

**TOWARDS A TOTAL OCCUPATION:  
A STUDY OF UK MERCHANT NAVY OFFICER CADETSHIP**

by

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This thesis is submitted in candidature for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents a study of UK Merchant Navy Officer cadetship. The study was conceived in the context of both a declining UK shipping fleet and seafaring workforce, and prompted by the lack of research on the experiences of UK seafarer officer cadets. The initial purpose of the study was to understand the experiences in training of Merchant Navy Officer cadets through their own voices. The need to understand the impact of recent UK Government policy initiatives connected to Merchant Navy cadetship became a further motivation. As data collection and analysis progressed, interviewee and questionnaire data on the cadet experience were combined with three further data-strands using a mixed methods approach. The reflexive methodology permitted the interactive linking and patterning of the data-strands, realised in the narrative representation of cadetship. Two further research outputs are: a concise set of descriptors of the experience of seafarer officer cadets; and, the construct of 'total occupation' used as a generic window through which to (re)view cadetship and seafaring. The study found that for most cadets entry into training was a positive process in which they saw the Merchant Navy as having specific attractions. Their ship-board experiences varied with each unique combination of voyage, ship, officers, and crew. For some cadets, the overall experience of training was rewarding. However there were others who had experiences of distress; some of those went on to resign from training, and suffered a sense of failure and disappointment. All cadets interviewed in the study displayed ambivalence in varying degrees towards aspects of the seafaring experience, notably its 'totalness'. The study findings suggest that structural determinants of the cadet experience were open to individual agency in which a sense of calling and tradition were factors.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **Towards a Total Occupation: A Study of UK Merchant Navy Officer Cadetship**

The thesis presents a study of UK Merchant Navy Officer Cadetship. The title of the thesis *'Towards a Total Occupation: A Study of UK Merchant Navy Officer Cadetship'* indicates the transitional nature of cadetship during which cadets moved towards the 'total occupation' of seafaring; it also introduces 'total occupation' as a construct emerging from an evolutionary and reflexive research process.

### **ORIGINS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study was conceived in 2001 in the context of a declining UK shipping fleet and seafaring workforce. The lack of research on UK seafarer cadetship gave the study its initial purpose of understanding the experiences in training of Merchant Navy Officer cadets through their own voices. The study became further motivated by the need to understand the impact of recent UK Government policy initiatives connected to Merchant Navy Officer training; these policies were designed to meet changes in the global shipping industry.

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS**

The aim of the thesis is to provide an account of the study in terms of: recording its origins and the development of the methodology and study materials; representing the findings in narrative and concise formats; accounting for the integrity of the conduct of the research and the validity of the findings.

The thesis has four objectives in respect of study outputs:

Firstly: To record the voices of the cadets as they described their experiences as seafarer officers in training, and the hopes and concerns they held for their futures.

Secondly: To offer two representations of cadetship; the first takes the form of four narrative chapters on the experience of cadetship, from which emerge concise descriptors of the cadet experience which are offered as a second form of representation.

Thirdly: To record both the construction of a 'generic window' from the concise descriptors of the cadet experience and its use in viewing the study data and materials.

Fourthly: To introduce the concept of the 'Total Occupation' composed of the dynamic interaction between ambivalence, totalness, tradition and calling.

## **SUMMARY EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON THE CADET EXPERIENCE**

The study found that for most cadets entry into training was a positive process in which they saw the Merchant Navy as having specific attractions for them. The cadets' experiences of planned training at sea varied with each unique combination of voyage, ship, officers, and crew. For some cadets the overall experience of training was rewarding. However there were others who experienced distress; some of those cadets went on to resign from training and suffer a sense of failure and disappointment. All cadets interviewed in the study displayed ambivalence in varying degrees towards aspects of the seafaring experience. The study findings suggest that the structural determinants of the cadet experience were open to individual agency in which 'a sense of calling' and tradition were factors.

## **SUMMARY THEORETICAL FINDINGS**

From the range of perspectives considered in the course of this study, Goffman's concept of the total institution and Merton's typology of sociological ambivalence were particularly useful in the interpretation of cadet data. Using these two concepts inter-actively led to the finding that the total occupation provided a generic window for viewing the transitional experiences of seafaring cadetship within a wider occupational setting.

## **A NOTE ON STYLE**

The style of the thesis embodies the emphasis on recording and representing the voices of young people in training. This emphasis on preserving the integrity of the cadets' voices has remained throughout the conduct of the study and is evident in every section of the narrative representation of Merchant Navy officer cadetship contained in the study's analytic chapters. In these four analytic chapters, extended passages of text taken from cadet interviews are integral to the narrative. Whilst each analytic chapter has focussed on a specific element of the cadet journey through training, conversations are rarely linear, and selected interview extracts often cover a number of areas of interest. Just as cadets moved back and forth across time and topics, so each analytical chapter picks up threads which surface, disappear, and resurface throughout the study. Hence, the style also reflects the view that data, methods and research outputs are inseparably interrelated, a view made explicit in the research methodology in terms of the full interpenetration of data and theory.

## **OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY**

The study has a qualitative and reflexive orientation and an emergent research design. As data collection and analysis progressed, based on modified grounded theory, interviewee and questionnaire data on the cadet experience were combined with three further data-strands using a mixed methods approach. These further strands comprised: theoretical inputs; material on the policy, industry and training environments; and, insights drawn from the works of the writer and Master Mariner, Joseph Conrad. Chapter Two of the thesis describes the methodology and considers the analytical processes employed in each research phase, with particular reference to the Constant Comparative Method. The reflexive methodology permitted not just the interactive linking and patterning of the data-strands realised in the narrative representation of cadetship, but also the development of the concise descriptors of cadetship and the construction of the 'generic window'.

## **OVERVIEW OF CONTENT**

The thesis, aside from this introduction, is structured as seven chapters. Chapter Two is devoted to the methodology as described above.

Chapter Three considers the three data-strands interwoven with cadet-derived data to form the narrative representation of cadetship. The first relates to the occupational context of the UK Merchant Navy and outlines trends in the post-1970 UK shipping industry and the seafarer workforce including cadets, together with the background of UK Merchant Navy Officer training. This material is used to contextualise cadets' training experiences and also to confirm technical issues raised by the cadets during interviews. The second data-strand relates to the extant research and scholarly literatures used throughout the thesis as points of discussion, corroboration, or contrast with the findings of this study. By providing informed critical perspectives, these theoretical inputs from a range of disciplines and research fields became integral to the analysis and construction of the representation of cadetship. Selected writings of Joseph Conrad form the third data-strand; extracts of text from his work have been introduced into the analysis so as to offer contrast, comparison, and illumination in relation to the cadet voices and views, heard and expressed, in this study.

Chapter Four, the first of the four analytical chapters, focuses on cadets' views on their motivations for entering training. In relation to the origins of their decision, two themes recurred: the first reflected the importance of a relationship with the sea as a natural environment. The second theme was the role of family tradition. Research suggests that family influences may shape the sense of calling as a subjective career phenomenon, identified as having relevance to the findings of the study. The attractions of a life at sea are classified as either objective or subjective. Good pay and skills transferability are listed as objective career attractions. Subjective career attractions include: the desire to travel and see the world; meeting people from many different backgrounds; and, experiencing what is described as a liminal space away from the routines and demands of life shore-side.

The focus of Chapter Five is on cadets' ship-board experiences, referred to as 'planned training at sea'. The chapter revealed the unfamiliarity and the inescapability of the ship as an environment closed to the outside world. The fact that work, sleep and leisure are brought within the same physical and social confines leads to a consideration of the theoretical perspective of the total institution; the notion of 'totalness' becomes a key feature of cadetship and seafaring in this study. Cadets are shown to find a variety of ways of adapting to the complexity of shipboard relationships, not just to get by, but to become accepted as seafarers; this adaptation is seen as part of an initiation process. Some cadets found the process of adaptation to be intolerable; their distressing experiences of shipboard life can be seen within the broader context of the psychosocial health of seafarers. However shipboard life can also generate fellowship in which seafarers look out for each other. The study noted the increased challenge for women cadets of negotiating not just occupational initiation but also their entry into a male dominated environment.

Chapter Six explores the opportunities offered by planned training at sea to learn the practical skills and competences essential to cadets in their future roles as deck officers or engineers. Cadets' varied experiences of learning at sea are considered in the light of notions of '*expansive*' and '*restrictive*' learning which have extended the traditional concept of apprenticeship. Cadets took proactive and reactive approaches to managing their learning, and responding to the support, or lack of support, they received from those around them.

Descriptions were given by cadets about their growing responsibilities and the prospects of danger at sea, danger sometimes compounded by the overlap of social and of work lives.

The fourth chapter of narrative analysis, Chapter Seven, presents cadets views on a future at sea once they had gained their first certificate of competency. The study suggests that the ambivalence experienced individually by cadets can be seen in terms of sociological ambivalence. The continuous oscillation between sea and shore is offered as an extended illustration of a structural determinant of ambivalence and as an enduring feature of seafaring life. Managing this oscillation is shown to be a challenge for cadets, giving rise to ambivalence in terms of a long-term future at sea. This chapter reveals the anxiety expressed by cadets about finding employment once they had qualified as Junior Officers. Many believed that the training component of the UK Tonnage Tax had failed to provide any 'real jobs' and had created training environments that were sometimes less than satisfactory. The study suggests that cadet concerns over the lack of job opportunities did have foundation.

Chapter Eight represents the final phase of the research design and the concluding chapter of the thesis. Drawing together the concise descriptors of the cadet experience in one last act of interpretation leads to the construction of a 'window' through which seafaring, and the cadet experience can be viewed in terms of a 'total occupation'. The window is used to view the experiences of individual cadets; Joseph Conrad; and features of the 'landscape' of cadetship. The possibility of viewing other occupations and activities through this window raises the question of whether 'total occupation' might have wider applicability; this question becomes the point of departure for further research and new journeys.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **METHODOLOGY**

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## 2.1 OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

### STUDY: DEFINITION, METHODOLOGICAL INFLUENCES and APPROACH

#### Definition

This thesis presents a study of UK Merchant Navy officer cadets who were in training between 2002 and 2005. The term 'study' implies the purposeful application of the mind in pursuit of knowledge and understanding, and offers the most appropriate descriptor of the work presented here. As a scholarly study it aims to make a contribution to what Dingwall (1997:62) has called the '*cumulative science of society*' in ways that are rigorous and valid. The basis and intent of this study are sociological; yet the act of studying has led to the recognition that other disciplines, research fields and cultural forms, such as, anthropology, organisational studies and the novel, respectively, can offer insights into the phenomenon of seafaring cadetship.

#### Methodological influences

*"Even the most minute empirical operation ... involves theoretical choices, conscious or unconscious, while the most abstract conceptual puzzle cannot be fully clarified without systematic engagement with empirical reality."*

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:35; italics added)

Soon after setting out on this journey to gain understanding and generate knowledge, I was reminded that data, methods and research outputs are inseparably interrelated. As part of the linked processes of reflection and iteration, the assertion of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:44) that every act of research is simultaneously empirical and theoretical, came to have increasing meaning. Their call for the fusion of theoretical construction and practical research operations, an entire interpenetration rather than a connection, has provided a key methodological influence on this study.

As far as the '*systematic engagement with empirical reality*' is concerned, the writing of what has been called 'The Chicago School' (Mead, 1934; Becker 1999) on work and occupation (Tomasi, 1998) has also influenced this study. From the 'first' Chicago School, the work of Everett Hughes (1945, 1958) continues to have currency both in terms of method and content. As a sociological movement, the Chicago School later developed symbolic interactionism as 'perspective and method' (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism is seen as the parent movement from which grounded theory has

developed (Charmaz, 2003); grounded theory has, with modification, influenced the methodological approach used in this study and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. In the field of ethnographic occupational research, key figures in the symbolic interactionist movement such as Becker (1970), Geer (1972), and Prus (1989), have provided me with compelling reading in their emphasis on empathy with those studied. In the Editorial Foreword to a collection of papers entitled *Learning to Work*, Geer (1972) captures the excitement of fieldwork with a range of occupations, barbers, steelworkers, and butchers, amongst others. Prus (1989) adopts a particular style characterised by the use of extensive extracts of interview material with the aim of creating as full a representation of the lived experience as possible. Throughout the course of the research I have returned to the writings of Howard Becker not just in relation to his research on work, but because of his preoccupation with creative ways of 'telling about society' often *'beyond the disciplinary fences of social science'* (Becker, 2007a: xv). Methodologically, Becker has been an important source of encouragement as I have adopted a mixed methods approach and moved beyond the *'disciplinary fence'* by using literature to tell something of the seafaring phenomenon.

From the field of youth studies and also within the 'Chicago School' tradition, Way's research with urban teenagers in USA in the 1990s was particularly meaningful as I came upon it at the time of early interviews with cadets. Her struggle with questions of legitimacy, the pressing sense of responsibility to represent the stories of students she studied as well as she could, and her strong sense of trying to *"... understand what their worlds feel like and what they mean personally ..."* (Way, 1998:9) seemed to echo my own aspirations, and also my concerns of doing justice to voices which had largely gone unheard in the past. This sense of responsibility was felt particularly keenly towards those young people describing their distress and disillusionment, and who actively sought reassurance from me that their stories might help spare others similar experiences.

From the field of business administration and organisational management, Alvesson and Skoldberg's *'Reflexive Methodology'* has been an inspiring text in the methodological development of this study. I identified with their stated position of the *"... precarious balance between accepting the existence of some sort of reality 'out there', and accepting*

*the rhetorical and narrative nature of our knowledge of this reality.*" (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000: 289). These authors propose that empirical social science is very much less certain and more problematic than common sense or conventional methodological text books would suggest. Their recognition that, *"It is not enough to rely upon the arguments of the recipe books; what is important is that the reflection is adapted to one's own personal abilities and conditions, and to the research task in hand."* (ibid, 2000:287) gave me confidence in striving for a 'data-driven' study in which 'data' are seen as a construction of the empirical conditions, produced through constant interpretation. It cannot go without mention that the cover of their book shows Turner's painting 'The Fighting Téméraire Tugged to her Last Berth to be Broken Up'; this painting the authors suggest is open to several interpretations, offering:

"What better illustration of what we have called reflexive methodology: to use a flexible structure in which the levels or areas of interpretation (colours) interact in order to encourage creative or thoughtful points, and in which the ambiguous reflections of the various acts of interpretation are central."

(Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000: End page)

Even so, in the research context, Bourdieu and Wacquant's notion of the interpenetration of empirical data and theory presents challenges for the final representational account that cannot be met with a painting, no matter how remarkable.

In respect of Bourdieu and Wacquant's contention that *"Even the most minute empirical operation ... involves theoretical choices"*, there have been particular influences on this study linked to these theoretical choices which require an initial discussion.

In relation to the sociology of seafaring, the outstanding figure is Aubert. Using a detailed knowledge of the everyday life of a seafarer and a consideration of the social structure of the ship, Aubert (1965) conceptualises and critiques the ship as total institution, applying the original notion due to Goffman (1961/1991). In this study the concept of total institution assumes importance as one interpretational device in the analysis of data derived from the cadets themselves. However, as befits a reflexive methodology, the conclusion records modifications to the concept of total institution.

Within the field of seafaring research, Hill has also been influential, although in a different way from Aubert. 'The Seafaring Career, A Study of the Forces Affecting Joining, Serving and Leaving the Merchant Navy' (Hill, 1972) was commissioned by the National

Maritime Board. Hill's study is based on interviews with 516 seafarers, 22 of whom were classed as 'apprentices and cadets'. Hill's interviews were open-ended, a research design feature which I also employed. In contrast to the present study, Hill's study is a technical report in which theoretical outputs are not explicit. However, taking account of Hill's findings was productive in analysing my own empirical data.

Although unrelated directly to seafaring, the writings of Fuller and Unwin (1998, 2003, and 2004) on apprenticeship have contributed significantly to this study of the cadet experience. Their work has provided an important theoretical lens for viewing the cadet experience, and prompted consideration of the parallels with apprenticeship.

The influence of the writer and Master Mariner Joseph Conrad is felt throughout this study and will be considered in greater depth as the thesis unfolds. His writings articulate in the most eloquent of ways enduring aspects of seafaring life, and explore the relationship between the seafarer and the sea. Material from his writings has been used in this study as an analytic resource to assist in illuminating aspects of the seafaring experience, offering both contrast and comparison with the interview conversations of contemporary cadets.

Finally, a significant influence on the approach taken to this study has been the commitment of my supervisors to 'data-driven' research and their encouragement to stay close to the data and to constantly return to it.

### **The methodological approach**

The key features of the methodological approach taken to this study, and which will be considered in turn, are:

- its qualitative and reflexive orientation;
- the application of modified grounded theory;
- emergent design;
- the use of mixed methods;
- rigour.

#### ***qualitative and reflexive orientation***

This study is qualitative in its orientation. Although it began tentatively as a cohort study of cadet attrition, it was re-oriented towards a predominantly qualitative study of the

cadet experience, as the account of the methodological development will show. Questionnaire data generated during the study's formative stage continued to have an ancillary role by providing a limited range of descriptive statistics. At the heart of the study are accounts of cadetship from cadets themselves, produced during face-to-face interviews. In studying their subjective world as neophyte seafarers, and in trying to reach an understanding of their experiences in the wider occupational context, new avenues for investigation were opened up. These avenues yielded further data whose interpretation contributed to the representations of cadetship offered in this thesis. The study has strived for a qualitative methodology that is based on, to use Alvesson and Sköldbberg's term, reflexive interpretation. By this is meant reflection across various levels of interpretation in which empirical material is constructed and interpreted, "... *setting into motion reflections on several issues at the same time consistently admitting ambiguity ...*" (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000:288).

### ***application of modified Grounded Theory***

"A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, *discovered, developed, and provisionally verified* through the systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon."

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990:23; italic emphasis added)

Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) is based on the premise that theory can be built up inductively through observations and insights from empirical research, as opposed to deductive theorising and hypothesis testing. Central to this approach to theory building is grounded analysis, which results from the systematic coding, sorting and organising of data. Grounded analysis is a way of structuring the data and giving this meaning and significance for the researcher and other relevant audiences (Jones, 1988). Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasise the importance of allowing categories to emerge from the data. Practical descriptions of the process of grounded analysis confirm the need for detailed reading and re-reading of data in order to move from first impressions to conceptual development (Charmaz, 1991; Orona, 1990). This study has used grounded analysis in the indexing of the interview data gathered from cadets, and this has generated ideas about seafaring and cadetship that contribute to theory building. Other sources of data have also contributed to the analysis of the qualitative data, and to this extent the grounded theory approach has been modified.

That is, to use Strauss and Corbin's terms, theory was '*discovered, developed, and provisionally verified*' inductively, but further '*developed*' using additional data sources.

### ***emergent design***

The design used in this study was emergent. The starting point was the concerns of the UK shipping industry and the UK Government on the future of the UK seafarer workforce and the associated training of officers; these concerns formed the initial policy and industry reference points. Following a review of the research literature on the training of Merchant Navy officers, it became apparent that there was no contemporary research focussing on the subjective views of cadets; Hill's study already cited being dated 1972. This gap in research suggested the need to gather empirical material directly from cadets, which was done initially through pilot interviews and questionnaires.

Hence, the nascent research design had three elements: industry and policy reference points; extant research (or lack of it); and an empirical orientation. These three elements were developed into three 'data-strands' as a result of the application of cyclical and organic processes characteristic of reflexive methodology. A fourth data-strand drawn from the works of the novelist, Joseph Conrad, was a further development of the research design.

As data were acquired and processed, so further decisions were taken on the design of the research. Such decisions considered both 'what to do' and 'what not to do'. For example, initial thoughts on a longitudinal cohort study were not implemented because of the likelihood of low response rates and tracking difficulties. This particular decision was more than compensated for by the richness of the qualitative data and the development of other strands of data.

The experience of continuous and overlapping cycles of self-reflection is often seen as a key characteristic of action research (Kemmis, 2001). This study did not take an action research approach; it did not develop relationships with the research participants beyond the interview. Nevertheless, it does share with action research methodologies the feature that design changes shape over time as understandings are focussed and refocused iteratively (Davis, 2007: 189).

A full account of the emergence and development of the design as it matured is given later in this chapter.

### ***use of mixed methods***

This study did not set out to make extensive use of mixed methods. It set out to reach an understanding of Merchant Navy officer cadets' experiences of their training by using a straightforward combination of questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. As the research process evolved, other sources of material were introduced to give a deeper and more rounded understanding of the phenomenon of cadetship. As outlined above in '*emergent design*', these additional sources of material formed three further strands: documents, particularly from the UK Government and the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) which related to seafarer workforce policy and training guidance; extant research and scholarly knowledge; and selected writings of Joseph Conrad. Each of these sources required different methods of capture and analysis as detailed in *Chart 2/1* (p.21). That is, a more extensive use of mixed methods was a consequence of developments in the research design.

The use of more than one method in social research has a long history (Hammond, 2005) and employing mixed methods within a research design has been recognised as a beneficial means of developing a complex picture of the phenomenon being studied (Rice and Ezzy, 1999; Irwin, 2006; Moran-Ellis et al, 2006). Brannen (2005) suggests that additional methods may be incorporated during the fieldwork phase as distinguished from the design phase, particularly where a study has taken place over a sufficiently lengthy period for new ideas to be introduced. Whilst Brannen's observations are useful, this study emphasises the reflexive and cyclical nature of data capture, analysis and design as opposed to a distinct 'design phase' followed by a 'fieldwork phase'. Commenting on combining qualitative with quantitative evidence, Eisenhardt suggests that the combination of data types can be highly synergistic, noting that "... *quantitative data can keep researchers from being carried away by vivid but false impressions from qualitative data.*" (Eisenhardt, 1989: 538)

In their monograph on '*linking data*', Fielding and Fielding (1986) offer examples of the ways in which qualitative materials obtained through different methods can be integrated, and also qualitative and quantitative analyses linked. They encourage the

recognition that, *"The multi-operational approach implies a good deal more than merely a piling on of instruments."* (Fielding and Fielding, 1986: 31). They emphasise that the *'tough problem'* is not merely putting various accounts and approaches alongside each other, but of achieving integration. In this respect, Moran-Ellis et al (2006) suggest that the challenge of an analysis that is integrated in any sense lies in developing some form of common analysis of a diverse set of data without losing the characteristics of each type of data and cite Coxon (2005) as using an approach which interweaves the analysis among the different types of data.

*'Triangulation'* was once seen as a strategy in which mixed methods could be used to achieve robust representations of research findings (Denzin, 1989:237-41). Richardson (2000:934) suggested *'crystallization'* as a more appropriate description of the use of different approaches to present the complexity of the phenomena being researched. An emphasis on the opportunities mixed methods afford reflexive data analysis is in keeping with the approach taken in this study. As Bloor contends, methodological pluralism allows *"... new light to be shed on topics and allows different facets of problems to be explored, so the mix of different methods has an interactive impact."* (Bloor, 1997:41)

Yin's discussion of quality in empirical social research is helpful here. Although his focus is the case study, he notes that: *"The most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of **converging lines of inquiry**."* (Yin, 2003:98; emphasis in original). Any research finding or conclusion, Yin goes on to say, is likely to be more convincing and accurate if based on several different sources of information. In this study, lines of inquiry can be said to have converged in the identification of key descriptors and the construct of 'total occupation'. The consideration of quality in empirical social research leads naturally to discussion of the methodological rigour of this study.

### ***rigour***

In qualitative studies, rigour can be defined in terms of the trustworthiness of methods and findings (Elliott, 2005:22; Rice and Ezzy, 1999:31; Lincoln and Guba, 1985:290). Rigour has also been considered in terms of validity and reliability especially, though not exclusively, in quantitative settings (Hammersley, 1992). In order to demonstrate the

ways in which rigour has been achieved in this research, each phase of the study is considered in turn.

### *Phase One*

Much of Phase One of this study focused on the gathering of data directly from cadets. Important in this phase was what Ratner described as '*procedural rigour*' (Ratner, 1996: 319; cited in Rice and Ezzy, 1999:36). Procedural rigour requires attention to the ethics of data gathering: the provision of explicit statements on the role of the researcher and the purpose of the research for those involved in the study; attention to confidentiality; arrangements for consent; and so on. It also requires attention to how the sample was obtained and how the material generated was recorded and preserved. In this case, all the above requirements were observed, for example: all ethical issues were addressed; all interviews were taped, transcribed verbatim and archived; and, all questionnaire responses were entered into a database using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software.

Approaching these procedural aspects of the research in a thorough and methodical way, and documenting them in detail in the research account, goes some way to addressing rigour. However, rigour is also needed in relation to analysis and interpretation – beginning in Phase One with the systematic manual indexing of interview material using grounded analysis to develop exhaustive coding categories. In short, in Phase One I employed, with appropriate quality controls, the range of procedures and processes that have become standard practice in achieving trustworthy/reliable research findings. These findings constituted indexed material derived from the cadets' accounts of their experience of training and representative statistics. The findings are internally valid in that they do provide a form of representation that corresponds directly, and with a degree of 'trustworthiness', to the experiences of the cadets.

### *Phase Two*

Phase Two of this study was devoted to the analysis, interpretation and representation of the empirical data interwoven with data from other sources, outlined in the discussion of mixed methods. It is useful to recall the earlier quote from Strauss and Corbin (1990:23) in which they state the possibility of grounded theory being "... '*provisionally verified*' using additional data sources." Rigour here relates to the relevance of the indexed material generated in Phase One to the '*additional data sources*'.

Intra-strand findings from the three additional data-strands were generated by the analysis of text analysis. For example, I found I was able to code Hill (1972) using the indexes derived from Phase One (see *Appendix 1* for an illustration). I also repeated this procedure on copies of selected works of Joseph Conrad purchased new for this purpose (see *Appendix 2* for an illustration). Quality controls were similar to those employed in analysing interview data.

Inter-strand analyses presented methodological challenges for rigour. To an extent the material from other sources confirmed the reliability of the emerging empirical findings and helped to identify in Yin's words '*converging lines of inquiry*' (Yin, 2003:98). Comparisons, drawn between the information or knowledge contained in the four data-strands, provided what Hammond describes as a '*broad-brush validity check*' because the evidence concerned the same general issues but from different perspectives (Hammond, 2005:242). To give two examples: the relevance to seafaring of the oscillation between sea and shore (an indexed category) so apparent in cadet accounts could also be identified in extant research. Concern over employment prospects (another index) amongst cadets could also be found both in trade union and in parliamentary reports. I did not set out to triangulate the indexed categories against existing knowledge or information, but effectively that is what happened. As the inter-strand analysis proceeded, further correspondences between the descriptors derived from the cadet data and the three other data-strands were recorded as displayed in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven. Hence, a claim can be made for the external validity of the descriptors, as finally generated, in that they have both relevance to, and correspondence with, existing sources of knowledge or information.

### *Phase Three*

In studying occupations there is nothing easier, Shaffir and Pawluch suggest, than gathering up personal experiences, stories and observations (Shaffir and Pawluch, 2003:906). But moving beyond the single case, Shaffir and Pawluch go on to point out, is less easy and requires organizing concepts and sociological theory. Phase Three of this study attempts to go beyond the personal experiences of the cadets and make a contribution to the building of theory which may possibly apply in other contexts. The analytical findings that emerged from Phase Two as descriptors of the cadet experience, are used in Phase Three to create a window on the cadet experience viewing it in terms

of 'total occupation'. In this notion the organizing concepts are those of 'ambivalence', 'totalness', 'tradition', and of 'calling'. Whilst there are no statistical measures of validity for the study's findings, the foundations on which it is built – information on the sample, on the data gathering procedures, the analysis and relevance to other data sources – should, as Eisenhardt (1989:548) suggests, give confidence in its valid contribution to theory building.

## **2.2 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND METHODS**

### **OVERVIEW**

The final study design features three research phases requiring an array of different methods. The three phases are described in detail in the following section. *Chart 2/1* presents a summary of the methods employed. A brief overview of phases and methods is given below.

The broad motivation behind this research was concern over the status of the UK seafaring workforce and associated training needs, coupled with the lack of qualitative research in this field. The initial purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of Merchant Navy officer cadets through their own voices. This purpose was expanded at an early stage as described in 'Phase One' below.

The motivation and purpose influenced the initial decisions to adopt the approaches to the research as described above. In particular, the need for the qualitative, grounded theory and emergent design approaches was recognised at a very early stage of development. These three approaches were realised in the strategy of gaining cadets' views on their experiences of training by using face-to-face interviews; the methodological details of which are recorded under 'Phase One'. This data stream and allied quantitative data constitute one 'strand'. Consistent with the notion of 'emergent design', as interview data was processed and analysed, the need for other perspectives was recognised, namely: a full description of the policy and training environment; more extensive theoretical inputs; and, insights drawn from the works of Joseph Conrad. The development of these perspectives is consistent with an approach using reflexivity. They constitute three further 'strands'. These design developments also required adjusting the research strategy to accommodate the use of mixed methods and the analysis of relationships between the strands. As described below, Phase One drew to a close as the

analysis of each strand reached a degree of maturity, and inter-strand analysis began.

**Chart 2/1** Summary of Study Materials Used: Methods of Elicitation, Capture/Sourcing, and Analysis

Source of Material	Method of Elicitation, Capture/Sourcing	Method of Analysis
<b>MATERIAL FROM CADETS</b>		
Cadets in final year of the training programme	<b><u>Pilot Interviews</u></b> - Face-to-face x 4 - Tape recorded & transcribed	- Interview material iteratively reviewed and indexed
	<b><u>Pilot Group Interview</u></b> - 4 participants - Tape recorded - Stenographer notes	- Interview material iteratively reviewed and indexed
Cadets across all 3 years of the training programme	<b><u>Postal Questionnaire Booklets</u></b> - 120 completed questionnaire booklets returned (each booklet containing the study specific questionnaire and the GHQ)	- Entered into database using SPSS software - Descriptive statistics derived and linked to interview indexing
	<b><u>Letter</u></b> - Letter x 1	- Read and used where relevant to indexing
Cadets in third and fifth phases of training  These cadets were a <u>subset</u> of the cadets responding to the Questionnaires.	<b><u>Face-to-Face Interviews</u></b> - Face-to-face semi-structured x 37 - All tape recorded and transcribed	- Interview material iteratively reviewed and indexed
	<b><u>E-Mail correspondence</u></b> - E-mail x 1	- Read and used where relevant to indexing
<b>MATERIAL FROM OTHER SOURCES</b>		
Union Representative	<b><u>Face to face interview</u></b> - Interview x 1 - Tape recorded and transcribed	- Interview material iteratively reviewed and indexed
Company representatives	<b><u>Face to face meetings</u></b> - Meeting x3 - Contemporaneous notes taken	- Interview material iteratively reviewed and indexed
College staff	<b><u>Email correspondence</u></b> - E-mail x 1	- Read and used where relevant to indexing

<b>Chart 2/1 (continued)</b>		
<b>(Source of Material)</b>	<b>(Method of Elicitation, Capture/Sourcing)</b>	<b>(Method of Analysis)</b>
<b>INFORMATION</b>		
Government policy documents and related material, e.g. official reports	- Selected through searching government websites	- Repeated reading of documents - Notes taken - Relevant passages selected
Other documents – training guidance and recruitment literature	- Selected through website searches	- Repeated reading of documents - Notes taken - Relevant passages selected
<b>WRITINGS OF JOSEPH CONRAD</b>		
<b>Novellas and Novels</b> <i>The Nigger of the Narcissus</i> <i>Typhoon</i> <i>Youth</i> <i>Lord Jim</i> <i>Heart of Darkness</i> <b>Sea Meditation</b> <i>The Mirror of the Sea</i>	- Sample selection based on prior knowledge and relevant literary criticism. - Identified through database search	- Repeated reading - Notes taken - Indexing of writing using same coding categories as used for interviews - Literary criticism
<b>Author's Notes and Letters</b> <i>A Personal Record</i>	- Sample selection based on prior knowledge	- Repeated reading - Notes taken
<b>Other works</b> <i>The End of the Tether</i> <i>The Shadow Line</i> <i>The Rescue</i> <i>Twixt Land and Sea</i>	- Sample selection based on prior knowledge	- Reading
<b>FORMAL SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE</b>		
Hill 1972	- Identified from database search	- Hill's report indexed using the same coding categories used for interviews
Scholarly literature from range of disciplines	- Identified from database searches	- Read repeatedly. Notes taken, relevant passages selected
Literary criticism relating to Joseph Conrad	- Identified from database searches	- Read repeatedly. Notes taken, relevant passages selected

Phase Two was concerned with broadening and deepening the analysis developed in the latter stages of Phase One, resulting in a representation of cadetship. This representation was created by repeated analyses of data within and between the strands, weaving them

together into a cohesive fabric. The output from Phase Two was four separate chapters on life at sea using inputs from the four data strands.

Phase Three involved the reflexive review of the research findings and the development of the concept of 'total occupation'. This was based upon descriptors of cadetship and seafaring experience generated from the analysis and interpretation in Phase Two.

### **A personal perspective**

The use of personal material – to provide insight into how and why this study unfolded as it did – is an aspect of a reflexive approach to research, consistent with the view that the researcher is an integral part of the research process, historically and culturally situated and bringing pre-existing understandings, experiences, and theoretical traditions to what they are able to describe and interpret (Rice and Ezzy, 1999:41). For Bourdieu and Wacquant it is reflexivity that enables the uncovering of "... *the social at the heart of the individual, the impersonal beneath the intimate, the universal buried deep within the most particular.*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:48) A challenge in conducting this research has been to make the connections between: the researcher's personal and essentially private experiences; the equally personal experiences of the cadets in this study; and the wider social world. Such connections require the imaginative leap that Mills (1959) referred to as sociological imagination.

McCracken suggests that in qualitative research the investigators themselves serve as a kind of '*instrument*' in the collection and analysis of data (McCracken, 1988:18), bringing experiences from their own past to the investigative process and giving insights in unexpected and often surprising ways. Referring to the process whereby the investigator searches for patterns in what are '*relatively messy, unorganised data*', McCracken (1988) proposes that it is necessary to '*rummage*' through '*the whole of one's experience and imagination*', looking for matches and for insights into the data. This approach is not however without risks. Punch warns against narcissism and self-indulgence (Punch, 1986:12), and Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000:246) echo the need to avoid the potential narcissism and self-centredness of self-reference. Examples of the inclusion of autobiographical detail in research accounts range from a passing reference about how a researcher became involved in a topic to intense auto-ethnography where the emotions of the researcher are centre-stage (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

I cannot say that I started this research journey with a specific interest in seafaring although I would, along with many of the cadets in this study, have described myself as having both a 'love of the sea' and a family tradition. I did however set off with an eclectic bag of interests that included an inveterate curiosity about people and how they describe their lives and relationships. As a young person there was nothing I had wanted to do more than to read. Novels, biographies, poetry all seemed to be ways of learning about the lives of others, of glimpsing the world through other eyes, of reaching some understanding of how others might see the world. As an undergraduate student of English Literature, I developed a special interest in the works of Joseph Conrad. It was not until the research was underway that I saw how Conrad's writings could come to be part of this study of modern day seafarers.

I also brought with me a longstanding interest in how people construct their lives in environments where choices are highly constrained. I had worked as a Health Visitor in communities with low levels of income, limited educational achievement, negative health behaviours, and poor physical environments, and had been humbled by the positive ways in which individuals and communities could build lives against these odds. Through the research I came to learn of the constraints of shipboard life. Rediker (1987) in his study of Merchant Seamen in the Eighteenth Century describes shipboard life as:

" ... a binding chain of linked limits: limited space, limited freedom, limited movement, limited sensory stimulation, and limited choices of leisure activities, social interaction, food and play."

(Rediker, 1987:159)

The limitations that Rediker lists also featured in cadets' interview descriptions of their experiences at sea, notably the inescapability of shipboard life. Some cadets even drew the comparison with prison, a longstanding metaphor of seafaring. The restrictions of shipboard life outlined by Rediker and experienced by cadets were not of course directly comparable with the restrictions experienced by many of the families I worked with as a Health Visitor. However I recognised, as the study progressed, that there was an unexpected parallel in the lifestyle constraints experienced by individuals in these quite different worlds.

I also came to this research with my own experience of a vocational training having followed my studies of English Literature with training as a Registered Nurse. As with

Merchant Navy officer training, nurse training also involves blocks of study in college interspersed with workplace training and learning – in my case in hospital and community placements. As with cadet training, attrition rates in nurse training have caused concern (Mulholland et al, 2008), and many nurses never practice once they have qualified (Deary, 2003). There were other similarities in the situations of neophyte nurses and seafarers, as I myself came to learn: finding oneself in demanding and responsible situations early in the training programme; organising a social life whilst working unsocial hours; negotiating entry into a distinctive culture with its own rules of engagement; and, coming to terms with an occupation with a strong sense of discipline and hierarchy. In studying the cadet experience I found myself reconsidering my own experience of training in a way I had not anticipated.

However, as indicated under 'rigour' above, the importance of my personal experience became less pronounced as this study progressed, and as the focus shifted more sharply to the experiences of cadets and the subsequent representation of cadetship.

## **PHASE ONE: SETTING OUT, GATHERING DATA, AND BEGINNING THE ANALYSIS**

### **Choosing the direction of travel**

The decision to focus this study on UK Merchant Navy officer cadets was taken in late 2001 when the need to encourage a renaissance of the UK seafarer workforce and support cadetship was topical for the shipping industry and the UK Government. The Merchant Navy Training Board (2000) had estimated that only with a three to four fold rise in cadet intake numbers would the number of UK Officers in the British merchant fleet recover to acceptable levels. The UK Government had recognised the concern over both the dwindling workforce and the declining fleet with the publication in 1998 of a White Paper on the future of British shipping (DETR, 1998) and the subsequent introduction of a Tonnage Tax with a training component that placed training obligations on participating companies. When the study began, however, these government policies were relatively new and still unevaluated.

