they learn that we have problems on board the ship, they will say, 'See? Haven't we told you that it is not a place for women?'

Isolation

Isolation has long been recognised as a main problem with all seafarers, men and women, and has drawn wide attention from the industry, unions, and academic or professional researchers.¹⁵ However the isolation faced by women seafarers is different in many aspects and more serious than the situation experienced by their male colleagues. In addition to the challenge common to all seafarers, typically a long separation from family and friends and the confinement to a small space without connection to land, women have to struggle with the male created problems noted above. These problems put additional pressure on the female part of the crew, causing a more intensified feeling of isolation.

Most women consider their isolation on board ship a big problem and believe it is different from that experienced by men. 'Men can drink together, talk to each other, or even fight with each other. A woman can't', says one of the women. In their view,

¹⁵ For instance, the possibility for seafarers to use the internet has been enthusiastically explored to combat seafarers' isolation at sea. At the other end of the development, COSCO, the biggest shipping company in the PRC has been actively contacting both Chinese and Western researchers, including SIRC, for proposals to deal with isolation confronting seafarers aboard ship.

men can make friends with some of their colleagues and the friendship can last at least during the voyage. 'They can talk about personal things, but we can't'. A woman with seven years' seafaring experience reflects. 'It's difficult for us to have friendship (with men) aboard. At some stage, sex would become an issue, unavoidably. Sometimes I find it funny. More often I would feel very sad' (Interviewee No. 4). A female Chief Officer notes,

'At sea, both men and women feel isolated. But the female does feel more isolated. When you are the minority with 20 blokes around, they are the boys' club. You are out. If you are a bit quiet, they would say 'Oh, she must have PMS'¹⁶. This is a constant pressure. They wouldn't say that kind of thing if you were a man'.

Discrimination and sexual harassment are two principal problems hindering normal or professional contact and interaction between men and women in the workplace. Even if a woman can overcome the former problem by proving herself, working harder for longer hours, she will still find it difficult to cope with the latter. The coping mechanisms adopted by women reflect the impact of the male created problems on the female labour force in the industry. As already mentioned, none of the women interviewed had even the intention to make a complaint to the Master, the Company, or the Union. 'It won't help' and can only make things worse.' They prefer to solve the problem 'by ourselves'.

'By ourselves', means putting up with it and keeping any feelings of bitterness to themselves. Some women, especially those with strong characters, attempt to solve the problem by passing clear messages to their male colleagues. They would say 'No' to men who intended to make unwelcome sexual advances towards them. In most cases, however, women draw the boundaries only by withdrawing and locking themselves in their own cabins. This has clearly affected their life-style. A woman with nine years' seafaring experience says 'I spent most of my off-duty time alone in my cabin. Now I am used to this. But I wasn't like this before I went to sea. I was more outgoing. I used to have many friends. Now I have... at most two or three. It has changed me a lot (Interviewee No.1).' A 24-year-old female cadet remembers that at

¹⁶ Pre-Menstrual Syndrome.

the beginning of her career, she sometimes joined her colleagues in the bar. But she has stopped,

(Because) as the only woman, it is dangerous to drink alcohol aboard. I have to take extra care to lock or double lock my cabin. Nothing serious has yet happened. But it's just like, say, if you do shopping in your small hometown, you can just jump out of the car and run into the shop. You don't have to lock your car. But in dangerous cities like London you must lock your car and always put yourself on extra guard. This is how I feel every time I go on board a ship (Interviewee No.12).

Serious isolation inevitably leads to alienation. Many of these women demonstrated a clear distrust of their male colleagues. Two cadets, when referring to the impact of these male created problems, said that they sometimes consider leaving the industry due to the kind of stressful experience they have to endure aboard a ship. At least one of the interviewees has given up seafaring as the result of extreme isolation (Interviewee No.11).

