



Careers and Labour Market Flexibility in Global Industries

The Case of Seafarers

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DEDICATION

To my grandmother, Gesya Bulkin

Посвящаю моей любимой бабушке

“...all men will be sailors then until the sea shall free them”

(from ‘Suzanne’, Leonard Cohen)

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Unusual as this might seem, I would like to acknowledge the inconsiderate individual who stole my bag on the train on my way to fieldwork. This incident led to a certain amount of paranoia and constant suspicion during consequent journeys. However, it also forced me to change route and move forward despite the traumatic experiences.

Polina Baum-Talmor

Cardiff, 2017



ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: ***Careers and Labour Market Flexibility in Global Industries: The Case of Seafarers***

The flexibilisation of labour in the global labour market has been a bone of contention among scholars from different disciplines over the past four decades. On the one hand, such employment is seen as a detrimental practice to employees, who might lose their occupational identity as well as constantly experience job insecurity and uncertainty. On the other hand, flexible employment is perceived as the pillar of freedom, enabling individuals to fulfil their potential through increasing labour market opportunities. In an attempt to assess these competing views within the context of a global industry where flexible employment is commonplace, the shipping industry has been chosen as the basis of an investigation to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are flexible employment arrangements perceived as beneficial to employers?
2. What are the perceived implications of flexible employment arrangements for employees?
3. What is the relationship between the flexibility of employment and the occupational identities of seafarers?

To answer these research questions, qualitative research methods were used to speak to over 70 participants. The methods included mostly semi-structured in-depth interviews and informal conversations conducted aboard a cargo ship.

The findings of the thesis can be largely divided into three main aspects. First, the thesis sheds light on the complexities of flexible employment in the shipping industry (i.e. the perceived negative and positive implications of such employment) for employers and employees. Secondly, using the shipping industry as an example, the thesis challenges current widespread views about the benefits of flexible employment to employers. Thirdly, the thesis presents the idea of a 'double occupational identity' to describe the often-complex occupational identity of seafarers related to differences in perceived labour market power.

Several strengths, limitations, and recommendations for policy and also for major stakeholders in the shipping industry are raised at the end of the thesis.

Key words: Career; Employment; Flexible Labour; Global Labour Market; In-Depth Interviews; Job; Occupational Identity; Precarious Work; Qualitative Research Methods; Seafarers; Seafaring Career; Shipping; Work.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Anthropological Association
AB	Able Bodied Seaman
AoS	Apostleship of the Sea
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BIMCO	Baltic and International Maritime Council
BSA	British Sociological Association
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
FOC	Flag of Convenience
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
ILO	International Labour Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
INSRV	Information Services (at Cardiff University)
IT	Information Technology
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
ISF	International Shipping Federation
MET	Maritime Education and Training
MLC	Maritime Labour Convention
MNC	Multi National Corporation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OS	Ordinary Seaman
PBT	Polina Baum-Talmor (used in quotations)
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
POEA	Philippines Overseas Employment Agency
SIRC	Seafarers' International Research Centre
SOCSI	School of Social Sciences
STCW	Standard of Training Certification and Watchkeeping
TNC	Trans-National Corporation
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

GLOSSARY OF MARITIME RELATED TERMS

Unique terms relating to the shipping industry are used throughout the thesis. For those unacquainted with the shipping industry, in addition to the list of abbreviations above, the following terms might shed some light on the subject.¹

Term	Definition
AB	Able bodied, a senior rating in the deck department
Bosun	Previously known as 'boatswain', the highest rank among ratings in the deck department, has a direct charge of all work on deck under the direct supervision of the most senior officer on deck.
Cadet	Trainee officer
Captain/ Master	The person in charge of the ship
Chief Cook	Highest rank within the galley department generally responsible for all aspects of the ship's food
Chief Engineer	Head of the engineering department
Chief Officer/ Mate	Head of the deck department
Flag Out	'The procedure undertaken when changing the registry of a ship from the country of domicile of the owner/operator to another, which is normally a flag of convenience country' (Belcher et al., 2003, p. xvi)
Flag of Convenience (FOC)	'A flag of a country under which a ship is registered in order to avoid financial charges or restrictive regulations in the owner's country' (Belcher et al., 2003, p. xvi)
Galley	The ship's kitchen and dining area
OS	Ordinary seaman, the lowest rating on deck
Pilot	'A qualified coastal navigator taken on board a ship at a particular place for the purpose of conducting her into and from a port or through a channel, river, or approaches to a port' (Kemp, 1988, p. 647)
Rating	A seafarer who is qualified in support level functions

¹ The glossary has been inspired and adapted from different sources, including Belcher et al. (2003); BIMCO (2015); Kemp (1988).

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

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THESIS

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore the perceived implications of flexible employment arrangements for employers and employees, as well as the implications such employment might have for the notion of 'career' in organisations, using the shipping industry as an example. The study utilised the qualitative method of in-depth interviews to explore the points of view of 71 employees and employers, mostly men from different countries and range of ages. In this context, the main point of emphasis in the analysis relates to the implications of the flexibilisation of labour for employees and employers in the short term, and to the hidden costs such employment arrangements have for different stakeholders in the long term.

Initially the flexibilisation of labour was not the focus of the research which started as an exploration of attrition and retention among young seafarers (as described in Chapter 3). However, flexible employment in the shipping industry became the centre of my investigation as a result of several factors, including personal experience and becoming attuned to recent public debates relating to precarious work. Finding temporary employment to make ends meet is often a necessity for someone like me. I have been a student in Higher Education for the past 13 years and the 'gig economy' has played a central part in enabling me to find temporary jobs that could be combined with academic schedules.² Such jobs included, for example, working as a research assistant on a fixed-term contract, working as a 'mechanical turk' online without a contract at all and working on zero-hour contracts through the University's employment hub.³ I was able to experience the advantages and disadvantages of such employment whilst being a flexible worker. Not only did these jobs give me the flexibility I needed in my choice of working hours and the ability to combine them with my studies, they were also a very convenient way of earning money fast. However, at the end of every job assignment there was often uncertainty about the next source of income and this was normally accompanied by

² The 'gig economy' in this context is associated with work that involves '*short-term engagements among employers, workers, and customers*' (Kalleberg and Dunn, 2016, p. 10).

³ 'Mechanical Turk' is a 'marketplace for work that requires human intelligence. The Mechanical Turk service gives businesses access to a diverse, on-demand, scalable workforce and gives Workers a selection of thousands of tasks to complete whenever it's convenient.' (from https://www.mturk.com/mturk/help?helpPage=overview#what_is, accessed on 20 April 2017).

frustration and the worry of not being able to rely on a steady salary. In this sense, the short-term benefits of such employment were mitigated by the longer-term disadvantages as well as posing questions as to my long-term career plans. Would it be better to search for one 'job for life' in one organisation or perhaps to follow a 'portfolio' career that would be based and structured across different organisations?

In this context, flexible work arrangements and the 'gig economy' have been at the centre of academic debates over the past four decades, and have recently been at the centre of public discussions both in the UK and also worldwide.⁴ The main argument concerns the so-called benefits of such employment practices to employers and to employees. For example, it is often claimed that flexible employment negatively impacts on individuals' character and self-worth (Beck, 2000; Braverman, 1998; Sennett, 2011; Standing, 2016). This is mainly because employers in a flexible work environment can effortlessly redeploy and reassign employees according to their organisational requirements (Stone, 2005), destabilising long-term job security for individuals (Felstead et al., 2001; Guest, 2004; Hess et al., 2012; Inkson et al., 2012; Stone, 2005). As opposed to these negative views, the benefits of flexible employment are emphasised by other researchers who claim that such employment enables individuals to fulfil themselves with endless opportunities and to reach their full potential beyond the borders of a particular organisation (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a; Banai and Wes, 2004; Hall, 1996b; Hall, 2004). Because there seems to be general agreement as to the benefits of such employment arrangements for employers, the main aspect of the current debate revolves around the question as to whether flexible employees are the beneficiaries of the 'opportunity' such arrangements provide or, alternatively, the victims of 'exploitation'. It is this debate which

⁴ For example, McDonalds recently announced that they are trialling a shift from zero-hour contracts to fixed-term employment, following employees' reported salary insecurity and instability (see <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/apr/25/mcdonalds-contracts-uk-zero-hours-workers>, accessed on 26 April 2017).

Other recent examples from the media include:

Gig economy report: a 'forlorn tribute to compromise'; 14/7/2017, available on <http://moneyweek.com/gig-economy-report-a-forlorn-tribute-to-compromise/>. Accessed on 14 July 2017.

Workers' rights should not be made an excuse to raise taxes and reduce flexibility; 11/7/2017, available on <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2017/07/11/workers-rights-should-not-made-excuse-raise-taxes-reduce-flexibility/>. Accessed on 14 July 2017.

Every Entrepreneur Gains from Nurturing the High-Skilled Gig Economy; 13/7/2017, available on <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/295736>. Accessed on 14 July 2017.

is at the centre of my thesis investigating the perceived implications of flexible employment for individuals and employers, using the case of the shipping industry.

The maritime industry has existed for hundreds of years, during which time ships have been central to distributing commodities globally (Alderton et al., 2004; Alderton and Winchester, 2002; Lillie, 2006; Sampson, 2013). Seafarers are the main workers in this industry, and there are currently around 1.5 million seafarers operating the world's fleet (BIMCO, 2015). While in the past seafaring was considered a secure and long-term career (Alderton et al., 2004; Fei et al., 2012; Hill, 1972; Mack, 2007), seafarers' working conditions began to change in the latter half of the 20th century (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). One important change relevant to flexible employment in shipping relates to the 'flagging out' of vessels to flags of convenience (FOCs). The registration of ships with FOCs has facilitated a largely precarious work environment with minimal regulation of work conditions (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). In the context of an industry that uses mostly flexible employment practices, the shipping industry appeared to be a suitable choice for an investigative study of the implications of these practices on employers and employees.

In addition, my personal experience of working flexibly and a long-term interest in the shipping industry and the lives of seafarers (previous work includes for example Baum-Talmor, 2012; Baum-Talmor, 2014; Baum-Talmor and Gekara, 2015) led to my choosing the maritime industry as the basis for research into aspects of flexible work. This thesis is intended as a contribution at a doctoral level to the fields of the sociology of work, employment studies and career studies.

AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The thesis aims to investigate the implications of flexible employment for individuals and organisations as they are demonstrated both in the literature and in the data collected throughout the research project. To accomplish these aims, the following research questions are explored:

1. To what extent are flexible employment arrangements perceived as beneficial to employers?

2. What are the perceived implications of flexible employment arrangements for employees?
3. What is the relationship between the flexibility of employment and the occupational identities of seafarers?

THESIS STRUCTURE

The writing is organised into nine chapters. Chapter 2 sets the scene for the examination of organisational and individual perspectives with regard to the flexibilisation of labour in the global labour market and is entitled: *From Bureaucracy to Flexibility: Review of the Changes in Employment Practices in the Global Labour Market*. It aims to investigate the implications of flexible employment for individuals and organisations as they are manifested in the literature. The chapter examines the changes in employment practices in the global labour market over the past four decades. It provides a brief overview of bureaucratic careers in organisations, followed by the shift to flexible career models. The benefits and drawbacks of flexible employment practices for organisations and individuals are then presented, along with the implications of this flexibility for the 'career identities' of individuals. The chapter then moves its focus to an exploration of the literature regarding the flexibilisation of labour in the maritime industry. It explores specific changes in employment in the context of a global industry, and considers the implications of such changes for shipping companies and for seafarers. The literature presented in this chapter is used with other, more specific literature throughout the data chapters of the thesis (Chapters 4-7).

Chapter 3 is the methods chapter and it is entitled: *Adventures and Misadventures on the High Seas: Researching 'Career' in the Shipping Industry*. The chapter aims to explain the inspiration and motivation underpinning this thesis. It is slightly longer than the other chapters. This was considered necessary in order to present a complete picture of the research process. Divided into two parts Chapter 3 is organised chronologically, the first focusing on my personal connection to the topic with the second centring on the actual process of research. As the title implies, and as might be the case with other large projects such as a PhD, the research project has been similar to a rollercoaster with emotional highs and lows. It has had its excitement, for example conducting a pilot study and sailing

on board a cargo ship and it has also had its disaster such as the incident that involved the theft of my bag en route to conducting a research voyage. This chapter is an attempt to depict these experiences and also to explain the rationale behind choosing the interpretive method for collecting and analysing data.

Chapter 4 is the first data chapter in the thesis and is entitled: *Riding the Wave of Globalisation: Flexible Employment in the Shipping Industry*. To examine the reality of flexible employment in the shipping industry, I spoke to employers and employees in the industry to explore the extent to which flexible employment is perceived as beneficial to employers. This chapter mostly attempts to answer the first research question relating to the perceived benefits of flexible employment to employers in the shipping industry. Chapter 4 focuses on two key points: the reasons among employers for the use of flexible employment practices in the shipping industry and the extent to which they use continuous employment practices along with those of flexible employment. The chapter shows how employers are potentially seeking to enjoy the best of both worlds when rehiring the same seafarers while employing them on a 'plug and play' basis.

Chapter 5 is the second data chapter and is entitled: *'For Better, for Worse ... in Sickness and in Health': Seafarers' Perceptions of Flexible Employment*. The chapter focuses on the nature of flexible contracts and considers seafarers' attitudes towards flexible employment in the shipping industry in an attempt to answer the second research question. The chapter focuses on the positive and negative characteristics of contractual employment as these are experienced by seafarers. It centres on two main aspects of flexible employment: income/employment insecurity and the lack of social support systems, both presented from the seafarers' points of view. Differences in seafarers' perceptions of flexible employment are explored, which can be mostly associated with seafarers' market position or market power, an idea which is further developed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 is the third data chapter named: *Being More Than a Seafarer: Difference in Perceptions Explained*. This chapter attempts to provide an explanation of the differences in seafarers' perceptions of flexible employment, both good and bad, addressing the third research question that relates to the connection between flexible employment and

occupational identity. The first section in the chapter gives a short overview of ‘what it means’ to be a seafarer, while the second section goes deeper into the division of labour on board, where the connection between the skill-sets seafarers hold and differences in their views of flexible employment are explored.

Chapter 7 is the fourth data chapter entitled: *‘Until Death Us Do Part’: Seafaring as a Lifelong Occupation?* and it focuses on the extent to which seafarers perceive their work at sea as a lifelong occupation. Additionally, in light of the findings presented in Chapter 6, it also investigates the extent to which seafarers’ intentions of staying in or leaving seafaring can be influenced by the transferability of their skills. The chapter shows that despite seafarers’ intentions of leaving the sea after several years of work, they often become ‘stuck’ there for different reasons which can be roughly divided into: limited number of sea-related positions ashore, the phenomenon of ‘golden handcuffs’ and institutionalisation into life at sea.

Chapter 8 is the discussion chapter, bringing the threads of the thesis together and it is entitled: *The Notion of Career in Globalised Industries: Discussion*. This chapter explores flexibilisation of labour as it is manifested in the data collected during the research project and in the literature.⁵ The chapter combines the literature presented in Chapter 2 with the data presented in Chapters 4-7, discussing the findings of the thesis in light of the literature.

Chapter 9 is the final chapter of the thesis. It presents the implications of the findings for the shipping industry and possible implications to other global industries. The chapter concludes the thesis with research strengths, limitations, recommendations and future directions.

⁵ As a stylistic comment, it is important to state that the catholic-wedding-related elements used in some of the titles of the thesis are used intentionally, and can be linked with the lifelong commitment some seafarers have for the seafaring occupation, similarly to that associated among other things with a catholic marriage. This conceptualisation is reinforced towards the end of the thesis where seafarers inevitably become ‘seafarers for life’ despite plans to leave the sea after several years. This happens for different reasons, as described in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER TWO

From Bureaucracy to Flexibility: Review of the Changes in Employment Practices in the Global Labour Market

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO

The topic of this thesis is the flexibilisation of labour and its perceived implications for employers and employees, as well as its implications for the notion of ‘career’ in organisations. Flexible labour generally refers to any type of employment that differs from the ‘standard’ jobs and careers that are described as permanent, full-time, open-ended and secure (Felstead and Jewson, 1999b). ‘Standard’ employment rests upon a *‘formal contract of employment, a range of legally binding terms and conditions, and other obligations placed on the employer and the state’* (Felstead and Jewson, 1999a, p. 1). The topic of the thesis rests upon the intersection of several literatures, which include those of globalisation, career and organisational studies, maritime studies and the sociology of work.

The flexibilisation of work and employment in the global labour market has been a bone of contention amongst organisational and industrial sociologists over the past four decades (Baruch, 2006; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Beck, 2000; Braverman, 1998; Brown, 1995; Sampson, 2013). It has often been argued that the impact of flexibilisation on individuals’ character and self-worth is detrimental (Beck, 2000; Braverman, 1998; Sennett, 2011; Standing, 2016). This is because a flexible work environment often means that the employer can effortlessly redeploy and reassign employees according to organisational requirements (Stone, 2005), undermining long-term job security for individuals (Felstead et al., 2001; Guest, 2004; Hess et al., 2012; Inkson et al., 2012; Stone, 2005). Conversely, the benefits of flexible employment are emphasised by other researchers who claim that such employment provides individuals with opportunities to fulfil themselves and reach their full potential beyond the borders of a particular organisation (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a; Banai and Wes, 2004; Hall, 1996b; Hall, 2004). Considering that nowadays over 75 per cent of employees in the global labour market are in non-permanent employment (ILO, 2015; ILO, 2016), there is extensive agreement that the subject of flexible employment practices is a key area for analysis in the study of work worldwide. Edgell et al. (2016) state in their introduction to a collection of writings on the Sociology of Work and Employment that, *‘there is now widespread recognition, and evidence [...] that precarity is a defining feature for workers and managers, and indeed*

(from another perspective) capital, worldwide. Sociologists of employment now understand precarious work as both a key analytical motif, and, more importantly perhaps, a social reality for increasing numbers of people' (Edgell et al., 2016, p. 12).

This chapter aims to investigate the implications of flexible employment for individuals and organisations as they are manifested in the literature. To accomplish these aims, the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first examines the changes in employment practices in the global labour market over the past four decades, giving a brief overview of the history of bureaucratic careers in organisations, followed by the transition to flexible career models. The debate is then presented regarding the benefits and drawbacks of flexible employment practices for organisations and individuals, as well as the implications of this transition for the 'career identities' of individuals. The second section focuses on literature about the flexibilisation of labour in the maritime industry, exploring specific changes in employment in the context of a global industry, and examining the implications of such employment changes for shipping companies and for seafarers. Several research questions are proposed at the end of the chapter, setting the scene for the examination of organisational and individual perspectives with regard to the flexibilisation of labour in the global labour market. The literature presented in this chapter is used alongside other, more specific literature throughout the data chapters of the thesis.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE GLOBAL LABOUR MARKET

Bureaucratic Employment Arrangements

The idea of 'career' is based on the notion of bureaucratisation in organisations, dating back to the 19th century and developments in the industrial revolution (Baruch, 2006).⁶ Within the context of this research, bureaucratic organisations are those utilising traditional employment practices, where employees maintain a continuous career in the same organisation for the duration of their employment. A '*bureaucratic career*' (Brown 1995), often referred to as '*organisational career*' (Arthur, 1994; Clarke, 2013), or as a

⁶ The 'traditional' career path is just one aspect of what is considered a bureaucratic organisation, and despite the importance of other aspects of employment in a bureaucratic organisation, the main focus of this section is on the 'traditional' career.

'traditional career' (Baruch, 2006; Peiperl et al., 2000), is characterised by the logic of linear advancement, involving a sequence of positions in a formally defined hierarchy (Kanter, 1989), typically within a single organisation. According to Clarke (2013), the concept of the bureaucratic career was tacitly present in Max Weber's theory of 'The Ideal Bureaucracy', including references to *'promotion based on technical competence'* (Clarke, 2013, p. 685). In this context, Merton (1968) refers to bureaucratic occupations as having a *'life-long tenure'* (Merton, 1968, p. 250), and as maximising *'vocational security'* for individuals (Merton, 1968, p. 250).⁷ In addition to the above characteristics, in his book *'The Organisation Man'*, Whyte (1956) notes that individuals with bureaucratic careers do not only work for a particular organisation but also belong to it.

In this context, it is worth distinguishing between *'career'* and *'occupation'*. Whereas *'Career'* is defined as *'a job or occupation regarded as a long-term or lifelong activity [...] somebody's progress in a chosen profession or during that person's working life'* (Rooney, 2001), *'occupation'* is defined as *'the job by which somebody earns a living'* (Rooney, 2001). In addition to being an income source, occupation can often be viewed as the means of developing one's identity and as an important mechanism of social integration (Christiansen, 1999).

In this respect, the idea of an *'occupational identity'*, also referred to as *'career identity'*, refers to the conscious awareness of oneself as a worker (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011, p. 693). Occupational identity is often seen as a core element of individual's identity (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011), formed through different stages in individuals' lives. Individuals' occupational identity can be influenced by various factors. Some scholars (for example, Vondracek et al., 1986) argue that many individuals explore their occupational self through both vocational and avocational activities in their lives, potentially contributing to the process of occupational identity development (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011).

Skorikov and Vondracek (2011) also maintain that individuals' occupational identity can be influenced by their gender, family and peers as well as modern social and economic

⁷ In this context, it is worth pointing out that these occupations were largely restricted to men in *'white collar'* jobs (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1961).

conditions. Some early studies of occupational identities focus on the training stage in individuals' workplaces as instrumental in the development of their occupational identity. For example, in their study of the ways in which individuals develop an identity aligned with particular occupations, Becker and Carper (1956) emphasise different mechanisms such as *'development of problem interest and pride in new skills, the acquisition of professional ideology, investment, the internalisation of motives, and sponsorship'* (p. 296) as having the potential to produce changes in individuals' occupational identity.⁸ In a different project focusing on the occupational identities of Filipino and Norwegian seafarers, Østreng (2000a) asserts that seafarers' occupational identity is 'locally constructed', often based upon seafarers' national, historical and cultural backgrounds.

Drawing on the above discussion it is possible to argue that the main difference between career and occupation seems to lie in individuals' choices with regards to the future trajectory of their employment. It could be said that whereas individuals merely spend their present working time in an occupation, a career seems to carry a longer-term trajectory, whereby individuals make a conscious choice with regards to the continuation of their occupational future. In this context, individuals who plan a 'career' are likely to make long-term decisions with regards to the development of their skills and knowledge. Investment in training and in the development of one's skills can be linked to the idea of the 'bureaucratic career', especially in the context of an individual's career management. Specifically, most of the decisions relating to the management of bureaucratic careers are generally made by their employer Whyte (1956), where the *'assignment of roles occurs on the basis of technical qualifications which are ascertained through formalised, impersonal procedures'* (Clarke, 2013). In this context, individuals generally receive organisational support in their career development and follow a largely hierarchical route for advancement (Merton, 1968, p. 250). One way in which such organisations support

⁸ Changes in employment patterns have had implications for individuals' occupational identity formation (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011). These changes include, for example, processes of globalisation, a demand for flexibility and mobility, a decrease in loyalty within employee-employer relationships, as well as a decline in the availability of long-term career paths (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011). The implications of such changes for the notion of 'career' are discussed later in this chapter, in the section on the shift to flexible employment arrangements.

employees in their career development is by investing in their training and skilling for the long term, or by investing in their human capital (Merton, 1968).

Investment in Human Capital

Human capital is defined as the *'skills, knowledge and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organisation or country'* (Stevenson, 2015), or as *'productive wealth embodied in labour, skills and knowledge'* (OECD, 2017). The above definitions assume a connection between education and financial gain, a fundamental idea in Human Capital Theory. Human Capital Theory was primarily developed by Theodore W. Schultz and Gary S. Becker, who are often perceived as its *'two most pronounced scholars'* (Sweetland, 1996, p. 342). In a nutshell, Human Capital Theory presumes that there is a clear connection between education and individuals' economic capabilities (Schultz, 1961), suggesting that the investment of resources in the education and training of employees by organisations is financially viable for organisations for the long term (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1961). According to Human Capital theory, investing resources in the training of employees can increase employees' loyalty and commitment and ensure long-term employment and stability both for individuals and organisations (Banai and Wes, 2004; Danson and Gilmore, 2012).

It is suggested that individuals working in bureaucratic organisations generally enjoy organisational support in developing their skills (Clarke, 2013; Merton, 1968), and long job-tenure (Brown, 1995). However, changes in the global labour market have affected bureaucratic employment practices, as well as investment in human capital by organisations.

Changes to Bureaucratic Employment Arrangements

Changes to the bureaucratic model of careers started in the 1980s, when worldwide economic factors led to increased competition and uncertainty for international companies. These changes created pressure on organisations worldwide to *'push for greater profits and be more flexible in contracting their employees'* (Kalleberg, 2000, p. 343) in order to remain attractive in a highly competitive global market. Innovation, competition and economic conditions led to *'organisational downsizing and restructuring'*

(Clarke, 2013, p. 685), resulting in mass layoffs and the flattening of traditional hierarchies in some organisations (Brown, 1995; Stroud et al., 2014). This was in contrast to the promotion options that were previously available in organisations where bureaucratic employment practices were used. The flattening of traditional hierarchies meant that individuals could not necessarily rely on entry-level positions as a first step to advancing within the organisational hierarchy (see for example Scherer, 2004 in the European context) especially through positions acquired via temporary employment (Pavlopoulos, 2013). In several companies the flattening of organisational structures also raised doubts with regards to the long-term benefits of investment in the training of employees (Ashton et al., 2010), affirming to some extent prior criticism of Human Capital Theory (Bowles and Gintis, 1975; Gog, 2016). Specifically, the general uncertainty regarding investment decisions surrounding '*both physical and human capital*' (Sheehan, 2014, p. 14) including the downsizing and restructuring of organisational structures could create difficulties for organisations in planning their future workforce (Sheehan, 2014). Hence, investment in human capital was no longer seen as beneficial for the long term, as there was more focus on short-term profits (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown, 1995) and resulted in cuts to education and skilling in many organisations (Ashton et al., 2010; O'Reilly et al., 2011).

In line with the trend among many companies to reduce investment in a long-term and loyal workforce, there was a shift towards short-term contracts of employment (Brown, 1995; Clarke, 2013; Hewison, 2016). In order to save the costs associated with investment in human capital, and considering the need for competent and qualified employees, there has been an expansion of the outsourcing of a high-skilled, low-wage labour force to emerging and developing economies in some organisations (Brown, 2003; Brown and Lauder, 2006; Brown et al., 2011). This has often been seen as financially preferable to the recruitment of high-skilled, high-wage individuals from the local workforce (Brown, 1995; Brown et al., 2011; Clarke, 2013). These processes have happened in conjunction with the growing use of third-party labour contractors in order to employ fixed-term employees (Brown, 1995; Clarke, 2013), and has largely signalled the loss of direct contact between the employer and the employee (Clarke, 2013; Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg and Hewison, 2013). In some organisations, fixed-term

employees work alongside permanent employees. Hewison (2016), for example, describes:

In both developed and developing economies, modern factories, once the locus of the standard work relationship, now see teams of workers, often supplied by labour contractors, working alongside company employees. These different sets of workers, with diverse employers, receive different contracts, pay and benefits. Those employed by labour contractors may be on short-term contracts, with or without benefits, and lack opportunities for promotion or progress within the contracting company. Some of these workers may be migrants, trainees or interns, and, according to their status, all subject to different rules and remuneration, such as day rates, piece rates and monthly pay. Others may swap in and out of jobs, switching from the informal to the formal sector when a position opens, and then back again when the job is finished. (Hewison, 2016, p. 432)

Some scholars might argue that these processes and changes in the organisation of work have facilitated the increased crumbling of bureaucratic careers (see for example Cappelli, 1999; Hall, 1996a). Consequently, individuals have faced a ‘new era’ of employment, where they are inevitably responsible for their own fate. In this ‘new era’ individuals can no longer rely on organisational support in the investment in their human capital and the provision of life-long employment. These changes have led individuals (as well as organisations and countries) to accept greater flexibility in employment (Kalleberg, 2000) and contributed to the rise of a new career model. This career is often referred to as a ‘flexible career’ (Brown, 1995; Clarke, 2013), ‘boundaryless career’ (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a; Banai and Wes, 2004; Inkson et al., 2012; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009) or ‘portfolio career’ (Mallon, 1998), and it is covered at greater length in the next section.⁹

Flexible Employment Arrangements

Flexible Careers

Unlike the traditional career, which is ‘conceived to unfold in a single employment setting’ (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996b, p. 5), flexible careers break traditional assumptions about career advancement and hierarchy (Lazarova and Taylor, 2009). In a flexible career,

⁹ For purposes of coherency in the thesis, the term ‘flexible career’ will be used from now on to describe the ‘portfolio’/ ‘boundaryless’ career models.

an individual's career identity is independent of the employer (Banai and Wes, 2004), and generally develops beyond the borders of a single organisation. Flexible careers largely involve *'the unfolding sequence of any person's work experiences over time'* (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a, p. 4), in which individuals develop their personal and professional skills.

Flexible careers are diverse in nature and can be found across a breadth of occupations, often crossing national and organisational borders. There are several examples of flexible careers that can be seen in the global labour market today. Perhaps the ultimate contemporary flexible worker accesses work in the 'digital world', for example contractors use digital platforms such as 'CrowdFlower', 'Upwork' and 'Mechanical Turk' and contributors to services such as 'Uber' and 'Deliveroo' are facilitated by way of the internet.¹⁰ These web-based platforms enable anyone with the 'right' skills to obtain work and consequently services in a highly flexible form (Beynon, 2016; Sampson, forthcoming). Such work and services often exist in 'virtual spaces' introducing geographical flexibility to commissioners and to providers (Graham, 2010; Graham, 2015). Additional examples of industries that facilitate flexible careers include the hospitality industry (Burrow et al., 2015), entertainment (Hennekam and Bennett, 2017; Raito and Lahelma, 2015; Randle et al., 2015), transport (Wintersberger et al., 2013) and academia (Baruch and Hall, 2004; Danson and Gilmore, 2012).

Flexible careers emerged as individuals' response to the breakdown of organisational support and to the diminishing availability of bureaucratic careers within organisations. As such, flexible careers supposedly empower individuals to be at the helm of their career development, where they proactively navigate their own occupational paths (for

¹⁰ Digital workers are referred to here in the context of tangible services that are provided to commissioners through an online platform. There are several examples of such services. '**CrowdFlower**' is an online 'on demand' platform, provided by over 500,000 workers in more than 70 countries (Beynon, 2016). '**Deliveroo**' is 'service that allows users to order from their favorite restaurants within a 32-minute time frame' (from <https://thebusinessoftech.wordpress.com/2016/05/08/deliveroo/> accessed on 21 January 2017). '**Mechanical Turk**' is a 'marketplace for work that requires human intelligence. The Mechanical Turk service gives businesses access to a diverse, on-demand, scalable workforce and gives Workers a selection of thousands of tasks to complete whenever it's convenient.' (from https://www.mturk.com/mturk/help?helpPage=overview#what_is, accessed on 20 April 2017). '**Uber**' is 'essentially an app which connects drivers with passengers directly, instead of through a centralized booking service' (from http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/11/what-is-uber_n_5483290.html accessed on 21 January 2017). '**Upwork**' is a 'freelancing website that connects clients with top freelance professionals' (from <https://www.upwork.com/about/> accessed on 21 January 2017).

example, see Altman and Baruch, 2012 in the context of international employees). There are, however, some scholars who claim that such flexibility holds a gloomy future for individuals, with negative consequences for both their self-worth (Beck, 2000; Sennett, 2011) and their future financial security (Kalleberg, 2016; Sennett, 2011). These differing bodies of literature offer a complex picture of flexible employment.

The Bright Side of Flexibility

One of the main arguments in favour of flexible work is that individuals have so-called freedom to choose and shape their financial and occupational futures (Arthur et al., 2005; Lazarova and Taylor, 2009). It is argued that individuals are enabled to fulfil themselves by reaching their highest potential, an assumption that bears resemblance to Maslow's Theory of Human Needs (Maslow, 1943). In his theory, Maslow (1943) maintains that human motivation manifests itself in a pattern of five hierarchical need levels. Listed from lowest to the highest the needs are: physiological (i.e. basic needs like hunger and thirst); safety (i.e. need for security); affiliation (i.e. need for close affective relationships); achievement and esteem (i.e. need for achievement and self-respect); and finally, self-actualisation (i.e. need for growth of one's potential skills and abilities). According to the hierarchy of needs, once individuals establish meaningful career identities by controlling their career paths (Lazarova and Taylor, 2009; Schein, 1996), they are likely to increase their chances for self-actualisation (see Hall and Nougaim, 1968 especially in the context of managerial role advancement).

Another potential positive aspect of flexible careers is perceived to be increased opportunities to travel the world (Altman and Baruch, 2012). This advantage can mostly be associated with expatriates and those working on international assignments (for example see Altman and Baruch, 2012; Baruch and Altman, 2002; Mäkelä et al., 2016). As such, often an international assignment is in itself considered to be advantageous to an individual's career development since it facilitates contact with different cultures and geographies (Baruch et al., 2013).

Another aspect of flexible careers that supposedly provides individuals with freedom is the ability to shift between different organisations as part of their career development.

This 'freedom' has been reported to provide individuals with the possibility of expanding their skill set (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 181) and gaining transferable skills (Banai and Wes, 2004; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Transferable skills are defined as '*the generic capabilities which allow people to succeed in a wide range of different tasks and jobs*' (Training Agency, 1990, p. 5), and these are generally accumulated as part of individuals' job experiences (Derr and Laurent, 1989).

In the context of skill transferability, a research project investigating the transferability of skills in vocational education in Australia classified the different levels of transferability according to the type of skills individuals were able to present (Snell et al., 2016a; Snell et al., 2016b). They separated employees' skills into soft skills, generic hard skills and specific hard skills (Snell et al., 2016b). *Soft skills* generally relate to an individual's ability to operate effectively in the workplace, referring to non-job specific skills that are potentially transferable and include for example communication, social and IT skills. *Generic hard skills* include technical and professional capabilities that can be applied effectively in almost all jobs in most companies, occupations and sectors and in personal life and are perceived as highly transferable. Finally, *specific hard skills* refer to technical and job-specific abilities that are applicable in a small number of companies, occupations and sectors. According to Snell et al. (2016b), individuals with soft skills and generic hard skills may find it easier to find employment in different workplaces as compared to individuals with specific hard skills. This suggests that generic hard skills could be highly useful in increasing an individual's market power.

Supporters of the flexible career model might claim that the ability of individuals to use skills as assets (or as their 'market power') regardless of the organisation worked for provides them with the freedom to make their own vocational choices and increases their options of finding employment. Sometimes, workers' transferable skills can be associated with higher prospects of finding a job, where '*workers with skills that are in short supply and relatively high demand are assumed to be able to exert more control over their careers as a result of their portable competencies*' (Kalleberg, 2016, p. 122). Furthermore, individuals with flexible careers hold the potential to use their transferable skills as commodities they might 'sell' to organisations as a way of promoting their careers independently (Banai and Wes, 2004; Sullivan and Arthur, 2006).

In the context of skill transferability and its benefit to organisations, it could be argued that the endless supply of a skilled and qualified workforce is beneficial because it avoids the necessity of investing funds in training (Ashton et al., 2010; O'Reilly et al., 2011; Sheehan, 2014; Stroud et al., 2014). Conversely it could be claimed that individuals' 'freedom' to shift across different workplaces might carry negative implications because it creates difficulties for organisations when planning their future workforces (Brown, 1995; Brown et al., 2011). If individuals invest in their own education, without a particular sense of loyalty or commitment towards any one organisation they can easily shift to another (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2011). In an increasingly unpredictable market this creates problems for organisations where there is a need to plan personnel requirements for the long term.

It could be said that the nature of flexible careers appears to provide individuals with more power to navigate their careers and have more control over their occupational future (Baruch, 2006; Clarke, 2013) than traditional careers in bureaucratic organisations. This freedom can be compared to the obligations of individuals with traditional careers who are '*tacitly expected*' to adapt their '*thoughts, feelings and actions*' (Merton, 1968, p. 255) to the rules of the organisation. Additionally, these individuals may be required to sacrifice their personal desires to the impersonal goals and procedures of the bureaucratic organisation (Weber, 1947; Whyte, 1956). So far, the benefits of flexible employment to individuals were emphasised. Even though there appears to be an underlying assumption among some scholars that flexible careers are mostly beneficial to individuals (Dickmann and Harris, 2005; Hall, 2004), others criticise this practice by claiming that disconnection from an organisational structure has mostly negative implications for individuals in the short and the longer term, as discussed next.

The Dark Side of Flexibility

Flexible work is often 'precarious work', and is sometimes associated with '*the loss of social protection and a rejection or loss of the standard employment relationship*' (Hewison, 2016, p. 431). In this context, the main critique of flexible employment relates to the unclear financial future faced by individuals in such employment (Beck, 2000; Guest, 2004; Hewison, 2016; Standing, 2016). Research shows that individuals who work

flexibly ‘almost always get paid less while having fewer opportunities to access workplace or even statutory benefits’ (Hewison, 2016, p. 437). For example, organisations using flexible employment practices often cut pension contributions as a way of reducing costs (Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016). Some studies suggest that flexible employees, or ‘the precariat,’ as Standing (2016) calls them, experience income insecurity and no contributions-based social protection (i.e. state-supported pension schemes) due to the nature of their contracts (Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016). Income insecurity is closely linked with general job insecurity, which is defined as ‘the powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation’ (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438).

The lack of organisational or state-supported pension schemes often means that individuals are left to their own devices when it comes to planning their financial future upon retirement, a task that becomes more complex in light of the general income insecurity associated with flexible work (Beck, 2000; Sennett, 2011). With the short-term nature of contractual employment, the responsibility for finding alternative employment at the end of their contract often falls on individuals. As a result, people find themselves in what Beck (2000) terms ‘endemic insecurity’, or in what Sennett (2011) refers to as a complete lack of stability, in which individuals become uncertain about their next source of income. In this regard, Standing (2016), for example, notes:

While being in and out of temporary low-wage jobs does not build up entitlement to state or enterprise benefits, the person exhausts the ability to call on benefits provided by family and friends in times of need. [...] It is made worse by the stress of insecurity and the indignity of constantly having to try to sell oneself to agencies and potential employers. (Standing, 2016, p. 83)

Some individuals rely on their skills to provide them with a competitive edge when it comes to finding employment in the precarious labour market (Brown et al., 2011; Brown and Tannock, 2009). The existence of so-called marketability to ‘sell’ themselves and their services can be beneficial to organisations that can access high-quality workers without the hassle involved in investing in their training (see for example Ashton et al., 2009 in the context of skill formation in TNCs). However, as noted by Standing (2016) and implied by

others (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2009; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2016) it might not offer the same benefits for employees who remain in a constant state of uncertainty.

In a global labour market, the need for qualified and skilled employees often drives contemporary organisations to hire individuals who already hold the appropriate educational credentials (Brown and Hesketh, 2004), thus circumventing the need to invest in training. Being unable to rely on company-funded training, individuals are required to invest resources in the development of their own credentials, which serves as proof that they are sufficiently qualified to work in a given organisation (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Brown and Tannock, 2009). Market reforms in some countries, for instance governmental policies that favour competitiveness for jobs among individuals in global economies (Brown, 2003) have led to individuals' dependence on 'credential competition'. This competition has fuelled the perception that the so-called 'good jobs' are attainable only by those with high credentials (Brown, 2003).

In many countries the competition for jobs has produced a growing number of individuals who want to attain higher education credentials (Brown, 1995), and as a result higher education institutions accept more students than before and 'produce' more educated individuals (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown and Tannock, 2009). This has created an influx of highly educated individuals without sufficient employment options, as there has been no change in the number of available positions in the global labour market. This leads to a complex situation. On the one hand, if everyone obtains these credentials, no one will get ahead in the competition for jobs. On the other hand, individuals who do not play 'the game' of obtaining higher education credentials have very low chances of winning 'the game' i.e. finding a job (Brown et al., 2011). This is what Brown (2003) refers to as the 'opportunity trap', where only a few individuals '*can afford to opt out of the competition for a livelihood*' (p. 142).

The growing precariousness of employment in the global labour market has facilitated a situation where many people often stay in dead-end jobs without upward mobility in order to provide for themselves and their families (Brown et al., 2011; Kalleberg, 2009). Additionally, there are reported cases where individuals are forced to take on more than one job to make ends meet (Beck, 2000; Graham, 2016; Kalleberg, 2009). In this context,

Kalleberg (2009) notes the implications of precarious work where individuals spend more time working and less time in developing their communities, where '*families have had to increase their working time to keep up with their income needs*' (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 9) compared to the situation in the past.¹¹ Furthermore, according to Sennett (2011), flexible employment has created a situation in which people no longer find definition and narrative in their working lives and are no longer connected to the work they do (Sennett, 2011). In Sennett's view, the work individuals do reflects their self-worth, and if people no longer find purpose in their work it impinges negatively on their sense of identity (Sennett, 2011, p. 99).

In addition to the predicaments of flexible employees described above, there appear to be even worse implications for those whose employment crosses geographical boundaries, for example digital workers (Graham, 2010). Since these employees are physically dispersed (Beynon, 2016), they often lack the options to form trade unions which could potentially defend their rights, demand a greater share of returns generated by the work they do, and help regulate their working conditions (Graham, 2016). A rosy picture is depicted of there being more opportunities than ever before for workers in the online platforms previously mentioned (e.g. 'Upwork' and 'CrowdFlower'). The reality of the situation is somewhat different, as Beynon (2016) notes:

This new digitalised piecework system is often presented in terms of workers making 'choices'. The prime attraction to employers of this new Taylorism is that it is a source of cheap, highly exploitable labour. Crowd work offers an inexpensive, increasingly global, zero-hours system, and as such epitomises the underemployment that characterises much of the world of work today. (Beynon, 2016, p. 320)

Workers in such employment experience precarity and uncertainty (Beynon, 2016). Moreover, digital workers are often required to compete with other digital workers by 'selling' their skills based on requirement (Beynon, 2016; Graham, 2016). The online competition among these digital workers often leads to a 'race to the bottom' in terms of

¹¹ This can be seen in the US (see for example Jacobs and Gerson, 2004, Chapter 4 on p. 80), especially with reference to the time spent at work and the time spent at home, when compared to the situation in the past.

wages and work conditions (Graham, 2016; Lehdonvirta et al., 2014), which signifies another detrimental aspect of flexible employment.

In sum, different interpretations of flexible employment can be identified within the literature. These can be roughly divided into those which claim that individuals might no longer be able to develop what can be seen as a meaningful career identity within a precarious labour market (see for example Sennett, 2011, pp. 273-274; Standing, 2016, pp. 119-121), and those which assert that a meaningful and fulfilling career is possible in the era of flexible employment (see for example Arthur et al., 2005; Banai and Wes, 2004). Some of the ideas behind the flexibilisation of labour appear to be related to skills that construct a sense of career for individuals, in the context of skills that might provide individuals with a competitive edge in finding a job in the precarious labour market (Brown et al., 2011; Brown and Tannock, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to explore which perspective represents the situation in reality, and to examine whether flexible employment is in fact perceived as beneficial by organisations and by individuals in the global labour market.

In this thesis, I will examine the different interpretations of ‘career’ and ‘skills’ in a flexible working environment, using a specific example of an industry at the forefront of economic globalisation, the shipping industry. The next section overviews current employment in shipping in order to demonstrate how the shipping industry is a suitable example for examining those issues.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY

Combining Bureaucracy and Flexibility

Ships and the Sea

The shipping industry has existed for hundreds of years, during which time ships have been the main means of delivering goods around the world (Alderton et al., 2004; Alderton and Winchester, 2002; Lillie, 2006; Sampson, 2013). Today, over 73 per cent of the global merchandise trade (by volume) is done by sea in over 90,000 of the world’s

commercial vessels (UNCTAD, 2016, p. 3).¹² Seafarers are the main labourers in this industry, and currently there are approximately 1.5 million seafarers operating the world's fleet (BIMCO, 2015). In the past, seafaring was considered a secure and lifelong career (Alderton et al., 2004; Fei et al., 2012; Hill, 1972; Mack, 2007). However employment practices began to change in the latter half of the 20th century as did seafarers' working conditions (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). Included in such changes were several processes that marked a shift towards flexible employment practices, bearing similarity to processes in other global industries.

Shift towards Flexibility

Within the context of the shift towards flexible employment in shipping, one important change relates to the 'flagging out' of vessels to flags of convenience (FOCs). Ships that sail international waters generally sail under a particular flag. According to Article 91 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) from 1982, which is seen as the main legislation affecting ship registration (Alderton et al., 2004), *'[s]hips have the nationality of the State whose flag they are entitled to fly. There must exist a genuine link between the State and the ship'* (UN, 1982, p. 58). During most of the 19th and 20th centuries, vessels were generally registered locally, and the vessel owner's offices and the ship owning companies were located in the same geographical area (Sampson, 2013). Ship owners were generally required to comply with the local regulations where their vessel was registered (Sampson, 2013). For political and military reasons, from the 1930s onwards, specific nations (Honduras, Liberia and Panama) were developed as 'open' or Flag of Convenience (FOC) ship registries (Alderton et al., 2004), offering minimal regulatory restrictions and lower costs to ship owners. Soon other nations were offering their own open registries in an attempt to entice ship owners to register their vessels with them (Alderton et al., 2004). Following falling freight rates, bankruptcies and mergers, the practice of 'flagging out' became increasingly common in

¹² The latest available information about the world trade by volume, which refers to trade in value terms (UNCTAD, 2016, p. 3) is calculated based on GDP and merchandise trade in US dollars and seaborne trade in metric tons. The world trade by volume is represented by the figure 340, whilst the seaborne trade by volume is represented by the figure 250. A percentage calculation (250/340) has resulted in 73.5 percent (=0.73529*100 per cent) of the world trade that is done by sea.

the 1970s and 1980s (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013) as one way of surviving in a highly competitive environment.

The latter half of the 20th century marked a further change in ship registration from traditional maritime nations to open registries (Alderton et al., 2004; Bloor and Sampson, 2009) and to second registries (Alderton et al., 2004; Carlisle, 2009; Sampson, 2013). Second registries enabled ship owners to keep their ships '*under the national flag of the home state or under that of an overseas dependency*' (Carlisle, 2009, p. 322) while maintaining competitive costs on the world market. The second registries were meant to offset the appeal of the FOCs by offering competitive prices to ship owners while maintaining the national flag of their home state, but the FOCs endured and continued to be used alongside the second registries, leaving over 70 per cent of the tonnage registered ships worldwide under a foreign flag by 2016 (UNCTAD, 2016).¹³ In line with the increasing use of FOCs, there has been a change in the relationship between the location of the vessel ownership and the location of the vessel registration (Sampson, 2013). This has largely freed ship owners from '*compliance with national labour agreements on salaries, contracts, and conditions*' (Sampson, 2013, p. 33). While in the past '*seafarers tended either to be recruited by national companies or to seek work in countries with well-established fleets flagged under national flags*' (Sampson and Schroeder, 2006, p. 62), the registration of ships with FOCs has facilitated a largely precarious work environment with minimal regulation of work conditions (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013).

In Search of Cheaper Labour

In line with the changes in the relationship between the locations of vessel ownership and vessel registration, there has been an increasing search for cheap labour to crew internationally flagged vessels by ship owners (Alderton and Winchester, 2002; Sampson, 2013). Socio-economic and political processes in developing and emerging economies played a significant part in the financial attractiveness of seafarers from those countries to employers (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Wu and Morris, 2006), as well as the appeal of

¹³ For more information about the political and economic processes that contributed to the development of second registries see Alderton et al. (2004); Alderton and Winchester (2002); Carlisle (2009); Sampson (2013, pp. 32-34); Winchester and Alderton (2003).

the shipping industry to individuals (Barnett et al., 2006; Sampson, 2013). For example, economic liberalisation in China, the former Soviet Union and in several countries in Eastern Europe during the 1990s created more international working opportunities for individuals than before (Wu and Morris, 2006), which resulted in ‘*seafarers from the new transitional states being added to the mix of crews*’ (Bloor and Sampson, 2009, p. 712) in the global labour market for seafarers.

The origin of seafarers on board vessels worldwide has been well documented in manpower surveys. Specifically, from the early 1990s, and every five years after that, the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO), together with the International Shipping Federation (ISF) has undertaken a ‘*series of national surveys supported by both employers and unions*’ (Albert et al., 2016, p. 2) to estimate the number of officers and ratings that crew the seafaring global fleet. The growing number of seafarers from developing and emerging economies in the global labour market has been cited as marking a shift in the ‘*center of gravity of the labour market for seafarers*’ (BIMCO, 2005), from ‘traditional’ maritime labour supplying countries like Western Europe and OECD countries towards the Far East, the Indian sub-continent and Eastern Europe (BIMCO, 2005; BIMCO, 2010; BIMCO, 2015). Nowadays, the majority of the world’s ships are manned by mixed-nationality crews (BIMCO, 2015; Bloor and Sampson, 2009). In 2015, the countries with the largest number of seafarers were China, Philippines, Indonesia, Russian Federation, and Ukraine (see Table 1 and Table 2 below). Such changes in the origins of seafarers are supported by earlier crew list data from 2003 (Ellis and Sampson, 2008), which demonstrate that the highest number of seafarers at that time came from the Philippines, Ukraine, Russia, Indonesia and China (see Table 2), comprising almost half of the total number of seafarers worldwide (Ellis and Sampson, 2008; Sampson, 2013).¹⁴

Table 1: Estimate of the supply of seafarers by economic and regional groupings, 2015. Adapted from BIMCO (2015, p. 34)

Area	Current supply
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¹⁴ These data exclude personnel working on passenger vessels, for example cruise ships and ferries. For more information about composition of crews on board merchant ships, see Ellis and Sampson (2008), BIMCO (2015), as well as Sampson (2013).