A review of the research literature on the training of Merchant Navy officer cadets and associated issues of recruitment and retention revealed no contemporary research focussing on cadets.

These researches set the study's direction of travel in terms of determining its motivation and purpose. The initial research question became: 'In what ways could I represent the experiences of Merchant Navy Officer cadets?'

### **Initial thoughts on design**

Initial thoughts on a research design also included a longitudinal component to provide points of comparison over time as training progressed and cadets moved into the workplace. A proposal was sketched to track three cohorts of cadets, one from each year of training. The cohorts would be invited to complete questionnaires and participate in interviews every year for three years; this would require following Year Two and Three cadets into the workplace for one and two years respectively. However, on considering this proposal in more detail, the well-documented practical difficulties in longitudinal design were recognised (Huber and Van de Ven, 1995; Miller, 2000; Ruispini, 2002). Firstly there was concern that an adequate sample of cadets from each of the three years of training could be recruited, given that the study involved young people and predominantly young men who are generally less inclined to participate as volunteers in research (Glendinning et al, 2002; Thomson and Holland, 2003). Secondly, attrition rates for cadets during training posed a risk that the samples could shrink over a three year period and the potential to make comparisons over time would be lost. Thirdly, tracking difficulties were anticipated in contacting cadets: for those in training, much of the programme is spent at sea and interview arrangements would have to take this into account. As the cadets in years two and three moved into the job market the difficulties of contacting them were likely to mount. Fourthly, the logistics and costs of such a research design were considerable. Tellingly there are no examples of longitudinal research conducted amongst seafarers. As result of these concerns, the longitudinal component did not become part of the final design.

A lesson learnt at this early stage was the need for flexibility in the conduct of the research. I had given much thought to the prospect of this study. I wanted everything to go according to a plan, to be neat and orderly. Yet as it began to unfold I realised the need for pragmatism; that 'improvisation' was essential for survival, and that the challenge would be to work with a process that was highly emergent. Harrison White's words described well my feelings in the early days of this research:

“Entering an introductory class in any branch of social science can be intimidating. Professors lay out a world of uniformities – of rules, of seamless connection – and many treat change, disorder, or even improvisation as exceptional. Students meanwhile, live in a world where disorder is around every corner and improvisation the only means of survival.”

(White, 1992: 3)

### **Negotiating access**

The role and importance of gatekeepers in gaining access to study participants is well documented (Burgess, 1984). The then Director of the Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) asked that I approach the shipping or training companies for access to cadets rather than the education Colleges. This choice was considered an important courtesy in recognition of the relationship with the shipping industry that SIRC had developed over the years. It was suggested that gaining company support for the research would lend it an air of authority and legitimacy, and that cadets receiving an invitation to participate with a covering letter from their Company might take it more seriously than if it had arrived by another route. As it turned out, 76% of cadets who received a questionnaire did not respond: this maybe suggests that they did not see it in this way, and there is the possibility that some perceived the company connection as inhibiting and potentially undermining the confidentiality of their accounts.

In March 2002 I approached two shipping companies, Ace Marine\* and Star Shipping\*, both with offices in the UK and sponsoring British cadets. The Training Officers of both companies saw the proposed research as worthwhile, gave permission to contact their cadets, and offered administrative support in distributing questionnaires. However the number of cadets across the three years and between the two companies totalled only 60. Given concerns about non-participation, this number was felt to be too small and I approached a third organisation, Ocean XL\*, a company acting on behalf of a number of shipping companies, recruiting cadets, arranging their college places and placements at sea. They were equally cooperative, and by May 2002 I had permission to approach 500 cadets - the total number in training with Ace Marine, Star Shipping and Ocean XL.

All three company contacts responded cheerfully to my requests for the distribution of material and reminders. Part way through the third year of the research, the Training

\*All names changed to protect confidentiality.

Officers of both shipping companies retired, and contacts with their replacements proved difficult to establish; an already documented aspect of research continuity (Ward and Henderson, 2003). As I had by this time established good contacts with the college administrators, the practical impact on the research was limited – but, these changes in contacts did confirm the initial decision to reject a longitudinal design. With approval from the Companies to approach the cadets, I contacted Colleges A, B and C and was put in touch with teaching and administrative staff who subsequently went out of their way not only to arrange interview times and accommodation but also to distribute correspondence to cadets.

## **The pilot**

### *the pilot interviews*

In April 2002 I visited College C having identified, with the help of the Company Training Officers and the College Cadet Administrator, two cadets who were prepared to be interviewed. Both were male and in their final phase of training sponsored by Ace Marine; one cadet was a 'deck cadet' undertaking the training to become officer in charge of a navigational watch' and the other an 'engineer cadet', training to become an 'officer in charge of an engineering watch'. Contacting them by letter, I explained that I was in the earliest stage of research that would focus on their experiences as cadets and how they saw their futures as seafarers. This initial contact could be considered as convenience sampling (Patton, 1990:180) as the cadets were from the college which was the easiest for me to reach and happened to have time in their college schedule to meet me. Sampling was also purposive in that I specified the basic characteristics of those I wanted to interview. There was also an element of volunteer sampling in that these were cadets who were willing to meet with me.

I prepared a pilot interview schedule (*Appendix 3*), asking about their motivations for a career at sea and inviting them to tell me about life as a cadet at sea, the things that they found good and the things that weren't so good, the college aspects of training and their future plans. The interviews, which were individual, were tape-recorded with their permission and subsequently transcribed by me.

I followed these two interviews with another visit to the college six weeks later in which I interviewed a further two cadets, again male and both deck cadets in their final year.

The issues raised by the cadets in these pilot interviews clustered around:

- their relationships at sea;
- their relationships with friends and family on shore;
- the nature of the work at sea;
- their material circumstances; and,
- how these factors, taken together contributed to the experience of being a cadet.

Listening to the four interview tapes, transcribing them, and repeatedly reading over the transcriptions provided me with sufficient insight into the experience of cadetship to construct a draft questionnaire to pilot, together with a second questionnaire, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). The GHQ-28 is a validated self-administered screening tool, designed for use in general population surveys and also in primary medical care settings. Measuring somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression, it identifies potential cases, leaving the diagnosis of disorder to the clinical interview (Goldberg, 1972; McDowell and Newell, 1987; Goldberg and Hillier, 1979). The GHQ was selected in preference to the SF-36, an instrument widely used in monitoring health outcomes in various disease and condition areas (Ware and Sherbourne, 1992). This instrument seemed less appropriate for use with cadets as fit young people than the GHQ with its focus on detecting breaks in normal functioning and patterns of adjustment. However as the empirical data analysis progressed, the decision was taken not to include the GHQ data.

This decision was taken because of the emerging emphasis on the qualitative data generated directly by the cadets and the developing realisation of the importance of the other three data-strands. GHQ data would also have been most important in plotting change over time and this was no longer relevant given that a longitudinal focus was not being pursued. It was also in recognition of the fact that this was a young and healthy workforce where screening would reveal the "healthy worker effect" (Carpenter, 1987). This research suggests that health surveys of workers tend to show lower levels of morbidity than surveys of general populations as a consequence of unhealthy individuals leaving the workforce or being prevented from joining it in the first place.

Gaining insight from the pilot interviews, developing a pilot questionnaire, and identifying a possible validated instrument gave me the confidence to convene a group interview to further test the relevance of the topic areas which had been identified.

#### *the group interview*

In the autumn of 2002, with the help of the Cadet Administrator in College C, seven cadets were recruited to join a group interview to gauge reactions to the pilot questionnaire which I had developed, and also to identify any other topic areas relevant to cadetship that they felt had been overlooked. A group interview, Bloor et al (2001:43) suggest is where the interviewer seeks answers, as contrasted with a focus group which seeks data on group processes and normative understandings. Feedback from the group interview enabled me to finalise both the study-specific questionnaire and the interview schedule used in the main stage of empirical data gathering. The pilot questionnaire, developed following the individual pilot interviews, covered the following areas:

- demographic details;
- reasons for joining the training programme;
- training details;
- relationships at home and sea;
- attractions of the job;
- career prospects;
- and, physical health issues.

The pilot and the final version of the questionnaire included two vignettes to which cadets were invited to respond. The vignettes had been developed from the material generated in the pilot interviews. Vignette-derived data have been used in social science research to complement other forms of data, recognising that the difference between self-reported behaviour and actual behaviour is an enduring issue for social science researchers (Cornwell, 1984). Hughes considers the benefits and difficulties that can be attributed to vignette research and suggests that: "*Vignettes can help unpackage individuals' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes to a wide range of social issues.*" (Hughes, 1998: 384). Hughes also counsels caution in implying too strong a link between responses to vignette representations and real world representations. Used in interviews, vignettes can open up conversations and lead in new directions. Their use in questionnaires is

more restricted and the vignettes used in the cadet questionnaire proved perhaps to have been too specific, limiting their capacity to draw cadets into thinking about their own futures. However those who completed the pilot questionnaire, bar one, provided a response to the vignettes and I decided to include them in the final version. I also used them in preparation for the group interview should conversation run dry – unnecessarily as it turned out.

Making the practical arrangements to bring the cadets together for the group interview was time-consuming and only four of the original seven cadets eventually participated. Even so, both the pilot study-specific and the GHQ questionnaires were returned by all seven – some with useful additional comments: for example, one cadet wrote on the study-specific questionnaire that he found it “... *fairly straightforward to complete. It was a pleasure.*” (Group interviewee 02/02)

Although I have not considered this as a focus group, the recording of what took place in that hour presented the same issues and subsequent challenges for transcription: people talking simultaneously; leaving sentences in mid air; introducing tangential comments; and generally presenting a vast quantity of data. I recorded the meeting and was accompanied by a stenographer who typed the discussion directly onto a laptop. We felt that if this worked well, it could provide an effective alternative approach to the traditional way of transcribing. As it turned out the stenographer was unable to capture the full complexity of the exchanges. The tape itself was not transcribed but afterwards I could listen to it and between this and the stenographer's account I was satisfied that the group interview had answered the questions I had raised with the group on the suitability and comprehensiveness of the questionnaires and the interview schedule.

### **The development of three further data-strands**

During the course of the pilot phase, the data itself suggested a number of other avenues for exploration each of which could add to the understanding of cadetship. The most obvious sources of material were policy documents and reports related to the current training situation and the overall decline of the UK seafaring workforce. The pilot interviews had shown that cadets were concerned about the wider context of their recruitment and training. Cadets referred specifically to what they saw as the impact of government policy and shipping company practice relating to the Tonnage Tax. From

this, policy, training and consultancy documents from a range of bodies developed into a distinct strand of data alongside the growing strand of cadet material.

The third strand of material, which emerged in the latter stages of Phase One, was the theoretical input from academic literature in the form of journal papers and books. As already indicated, the research literature on the seafarer cadet experience was very sparse, and the sociology of seafaring is not an extensive field. SIRC had begun to publish qualitative research on the seafarer experience (Thomas, 2002) but this was at an early stage. However, as the body of empirical data from the cadets grew, it became clear that theoretical inputs from other areas of research were needed; literatures relating to youth transitions, to training, and to rites of passage, being examples. These literatures were searched partly using electronic databases, following up references, checking citations, and were integrated into the analysis and construction of the representation of cadetship that took place in Phase Two.

The fourth strand of data came from a more unexpected source. Returning home after the last pilot interview, my mind was full of cadets' descriptions of their lives at sea. That evening, I picked up a copy of *'The Mirror of the Sea'* (Conrad, 1906/1975). The then Director of SIRC, a former seafarer himself, had suggested to me that this work by Joseph Conrad reflected a reality which seafarers recognised. As I began to read I saw the points of correspondence with some of the remarks from the cadets I had already met. Over a period of months I reached the decision to include material from Conrad's writings in this study as a further strand of material. Conrad articulates enduring aspects of seafaring and the relationship between the seafarer and the sea, offering contrast, comparison and illumination in relation to the views and voices of the cadets themselves. I have validated the use of selected/sampled works of Joseph Conrad in the following chapter.

### **Ethical considerations**

Codes of ethics for professional and academic associations emphasise four cardinal principles in the conduct of research (Christians, 2000): informed consent; opposition to deception; protection of privacy and confidentiality; and data accuracy. The protection of confidentiality was an important issue for the cadets who participated in the study. Cadets who were interviewed needed particular reassurance that whatever they wrote or said could not be traced back to them and that there was no possibility that their

responses could jeopardise their careers in any way. As part of the process of informed consent, I provided cadets with information on how I intended to ensure their confidentiality, the practical arrangements for returning questionnaires directly to me, and the security of interview tapes and transcripts. Each cadet was given an information sheet and, prior to the start of every interview, I went over the intentions behind the research.

The research proposal was submitted to the Multi-Centre Research Ethics Committee for Wales (MREC). The crucial elements of the application concerned: the efforts made to ensure that cadets were fully informed about the study before giving their consent to be involved; the arrangements made to protect their confidentiality; the recognition that the study could trigger anxiety in the cadets if they had negative experiences of being at sea; and the steps taken to anticipate and respond to such anxieties. The MREC found that these issues had been addressed in the submission and considered the study '*... interesting and worthwhile with no significant ethical objections to the approach or the methods being used.*'

### **Sample characteristics, representativeness and bias**

The processes associated with sampling have been described above. In this section, the samples generated by these processes are recorded together with issues of representativeness and bias.

The study sample comprised 500 cadets. All cadets in the sample were:

- currently undergoing training as Merchant Navy Officers;
- either a deck cadet or an engineer cadet;
- from the UK;
- of either sex;
- based at one of three colleges;
- in training with Ace Marine, Star Shipping or Ocean XL;
- and, had completed at least one phase of training at sea.

The study sample represented 50% of the total number of officer cadets in training in the calendar year 2003 according to the figures from the UK Seafarer Statistics (Glen et al, 2010; see also *Table 3/4*, p.76).

Of the questionnaire booklets distributed to the study sample, 120 were returned. These cadets constituted a sub-sample: the 'questionnaire sample'. Of those questionnaires returned, 5% were from females; a figure consistent with the overall gender profile of Merchant Navy cadets, since a survey of Merchant Navy cadets in the UK showed women enrolled in maritime education and training as 4.6% of the total (ILO, 2003). With regard to the numbers of deck and engineer cadets responding, the figures were 63% and 37%, respectively. Given that in the years 2000 and 2001, there were 930 'new starts' comprising 520(56%) deck and 410(44%) engineers, it follows that the number of engineers was slightly under-represented in the 'questionnaire sample'.

Further sample statistics are that the age range of respondents was 16-26 yrs with 71% under 21 years of age.

The 'interview sample' of 25 cadets was a subset of the questionnaire sample. Of the 120 consent forms returned with the completed questionnaires, 79 cadets were willing to be interviewed. Of the 79 possible interviewees only 25 were in a college phase during the six month time period I had available to carry out the interviews, hence the final interview sample of 25.

*Table 2/1* displays a synopsis of the profiles of the cadets interviewed, recorded in full in *Appendix 4*.

**Table 2/1** Synopsis of the 'interview sample' characteristics: type and frequency

Characteristic	type frequency		
	Gender	Male 22	female 3
Course	Deck 19 (1 female)	engineer 6 (2 female)	
Age	Under 21 14	21 or over 11	
Company	Ace Marine 5	Star Shipping 2	Ocean XL 18
College	A 10	B 3	C 12

The following summary and commentary deals with issues of representativeness and bias arising from *Table 2/1*.

In summary, the pragmatically determined sampling processes yielded:

- a questionnaire sample whose gender and course-type profile matched that of the population within acceptable error;
- an interview sample in which women cadets were comparatively well represented and engineers were comparatively less well represented;
- in terms of age distribution, the interview sample featuring a significantly higher proportion of 'older' cadets older than the questionnaire sample.

Notwithstanding the issue of sample size in qualitative research, the interview sample did generate data that was useable, meaningful and covered the cadet experiences from a variety of perspectives. Because of the restrictions already described, further cycles of data collection and analysis to the point of saturation were not possible – instead the mixed methods strategy was employed using all four data-strands.

In regard to bias, the following four observations are relevant:

First, the method of recruitment may inevitably have introduced a systematic bias because of its voluntary nature. For example, those who participated in the study may have had stronger views about cadetship whether positive or negative, than those who did not respond; non-respondents may have been uncomfortable with expressing themselves, or may have seen the study as irrelevant to their interests. However the spread of views within the sample suggests that response was not confined to those with more dramatic experiences of cadetship.

Second, the samples were drawn from a population that had already undergone attrition. Hence the residual population was likely to contain a relatively higher number of favourably disposed cadets.

Third, the relatively high number of 'older' cadets in the interview sample might be a source of bias, whose 'direction' is open to interpretation.

Fourth, variations in the 'training provision' are another source of potential bias.

The third and fourth points are further considered in the study's final chapter.

In respect of analysis, occasions where specific reference to sampling issues is required are dealt with accordingly.

## The questionnaires

The questionnaire booklets containing the study-specific questionnaire and the GHQ were distributed to cadets via the companies in February 2003, each with a unique identifying number. The final study-specific questionnaire is found as *Appendix 5* and the GHQ as *Appendix 6*. A letter of explanation, an information sheet and a consent form accompanied each questionnaire booklet. The letter of explanation was written by me on behalf of the companies and was on company headed notepaper. Cadets were asked to return the completed questionnaire booklets directly to me using the stamped addressed envelope included in the package, together with the signed consent form. It was emphasised to cadets that the companies would not have sight of the individual responses given. On receipt of a completed questionnaire, responses were entered into a database created using SPSS, and Word files were kept of narrative responses.

**Table 2/2** Questionnaire Distribution

<b>Date of Questionnaire Distribution</b>	<b>Distributed</b>	<b>Number of completed questionnaires returned</b>
<b>February 2003</b>	<i>400 sent to Ocean XL - posted by the company to individuals and returned to researcher by post.</i>	68
	<i>60 sent to Ace Marine- posted by the company to individuals and returned to researcher by post.</i>	19
	<i>40 sent to Star Shipping- posted by the company to individuals and returned to researcher by post.</i>	12
<b>July 2003</b>	<i>Reminders sent to non-respondents in all three companies. Posted by companies to individuals and returned to researcher by post.</i>	4 x Star Shipping 1 x Ocean XL
<b>September 2003</b>	<i>Reminders sent to Colleges A and C for distribution by hand to cadets in sample. Returned to researcher by post.</i>	3 x Ace Marine 13 x Ocean XL
<b>Totals</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>120</b>

In July 2003, duplicate sets of documentation went out via the companies to the cadets who had not responded the first time. This time the letter of invitation was on SIRC headed paper; I thought this might increase the response rate but only 5 completed questionnaires were returned from this follow up batch.

By the beginning of September 2003 I had received a total of 104 completed questionnaires. College staff in colleges A and C offered to distribute duplicate questionnaires and a reminder letter to cadets in the study population whilst they were in class. This yielded a further 16 responses giving a total sample of 120. *Table 2/2* (above) provides a summary of the distribution of questionnaires.

The number of questionnaires returned disappointed me, although a response rate of 24% from a study population of predominantly young men is not unacceptable. I preferred to think that administrative reasons were behind what I saw as a low response rate, rather than a lack of interest from cadets. The practicalities of administering the questionnaires were not straightforward and perhaps the envelopes had not reached the cadets or completed questionnaires had not made it back to me for whatever reason. This may have been the case with some responses, although one cadet had his own view on the response rates:

Interviewee:

“Yeah, I’d kind of expect that ... All the bits of paper that get sent through the postbox ... we’re used to filling out the forms and having to send them back, and so when yours came through, I just thought it was just another form to fill out which for me is no bother. I enjoy sort of helping people, but yeah, the other guys, they’re not really interested . . . They’re not really interested in anything besides doing their ticket and getting on with it, I think. So I think, it doesn’t surprise me and I think you’ll only get a reply from sort of the top really keen students, so I think no, it doesn’t surprise me at all.”

(Dan/05 – M/D/22/XL)

This view was echoed by one of the college academic staff who considered that many of the cadets he had approached when distributing the second batch of ‘reminder questionnaires’ perceived the questionnaire to be *‘of little benefit or relevance to them’* (Email communication).

Academic researchers, government agencies and for-profit companies alike have experienced declining study participation rates (Galea and Tracy, 2007). Nair et al (2008) report falling response rates in student evaluation surveys citing ‘survey fatigue’ and the expectation of incentives as contributing factors. This widely experienced decline in study participation combined with administrative challenges suggests that the overall response to this study was reasonable.

## **The main interviews**

The practical arrangements for the interviews went smoothly despite the logistics of fitting around college timetables and room availabilities. Interviews were carried out in a quiet room in each of the Colleges, and all were recorded with the permission of the cadets. Interviews lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes with transcriptions ranging in length from 9,000 words to 21,000 words with a mean length of 11,000 words. The interviews were semi-structured using an interview schedule prepared following the pilot work previously described and included as *Appendix 7*. However as Fielding and Fielding point out, there is a difference between interviews as discussed in research methods texts and the actual practice where interviewees develop their responses in their full complexity outside any pre-structuring format (Fielding and Fielding, 1986:49). Whilst there were cadets who were very brief in their interview responses, the majority of those interviewed were articulate and expansive in describing their experiences as cadets. It is plausible that they felt comfortable in giving account of their experiences given my position as someone very different from them in terms of background, age and gender, and who appeared genuinely interested in them.

I scheduled interviews with three cadets on each visit to contain costs, although two interviews would have been preferable, as each interview was demanding in terms of concentration, especially as the subject matter was still relatively new to me. The interview had been the mainstay of my work as a Health Visitor: I always enjoyed this aspect of the role, but I had also experienced the demands of listening and concentrating on interviewees' accounts. Asking questions and listening to the answers, as Ezzy (2010) notes, requires a simultaneous sense of one's own sense as an interviewer independent of the interviewee, and openness to what the interviewee has to say. The Health Visitor role however is a therapeutic one where interviews are often used to reframe experiences for therapeutic purposes (White and Epston, 1990). I was sensitive to the need to avoid being drawn into problem solving with cadets, although there are researchers who contend that basic counselling skills can be of value in handling emotional interviews and responding humanely in the face of displays of emotion or requests for help (Owens, 1996). Reissman (1990) suggested explicitly that interviewing can in itself have potentially therapeutic effects.

As the number of cadet interviews built up, I became increasingly aware of the sensitivity

of some of the cadets' disclosures, and the ethical issues developed meaning beyond the paperwork required by the MREC. Participation in qualitative research as a respondent can be time consuming and privacy endangering as well as intellectually and emotionally demanding, as McCracken (1988) notes, with many respondents finding it difficult to anticipate these dangers at the outset of the interview. Informed consent in the context of interviews should be seen as a continuous process: Miller and Bell (2002) suggest that consent to participate must always be treated as provisional and the right to withdraw as absolute. Whilst the very nature of the interview is one of revelation and exposure (Gadamer, 1979), I considered it essential to avoid what has been described as '*predatory*' interviewing to obtain information from respondents (McCracken, 1988; Owens, 1996). This is particularly the case where interview material could be seen as revealing and sensational – an issue explored more fully in recounting the negative experiences of cadets.

There were four cadet interviews in which I felt that a response was needed to accounts of distress. With the recorder turned off, I explained to cadets that my role was not therapeutic, but that the things they had said gave me concern for their wellbeing. In one case a cadet considered that excessive alcohol was affecting his performance both in college and at sea. The other instances related to distress over shortcomings and problems with placements at sea, feelings of injustice, and uncertainty over the future. In all cases I encouraged the cadet to seek help through their college or company, and where this suggestion was dismissed, encouraged them to talk about their experiences to friends or family, or at least to write them down. For these cadets the interview could be seen as an opportunity to unburden a difficult experience and there are examples of research participants finding it cathartic and therapeutic to simply talk about their experiences to a sympathetic listener (Bergen, 1993; Grafanaki, 1996; Holloway and Jefferson, 2000).

Whilst some cadets were aware that others had also had negative experiences, there were those who wanted to know how widespread were the difficulties they had experienced – 'were their experiences unique?' I was seen as a potential advocate in bringing concerns to light, and as someone with the power to influence. Williamson (1996) notes that researchers are often perceived as having knowledge and expertise on which respondents may choose to call. He views critically the position of researchers who

attempt to remain detached and technically neutral when respondents, often in disadvantaged positions, seek their help and advice.

The ethical considerations had been addressed in the documentation submitted as described to the Multi-Centre Research Ethics Committee for Wales (MREC); however it was in the conduct of the fieldwork that the issues of confidentiality, of advocacy and of even a very limited degree of therapeutic involvement came to have meaning for me. Having said this, a grand significance should not be attributed to all interviews and it is quite possible that some cadets saw their interview as little more than an interlude between their college classes.

Although a longitudinal component to the study had been rejected, I did ask cadets at the end of each interview how they felt about being re-interviewed in a year's time. They were all agreeable; however it was possible to track only twelve cadets by the following year, confirming the difficulties of a longitudinal study which have already been noted. Details of the 're-interview sample' are recorded in *Table 2/3*. Apart from 'Age' (cadets one year older), in each case, the frequencies recorded in *Table 2/3* represent a 50% attrition compared to *Table 2/1*.

**Table 2/3** Synopsis of the 're-interview sample' characteristics: type and frequency

Characteristic	Type Frequency		
	Gender	male 10	female 2
Course	deck 11 (1 female)	engineer 1 (1 female)	
Age	Under 21 5	21 or over 7	
Company	Ace Marine 2	Star Shipping 1	Ocean XL 9
College	A 6	B 1	C 5

The interview schedules for the second interviews were designed for each cadet on an individual basis, using material from their first interviews. These data were not used to measure change over time although specific differences and similarities in individual interview data have been noted during the course of the analysis. The re-interviewing of these twelve cadets between April and June 2005 brought to a close the research fieldwork.

## Developing the analysis

The detailed and transparent account of fieldwork given demonstrates the trustworthiness of the raw data used in this study. This approach of 'detailed transparency' is also used in recording the analytical aspects of the methodology and is required to avoid what Eisenhardt (1989:539) has described as '*a huge chasm*' that often separates data from conclusions. Eisenhardt goes on to comment:

“. . . the reality (is) that people are notoriously poor processors of information. They leap to conclusions based in limited data (Kahneman and Tversky 1973), they are overly influenced by the vividness (Nisbett and Ross 1980) or by more elite respondents (Miles and Huberman 1984), they ignore basic statistical properties (Kahneman and Tversky 1973), or they sometimes inadvertently drop disconfirming evidence (Nisbett and Ross 1980).”

(Eisenhardt, 1989:540)

The analysis of data, it has been suggested, is the least frequently described part of the research process (Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Eisenhardt, 1989; Boeije, 2002). Miles and Huberman (1984:16) write:

“One cannot ordinarily follow how a researcher got from 3600 pages of field notes to the final conclusions, sprinkled with vivid quotes though they may be.”

(Miles and Huberman, 1984:16)

In order to address the need for transparency in the transformation of data ultimately into conclusions, there follows a description of the analytic processes employed in each of the research phases and as outlined in *Chart 2/2* (overleaf).

In Phase One of the study, analysis of data began using the material gathered in the pilot interviews. Analysis in this context involved familiarization with the data through reading, re-reading and annotating the transcriptions of the pilot interviews. During familiarization, as Ritchie and Spencer (2002) point out, the researcher gains an overview of the richness, depth and diversity of the data. The analytical approach was strictly grounded. I had no previous knowledge of sea-cadetship nor did I have in mind the other knowledge/information strands introduced later in the study other than the basic awareness of industry and government concerns over the sustainability of a UK seafaring workforce. Analysis was a 'sense-making' exercise using 'open coding' to identify the broad 'topic areas'. These topic areas were identified as:

- cadets' relationships at sea;
- cadets' relationships with friends and family on shore;
- the nature of the work at sea;
- cadets' experiences of learning
- cadets' material circumstances;
- cadets' reasons for joining the training programme;
- cadets' views on career prospects;
- and, physical health issues.

**Chart 2/2:** Developing the Material through Constant Comparative Method

Development of Material	Constant Comparative Method Analytic Processes
<p><b><u>Pilot data</u></b></p> <p>Topics</p> <p><b><u>All cadet data</u></b></p> <p>Indices/codes</p> <p><b><u>Other data strands</u></b></p> <p>Categories</p> <p>Refined categories</p> <p>Representations</p> <p>Construct</p>	<p>Exploring and Familiarizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reading</li> <li>- re-reading</li> <li>- annotating</li> <li>- sense-making</li> <li>- reflecting</li> </ul> <p>Forming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- continue 'Exploring' processes</li> <li>- open coding</li> <li>- fragmenting &amp; connecting</li> <li>- comparing &amp; contrasting</li> <li>- measuring</li> <li>- categorizing</li> <li>- reflexive reflecting</li> </ul> <p>Refining</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prioritizing</li> <li>- selecting/reducing</li> </ul> <p>Integrating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- linking</li> <li>- interpreting</li> <li>- arranging/patterning</li> <li>- reflexive reflecting</li> </ul> <p>Accounting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- structuring</li> <li>- writing</li> <li>- reflexive reflecting</li> </ul>

These topic areas served two main purposes. First, they were used to inform the study-specific questionnaire and the interview schedule. Second, the topic areas gave rise to more detailed topics which were effectively the latent codes/indices generated during the more structured analysis of all the field data. Further, in Phase Two, the descriptors of sea cadet experience emerged eventually from the topic areas.

More structured analysis began with the iterative reading of each 'main stage' interview transcript in an effort to recognise words, phrases and passages of discussion which connected with the topic areas already identified. The approach taken was one of 'constant comparison' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Glaser, 1992). In employing the constant comparative method, I was mindful of this observation by Tesch as quoted by Boeije:

"The main intellectual tool is comparison. The method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns. (Tesch, 1990: 96)"

(in Boeije, 2002:392)

Applying Tesch's 'intellectual tool', the comparisons in Phase One of the study were guided by the following five questions:

1. Were established topic areas recognisable in each interview?
2. If so, in what depth and detail?
3. Were topic area contents consistent with other interviewee statements?
4. To what extent was there negation or omission of a topic area?
5. Were there new topic areas?

The task of analysis, at this stage consisted, as Dey suggests (1993), of two activities, namely 'fragmenting and connecting'; breaking down material within interviews, and then making the connections between interviews. As the analysis progressed, the topic areas gained in meaning and precision becoming recognisable as codes or indices. My supervisors provided a measure of validation of the coding process and the establishment of a comprehensive indexing framework. I invited them to create their own indices from a sample of interview material; these indices were shared and compared as a broad validity check before the indexing framework was finalised.

The final framework, included as *Appendix 8*, used three main indices: Category A (Relationships), Category B (Competences) and Category C (Expectations, Aspirations and Anxieties). A fourth Category (D) contained miscellaneous indices. Within each category there were numerous sub-categories; for example Category A (Relationships) was subdivided as follows:

***A/1: Relationships with other seafarers***

- A/1/1: with captains
- A/1/2: with officers
- A/1/3: with other cadets
- A/1/4: with non –officers
- A/1/5: gendered relationships
- A/1/6: intergenerational
- A/1/7: harassment/bullying
- A/1/8: multicultural/racial
- A/1/9: crew in general

***A/2: Relationships with those back home***

- A/2/1: with family/friends whilst at sea
- A/2/2: sustaining partner relationships
- A/2/3: with sponsor company

***A/3: Handling relationships***

- A/3/1: coping strategies whilst at sea
- A/3/2: low spirits/depression/loneliness
- A/3/3: reconciling sea and shore life (oscillation)
- A/3/4: preparing to return to sea

***A/4 Social Relationships***

- A/4/1: use of alcohol
- A/4/2: leisure time

***A/5 Relationship with self/View of self***

- A/5/1: personal characteristics
- A/5/2: as seafarer

In order to retain both a sense of the views of each interviewee, and the spread of views across interviewees, folders were maintained on each indexed category, within which there was a file for each cadet. Each cadet file containing extracts selected, copied and pasted from their interview transcripts, relating to the category in question. An example of a cadet file is attached as *Appendix 9*. In some instances the same material was entered into a number of different categories, a recognised feature in the indexing process (Moghaddam, 2006).

A parallel task was the creation of a database using SPSS and the entering of questionnaire responses. The database facilitated the analysis of the questionnaire data by providing summary statistics using two basic procedures. One procedure was the measurement of frequency: this procedure provided information such as the number of female cadets in the sample, or the number of engineers. The second procedure was the crosstabs operation which measured association: this procedure provided information such as the number of female cadets in the sample who were also engineers. To assist in the comparison between the quantitative and qualitative data the questions were allocated to different coding categories: for example the responses to Question 26 which related to multiracial crews could be linked to and compared with the interview responses indexed A/1/8 – multicultural/racial relationships (see *Appendix 10*).

As a result of this analysis, the outputs from Phase One of the research design were a set of indexed interviews and a database of questionnaire responses. In addition, there were three other data-strands in the very early stages of development: theoretical inputs; the policy and training environment; and, the works of Joseph Conrad. These outputs became the foundation of Phase Two of the study.

## **PHASE TWO: FURTHER ANALYSIS, DATA INTEGRATION AND REPRESENTATION**

### **Overview**

The primary aim of Phase Two was to create a representation of seafarer cadetship. During Phase Two, it was recognised that two forms of representation could be created. First, an extended representation of sea cadetship as a narrative based on current experiences and complemented by other relevant perspectives and second, a concise representation of sea cadetship in the form of descriptors.

Achieving the primary aim required developing and refining the constant comparative method used in Phase One. In particular, analytic techniques of data linking and integration proved useful. The following sections explain these techniques and illustrate their application in relation to 'the glamour of seafaring'. The account of Phase Two methodology concludes with a reflection on the broader issues of representation.

### **Further analysis and data integration**

Generating a representation required a methodical process for the further selection, translation, arrangement and interpretation of '*all this stuff*' as Becker (2007a: 31) might describe the outputs of Phase One.

Extending the indexing framework to the other three data-strands provided the starting point of this methodical process. As already described under the section entitled 'Rigour', because of the particular relevance of Hill's study, I applied the indexing categories to his report. In the same manner, I worked through selected writings of Conrad, indexing the text where I could find pertinent material. There is no suggestion that the indexing framework was applicable in its detail to the writings of Conrad I had selected. It did identify passages of text which were relevant and illuminating to the cadet experience, particularly in relation to shipboard relationships and working practices. It was however, always cadet-generated data that formed the substance of this study and had primacy over the other data-strands.

Analysing the four strands together meant that using both different methods of elicitation and analytic techniques became regular practice. The use of mixed methods arose naturally at this stage of study. For example, in addition to applying a social science method to the works of Joseph Conrad, I also used literary criticism as a method of interpretation.

As the survey and interview within each indexed category were reviewed, the need to search out relevant material from the other data-strands was identified. For example the category C/3/1 which related to future prospects, contained cadets' opinions on the impact of the Tonnage Tax. Following this thread led to UK Government policy documents relating to the Tonnage Tax, and to relevant research papers. This further data was assembled and cross-referenced with existing study material. It is at this point that previous comments on emergent design and modified grounded theory are most applicable. The original strategy of working only with survey and interview data had developed into a strategy using four data strands in reflexive interaction.

The constant comparative method (CCM), fundamental to grounded analysis, was, in essence, the analytical tool I used. Strauss and Corbin (1990) understand CCM both as an

exploration of differences and similarities within the current data, and as an impetus to the collection of additional data, requiring the need to be simultaneously systematic and creative.

As the process unfolded, some indices flourished as they became the subject of more detailed investigation and interpretation. Conversely, others diminished. Not every data item is evident in the final representation. A coherent representation depends on data selection and reduction. 'Prioritising' is not a verb much used in descriptions of qualitative analysis but I found it a necessary part of data reduction. Prioritisation involved assessment of the extent to which cadets emphasised the importance of a particular issue in the interview accounts. The fact that an indexing category had been created was evidence that cadets had touched upon the issue concerned. But not all indices contained material of equal depth or detail. For example, whilst the importance of food at sea had emerged as an indexed category, with input from interview and questionnaire responses, the input was limited. The importance of food at sea is far from inconsequential, but it was not an issue which cadets explored. As a result 'food at sea' was not taken forward to any extent in the final representation. It could be argued that had I pursued this issue with cadets during their interviews, then their responses might have been much more detailed. However the approach taken in the interviews was to encourage cadets to describe their experiences, and the issues which were of significance to them. The number of cadets who mentioned an issue was taken into account in the final selection of material; however this was only one consideration. For instance, the majority of cadets interviewed did not describe experiences of harassment, but for those who did, it dominated their interview accounts, and consequently this topic area featured in the final representation.

It follows that one issue in the intra-strand analysis of the cadet data was the relative weighting given to the questionnaire and interview data in relation to prioritisation. As demonstrated shortly in the illustration on 'glamour', the issue of 'qualitative and quantitative prioritisation' was handled on a case-by-case basis. Further, in the four narrative chapters, there are two instances where the co-analysis of questionnaire and interview data required particular attention to the representativeness of sub-samples in

order to 'weigh' data for prioritisation; these sections are 'a relationship with the sea' (p.112) and 'beyond getting the ticket' (p.236).

A further consideration in the selection process was the extent to which the other data-strands contributed to an indexed category. Returning to the examples mentioned already, there was little in the other data-strands in relation to the issue of food at sea. There was however considerable material which amplified the issue of the Tonnage Tax. It was however not the case that all the issues in the final representation had input from all four data-strands.

A third selection criterion concerned variation in meaning. Where meanings were shared across strands then that theme, category or index was considered more favourably for representation. This is not to imply that only meanings that were congruent with each other were included in the final representation – in fact ambivalence itself became a key feature in the representation of cadetship. But where there were no correspondences in themes between data-strands, then a pragmatic approach was taken, given the limitations of what could actually appear in the final representation. This consideration is also illustrated in the section on 'glamour'; this was not included as a topic in itself, although implicit in discussions of seafaring as an occupation out of public view.

In summary, I applied the following set of criteria in the selection and reduction of data and the generation of content for the representations of sea cadetship:

- qualitative and quantitative prioritisation;
- the extent to which all strands contain references to the category or theme;
- the variations in meaning evident in the data strands.