Gender, Power and Nationality

It is worth noting that many women observe that they tend to have more problems with men, mostly officers, of their own nationality. But nearly all the women who have experiences of sailing on multinationally-crewed ships have positive memories of the voyages when they worked together with the male ratings, men from developing countries. With these men, these women rarely felt threatened or intimidated. They felt safe, open and at ease during the voyage. A German woman reports,

I have sailed with Germans, Spaniards and Filipinos. I like the Spaniards and Filipinos most. They were sincere. Say, when they invited you to a fish party, they didn't mean something else beside that purpose. But if you were invited by the officers, you could tell there was an objective behind (Interviewee No. 11).

Another woman says that she has sailed with ratings from developing countries on container ships. She felt free in contacting them, and enjoyed their fish parties. 'They do not hate women. I have no problem with them with regard to being accepted'

(Interviewee No.4). An English female Second Officer remembers her first ship, 'I was the only woman my male rating colleagues had ever encountered. They were Filipinos and Burmese. With them I felt I was a Christmas tree (Interviewee No.8).'

Bullying and sexual harassment seem no longer so much an issue when men and women meet and interact in this context, a context where male sexuality does not go hand in hand with power. Men from developing countries tend to work as ratings on the vessel, doing the hardest labour for the lowest pay. They are powerless at the bottom of the hierarchy. It is with these men that women seafarers seem most able to identify with and most at ease to work with.

3.3.4. Career, Family and Future

Despite the hard work and the always unfriendly and alienating working conditions, these women still like seafaring and feel confident about their capability as competent seawomen. Generally, they are satisfied with their pay . 'Yes, it's pretty good money. You don't expect to get paid 19,000 (pounds) at my age when you have just started a job ashore,' says a 22-year-old Third Officer. The female Chief Officer quoted before feels good with her 32,000 pounds tax-free annual pay. They are also optimistic about their job opportunities at the seafarers labour market. They are well informed about the severe shortage of officers in the industry and are aware of other women's recent success in finding jobs with shipping companies. A German ship mechanic was delighted when learning that one of her girl friends had recently received job offers from five shipping companies.

However, these women are by no means naive. They are fully aware of the still glaring male resistance to women's advance in the shipping sector and understand the ultimate reason why industry is belatedly attempting to recruit more women.

Nowadays the number of the crew has become so small that they have to accept you in the end even though they still don't believe you can do the job. At the moment the situation seems very good for girls because

there are not enough men applying for jobs in the shipping industry. So it's always been like this through history (Interviewee No. 15).¹⁷

Indeed, while women seafarers appreciate their opportunities in the world seafaring labour market, they keep a clear head. They know that their apparently good job opportunity for the moment has not been brought about by progressive thinking in the shipping industry. It is because although men do not want to do the job, ship owners still want profits. Neither are they over optimistic about the prospect for their future promotion in the industry. They are aware of the fact that being a woman remains a great disadvantage for higher positions. When asked her own chances of becoming a captain, a German woman already with Master Qualification says, 'Yes, there may be a chance for me to become Captain. But it will take a longer time. If there is a man and a woman, they always take the man (Interviewee No.1).' This view is shared by other women, for example:

Well, I think if you are a female you might be more likely to be promoted so that they can show 'look we've got the first female officer - we've got the first female captain' they like to show themselves as a token. But, as long as they got one, your chance becomes very dim. As long as they can show they are an equal opportunity employer, your chance becomes very small' (Interviewee No.12).

Despite all these hardships, these women tend to evaluate their seafaring experiences positively. Reflecting upon her two years' service as an AB on a container ship, a German woman says, 'I feel I've benefited a lot from it. It gave me the chance to see the world. I've visited many countries during the two years. More importantly, it taught me how to deal with men, how to work in a male dominated environment.... a world I am still working in (Interviewee No.11). This woman is now a management consultant near Bremen specialised in employee disputes and team work, dealing with bankers, managers and directors. A British woman, still active with seafaring says, 'It has taught me independence and has stretched my capability. I have become much more decisive than before' (Interviewee No.9). She is the Chief Officer in a leading shipping company in the UK.

¹⁷ A widely cited example is the recruitment of large numbers of women into the paid labour force during World War II and their immediate dismissal after the War when men had returned from the battle fields and needed jobs.