	Officers	% of total officers	Ratings	% of total ratings
<i>OECD Countries</i>	176,000	23	118,000	14
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	135,000	17	125,000	14
<i>Africa/Latin America</i>	65,000	8	82,000	9
<i>Far East</i>	300,000	39	477,500	55
<i>Indian Sub- Continent</i>	98,000	13	71,000	8
All National Groups	774,000	100	873,500	100

Table 2: Estimate of active seafarers by selected nationality based upon crew list data. Adapted from Sampson (2013, p. 37)

Nationality	Number of seafarers	% of total seafarers
Philippines	141,698	22.4
Ukraine	45,607	7.2
Russia	44,101	7
Indonesia	43,592	6.9
China	32,379	5.1
India	26,335	4.2
Turkey	23,810	3.8
Poland	20,057	3.2
Greece	15,952	2.5
Myanmar	12,519	2
The rest of the world	225,217	35.7
	631,267	100

Third-Party Recruitment Agencies

As in other global industries, and in line with the changing composition of crew on board (Ellis et al., 2012; Ellis and Sampson, 2008), there has been an increasing use of third-party recruitment agencies by shipping companies to recruit seafarers (Sampson, 2013). These third-party recruitment agencies are usually located in emerging economies, such as the Philippines or Romania, and they target local personnel for shipping companies worldwide (Sampson, 2013). The use of third-party recruitment agencies implies the loss of the direct link between shipping companies and seafarers that existed in the past (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Fei, 2011), and has been reported to have a predominantly detrimental effect on seafarers' working and living conditions on board vessels (see for example Dutt, 2015; Gekara et al., 2013; Sampson, 2013).

In conjunction with these changes, and as in other global industries, there has been an increase in the number of temporary contracts issued to seafarers (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Ellis et al., 2012). The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), an international federation of transport workers' trade unions, generally advocates permanent contracts for seafarers. Nevertheless, seafarers working in the global labour

market are increasingly employed under temporary contracts with short-term retention (Ali et al., 2014; Sampson, 2013). Bloor and Sampson (2009) describe it thus:

Contractual arrangements for outsourced labour vary between ship operators and between ship sectors (ferry, cruise, bulk carriers, container ships, oil tankers, gas carriers, etc.), but typically only senior officers will be employed on permanent contracts if permanent contracts are in place at all: junior officers (frequently) and crew (almost invariably) will be employed on short-term contracts of a year or less, but will remain 'on the books' of the crewing agency. (Bloor and Sampson, 2009, p. 713)

Seafarers who are employed on short-term contracts normally become unemployed at the end of their contract (Leong, 2012). This often means that once their contract is finished, these seafarers generally lack any social benefits, such as medical and life insurance (Dutt, 2015; Sampson, 2013). The use of temporary short-term contracts also means many seafarers lack state-funded pension schemes in their countries (Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Schroeder, 2006).

In light of the lack of job security and pension schemes, cases have been reported in which seafarers signed very long contracts, for example up to two years, in an attempt to secure as much income as possible during their employment (Gerstenberger, 2002; Kahveci, 2005). According to Gerstenberger (2002), the reason for this is clear: *'these seafarers cannot wish for short contracts as long as they cannot be reasonably sure that they will be employed again after their leave'* (Gerstenberger, 2002, p. 11). This practice has been cost-efficient to ship owners, who save travel costs (Gerstenberger, 2002). For seafarers, however, despite a relatively steady income source for the duration of the contract, taking on a two-year contract can potentially carry negative implications, both physically and psychologically, as has been previously reported (see for example Bridger et al., 2010; Dutt, 2015).

The practices of taking up long contracts have become more regulated since the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 came into force during August 2013. The MLC limited the term of service seafarers were permitted to a maximum of 12 months (ILO, 2006). As a result of these limitations, there was increased pressure on shipping companies (particularly from the ITF), to limit the length of the contract for seafarers working on board internationally flagged vessels (Lillie, 2006). For example, in a uniform

and standard Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for crews from 2015, the ITF recommends that seafarers who work on board internationally flagged vessels *'shall be engaged for 9 (nine) months and such period may be extended or reduced by 1 (one) month for operational convenience. The employment shall be automatically terminated [...] at the first arrival of the ship in port after expiration of that period, unless the company operates a permanent employment system'* (ITF, 2015).¹⁵

The flexible aspects of employment practices in shipping presented so far, including the use of third-party recruitment agencies, temporary contracts and the lack of pension schemes, appear to be driven by the logic of cost-efficiency (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson, 2013). Another cost-cutting practice that has become common among ship owners is reducing investment in vocational training for seafarers (Sampson and Tang, 2015).

Investment in Training and Education

In order to maintain a well-functioning ship, seafarers have to undergo appropriate training in Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions worldwide prior to joining a ship (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson and Tang, 2015). In the past training was provided to seafarers by their employers. This was in line with bureaucratic employment practices and particularly the case for sea-going officers (Aubert and Arner, 1959; Gould, 2010; Hill, 1972; Sampson and Tang, 2015). Nowadays, seafarers and their families shoulder most of the costs associated with training (Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015). The financially driven reductions leading to lower investment in vocational training for seafarers and cadets have been explained by Sampson and Tang (2015):

Not only is the industry highly responsive to world trade (for obvious reasons, there is little insulation available to the transport sector when world trade takes a downturn), but it also experiences a significant time lag when it comes to capacity. New ship orders placed with shipyards in China, Korea and Japan¹⁶ take several years to fulfil and new tonnage that is ordered when freight rates are buoyant may not be launched until such

¹⁵ In this example of a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the contract does not specify whether it refers to officers or ratings on board, or whether it refers to a particular nationality of seafarers, but is it said to be used by the unions that are most affiliated with the ITF (from http://www.itfseafarers.org/itf_agreements.cfm, accessed on February 4, 2017).

¹⁶ From Sampson and Tang (2015), the footnote states: 'The three main shipbuilding nations'.

time as demand has slumped and profit margins have been wiped out. The additional capacity further increases pressure in an industry that is highly globalised and subject to significant competitive pressures. (Sampson and Tang, 2015, p. 2)

These pressures, in turn, create difficulties in planning the demand for ships and personnel on board for the long term (Sampson and Tang, 2015). Difficulties in personnel planning reduce the value of investment in training as seafarers are often hired on the basis that they already possess the skills and qualifications required for their work on board (Sampson and Tang, 2015).

In keeping with the shift of recruitment to developing countries, education and training of seafarers has also relocated there (Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015). This shift has had an impact on the maintenance of basic standards of training and education (Bloor et al., 2014; Sampson and Tang, 2015) and for the international regulation of these standards (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson and Tang, 2015). In an endeavour to sustain an *'international standard of competence aboard internationally trading vessels regardless of country of registration'* (Bloor and Sampson, 2009, p. 718), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) created the international convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) (Bloor and Sampson, 2009). The STCW determines the basic qualifications and certificates required by all seafarers before they are entitled to work on a vessel (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson et al., 2011).

The IMO's attempts to regulate seafarers' training worldwide is often undermined by flexible employment practices. For example, it has been reported that in some cases, crewing agencies engage in corrupt practices by pressurising training institutions to produce forged certificates (Bloor and Sampson, 2009). It has also been reported that in order to increase their chances of securing work in a highly competitive sector, some seafarers who struggle to meet training fees go to great lengths to buy fake certificates (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Bloor et al., 2014; Sampson, 2013). Other seafarers were reported to have taken drastic means to secure their first employment contract, especially during the initial stage of their training as this was a crucial step in securing their future employment (Bloor and Sampson, 2009). As Bloor and Sampson (2009) note: *'[b]ribery*

was reported by seafarers in respect of other aspects of training, for example in securing a scarce training position (the twelve months 'sea time', or practical training required for graduation) on a ship immediately after completing college training' (Bloor and Sampson, 2009, p. 722). The seafaring occupation is built on hierarchical promotion, where seafarers move up the ranks in order to develop their seafaring 'career' (Aubert and Arner, 1959; Fei et al., 2012; Hill, 1972; Sampson, 2013), not necessarily on board the same ship or with a single shipping company (Alderton et al., 2004; Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson et al., 2011). Thus, successfully securing the initial training position is seen by seafarers as a determining factor in obtaining future employment.

In the context of precarious employment, and unsurprisingly for a global industry, the ample supply of seafarers from developing and emerging economies (BIMCO, 2015; Sampson, 2013) can place workers in a vulnerable position open to exploitation by employers. Often fierce competition is created among seafarers who wish to enter the seafaring occupation, both at national (Leong, 2012; Sampson and Zhao, 2003; Yang, 2010) and at international level (Sampson, 2013; Tang et al., 2015). It has been reported for example that seafarers in India, especially those in lower ranks (like junior officers and ratings), wait in seafarer hostels for months before they manage to secure their first contract (Yang, 2010), not necessarily securing further employment. Other seafarers wait a long time between contracts (Sampson, 2013), and are often restricted to searching for work at sea due to the sector specific skills most of them hold (Sampson and Tang, 2015). It is reported that increasing competition for jobs causes some seafarers to start their work on board in a lower rank than the rank for which they hold a qualification, i.e. start working as a rating in the deck department even if they hold an officer's ticket, just to be able to 'get their foot in the door' and secure initial employment within shipping (Sampson, 2013).

Seafarers have various reasons for seeking employment in the shipping industry. Some go to sea in order to earn large sums of money in a relatively short time (Baylon and Stevenson, 2005; Calderón, 2011; Guo et al., 2006; Østreng, 2000b). Others are reported to join the shipping industry in order to develop their skills in different workplaces (i.e. ships), as a means of increasing their attractiveness in the global labour market (Gould, 2010; Guo et al., 2006). Another reason reported is that a seafaring occupation will

provide them with opportunities to travel (Barnett et al., 2006; Baylon and Stevenson, 2005; Calderón, 2011; Dearsley, 2013; Gould, 2010) and to have an ‘adventure’ (Gould, 2010; Mack, 2007). In this context, many seafarers are disappointed when they start their work at sea. They find ‘*modern-day seafaring to be different to the world they had imagined*’ (Sampson, 2013, p. 75). The short and rushed port stays may limit seafarers’ visits ashore as does the general remoteness of port locations from cities (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013; Sampson, 2017). Consequently, the possibility of touring these places is limited.

Within the context of working in a globalised industry, seafarers can be likened to some extent to ‘digital workers’ whose employment in the ‘virtual’ world often crosses international borders (Graham, 2010).¹⁷ As seafarers experience it, a potential downside of their employment is the limited option for forming trade unions (Beynon, 2016; Hewison, 2016; Lehdonvirta et al., 2014). There are trade unions in the shipping industry that defend seafarers’ rights (Gekara et al., 2013; Lillie, 2006), however, there has been a weakening in seafarers’ representation on board vessels trading internationally, mostly due to the replacement of seafarers from developed countries with those from developing and emerging economies (Sampson, 2013, p. 92). Additionally, there are limitations to the involvement of such unions in disputes that take place during seafarers’ employment on board, in part due to rapid turnaround times and remote port locations (Alderton et al., 2004), or because of mutiny-related laws on board which represent an important barrier to strike action by seafarers (see for example White, 2004).

Platform for Examining Implications of Flexible Work

From the above overview, it is clear that seafaring as an occupation combines some characteristics of bureaucratic employment as well as those of flexible employment. On the one hand, there is hierarchical advancement and the option for a continuous career

¹⁷ Digital workers might be one group of precarious workers that can be compared to seafarers. Despite some core similarities between seafarers’ precarious employment situation and that of digital workers, however, there are some fundamental differences. Seafarers appear to be slightly more stable when compared to digital workers by virtue of having smaller number of longer-term contracts in their careers compared to digital workers, who might have several thousand small jobs in the course of their careers (Beynon, 2016; Sampson, forthcoming). Nevertheless, within the context of unionisation, the comparison seemed appropriate.

for some workers such as officers; and on the other hand, there are features of flexible employment such as the ‘freedom’ to shift between different companies for purposes of career development. Shipping companies have systems in place to ensure that seafarers pass particular milestones in their training in order to be hired (Sampson and Tang, 2015). At the same time, they are employed through third-party recruitment agencies, mostly on a temporary basis (Alderton et al., 2004; Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson, 2013). In this context, seafarers can generally shift between different shipping companies as part of a ‘continuous’ employment trajectory, and might develop a long-term career based on ‘bits and pieces’ in the form of temporary employment contracts.

The flexibility seafarers have to shift between different shipping companies but remain within the shipping industry does not necessarily have a detrimental effect on the industry as a whole, since the human capital (i.e. seafarers) remains within the boundaries of the industry. However, seafarers’ employment on a temporary basis suggests that they lack formal commitment towards a particular employer which may create problems for shipping companies planning their future workforce. Another potentially detrimental effect flexibility might have for ship owners is the number of incidents associated with inadequate training and the unexpected costs incurred as a result (Sampson and Tang, 2015; Sampson et al., 2014). This is because lack of investment in training by employers as well as bribery and forged certificates can facilitate a situation whereby incompetently trained seafarers start working on board ships without going through the appropriate channels, a practice that has been previously associated with *‘high profile shipping accidents involving pollution and related economic deprivation’* (Sampson, 2004b, p. 247).

These issues beg the question of whether flexible employment is predominantly beneficial or detrimental to seafarers and companies, and in a wider context, whether employees and employers in other industries are affected detrimentally or beneficially by flexible employment. In addition, such issues raise the question of the extent to which seafarers can develop a meaningful occupational identity within an industry where these employment practices are commonplace.

SUMMARY

This chapter explored the implications of flexible employment practices for individuals and organisations. The advantages of flexibilisation to employers appear to be self-evident as they can keep labour costs low in a highly competitive labour market. However, disadvantages to such employment are noted in the literature (Beynon, 2016; Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Bloor, 2007). Examples are given of accidents occurring at sea whereby a company's reputation is damaged. In addition are the difficulties companies have in planning their workforces. Thus, the affect that flexible employment has on employers and employees lies at the heart of the discussion. The shipping industry appears to be an interesting platform for research into flexible employment, entailing as it does factors that create the need for a 'portfolio' career path (especially for officers) based on short-term contracts in different companies and in various workplaces (i.e. different ships). There is the potential for comparison with flexible careers in the global labour market, such as that of skilled agency workers or international workers. In this context, the combination of flexible employment and the possibility of progress might facilitate the development of an occupational identity and possibly a meaningful career within a flexible industry. If this flexible career is beneficial for individuals and companies within the shipping industry, it might also be beneficial to individuals and companies in other global industries.

In order to examine the implications of flexible employment for employers and employees, the balance of the thesis focuses on both seafarers' and employers' perceptions of the practice. First, the views expressed by representatives of the shipping industry about flexible employment are explored, determining whether shipping companies are perceived as benefitting from these practices. Second, seafarers' views about flexible employment in shipping are investigated, establishing whether they enjoy the benefits of flexible employment and/or whether they suffer from its drawbacks. Third, the effects of flexible employment on individuals' sense of occupational identity are examined, pinpointing the implications such flexible employment has for the notion of career. The following research questions are explored:

- To what extent are flexible employment arrangements perceived as beneficial to employers?
- What are the perceived implications of flexible employment arrangements for employees?
- What is the relationship between the flexibility of employment and the occupational identities of seafarers?

To address these questions, I spoke with 71 research participants from different countries. Using the interpretive approach to research, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews and informal conversations in different locations which included a voyage on board a cargo ship. The next chapter presents the comprehensive research design of this study, anchoring it within the literature on research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

Adventures and Misadventures on the High Seas: Researching ‘Career’ in the Shipping Industry

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER THREE

The topic of this thesis, that of the flexibilisation of labour in the global labour market in relation to seafarers, is not the topic I initially had in mind when I first applied for the PhD programme in 2011. It evolved and changed throughout the years, as did the research questions. In this chapter, the reader is provided with as holistic a picture as possible of the research design. It is my belief that this can only be done by offering a comprehensive description of my experiences of the research process from the initial stage of formulating ideas for the thesis up to the time of writing up the findings. The official data collection process lasted for approximately one year. It started with a pilot study in September 2014, after which I completed a research trip on board a cargo vessel in November 2014, and continued to interview people in the shipping industry until July 2015 (the date of the last interview).

As the title of the chapter suggests, the research project has had highs and lows, adventures and misadventures. It is longer than the other chapters in the thesis, in order to present a full picture of the research process, hence it is divided into two parts organised chronologically. The first part centres on my personal connection to the topic of the thesis, and around my methodological influences and research trajectory. The second part focuses on the actual process of research, touching upon issues of sample choice, an unexpected incident during data collection, post-data-collection experiences and ethical issues involved in sociological research.

BEFORE DATA COLLECTION

The Beginning

Personal Connection to Social Sciences

I was born in Latvia in the early 1980s, while it was under the communist regime of the USSR. Holding strong ideological Zionist Jewish values, and because of growing anti-Semitic sentiments in Latvia, my parents wanted to emigrate to Israel. However, under the communist regime, it was very challenging to do so legally. The official Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia occurred on May 5, 1990, after which my parents

could start the official process of leaving which necessitated giving up our Latvian citizenship. When I was eight years old, this process was finally complete and a new chapter in my life began. The process of leaving friends and remaining family to emigrate to a new country of which I knew practically nothing and with no knowledge of the language, probably ignited my interest in understanding different people and cultures.

After many years, having been assimilated into Israeli society and having served almost two years in the Israeli army, I undertook to travel for several months to North and South America.¹⁸ During this journey, I meticulously documented my experiences in a travel journal, keeping detailed accounts of the various peoples I met, without realising this could be a presage to becoming an anthropological researcher. Towards the end of the journey, while in an isolated town somewhere in Bolivia, I decided to register for a degree in social sciences, which led me to start a B.A. in Israel the following academic year. During my B.A. studies in sociology, anthropology and HR I was exposed to the theories of various social scientists and learned about the social and cultural aspects of the world around me through quantitative and qualitative research. I was curious to understand the reasons people behave in certain ways, and how their behaviour could be interpreted within particular social contexts. In particular, one social context I stumbled upon which intrigued me was cargo ships and the people who work on them. This became the focus of my scientific investigation from 2009.

The Link to Seafaring

In an editorial for the *Maritime Policy and Management Journal*, David H. Moreby addressed young researchers and called for the exploration of the fascinating aspects of the shipping industry. He wrote: *'[d]ear young researcher ... what marvellous challenges you face in this present-day, wonderful, turbulent world of shipping!'* (Moreby, 2004, p. 89). My personal 'turbulent' voyage through the shipping industry started after finishing my B.A. (2009) when I started considering my future career prospects. During my job search, I came across a job advertisement for becoming a seafarer by joining the merchant

¹⁸ Travelling to different parts of the world following the end of military service is a common practice among many Israelis. In some respects, it is similar to having a 'gap year' for students as a period of self-exploration and adventure before settling down with a job.

fleet as a navigation or engine trainee. From this it appeared there was the potential to combine a lucrative career with adventures and travel. Becoming a seafarer seemed appealing at the time, as I wanted to combine employment with travel and this appeared to be the perfect opportunity to do so.

As a result, I applied for the job and successfully passed the recruitment process. However, after discussing it with family and friends, I realised that becoming a seafarer could have a negative impact on the prospects of a 'normal' family life and the pursuit of higher education, which I knew I had an interest in. It occurred to me then that there are many people who work in the shipping industry despite the difficulties, and I became intrigued by the life of seafarers. It is a distinct work environment that entails hierarchy and order (Aubert and Arner, 1959; Zurcher, 1965), and unique social relations stemming from the multinational composition of the ship's crew (Sampson, 2013). I was also drawn to the potentially interesting social research aspects aboard a ship which is an enclosed and isolated working environment. The desire to combine my interest in shipboard life with higher education positioned seafarers at the forefront of my research agenda. Consequently I embarked on an M.A. in anthropology (2009-2012), undertaking an ethnographic study of seafarers (Baum-Talmor, 2012).

During my M.A. studies, I used an immersive research technique in order to learn as much as possible about seafarers' lives. Two rounds of fieldwork were conducted on board merchant ships for two weeks each, embarking in Israel and sailing to France, Italy and Spain. During these voyages, I had the opportunity to experience a taste of life on board first-hand, after which I had felt even more genuinely drawn towards studying the unique seafaring lifestyle. During my M.A. literature review, I encountered publications originating from the Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) and I was exposed to a network of international researchers' studies of seafarers' life from different perspectives.

Wanting to know more about seafaring as an academic field, I attended a symposium organised by SIRC in 2011, and was inspired by the various research projects at SIRC such as PhD projects by Anand (2011), Gekara (2008), Gould (2010) and Turgo (2010), which prompted me to apply for the SIRC/Nippon Postgraduate Fellowship. In my initial research

proposal, I decided to focus on the reasons for and implications of the diminishing numbers of Israeli seafarers. I believed that identifying the reasons for Israeli seafarers' attrition would enable me to contribute to the retention of officers in the global shipping industry, which seemed an important issue at the time.¹⁹ My research proposal was approved, and after an interview in Singapore, I started my PhD studies at SIRC, fully funded by the Nippon Foundation (2012-2016).

The Development of the Topic

Since the acceptance of the initial research proposal there have been changes in the topic and focus, as the title and Chapters 1 and 2 imply. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the idea of focusing on Israeli officers soon became irrelevant. I discovered that the number of Israeli seafarers is very low compared to the number of seafarers worldwide – less than 0.1% of the total number of seafarers (BIMCO, 2015). Thus, I felt that the Israeli case could not be used as a representative study for examining issues of attrition and retention among the globally diverse workforce of seafarers. Realising this, the focus of the research shifted to include seafarers (officers and ratings) from other countries.²⁰ Secondly, after reading around issues relating to attrition and retention of seafarers (e.g. Barnett et al., 2006; Dearsley, 2013; Fei et al., 2012; Gekara, 2009; Wu and Morris, 2006), I recognised that these complex subjects could be incorporated within the broader topic of careers in the global labour market. I was interested in discovering to what extent it is possible to have a 'career' in a labour market where few employees have permanent jobs (ILO, 2015; ILO, 2016).

An interest in investigating whether non-permanent employment is perceived as beneficial or detrimental to employers and employees then led to a further development in the research topic. It then centred on flexible employment arrangements and their implications for employers, employees and the concept of 'career'. I decided to use the shipping industry as a case study to explore the notion of 'career' in globalised industries,

¹⁹ The issue of officer retention was mostly mentioned in the context of the so-called shortage of officers from OECD countries. To read more, see for example Cahoon and Haugstetter (2008); Eler et al. (2009); Leggate (2004); Leong (2012).

²⁰ As explained later in the Data Collection section, further considerations shaped the choice of sample in this research, including convenience and availability.

hoping to implement some of the findings of this research to a wider context (i.e. other industries where flexible employment arrangements are used, especially in the context of the 'gig economy'). These transformations steered the project towards a particular research design and methodological approach.

Choosing a Methodological Approach

Correct choice of methodology is essential in every research design. Silverman (2006) defines methodology as: *'the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc. in planning and executing a research study'* (Silverman, 2006, p. 15). Considering the myriad of methodological options for conducting the current research, I had to choose an approach that would help me answer the research questions. My background in anthropology at a postgraduate level resulted in a strong tendency towards qualitative research. Additionally, I believed that individual knowledge is socially constructed and that social phenomenon can be understood through active social interpretation (as do others who studied the social world of seafarers before me, for instance Gekara, 2008, p. 71; Gould, 2010). Consequently, the epistemological and ontological foundational principles that guided my research throughout my M.A. and PhD are rooted in the interpretivist approach, which focuses on the subjective meaning individuals attach to social action (Bryman, 2004).

Some refer to the interpretivist approach as an 'anti-positivist' approach. In this context, positivism is considered a conception of a scientific method that is based on the natural sciences (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), where social researchers have *'sought a science of society that could emulate the achievements and influence of the natural sciences'* (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 119). The most important feature of scientific theories for positivists is that these can be confirmed/falsified with certainty and are subjected to testing (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Qualitative research supposedly does not match these positivist principles, and thus has attracted criticism as a scientific method and has been 'accused' of lacking scientific rigour.²¹ Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note

²¹ It is worth noting, as others have done (for example, see Geertz, 1983; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2008), that not all anthropologists were 'accused' of lacking rigour. The anthropological work of Bronislaw K. Malinowski, for example, was influenced by early positivist ideas and he conducted his fieldwork according to these principles.

that this criticism was explained *'on the grounds that the data and findings it produces are 'subjective', mere idiosyncratic impressions of one or two cases that cannot provide a solid foundation for rigorous scientific analysis'* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 7).

In response to this criticism, some anthropologists have developed an alternative view of what they considered the 'appropriate' nature of social research, often termed 'naturalism' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Lincoln et al., 2011; Lofland, 1967). The main idea behind naturalism is that the social world should be studied as far as possible in its 'natural' state, without being disturbed by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Lofland, 1967). As opposed to the positivist approach that measures completely controlled variables, the naturalist approach suggests that non-artificial settings should be the main source of data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Lofland, 1967). Additionally, naturalists perceive social phenomenon as distinct from physical phenomenon (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and they generally draw on a wide range of sociological and philosophical ideas, especially on interpretivism.

The term 'interpretivism' or the 'interpretivist approach' to research refers to *'epistemologies, or theories about how we can gain knowledge of the world, which loosely rely on interpreting or understanding the meanings that humans attach to their actions'* (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 118). Like other interpretive researchers (for example Atkinson, 2009; Geertz, 1973; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Myers, 2013; Warden, 2013), I worked under the assumption that accessing the given or socially constructed reality of the participants is only possible through social constructions, such as *'language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments'* (Myers, 2013, p. 39). Hence, in order to access and understand seafarers, the main research method utilised in this project is the qualitative interview.

Preparing for Data Collection

The Qualitative Approach

Having chosen to investigate the notion of 'career' in the shipping industry, it was important to take into account previous research on this topic to learn what was the most suitable way of investigating it. An interesting book by Hill (1972), entitled 'The Seafaring

Career' helped me to understand some aspects of the topic. By conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews, Hill (1972) managed to capture some seafarers' accounts of a career at sea. As this book was written about mainly British and European officers in the early 1970s, the relevance of its findings may have diminished in the face of globalisation and the changes to crew composition on board (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). Therefore, I reviewed additional, more current, literature that focused on different aspects of seafarers' experiences of life on board (for example Acejo, 2012; Belousov et al., 2007; Ellis et al., 2012; Sampson and Thomas, 2003). In the majority of these projects, interviews with seafarers were used as the main data collection method. However, in order to improve the quality and richness of interviews, many of them used fieldwork on board ships in order to increase rapport and trust-based relationship with participants. Similarly, I decided to use in-depth interviews alongside fieldwork on board cargo ships to establish trust and rapport with those seafarers involved in my research.²²

When it comes to data collection, ethnography generally involves overt or covert participation by the researcher in people's daily lives for an extended period (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In this research whilst a classic ethnography would not have been appropriate, I chose to conduct my interviews on board where possible. This increased the chances of establishing rapport with seafarers but it also provided me with a valuable opportunity to develop an understanding of their roles on board. Furthermore, it enabled me to access them in their workplace, which was important as not all seafarers have the time or desire to disembark while the ship is in dock, and boarding a ship is often the only way to speak with them. Consequently, ethnography was used to secure a better response during interviews.

The ethnographic approach has often been used as a way of increasing trust and rapport with research participants prior to and in addition to formal interview opportunities. The importance of being near the participants in order to facilitate cooperation is mentioned by Adler and Adler (2001), who note that consistently approaching respondents enables researchers to raise sensitive issues and nurture a

²² This decision to conduct fieldwork on board is also based on previous research I have conducted (Baum-Talmor, 2012), during which I realised that seafarers were much more open to me compared to interviews I conducted in seafarers' centres, where I approached seafarers with no prior connection.

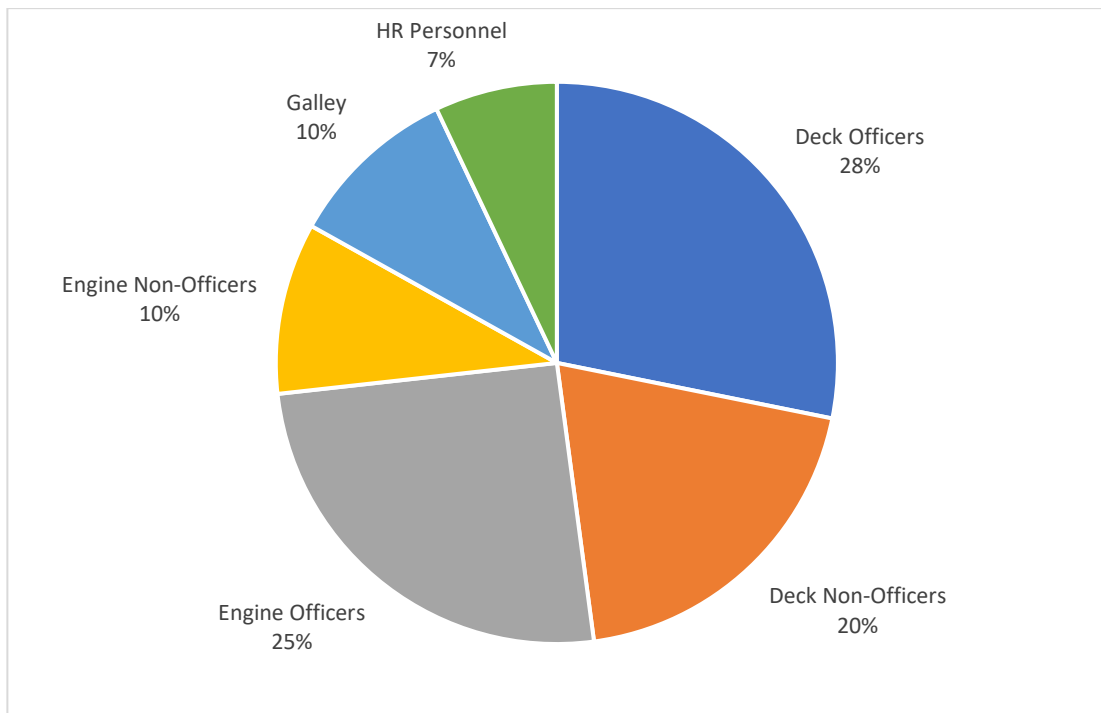
deeper intimacy with them. Additionally, spending time with participants in their workplace has been noted as one way of overcoming participant resistance and establishing a relationship with respondents prior to the interview (Adler and Adler, 2001). I needed people to share their career plans and life trajectories with me in order to understand how they perceived their occupational identity. Thus, it was important to the research that people felt comfortable sharing their personal opinions. This was best achieved in informal conversations and through spending time with them in an environment familiar to them (i.e. the ship).

The People Behind the Data

While planning the research design, I needed to make decisions regarding the composition and size of the sample. In total, I conducted 71 formal and informal interviews with seafarers and HR personnel, most of which (N=56) were recorded. As I wanted to understand the notion of ‘career’ in the context of what can be seen as a ‘flexible’ work environment (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013), it was important to include seafarers as the main group of participants. The majority of the sample worked as seafarers. These can be divided into officers and non-officers working in different departments, including deck officers (N=20), deck non-officers (N=14), engine officers (N=18), engine non-officers (N=7) and galley staff (N=7) (see Figure 1).²³ In addition, several HR related personnel were interviewed (N=5) because I felt it was necessary to have a glimpse into employers’ perceptions of flexible employment. Employers in this respect are those responsible for different aspects of seafarers’ employment on board, including but not limited to seafarers’ recruitment and training. Employers in the sample included three HR/training managers from different shipping companies, one crew manager and a CEO of an MET.

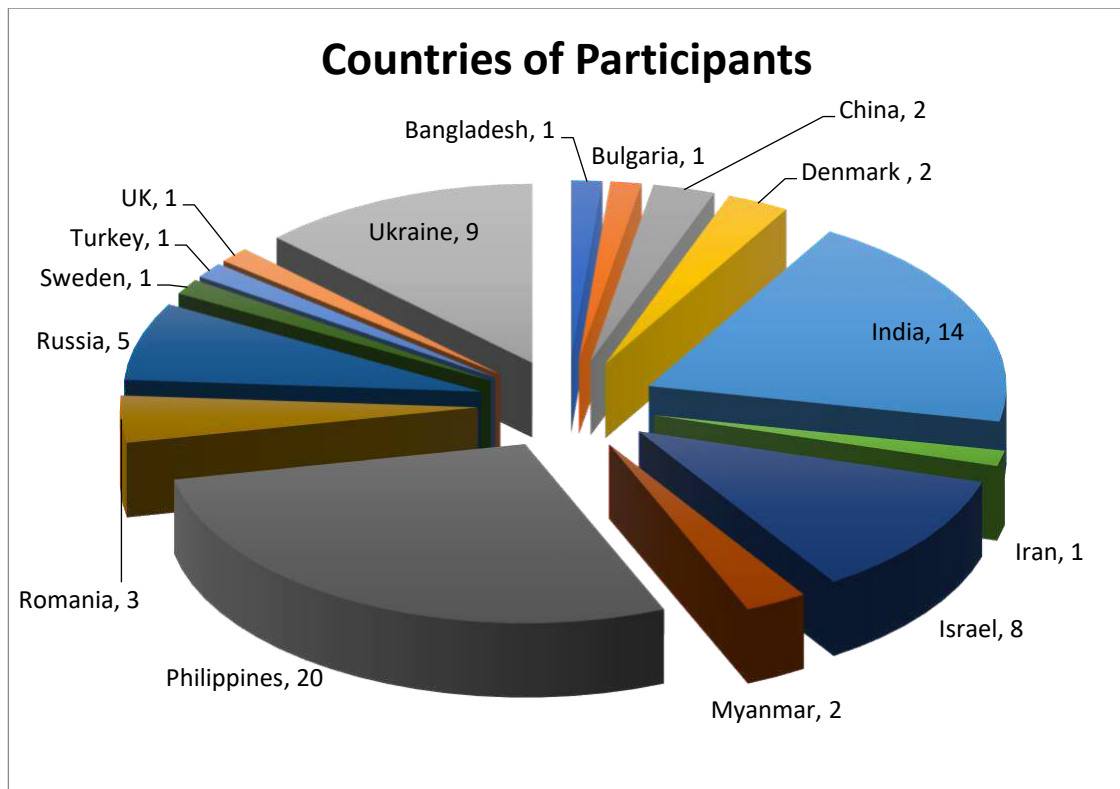
²³ Seafarers in this context are those employed on board merchant vessels (rather than those employed on cruise ships and ferries), mostly due to availability of the sample and to make the sample as unified as possible.

Figure 1: Sample according to Roles Held



Decisions about sample size often signify *'a compromise between the constraints of time and cost, the need for precision, and a variety of further considerations'* (Bryman, 2004, p. 97), including access to research participants. Deciding on the composition of the sample in qualitative research is also a complex affair, especially during a PhD. Specifically, the desire to obtain a representative sample that also enables the research question to be addressed is often at odds with the limited time available for conducting the research. In this case, the choice of sample was also based on *'convenience'*, in other words what was available to me *'by virtue of its accessibility'* (Bryman, 2004, p. 97). The final sample, based on participants' availability and on my resources, includes participants from diverse countries of origin, wherein the majority were from the Philippines (N=20), India (N=14), Ukraine (N=9) and Israel (N=8) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sample according to Seafarers' Origin Country



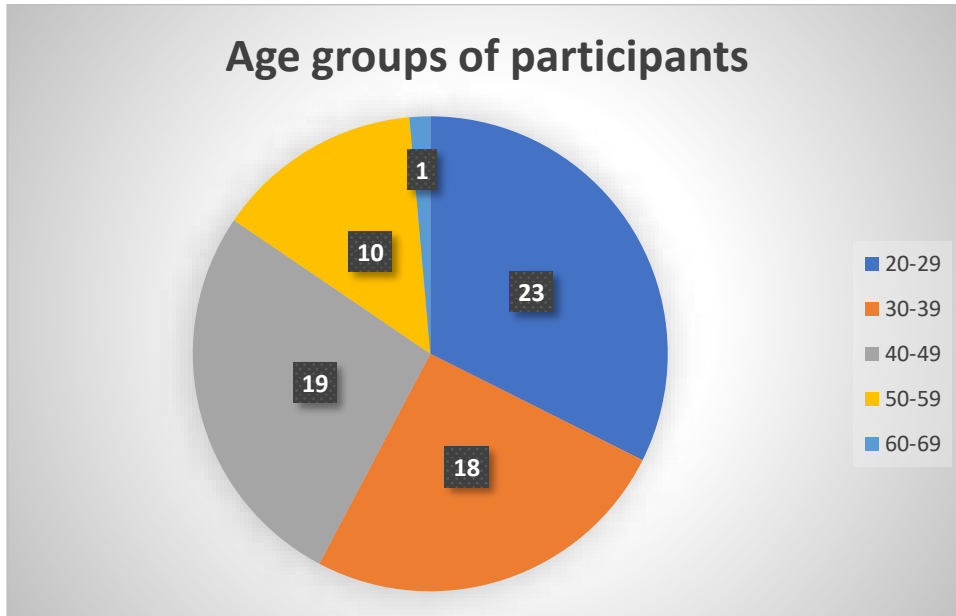
As I assumed there would be differences in perceptions of flexible employment among seafarers coming from different countries, an attempt was made to simplify the analysis by using the categorisation previously used by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2015, p. 149) in which participants are divided between those coming from advanced economies (N=12) and those coming from emerging market and developing economies (N=59). This differentiation is also similar to that used in the World Employment Social Outlook by the ILO (2016). This somewhat artificial and binary division was mainly done for convenience.²⁴

The number of women seafarers in the global shipping industry is low according to the BIMCO (2015, p. 39) report, and has been estimated to be 1 per cent. Consequently, the sample in this research is male-dominated, where out of 71 participants, only one participant is female. Participants' age ranged between 20 and 67 years old (see Figure 3),

²⁴ As shown later in the thesis (Chapters 4-7), the differences in seafarers' perceptions can be associated with different factors, in particular the role seafarers hold on board and the level of transferability of their skills.

with the majority of interviewees in their twenties (N=23), some in their thirties (N=18) and forties (N=19), a few in their fifties (N=10) and just one over sixty (N=1).

Figure 3: Age Groups of Participants in the Research



The features of the sample I presented so far (i.e. age, gender and country of origin) appear to be mostly in line with those in the global labour market (BIMCO, 2015). For example, according to BIMCO (2015), the majority of seafarers originate in emerging market and developing economies (as also noted in Chapter 2), and the majority of seafarers are men. In order to provide some specific background about the participants that might help to portray each of them as a unique individual, Appendix 1 includes basic information presented in alphabetical order, including name (pseudonym), gender, role, age, nationality, length of time working at sea. Further, more detailed information about each person in the sample can be seen in Appendix 2.

Accessing the Field

Having decided to use interviews as the main data collection method, and following the decision to sail with a ship to access interviewees, I needed to find a cargo ship on board which I could interview seafarers. One of the first steps included gaining access to the ship (Sampson and Thomas, 2003), which was not a straightforward procedure. In this section I present some of the challenges encountered prior to data collection, with special

reference to gaining access to research participants ashore and on board. As Smith (2001, p. 226) notes in the context of accessing a workplace and researching people at work: *'[s]ome writers convey the sense that obtaining access was seamless and effortless... But the preponderance of evidence suggests that organisational gatekeepers tend to deny and delay researchers'*. I experienced similar issues in accessing the global shipping industry, where I often waited a long time for responses and experienced problems in setting up interviews with important gatekeepers in the field. In this respect, it was particularly difficult to gain access to employers in the shipping industry. It is likely that employers who are considered to be the 'good' employers are more likely to agree to participate in the research as opposed to the 'bad' employers. In this context, employers who do not comply with the industry's global regulations in relation to the employment of seafarers are less likely to share their malpractices with researchers, even if their anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed. Additionally, despite numerous attempts of negotiating access to shipping companies I found through a search engine online, these attempts were not successful, and eventually most contact with employers was achieved through personal connections. Specifically, I found potential participants in various ways, including through social and professional networks such as Facebook™ and LinkedIn™, and by contacting people I met in professional conferences and during my M.A. studies.²⁵

Additionally, I started volunteering as a ship visitor for the AoS (Apostleship of the Sea) at the end of 2013, which provided additional access to ships, to seafarers' centres ashore and to other maritime professionals. I started contacting people in 2013, in order to try and secure a research voyage (see Appendix 3 for an example of an access letter). A detailed account was kept of people who could potentially assist me with data collection and whom I contacted (see Appendix 4). Unfortunately, despite dozens of emails and phone calls, in most cases these attempts did not result in an interview. Figure 4 shows an example of how contact was made, in this case an unsuccessful attempt with a shipping company. The process included an initial email to a previous research contact, followed by an attempt to secure a research voyage on board. Following prolonged

²⁵ In this context, the described difficulties can serve as one possible explanation for the small number of employers in the sample.

correspondence over a period of almost a year, I failed to secure additional access to data through this contact.

Figure 4: Accessing the Field – Example of Following Up a Potential Contact

	Name of contact	Type of contact	Date first contacted	Is there still hope to get access?	Follow up date and results 1	Follow up date and results 2	Follow up date and results 3	Follow up date and results 4	Follow up date and results 5	Follow up date and results 6	Follow up date and results 7
1	A - personnel manager company 1	Company	Sep-14	Yes	Have been in touch with him for the last few months. Replied to phone call, I will be in touch again beginning of March 2015	11/3/2015 Recontact again to check whether there is a free ship (OKAY) he said that for now ships are fully booked with cadets - I should try mid April or beginning of May.	15/4/2015 Check with A if ships are available and still relevant.	3/4/2015 Put the contact on hold for now - I might not need to recontact them any time soon.	2/7/2015 Wrote an email about interview with him (no reply)	15/7/2015 Write another email	END OF CONTACT

Ethical Issues

In their account of potential ethical challenges faced by ethnographers, Murphy and Dingwall (2001) note that research is considered ethical if its benefits outweigh its potential for harm. In order to address the possible ethical issues in the current research, I managed every stage of my research with careful consideration of my responsibilities and duties towards the participants of the research, towards the data collected, and towards my sponsor (similarly to Gekara, 2008). In order to conduct the research project ethically, I relied on the Statement on Ethics and the Principles of Professional Responsibilities of the American Anthropological Association (AAA, 2012) and on the Ethical Procedures of the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002). Additionally, I relied on the guidance of the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences (SOCSI) Ethics Committee, from whom I obtained approval to conduct the research (see Appendix 5). In order to protect participants' anonymity, I used pseudonyms throughout the research.²⁶ Additionally, I removed any information about the participants that could lead to their identification, including the exact location and time of the interview. During the research voyage, I photographed seafarers on board, which might have compromised seafarers' anonymity. However, as all photos were held securely by me, and considering that I only

²⁶ I wanted to present participants as distinctive individuals and not as numbers (e.g. 'Participant 1.01A/B'), so I used unique names for each. Since the number of participants was relatively high for a qualitative study, I needed to find enough different names to represent each person. I was inspired by R.R. Martin's series of 'A Song of Ice and Fire', and used some of the names he used in his novels, which included over 100 unique character names (and still counting).

made public those photos which do not show seafarers' faces, their identity was protected.

As research has the potential to have negative consequences when findings are published, it was important to secure access to the collected information (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). To maintain confidentiality, I kept all materials in a password protected laptop, with several encrypted backups only I had access to. Additionally, I did not share any information about seafarers with the companies. A potential issue arose from the fact that I only sailed aboard one ship during the research. Since most seafarers have a unique role on board, I wanted to prevent situations where seafarers' identity was exposed by their role. Therefore, I did not differentiate between seafarers from the ship and other seafarers interviewed during the course of the research, treating each seafarer according to their role.

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Prior to conducting interviews and observation, I obtained participants' written permission by asking them to sign a consent form (Kvale, 2007; Piper and Simons, 2005; Warren, 2001) (see Appendix 6). I also provided participants with an information sheet (see Appendix 7), explaining the overall purpose and the main features of the research design, and about potential risks and benefits from participation in the project (Kvale, 2007, p. 27). Considering the multinational nature of the shipping industry, I wanted to make sure the forms were written clearly and in languages the participants could easily understand. Thus, I prepared these forms in English, Hebrew, Russian and Tagalog.²⁷

A Note on Researcher's Safety

Whereas participants need to know how to protect themselves from the researcher, Sampson et al. (2008) note, '*we too, need to know how to protect ourselves when undertaking research*' (Sampson et al., 2008, p. 930). Thus, I needed to take into account possible hazards to myself as a researcher in the field. I had not considered risk in detail

²⁷ My grandmother, who used to teach the Russian language in Latvia, helped me in proof reading the Russian version. The Tagalog forms were translated and checked by my Filipino colleagues from SIRC, Ms. Roge Pepito and Dr Mark Llangco.

during my previous fieldwork on board (Baum-Talmor, 2012). Since then, however, I have read substantial accounts by other researchers who describe some of the risks associated with fieldwork on board (Belousov et al., 2007; Bloor et al., 2007; Sampson and Thomas, 2003). In addition, the guidelines from SIRC for research students intending to undertake fieldwork on board, were constructive. These guidelines include steps to protect researcher's safety during the fieldwork (e.g. maintaining contact with someone ashore, risk assessment, fieldtrip health and safety questionnaires and overseas travel approval for insurance purposes). These guidelines also require the researcher to carry a satellite phone on board (to have an independent form of communication), and recommend undertaking a Personal Survival at Sea course (according to the STCW) prior to sailing, which I successfully completed prior to boarding my ship (see appendix 8).

Pilot Study

My original plan for a pilot study was to conduct non-participant observation on board merchant ships in order to ensure the interview questions were suitable, and to scrutinise potential ethical and risk-related issues prior to the actual data collection. Considering this further, however, it was decided that the interview questions and their relevance to the research design could be tested without sailing on board. Moreover, I realised that ethical and risk-related issues might vary from vessel to vessel and thus could not be predicted through a pilot study. Therefore, the pilot study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews which facilitated a deeper understanding of the interview as a research tool and ensured that the questions worked well as a research instrument (Bryman, 2004). Additionally, like Sampson (2004a), I could receive spoken and unspoken feedback from participants about the questions I asked.

The pilot study was conducted over a period of two weeks at the beginning of 2014, during which I interviewed five active seafarers in the port of Bristol and one crew manager in Cardiff.²⁸ Prior to conducting the interviews, I prepared an initial interview guide/schedule (see Appendix 9), with different questions for seafarers and crew

²⁸ Through my work as a volunteer ship visitor, I had established some contacts with the Port of Bristol Seafarers' Centre. This centre is normally open six days a week, Monday to Saturday, between 13:00-22:00. The traffic to the centre is irregular, as it depends on times of tides, on the number of ships in port on a given day, and on the ability of crewmembers to leave their vessels and come into the centre.

managers. The interviews were conducted in English and were recorded. Interview time varied between 45 minutes and over two hours, and all the interviews were fully transcribed into approximately 35,000 words of written text.

By transcribing each interview straight away, before conducting the next interview, I was able to detect 'problematic' questions and change them accordingly for the next interview (e.g. questions that were irrelevant or poorly phrased). Following initial data analysis and review of the interview questions during the pilot study, I made some changes to the research design. First, I decided to reduce the number of questions in the interview guide and follow a general structure according to the topics I needed to cover.²⁹ Secondly, as some of the questions did not contribute to answering the research questions, I removed these from the interview guide. Thirdly, during some interviews participants raised additional issues which required me to expand the view on flexible employment in the global labour market (i.e. transferability of skills). Consequently, I added more topics to the interview guide and adjusted the research questions accordingly. The final form was established at the end of the pilot study (see Appendix 10).³⁰

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data Collection on Board and Ashore

Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

The bulk of my research data was collected through recorded interviews with participants on board and ashore. Specifically, I conducted 50 recorded interviews during the research (in addition to six recorded interviews during the pilot study). Interview time varied between 25 minutes and over two hours, and all the interviews were fully transcribed into approximately 358,000 words of written text (over 620 pages). I treated

²⁹ The reduction in the number of questions and the changes in the interview guide were also due to some technical aspects of the interviewing that did not seem to work during the pilot study. Specifically, the interview guide was too structured, which made it difficult to obtain long and detailed answers from participants.