Selection also involved the processes of translation, arrangement and interpretation already mentioned. For example, dealing with variations in meaning across the four strands involved translation and interpretation. Data selection inevitably meant that data from the four strands became 'linked' (Fielding and Fielding, 1986) through a process requiring the constant comparative analysis of all four data strands, linking indexed material, discarding some and developing others.

As the selection process proceeded and patterns made by the linked data became clearer, I came to see further possibilities for the study. These further thoughts led from

the narrative representation towards a concise representation in the form of findings as descriptors and eventually, in Phase Three of the research design, to the construction of what I describe as a 'window' with which to view the study material as a whole. The view through this window allowed me to see cadetship and seafaring in terms of 'a total occupation' and makes a modest contribution towards theory building. I again found Boeije's paper on constant comparative method especially useful (Boeije, 2002). Boeije provides a helpful reminder that theory building goes 'hand in hand' with the minutiae of analysis, and considers how this form of theory development using constant comparison automatically ensures internal validity:

"Comparisons that are highly regarded increase the internal validity of the findings. One criterion for qualitative research is that the researcher tries to describe and conceptualise the variety that exists within the subject under study. Variation or range exists by the grace of comparison and looking for commonalities and differences in behaviour, reasons, attitudes, perspectives and so on."

(Boeije, 2002: 393)

A detailed account of each analytical decision which has been used to create the representation in this study using CCM is clearly impractical. However in order to demonstrate how the process worked in practice I have given an illustration relating to the notion of the 'glamour' of seafaring.

### **The glamour of seafaring: illustrating the analytical processes**

The use of an illustration to reveal the analytical processes underpinning this study was prompted by my reading of Fielding and Fielding (1986). Fielding and Fielding suggest that rather than offer homilies which exhort the researcher to be imaginative in pondering what the data are telling us, it is helpful to provide practical guidance; they do this by giving an illustration in which they trace the procedures involved in data identification and analysis using research data on police careers. Boeije (2002) also offers an illustration of a step by step approach to qualitative analysis based on an empirical study of the patient and carer experience of multiple sclerosis.

The illustration given here takes the reader through the analytical processes set out earlier in *Chart 2/2* and refers to the criteria used in the selection and reduction of data as set out above (p. 48).

### ***exploring and familiarizing: pilot data***

Familiarization with the data generated in the pilot phase involved the reading, re-reading, and annotating of the pilot interview transcripts. At this point there were no topic areas or obvious signposts, and this first stage of analysis aimed to make sense of what seemed an unruly mass of data.

Reading through the first pilot interview, I noted that the deck cadet mentioned the way in which his friends 'shore-side' saw his life as a seafarer: *'they all think I'm minted, and they all say ... cor, I wish I had your life, you've got it brilliant.'* He believed that they had *"... visions of it (seafaring) being romantic, sailing into luxurious ports ..."* (Brett/02). Looking for comparable material in the other pilot interviews I recognised further references to what could be described as the romantic and exotic elements of seafaring. These references were not straightforward: there were no obvious key words but cadets talked about their own views of seafaring and what could be seen as its intrinsically exotic attractions, whilst observing that the day-to-day reality of life at sea was far from romantic. They also talked about the distance they felt from their non-seafaring peers 'shore side', and the romantic view of seafaring they felt was held by the outside world.

As I re-read and reflected upon the pilot interview transcripts it felt to me as though the interviewees were themselves trying to make sense of their own feelings and opinions as they talked. I could see how notions of both how cadets thought their lifestyle was perceived by others, and how they themselves saw their career, fitted the developing topic areas of 'cadets' relationships with friends and family on shore' and 'cadets' reasons for joining the training programme'.

Following on from these observations, I decided to include the option of *'others find it glamorous'* as one of the attractions of a career at sea. The word 'glamorous' was my own choice, an attempt to make sense of the descriptions given by cadets of the impressions non-seafarers had of seafaring. The notion of the glamorous image of seafaring became embedded explicitly in the questionnaire. Additionally, the interview schedule gave opportunity for discussion on both the attractions of seafaring and relationships 'shore-side'. Thus the notion of glamour was approached more obliquely in the interviews than in the questionnaire.

### ***forming: questionnaires and main interviews***

The completed questionnaires and the main interview responses gave somewhat contrasting indications of the status of 'glamour' as an aspect of cadetship. On the one hand, the completed questionnaires did not support the use of 'glamour' in any representation of sea cadetship. On the other hand, the main stage interview responses provided many comments that could have been interpreted as having some connection with 'glamour', thus strengthening the case for its inclusion in a representation of cadetship. In the next two paragraphs, I discuss in more detail how the contrasting data provided by the questionnaires and the main stage interviews 'measured up'.

Question 16 of the questionnaire offered cadets seven reasons for being attracted to a seafaring career and invited them to select as many as they felt were true for them. The attractions are listed in *Table 4/1* (p.125). '*Others find it glamorous*' was chosen as a career attraction by only 6 of the 120 cadets who responded to the questionnaire; all who selected this option were male cadets, 5 were deck cadets and one was an engineer. As a comparison, 113 of the 120 cadets selected 'good pay' as a career attraction. The questionnaire responses clearly offered no opportunity for further interrogation. I wondered whether cadets had given the attraction of 'glamour' any thought or if they had dismissed it out of hand; I reflected that if I had worded it in a different way, such as '*It's an occupation that attracts respect*' then the response might have been quite different. However the fact that it was an option selected by so few cadets from the questionnaire menu prompted me to look closely at the interview data to see whether the notion emerged at all from the conversations.

The interview data did in fact reveal numerous examples where cadets described how others seemed impressed by the apparently exotic, romantic nature of their work, and the smooth, attractive image of a seafaring officer. These numerous examples shared connotations with glamour. Moreover cadets themselves seemed to relish and to encourage these images - to give one example in which a cadet describes himself as having '*the whole Top Gun, Tom Cruise look*':

Interviewee:

"Wearing white trousers and a white shirt - when we were out in the Tropics we had the white shirt on the airplane, white shoes - it was just the whole Top Gun, Tom Cruise look. My friend only goes to bars nowadays, he just tells the girls he's in the, the Navy or the

Merchant Navy and he just, well they're all over him. They seem to like it too, the idea of a sailor."

(Graham/04 – M/D/18/XL)

Comparing and contrasting passages of interview material formed the basis for the construction of the detailed indexing framework, displayed in *Appendix 8*. This framework allowed me to 'categorise' interview material which related to notions of glamour but which was not necessarily explicit, including: exotic, romantic and physically attractive. Material relevant to the notion of glamour was categorised under indices relating to: expectations of life at sea; relationships with those back home; and, views of what it meant to be a seafarer.

***refining: material from other data-strands***

As I moved further into Phase Two of the research design, it seemed that there was sufficient degree of contrast and interest in the cadet data relating to 'glamour' to explore it more deeply. The next step of analysis was to see whether the other data-strands contained material which could be seen as of relevance.

In the research literature I found that Hill noted how seafarers recorded the perceptions held by non-seafarers of their working lives: *"You're a bit of a hero when you come back – it's something to tell the lads about."* (Hill, 1972:61). Hill's study also used the word 'glamorisation' in respect of seafarers' own ambivalent view of life at sea, juxtaposing their attraction to an occupation that could be seen as exotic, with the harshness and challenge of daily seafaring life. In her analysis of data on the occupational identity of Norwegian and Filipino seafarers Østreng (2001) also referred to popular mythology in which seafarers were seen as well-travelled heroes, particularly in their home towns.

Turning to the data-strand containing documentation on shipping policy and officer training, it was possible to see material that was relevant to the notion of glamour in the promotional literature encouraging recruitment into seafaring and maritime careers generally. This material was for the consumption of would-be seafarers rather than non-seafarers but was nevertheless publicly available. Whilst clearly not using words such as glamorous, romantic, or exotic, there were examples of material which emphasised excitement, adventure, and world wide travel opportunities in the seafaring career, and displayed images of attractive people in uniform. As an example, an edition of the

Seafarer (2006), the quarterly magazine of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets, selected at random contained three examples which could be seen as depicting a glamorous image of seafaring: the first from an article on the luxury-cruise industry portraying bridge officers engaging with smartly dressed passengers; the second image was an advertisement for a shipping company showing the cool and confident captain of a liquefied natural gas container ship smiling at the camera from the deck of his vessel; and the third a shipping company advertisement for trainees showed uniformed personnel in discussion on the bridge. These images were almost certainly realistic, yet they conveyed, certainly to me as a lay person a glamorous portrait of the seafarer.

Unexpectedly, as I had seen glamour as a modern-day notion, I found the word glamour itself in Conrad's 'Youth' (Conrad, 1898/1975) as the narrator of the tale recalls his life as a young seafarer, linking firstly glamour and youth, then youth and the sea, then glamour and the sea. However in this extract, as with the cadet material, Conrad's meaning was ambivalent:

"Only a moment; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour – of youth! ... Ah! The good old time – the good old time. Youth and the sea. Glamour and the sea! The good, strong sea, the salt, the bitter sea, that could whisper to you and roar at you and knock the breath out of you."

(Conrad, 1898/1975:39)

This highly specific reference to glamour by Conrad was noteworthy but ultimately was insufficiently supported by material in the other data-strands.

***integrating: no linking or patterning for glamour across all data strands***

Despite the evidence for the formal inclusion of glamour in the final representations of seafaring cadetship, attempts to link and pattern data connoting glamour within and across all four data strands proved unsuccessful. Accounting for this failure to integrate glamour into the representations is now considered.

***accounting: evaluation and narration***

This study understands 'accounting' in terms of both its evaluative and narrative senses.

In respect of evaluating 'glamour', the foregoing account under the headings of the key processes of the CCM needs to be considered in relation to the criteria set out (p.48).

*- qualitative and quantitative prioritisation*

The survey data indicated that the notion of glamour as set out in the question was not seen as relevant by the vast majority of cadets. The qualitative data did contain relevant material but the extent of ambiguity in meaning meant that 'glamour' as a theme could not be substantiated as a category.

*- references across all data-strands*

All data-strands provided some material of relevance to the notion of glamour but the references were limited in extent and the degree to which they had been developed.

*- variations in meaning*

Whilst attempting to understand the variations in meaning central to qualitative methodologies, the researcher needs to exercise controlled discretion when interpreting material from a particular perspective; in this case, glamour. Even though there was evidence of shared meaning between the data-strands, reflecting reflexively on that evidence suggested too great a degree of ambiguity that could be the basis for any patterning of data that could be represented in any coherent fashion.

Despite the above quotes from the cadet (pseudonymised as Graham/04) and Conrad's 'Youth' offering attractive examples, applying the three selection criteria, glamour was not integrated in the representation of cadetship as an explicit category for discussion. Moreover, compared to other categories that were included in the final representations, glamour was less supported by evidence. There was also the complication of one facet of glamour related to the views of families and friends, necessitating dedicated further data collection well beyond the scope of even an emergent design.

Even though the above account of the potential of glamour in the representation of seafarer cadetship centred on evaluating evidence generated using the Constant Comparative Method, the account also has similarities to the narrative style used in chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven of this study. In respect of the narrative account, it is necessary to explain the role played by 'formally silent' categories such as glamour. By 'formally silent', I mean themes, codes and categories that do not appear as headings or descriptors in the final representations of seafaring cadetship, yet have still contributed to the narrative account.

Although the notion of glamour does not appear formally in the representations of cadetship for the reasons given above, the process of analysis led to reflection on other aspects of cadetship and seafaring which were fully developed in the study. These aspects were: the ambivalence with which the cadets saw their working lives where elements of the exotic were juxtaposed with an often harsh daily reality; and, the emphasis on seafaring as an occupation of '*difference*' in which cadets were drawn to work where notions associated with glamour were embedded in the attractions of seeing the world and of a non-routine life style. Exploring glamour also contributed to the notion of seafaring as an occupation closed to the outside world: cadets' stories of how they perceived – and encouraged – their non-seafaring peers to be impressed by the apparently exotic nature of their work added to the consideration of how cadets saw their wider relationships 'shore-side'.

Choosing 'the glamour of seafaring' as an illustration of the analytical processes underpinning this study has also demonstrated that much of the analysis which has taken place has not been presented in the final representations. This has been an inevitable consequence of the processes of selection and reduction. However the reflection which 'glamour' has prompted in terms of the comparisons between the survey and the interview data and the consideration of glamour in the other data-strands, has contributed more generally to the final representation of cadetship, in which '*difference*' and ambivalence of seafaring have been major features.

### **A reflection on representation**

The process of analysis required the constant comparative analysis of all four data-strands, linking indexed material, discarding some and developing others. The selected material then required 'arrangement' into a representation that was coherent and readable. The representation eventually took the shape of four separate chapters based on the cadet journey through training, providing in themselves a record of the process of analysis. The structuring of the chapters in this way was influenced by the view that the nature of human group life is processual, and that human lived experience unfolds over time (Geer et al, 1970; Prus, 1996 and 2009). The first of these chapters focussed on the background to entry into training. The second and third were based on the experience of planned training at sea; and the fourth was structured around the futures cadets

envisaged for themselves. Within each chapter the time frames shifted as cadets reflected on their past, considered their present lives, and looked to the future - all within the present of the interview.

In creating this representation, the very act of imposing a narrative provided a sense of order. Traditional research accounts have been criticised as failing to portray the disorderliness of reality (Maynard and Purvis, 1994), where the efforts of researchers to sanitise the messiness, confusion and complexity of conducting research have resulted in accounts which '*bear little or no relation to real events*' (Kelly et al, 1994: 46). However censoring out the '*frustrating and messy enterprise [of research] with false starts and blind alleys*' (Elliott, 2005:154) may be partly a consequence of imposing a narrative order rather than an intention to mislead. Kermode (1966) writing from the perspective of a literary critic, contrasts the simplicity found in narrative order and the illusion of causality which it can give, with what he refers to as the '*overwhelming variegation of life*':

"How good it would be... if one could find in life the simplicity inherent in narrative order. This is the simple order that consists in being able to say: "When that happened then this happened." What puts our minds at rest is the simple sequence, the overwhelming variegation of life now represented in, as a mathematician would say, a unidimensional order. We like the illusions of this sequence, its acceptable appearance of causality: it has the look of necessity. But the look is illusory."

(Kermode, 1966:127)

Writing with particular reference to the transitions of young people into adult life, Pais questions whether linear methods can "*offer us a true account of the upheavals of life*", likening the methodological challenge of representing "*the fragments of life*" to putting together a jigsaw, turning over the pieces, and seeing how they fit together to create meaning (Pais, 2003: 120).

Becker provides reassurance that any representation of social reality, "*... whether a documentary film, a demographic study, a realistic novel is necessarily partial ...*" (Becker, 2007a:20). Looking back, it seems obvious that the operations of selection, translation, arrangement and interpretation as Becker describes them, would be fundamental to the research process and its representation; that the very nature of data gathering requires choices to be made and that in '*arranging all this stuff*' a selection is made, an argument

is constructed. However this understanding was not obvious at the outset and has been something that I have appreciated as part of the reflexive process.

Becker is also encouraging in his call to extend the range of '*ways of telling about society*' and uses Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as an example of a novel "*rich in possibilities for sociological analysis and thinking*" (Becker, 2007a: 250). Becker has applauded Candido's contribution to the debate on literature and society which is of particular interest to this study: Candido takes the view that literature and sociology are not two different fields of study and describes his own scholarly life as "*The search for an open and integrative mode [of analysis or criticism] that rises above [conventional academic divisions between social science and the humanities] in order to arrive at a more coherent point of view.*" (Candido, 1995: xiii). Candido suggests that authors use social observation and analysis as the basis for the structure of a work and uses Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* as an example:

"The effectiveness of Conrad's art is not due to the simple proposal of an attitude to life, but to the fact of translating that attitude into a method of narration, which becomes an indissoluble part of what the novelist means since, in the end, it is what he effectively says."

(Candido, 1995: xiv)

The theme of the relationship between literature and society is also explored by Strong, who lists novelists, journalists, film-makers and dramatists as, at least in part, professional students of the social world. Whilst their primary audiences may differ, together with their modes of analysis and communication, he argues that quite a few of their findings and methods are the same; "*a fact which is all too often ignored, at least by ourselves.*" (i.e. sociologists) (Strong, 1983: 119). Going on to consider similarities and differences in what he describes as '*the sociological trades*', Strong discusses the mutuality of influence, suggesting that large parts of sociology have grown directly out of literary and journalistic conditions. In the UK the tradition of the novelist as social commentator is seen clearly in the novels of Dickens and Orwell amongst others. Equally, he suggests, social science has affected the works of both novelists and journalists. Ethnographic methods have encouraged lengthy and direct involvement with '*subjects*', the recording of actual speech, and the need to consider the '*story behind the story*'.

In describing the mutual ambition of social science, journalism and creative writing to offer keys to the meaning of social life, Strong raises the same issues explored by Becker,

and notes that journalists seem to worry as much as sociologists about their proper analytical role. Strong adds to mutual influences and ambitions, a fascination with speech and what it may reveal, where the concerns of a novelist in studying character are “*something more akin to interpretative sociology*” (Strong, 1983:124). Describing one of the central interpretative difficulties that he faced in an analysis of his own observational study of doctor-patient consultations as the lack of comparable material from other studies, Strong (1979) refers to how he used material from a collection of Russian short stories. This is of relevance to this study where selected writings of Joseph Conrad have been included as a source of material.

Conrad was known from his letters and notes to be particularly interested in representing the complexity of reality, recognising through the voices of his characters that there is no one privileged point of view in a given situation. ‘Facts’ alone are insufficient in order to make sense of the world as the impassioned outburst from Marlow, narrator of the novel *Lord Jim*, frustrated at the conduct of the Inquest into Jim’s abandonment of the ship on which he is serving as first mate, suggests:

“They wanted facts. Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything!”

(Conrad, 1900 /1974: 33)

There are however important differences to be noted between the representations of social scientists and of novelists, and again, it is relevant to this study to expand on these differences, especially as I have grappled with the relationship between the sociological and the literary during the course of this research.

The most central difference between the conventional literary artist and the social scientist, Strong suggests, is the very different nature of the truth they claim to serve. The novelist will often claim that ‘*any similarity to real individuals is entirely coincidental*’, whereas the claims of the social scientist are based on the veracity of their data and the procedural reliability. The artist exalts imagination and conceals their method or processes; the social scientist exalts facts and makes public the methods involved in establishing those facts. Strong goes on to assert that artists and journalists are freer to experiment with new forms and techniques, suggesting that many important contributions to the social sciences have been made by ‘role-hybrids’ who bring to the

academy empirical material and analyses which have, hitherto, conventionally been excluded. Dennis (2005) considers there to be an increasing interest from sociologists in experimenting with a 'literary turn' to the social sciences, citing the writings of Richardson and Lockridge (2004) and Ellis (2004). His view is that "... *literature and sociology simply have different goals and readers approach them with different expectations.*" (Dennis, 2005: 477). Whilst they may share the goal of creating an interpretation and thus a representation of social life, the social scientist, unlike the novelist is obliged to give an account of the process by which this representation was reached, a process which has to demonstrate rigour. Mills suggests that the ground between the 'thick facts' and the 'thin meanings' of the ordinary sociological monograph, and those art forms which "... *do away with the facts*" (Mills, 2008:34), is best described as 'sociological poetry'. This he suggests might have a ratio of meaning to fact, with success being '*a sociological poem which contains the full human meaning in statements of apparent fact*', a view that might well be shared by Richardson in her efforts to represent the sociological as poetry as a way of "... *experiencing the self as a sociological knower/constructor.*" (Richardson, 1992:136)

These reflections on representation have touched on content, on perspectives, and on style, with an emphasis on the relationship between literature and sociology. Before moving on to the final phase of this study's research design, it is noted that such concerns about how to represent the social world and the human condition are very ancient. Prus points out that, "... *conceptualizing and representing the human condition has been of concern to scholars of "poetics" at least since the writings of Homer and Hesiod (cira 700BCE).*" (Prus, 2009:23). It is Prus's contention that whilst the poetics of the classical Greek era (c700-300BCE) may seem somewhat removed from a pragmatist social science, they can be seen as contributing to a scholarly emphasis on the ways in which people engage with the world. Appropriately for this study, Prus begins his discussion with Homer's '*Odyssey*', suggesting that both '*The Odyssey*' and the '*The Iliad*' as extensively developed epic poems depict matters of adversity, deliberation, affection, loyalty, morality, persona, mortality, and ongoing adjustment, as the substance of human interchange and as such "*represent particularly significant reference points for those embarking on scholarly representations of things "human".*" (Prus, 2009:7). His focus is

on the poetic expressions however he makes a more general point reproduced here because of its relevance to the approach taken in this study:

“All resources (ethnographic, historical, poetic, philosophical) pertaining to the study of human knowing and acting, offer greater potential for comprehending community life when these material are subject to comparative analysis within a broader pragmatist emphasis on learning about people’s life-worlds and the activities (and interchanges) they develop therein. Given its introductory quality, the present statement is just one step in that direction. Hopefully, though, by alerting others to the comparatively untapped resources suggested by some of the detailed accounts of human group life that one encounters in the poetics literature and other “historically situated” materials, this statement may encourage more sustained considerations of community life “in the making”.”

(Prus, 2009:24)

### **PHASE THREE: CONSTRUCTING A WINDOW ON CADETSHIP**

The selection, translation, arrangement and interpretation of the four data-strands resulted in an extended representation of cadetship displayed in and by Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven of this thesis, and a concise representation of sea cadetship in the form of descriptors of the cadet experience.

Drawing the study to a conclusion, I returned yet again to the cadet data, to the other data-strands, and to the findings of the study contained in the chapters of representation. I was mindful that grounded analysis and the use of CCM offered the potential for external validity and for potentially *‘moving beyond the single case’*, as Shaffir and Pawluch (2003:906) pointed out and as Boeije (2002) notes:

“When the sampling has been conducted well in a reasonably homogeneous sample, there is a solid basis for generalizing the concepts and the relations between them to units that were absent from the sample, but which represent the same phenomenon. The conceptual model can even be transferred to different substantial fields that show similarities with the original field.”

(Boeije, 2002: 393)

Working with the descriptors of cadet experience, Phase Three aimed to connect the conceptual and the empirical aspects of inquiry (Dewey, 1938). The result was the construction of what is described as a window with which to view the material gathered during the course of the study: the view through the window is of cadetship and seafaring as a total occupation structured by the dynamic interplay of *‘ambivalence’*, *‘totalness’*, *‘calling’* and *‘tradition’*.

It is worth noting that whereas I have provided detailed descriptions of the methods used in Phases One and Two, the above description of Phase Three methods is minimal. This difference in detail is due to the fact that Phases One and Two methods are 'enacted' in the narrative representation of seafarer cadetship but the construction of 'the window' in the study's final chapter required methods that are described and used as one.

## **2.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter has been structured to give an overview of the methodology employed in this study and also to show in detail how the research processes unfolded over time.

The overview outlined the key methodological influences and the key aspects of the approach taken to the study. These aspects were considered as: the qualitative and reflexive orientation of the study; the use of modified grounded theory rooted in grounded analysis; the emergent nature of the research design; the use of mixed methods; and the approach taken to rigour.

Describing in detail the conduct of the research, the second part of the chapter explained how the study was conceived, the researcher's own motivations and the reflexive nature of the research. Attention was given to the pilot phase of the study where the selected methods for data elicitation were face-to-face interviews with Merchant Navy officer cadets, a group discussion, and both a study-specific and a validated questionnaire. Access to the cadets was negotiated through their sponsor companies with the co-operation of the education colleges. The ethical issues of conducting the research were discussed, including the fine line which is drawn between the research and the therapeutic interview. The pilot work paved the way for the main study in which material was gathered from 120 completed study-specific questionnaires and 37 face-to-face interviews conducted with 25 cadets.

The study set out to study the phenomenon of Merchant Navy officer cadetship by focussing initially on the voices of cadets themselves as these had not featured in the contemporary research literature. The openness of cadets and the resulting richness of detail and insight in their interview accounts were to a degree unexpected, and has been one of the methodological strengths of this study.

Clearly the sample involved only those cadets who were willing to express their views and feelings in completing the questionnaires and, to a greater extent, participating in the interviews. The method of recruitment may inevitably have introduced a systematic bias because of its voluntary nature. Nevertheless the empirical material gathered does contain a full range of responses to cadetship, suggesting that the study did not simply attract those at one end of the spectrum of views.

Concerns over the sample size; of potential attrition from the sample; tracking difficulties; and, fieldwork costs, all informed the decision not to include a longitudinal component in the final design. As the body of empirical material grew, new perspectives and avenues of exploration were opened up. These perspectives came to form three further 'data-strands' in the study and were incorporated into the emergent research design, consistent with an approach using reflexivity. These data-strands comprised: theoretical inputs; a description of the policy and industry environment; and, insights drawn from the works of Joseph Conrad. It is suggested that this use of mixed methods has brought together material from other disciplines, research fields and cultural forms and made possible a broader exploration and consequent representation of the phenomenon of seafarer cadetship than might have been achieved through a single method. The use of mixed methods has also provided a '*broad-brush validity check*' on the research findings and the representations offered.

The reflections on representation in this chapter have led to discussion of the relationships between social science representations of the social world and those produced by other users of text – notably the writers of literature. One of the points arising from this discussion is that content and form are in a sense indissoluble, rather as methods and research outputs are inseparably interrelated, an observation made at the beginning of this chapter. Both Van Maanen (1988) and Richardson (1990) emphasise the way in which narrative can be used to structure the writing of research accounts and the representation of cadetship which appears in chapters four, five, six and seven takes the form of a narrative based upon the words of the cadets themselves. These words are contextualised by the policy data-strand, illuminated by Conrad's writings and critically informed by the research literatures.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **STUDY MATERIALS**

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The views expressed by Merchant Navy officer cadets on their experiences of cadetship constitute the substantive content – the core material – of this study. As recorded in the previous chapter, preliminary data analysis of the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts opened up new avenues of inquiry that eventually yielded a further three ‘data-strands’ in addition to the cadet data. Each data-strand has made a distinctive contribution to the interpretation and representation of the phenomenon of seafaring cadetship in terms of content, perspective and style. This chapter outlines the nature of the material forming the additional strands; by implication and necessity, it reviews extant information and knowledge so as to establish fundamental contexts and elements that are used interactively in the narrative analysis of the subsequent four chapters.

#### **CHAPTER STRUCTURE**

The first data-strand to be considered is derived primarily from documentary material issued by: the UK Government; the Merchant Navy Training Board; consultancies; and, by a trade union. The content of this strand relates to the post-1970 UK shipping industry, especially the seafarer workforce and UK Merchant Navy Officer training. The material generates a context for interpreting the experiences of cadets; it also expands on pertinent technical issues. For example, I show that the ‘tonnage tax’ is a core element in the analysis of current UK Merchant Navy phenomena and explain the context in which the ‘tonnage tax’ operates. This approach to review and overview of relevant material provides reference points for the narrative discussion of the cadets’ experiences both in terms of their specific views of the ‘tonnage tax’ and, more generally, other topics suggested by data provided by the cadets themselves. This data-strand is therefore treated at length in this chapter as much of the material does not appear again in the study other than as reference points.

The second data-strand relates to the extant research and scholarly literatures used throughout the thesis as a means of: point of discussion; corroboration; or, contrast with the findings of this study. As the body of data from the cadets grew, it became necessary to seek out theoretical inputs from a range of disciplines and research areas. These theoretical inputs became integral to the analysis and construction of the representation of cadetship. An outline of the approach taken to the research literatures is given,

followed by an overview of those literatures as they appear in each of the analytical chapters. The treatment of this data-strand is concise because the research literatures are fully embedded in the analytical chapters, being used 'on demand' in response to the analysis of the cadet data.

Selected writings of Joseph Conrad form the third data-strand. Selected extracts of text have been introduced into the analysis to offer contrast, comparison, and illumination in relation to the views and voices of the cadets who participated in this study. Working with a sample of Conrad's numerous studies of men and the sea, material was further selected using the indexing categories which emerged from the grounded analysis of the interview data. It would have been surprising and unlikely that the whole sample of Conrad's work could be fully indexed in this way, and no claim is made for any universal Conradian perspective applicable to seafaring today. However, the introduction of this data-strand suggests that there are enduring aspects of the seafaring experience that hold true despite fundamental changes in seafaring practice. In this chapter Conrad's writing is set in the context of his biography and, as in the case of the first data-strand, contains material that does not appear explicitly in the analytical chapters.

The chapter concludes by describing 'the study materials in use'. This section provides both a link between this and the preceding chapter and a bridge to the narrative chapters that follow. The discussion centres on the issue of how content, style and perspective are managed in generating representations of phenomena.

### **3.2 THE UK MERCHANT NAVY – CONTEXTUALISING AN OCCUPATION**

The young people in this study were engaged in training which would, if they were successful, provide them with the necessary certification to enter the world of work as seafaring officers. The term 'occupation' is used in this thesis to refer to the world of work into which cadets are being inducted, and the reasons for choosing this term are briefly covered in the following notes.

#### **NOTES TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF OCCUPATION**

Hughes suggested that in named occupations, "*The names are a combination of price tag and calling card.*" (Hughes 1958:42). This notion of occupation clearly encompasses

socio-economic concerns with salary and status. Gross et al (1958) provide a more sociological view of occupation through a focus on '*occupancy*' and '*performance*':

"It is through the **occupancy** of statuses by individuals and their performance of roles that the "business" of a society is accomplished. It is carried out in a patterned and organized way through the members of society occupying statuses and performing roles."

(Gross et al, 1958:12, emphasis added)

As will be recorded in due course, Gross et al's identification of individuals occupying multiple statuses and performing different roles will be of central importance in this study. Gross et al's use of inverted commas around the word 'business' implies a notion of occupation that is not just limited to business in the sense of a paid job but also signals the wider social world. The notion of 'total occupation' accommodates the possibility of a seafarer occupying a status in social space whilst not bodily occupying the corresponding place in physical space; the ambivalence of 'being at home' and 'being not a home' at one and the same time.

Other notes that might go to a definition of occupation include training in respect of skills and competencies. '*Learning the ropes*' (Geer et al, 1970) is relevant to individuals in diverse occupational settings: an occupation requires the application of skills and the acquisition of competencies which may not necessarily be linked to paid employment; the 'traditional housewife', for example. In this study attention is given to the skills and competences of seamanship acquired and developed during planned training at sea.

Certification and regulation feature in certain paid occupations and this is the case for seafaring officers.

In addition to pay, status, role, skills, competencies, training, certification and regulation, occupations can be noted by culture and tradition. Seafaring can claim to be an occupation with one of the oldest traditions (Hope, 2001). Even so, the 'business' of seafaring has changed in recent decades; changes which are both cause and effect of globalization. This consideration adds further 'notes' towards our definition of occupation: the need to include industry characteristics and government policies; matters which are considered next.

## **THE UK SHIPPING INDUSTRY & RELATED UK GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

The experience of the cadets in this study has been structured in part by the overall situation of the UK shipping industry, and by the policy response of the UK Government to the decline in both the Merchant Fleet and the UK seafaring workforce. Statistics on the position of the industry, government policy documents including parliamentary reports and the evidence submitted to Parliament, and, observations from informed commentators have all been used as material in this strand of the study. This material was sourced primarily through data-base and website searches and subjected to iterative reading and review; content was analysed in relation to the material derived from the cadet interviews and questionnaire responses which had already been indexed using a grounded analysis approach. As previously described, some of this material has been integrated in the chapters of analysis in this thesis; however not all that was of relevance could be formally integrated, including information on the state of the UK shipping industry since the mid-twentieth century, and government policy response. This background information is provided here as an essential component to an understanding of UK Merchant Navy Officer Cadetship.

### **The UK merchant fleet**

The decline of the UK merchant shipping industry between 1950 and 2001, when this study began, has been well documented in terms of shipping tonnage – both ownership and registration – and of shipping workforce (Ledger and Roe, 1992; DETR, 1998; SIRC, 1999; Brownrigg et al, 2001). In 1950 Britain owned the largest merchant fleet in the world with 21% of all tonnage; by 1990 it was the eleventh biggest with 2% (Ledger and Roe, 1992). The deadweight tonnage (DWT) of UK-owned vessels of over 500 gross tonnes had reached a peak in 1975 of approximately 50.8 million DWT; by 1999 this had fallen to 7 million DWT (Brownrigg et al, 2001). DWT is commonly defined as the weight in tonnes of cargo, fuel, provisions, stores and passengers, which can be carried by a vessel when fully loaded (Strandgaard, 1936).

The reduction of the UK fleet in these years was even greater in terms of UK-registration than in UK-ownership, both in absolute numbers of vessels, and as a proportion of UK-owned tonnage. Until the late 1970s UK-owned ships were almost always registered in the UK but by 2001, 50% of UK-owned vessels were registered abroad, accounting for

two thirds of UK-owned DWT (Brownrigg et al, 2001). The ‘flagging out’ of vessels, which began in the 1920s, increased during the late 1970s and the 1980s as more ship owners chose to register under Flags of Convenience (FOC) and operate within less regulated environments (SIRC, 1999). The International Transport Federation defines an FOC as:

“Where beneficial ownership and control of a vessel is found to lie elsewhere than in the country of the flag the vessel is flying, the vessel is considered as sailing under a flag of convenience.”

(ITF, 1999)

The overall decline of the British merchant fleet in the latter half of the Twentieth Century and the reasons behind it are seen as complex and multi-factored, and are located within the global context. The reasons include economic and commercial problems of over-capacity and associated declining freight rates; accelerating concentration of ownership; changes in patterns of capital financing; the shipping and fiscal policies of other maritime nations; and, the growth of developing and newly industrialized economies (Ledger and Roe, 1992; DETR, 1998; SIRC, 1999; Brownrigg et al, 2001; Selkou and Roe, 2002).

**Table 3/1** Total trading fleet on the UK Register (vessels of 100GT and over)

<b>End Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>000 GT</b>	<b>000 DWT</b>
1999	379	3,200	2,740
2000	417	4,579	3,757
2001	427	5,035	4,269
2002	497	7,114	6,686
2003	587	9,971	9,830
<b>% change 1999 to 2003</b>	<b>54.9</b>	<b>211.6</b>	<b>258.8</b>

**Source:** House of Commons Transport Committee Report (HoC, 2005a:13)

The UK Tonnage Tax, introduced in January 2000 and outlined later in this chapter, is flag neutral in that there is no requirement for ships in tonnage tax to be linked to any particular flag; however they must be strategically and commercially managed in the UK. The House of Commons Transport Committee report into the Tonnage Tax (House of Commons, 2005a:13) illustrates the increase in the number of ships on the UK register

since the introduction of the Tonnage Tax, using figures produced by the Chamber of Shipping. These details of vessels over 100 gross tonnes, their gross tonnage and deadweight tonnage between 1999 and 2003 on the UK Register are displayed in *Table 3/1* (above).

Vessels on the UK Register increased in number to 629 in 2007, together with an increase in the DWT to nearly 18 million in 2007 (Oxford Economics, 2007:17). In the data presented to the House of Commons Transport Committee (2005a:14), the number of ships in the UK-owned fleet shows only a small increase over this same period as shown in *Table 3/2*.

**Table 3/2** Total UK-owned Trading Fleet (vessels of 100GT and over)

End Year	Number	000 GT	000 DWT
1999	617	6,530	7,196
2000	624	8,536	10,499
2001	594	9,480	12,013
2002	590	9,752	12,273
2003	649	12,656	14,972
<b>% change 1999 to 2003</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>108.1</b>

**Source:** House of Commons Transport Committee Report (HoC, 2005a:14)

The Chamber of Shipping suggested to the Committee that the increase in ships might actually have been greater, based on the fact that a review of ships on The Register had indicated the baseline figures might be an overestimate. The President of the Chamber of Shipping pointed out that whilst new ships were much larger this did not mean correspondingly higher numbers of officers – a trading vessel will employ similar crew numbers ‘*virtually regardless of the ship size*’ (House of Commons, 2005a:15). This does raise the issue of labour-intensification where technological innovations have allowed reductions in crewing levels but placed additional demands on the diminished crews (Bloor and Sampson, 2009; Bloor, 2010a). Nevertheless there appears to be agreement across all parts of the shipping industry that the Tonnage Tax regime has been successful

in attracting tonnage but to a lesser extent numbers of vessels (House of Commons, 2005a; Leggate and McConville, 2005; Oxford Economics, 2007).

### **The UK seafarer workforce**

Concern over the decline of the UK shipping industry has not only been confined to the fleet itself, but also to the numbers of UK citizens employed as active seafarers; a diminishing seafaring workforce also has implications for the UK maritime cluster, where a supply of people with seafaring skills and experience is seen as essential to fill jobs in the shore-based maritime-related sectors of the economy (Moreby and Springett, 1990; Ledger and Roe, 1992; Gardner and Pettit, 1996; DETR, 1998). Glen et al (2005) in the 2004 UK Seafarers Analysis Report use the following definition of a seafarer and build into the figures the assumption that 16% of officers of all ages with valid certificates work on shore:

“Any person who holds an officer’s Certificate of Competency, which gives the holder the potential to work on board a registered vessel, together with any other person who is identified as working regularly at sea (e.g. an uncertificated technical or catering officer, a trainee, or a rating). The term includes officers who hold a valid Certificate of Competency but who may be working in on-shore positions, and are thus not engaged in sea-going activity.”

(Glen et al, 2005:11; underlining added)

Since 1975 there has been a decline in the pool of active UK seafarers and an increase in the average age of the UK seafarer population. The decline has been associated with changes in the structure of the shipping industry in the 1980s which led to the true globalization of the seafarer labour market (SIRC, 1999) and to what Leggate describes as a relentless decline in the number of seafarers coming from developed countries (Leggate, 2004). SIRC’s global labour market database shows that the proportion of European Union (EU) nationals on EU-flagged ships fell from 67% in 1993 to 39% in 1997, and that EU seafarers have much higher mean ages than seafarers from developing nations (Lane et al, 2002).