Like men, women seafarers find it difficult to combine seafaring career and family together. Relationships may survive, with difficulty. But children and sea almost certainly will clash. At least four (27%) of the women have experienced marriage break-downs. The major reason was that their commitment to their seafaring career has upset their husbands who wanted them to stop seafaring and to have babies. In these cases, it was the husband who initiated the divorce with the argument that wives should stay ashore with their husbands and children. A woman recalls the bitter memory 'I have tried by all means to save the marriage. I said I'd like to sail just for another couple of years. I made lots of compromises. In the end I even offered to give up (seafaring), but it didn't work. It was too late. He had made up his mind' (Interviewee No. 7).

Two women (13%) have decided to continue to work at sea until retirement. They both have decided not to have marriage or children, although they consider it may be possible to have relationships. Two other women, both divorced and working towards their Master Qualifications say that they may stay at sea until retirement if they see chances to become captains.

About one third of the women are in their early or mid twenties, working as cadets or officers. They are enthusiastic about seafaring and hope to learn more knowledge at nautical marine colleges and gain more experience through practical training on vessels. They want to have their certificates and get promoted to higher positions. However, they have no intention of sticking permanently to seafaring. These women would like to move from employment at sea to shore-based jobs when they reach the age of 30 and when they begin to consider to have children. For this purpose some of them have started preparing themselves, for instance, by taking engineering courses.

The rest of the women interviewed (30%) have left seafaring mainly for the sake of the family. All but one have found jobs which are shore-based but closely linked to sea, including one employed as an International Management System Inspector, one lecturing in a nautical college and one holding an important position in a major transport workers union. Those who are married have husbands who are closely

connected with the maritime industry, as ship owners, managers, or seafarers. In other words, these women have stopped seafaring, but they have never been far from sea.

Certainly, the picture does not look very bright for the shipping industry which is in high demand for seafarers and has begun to view women as the most promising potential labour supply. *But men do not stay at sea either.* At least, men and women share one reason for their departure from the industry: the apparent incompatibility between family and sea. A male British lecturer in nautical science says very touchingly,

I came ashore eventually, because I got married and decided that there was more to live with. After the marriage, I found it very hard to go back to sea. Yes, men also leave. Look at my colleagues here. They are all men, ex-seafarers. They are here for the same reason. They got married, had families and decided they wanted to be part of the family, instead of being strangers who come home every 6 months or so' (Interviewee No.16).

We find no recent reliable data available on the length of seafarers' stay at sea, men and women. Nor do we, at this initial stage, have resources to systematically explore this dimension of the employment of the seafaring personnel. But according to the impression of some senior teaching staff in the nautical colleges we visited, the length of most male seafarers' service at sea is seven to eight years. This impression agrees with the finding of a British study which estimates that the average years of service of British seafarers in the early 1970s was seven years and the finding of a German study which estimates that the average years of service of German male seafarers in the late 1970s was eight years (Hill, 1972; Jensen, 1980:88). Many of our interviewees, women and men, have doubts about the argument frequently wielded by ship owners that women leave the industry sooner than men. Some women argue that in their experience women actually tend to stay longer. Clearly, further study needs to be conducted.

4. MAJOR ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Major Issues

We believe that the views and experiences of the women seafarers documented above help outline some salient features of women's employment relations on board ships in the EC. The main objections to women's full participation in the maritime industry at least include the following:

(1). Low and Negative Profile of the Shipping Industry

As sharply pointed out by some women during the interviews, 'shipping industry has been forgotten. Ships do, of course, sometimes appear in newspapers, televisions, advertisements and so on. But shipping generally has a very low profile compared with most other sectors of the transport industry, for example, rail and aviation. When sometimes it does become the focus of public attention, the image is negative. The comments made by a senior lecturer in nautical science are worth quoting: 'You only hear about the maritime industry when there is disaster and that's it. Only then, when people begin to see seafarers, strange *men* standing there and looking on that disaster (Interviewee No. 16).' With such a low, negative and male dominant public image, the industry will certainly find it increasingly difficult to attract applicants, especially applicants from women.