³⁰ I encountered additional issues during the pilot study (e.g. translation of interviews and limited time for the interviews), but as these issues were notably present in subsequent interviews, I have noted them in a later section about in-depth semi-structured interviews.

these interviews as sites for the construction of knowledge through interaction between researcher and participant (Kvale, 2007), where I attempted to play an active and central role in the interaction (Rapley, 2001). In order to make participants feel comfortable in a short period of time, I used 'small talk', informally explained the context of the research and used basic, general questions (i.e. 'tell me about your role on board') before the actual interview questions to 'break the ice' (Johnson and Weller, 2001). In most cases, my questions stemmed from the immediate context and if I felt lost or distracted, I could rely on the interview guide to put me back on track. It was my intention to make interviewees feel more comfortable by conducting the interview as a chat, whereby participants often felt less aware of the recorder, in preference to a formal conversation (similarly to what Albert et al., 2016 had done in their research on seafaring careers).

In two cases, due to the constraints of time and cost associated with travel (e.g. flying to Singapore or Denmark), I conducted the interviews using Skype™. Despite the limitations of this method (similar to those of phone interviews where one is not able to respond to body language and/or identify discomfort), these interviews gave me access to people who could not be interviewed otherwise (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The data collected provided an important glimpse into employers' perspectives on flexible employment.

I chose to use semi-structured in-depth interviews since they allow a deep, textured and rich insight into interviewees' lives, providing a virtual window to the human experience (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). I was looking for detailed and explanatory accounts of seafarers' employment at sea, and the interviews provided me with the appropriate tool for collecting this type of data. They also provided a platform for asking follow-up questions (Rapley, 2001), which seemed the most efficient way to answer the research questions, especially when compared to surveys or focus groups (Johnson, 2001). As other researchers have found (for example Gekara, 2008, p. 76), I could not rely on my memory to accurately capture the whole interview. Thus, with the signed consent of the interviewees, I recorded them using two small, non-intrusive recording devices.

Non-Participant Observation on Board

As noted earlier, non-participant observation on board was used to establish trust-based relations with participants as a complimentary approach to interviewing. Sailing with a cargo ship was an important aspect of the interpretive approach to research and was central to the study for several reasons. Firstly, I felt it was not enough to meet seafarers while the ship was docked, as they often do not have time for interviews because they need to work (Sampson, 2013). Additionally, seafarers' work can be very tiring and they frequently work for over 13 hours per day (Wadsworth et al., 2008), thus many seafarers spend their free time resting. Furthermore, due to containerisation, ships normally berth for just a few hours at a time and not for days as used to be the case, which means that access to seafarers has become increasingly restricted (Alderton et al., 2004). Finally, based on my previous encounters with retired seafarers in seafarers' clubs, I believed that the establishment of rapport and trust would be facilitated by my being seen several times before the interviews. This would contribute to the participants' cooperation.

In 2014, I managed to secure access to a cargo ship on which I sailed for a period of 12 days, from Israel to several countries along the Mediterranean Sea coast. A ship is a relatively unusual setting for conducting fieldwork as I had discovered during my former research project (Baum-Talmor, 2012) and as previous researchers who have conducted on-board research have noted (Sampson and Thomas, 2003). Specifically, the ship is an isolated environment that often presents increased researcher risk and limited options for communication with the outside world. As suggested by the SIRC guidelines, I was equipped with a satellite phone for use as an independent means of communication with the outside world in case anything goes wrong. Additionally, to overcome the potential loneliness of shipboard research, with a basic internet connection on board I was able to maintain daily contact with my husband and supervisors, which essentially provided both emotional and professional support during the fieldwork.

Issues to Consider during Data Collection

A Female Researcher in a Male-Dominated Field

There are several issues worth mentioning regarding research conducted by a woman in a male-dominated field (Sampson and Thomas, 2003). The identity of the researcher may well be defined by gender and by the different role expectations held by men and women (Purdy and Jones, 2013). Within the research context, gender has been noted as shaping *'our research interests, access to the field, relationships with the researched, and our interpretation and representation of the culture'* (Lumsden, 2009, p. 510). Consequently, my being a woman within a male-dominated work environment (i.e. the ship) could not go unnoticed.

My personal experience of being in a male-dominated field was not a negative one, as I encountered no offensive or sexist behaviour on board. Compared to other women who have conducted research in a male-dominated field (for example Mazzei and O'Brien, 2009; Purdy and Jones, 2013), I was fortunate in not needing to tolerate and/or reciprocate sexual banter in order to maintain rapport with the participants. However, I often felt that my female identity on board did play a role in data collection. For example, as described by Sampson and Thomas (2003), I felt that it was necessary to 'monitor' my gender by undertaking counter-stereotypical behaviour on-board, e.g. mitigating my sex by dressing in a gender-neutral way and not wearing any make-up. Additionally, it was frequently my experience that some seafarers tended to share private and often revealing information with me as they associated my 'female' presence on board with a therapist-like figure (similarly to what Sampson and Thomas, 2003, described). This aided my data collection as I could strategically work in the field within the socially constructed meanings of my gender. Moreover, some seafarers disclosed that having a woman on board caused them to act 'more morally' compared to when they were among men only. They refrained from using 'foul' language and took greater care with regards to personal appearance like shaving on a daily basis. These slight changes in general behaviour could not negatively affect the research as personal morals and behaviour were not the topic of the research.

Bias and Reflexivity

Two additional issues worth mentioning with regards to this research are potential bias and reflexivity. Specifically, the fact that I had already conducted fieldwork on board (Baum-Talmor, 2012) could have caused bias in data collection since I was already familiar to some extent with shipboard life. Familiarity with the research field can be advantageous or detrimental. My familiarity could have been an advantage since it enabled me to focus on collecting ‘important’ data rather than ‘wasting’ time. On the other hand, this familiarity meant that I had prior expectations as to what I might find in the field and my responses might be mediated accordingly. For these reasons, I needed to take into account issues of potential bias. I tried to ‘demolish’ my preconceptions of the field by estranging myself as much as possible (Schütz, 1944) and treating the ship as a new research field. Additionally, I tried to be reflexive about my experiences.

Reflexivity can be defined as *‘the capacity of any system of significations, including a human being ... to turn back upon or to mirror itself’* (Robertson, 2002, p. 785). As Sampson et al. (2008) point out, *‘feminist researchers have made an influential contribution to the development of research techniques that have led researchers to become more reflexive, more conscious of power relationships and responsibilities in research’* (Sampson et al., 2008, p. 921). Considering that *‘evidence is never morally or ethically neutral’* (Denzin, 2009, p. 142), the use of a research diary and the constant interpretation of fieldwork events enabled me to reflect on the process throughout the research design and thus address issues of potential bias by documentation. In addition to my research diary a journal has been kept since 2012 in which every aspect of the project (i.e. data, experiences, challenges and insights) has been noted.³¹

‘Even if you are a spy...’ – Positionality in the Field

I conducted data collection on board in order to improve rapport with participants through interviews rather than through observation. However, collecting data through interviews sometimes proved challenging, especially in cases where participants refused

³¹ I have been documenting my research experience in several Word™ documents, which I print and bound at the end of each year. Between 2012-2016, I wrote over 850 pages of reflections on the experience of writing and completing the PhD process.

to be interviewed or where they were suspicious that I was ‘spying’ on them on behalf of the company. Prior to sailing my fieldwork was approved by the company representative who noted that he would like to receive updates on any problems or misconduct I experienced on board. As one condition of my research is maintaining seafarers’ anonymity and confidentiality my response made it very clear that I could not comply with such a request. However, it is within the realms of possibility that the company representative led the seafarers on board to believe that I was there to ‘spy’ on them and to report on their behaviour to their superiors. In general, I managed to overcome their suspicions after spending several days on board, where I found most participants to be friendly and cooperative, sharing their life stories and work aspirations with me. However, establishing rapport with participants was not always straightforward, as documented in the research diary:

After I was helped to get on board through the gangway, I was met by the AB Alton. He signed me in on the ship’s log and introduced me to the third mate Euron, whose first words to me were (in Hebrew): ‘so you’re here to investigate us, huh?’ [...] When the ship had already left the port and was at sea, [Euron] seemed to relax a bit and told me a little bit about himself. [...] He told me that he thinks that I was sent by the company to spy on them, and I tried to clarify that I had come on board on behalf of the university, and that I am committed to maintain seafarers’ anonymity. [Notes from the first two days on board]

Even though Euron spoke extensively about his life during the following weeks, he did not agree to be recorded, fearing that somehow the recording would reach the company. As occurred in a few other cases, to avoid the pressure of formal interviews I held non-recorded informal conversations with him (Adler and Adler, 2001). These conversations were nonetheless documented in the research diary as soon as possible afterwards so as to capture accurately some of the seafarers’ accounts. Towards the end of the voyage when I thought that their perception of me as a ‘spy’ had been toned down, the last interview I conducted was illuminating:

At the end of the interview with Varys, I asked him whether the interview had made him feel uncomfortable or intimidated, and he said that it had not. He added that even if I had been sent by the company, he would feel comfortable talking to me because he did not have anything to hide. After 10 days on board, I thought that I had gained trust but even if I have among some seafarers, it appears that there are seafarers on board

*that are still under the impression that I have been sent by the company.
[Notes from the tenth day on board]*

Despite these isolated incidents, I managed to collect rich data during my voyage which provided important insights into seafarers' perceptions of flexible employment.

Translators are Traitors

Communication with research participants was in three languages: English, Russian and Hebrew. English is often considered the *lingua franca* of the sea (Sampson and Zhao, 2003), therefore it was to be expected that most seafarers would be able to communicate in English. Nevertheless, some seafarers felt more comfortable speaking in their own language when possible, which sometimes meant that they could express themselves better in Russian or Hebrew than in English. I am able to speak Russian because of my Latvian/USSR origin, and my Hebrew is at the level of mother tongue because most of my education (i.e. primary, secondary, B.A., M.A.) took place in Israel. I learned basic English at school, and over the years improved it by watching TV, reading books and listening to music, and through studying in the UK. As it turned out, knowing these languages was very useful in a global research environment such as the shipping industry and I found it to be invaluable. Consequently, I conducted the interviews and most of my communication with participants in English (N=48), Russian (N=17) and Hebrew (N=6).

Since my thesis was to be written in English, I preferred documenting everything in that language and all the interviews were directly transcribed into it. As meaning often becomes lost in the process of translation (Kvale, 2007, even referred to translators as traitors, p. 93), I took pains to ensure that all data was true to its source to prevent any potential loss or misrepresentation. Firstly, before conducting the interviews, I prepared participant information sheets and consent forms in several languages, so as to ensure that the purpose of the research was clear to the participants. Secondly, while transcribing the interviews, I listened to those in Hebrew and Russian several times in order to make sure they were translated correctly, using dictionaries where necessary. As much context as possible was given for each quotation in an attempt to counter the possible limitations of the translation.

Another Attempt to Board a Ship

After collecting rich and interesting data during the voyage I conducted in 2014, I was hoping for a chance to sail with another ship. Following several months of correspondence, I managed to secure another research voyage on board a cargo ship that was sailing from London to Brazil. I had been preparing for the voyage for at least 6 months, including flight reservations from Brazil, transport to the ship, insurance cover, physical check-ups, and the completion of plethora of forms and ethical approvals. On May 26, 2015, I was ready to board the ship for a 3-week voyage. After an hour or so of travelling on the train from Cardiff to London, I realised with horror that my bag which contained, among other things, my passport, travel money, laptop and research data was missing. The train conductor was notified immediately but by the time the train reached London, there was no sign of the bag, without which I could not proceed to data collection. Presumably the thief had grabbed my bag at one of the stations en route to London. Dumbfounded by this turn of events, I returned to Cardiff the same day and ironically on the same train. It was fortunate that all my PhD-related materials had been backed up prior to my departure, so no significant data loss had occurred. Nevertheless, my external drive with some personal information (like pictures and documents) had not been backed up so this was permanently lost.³²

Apart from the obvious implications of such an incident in terms of a delay in data collection, more became apparent when the practical aspects were assessed. I could not leave the UK without a valid passport and visa, the replacement of which is an essential, costly, and time-consuming affair for an international student. Thus, I needed to apply for a new Israeli passport and reapply to the Home Office for a new visa. The passport was issued the next day, but the issue of a new visa was to take approximately three months. Having been insured through the university I could claim some of the expenses from the insurance company to help cover the costs arising from the incident.³³ As helpful as this

³² It is worth noting that all confidential data on the stolen laptop were password-protected and encrypted.

³³ Apart from the visa and passport issuing costs (over £500), I needed to buy a new laptop and replace some of the equipment that had been stolen (i.e. a new external drive, recording devices, earphones for DragonDictate software, etc.). I needed to provide a receipt for each item and the new price I claimed. The insurance company paid out around 70% of the sum I initially claimed (which was the result of some depreciation rates), and I ended up under some financial strain as a result of this incident.

was, the monetary loss was only one aspect. There could be no cover for the lost opportunity, which was irreplaceable.³⁴ This incident also had a ripple effect on my studies in the longer term, causing significant emotional distress that, to a certain extent, temporarily derailed my research project, even though no actual physical harm had occurred.

While dealing with the administrative and emotional aspects of the incident, I needed to progress my project by continuing with the data collection and finding a setting that would provide access to participants without necessitating international travel. Consequently, in order to prevent further delay, I opted for the collection of data in Cardiff and Bristol Ports, where I conducted most of the remaining interviews for the research. Unfortunately for me, despite a police investigation, no further information about the stolen luggage has been found.

Data Analysis

I started analysing data as soon as I started the data collection by taking reflective notes during the interviews. The first step in formally analysing the collected data was transcribing the recorded interviews. Kvale refers to transcriptions as the '*solid rock-bottom empirical data of an interview project*' (Kvale, 2007, pp. 92-93), and they can be considered a second abstraction of the interviews where many things like the tone of the voice, intonations and breathing are lost (Kvale, 2007). I wanted to ensure that interview transcripts were verbatim accounts of what had been said in the interview. However, like Poland (2001), while transcribing I emphasised the importance of what was said in the interview rather than how it was said, focusing mainly on the contexts and literal meaning especially where the interviews were transcribed from Hebrew/Russian to English. I used different software to assist me with the transcription process. The first is Transcriptions™ for Mac, a Rich Text Format editor for manual transcription that enables the use of 'time stamp'. The second is Dragon Dictate™, a speech recognition software that enables the

³⁴ One positive aspect of this incident was the reflective process that followed. Sharing my experience with colleagues, and discovering similarities between this incident and that of a colleague at SIRC resulted in a shared presentation. This presentation focused on experiencing and coping with life- or project-threatening events during the PhD process, reflecting on opportunities for the improvement of the current university guidelines for lone researchers and on its implications for research practice.

user to listen to the interviews and simultaneously repeat what has been said using a speech to text interface (see Appendix 11 for an example of transcript done with the combination of the above software).

The second step of analysis included further interpretation through the code-and-retrieve method, which involved methodical coding through the raw data. This enabled me to move away from data description to data conceptualisation (Charmaz, 2001). For this purpose, I used CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software), specifically the NVivo™ Software, which is designed to help the researcher '*organise, analyse and find insights in unstructured, or qualitative data*'.³⁵ I chose NVivo™ rather than other available software (i.e. Atlas.ti™) due to easy access, as NVivo™ was available for a free download via Cardiff University's INSRV (Information Services). Another software used to help organise data is SimpleMind™, a mind map software that enables brainstorming through the collection of ideas and thoughts on the screen (see example in Appendix 12). The use of CAQDAS assisted me with the analysis of interview transcripts and research notes through coding, which substituted the time-demanding method of cutting and pasting hundreds of pages with 'electronic scissors' (Kvale, 2007, p. 99). One of the said advantages of using CAQDAS is that it encourages rigour (Seale, 2001) through adaptable and inventive modification of software features to the collected data. Additionally, as Coffey et al. (1996, p. 7) note: '*The underlying logic of coding and searching for coded segments differs little, if at all, from that of manual techniques*'. Thus, the use of software saved valuable time, leaving more time for interpreting the collected data.

Limitations

Although the research methods were relatively straightforward, there were several issues that slightly impeded the research process. The project was under time constraints because of the fixed nature of the project funding. These time constraints were intensified by the bag theft incident creating an unexpected delay in data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, with appropriate planning and careful organisation of my work schedule, I

³⁵ The quote is taken from the NVivo™ website: <http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-nvivo>, accessed on 26 May 2017.

was able to overcome the time restrictions. It is quite possible that given additional time I might have interviewed more shipping company representatives and the scope of the research would have been expanded to include additional views. Additionally, the small number of employers in the sample is prone to be composed of those considered as the 'good' employers (as explained earlier), which might not be representative of views held by other employers in this industry. However, as the emphasis in this project was mostly on the perceived implications of flexible employment practices for seafarers, it is my belief that data collected from seafarers was sufficient for answering the research questions and employers' views in this respect complemented those of seafarers. It is also possible that ex-seafarers could have been interviewed giving me an additional perspective regarding successful or unsuccessful attempts to leave the sea. However, it is my belief that the complexity and value of the data gathered within the given space and time has adequately diminished any weaknesses caused by time pressure.

Reliability and validity, which played an inherent part in the research design, also needed to be considered. As Kvale (2007, p. 120) suggests: '*[i]ssues of reliability and validity go beyond technical or conceptual concerns and raise epistemological questions of objectivity of knowledge*'. Reliability refers to the trustworthiness and consistency of research findings, establishing whether a finding can be replicated by other researchers elsewhere (Kvale, 2007). Validity, in turn, refers to the truth, correctness and strength of a statement, examining whether a method meets its investigation objectives (Kvale, 2007).

As this is a qualitative study, my aim was to gain a better understanding of the complex picture of employment in the shipping industry. A different researcher might have collected different data. However, the fact that data saturation was reached in the analysis stage, where I found many recurring themes, suggests the information collected was reliable. An additional aspect of reliability is the generalisation of the results to the global labour market through the use of a relatively small sample. Albert et al. (2016), who conducted research into seafaring careers, justified the use of a small sample by noting:

The epistemic work related to each interview is more important than the number of participants. The objective is not to validate and generalise

a model, but to build knowledge that can make sense and be reinterpreted by others. (Albert et al., 2016, p. 5)

Similarly, I intended to provide a multifaceted depiction of seafarers' employment and had no intention of generalising the findings of this research to other groups of people. In order to judge the validity of my interpretation and increase that of the data analysis of my project, I endeavoured to present extracts from interviews in the context in which they transpired, including the questions that led to the answers and the conversations that followed (Rapley, 2001). Additionally, by making adjustments to the research questions following the pilot study, I considered that the validity of the research was increased, ensuring that the responses to the interview questions contributed to answering those of the research.

Note on the Study of 'Careers' in a Global Context

A possible criticism of this project might be of the focus on the cultural notion of 'career' in the context of the diverse workforce of the global shipping industry (BIMCO, 2015). Drawing on insights from scholars such as Edward Said (1978) and others (Agee, 2009; Coffey et al., 1996; Spivak, 1988), it might be thought that representing the 'oriental' (i.e. non-western) participants' viewpoints, using a 'western' concept, could be problematic. However, as claimed later in the thesis, the global working environment does create career aspirations for people who work in it. Possibly economic growth in non-western countries and the aforementioned changes in the work environment has facilitated the rise of the flexible career (i.e. restructuring of organisational hierarchies, and the growing use of non-permanent employment) (Brown, 1995; Sampson, 2013). Hence, in investigating 'careers' in a global context I use 'career' as a general concept for describing individuals' working lives. This is similar to Mallon (1998), who studied portfolio careers and noted:

A significant aspect of studying careers is that they orient attention to both the objective features of a career – the posts, the promotions etc. – and to the sense that individuals make of the events of their own working life [...] What matters is less about 'objective reality' of their circumstances as seen by others, and more about how people's interpretations of their circumstances spur them to certain actions. (Mallon, 1998, p. 365)

Thus, the focus of my analysis is the subjective way individuals perceive and interpret their occupational identity rather than on an objective reality of employment in the shipping industry. My interest was on the extent to which participants' accounts incorporate different ways of talking about 'careers' within a flexible work environment.

SUMMARY

The thesis and the data included in it have been shaped by the highs (i.e. sailing on board a cargo ship and conducting in-depth interviews) and lows (i.e. the incident with the bag and the limitations of the research) of the research process. In sum, in this chapter, I have attempted to describe these experiences and also to explain the rationale behind choosing the interpretive method for collecting and analysing data.

At the end of Chapter 2, the following research questions were raised:

- To what extent are flexible employment arrangements perceived as beneficial to employers?
- What are the perceived implications of flexible employment arrangements for employees?
- What is the relationship between the flexibility of employment and the occupational identities of seafarers?

Using the case of seafarers, these questions guided the investigation of flexible employment in the global labour market and its ramifications for employers and employees. Having described the methodological design behind the thesis, the following chapters (4-7) incorporate the research findings based on the data collected, the first of which (Chapter 4) shows how employers in the shipping industry perceive flexible employment.

CHAPTER FOUR

Riding the Wave of Globalisation: Flexible Employment in the Shipping Industry

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter focuses on two key points. Firstly, it presents the reasons given by employers for the use of flexible employment practices in the shipping industry. Secondly, it explores the extent to which employers in the shipping industry use continuous employment practices along with those of flexible employment; potentially seeking to enjoy the best of both worlds when rehiring the same seafarers while employing them on a ‘plug and play’ basis. In order to examine the reality of flexible employment in the shipping industry, I spoke to employers and employees in the industry to explore the extent to which flexible employment is perceived as beneficial to employers.³⁶

Chapter 2 included a discussion of the complex nature of employment in shipping, and showed how the shipping industry combines aspects of flexible employment with those of continuous employment. Practices associated with flexible employment include, for example, the use of temporary fixed-term contracts (Ellis and Sampson, 2008), the expanding use of third-party labour contractors (Sampson, 2013), and reduced employer investment in training (Bloor et al., 2014; Sampson and Tang, 2015). Aspects associated with continuous employment include, for example, hierarchical advancement options on board (Sampson, 2013) and the tacit sea-related knowledge and familiarity required of seafarers to perform their work (Sampson and Tang, 2015). Based on the literature, it appears that the current situation of employment in the shipping industry is largely beneficial to employers. In a highly competitive global environment they manage to reduce the costs of operating ships and to remain attractive to customers (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson, 2013). In this context, it is worth examining whether flexibility is perceived as beneficial to employers in the shipping industry in the same way as it is understood in the literature.

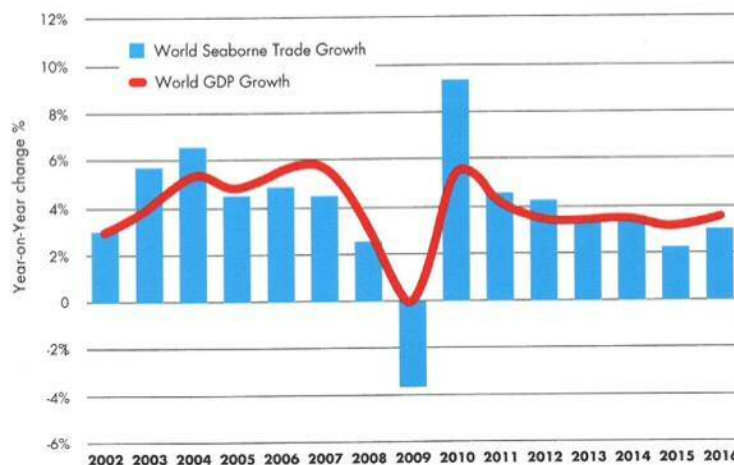
³⁶ For a detailed description of the methods used in this thesis, see Chapter 3.

FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT IN SHIPPING

A Volatile Global Industry

The shipping industry is considered a volatile industry (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013), where the demand for ships and hence the demand for personnel is unpredictable (Sampson and Tang, 2015).³⁷ For example, the BIMCO (2015) report illustrates changes in global seaborne trade, demonstrating how the financial crisis in 2008 had a negative impact on the growth in the demand for ships (Figure 5), with -4 per cent in 2009, but an increase of nearly 10 per cent in 2010.

Figure 5: World GDP growth and seaborne trade 2002-2014, adapted from BIMCO (2015, p. 16).



Source: Seaborne Trade Monitor, November 2015 (Volume 2, No. 11), Clarksons Research, p. 3

As the need for ships changes, the demand for personnel also varies (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015). As a result, shipping companies have difficulty planning the labour force for the longer term. Seafarers interviewed during the course of this research often mentioned the unpredictable nature of the shipping

³⁷ The volatility of the shipping industry has been widely covered in professional and academic maritime-related journals.

Professional journals include, among others, the *Maritime Executive* (<https://www.maritime-executive.com>), *gCaptain* (<https://gcaptain.com>), *IHS* (<https://www.ihs.com/index.html>), *Nautilus International Telegraph* (<https://nautilusint.org/en/what-we-say/telegraph/>). Maritime academic journals include for example the *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs* and *Maritime Policy & Management* journal.

industry, where employers did not necessarily know when they would require their 'services'. For example, Daario explained:

Once you've left for the voyage [on board], from the starting point of the voyage [laughing], it can happen that you don't know when you will have, I mean, when the company has the option to arrange for a [new] ship. [...] They've put you in the queue, as soon as they have the chance, they'll send you [to work on board a ship]. I mean, where I work, you have this kind of thing, you have to sign some kind of statement [...] you write on a note that you're either ready to go for an assignment in two months, or state that you're not ready. And if you write that you're ready, the management are required to put you at the beginning of the queue, and then you leave whenever there is a spot. [Daario, Third Engineer, 23 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Daario noted the uncertainty associated with every new contract during this employment. This uncertainty was clear in a different interview as well:

PBT – When you go home, after you finish your contract, is there any chance that the office will tell you, '[there's] no more work for you'?

Renly – [Laughing] anything can happen, it's the private sector, you cannot say that it cannot. [...]

PBT – So, do you think that the [shipping] company will have a job for you, as long as you want to continue [working on board]?

Renly – As long as they can, yeah. Because if something like I remember in 2008, there was recession, after I finish[ed] my course, I was not able to find a job for two years, because the company did not have ships. If they don't have [ships], how will they have people [to work on board]? [Renly, Administrative Officer, 27 years old, from India, interview in English]

Seafarers are often forced to wait a long time between contracts before being provided with employment, if at all. During this period, they are generally unpaid. For example, a seafarer noted:

[Seafarers need to wait for the next contract] because there's this thing, too much of, many people are like fourth engineers, too many fourth engineers are there, so they [crewing agencies] cannot give job to everybody, too much of waiting, yeah, engineers, fourth engineers especially. [Jon, Fourth Engineer, 25 years old, from India, interview in English]

The competition described by Jon was portrayed by other participants. For example, an HR manager explained:

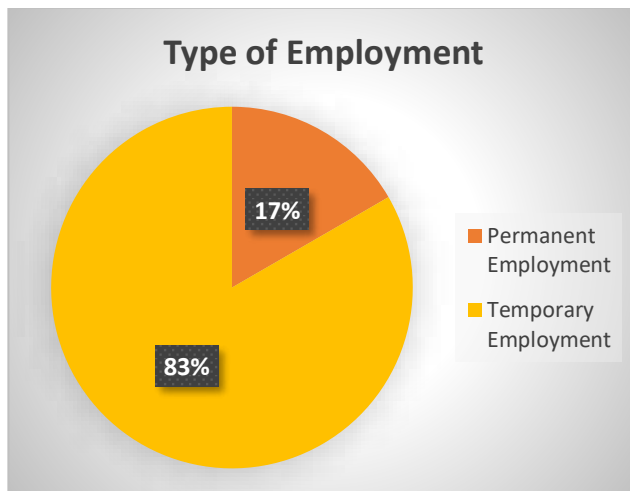
[We are a] bigger company, [seafarers] are more or less secure [in our company]. Because if we decide to expand, so they will always get jobs. But for the smaller companies [...], in those companies it's very bad, because they [seafarers] really have to wait for a very long time, [before they can] go on board. [Pypar, HR Manager, 39 years old, from India, interview in English]

If seafarers are hired on a permanent contract, employers face the hassle and possibly cost of terminating their contracts at the first sign of turbulence (Sampson, 2013). Hence, in light of the unpredictability of the shipping industry, it is likely that employers will have a preference for employing seafarers on a temporary basis.

Temporary Fixed-Term Contracts

Unsurprisingly then, most seafarers interviewed during the course of this research (87 per cent, N=66) were employed temporarily on fixed-term contracts (see Figure 6). The depiction of employment practices in this research appears to be similar to those of the global labour market, where it has been estimated that some 75 per cent of employees worldwide work in temporary employment (Ellis et al., 2012; ILO, 2015; ILO, 2016).³⁸

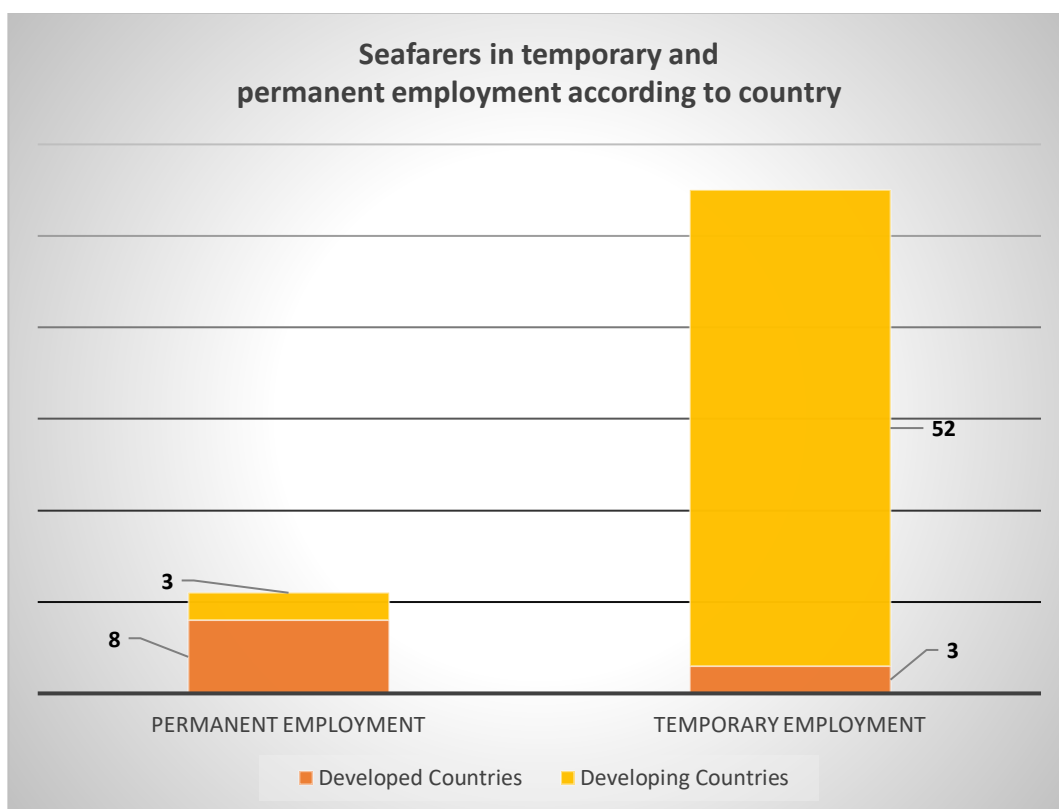
Figure 6: Type of employment according to data collected in the research project (temporary or permanent), N = 66.



³⁸ Based on current estimations of manpower in the shipping industry (BIMCO, 2015), there was no concrete information about the temporality or permanency of seafarers' employment. However, taking into account the fact that most seafarers in the global labour market originated in the Philippines (BIMCO, 2015), and considering the POEA limitations on permanent employment (POEA, 2016b and as explained later in this section), it is likely that the majority of seafarers from the Philippines worked on a temporary basis.

There were notable differences in contract type between seafarers of different nationalities (developing and emerging vs. developed economies) and seafarers of different ranks (officers vs. ratings). Specifically, seafarers from developed countries were mostly employed on a permanent basis (N=8, vs. N=3 from developing and emerging economies), while seafarers from developing and emerging economies were mostly employed on a temporary basis (N=3 vs. N=52 from developed countries) (see Figure 7).³⁹

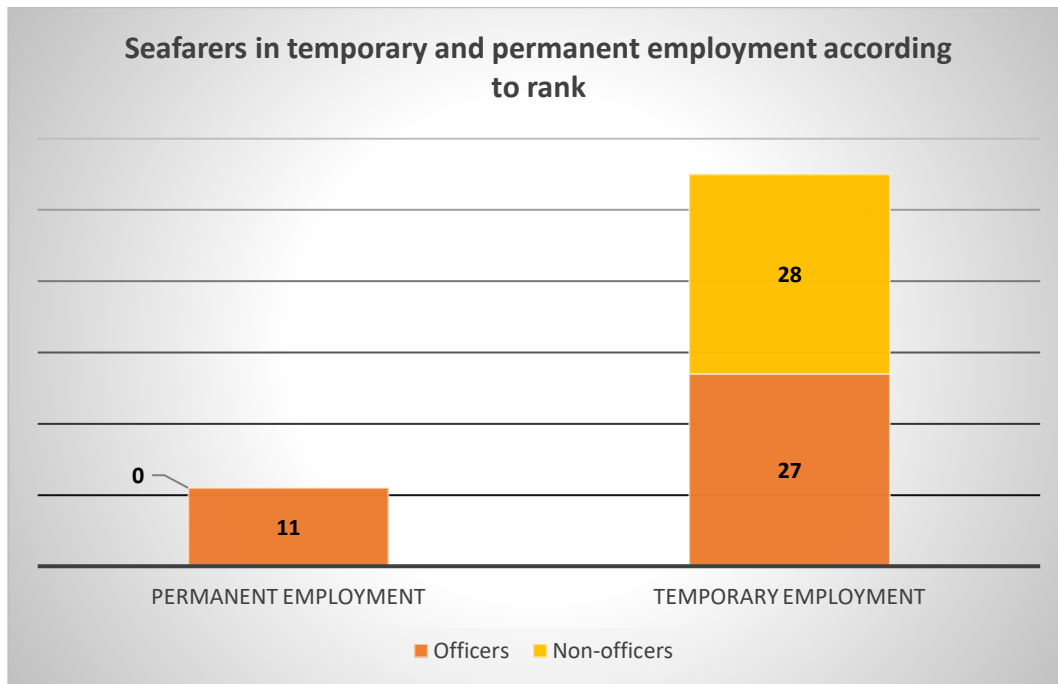
Figure 7: Type of employment according to seafarers' origin country (temporary or permanent), N = 66.



Furthermore, most seafarers in the research were employed temporarily with N=28 non-officers and N=27 officers (see Figure 8), and officers were more likely to be employed permanently than ratings (N=11 as opposed to N=0 for non-officers).

³⁹ Information about participants might not be statistically significant, however it serves the purpose of providing a glimpse into the complex nature of employment in shipping.

Figure 8: Type of employment according to seafarers' rank (temporary or permanent), N = 66.



According to the research findings, there were differences between officers and non-officers in the type of employment offered, which has been previously acknowledged in the literature. Specifically, as reported by Bloor and Sampson (2009) and Ellis et al. (2012), senior officers are more likely to be employed on permanent contracts, while junior officers and ratings are more likely to be employed on those which are temporary. These differences are also supported in the research findings. One training manager, for example, explained the differing lengths of employment contracts between officers and ratings in his shipping company.

If a second officer does 90 days on board, he will then have 66 days off. [...] Ratings do much longer contracts, 6-8 months, and then they have our leave entitlement. [Tyrion, Training Manager, 24 years old, from the UK, interview in English]

One seafarer told of how the 'continuity' of his employment largely depended on the demand for ships:

We're all basically contract employees, so our contract is for five months, well the [shipping company] gives [us] a job after that also, for [the] next contract also, but that's [...] not compulsory. Depending on the availability. [...] Still, there's a chance [to remain without a job]. So if

something happens tomorrow, they lost ships or something like that, or their standards have come down, then I'm out to search for another company. So, I will send my profile to another company, nowadays online I can send [my application], and they'll see my record and if they are [interested], they will call me. [Aegon, Second Engineer, 31 years old, from India, interview in English]

For the few seafarers interviewed in this research who had worked under a permanent contract (N=11 out of N=66), there was normally an obligation from their employer to provide them with employment on board within a particular period after the end of their vacation. One officer who worked under a permanent contract explained:

If someone has permanency [with] the company, it's like, it can happen that there's no job, [but] in that case the [company] is obligated to pay me a 'waiting fee'. It's like receiving pay while I'm ashore. They have to pay me until I'm sent on board. [...] When the [paid] vacation is finished, if they don't give me a job, they have to pay me for this waiting time [ashore]. [...] It's clear that this is not in their interests to pay me money [like this], that's why they try to avoid it, they will find me a job quickly. Lately, I haven't had any 'waiting' time, they've managed to find me a job, assigning me to any ship, without even giving me time [to rest] at home. [Drogo, Second Engineer, 39 years old, from Israel, interview in Russian]

In some cases, there are national restrictions limiting the employment terms of seafarers from a particular country, even if employers are willing to employ them permanently. One example of this can be seen in the case of seafarers from the Philippines. Specifically, the work of Filipino seafarers is regulated by the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), which exerts control over seafarers' employment terms and conditions (POEA, 2016b; Sampson, 2013). These regulations constrain shipping companies from giving Filipino seafarers permanency in their employment, resulting in recurring but not permanent contracts. For example, Pypar noted:

[The] Philippines are overseeing employment overseas, so you cannot have sort of like permanent employment. You need to give a contract to [an] overseas worker. So... that's how it works there. [Pypar, HR Manager, 39 years old, from India, interview in English]

Roslin, a crew manager from the Philippines, tried to explain the reasons as follows:

Probably it has something to do with the fact that they [the POEA] want the Philippines to be able to offer the best rate to ship owners, they

want to be able to market Filipinos in the best rate possible. Because when you offer a permanent contract, then it has a multiplier effect on the cost, so it would be more expensive for the ship owner, Filipino [seafarers] would then become more expensive, and I guess that ship owners will likely go to alternative countries, crewing countries like Indonesia, or Vietnam, and I don't think that Filipinos can afford losing this market share. So they have to be able to push them, not only for seafarers, because that particular policy for temporary [employment] it applies to land-based workers as well. They don't want to lose the market share, we don't want that. We are poor [laughing]! [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In this context, it is worth noting that the POEA also charges the employer an administration fee for every Filipino worker employed overseas termed 'POEA processing fee' (POEA, 2016a), which might be another reason behind these limitations.

Overall, it seems that just as in other sectors where temporary contracts are commonplace for reducing costs (Brown et al., 2011), employers in the shipping industry are inclined to follow the same practice. Specifically, in a highly competitive labour market and the context of an unpredictable demand for ships, this pattern of employment can help to maintain the low cost of personnel (Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015).

CLOSER LOOK AT FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT IN SHIPPING

Reduced Investment in Training

Considering the above findings and the competitive reality of the shipping industry, another important aspect of minimising costs is the reduction of investment in seafarers' training (Sampson, 2004b; Sampson and Tang, 2015). The situation in the shipping industry can be seen as unique when compared to other global industries, where casualised labour might be referred to as unskilled or semi-skilled labour (see for example Kalleberg and Hewison, 2013). Seafarers, while commonly employed casually, are considered as skilled labour (with officers perceived as highly skilled and ratings less so) (Sampson and Tang, 2015). This suggests the shipping industry requires highly skilled labour to work on board ships.

While in the past employers largely invested funds in seafarers' skilling and training, nowadays this investment has been significantly reduced. The volatility of the shipping

industry has driven employers to reduce the costs associated with investing in seafarers' training as they did with permanent employees previously (Sampson and Tang, 2015). The curtailment is necessary if the costs of ship operations are to be held down and does not reflect any lessening of the need for training (Bloor et al., 2014; Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015). One crew manager has worked with several clients, and while some of them invested in the training and development of seafarers, others had not done so and the training costs were mostly shouldered by the seafarers and their families (as also noted in Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015). Roslin described the situation in the following way:

Company A, being a third-party manning agent, not owning their own vessels, [are] very much profit oriented. The management style will always depend on what the ship owners decide. So, if for example, the ship owner would like to, is not willing to spend money, the agency itself would not do so itself. So, the agency can make recommendations but it is also very much profit oriented, it doesn't, I don't think it changed, it doesn't do much initiative to invest, to come from your pocket. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

During the same interview, Roslin noted how some employers (i.e. some of the agency's clients) invested in the training of seafarers, with the expectation that they would remain and work for the company at the end of their training:

We have a school that is funded by the Dutch, and basically they teach everything there. And afterwards, we pick a handful of students there, we send them to the Netherlands, and have their training, they study there. We pay for it, for the whole thing, the company [pays], for everything, everything! [...] Actually, it's a very generous plan of the company, because they [the seafarers] only sign a three-year contract. So the three years, for example, we train them right? They want them to become officers, if they sign a three-year contract, by the time they become officers, they already finished with the 3 years, so they are now free, so we don't get them, they now have the option to go wherever they want, after we have invested in them. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In the case described above, Filipino seafarers cannot work permanently due to national restrictions (POEA, 2016b; Sampson, 2013). However, the company Roslin described had clear expectations of continuously employing them even after the 'official'

commitment was over. While it might be in the interest of seafarers to have guaranteed employment after the end of their vacation, it might also be in the interest of employers.

Rehiring the Same Seafarers

Employers prefer hiring people who have worked for them in the past rather than hiring new seafarers. In some cases, personnel managers use temporary contracts but expect to have 'permanent' employees returning on a 'rolling' basis. For example, Tyrion noted how:

At the end of [the seafarer's] leave [period] we would expect [him] to return to our fleet, so it's actually continuous, it rolls like that all the time. [Tyrion, Training Manager, 24 years old, from the UK, interview in English]

The preference to rehire the same seafarers has also been suggested in previous research (see for example Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Tang, 2015). One CEO of a MET (Maritime Education and Training) institute commented on this preference:

[Hiring new seafarers] affects [work on board] in several ways. First of all, if [a seafarer] comes on board and doesn't know anything, he can cause damage. Secondly, if the company brings him and a day before [he needs to board the ship] they test him and discover that he doesn't know anything, the company needs to find someone else to replace him, otherwise the ship cannot sail. So it can cause problems for the company. That's the reason companies normally try to work with people they already know. [Gendry, CEO of MET, 54 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Later during the interview, Gendry noted:

We don't qualify officers unless we are certain we could provide them with a job. Because we have mutual commitment with the cadets for three years of work. They commit to work for three years, and we, or more accurately, the shipping companies are committed to providing them with a job during this period. [Gendry, CEO of MET, 54 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

If a ship cannot sail on schedule, it is likely to involve considerable costs for the owner (e.g. paying fees to the port or postponing scheduled shipment). Similarly, the emphasis on the operational costs associated with the introduction of new seafarers to the

organisation has been remarked on by other interviewees. Roslin, for example, described how:

It's going to make your life difficult if you don't actually [...] rotate, and assign [seafarers with] another contract. It's going to make your life difficult if you keep on recruiting [new seafarers]. So what we usually do, the moment the seafarer [...] signs off the vessel and reports to the office, and then we ask him if he is interested to return, and [check] if his performance is also okay. Afterwards, we ask him how many months he wants to go on vacation. [...] If he agrees to that, we generate the contracts and then he signs it on the spot and then he can go on vacation. [...] [By hiring the same seafarers] the [seafarers] know the culture on board, and the policy on board, it's the learning curve on board, when they join the vessel. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Using the same pool of seafarers was seen as a viable option for Roslin as a crew manager. Similarly, a HR manager noted how he prefers hiring the same seafarers to maintain their loyalty to the company:

Pypar – Most of the time [the company] will be [hiring] the same [seafarers], but as the company keeps expanding, we have to hire new [seafarers]...

PBT – Would you have a preference to hire someone who has already worked with the company?

Pypar – That will be depending on the reason why he left. If he was dismissed, definitely not, but yes if he was distant and he left and later he wanted to join, we will welcome [him]. [...] Like for us, everything is very nice for them. The [seafarers] are very very happy working with us. And their waiting time is absolute minimum, so when they want to come on board on a ship, everything is smooth. [Pypar, HR Manager, 39 years old, from India, interview in English]

Despite Pypar's preference to rehire seafarers it might not always be possible. Specifically, as was noted by another personnel manager, if seafarers cannot report back to the company when needed, the employer will find alternative seafarers to replace them (as per the temporary nature of employment in shipping). Consequently, when asked whether he would prioritise hiring a rating that has worked for the company in the past rather than hiring someone new, Bronn explained his reasons thus:

Oh yeah yes, absolutely, so it's the ratings who are working for the company, they report back, and then we take them, put them back on our ships. If they refuse to go back, and they want to be home for longer, and

there is a requirement, then we'll hire from the outside. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

These findings are supported in a study about Indian seafarers working in international fleets (Dutt, 2015), where temporary contracts were offered to officers after which they were re-employed on a regular basis. Despite the use of mostly temporary employment practices in the shipping industry (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013), employers in this project appear to have used concepts that could be associated with permanent and long-term employment. These include for example terms like 'organisational culture', 'mutual commitment' and 'learning curve', which can be strongly linked with bureaucratic employment models (see for example Merton, 1968; Whyte, 1956). In this context, it makes sense to hire people who are 'tried and tested', but it also raises the question of why these seafarers are not employed on permanent contracts. It seems that employers in the shipping industry do not need to use permanent contracts because they can rehire the same people, hence the use of temporary contracts can be explained by the character of the labour market for seafarers.

Reliance on an Endless Supply

While some seafarers are rehired repeatedly, and are expected to remain loyal to their employers, there also appears to be a general reliance among shipping companies on an endless supply of seafarers. In other words, employers in the shipping industry largely expect seafarers to be available for as long as needed, without the traditional job security associated with permanent employment. For some roles on board, especially for junior officers and for ratings, this 'endless supply' of availability actually seems to be the case. Often, the oversupply of seafarers for certain roles leads to fierce competition among them, and employers benefit from having a wide choice, both nationally (see for example Leong, 2012; Sampson and Zhao, 2003; Yang, 2010) and internationally (Sampson, 2013; Tang et al., 2015). For example, one officer talked about how the labour market for seafarers is 'flooded' with junior officers:

In my first year [of studies] we were 700 [cadets] in my university, 700 people, and we finished around 250. Most of them, they quit because they found out that there is no way to go on sea as a cadet, so no point to lose four years for nothing. Most of them they finished, but there is no chance,

they didn't have any chance [to find a job at sea], so they are working either in harbour, or in [the] office, in some small companies, depends on their luck of course. [Dontos, Second Officer, 27 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Dontos pointed out how seafarers' chances of finding employment after they graduated from the MET were extremely low. Another seafarer noted how the labour market for seafarers in India was flooded with newly qualified seafarers with low employment prospects:

Now for officers, one over 2000, in India. Junior officers. Fully, fully flooded. [...] [There are] 2000 people for [one] position. [...] It's been, lately, just because of these institutions who are issuing all [these] documents, just because of the institutions. [...] They're just giving, for every batch they are producing 600 cadets, so where do they go? Where [will] they find a job? [...] They [the institution] won't promise [a job], they just say that we are just giving a training, for cadets. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Despite the oversupply of seafarers for certain roles on board, there have been reports of an undersupply of seafarers for the 'top four' ranks, especially seafarers originating in OECD countries (Sampson, 2013).⁴⁰ One crew manager noted that some seafarers filling these roles might be in a position to take advantage of this undersupply in order to negotiate better conditions. Roslin noted:

There [is a larger] supply of ratings than needed, and there are less officers than before, this is according to my work with generations already in the maritime business, when you have officers, whatever contract you give them, they just say yes. No objections, they go and basically do their part. But now, according to them, officers are changing. It's like when you gave them a contract, they question you, like, they start getting very picky, they say 'oh what kind of vessel is it? How many officers are there? What other nationalities on board? Is it mixed crew nationality or is it like full Filipino?' There are officers that don't like to work with full Filipino [crew] because they don't like the culture, you're also, it's not like working with mixed nationalities, they have those preferences. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In this context, it appears that although employers accept the need for flexibility in employment practices, they additionally seek to benefit from the 'best of both worlds',

⁴⁰ The 'top four' positions on board are the Captain, Chief Mate, Chief Engineer, and First Engineer (Sampson, 2004b, p. 246).

by employing seafarers temporarily while maintaining some of the positive elements of bureaucratic employment (i.e. job continuity with the same employer). This suggests a long-term working relationship between seafarers and employers without the traditional job security associated with it.

THE 'BEST OF BOTH WORLDS'?