Data available for vessels owned by Chamber of Shipping members show a steep decline in the numbers of UK seafarers, both officers and ratings, employed between 1980 and 1997; numbers of UK ratings fell in this period by 65% and numbers of officers by 78% (DETR, 1998). Data collection and analysis on the UK seafarer workforce undertaken by London Metropolitan University for the Department for Transport are published as

*'Annual UK Seafarer Statistics'*, previously named as *'UK Seafarer Analysis'* (Glen et al, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; and 2010). From 2004 onwards the data sources used to inform the seafarer statistics have been extended in a number of ways: by using detailed information on age and departmental distribution of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) members; by improved modeling of seafarer projection numbers using information from the Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund (MNOFP); by incorporating improved data from the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) on new trainees; and finally, by using information from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) on non-UK officers serving on UK registered vessels (Glen et al, 2005).

Although the most recent UK Seafarer Statistics (Glen et al, 2010) indicate that the number of certificated deck and engine officers working regularly at sea in 2009 has remained stable in relation to the 2008 figures (Glen et al, 2009) at 11,400, the overall trend in numbers of certificated officers is one of decline. The data from 2007 (Glen et al, 2008) showed approximately 12,000 UK deck and engineering officers working regularly at sea, down from 13,600 in 2006 (Glen et al, 2007). Looking back over a period of two decades, the number of certificated officers was 20% lower in 2009 than in 1997, and 25% lower if newly eligible groups are excluded (Glen et al, 2010). Taking a retirement age of 65 years, UK officer numbers have been predicted to decline from 17,126 in 2003 to 9,817 in 2018 (HoC, 2005a:18). In the most recent set of UK Seafarer's Statistics Glen et al (2010:5) suggest that projections indicate a 'bottoming out' of the decline in certificated officers at 2027. Projections assume a cadet entry rate of 600 per year and attrition rates of 8% per annum during training.

The decline in seafarer numbers has been paralleled by the increase since 1980 in the age of the UK seafarer population. NUMAST data suggest that in 2004 more than 80% of the entire British seafarer workforce were aged over 35 years, compared with 41% in 1971 (NUMAST, 2004b). As far as UK officers are concerned, in 1980 the average age was 27 years whilst in 2004 this was over 47 years. The 2009 UK Seafarer Statistics (Glen et al, 2010) note that *'nearly two thirds'* of the certificated officers are over forty years of age. NUMAST (2004b:8) suggested that 73% of UK Merchant Navy officers were aged over 40 years; this compares with 53% in the UK male workforce as a whole.

Explanations underlying the marked increase in the age of both the total seafarer workforce and the sub-set of officers could be that there are very few young seafarers entering the labour market; alternatively that increasing numbers of seafarers are staying in the industry. It is suggested later in this chapter that it is recruitment of young seafarers into the service that is declining. The McKinnon Report (2006) suggests that new British officers will not be recruited at a rate sufficient to replace those already employed, and that 32% of the companies involved in their survey expected a significant change in the nature of their companies need for Junior Officers over the next three years; this commonly meant *'crewing out'* – that is switching from British to non-British junior officers.

Alongside *'crewing out'* as an explanation for fewer UK Junior Officers, overall reductions in crewing levels should also be mentioned. Reductions, in crewing levels, partly as a result of technological changes such as automated engine rooms, and partly due to commercial pressures, are likely to affect disproportionately the number of places for Junior Officers available on ships (Bloor, 2010a).

### ***cadet numbers***

The data on *'trainees in training'* includes officer cadets, apprentices (ratings recruited for a ratings-to-officer training programme), and undergraduate officer trainees, *'generally with no prior relevant experience or qualifications for whom full training is provided'* (Glen et al, 2010:16). The number of new starts other than as deck and engineering cadets remains extremely small and for this reason the data used in this study relates to the numbers defined as *'officer cadets'*. *'New start'* numbers of officer cadets are collected by financial rather than calendar year and are provided by the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB). Estimates of the number of cadets in training are derived by deducting MNTB figures for *'new starts'* from the estimated total number of cadets supported by the Support for Maritime Training scheme (SMarT). The SMarT scheme, established in 1998, disburses the grants to support Merchant Navy training, and is the responsibility of The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA, 2003). Information obtained through the MNTB and through SMarT differs slightly because of eligibility for SMarT support. It is anticipated that a new database for cadets, using the SMarT data as the primary source - to be implemented from 2008 - will improve the

information currently available on cadet numbers, cohort progression, and attrition rates (Glen et al, 2010).

From 2004 onwards the UK Seafarer Analyses and Statistics (Glen et al, 2005) contain more detailed information on cadet figures than earlier reports (see p.73). However the figures prior to this (NUMAST, 2004b) show that in 1975 there were 2,315 officer cadets beginning training in the UK falling to 1,274 in 1980 and reaching a low of 162 in 1987. Training numbers recovered during the 1990s to between 400 and 500. The number of officer cadet ‘new starts’ from financial years 1999/2000 to 2008/09 are shown in *Table 3/3*.

**Table 3/3** Number of officer cadets (new starts) in the years 1999/2000-2008/9

<b>New Starts</b> \ <b>Year</b>	99/00 (2000)	00/01 (2001)	01/02 (2002)	02/03 (2003)	03/04 (2004)	04/05 (2005)	05/06 (2006)	06/07 (2007)	07/08 (2008)	08/09 (2009)
Deck	250	270	270	290	320	280	330	410	480	520
Engine	200	210	210	310	250	220	280	240	400	370
Technical/ dual	—	—	—	—	40	40	20	80	10	—
All officers (total)	450	480	480	600	610	540	630	730	880	890

Adapted from table 1.6 in UK Seafarer Statistics2009 (Glen et al, 2010:19)

The table illustrates that the number of new starts and of cadets/trainees in training has shown a slow but steady increase overall. However annual intakes of cadets are still lower than the annual intake of 1000 which London Metropolitan University (LMU) considered necessary to maintain officer numbers at their current levels. Moreover, provisional figures for new starts in 2009/10 have fallen to 700; this sudden decline is attributed to the onset of the economic recession, and the fact that the positive effects of the introduction of Foundation Degrees has ‘worn off’ (Glen et al, 2010:17). The total numbers of UK officer cadets in training are shown in *Table 3/4* (overleaf) and are for financial, not calendar year.

The House of Commons Transport Committee (2005a) noted that the Government had agreed that this number of trainees is not enough. The written evidence from NUMAST

to the Committee (HoC, 2005a: Evidence 25) indicated that cadet numbers since the introduction of the UK Tonnage Tax had been disappointing, suggesting both that some companies had reduced their training levels, and that attrition rates were higher than thought.

**Table 3/4** UK officer cadets in training in the years 1999/00-2008/09

Year	99/00 (2000)	00/01 (2001)	01/02 (2002)	02/03 (2003)	03/04 (2004)	04/05 (2005)	05/06 (2006)	06/07 (2007)	07/08 (2008)	08/09 (2009)
<b>Total Number of Officer Cadets in training</b>	980	1020	1010	1000	1030	1050	1100	1400	1700	1800

Adapted from table 1.7 in UK Seafarer Statistics 2009 (Glen et al, 2010:17)

The decline in the UK merchant fleet and the UK seafarer workforce, including officer cadets, has to be seen within the context of the global market, as has already been suggested. The policy stance taken on this issue by the UK Government from 1970 onwards is briefly reviewed in the following section which describes the approach taken by Government administrations to changes in the industry, and the efforts from 2000 onwards to reverse the decline in both fleet and workforce.

### **UK Government Shipping Policy from 1970**

The following section outlines the shipping policy of UK governments between 1970 and 1997, and changes following the election of the Labour Government in 1997. There is a description and assessment of the Tonnage Tax, a key strand of government shipping policy from 2000, and particular reference to the training component of this tax regime. This section concludes with a brief assessment of the impact of the Tonnage Tax.

UK governments between 1970 and 1997 were seen to have largely ignored the decline of both UK owned/registered tonnage and the UK seafaring labour force, viewing it as the inevitable outcome of market forces and accepting pragmatically that sea trade could be carried out by foreign ships and seafarers (Selkou and Roe, 2002). The lack of coherent, proactive shipping policies from the UK government was seen by Ledger and Roe (1992) as having allowed the decline to continue unrestrained. They outlined reasons why ship-owning may be considered vital to the national interest, and why UK citizens should remain involved in the manning, technical operation and trading of ships. These reasons they categorised in terms of: providing expertise for the wider marine

related activities in the country; having the capability to exploit new trading opportunities and resources from the sea; and, playing a part in national security particularly during any period of tension or war. They cited the work of Moreby and Springett (1990) in identifying seafaring experience as essential to the maintenance of the UK maritime infrastructure and component activities.

The response given by Michael Parker, President of the Chamber of Shipping in oral evidence to the House of Commons Transport Committee on the Tonnage Tax (2005a) on why the UK needs to increase the size of its fleet sums up the view of the industry as follows:

“I think the best answer to that is that we have had a long run down over many years, and if it had continued we would have vanished as an industry. We have to have a respectable size fleet here if we are going to maintain a maritime centre in this country. We have an enormous wealth of talent seaborne and on the land side”.

(Mr Michael Parker in Oral Evidence HoC 2005a, Q4, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004)

Ledger and Roe (1992:250) predicted that without a proactive shipping policy, the UK industry would face further pressure from competitors both within and outside Europe, who received support from their governments:

“The future looks grim for UK Shipping. Constant and logical, well-presented and politically-sensitive pressure has produced almost no government response. With a General Election in 1992 shipping is likely to have to take a back seat until a newly elected administration has settled in”.

(Ledger & Roe, 1992:250)

Shipping can indeed be seen to have taken a policy back seat until after the election of a Labour administration in May 1997. A Government declaration in the Autumn of 1997 that the long decline in the UK Merchant Navy should no longer be accepted, heralded the establishment of the Shipping Working Group (SWG) by the then Deputy Prime Minister, himself a former seafarer who had also worked as a full-time official for the National Union of Seamen. The terms of reference of this group, which had representation from the Chamber of Shipping, the maritime trade unions and government departments with related policy interests, were to identify actions to: enable the maximum economic and environmental benefit to be obtained from shipping; reverse the decline of the UK merchant fleet; increase the employment and training of British seafarers; and, encourage ship-owners and the wider maritime industry to commit more resources to seafarer training.

The SWG reported in March 1998 with proposals relating to: funding of training; facilitating training; adding value to British ratings; improving the employment environment; regulating to enhance UK/EU seafarer employment prospects; safeguarding the employment rights of British seafarers; improving the fiscal environment; opening up new opportunities for UK shipping; and, the operation of the UK Shipping Register. Given the range of interests contained within the SWG, priorities and approaches understandably differed. There was however consensus on the need for urgent action and that all options discussed should be offered to the government for consideration. Drawing on the SWG report, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions issued a White Paper on the Future of Transport, *'British Shipping: Charting a New Course'*. This White Paper set out four broad aims of an integrated shipping policy which depended on synergy to achieve what is described as a *'virtuous circle of growth'* (DETR, 1998:20). These aims are recorded in *Textbox 3/1*.

**Textbox 3/1** Extract from White Paper (DETR, 1980:5) (underlining added)

***The White Paper on the Future of Transport***

5. The White Paper on the Future of Transport, published in July 1998, set out four broad aims of an integrated shipping policy (paragraph 3.181):

- to facilitate shipping as an efficient and environmentally friendly means of carrying our trade;
- to foster the growth of an efficient UK-owned merchant fleet;
- to promote the employment and training of British seafarers in order to keep open a wide range of job opportunities for young people and to maintain the supply of skills and experience vital to the economy;
- to encourage UK ship registration, to increase ship owners' identification with the UK, to improve our regulatory control of shipping using UK ports and waters and to maintain the availability of assets and personnel that might be needed in war.

Although there was nothing mentioned specifically about a tonnage tax, the need for fiscal means of supporting the industry was noted in the White Paper. When the report of an independent inquiry, requested by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Alexander Report, 1999), recommended that a tonnage tax should form part of a wider initiative to improve the competitiveness of UK shipping, it was adopted by the Government in their Finance Bill for the year 2000 (Brownrigg et al, 2001; Selkou and Roe, 2002). An overview of this tax is outlined in the following section, the main interest here being the proposals

which relate specifically to training and skills development of the UK seafaring workforce – the ‘Minimum Training Obligation’.

### **The Tonnage Tax**

In Northern Europe the term ‘tonnage tax’ is used to refer to tonnage-based corporation tax where a notional profit based on the number and size of ships operated by a company is computed and then taxed at the normal corporation tax rate. The tonnage rate is set so that notional profits, and hence tax liability, are minimal whilst remaining compatible with international tax treaty obligations. This is in contrast to traditional corporation tax under which a company’s tax liability is based on their annual commercial profits. A tonnage tax, it is argued, can be advantageous in encouraging domestic shipping investment (Brownrigg et al, 2001). Selkou and Roe (2002) have also argued that the certainty of the tax liabilities and costs makes it highly attractive to shipping companies and investors: companies have flexibility over when to buy ships and how to finance them; the clarity of a company’s tax position is more easily understood by observers; and, a tonnage tax regime offers compatibility and competitiveness with other countries’ regimes. Potential disadvantages have been listed as: tax avoidance; and, the distortion of competition between shipping versus other modes of transport. Tonnage tax is considered to be the most popular tax system for the maritime industry adopted throughout the European Union (Leggate and McConville, 2005). In order to qualify for inclusion in the UK Tonnage Tax regime, ships must be over 100 tons gross tonnage, ‘sea-going’, and with only ‘ring-fenced’ shipping activities falling within the tax regime.

### ***The Minimum Training Obligation (MTO)***

Whilst the UK Tonnage Tax was adopted to help boost the UK shipping industry, it also includes a training commitment, the Minimum Training Obligation (MTO) with the specific aim of improving the training provision for the UK seafaring workforce. Key to the administration of the MTO is the submission by the shipping company of an annual plan known as the Core Training Commitment (CTC), setting out their training obligation and how it will be met, together with End of Period Adjustments (EPA) should the CTC plans not be realized. Each plan is subject to Department of Transport approval and compliance with the CTC is assessed 3 times each year. Officer cadets and Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) apprentices (ratings recruited for a ratings-to-officer training programme) are tracked for 36 months from the date on which they begin a

course of training approved by the MNTB leading to the first certificate of competency (FCC). A 'first certificate of competency' (FCC) refers to the appropriate certificate for an officer in charge of a navigational watch or the appropriate certificate for an officer in charge of an engineering watch. Criteria on nationality and residence also have to be met; trainees should be UK nationals; a national of another European Economic Area (EEA) State (plus nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway); or, a British citizen from the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

The MTO for officers requires a participating company to train one officer trainee per year for every 15 deck and engineer officer posts of the company's effective officer complement. The MTO for companies with 15 or less deck and engineer officer posts is 1. This complement is calculated as the number of relevant officers entered on the Safe Manning Document (SMD) (or equivalent). As most officer training lasts for 3 years this means that, in principle, a company with a Core Training Commitment of 1 per year will have 3 officer trainees for every 15 posts in its effective officer complement when it is in its third year in tonnage tax.

The MNTB in their guidance for companies and seagoing officers on 'Planned Training at Sea' (2006) note that the selection of the ships to which officer trainees are appointed to undertake practical training is of critical importance and significant financial penalties are incurred by those companies who fail to meet their obligations. The MNTB guidance is returned to later in this chapter. Alternatively a company can make Payments In Lieu Of Training (PILOT) instead of actually taking trainees on their ships. Lord Alexander of Weedon's Report (Alexander Report, 1999) considered 'opting out' should only be considered in exceptional circumstances; entry to the PILOT scheme is therefore restricted and relates mainly to a company's capacity to recruit and train cadets.

### ***assessments of the impact of the Tonnage Tax***

After over a decade of the UK Tonnage Tax regime, there have been assessments of the effectiveness of implementation, including a House of Commons Transport Committee Report (Inland Revenue, 2004; NUMAST, 2004b; HoC 2005a; Leggate and McConville, 2005; Oxford Economics, 2007; Gekara, 2008).

The report from Oxford Economics is alone in its uncritical praise for the initiative, concluding that, *“The tonnage tax has been vital to the turnaround of the UK shipping environment characterised by stiff tax competition.”* (Oxford Economics, 2007:32). In relation to training arrangements, the report concludes that the commitment to training will help, in part, to satisfy the need for ex-seafarers to be available to work in shore-based maritime activities, and gives the following comments from UK based shipping companies:

“Many correspondents felt that the training requirement associated with the tonnage tax was a “good idea” and that they took training “seriously” and had an “active cadet programme”.”

(Oxford Economics, 2007:22)

However the conclusions of NUMAST (2004b), Leggate and McConville (2005), Gekara (2008), and of the House of Commons Transport Committee (2005a) are less fulsome in their praise of its effects. Leggate and McConville (2005) concluded that it has been successful in attracting tonnage to the UK register; however in terms of employment it is the number of vessels rather than the tonnage which is the significant factor and this has not increased substantially. In addition, many companies have taken up the PILOT option, and opted out of recruitment. They point out that in 2000-2001, 80% of the total number of officers employed on tonnage tax vessels were UK resident but by 2003-2004, this proportion had declined to 42%. Additionally during the period 2001 to 2004, employment declined from 4.6 to 2.2 UK seafarers per tonnage tax vessel. The analysis of Leggate and McConville also shows the relative reduction in the number of UK seafarers employed on qualifying ships under the tonnage tax legislation, and a definite preference for non European Economic Area (EEA) nationalities. They conclude that the link to recruitment has led to only a slight increase in cadet numbers and employment opportunities concentrated on non-EEA seafarers, and their overall conclusion is that the decline in UK seafarers has not been reversed.

Similarly the view of NUMAST (2004b) was that:

“The tonnage tax has been remarkably successful in attracting their ship owners to register their vessels within the scheme - but markedly less so in delivering the ‘unique feature’ of increased training and employment.”

(NUMAST, 2004b: 4)

The authors suggested that the failure to link training with employment is revealed in the declining numbers of UK officers employed aboard tonnage tax ships.

The House of Commons Transport Committee Report (2005a:21) noted that there was anecdotal evidence that the system *'cannot cope'* with the number of junior officers being produced through the tonnage tax regime. That is, there were not enough junior officer posts at UK rates of pay for cadets at the end of their training. Clyde Marine, a training company working on behalf of 45 ship owners, reported that having previously been required to fill 60-80 junior officer positions over a three year period, these were reduced to zero and they were recording no industry requirements for junior officers (HoC, 2005a: Evidence 37). Clyde Marine advised that the annual salary of a Third (Junior) Officer from East Europe/Pacific Rim was approximately £8,000 less per annum than his/her UK counterpart. In his investigation of shipping company recruitment policies, Gekara (2008) showed that some companies openly acknowledged that British cadets were more costly for them to employ, and that they consequently took advantage of cheaper labour world-wide. Further to this issue of differential pay, in May 2010 the *'Review of Stakeholder Evidence on Differential Pay in the Shipping Industry'* (DoT, 2010) recommended to the UK Department of Transport that nationality based pay differentials for seafarers should be outlawed, based on a review of stakeholder evidence. It was however the view of the Chamber of Shipping that removing differentials would reduce competitiveness and lead to significant *'flagging out'* of ships from the UK. The recommendation is to be used to inform the Department of Transport's decisions on regulations to be made under the Equality Act 2010. This Act is described by the Government as a social measure, the implementation of which is expected to involve significant costs, with greater equality bringing economic benefits only in the long-term (DfT, 2010: 6). If implemented this recommendation could create more employment opportunities for UK cadets.

The Transport Committee Report (2005a) acknowledged the lack of robust data on the employment of UK based junior officers. The Government's response to the Committee Report (HoC2005b) states that the Department for Transport was considering how best to obtain this information. An enquiry made to the Department of Transport on this point was unable to elicit any further detail on progress on this issue (personal communication).

NUMAST, Trinity House, and Dr Leggate are all reported in the Committee Report (HoC, 2005a) as recommending the introduction of an employment obligation for companies

participating in the tonnage tax regime. The Committee believed that an employment link could be devised which would be acceptable to both industry and the Government and recommended that the government should consider refining the MTO to link training and employment. This recommendation was supported in the government's response to the Transport Committee report (HoC, 2005b), but has not to date been implemented.

Of particular interest to this study is the exchange between the Chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee and Mr. Maurice Storey, member of the Chamber of Shipping:

**“Chairman:**

If you are serving on a vessel where all the senior officers are of a different nationality and culture and have trained under quite different regimes to that established in the UK, how do you control the level of training that is being handed out to the cadets?

**Mr. Storey:**

By ensuring that the officers – I have that exact situation in one of the companies I represent, where we have foreign officers training British cadets, but the officers have full British certificates of competency and they are trained and able to train the cadets and the records from the cadets who have been on the ships I am talking about are very high records. I have shared this information with NUMAST to prove the situation.”

(HoC 2005a, Oral Evidence 6, Question 51 taken on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004)

However, the written evidence from NUMAST to the Transport Committee states, in contrast, concern over what the Union saw as insufficiently rigorous procedures for the issuing of Certificates of Equivalent Competency (CEC) by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency which had increased from 37 in 1997 to more than 2,000 in 2002. The Union view was that at a time of international concern about variations in training standards, there were insufficient checks on competence, language and cultural difference, with the implication being that officers may not be in a position to offer the support and guidance necessary in a satisfactory training environment. Their evidence goes on to cite examples of *'best practice operators'* who, they say are making a commitment to defined long term training and employment pathways for British officers.

The concerns highlighted by the Transport Committee over the variability of the workplace training environment are borne out in the accounts which some cadets gave of their experiences during planned training at sea. The fact of this alignment between the views of cadets and the Transport Committee has relevance for the validity of this

study. Additionally, there is another methodological consideration that comes to the fore. By making this assessment of the impact of the Tonnage Tax, the account has clearly moved beyond providing background information to take in post-hoc evaluations. The important methodological issue concerns the temporal location of the interviews during the period 2002 to 2005 and contextualizing those views historically – a matter dealt with in the conclusion (p.296).

## **UK MERCHANT NAVY OFFICER TRAINING**

The accounts given by cadets of their experience of cadetship have to be seen not only within the industrial and political context of seafaring, but also within the context of UK Merchant Navy Officer training. The training requirements are an integral part of the analysis of the interview data, however further detail on the training programmes themselves is provided here, and reference made to cadet attrition rates.

### **Training programmes**

The education and training of Merchant Navy Officers takes place in the UK Nautical Colleges and those Universities which offer programmes to bring trainees to the necessary levels of competence. It is an international requirement that Merchant Vessels are operated by those who hold certificates of competency which attest to their competence at the rank they hold aboard a ship. In the UK the responsibility for ensuring the standards of these certificates lies with the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). The MCA works with the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) and UK Nautical Colleges and Universities to provide programmes of training and education at each of the certificate levels. For deck officers and for engineers, the first MCA certificate is of competency as an Officer of the Watch (OOW).

Since the data collection in this study began in 2002, there have been significant developments in the routes available for gaining the qualifications required to practice as a certificated Merchant Navy Officer. The establishment of Foundation Degrees in England and of the Professional Diplomas in Scotland has paved the way to the likely phasing out of the HND qualification as an adjunct to the Certificate of Competency. These new routes offer trainees managerial competences in addition to the technical competence of the OOW certificate. Applicants apply directly to shipping or training companies, and through the University and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS). In

addition there are 4 year undergraduate courses where the third year is spent at sea; entry is through UCAS and there are companies who will sponsor these programmes. The trend towards the training of Merchant Navy officers in increasingly academic settings is returned to later in this thesis.

The cadets who participated in this study were following training courses for both deck officers and engineers culminating in MCA registration with a Scottish/National Vocational Qualification (S/NVQ) Level 3 in Merchant Navy Vessel Operations and Marine Engineering respectively. On completion deck cadets would have completed almost all the academic parts of an HND in Nautical Science which they would receive on completion of a further 12 months at sea. For the engineer officer cadets the academic parts of an HND in Marine Engineering would have all been completed with a further 12 months at sea giving them the diploma itself.

The programme required the deck cadets in this study to undertake at least 12 months sea service although the structure of the course allocated 4 months (approximately) to the first and second sea phases and 8 months (approximately) to the third sea phase giving a total of 16 months. The three sea phases were interspersed with college based work and together were designed to form *“an integrated and progressive pattern of education, training and practical experience”* (MNTB, 2006:3). The programme for engineer cadets was slightly different in structure having two sea phases of 24 weeks each. The outlines of the courses are included in *Appendix 11*. During the training period cadets received wages from their sponsoring company which varied from company to company. Those interviewed mentioned sums ranging from £550 to £900 per month. Unsurprisingly this differential was a source of discontent for those with the more poorly paying sponsors.

### **Admission to training**

For the cadets in this study, admission into training was through the training company ‘Ocean XL’ acting on behalf of a number of shipping companies, or by direct application to the two shipping companies featured, ‘Ace Marine’ and ‘Star Shipping’ (all pseudonyms). For the courses concerned, the academic entry requirements were at least four good GCSEs or SCEs in English, Mathematics, Physics or a Combined Science; or with A-levels or Scottish Highers; or with an Intermediate GNVQ or equivalent. Ocean XL used

an interview assessment form for cadet selection covering: knowledge of the sea; motivation; work experience; leisure interests; and, self presentation. The details of the form are not included here at the request of the company. Both Ace Marine and Star Shipping interviewed candidates themselves using experienced training officers. Once the companies had made their selection, cadets were allocated to a college for admission to the training programme.

The training of the cadets can be seen as a product of the relationship between a number of bodies and individuals: the shipping companies who, with the Government, pay for the training, and who provide the placements at sea; the training companies who may act on behalf of the shipping company; the shipboard officers who play a part in the shipboard training of cadets; the colleges who teach and provide the shore based training; the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as the Government body responsible for the implementation of the Government's maritime safety policy; and, the Merchant Navy Training Board, an industry body one of whose remits is to work with Government and the training colleges/Universities to develop and promote training.

### **The college component**

Aside from their reflections on entering training and their future on qualification, cadets' accounts of cadetship were dominated by their experiences of life at sea. Whilst the interview schedule prompted them to talk about college life and studies, and how they felt the college blocks prepared them for being at sea, this aspect of training played a negligible part in their interview conversations. Indeed this thesis has emphasized planned training at sea as providing a meaningful experience of seafaring which cannot be obtained from the college instruction. Nevertheless cadetship does involve college based learning.

For deck cadets there were four college phases, the first being a 6/8 week induction. This is in contrast to the 18 week induction phase of the new Foundation Degrees. The second college phase followed 24 weeks at sea, reviewed progress, assessed for S/NVQ Level 2, HND Part 1 studies and underpinning knowledge for S/NVQ Level 3. After a second sea phase of 32 weeks, cadets returned to college for a 13 week college phase with an interim review and assessment, and completion of the underpinning knowledge of S/NVQ Level 3. The final college phase week phase provides the final assessment of

S/NVQ level 3, completion of HND Part 2, and preparation for the MCA Officer of the Watch Oral Examination. For those following the engineering course (36% of those surveyed and 24% of those interviewed), there were two rather than three sea phases with a 40 week third phase in college, i.e. a large part of the second year.

When cadets did talk about college life and academic work, the impression many gave was that it was intense and of high volume, with some finding the standards to be demanding. It was clear that the college experience was perceived by cadets as being very different from the stereotypical student life; cadets were expected to wear uniform and follow the discipline which would be expected of them at sea. Cadets recognised that college-based learning had to be applied during their planned training at sea and some commented upon both the challenge and the satisfaction of applying the theoretical concepts they had studied in college to practice. However it was also noted that there were opportunities for cadets to bring new knowledge from their shipboard experience back into the college in what one cadet described as a '*well worked circle of learning*' involving cadet, ship and college.

### **Planned training at sea**

"For the purpose of training new officers, the total character of the ship and its mode of life is recognized; and on this recognition is based a philosophy of training."

(Aubert, 1965:248)

Shipboard experience, referred to by the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) as 'planned training at sea' constituted a major element of the three year training programme of the cadets in this study. The MNTB documentation (2006) offers guidance to companies and seagoing officers responsible for this aspect of training which emphasises the importance attached to planned training at sea in the development of the skills, knowledge and experience needed by future officers. As Aubert (1965) suggests, such a training programme is predicated on the belief that first hand experience of life onboard ship is fundamental to becoming a trained seafarer. The periods of sea-based training are managed and co-ordinated by the sponsoring company or training organization, not the colleges, and MNTB Guidance specifies that training should be delivered aboard ships where the quality of provision can be monitored. The quality of the shipboard training environment was an issue raised by the House of Commons Transport Committee and referred to earlier (HoC, 2005a: Oral Evidence 6).

### **Attrition from training**

As there are no definitive data available on the attrition rate from officer training the most accurate rate remains the source of some speculation. Gardner and Pettit's study (1996), *'The UK Economy's Requirements for people with Experience of Working at Sea'*, published for the Department of Transport, assumed a cadet wastage rate of 10%. In updating the study, Gardner et al (2004) revised this figure downwards to 6%, based on UK Seafarers Analysis statistics (Glen et al, 2003). The UK Seafarer Statistics for 2004 (Glen et al, 2005:22) use the assumption of an average 8% drop out per year based on data from the Government Assistance for Training (GAFT).

*Textbox 3/2* records the 2005 House of Commons Transport Committee Report requirements on training information (2005a: 20).

**Textbox 3/2** Extract from House of Commons Transport Committee Report (2005a)

The Department for Transport must establish some hard facts about the training carried out by tonnage tax companies. We need to know:

- The effect of tonnage tax on the number of trainees on UK related vessels;
- What proportion of tonnage tax funded cadets really do fail to complete their training;
- The reasons why cadets fail to complete their training;
- How the Maritime Training Trust can be used most effectively.

The NUMAST report, *UK Seafarers, Maritime Skills and the Tonnage Tax* (2004b), also highlights the fact that there is insubstantial evidence to support current assumptions on attrition rates.

Despite the fact that the gathering of robust attrition data was a recommendation of the House of Commons Transport Committee Report this activity has not happened. The Department of Transport was unable to provide an answer on whether progress had been made on this (personal communication). College attrition rates are not publicly available. Of the cadets in this study, 19 out of the 25 interviewed described heavy drop out rates from their cohorts: of the 8 who gave estimates, these were mostly around 50%, although one cadet claimed his cohort had dropped from 90 to 20, and another said his cohort had fallen from 126 to 50. Gekara (2008) found that the college administrators who participated in his study quoted a drop out rate of between 20% and 30% per cohort. In conclusion there is no definitive evidence on cadet attrition rates although

anecdotal evidence suggests that attrition rates are in excess of those appearing in the *'UK Seafarer Statistics'*.

Concern over attrition rates amongst those going to sea is not however something new. Millington (1935) in an account of 'nautical training' of apprentices in the 1930s by the Blue Funnel Line in Liverpool notes:

"The more serious feature ... is the great wastage of personnel that occurs, not only in deck cadets but in deck ratings. Of those cadets who had passed out from training schools there were 79% serving at the end of the first year, 74% at the end of the second year and 68% at the end of the third year. This wastage is bad for the Service and for the boy, and is a weeding-out process that could be better carried out in school."

(Millington, 1935:166)

A few brief comments are relevant here. Firstly, attrition rates have a bearing on the study methodology as noted in the previous chapter. The sample consisted of cadets in training when they completed the questionnaire – those most disaffected would already have left. Secondly, whatever the accuracy of the attrition figures claimed by cadets, it was their perception that there was a high drop out rate. For those who did drop out, based on the interviews with those known to have left, there were possible negative consequences for their wellbeing.

### **3.3 RESEARCH LITERATURES – CRITICALLY INFORMING ANALYSIS**

Input from academic literature forms a further data-strand in this study. Befitting the traditional notion of 'study': books and journal papers were accessed, read and annotated; searches were made, partly using electronic databases; references were followed up; citations checked; and, these processes repeated time and time again. How the resulting material was fully integrated into the narrative of the study was considered in the methodology chapter. This section discusses the approach taken to the review of the scholarly literature used in this study and highlights the key literatures which have informed the data analysis and interpretation.

#### **THE APPROACH TAKEN TO LITERATURE REVIEW: OVERVIEW AND ORIGINS**

In this study, reviewing the relevant literature has been integral and organic to the processes of analysis and interpretation. This approach has resulted in the research literature being embedded in the representations of cadetship that appear in this thesis. Literatures have been accessed on an almost continuous basis throughout the research

process, from the initial search in the winter of 2001 for material on the subjective experience of cadets, to papers published as this thesis was being finalized in the summer of 2010.

As the data gathered from cadets were analysed, lines of inquiry opened up which required the seeking out of relevant literatures, as would be expected with the modified grounded approach which has been taken in this study. For instance, key theoretical concepts such as 'ambivalence' and 'total institution' were researched in response to drivers arising from the analysis of the cadet data. The process of inquiry has led to the literature of disciplines other than sociology, notably psychology and anthropology, and to research fields such as organisational and educational studies; the result has been an eclectic range of references.

Dick (1993) has suggested that approaching the research literature in this way, seeking out confirming and disconfirming evidence at the same time as data are being analysed and interpreted, can help the researcher to reach conclusions with more confidence. Davis (2007) provides an account of how her own thesis brought together narrative, critical commentary, literature review, data analysis and interpretation within each chapter. This approach, which has also been taken in this study, demonstrates the reflexive nature of the research process in which understandings are focused and refocused iteratively as the data is reviewed and reconsidered in the light of extant knowledge.

The origins of this approach stem from the fact that in 2001 there was almost a complete lack of research on seafaring cadetship, especially the views of cadets in training. Because of this fact, it was not possible to conduct a conventional literature review so as to establish any boundary of knowledge. There was almost no knowledge apart from Hill's 1972 study already considered in the previous chapter. The most recent work of relevance at that time (2001) was Stevenson's study (1998) of labour retention amongst ships' deck officers which offered insight into the factors that attracted and kept seafarers at sea. Using survey data he noted the impact on seafarers of isolation, loneliness, monotony, fatigue, and communication difficulties. Stevenson also recorded explicit links between the needs and aspirations of seafarers with the employment packages offered by the industry. These findings do have some resonance with the

findings of this study although Stevenson's research did not include cadets. The only other work of specific relevance was Hopwood's 1973 account of problems associated with the selection and training of British deck and engineer cadets. Hopwood's findings, based on survey data obtained in 1971 from cadets in a 'British Nautical School', related to the factors that conspired against assimilation into the occupational group; contentment with career choice; and, development of favourable impressions of a sea career.

If the original lack of knowledge determined this study's approaches to methodology in general and literature review in particular, then as time has passed the recognition of the under-researched nature of the seafarer cadet experience has attracted interest from a number of research communities. For example, research commissioned by the trade union Nautilus-UK (formerly NUMAST) on the views of British officer cadets (NUMAST, 2004a) and the 2008 study by Gekara have already been considered in the preceding section. As also noted at the end of that section, within the dynamics of emergent design, the knowledge problem changed from one of dealing with no extant research to accommodating current and parallel research.

## **INTRODUCING THE LITERATURES**

The research literatures used in the study are introduced chapter by chapter.

### **Chapter Two: methodology**

As already described in detail, the literatures informing the chapter on methodology are extensive. The overall approach has been particularly influenced by the notion of reflexivity as propounded by sociologists, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), and by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) from the field of business administration and organisational management. Taking a modified grounded approach to data analysis has involved consideration of the contributions of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Writings which can be traced back to what has been called 'The Chicago School' have featured extensively (Hughes, 1945; Geer, 1972; Haas 1972; Prus, 1989, Way 1998) and the work of Howard Becker is referenced in every chapter of the study. A range of scholarly work related to qualitative research, the constant comparative method and mixed methods proved essential in carrying out study tasks methodically and rigourously.

### **Chapter Three: the study materials**

The previous section references scholarly work drawn from the field of policy studies. The scholarly outputs of literary critics was used in connection with the analysis of the writings of Joseph Conrad and are described in detail in the following section.

### **Chapter Four: youth transition / occupational choice / 'calling' / rites of passage**

The chapter which examined how cadets reconstructed their decision to enter cadet officer training, draws initially upon the literature of youth transition within which there is a diversity of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives (Rudd, 1997; Irwin, 1995; Evans and Furlong, 1997; Evans, 2002a). The chapter references literature on occupational choice and how careers are entered and exited (Williams, 1974; Bassis and Rosengren, 1975; Lehmann, 2005a). Much of the literature on family influences on occupational choice is from the realm of psychology, as seen in the meta-analysis of Whiston and Keller (2004). Significant to the analysis in this chapter is the literature on a sense of calling (Hall and Chandler, 2005; Duffy and Sedlacek, 2007; Dik and Duffy, 2009; Hunter et al, 2009; Dubrow, 2004 and 2010). Much of this research also has its origins in social psychology, and it is noted that Dubrow (2010) suggests that further research on 'calling' would benefit from a focus on the wider social factors and influences. Supporting the exploration of initiation in this chapter is the work of Van Gennep (1909/1960) and Turner (1969; 1974) on rites of passage. This work, which has its origins in anthropology, has been taken up by organisational theorists (Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch, 2005; Altman and Holmes, 2005) who seek to apply the concepts to career transitions.