(2). Inadequate Information and the Male Dominant Image

Conventionally, seafaring has been treated as men's domain, not a job for women. While such thinking remains prevalent, young women may very possibly not realise that opportunities exist for them in the maritime industry unless the industry and other related institutions promote positive and gender-sensitive information to potential applicants. But not much effort has been made in this respect. As our study indicates, women found employment at sea largely through informal connections such as families and friends and this happened most in port cities. Rarely did we come across cases where women

were hired as a result of a recruitment drive or in inland areas. Indeed, when women do eventually get access to the information they need, they always find that the language, the images and the tone can only remind: jobs on vessels are only for men.

(3). Lack of Support from the Industry

There is a strong resistance against women's participation in shipping industry. Women still find it difficult to be accepted by shipping companies, despite the apparent progress made in past decade. Women still feel that they are not really welcome by shipping companies. 'At the moment the Owners Association doesn't seem to have much encouragement (to recruit women seafarers). At the very best, they are sort of neutral. But if you insist on asking, they are not neutral at all'. When they apply for jobs with shipping companies, they sometimes are still told, 'Well, as long as we have enough men, why should we take women? It causes problems (Interviewee No.15).'

Nautical schools also complain about the lack of support shipping industry. They find that it has become increasingly difficult to find places for their students from shipping companies. Although this may affect both male and female students, the reluctance on the part of the industry can only further discourage women from applying for jobs on vessels.

(4). Alienating Working Environment for Women

The working conditions for women seafarers are worse. While all seagoing personnel, men and women, have been severely affected by the deterioration of working conditions on vessels due to ship owners desperate pursuit for profits, women have suffered double exploitation. As workers, they are exploited by ship owners; as women, they are oppressed by male dominance at sea. Compared with men, women have to make double efforts to be accepted by the crew. The battle is constant, repetitive with each and every ship they are assigned to. Such a hostile working context has significant impact upon women, affecting their health, their well-being, their moral and commitment to their employment at sea.

(5). Lack of Support for Maternity Leave and Child Care

In this initial stage, we have not yet investigated in detail company policies and practices with regard to the arrangement of maternity leave and child care for women seafarers. But according to our interviews with women in the two countries, we find little evidence indicating support from the industry. Most women do not know if maternity leave and child care are included in their contract and some do notice 'these things are not mentioned at all in the contract. But pregnancy and women's concern with child care are important incentives for women to quit seafaring. One of the women we met is in the early stage of pregnancy. She is going to quit employment at sea soon. When asked if she would like to return to sea after giving birth to the child, she says, 'in a sense, yes, I'd like to, very much. But who will look after the child when I am away?' Several women expressed their wish to continue to work at sea if they can adequate some child-care support.

(6). Lack of Networking Support

It has been widely recognised that a sense of belonging is important to keep individual employees loyal or committed to their firms. In the shipping industry, however, it is difficult to nurture such a sense of loyalty, largely due to the nature of the industry nowadays. Ships come and go. Seafarers often have to shift constantly between shipping companies, and even more so between crews of different individuals and nationalities. Women find the challenge is even more severe with the male resistance and hostility they face on board vessels. Always the minority aboard, the only woman among "twenty or so blokes", individual female seafarers find it extremely hard to cope with the situation. As individuals they can only either put up with it or quit.

Solidarity is most effective to combat prejudice and isolation. Women know this. All the women seafarers we met for this study expressed a strong desire for networking. They wanted very much to contact and share their experiences with their sisters on board other vessels and in other parts of the world. But such a network is not

available to meet women's' needs although some initiative have been taken to address the problem, mostly by women themselves.

4.2. Recommendations

With major issues identified, recommendations for addressing these issues becomes self-evident. To promote integration of women into the maritime industry, or rather, the seafaring sector of the industry, we suggest that following strategies should be taken immediately with a strong commitment by all the parties involved including at least the shipping industry, the educational institutions in nautical science, government agencies and seafarers' trade unions.