References to an 'Organisational Culture'

The constant rehiring of seafarers has been linked to a clear preference for those who are familiar with the working environment of the ship and do not require a repeat introduction (Sampson and Tang, 2015). Inexperienced seafarers may be involved in accidents that are a direct result of being unfamiliar with the ship's equipment because they are unaccustomed to working on board. This is likely to cause financial damage (Sampson and Tang, 2015). The importance of seafarers' knowledge of the work on board often extends beyond technical issues to include seafarers' awareness of the company norms and traditions, or in other words, with the company's organisational culture. One personnel manager talked about this in the context of hiring captains who have not worked for the shipping company before:

We typically don't hire captains from [the] outside. [...] One of the reasons why we don't hire captains, it's not that we're not taking captains from the outside, we have plenty of captains that we have taken from the outside, but that number is limited and it's maybe 20 per cent of all the captains that we've hired. The reason is that you know, we firmly believe that people should be in-bred in the system, [...] and when you become a captain, you know, you're a company representative, and you should be fully familiar with the way the company works. So it's better that you come in as a chief officer, understand the company and the system entirely, and then get on to take command of one of our vessels. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

In the context of organisational advancement and progression, organisations that offer permanent employment opportunities frequently value the development of competent employees who are knowledgeable about the organisational culture (Whyte, 1956), and about 'organisation-specific tacit knowledge' (Alvesson, 2000, p. 1103). These employment relations are valued as a way of reducing the costs that are generally

associated with maintaining ‘specific human capital [...] through work experience and on-the-job training’ (Bihagen and Ohls, 2007, p. 160). In a similar way, Roslin noted the existence of a so-called ‘organisational culture’ within the recruitment agency, which has often been impeded by hiring new seafarers that had not worked for the agency in the past:

As manning companies, we always look for those [seafarers] who we can develop. Because as much as possible, we don't want to, we'd rather promote from rating to officer rather than hiring somebody who's an officer already from the outside. [...] It's more expensive to bring people from outside, and it gives you more problems. Because the moment when they get in, they bring their culture with them, and sometimes it doesn't fit with the culture of the organisation. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Roslin explained something of the logic behind rehiring the same seafarers. Similarly, Tyrion noted:

That's the company's ethos across the world, office based, ship based, we're trying to promote people where we can when we can. So should there be any AB on board the vessel or bosun on board the vessel that wants an officer of the watch certificate, and we have the vacancy and he's looking to take the responsibility on, that's clear to us, then we would interview them for the position. [Tyrion, Training Manager, 24 years old, from the UK, interview in English]

Within the HRM (Human Resources Management) body of literature, organisational culture is seen as substantially contributing to employees’ commitment towards their organisation (see for example Adekiya, 2015; Alvesson, 2000; Ok and Vandenberghe, 2016; Rousseau, 2004). In keeping with this view, some employers interviewed during the course of this research expressed their expectations of loyalty from seafarers, despite the prevailing use of temporary contracts.

Expectations of Loyalty

As previously stated seafarers are expected to be loyal to the company despite the temporary employment culture of the shipping industry. Specifically, as noted above, many employers expressed a clear anticipation that their workforce would be available for work at the end of a vacation despite the formal end of the relationship. Where an

employer invested in the initial training of seafarers an HR manager perceived this investment as an incentive for seafarers to remain committed to the company:

My job is to make sure that our ships are properly manned at all times, with competent crew, [...] we plan their training, their competence, career development, we have a pool of deck cadets, which provides the talent pipeline, so we can groom our officers in house. From cadet to chief engineer, and then of course transition phase where we can take them to the office on two assignments or permanent assignment, in the office, so it depends on what their career aspirations are. My job requires [...] that we also have sufficient retention, make sure the attrition rates are low. [...] Typically, our attrition rate is less than 10 per cent, so you see, 90 per cent of our people, more than 90 per cent of our people are not leaving the company. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Later on, Bronn noted the long-term careers he envisions for seafarers working in his company:

When people join Talon [pseudonym], usually it is that, it means that they are going to be here for the rest of their lives. [...] It's fairly common that when officers reach a senior rank and they become captains and chief engineers, they typically don't like to leave [the sea], until they want to move here [to the offices ashore]. So they want to do something else, but as far as sailing is concerned, they don't leave Talon. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Similarly, Pypar, a HR manager, reported that:

For sure, any good company would prefer to have very loyal seafarers. [...] I think that the thing is, we do look out for the welfare of the seafarers, [...] and we provide like recreation facilities on board. [...] So this kind of thing, I think, raises [the] loyalty of our seafarers. [Pypar, HR manager, 39 years old, from India, interview in English]

In support of this, Tyrion also stated:

We don't want to train somebody just to complete a 4-month contract, we're training them so that they can stay with us for years you know, we're looking for the long-term people. [...] I think [seafaring] is a career for life. There are many ways a career can go, it can take lots of directions, but I think it's a career for life. This industry provides opportunities for anybody who wants it. [...] I actually think that the way we do it is good [rehiring the same seafarers]. We call it 'golden handcuffs'. [...] We are tying the seafarers to us for two years after they

qualify any advanced training so [...] they're stuck with us in a sense. But ... they are guaranteed a job for the next two years, not only they're guaranteed a job but they're guaranteed good training so it's, [...] it's like the cliché, 'I scratch your back and you scratch [mine]', we know what we expect from them [and they know what to expect from us]. [Tyrion, Training Manager, 24 years old, from the UK, interview in English]

These expectations of loyalty can be associated with bureaucratic employment practices, where the investment in employees' training can increase employees' loyalty and commitment to organisations (Banai and Wes, 2004; Danson and Gilmore, 2012 and as also noted in Chapter 2), where individuals generally remain with the same employer for the duration of their employment (Brown, 1995). The expectation that temporary employees be available for work even after the 'official' relationship between the seafarers and the company has ended was mentioned by some seafarers interviewed during this research as well. One seafarer, for example, noted how during the recruitment process, company representatives expressed their expectations of loyalty:

When I was in school, I think [in my] second year of college, this, company man, this manager, [...] they come to our school [...], and they were talking to us about this company, and actually one of them said that he is really disappointed that they take cadets, they [the cadets] come, they do, one contract, two contracts, they start, as cadets and after [this] they go [leave the industry]. [Matthos, Electrician Cadet, 23 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Matthos continued in order to explain his feelings of commitment towards the shipping company despite the temporary relationship:

Actually, this is what I don't like. [...] Plenty people after the first voyage they, they don't [continue] sail[ing]. [...] Actually, these people, you know, they are pushed by their family, by [their] situation, this, they're not [...] committed, to this career. And, these guys, these managers actually, were complaining about this, 'cadets come, they make one contract, two, and then they go'. Actually, I don't like this, I don't [do] this by principle, I don't know, I see this company actually, you know, they offer me help, you know in my country it's harder to, [...] to get initiated in some company, and to actually go on the sea. Specially for people that don't have, I don't know how to say, some connection, you know? [...] I actually think, you know, they [the company] offered me this help, and I won't, you know, just go to another company, like that. [...] I don't even think about changing company. [Matthos, Electrician Cadet, 23 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Matthos noted the importance of an initial working opportunity in a highly competitive labour market. In this context, many seafarers expressed their preference to work for the same company rather than change employers, even if such an option were available to them:

If I have a normal contract [with this company], there is no point looking for [something else]. This is actually what I don't like, you come, and this running around companies, I come here [and tell the company], 'I will be ready then and then', and everything is good. I don't like working a little bit in many companies, if I settle, yes, I can settle for five or ten years in the same company. If something isn't going well, I can turn around, leave, and go to another company. But not like that... Arguing about \$100. What happens if something goes wrong there? What happens if you don't get along with the crew? You will leave earlier to go home... You will only lose by doing that [by looking for another company]. [Lancel, Electrician, 24 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Despite the perceived options to work in other shipping companies, Lancel noted how he preferred working with one shipping company. Similarly, one cook noted:

[Working for this shipping company], I feel more, even more comfortable than 20 years ago. If I say I want to have this, they give [it to] me. It's a matter of give and take, we already blended ourselves in symbiotic relations, if they have given me something, it's more working relationship with me and the employer. [...] I'm not this kind of person that goes from one company to the other. If I get what I want from this company I am going to stay with them and work comfortably, instead of looking for something else and start anew. [Amory, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Other seafarers interviewed during this research talked about their loyalty to a particular company despite the temporary relationship between the company and the seafarers. One captain expressed his views about this as follows:

I don't spit into the well I'm drinking from. I had the option to move to another company [name], but I gave it up, I returned to the company with whom I started my work. They were good to me from the beginning. I think that they are a good company. They always helped me when I needed it, either with lending me money, or being considerate, I get everything I need from them. They don't try to hustle me, I'm comfortable here. If it wasn't good for me, [I could] leave. What's the point? Why stay and cry about it? There are people that say 'oh, they are hustling us, those shits', you know, so go! [...] What's your problem? Is anyone holding a gun to your head [and forcing you to stay here]? Why? If I find one day that it

isn't good for me anymore, then I'll leave [the company]. [Edmure, Captain, 48 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

This view represented precisely the attitudes that employers hoped to foster. In his interview, Bronn emphasised the mutual benefit of employing seafarers on a contractual basis:

I would like the seafarers to stay here for longer, sail on our ships and then if they like and we have vacancies, they should move into the office and then you know, in that way I will see the return coming back to the company. In my way the best return is when you have someone that you groom from Cadet to a captain, he's commanded one of our ships, and then he moves to the office and that is the best return of investment. As far as I'm concerned. And I would really like to see that happen as much as possible. If they would like to seek alternate careers, or alternate companies, alternate employers, it would be a sad thing to see them go because sometimes you see good guys go for their own personal reasons, and that's very sad, but is their choice at the end of the day and obviously we will not hold them back, we can only equip them in their, whatever future they decide or which is best for them. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

The above quotations appear to reinforce the view that 'continuous' temporary employment contributes to employees' commitment, loyalty and performance (see for example Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch, 2005). In many cases, raising the loyalty of employees is an attempt on behalf of employers to '*reinforce social identities associated with corporate membership*' (Alvesson, 2000, p. 1108). Within the context of an industry where flexible employment practices are commonplace, the situation is slightly different. Employers in the shipping industry appear to have no official obligation to provide seafarers with another contract at the end of their 'formal' commitment. Hence, the 'mutual' benefit of having guaranteed employment for both the company and the seafarers implied in the quotes was only guaranteed for a limited period of time, without additional assurances from the company for further employment opportunities in the long term. These practices are very much market oriented, and they appear to be mostly economic. They are also a contributing factor in the creation of an illusion of permanent employment where in reality seafarers' employment is largely temporary.

SUMMARY

It has been shown that employers in the shipping industry emphasise the need for an adequate supply of seafarers whilst having the option to shed their labour force if the demand for ships is reduced. The model used in the shipping industry in the past, enabled seafarers to have permanent contracts and provided them with training (Sampson and Tang, 2015). This is perceived by employers to be unsustainable because of the current erratic state of the industry. Ergo, given the unpredictable demand for the carriage of goods, companies need to be able to lay off and take on seafarers easily rather than maintain a permanent workforce. Thus, in the reality of a volatile industry such as the shipping industry (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013), many companies are pursuing a different model and prefer using a pool-based, temporary workforce. Employers prefer to rehire 'tried and tested' seafarers repeatedly in preference to having a permanent workforce on a payroll (in such a case there would be a requirement for a formal process of termination in the event of any unpredictable occurrence in the industry). Nevertheless, they are not enthusiastic about hiring seafarers who are complete novices and unfamiliar with the 'organisational culture'.

By rehiring seafarers at the end of their contract, shipping companies appear to enjoy the benefits of having an engaged, 'tried and tested' workforce, often associated with permanent employment, while using temporary employment practices and enjoying the 'best of both worlds' to some extent. Such methods appear to be beneficial to employers however employees may have differing perceptions. In Chapter 5 seafarers' views, both negative and positive, are examined.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘For Better, for Worse ... in Sickness and in Health’: Seafarers’ Perceptions of Flexible Employment

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter focuses on the nature of flexible contracts and considers seafarers' attitudes towards flexible employment in the shipping industry. Employers in the shipping industry seem to enjoy 'the best of both worlds' (as shown in chapter 4) in the context of flexible employment. They employ seafarers on a temporary basis while rehiring the same seafarers to maintain continuity of employment. After presenting the implications of these practices from the employers' point of view, it is necessary to examine the effects of flexible employment on employees.

Specifically, the chapter focuses on the positive and negative characteristics of contractual employment as these are experienced by seafarers working in the shipping industry. It revolves around two main features of flexible employment. The first is income/employment insecurity and the second is the lack of social support systems. Both aspects are presented as perceived by some seafarers as good and for others bad. These data suggest that seafarers' views of flexible employment in shipping are overwhelmingly negative. Nevertheless, a small number of seafarers perceived their employment favourably.

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT FLEXIBILITY

Income and employment insecurity are mostly associated with the precarious nature of flexible employment and seafarers' accounts reveal two main predicaments in this context. The first is the financial pressures some seafarers experience as a result of waiting between contracts for an unspecified period of time, without remuneration. Another predicament remarked on by seafarers is the difficulty they have in obtaining work within the shipping industry.

Financial Pressures

The nature of employment in shipping generally means that at the end of a seafarer's contract, an additional employment contract is not guaranteed (as noted in Chapters 2 and 4). Additionally, the contractual nature of employment in shipping generally means

that many seafarers are only paid for their working time at sea.⁴¹ Another factor worth considering in this context is that because organisations have reduced their investment in training, the costs have to be borne by seafarers and their families, as noted elsewhere in the thesis (Chapters 2 and 4) and also in Sampson and Tang (2015). This often results in long periods of time ashore without pay while waiting to be called to sea because receiving an offer for a further assignment at sea is not always an easy affair. Some seafarers are fortunate during their waiting time and manage to find temporary work or rely on income from businesses they have set up ashore. Less fortunate was one seafarer who noted how he was forced to stay home for 11 months without pay and depended on family to help him:

PBT – What was the longest time you waited for a contract?

Hodor – It was [a] long time ago, [I waited for] almost 11 months.

PBT – Are you getting paid while you wait for the next contract?

Hodor – No. Just [getting by] by ourselves. [...]

PBT – Did you ever run out of money? [...]

Hodor – Of course, I had no income.

PBT – What did you do then?

Hodor – Sometimes I worked with my brother in law, he has a small store, [I helped him there] and he gave me [money]. [Hodor, Bosun, 46 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Hodor managed to find temporary employment while he waited for his next contract on board. Another seafarer, Varys, found employment at his uncle’s hotel while waiting. He recalled how:

Even before I came here [on board], there was one year [of] waiting for me, when I was sitting at home. In that period, I went to my uncle's hotel and I learned about how you open a restaurant, and how you, you know? Operate a kitchen. [...] Instead of sitting at home and [at the] end your mind goes [crazy]... So it is better to get productive. [Varys, Trainee Chief Cook, 23 years old, from India, interview in English]

Another seafarer described how he managed to make ends meet between contracts by running the family farm:

⁴¹ Some seafarers (especially those on permanent contracts) are entitled to paid leave for an agreed period of time ashore, pay that is calculated with accordance to the time they have spent at sea. Other seafarers have their leave pay factored into their monthly wage agreements and they do not receive pay while ashore.

At our place I have a small farm so, we could always rely on our income from the farm, but it's less from what I am earning [on board], but for sustenance, for survival, it's what helps. [Amory, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In the cases described above seafarers managed to find temporary employment ashore or survived in other ways while awaiting their next contract. However, this option might not be available to all. The flexible nature of work in shipping generally means that seafarers cannot predict their working status for the long term. Thus, finding temporary employment ashore can pose problems. Walder revealed the challenges of finding temporary employment ashore while waiting for his temporary employment at sea, during an interview:

I could have found a job, it's not a problem. I could have returned to the same place where I used to work before, or find a new place. I don't have a problem finding a job. But, you know, when they [the shipping company] tell me 'okay, half a month, we will give you a job', [when] I go looking for a job [ashore], so, who will take me for two weeks? By the time I learn the job, it's a week and a half, and then what? [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

As noted previously, seafarers do not receive pay between contracts and this frequently leads to financial pressures, relatively common among seafarers and their families. Consequently, seafarers are often compelled to accept the longest possible ‘per voyage’ contracts. One seafarer (Stannis) revealed that he preferred to accept long contracts lasting for over 9 months at a time. He explained:

[I prefer] longer contracts, I like that. Because [then] I will stay more time [at] home. Six months if I stay [on board], then I will stay two months at home. If I stay nine months [on board], I will stay [at home] little more. So I will have little money [that I earned while working on board], so I will stay [at home for longer]. [Stannis, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from India, interview in English]

Stannis explained that he took on longer contracts in order to accumulate enough funds to sustain himself and his family during time off. However nowadays, there are limitations to the length of contract seafarers can take on board. This has not always been the case as noted in Chapter 2. On occasions, in the past, seafarers were able to sign very long contracts, for example up to two years, so as to secure as much income as possible during their time at sea (Gerstenberger, 2002; Kahveci, 2005). These practices have

become more regulated since the MLC 2006 came into force (August 2013) limiting the term of service permitted to a maximum of 12 months (ILO, 2006). There are many reported cases in which money earned on board was exhausted while the seafarers were ashore. Amory stated:

Amory – It's going to happen [that the money runs out] and it's happening always. When you're on leave, you have to lead also normal life.

PBT – What do you mean by 'normal life'?

Amory – Normal life is [when] you have to pay for your bills, and at the same time you are not receiving salary because you are not hired, and at the same time you can run out of money and it's tough. It's a hard time for us. [Amory, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Amory's predicament of running out of money was not uncommon among participants. For example, Quentin noted:

It happened [that the money finished] also, and god forbids, it could happen again. You see, I earn this money, and spend it straightaway. Not just me, but my family spends it too. Straightaway. And also, I cannot avoid spending money here [on board] as well... [Quentin, Bosun, 43 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

In this context, seafarers often need to rely on loans to cover different expenses ashore.

Taking Loans

Apart from causing seafarers to find alternative sources of income in the form of paid work ashore or managing small businesses between contracts, the lack of payment can drive some seafarers to borrow money in order to sustain their day-to-day living. Rakharo explained:

That's the worst thing in this field, we are not getting paid after we sign off from the ship. So that's the drawback of [the] shipping industry. And we have to face sometimes financial troubles also. [...] When we are not joining [the ship] in time, then like, we have to face some troubles. [...] So we try to invest somewhere, whatever, when we are in port, and if we are delayed to join a ship, like we have to struggle for the money, and we keep on borrowing here and there, and making [ends meet]. My wife used to maintain this one [business ashore], so it's okay, not bad, but when

compared to others, like [people] working ashore, they don't have to worry about financial [issues], like they don't have to [worry about that], because every month they are getting paid. For us it's not like that. That's the drawback. [...] When I go back to [the] ship, I have to pay [back the money] with interest. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Irregular earnings lead to difficulties in securing ‘safe’ loans from respectable institutions such as banks and force seafarers to rely on loans from private establishments, which are often unregulated and risky. In this context, seafarers are frequently forced to borrow from families, in the best-case scenario or from questionable lenders in the worst. There are cases where seafarers were forced to provide security against a loan which was not always available. Rakharo explained:

No bank will support us, because we, our earnings are not continuous. So we are [taking the loans] privately, we have to beg someone by putting gold or high value things, and take the money. And if you try to buy a house, so they will give you the loan, but how [do] you pay if you're not, if your earnings are not continuous? Then how you are going to pay? Even though [the] budget might be less [money for spending], but you have to face [this] financial problem, that's there. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

When seafarers are unable to earn, or borrow, sufficient money to allow them to cover their expenses (i.e. training costs, repaying loans or day-to-day costs) they fall into longer-term debt.

Falling into Debt

Debts were noted as one negative consequence of working flexibly. During an interview, Syrio mentioned that as a result of paying for the renewal of the documents that he needed in order to work on board, he experienced financial difficulties, forcing him to borrow money from other people. He explained that:

Sometimes [the] money [finishes], I can take, borrow [money] from my friend, [from my] five brother[s], and then [when] I come [to work] on board, I [can] give to the[m] back [return the money]. But I want to try [to] adjust, when [the money] finish[es], to go back [to the ship]. [Syrio, Fitter, 51 years old, from Turkey, interview in English]

Because Syrio owed money he felt that he had to go back to the ship as soon as possible in order to be able to repay his creditors. In another case, Ned described how he was forced to shorten his vacation time at home as a result of accumulated debts:

I have big spending [ashore], because I got a loan from the bank, for the new house, so I need to pay more, so instead of two months vacation [...] in two weeks [at home] I [was] already reporting to the company that I need some assignment, new assignment. [...] It's difficult, but if I put on my mind that I need to work, and it's better to work than no[t to] work, so it's better to save, earlier than to take a two month vacation without money, it will be much more difficult for me and my family. [Ned, Electrician, 40 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

After explaining his need to return to the sea earlier than planned, Ned continued by describing an extreme situation when he was forced to return to sea after only three days' leave:

[During the] last two years, my wife [has] put up some small business, [in] which she [...] [took] loans from my family, from my father, and from the bank, some big amount of money, which I didn't know [about], which she didn't [tell] me. So when I came home, I found [out about] it. [...] So I was very angry, because the money that I save[d] for my 8 months contract [on board], it went already there [to pay for this debt]. [...] So instead of taking one month vacation [at home, it was] only three days [during which] I [was] already reporting back to the office [to ask for another assignment]. [Ned, Electrician, 40 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Such short resting time often prevents seafarers from fully recovering from their preceding assignment on board, which can potentially impact on their psychological well-being (see for example Bridger et al., 2010; Dutt, 2015). These difficult circumstances, causing Ned to return to the ship after only a few days at home, were not uncommon among participants in the research. Another example was given by Olyvar when he described how he would try to facilitate an early return to work if the need for money arose:

If you want to join after two months [at home] [...], if you want to join and you are in need of money, you can join earlier. You just come back home and after one month [say] it to them [the crewing agency], ‘Okay, next month I'm ready to join [the vessel]’. [Olyvar, Electrician, 58 years old, from India, interview in English]

The examples above show how some seafarers can be heavily affected by financial problems ashore. This is in contrast to other seafarers who welcome the relative freedom to choose the length of their holidays and perceive it as a compensating factor for the lack of payment while on land. The following field note, which documents an informal conversation with one of the seafarers on board, relates to this issue:

Euron said that the working life on board is convenient for him, and that he does not intend on working ashore. For him, working ashore means working almost without days off during the year. When he works on board for several months, he can then stay at home for two to three months at a time, doing whatever he wants, answering to no one, something he could not do ashore. [From the research diary aboard the Braavos ship, Euron, Third Officer, 31 years old, from Israel, conversation in Hebrew]

The benefits of a comparably long holiday ashore described by Euron can be seen as one of the advantages of work at sea. Similarly, a chief engineer commented:

The way things work, I earned some money [while working on board], and from there I'm free. Ashore you don't have this kind of option. And if you do, it's very rare; you don't often have people who can work as much as they want and then be on vacation as much as they want - as long as they need, not as long as they deserve. [...] [I like] the opportunity to feel free. For some time [at least]. Until you are on holiday, you are free. I mean totally. This kind of feeling can happen here [working in shipping]. People who work in other places [ashore] cannot feel that. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

According to the personal accounts presented so far, there is a difference in what are considered by some seafarers as benefits and others as disadvantages associated with flexible employment. Most seafarers interviewed seemed to focus on its negative aspects while a few perceived flexible employment at sea as beneficial. Some seafarers noted how they could facilitate an early return to the sea relatively easily, while others had to wait a long time between contracts. In this context, it is likely that a feature of seafarers' employability is their ability to fulfil roles on board which are in great demand, such as those of electricians or engineers. Where the demand for seafarers' roles is much lower than the supply fierce competition for jobs is created. As a result, seafarers holding roles where the supply exceeds the demand find themselves at a disadvantage.

Difficulties in Obtaining Employment

Flexible contracts are especially problematic for young seafarers because they lack the know-how that companies are looking for in the ‘plug and play’ employment world. Yet they cannot gain this without being hired. There is an increasing number of seafarers recruited from developing and emerging economies to work on internationally flagged vessels (Alderton and Winchester, 2002; BIMCO, 2015; Ellis et al., 2012). There are also a growing number of training institutions in these countries. As a consequence, the number of seafarers graduating is often higher than the number of jobs on offer. Training institutions cannot guarantee seafarers’ employment after qualifying so many of them find themselves unemployed long after they have finished their studies. Mace put it like this:

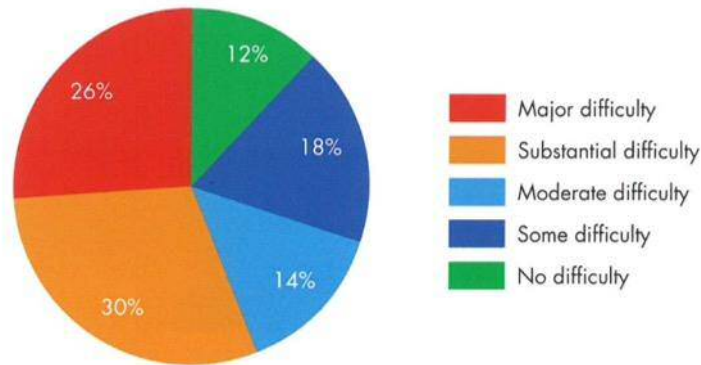
When you start without experience, no one needs you. You are needed only when you already have experience [of work on board]. But where do you find [this experience]? They [shipping companies] don't care about that. They just want to find someone with experience. That's it. For them this is the most important thing. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Mace implied how seafarers are often caught in a vicious circle – struggling to find jobs without experience, while they need a job to gain experience in the first place. Mace continued by saying:

If you are just looking for a job yourself, and you did not get to any program with some Institute, [...] it's difficult, it's very difficult [to find a job]. As I said, I know someone who has diplomas, he finished the [training] Institute, everything, and he's been sitting [at home] for two years, he just couldn't find [a job]. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Young seafarers’ problems in gaining experience at sea are evidenced in the BIMCO (2015) report and their difficulties in obtaining sea time, before they are qualified to work on board, are demonstrated. Figure 9 shows the perceived difficulty for officer trainees to obtain sea time before qualification with most (56 per cent) estimating this difficulty as either major or substantial.

Figure 9: Estimated Difficulty for Officer Trainees to Obtain Sea time Before Qualification, adapted from BIMCO (2015, p. 53)



* Source: MET Institution Survey, 2015

Many young seafarers reported that they encountered difficulties in finding work because of the high number of seafarers holding the same role. They were often competing with dozens or even hundreds of other qualified candidates.⁴² One seafarer explained:

The pool [of seafarers] is very big, there are enough people [working for the shipping company], that's why it became harder with progression, significantly harder. For instance, if before that, two or three contracts were enough to work as a first mate, to become a second mate, now people work even for seven contracts, or six contracts, for me it's the fifth contract [as a third mate, before they can advance]. [Aemon, Third Officer, 25 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

Similarly, Ramsay noted:

[My friend] has been a second officer [...] for many years, he's been a chief mate in qualification, but there is no progression, the places are occupied, so... In principle if the company is good, people are holding on to their positions, if the salary is good, everyone will be holding on to their positions. [...] So if people are not leaving, so how can someone come in their place? [Ramsay, Third Engineer, 40 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

⁴² This was also noted in the context of having a large pool of seafarers employers can 'draw' from described in Chapter 4. This was particularly evident among junior officers and ratings, and is also widely supported in maritime-related literature (for example Leong, 2012; Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Zhao, 2003; Tang et al., 2015; Yang, 2010).

In this respect, many seafarers accept contracts at a lower rank than they are qualified for believing that having a lower paid job is better than having no job at all. In this way, they are able to gain experience over time, starting at the lowest rank on board. Some seafarers see this as their only chance of advancing through the hierarchy of roles on board. For example, Polliver described how his cadet qualifications did not necessarily guarantee his employment on board and consequently he had to work as a rating before he could work as an officer:

[I experienced difficulties] be[ing] promoted [to] an officer [from being a cadet]. [...] From cadet I become [an] OS, then AB, [and] then I become [an] officer because it's too hard to be [an officer] straightaway, you know? So, I become OS two times [for two contracts], and then one time [I worked as an] AB and then [one time as a] third officer. Then I become [a] third officer for some time, [...] then I get promoted on the ship to become a second officer, but I was like third officer for about, almost I would say almost three or four years. [Polliver, Second Officer, 33 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Hierarchical advancement is an inherent component of employment at sea particularly for officers (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). Many seafarers reported that their progression opportunities were often greater if they shifted between different companies. If they experienced difficulties in making progress in one they moved to another. In this context, Polliver continued:

[To become an officer] I need to change companies, you know? [Polliver, Second Officer, 33 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In a similar fashion, Mace explained:

For me, I might do another contract here, I am sure 99%, that I won't become a first engineer here, that's why I will be looking for another company, where they'll take me without experience. Perhaps I'll go for something worse, I mean, risk it, sacrifice something, but at least I'll be able to progress in my role. I will gain some experience there, and then find something better. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Mace explained that he was willing to give up his working conditions in his current company if it would help him advance in the hierarchical structure of employment at sea. It is possible that the existence of a global labour market in the shipping industry enables

qualified and experienced seafarers to make these choices, either working within their national fleet or on board foreign vessels (Wu and Morris, 2006). This view is supported in Barnett et al. (2006) with relevance to the use of third-party employment agencies. They note: ‘with many seafarers now employed by crewing agencies, they will often move between different vessels and companies, and will not develop an allegiance to a particular operator or shipping company’ (Barnett et al., 2006, p. 5).

In some cases, often regardless of their experience or qualifications, having a personal connection at the crewing agency can help seafarers’ employment prospects. For example, Jamie, who worked as a bosun for over two decades, recalled:

Jamie – You know, sometimes, not that I, [that] they kick me out, this crewing agency in Romania, [it happens that] coming one guy with new people [someone new started working at the agency], I was two times ready with my contract in hand and [then], coming another...

PBT – He took someone else...

Jamie – [nods]

PBT – Why?

Jamie – [signals with his hand] connections. Even here [on this ship], when I c[a]me [at the beginning of my contract], [without] anyone help[ing] me, I couldn't come [and work on board]. [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Jamie emphasised the difficulties of securing a contract despite his vast experience of working at sea (over 20 years) on the account of having no personal connections at the recruitment agency. In a different case, Gregor, a young seafarer, described how:

I finished my studies in 2013, and I waited for a year, perhaps even more. I sat at home and waited, there wasn't work. I was searching and searching, but it was difficult. There was a problem finding a job. [...] I went and distributed my CVs, I mean I filled out my personal information, if they have a place for you they will call you, but that's rare, because you have to know someone. To go just like that, it's just not realistic [to find a job]. [Gregor, Mess Man, 21 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

As the quotations above suggest, the absence of direct contact between employers and employees adds to seafarers’ uncertainty about their employment and as there has been an increasing use of third-party recruitment agencies by shipping companies (Sampson, 2013) the situation can only worsen. It generally means that the direct contact

between employers and employees is interrupted by a mediator for whom seafarers’ interests are rarely a priority. Roslin, a crew manager, elaborated on this issue:

Here is the ship owner, this is the crewing manager [[holds one hand up and one hand down]] and here's the seafarer [[in the middle between them]] there's such a very big gap. The ship owner wants this [one thing], and the seafarer wants this [another thing], and the manning agent has to weigh, who's interest is he to prioritise, the ship owner or the one here [the seafarer]? The crew manager is also pressured by management decisions on how much to earn. So now he, which is I, have to weigh the interest of my bosses, the ship owner, and my crew. And since the one that suffers from this is the seafarer, right? Because this is bad to say it, but the companies are profit oriented, you have to be able to earn more, and you want [a] personal interest as well, which is sometimes aligned with the companies' interest, and you have to please the ship owner, so that he doesn't change his mind and assign this vessel to another agency. So the only ones that, you really have no choice, but to sacrifice sometimes, you need the crew [to sacrifice the crew] because they can always be replaced, especially when there's so much excess. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Roslin emphasised the profit-oriented considerations she had to take into account, in which seafarers are often regarded as replaceable. In many cases such recruitment and employment practices facilitate situations where seafarers resort to extreme measures to secure a contract on a ship.

Paying Bribes

In line with the competition for jobs, bribery was described as common practice for securing employment on board. For example, Jamie considered that paying a bribe was often the only way of securing an employment contract on board:

I heard also, till today, you have to pay some money for every contract. [...] Some people say their agencies say [to them] ‘one-month contract is my money’. Agent. [If] you like [to get the] job, you pay [the agent]. Yeah. It's sad, but.... [...] If you like to work, you have to pay. Before [it] was normal, in Romania. I believe nobody had the chance to sail without [paying] this money. Maybe somebody [could] take one month, salary, maybe someone [could] take half [a] month's salary. But, this was the rule before. [If] you [don't] pay, [you will get] no contract. Now in this, in this company, on the beginning, I [had to] give to that guy [at the agency] some money, but this was [for the] first time. But after that, no. [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Jamie’s experience of securing an employment contract on board is similar to that of Rakharo who described how:

Finding a job is your problem. Not their problem. Clearly. [...] [A seafarer] pays a lot of money for training, after that for joining also you have to bribe. Openly I'm saying, everywhere. My time there was no bribe, but here nowadays everywhere, bribe is like [laughing] it's a fashion. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Thus far I have presented the struggle seafarers, both experienced and inexperienced, have to secure continuous employment in shipping. However, there are other problems they may encounter if a new contract is offered with terms that are difficult to accept e.g. at an inconvenient time or with a low salary.

Offers of Employment are Difficult to Refuse

Seafarers reported that they are under pressure to accept any offer that is made by a company, otherwise they may be forced to wait ashore, without pay, for an undefined period of time. In this context, employers often expect an early return to sea without enabling a seafarer to fully recover from a previous assignment. If a seafarer refuses a contract when it is offered, there is the risk of being blacklisted by employers. Jojen described how being blacklisted was a potential consequence of refusing to accept a contract offer, even though he has not experienced this himself:

Whoever comes back [to the ship] needs to maintain [...] the company's need [for employees]. If they don't, it's not easy to maintain your job. [...] You always have to be ready [to join a ship], because if they call you at any moment, and you're not willing to go, it's possible that there is a month without a salary. I didn't have problems with that. Because I always went to work on time. [Jojen, Second Officer, 38 years old, from Israel/ Argentina, interview in Hebrew]

As noted by Jojen, the nature of employment at sea often means that if someone has been blacklisted by an employer, they might not receive a salary until they find a new contract. Similarly, Tywin described his fear of being blacklisted by the company:

Just now, after being [at sea] for eight months and [...] [the manning agency] told me straight away, 'there is a vessel, a good salary, but it leaves within a week'. Well, if I say no, there are 10 others like me, they will just tell me 'why do we need to deal with your refusals, we'll take

other people and that's it'. [...] That's why, if they [the agency] offer [to take an assignment] it's better to take it, there isn't much time at home, I didn't see my daughter properly, but... I have to. [...] This means that if I refuse for the second time, so I doubt it if, the chances are high that they will not take me for the next time. [Tywin, Motorman, 27 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

As Tywin described, the fear of not being offered an additional assignment often supersedes the desire to spend time with his family. Another officer reflected:

Jory – They [the crewing agency] will ask, ‘when are you available’ so maybe I [will] tell them, after three months, or after two months [at home], and [...] after two months or earlier [than] that, they will call you, they will inform you that you have [an] assigned vessel for the next contract, so it depends on you. If you want to go on that ship or you want to refuse, you must inform them, otherwise they might force you to join.

PBT – How can they force you to join?

Jory – Like we don't get, [they can say] ‘why [didn't you] refuse before? So we don't have time now to look [for] other, other position to relieve you, so you must go on this ship otherwise, you need to stay more, longer months [at home]’. [Jory, Second Engineer, 35 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Despite the pressure some seafarers experience to accept any offer of employment, many are compelled to turn a contract offer down, with often negative rippled effects. In some cases, refusal to accept a contract substantially prolongs seafarers' time at home without pay. However, accepting a contract earlier than expected means that seafarers do not have a chance to recover from their previous contract at sea. For example, Ned described how he could not afford to be selective when it came to choosing a contract:

Ned – you want to take a break from a big ship like this, and you want a contract which is not hard [...], but in Philippines, when [a] crew manager told you to go on board on this ship, on this contract, on this day, if you disagree, they will put your paper on the [...] bottom, and you can wait for another 2-3 months, until [you get an offer for another contract], it's like a punishment.

PBT – So you cannot really be picky...

Ned – Yeah, you have to be careful, you cannot pick what you want. [Ned, Electrician, 40 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In other cases, accepting a contract at an inconvenient time results in seafarers' sacrificing precious time ashore with their families. A field note records such a situation as follows:

[Theon] told me that he normally works on a 6-month contract [basis], and then he does not know when his next contract is. He said that once the agency called him after two months at home and asked him to board a ship. He said that this was too early to board the ship because he had not spent enough time with his son, so they [the company] didn't call him for 6 months after that. So he didn't have a job for that period of time just because he had refused. [From the research diary, Theon, Steward, 45 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Being blacklisted by the shipping company or the crewing agency was a common concern among many seafarers in this project (as shown in the examples above). Nevertheless, there were some seafarers, who felt quite confident about the prospects of finding another contract or another source of income if the company threatened to blacklist them. As Mace explained:

Mace – [In my company, if there is a problem] I'll just tell them, 'I need three months [at home]', so they don't bother me for three months. I mean... it happened that they tried, 'you can stay at home [only] for two months...' and I told them, 'I don't want anything [any assignments]. I [just] want to sit home and that's it.'

PBT – And do they enable you to do that?

Mace – why, who are they anyway? Are they God? They don't have the right to tell me what to do. They just have the right to dictate their conditions when I signed the contract, for a certain time that I owe them something. When I'm already at home, they're not paying me any money, that's why they don't have the right to tell me what to do. I can decide for myself, how long I will be staying at home and how. [...] I can tell them 'no' if I want to. [...] I'll just go to another company and find a job. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

In fact, there were a few seafarers in the sample who expressed similar views. Compared to seafarers who encountered difficulties in securing employment in shipping (i.e. working in a lower rank on board, changing companies, experiencing pressures and fear of being blacklisted, paying bribe), there were those who were confident about their employment prospects. Such was Lancel's case:

I'm not worried about not finding a job. In Odessa [Ukraine], there are over 2000 crewing agencies, and each agency is working with at least two or three shipping companies, do you understand how many global shipping companies are out there? [...] I've got working experience in a multinational crew environment, I have English, I can talk freely about work, work experience, I mean on big vessels, on new vessels, and another factor is my age, there aren't many young guys nowadays in this role

[electrician], so I'm not worried [about finding a different job]. [Lancel, Electrician, 24 Years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Lancel noted several factors that might be linked to his confidence regarding future prospects of employment, including his experience, his age and his role on board. Similarly, long years of experience and the accumulation of skills acquired by some seafarers often boosted the confidence they had of finding alternative employment easily. Aegon explained it thus:

As an experienced seafarer, experience of three or four years, everybody would have those things, some sort of knowledge. Like your knowledge about the industry. But as a fresher [someone new], somebody who don't know about what is this industry all about, in that particular phase, I have an advantage, and it would be easier for me to find a job. [Aegon, Second Engineer, 31 years old, from India, interview in English]

Another seafarer, a chief engineer who had been working at sea for over two decades, echoed his perception of ease in finding a job because of his accrued skills and experience. Sandor described how he typically singles out his next employer:

If there are other offers [for employment], more interesting, I'll go there. [...] I started working here in the same way, I mean I worked for one company and here [in the current company] they offered me something more interesting. So I'm working here. [...] The choice is big, I mean I can work all over the world, I can work in another company. Once I finished the contract here, I can work wherever I am offered more money. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

One young seafarer expressed confidence in being able to find employment when needed. Walder revealed:

There are other companies, I can just go to every other company and work there. [...] I can just go to Z [name of shipping company] [...] I don't have a problem, I don't think, even with my first degree, I don't think that I will have a problem finding a job. Because all the people that I used to study with, they already found a job. [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

In another interview, a captain noted how the ‘freedom’ to shift to other workplaces was one of the advantages of flexible employment. Benjen said:

We can get [a] job in other companies also. [...] They [crewing agencies] will think you're working for them, and at the same time, at the

*back of their minds, they know that you are free, you can go anywhere.
So they cannot push you, they cannot persuade you to stay with them.
[Benjen, Captain, 44 years old, from Bangladesh, interview in English]*

Benjen’s view that he is free to shift between different companies and different workplaces can be associated not only with the contractual nature of employment in shipping, but also with his role as a captain on board.

All in all, the majority of quotations demonstrate how employers in this industry exercise the power they have when making decisions regarding seafarers’ employment. It is apparent that seafarers are often fearful of being blacklisted and so may have to accept contracts unfavourable to their circumstances. Conversely, in a few cases, the seafarers interviewed expressed confidence about their prospects of finding employment and were demonstrably empowered by this. Such variations in perceptions go some way to answering the question of why there might be differences in seafarers’ views which is further considered in Chapter 6.

UNCLEAR FUTURE AWAITS

An additional key aspect of flexible employment is the uncertainty generated by the inability to plan for a secure future. The lack of organisational and social support systems in seafarers’ employment was referred to by participants. In this context, many expressed their concerns about their own financial future, as well as that of their children. Specifically, two main issues are discussed here: the lack of pension schemes and seafarers’ viewpoints on their children working at sea.

No Pension Schemes

In most cases, seafarers are considered to be international workers in their countries, which means many of them lack state-funded pension schemes (Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Schroeder, 2006). In addition to this, the use of temporary contracts generally means that most seafarers do not have occupational pension schemes through their employer (as also noted in Chapter 2), because in most cases a pension contribution is incorporated within a seafarer’s monthly pay. Some seafarers reported that their employer provides a

plan that replaces the pension scheme with a form of savings fund. For example, Aemon described how:

We have a retirement plan [...] after sailing for four months, we have a fixed salary, and every month the money is deducted from this salary, \$80, every month these \$80 are put aside, and every month this money accumulates and accumulates, and after 10 years [...] you can claim this [...] money, whatever you accumulated, to claim it from the company. [...] No one will be allocating this money for annuity, I mean, in a way that every month you will be getting a certain amount [for pension]. After they have given you the whole amount, you can allocate it any way you like. [Aemon, Third Officer, 25 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

As Aemon suggests, the savings fund can be opened at any point for seafarers’ personal use as opposed to a pension scheme where the money can only be used to sustain seafarers upon retirement. This savings’ fund is facilitated by the company but it is mainly the seafarers’ responsibility as they are the ones contributing. Consequently, seafarers decide how to allocate the money and have to make practical decisions so as to secure their financial future. In many cases, seafarers prioritise immediate problems rather than following a long-term financial plan to secure their income in retirement. In such a situation, any unplanned event requiring unexpected expenses has the potential of leading to an immediate disbursement of the funds intended for a pension. Jamie, for example, described a situation like this:

Jamie – I pa[id] for [a pension fund], a few years before, but now I stop[ped] this, [because of my son’s] university... [...] I cannot afford [to] pay [for the pension fund]. Because our also government [fees] increase like hell. Before it was like \$50, \$60, now I have to pay \$100. [...]

PBT – But when your son finishes his studies, then what?

Jamie – Then there will remain some money for me. [Chuckling] I [will be able to] continue to pay [for the pension]. [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

As seen in Jamie’s case, using the savings’ plan for any reason other than a designated pension fund generally means that reaching retirement age in a financially secure manner cannot be guaranteed. For some seafarers, retirement seemed too far in the future, which made them less concerned about their pension funds and savings’ plan. Lancel admitted there was a scheme in place to assist seafarers with their financial plans but he did not

think it was relevant to him at this point in time. He was focusing mainly on the short-term:

There is a system in this company, in addition to your salary, there is some percentage of your salary that dribbles into a pension fund, and every year this sum becomes bigger. [...] I don't think about that [about the pension] at the moment, I am 24 years old, I have my whole life in front of me. I just started working at sea, in general, what can I say, maybe in 40 years I'll think about pensions, after that I can discuss this. Now of course it's good [to have a savings' plan], but what's the point of this pension [for me now]? [Lancel, Electrician, 24 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Nevertheless, other seafarers were very concerned about planning ahead for their financial future. Rakharo poignantly talked about retired seafarers in his village:

No government is giving any fund, any penny for the seafarers who is retired. After retirement, [a] seafarer is like a beggar, he is useless. Whatever he saves, in his [work], that is the only money he can use further. So someone like, who is enjoying, who is not keeping money in the bank, what he can do? [...] Here, I'm just seeing here, in my village, [...] I heard so many stories, this is the reason the seafarer dies within 65 years, just because he don't have this moral strength. He feels that he's dead. That's the true story. Seafarer is like, he's working very hard, it's a mission, he is like a mission. Once the mission stops, finishes, he is crap. So many stories out there ma'am. I have seen... Like our generation. My previous generation had this kind of problem, we saw that, we pointed out, now we are focusing on only savings. We realised [this] from the past. This is the truth. Even in [a] hostel, being in a seafarers' hostel, [the] number of people who is leaving home after retirement also, [because] they don't want to stay at home, they are coming back to the hostel [...] just because they have some pressure, they're not, nobody will hire him because he's about 66, 65. [...] What [do] you have? No property for the future... [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

This quotation demonstrates how retired seafarers are left to their own devices and as a result struggle to survive financially when they retire from their work at sea. The lack of organisational support when it comes to pension schemes shifts responsibility from organisations to employees. In this context, seafarers are vulnerable on two fronts: they have neither organisational support nor a state-funded pension scheme. As a result, many seafarers are left to their own devices as to retirement and this can have a rippling affect when they reach old age and move ashore.

In this respect, the lack of a pension scheme might be perceived as a core aspect of flexible employment. Given the pressure for money between contracts, seafarers are unable to make pension savings to provide for their later life. This is a situation in which seafarers can be compared to flexible employees in other industries who generally are not provided with organisational pension schemes and who face a similar fate (seen for example in Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016; Standing, 2016).

Seafarers’ Points of View Regarding their Children Working at Sea

Considering the hardships of working at sea it is not surprising that many seafarers with family expressed an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards their children following their occupational path. They suggested that the downsides of working at sea were greater than the advantages and they were not in favour of their children going through the same ordeals in their employment. For example, Rakharo, whose father was a seafarer, recounted how:

When we grow up we see what our fathers are doing, blindly we follow, because we, when I [was] very small, young, like by that time my father used to have fun with his friends and join the vacations, then we saw all these things and we thought that ‘why don't we go [to work] as a seaman and enjoy like our father?’ [Laughing] We don't know how he [would] struggle aboard [the] ship, he never said how [many] bad experience[s] [he had] with life, so many things and all, [...] when I step in on the first ship [I worked on], I started crying. [...] [It was] very very difficult, then I realised that my father had really hard work [on board]. And like I felt really bad, [that] I've chosen really the wrong way [to go]. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Then, when asked specifically about the prospects of his children continuing his work at sea, Rakharo noted:

Thank God, I have three baby [girls] [laughing]. I don't want to send them on ships. No. Because [...] I love my job. Until now, this is why I'm here, because this is, I'm in this position. Right? I have very much respect to my job, but, but I say [that for my children] I wanted to have from this career to another career, where there was happiness. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

In Rakharo’s view, it was too late to change occupations, but there was still time for his children to choose a different employment path. Similarly, Olyvar explained how working at sea was his dream, but it was not something he envisioned for his children:

[Working at sea] was always my ambition. To come out at sea. And those days [when I was young], you know, the opportunities at shore [were] not what they are now. So [going to sea] was the best option I had. Concerning my education and all that. But then, when I got married and I had like, children, so I don't encourage them to come out at sea. So my children, I have two sons and one daughter, nobody wants to be out at sea. Actually now, because they have seen my life, once, when the ships come to India, they came and I brought them on board, and they saw what a hectic life I was having there, and they said, never I won't come out at sea. And I'm glad they decided against that. [Olyvar, Electrician, 58 years old, from India, interview in English]

Olyvar accepted the ‘fate’ of his continuous, lifelong employment at sea, but he had a dismissive view about the possibility of his children following in his footsteps. Such an attitude was not uncommon among the participants and the data shows a typically disapproving opinion among seafarers of their children working at sea, mainly because of their own negative experiences of flexible employment. Seafarers of different roles and backgrounds categorically emphasised they would not want their children to continue their occupational path. These included, for example, Edmure (Captain, 48 years old, Israel); Arrys (Chief Officer, 66 years old, Israel); Jamie (Bosun, 49 years old, Romania); Sandor (Chief Engineer, 49 years old, Russia); Dontos (Second Officer, 27 years old, Romania) and Samwell (Captain, 49 years old, Iran). As discussed later on in the thesis (Chapter 8), it is possible that if the next generation of potential seafarers were to strive for different employment paths, employers might face a potential for supply-side problems in recruiting shipboard personnel.

SUMMARY

It is apparent that overall, the seafarers who were interviewed had a predominantly negative opinion of flexible employment in the shipping industry. Having described some of the difficulties of working flexibly (i.e. income/employment insecurity and the lack of organisational support in seafarers’ employment), there appear to be two main factors that can mitigate against these difficulties:

- Holding enough experience in the shipping industry making it easier to secure initial sea-time.
- Holding certain skills enabling seafarers to hold ‘in-demand’ positions and thus face a less competitive job market.

Both these factors seem to relate to the advantageous differences some seafarers have over others regarding their employment potential, which are discussed more thoroughly in Chapters 6 and 8. While some express uncertainty and face bleak employment prospects, others perceive their position in a much brighter light and believe they have a wide choice of employment opportunities. These data might go some way to answering the second research question posed at the beginning of the thesis with regards to employees’ perception of the implications of flexible employment arrangements. While many appear to suffer income and employment insecurity, a few perceive flexible employment as beneficial, enjoying the freedom to make their own occupational choices while being employed flexibly.