### **Chapter Five: the total institution / occupational socialization / initiation / gender**

In the chapter which explores shipboard relationships and cadets' first experiences of the realities of life at sea, the literature on total institutions is central to the analysis and interpretation of the interview data (Goffman, 1961/1991; Nolan, 1973; McEwan, 1980; Becker, 2007a). In relation to the applicability of the notion of total institution to the ship, the work of Aubert, both independently and in conjunction with Arner, plays an important role. Using a detailed knowledge of the everyday life of a seafarer and a consideration of the social structure of the ship, Aubert conceptualises and critiques the ship as total institution (Aubert, 1965; Aubert and Arner, 1965), applying Goffman's original notion. This literature assists the exploration of the isolation and separation which characterises life at sea. Research on occupational socialisation is also included in

this chapter with reference to the Chicago ethnographers and their findings on workplace cultures (Geer, 1972; Haas, 1972). Aspects of the occupational initiation at sea were seen by some cadets as unbearable, and whilst the word 'bullying' was never used by cadets, this led to an investigation of the literature on workplace bullying (Ashforth, 1994; Liefoghe and Davey, 2001; Salin, 2003) and male behaviours in the workplace (Collinson, 1988; Bourassa and Ashforth, 1998). This chapter also made reference to the shipboard experiences of the female cadets who took part in this study; their experiences were entirely consistent with the findings in extant research on women seafarers, much of which originated in SIRC (Thomas et al, 2003; ILO, 2003; Thomas, 2004).

### **Chapter Six: apprenticeship / workplace learning / communities of practice / professionalization**

This chapter was most helped by the literature on apprenticeship (Fuller and Unwin, 1998, 2003, 2004; Fuller et al, 2005; Lehmann, 2005a and 2005b; Tanggaard, 2005). Selecting apprenticeship as a means of interpreting the experiences of cadets and their views on the acquisition of the skills of seamanship, made it possible to steer a course through what would otherwise have been unmanageable amounts of research literature on workplace learning. Rainbird's comment on the terrain of workplace learning as "*complex, contextual and conflicted*" (2000:15) hints at the challenge of finding and reviewing the literature most helpful in analyzing and writing this particular chapter. Lave and Wenger writing separately and together on social learning and the importance of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, provided relevant literature (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1996; Wenger, 1998/2004) as did Melia (1987). Melia's work on the quasi-apprenticeship of nurse training provided useful insights not only into occupational socialisation but into the professionalisation of an occupation, in this case nursing, which had clear parallels with cadet officer training.

### **Chapter Seven: life transitions / lifetime careers / work uncertainty / ambivalence**

Unlike the nurse students in Melia's study (1987), cadets' experience of training did give them insight into a future in their selected occupation. This chapter returned to the literature of youth transition, to the studies of how young people project their futures and talk about their life plans (Gordon and Lahelma, 2002; Anderson et al, 2002; Bradley and Devadason, 2008). The studies of Hill (1972) and of those who have explored the implications of seafaring on family life (Thomas, 2002 and 2003; Sampson, 2005; Thomas

and Bailey, 2006 and 2009) were of central importance as cadets considered what a future at sea might mean for them. The maritime policy literature (SIRC, 1999; Gekara, 2008) and research findings on work instability were used in relation to cadets' views on their job prospects (Burchell et al, 1999; Doogan, 2001). The exploration of ambivalence led to the work of Merton (1976) and to the work of Bauman (1991) which although not referenced in the study, provided further reading in social theory.

### **3.4 SELECTED WRITINGS OF J.CONRAD – ILLUMINATING THE NARRATIVE**

“And what is a novel if not a conviction of our fellow-men’s existence strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality, and whose accumulated verisimilitude of selected episodes puts to shame the pride of documentary history?”

(Conrad, 1912/1975:15)

This data-strand was developed from a sample of Joseph Conrad’s writings on men and the sea, comprising one novel, four novellas, and a sea meditation. Selected extracts from these works offer a counterpoint to the interview data derived from the cadets during the course of this study. Not, as Conrad suggests in the remark above, that these extracts offer representations which are ‘*dearer than reality*’ or which put ‘*to shame the pride of documentary history*’, but rather that they illuminate; they assist in understanding elements of the seafaring experience, adding to the representation of seafarer cadetship offered in this study. References to the sampled works are embedded in the chapters of analysis and interpretation. The purpose of the following section is to give background as to how, from the vast range of sea literature, it was the writings of Conrad that came to be included in this study. It gives the briefest of overviews of each of the texts used and their relevance to this study, and opens by sketching Conrad’s biographical details.

#### **JOSEPH CONRAD: 'A UNIQUE AND HAPPY UNION OF SEAMAN & WRITER'**

Conrad was the only child of politically active parents of the Polish landowning nobility, who were exiled from Poland to Russia in 1862 when Conrad was five years old. Orphaned by the age of ten, Conrad’s education was dominated by his reading. He favoured books on travel and adventure, and in 1872 expressed a wish to go to sea, a desire which Karl colourfully likened to “... *an Eskimo boy informing his parents that he wanted to become an architect.*” (Karl, 1979: 96) Karl suggests that Conrad’s decision to go to sea, with no family tradition of seafaring, was a consequence of several factors: the

recurrence of severe migraines for which sea air and physical activity had been recommended; an indifferent performance in school which had made 'land' professions unlikely; and, a personal sense of adventurousness which had been fuelled by his reading, much of which was of sea literature.

In October 1874, not yet seventeen and having overcome the resistance of his guardian uncle to becoming a seafarer, Conrad travelled to Marseilles. However, irregularities in his papers meant that a future in the French merchant service was not possible, and in June 1878 Conrad arrived in England to begin his career as a British seafarer. Writing of his earliest experiences in England Conrad wrote: "*The North Sea was my finishing school of seamanship before I launched myself on the wider ocean.*" (in Sherry, 1972:28). Conrad gained his second mate's ticket in 1880, his first mate's ticket in 1884, and his Masters certificate in 1886, the same year as he became a naturalized British subject.

His life as an active seafarer extended from 1878 when he was 20 years of age, until 1894 when he was 36, during which time he was, according to Sherry's description, "*... a restless, adventurous merchant seaman, with the emphasis upon the restlessness ...*" (Sherry, 1972: 28). He does not appear to have stayed long with any ship, quarrelling frequently with the captains. His voyages took him to Australia and the Far East and, in 1890, to the Congo as the captain of a river steamer. His experiences provided the basis for much of his writing; the writer Galsworthy who met Conrad when he was a passenger and Conrad was first mate aboard the clipper *Torrens*, wrote: "*He is a man of travel and experience in many parts of the world, and has a fund of yarns on which I draw freely.*" (in Sherry, 1972:65).

Conrad began writing in 1889 during a period ashore. The novel, '*Almayer's Folly*', was completed and sent for consideration to publishers in July 1894; it was accepted for the copyright fee of £20 in October of that year and Conrad's days as a serving seaman were over. From then until his death in 1924, Conrad's life assumed a pattern which Sherry describes as: "*... difficulties in writing, bouts of crippling malarial gout and fever, fits of depression, financial difficulties, and frequent dashes to the Continent for relief.*" (Sherry, 1972:73). His biographers (Baines, 1960/1971; Sherry, 1966 and 1971; Karl, 1979) record Conrad's extreme anguish as a writer struggling with the pressures of providing for his family, whilst striving to retain his artistic integrity and produce

literature of the highest order. By the time of his death in 1924, Conrad was in vogue and comparatively wealthy, although it was not until the middle of the Twentieth Century that he was accorded his high standing in English literature.

### **WHY CONRAD? QUALITY, CONTENT AND FORM**

Previous academic study had led me to hold the literature of Joseph Conrad in high regard, and it was unsurprising that I would return to his sea related writings once I began my studies at SIRC. In my first and exciting re-encounter with Conrad, described in the previous chapter (p.32), I had been struck by the way in which his observations on the nature of seafaring in *Mirror of the Sea* had resonance with comments from the cadets I had been interviewing (Conrad, 1906/1975).

In keeping with a reflexive and emergent methodology, and encouraged by a Progress Review to think more widely about the interpretation and representation of the cadet experience, I followed up the re-reading of *Mirror of the Sea* with a foray into the wider world of 'sea literature', a world graphically described by Foulke:

“For the scholar, entering it [*sea literature as a field of study*] is more like sailing into the Sargasso Sea, a vast expanse of the North Atlantic filled with patches of floating weed that was once mistakenly thought to entrap ships but is now known merely to harbor myriads of ocean life.”

(Foulke, 2002: xii; my italics)

Sea literature, Foulke suggests (2002), resists easy definition for two reasons. Firstly, it contains within it history and literature, imagination and experience, autobiography and fiction. As I listened to the accounts of their lives at sea given by the cadets in this study, I was conscious that they too mixed together reflections, events, anecdotes, perhaps some invention, in a way not dissimilar from the voyage narratives I encountered. The second typological difficulty of sea literature relates to quality. Foulke suggests that, “We usually distinguish literature from the unending string of ephemeral words that clutter our daily lives by assuming that the text of the former has permanent value.” (Foulke, 2002: xii-xiii) and goes on to suggest that sea literature in its sheer volume is ‘*a mélange of the superb and the inept, of the Odyssey and mass-market adventure stories*’. Exploring sea literature involved introducing myself to this *mélange* of writers both eminent and unknown, and considering what they might bring to this study (Hope, 1982; Carlson, 1986; Bender, 1988; Coote, 1991; Tanner, 1994).

Whilst the exploration of sea literature made a fascinating excursion, it is only selected literature by Joseph Conrad that features in the mature research design of this study. The choice of Conrad, whilst originating in prior knowledge, was made on the basis of quality and content. The earlier comment from Foulke has suggested that texts of literature are differentiated from '*unending string of ephemeral words*' by having a permanent value. As a writer, Conrad has stood the test of time. The literary critic Leavis (1948/1962) declared him to be:

"Amongst the very greatest novelists in the language – or in any language ... distinguished by a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity."

(Leavis, 1948/1962:248)

Conrad's works highlight enduring and fundamental aspects of life at sea, such as the relationship between seafarer, the sea, the ship, and the shore; the tension between solidarity and isolation; and, the inescapable need for competent seamanship. This content was reflected in much of the material derived from the cadets in this study. Although Conrad writes with over a decade of experience as a qualified seafarer and with the insight that comes from that, the enduring aspects of seafaring described by Conrad are experienced by novices and veterans alike. This is not to deny that Conrad describes a world of seafaring that is, in many aspects, unrecognisable today. His writings hark back to an age of sailing ships which was fast being overtaken by steam ships even when he was a seafarer (Middleton, 2006:5). The types of ships and of cargo have changed, as have working practices and the technologies involved, and to this extent the content of Conrad's sea based works is historical. However the details of daily life at sea and the 'ordinariness' of shipboard life are vividly conveyed, with human interactions that are not just historically situated. Conrad's finest work seeks to make the connection with substantial themes of the human condition: loneliness; isolation; ambivalence; and, the dissonance experienced by human beings as they struggle to reconcile themselves with '*... the shadowy ideal of conduct ...*' (Conrad, 1900/1974:313). In a letter to an anonymous reviewer of the novella *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Conrad writes of how he:

"... wanted to connect the small world of the ship with that larger world carrying perplexities, fears, affections, rebellions, in a loneliness greater than that of the ship at sea."

(Conrad, 1983:421)

Baines (1960/1971:539) considered Conrad's work to be characterised by the values he held as a seafarer and a writer: belief in professional competence; in the need for a sense of solidarity in the face of loneliness; and, a single-minded devotion to the task in hand. The main part of Conrad's strength, Leavis suggested (1948/1962:208-209) is in the *'unique and happy union of seaman and writer'*, describing him as *'the prose laureate of the British seaman'*.

The relevance of the content is the prime reason for including Conrad's writing in this study, however *'his fascination with his craft'* as Middleton (2006:14) describes it, adds further interest. Inevitably, issues of content cannot be separated from finding an appropriate medium of communication. In the previous chapter, I sketched my approach to representation. In his letters and author's notes, Conrad made clear his belief that one of the challenges for a writer was to represent the complexity of 'truth' and to rise above the linear order conferred by the written word, a challenge that has preoccupied me in this study and has been described in the preceding chapter.

In an effort to break out of narrative linearity, Conrad frequently employed complex methods of narration, using broken time sequences and creating, Jameson (1981) suggests, a new narrative mode in which:

"What is essential to the production of the text is not ... the construction of a central observational and psychic perspective within which one may for sometime remain, but rather a quite different matter of inventing modulations, chromatic bridge-passages, cinematographic fadeouts or montages, which allow us *to slip from one point of view to another.*"

(Jameson, 1981:22-23; italics added)

In adopting a mixed-methods approach, I was mindful of what novelists and literary critics had identified in terms of the complex and shifting nature of truth required me to *'slip from one point of view to another'*.

So, although I was primarily interested in Conrad as a relevant source of material, as the study progressed and the challenges of representation grew, Conrad's approach to narrative structure proved useful. However, returning to the issue of the complexity of truth, content and structure have to serve the purpose of providing, in this context, an understanding of the experiences of cadetship. How such an understanding – of the human experience – can be achieved is common ethical ground for the social scientist and novelist, as the following quotes illustrate.

Friedrich Karl, a pre-eminent scholar of Conrad's literary heritage, writes:

“And how, Conrad asks can art – particularly fiction – catch this air of sensory reality; how in short, “does it penetrate to the colors of life's complexities”?”

(Karl, 1979:26)

In the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Conrad has second guessed this question:

“Written words must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting and to the magic suggestiveness of music.”

(Conrad, 1897/1982:12)

Driven by what he saw as the responsibility of the artist to create an alliance between the moral and the aesthetic, Conrad wrote in the preface to '*The Nigger of the Narcissus*' that:

“And art itself may be defined as a single minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential.”

(Conrad, 1897/1982:11)

Having decided to select Conrad's writings and incorporate them in the representation of cadetship, a systematic approach was required in choosing a sample, and then in selecting material from that sample.

## **THE SAMPLE**

From the 'population' of Conrad's prolific output of sea related literature, I worked with a limited sample. Limiting the sample was for reasons of manageability; Conrad's work plays a secondary role in relation to the data gathered from cadets, and it was important to balance proportionately the time spent on the various aspects of the study.

The sampled works contain elements related to the sea and to ship based life relevant to this study of cadetship: *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (Conrad, 1897/1982), *Typhoon* (Conrad, 1903/1982), *Youth* (Conrad, 1898/1975), *Lord Jim* (Conrad,1900/1974), *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1902/1973), and, *The Mirror of the Sea* (Conrad, 1906/1975). All of these works can be linked with Conrad's personal sources and experiences (Sherry, 1966, 1971). As described in the chapter on methodology, I found I was able to code the sampled works of Joseph Conrad using the indexes derived from Phase One and writing on copies purchased for this purpose (see *Appendix 2* for an illustration); selected passages from these works are integrated in the body of the study. Sketches of each of

the texts used are provided in this chapter for completeness, and follow in order of publication:

***The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*** (Conrad, 1897/1982) was the result of prompting by Conrad's publisher to write a 'sea story', and explores the social psychology of men under pressure at sea. Middleton suggests that in its writing Conrad embraced the cultural milieu that was most familiar to him – English seafarers returning home. What struck early reviewers was the extent to which Conrad avoided the use of the clichés of sea fiction. Writing to his publisher, Conrad declared that the novel's lack of incident was true to life, noting that '*only in a boy's book of adventures*' does one get completed episodes whereas in life *events crowd and push and nothing happens*' (Middleton, 2006:32). Extracts from *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* were useful in this study in relation to considerations of fellowship and camaraderie at sea.

***Typhoon*** (Conrad, 1903/1982) is seen as one of Conrad's most celebrated sea pieces. It tells the story of a voyage in which a ship taking Chinese labourers back to their homes runs into unexpectedly bad weather which is successfully negotiated through the seamanship of the captain. Leavis (1948/1962) praised '*Typhoon*' above '*Lord Jim*' and highlights the presentation of men rather than the evocation of the storm as central to its achievements.

***Youth: A Narrative*** (Conrad, 1898/1975) was the first of Conrad's published texts to introduce Marlow as the teller of the tale within a tale, and the multiple perspectives which this approach affords. Told within a group of men who all served as merchant seamen in their youth, it offers a story of initiation as second mate and tells of the struggle to get '*a wretched 600 ton cargo of coal to its destination*'. Captain and crew are faced with repeated misadventures and the novella ends with a paean to youth:

"Only a moment; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour – of youth! ... Ah! The good old time – the good old time. Youth and the sea. Glamour and the sea! The good, strong sea, the salt, the bitter sea, that could whisper to you and roar at you and knock the breath out of you".

(Conrad, 1898/1975:39)

*Youth* has been drawn on in this study in relation to reflections on: the traditions of seafaring; notions of difference and the exotic; voyages of initiation; and, notions of fellowship.

**Lord Jim** (Conrad, 1900/1974) was begun as a short story at the same time as Conrad was working on *Youth*. Of interest to this study is the depiction of the young seafarer Jim, whose life becomes a search to redeem himself in his own eyes, having failed to live up to his view of himself, and to the ideals of seamanship. The novel is regarded as one of Conrad's finest: an early modernist masterpiece with "*a dazzling narrative arrangement*" (Middleton, 2006:44). Candido saw the novel, along with Conrad's other most significant works, as revealing subtle and painful elements of the human experience – "*...creating a milieu conducive to the formation and emergence of some of his most revealing themes.*" (Candido, 1995:23) – amongst which he includes isolation, both physical and moral. Isolation as one of the fundamental and enduring aspects of life at sea, is a key focus of this study.

**Heart of Darkness** (Conrad, 1902/1973) has been used in this study for its reflections on seamanship, although the novella is set not at sea, but in Central Africa. Based on Conrad's own experiences, it is probably the most widely read of Conrad's writings. At the level of the plot, it is an account by a riverboat captain, Marlow, working for a trading company whose river journey leads him to one of the trading company's traders, Mr Kurtz, exposing the excesses of which Kurtz is part. Middleton (2006:53) refers to the '*bewildering variety*' of critical responses to the work in relation to both its style and content. The style has been likened to an impressionist painting or a mosaic, with the often verb-less and sometimes noun-less sentences heralding a modernist style that puzzled early reviewers. The content has also provoked strong reactions: Achebe (1975/1988) denounced Conrad as a 'thoroughgoing racist', whilst Straus (1987), suggested that his representation of women excluded female readers and pandered to male readers' identification with notions of heroic action. The value of the story for the purposes of this study is in the way it casts seamanship as something clearly defined and practical, in contrast to the moral ambiguity and uncertainty which unfolds in the course of the river journey.

**The Mirror of the Sea** (Conrad, 1906/1975) is described by Conrad as '*a very intimate revelation*'. It is a sea meditation, a form of writing found throughout voyage narratives and essays on seafaring, in which writers often extend their observations of the sea and shipboard life to wider observations on life (Foulke, 2002:14). As described in the chapter on methodology, it was *The Mirror of the Sea* (Conrad, 1906/1975) that I returned to

following the pilot interviews with cadets. In this tiny extract from the Author's Note which introduces it there was resonance with some of the remarks from the cadets I had already met:

"I have attempted here to lay bare with the unreserve of a last hour's confession the terms of my relation with the sea, which beginning mysteriously, like any great passion the inscrutable gods send to mortals, went on unreasoning and invincible, surviving the test of disillusion, defying the disenchantment that lurks in every day of a strenuous life."

(Conrad, 1906/1975: v)

There was a century between the descriptions given by Conrad and by the cadets and the actual words used were clearly different, but it seemed even at this early stage of the study that there were fundamentals in the experience of being a seafarer that were as true for some of the cadets as it was for Conrad. Extracts from *'The Mirror of the Sea'* have been used in this study particularly in exploring the notion of what it means to have a sense of calling to the sea and to seafaring.

### **3.5 THE STUDY MATERIALS IN USE**

This section serves to link the purposes of the different study materials and also to form a bridge between the combination of the methodology and study materials chapters and the four narrative chapters that follow.

As for 'purpose', each of the data-strands constituting the study materials has been assigned a characteristic action in its heading: contextualising, critically informing and illuminating. By specifying these characteristic actions, the intention is to draw attention to the fact that not only is the content of the materials in the three data strands distinctive but also that they perform different roles within the forthcoming narrative.

Study material relating to the UK Merchant Navy has been considered in detail so as to provide significant background information in order facilitate understanding of context of action for seafarer cadets. For this data-strand, 'contextualising' has been a one-time action: in the narrative chapters, information recorded in the section above on the UK Merchant Navy is used for reference but not subjected to further analysis.

Material derived from the research literatures is used interactively with other data-strands as a means of critically informing the analysis of the narrative. For the greater

part, research knowledge is employed in reaction to cadet data and when the cadet data presents a pattern that has a good 'fit' with existing theory.

People – especially young people in unfamiliar situations – can find it difficult to articulate their thoughts and feelings. One reason for recording excerpts from the cadet interviews verbatim has been to ensure the integrity of the original voice. Even so, amidst the half finished sentences, deviations, and hesitations, there is a need for sense-making. During interview, the interviewer has the opportunity to seek clarification. Post interview, it's generally the case of the interviewer and the transcribed text. There were times during the analysis when I was puzzled by what the cadets were saying; having copies of the writings of Joseph Conrad to hand did feel like having an old seadog at my side – his writings were illuminating.

So much for the different purposes of the three additional data-strands, it is also necessary to say something about their realization in the narrative representation of seafaring cadetship in terms of content, style and perspective. The content of a page selected at random from the following four chapters will generally contain one or more cadet quotations with sections of 'connecting analytic narrative'; a style of *presentation* strongly influenced by the work of Prus and his collaborators (Prus, 1989; Prus and Sharper, 1977; Prus and Irini, 1980/1988). The contents of this 'connecting analytic narrative' are mostly drawn from the research literatures and automatically invoke the perspectives within which they are cast; that is, they critically inform the narrative. As also recorded above, the other two data-strands also contribute to the connecting analytic narrative in their distinctive ways.

### **3.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter has outlined the nature of the study materials in the three data-strands which, together with cadet data, form the representation of cadetship in this thesis. These comprise: material on the UK merchant shipping industry and workforce, and the training of UK Merchant Navy Officers; extant research and scholarly knowledge; and, writings from the sampled work of Joseph Conrad.

The occupational context of cadets' training experience has required the sketching of the state of the UK merchant fleet and seafaring workforce since the mid twentieth century.

It has been shown that there is agreement across all parts of the shipping industry that the Tonnage Tax, introduced in the UK in 2000, has been successful in attracting tonnage. The attraction of vessels onto the UK register has been less successful. Vessels have also become larger and there are fewer of them, effectively creating fewer workplaces and fewer places for workplace training and learning. A key element of the UK Tonnage Tax has been to increase the number of cadets and reverse the decline of the UK seafaring workforce. It was suggested however that the training element of the Tonnage Tax has not been as successful as had been hoped. The number of cadets has increased but there is no evidence that the large majority of those trained are then entering the seafaring workforce as qualified junior officers. It was recognized that British cadets may be seen as costly for shipping companies to employ in comparison with those from developing countries. The Report of the House of Commons Transport Committee suggested concern over the variability of the workplace training environment and highlighted differences in competence, language and culture between those training and trainees; this is borne out in the accounts which some cadets gave of their experiences during planned training at sea.

The increase of routes into Merchant Navy officer training since this research began has been noted. The introduction of foundation and undergraduate degrees is to be expected as part of the overall expansion of higher education in the UK. These programmes of study do not offer the immediate experience of shipboard life experienced by the cadets in this study.

The research literatures used in this study were accessed continuously as part of the analytical process and they form an integral part of the representations of cadetship that appear in this thesis. This approach was consistent with the emergent research design and the modified grounded approach that was taken. The process of inquiry has led to the literatures of disciplines other than sociology, notably psychology and anthropology, and to research fields such as maritime, organizational, and educational studies.

Finally, this chapter has outlined how the writings of Conrad came to be included in this study, and has given an overview of the texts used. Conrad made it clear that he did not feel himself to be a 'writer of the sea' in the sense of authoring adventure books, and a good deal of modern criticism has focused on Conrad's exposition of the human

condition, independent of place and time. The view put forward here, is that his intimacy with the sea and seafaring and his interest in enduring aspects of the human experience are inextricably linked and this strengthens the use of his writing to illuminate the cadet data in this study.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **A LIFE AT SEA: ORIGINS, ATTRACTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>A Life at Sea: Origins, Attractions and Expectations</b>	<b>Page</b>
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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

“... every person, every group, every action has a history. Nothing just pops into existence in some mysterious way we must not enquire into.”

(Becker, 1970: VI)

This chapter is the first of four chapters in which the data-strands of this study are woven together. The structure of these four chapters mirrors the progress of the cadet journey through training. In this chapter cadets reflect on the origins, attractions and expectations which they felt preceded their entry into training as seafarers.

The interview data which have informed this chapter have been selected during the processes of exploration and familiarization, of forming, refining and integrating as described in the previous chapter on methodology. In a systematic and iterative process, each interview text was read and re-read and the broad ‘topic areas’, equally well described as ‘themes’ (Bernard, 1996), were identified, followed by the detailed codes or indices. The topic areas which dominate this chapter, and the coded material used, are those relating to cadets’ expectations and aspirations, but not exclusively. The interview conversations revealed the intermingling of personal histories, present situations and future possibilities, and topics relating to relationships aboard ship, and relationships with those on shore also inform this chapter. The metaphor of ‘confluence’ used by Davis to describe entry into an occupation – a “*confluence of lived pasts and imagined futures*” (Davis, 1968:251) – is apt in capturing the elements of past, present and future, and the associated feelings of movement and turbulence, of different flows and undercurrents which can be experienced at this time, and which were apparent in the interview conversations with cadets.

Entry into the occupational world is a significant event for a young person. The decisions made have potentially life-long ramifications, particularly where the occupation has the far reaching lifestyle implications of seafaring. The young people in this study were not strictly entering an occupation but into a vocational training leading to an occupation. However, as the study will show, their experience of training did provide insight into the occupational world of seafaring, and what a career at sea might mean for them.

The interviews with the cadets in this study always began by my asking how they came to be on their training courses. Becker notes that asking ‘how’ rather than ‘why’ gives

people more leeway to answer in any way which suits them, "... to tell whatever they thought the story ought to include, in order to make sense." (Becker, 1997:58). The literatures on post-school destinations and occupational choice suggest that the question of 'how' such decisions are made is complex and multi-factored (Williams, 1974; Irwin, 1995; Rudd, 1997; Evans, 2002a). Rudd argues that "*the perplexing array of options*" (Rudd, 1997:258) available to young people on leaving school from the 1990s onwards, has seen the development of a parallel diversity of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives on school-to-work transitions. According to Evans and Furlong (1997), different assessments of the influence of structure and agency during this transitional phase of life are suggested by the range of metaphors used to describe youth transitions: niches, bridges, routes, pathways, trajectories and, navigations. The exploration of the reciprocal relationships between individual experiences and social structures by youth researchers has recognised that patterns of socialisation and transitions into work are more complex than the classic model of socialisation once proposed (Hubbard, 2000; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005). Indeed Lehmann (2005a) suggests that amidst conflicting theoretical and empirical positions, there is still relatively little known about how young people rationalize their educational and occupational plans.

In this study cadets commented freely, and often at length, about 'how' they rationalized their occupational plans; that is, how they believed they had reached their decision to take up Merchant Navy training and the reasons they felt drawn to seafaring as a career. In analyzing the survey and interview data gathered in this study, it was necessary to disentangle what cadets perceived as the origins of their decision to enter Merchant Navy training and what they saw as the attractions of the career. Inevitably there were overlaps between origins and attractions, and interview conversations did not always clearly differentiate between the two, reflecting mutual sense-making by interview and interviewer.

In general, during the course of the interviews there was a strong sense of retrospective 'sense-making' as cadets tried to articulate their position. Bloor (1995a) comments that interviewees' responses are shaped by the fact that they are providing answers, variously previously considered, to the questions of an interviewer. For some cadets it may have been the first time they had articulated their feelings and thoughts, even to themselves; for others their responses may have been a well rehearsed story rather than "*the artless*

*revelation of an authentic truth teller*" (Bloor, 1995a:93). Similarly Atkinson has argued that "... *self-revelations are as conventional and artful as any other mode of representation.*" (Atkinson, 1997:331). These observations do not diminish the responses of interviewees; they simply situate them within the context of the interview.

Providing an interview response required cadets to construct a description of the process of entry to the occupational world. In trying to make sense of this to both interviewer and to themselves, they may represent the past "... *as a set of purposive steps towards the present ...*" (Williams, 1974:27), applying a post-hoc logic to events and actions. This interpretation of how decisions made in the past are accounted for is consistent with what Lehmann (2005a: 337) describes as a process of "*biography construction*". Referring to his study of German and Canadian apprentices, Lehmann noted that decisions to undertake apprenticeships were re-cast as being based on already existing interests, as well as the promises of pleasure and enjoyment which the work promised to entail.

The literature on careers development also has relevance for this study. As with the above literatures of youth transition, studies of the subjective elements of careers have also employed imagery that includes: stages, turning points, and trajectories. Researchers have suggested these images offer rich insights into how careers are chosen, developed, reorganized and also exited (Shaffir and Pawluch, 2003; Bassis and Rosengren, 1975). According to Arnett (2004), college students (ages 18-25) are in the developmental stage of '*emerging adulthood*'. Arnett suggests this life stage has become relevant in recent decades in the affluent countries of the world, and is a product of an increasing number of years between adolescence and adulthood; one of the consequences being more time for reflection and a greater expressed desire for personally and socially meaningful work compared to past generations.

The cadets involved in the study were in a period of emerging adulthood and of transition leading into the world of work and possibly a long career as a seafarer. The concept of a career suggests a sequence which encompasses past work history, present employment and plans for the future. Hughes (1958) identified that there were both subjective and objective views of the career; one inside of the person, and one outside. He asserted that the '*subjective career*' is most pertinent from the vantage-point of the

individual for example job-satisfaction, and learning, whilst the 'objective career' focuses on the external aspects of an individual's career such as income and hierarchical position.

Researchers have recently begun to re-examine the sense of calling as an important subjective career phenomenon (Hall and Chandler, 2005; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Dubrow, 2010). Although my own investigation of the sense of calling stemmed from topics arising in the empirical data, the section of this chapter entitled 'Seafaring as a calling: current perspectives' is mainly informed from the research literatures strand. In terms of representation, this section offers an example of how material from the different data-strands has been used selectively and linked to greatest effect.

More generally, the chapter itself is a product of the analytic processes of integration and accounting as set out in *Chart 2/2*. Integrating involved the linking and interpreting of material across the data-strands; establishing patterns sometimes meant that the accounting process was not necessarily linear. The discussion in this chapter of 'love of the sea' is an example of the way in which data has been arranged as a result of interpretation; although 'love of the sea' was offered as a reason for being attracted to a seafaring career, it is explored as one of the origins of the decisions to go to sea. This analytic distinction only emerged through the application of the processes of the Constant Comparative Method with the result that the interpreted and linked data were patterned accordingly. The overall result of this patterning is represented in the chapter structure organized by its headings and various sub-headings.

## **CHAPTER STRUCTURE**

Aside from the introduction, this chapter is divided into three main sections, followed by a conclusion. The first section explores the origins to which cadets attributed their choice of entering training, seen as synonymous with entering the Merchant Navy. Two themes recurred and are recognised in the limited literature on entry into seafaring (Hill, 1972; Hopwood, 1973; Bassis and Rosengren, 1975; Stevenson, 1998; NUMAST, 2004a). The first theme is that of cadets' experiences of the sea, either through closeness to the sea or sea-based activities, a theme closely bound up with the notion of 'love of the sea'. The second theme is the strength of family tradition in respect of the sea and seafaring.

The second section considers the attractions which cadets perceived in a career in the

Merchant Navy and the expectations they held. These attractions and expectations reveal what cadets believed might be in store for them in choosing seafaring as an occupation. These attractions and expectations are described from the perspective of cadets who had already experienced training at sea, and whose interpretation of their pre-training expectations may already have been re-shaped without them having realized.

The third section of the chapter considers the sense of calling as relevant to the findings of this study; the sense of calling has attracted increasing research attention as a subjective career phenomenon.

The conclusion brings together the findings of this chapter in the form of descriptors of the cadet experience; these provide a concise representation of cadetship. In this chapter these descriptors are: the importance of the sea environment; tradition; difference; a sense of calling; and, ambivalence. Not all the experiences of each cadet conform to these descriptors but every account of cadet experience can be viewed in their light. The descriptors are representations offering a way of viewing the cadet experience that was not apparent at the beginning of the research process. The synthesis of descriptors into the notion of a total occupation forms the basis of Phase Three of this study, and is discussed in the final chapter.

## **4.2 ORIGINS**

### **A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SEA**

In the opening sentence of *Youth*, Joseph Conrad puts forward the view that in England, ‘*men and sea interpenetrate*’; that the sea enters into the lives of ‘most men’ in England; and, that most men know “... *something or everything about the sea, in the way of amusement, of travel, or of breadwinning.*” (Conrad, 1898/1975:9). Conrad was writing at the cusp of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, at a time when British merchant shipping held a unique position as a carrier of world trade with half of the world’s tonnage in its ownership, and maritime Britain could be said to be “*on the crest of its wave*” (Hope, 2001: 270). Seafaring as a means of breadwinning in the UK has declined significantly since then (Ledger and Roe, 1992), and although it is argued that other forms of maritime activity are thriving (Smith and Lalwani, 1999), it is doubtful whether

'most men' in England today would recognise the 'interpenetration' with the sea which Conrad suggested. Cadets in this study did however place a strong emphasis on connections with the sea in their accounts of how they came to train as seafarers.

In responding to the interview question of how they found themselves as Merchant Navy Officer cadets, 15 of the 25 cadets interviewed in the main body of the study began by talking about their early childhood experiences of living by the sea, and also of the sea-based activities which they had enjoyed such as fishing, sailing or surfing. As one interviewee put it "*I'd done the maritime thing*". The following four comments are examples of how cadets described a relationship which they had with the sea, a relationship which was a particular passion, which gave them enjoyment, and which they saw as playing a fundamental part in their decision to enter the world of seafaring:

Interviewee:

"I live by, right by the water, so I enjoy sailing and the water sports, windsurfing and jet-skiing and all that, so I've always wanted to do something with the water."

(Nathan/04 – M/D/17/XL)

Interviewee:

"Well I live by the sea and I've always been on the sea and I've sailed and, like, I've raced little dinghies since I was twelve, thirte en. I've always been out sailing too."

(Andy/04 – M/D/20/AM)

Interviewee:

"I'd done the maritime thing 'cos I'd lived in Southampton and I've been in the Sea Scouts and I've done lots of sailing and I mean I felt that I could do the job, that this is a role that I feel I could have, could fulfill and succeed."

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Interviewee:

"I lived near the sea and I had owned a small boat and I'm always fishing and stuff."

(Mark/04 – M/D/24/XL)

For some cadets the relationship with the sea was connected to simply having grown up by the sea:

Interviewee:

"Love the sea, I grew up next to the sea and I just love the sea."

(Charlotte/04 – F/D/21/XL)

Traditionally, seafarers have been recruited from the developed maritime nations, although changes in the structure of the shipping industry in the 1980s (SIRC, 1999) have contributed to the decline in the number of seafarers coming from these countries (Leggate, 2004). Within those traditional maritime nations seafarers would be more likely to originate from coastal areas where the sea offered the main source of employment (Østreng, 2001). As a trade union representative interviewed during the course of this study remarked: *“We’re an island nation here in the United Kingdom, and it’s interesting the propensity of the young people in this island, as indeed in all islands around the world, to go to sea.”* Despite changes in the global picture of seafarer recruitment, 95 of the 120 cadets who participated in this study had coastal home towns around the UK. Cadets offered proximity to the sea as ‘supporting evidence’ in what Bunderson and Thompson (2009:37) call their *“narrative of occupational place”*. Closeness to the sea in a less literal sense was also given as an occupational attraction in the form of *‘love of the sea’*. ‘Love of the sea’ was selected by 53% of the questionnaire respondents as a reason for being attracted to a career at sea. Within that overall figure, the difference in responses between engineering and deck cadets to the selection of ‘love of the sea’ as an attraction was found to be statistically significant at the 5% level ( $p=.016$ ) with 36% of engineer officer cadets and 62% of deck officer cadets making this selection. This finding can be related to interview findings, explored later in this chapter, which suggest that for engineering cadets, but with notable exceptions, the sea was incidental to their career choice of seafaring, the focus being on the engineering skills they would acquire

Of those cadets who indicated a ‘love of the sea’ as one of the reasons they were attracted to the career, 66% also selected the statement that “going to sea” had always held an attraction for them. In Question 11 of the study-specific questionnaire, cadets were asked to select the statement which better reflected their own point of view. The first statement, Option A, read: *“I just sort of stumbled into cadet training. It wasn’t planned really. It gives me qualifications and pays me. I can’t say I always had a lifelong ambition to go to sea”*. The second statement, Option B, read: *“Going to sea is something I’ve just always wanted to do, it has always held an attraction for me”*. Unlike the selection of ‘love of the sea’ as a career attraction, there was no difference in the responses from deck cadets and from engineer cadets, with 67% and 65% respectively selecting Option B. There were no inter-company differences between those who

selected Option A and those who selected Option B. The distribution of responses from the interview sub-sample was consistent with that of the total study sample. This issue of sample representativeness was dealt with in the methodology chapter, as was the use of 'qualitative and quantitative prioritisation' considered now.

Whilst questionnaire responses provided insight, it was the interview data that provided substance to the questionnaire responses, capturing variations in the strengths of views and qualifying factors. Based on the questionnaire responses alone, it could be construed that 'love of the sea' was not a prerequisite, or a component of wanting to go to sea. If this were the case, it is likely that the proportions of those selecting both 'love of the sea' and 'going to sea as a long held attraction' would have been similar. This raises fundamental questions about what constitutes the notions of 'going to sea' and 'love of the sea'.