First, effective means must be adopted to help raise the profile of the shipping industry. This can include putting advertisements or feature articles or programmes in newspapers or on television. Whereas it is certainly necessary to keep an eye on the negative factors in shipping, it is equally important to educate the public about the industry with positive input. Gender issues, as well as other issues concerning the rights and interests of seafarers, should of course be included in this kind of public education. But focus of the promotion seems better to be placed on how to address these issues. It is also important to pass across the following message to the general public. Seafaring is no longer totally a man's territory. Both men and women have the choice to become seafarers in today's maritime industry.

Secondly, promotion drives should be organised to encourage both men and women to join the industry at various localities. A positive approach should be adopted. For example, positive and gender-sensitive recruitment promoting materials such as booklets and leaflets should be prepared and distributed to job centres and schools in both coastal and in-land areas. Career tutors in educational institutions should be kept well-informed about the employment possibilities for students, male and female, so that they can pass the message through to help attract more applicants, especially from among women. With the introduction of a new educational system initiated by METHAR (Maritime Education Training Harmonisation in Europe), nautical schools

should be able to play a more active role with the recruitment of students. It is therefore important to have nautical schools involved in the recruitment drive.

Thirdly, the industry must overcome its own prejudice against women's entry into the jobs in the seafaring sector. Shipowners and shipping companies should sincerely welcome and accommodate female applicants and commit themselves better with the training of women seafarers. They should work together with nautical schools to help training places for women cadets or students. Efforts must also be made to help women seafarers solve their problems with pregnancy and childcare, which are important factors blocking women from returning to their employment at sea. Shipowners and shipping companies cannot ignore these problems if they want to keep women in the seafaring sector. They must provide women with adequate arrangements for maternity leave and childcare. The apparent and temporary increased cost, will actually be off-set with women extending their years of service at sea. The industry with a vision for the future should not hesitate to invest in this part of human resource (HR) development.

Fourthly, resources must be mobilised to promote the establishment and development of an EC-based network open to all women seafarers in the area. Practically, this network should be initiated from the bottom-up, for example, by initiatives taken by seafarers' unions in each EC member country. In fact, the ITF and some researchers, have already laid some ground. While the ITF has appointed contact persons for women workers in affiliated transport workers' unions, researchers in Germany and the UK have already started women-at-sea networks at a local level. Developments like this enjoy warm appreciation and support from women seafarers. To develop such a network across the EC, however, a co-ordinating body is needed. SIRC can be considered to play this role provided adequate funding is committed.

Last, but most importantly, efforts must be made in the education of seafarers, especially male seafarers. Education should at least start as soon as individuals are recruited. Gender issues must be included as an integral part of the training in nautical schools as well as in shipping companies. Seafarers should be informed of

the existence of the male prejudice or resistance against women at sea. While all seafarers should be educated with proper or professional attitudes and behaviours in workplaces, focus of the attention must be placed on the education of men. They must learn how to treat their female colleagues with respect and how to interact with women professionally on board vessels. It must be made clear during the education that both discrimination and sexual harassment are not allowed in workplaces. On the other hand, women should be encouraged to be strong and informed of their right not to be discriminated against or harassed by anyone aboard. Anti-discrimination and harassment materials such as booklets, leaflets and posters should be distributed to vessels. Gender-issues should also be integrated into workshops or seminars sponsored by companies or unions in the industry. In addition to education, companies and unions should include clauses addressing discrimination and harassment into companies codes and contracts of employment.

We recognise that it would be a long way to combat the existing male prejudice against women's entry into jobs traditionally held by men. Tremendous efforts are required to restructure the conventionally male-dominant 'ship culture'. At the same time, we are also fully aware of the existence of other fundamental problems concerning seafarers at the same time typically the deterioration of working conditions on vessels which affect both male and female seafarers. These 'other problems' further complicate the problem of women's joining or departing the shipping industry. But we are still confident that the above suggestions shall help recruit and retain more women in the seafaring sector of the maritime industry if actions are taken to accommodate such a purpose.

5. CONCLUSION

At this early stage of the study, it is difficult to draw a conclusion. 'Women at sea' is a large area for exploration. What presented in this report is only attempted to address part of the issue.