These varying opinions seem to relate to seafarers’ market position, with those who have experience and/or hold in-demand roles more likely to perceive flexible employment as beneficial as compared to those without such experience or in positions where there is an over-supply. Based on the interviews, it is probable that seafarers’ market position or market power can explain the differences in their views, an idea that is thoroughly explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Being More Than a Seafarer: Different Perceptions Explained

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SIX

This chapter aims to shed light on the contrasting views seafarers hold concerning flexible employment. It is structured as follows: the first section gives a short overview of ‘what it means’ to be a seafarer; the second section goes deeper into the division of labour on board, where the connection between the skill-sets seafarers hold and differences in their views of flexible employment are examined. This section reveals that some seafarers have skills that are not related specifically to the shipboard environment, which may provide a possible explanation for the variations in seafarers’ views of flexible employment

Within the contemporary shipping industry, flexible employment practices are commonplace. Seafarers are generally employed on a short-term basis and normally on per voyage contracts (Ellis et al., 2012). These practices have been pursued in the context of a highly competitive sector, in order to reduce costs (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). As shown in Chapter 4, these practices appear to be beneficial to shipping companies, however seafarers have mixed views about this type of employment. As discussed in Chapter 5, most seafarers perceive precarious employment in the shipping industry negatively, for a variety of reasons such as lack of stability and an inability to plan for the financial future. Nevertheless, there are seafarers who perceive their flexible employment arrangements positively because they are able to choose the companies they work for and the timing of their contracts. Since flexible employment seems to work for some seafarers but not for others, it is of interest to examine how the differences in seafarers’ views can be explained.

BEING A SEAFARER

Seafarers are the main workforce in the shipping industry and, responsible for operating over 90,000 of the world’s commercial ships (UNCTAD, 2016). A ‘seafarer’, ‘mariner’ or ‘seaman’ (not forgetting the few women in this industry) is someone who regularly travels by sea (Stevenson, 2015), and generally ‘*any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship*’ (ILO, 2006). Despite this standardised definition, seafarers are not part of a homogenous group since the roles they fulfil and


the ranks they hold on board are as diverse as is their training. The roles and skills required for work on board a modern merchant vessel are described in the following sections.


Roles and Departments on the Ship

The changes to the shipping industry over the past few decades, as described in Chapters 2 and 4, have affected the composition of labour on board ships and have also resulted in an overall reduction in the size of crews (Ellis et al., 2012; Ellis and Sampson, 2008) although the number of seafarers from developing and emerging economies has grown (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Wu and Morris, 2006). Seafarers working on board contemporary ships hold various positions. Each of these fulfil a different function to maintain the effective operation of the ship. In addition the crew normally adhere to a very strict hierarchical structure (Barnett et al., 2006; Sampson, 2013) which is usually divided into officers and non-officers (ratings). Additionally the category of ‘officer’ is subdivided into senior, junior and petty officers (Sampson, 2013).

Table 3 and Table 4 present a short overview of the division of roles generally held on board ships according to seniority, as well as the categorisation of roles and departments on board a typical cargo ship. The tables are followed by a detailed explanation about these roles and departments.

Table 3: Typical hierarchy of jobs on board, based on Sampson (2013, p. 78)

	Senior officers	Junior officers	Petty officers	Ratings
Direction of descending seniority 	Captain	Second Officer	Bosun	AB (Able-Bodied Seaman)
	Chief Engineer	Third Officer	Chief Steward	OS (Ordinary Seaman)
	Chief Officer	Deck Cadet	Chief Cook	Oiler/Motorman
	First/Second Engineer*	Second/Third Engineer*	Electrician	Wiper
		Fourth Engineer	Fitter	Second Cook
		Engine Cadet		Mess Man


 Direction of descending seniority

*Some call the position immediately beneath the chief engineer ‘second engineer’, and some call it ‘first engineer’ with knock-on effect for the names of the junior officer ranks (Sampson, 2013).

Table 4: Departments and roles on board a typical cargo ship

Department	Roles within the department
Deck/Bridge	Captain, Chief Officer, Second Officer, Third Officer, Deck Cadet Bosun, AB (Able-Bodied Seaman), OS (Ordinary Seaman)
Engine Room	Chief Engineer, First Engineer, Second Engineer, Third Engineer, Fourth Engineer, Engine Cadet, Electrician, Reefer Engineer Carpenter, Fitter, Oiler/Motorman, Wiper
Galley/ common areas	Chief Steward/Chief Cook, Second Cook, Mess Man

In order to maintain a well-functioning ship, all seafarers on board need to have basic qualifications, specific to their role and rank (Bloor et al., 2014; Sampson and Tang, 2015). Since crews on board many vessels are multinational there are standardised guidelines for the training of seafarers worldwide, referred to as the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code. The STCW determines basic training requirements at an international level (Leong, 2012), and specifies the certification, skills and qualifications required for becoming a seafarer (IMO, 1995).⁴³ Once seafarers are certified to work on board, they generally work within specific departments, which on most ships consist of deck, engine and galley (kitchen) departments, as described in Table 4 above.⁴⁴

⁴³ Due to inadequate quality of maritime training reported in different countries (Sampson, 2004b; Sampson et al., 2011; Sampson and Tang, 2015) and the desire to reduce the effects of human error in maritime related incidents (Knudsen and Hassler, 2011), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) undertook a comprehensive review of the 1978 STCW Convention, which was followed by a decision to revise the Code in 1995. The IMO concentrated mainly on matters relating to the human element, training and operational practices within the Code. The modified STCW Code of 1995 entered into force in 1997, and compelled maritime countries to abide by it by 2002 (Leong, 2012). Requirements for minimal training are constantly monitored by the IMO in order to maintain the appropriate standards for crewing ships (Leong, 2012). For more information about these issues, see Leong (2012), IMO (1995) and (IMO, 2010).

⁴⁴ This division of roles varies between different types of ships, and some roles might not exist on board certain ships, i.e. small tonnage ships, while other vessels such as ferries or cruise ships require additional roles not found on a standard cargo vessel. Nevertheless, since this research mainly focused on seafarers working on cargo and container ships, this division is relevant to most seafarers interviewed. Specific and detailed information about all participants is available in the Appendices.

The deck department

The deck department on board includes the bridge team engaged in navigation and the deck responsible for painting, chipping and cleaning (Sampson, 2013).⁴⁵ The deck department consists of officers and ratings (non-officers), and the deck crew. According to a role description of navigation officers on the Warsash Maritime Academy website, they are ‘...well-trained and experienced mariners, having gained and developed their professional expertise and skills in one or more of the maritime sectors’, implying the requirement for sea-specific skills in order to fill these roles.⁴⁶

On board a typical cargo ship, both within the deck department and overall, the highest responsible navigation officer is the Captain, who generally acts on behalf of the ship’s owner and who is responsible for the day-to-day matters on board the ship (Sampson, 2013). The captain’s position often carries a significant responsibility and involves a substantial managerial function. One captain explained his role on board as follows:

[The] captain is the one in charge, you know? We take [the] ship from point A to point B, including the management, the internal management of the vessel, looking on all the navigation processes, cargo, and crew welfare affairs also. It's not a single job, it's multiple jobs. Including the communications, the charter, owner, management, all the crew. [Benjen, Captain, 44 years old, from Bangladesh, interview in English]

As in every department on board, and as has been the case for decades, the path to the highest position of captain begins at the bottom, at the lowest officer rank in the deck department (Aubert and Arner, 1959). Thus, navigation officers normally gain qualifications and experience over several years until they become captains. The skills

⁴⁵ ‘Chip’ (verb) refers to ‘cut[ting] pieces off (a hard material) to shape it or break it up’ (Stevenson, 2015), and within the context of shipping, it means the scraping and sanding off of any rust and old paint from the external parts of a ship, prior to adding a rust protective coat.

⁴⁶ This role description, and other role descriptions to follow, were borrowed from the Warsash Maritime Academy website. The Warsash Maritime Academy is a leading, well-respected maritime academy, and is part of the Southampton Solent University’s School of Maritime Science and Engineering, based in Southampton, UK. It provides maritime training and education to seagoing personnel. For more information visit <http://www.warsashacademy.co.uk/careers/deck-navigation/overview.aspx> (accessed on 21 December 2016).

achieved may not necessarily be on the same ship.⁴⁷ The highest role within the deck department after the captain, is the Chief Officer or the Chief Mate (as also seen in Table 4 above), who is the second-in-command. His main responsibilities include the vessel's cargo operations (Sampson, 2013), and his duties include supervising the deck crew and maintaining a watch.

Under the Chief Officer in the hierarchical structure are the Second and Third Navigation officers, who are often referred to as the Second and Third Mates. In addition, there may be navigation cadets, or trainees. As implied in the title, navigation officers are responsible for the planning and implementation of the safe passage of the ship from one destination to the other (IMO, 1995; IMO, 2010). Since the ship functions around the clock, they generally operate within a strict watch system whereby all navigation officers work on what can be described as shifts, for the duration of which they are responsible for the duties on the bridge and deck. They also have other responsibilities like the completion of safety drills and administrative duties (IMO, 2010) which involve the application of leadership and teamwork skills. One second Officer described his role in the following way:

Voyage planning, this is my responsibility. The navigation officer's, actually. Because now it doesn't matter if you are a third officer or [a] second officer, it's the same degree, [...] it's [the] navigation officer. So I'm planning the voyage from port to port, from point A to point B, voyage deficiencies, and all that means, charts... okay we are not using anymore charts, we are using [...] electronic navigation charts, so, yeah, it's quite easy now. [Dontos, Second Officer, 27 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Dontos described the technical duties of navigation officers that involved the use of navigational systems on board. In a similar way, another navigation officer described how:

My role involves doing a watch on the bridge, cargo watch, and additionally to plan the voyage, to plan the sailing books, maps,

⁴⁷ Based on interviews and conversations with seafarers in the research, it seems that sometimes the route to the role of the captain starts at the bottom of the hierarchical structure, namely with the role of the third Officer. Due to the over-supply of seafarers who hold junior officer ranks (e.g. third Officers), however, some of these seafarers start working on board as ABs (a role that is lower in status) in order to get their 'foot in the door' and rise up the ranks, even if they hold the qualifications to work as junior officers. This depends on their nationality and varies between different shipping companies, as was also mentioned in Sampson (2013).

navigation, that's in general. I am also responsible for the medical supplies on board, making sure that nothing has expired. [Jojen, Second Officer, 38 years old, from Israel/ Argentina, interview in Hebrew]

As Jojen noted, the second navigation officer is often responsible for the medical supplies on board. In addition to navigational and medical duties, one third Officer disclosed the administrative aspects of work on board:

I mostly handle documents, and I'm responsible for the validation of all the documents on board, including the arrival and departure [of the ship]. [...] I basically do all the administrative work, for instance, if the chief mate gives instructions, I document all the activities by completing the paperwork, making sure everyone signs all the necessary forms. [...] My work mostly involves paperwork. And, when there are watches, I do my watch [...] from 8AM until 12PM and then from 8PM to 12AM. [Will, Third Officer, 36 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

As the quotations above show, some of the tasks navigation officers are required to perform involve broad-spectrum skills like providing first aid, engaging in administrative tasks and operating IT systems. However, most of their tasks relate to the daily operation of the ship, and thus entail mostly sea-specific and ship-related skills.

Alongside the navigation officers in the deck department are the ratings. These include the bosun, the AB (able-bodied seaman), and the OS (ordinary seaman). The bosun is the highest-ranking rating on board, and is often referred to as a petty officer (see Table 3 above). He carries out a supervisory function over the AB and the OS, and generally functions as the intermediary between the officers and the ratings in the deck department, as he takes orders from the Chief Officer, who answers to the captain. One bosun, Quentin, described his role thus:

A bosun is a rating on board the vessel, and he is responsible for executing all the instructions from the chief mate and the captain. [...] I have the deck crew who answer to me, but I'm not their actual commander, their commander is the chief mate. I just organise the work, meaning that I need to organise the work, to make sure it is done safely, to choose the people that will actually perform the job. [...] And of course, I need to know everything about the vessel, about all the devices on board, about everything, I have to know absolutely everything. [Quentin, Bosun, 43 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Quentin noted the supervisory aspects of his role. However, bosuns appeared to have a degree of leeway in their role. Jamie, another bosun, described a less ‘hands-on’ approach than Quentin when he said:

I don't go anymore for chipping myself, I say [to the AB and OS] ‘you do this’. I organise the job, give people jobs. [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

And Rickon emphasised how the bosun mostly served as the intermediary between the officers and ratings on deck:

I take order[s] from my chief mate, and just [do the] maintenance also, and I [am] the [...] supervisor on deck, I'm handling [all the maintenance jobs on the deck] [...] [If] there [is] some job to do, I [am] the one [responsible] first to check [that the job is] safe [...] I'm the first to be called by my chief mate [to be told] what to do. [Rickon, Bosun, 54 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Typically, the two ranks under the bosun are the AB and the OS. They often form a part of a navigational watch (IMO, 2010), and during the rest of the their time they perform physical tasks for the maintenance of the ship, including cleaning, chipping, and painting. One OS described a typical day of work on board:

I wake up at 6:30, 7 o'clock [...], at 8 o'clock we start work, like maintenance work, we [ABs and OSs] all do maintenance work, chipping, painting, oiling, greasing, and 12 o'clock is lunchtime, 12 to 1 o'clock, and I finish my work at 5 o'clock in the evening. [Petyr, OS, 26 years old, from India, interview in English]

One can infer from the type of work Petyr does that ratings are often considered ‘support level’ employees (IMO, 2010) and are engaged in what can mainly be characterised as unskilled jobs. For this reason, their roles neither require lengthy training nor the qualifications that the officers working on board are required to undertake. Specifically, ratings’ training generally lasts for several weeks and up to several months, while officers’ training often involves years of studying in Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions (IMO, 2010).

The findings illustrate that some seafarers within the deck department, e.g. the Captain, the First Officer and the bosun, hold managerial and supervisory roles which

appear to incorporate management skills that can be used outside the shipping industry. Nevertheless, the quotes demonstrate that the majority of skills held by seafarers working in the deck department are largely sea-specific and consequently are less likely to be transferable to onshore occupations. This is in contrast to the seafarers in other departments on board who hold skills that often extend beyond the sea; for example, seafarers working in the engine department.

The Engine Department

The engine department is generally located at the bottom of the ship and some seafarers in this research referred to it as the ‘downtown’ of the ship both physically (relating to the location of the engine room) and figuratively (relating to the important part the engine department plays in the daily operation of the ship). The engine room holds the engine and all the machinery that contributes to the day-to-day motorised operation of the ship (Sampson, 2013). As with the deck department, seafarers working in the engine room hold officer and non-officer positions, and the highest role in the engine department is the Chief Engineer. The Chief Engineer is responsible for overseeing the engine department, and for the operational implementation of all the machinery in the engine room. Although the Chief Engineer is ‘*technically of equal status to the captain*’ (Sampson, 2013, p. 85), he generally remains in the engine room and is not involved in the overall management of the ship although he is responsible for the individuals working in the engine department (also shown in Table 4 above). One chief engineer explained:

I am the Chief Engineer, responsible for all the engineers on board, for all the people in the engine room, including [solving] any problems that might arise. Additionally, [I am responsible for] the technical planning, and all the other things that relate to that. Generally I am responsible for all the mechanical issues on board.... Let’s say that I’m the captain’s right hand on technical issues. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

As in the deck department, only officers working in the engine department can progress through the ranks to become a Chief Engineer (Sampson, 2013). The next ranking officer under the Chief Engineer is the First Engineer, who is responsible for supervising the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the engine department. Working under the First Engineer are normally the Second and the Third engineers (illustrated in Table 3 and

Table 4 above), who operate a watch system in the engine room similar to that on the bridge. The ratings in the engine department normally include a motorman, and a wiper who is usually junior to the motorman). Both assist the engineers with the everyday maintenance of the ship's engine.⁴⁸ Even though these roles require technical knowledge and skills, they are considered support-level employees, similar to the status of ratings within the deck department, and are generally categorised as low-skilled employees (IMO, 2010).

Some shipping companies employ an engineering cadet, who would normally spend several months 'on-the-job' learning to acquire the skills necessary to become an engineer. According to the notes on the skills and attributes of an engineer found on the Warsash Maritime Academy website, an engineer should be *'[t]echnically adept and versatile with the ability to take on a variety of different roles, from the engine room to hotel services. A wide knowledge of vessel systems from the main engines to refrigeration units, generators and air conditioning units'*. One second engineer described the technical tasks in his work as follows:

My work on [the] ship is, I'm doing the maintenance [of the] generators, [and of the] main engine, and I follow the instructions of [the] first engineer, whatever he says, do this one, do that maintenance, I must do [it]. Because I am the operational level, the first engineer [is] in charge [of] all the jobs in the engine room, and he is [in the] management level. [Jory, Second Engineer, 35 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

The emphasis on technical skills that are required of engineers, both in the role description and in the quote, suggests that unlike seafarers who work in the deck department, engineers hold skills that often extend beyond the ship and the sea.

Within the context of technical skills required on board ships, there are additional roles worth mentioning that are based within the engine department: specifically, that of the electrician and that of the fitter. The electrician, or the electrical officer, is responsible for every electrical aspect of the ship's operation. He is generally based within the engine

⁴⁸ The number of seafarers holding the motorman and the wiper positions on board ships vary according to different factors, e.g. the tonnage of the ship and regulatory limitations (Sampson, 2013).

room even though he operates in every part of the ship. One electrician described his work on board thus:

I am the electrician of the ship. Everything, every electronic wire on board, [every] electricity card is under my responsibility. In general, I work from 8 to 5. [...] We have routine maintenance that we are supposed to do every once in a while, engine and everything. The reefers are also under the responsibility of the electrician. [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Walder emphasised the variety of responsibilities electricians have across the ship.

Another noted how electricians must keep their technical skills up to date:

In seamanship, every vessel, they're becoming more advanced, they're more hi-tech, for the engineers and for me as an electrical officer, sometimes we have to upgrade [...] for these new systems. [...] We cannot get contracts because of that, [without] some trainings, but we have no choice but to get it. [Ned, Electrician, 40 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Compared to other high-ranking officers working on board, and as has been the case for decades, electricians are generally directly employed in their posts without 'climbing' from positions of a lower rank (Aubert and Arner, 1959). They normally work on their own and do not have superiors holding the same expertise and understanding of electrical systems to consult with, which suggests that the electrician's role requires a high level of independence and self-reliance. As one electrician explained:

If any problem [arises], because I'm the only one on the electrical side, so there's no one to help out, if I need some help, I get it from the engine room staff, and then I am [responsible for] all the electrical installations [...] Sometimes of course they try to help but their knowledge is not [the same] as mine, in the same way like tomorrow, if I also help them out in their jobs, but then I cannot guide them. [...] In the engineering department, [the chief engineer] can guide them, I can give my input but it is not as much as it is required to solve a problem. [...] So [in] the same way if a problem [arises] on my side, the electrical side, these guys [cannot help] ... of course they will try to help you, give their suggestion and all that, but it's like that. Ultimately the final call is on me. [Olyvar, Electrician, 58 years old, from India, interview in English]

The fitter is another 'lone' worker on board who is generally based within the engine department. Considered a rating he is responsible for fitting and assembling different

parts of the ship upon requirement. The fitter's role requires high skill and expertise, perhaps similar to that of a welder ashore. It incorporates the independence of working alone in a highly pressurised working environment (Baum-Talmor, 2014; Belousov et al., 2007). One fitter, Syrio, described his work on board as follows:

Fitter is [someone who] fix something, fix what is broken and fix what is damaged [on board the ship], fix[ing] [and also] welding, cutting, repair[ing]. [Syrio, Fitter, 51 years old, from Turkey, interview in English]

The fitter provides a service to seafarers, regardless of their department, as and when the need arises and when equipment malfunctions on board. Similar service-oriented and needs-driven work is done in the galley department, by the chief cook and the steward.

The Galley Department

The galley is the ship's kitchen, where the galley's crew prepare the seafarers' meals several times a day. The galley department has not changed much over the last few decades, nor has the role of the galley's personnel. As Aubert and Arner (1959) note, the galley's crew 'fill a function which the industrial worker's home usually takes care of, the buying, preparing, and serving of food, and possibly undertaking other kinds of housework' (Aubert and Arner, 1959, p. 214). The Chief Cook is the highest rank within the galley department, and he is generally responsible for all aspects of the ship's food. Specifically, he is responsible for preparing and often serving the meals, as well as for the general management of the kitchen, which includes ordering and rotating stock, and maintaining the kitchen's hygiene. On board some ships, the chief cook also holds the role of a chief steward, dealing with the maintenance and cleanliness of different parts of the ship. The chief cook's responsibilities often include directing lower-ranking personnel, including the second cook and the steward, and assigning them different functions such as cleaning the living quarters and common areas on board the ship, and serving meals. The cook's work is highly specialised and requires specific culinary training. Additionally, as was noted in Chapters 2 and 4, the ship's crew nowadays is normally multinational and consequently adjustments may be required to accommodate the particular tastes of different nationalities. The following examples are illustrative:

I have to prepare the [food for the] [...] multinational crew. I have to prepare their [...] continental food, so I have to make everybody [happy], [...], so for every 15 days I am preparing the food for each country, [...] every day. So I prepare all kinds of food, not only one kind, like one day is Filipino food, one day European food, there is something in there, because they must like [it]... They must [be] happy... [Because food is] very important on the ship, chief cook, everybody they are working and they must [be] thinking of the food, I will prepare a good food for them, everywhere every day, according to the company's rules and regulations. So, also I have to order for the food for my provisions, so if this ship is sailing 15 days, [I will take food] from the next port, for all the crew. [Stannis, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from India, interview in English]

Stannis noted the different aspects of food preparation he was responsible for on board, mostly emphasising the importance of satisfying his hard-working 'clients'. Another cook in his training period, when asked whether it was important to him for people to like his food, noted:

Yes, yes. This is [important], if I become an owner of a restaurant, I have to take care of this. You know? I have to keep my customers happy. I have to build a habit from now [on] to, you know, to make my customers happy. [Varys, Trainee Chief Cook, 23 years old, from India, interview in English]

Both cooks highlighted the importance of keeping their 'customers' happy by tailoring the food on board to the seafarers' needs and nationalities. Culinary skills and adjustment to customers' requirements are skills that can be translated to the hospitality industry ashore, and Varys emphasised his intention of implementing the skills from the ship in a restaurant ashore several times during the interview.

Roles That Extend Beyond the Ship

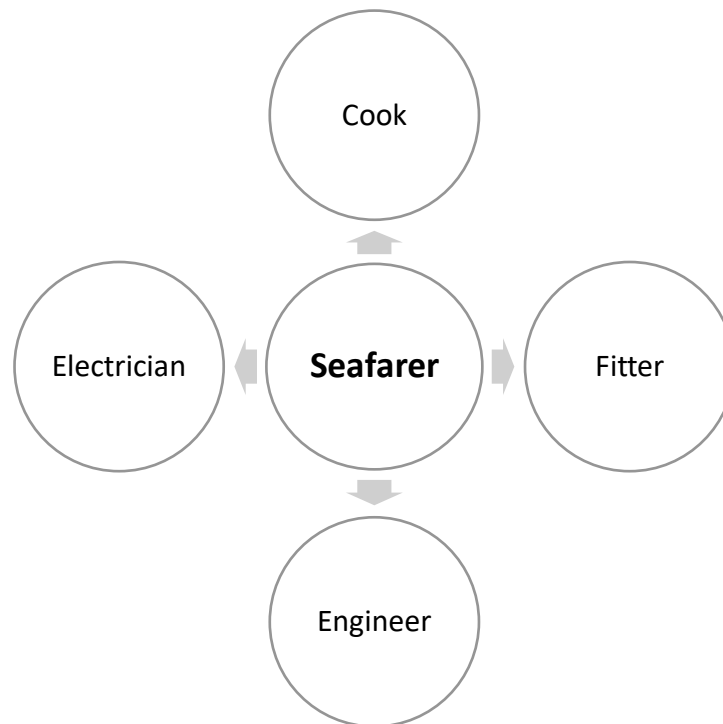
Particular skills and qualifications are normally required for any occupation be it that of a doctor, an actor or a nurse. Similarly, as has been shown in the role descriptions above, seafarers require skills and training relevant to their seafaring occupation. The navigation officers and the ratings in the deck department (i.e. second officers, ABs and OSs) fill multi-faceted and complex roles, but they appear to hold mostly sea-specific skills. In contrast officers and ratings in the engine room (i.e. engineers, electricians and fitters) and in the galley (i.e. cooks) not only have sea-specific skills but they also hold technical or professional skills that are often transferable to other industries. Consequently, there

is some merit in considering whether these additional skills might impact on seafarers' views regarding flexible employment. Within this context, the next section explores the transferability of technical and professional skills by focusing on seafarers' occupational identities.⁴⁹

BEING MORE THAN A SEAFARER

Having skills that do not solely relate to the sea implies that seafarers may hold an additional occupational identity. Based on a thorough analysis of the conversations and interviews in the project, and from the seafarers' own role descriptions, it is clear that while some roles on board require mostly sea-specific skills and are mainly restricted to the shipping industry, others incorporate skills that are generally transferable. Thus, in addition to filling the role of seafarers, some individuals have an additional professional or technical function on board, as illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Example of roles on board with more than one occupational identity



⁴⁹ As will be explained further along the line in the discussion chapter, one of the methodological shortcomings of this research project is its limited capacity to capture the perspectives of seafarers who have left the seafaring occupation and have sought other jobs outside seafaring at some point in their career.

Double Occupational Identity

Here ‘double’ occupational identity refers to a seafarer who is able to assume both an occupational identity as a seafarer and the occupational identity of their distinct profession on board that can potentially be used ashore. Ergo the existence of transferable skills creates the opportunity for a double occupational identity for some seafarers. The issue of skills’ transferability from the ship was formerly implied in maritime-related literature, with a special reference to officers (Caesar et al., 2015b; Dearsley, 2013; Fei et al., 2012). These issues of skills’ transferability are longstanding. Aubert and Arner (1959) in their study of the hierarchical structure of the ship, distinguish between engineers who can use their skills ashore and deck officers who are limited to sea-related positions:

The engineers have a field of work which is also a trade on land, which is not the case with the deck officers. Their only openings on land are a few positions in the shipping companies. (Aubert and Arner, 1959, p. 214)

In most cases investigated during this research, seafarers with a double occupational identity not only highlight their professional role on board. They also emphasise the usability of their skills from the ship in other occupations ashore, associating their additional, professional roles with their prospects of finding a job in other industries.

Ramsay, for example, described how his role as an engineer served as a ‘safety net’ enabling him to remain attractive as an employee in the global labour market. He explained:

If something unexpected happens [and I can no longer work on board], it will be easier [for me] to find a job as an engineer ashore. A navigator ashore is like a janitor [there is not much he can do], and an engineer ashore, well at least he’s an engineer... [...] As an engineer, you can use your profession [to find employment]. [You can] work in a car repair workshop [...] but where can a navigator work ashore? What can he do? [...] Engineers have more options [for employment]. [Ramsay, Third Engineer, 40 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

Ramsay referred to his role as an engineer on board as an ‘external ability’ that granted him market power on shore in the event of no longer continuing to work at sea. Another seafarer, an electrician cadet, emphasises his professional identity rather than his

seaman's identity as a means of increasing his chances of finding work elsewhere. He represented his occupational identity as a mere consequence of his work as an engineer at sea:

I am here to be an electrician, not to be a seafarer. [...] I never thought about wanting to be a seafarer. I mean, if I was thinking about becoming a seafarer, I would go and work in the deck department, [but] I am here to be an electrician. [...] I am here to gain experience [as an electrician]. [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

And later Walder added:

In [my training institute], I heard many stories about people who left the sea and found a job ashore. [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Both Ramsay and Walder compared themselves to other seafarers whose skills cannot be utilised in other occupations or industries ashore. One captain, who did not hold a double occupational identity, explained:

If you're working as an engineer, you have [a] much better chance of getting a shore job. Or if you're working in the electronics department, like [as an] electrician, or [an] electronic officer... Those people have a better opportunity ashore, because the other industries [ashore] [...] can easily get them a job. But for a navigator, what else you can do except [for] going to a shipping company? [Samwell, Captain, 49 years old, from Iran, interview in English]

Later on, Samwell continued:

That's why the deck officers continue in their jobs, they just finish with retirement, but engineers, the dropouts in engineers are much more than the deck officers, because they get opportunities in other industries ashore. [...] When they are engineers and they go on board ships, then they work for a couple of years, they are so well experienced that any factory [ashore] can, you know, recruit them. [Samwell, Captain, 49 years old, from Iran, interview in English]

Samwell noted how in his view, engineers were more likely to find employment ashore when compared to navigation officers. Similarly, a seafarer without a double occupational identity, Polliver, notes:

If you are [an] engineer, it's easier for you to [find] a job ashore, you know? Because you know more [about] the technical things. [Polliver, Second Officer, 33 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

As stated earlier in this chapter, seafarers' skills are acquired partially in MET institutions, and partially through on-the-job learning on board ships. The combination of the development of skills from both theoretical learning and on-the-job experience actually forms the human capital held by individuals. As noted in Chapter 2, human capital refers to the *'skills, knowledge and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organisation or country'* (Stevenson, 2015). Becker (1962) and Schultz (1961), who are considered to be the originators of Human Capital Theory, emphasise the importance of on-the-job training and employee skills development as financially beneficial to companies in the long term. They hypothesise that if companies invest in their human capital by providing company-specific training, it is beneficial in the long term. However, if the skills individuals obtain during their on-the-job training can be used elsewhere, it is unlikely to be beneficial to the company since there is the potential for employees to take their human capital elsewhere (as further discussed in Chapter 8).

In the past in the context of investment in a long-term workforce, companies allocated resources and funds for the development of employees' skills. This was a widely-used practice for supporting a long-term career with one organisation (Brown, 2003; Brown et al., 2003). Nowadays, in part due to the flexibilisation of labour, many employees invest time and money in the development of their own skills, whether these are sea-specific or non-sea-related skills (Brown et al., 2011; Sampson and Tang, 2015). One shipping company in the current study did invest some resources in the development of their seafarers' skills, but these were solely sea-related. For example, when asked if the company was investing resources in the development of transferable skills for their seafarers, the company's personnel manager exclaimed:

No, why would we want to do that? I mean, I'm trying to say what kind of system would that be? [...] No, there will be no training as such provided which, where he could leave the shipping industry. I mean, he could still continue in the shipping industry, he has learned about ships, and worked on ships, so he can leave [our company] and can join an engine manufacturer or you know, some kind of safety item, you know, company,

or some other shipping related company, but the training imparted will be related to shipping, and ship operation only. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

In the quote, Bronn implies that seafarers have the option of using their skills in other workplaces ashore, regardless of whether the company provides them with the training and development to do that. However, seafarers can still invest in the development of their skills independently, like other individuals in the global labour market (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2011), and then they can potentially use their self-funded skills as market power to increase their chances of finding employment, as shown in the above quotations. For example, a cook highlighted his professional identity on board by emphasising his attempts to gain a competitive advantage over his colleagues. The following example is illustrative:

Some training requires us to pay, it could be outside of the company. It requires some costs, sometimes the company pays for us. For me, just to make sure I can make use of it outside the company, I sometimes pay for myself. I think that this is a kind of investment, they can't take it out from you. You have to put in something, and after you invest in this they cannot take it from me. [...] If I can afford it I pay it, I want to pay it. [Amory, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Amory believed that by improving his culinary knowledge and investing in his own skill development during his time off the ship, he was securing his future employment. Then he added:

It's my personal hobby to look for other new things, relative to my job. Because in my job this is also a silent competition with other cooks, you have to be different from other cooks. [...] It's [a] silent competition, no one talks about it, because there is always, [there is] no standard food preparation, every cook has his own standard, every cook has his own responsibilities. [...] I managed to survive [in the shipping industry] and so far, that's the one secret weapon I am using so they [the employer] are keeping me for longer than my colleagues. [Amory, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

In his case, in order to increase his market power relative to other cooks, Amory developed his skills independently and externally to his training as a cook in the shipping industry. Nevertheless, even though he could use these skills elsewhere, he relied on his

skill development as a way of sustaining his employment within the shipping industry in preference to searching for work as a cook ashore.

Skills and Labour Market Power

The differing levels of skill usability by employees in different workplaces was also discussed by Snell et al. (2016b) in their research into the transferability of skills in vocational education in Australia. In order to differentiate the levels, Snell et al. (2016b) divide employees’ skills into soft skills, generic hard skills and specific hard skills. *Soft skills* refer to non-job specific skills that are transferable and generally relate to individuals’ ability to operate effectively in the workplace. These include for example social, communication and IT skills. *Generic hard skills* are perceived as highly transferable, and they include technical capabilities that can be applied effectively in almost all jobs in most companies, occupations and sectors and in personal life. Finally, *specific hard skills* refer to technical and job-specific abilities that are applicable in a small number of companies, occupations and sectors. A summary of these types of skills can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: General definition of soft and hard skills – adapted from Snell et al. (2016b, p. 23)

Type of skills	Definition
<i>Soft skills</i>	Non-job specific skills, described as perfectly transferable.
<i>Generic Hard skills</i>	Technical skills, perceived as highly transferable.
<i>Specific Hard skills</i>	Technical and job-specific abilities, special attributes for performing an occupation in practice.

Snell’s definition of soft and hard skills distinguishes between different levels of skills’ transferability, and to some extent, it resembles the multidimensionality of skills seafarers have when working on board. Since all working individuals have some soft skills (Snell et al., 2016b), the focus here is mainly on generic and specific hard skills. As was described earlier in this chapter, the unique working environment on board can be a platform for the development of a double occupational identity, in which some seafarers hold sea-specific as well as professional skills, reflecting a distinction between specific and generic skills. Seafarers without a double occupational identity, whose roles are primarily related to their work at sea hold skills that are, in the main, relevant to the shipping industry (e.g. navigation officers, ABs and OSs). Compared to these seafarers those with a double

occupational identity (e.g. engineers, electricians and cooks), not only have sector-specific skills, they hold skills that are perceived as highly transferable to shore occupations. This suggests they have additional external market power which appears to facilitate more work options for them in the flexible labour market than those without a double occupational identity.

Differences in Perceptions Explained

As stated in the introduction, some seafarers perceive flexible employment in the global labour market negatively while others perceive it positively. The findings in Chapter 5 show that seafarers who hold roles with mostly sea-specific skills (e.g. navigation officers, bosuns, OSs) perceive flexible employment negatively while seafarers who hold roles with technical or professional skills (e.g. engineers, electricians, cooks) and have a double occupational identity, largely perceive employment in the shipping industry positively. In other words, perceptions of flexible employment are shaped by differences in perceived market power, where those with more widely marketable skills appear to have better overall job prospects.

Specifically, as noted in Chapter 5, and demonstrated earlier in this chapter, most of the seafarers who appear to enjoy the benefits of flexible employment hold a double occupational identity. Seafarers who fill roles with transferable skills, or with external market power, can use their non-sea related skills to find employment elsewhere if needed. Thus, they use the flexibility of this industry to their advantage. By being able to do so, if they are averse to any aspect of the working conditions on board, they generally feel confident about leaving one shipping company and moving to another one and they mention that they can easily find a job ashore if necessary. The following quotes from interviews with seafarers holding a double occupational identity are illustrative:

PBT – do you think that when you leave the sea you will have a problem finding a job?

Walder – Not really. Not a serious problem. I don't think so. I will not be stuck at home for two years. [...] I think I will find [a job] immediately, I know a lot of people who work in this field [electricity] that can help me find a job in different places. [...] What I learned let's say here, will help me to find a job, yes.

PBT – In what way?

Walder – I do different [things] here, for instance if I was only working with electricity boards, I wouldn't know how to check other things, how to find malfunctions, how to inspect the engine. Here [on board] I do all kinds of things, I know I don't have any specialisation, but I can see the big picture here. In the future, if I want to start working with [electricity] boards, I know how this board works, it means that I don't need to learn everything all over again. Also, listening to other people, an electrician at sea is quite a senior position, when I come back [ashore] and want to find a job, I could find a job in a good place. [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Walder described the multifaceted aspects of his work on board, which involves skills that can potentially be used outside the shipping industry. Similarly, when asked if he would have difficulty finding a job ashore, one engineer noted:

As an engineer, I will find a job in any case. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

And another engineer explained:

Engineering is a wide-profile profession, at the [MET] Institute they don't only teach us how to twist screws [laughing]. They teach us how to think globally, so you can [find a job ashore], if you want to, you can. The most important thing is to have a desire and to strive for it. [Daario, Third Engineer, 23 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

These seafarers are aware they have greater market power in relation to employment than those without a double occupational identity. In contrast, as also discussed in Chapter 5, seafarers without a double occupational identity seem to be disadvantaged by flexible employment. For instance, navigation officers, ABs and bosuns appear to suffer more from the drawbacks of flexible employment, because they lack the external market power required to find employment ashore and generally rely on employment options within shipping. Consequently, due to the flexible employment practices that are commonly used within this industry (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013), their employment prospects appear to be limited when compared to seafarers with a double occupational identity. For example, one seafarer without a double occupational identity exclaimed:

I cannot [work elsewhere]... [I have] no other chance. To go home for what? Money first of all. [...] I told you, I start[ed] work[ing here] like [an] idiot, and I cannot stop [laughing]. [...] I know many things [how] to do,

[...] I know many things, on many things, but only [a] little, you know? [...] This is particular [knowledge] for the ship. [...] Okay, I know even Crane operating, but I have no certificate [for this]. To go [and become a] Crane operator ashore you need [a] certificate, you have to go [to] school. Who will take [me]? [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

According to the data, seafarers with external market power are more likely to feel confident about their work prospects if their employment in the shipping industry does not go as planned and consequently enjoy the benefits of flexible employment as noted in Chapters 2 and 5. Conversely, seafarers without external market power are less likely to be able to use their sea-specific skills to find employment elsewhere and thus are disadvantaged by flexible employment practices.

SUMMARY

The different degrees of market power held by the seafarers included in this research helps to explain their different perceptions of flexible employment. Seafarers with a double occupational identity have the potential to use their professionalism in a way that achieves job security. If the need arises, these seafarers are able to choose whether to work in other industries. In contrast, seafarers lacking a double occupational identity are vulnerable to the uncertainty and lack of job security in the shipping industry because they have less external market power and consequently rely on the shipping industry to provide them with employment options.

This could go some way to providing an explanation of the differences in seafarers' perceptions of flexible employment because seafarers with a double occupational identity are empowered by their ability to choose: they can remain at sea or go elsewhere. Taking this into account, the possibility that these seafarers could decide to leave the shipping industry may change companies' current overreliance on the seemingly endless supply of seafarers (as noted in Chapter 4), which might be challenged by the existence of the double occupational identity.

The next chapter investigates the extent to which seafarers' external market power plays a role in their intentions of staying in the shipping industry for the long term, and explores the influence this might have for their occupational identity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

‘Until Death Us Do Part’: Seafaring as a Lifelong Occupation?

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SEVEN

This chapter investigates to what extent seafarers plan to work at sea for the long term. Additionally, in light of the findings presented in Chapter 6, it also investigates the extent to which seafarers’ intentions of staying in or leaving seafaring can be influenced by the existence of a double occupational identity.

The use of temporary contracts, where employers operate on a ‘plug and play’ basis, is common among employers in the global shipping industry (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013) and as noted in Chapter 2. Such contracts are largely used to reduce costs in a highly competitive global market (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). By operating on a ‘plug and play’ basis, employers appear to maintain a readily available, experienced and qualified pool of seafarers (Sampson and Tang, 2015). Such flexible employment practices are usually portrayed as beneficial to employers, who appear to rely on the industry’s labour force being available for work for as long as is needed. However, the advantages of such practices may be challenged to some extent by seafarers with a ‘double’ occupational identity who have the market power to transfer to another industry. Were this to happen to a significant extent, employers may find it more difficult to plan the industry’s future workforce since the pool of seafarers would potentially diminish. In other words, the benefits of flexible employment practices for employers in the shipping industry might not be as marked as currently appears if the labour force cannot be relied upon in the long term. Consequently, an examination of the extent to which employers can rely on the availability of a maritime labour force is of value.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, the reasons that might have attracted individuals to work at sea are presented, with an exploration of their initial intentions and whether the work was viewed as a source of short-term employment or a longer-term vocation. Secondly, the factors that might hinder seafarers’ attempts to leave the shipping industry are presented.

SEAFARING AS A CHOICE

Attractions of Work at Sea

One of the questions I asked in every interview related to the reasons behind the seafarers’ decision to go to sea. Several factors were mentioned by interviewees, which could be roughly divided into financial, professional and social reasons. One prominent factor was the desire to develop professional skills via a period of time at sea. As shown earlier (in Chapter 6), seafarers’ market power often relates to the roles they fill on board and to the transferability of their skills to other occupations ashore. In the same way as in other industries, seafarers’ skills can be developed through training and through practical experience in their workplace, the ship (Sampson and Tang, 2015). The findings show that some seafarers, mostly those with a double occupational identity, had joined the shipping industry explicitly to increase their future employment prospects by gaining skills in a relatively short period of time. For example, one trainee cook described his intention to obtain experience at sea as follows:

I was working in the kitchen [ashore], and I saw the chefs, how much respect they got, how [many] skills, you know, they were able to present. So, I was very, you know, fascinated about this. So when, it was a time when, [it was] hard to select a particular field, so I told my father, like okay, this is what I want to do [cooking], but, not on land, you know? Not on shore. I want to work at sea. [...] [A]shore, [in] one year I cannot become a chief cook or... you know, because there are a lot more people waiting. And here [on board] I become a chief cook in one year, even [in] less [time]. [Varys, Trainee Chief Cook, 23 years old, from India, interview in English]

During the interview Varys commented several times that he planned to shift to the shore once he had gained sufficient experience and skills on board. He emphasised the greater speed at which he could progress to becoming a chief cook in the shipping industry as compared to the slower progress he would make were he working as a cook ashore. This can be explained by the intense working schedule (Baum-Talmor, 2012; Sampson, 2013) and the fast-track promotion opportunities on board (Hill, 1972; Sampson, 2013; Zurcher, 1965), which had given Varys the impression that he would develop his skills more quickly and in a better way than he would have been able to do ashore. Other seafarers with a double occupational identity also expressed their desire to develop skills

and gain experience on board in order to increase their employability. As Walder, an electrician, explained:

Let's just say that what I learned here [on board], will help me in finding a job [ashore]. [...] [On board] the electrician deals with all kinds of issues, and this is what's interesting about this [job]. You always need to read, you always need to update your knowledge and not all the ships are the same. [...] I don't think that I will stay in this field for the rest of my life, [...] I'm thinking about three years here [on board], [...] gaining experience, learning English [and then leaving]. [...] [Seafaring is] not a job for life. I would never work in one place for the rest of my life. [Walder, Electrician, 27 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

In addition to reasons associated with the development of their occupational identity, some seafarers had more arbitrary reasons for joining seafaring. For instance, some remarked that they had not intended to work as seafarers when they were young but at some point in their lives, they ‘stumbled upon’ a job at sea. For instance, Renly, an administrative officer, explained:

[My friend] was doing a cadet course in the [Maritime] Academy, and he told me that there is a course for the job I am doing right now, and I can apply. That's how I got to know about the seamen's life and all this. [...] [In high school] I had no idea about any kind of, like sea work, about working at sea, I had no plans like nothing, no plans for future, I just, doing my study, and whatever happens, happens. [Renly, Administrative Officer, 27 years old, from India, interview in English]

He noted that seafaring was not a ‘career’ he had planned to pursue. Other seafarers had random reasons that were mostly associated with what they referred to as ‘fate, ‘luck’ and ‘chance’. The following quotes are illustrative:

*PBT – Have you always known you were going to become a seafarer?
Gregor – No... It's my sister's husband, he insisted [that I should join seafaring]. ‘Just do it’, [he told me]. [...] In Ukraine we have 11 grades, [he told me] ‘just do it after [you finish] the ninth grade’. I didn't want to [go], I didn't want to, but after the eleventh grade I went there. I haven't even sent my CV to other workplaces. [Gregor, Mess man, 21 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]*

Following pressures from his brother in law, Gregor ‘succumbed’ and joined seafaring, even though this was not what he had had in mind for his employment. Gregor admitted that he had not explored other employment options ashore. Similarly, Benjen noted:

When I was [a] young boy [...] I had ambitions to become a doctor, an engineer, maybe a seafarer, so initially, this is the first exam [I had taken], [...] So they selected me. Okay I know that, in fact I didn't try for engineering or medicine, this is the first job [I received]... It was by luck you can say, I could have been in another job also. [Benjen, Captain, 44 years old, from Bangladesh, interview in English]

Benjen associated the reasons for joining the sea with ‘luck’, but there were some seafarers whose reasons for going to sea could be considered unlucky. These were the seafarers who were pushed into the work because of the political situations in their countries. Oberyne explained such a scenario:

I worked as a safety engineer ashore, in a port. It happened that the country fell apart (Ukraine), and with this fallout, people needed to do something, to feed themselves somehow, they cannot survive without money. So it happened that the option for me was to go to sea. Many people went there because they didn't have another choice. [...] I mean, people at sea, they just happened to be there, by chance, it's like ‘I'll just see what it's like, and earn some money [while I'm at it]...’ [Oberyne, Chief Officer, 40 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

In the cases described above, it seems that participants ‘fell into’ going to sea by sheer luck (or lack of it). Thus, if alternative work were available, there appears to be a greater likelihood of them leaving the sea.