In reference to Lane's 1986 portrayal of late twentieth century British merchant seafarers, Mack (2007) considers '*love of the sea and nature's elements*' as a distinguishing characteristic of seafarers. In writing about an earlier era, Conrad suggests in '*The Mirror of the Sea*' that '*close communion*' and '*intimacy with nature*' are strengthened by the seafaring expertise required to "*master the craft*" (Conrad, 1906/1975:31). Conrad also raises the issue of the interaction between the ship's technologies and seafaring skills, by putting forward the view that sailing ships placed more demands on the skills of seamanship than any 'modern' steam ship. Going on to suggest that the love of the sea is a '*complex sentiment*' which has as a component part the '*love of ships*', Conrad provides insights which are helpful in trying to disentangle timeless relationships between: love of the sea; the love of ships and their technologies; and, the mediating role of the seafarer and their occupational skills. For the engineering cadets who claimed an attraction to going to sea but do not record a love of the sea, a love of ships, or more precisely a love of ships' engines, may be an important aspect of going to sea. A love of ships, as with a love of trains or of cars, is more than just affection for a mode of transport, combining elements both practical and symbolic. Of the six engineer officer cadets interviewed in this study, all spoke of the attractions of the engine room, including the two female cadets:

Interviewee:

“Yeah, it’s the engineering side, just working with my hands, getting dirty, fixing things, taking things apart.”

(Interviewer: “Is that something you’d always wanted to do, the engineering?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, you know, always just playing with my little car and stuff when I was younger. [LAUGHS] Well, it wasn’t mine, it was my brother’s. [LAUGHS]”

(Interviewer: “So where did the sea come in?”)

Interviewee:

“Bigger engines!”

(Emma/04 – F/E/21/XL and interviewer)

Her fellow female engineering cadet took a similar view, revealing in the following extract that her identification with the role of engineer took precedence over that of seafarer:

Interviewee:

“I couldn’t put that across to this Chief Engineer, he couldn’t see that, I dunno why. It . . . it wasn’t like he was an old fella, or anything. He was fairly young, fairly modern, fairly modern in thought, but he couldn’t see that I didn’t wanna be a seafarer necessarily. I just couldn’t find a way to put that across to him, me being an Engineer, being I’m an Engineer on a ship, I can be an Engineer in a garage, I can be an Engineer on a plane. I can do anything ‘cos the principles are all the same. An engine is an engine. But he, he couldn’t [LAUGHS], he really couldn’t see that.”

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL)

Even so, the same cadet went on later in the interview to give an exuberant description of the beauty of the natural environment, and to suggest that the attraction of the sea as a natural environment has more weight as a career attraction for deck cadets than for their engineering counterparts:

Interviewee:

“Because we were in the Southern Hemisphere, you can see the Milky Way. You can see like a sprinkling of dust, it’s like gold dust. And a straight line over your head and it’s absolutely fantastic. You see millions and millions of stars, nothing like what you can see on land. It’s absolutely amazing, you’ve got dolphins, you’ve got whales, you’ve got sharks. You’ve got all this stuff going on. And if anything was going to send me back to sea, it would be that, it wouldn’t necessarily be a job. You have to weigh up the difference between the two. Whether it’s actually what you want to be, to do, is to be at sea or whether you just want to be an engineer. If you love all the stars and the wildlife, watching the flying fish skipping about, then that’s probably what you really want to do. And you probably want to work deck-side so you can see all that.”

(Interviewer: “You make it sound amazing.”)

Interviewee: "It is amazing. If I'd gone deck side I'd probably stay at sea."

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL and Interviewer)

The fact that cadets did select 'love of the sea' from a list of career attractions in the questionnaire and shown in *Table 4/1* (p.125) suggests that the question had meaning for them, and there were a number of interviews which succeeded in drawing out a discussion of what 'love of the sea' involved. These have their share of striking images of the sea as a whole natural environment which encompasses the stars, the sunsets and sunrises, and marine sea life. In one of the pilot interviews, a particularly articulate third year cadet described the power of the sea environment in lyrical terms of dolphins, sunsets, and distant horizons. The tape recorder failed to record properly – an early and salutary introduction to an occupational hazard – but his description was both moving and memorable, and was not dissimilar from the description given earlier by the female engineering cadet who was explicit in differentiating between her job as an engineer and this aspect of sea life with its emphasis on the natural environment.

In the following extended interview extract, the interviewer and interviewee try together to deconstruct what is meant by 'love of the sea', and whether it is something which underpins the activities of the seafarer as well as those of the sea sportsman. The cadet does refer to a distancing from the sea on board ship, in contrast to the close contact experienced in his sea leisure activities:

Interviewee:

"What drives me is I really love the sea. I think that's probably the reason, it seems like a good job and I wouldn't like to be in an office."

(Interviewer: "I was thinking about that, I was thinking exactly about what does it mean, loving the sea. I love the sea and I was trying to think about what does that mean? I hadn't thought of breaking it down. Could you?")

Interviewee:

"I think I just love everything about it, and the coast. Yesterday I was surfing in Newquay, Cornwall. And then when I'm not doing the sea, I plan to get a sailing dinghy when I'm down there so I'll be out on my sailing dinghy and then be at sea."

(Interviewer: "Is it the noise? The colours? Is it the movement?")

Interviewee:

"The smell of it, and some days it's really rough out there and the wind's howling, rain's pouring. Other days it's just like glass out there."

(Interviewer: "Do you get that sense of it when you're at sea, in your job? The things that you love about it that you describe when you're surfing . . . Is it the same at sea?")

Interviewee:

“It’s not quite the same, no, because I’m so far up off the sea surface. And funnily, when you’re at sea you don’t really get the sea smell as such. It seems to be more of a coastal thing I think. But some days you go up there, it is really flat, and all you can see is really flat all the way around to the horizon, clear blue skies, there’s nothing around. Some days you get these really magical days out there. And that makes it really worth it.”

(Interviewer: “In a few interviews cadets talked about this love of the sea . . .”)

Interviewee:

“It’s quite normal with cadets.”

(Interviewer: “One said to me, it was just, those were his words “I just love the sea.” And I hadn’t thought at the time to say “What do you actually mean by that?” And whether the things you do love about it, you do experience when you’re on a ship as an officer.”)

Interviewee:

“On the whole I’d say you don’t really, but then some days, just coming around the coast there, it was amazing and I was just thinking how lucky I was.”

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL and interviewer)

‘Love of the sea’, outlined in the foregoing discussion, is constructed as a relationship built through living by the sea, and/or through sea-related hobbies, and extended by the experience of cadet training. The relationship between the serious business of seafaring, and the entertainment, or amusement to be derived from the sea was recognised by Conrad in *‘Youth’*:

“Between the five of us there was a strong bond of the sea, and also the fellowship of the craft, which no amount of enthusiasm for yachting, cruising, and so on can give, since one is only the amusement of life and the other is life itself.”

(Conrad, 1898/1975:9)

This statement is itself complex, bringing together the powerfulness of a relationship with the sea as a common bond between seafarers; and, the relationship between seafarers themselves derived from the craft as shared skills and/or as shared vessel. The amusement derived from “*yachting, cruising and so on*” comes, Conrad suggests, a poor second to seafarers’ experience of the sea. Perhaps, if Conrad had been writing today, he might have adjusted his comment of *‘men and sea interpenetrate’* (see p.112) to seafarers and sea interpenetrate despite the changes in ships, their technologies and occupational roles.

The juxtaposition of seafaring with a positive relationship with the sea, suggests that cadets anticipated pleasure and enjoyment from seafaring, based on their experiences of

living by the sea and/or sea-based interests and activities. Although, as will be shown later, cadets' experiences of working at sea did not necessarily deliver for them the excitement of their formative experiences, there was nevertheless a sense from the interview data that 'the sea' itself remained, certainly for deck cadets, central to their occupational experience. In exploring entry into work, Bunderson and Thompson note how interviewees constructed and perhaps selectively interpreted their personal histories to "... discover evidence of particular passions and endowments ..." in explaining their occupational place (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009:37). From the *particular passion* of the sea, the focus now turns to what could be seen as an 'endowment' – the place of a family tradition of seafaring.

### **IN THE BLOOD: SEAFARING AS FAMILY TRADITION**

"It's in the blood" and "It runs in the family" are interviewee comments supplied by Veness (1962: 69) as examples of a tradition-directed orientation to employment choice. Becker (1970) suggested tradition as an element in the construction of work identification. Other researchers, reviewing interdisciplinary literature on calling and vocation, refer to 'a family legacy' (Hunter et al, 2009:179) as an external source of influence that compels or motivates a person towards a particular life role.

The findings from this study showed that 57% of those responding to the questionnaire had members of their family who were seafarers; of those, 37% had more than two seafarers in the family. Of the 17 interviewees for whom seafaring was a family tradition, 6 had more than two family members who had been to sea either in the Merchant or the Royal Navy; typical comments were:

Interviewee:

"Well all my family, most of my family's been at sea."

(Nathan/04 – M/D/17/XL)

Interviewee:

"Both my parents were originally at sea. My Mam was a Third Officer with \*\* and my Dad was a really good Officer with \*\* as well."

(Luke/04 – M/D/17/AM)

Interviewee:

"More or less, my whole back-, background is around ships and boats, my whole family, my father's a pilot, a ship's pilot and since I was a wee kid I used to go on the ships. I knew it was what I wanted to do, from day one".

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

In reporting the attitudes to career choice of deck and engineer cadets in 1971, Hopwood found that 50% of the sample (n=unspecified) came from family backgrounds with seafaring connections (Hopwood, 1973), and the findings of the NUMAST Cadet Survey were also not dissimilar in that 50% of the total of 249 cadets who participated had a seafaring family member (NUMAST, 2004a).

Reviewing research on the influence of family origin on career development and occupational choice from a psychological perspective, Whiston and Keller (2004) note that children strongly identify with parents' occupational area. This identification attenuates with age, although even in adolescence family members had more influence than peers on career decision-making. Critically, Trice (1991) highlighted the dearth of studies involving adults in examining family of origin influences, suggesting that despite well recognised difficulties with using recollections, more research with adults could provide additional insight into the long term influences of family origin.

The cadets who referred to their family tradition of seafaring did not elaborate on how these family connections actually influenced their occupational choice, although the questionnaire data indicated that 71% of those cadets with a family history of seafaring considered that going to sea was something they had always wanted to do; for those with no family connections this figure was 60%. It has been noted in the literature that it is difficult to identify and describe the processes which take place in the home which result in attitudes and expectations about work (Keil et al, 1966; Williams, 1974; Hargrove et al, 2002). An obvious possibility is that family connections had given cadets a positive feel for what the experience would be like through everyday conversations with relatives. One cadet described how his father, the captain of a tug boat, had taken him out with him in the course of his work. Another possibility is that cadets may have been actively encouraged to apply for officer training. For one cadet there was a sense that the decision to train was a foregone conclusion, taken by his former seafaring parents on his behalf:

Interviewee:

“I’m really into music and everything, I wanted to be a DJ and that’s all I was concerned with when I was like fifteen, sixteen and I was just, couldn’t care about anything else. So, it was, sort of, Mum and Dad were running around organising this and I was just going out and buying music all the time. And then when I failed my science, that really brought me down to earth a bit and I started taking things seriously again.”

(Interviewer: “So your parents helped sort out the sponsorship?”)

Interviewee:

“They, yeah, they ran around and yeah, they dragged me round, [LAUGHS], I just did it, cos they all, I just, they all, all come to me in the end, so . . .”

(Alan/04 – M/E/19/XL and interviewer)

None of the cadets interviewed said that their families had actively discouraged them from going to sea because of their own experiences as seafarers. However one cadet with strong family connections said that he had at first dismissed this as a career precisely because it was a family tradition:

Interviewee:

“Basically my Grandfather was in the Merchant Navy, made it for quite a few years, he was a Captain and a Pilot and all that. And it was something my parents actually wanted me to do and I actually decided totally against it; I wanted to go and do something different.”

(David/04 – M/D/19/AM)

The same cadet was one of those most enthusiastic about the experience of planned training at sea and most optimistic about a long term career at sea.

Other studies relating to seafarers have emphasised the place of family tradition in seafaring. In a study of Norwegian seafarers, Mack (2007) reported respondents as being initially attracted to seafaring careers based on their immediate family traditions. Family tradition in relation to their occupational decision was offered by seafarers in Hill’s study “... *as though going to sea were an inherited characteristic.*” (Hill, 1972:44). Hill puts some emphasis on this interpretation, noting that in cases where there was no obvious relative at sea, the seafarer would have the urge to search for one to provide a rationale for his decision. Hill’s study also makes particular reference to seafarers’ notion of the sea being ‘in the blood’:

“A commonly used phrase is, “It’s in the blood” or that “some salt water came down with the blood” and in this way the seafarer attempts to understand the origin of a desire that seems to him to have deep roots in the past.”

(Hill, 1972:44)

This ‘commonly used phrase’ was used by one deck cadet who commented:

Interviewee:

“It’s part of you – in your blood”.

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

A family tradition of seafaring did not apply to all recruits in this study - and indeed Joseph Conrad, with no family tradition, met strong family resistance to going to sea. In his novella *Typhoon*, he says of Captain McWhirr:

“It was impossible in Captain McWhirr’s case, for instance, to understand what under heaven could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a petty grocer in Belfast to run away to sea.”

(Conrad, 1903/1982:152)

However, of the cadets interviewed, only one did not identify at least one of the following: ‘a love of the sea’, ‘family connections’, or ‘a long standing ambition to enter seafaring’. The sole cadet who could attribute no specific origins to his decision to train as a seafarer remarked:

Interviewee:

“To be quite honest I’m not, I’m not a hundred percent sure what made me go for the Merchant Navy, cos I’ve never quite been able to tie it down, you know.”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

The NUMAST cadet survey (2004a) questioned Merchant Navy cadets on what were described as “career triggers”; family influence, hobbies, careers information and sea travel were identified as the most common. A cadet interviewed in the pilot phase who did have a seafarer in the family but described himself as ending up on the deck training course “*sort of by accident really*”, explained the part played by promotional recruitment literature:

Interviewee:

“[It happened by] ... sort of by accident really: it was raining at school and the only place open was the careers library and um . . . I picked up a magazine about careers and there was an advert for Ace Marine in it and it didn’t sound too bad, applied, and sort of here I am really. It wasn’t planned at all.”

(Brett/Pilot/02 – M/D/18/AM)

Recruitment literature was not something cited frequently by cadets as having influenced their decision to enter Merchant Navy officer training. Word of mouth was most frequently given as the source of influence from a list that included: ‘advice at school’; ‘magazine/press advertisements’; and, ‘job centre advertisements’. The literature from Ace Marine however clearly highlighted aspects of the job which appealed to this particular cadet, as he went on to say:

Interviewee:

“My Uncle, my Dad’s brother, he’d been to sea in the sixties, but that didn’t really influence

my choices, sort of I, quite, I wanted to travel, I wanted to earn some good money, um . . . I didn't want to go to 6<sup>th</sup> Form so I wanted something that would train me as I did it and it *seemed to fit the bill really.*"

(Brett/Pilot/02–M/D/18/AM, with italic emphasis added)

The following section of this chapter considers cadets' views on why the Merchant Navy "*seemed to fit the bill*" for them.

### **4.3 ATTRACTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

The selection of Merchant Navy training was, for most of those interviewed, on deck and engineering courses alike, a positive process in which they saw the Merchant Navy as having specific attractions for them. This finding was in marked contrast to Hopwood's findings in which the majority of deck cadets in the sample had taken up a sea career either through failure to gain entry to the career they most wanted, or as an escape from family difficulties (Hopwood, 1973). Only two of the cadets I interviewed, one in the pilot phase and one in the main phase, said that they would have preferred another occupation. In both cases their preference was for the armed forces, but this had not worked out for them for medical reasons:

Interviewee:

"All my family really are in the military of some sort and erm, I've got slight asthma, so I couldn't get into the actual armed forces side of things and so I, I managed to get into this side of, of the training where I can still be in the forces of, of some sort, if you know what I mean."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

Interviewee:

"I had been turned down for the RAF, 'cos well I could have got in but I was told some duff information about that. My old man was in the RAF for 24 years and I was in the Air Cadets and everything, and that was what I was going to do. I was going to make up to join the RAF, but then I was told I wouldn't pass the medical, so I was just looking for other stuff really, so I sort of stumbled on this."

(Brett/Pilot/02 – M/D/18/AM)

In the following interview extract, a deck officer cadet described how he decided in favour of the Merchant Navy over the Royal Navy, based on an encounter with a Royal Navy officer seconded into the Careers Service at his school. Unable to identify with this individual, he constructs an image of the Royal Navy peopled by those in a different social class – and decides that it is not for him:

Interviewee:

"I was originally gonna join the Royal Navy but I decided not to, and then I did catering on Cross Channel ferries out of Dover for a year. Like, talking to Officers and they said, 'Well you should join the Merchant Navy, cos it's really good.' I was like, fair enough, thought I'll give that a go and then I wrote off to a load of companies and got three interviews, got offered three jobs. 'Ace Marine' was why I came here."

(Interviewer: "So when you said about the Royal Navy and actively deciding not to do that, was there a reason for that?")

Interviewee:

"Erm, yeah the Careers Officer . . . he was really, really upper class, been to University and everything like that and he was a bit 'ra, ra, ra'. That just didn't appeal to my mind at all."

(Interviewer: "So he was a Royal Navy Officer or a Careers person?")

Interviewee:

"Well he was more a Navy Officer but he was on secondment to the Careers Department. No, I didn't fancy working with that sort of person."

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

This account was lighthearted, but provides a hint of the diverse influences and impressions which contribute to the process of entry into the occupational world.

In the following section the attractions and expectations of a career at sea are examined, using as the starting point the responses to Question 16 of the Study Questionnaire. This question offered seven possible reasons why cadets might be attracted to a career at sea. The percentage of cadets, by course, who selected each of the seven reasons, is shown in *Table 4/1*. Cadets were invited to select as many or as few reasons as they felt applied to them. The reasons had been formulated from pilot interviews as at that time, as has been noted, there was no contemporary research on cadet views. However a report of a workshop convened in 2009 by INTERTANKO and the International Transport Workers' Federation, and involving 20 young seafarers of seven different nationalities, identified similar attractions of going to sea. These were: salary; family tradition; the opportunity to see the world; a lifestyle of hard work but with long breaks; job opportunities linked with absence of other options; and, challenging and interesting work (IMO, 2009).

In analyzing the survey and interview data, following Hughes (1958) differentiation has been made between those attractions related to the 'objective career' and those associated with 'subjective interests'. Objective career attractions are: measures of good

pay and skills transferability. Attractions associated with subjective interests are suggestive of seafaring as an occupation grounded in difference and consequent separateness. These attractions are listed as: travel; meeting people from many different backgrounds; and, the opportunity of ‘getting away from it all’ in respect of the daily routines and worries of everyday life. (‘Love of the sea’ and ‘glamour’ have been dealt with separately.)

**Table 4/1** Percentage of cadets by course selecting career attraction

<b>Cadet Course</b> <b>Attraction</b>	<b>Deck</b> <b>(n =76)</b>	<b>Engineers</b> <b>(n = 44)</b>
<b>See the world</b>	84%	88%
<b>Good pay</b>	80%	93%
<b>Love of the sea</b>	61%	36%
<b>Meet people from many different backgrounds</b>	41%	48%
<b>Learn skills you can use in land jobs</b>	24%	59%
<b>Leave behind worries of everyday life</b>	31%	25%
<b>Others find it glamorous</b>	7%	2%

(Percentages rounded to nearest whole figure)

## **OBJECTIVE CAREER ATTRACTIONS**

### **Good pay**

The questionnaire responses showed that for most cadets the two main attractions of a seafaring career were firstly the opportunity to see the world, and secondly, the expectation of a good level of pay. The NUMAST survey (2004a) gave ‘pay’ as the most important factor for cadets in the terms and conditions of their cadetship, and the factor with which they felt the most dissatisfaction. Only 17 of the 120 questionnaire respondents and 3 of the 25 cadets interviewed did not select ‘good pay’ as a career attraction. However, the issue for most of those interviewed was not so much the prospects of good pay, but of any pay at all. Cadets saw job opportunities as having changed since their enrolment on their training courses; for one cadet, who was

interviewed on two occasions, the thirteen months between interviews showed a change in his assessment of his prospects:

Interviewee:

“I wanted to do sea training for a variety of reasons but the most important one is that in my area there’s no work to do at all and this is a good way to get work, without having to go to university and then end up with a lot of debt after coming out.”

(Graham/04 – M/D/18/XL)

Interviewee:

“I still see myself going to sea, but it’s a cloudier outlook now. I go around my different boats and everybody I talk to says there’s less and less jobs available all the time. Especially because a lot of the guys on the ships that I’ve worked with have been agency folk who can’t get a full time job and they’ve had to all do agency work.”

(Graham/05 – M/D/19/XL)

Difficulties of finding employment at what they saw as an acceptable rate of pay, were attributed by cadets in part to the UK Tonnage Tax where companies are incentivised to train cadets but without a corresponding incentive to employ them as Junior Officers. Concerns over job opportunities are fully explored in Chapter Seven as cadets considered their prospects for a career at sea.

Also marked in relation to the discussion on ‘good pay’ was the recognition that it could in itself bring problems – referred to by cadets as ‘the money trap’. Questionnaire responses indicated that 20% of respondents felt themselves to already be in a money trap, and this proportion was mirrored in the sample of cadets interviewed. Two examples of their views are given in the following extracts:

Interviewee:

“They call it the money trap. You start off and you think it’s good, and then you get the money and then you can’t afford to leave ‘cos it’s tax-free. I’m not tax-free at the minute but when I qualify I will be.”

(Interviewer: “So what will you get paid when you qualify?”)

Interviewee:

“I’ll get £21,950 per year. Yeah, that’s for 6 months work basically. If you’re out of the country for more than a year, you don’t have to pay income tax and what other job at 19 could I get that sort of money [LAUGHS]. I know I’ll be earning more money than my Dad, touch wood, like. They call it the money trap ‘cos then you can’t afford to leave, ‘cos to go ashore, you’ve got to find a job that pays that, but then you’ve got to think about the tax, so then you need something that pays like £30 grand, and there’s just not those jobs about. So then you’re stuck at sea.”

(Brett/Pilot/02 – M/D/18/AM and interviewer)

In the following interview extract, the cadet also makes specific reference to ‘the money trap’:

Interviewee:

“I know for a fact there’s people who are at sea and they’re caught in the money trap ‘cos now they’re earning all this money and they can’t find a shore side job that’s gonna pay them the same wages. You know, I mean someone said to me, “When I qualify, or you qualify you’ll be on £23,000 a year, you won’t be paying tax”. If you were gonna get that on a job shore side you’d have to be earning £32, £33k a year. The Second Mate at my company he’s on £30,000 a year. So even if I don’t actually go any further than Second Mate I’m gonna have £30,000 a year for the rest of my life. But if you get used to that then you’ll have to earn £30,000 a year for the rest of your life, ‘cos you won’t be able to get another job.”

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL)

A reflexive observation on ‘the money trap’ is that even in what would seem to be a wholly positive aspect of the seafaring career – the good salary – there are hints of ambivalence and mixed emotion.

### **Skills transferability\***

The British Government’s shipping policy post-1997 (DETR, 1998) emphasised the need to promote the employment and training of British seafarers in order to keep open a wide range of job opportunities for young people, and to maintain the supply of skills and experience vital to the economy. The policy also emphasised that the skills and experience were needed, not just for active service at sea, but to fill jobs in the shore-based maritime cluster. The idea of individuals being able to transfer skills and competences between jobs can be linked to the wider modernization and deregulation agendas of the 1980s and 1990s in the UK (Evans and Rainbird, 2002). Arguing that naïve mappings of key skills from one environment to another are not the basis for occupational mobility, Evans (2002b:83) suggests “... *that people do take things with them into new jobs and occupations, but not in simple ways ...*” and calls for a better understanding of the process by which skills are ‘transformed’ from one setting to another.

Regardless of the policy emphasis on skills transfer, 76% of deck cadets surveyed did not select skills transferability as a career attraction, and there was little suggestion in the

\* For the sake of clear English, I used the expression ‘learn skills you can use in land jobs’ in the questionnaires. Henceforth, I use the standard policy term of ‘skills transferability’.

interviews that they perceived their deck skills to be transferable to any other sector or, in fact, to shore-based shipping related employment. This view of skills acquisition by the trainees themselves is consistent with Lehmann (2005b) who found that the assumed advantage of youth apprenticeships, namely the integration of learning into the everyday processes of the workplace, was largely rejected by the young people in his study. Their focus was on the development of either job-specific skills, or what Lehmann describes as work ethic skills: these were punctuality, cleanliness, and discipline, rather than the generic work skills of critical thinking, communication, problem solving, teamwork, and leadership skills.

Turning the focus from cadet to employer, one deck cadet, whose own aspirations were to go into maritime law, believed that prospective employers had little appreciation of the skills learnt in a deck officer training:

Interviewee:

“It doesn’t actually give you a recognised qualification on the street. Somebody who works in a shop isn’t really going to understand what you’ve actually been through and what you have to actually do to get that ticket. And they’re going to look at it and say, “Well we don’t need a navigation officer in ASDA supermarket, we need somebody that can work a till.” I think you do learn a lot (at sea) and I think you do learn a lot in the way of man management and that kind of side of things, but it only really counts to people who know anything about the industry. If you go and talk to somebody who hasn’t an ounce of knowledge of what the shipping industry’s all about, it’ll mean nothing.”

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

59% of engineering cadets on the other hand did list skills transferability as a career attraction. It has been noted earlier in this chapter that the interviews with engineering cadets suggested that they saw their training to be in engineering, and that the sea as environment was less important than for their deck counterparts, as one commented, *“an engine is an engine, is an engine”*:

Interviewee:

“It might be that I’ll stop being a Marine Engineer and find another job as an Engineer on the mainland.”

(Interviewer: “The qualifications you’ve got here though would stand you in good stead for that, yeah?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, I mean as far as I’m aware, the principles of engineering are the same throughout; an engine is an engine, is an engine.”

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL and interviewer)

Another engineering cadet recognized the possibility of job security linked to skills acquisition:

(Interviewer: “Was it important to you, the fact that it was at sea, as opposed to in a garage, or in a factory?”)

Interviewee:

“No, not really but it was a guarantee, well not really a guarantee but it was, like, a much higher chance of getting a job, once I’d qualified, than with anyone else. But that didn’t really bother me, whether it was at sea or in the garage, or whatever. I just liked the idea of having skills and learning skills and being with a company already, so you’ve got a good chance of getting a job at the end of this. So that’s all really.”

(Angus/04 – M/E/17/SS and interviewer)

It was the view of the trade union representative interviewed that, in addition to *‘the people who have twenty years at sea and go on to command the great liners’*, experience as a seafarer offered a wide range of job possibilities in addition to active service at sea:

Interviewee:

“We want people that have done three years, five, seven, ten, twelve years and go ashore . We *need* them. That’s a very different perspective, so it isn’t seen as actual ly seen as a kind of, a negative, or a failure, that you don’t stay at sea, it’s seen as part of the natural cycle that you could go from being at sea, to going to vessel traffic management with the Port of London Authority. You can move into a shore position after ten years at sea. We don’t want people to stop at sea all their life, not everybody, but we *do* want some, we *do* want some because experience counts erm . . . and we do want some to stop at sea but what we *do* need, above all, is a bigger pool, so we need quantity and we need quality.”

(Trade Union Official)

## **SUBJECTIVE INTERESTS: OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE DIFFERENCE**

The attractions which drew cadets into seafaring included those that they expected would take them out of the routine and the familiar, offering what are described here as opportunities for experiencing difference. These were primarily travelling and seeing the world; meeting others from many different backgrounds; and, leaving behind the worries of everyday life.

### **Seeing the world**

The promotional material from Careers at Sea, an organisation set up to promote awareness of work opportunities in this sector (<http://www.gotosea.org.uk>), suggests that a career in the Merchant Navy will offer ‘the chance to travel the world at someone else’s expense’. The opportunity to ‘see the world’ was the career attraction recorded

most frequently in the questionnaire responses, and combined with the idea of travelling, was mentioned repeatedly in the interview conversations. The responses of the deck and engineering cadets in the questionnaire sample were comparable with 88.6% of engineers and 83.5% of deck cadets selecting this career attraction.

Interviewee:

“I just thought I wanted to, I mean I wanted to go travelling and I didn’t have money behind me to go travelling or anything, so I thought, I’ll join the Merchant Navy, I’ll get to see a bit of the world, do something different.”

(Charlotte/04 – F/D/21/XL)

Interviewee:

“Well when I applied to join I really wanted to travel and everything.”

(Jack/04– M/D/20/XL)

Interviewee:

“I tend to like foreign countries as well, you know, hot climates, different weathers. So travelling has always been another one of my hobbies as well as you know its traditions and stuff.”

(Nathan/04 – M/D/17/XL)

Interviewee:

“I always wanted to travel the world and I did go travelling off my own expenses but it got very expensive. I decided to try and get a career in it rather than actually paying for it myself. So that was one of the highlights of coming into this.”

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

As the promotional material suggests, a number of cadets did see the career as an opportunity to have one’s travelling funded, whilst others spoke of travelling and receiving good pay as a combination of motivating factors.

Interviewee:

“I’ve been well travelled when I was a child anyway, ‘cos my father was in the Royal Air Force. He’s had multiple postings all over the world so I’ve been to see wherever he’s been, so I’ve had my eyes opened when I was younger. So I thought, yeah, I quite fancy keeping on doing that really and get in the decent pay and everything.”

(Neil/04 – M/D/23/XL)

Interviewee:

“I like travelling. I’ve done a fair bit of travelling before this so I thought it would be a good combination to earn some money and to travel and I’m single, so I don’t have any ties or anything. So I thought it seemed quite exciting so I thought I’d go for it.”

(Andy/04 – M/D/20/AM)

For the young people involved in this study, the seafaring career seemed to offer the promise of adventure, the attraction of something exciting and different but within a traditional and well recognised occupation. Drawing on the work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918/1984), Pais argues (2003) in his discussion of how young people describe their futures and life plans, that 'the work of the future' will increasingly combine two life ethics. These ethics are conceptualized as the traditional work ethic defined by the desire for security, and the adventure ethic characterized by the desire for new experience. Pais suggests that what appears increasingly important to young people when faced with the dilemmas of their own lives is a 'life ethic' that treats life as an adventure. For the cadets in this study, seafaring would seem to have offered an interesting combination of the two life ethics which Pais describes.

Rather in the way cadets applied their enjoyment of sea-related sports to seafaring, so they associated the adventure found in leisure travelling with seafaring. For some cadets, shore leave when they were in port gave them the experiences which they associated with travelling. In the extract below one cadet described his reactions to being exposed to an unfamiliar country and culture whilst on shore leave from his ship docked in an African port:

Interviewee:

"I've seen a lot of how people live. It annoys me people here moaning about nothing. You go out there, they're so poor, they have nothing. It's something I'd seen on television, but it's not something you appreciate until you go there and see it for yourself. Ethiopia, starving children, I've grown up with it. Live Aid when I was young and it's been on TV every year. And you put it in a box and don't think anything about it. I don't know; it's strange to see it on TV and then to go there."

(Calum/03 – M/E/24/XL)

Cadets' descriptions of the fun of discovering local customs and culture whilst on shore leave could be the accounts of any young traveller encountering new and exotic cultures. The comments of seafarers recorded by Hill also suggest that the opportunity of exposure to different places is considered as an important element of seafaring:

"The sea has always had a lure for me, ever since I was a kid ... A question of romance, seeing far-off lands, a form of escapism, I suppose, seeing foreign cities ... and seeing it with your own eyes not on television."

(Hill, 1972:43)

In Conrad's *'Youth'*, the former seafarer Marlow recalls:

“I loved the ship more than ever and wanted to get to Bangkok. To Bangkok! Magic name, blessed name. Remember I was twenty and it was my first second-mate’s billet, and the East was waiting for me.”

(Conrad, 1898/1975:18)

Whilst it was cadets’ expectation that they would experience the excitement of leisure travel as seafarers, it became clear as they talked about their experiences of planned training at sea, that this was not always the case – a result of changes in the practices of seafaring. As Sampson and Wu (2003) noted, a seafarer today may in his working life see less of the world not only than his nineteenth century counterpart, but also his counterpart of the 1960s and 1970s, where longer periods of shore leave allowed seafarers to see and experience different countries and cultures.

Linked also to the image of an occupation offering difference, were expectations that seafaring would offer something far from the routine of ‘office’ life; no ‘nine-to-five’ working day, and no strict division between the working week and the weekend, as the following interview extracts suggest:

Interviewee:

“I’ve done an office job and I’ve no disrespect to people who do office jobs or anything like that but it’s boring as sin. Sitting there at a desk, ear to hand co-ordination, finish at five - and I know so many people who are just happy doing that. They’re happy to get up, go in to work at eight o’clock in the morning, finish at half four, five o’clock. They’re earning probably, maybe £250-£300 a week, paying their rent and they’re going out on a Friday and Saturday night at the weekend. But it’s not the way for me. I did, I did that when I was at school.”

(Interviewer: “So what does, what does life at sea give you particularly?”)

Interviewee:

“Just different. Every day is different. Even though you go, oh it’s boring, it’s boring.”

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

### **Meeting people from many different backgrounds**

The attraction of “meeting people from many different backgrounds”, which 44% of cadets identified in the questionnaire responses as a career attraction, can be related to the opportunity of travelling, and of shore leave in distant places. It can also be related to the opportunities of working with a range of individuals from different social and ethnic backgrounds. Whilst the experience of working as part of a multiracial crew brought challenges, as will be shown, it was seen by almost half of the cadets surveyed as a career attraction. In the following interview extract there is a graphic description of how

seeing the world and meeting new people were the key attractions of going to sea for this particular cadet. It should be noted that this was the second interview with a cadet who, a year previously, had puzzled over the reasons that attracted him to the Merchant Navy; it offers a good example of the way in which cadets rationalized in a post-hoc fashion their decisions to enter training:

Interviewee:

“One of the best things (about being at sea) was speaking to the other people on board, other nationalities, finding out their cultures, different ways of doing things. Sitting and having a few beers with them, that was one of the most enjoyable things. Seeing the world, how different our lives were. Seeing where they were coming from - I really enjoyed that as well, and even, to a certain extent, learning the language and whatever as well. Because I can now just about speak some Bulgarian or whatever. But whether that’ll be any use in the future I don’t know. It was just seeing that culture and the different customs, it was really quite eye-opening. Yeah, speaking to so many different people. And obviously as well, although it’s not such a big thing, just seeing the world as well. Because you do, you see quite a bit. The last trip we were lucky enough to dock just next to Venice and I probably wouldn’t have ever paid to go and see Venice, so to get to see that for free, well get paid to do it, essentially. That part of things is always good as well, seeing new things. Yeah. I mean I know, when I first went in, it was all to do with that. Initially that was the reason I wanted to go to sea, see the world and meet new people.”

(Richard/05 – M/D/19/XL)

### **Leaving behind worries of everyday life**

Interviewee:

“I like the idea of actually going away and leaving your problems behind, if you know what I mean, you’re leaving whatever home life problems you have behind and you’re actually going away.”

(Nathan/04 – M/D/17/XL)

The section of the Southampton port website which provides advice on working as a seafarer is entitled “Run away to sea!” ([www.plimsoll.org](http://www.plimsoll.org)): the implication is one of escape although, as Hill (1972) observed, and Aubert (1965) before him, whilst seafaring offers escape from one world it leads to confinement in another:

“The decision to go to sea is more than just choosing a job and involves leaving home and adopting a new way of life ... At one and the same time he (the seafarer) is progressing and regressing, “running away” from home but to a job that supplies all his need, “escaping” not into freedom but into a new enclosed dependency.”

(Hill, 1972: 46)

34 of the questionnaire responses from cadets showed ‘leaving behind worries of everyday life’ as an attraction of going to sea. 8 of the 19 deck cadets and one of the

engineering cadets interviewed had selected this attraction in their completed questionnaire. As a survey question, it is uncertain how cadets would have interpreted it and it was in the interviews that cadets could explain and elaborate their thoughts. For one female cadet 'leaving worries behind' was cast as a positive choice of a different world, with few of the usual distractions of life's routines:

Interviewee:

"I'm quite happy just doing my own thing, I do a lot of writing, I'm trying to write a book. You're away from everything, it's like yeah, it's, it's like going on holiday, I mean, the way you shut yourself off from other things, it's like just going on holiday, you just get away from everything. I mean a change is as good as a holiday, they say, you know? [LAUGHS] It is, definitely."

(Interviewer: "Do you enjoy that, or . . . ?")

Interviewee:

"Yeah, yeah, I love it. I love it, I love it. I think probably the biggest attraction for me is the fact that there's so few distractions. It's almost like a form of meditation. I love my own space to that extent."

(Charlotte/04 – F/D/21/XL)

This cadet likened shipboard experience to 'being on holiday' in the sense of stepping out of familiar routines – '*you just get away from everything*'. Holiday experiences have themselves been considered in relation to the notion of liminality (Bloor 1995b), a concept originating in the work of Van Gennep (1909/1960) on rites of passage, and developed by Turner (1967; 1974). In the intermediary phase in which individuals pass through the threshold from one social status to another, they are said to be in a liminal position 'betwixt and between' any stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised. Rites of passage are considered in relation to the cadet experience in the following chapter. As far as liminality is concerned, there were cadets who saw the shipboard experience as a time of freedom from the constraints imposed by previous roles and their associated responsibilities. For one cadet, being away from home was in itself cast as a positive aspect of being at sea:

Interviewee:

"That's probably one of the things I came to sea for, you know, 'cos I get on all right with my parents, it's just I'm not really, I told them I'm not really a home bird. If I wanna go, I just leave really. I think I've called them once in the first month, you know, the pair of them but I don't really, I'm not really bothered about my family, so they don't mind."

(Nathan/04 – M/D/17/XL)

Entry into seafaring as an escape route from the problems created by the breakdown of family life features strongly in the findings of both Hill (1972) and Hopwood (1973) on the background to the seafaring career. Hill (1972) refers to an *“open connection between certain orphanages and the sea”* and also to a *“connection recognised by seafarers themselves”* between *“a bad or broken home”* and going to sea. Hill believed that there was widespread underestimation of this relationship which he attributed to reticence on the part of seafarers, a reticence which did not apply in their interviews with Hill’s research team. This is a very different picture to that painted by the cadets I interviewed, and perhaps suggests a social change rather than a reticence on the part of the cadets. The previous comment from the cadet who described himself as *‘not really a home bird’* was as close as any cadet interviewed came to the accounts in Hill of *‘an unsympathetic background’*. Orphanages as such no longer exist in the UK; the dismantling and reassembling of the family unit is commonplace; and ‘broken home’ is not a term in common usage. Furthermore going to sea is also just one of a range of alternatives for young people through which they can leave home.