Indeed, more attention and resources must be put for further research. There are so many aspects of women seafarers' life and employment remain unknown, to laymen/women and professionals alike. The conclusion here therefore raises more questions than answers. Do women really leave seafaring sooner than men? What are the experiences of female ratings? Do they share the same features of women cadets or officers? Are there any differences between the employment patterns between women seafarers in the West and women seafarers from other cultures or societies? We need to know more to draw conclusions about women at sea.

The conclusion here however contains our suggestions for further study of the subject. First, a systematic EC-wide survey should be conducted and analysed based on the preliminary information on the subject provided in this report. It is necessary to further confirm the findings in the initial stage of the study. At the same time, a comparative research project should be set up to concentrate on the length of service at sea of male and female seafarers across the EC countries. Seafarers' registration with manning agencies and insurance companies, for example, can be used as important source of information for the purpose. Thirdly, women ratings, in particular those employed in the rapidly growing cruising sector should be focused for study. After all, these women represent the largest proportion of the female part of the work force in today's shipping industry. We believe that investigation into these aspects shall help us gain a better insight about women seafarers' employment patterns in both the EC and other parts of the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AMIS, 1994, *Australia Maritime Industrial Statistics, 1994*.

Bexell, Ulva, 1997, 'Report from SSOA to ITF "Women at Sea Meeting in Singapore"', *ITF internal document*.

Creighton, S. Margaret, 1992, 'Women and Men in American Whaling, 1830-1870', *International Journal of Maritime History*, IV, No.1, June, pp.195-218.

Creighton, Margaret S & Norling, Lisa, (ed.), 1996, *Iron Men, Wooden Women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press).

Dugaw, Dianne, 1992, 'Rambling Female Sailors: the rise and fall of the seafaring heroine', *International Journal of Maritime History*, IV, No.1, June, pp.179-194.

Effective Change Pty Ltd, 1995, *Women at Sea: Policy Discussion Paper*.

EIRR 287 December 1997, 'Sexual Harassment at the Workplace - Part 1', pp. 13-17.

Fournier, Constance Anne, 1993, *Undercurrents: the experiences of new England maritime women, 1790-1912*, a dissertation submitted to the graduate division of the University of Hawaii in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of doctor of philosophy.

ISF (The International Shipping Federation), 1991, 'The World-wide Demand for and Supply of Seafarers: summary and conclusions', prepared by University of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research.

IMO, 1988, *Strategy for the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector*, internal document.

IMO, 1992, *Medium-Term Plan for the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector*, internal document.

IMO, 1997, *Action Programme 1997-2001*, internal document.

ITF, 1996, 'Who are ITF Women.: survey results', *ITF Women, No.1, 1996*.

ITF Seafarers Section Steering Committee, 1997, 'Agenda Item 11: Any Other Business: Harassment, Assault and Bullying', internal document.

HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency), 1997, *Resources of Higher Education Institutions 1995/1996*, internal publication.

Hill, J. MM, 1972, *The Seafaring Career*, (London: Tavistak).

Jensen, Hans-Joachim, 1980, *Der Seemann und seine Beziehung zur Arbeit und Fuehrung auf Seeschiffen. Eine empirische Untersuchung, (The Seaman's Relation to Work and Leadership aboard Deep Sea Ships, An Empirical Study)*, (Frankfurt am /Main/Bern/Cirencester: Europaeische Hochschulschriften, Reihe IV, Vol. 56).

Keitsch, Christine, 1997, *Women at Sea*, (Flensburger: Flensburger Museum).

Lane, Tony, 1986, *Grey, Down Breaking: British Merchant Seafarers in the late 20th Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Latvian Seafarers Union , 1997, 'Women Seafarers in Latvia', ITF internal report.

NUMAST, 1997, *Council's Report to the Biennial General Meeting, May-1997*, internal publication.

Stanley, Jo, 1987, *Women at Sea*, published by the author, c/o Nazeby Avenue, Crosby, Liverpool 23.

The Telegraph, 1981, 'Barriers Against Women at Sea are Crumbling in Most Countries', Jan, 1994.

SSOA, 'Report to ITF Women at Sea meeting in Singapore', October 1997.