In addition to the arbitrary reasons noted above, there were also financial reasons given by some seafarers for joining the sea. Money considerations were a prominent reason for seeking work on a ship especially when seafarers were from developing and emerging economies (see also Chapters 2 and 4). Quentin, for instance, revealed:

This is our only option to earn money, [by working] at sea. [...] We only go [to work at sea] because this is our only means of income. We don't have any passion for the sea. We don't have it, and we won't have it. When our country is calmer, then we will have a choice, then the passion will emerge. Clearly. Because no one will make us go [to sea], a person will knowingly go there, because he likes that. [Quentin, Bosun, 43 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Quentin noted how he started working at sea for financial gain. Similarly, another seafarer, from Myanmar, explained:

This is my occupation, I [did not go] to university, I just only finish[ed] high school, [if] I work somewhere in my country [Myanmar], I cannot get [a] salary like this. But [when] I work here as [a] seaman, far from the home, I get good money. [Meryn, AB, 37 years old, from Myanmar (Burma), interview in English]

The harsh financial conditions in other developing and emerging economies was often given as a major reason for joining a ship. Roslin, a crew manager from the Philippines elaborated on this issue:

Usually, from [the] Philippines side, [the reason to join seafaring] is always money. It's always that. [...] Well, given the economy of the Philippines, it's like there is no other option. [...] Let's talk about an OS [Ordinary Seaman], that's the entry level [of a seafarer] [...] the salary will be around \$1000, which is equivalent to 50,000 [Philippine] pesos. If he works in the Philippines, he will most likely receive a salary of 7,000 pesos. For officers, if you get paid like \$4000 a month, if you work there [ashore], you can likely get 15,000-20,000 [pesos] \$4000 is like 200,000 pesos a month, it's a big difference, and that's without tax. If you work at home [in the Philippines] you get taxed 25 per cent so, the attraction is so [big]. [Roslin, Crew Manager, 38 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Furthermore, an HR manager provided his view on the financial situation in developing and emerging economies:

Mostly it's the economy of those countries. And many of them living in small provinces, there it's quite hard to get suitable employment, and seafaring is considered as a good alternative. And the money what they get compared to [a] salary [ashore], they will be working without qualifications, they will be getting much less, and also it gives their family sort of opportunity to get a better life, and more spending power. [Pympar, HR Manager, 39 years old, from India, interview in English]

Coupled with financial considerations, with the shipping industry offering relatively high wages, is a lack of alternative employment opportunities (Barnett et al., 2006; Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Wu and Morris, 2006). These circumstances seemed to have pushed some individuals into seafaring even if initially they had plans to work elsewhere. Mace, for example, noted:

Since childhood, every person fantasises about becoming something, [...] but when you become older you start realising that you must choose a profession that will bring you money. For us, there are young people

that don't understand that, they just go and study, and eventually, they receive higher education in some rocket science institute, they've spent a lot of energy, wrote projects, but they work somewhere in a shop, selling cell phones. It happens. Someone with higher education, in our country, Ukraine, will end up selling cell phones in a shop. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

When asked why in his view this situation prevails, he replied:

Because there are no jobs. Even if there is a job, there are many students... [...] You are left without places to work in. I mean, you have the qualifications but you don't have a workplace. That's why, I mean, when I was already applying [to work on board], I didn't know much about it, that's why this is not something I might have wanted in life, but I knew that I had to set myself somehow in this life, to earn [enough money]. That's why I came here [to work on board]. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

In the context of the financial attractions that work at sea can offer, many emphasised their intentions of earning large sums of money in a relatively short period of time. The following quote by a seafarer from Ukraine is illustrative:

[Seafarers] came [to work on board] for a short time to earn some money, similarly to what the Dutch people refer to as 'quick money', so they joined to earn 'quick money', which means to earn money quickly and that's it. And later along the line, those people in the company will move forward, to a more constructive and interesting role, or they might open up a business, perhaps something else, but in any case, they don't return [to the company or to seafaring]. [Obery, Chief Officer, 40 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Earning large sums of money in a short period is possible because salaries at sea are normally higher than salaries ashore (Barnett et al., 2006; Baylon and Stevenson, 2005; Dearsley, 2013), this is particularly true for seafarers from developing and emerging economies. The financial reasons for seafaring are often intertwined with what can be considered 'typical' practices in some seafarers' communities. It has been previously found that many seafarers experience significant pressure from their families to enter seafaring (see for example Barnett et al., 2006; Baylon and Stevenson, 2005; Calderón, 2011; Dearsley, 2013; Guo et al., 2006). Similarly, on several occasions during interviews, seafarers commented that a seagoing tradition in their families or communities was their

main reason for going to sea. This accords with the social reasons that attract seafarers to this occupation. For example, one cook reported that:

My family [...] they are all seafarers. So when I am in [...] school, I am thinking we must go to the sea, like that. That time I know, that I have to go there. Because father is a seafarer, uncle seafarer, brother seafarer, mother's father, mother's side everybody, where I live in that place, all of them seamen. [Stannis, Chief Cook, 50 years old, from India, interview in English]

Stannis uses words like ‘must go’ and ‘have to go’, which suggests that he would have suffered from a negative reaction from his familial community had he chosen a different employment path. Another reason for going to sea was related to a search for adventure and travel opportunities. For example, one seafarer described how:

I actually want to see everything that I can see [in the world]. [...] This was also one of the reasons why I actually come here [on board]. [Matthos, Electrician Cadet, 23 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Seeking travel opportunities at sea has been recorded previously as a reason for joining seafaring (Barnett et al., 2006; Baylon and Stevenson, 2005; Calderón, 2011; Dearsley, 2013), and has been associated with the anticipation of adventure on board (Gould, 2010; Mack, 2007). After starting their work at sea, however, many seafarers often become disillusioned (Gould, 2010; Sampson, 2013; Sampson, 2017) as a result of the differences between their expectations and the reality of life on board ship. Matthos, for example, went on to say that:

In the end, seeing places from the ship is overrated. You cannot see. Okay, you can make some pictures, aha I have been there, but actually you've [only] been four meters from the pier. [Matthos, Electrician Cadet, 23 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Matthos noted how visiting places while working on board has been a disenchanting experience. Similarly, Dontos acknowledged:

You don't have time to go and visit cities like I [thought] when I [have] chose[n] this job. I was thinking you have time to go ashore, and visit a lot of cities and a lot of countries, but actually it's not like this. Since I came here, I already have two and a half months [of work on board], I think, and I've been only one time in Dublin. That's all. So you don't have time to

go. This one I didn't know when I started. [Dontos, Second Officer, 27 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

The ‘fleeting’ visits ashore were noted in the literature as well, where the number of seafarers who actually manage to leave the ship when it berths are rapidly declining (Sampson, 2017). A seafarer, who started working at sea while his country was still under the communist regime, commented on his experience:

I want[ed] to go [out of Romania]. To see somewhere else. But, it was another story, another mind, [I was] young. [I] cannot go back now. [...] Young [people] ever dream, you know? You see something that already passed. [Seafaring] was something at that time, different, like [an] adventure, you know [...] I believe if it was today I [would] not choose this. Because, in that time you [could not] go out, only this was the way to go out [of Romania]. [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

In sum, although there are many reasons for joining seafaring financial circumstances appear to be fundamental, particularly for seafarers from developing and emerging economies. For others, developing their skills at sea appeared to be the underlying reason for joining. These reasons suggest that many seafarers intend to work at sea temporarily, either to earn enough money, or see the world and then leave seafaring. The implication is that they are likely to shift to another job when an opportunity presents itself. If seafarers decide to leave the shipping industry altogether, it can have negative implications for companies who might subsequently suffer supply-side problems. With data indicating that some national economies are likely to develop rapidly, the flow of new recruits may well become problematic and employers may no longer be able to continue to ‘enjoy’ the availability of a ready-made workforce.

Seafaring as a Transitory Phase

Many seafarers noted that they planned to work at sea temporarily and expressed plans to leave the sea after accomplishing the goal they had set out to achieve (i.e. gaining transferable skills, earning enough money or traveling the world). In this context, seafarers’ plans to leave can be largely divided into whether they have plans to continue working ashore in the shipping industry or whether they intend entering an entirely different industry. The following quotes are illustrative:

[Working at sea] is good as an experience, but on the long term, I don't feel that this is a good job. If you're [working at sea] until [you're] 35 years old, I think [it] should be enough. More than that, I think it's time to change. Because it depends on you as a person, how you are. I'm getting bored quite quickly, and I need a change in my life, so changing jobs is [the] best way to do something in your life. [Dontos, Second Officer, 27 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

Dontos held the opinion that it was better to leave the sea earlier than later. His view can be linked to other young seafarers who plan to stay at sea temporarily (as noted, for example, in Cahoon and Haugstetter, 2008). In this respect, Aegon, a second engineer, said:

[I'm planning to work] maybe another five years more. Until I'm like 40 years old. I'll stay at sea [and then leave]. [...] Because I think about the health side, this is a hectic job, especially as a marine engineer, compared to [the] navigation side, [the] engineering side is more tough. [...] Because we're working in heat, engine room is always above 40°C, 45°C, and the vibration, a lot of things. So it's better to quit at the age of 45, if I can make enough money, then I would think of something else. Because maritime related opportunities are also there. Once you become a chief engineer, you can go [and work] as a superintendent, as a surveyor, something like that. Basically, all things like that. I cannot stay here [on board]. I cannot keep on sailing until [I'm] 60 [years old]. [Laughing] I don't know what will happen to me. [Aegon, Second Engineer, 31 years old, from India, interview in English]

While Dontos (second officer) emphasised the option of leaving the sea and working in other occupations and industries ashore, outside the shipping industry, Aegon (second engineer) highlighted his plan to search for employment on the land within the maritime industry. Interestingly, Dontos as a second officer does not hold a double occupational identity on board, while Aegon as a second engineer does. Nevertheless, they both treat seafaring as a temporary job and believe there are employment options ashore.⁵⁰ Another seafarer (Bryndon) noted how opening a business ashore was the alternative for him to earn money:

When I get older [...] I want to plan a business [in the] Philippines, because you know, when you're [a] seafarer, the money on vacation is always going out [running out], yeah, so I need, I plan to have some

⁵⁰ As will be explained later in this chapter, finding a shore-based maritime-related job often turns out to be extremely difficult.

business, something like that, so when I'm on vacation, the money is not always, going out. [...] When time comes, I will retire, not so much old. So I will retire sometime, 50, or 55, something like that, yeah. When I'm sure I'm stable already. [Bryndon, OS, 28 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

Bryndon mentioned his plans of retiring early to open a business ashore. There were other seafarers with entrepreneurial intentions. Jorah noted his plans for early retirement by opening a business ashore:

That's my plan [opening my own business]. I don't want to get older [on board the ship], because for [a] very long time, most of the time we spend our life in the ship, instead of [with] our family. [Jorah, Chief Cook, 44 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

But Polliver emphasising his intention to retire early implied that his plans to shift ashore might not be fulfilled:

I wanted also to work ashore, as a teacher maybe, because I don't want to get old also working on the ship, yeah, hopefully maybe, I'm 33 now, hopefully [in] 10 years I can stop and work ashore, but... I will try my best. [Laughing] I hope that I can do my plans, yeah. [Polliver, Second Officer, 33 years old, from the Philippines, interview in English]

And another seafarer was sceptical regarding his own prospects of finding work ashore:

If by the time I'm 30, or 35 years old, the deadline is 35 years old, I haven't left the seas, then I will probably be working at sea for the rest of my life. If I've managed to leave by the time I'm 35 years old, that means I've managed to get out of the net. [Alliser, Third Officer, 24 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

As the quotations above indicate, many seafarers intend to work at sea for a limited period, until a new opportunity presents itself to leave. These findings are supported in maritime-related literature. For example, British and European officers expressed plans of gaining skills at sea (Barnett et al., 2006; Dearsley, 2013) and Kiribati seafarers intended to earn large sums of money at sea in a relatively short period (Klikauer and Morris, 2002). These views are also supported in a career mapping report (Dearsley, 2013) which stated that: *'the majority of trainees and active seafarers do not intend to remain at sea for the rest of their careers'* (Dearsley, 2013, p. 21).

SEAFARING AS A HABIT

Limited Options for Maritime Positions Ashore

Despite the intentions of some seafarers to work at sea for the short term, those goals are not always achieved and some fear never escaping the ‘net’ mentioned by Alliser (above). The three impediments to seafarers’ intentions of shifting to the shore are:

- Limited options for maritime-related positions ashore
- The phenomenon of ‘Golden Handcuffs’
- Institutionalisation to life at sea.

The first factor that hinders seafarers from leaving the sea is the shortage of sea-related positions ashore. These positions normally require lengthy sea-going experience (Barnett et al., 2006; Dyer-Smith, 1992; Eler et al., 2009; Fei, 2011; Gardner et al., 2007). It would therefore appear that experienced seafarers have good employment prospects in the shipping industry or wider maritime cluster, that do not involve continuous sailing.⁵¹ However, the actual number of available positions ashore for sea-going personnel is reported as being particularly low. Bronn, a personnel manager, commented that:

On the shore side, within the technical organisations there could [be] no more than 120 people. So, for 1400 officers [working on board], and then it's 120, so that's less than [10] per cent [of positions available for officers ashore]. [Bronn, Personnel Manager, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

In this context, one bosun noted that even with the extensive knowledge he had acquired on the ship, there were no employment options available to him unless he gained additional qualifications:

⁵¹ In this context, the maritime cluster refers, for example, to marine insurance (P&I – Protection and Indemnity – Clubs), shipbuilding, ship brokering, accounting, etc.

The requirement for sea-going experience to fill sea-related positions ashore is noted mostly within the literature that discusses the anticipated shortage of nautical officers from developed countries in the shipping industry. For more information about similar issues, see for example Barnett et al. (2006); Dyer-Smith (1992); Eler et al. (2009); Fei (2011); Gardner et al. (2007).

I know even crane operating, but I have no certificate. To go [and become a] crane operator ashore, you need [to have a] certificate, you have to go [to] school. [...] This is too late for me [now] to start another something. I cannot go after so many years to do something else. [...] What can I do [ashore]? I have to continue here [working on board]. I cannot do anything else. Where to go now? To do what at home? Watchman? Security? What? Who will take me now? On the 50 [years old]? 50? Even 45 is not good. [...] For me [the] only [option to work is to] remain [here]. [Jamie, Bosun, 49 years old, from Romania, interview in English]

By asking ‘who will take me now’, Jamie recognises that in addition to the lack of shore-related qualifications, his age holds him back from finding employment ashore. He noted that if he wanted to find a different job his only choice was to continue his training. As a result, Jamie recognised his options for employment were limited to those at sea because his skills were sea-specific. Consequently, his inclination was to remain at sea for the long term.

Tommen, a pilot and a captain, elaborated about the challenges further training can create for seafarers, especially for the older seafarers:

Most of the changes need some kind of education, and if you can't find a sponsor for that, then it's difficult, you know? If I for example in my age, I decide now, I want to be DP certified, Dynamic Position certified, working in the offshore for example, and I will have to start paying for the basic training myself and find somewhere to work in order to be able to develop it, and be fully licensed [...] for that, people would say 'no, we have a guy, he's 25 [years old], so let's put our efforts into him instead'. [Tommen, Pilot/Captain, 52 years old, from Denmark, interview in English]

These quotations suggest that many seafarers might not have as many sea-related working opportunities ashore as they believed. Additionally, in order to make a ‘successful’ transition to the maritime industry ashore, they realised it is often necessary to invest in further education, as has also been noted in the literature (Anand, 2011; Dearsley, 2013). Such an investment can often present unwelcome challenges to seafarers (i.e. additional costs and lengthy training).

‘Golden Handcuffs’

Another key reason for seafarers’ difficulty in transferring ashore is connected to the reason that attracted some of them to this occupation in the first place, namely finance (Baylon and Stevenson, 2005; Calderón, 2011; Dearsley, 2013). As many seafarers have become accustomed to the higher salaries at sea, salaries ashore cannot compete. Mace explained his thinking:

There are so many people working as seafarers who often say, 'that's it, I'm going to leave, I'm going to work ashore'. But everything changes when they start looking for jobs and discover that the salary is several times lower, and then [they say], 'fair enough, I will return to the sea, because they don't pay as much here [ashore]'. [Mace, Second Engineer, 26 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

The high salaries offered to seafarers (compounded by usually low or no tax liability) appear to hinder their transition ashore, which resembles the phenomenon of ‘golden handcuffs’. ‘Golden handcuffs’ are defined as the *‘financial allurements and benefits that have the objective to encourage highly compensated employees to remain within a company or organisation instead of moving from company to company’* (Stevenson, 2015). In the context of the shipping industry, seafarers’ employment is largely done on a ‘plug and play basis’, which implies constant transition from company to company (Alderton et al., 2004; Sampson, 2013). However, as the salaries in different companies are considered high when compared to shore jobs (Dearsley, 2013; Sampson, 2013), the phenomenon of ‘golden handcuffs’ appears to be relevant. Many seafarers, especially seafarers from developing and emerging economies, become dependent on the so-called ‘luxurious’ lifestyle that seafaring enables them to have. One seafarer explained why this might be so:

I see things and how things are developing in general in shipping, we get more and more third world countries seafarers joining, because for them it might be a good chance to find a way to make a decent living, while for, for example Danish, like for me, when I was 18, it might be less attractive, because you have to offer them a bit more than what I see seafarers are being offered today. So basically it depends on where you come from, and if you compare a salary that a Filipino guy for example earns, you can easily support a big family for what he makes. While when we compare it to me, working in a similar position on a Danish ship, if you

put everything into perspective, I'm still earning a relatively good salary, but not as much as the Filipino guy, because he is living in a, his expenses at home are less than mine, so basically depends, you know? Where you come from. I think it has a lot to do with that. [Tommen, Pilot/Captain, 52 years old, from Denmark, interview in English]

Tommen confirmed what was noted earlier in the chapter, namely that many seafarers from developing and emerging economies join the sea for financial reasons. Consequently, it might be difficult for them to leave after becoming accustomed to such high wages. For example, one captain explained:

A salary of a third mate from the Philippines, compared to the price of living in the place where he comes from, it's not the same like someone that comes from France, or Dutch, or for an Israeli for that matter. So here, there should be an emphasis on that. [Someone needs] to come and force the companies to [...] match the salaries with the living conditions of this specific seafarer, [originating] in [a] specific country. Maybe I don't understand enough, but this is more or less what I mean. Because not everyone can live by, for instance us Israelis, our salaries have really been dropped, like you wouldn't believe. [Edmure, Captain, 48 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Edmure emphasised the high salaries at sea for seafarers from developing and emerging economies. To expand on this, Rakharo noted how the luxurious lifestyle facilitated by the high salaries at sea can become ‘addictive’:

We'll get addicted, in every country, wherever we go, we just, we feel like we are living in luxurious life, we got used to. [...] If you [are] dropped to like [a] minimum human, like [a] common man, who is earning 10 bucks in a day, it's not possible [to feel like that]. [Rakharo, Third Officer, 38 years old, from India, interview in English]

Will elaborated on this situation by comparing the seafarer to a drug addict:

[Being a seafarer], it's like this weakness, [...] it's like [being] a drug addict, you know? Someone who had become addicted to drugs, and says 'well that's it, this is the last time...' and after that, 'I need to feel good', he feels the craving, he needs a dose of drugs to ease the craving, and once he gets it, he says 'that's it, that was the last time and I will not do that anymore'. And afterwards when he starts feeling the craving again, again he runs after this dose. The same happens with seafarers, the same. When the money runs out, do you understand? And he [the seafarer] is used to living in luxury, he is used to [spending large amounts of money], where would he go? With his education, he couldn't earn anything at

home, I mean what's next? He goes [back] to the sea... he must. And this way, every voyage is like the last one, that's why... I'm attracted to this profession. [Will, Third Officer, 36 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Will continued by providing an example:

[The seafarer] is already used to not denying anything from himself, for instance he got used to, there is a new phone model that came out, he can just go ahead and buy it. Just because he has a sufficient salary, [...] if I want to buy a phone for \$400, I just go ahead and buy it, without problems. But at home, with a salary of \$200, \$300, I will not be able to afford it. [Will, Third Officer, 36 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

It is not only the seafarers who develop expensive tastes, their families also become used to a certain lifestyle and may exert pressure on a seafarer to continue it. Later in the interview, Will described how his former wife tried to compel him to return to work on board after a long waiting period at home:

My wife [...] she said, 'go and earn money, we need money for the family, we need money for the baby...' I mean she's been already used to, since my first contract, she had my card, I was receiving my salary, from the first contract [she could use my money]. And when I returned from my contract, I had to stay at home a little bit because there weren't enough jobs, and then the complaints started. Why don't we have that, why don't we have this? And she's been already used to receiving everything she wanted [not denying herself from anything] and there it was... and [our relationship] has been going downhill from there. [Will, Third Officer, 36 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Will's story was one of many where pressures to maintain the same standard of living lead to seafarers remaining at sea. This demonstrates how, due to the financial implications that might be involved in leaving, many seafarers continue to sail long after they have planned to give up. The benefits associated with work on board have been noted in the literature in the context of the seafaring 'career' (Hill, 1972) who specifically refers to the addictive nature of work at sea (Hill, 1972, p. 87).

Institutionalisation to Life on Board

Institutionalisation is a third factor which militates against a seafarer's intention to leave the sea. The institutionalising nature of the ship (which could also be linked with the

idea of ‘addiction’) makes leaving difficult. During a public speech in 2016, Dame Ellen MacArthur, who broke the world’s record for the fastest solo circumnavigation of the globe in 2002, shared her experiences with the audience. She particularly emphasised the difficulties of leaving her boat after spending several months at sea:

You’d think that you’ve finished [sailing] around the world and the one thing you would want to do is to get off the boat and go and have a nice meal and have some salad or something you haven’t been able to eat for three and a half months. But for me, I was actually more comfortable on the boat and happier on the boat, and the hardest thing I found after that race was actually getting off the boat. (MacArthur, 2016)⁵²

Dame MacArthur had sailed a boat on her own and had been cut off from the wider society ashore for several months. It is possible that her difficulty in leaving the boat could be seen as something akin to institutionalisation. Institutionalisation, in turn, can be associated with Erving Goffman’s concept of ‘total institutions’. In this context, Goffman (1961) defines total institutions as:

[A] place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life (Goffman, 1961, p. 11)

Ships have been compared to and have been found to be similar to ‘total institutions’ in some ways (Baum-Talmor, 2012; Davies, 1989; Gerstenberger, 1996; Gould, 2010; Zurcher, 1965) because some characteristics of life on board a ship resemble life in total institutions. For example, a ship is a place of residence and work, where seafarers as like-situated individuals are physically isolated and often spend long periods of time away from the outside world and the shore (Baum-Talmor, 2012; Davies, 1989). This may be why one Chief Officer explained his thinking about the ship as a prison, a different type of total institution (according to Goffman, 1961):

Living under these conditions, you must be available for work 24 hours a day, it’s like being in prison. My son, when he was in kindergarten [...] he drew a picture, he drew his father’s ship, and he drew something that resembled prison bars [on the ship], [laughing] he already saw it then, at the age of zero, that this is his father’s prison. [...] And it’s really like that.

⁵² To read and see more about Dame Ellen MacArthur’s experiences, see MacArthur (2003); MacArthur (2016).

It's living in a closed space 24 hours a day, with a limited number of people, whether you like it or not, you have to be with them. Outside [ashore] you have a choice, you choose your friends, who to talk to or not to talk to, here [on board] you don't have this option. [Arrys, Chief Officer, 66 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Goffman (1961) also mentions the process of stripping off one's personal identity upon entering the total institution. This is followed by a further intense process of socialisation into the institution so as to familiarise newcomers with the institution's practices and norms (Goffman, 1961, pp. 26-27). This socialisation into the institution often involves disconnection and lack of belongingness to the world outside. For example, Sandor, who had been working at sea for 26 years at the time of the interview, commented bitterly that:

It's been a long time since I felt at home anywhere. I mean the way it has been before [I joined the shipping industry]. Even when I go to my country [Russia], to my daughter, I have a place to live but I cannot say that I feel at home there, I don't feel that. [...] You are continuously going somewhere, traveling here traveling there, you always get the feeling of staying at a hotel. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

Often this feeling of displacement creates problems in re-adjusting to the world outside the institution (the shore) if and when individuals attempt to leave. Another institutionalising aspect that may impact on a seafarer's intention to leave the sea is related to the different working arrangements on board ships as compared to the working arrangements ashore. There individuals tend to sleep, play and work in different locations, whereas in total institutions there is generally 'a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life' (Goffman, 1961, p. 17). In the context of the ship, seafarers work, sleep and spend their free time on board, where needs like food, sleep and shelter are all provided within their workplace. This all-encompassing environment often influences seafarers' attempts to leave the sea, since they become dependent upon the provision of what can be termed their 'basic needs' (Maslow, 1943), including physiological needs like food and shelter. The following quote illustrates how some seafarers become dependent on the ship for supplying them with all their needs:

I wake up, and after 15 minutes, I descend two levels, and I am at work already. I know that [when] I arrive [on board], I get fed, I'm always warm,

I don't need to pay for water, I don't need to pay for bills, I don't need to cook. [...] But at home, [when] I come [home], I lose weight straightaway, [laughing], during the contract I always gain weight, [but when] at home I lose weight straightaway because I eat only once a day, it just happens this way. Plus, [at home] you have all these domestic problems, you need to pay for energy, for water, going there and there, you have a queue there, [stand in] a queue there, you're not used to that anymore. [Laughing] so it becomes hard in some way [to come ashore]. [Tywin, Motorman, 27 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

Tywin noted how the most prominent difficulty of coming ashore was being accustomed to the provision of basic needs on board that were not provided ashore. Similarly, Daario explained:

When people spend their time at sea for a long time, they just become unused to solving household problems that accumulate at home. [Daario, Third Engineer, 23 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

The quotes show an additional difficulty in adjusting to the shore. Seafarers have to get used to taking care of seemingly mundane tasks (at least for people ashore), e.g. paying household bills or buying food. Goffman also comments on the incompatibility of the ‘total institution’ with another vital element in individuals’ lives, that of the family (Goffman, 1961, p. 22). In this context, the difficulties often involve seafarers’ families, who in many cases become accustomed to managing their lives alone (Sampson, 2013; Thomas, 2003; Thomas and Bailey, 2009; Thomas et al., 2003). Consequently, a family’s routine can be heavily affected when a seafarer shifts back to the shore. One seafarer described his perceptions of how interpersonal connections in the family can be interrupted when a seafarer is at home:

I've noticed that the longer people work at sea, once they decide to leave the sea [...] they start encountering problems at home. Because they, this is also one of the reasons that I don't want to delay my retirement from the sea, a person at sea doesn't interact with his wife and kids, he doesn't have the opportunity to learn to communicate with his wife and kids. All their lives, they study each other, they find compromises with each other, as husband and wife. [Drogo, Second Engineer, 39 years old, from Israel, interview in Russian]

Drogo then described possible mismatches between seafarers and their partners ashore:

[When a seafarer] returns home from the contract, there is this meeting, and happiness, that and that and that, but when you are at home for a month, some domestic problems start arising. His wife is used to making her own decisions, and here the husband wants to solve things in his way, and this might create many conflicts, and almost for everyone, either they start learning how to get along together, to interact with each other, if they manage to do that, then everything’s okay. If not, it could lead to a divorce. People are just not used to being so close to each other for a long time, they get tired of each other. [Drogo, Second Engineer, 39 years old, from Israel, interview in Russian]

The following quote from a former research project supports Drogo’s view:

Your family has become used to managing their own daily routine, they have become used to living without you. You only provide them with [financial] support. You arrive home, after six months you’ve been away, and you enter their lives with your own habits [from the sea]. They’ve missed you, they love you, but you don’t come to someone’s house with your own samovar.⁵³ You come home and you start breaking their daily routine. So at the beginning they’re happy to see you, then they tolerate you and after [a few more days] they cannot wait for you to leave. They love you but they just want you to leave [already]. [Quote by Alex, a Third Officer, taken from Baum-Talmor (2012, p. 43), translated from Hebrew]

Such difficulties resemble what Goffman terms ‘disculturation’, which occurs when individuals attempt to leave the total institution. ‘Disculturation’ refers to ‘*the loss or failure to acquire some of the habits currently required in the wider society*’ (Goffman, 1961, p. 71). The following quotes are illustrative of some aspects of the ‘disculturation’ seafarers might experience when attempting to shift ashore:

To be honest, [if I need] to come ashore now, I don't know how to look for a job, I've become used to it [to the job at sea]. [Tywin, Motorman, 27 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

The difficulties to adjust to the shore were noted by another seafarer:

I am [a] dyed to the wool seafarer. So I find it difficult, if at this stage I want to find a job ashore, I can never adjust to that. Because all my life has been out at sea. [Olyvar, Electrician, 58 years old, from India, interview in English]

⁵³ A ‘samovar’ is a heated metal container traditionally used to heat and boil water in and around Russia as well as in other countries (Stevenson, 2015), and in this context is used to explain that a person should not impose his views and habits when he visits someone else’s home.

Tywin and Olyvar noted they felt comfortable with their job at sea and preferred the familiar to the unfamiliar. Similarly, Daario explained:

If you live ashore it's clear that [if you need to find a job], you need to go to an agency, issue some documents, and everything you need, it's quite mundane. But [if] you're not used to it, when you come home then all of this seems a bit strange. On the vessel, you can approach the third mate, he provides you with all the paperwork [you need], [laughing] and there [ashore] no, you must deal with all of this on your own, that's why, maybe yes, it calls for some inconveniences [when you come ashore]. [Daario, Third Engineer, 23 years old, from Ukraine, interview in Russian]

The problem of not knowing how to look for a job ashore has been previously explained in maritime-related literature by Barnett et al. (2006), who assert: ‘*One of the problems of being at sea is that individuals are away from the recruitment and interview circuit. It is more difficult for them to respond to advertisements by deadlines, organise interview dates. They have to rely on family and friends more to bring opportunities to their attention*’ (Barnett et al., 2006, p. 8).

There are other aspects of life ashore that might impede seafarers’ attempts to leave the sea after spending a considerable period of time on board a ship. Arrys, a Chief Officer, spoke about his unsuccessful attempt:

After I got married, I wanted to retire [from work at sea]. I tried to get along ashore a couple of times, but it didn't work out. I was lost. [...] I tried all kinds of jobs [ashore], [...] but it wasn't for me. I didn't like it. I worked there for a period, the pay check, I don't care about the salary, it was peanuts, [compared to what I earned on-board], I didn't care, as long as I was sitting on land, but it wasn't for me, eventually I came back [to sea]. [...] It's getting up in the morning, and going to work, and it's the same all the time.... [...] Here [on board] it's different, it's a completely different job. [There are] always different people, it's not the same people, and always a different situation, a quiet sea, a storming sea, you understand? It's not sitting on a chair in an office for 8 hours. [Arrys, Chief Officer, 66 years old, from Israel, interview in Hebrew]

Arrys found it so difficult to adapt to the nature of work ashore that he continued sailing for over 40 years. Arrys’ role on board as a navigation officer is mostly sea-related and entails particular skills that are limited to work at sea. Hence, his difficulty in adjusting to the shore could also be associated with the fact that his skills were less transferable to shore-based positions as compared to seafarers with a double occupational identity.

Having said that, seafarers’ institutionalisation on board is often stronger than their ability to use their skills ashore. In other words, even seafarers with a double occupational identity after many years of working at sea might not necessarily adjust to life ashore. Sandor, a Chief Engineer, was insistent for example, that:

If a person could not separate himself from the sea until he’s 35 years old, then he won’t be able to do that for the rest of his life. For many reasons, I tried [working ashore], twice. Once I worked for a year ashore, the second time was for a bit longer [...] seafarers can work only at sea. Ashore I could find a job with a reasonable pay, [...] but it didn’t work out. I could spend so much time ashore [in search of work], I was searching and searching and searching, but when you search for work [without getting paid], and you are presented with countless offers to work at sea, where you’ll be paid twice as much, but it’s [working] at sea [and not ashore], and you also have the documents you need in order to work, to take care of all these issues, of course you will choose [the work at sea]. ‘It’s better to have one bird in the hand than two birds in the air’, so after that, the point of [searching for a job ashore] was lost. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

Later on, Sandor continued and explained:

For me, having the same [role that I have now] ashore is taking the role [of a Chief Engineer], [and then becoming], perhaps not a company manager, but someone important, just a bit higher [position] than that of the person in charge of a company, and in order to reach that role, you also need to work for the rest of your life [laughing]. So what’s the point in that? This is it. So, if my health is good enough, I hope it will be enough for continuing [my work at sea] until I retire. [Sandor, Chief Engineer, 49 years old, from Russia, interview in Russian]

Sandor emphasised his high-ranking role on board as a chief engineer, and compared it to equivalent roles ashore that might have brought him the same prestige and status. To reach a similar position in a shore job, however, Sandor would have to spend years working in a role much lower in the organisational hierarchy, which would require de-institutionalisation from the ship to the shore and further training. In this case, it appears that despite his external market power as an engineer, Sandor’s institutionalisation, as the result of life at sea, was a barrier to his moving to a shore-based position.

Seafaring as a Long-Term Occupation?

The intention to leave seafaring after a short time to change jobs or seek employment elsewhere resembles some of the characteristics of the flexible career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a; Banai and Wes, 2004; Baruch, 2006; Pringle and Mallon, 2003). In a way, individuals with a flexible career work at a particular workplace for a short period of time, in order to accumulate ‘*employment flexible know-how (e.g., how to work in an innovative, efficient, and/or quality-enhancing way)*’ (Banai and Wes, 2004, p. 98). They generally work across different organisations and jobs (Eby et al., 2003) in order to gain skills and experience (Baruch, 2006; Marler et al., 2002), before they shift to their next workplace.

The flexible career requires the transferability of skills from one workplace to the other (Banai and Wes, 2004; Mallon, 1998), and as noted in Chapter 6, some seafarers, specifically those with a double occupational identity, have the skills that can be used in other occupations ashore. Other seafarers, namely those without a double occupational identity, hold mostly sea-specific skills that can largely be used at sea and in maritime-related occupations. In the context of this research, despite the intention of many seafarers to leave the sea and continue their employment ashore, they are hindered from doing so for various reasons which include the three examples expanded upon above. As a result, even if seafaring is initially intended to be a short-term job, for many, it is liable to become a lifelong occupation.

Data suggest that some seafarers would leave the sea earlier in life if they had the chance (i.e. alternative employment options or high salaries ashore). As employers seem to rely on an endless supply of seafarers for as long as needed (as indicated in Chapter 4), if seafarers could choose other work employers would not be able to depend on a large reserve of seafarers as they do now. This could potentially lead to supply-side problems.

SUMMARY

The data overwhelmingly indicate that a large proportion of seafarers do not seek a permanent life at sea. Nevertheless, despite the intentions of many of them to only temporarily work on ships, some become dependent on this work and remain for the long

term. This may be because of financial and family pressures as well as their inability to adapt to shore life. It can also be because they have become institutionalised or dependant on their high income i.e. golden handcuffs. Such dependence occurs without the traditional job security that accompanies employment in a bureaucratic organisation being available. In terms of the investigation it appears that those with greater labour market opportunities (i.e. a double occupational identity) appear to be as likely as others to remain at sea.

Employers have a general reliance on the belief that an endless supply of seafarers will continue for as long as is needed, as has been shown previously (in Chapter 4). However, seafarers with a double occupational identity (as shown in Chapter 6) appear to have more employment opportunities ashore and this would seem to undermine employers’ expectations to some extent. Consequently, if seafarers, especially those with a double occupational identity, become ‘trapped’ at sea, it can potentially be beneficial to employers who can continue to rely on a never-ending supply of employees. In this context, it is interesting to re-examine the extent to which current employment practices are perceived as beneficial to employers.

Both seafarers with a double occupational identity and without it shift between different ships and shipping companies during their employment in the industry and by doing so they maintain some continuity in their employment. Considering that for many seafarers, seafaring might become a lifelong occupation, an investigation into the extent to which they can develop a meaningful career within the shipping industry is of value. Despite the fractured nature of the seafaring occupation (i.e. temporary contracts on board several ships and across different companies) can they build one continuous career? These themes are explored more thoroughly in the next chapter, which brings together the threads of the thesis by going back to the research questions presented at the beginning (in Chapters 1 and 2). More specifically, the discussion chapter considers in greater depth the literature and the findings, offering a more profound analysis of flexible employment and its implications for employees and employers in the shipping industry and potentially in other industries.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Notion of ‘Career’ in Globalised Industries: Discussion

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER EIGHT

In this thesis, I set out to examine the perceived implications of labour flexibilisation for different stakeholders within the maritime industry and to explore how the widely used concept of flexible work is understood in this industry. The aim of the thesis is to contribute to existing literature on ‘flexible’ work practices. Based on an evaluation of the themes emerging from the data analysis (Chapters 4-7) this chapter aims at bringing the threads of the thesis, and the relevant, broader, literature together by addressing the research questions guiding the study. I am particularly concerned as to whether flexible employment arrangements are perceived as beneficial to employers and if so to what extent, what employees’ perceptions of these practices are and with examining the relationship between the flexibility of employment and the occupational identities of seafarers.

The key findings of this thesis show how employers are currently in a position to reap the benefits of flexible work arrangements, how seafarers’ perceptions of flexible work arrangements are overwhelmingly negative (even though there are a few seafarers who might be in a position to ‘enjoy’ the benefits of such employment, especially those with a double occupational identity) and how some seafarers have bought into the idea of having a meaningful work identity within a precarious work environment.

Since the 1980s, flexible employment has become a widespread practice in relation to the employment of workers within global labour markets. A confluence of factors has contributed to this shift from bureaucratic and lifelong employment to flexible and temporary employment (Brown, 1995; Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016). These factors include, for example, increased competition and uncertainty between, and within, global organisations as a result of economic changes rooted in the circumstances of the 1980s (Clarke, 2013; Kalleberg, 2000), as well as the flattening of traditional hierarchies in some organisations (Brown, 1995). The consequences of the flexibilisation of labour have long been a serious bone of contention among researchers within sociology, labour market, organisational and career studies (Baruch, 2006; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Beck, 2000; Braverman, 1998; Brown, 1995; Sampson, 2013). They have also been at the centre of public debates in the media describing the ‘gig economy’ as ‘opportunity’ or

‘exploitation’.⁵⁴ The main dispute in this respect seems to be around the perceived benefits or drawbacks of flexible employment for employers and employees. These divergent views made it particularly important to explore the implications of such employment in relation to the realities of the shipping industry, which was chosen as the basis for empirical investigation in light of the distinctive combination of flexible and bureaucratic elements of employment.

The shipping industry has been heavily affected by the processes and development of globalisation (Dearsley, 2013; Ellis and Sampson, 2008; Sampson, 2013). In the recent past seafarers’ contracts were frequently permanent, with long-term job security and organisational support (Sampson, 2013). However, ship owners have shifted towards temporary employment practices in line with the extensive deregulation of the global shipping labour market that started in the late 1970s (Gekara, 2008; Sampson, 2013). Consequently, there has been a deterioration in seafarers’ working conditions as flexible, or ‘plug and play’ employment in shipping has gradually become commonplace. Employers in the shipping industry have followed similar practices to those of other employers in the global labour market and have, for instance, reduced investment in training, increased numbers of temporary contracts and reduced organisational investment in pension schemes. These practices have enabled employers to reduce the cost of personnel at a time when competition between operators is particularly high (Kalleberg, 2016; Sampson, 2013).

Despite the use of mostly flexible employment practices in today’s shipping industry, I have shown how seafarers’ employment still entails elements of bureaucratic employment practice, i.e. hierarchical advancement on board and the option for a long-term career (mainly for officers). In this context, the findings show how the shipping industry is unique in the sense that flexible employment practices are used while attempts

⁵⁴ Some recent examples include:

Gig economy report: a “forlorn tribute to compromise”; 14 July 2017, available on <http://moneyweek.com/gig-economy-report-a-forlorn-tribute-to-compromise/>. Accessed on 14 July 2017.

Workers' rights should not be made an excuse to raise taxes and reduce flexibility; 11 July 2017, available on <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2017/07/11/workers-rights-should-not-made-excuse-raise-taxes-reduce-flexibility/>. Accessed on 14 July 2017.

Every Entrepreneur Gains From Nurturing the High-Skilled Gig Economy; 13 July 2017, available on <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/295736>. Accessed on 14 July 2017.

are made to maintain some of the benefits (to employers and employees) of permanent contracts.

In reflecting on the understandings that employers and employees in the shipping industry have of flexible employment (based on data from 71 participants), the findings of this thesis highlight a mismatch between what are generally perceived as the benefits of flexible employment to employers and the latent reality that such employment practices may ultimately prove to be disadvantageous to the industry. I will argue that there are significant complexities to be taken into account in this analysis including skills' transferability among seafarers and their implications for employers, as well as the difficulties some seafarers might encounter in leaving the sea.

This chapter is arranged as follows. It first covers the different dimensions of flexible employment based on the findings of this research and the relevant literature. It then uncovers the potentially hidden cost of flexible employment. The chapter culminates in a suggested synopsis of the research findings that incorporate possible scenarios with different configurations of the positive and negative implications of flexible work arrangements for employers and employees.

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS TO FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT

Seafarers in this project often noted how the volatile nature of the shipping industry meant that employers did not necessarily know when they would require their 'services', resulting in constant uncertainty surrounding their employment. While some seafarers are regarded as fungible employees since they can be easily replaced at any time, there is also the need for a specialised and experienced workforce within this industry, consequently there is a requirement for continuity of knowledge and skills.

From the employee's point of view, it is evident that some seafarers become more committed to their 'careers' at sea as a result of the time and money they have had to personally invest in their own training as well as finding that there is a lack of alternative employment options ashore. If a permanent workforce is employed in an unstable economic environment when the demand for ships is particularly low (for example during and after the financial crisis in 2008) employers have to go through the costly process of

laying off employees. The situation in shipping is similar to that found in organisations worldwide which are forced to *'push for greater profits and be more flexible in contracting their employees'* (Kalleberg, 2000, p. 343) in order to remain attractive in a highly competitive global market. Many employers in shipping strive to achieve a 'permanent' pool of labour using temporary contracts in order to enjoy the 'best of both worlds'. As the data shows, this is likely to be because there is a source of trained and experienced seafarers available that can be drawn on without the need to invest in training new personnel. There is also a reliance on seafarers' loyalty and availability for the long term.

The views expressed in the data show how flexible employment is perceived as mostly beneficial to employers in the shipping industry. These views seem to coincide with those described in previous research on shipping and other global industries where the benefits of flexible work arrangements to employers have been made clear (see for example Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2009; Sampson, 2013; Standing, 2016). Having shown how flexible work arrangements seem to be advantageous to employers in the shipping industry, it was important to monitor how these practices were perceived by seafarers.

This thesis found that seafarers' views on flexible employment were largely negative, although a minority viewed certain aspects as personally beneficial. Many seafarers expressed their anxiety regarding the precariousness of their income source with some seafarers in the project noting that they did not know when they were going to sign their next contract. This led to indeterminate periods of time at home without pay. Seafarers' distress created by income and work insecurity is similar to other cases of flexible workers, for example those of digital employees (Beynon, 2016; Graham, 2010). Digital workers bear a resemblance to seafarers in the sense that similarly they cross geographical borders as part of their employment. However, while digital workers perform dozens or even hundreds of separate and distinct tasks in their jobs, seafarers' work is relatively continuous and consistent throughout their contract. Additionally, while digital workers do not appear to have options for career development in their employment, seafarers can 'enjoy' a hierarchical advancement structure (especially officers).

Seafarers' income uncertainty results in some seafarers accepting longer contracts in order to ensure an income source for the duration of their contract (as also noted by

Anand, 2011). Taking up long contracts often results in extensive absence from home, which can impact negatively on their families and also on their own sense of ‘belonging’. The sensation of a lack of ‘belonging’ has been reported elsewhere. Filipino seafarers experienced a reduced sense of belonging to their local communities ashore as described in Acejo (2012) and these predicaments could be linked with seafarers’ routine absence from home (Thomas and Bailey, 2009). This can be partially explained by the temporal dissonance experienced by seafarers and their families which is an inherent component in their contractual employment and can be worsened when seafarers need to accept long contracts away. In a different context, Kalleberg (2009) notes the detrimental effect that spending more time at work has on individuals’ communities since *‘families have had to increase their working time to keep up with their income needs’* (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 9).

Taking up long contracts can impact negatively on seafarers’ mental and physical health because when seafarers do not have sufficient rest between voyages they become fatigued. A recent report suggests that the deterioration in seafarers’ mental health over the past few years can be partially linked to their working conditions (fatigue, among other things) (Sampson et al., 2017). This, in turn, can affect employers negatively as it has been suggested in the past that seafarers’ exhaustion, apart from leading to human casualties and injuries, can also lead to high financial costs for companies with previous research showing a strong correlation between fatigued crew and accidents (Grech, 2016; Smith, 2007; Smith et al., 2006; Wadsworth et al., 2008).

When some seafarers do not manage to secure a longer contract on board they may need to find temporary employment ashore while waiting for their next contract offer. These seafarers are already qualified to work on board, however, if they decide to remain ashore, it can cause problems for employers who currently rely on them to be available for work when needed and consequently find the pool of experienced people diminishing. For example there is a mismatch between deck officers’ intentions of working at sea for 10-15 years before shifting to the shore and the industry’s goals to retain them as seagoing officers for the long term (Albert et al., 2016). Additionally, research shows employment options are opening up for individuals in developing and emerging economies that were not available before (for example Caesar, 2016; Sampson, forthcoming; Zhao et al., 2016), and the shipping industry may no longer be perceived as

the prominent income source for individuals in these countries. Consequently, if mariners decide to permanently shift to the shore and are provided with this option, employers could face a decline in the supply of people required to crew their ships.

While some seafarers felt that they could easily find a job ashore to provide them with an income source (especially those who held transferable skills) others failed to find employment and fell into debt. Because of the precarious nature of employment at sea official institutions (i.e. banks) are reluctant to lend money to seafarers who cannot guarantee a required steady income to pay off their loans. As a result, many seafarers reported that they were forced to borrow money from family and friends (where possible) and at times depended on establishments of a questionable nature to get by (i.e. relying on cash loans against their goods).

Such predicaments often put seafarers under pressure to accept contract offers even if it means they need to give up spending time with their families. Consequently, they may have insufficient time to recover from their previous contract. For example, there were cases where seafarers who returned home from a 9-month contract were offered work at sea after only a few days at home. They were disinclined to return but they were equally reluctant to refuse since it could mean facing an unknown period ashore before being offered a subsequent contract. Other interview extracts show cases where seafarers who refused to accept a contract when offered one often faced the risk of being 'blacklisted' by shipping companies which jeopardised their future employment prospects. These findings are similar to those in maritime-related literature (Anand, 2011; Sampson and Zhao, 2003) where practices of 'blacklisting' seafarers are reported. Such practices can be associated with the creation of anxiety among seafarers who are '*consequently afraid to be seen as less than competent in any aspect of their job*' (Sampson and Zhao, 2003, p. 36), and so increases the pressure to accept contract offers at an inconvenient time. In contrast, some seafarers considered that even if they were blacklisted by one company, they had employment options with other companies which gave them power over the shipping companies in choosing the timing of their contract (and not the other way around). Seafarers such as these normally hold more market power either because they have more experience of working at sea, hold qualifications for a sought-for role on board or hold transferable skills that can be used elsewhere. This could ultimately be

detrimental to shipping companies, as there are already reports of shortages of seafarers, especially officers (BIMCO, 2015) which could ultimately lead to personnel planning difficulties.

Income and employment insecurity can be linked to a lack of social security and social protection. This is particularly applicable to seafarers because of the international nature of their employment and can be linked to the lack of broader organisational support for their employment terms and conditions. For example, most seafarers reported the lack of a pension scheme provision by their employer as the result of which they had to take full responsibility for their own retirement funds. In addition, in the context of an international industry, seafarers often lack access to state-funded pension schemes in their own 'home' countries (Sampson, 2013; Sampson and Schroeder, 2006) and are left to fend for themselves when it comes to planning their financial future upon retirement. Often, due to financial difficulties (which can also be associated with no pay between contracts) and having no other option, some seafarers are forced to use the funds intended for pension for other purposes (e.g. paying back loans or paying for their children's education). Others (especially those in their twenties and thirties) were insouciant about the prospects of not having a pension, considering that it was too early to think about retirement. However, overall seafarers showed some concern regarding their lack of long-term financial security. Their situation is similar to that of employees in other industries where flexible employment practices are used and organisations cut pension contributions as a way of reducing costs (Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016) leaving employees to their own devices when it comes to their retirement. In this context, one of the main critiques of flexible employment relates to the vague financial future faced by individuals employed on this basis (Beck, 2000; Guest, 2004; Hewison, 2016; Standing, 2016). Such a situation could lead to a whole generation of individuals without financial security on reaching retirement.

Not only has there been a reduction in pension provision but employers have reduced investment in seafarers' training compared to their past commitment, as the result of which most of the training costs are borne by seafarers and their families. This adds to seafarers' financial pressures ashore because not only are they dealing with day-to-day expenses while awaiting their next contract but they also need to pay for their training to

enable them to obtain further work on board. Consequently, there are many reported cases in which participants fell into debt as a result of paying training fees (i.e. they took loans to cover the cost of their studies). In some cases, in order to earn enough money to take an exam leading to a higher qualification, seafarers were forced to work in a low-paying rank on board. These seafarers were caught in a vicious circle – in low-paid roles because they did not hold the appropriate qualification but needing to work in these roles to pay for the exams that would lead to obtaining a more senior position.

Such predicaments are similar to cases reported in maritime related literature (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson and Tang, 2015) and can also be found in other sectors where flexible employment practices are commonly used (for example, Beynon, 2016; Graham, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016; Kalleberg and Dunn, 2016). The reported reduction in the investment in training elsewhere can be linked with the growing number of individuals who are required to invest in the development of their own credentials in the form of acquiring higher education (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Brown and Tannock, 2009). In this context, if individuals invest in their own training, they are likely to be less committed to returning to the same employer (as was shown in some cases presented in this research), which has the potential of leading to attrition and retention problems for employers. Shipping companies nowadays are already encountering difficulties in recruiting seafarers (BIMCO, 2015), and these findings demonstrate that this can be detrimental to employers in the industry.

The over-supply of seafarers in particular ranks increases the competition for some jobs. In their study of employability in a knowledge-driven economy, Brown et al. (2003) note how *'at times of labour shortages the long-term unemployed become 'employable'; when jobs are in short supply they become 'unemployable' because there is a ready supply of better qualified job seekers willing to take low-skilled, low-waged jobs'* (Brown et al., 2003, p. 110). My findings develop those of Brown et al. (2003) by showing how some seafarers accepted low-ranking jobs on board while others could not secure their employment contracts due to increased competition for jobs. This was particularly devastating for young seafarers who had no experience of working at sea. They frequently reported difficulties in securing their initial contract on board because of their lack of experience and because they were competing with many more experienced seafarers for

entry-level positions. These circumstances often lead to a different vicious circle to that mentioned above. Seafarers cannot find a job because they do not have the required experience but they cannot gain this experience without finding a job. At the moment, there appears to be a reported over-supply of ratings and officers of certain ranks (e.g. deck officers) but some problems in recruiting officers of other ranks, for example those holding an engineer's qualification (BIMCO, 2015). If seafarers pay for their own training, they might choose to qualify for a sought-after position on board (e.g. engineer), rather than an over-supply position (e.g. deck officer), which could change the balance of supply-demand in this respect. The impact on employers could be detrimental, as in the long term they might encounter problems in planning their crew composition on board.

The negative implications of flexible employment noted by seafarers in this research seem to confirm arguments within the existing literature about this practice, especially in relation to a lack of social protection (Ellis et al., 2012; Hewison, 2016), the unclear financial future these employees face as a result of income and job insecurity (Beck, 2000; Guest, 2004; Hewison, 2016; Sampson and Tang, 2015; Standing, 2014) and the implications of paying their own training costs (Brown and Tannock, 2009; Sampson and Tang, 2015). Additionally, the oversupply of junior officers/ratings and the competition for jobs described by seafarers is similar to the situation that is often described in the wider context of the global labour market, where young employees were often reported to struggle to secure their initial job due to lacking experience (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown, 2003). Despite these similarities, seafarers are slightly different from other flexible employees in the sense that they are generally considered skilled workers, with some of them having the potential to use their skills in other industries.