#### **SEPARATENESS: A CONSEQUENCE OF DIFFERENCE**

“As a sailor you’re a separate animal from the rest of humanity. You’re always on the edge. We like that.”

(Captain Richard Woodman, 2005)

The attractions of the sea environment, of unfamiliar places and people, and of a liminal world, offered ‘difference’ which inevitably separated the seafarer from life ‘shore-side’:

Interviewee:

“As an individual, to be a seafarer [SIGHS] it means, yes, you are singled out in many respects because as a human being you’re going to work in an environment in which human beings can’t exist. You are leaving the land base, we are land based animals and we’re going into a very hostile and unforgiving environment as a seafarer and therefore it does mean something and it is significant”.

(Trade Union Official)

Sea voyages by their very nature set seafarers apart. In the space and time between departure and landfall, those on board are separated from family, neighbourhood, and home country (Foulke, 2002). Modern seafarers are just as removed from the land as were their historical counterparts, as Sampson and Wu point out:

“Whilst working conditions, wages, and standards of health and hygiene have improved across the industry, seafarers in the twenty-first century once again find their lives at sea to

be characterized by isolation, tedium and confinement. They too experience a sense of “excommunication” and separation.”

(Sampson and Wu, 2003:126)

Based upon the images provided by seafarers themselves, and through cultural representations of seafaring, a public image or occupational stereotype is constructed. Writing on the visual representation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century seaman, Quilley contends that the social persona of the seafarer fits precisely Michel Foucault's definition of the 'other':

“... that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness).”

(Quilley, n.d.)

Reference to a ‘public image’ of seafaring brings the discussion to the career attraction least selected by cadets in the questionnaire, and the final one to be considered in this chapter. This attraction relates to how cadets thought others might see them - ‘others find it glamorous’. Only 6 cadets in the sample chose this from the questionnaire list as a reason for choosing a seafaring career, yet the interview material offered different perspectives. Cadets were aware that there were those outside the occupation who perceived it in a glamorized way, and cadets often fuelled this perception. The analysis of the data on this topic, together with relevant material selected from the other data - strands, was described in detail in Chapter 2, ‘Methodology’, as an illustration of the analytical processes underpinning this study.

#### **4.4 SEAFARING AS A CALLING: CURRENT PERSPECTIVES**

This chapter has emphasised the subjective features of a seafaring career put forward by cadets in this study: enjoyment derived from the sea as a natural environment; the potential job satisfaction arising from the opportunities to experience difference; and the recognition of being part of a tradition in a sense both familial and occupational. These features were shown as drawing many cadets, but not all, towards a career at sea, an idea which can be related to the notion of a calling. The sense of calling has been the focus of increased scholarly and practitioner literature in which it has been examined as an important subjective career phenomenon (Hall and Chandler, 2005; Duffy and Sedlacek, 2007; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Dik and Duffy, 2009; Hunter et al 2009; Dubrow, 2004 and 2010).

The recent literature on calling has exposed the divergence between classical conceptualisations of calling linked to notions of duty and destiny, and modern conceptualisations that emphasise the importance of “... *self-knowledge, identity, self-fulfilment and the pursuit of personal happiness.*” (Novak, 1996:39; cited in Bunderson and Thompson, 2009:32). Moving from what Bunderson and Thompson term the neoclassical conceptualization of work as a calling, in which the constructs of both calling and vocation “... *include a posture of seeking the common good ...*” (Dik and Duffy, 2009:440), the modern approach to ‘calling’ allows for the possibility that individuals may be drawn to an area of work for reasons that that are highly meaningful for them, and offer ‘*personal fit, well-being and meaning*’ without necessarily having implications of altruism or external guiding forces (Hunter et al, 2009:183). Dik and Duffy (2009) hold the view that both constructs, calling and vocation, involve an ongoing process of evaluating the purpose and meaningfulness of activities within a job, and can include making a career choice.

The conceptual and empirical definition of the sense of calling is subject to ongoing debate, however core aspects typically include: personal fulfilment or enjoyment in doing the calling-related activities; interconnection between calling-related activities and the rest of life; and, meaningfulness in engaging in calling-related activities (Dubrow, 2004; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009). To these aspects Dubrow adds: firstly, a calling as oriented toward a specific domain, rather than a general sense of calling as a personality trait; secondly, a calling as a continuum from high to low rather than something that is binary; and finally, that experiencing a calling is not equivalent to working or being employed in a domain, although that may be the case (Dubrow, 2010).

Following Hall and Chandler, Dik and Duffy (2009) suggested that the constructs of ‘calling’ and of ‘vocation’ are valuable in guiding research on the individual’s experience of meaningful work. The terms calling and vocation are frequently used in combination, or interchangeably although Dik and Duffy suggest that over time a distinction has evolved. The distinction they propose is that:

“Individuals with callings and vocations connect their work to an overall sense of purpose and meaningfulness towards other-oriented ends, but only individuals with callings perceive the impetus to approach work in this manner as originating from a source external to the self.”

(Dik and Duffy, 2009:428)

The distinction is not entirely convincing and throughout their paper the two terms are invariably used together whereas Dubrow (2010) moves to the exclusive use of the phrase 'the sense of calling'. Pointing out that most research on the factors associated with the sense of calling focuses on individual-level characteristics, Dubrow suggests that the sense of calling may also be related to behavioural and social factors – having a calling may be socially shaped, with parents and peers playing an important part. Dik and Duffy (2009) also suggest that family-of-origin influences may be at work in the development of calling or vocation and refer to research within vocational psychology already cited in this study (Whiston and Keller, 2004) as indicating the importance of both family structure variables, for example, parents' occupations, as well as family process variables, for example, attachment, in influencing career development. Dubrow's longitudinal study of young musicians in transition from high school to college establishes the sense of calling as a dynamic construct; this is supported by adult development and identity development literatures (Pratt, 2000), and by the literatures of occupational identification already referred to in this chapter (Becker, 1970).

As far as seafarers are concerned, Dubrow (2010) suggests that her study opens up avenues for future research on whether the sense of calling is an important construct for other populations. Indeed, Mack (2007) has already explored Norwegian seafarers' career experiences in relation to seafaring as a calling. Her study involved 41 active, non-active, and retired seafarers who were interviewed by email and telephone. From this data Mack puts forward the following aspects of seafaring as a calling: a heritage as a seafaring nation; love of the sea and nature's elements; and a sense of adventure and high social status. Her study invited respondents to consider the factors which supported, and those which hindered their sense of calling. Much of what she found was related to ambivalence: whilst the aspects of a calling remained strong amongst her interviewees, the impacts of the 'global transformation of shipping' and its impact on practices and the human elements of seafaring were seen as 'hinderers' to the notion of calling.

Similarly, the interview data from this study has suggested that cadets applied or transferred what could be described as a calling towards the sea with its pleasures and sense of adventure, to the activities of seafaring. Whilst clearly interrelated, a calling towards the sea and a calling towards seafaring are not one and the same, and create the

possibility of ambivalence when the everyday reality of shipboard life is realized. The longitudinal design of Dubrow's study revealed the ways in which the sense of calling in the young musicians studied declined over time as they came to experience the "*dark side consequences*" of their calling (Dubrow, 2010:35), consequences that impacted deleteriously on other aspects of their lives. Ambivalence may be an inevitable corollary to the sense of calling.

Multi-disciplinary research on calling and vocation has flourished during the time period in which this study was drawing to a close. The idea that cadets might see themselves as having a calling towards the sea and/or to seafaring was not something that had featured in the open coding of field data, and has emerged in the reflexive and iterative process of writing and analysis. It is suggested that the sense of calling would be a fruitful line of inquiry for future research with seafaring cadets. In the meantime, the data from this study suggests that the subjective aspects of a seafaring career are compatible with a sense of calling for many, but not all, cadets involved in this study.

#### **4.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

In this account of how cadets talked about their entry into the cadet training programmes, an analytic distinction has been made between what cadets perceived as the origins of their decision to take up training as a seafarer, and what they believed were the attractions of a seafaring career. This distinction grew out of exploring, analysing, and interpreting the data, and whilst it is not apparent in the existing literature on recruitment into seafaring (Hill, 1972; Stevenson, 1998; NUMAST, 2004a; IMO, 2009), it revealed the importance cadets attributed to the past in terms of long standing connections with the sea and seafaring, and how this became 'translated' into what they saw as the attractions of seafaring as a career.

In relation to the origins of their decisions to go to sea, the recurrent 'explanations' offered by cadets were: their positive experiences of the sea as a natural environment and, having a tradition of the sea and of seafaring in the family. The dominance of these two themes is consistent with Hill's exploration of the background to entry into the seafaring career (Hill, 1972).

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEA ENVIRONMENT: A LOVE OF THE SEA**

The importance of the sea environment in the decision to train as a seafarer was explored through cadets' experiences of the sea prior to starting on their courses. Half of those surveyed recorded experiences of being at sea before they had started their training: these experiences included activities such as fishing and sailing, whilst others had belonged to organised groups such as sea scouts and sea cadets. Cadets highlighted sea-related leisure pursuits during interview conversations, and it is suggested that cadets extended the sense of excitement and adventure from these activities to their career selection. The desire for adventure expressed by cadets is compatible with what Pais (2003) described as the 'adventure ethic' increasingly sought by young people in their lives. Simply having lived by the sea was recognised by a number of cadets as having played a part in their decision to go to sea.

The questionnaire responses showed two thirds of cadets as reporting a long standing attraction to going to sea, a view expressed equally by both deck and engineering cadets. The interview material provided depth to this response, revealing 'going to sea' as a complex set of ideas; in deconstructing what the attraction of going to sea might involve, the abstract notion of 'a love of the sea' was explored. 'Love of the sea' was selected as an attraction of seafaring by half of the questionnaire respondents. It was however selected by a significantly greater number of deck cadets than engineers, suggesting that the sea as an occupational environment was more important to deck cadets than to engineers. Interview material contained many exuberant descriptions of the beauty of the ocean world from deck cadets, and whilst this was acknowledged by some of the engineering cadets, their focus was more upon the wonders of the engine room. Within the notion of 'love of the sea' the attractions of sea-based leisure activities were with seafaring as an occupation. Extracts from Conrad's writing were used to aid the exploration of the elements of "going to sea" and the disentangling of a love of the sea, a love of ships and the mediating role of the seafarer.

Although a positive association with the sea might have little if any bearing on the actual tasks carried out by a seafarer, discussions on the background to entry into seafaring confirmed that the sea as an environment was important to the majority of deck cadets.

Notwithstanding the difference recorded in the questionnaire findings, there is evidence that love of the sea itself holds a particular attraction for seafarers whether deck or engineering officer cadets.

### **LINKS TO FAMILY TRADITION**

Turning to the second theme which characterised cadets' accounts of the origins of their decision to take up seafarer training, a family tradition of seafaring was shown to apply to over half the sample (55%); this finding was comparable both with Hopwood's data (Hopwood, 1973) and with NUMAST data (NUMAST, 2004a). The questionnaire data also showed that those cadets with seafarers in the family were more likely to claim a long-standing attraction to the sea. The qualitative data supports the emphasis that cadets placed on family tradition, but provided little insight into ways in which cadets thought this might operate. Recent research on the sense of calling (Dik and Duffy, 2009; Dubrow, 2010) suggests that family-of-origin influences may play a part in the social shaping of a sense of calling.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENCE**

It has been suggested in this chapter that the emphasis on the attractions of travel was part of a broader attraction of seafaring – that of experiencing 'difference'. Difference was also taken to include the avoidance of the routine; the exposure to other cultures; and, the opportunity to experience a liminal space away from everyday worries. Supporting the emphasis on travel and the opportunity to see the world, the interview data also suggested that cadets acknowledged the romantic and exotic attractions of going to sea and this echoes Hill's findings. The extracts from Joseph Conrad were chosen to support the suggestion that seeing the world has long been an attraction of seafaring. The interview data suggests that this is unchanged despite the fact that world wide travel is now accessible to greater numbers of the population than ever before, and paradoxically that seafarers have less time than ever before to enjoy the exotic because of greatly reduced shore leave (Sampson and Wu, 2003).

### **A SENSE OF CALLING**

The fact that young people enter the occupational world with relatively limited knowledge about what is actually involved in the job itself is unsurprising (Evans and

McCloskey, 2001). It was the finding of this study that entry into seafaring was seen as a positive choice by the majority of cadets involved in the research. Although it is possible that those who responded to the questionnaire were those who were altogether more optimistic about seafaring, this finding was in marked contrast to Hopwood's study (1973) where, for the majority of deck cadets, the choice of a sea career was not a decision taken positively. An active desire to "go to sea" was not however necessarily associated with the tasks involved in seafaring. Deck cadets rarely mentioned the skills associated with being a deck officer and the work they were required perform, focusing rather on the natural environment, the opportunities for difference and an "adventure ethic". The subjective attractions of a career as a deck officer, and the origins underpinning their decisions, could be seen as a sense of calling although this assertion requires further investigation and testing. Engineering cadets focused more on the transferable engineering skills they would acquire during training, although they too noted the attractions of the natural environment. It is suggested that an exploration of cadets' perceptions of calling in relation to both the sea and seafaring would be a fruitful avenue of study.

#### **HINTS OF AMBIVALENCE**

The cadets interviewed were however already tempering their expectations of adventure and excitement as a consequence of their experiences of the reality of shipboard life. Such a finding is well supported by the literature which recognises the incorporation of what have been described as 'reality elements' into the unfolding process involved in the entry into an occupation (Becker and Geer, 1958; Psathas, 1968; Geer 1972). The 'incorporation of reality elements' has the potential for creating ambivalence in relation to a future at sea.

The study also found ambivalence in relation to the attraction of good pay. This attraction was selected most frequently by both deck and engineering cadets in the questionnaire responses, together with the opportunity of seeing the world, as reasons for choosing a career at sea. The NUMAST survey (2004a) had shown pay as the most important factor for cadets in their terms and conditions, and the factor with which they felt the most dissatisfaction, however pay was mentioned infrequently in the interview conversations – when it was mentioned it was in relation to the uncertainties of securing employment post-certification, and also in connection with what cadets described as 'the

money-trap'. The fact that deck cadets particularly did not see their training as giving them transferable skills did not add to the confidence of cadets in their overall job prospects. The emphasis on pay in the NUMAST survey is not altogether surprising in that NUMAST (now Nautilus-UK) is a trade union body for whom improving terms and conditions for members is a prime function. This study sees the concerns expressed by cadets both in relation to job acquisition, to skills transferability and to the money trap, as suggesting ambivalence: ambivalence as a feature of cadetship is taken up more fully in subsequent chapters of this study.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

**LIFE AT SEA:**

**THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CRAFT**

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

“For the purpose of training new officers, the total character of the ship and its mode of life is recognized; and on this recognition is based a philosophy of training.”

(Aubert 1965:249)

In this chapter the focus moves from cadets’ reflections on their motivations for entering their training programmes, to accounts of their shipboard experience, referred to by the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) as ‘planned training at sea’. The 2006 MNTB guidance to companies and seagoing officers responsible for this element of training emphasises its prime importance in the development of the skills, knowledge and experience needed by future officers, as Aubert suggests in the foregoing comment.

The cadets in this study had completed a mean of 32 weeks of planned training at sea, with the most experienced respondent reporting 81 weeks at sea, and the least experienced 6 weeks. As a sample, they had completed on average over 40% of their ship based training time when responding to the questionnaire, and they were therefore in a position to comment and reflect on their experiences of shipboard life as seafarers in training. 72% of questionnaire respondents had completed two or more trips; in the interview sample the figure was 48%. This exposure to different placements had the advantage that nearly half of the cadets interviewed, and three quarters of those surveyed, could base their responses on more than one trip: this enabled them to draw their own comparisons between captains, between crews, and between the atmospheres of different ships. During each phase cadets could undertake one long trip, or a number of shorter trips; the cadets interviewed described a range of placements from one ship with the same crew for the whole phase, to a number of shorter trips on different vessels, and the diversity of their shipboard experiences as a group added to the richness of the data which was generated.

### ENVISAGING SHIPBOARD LIFE

That young people tend to enter the world of work with limited knowledge of what is involved in the job itself has been documented (Evans and McCloskey, 2001) and was illustrated earlier in the accounts cadets gave of their entry into Merchant Navy officer training. The difficulty of imagining the actuality of a job has been recognised as particularly pronounced where the job is not visible or easily accessed by those outside the occupation, as is the case with seafaring. Whilst many cadets who entered training

had experience of living by the sea and of sea-based leisure activities, they soon found that the experience of the ocean environment as a seafarer was altogether different, as the deck cadet in the following interview extract discovered:

Interviewee:

“Mainly they just don’t tell you what you’re getting yourself in to . . . and then when you go to sea ... you’ve never been to sea before, you don’t know what it’s like, you don’t know what you’re getting yourself into, what people are going to be like.

All the boys from my area . . . they’ve all been about boats and worked on boats before.

But then going away on a ship, it’s different. It’s just a different way of life. Sometimes it’s a big shock ... it was so, so, so different. You’re kind of set in a routine when you’re at school.

And you go away to sea, straight off your biological clock’s mangled, you’re up at strange hours, going to bed at strange hours. You end up eating at strange hours, stuff like that, it kind of mucks about with you, “Oh my God, what’s happened?” It’s quite challenging when you first start . . .”

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL)

Anticipatory socialisation, in which individuals imagine or anticipate what it would be like to perform a role in any other situation beyond their current experience, is equally applicable to those: preparing to enter training; to those in training; or, to those who are established in an occupation and progressing through the different stages of their career (Pavalko, 1971). The Merchant Navy Training Board ([www.mntb.org.uk](http://www.mntb.org.uk)) and The Marine Society and Sea Cadets ([www.ms-sc.org](http://www.ms-sc.org)) contribute to the anticipatory socialisation process by trying to convey to potential seafarers the day-to-day experience of life at sea. Accounts of daily life by serving cadets and officers are available as case studies, and more recently as blogs, on the websites of these organisations; web cameras on board different types of vessels relay views of the physical environment of the ship. However, as Padfield (1962) points out, a fundamental difficulty faced by future seafarers in trying to picture their lives at sea is that the life is completely outside their existing experience:

“But living aboard ship is not playing sailors. It will bear little or no relation to anything you have been doing before.”

(Padfield, 1962:10)

Assembling prior information about a job can only prepare an individual to a limited extent: one cadet commented that although he began his training with expectations based on information acquired from his family he never, by his own admission, “*really thought it through*”, and even if he had, it was only when he “*stepped on that ship*” that the implications of being at sea became meaningful for him:

Interviewee:

“I imagined – I don’t know really because I never really, to be honest with you, never really thought it through. My brother did it and I was told that I’d need this qualification to come home and get my pilot’s ticket anyway and stuff. And I was like, “OK, it has to be done, it has to be done”. I never thought about how I would feel about going away for 4 to 5 months at a time. It never entered my head until I stepped on that ship. I just felt it would be, I don’t know, a long time but sure, you’d be seeing the world and stuff. That’ll be great, you’ll be able to tell everyone where you’ve been and stuff. I never thought anything really through, to be honest with you. I think that’s why it was so difficult at the start.”

(Stuart/05 – M/D/20/XL)

The Merchant Navy Officer training undertaken by the cadets in this study began with a six week induction phase which offered an introduction to safety at sea, general ship knowledge, and underpinning knowledge for the N/SVQ. It was however the planned training at sea which gave cadets meaningful experience of life onboard ship and the opportunity to assess whether the attractions of seafaring that they had imagined were borne out in reality.

## **CHAPTER STRUCTURE**

Aside from this introduction, the chapter is divided into two main sections followed by a conclusion. The first section, *‘First Impressions’*, explores both the unfamiliarity and the inescapability of the ship environment, particularly the way in which work, sleep and leisure are brought within the same physical and social confines. The concept of a total institution is introduced and its applicability to shipboard life considered. The themes of unfamiliarity, inescapability, and the total character of the ship are taken forward in a consideration of the variety of ways in which cadets negotiated the complexity of shipboard relationships and the different behaviours they adopted in response. The frequently indistinct boundaries of work and non-work relations are shown to require careful negotiation by cadets as occupational newcomers, and as part of their initiation into seafaring.

The second section, *‘Developing the First Impressions’*, opens by considering the cadet experience in terms of initiation and *‘rites of passage’*. For some cadets their experiences of shipboard life were particularly bleak, and can be seen within the context of psychosocial health. The increased challenge for women cadets of negotiating, not just occupational initiation, but also their entry into a male dominated environment, is

explored. The final part of this section focuses on relationships within the context of fellowship, traditionally seen as a characteristic of shipboard life. This section is intended to give insight into the inter-relationships between cadets and their peers, and with officers and crew. *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (Conrad, 1897/1982) is selected as the Conrad's writings most concerned with the dynamics of fellowship on board.

As in the conclusion to the previous chapter, the findings which have emerged are grouped under a number of headings which form the descriptors of the cadet experience. In this chapter these descriptors are: separateness; the total character of the shipboard experience; a traditional occupational culture; and, fellowship and isolation.

The chapter has been constructed using the same analytical processes as outlined in the methodology chapter and in the introduction to the previous chapter; this is also the case for chapters six and seven. Thus, in the interest of avoiding repetition, only minimal reference is made to methodology.

## **5.2 FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

### **UNFAMILIARITY**

Eleven of the cadets who responded to the study questionnaire had experience of working at sea before starting their cadetships, in roles that included working on fishing vessels and local ferries. Of those interviewed, only one deck cadet had paid work experience at sea, having spent a year as a catering assistant on a cross channel ferry. It is not surprising therefore that for many of the cadets interviewed the unfamiliarity and the novelty of their first sea trip left impressions that were particularly memorable. The vividness of early impressions are also recorded by Hill (1972:54); reporting on reactions to the first voyage, his finding was that responses were invariably sharply negative, sharply positive or a mixture of the two, with little room for a neutral experience.

The 'opportunity of experiencing difference' featured in cadets' accounts of the attractions of seafaring discussed in the previous chapter. For the engineering cadet speaking in the following interview extract, difference was first experienced in the unfamiliarity of the engine room and in the astonishing size of the engines for which she might one day be responsible:

Interviewee:

“But when I, when I saw it, it was like, ‘Oh, my God.’ It’s nothing like ... you’d never seen anything like that anywhere else before. It’s not like a car engine, it’s only this big [ACTION]. And, alright, the principle is the same but it’s huge, you know? When I got into the engine room and I saw these huge great pieces of machinery, I was like, “Oh my God!” [BOTH LAUGH].

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL and interviewer)

It was however the unfamiliarity of shipboard life as a total and committing experience which featured most strongly in cadets’ accounts of life at sea, an unfamiliarity which they faced with varying degrees of apprehension:

Interviewee:

“I think it was quite, it was daunting there, you know. Looking up at that big ship and thinking you’re gonna be on there for three months, and also, you don’t know anybody. You don’t know if you’re gonna get on with them and that sort of thing.”

(Neil/04 – M/D/23/XL)

Interviewee:

“I mean when you join your first ship you’re a bit edgy, you’re trying to work out where you’re gonna fit in, how people are, what sort of people they are.”

(David/04 – M/D/19/AM)

In the following account of his maiden voyage, the deck cadet concerned related his sense of anticipation. His laughter, interspersed throughout the conversation, may have reflected both his nervousness and the fact that, in retrospect, the humour of his introduction to seafaring was not lost on him:

Interviewee:

“Well we turned up to the boat late and the ship had already sailed [LAUGHS]. You could see them sailing down the river. They organised a tug and everything for us to get to the ship, ‘cos they’d already set sail [LAUGHS]. They were about to wait for the tides on the river, so they got that opportunity to go up and set sail, [BOTH LAUGH] so they sailed without us [LAUGHS]. Yeah it was quite scary. It was scary because being your first trip away, you’re really nervous, because you don’t really know what to expect. You’ve kinda got the ship sailing away from you, and you just simply go, “Oh forget this, I dunno what I’m gonna do.””

(David/04 – M/D/19/AM and interviewer)

Whilst the first sea voyage can be seen as having particular significance, it was suggested in the following comment, that every new voyage can bring its own sense of unfamiliarity and apprehension, no matter how experienced the seafarer:

Interviewee:

“But I was speaking to a Chief Mate and he’s been at sea for twenty-five years, and he says, he still says that when you arrive at a ship, you look up and you’re still a bit daunted, you know. I think it’s something lots of people have throughout their seafaring you know.”

(Neil/04 – M/D/23/XL)

A voyage to an unfamiliar destination combined with a new position on board whether as officer cadet or in a new rank, increases the memorability of the experience, as can be seen in ‘*Youth*’ (Conrad, 1898/1975), an account of a first voyage in a new role, and to a new destination. Conrad described the writing of ‘*Youth*’ as a “... *feat of memory ... a record of experience...*” (in Karl, 1979: 297) as it draws closely on his own experiences as a seafarer when, in 1881, he sailed to Bangkok on his first voyage as second mate (Sherry, 1972: 34):

“It was altogether a memorable affair. It was my first voyage to the East, and my first voyage as second mate: it was also my skipper’s first command ... Fancy! Second mate for the first time – a really responsible officer! I wouldn’t have thrown up my new billet for a fortune.”

(Conrad, 1898/1975:9)

Besides mirroring cadets’ accounts of the memorable nature of their voyages of initiation, ‘*Youth*’ also illustrates the way in which an actual sea experience, in this case Conrad’s own, is retold as a tale to be shared with others. Baines, in his critical biography of Conrad, suggests that ‘*Youth*’ romanticises and glamorizes life at sea, giving the prosaic actuality of daily shipboard life an ‘*imaginative gloss*’ (Baines, 1960/1971:98), whilst Leavis found the novella to have a florid tone, suggesting that “... *the prose laureate of the British seaman does sometimes degenerate into a Kipling of the South Seas.*” (Leavis, 1948/1962:209). Dramatization of the ‘ordinariness’ of the sea experience, whether by Conrad’s fictional chronicler Marlow, or by a second year Deck Cadet, is however a recognised tradition in seafaring to the extent that the nautical spinning of a yarn, ‘*the twisting of threads to form strands which are in turn twisted together to form a rope*’ (Smyth, 2005), has become a figurative expression for telling a story or tale. Zurcher (1965) describes sea-stories as an omnipresent part of shipboard discourse and whilst the cadets in this study did describe the telling of sea stories to their non-seafaring peers, often inviting them to see their lives perhaps with ‘*imaginative gloss*’, many of the yarns, as illustrated in the following remarks, were told in the Mess by experienced seafarers to novices:

Interviewee:

“With the one crew, yeah, we used to, well, we’d hang around in the Mess and talk and is, they used to tell us salty seaman stories and stuff like that . . . people that have been away at sea for thirty, forty years have got a lot of stories.”

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

Such ‘salty seaman stories’ could be seen as part of cadets’ occupational socialisation, helping them to come to terms with an environment that was both unfamiliar and inescapable.

### **INESCAPABILITY**

For the cadets in this study the nervousness of entering a world of work with its new tasks and behaviours, was magnified by the unfamiliar physical environment. Apprehension was further compounded by the fact that they were committed to being in that environment for some length of time; ships vary greatly in respect of the continuous time spent at sea (Aubert, 1965; Thomas, 2003), and whilst no cadet faced the two years absence described by one of Hill’s interviewees, they were certainly away for weeks if not months. As Hill noted “*... on a ship, unlike a factory ... the new entrant has to stick it out, at least until the end of the first voyage.*” (Hill, 1972:56). The inescapability of shipboard life featured strongly in cadets’ descriptions of their experiences, and the comparison with prison appeared spontaneously in four separate interviews. As far as the interviewer was aware, none of the cadets had actually been in prison, yet they used prison as a point of comparison for their experience, adopting a longstanding metaphor of seafaring life. A member of the group interview repeated a remark originally attributed to Samuel Johnson:

Interviewee:

“They say that in prison you’ve better company, better food and no risk of drowning.”

(Group interview, October 2002)

The following comment from a deck cadet who subsequently left training, referred specifically to the experience of oceangoing, referred to by cadets as deep sea:

Interviewee:

“I mean it’s a prison sentence, isn’t it? It is a prison sentence and, and that’s the way I got to think about deep sea.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

For another cadet, the feelings of inescapability were juxtaposed with the feelings of relief as he returned to shore:

Interviewee:

“Coming home was just total relief. As soon as I stepped foot in that plane, I knew ‘I’m home, I’m home in an hour or less than an hour’. It was a big relief and then my Dad came and picked me up and my Mum had tea all ready for me, with the buns. It was very exciting to be back home. It was like coming home from prison or something, you know. That’s what it was like on that ship; it was just like a prison, more or less. I was so happy to be home.”

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

These feelings of relief on leaving the enclosed world of the ship were echoed by another cadet who subsequently resigned from training. Whilst Goffman in his description of a resident leaving the confines of a psychiatric hospital notes that upon release the individual is likely to be “... *marvellously alive to the liberties and pleasures of civil status* ... ” (Goffman, 1961/1991:70), the following interview extract also notes that re-engaging with the realities of shore life can be disconcerting:

Interviewee:

“Yeah, but the day you, you get off – it’s like getting out, that’s what I keep saying, we’re getting out, it’s like leaving prison. It’s for certain it’s not a job, it’s . . . you’re four months away and when you come back you’re dealing with everyday things that you would think you know.”

(Interviewer: [LAUGHS] “Tax disks and, and cars and. . .”)

Interviewee:

“Dealing with - even with money again, it’s how to even spend things. You’d go for the shopping, or go to the school. It’s a strange change of life [LAUGHS]. You’ve been, you’ve lived in a square box, a metal box. You know when you walk down the stairs you see carpets, it’s soft and wood and we used to have metal. Living in a little box can’t be good for you.”

(Mark/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

These numerous remarks on the confinement of shipboard life find resonance in ethnographic studies of transnational seafarer communities. An ‘*oiler*’ described working in the engine room, as: “*It’s like prison. You eat and then you work ... yes, like a prison. You don’t go ashore.*” (Sampson and Wu, 2003:126). Lane (1998) has suggested that changes in working practices, fast vessel turnaround, containerization and innovation in information and communication technology have made vessels ‘*more like a prison than ever*’. For some cadets who enjoyed sport and the outdoors, the physical restrictions imposed by being at sea were particularly difficult to tolerate:

Interviewee: "(I'm) very sporty, yeah and then to go to that, where you just do no exercise and no activities is, was a real shock. I thought it would be completely different."

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

However, those who participated in this study experienced feelings of confinement and constraint aboard ship in varying degrees. For example, item 19 of the study-specific questionnaire is: *'It's difficult being cooped up with the same people all the time. It gets you down. You can't really get away from them, you're either working with them or in the bar with them'* (Appendix 5). This statement had been created from cadet comments obtained in the pilot phase of the study, and the questionnaire responses were fairly equally distributed between: those who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 31.3%; those who strongly disagreed or disagreed totaled 30.5%; and, those who took a neutral position, a figure of 38.1%. So, reactions to the ship itself being a confined social space were fairly evenly distributed.

Even so, the ship imposes a combination of confinements. Those on board are held in an enclosed physical space where work, recreation and sleep are brought together within social boundaries in which relationships have to be negotiated between very limited numbers of individuals. The interconnectedness of physical and social constraints is well illustrated in the following description of shipboard life offered by an engineering cadet:

Interviewee:

"When I'd been there a month or so, I was, you just get the feeling that you can't get away from anybody. I mean, not only are you surrounded by big huge walls, you can't see the sky. Not seeing the sky - you, you don't even realise that this would affect you. But one of the things I ended up having to do, I had to go out every night onto the deck and just watch the sun go down, or something. I had to get out. I had to see the sky, you know, its just sounds daft but it's just something that you need. You have to get away ...

It makes it difficult as well because they're not people of your choosing, they're not your mates necessarily, they're just, they're just people that are there and if you don't get on with them, it makes it worse. And it can get difficult if you're working in a confined space. You're working with people who you don't know, you don't know them well, or you don't get on with them, or whatever you, you just want to get out. There's no other way to describe it, you just have to get out of there. I just had to get out."

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL)

As I reviewed the interview material which I had coded under the broad topic area of 'relationships at sea', it became clear that the interconnectedness of all aspects of life at sea within a physical and social environment both isolated and constrained featured

strongly as something of significance to cadets. Seeking to inform my understanding of such an environment led to an exploration of the notion of the total institution; this concept has become central to the representation of cadetship and of seafaring in this study, and is considered in the following discussion.

## **THE TOTAL INSTITUTION**

The concept of the total institution is set out in Goffman's essay '*On the Characteristics of Total Institutions*', first published in 1957 and then appearing in a slightly longer form as the first of four essays in *Asylums* (Goffman, 1961/1991). Goffman describes this first essay as '*a general examination of social life in these establishments*' (total institutions), illustrating his points with particular reference to mental hospitals and prisons, but also including examples from Melville's account of life on a Nineteenth Century man-of-war ship (Melville, 1850/1991). Goffman proposed the concept as an ideal type, arriving at the notion of 'total institution' by a comparative method, singling out a category of institutions with '*encompassing tendencies*' that are '*discontinuously greater than the ones next in line*':

"Every institution captures something of the time and interest of its members and provides something of a world for them; in brief, every institution has encompassing tendencies. When we review the different institutions in our Western society, we find that some are encompassing to a degree discontinuously greater than the ones next in line. Their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that it is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests or moors. These establishments I am calling total institutions, and it is their general characteristics I want to explore."

(Goffman, 1961/1991:15)

His description of the class of institutions he termed as total institutions was:

"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, 1961/1991:11)

Goffman identified the central feature of total institutions as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating the three spheres of life i.e. sleep, play and work. This central feature is described in terms of four features: first, that all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same authority; second, that each phase of the member's daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of

others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together; third, that all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled and imposed from above; and, finally that the various enforced activities are combined to fulfill the official aims of the institution. Within the overall class of total institution he suggested five groupings of institutions. Four of the groupings are: those which provided care for those incapable of caring for themselves but who but presented no harm to others (e.g. care homes); those who were incapable but did present some form of threat to others (e.g. high security hospital); those where the individuals were held to protect the community (e.g. prison); and, those where the institution provided a retreat from the world (e.g. the cloister). The ship was included in a further group together with army barracks, boarding schools, work camps, colonial compounds and the servants' quarters of large mansions in, as a group of institutions *"purportedly established to pursue some workmanlike task and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds"* (Goffman, 1961/1991:16). Although not included in this study, the cruise ship could be described as both ship and *"a large mansion from the point of view of those who live in the servants' quarters"* (*ibid*: p.16).

Goffman described the total institution as *"a social hybrid, part residential community and part formal organization"* (*ibid*: p.22) and the concept revealed how organisational structures shape the behaviours of individuals and can compromise their agency. But Goffman also sought to show what McEwan refers to as *"the complex tangle of ways"* (McEwan, 1980:144) in which inmates of total institutions succumb to, and actively resist, the definitions of self imposed on them by their organisations, developing individual *"lines of adaptation"* (Goffman, 1961/1991:56). Most commonly, the inmates of the hospital learned to 'play it cool' with a combination of techniques such as withdrawal or intransigence (*ibid*: pp.60-65). In what Scott (2010:215) describes as a revisiting of the concept of total institution she notes the tension throughout *'Asylums'* between the agency of the actors and the institutional structures, a tension which has sometimes been overlooked. Scott suggests that overlooking this tension and the subtleties of Goffman's analysis may have perpetuated the view, also highlighted by McEwan (1980:147) that the total institution is equated with organisations that isolate, degrade and oppress their members.

Becker (2007a: 236) suggests that in generalizing about total institutions, Goffman made possible a far more serious moral evaluation of the practices that went on in the mental

hospital, than using conventional moral judgments. It was Goffman's view that, through understanding the functional reasons for the presence of and relationships between the features of total institutions:

"We will give less praise and blame to particular superintendents, commandants, wardens, and abbots and tend more to understand the social problems and issues in total institutions by appealing to the underlying structural design common to them all."

(Goffman, 1961/1991:115)

Whilst the central feature of the total institution – a breakdown of the barriers between sleep, work and play – fits comfortably with a seagoing vessel, the applicability of the more detailed characteristics of total institutions to the ship has been questioned. Using the concept to explore shipboard relations and relationships, Zurcher concluded that only when a ship is at sea is it a total institution, and describes a range of informal traditions and initiations designed to '*make a salt*' of the new recruit (Zurcher, 1965:400). Nolan suggested that the simultaneously supporting and constraining structure of the ship as total institution fosters dependence and limits social awareness resulted in the seafarer being ill at ease in the social world ashore (Nolan, 1973:95). In the most detailed and explicit application of the concept of the total institution to the ship, Aubert suggests however that whilst the ship from the outside may appear as "*... the ideal combination of escape from present difficulties at home, and the prospect of a warm social unit with close comradeship.*" (Aubert, 1965:245), it does in fact demand "*... more, rather than less psychic strength compared with other places of work and modes of life.*" (*ibid*: p.244).