SSR, 1997, *Swedish Seamen's Register 1997*.

Wallace, Frederick William, 1924, *Wooden Ships and Iron Men, Marine of British North America*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton).

Weibust, K. 1976, *Deep Sea Sailors: a Study in Maritime Ethnology*, second edition, (Stockholm: Kungl Boktryckeriet P.A. Norstedt and Soner).

Wiltsher, Anne, 1981, 'The Second Mates Ticket', 15 March, *The Observer*.

APPENDIX

Women at Sea: Interview Questions

This research is on women seafarers funded by EU. We would like to know your experience as a woman seafarer, especially your experience concerning education, training and employment at sea. We thank you very much for your time and help and guarantee the confidentiality of anything we will talk about during this interview.

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your nationality?
4. Where were you born?
5. Is the community featured with shipping industry?
6. What does your father do?
7. What does your mother do?
8. Are you married?
9. (If yes) what does your husband do?
10. (If yes) how many children do you have?
11. How old are they?

Before You Joined the Maritime Industry:

1. What kind of qualifications did you have before you joined the industry / enrolled as a cadet?
2. Did you have any contact with seafaring before you decided to go to sea?
3. Do you have any family members, relatives or friends who have seafaring experiences?
4. Why did you want to go to sea initially?
5. What was your parents' response to your decision?
6. Where and how did you get the information to join the industry?
7. Do you think that the source where you got the information for the job was most effective to publicise the seafaring career, especially for girls?
8. What is your suggestion to better publicise the seafaring job for girls/women?
9. How were you recruited?
10. How in your opinion to encourage girls to be recruited by the maritime industry?

Your Seafaring Experiences:

1. How long have you been at sea?
2. Can you tell me about your experiences at sea?
3. What kind of ship did you sail most?
4. What position did you have?
5. What kind of crew in terms of nationality do you prefer to sail with?
6. Why?

7. How many men and how many women aboard the ship in most of the ships you have sailed?
8. How did you feel as the minority, always the only woman, working in this kind of male dominated work place?
9. How did you get along with your male colleagues in the during working hours?
10. How did you feel when you worked together with them on vessels?
11. How did you interact with your male colleagues during the off-duty hours?
12. How did you feel when you socialised with them in non-working places, such as the bar?
13. Have you had problems with your male colleagues at sea?
14. What are the problems?
15. (If yes,) How did you cope with these problems?
16. Have you complained about the men involved to the Captain?
17. (If yes) What was the response?
18. (If not) Why?
19. Do you think that it may help if there is at least another woman sailing together with you on the same vessel?
20. Why?
21. What in your opinion, should be done to improve the conditions in the ship to encourage women to work at sea?

You and the Shipping Company:

1. Are you happy with your salaries paid by the company?
2. Why?
3. Are maternity leave and child care arrangements included in your contract?
4. Do you think that you have equal chance to be promoted in future as your male colleagues?
5. Why?
6. What should the company do to encourage women stay with the industry?

You and the Union:

1. Are you a union member?
2. Have you turned to your union for help when you had problems at sea?
3. Why?
4. What do you think the union should do to encourage women seafarers stay with seafaring?

You and Your Family:

1. How did you communicate with your family, especially your husband, while you were at sea?
2. Have you had problems with your family as a seafarer?
3. What are the problems?
4. What kind of support do you wish to get from your family in order for you to develop your career in seafaring?

Your Study as a Cadet:

1. What is the certificate you have?
2. How many female students were there in your year when you studied as a cadet in the nautical college?
3. Did you have any problems in getting along with the male students and lecturers as the minority, the only (of the few) female student(s)?
4. What do you think nautical colleges can do to attract more women to go to sea?

Your Future:

1. What do you think of the future of your career development in maritime industry as a woman seafarer? What is your highest expectation?
2. How long do you want to continue to work at sea?
3. Why?
4. Would you encourage more women to become seafarers?
5. Why?
6. Can you think of anything else, which are important but I might have missed, to improve the situation for women to join and stay with seafaring?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOOD LUCK FOR YOUR FUTURE!