While the perception of flexible employment among seafarers is overwhelmingly negative, there are some positive factors evident in their accounts which are worthy of note. These are mostly underpinned by the idea of seafarers' ability to control their occupational path, linked to their market power. Specifically, some seafarers seemed content with the 'freedom' to choose between different shipping companies and the flexibility this type of work enabled them to have. In this context, some seafarers considered that the shipping industry provided them with options to develop their 'career' and skills by enabling them to shift across different employers (i.e. shipping

companies or third-party recruitment agencies) and different workplaces (i.e. ships). Some seafarers also commented on how they changed their employer if they were averse to any aspect of their terms and conditions on board. A few seafarers noted the additional benefits of working at sea, including the comparably high salaries, long holidays and the options to travel. For example, some seafarers recounted how they were free to do as they wished during their comparatively long holiday time at home (which in some cases could be up to six months of holiday a year, especially for the high-ranking officers) as compared to people they knew who worked ashore. Others emphasised the opportunity to travel the world, identified by some participants as an important perk of working at sea and which was one of the reported reasons for joining the shipping industry in the first place. In the context of travelling, an international assignment in itself is often seen as an advantage to individuals' career development, since it enables them to facilitate contact with different cultures and geographies while working, as in the case of expatriates (Baruch et al., 2013). Seafarers' accounts emphasised the benefits of being able to combine work and travel. However, many were soon disillusioned due to the short port stays and the limited opportunities to reach the cities ashore, as noted earlier in the thesis (Chapter 7). This disillusion with work at sea and with the possibilities to visit the shore is similar to that described in previous maritime-related literature (see for example Gould, 2010; Sampson, 2013; Sampson, 2017).

Seafarers' positive experiences of working flexibly mirror the broader views of the literature regarding the new flexible and mobile work which emphasises how individuals with flexible careers have the freedom to shift across different workplaces and develop their career throughout their employment 'life' (Arthur et al., 2005; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996c; Banai and Wes, 2004; Eby et al., 2003; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). The 'freedom' to shift across different workplaces, in turn, has been reported to offer workers a possibility to expand their skill set (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 181) and gain transferable skills (Banai and Wes, 2004; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). In the context of shipping, it is worth noting that these alternative employment options are not available for all as the scope of employment opportunities from sea to shore is often limited. The range of different perceptions of flexible employment presented by the findings leads to the discussion of the extent to which it constructs employees' occupational identity.

Seafarers' terms and conditions place them in a relatively powerless situation in terms of their occupational and financial futures. Those with more positive attitudes are likely to have a greater sense of market power, and they perceive themselves to have a positional advantage over others. Many such seafarers noted how they could use their skills and qualifications from the ship on board other ships, for example navigation officers and ABs. Some additionally felt that their skills could be transferred to different areas of work ashore, for example cooks, electricians and engineers. Thus, one explanation for the differences found in the way seafarers perceive flexible employment conditions relates to the different levels of skills' transferability amongst them. In this context, the identification of 'double' occupational identities is a key point in the study with seafarers working on board roughly divided into those holding a double occupational identity and those who do not according to the level of their skills' transferability. The concept of a double occupational identity refers to a seafarer who is able to assume both an occupational identity as a seafarer and the occupational identity of their distinct profession on board with the potential of it being used ashore. Roles with a double occupational identity can be linked to a sense of positional advantage, especially beyond the market for seafarers.

In their research on the transferability of skills in the context of vocational education in Australia, Snell et al. (2016a) and Snell et al. (2016b) note how employees' skills can be divided into soft skills, generic hard skills and specific hard skills according to the level of their skills' transferability.⁵⁵ They also note how some employees hold cross-occupational skills (Snell et al., 2016a) which enable them to overcome mobility challenges by shifting to other sectors without needing to retrain or upskill. My research findings lend support to their research, at least in cases of seafarers with a double occupational identity, who potentially hold increased transferability of skills when compared to seafarers without a double occupational identity. My findings however extend those of Snell et al. (2016a)

⁵⁵ As noted in Chapter 2, *Soft skills* generally relate to an individual's ability to operate effectively in the workplace, referring to non-job specific skills that are potentially transferable and include for example communication, social and IT skills. *Generic hard skills* include technical and professional capabilities that can be applied effectively in almost all jobs in most companies, occupations and sectors and in personal life and are perceived as highly transferable. Finally, *specific hard skills* refer to technical and job-specific abilities that are applicable in a small number of companies, occupations and sectors.

and Snell et al. (2016b) by raising an additional conceptualisation of different forms of skills' transferability.

Different Forms of Skills' Transferability

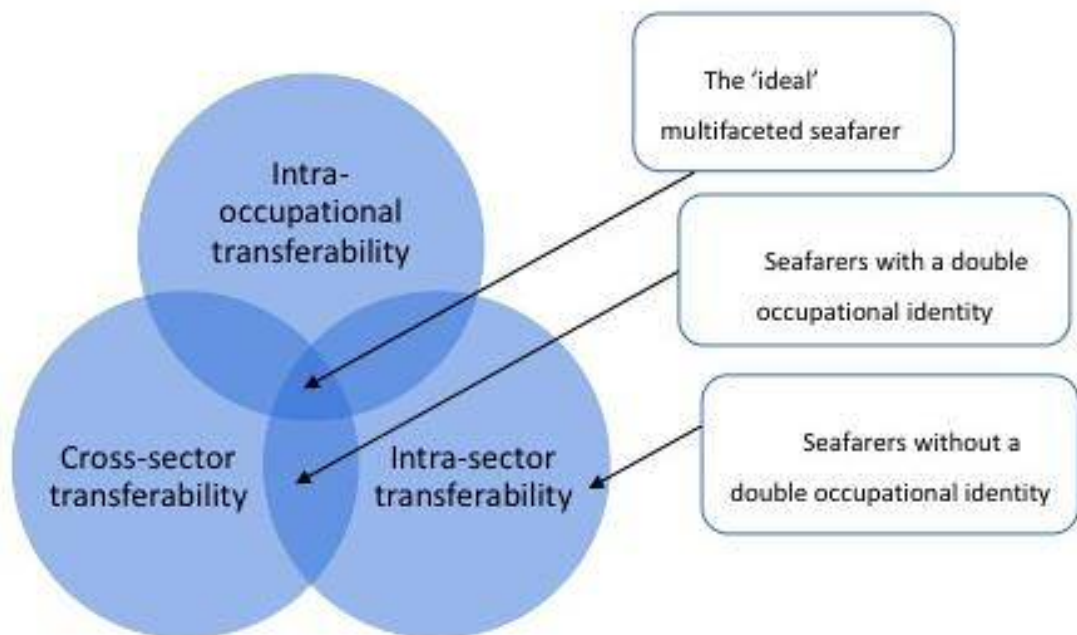
The data discussed so far show how seafarers' skills play a role in their 'market power' or in other words, their employability. In this context, three levels of skills' transferability emerge from the findings and interpretation: intra-occupational transferability, intra-sector transferability and cross-sector transferability.

1. **Intra-occupational transferability** relates to the transferability of skills within the different departments on the ship and it refers to an 'ideal' situation where seafarers can potentially perform every task and role required on board. Within the context of a precarious working environment, as is the case in the shipping industry, someone who can perform multiple jobs across different departments on board would potentially always have a job. For example, a seafarer who has been trained as a deck officer but also has a chef's qualification, or an engineer who has also been trained as a deck officer would have more options of finding employment than a seafarer with one role. In this context, it has been reported that a dual deck/engine qualification was previously available for Dutch officers (Dearsley, 2013), providing these seafarers with extended opportunities for employment on board ships. In my research, however, I did not identify any seafarers with this type of skill transferability.
2. **Intra-sector transferability** relates to the opportunity to transfer skills across maritime-related occupations at sea and ashore, i.e. work in ports, ship management companies, maritime training institutions and the wider maritime cluster. These are roles that are available for seafarers who hold sea-specific skills, including both those with a double occupational identity and those without. In the context of my research there were some seafarers who felt that they did possess this kind of skills' transferability, for example seafarers who shifted relatively easily between different shipping companies and different recruitment agencies to find work and believed they had employment opportunities ashore if such a need were to arise.
3. **Cross-sector transferability** relates to the ability to shift from maritime related to non-maritime related industries ashore, using the skills and experience gained as seafarers e.g. from seafaring into manufacturing. In their research, Snell et al. (2016a) note how cross-occupational mobility involves little or no additional training, enabling employees to shift between different workplaces relatively easily. Similarly, in this research the findings suggest that seafarers with cross-sector transferability require little training to shift to other sectors as they already hold the necessary skills and qualifications. This enables seafarers who have a double occupational identity to use their transferable occupation-specific skills in other sectors and industries ashore. There were a number

of examples of seafarers with such double-occupational identities in my study, especially those who reported they felt they could use their skills from the ship to search for work ashore without requiring further training, e.g. cooks, engineers and electricians.

Figure 11 (below) shows how seafarers with a double occupational identity fall within the category of having cross-sector and intra-sector transferability. This position in their view translates into heightened labour market power, and they believe it potentially increases the chances of finding employment within and outside the shipping industry. Seafarers without a double occupational identity have the potential to gain skills and qualifications providing them with intra-sector transferability. This transferability could potentially translate into employment opportunities across different companies and different ships, and in maritime-related jobs ashore. However, their skills are largely limited to employment in the shipping industry and the wider maritime cluster.

Figure 11: Different Levels of Skills' Transferability⁵⁶



I propose additional observations in the context of the transferability of seafarers' skills. The nature of work at sea creates a complicated career development path for seafarers, who on the one hand face temporary and contract-based employment and on

⁵⁶ 'ideal' in this context is seen from the employee's perspective.

the other hand aspire to promotion to the highest role possible for them on board. Seafarers with sea-specific skills lack traditional job security and find themselves uncomfortably dependent upon the precarious shipping industry to provide them with employment options. The situation is potentially different for other seafarers who, in addition to holding intra-sector transferability also hold cross-sector transferability (i.e. seafarers with a double occupational identity). Seafarers with a double occupational identity appear to hold more labour market power compared to seafarers without a double occupational identity.

In fact, seafarers with a double occupational identity appear to have managed to create a unique career progression route in the context of the great uncertainty that accompanies employment in the volatile shipping industry. This unique career progression route resembles a skill-based career that enables individuals to use their professional skills across different organisations and different industries, which is often referred to as a 'flexible career' (Baruch, 2006; Brown, 1995; Mallon, 1998; Pringle and Mallon, 2003). Workers with a flexible career have been reported to work at a particular workplace for a short period, amassing '*employment flexible know-how (e.g., how to work in an innovative, efficient, and/or quality-enhancing way)*' (Banai and Wes, 2004, p. 98). These individuals normally work across different jobs and organisations (Eby et al., 2003) in order to gain experience and skills (Baruch, 2006; Marler et al., 2002), before shifting to their next workplace. In this respect seafarers are similar to other employees in different sectors who are considered to have a flexible career, including those who work in academia (see for example Baruch and Hall, 2004; Danson and Gilmore, 2012) and international workers or expatriates working in MNCs (Altman and Baruch, 2012; Baruch and Altman, 2002; Baruch et al., 2013; Mäkelä et al., 2016).

In the context of the findings of this research, different levels of skills' transferability potentially provide some seafarers with the option to transfer to a different workplace ashore when they want to. The actual opportunities for employment mobility, however, might be limited. Specifically, it is worth asking whether the perceived opportunities for employment outside the shipping industry are likely to occur in reality, as there could be barriers to such transfers in practice. Therefore, the extent to which these might apply was also examined in more detail in my data analysis.

Hindered Attempts to Transition to Shore-Based Work

The findings show how many seafarers with different levels of skills' transferability had an intention to work at sea for a limited period until a new opportunity presented itself enabling them to work ashore. According to the findings, however, seafarers' intentions to leave the sea were often obstructed by several factors, including: limited options for maritime positions ashore, the phenomenon of 'golden handcuffs' and institutionalisation into life at sea. For many seafarers, these factors transformed a planned short-term job at sea into a long-term occupation, which suggests that differences in market power do not necessarily account for seafarers' actions in reality.

The first barrier to finding employment ashore described by participants is the paucity of sea-related positions in shipping companies ashore and in the wider maritime cluster. Such positions usually require extensive sea-going experience (Barnett et al., 2006; Dyer-Smith, 1992; Eler et al., 2009; Fei, 2011; Gardner et al., 2007), whilst having the potential to provide seafarers with employment opportunities in shipping which do not require continuous sailing. However, the number of maritime positions available on land intended for sea-going personnel is reported to be extremely limited. Furthermore, some seafarers noted how a 'successful' transition to a role in the maritime industry ashore often requires investment in more education (as also noted in Anand, 2011; Dearsley, 2013), which can present unexpected difficulties, i.e. time-consuming training and excessive costs. This limitation has been mentioned in the findings and is also true in the wider context of the global labour market, where the existence of skills does not necessarily guarantee a successful shift to a different workplace. For example, as Baruch and Vardi (2015) note: *'Any career move requires investment of financial and emotional resources, but the return on this investment is not always positive'* (Baruch and Vardi, 2015, p. 5). In this respect, seafarers with a double occupational identity might potentially have more options for employment ashore outside the shipping industry.

The second barrier to seafarers who want to shift to shore-based work noted in the findings is referred to as a version of the phenomenon of 'golden handcuffs'. 'Golden handcuffs' are the *'financial allurements and benefits that have the objective to encourage highly compensated employees to remain within a company or organisation instead of*

moving from company to company' (Stevenson, 2015). The findings show how the high salaries offered to seafarers (compounded by usually low or no tax liability) appear to hinder their transition ashore. Some seafarers seemed to prefer earning more money at sea for the short-term and not pay tax at home rather than working ashore and earning considerably less money, while also paying taxes. This reliance on the high salaries at sea can also have unfavourable consequences, as some seafarers and their extended families rapidly become dependent upon them because it enables them to have a more 'luxurious' lifestyle. This reliance often makes it difficult to leave a job however much one has a desire to do so. Seafarers described how it was challenging to leave the sea and find alternative employment ashore because of the considerably lower wages offered to them. The comparatively high salaries seafarers receive at sea are at odds with the salaries of other flexible employees reported in the literature. For example, in their work on precarious employment, Hewison (2016) and Kalleberg and Hewison (2013) note how individuals who work flexibly almost always get paid less when compared to permanent employees. Even though the findings in this research differ from those in Hewison (2016) and Kalleberg and Hewison (2013), they are consistent with research conducted in the shipping industry where it is noted how the high salaries are meant to compensate for the hardships of employment at sea (Albert et al., 2016; Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Caesar, 2016; Ruggunan and Kanengoni, 2017). Thus, the phenomenon of 'golden handcuffs' in relation to high wages in the context of flexible employment can be seen as unique to the shipping industry, and is likely to be present in situations where the wages of flexible employees are much higher than those of other employees.

The convenience associated with work at sea has been previously noted in the literature on the seafaring 'career', with reference to the addictive nature of work at sea (Hill, 1972, p. 87). In this context, the data shows how institutionalisation can be seen as another factor that seems to impede seafarers' attempts to leave the sea. Seafarers work in what are effectively temporary total institutions. Goffman (1961) defines a total institution as:

[A] place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life (Goffman, 1961, p. 11)

Some of the features of life on board a ship have been previously found to be similar to life in ‘total institutions’ (Baum-Talmor, 2012; Becker, 2003; Davies, 1989; Gerstenberger, 1996; Whyte, 1983; Zurcher, 1965). The ship is considered a place of residence and work, where seafarers as like-situated individuals often spend long periods of time away from the shore (Baum-Talmor, 2012; Davies, 1989; Whyte, 1983). The findings show how many seafarers had become so institutionalised to life and work on board that some of them reported difficulties in adjusting to their shore-based lives. Specifically, seafarers in this project who had become accustomed to life and work at sea described how they had become dependent to some extent on being provided with all their basic needs, for example food and shelter. They noted how they could not get used to managing what seems like mundane tasks for people ashore, including shopping, cooking or paying the bills. This supports previous research on total institutions, especially in relation to the process of ‘disculturation’ (Goffman, 1961), as there were examples of seafarers who had become so unused to solving everyday problems ashore, that the prospect of leaving the sea for a shore job had become unimaginable. Additionally, many seafarers noted how their families ashore have developed a life routine without them, which often made it even more challenging for them to feel part of their communities ashore. Thus, for many seafarers, the work had shifted from being a choice to being a necessity, resulting in the likelihood that they would remain at sea for the duration of their occupational life.

The findings show that contrary to the commonly assumed disconnection between flexible employment and identity, it appears that there are some seafarers in the sample who maintained a strong sense of maritime identity. These include, for example those who expressed strong views about being seafarers, either accepting their fate (*‘I’m stuck here’*) or by referring to seafaring as a calling (*‘I’m a dyed in the wool seafarer’*). Others appear to have maintained a sense of a double occupational identity often emphasising the professional rather than the nautical aspect of their role on board (i.e. *‘I’m a cook first, and then a seafarer’*). Therefore in contrast to the prevailing assumption that employees in flexible employment can no longer find definition and narrative in their working lives (Sennett, 2011), these findings show how seafarers are likely to develop a strong sense of occupational identity in a flexible employment setting.

HIDDEN COSTS OF FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT

The discussion so far has focused on the ways in which employers relish the positive aspects of flexible employment while many employees get the rough end of the deal. The findings presented support the widely assumed view that flexible employment practices are beneficial to employers (as noted for example in Beynon, 2016; Edgell et al., 2016; Hewison, 2016; Sampson, 2013). However, it can also be surmised from the findings that there are potentially hidden costs to employers which are worth noting. One hidden cost of flexible employment to employers can arise as a result of their reduced investment in training. Most of the responsibility for training falls on governments and seafarers rather than on the shipping companies (Gekara, 2008). In situations where seafarers are forced to pay for their own training they potentially have an incentive to go for the cheapest training available to them (which may be of poor quality). They may also be motivated to buy forged certificates or to use bribes to secure employment on board as has been previously reported in maritime-related literature (see for example Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Sampson and Tang, 2015). In this context, if insufficiently trained individuals work on board vessels, it can lead to adverse incidents (involving pollution, injury or death) that result in heavy financial and reputational losses for employers (see for example Barnett et al., 2003; Sampson and Tang, 2015).

Another potentially negative impact for employers that is likely to be associated with reduced investment in training can be linked to Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1961), especially when applied to those already employed. According to this theory employers' investment in employees' training can increase the company's profitability for the long term as well as employees' loyalty and commitment. This implies that if employers no longer invest in employees' training employees may have little long-term commitment towards their organisation, which can be linked to reduced profitability in the long-term (an assumption based on Human Capital Theory). In the context of shipping, the findings show how training costs are mostly shouldered by seafarers and their families. Consequently, according to this theory seafarers are less likely to feel obligated to remain with one employer even if they are valued by them.

The evidence in this research confirms the fact that when individuals invest in their own education, they are likely to have no commitment towards any one organisation, thus they can potentially shift to other organisations when such need arises (e.g. an electrician who noted how he could change companies if he wanted to). Seafarers' situation in this respect is similar to that of other employees who feel no commitment or loyalty towards their workplace and are consequently free to shift to other organisations (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2011). Generally speaking employers rely on seafarers returning to their company for subsequent contracts, however, there is no formal commitment on either side to renew a contract. As noted above, seafarers with intra-sector transferability can potentially shift to other shipping companies using their prior training and skills. Thus, if seafarers in numbers decide not to continue their employment in the industry (e.g. because they decided to use their cross-occupational transferability or because they were offered alternative employment options ashore) it is likely that employers will not be able to rely on the current pool of seafarers in the long term, which could compel them to change their recruitment and retention strategies. These findings support previous findings in the global context (Ashton et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2011) where it is noted how the high level of turnover among employees can create difficulties in planning personnel for the long term.

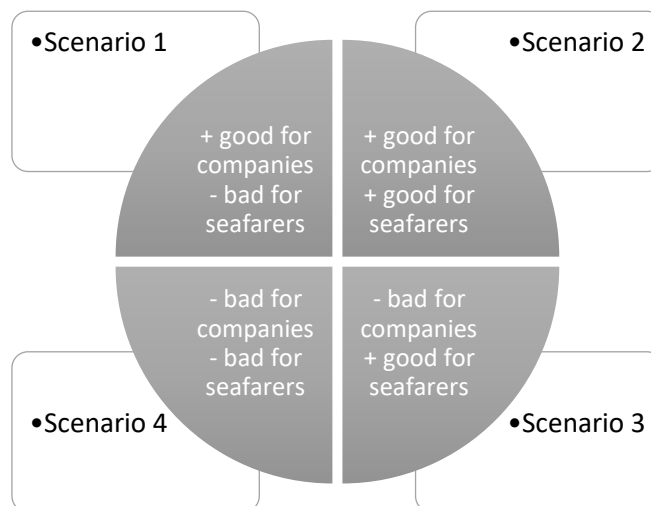
In line with potential supply-side problems associated with reduced investment in training, the data point towards an additional hidden cost that can be associated with the use of flexible employment practices, namely the expressed reluctance of seafarers to send their children to work at sea. The evidence from interviews suggests that the downsides of working at sea (e.g. income and work insecurity) are greater than the advantages (e.g. comparably high salaries). As a result, many seafarers were not in favour of their children going through the same ordeals in their employment.⁵⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, these were mostly seafarers who were not content with their current employment situation and those who expressed the sentiment of feeling 'stuck' at sea.

⁵⁷ In many cases, the reasons people choose to become seafarers, especially in developing countries, often has little to do with what they 'want' (i.e. considering the financial reasons for joining the seafaring occupation). Thus, it is possible that such views might not have any enduring implications for planning the long-term personnel of the shipping industry. However, these views propose another complexity to the use of flexible employment practices worth taking into account, challenging the benefits of such employment to employers in the shipping industry.

Consequently, it is possible that if the next generation of potential seafarers were to strive for different employment paths, flexible employment practices might no longer be beneficial to employers whose current reliance on an endless supply of seafarers on board their vessels would come to an end. These data corroborate previous research where shipping has already been noted as a less attractive career option for the so-called Generation Y employees as compared to the past (see for example Albert et al., 2016; Caesar, 2016; Cahoon and Haugstetter, 2008).⁵⁸

The ramifications of what has been presented above introduce an additional dimension to the examination of flexibilisation of labour presented thus far. The short-term flexible employment practices currently used by employers in the shipping industry which appear beneficial at the moment might prove to be less so in the future. Further reflections on the negative and the positive implications of flexible employment based on the findings of this thesis are presented in the following synopsis. Specifically, I identify four main scenarios relating to flexible employment that set forth potential benefits and drawbacks of such arrangements for employers and employees in different configurations (see Figure 12).⁵⁹

Figure 12: Synopsis of the Thesis



⁵⁸ Generation Y refers to individuals born in the 1980s and 1990s.

⁵⁹ It is important to note that these scenarios are meant to represent the ‘ideal type’ and do not strive to represent all employment relationships in the shipping industry.

Scenario 1: Good for Employers, Bad for Seafarers

In this scenario, employers ‘enjoy’ the benefits of flexible employment while employees mostly suffer from its negative consequences. In this respect, flexibility of employment is taken for granted by employers and by employees, who accept the current situation because they do not seem to have an alternative. This appears to be supported by much of the evidence presented in this project and generally corresponds to the literature on the benefits of flexible employment to employers and the detrimental aspects of flexible employment to employees (for example Hewison, 2016; Sampson, 2013; Standing, 2016). This situation appears to be particularly applicable to seafarers with less market power, especially those who do not hold intra-sector and cross-sector transferability (i.e. those without a double occupational identity). These seafarers currently rely on the volatile shipping industry to provide them with employment options, and they appear to have fewer employment options outside the shipping industry. In this sequence of events, employers can presumably continue to rely on the ‘endless’ pool of seafarers for as long as needed, and seafarers will remain ‘at the mercy’ of employers to provide them with a source of income. This can be particularly devastating for those who have become ‘stuck’ in the shipping industry as a result of different factors (e.g. the phenomenon of ‘golden handcuffs’ or institutionalisation) without alternative employment options.

Scenario 2: Good for Employers, Good for Seafarers

In this scenario, seafarers would be able to rely on many employment options, while employers would be able to draw upon a reliable and experienced workforce. Such is the situation in some of the cases presented in the research, and is particularly applicable to seafarers with intra-sector transferability (i.e. most seafarers who can use their skills across different companies within the shipping industry). These seafarers have the potential to shift across different ships and different shipping companies while maintaining a continuous career path. Even though most seafarers have the potential to use their skills this way, those in low-supply roles and/or with more experience are more likely to be in this situation.

Scenario 3: Bad for Employers, Good for Seafarers

In this scenario, seafarers would potentially ‘enjoy’ the benefits of flexible employment while employers would ‘suffer’ the negative implications of such employment. The flexibilisation of labour is bad for employers if they cannot rely on the workforce to remain available for work. With growing insecurity of employment, employees appear to be less committed to their employers, which is likely to affect their loyalty. This scenario can be particularly relevant to seafarers with a double occupational identity (i.e. those with cross-sector and intra-sector transferability), as they appear to hold more market power in comparison to seafarers without a double occupational identity. Thus, if they decide to leave the shipping industry in order to work for a different industry, and assuming they have the opportunity, there is the potential of a supply-side problem for employers as they are unlikely to be able to rely on an endless supply of loyal seafarers. This could happen, for example, if all cooks on board were to leave their employment at sea after reaching what they consider a sufficient level of experience, or if engineers were to leave the sea after several years of work. In addition to issues of planning their personnel, this scenario could lead to insufficient experience levels that can only be accumulated over time on board. This correlates with literature presenting the benefits of flexible employment for employees (for example Altman and Baruch, 2012; Baruch et al., 2013), where individuals are free to shift across different companies using the skills they acquired as part of their flexible careers.

Scenario 4: Bad for Employers, Bad for Seafarers

In this scenario, both employers and employees would potentially experience the negative implications of flexible employment which is possible under a very specific set of circumstances and would be particularly pertinent in the long term. Seafarers ‘stuck’ in the shipping industry (for the reasons described earlier) can be considered as beneficial to employers for the short term. They will have a large pool of seafarers to rely upon. However, if many seafarers express dissatisfaction with their employment and prefer a different ‘destiny’ for their children they will dissuade them from following them into seafaring. Additionally, in the context of the changing nature of employment and work, it is possible that the next generation of potential seafarers would have alternative

employment options outside the shipping industry. In this context, even if seafarers of Generation Y decide to join the shipping industry, they are not likely to want to remain at sea for the long term (see for example Caesar et al., 2015a; Caesar et al., 2015b; Cahoon and Haugstetter, 2008). This would be in contrast to the previous generation of seafarers ‘stuck’ at sea as the findings of this research amply demonstrate and which is elsewhere noted as a ‘*major human resource challenge for global shipping industry employers*’ (Caesar et al., 2015b, p. 2). Thus, this scenario implies potential supply-side problems in the long term where employers in shipping may no longer be able to rely on an endless supply of seafarers as they currently do.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the beginning of the chapter, I set out to bring together the themes emerging from the data analysis with the literature on ‘flexible’ work arrangements. Along with the complex aspects of flexible employment practices revealed in the thesis, there were ‘hidden’ facets to the use of flexible employment practices by employers in the shipping industry. In this context, data shows how seafarers’ skills play a role in their employability, and three levels of skills’ transferability were identified. These different levels of transferability potentially provide some seafarers with more options than others to shift to positions ashore. Looking on this from the employers’ perspective, if seafarers, in numbers, decide to leave the shipping industry, this has the potential to lead to employee attrition in the long term. In an attempt to account for the possible sequence of events in the shipping industry given current employment practices, a synopsis of the thesis was presented in four scenarios, with different configurations of the potential benefits and drawbacks of flexible employment arrangements for employers and employees.

There are endless ways in which the scenarios can play out for different stakeholders in the shipping industry. For example, where seafarers with a double occupational identity are concerned (i.e. those with cross-sector transferability of skills), all scenarios can potentially play out positively for them, because in most cases their market power places them in an advantageous position when compared to seafarers without a double occupational identity. A possible way of looking on these scenarios could be through the lens of time. In this respect, Scenario 1 (where flexible employment is perceived as

positive for employers and negative for employees) seems to be the current situation in the shipping industry, whereas most seafarers (especially those without a double occupational identity, or those who hold intra-sector transferability of skills) perceive their employment in the shipping industry negatively. Scenario 4 (where flexible employment is perceived as negative for employers and negative for employees) can be seen as the ‘mid-term’ future of flexible employment, if current employment practices are used. In this respect, shipping companies might not be able to rely on their workforce to be available for the long term, consequently encountering supply-side problems due to employee attrition and possibly external employment opportunities that may become available. Seafarers in this scenario are those who hold intra-sector transferability and do not seem to have many employment options outside of the shipping industry. Looking on Scenario 2 (where flexible employment is perceived as positive for both employers and employees), this scenario could be perceived as the ideal long-term future, where both employers and employees can potentially reap the benefits of flexible employment. This situation would be particularly applicable for seafarers who hold intra-sector and cross sector transferability. Finally, Scenario 3 (where flexible employment is perceived as negative for employers and positive for employees) appears as the most unlikely scenario. Specifically, employers are generally profit-oriented and if their employment practices are no longer perceived as beneficial (as flexible employment practices are perceived at the moment, for example), employers are more than likely to change these practices. As far as seafarers are concerned, this scenario is particularly beneficial to those with cross-sector transferability, whereas they would be in a position to enjoy more options for employment when compared to other seafarers.

In terms of the relevance of these scenarios to the wider labour market, it is possible to draw parallels to other industries where flexible employment practices are commonly used. For example, Scenario 1 can be observed at present in different industries where the supply of low-skilled individuals is generally higher than the demand, for example in different online platforms, where employers can easily replace their employees with others who hold similar skills (Graham, 2016) and in general where flexible employment practices are perceived as negative for employees (see for example Beynon, 2016; Hewison, 2016; Standing, 2016). Another example is given in Scenario 3, whereas if cooks

from the ship decide to leave the shipping industry for a job ashore, this has the potential to influence the labour market in the hospitality industry ashore, leading to a higher supply of skilled and qualified cooks. Further parallels can be drawn to workplaces where zero-hour contracts are used where employees who are not satisfied with their working conditions can potentially unite against their employer (this is also touched upon later in Chapter 9).

I have conveyed how the flexibilisation of labour impacted employment in the shipping industry through the findings of this research project. I have also shown that while flexible employment exists in shipping, this flexibility seems to be mostly advantageous to employers, even though some employees (e.g. those with a double occupational identity) are in a position to benefit from this flexibility. In light of the above findings and discussion, possible recommendations for employers in the shipping industry are presented in the next chapter, along with research strengths/limitations and future research agenda.

CHAPTER NINE

Concluding Remarks

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VARIATIONS OF FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT

The nature of flexible employment in the global labour market has been explored in this thesis by investigating the case of seafarers. Some of the diverse aspects of flexible employment were reviewed using the particularly globalised, dynamic and complex shipping industry as an example. This was done in an attempt to consider the extent to which flexible employment is perceived as beneficial to employers in the shipping industry and gauge the implications such employment might have for employees.

The general conclusion arising from the assessment of the benefits of flexible employment to employers in the shipping industry is that whereas they are in a position to enjoy these at the moment, flexible recruitment and employment practices might not be as advantageous in the foreseeable future especially in terms of employee attrition. Following this short re-acquaintance with the research questions and the key message of this research, I will now write about the original contribution of the thesis.

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

This thesis adds to the fields of the sociology of work, maritime studies, career and organisational studies at a doctoral level in the following three ways:

1. Using the shipping industry as an example, it contributes to the empirical investigation of flexible employment and work practices by focusing on a globalised industry and includes the perceptions of different stakeholders. The thesis speculates that the current perceived benefits of flexible employment arrangements to employers may not continue into the foreseeable future.
2. In terms of industry-related contribution, the thesis sheds light on the complexities of flexible employment in the shipping industry (i.e. negative and positive implications of such employment) for employers and employees.
3. A new term is introduced for describing the often-complex occupational identity of seafarers, namely 'double occupational identity'. What is also identified is a possible conceptualisation of different forms of skills' transferability (i.e. intra-occupational, cross-sector and intra-sector transferability) that could be implemented in other contexts of global employment.

I will now elaborate on the possible implications these data and analyses might have for the shipping industry.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This thesis demonstrates that current employment practices, though perceived as beneficial to employers at the moment, might come at a cost (particularly regarding employee attrition) and the continuous use of these employment practices could lead to uncertainty in terms of the supply of seafarers for the long term. Notwithstanding current benefits, in the future employers may struggle to recruit experienced labour, partly as a result of potential ‘escape’ routes from shipping to other sectors among some seafarers (e.g. especially those with a double occupational identity) and partly because of the doubtful availability of seafarers in the long term because of economic development and better onshore employment options in new labour supply nations (e.g. China).

In the context of seafarers’ working conditions, there might be negative implications to employers apart from those noted previously. For example, looking on other sectors where flexible employment practices are commonly used, there have been cases recently where employees, who were considered dispersed and unorganised, decided to take industrial action protesting against their precarious working conditions. For instance, 18th August 2017, McDonald’s employees in two branches in the UK, mostly employed on zero-hour contracts, called for industrial action to demand better salaries and more security in their employment.⁶⁰ On another occasion in 2016, ‘Deliveroo’ workers (also employed on a precarious basis) united and staged a week-long strike over a new pay structure that was offered to them by their employer which they considered disadvantageous.⁶¹ These workers’ conditions are similar to those of some of the seafarers noted in this research, e.g. not knowing the timing and length of their contracts. In the context of shipping, if seafarers decided to call for industrial action as a response to their current working

⁶⁰ This was reported across several national and international newspapers, for example: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/mcdonalds-strike-workers-rights-ballot-industrial-action-vote-walkout-a7901421.html> entitled ‘McDonalds faces first ever British strike as workers at two restaurants call for industrial action’ and published on 18 August 2017 (Accessed on 26 August 2017), or <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/aug/18/mcdonalds-employees-vote-to-strike-over-pay-and-zero-hours-concerns> entitled ‘McDonald’s employees vote to strike over pay and zero-hours concerns’ and published on 18 August 2017 (Accessed on 26 August 2017).

⁶¹ This was reported online on several websites, during August 2016, for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/aug/15/deliveroo-workers-strike-again-over-new-pay-structure> (Accessed on 26 August 2017), or <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/31/deliveroo-organising-wages-conditions-gig-economy> (Accessed on 28 August 2017).

conditions, as was the case in Indonesia for example (Tan, 2017), shipping companies could sustain extensive costs, including, but not limited to, those associated with the expenses of a ship docking at a particular port (which can vary according to country but can reach thousands of British Pounds per day). In addition, delays in the delivery of goods would lead to heavy financial costs and the potential loss of loyal customers.

Coupled with the negative consequences associated with seafarers' working terms and conditions, additional implications of flexible employment practices should be considered. These might include the possible loss of experienced staff, as can be seen in other sectors. For example, in a recent news story it was reported that retired police officers in the UK have been called back to work following several, simultaneous, security-sensitive events. This demonstrates how employers end up paying more to experienced personnel (former officers) as compared to retaining the same officers for the long term as permanent staff.⁶² In a different case, there have been reports of a growing number of agency nurses being hired to compensate for the staff shortages in the NHS. Higher costs are consequently incurred because agency nurses are being paid more than permanent staff would be.⁶³ These sectors are similar to shipping in the sense that they require 'ready-made', highly skilled and experienced employees to fill the different posts with shipping companies relying on the existing pool of seafarers to be available for as long as needed. This reliance could be misplaced, as in the BIMCO (2015) report it has been noted that most interviewed seafarers were planning to remain at sea for only 5-10 years before shifting to a shore job. A particular problem would occur in the case of captains, who in most cases need to work at sea for several years after obtaining their license before they can gain sufficient experience to be appointed as captains. In this context, if a large number of captains were to leave the sea after acquiring their captain's license, the

⁶² This was reported in the national news in the UK, for example, an articles published on 18 July 2017, 'Scotland Yard urges retired officers to return to work due to staff shortages in 'challenging times'' <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/18/scotland-yard-urges-retired-officers-return-work-due-staff-shortages/>, accessed on 26 August 2017.

⁶³ This was reported in the media, for example an article published online on 2 August 2017 entitled 'The NHS is 30,000 nurses short—where's the government panic?' <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/nhs-30000-nurses-short-where-government-panic-health-service> (accessed on 26 August 2017), or an article published on 1 August 2017 entitled: 'NHS staffing shortages are compromising patient care' <http://www.scotsman.com/news/nhs-staffing-shortages-are-compromising-patient-care-1-4518847> (accessed on 26 August 2017).

industry could face a shortage of skilled captains, with a subsequent impact on the quality of officers on board, as has been already noted in the context of maritime-related professional and academic literature (Drewry, 2015; Oommen, 2015).

There is another aspect to the potential deficit of experienced and qualified seafarers relating to the findings, demonstrating that employees with a double occupational identity have the potential to shift to other sectors using their skills from the ship. In this respect, it has been reported that there might be difficulties not only in recruiting but also in retaining seafarers in particular roles, for example engineers and electricians (BIMCO, 2015; Ship Management International, 2014; Society of Maritime Industries, 2013). As the findings of this research amply demonstrate, engineers and electricians fall within the category of having a double occupational identity and thus have alternative options for employment as compared to other seafarers. Consequently they are likely to leave the shipping industry after several years of work on board. In addition to this, employment options in developing and emerging economies are likely to gradually become more available ashore when compared to the past, as is the case for example in China (Zhao et al., 2016). Considering that most seafarers nowadays are recruited from these countries (BIMCO, 2015; Ellis et al., 2012), if employment options were to become available for individuals outside shipping, there might be another challenge for employers in the industry in predicting their future workforce. Furthermore, the speculations regarding the ageing workforce in the shipping industry, especially in the UK context (Gardner and Pettit, 1999; Gekara, 2010), could provide an additional perspective regarding the potential deficit of experienced seafarers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND STAKEHOLDERS

The evidence suggests that the current benefits of flexible employment for employers in the shipping industry may not endure in the future, with the drawbacks of flexible employment outstripping the benefits in the long term. Based on the literature and empirical data presented so far, there are several recommendations for policy and major stakeholders in the shipping industry. In order to prepare for a possible, future supply-side problem current flexible recruitment practices need to be adjusted in two ways. First, employers in the shipping industry should consider improving seafarers' employment

conditions. Second, employers in this industry should implement a tailored career path for individuals according to their needs and expectations. In this context, employers could consider providing support to employees by building career progression around flexible contracts of employment.

One way that employers in the shipping industry could address the issue of improving seafarers' working conditions on board is to reintroduce permanent employment for employees. This way seafarers employed in the industry will have guarantees for the continuation of their employment in the long term and potentially have better working conditions under permanent employment contracts as used to be the case in the past (see for example Hill, 1972; Mack, 2007; Sampson, 2013). However, the situation is not cut and dried as employers have used temporary, contract-based employment practices for decades precisely because of the difficulties associated with predicting the demand for ships (and thus seafarers) and also as a consequence of the highly competitive industrial environment. In addition the re-introduction of permanent employment by employers could be problematic because of the restrictions imposed by some countries regarding this type of employment for seafarers (e.g. The Philippines as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, and also in POEA, 2016b; Sampson, 2013). Nevertheless, despite these challenges, some employers in shipping are reported to be using permanent employment practices. However there appears to be significant nationality differences with relation to the nature of seafarers' contracts in this respect (Ellis et al., 2012). Specifically, seafarers of certain countries are more likely to be employed on a permanent contract (e.g. seafarers originating in the UK and China) as compared to seafarers from other countries (e.g. seafarers originating in India and the Philippines). Based on the findings of this research project, especially in the context of seafarers with a double occupational identity, employers in shipping need to reconsider current practices and think about dividing permanent and temporary contracts according to seafarers' market power rather than according to their nationality.

In this regard, another way of confronting the potential employee attrition resulting from current employment practices would be to deal with the dissatisfaction voiced by seafarers in relation to their employment conditions. For example, income and work insecurity was raised by seafarers in this research as one of the main disadvantages of

flexible employment. Therefore, the current situation might change if employers were to offer seafarers better leave terms and conditions, i.e. change the payment system on board from incorporating leave pay in the salary while working on board (as is currently the case) to paying seafarers during their time at home between contracts. This is potentially a way of increasing seafarers' loyalty as they will consequently be more likely to return to work for the same shipping company. In this respect, improving seafarers' terms and conditions is particularly relevant to seafarers who are 'stuck' in the shipping industry without alternative employment options. An additional consideration is for all employers in the industry to offer seafarers a pension contribution scheme as an inherent component of their employment which some of the larger employers in shipping seem to be doing now. Furthermore, to assist seafarers to gain the initial experience they need to find employment, employers in shipping could adopt a system of training berths on board, in collaboration with national state-funded institutions, as can be seen, for example, in Lewarn (2009); Sampson (2004b); and Simhan (2016). This could lead to increased loyalty towards an employer, as was the case for some of the participants of this research. Despite the flexible nature of their contracts they expressed sentiments of loyalty and long-term commitment towards their employers having been offered training and organisational support from the onset of their employment.

A potential challenge for employers is to modify and improve existing flexible employment practices and to review the current use of non-direct employment practices (i.e. employment through third party recruitment agencies). Employers in shipping might therefore consider reducing the use of intermediaries in seafarer recruitment and return to direct employment practices where the connection between the employer and the employee is uninterrupted as was the case in the past (see for example Mack, 2007; Sampson, 2013). This, in turn, could contribute to an improvement in seafarers' employment terms and conditions because the connection between employers and employees would be unmediated and direct. Such a practice exists among some of the large employers in shipping nowadays where the employment of seafarers is done directly through their own manning agents (as described in some of the cases in this research).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ These companies are not named here for ethical reasons.

Seafarers' terms and conditions on board would be improved if employers in shipping considered introducing employment practices that engaged with seafarers' intentions and opportunities for continued work at sea. Employment and recruitment practices could be adapted to seafarers' needs, i.e. providing permanent employment options for those who intend to stay in the shipping industry and tailoring the employment route according to the requirements of the next generation of seafarers. This might include providing seafarers with transferable skills and giving them more options for using sea-related skills across other industries, i.e. cross-sector and intra-sector transferability, as well as specific training for smoothing the difficulties of transitioning ashore.

The overall conclusion, therefore, is that in order to keep their costs low in the foreseeable future, employers in the shipping industry should reconsider current recruitment and employment practices. For long-term profitability, they should look at improving seafarers' employment terms and conditions, as well as providing a platform for developing a meaningful career within a flexible work setting. The research findings and conclusions have the potential for implementation in other industries where flexible employment practices are commonly used. Examples include industries where precarious work practices are detrimental to employees, for example the hospitality industry (Burrow et al., 2015), the entertainment industry (Hennekam and Bennett, 2017; Raito and Lahelma, 2015; Randle et al., 2015), the transport industry (Wintersberger et al., 2013) and in academia (Baruch and Hall, 2004; Danson and Gilmore, 2012). As flexible employment spreads throughout the workforce, there may be other cases in which rehiring the same (skilled or semi-skilled) people on temporary contracts becomes common. Thus, the example of the shipping industry might be particularly relevant when it comes to reaping the benefits of flexible employment for both employers and employees. In this context, changes in the supply and demand of seafarers potentially have implications for other global industries. For example, seafarers with a double occupational identity can shift to other industries, i.e. if a cook were to decide to leave the shipping industry, he could carry his human capital to the hospitality industry. Thus, there could be a lower supply of cooks in shipping and a higher supply of cooks in the hospitality industry ashore. This can have an impact on the dynamics of recruitment and contract negotiation for both employers and employees.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

This study contains two particular strengths. The first is that an ability to explore current pressing issues in the global labour market (i.e. the implications of flexible work for employees and employers) has been demonstrated by means of accessing and exploring the global shipping industry. The second relates to the methodology used throughout the research, including the research on board and the ability to use more than one language to conduct the interviews. The voyage served as a rapport builder with some of the seafarers and enabled the researcher to experience first-hand, life at sea. Unfortunately, another sea trip was aborted due to time issues resulting from the theft of my bag when I was on my way to join the vessel. The bag contained all my travel documents and as a result I was unable to join the ship as scheduled. Nevertheless, I am cognisant of, and will always appreciate, the merits of immersive research and was fortunate in this project to experience it once. I believe that my ability to conduct interviews in one of several languages enabled me to interact with many of the interviewees who by using their mother tongue expressed themselves fully and without constraint. This resulted in rich and comprehensive data.

As already shown in Chapter 3 (the Methodological design), even though the research methods and generally the research process were relatively straightforward, there were several issues that slightly impeded the project. The restricted nature of time due to the fixed nature of the project funding, for example, placed the project under time constraints. Such time constraints were intensified by the bag theft en route to conducting fieldwork, which had a rippling effect on the research and created an additional delay in data collection and data analysis. Nevertheless, with appropriate planning and diligent organisation of the work schedule, I was able to overcome these restrictions, and as a result of the incident managed to collaboratively produce a conference paper that touched upon issues of researcher safety.⁶⁵ It is quite possible that given more time I might have interviewed more representatives from shipping companies, which would have expanded the scope of the research to include more views. As noted earlier, the problem

⁶⁵ A collaborative project entitled '(Mis)Adventures in the Field: Reflections on Risk Management in Social Research' has been presented in two conferences in Cardiff.

of such a small number of employers in the sample can be intensified by the assumption that those included in the research are more likely to be the 'good' employers. This, in turn, could mean that their responses may not be representative of those of other employers in the industry. Nevertheless, as the thesis' objective was to provide a complex portrayal of seafarers' employment rather than to generalise the findings to other groups, it is my belief that this objective has been accomplished. Finally, I believe the complexity and value of the data gathered within the given space and time has adequately diminished any weaknesses arising from time pressure.

There are additional flaws in the research design that may have weakened the strength of the data, however, careful steps to address any gaps during the research process has ensured the production of valid and rich data. One minor deficiency is the omission of ex-seafarers as one of the interviewee groups in the research design. In this respect, ex-seafarers have actually experienced the transition ashore, thus they are likely to shed light on the practical aspects of shifting ashore as compared to current seafarers. Looking back on the data in this project, some seafarers failed to shift ashore due to lower pay and difficulties of adjustment (among other things), hence it would be interesting to examine the factors making a transition ashore 'successful'. In addition, the inclusion of ex-seafarers could have provided an alternative perspective to the push and pull factors of a seafaring occupation. Some of the questions would have included the description of their experiences of leaving the sea, and the extent to which they felt that their skills contributed or impeded their transition to the shore. Nonetheless, the interviews with seafarers throughout the project generated rich qualitative data which provided some information as to seafarers' forthcoming plans.

In addition to these points I am aware that it would have been beneficial to conduct a follow up interview with some of the young seafarers interviewed in the research, in order to find out whether their prospective plans to leave the sea actually materialised.⁶⁶ This would have provided an additional perspective on seafarers' career opportunities,

⁶⁶ It is possible that seafarers' lives could turn out differently to what they have imagined at the time of the interviews, as has been described for example in Goodwin and O'Connor (2009) in the context of British workers. Their paper follows up on a research project on young workers conducted 40 years before by Ashton and Field (1976), and reveals how employees' *'work histories did not follow exactly the linear and smooth trajectories predicted for them'* (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2009, p. 417).

namely, whether their planned career trajectory was in fact successful. Conversely, considering that the interviews with current seafarers were very comprehensive and covered their perceived employability from their point of view and given the fact that I conducted additional interviews with HR personnel some of whom had had a career at sea, the conclusions may well have remained the same as those presented in this document.

Another possible limitation of the study is that the research sample is weighted towards seafarers from developing and emerging economies, as noted in Chapter 3 on methodology. It should be noted that seafarers from developed countries are less likely to emphasise financial considerations as the main reason for joining seafaring, as they have alternative employment options paying high wages in their countries. The weighting of the sample is tempered to some extent by acknowledging the composition of the global labour force in the shipping industry. Namely that the nature of recruitment in the shipping industry, as was noted in Chapters 2 and 4, may inevitably introduce an embedded bias to the research since most seafarers are recruited from developing and emerging economies (BIMCO, 2015). Thus, the sample in this research is more or less representative of the global labour market for seafarers. Furthermore, as noted elsewhere in the thesis (Chapter 3), its objective was not to generalise the findings to other groups, but to provide a multifaceted depiction of seafarers' employment, which it has accomplished.

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

In light of the literatures presented throughout the thesis, the analysis of data from Chapters 4-7, and the limitations of the research project as presented earlier, I consider that my research has opened the door to more questions regarding flexible employment. A possible avenue to explore is a study of post-sea occupations taken up ashore by former seafarers, with reference to the difficulties expressed by many of them in adjusting to a shore job. Specifically, whilst a large number of seafarers had problems in adjusting to a shore job (Chapter 7), there was an indication that some had the intention of opening up a business ashore enabling them to be 'their own boss'. There is, therefore, room for further research exploring whether seafarers ashore prefer to be employed within a

hierarchical structure or to run their own business and whether their choices are linked to their last role on board (i.e. a captain might encounter more difficulties in having a boss than an AB). In addition, it would be of interest to examine whether ex-seafarers who own their businesses are more likely to adjust easily to the shore after a career at sea than those employed within a hierarchical organisation.

Another area considered in this thesis, but not explored in detail, is the extent to which flexible employment in other industries is beneficial to employers. For example, there are different industries where fixed-term contracts are commonplace, including the Entertainment, Academia, and Hospitality industries. Whether working on a film/a TV series, a two-year post-doctoral fellowship, or working during a particularly busy period in a hotel, these industries appear to offer employees mostly fixed-term contractual employment, without any guarantee for future job security or organisational support. Flexible employment practices play a crucial role in shaping employment worldwide (Beynon, 2016; Edgell et al., 2016; Hewison, 2016; Kalleberg, 2016). Thus, it would be interesting to examine similar issues to those explored in the thesis, especially in the context of employees' occupational identity and ways in which they find meaning in what they do. This evaluation would involve a critical analysis of the existing literature regarding occupational identities in the 'era' of flexible work, as well as interviews with key stakeholders in the suggested industries.

On a theoretical level, there are additional aspects of flexible employment worth exploring. In particular it would be interesting to examine flexible careers further in the context of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). There has been some research in this respect, e.g. Hall and Nougaim (1968) who examined Maslow's theory in an organisational setting, however current research is required. Namely, it is worth exploring whether someone with a flexible career who has reached the highest level of self-fulfilment by following a flexible career (according to Maslow's pyramid of needs) would find this fulfilment more important, for example, than reaching basic needs such as physiological needs, the need for shelter or the need for safety.⁶⁷ This could be explored

⁶⁷ As a reminder, the hierarchy of needs listed from lowest to the highest the needs are: physiological (i.e. basic needs like hunger and thirst); safety (i.e. need for security); affiliation (i.e. need for close affective

in the context of the general instability and insecurity for individuals associated with flexible careers.

AFTERWORD

Seafarers were at the centre of my academic investigation from the outset of this research project. However, readings on flexible employment combined with personal experience of working flexibly reveal that flexible employment extends beyond the shipping industry. For example, vendors in major retailer shops and servers in fast-food chains all work on zero-hour contracts and also digital workers whose work is based on the completion of thousands of small tasks with extremely low pay, and other employees who shift between different workplaces and have no job security. All are flexibly employed which seems to be the reality for approximately 75 per cent of the world's employees according to the ILO (2015).

At the end of this personal journey undertaken to comprehend the intricacies and complexities of (mostly flexible) employment in this day and age, I have managed to gain a better understanding. However, as some of the recommendations above suggest, there is still much to be done. Therefore, this afterword is an invitation to interdisciplinary researchers from different schools of thought to continue with an exploration of imperative issues linked with employment in the global labour market. This is likely to be accomplished by exploring both organisational and individual perspectives and uncovering ways of supporting employers and employees in this age of financial uncertainty.

relationships); achievement and esteem (i.e. need for achievement and self-respect); and finally, self-actualisation (i.e. need for growth of one's potential skills and abilities).

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (PSEUDONYMS) IN THE RESEARCH⁶⁸

	Pseudonym	Gender	Role	Age	Nationality	Work at sea
1	Aegon	Male	Second Engineer	31	India	6 years
2	Aemon	Male	Third Officer	25	Russia	3 years
3	Aggo*	Male	First Engineer	53	Russia	N/A
4	Alliser	Male	Third Officer	24	Russia	11 months
5	Alton*	Male	OS/AB	*35	Philippines	N/A
6	Amory	Male	Chief Cook	50	Philippines	21 years
7	Arrys	Male	Chief Officer	66	Israel	Over 40 years
8	Balon*	Male	Chief Officer	24	Ukraine	N/A
9	Ben*	Male	Third Engineer	26	China	3 years
10	Benjen	Male	Captain	44	Bangladesh	25 years
11	Bronn	Male	Personnel Manager	38	India	N/A
12	Bryndon	Male	OS	28	Philippines	7 years
13	Daario	Male	Third Engineer	23	Ukraine	4 years
14	Dontos	Male	Second Officer	27	Romania	4 years
15	Drogo	Male	Second Engineer	39	Israel	8 years
16	Eddard*	Male	AB	32	Philippines	11 years
17	Edmure	Male	Captain	48	Israel	14 years
18	Euron*	Male	Third Officer	31	Israel	4 years
19	Gendry	Male	CEO MET	54	Israel	N/A
20	Gregor	Male	Mess man	21	Ukraine	2 years
21	Griff	Male	Oiler	40	Philippines	15 years
22	Hodor	Male	Bosun	46	Philippines	22 years
23	Jamie	Male	Bosun	49	Romania	28 years
24	Janos*	Male	Mess man	23	India	3 years
25	Jojen	Male	Second Officer	38	Israel/Argentina	7 years
26	Jon	Male	Assistant Engineer	25	India	9 months
27	Jorah	Male	Chief Cook	44	Philippines	20 years
28	Jory	Male	Second Engineer	35	Philippines	11 years
29	Kevan	Male	Oiler	28	Myanmar (Burma)	5 years
30	Lancel	Male	Electrician	24	Ukraine	5 years
31	Locke*	Male	Wiper	39	Philippines	N/A
32	Loras	Male	AB	43	Philippines	14 years
33	Mace	Male	Second Engineer	26	Ukraine	8 years
34	Matthos	Male	Electrician Cadet	23	Romania	3 years

⁶⁸ The names marked with an asterisk (*) mean that the conversation with them was not recorded on the recording device but was documented in the research diary. Additionally, the conversation with Alton (no. 5) was not recorded and I did not have the chance to ask for his exact age, but based on his external appearance, I assumed he was probably in his 30s.

Appendices

35	Meryn	Male	AB	37	Myanmar (Burma)	10 years
36	Ned	Male	Electrician	40	Philippines	7 years
37	Oberynd	Male	Chief Officer	40	Ukraine	15 years
38	Oolly	Male	Chief Officer	42	Sweden	27 years
39	Olyvar	Male	Electrician	58	India	36 years
40	Petyr	Male	OS	26	India	5 years
41	Podrick	Male	Navigation Cadet	22	India	18 months
42	Polliver	Male	Second Officer	33	Philippines	10 years
43	Pypar	Male	HR manager	39	India	N/A
44	Quentin	Male	Bosun	43	Ukraine	20 years
45	Rakharo	Male	Third Officer	38	India	15 years
46	Ramsay	Male	Third Engineer	40	Russia	10 years
47	Rast*	Male	AB	35	Philippines	N/A
48	Renly	Male	Admin. Officer	27	India	4 years
49	Rickon	Male	Bosun	54	Philippines	20 years
50	Robb*	Male	Engine Cadet	24	China	N/A
51	Robert	Male	Chief Engineer	49	Philippines	19 years
52	Robin*	Male	AB	34	Philippines	N/A
53	Rodrick	Male	AB	24	India	6 years
54	Roose	Male	Captain	41	Faroe Islands (Denmark)	26 years
55	Roslin	Female	Crew Manager	38	Philippines	N/A
56	Samwell	Male	Captain	49	Iran	18 years
57	Sandor	Male	Chief Engineer	49	Russia	26 years
58	Stannis	Male	Chief Cook	50	India	30 years
59	Syrio	Male	Fitter	51	Turkey	25 years
60	Theon*	Male	Steward	45	Philippines	15 years
61	Thoros	Male	Fitter	42	India	10 years
62	Tommen	Male	Pilot/Captain	52	Denmark	35 years
63	Tyrion	Male	Training Manager	24	UK	N/A
64	Tywin	Male	Motorman	27	Ukraine	2 years
65	Varys	Male	Trainee Chief Cook	23	India	2 months
66	Victarion*	Male	Motorman	56	Philippines	Over 30 years
67	Viserys*	Male	First Engineer	41	Bulgaria	N/A
68	Walder	Male	Electrician	27	Israel	18 months
69	Will	Male	Third Officer	36	Ukraine	7 years
70	Yandry*	Male	AB	58	Philippines	Over 30 years
71	Yoren	Male	Deck Cadet	38	Israel	4 months

APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION ABOUT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Comment before proceeding

All information about the participants in the research was correct at the time of the interview. This information might have changed post-data collection of which I would not be aware. The description of participants is for the purpose of providing some background about them as complex and unique individuals rather than just 'research participants' or 'numbers'. The asterisk (*) near interviewees' names implies that the conversation with them was not recorded on the recording device but was otherwise documented.

1. Aegon

Aegon is a second engineer who is 31 years old and from India. He is married, has one child, and has been working at sea for 6 years. Aegon appears to have started working as a seafarer by chance because he comes from a family of sea-going people. He started studying for marine engineering in his fourth year of studies. He plans to stay at sea until he is 40 and then try to find a marine-related job ashore. He has no plans to work outside shipping.

2. Aemon

Aemon is a third officer who is 25 years old and from Russia. He has been working in the shipping industry for the last 3 years. He admitted to feeling some connection to the sea, as he comes from a heritage of seafarers. He plans to work at sea for the long term and is currently employed on a contractual basis. His contracts normally last between 3-4 months after which he has approximately 3 months of leave at home. He is not married but he has a girlfriend who works and lives ashore in Russia.

3. Aggo*

Aggo is a chief engineer, is 53 years old and is from Russia. He has been signed off the ship since he failed the local exams in the registration country of the ship's flag.

4. Alliser

Alliser is a third officer who is 24 years old and from Russia. He has been working at sea for less than a year, and this is his third contract at sea. He is married. It appears that he works mostly for the money and does not seem to have a particular connection to the sea. During the interview, he said that one of the advantages of working at sea is that he thinks he loves his wife more because he misses her while away. He believes that if he were working in a shore job, he would not love and miss his wife so much.

5. Alton*

Alton is an AB in his thirties, from the Philippines and is married. I have not had the chance to record a conversation with him, but we had one short informal conversation. He told me that he married 2 months ago, and that he would ask the company if he could be at home for 8-10 months so as to spend some time with his wife. At the time of the interview he had not seen his new wife for approximately six months.

6. Amory

Amory is a chief cook who is almost 50 years old and from the Philippines. He is married with two children. Amory treats his profession as a craft and sees himself firstly as a cook and then as a seafarer. He has been working at sea for 21 years, for the same manning agency that sends him to work on different ships every time he finishes a contract. He believes that by developing his skills he will have more chance of getting the next contract.

7. Arrys

Arrys is a 66-year-old chief officer from Israel who has been working at sea for over 40 years. He is married with three children and he is not interested in any of them becoming seafarers. He has reached the rank of a chief Officer, one rank below that of a captain. He considers that life at sea has changed a lot since he started work. He tried to work in different jobs ashore, but said that life on-board is so different that he could not adjust to anything else. Arrys admitted that when he first started working on board, he enjoyed it but now, in his opinion, work on board is too boring and involves too much paperwork. Arrys plans to retire after a few more contracts.

8. Balon*

Balon is a 24-year-old chief officer who is from Ukraine. He has been working at sea for approximately 8 years, and seems to want a long-term career at sea. Balon mentioned to me that he was the youngest chief officer in the company and that he advanced up the ranks quite fast.

9. Ben*

Ben, who is a third engineer, aged 26 and from China, has been working as a seafarer for three years. He started working with his current shipping company as a cadet and told me that he feels a sense of loyalty to the company. He mentioned that he is pleased that the shipping company arranged for another Chinese seafarer to work on board with him so that he would not be the only one from China. Ben believes that 20 or 30 years of working at sea is too much which implies that he does not intend to work on a ship for long. Neither his girlfriend nor his family are interested in him continuing to work at sea.

10. Benjen

Benjen is a captain from Bangladesh who is 44 years old, is married and has three children. He has been working at sea for 25 years and plans to continue at sea until retirement. He then intends to retire from seafaring to spend more time with his family. Benjen's choice of working at sea was not his only one as he had the option of becoming an engineer or a doctor and for no particular reason he chose seafaring. He said that had he known then what he knows now, he would not have made that choice.

11. Bronn

Bronn is the personnel manager in a big shipping company who is 38 years old and from India. Married, with two children, he worked at sea for 15 years before he moved to a shore position. Of his 15 years working at sea 5 were as a captain.

12. Bryndon

Bryndon is a 28 year-old-OS, from the Philippines and has been working at sea for the past seven years. Bryndon's work at sea has been a continuation of his heritage, as his father worked at sea before him but died when Bryndon was 6 years old. Even though he is working as a rating at the moment, he is waiting to save enough money to take his officer's exam.

13. Daario

Daario is a third engineer from Ukraine, who is 23 years old and single. During the interview, he mentioned that he saw working at sea as an opportunity to earn money and he treats seafaring as a temporary job. He has been working at sea for less than a year and this is his first contract as a third engineer rather than a cadet. He is striving to develop his professional knowledge while working on the ship and stated that once his job stopped challenging him he plans to change it.

14. Dontos

Dontos is a second officer, aged 27 and from Romania. He has been working at sea for the past four years and does not consider seafaring to be a life-long occupation. His wife is also a seafarer who is about to finish her studies. He is hoping to be able to work on the same ship as his wife in the future, after which he plans to work in Europe.

15. Drogo

Drogo is a 39-year-old second engineer who is from Israel but was originally from the USSR. He has been working as a seafarer for 7 years, is married and has a three-month-old baby. He does not intend to work in the industry for long and is looking into the

possibility of finding a job as an engineer outside the shipping industry. He believes that with the skills and knowledge he has, he will easily be able to find a job ashore. He considers that the longer he delays his retirement from the sea, the harder it is going to be for him to get used to being ashore and to life on land in general. He does not enjoy working for his current company, and expressed his disappointment regarding the company's mistreatment of seafarers.

16. Eddard*

Eddard is an AB, who is 32 years old and from the Philippines. I did not have the chance to record a conversation with him but we shared an informal conversation. Eddard has been working at sea for 11 years, is not married but has a girlfriend. He told me that he could become an officer but needs to take an exam to get his license. This is a problem because the exam only takes place four times a year. He would need to prepare for it by staying at home for 6 months during which time he would not be paid.

17. Edmure

Edmure is a 48-year-old captain from Israel. He is married with three children. He told me that he had always dreamt of working at sea and so all his previous occupations had been sea related, whether it had been running a seafood restaurant or working at the port. He started his work at sea 8 years ago, and progressed quite quickly to becoming a captain.

18. Euron*

Euron is a third officer who is 31 years old and from Israel. He is single and has been working as a seafarer for four years. He likes working at sea because he is employed for several months and then can enjoy spending his pay during his time of 'unemployment' ashore. Euron had no particular plans to become a seafarer when he was young.

19. Gendry

Gendry, CEO of a maritime institute, is 54 years old and from Israel. He is married and has 3 children.

20. Gregor

Gregor is a 21-year-old mess man, who is single and from Ukraine. He has been working at sea for 2 years. His main work is in the kitchen and he feels that working at sea is the only option for him to earn money at the moment, as his employment opportunities ashore are limited. He thinks that his six-month contract on board is too long.

21. Griff

Griff is an oiler from the Philippines who is 40 years old. He is married and has two children. He has been working at sea for 15 years and works as a rating on board. Having completed a course in marine engineering, he has not yet taken the exam as he is currently waiting to finish building his house in the Philippines. He said that this might take two more years and then he would be able to become an engineer. He would prefer working ashore but he continues his work at sea because he can earn more money there.

22. Hodor

Hodor is a bosun who is 46 years old and from the Philippines. He has been working at sea for over 20 years. Married, with three children, he plans to work on board at least until they all finish college.

23. Jamie

Jamie is a bosun from Romania and is almost 50 years old. He has been working in the shipping industry for over 20 years. He started working at sea because it was one of the only ways to get out of Romania at the time but now feels that he is stuck in seafaring without any other alternatives. He is married and has one son. He has been paying for his son's higher education so that he will not have to go to sea. He talked about cases in which mariners need to pay crewing agents in order to obtain work on ships.

24. Janos*

Janos is a mess man who is 23 years old and from India. He has been working at sea for approximately 3 years and comes from a tradition of seafarers. When he talked about his seagoing uncles, he used hand gestures to imply that they were big and strong. He previously worked as a fisherman.

25. Jojen

Jojen is a second officer, is 38 years old and was born in Argentina but emigrated to Israel in 2002. He is licensed to work as a chief officer. He has been in the shipping industry for seven years and appears to be very concerned about his financial status. He does not have any special affection for life at sea and is working on board solely to earn money.

26. Jon

Jon is an assistant engineer (equivalent to a junior engine officer), is 25 years old and from India. He has worked at sea for less than a year and has made meticulous plans for his future. He intends to continue at sea for 15 years, so as to be able to save enough

money to sustain his family for the rest of his life. He thinks that he could work ashore as an engineer.

27. Jorah

Jorah is a 44-year-old chief cook from the Philippines who has been working at sea for over 20 years. He started his work at sea from a low rank and began studying for the position of a Marine Engineer. After two years he visited a merchant ship and was offered a job in the galley, which he accepted. He progressed through the ranks, undertook additional food-related training and over the years learned his profession. Jorah is interested in continuing his work on-board until he has collected enough funds to open a food-related business ashore.

28. Jory

Jory, a second engineer from the Philippines is 35 years old. He is married and has two children. It appears that Jory started working at sea because he needed to earn money. When he remembered the different jobs he had done in the past before becoming a seafarer, for instance boxing and taking people on his bicycle, he started crying. This demonstrated some of the difficulties he had encountered before going to sea.

29. Kevan

Kevan is a 28-year-old oiler from Myanmar. He is single and has been a seafarer for 5 years. He plans to progress in the shipping industry and to become an engineer but intends staying and working at sea only until he reaches the rank of second engineer. He believes that after this the responsibility will be too much for him. As a result, he is not interested in it. Although he has a general plan for what he is going to do, he is not certain about his future employment and consequently lacks job security.

30. Lancel

Lancel is a 24-year-old electrician from Ukraine. He was born and raised in a port city in Ukraine. He considers that the money he earns on-board is much better than what he knows the people ashore earn. He believes that he has the option of finding a job in another company if he really wants to. He loves the sea, and he mentioned that even if he worked ashore, he would want to be able to come out to sea at least once or twice a year, to take a 'holiday' from life ashore.

31. Locke*

Locke is a 39-year-old wiper from the Philippines.

32. Loras

Loras is a 43-year-old AB from the Philippines. He is married, with no children so far and has been working at sea for 14 years. He told me that he had changed from the manning company he had previously been working for because the conditions there did not suit him. Loras hopes to be able to leave his job at sea in the future so as to open and develop his own business ashore.

33. Mace

Mace is a second engineer. He is 26 years old, single and from Ukraine. During the interview, he said that he works at sea mostly because of the money and he is not sure about what the future holds. He hopes to develop his professional knowledge while working at sea. Mace worked for different small shipping companies in the past, where working conditions were not good and where the crew was treated badly. The ship he is working on at the moment is better.

34. Matthos

Matthos is an electrician cadet who is 23 years old and from Romania. I interviewed him during his second contract as a seafarer. He appears to be very motivated about working on-board. He said that he had always wanted to work at sea even though there is no tradition of seagoing people in his family or community. He confided that when he was young, he discovered that he liked to break things and then put them back together, so he decided to start working as an electrician on-board. He said that for him working at sea is a 'dream job' and he intends to work there for at least 10-15 years. What he likes is that it enables him to visit new places and it provides him with the challenge of being able to fix things on board.

35. Meryn

Meryn is an AB, 37 years old and from Myanmar. He is married, and has been working for the shipping industry for roughly 10 years. He treats his work at sea as a temporary job. He has been working for the current crewing agency for two contracts and he changed to it from the previous one because it gave him more contracts. The length of his current one is 9 months and he does not have any information regarding the next one.

36. Ned

Ned is a 40-year-old electrician who is from the Philippines. He is married and has three children. Ned has been a seafarer for 7 years and always dreamt of becoming an electrical engineer just like his father, but he never obtained an electrical engineering diploma. He currently holds an electrician's qualification. He mentioned that he was not surprised by the difficulties of working at sea because he had worked in Korea for three

years. This entailed his being away from his family and the working conditions were difficult, involving long hours and limited rest.

37. Obery

Obery is a 40-year-old chief officer who is from Ukraine. He is single and has been working at sea for 15 years. He said that having a family does not go hand in hand with seafaring. He feels that he has other options in the industry if he does not like one company or another and also believes that he can leave the sea when he wants.

38. Olly

Olly is a chief officer, is 42 years old and from Sweden. He has been working at sea for 27 years having joined the Swedish navy at the age of 16. He does not remember his initial reason for joining but just knows that he likes the sea. He believes that he has competition from officers coming from developing and emerging economies and he considers that his future job is at risk. He cannot tolerate the thought of working ashore (he said he had tried), because he likes the freedom of working at sea.

39. Olyvar

Olyvar is a 58-year-old electrician from India who has been working at sea for 36 years and is married with three children. Olyvar comes from a tradition of seafaring people which was the main reason for him taking up this work. He is pleased that his children do not want to work at sea and said that if he had another life he would not choose seafaring despite the fact that he still loves his job.

40. Petyr

Petyr is an OS, aged 26 years and from India. He is single and has been working at sea for 5 years. Petyr became a seafarer solely because of the money as he did not have any particular plans to go sea. He is not keen on the lack of social life on-board and would have preferred a shorter contract but accepts it as part of his time on the ship. He wants to progress to a higher position and become an officer.

41. Podrick

Podrick is a 22-year-old navigation cadet who is from India. He is single and has been working at sea for 18 months. Podrick has a very concise plan about his future professional life. He intends working at sea for 10-15 years to earn enough money before shifting to a shore job.

42. Polliver

Polliver is a second officer from the Philippines who is 33 years old and has been working at sea for 10 years. Married and with a child Polliver comes from a tradition of seafarers in his family; his father and uncles worked at sea so he knew from quite a young age what he was going to do. He considers the sea to be a completely different environment from that of the land and plans to work on board for several more years before taking a shore-based job, noting that he does not want to 'get old' on board.

43. Pypar

Pypar an HR manager, is 39 years old and from India. He is married and has one child. Pypar worked at sea for 17 years before moving to a shore job 5 years ago.

44. Quentin

Quentin is a 43-year-old bosun from Ukraine. He is married, has one child and has been a seafarer for 20 years. He feels that he has to work at sea because he believes that nowadays he would not be able to find a job in Ukraine that would pay as much as he receives on the ship. He also considers that his employers in the crewing agency are aware of this fact and take advantage of it by paying him less than seafarers from other countries, under the assumption that he could not find a similarly paid job ashore.

45. Rakharo

Rakharo is a third engineer, is 38 years old and from India. He has been working at sea for 15 years, is married and has three children. Rakharo started work as a rating, and progressed up the ranks. He follows a tradition of seagoing people from his village and remarked that seafarers' unemployment after their retirement from the sea is a very stressful experience. He also noted the benefits of undergoing additional training that retired seafarers can do in order to adjust to life ashore after working for a prolonged period of time at sea.

46. Ramsay

Ramsay is a 40-year-old third engineer who is from Russia. He has been married 5 times and has two children by different wives. Ramsay has been working at sea for 10 years and considers himself to be 'old' compared to other seafarers who started their work at sea at the age of 18. He claims that his family history attracted him to this work but soon after he started it, he felt disenchanted with the life because of the many difficulties it involves.

47. Rast*

Rast is an AB who is 35 years old and from the Philippines.

48. Renly

Renly is a 27-year-old administrative officer from India whose home is in a landlocked area. He started working at sea because of a chance encounter with a friend who told him about his particular role as a seafarer. He used to work in New Delhi, in an office and did not like the 9-to-5 routine ashore.

49. Rickon

Rickon is a bosun who is 54 years old and from the Philippines. Married with three children, Rickon has been working at sea for 20 years many of which have been for the same shipping company on a contractual basis. He said that he generally enjoys his work but he joined the sea mainly for the money. He plans to stop sailing once his children finish their studies at college. It is important to him that he works with what he refers to as 'good management', where officers in the higher ranks treat the lower ranks on-board as human beings. Rickon changed companies in the past because he was treated badly.

50. Robb*

Robb is an engine cadet from China and is 24 years old. He is single and had only recently started working as a seafarer.

51. Robert

Robert is a 49-year-old chief engineer from the Philippines who is married and has one child. He has been working at sea for 19 years. It took a while before Robert was able to start working on a ship after completing his studies because he did not have enough money to pay for the final exam. He originally wanted to become a teacher but when he did not pass the qualifying exams he looked for a job as a seafarer. His brother was a mariner, but sadly died from a cardiac arrest while he was on a ship. Robert intends to work on board until retirement.

52. Robin*

Robin is an AB who is 34 years old and from the Philippines.

53. Rodrick

Rodrick is a 24-year-old AB from India. He is single and he has been working at sea for 6 years and appears to be very passionate about it. Three years ago, he was involved in a serious accident on board during which he witnessed the death of two of his colleagues.

Despite this, he is interested in a life-long career at sea. He currently works as a rating but he is in the process of saving enough money to take an officer's exam. He follows a sea-going tradition in his family and said that he could not work anywhere else.

54. Roose

Roose is a 41-year-old captain from Denmark, who is married with two children. He has been working at sea for 26 years, said that he enjoys working as a captain on-board and is not interested in shifting ashore at the moment.

55. Roslin

Roslin is a crew manager who is 38 years old and from the Philippines. She has been working for the crewing agency for approximately 15 years and her current role includes the management of 10 accounts for different clients worldwide.

56. Samwell

Samwell, a captain, is 49 years old and from Iran. He has been working in the shipping industry for 18 years and is aware of the changes the global shipping industry has undergone since he started work. He mentioned that if he were given the option to choose employment nowadays he would not choose seafaring.

57. Sandor

Sandor is a 49-year-old chief engineer from Russia, divorced and with one daughter. He has been working at sea for 26 years. He feels that he has the option choosing between employers according to the financial remuneration they offer. During the interview, he shared that because of his work at sea, sadly, he does not feel as if he belongs anywhere; when he is back in Russia he is just considered a visitor and when on the ship it is only a temporary home for several months at a time.

58. Stannis

Stannis is a chief cook who is 50 years old and from India. He is married with two sons, aged 14 and 18, both of whom are planning to work at sea. He comes from a tradition of seafarers. His father was a seafarer and he has other relatives who worked at sea. He has been working in the shipping industry for 30 years and for this specific shipping company for the last 25 years. He enjoys the comparatively high salary and the fact that he can stay at home for about three or four months at a time.

59. Syrio

Syrio, who is a 51-year-old fitter, is from Turkey. He is married with two daughters and has been a seafarer for 25 years. He keeps a written account of all of his contracts. Even

the first one he took is written in his notebook and includes details such as the time of the contract, the salary he received and the exact dates. He is trying to learn English as much as possible in order to be able to study to be a third engineer and become an officer.

60. Theon*

Theon is a 45-year-old steward from the Philippines. He is single but has a son who lives with the mother. Theon has been working for the same shipping company for 15 years on a contractual basis. He has 5 brothers, 4 of whom are working on board ships. He also has 2 sisters who work in commerce. He initially started his studies in a nautical institute in order to become a third officer, but the fact that he was colour blind made this impossible. As a result, he started working on board as a steward. Theon owns several properties in the Philippines, which he rents out. He plans to buy enough properties so that he can leave his work at sea and spend more time with his son ashore. In addition, he wants to have enough resources to take him into old age.

61. Thoros

Thoros who is a fitter, is 42 years old and from India. Married and with three children he joined the shipping industry 10 years ago since when he has been working for the same management company. He plans to work at sea for 5 more years and then run a small business ashore with his wife.

62. Tommen

Tommen, a 52 year-old-Danish pilot/captain, has been working at sea for the past 35 years after attempting to work ashore several times. Having started his career when he was 18 he stated that were he given the chance to do it again, he would not become a seafarer.

63. Tyrion

Tyrion is a 24-year-old training manager from the UK who has been working in the shipping industry for 6 years. He joined it as a cadet and after spending three years working on-board moved to a shore position.

64. Tywin

Tywin is a motorman who is 27 years old and from Ukraine. Married and with one child he has been working at sea for two years. Concerned over the current political situation in Ukraine he said that he stays at sea for long periods of time in order to avoid conscription.

65. Varys

Varys is a 23-year-old trainee chief cook from India. He is single and at the time of the interview it was his first contract as a seafarer. He believes that there are more opportunities of earning money and making progress on-board compared with similar jobs ashore. He plans to open his own restaurant ashore serving European food because, in his opinion, there are not enough restaurants in India that serve anything other than local food.

66. Victarion*

Victarion is a motorman who is 56 years old and from the Philippines. Married with 6 children he has been working at sea for over 30 years. He said that he continues working at sea because he needs to pay for his children's education in the Philippines. He told me about his 19-years-old son who recently started working at sea as a cadet. Victarion said that he had asked his son to work on board in order to earn money so his sister could go to college.

67. Viserys*

Viserys is a first engineer from Bulgaria, who is 41 years old.

68. Walder

Walder is a 27-year-old electrician cadet from Israel who has been working at sea for 18 months. He plans to work on-board for 2-3 years and then continue his education and find a job ashore. He told me of his plan to study for a PhD.

69. Will

Will is a third officer from Ukraine who is 36 years old, divorced and with two children. He has been working at sea for 7 years. He said that the reason for his divorce was his inability to combine family life and seafaring. He continues to work at sea because he feels that he cannot go home to Ukraine where he is afraid of conscription due to the political situation there.

70. Yandry*

Yandry is a 52-year -old AB from the Philippines who is married and has two children. He has been working at sea for over 30 years. Yandry initially went to sea for financial reasons. However, even when he had enough money to run his own business ashore, he missed the work so he returned to being a seafarer. Yandry noted that he likes working on-board, but also finds that it is often very hard to sit at home without any pay and

without knowing when his next contract will be. He plans to retire at the end of his current contract.

71. Yoren

Yoren, a deck cadet who is 38 years old, was born in the USSR and emigrated to Israel with his family when he was 17 years old. He has been working at sea for less than a year.

APPENDIX 3: AN EXAMPLE OF AN ACCESS LETTER (ENGLISH)

[Date]

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Polina Baum-Talmor, I am at present a PhD student at the Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC), part of the School of Social Sciences in Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK. I have acquired your contact details from the University website.

My research project focuses on career trajectories and career identities among seafarers, from both individual and organisational perspectives. The aim of the research is to identify possible career paths for seafarers and to better understand the changing nature of careers in the shipping industry as a global industry. I am particularly interested in career development routes among seafarers worldwide, and the research project requires data collection that includes interviews with seafarers and recruitment-related professionals in the shipping industry. The results of the research will be published as part of the PhD completion process (approximately at the end of year 2016), with all participants anonymised.

I am writing to you now in order to explore the possibility of including seafarers studying at [NAME] in the research. If you require any references to verify my identity and/or my research project, I have a page on the SIRC website http://www.sirc.cf.ac.uk/Polina_Baum-Talmor.aspx, or alternatively, you could contact my supervisor and the director of the Seafarers International Research Centre, Prof. Helen Sampson via email.

I would really appreciate it if we could schedule a meeting during which I will be able to provide further information about my research, to answer any questions you might have and to explore a potential collaboration.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Polina Baum-Talmor

[Contact details]

APPENDIX 4: TABLE OF ACCESS ATTEMPTS (EXTRACT)

	Name of contact	Type of contact	Date first contacted	Is there still hope to get access?	Follow up date and results 1	Follow up date and results 2	Follow up date and results 3	Follow up date and results 4	Follow up date and results 5	Follow up date and results 6	Follow up date and results 7	Follow up date and results 8	Follow up date and results 9	Follow up date and results 10	Follow up date and results 11	Is there still hope to get access?
1	A - personnel manager company 1	Company	Sep-14	Yes	Have been in touch with him for the last few months. Requested to phone call, will be in touch again beginning of March 2015	11/3/2015 Recontact again to check whether there is a free ship (OSKY) he said that for now ships are fully booked with cadets - I should try mid April or beginning of May.	15/4/2015 Check with A if ships are available and still relevant.	3/4/2015 put the contact on hold for now - I might not need to recontact them any time soon.	27/7/2015 Wrote an email about interview with him (no reply)	15/7/2015 Wrote another email	END OF CONTACT					
2	B - personnel manager from company 2	Company	Sep-14	Yes	Replied to email 09/2015, invited for a meeting at the office.	I attended a meeting with Band Tyrion 9/2014 in Scotland and emailed summary of meetings afterwards.	I sent another email during 11/2014 with no specific reply.	I sent a text message at the end of 01/2015. B replied he will be in touch a week after, has not contacted me yet. I will contact him again.	9/2/2015 I will be contacting B again today via email first.	27/7/2015 Wrote an email about interview with him (no reply)	15/7/2015 Wrote another email	END OF CONTACT	****	****	****	No (not specifically from him but from his colleague)
3	Roshin - Crewing agent from	HR manager	20/5/2015 if no reply from other potential people for contacts - contact Roshin to ask about potential colleagues	Yes	17/7/2015 Wrote email	15/7/2015 Wrote another email	Agreed to be interviewed									
4	Pypar - Crew Sourcing Manager company 3	HR manager	30/9/2015 wrote an email	Yes	15/7/2015 Wrote another email	Agreed to be interviewed	Agreed to be interviewed									
5	Bronn - Talon	Head of Crewing	11/06/2015	Yes	27/7/2015 Wrote email	27/7/2015 Wrote email	Agreed to be interviewed									
6	C - from the Nautical Institute	College	Jan-15	Yes	He replied to my email straight away, asking to send him more information. I've sent an email 5/2/2015 waiting for a reply.	20/2/2015 I have sent an email to follow up on the previous email, asking about date I could expect him to meet with me or speak with me on the phone.	24/2/2015 He replied to my email, looking forward to more correspondence via email and he will be coming to SIC soon. I need to reply to his email.	18/3/2015 I replied to his email, said I look forward to corresponding with him and welcoming him to SIC as a visitor	3/4/2015 put the contact on hold for now - I might not need to recontact them any time soon.	END OF CONTACT						

APPENDIX 5: RESEARCH APPROVAL FROM THE CARDIFF UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (SOCSI) ETHICS COMMITTEE

Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Director Professor Malcolm Williams
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol Caerdydd
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26th November 2013

Our ref: SREC/1198

Polina Baum-Talmor
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Polina

Your project entitled "*The notion of 'career' in a globalized industry: The case of seafarers*" has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project.

Please note that since your project involves data collection abroad you may need approval from a competent body in the relevant jurisdiction.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Tom Horlick-Jones
Chair of the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc: E Renton
Supervisors: H Sampson & G Recs
P Braun
Registered charity, no. 1136855
Mae Prifysgol Caerdydd yn elusen gofrestrdedig, rhif 1136855

APPENDIX 6: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH)

Polina Baum-Talmor

Seafarers International Research Centre

Consent form to participate in the research titled:

The notion of career on a globalized industry: the case of seafarers

To the participant: please sign using your initials after each statement.

I have read the 'Research participant information sheet' and I understand it	(Initials)_____
I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason	(Initials)_____
I have <input type="checkbox"/> / have not <input type="checkbox"/> agreed to a voice recording of this interview between the researcher and me	(Initials)_____

I, (NAME) _____ consent to participate in the study conducted by *Polina Baum-Talmor*, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University under the supervision of *Prof Helen Sampson and Prof Phillip Brown*.

Signed (researcher): _____

Signed (Participant): _____

Date: _____



APPENDIX 7: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (ENGLISH)

Project title: The notion of 'career' in a globalized industry: The case of seafarers

My name is Polina Baum-Talmor, I am a PhD researcher at Cardiff University, part of the Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC). My project is fully funded by the Nippon Foundation, and my PhD supervisors are Prof. Helen Sampson and Prof. Phillip Brown from the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. The main objective of this project is to understand career development among seafarers from individual and organizational perspectives.

One of the problems the maritime industry faces today is the anticipated shortage of skilled workers and early career-change among seafarers. In order to understand different ways in which seafarers perceive their career, I am holding a series of anonymous interviews with seafarers and HR managers in the shipping industry. Hopefully this will help inform future government and industry strategies to assist seafarers around the world to plan their career and to contribute to knowledge about how to retain stable employment.

Participation in this project will involve the completion of an interview, which will require between 30-90 minutes of your time.

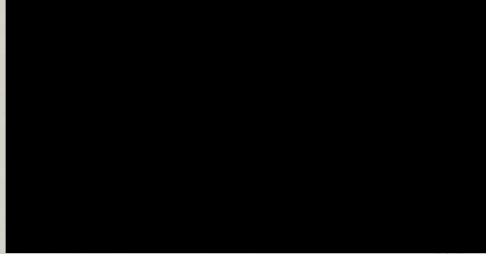
The information you provide will be shared with the research supervisors and may be used in subsequent publications. The information provided by you will be held absolutely anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to you individually. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, this information may be retained for up to ten years after the end of the project.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate. If you have any questions prior to the interview, during or after the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Polina Baum-Talmor

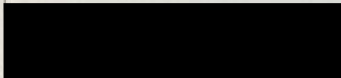
APPENDIX 8: PERSONAL SURVIVAL AT SEA COURSE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number:
MCA Approval Certificate Number
Issuing Authority:
Address and contact details:



**Certificate of Proficiency in
Personal Survival Techniques;**

This is to certify that: Polina Baum-Talmor



has successfully completed a programme of training approved by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as meeting the requirements laid down in:

Regulation V1/1, paragraph 1 and Section A-V1/1, paragraph 2.1.1 of the STCW Convention and Code 1978, as amended

and has also met the additional criteria specified in the STCW Convention and Code, applicable to the issue of this certificate.

This Certificate is issued under the authority of the Maritime and Coast Guard Agency of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, an executive agency of the Department for Transport.

Signature of Principal or
Authorised Representative
of the Approved Training
Centre

Signature of person to
whom this certificate was
issued

Issuing Authority
Stamp and Date



Inquiries concerning this certificate should be addressed to the issuing Authority at the address above

APPENDIX 9: EXTRACT FROM INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

	SN	Research question that relates to this	Current seafarers	Shipping companies/Managers	Manning agencies/Recruiters
Part 1 - Introduction	A1	Question #1. To what extent does the flexibility of seafarers' employment undermine their career structure?	Introduction: My name is Polina, I am a Doctoral student at Cardiff University and my research focuses on career development among seafarers	Introduction: My name is Polina, I am a Doctoral student at Cardiff University and my research focuses on career development among seafarers	Introduction: My name is Polina, I am a Doctoral student at Cardiff University and my research focuses on career development among seafarers
Part 1 - Introduction	A2	Question #2. Do seafarers perceive their occupation as a 'career'?	Do you mind if I record the interview?	Do you mind if I record the interview?	Do you mind if I record the interview?
Part 1 - Introduction	A3	Question #3. How do seafarers envisage their occupational 'identity'?	[Present participant's information sheet and ask to sign consent form]	[Present participant's information sheet and ask to sign consent form]	[Present participant's information sheet and ask to sign consent form]
Part 1 - Introduction	A4	Question #4. What are the push and pull factors for the seafaring lifestyle?	Demographic questions: [Sex]; Age; (rank - if relevant); (length of current contract - if relevant); nationality; [time of work at sea if relevant]; marital status + children.	Demographic questions: [Sex]; Age; (rank - if relevant); (length of current contract - if relevant); nationality; [time of work at sea if relevant]; marital status + children.	Demographic questions: [Sex]; Age; (rank - if relevant); (length of current contract - if relevant); nationality; [time of work at sea if relevant]; marital status + children.
Part 1 - Introduction	A5	Question #5. How might the structure-agency debate shed light on seafarers' career?	Interview setting details [Could be filled after the interview]: Location, language, other people present, how got to this person, length of interview, recorded or not recorded, potential snowballing to other interviewees.	Interview setting details [Could be filled after the interview]: Location, language, other people present, how got to this person, length of interview, recorded or not recorded, potential snowballing to other interviewees.	Interview setting details [Could be filled after the interview]: Location, language, other people present, how got to this person, length of interview, recorded or not recorded, potential snowballing to other interviewees.
Part 2 - Background	B1	#3	**[#3] [about yourself] Could you please tell me about yourself? (who are you, where and when were you born...)	[about yourself] Could you please tell me about yourself? (who are you, where and when were you born...)	[about yourself] Could you please tell me about yourself? (who are you, where and when were you born...)
Part 2 - Background	B2	#3, #5	**[#3] [#5] [choosing a job] I am going to read out a list of some of the things people may look for in a job and I would like you to tell me how important you feel each is for you (regarded it as 'essential', 'very important', 'quite important' or 'not very important'). The list of job features: Good promotion prospects; Good pay; Good relations with your supervisor or manager; A secure job; A job where you can use your initiative; Work you like doing; Convenient hours of work; Choice in your hours of work; The opportunity to use your abilities; Good fringe benefits; An easy work load; Good training provision; Good physical working conditions; A lot of variety in the type of work; Friendly people to work with.	[connection shipping] How would you describe your connection to the shipping industry?	[connection shipping] How would you describe your connection to the shipping industry?
Part 2 - Background	B3		**[about job] What is the name or title of your job?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B4	#4, #5	**[#4] [#5] [decision job] Could you tell me how have you decided to become a seafarer?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B5	#2	**[#2] [about job] Did you have another job before you started your current role?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B6	#2	**[#2] [about job] What kind of work do you do most of the time?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B7	***	**[about job] What does the organization you work for mainly do?	**[about job] What does the organization you work for mainly do?	**[about job] What does the organization you work for mainly do?
Part 2 - Background	B8	#2	**[#2] [about job] How long, in total, have you been working for your current employer?	**[about job] How long, in total, have you been working for your current employer?	**[about job] How long, in total, have you been working for your current employer?
Part 2 - Background	B9	#5	**[#5] [about job] How did you find this current job?	[about company] What kind of ships does your company work with? What kind of seafarers work for you (ratings/officers, which nationalities)?	[about company] What kind of ships does your company work with? What kind of seafarers do you normally recruit (ratings/officers, which nationalities)?

Appendices

Part 2 - Background	B10	#1, #4	**[#1] [about job] Leaving aside your own personal intentions and circumstances, is your job: a permanent job or, is there some way that it is NOT permanent? In what way is the job NOT permanent? (seasonal work; done under contract for a fixed period or for a fixed task; agency temping; casual type of work; or, was there some other way that it was not permanent?	#4 [reasons seafarers] Thinking about people you know that are seafarers, or the seafarers that work for you, why do you think they join this occupation?	#4 [reasons seafarers] Thinking about people you know that are seafarers, or the seafarers that you recruit, why do you think they join this occupation?
Part 2 - Background	B11	#1	**[#1] [about job] How many hours per week do you usually work?	#1 [seafarers hours] Again, thinking about the seafarers that work for you, how many hours per week they normally work? Consider the differences between ratings and officers, and compare seafarers coming from different countries.	#1 [seafarers hours] Again, thinking about the seafarers that work for you, how many hours per week they normally work? Consider the differences between ratings and officers, and compare seafarers coming from different countries.
Part 2 - Background	B12	***	**[about job] What kind of ships have you worked on so far?	[recruitment] What are the main recruitment strategies you use for recruiting seafarers?	[recruitment] What are the main recruitment strategies you use for recruiting seafarers?
Part 2 - Background	B13	#2	**[#2] [about job] If you were looking for work today, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to find as good a job as your current one?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B14	#2, #3	**[#2] [#3] [about job] Has the job/profession of seafaring changed over your career? Speak about your experience and what people might have told you.	**[#2] [#3] [about job] Has the job/profession of seafaring changed over your career? Speak about your experience and what people might have told you.	**[#2] [#3] [about job] Has the job/profession of seafaring changed over your career? Speak about your experience and what people might have told you.
Part 2 - Background	B15	#1, #2, #3	**[#2] [#3] [about job] Have you thought about a different career/job? Why?	#1 [flexibility] Thinking about temporary contracts as opposed to permanent employment, which one do you prefer?	#1 [flexibility] Thinking about temporary contracts as opposed to permanent employment, which one do you prefer?
Part 2 - Background	B16	#1	**[#1] [global affects career] Some people talk about the world today as a 'global village', no boundaries between places, everybody can go and work anywhere. To what extent do you agree with this? Do you feel it has contributed or held back your career development?	**[#1] [global affects career] Some people talk about the world today as a 'global village', no boundaries between places, everybody can go and work anywhere. To what extent do you agree with this? Do you feel these processes affected seafarers' career? In what way? (Contributed or held back their career development?	**[#1] [global affects career] Some people talk about the world today as a 'global village', no boundaries between places, everybody can go and work anywhere. To what extent do you agree with this? Do you feel these processes affected seafarers' career? In what way? (Contributed or held back their career development?
Part 2 - Background	B17	#3	**[#3] [leaving sea] There is a saying that after 7 years of work at sea, a seafarer will not be able to get used to a job ashore. What do you think about this saying?	**[#3] [leaving sea] There is a saying that after 7 years of work at sea, a seafarer will not be able to get used to a job ashore. What do you think about this saying?	**[#3] [leaving sea] There is a saying that after 7 years of work at sea, a seafarer will not be able to get used to a job ashore. What do you think about this saying?
Part 2 - Background	B18	#2, #3	**[#2] [#3] [job like] What do you like about working at sea?	[global affects] Do you think that recent changes in the global labor market like outsourcing of cheaper employees from different countries and the registration of ships in low-cost location countries caused changes in the way seafarers are recruited to shipping companies?	[global affects] Do you think that recent changes in the global labor market like outsourcing of cheaper employees from different countries and the registration of ships in low-cost location countries caused changes in the way seafarers are recruited to shipping companies?
Part 2 - Background	B19	#2, #3	**[#2] [#3] [job dislike] What do you dislike about working at sea?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B20	#2, #3	**[#2] [#3] [job at sea] Can you tell me what words you would use to describe your feelings about being at sea? Or, if people ask you 'what do you do for a living', what would you say?	*****	*****
Part 2 - Background	B21	#2	**[#2] [job temporary] Do you consider seafaring as a temporary job or a career for life?	[temporality job] Do you think that the maritime related position or seafaring career is a temporary job or a career for life? Please bear in mind the officers and the ratings.	[temporality job] Do you think that the maritime related position or seafaring career is a temporary job or a career for life? Please bear in mind the officers and the ratings.
Part 3 - Pay and contract	C1	#1	**[#1] [pay] Can I ask – who pays your salary?	[pay] Who pays the seafarers' salaries? How does that work?	[pay] Who pays the seafarers' salaries? How does that work?
Part 3 - Pay and contract	C2	#1, #4	**[#1] [#4] [pay] To what extent do you think you could find a job that will pay the same or better in your home country?	[pay] If you compare the seafarers salaries to other occupations ashore, or other jobs ashore, would you say they are better or less paid for their job? Take into account officers and ratings.	[pay] If you compare the seafarers salaries to other occupations ashore, or other jobs ashore, would you say they are better or less paid for their job? Take into account officers and ratings.
Part 3 - Pay and contract	C3	#2, #4	**[#2] [#4] [pay] How important would you say the pay is to your job as a seafarer?	[pay] How important would you say that pay is to seafarers' work?	[pay] How important would you say that pay is to seafarers' work?

APPENDIX 10: AMENDED INTERVIEW GUIDE (FOR SEAFARERS)

Introduction

Introduction
Recording yes/no
Info sheet & consent form

Background

Current role
Present
Length work at sea
Kind of work you do
Job onboard – like it?
Training [payment during training, guidance, transferrable skills]
Contract [know when next contract, paid between contracts]
Pay [Compared to shore]
Work for agency/company
Past
High school
Other jobs
Why chose this role
Future
In 10 years
Better paid job – leave seafaring?
Promotion?
Competition with others?
In case of injury
Pension scheme?
Company support in career development – how?
Your children at sea?

Seafaring

Consider more – seafarer/professional
Likes/dislikes working at sea
Profession of seafaring changed? [globalisation – outsourcing, FOC]
Several years at sea, hard to get used to a job ashore?
Difference shore-sea job
Where is home

Post interview questions

Demographic info
What did you think about this interview?
Any questions that made you feel uncomfortable?
Important issues I have forgotten
Other interviewees
Something to add?

APPENDIX 11: EXAMPLE OF A TRANSCRIPTION

This is an example of an interview transcript using software (Transcriptions™ and Dragon Dictate™). This example is taken from the interview with Amory, a chief cook. The numbers at the end of each paragraph represent the time stamp during the recording (generated automatically):

Is all about seafarers? Or all about myself as seafarer? #00:00:21.1#

In general, both, you could say. #00:00:30.1#

It's better... #00:00:33.0#

So this is just to make sure, you can have my visit card, if you need to ask something [explaining and signing forms] #00:01:53.0#

So just to state again, my name is Polina, I'm from Cardiff [moving things around] and my study is about careers among seafarers #00:02:37.7#

It's a privilege to talk with someone from Cardiff #00:02:47.1#

Oh, thank you. [laughing] I'm not originally from there, but thank you. Some basic questions. So you said that you've been working on ships for half of your life, so how old are you? #00:02:59.6#

I'm going to be 50 this December, and hopefully, I'm counting few more contracts sailing, and then changing to another life career, sometimes you should set limits [to your work at sea], I shouldn't be working my whole life sailing. #00:03:30.0#

What are you planning to do next? #00:03:35.7#

We have plans moving out of the Philippines to Canada, with my family. #00:03:29.6#

[End of Quote]

APPENDIX 12: EXAMPLE OF A MIND MAP USING SIMPLEMIND™