Aubert suggests that the ship differs from all other total institutions in that the ship has no explicit purpose to change, model or reshape individuals. The prime purpose of the ship is economic, and where this involves periods of isolation, the impact on seafarers is an indirect consequence. The isolation of the ship at sea is "*... an incidental, inevitable, and unfortunate product of the circumstances.*" (*ibid*: p.247): this fact is in contrast to the prison, the boarding school, or the monastery, as examples of total institutions, where their isolation and total character are intrinsic to their purpose which is to re-shape the individuals involved. Related to this observation, Aubert makes the point that the ship, unlike most other total institutions other than the cloister, is a place of work for all its members, although the ship has its own power structures embodied in the hierarchy of officers and crew. He saw the ship as permitting more freedom to leave it, at least in the

longer term. Further, Goffman's reference to "enforced activities combined to fulfill the official aims of the institution" can be interpreted in part as the 'inmates' being suitably moulded or trained. Aubert notes that the ship has less interest in training than any other total institution however he does recognise that there are circumstances when the total character of the ship is used to re-shape and mould, and this is in relation to the new recruit: particular nautical training systems (Norwegian and UK included) are founded on the belief that:

"... only by being a member of this total institution for some time, and being moulded by its influence in his early years, will a man acquire the personal qualifications for future leadership. For the purpose of training new officers, the total character of the ship and its mode of life is recognized; and on this recognition is based a philosophy of training."

(Aubert, 1965:248-9)

Aubert contrasts the rules governing entry into the cloister with entry into the merchant marine. He suggests that cloister rules are specifically designed to assure that there is a considered decision behind the novice's entrance to the institution, whilst the merchant marine has "*... nothing similar ... to ensure that the new recruit really wants to become a seaman and has full insight into the consequences of his choice.*" (Aubert, 1965:250). However, as will be shown, being absorbed into the total character of the ship does offer cadets insight into the consequences of their occupational choice.

### **5.3 DEVELOPING THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

"Life in an organization or community is all of a piece. What you do in one area of action depends on and has consequences for other areas."

(Becker, 1970: 54)

Becker's observation (1970:54) echoes Aubert and Arner who noted, with respect to shipboard life, that: "*What happens within one area, for instance the more private area, has repercussions in other areas.*" (Aubert and Arner, 1965:263). The combined aspects of shipboard life outlined above which initially made such strong impressions upon cadets, the unfamiliarity, the inescapability, and the total character of the ship, expose cadets to the intricate web of work-based and leisure-based relationships that operate within the confines of the ship.

As this chapter develops, it will be shown that planned training at sea provides the opportunity for cadets to learn to negotiate this complex web of relationships not only as

newcomers to seafaring but also as future officers. Much of the effort is placed on 'self-management' in which cadets, often as the only trainee on board, have to find their own ways of 'getting by'. There were occasions on which cadets found themselves as part of a more broadly negotiated social order that encouraged fellowship and solidarity. Strauss (1978) suggested that even in a highly repressive total institution such as a maximum high security prison, staff and inmates may negotiate their own interpretation of the social order, often constructing an alternative that may be just as formal, although tacit, as that it replaces. Sometimes, as will be shown, senior officers took a management role in advising cadets on effective ways to 'self-manage' their emotions at sea, as part of their initiation.

### **NEGOTIATING RELATIONSHIPS**

The cadets interviewed in this study showed insight into the complexity of shipboard relationships and the variety of ways in which the phenomenon manifested and could be handled. The following interview extract suggests that experienced seafarers recognised the strain that the total character of shipboard life placed on their fellow seafarers and on the novice in particular:

Interviewee:

"You kinda know that you were stuck on this ship and there's no way to go and you can't really get away from anybody, 'cos you go to your cabin and people are always knocking on the door, trying to find out if you're alright and making sure you haven't done anything silly and you kind of can't get off the ship but you can't go anywhere either if you know what I mean?"

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

In part, this quote provides an additional perspective on 'inescapability' as not just a matter of confinement but also as a basis for mutual support, in keeping with Aubert's more nuanced conceptualization of the ship as a total institution considered above. Additionally, the quote illustrates that shipmates can be active in ensuring each other's wellbeing. The following quote develops this theme, particularly in relation to the managerial responsibilities that senior officers have for the crew, especially novice cadets.

Interviewee:

"I was on Watch with the Chief Mate ... he was a really switched on guy. He'd been on Watch for the last two days, or something like that and then he sort of goes, what's wrong and I'm like, ah, I'm just bored."

(Interviewer: “Do people look out for people? I mean like the, the Chief Mate that said to you, you know, do the kind of more experienced ones look out for the inexperienced? Try to cheer them up or . . .”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, I think so, Yeah, the people, people can see when . . . I mean ‘cos you live in such close confinement, you can always tell whether, you know, how people would behave normally, or what would constitute normal behaviour. So you know how they are and that, and you can always tell whether someone’s acting out a character.”

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

The following interview extracts display the variety of ways in which cadets responded as individuals to the complexity of shipboard relationships. For some, adaptation appeared to be effortless:

Interviewee:

“I mean I’m a very relaxed person anyway [LAUGHS], so I just kinda slide in and have a few jokes, sit down, have a chat, have a beer, you know? It was good. A lot of the guys were quite relaxed, chilled out. And as long as you were, you know, a bit of joking around so you could take a bit of that, which you get everywhere, you get it in college. On the ship it was good, ‘cos I think everyone kind of can see, respects the fact that you’re there for months, you’ve gotta get on with other people and so, it was alright. I mean, you’re gonna get some people who are quite uptight, who would take quite a few things to heart. If you’re in the bar and you’re joking around, and then someone takes offence to something, ‘cos you’re on a ship and there’s nowhere to go then, you know, basically what you’ve got is your cabin to go to. And then you’ve gotta work with these people, ‘cos there’s such a small number of people, I can imagine that would kind of cause a bit of trouble.”

(Interviewer: “Did you see that happening?”)

Interviewee:

“Not really, no.”

(Interviewer: And was that something that you had to work at, or that’s just how you are?)

Interviewee:

“That’s just how I am. It just it goes straight over the top of my head to be honest [LAUGHS]. Nothing really fazes me, I mean certain things, obviously, but none of the lot I’ve met here. People on the ship normally, you know, they respect other peoples’ privacy and stuff, which you’ve gotta do really; ‘cos when you’re on a ship, living in a confined space, you’re eating with the same people every day, working, well every day, working with them every day, socialising with them, you know? You’ve gotta work kind of at a short-term relationship. And it’s good, I mean it’s, it’s nice to do because you make new friends in the process.”

(David/04 – M/D/19/AM and interviewer)

A number of interviewees expressed a difference in their handling of ship and shore side disagreements. In the following quote, the cadet raises the issue of professionalism:

Interviewee:

“You’ve definitely gotta be able to just take everything. It’s gotta be water off a duck’s back. I mean, you share it with the same people for five and a half months, you know? You’re living with your family for five and a half months and can you honestly say you haven’t had an argument for five and a half months? . . . even with your mates or anything like that. [On ship] you can’t just turn around and say, “I’m not talking to you now” because it’s a professional thing as well.”

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL)

One deck cadet described how he had found his way of accommodating shipboard life, and suggested that he would do well to adopt his own shipboard strategy shore-side:

Interviewee:

“You’ve got to get on with the people, ‘cos if you don’t get on with them, it’s gonna be a horrible trip, so I find I’m biting my tongue quite a lot. If something annoys me I’ll say something, I don’t bite my tongue when I should; but on the ships I have done - I just bite my tongue and I find that it means problems don’t escalate. If someone annoys me, or, or I annoy them, instead of continuing and making it bigger, you just bite your tongue and say, ‘OK, leave it’ and come back a couple of hours later and its all fine. It seems to work. I ought to try to do that ashore too.”

(Andy/04 – M/D/20/AM)

One seventeen year-old engineering cadet, describing how he conducted himself aboard ship, cheerfully dismissed the interviewer’s suggestion that his attitude displayed considerable maturity:

Interviewee:

“I think you’ve gotta be able to work out that if something goes wrong, there’s no point in you getting all wound up about it, you’ve just gotta get on with it and like put your head down and do it and then when it’s over, have a laugh about it. But like I don’t see any point in, if something doesn’t go the way you want, sort of kicking and screaming and throwing a hissy fit about something. I don’t think there’s any need for that, especially when you’ve gotta sort of work in close confines with the person, every day seeing ‘em.”

(Interviewer: “That’s a lot for a seventeen year old to kind of adjust to, do you think?”)

Interviewee:

“Nah, it’s alright, it’s normal. You just get on with it, it’s not, it’s nothing too strenuous [LAUGHS]. I dunno, if you don’t like it, quit. If you don’t think you’re cut out for it, quit [LAUGHS].”

(Angus/04 – M/E/17/SS and interviewer)

For other cadets, adaptation appeared to require effortful adjustments. One female deck cadet explained the effort required in containing her natural exuberance. Singing and sporting a pink polo shirt were clearly not accepted behaviours by the Captain of her first training vessel:

Interviewee:

“Within forty eight hours he’d (the Captain) told me off for “joviality”, just cos I’d been smiling and going [ACTION], “Good morning,” or something, and he was just like, “There’s nothing for you to be happy about, what are you happy about?”. He just went mental at me. He’d heard me singing on deck, he went mental at me. So then he told me I was the worst form of sea life. He told me that I was female therefore I had more to prove. I was wearing track suit bottoms and trainers and a, sort of, polo shirt, which is generally the norm for what you’d wear on a supply vessel. The problem was the polo shirt was pink and he didn’t like it. So all these things before we’d left Aberdeen. So we’d just, we’d let go of the ropes and I’d gone down to my cabin and phoned my Mum in floods of tears, “Mum, this is gonna be a nightmare,” And my Mum was just like, “No, you’ve got to be strong, get over it.” And I did. After that it was a challenge. I took it as a challenge to keep him happy, “Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir”.”

(Charlotte/04 – F/D/21/XL)

For this cadet, who earlier in this interview had described arriving at her first ship having forgotten to bring any footwear other than a pair of high heels, the traditional gendered expectations of the Captain had to be managed as part of her initiation into life at sea: *“He told me that I was female therefore I had more to prove.”* and this additional challenge is explored later in this chapter.

There is an implication in some of the comments reproduced above that innate personality characteristics determine the ease with which cadets adapt to the intensity of shipboard life; that some individuals are suited to it, and some are not. One cadet who resigned from training during the first year, in unhappy circumstances, pondered whether personality was the key determinant to accepting shipboard life:

Interviewee:

“I suppose that’s, that’s a big, a big question that, maybe my, my personality wasn’t suited to the job, sort of thing.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Another cadet, who also resigned, held the clear view however, that ‘a good company’ was the key determinant to a positive shipboard experience, rather than individual personality. It is notable that he refers to the company rather than the ship, suggesting perhaps that companies themselves had different cultures reflected onboard their ships.

Comments from other cadets did confirm that certain companies were singled out by cadets as poor in terms of the learning experiences they offered to cadets.

Interviewee:

“I think you’ve gotta be with a good company. A good company will mean everything; if you’re with a good company, you’ll enjoy it, pass, have a good time. If you’re with a rotten company then it’s just awful, you know, if they don’t care. Its not, it’s not good at all.”

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

These differences of viewpoint hint at a significant element of discussion as this study unfolds, which is the extent to which the experience of cadetship is shaped by structural components, and how cadets respond in terms of their individual dispositions and personalities.

Keeping out of the way; biting your tongue; not making waves; and, trying to keep the peace, were all phrases used by cadets to describe their approach to negotiating onboard relations and keeping their emotional responses in check. In an examination of job attitudes of police recruits in an urban police department, Van Maanen concluded that the police socialisation process resulted in a “*lay low, don’t make waves approach*” (Van Maanen, 1975:207). In the interviews with cadets, the approach identified by Van Maanen also emerged as a favoured strategy and was related to the view that initiation into the traditional occupational culture of seafaring might require acceptance of behaviours towards them, which, in other circumstances, would be considered to be unacceptable:

Interviewee:

“I just kept out of the way of him (one of the engineers) because he would go out of his way to make a problem with the way you were doing something. Or at dinner-time, you know, they would talk about you as if, as if you were, because you were a cadet, you were the tea boy, the run around who should do all the awful stuff, really bad jobs and that, so. So, yes [LAUGHS].”

(Interviewer: “So did, did you keep your head down?”)

Interviewee: “Mmm, very much so, yeah.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM and interviewer)

However, cadets who felt that ‘*keeping one’s head down*’ was the way to get the best out of life at sea were outnumbered in the questionnaire responses (32.5%) by those who felt that it best to be assertive (67.5%). Of those 67.5%, 71% considered themselves to be assertive rather than under-confident. ‘Standing up for yourself’ was a phrase taken from a pilot interview and used in the study-specific questionnaire:

Interviewee:

“You’ve got to be quite strong mentally, ‘cos otherwise, you’re away from home and that, and you have to be able to stand on your own two feet ... you’ve got to be able to put your opinion across without offending ... you’ve got to be very assertive ‘cos otherwise you just get walked all over. . . ‘cos if you give an inch, they’ll take a mile and walk all over you and before you know it, they’ll be dumping all sorts of work and stuff on you. You’ve got, you’ve got to stand up for yourself. Well that’s how I get by anyway and I think people have got more respect for you if you stand up for yourself, ‘cos you know where you stand with people.”

(Brett/Pilot/02– M/D/18/AM)

Whilst the majority of cadets chose the assertive option in the questionnaire, the detail of the interview responses revealed the majority to take a less confrontational approach. Although *‘standing up for yourself’* was similar to a phrase used by another deck cadet in the following extract, his description also suggested that it was important for the trainee not to *“start anything”*, and that over time a constructive relationship could develop between trainee and the other shipboard members:

Interviewee:

“It gets better day after day and if you knuckle down and do your job and don’t start anything – stand up for yourself when you need to – but knuckle down and do the work and make sure everybody knows you’re doing the work, you earn respect very quickly. If they see you’re not a hard worker, not interested, they won’t bother. If they see you’re interested they’ll take time out and work with you. That’s something I found quite a lot. Show you’re interested, they’ll show interest back in you. And at the end of the trip, everybody’s getting on great with you. If you need a favour they’ll do it for you, ask you a favour, you’ll do it. It’s like a family at the end. It’s hard to walk away from it when it’s a cadet ship because you know you’re probably not going to see these folks again.”

(Graham/05 – M/D/19/XL)

Finding ways to adapt to the demands imposed by the total character of the ship were revealed in interviews as requiring varying degrees of emotional effort both in terms of how they appeared to others, and how they modified their own feelings. Tracy’s study of cruise ship activity directors, focused on the emotional labour required in a total institution (Tracy, 2000). A cruise ship activity director would not be considered as a seafarer in a traditional sense however they would still be subject to the same physical confines of the ship. Tracy uses Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective (Goffman 1959/1980) in which employees are cast as organisational actors performing roles front and back stage and combines this with the literature of emotion at work (Hochschild, 1983). Whilst the introduction of passengers into the shipboard environment brings

another dimension to relationships on board ship which has not been explored in this study, shipboard life for all seafarers inevitably has elements of front and back stage roles as individuals moved between their private, social and work worlds. Learning to adapt to the movement between those worlds, to the unfamiliarity, the inescapability and the total character of the ship were fundamental to cadet experiences of being at sea and can be seen as part of their occupational initiation.

### **INITIATION AND RITES OF PASSAGE**

The sea voyage has been a traditional signifier of an initiation which, in its simplest form, puts a young person, usually a boy, into an unfamiliar situation, tests his worth in crisis, and rewards those who pass muster with full acceptance as adults (Foulke, 2002: 11). In his discussion of the interrelationship of life cycles, turning points and careers, Hughes uses 'going to sea' as an example of a rite that marks the transition from boyhood to adulthood (Hughes, 1958:13). This study has recognised in its references to the literatures of youth transition, that cadetship can signify a double transition, both into adulthood as well as into the workplace.

In describing the attitudes which officers and crew displayed towards them, some cadets suggested that they were exposed to a challenging process of initiation as part of their occupational induction. In the following extract, taken from an interview with a cadet who subsequently resigned, the cadet himself suggests that this process was a "*sort of rite of passage*":

Interviewee:

"The Officers like to show a little bit of authority and particularly the guys who are, I mean some of the Officers are twenty, twenty one and I still regard that as being quite young to be an Officer on a ship you know, a forty man, million pound piece of equipment, that's such a huge responsibility. But fair enough, you know, they've done the course, they've got through it and they, they want to exert their authority. But I just think perhaps if they had a rough ride, they try and make it a rough ride for you, and there were times when I just said that, you know. I just don't think this is acceptable for that amount of nastiness is directed at the cadets just because they're the cadet, you know. They're out just to give them a badge, you know. I think one of the points is that it's a sort of rite of passage as it were, you know. The more you've gotta go through being treated in this way in order to be a proper cadet."

(Interviewer: "Did they think like that?")

Interviewee:

“Yeah, what they were saying is that you’ve gotta do it so that you know what its like to be at that level. I thought well, OK, fair enough, you actually, you should do the job and actually get your hands on, actually, understand about chipping and painting. But you know, if you’ve done months and months and months of it and you know you’ve done all the really grizzly jobs then fair enough you can do it, but it didn’t have to be in a negative way. It doesn’t have to be invisible, miserable does it, you know? I think that’s, that’s how some of the Officers like it to be basically, you know, and I don’t get the psychology of it.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM and interviewer)

The concept of *‘rites de passage’* developed from Van Gennep’s ethnographic observation amongst tribal societies (1909/1960), where the customary behaviours that accompanied common events such as pregnancy and childbirth, the arrival of sexual maturity, marriage, and, death, displayed certain commonalities. *‘Rites of passage’* were described by Van Gennep as rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age. They comprise three consecutive subsets of behaviours; the pre-liminal, the liminal and the post-liminal, when the ritual subject enters a new stable state with its own rights and obligations. The notion of the liminal space ‘betwixt and between’ the stable states, developed by Turner (1967; 1974) from Van Gennep’s work, was referenced in the previous chapter as a possible attraction of life at sea. Van Gennep suggested that a structural scheme or construct based on rites of passage could be universally applied to different kinds of transition.

Organizational management research during the 1980s applied the concept of rites of passage to the analysis of initiation processes in different occupations (Trice and Morand, 1989). Revisiting the usefulness of the concept in considering career transitions, Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch (2005) concluded that whilst it does not constitute a fully developed theory, it qualified as a useful model for specific aspects of career transition. They suggested that transitional rites could support occupational identity and the entering of new groups in a world where careers are increasingly seen as fragmented and unstable. Altman and Holmes (2005) were less favourable in their assessment of the use of the rites of passage concept in the career discourse, suggesting that it has been given explanatory powers it does not possess. They suggest that the significance of *‘rites of passage’* as Van Gennep described them was in drawing attention to the ceremonial (the rite) as part and parcel of the transformative (the passage). The experience of planned training at sea as initiation into seafaring may be transformative, but the experiences

reported by cadets did not suggest they were exposed to the range of rituals, customs and initiation ceremonies described by Zurcher (1965:400) as being performed on the novice seafarer in the 1950s. Aubert and Arner (1965:267) also suggest that whilst initiation and associated rites of passage have long been a recognised aspect of the occupational socialization process of seafarers, formalized rites have largely passed away. The ceremonial referred to by cadets in this study was limited to their oral examination at the end of their training after which they would receive their “Ticket”, that is, their MCA certification. One of the cadets interviewed in the pilot phase of the study did mention that a fellow cadet had been part of the crossing the line ceremony when he had crossed the Equator for the first time.

The transformative process was seen by some cadets as necessarily requiring them to experience ‘*a hard time*’ and to accept being treated “*like something they’ve trod on*” as this cadet put it:

Interviewee:

“Everybody looks down on a first timer. You’re meant to be treated like something they’ve trod on to start with. It’s just the way it is. Everybody gets treated that way. But the ones that get through that first phase will go on.”

(Graham/05 – M/D/19/XL)

In the following interchange, Stuart uses a similar metaphor to Graham (all cadet names have been pseudonymised) to convey a similar experience and reaction, albeit “*trodden on*” connotes rather differently from “*something they’ve trod on*”.

Interviewee:

“I’ve been up working and then he (the Captain) comes and knocks on your door after you’ve been asleep for only a few hours . . . but you’ve just gotta accept you know.”

(Interviewer: Were there any times when you felt, oh, this is a bit difficult to handle, or was it kind of, ‘Oh well, just get on with it?’)”

Interviewee:

“Yeah, kind of, you know, you just accept it and get on with it. There’s not much really, that you can really do about it, you just accept it. You’re basically the lowest. You should work your way up. Accept it, accept what you get, you know. You’re gonna get trodden on, just accept it and move on. There’s not really much you can do about it.”

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL and interviewer)

Some cadets saw demonstrating that you could ‘just accept it’ as evidence of maturity, and of their ability to adapt to being part of the wider social group. Or, in the language of

the rites of passage, they had completed one element of the transformative process from cadet to seafarer. This stance of acceptance corresponds with the reflections earlier on *“keeping your head down”*. Hill too reported that acceptance of one’s position on board, and commitment to the occupational culture was seen by the seafarer: *“... as though he has passed through an initiation ceremony and has successfully crossed the threshold into manhood.”* (Hill, 1972:58).

However, for a number of cadets interviewed, the experience of initiation was not something they felt inclined to just accept, interpreting it as aggressive and intimidating, as illustrated in the following two extracts:

Interviewee:

“There’s people like those crew who just make fun and games out of it, trying to make you cry and then they laugh at it. There was one cadet and some of the crew, they, they tied him up on deck and threw water over him and stuff, put oil all over him. Basically that, that’s just a very sad way to get a kick if that’s what they have to do to keep themselves happy at sea. They just tease the cadets and they’d make him cry after doing that and then they’d think, “Yes, we can do it again”. That’s what they’ll be trying.”

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

This comment and the preceding one (p.167), both from Stuart, make an interesting contrast. In the first quote Stuart records how he feels he personally copes with the intimidation present in initiation in a dispassionate fashion. Whereas in the second quote, he seems to be taking a more judgemental opinion of the perpetrators of the ‘rites’. In relation to the concept of the rites of passage, the apparently contradictory positions held by Stuart can be sensibly interpreted. Stuart is accepting in the transformation from cadet to seafarer, the passage will necessarily involve being “trodden on”. However, the form of being ‘trodden on’ – the rite itself – is clearly of concern. For Stuart, the rites described in his second quote are clearly not acceptable to him.

Interviewee:

“I had the Chief Mate and the Captain boasting, saying that five, six Ocean XL cadets have quit with us and they, they were turning around to me and said, “When are you gonna quit? Go on, you quit. Go on, quit, quit.” And it’s like this all the time. I had the Bosun as well swearing at me telling me, telling me to “Get your f\*\*\*ing ass up, erm, out here, go and f\*\*\*ing do that you little f\*\*\*ng s\*\*t”, and it was like I just thought, “Oh no, if this is, this is being at sea, I can see why people don’t wanna do it”. It’s just awful”.

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

For the cadet Sam who described the episode above, this was just one incident in what he found to be an intolerable experience, and he resigned from cadet training within a year of the interview having taken place. During interviews, even when describing the sort of encounters described in the extracts above, no cadet used the words cruel or bullying and Hill noted that whilst:

“... a significant proportion of young men, though probably not the majority, find their initial impression of the sea predominantly negative . . . instances of outright deliberate cruelty or bullying seem to be extremely rare.”

(Hill, 1972:54)

In describing such episodes cadets focussed on their responses to the actions and behaviours of those around them. The following extract is taken from an intense interview with a deck cadet, Robert, very shortly after he resigned from training. The episode involved his interrogation by a very drunk captain who challenges his motivation for being at sea. The cadet was clearly disturbed by the encounter and emphasises the aggressive verbal and body language of the captain. However, underneath the unpleasantness of the exchange there is the sense that the captain is pushing him to really think about his reasons for being at sea, and is testing his resolve: for the cadet he interprets this, in the light of his resignation, as confirmation of his unsuitability as a seafarer:

Interviewee:

“His (the Captain) reputation had sort of went ahead of him and you know and I, there was this almost dread that we got this Captain and when he came he was, he was quite nice to me er, initially and then there was a stage one night when he got so drunk he, he basically sat right, sat next to me and he said, erm, “Why,” he said, “Why, why are you at sea?” and I sat down and thought, I was, I wasn’t drunk or anything, I, I was so-, completely sober, I said “Well,” I said I, “I, I think you know, I think it’ll probably be like most guys, you know? I’ll find a good career and I, I wanna, I wanna make some money and, and have a career ladder really.” And he said “No”. You know he, he was, he would, he would eff and blind like every word in every sentence, and he said, “Why are you effin at sea?” and I said, “Well, well.” And I, I couldn’t see where, I couldn’t see where this was going at all, I said, “Well, well”, what’s he trying to get at here? and he said erm, and I said “Well I, you know, I, I just want a good, good career, holidays and, and pay and, and I think probably the leave is probably one of the most attractive features” He was like, he goes, “No, why the effin hell are you at sea?” And I, and I said “Well, you know, to be a Seafarer I suppose. I mean I, I dunno, that’s what I’m trying to get at,” “Well you shoulda said it the first time.” I was like, I said, “What?” and he goes and he came really close to me and he said, “I don’t think you effin wanna be here, do you?” and he said, “So, so I think you should eff off.” And erm and, and I sat up there and then the other two cadets were just silent and then I, I realised that perhaps he had seen, perhaps he had seen through me and in, in my work, I dunno, but perhaps,

perhaps I wasn't cut out for it but he, he said three or four times, cos he was so drunk, he said "I, I think you should eff off." And I, I was like, "Right I will, I will then.""

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

This powerful exchange goes to the heart of the matter of what it means to be a seafarer and what is the nature of seafaring. The attractions of a life at sea listed by Robert– the good pay, the holidays, the career ladder – are dismissed scornfully and increasingly angrily by the Captain until the cadet suggests, without much conviction, that he is perhaps at sea to be a seafarer. One is left to speculate what the Captain, presented with the study questionnaire and its seven career attractions, might himself have selected, or whether he would have taken Conrad's view that his passion for the sea was something mysterious and inscrutable (Conrad, 1906/1975:v).

### **Bullying or binging?**

Whether the Captain was carrying out a probing exercise to test resolve or was bullying a junior member of his crew is open to interpretation: bullying is an emotive and highly charged term. The literature of bullying at work has largely framed it as an interpersonal phenomenon which occurs between two individuals or between an individual and a group, and in which exposure to teasing, insulting remarks and ridicule are amongst the most common negative acts (Kapf and Einarsen, 2001). Ashforth (1994) argues that tyrannical behaviour may be legitimized by organisational norms and values which seek to divest employees of their former identities, and force compliance. Bullying appears to be particularly prevalent in total institutions where dominance and power imbalances are strongly emphasised (Salin, 2003). Liefoghe and Davey (2001) take a critical approach, and make the case for widening the frame of reference of workplace bullying so that it is viewed in the context of power relations in organisations. Critical management theorists argue that the operation of power is fundamental and the imbalances of power that arise are inevitable within organisations (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). Pathologising of both victim and bully may act as a distracter for dysfunctional organisational practices, and the categorisation of everyday workplace experiences as bullying may actually trivialise the experiences of some extremely abused individuals (Liefoghe and Davey, 2001). Whilst the cadet speaking in the following interview extract suggested that ridicule is "*part and parcel of the job*", other cadets were clearly disturbed by what they perceived to be abusive practices:

Interviewee:

“I mean its just part and parcel of the job. I mean if there’s anything about you that can be laughed at or made fun of, it’s done. But, but you don’t get away with anything. If you do something stupid, then it’s passed round the whole ship and they’re laughing at you.”

(Interviewer: “Heavy duty teasing?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, basically. It’s all done in good fun, good humour . . . erm, and with regards to anything and everything.”

(Interviewer: “No, no area is sort of sacrosanct, everything’s up to be made fun of?”)

Interviewee:

“Everything, yeah, even erm, race, religion, but is all done within, not with any cruel aspects, nothing said deliberately to hurt someone, everything’s just up for ridicule.”

(Ian/04 – M/D/23/SS and interviewer)

The process of subjecting a novice to what could be variously interpreted as bullying, ridicule, or teasing, is described by Haas (1972) in his study of the interaction between ironworkers (steeplejacks) and their apprentices. ‘*Kidding and ridicule*’ dominate the exchanges, with verbal sparring matches taking place hundreds of feet off the ground in the construction of multi-storey buildings. Haas cites Hughes’ analysis (1945) of the use of ridicule and deliberate verbal challenge in the workplace which is referred to as ‘*binging*’, and which plays an important part in testing newcomers:

“The zealot who turns the sparring match into a real battle, who takes a friendly initiation too seriously, is not likely to be trusted with the lighter sort of comment on one’s work or with doubts or misgivings; nor can he learn those parts of the working code which are communicated only by hint and gesture.”

(Hughes, 1945: 356)

The exchange recorded below is an example of where a ‘*sparring match*’ is turned into a ‘*real battle*’ between cadet and captain:

Interviewee:

“So, more or less, we had an argument, I told him (the Captain), “This is no way to be treating a hired cadet” and anyway he actually pushed me and the size of the man, he, like, threw me from about, say, from where I’m sitting now to that man’s desk in that room [ACTION]. It was a whole big argument and he got really abusive towards me and, he pushed me to my limit at that stage and I lost it, I can’t pretend, and I started shouting back. He said more or less, you know, “You can get off my ship,” more or less and I said, “Right, fine, I will.””

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

The final exchange mirrored almost word for word the exchange between the disillusioned deck cadet and the captain, reported earlier:

Interviewee:

“He said “I, I think you should eff off.” And I, I was like, “Right I will, I will then”.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Haas suggests that binging is used as an initiation by the ironworkers to test trustworthiness and self control, and that as an institutionalized part of the apprentice career it is a recognised mechanism for creating social order in the “*ambiguous and unstructured environment*” (Haas, 1972:35) of the ironworkers’ workplace, particularly where there are frequent changes in the workforce. Collinson’s empirical analysis of forms of joking on a factory shop floor identifies humour as resistance, as conformity, and as control (Collinson, 1988). He suggests that exposure to the joking culture served a dual purpose of instructing new members how to act and react, and testing their willingness to be part of the male group and accept its rules. On board an Alaskan fishing vessel, Bourassa and Ashforth (1998) found that as recruits demonstrated their ability and willingness to work in extremely arduous conditions and to tolerate abuse, they gradually became more accepted by the rest of the crew.

In this study, whilst some cadets may have sensed the attractiveness of the workplace culture and been prepared to accept its rules, others found themselves repelled by it. These cadets found that planned training at sea was characterised by feelings of disillusion that sometimes bordered on despair; such cadets represented 20% (n=5) of the total interview sample. Of these five interviewees: three felt such disillusion and disappointment that they abandoned a future in seafaring; and the other two continued their training in the hopes that their post-qualification experience would be more satisfactory.

### **Stories of despair**

Much of the content of the stories told by these five cadets was poignant and at times sensational and disturbing, not just because of the personal emotions involved, but because of their serious criticism of the cadet training system. I had my own uncomfortable memories of workplace learning, and I recognised the temptation of overly identifying with these cadets. Nevertheless I felt that responding to their concerns in a humane and understanding way was part of what Bloor has described as “... a

*continuing obligation to bring about good through one's conduct over the entire course of one's research.*" (Bloor, 2010b:17). These interviews were challenging. They were draining, requiring high levels of concentration; and they did create concern on my part for the wellbeing of the cadets involved. However I also confess that as a novice researcher returning home from these interviews, there was an undeniable sense of having secured, in Becker's words '*the real story*' – a sense which was not felt after the less controversial interviews.

"Sociologists have had a penchant for the exposé since the days of muck-raking. The interviewer is typically out to get "the real story" he conceives to be lying hidden between the platitudes of any group and discounts heavily any expressions of the "official" ideology."

(Becker, 1970:49)

It would be a mistake to suggest these challenging interviews provided '*the real story lying hidden*' beneath the discourse of seafarer recruitment and training. Challenging interviews are neither more nor less authentic than those less colourful and engaging (Dingwall, 1997:63) and the interviewees, as noted in the previous chapter, were no more truth tellers than their peers who had no dramatic stories to tell (Bloor, 1995a). Each interview revealed that there were multiple facets to the experience of cadetship.

Earlier in this chapter examples were given where cadets felt the total character of the ship to be oppressive; for the cadets whose conversations are recorded below, this sense of confinement and oppression became overwhelming:

Interviewee:

"Have you seen *Master and Commander*? I'd recommend you to watch it. It's, it's a recent film which has come out and I saw it and actually I have complete parallels with one of the guys who, actually, he committed suicide, 'cos he jumps overboard with a cannonball - and its set in a different time period but I actually, I could actually see parallels with his mindset but if, I dunno, if you're stronger or weaker if you actually have the, the nerve to, to go from that height? But and I, I felt that, nothing, for me personally, I, I don't have that inclination, but I imagine that for someone who gets so upset it'd be quite, quite easy to just jump off the back of the ship. Generally I would, I would imagine there are cases of it because there are certain environments that you can't, can't escape, really, there's no, you know, you are, you're there for that period and, to endure it. And for me, I mean I, I feel, I, I'm fairly tough to, to accept it and my feeling was, OK, endure it, you've only got - I mean I had the days marked off, for however many I had to go and I'd cross them off and look forward to that, every day [LAUGHS]. But the one thing for me was mainly reading and just trying to do, trying to do the job as best as I could, really."

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Despite the way in which the cadet distances himself from the character in the film who commits suicide by emphasising the fact that he himself is *'fairly tough'* and can accept and endure his sea trip, I understood this cadet to be saying as directly as he could, that he had at times felt suicidal. His recourse was to reading as it was for a fellow deck cadet for whom books, DVDs and sleep provided a partial refuge:

Interviewee:

"Well, the only thing I could do was, once I was finished my duties, all I had for myself was my cabin. So what I could do was there was two big, black boxes of DVDs and there was books of course to study, and between them two and sleeping that was all I could do. And I was really depressed, 'cos my first sea trip home, away from home and it was so far away from home. That was the sixth, the fifth week. I was really depressed that week."

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

For another deck cadet who left training, there was one incident that he found particularly disturbing; there is a sense that his shock was not just with the incident itself but with his own reaction to it, which takes him by surprise:

Interviewee:

"When he (the cook) threatened me with a knife, he was absolutely blind drunk. When he was cooking he used to drink, it was awful really. So after that episode I, well, after that incident I just went to my room and cried. And I've never, I've never actually cried in my life, I was just so, so scared and so, so lonely. And my company couldn't care less, they didn't even phone in, or send anything. It's, it was appalling and that's Ocean XL. Ocean XL are just dreadful. Well I, I just could not wait to leave the ship, I could not wait to get off that, off that ship. No one was there to say, you know good luck and see you later, or anything. So, I got off the ship and then I got back home. I was so glad to be home. I spoke to \*\*\* in Ocean XL and he just said "Are you embroidering what happened on the ship?" I said, "No, not at all. Not at all." So he didn't actually, they didn't, he didn't actually stick up for you, they didn't stick up for their cadets. It's always strange really, 'cos it's always the measly cadets, you know, they get thrown from pillar to post, there's no respect or, or anything."

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

The cadet's description highlights the active hostility to which he felt exposed; it also raises the importance of another set of relationships – those with the training or sponsoring company. This set of relationships is returned to in the next chapter in which cadets' experiences of the levels of support from the training and shipping companies are presented. The cadet who described his despair in the extract above resigned his cadetship some six months after the interview took place. His resignation was not

surprising, given the strength of his feeling conveyed in the following interview extract:

Interviewee:

“Well, I’ve been trying to look at things that have been positive about the Merchant Navy, what I’m doing now and I can’t actually. I really actually can’t see any, to be honest. There’s the fact that you earn good money when you’re at sea but then, when you’re at sea, to counteract the fact that you’ve got a good, you know, you’re earning fairly good money, you’re gonna be away for four or five months, and by that time everyone’s, you know, you, you’re like a stranger when you get back. And you’re stuck with people that, you know, you don’t necessarily get on well with and, like you’re, you’re like a caged, a caged rat, you know, stuck on a steel tub going from one horrible port to another [LAUGHS]. And it’s just, it really is not life, it, really, it’s just . . .”

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

This account of the most negative aspects of the cadet experience is brought to a close with the reproduction of a letter sent to me by a cadet who had just resigned from deck officer training. The cadet contacted me at SIRC having just returned from his first sea phase and having received a copy of the questionnaires and details of the research. He hadn’t actually completed the questionnaire but as a result of receiving it he wanted to talk with me about his experiences at sea which he believed had compromised his “*psychological and emotional wellbeing*”. We met informally in a coffee bar and I listened to his account of how difficult he had found his first sea phase. He told me that he was going to resign and that he would send me a copy of his letter of resignation: he felt that the letter would add to the research data and might help to raise awareness of the position of cadets left disillusioned and disappointed by their experiences of training at sea. *Textbox 5/1* contains the text of this letter.

The letter sets out clearly the issues which led to his resignation: the overall isolation; the restricted opportunities for mental, physical and social stimulation; the limitations on contact with family and friends, can all be seen as restrictions imposed by the very nature of seafaring. For this particular cadet, language barriers, boredom, and physical problems added to his difficulties, although unlike some of those with poor experiences of planned training at sea, this cadet found support from those around him.

**Textbox 5/1** Text of cadet's letter of resignation

Dear Sir

I am writing to inform you of my decision to discontinue training as a Deck Officer Cadet with your company. I have recently returned from a three month trip beginning in Japan and finishing in Spain upon the motor vessel \*\*\*.

I found the experience very difficult both psychologically and emotionally. There was a continuous feeling of tremendous isolation, loneliness and boredom which I had trouble coping with to say the least.

Very few members of the crew spoke English to any degree of proficiency. The Officers' English was better but they were often too busy working to part take in informal conversation.

Despite having an other cadet on board, having only each other to talk to and work with every day put a strain on our friendship and led to frequent arguments which just added to the stress of being so far from, and out of touch with, my family and girlfriend.

The only means of communication to contact anyone was sending text messages to mobiles on the telex machine, but these couldn't be replied to and so there was no way of knowing if they were being received.

The lack of facilities on board the ship was also frustrating. The only books to read were those I brought myself and the gymnasium facilities were very basic with only a few loose weights. The treadmill and stepper were both beyond repair.

The food was generally traditional Filipino dishes which the other crew members seemed to enjoy but which I found at times difficult to stomach and repetitive and as a result I suffered considerable weight loss in a short space of time.

The major difficulty I experienced was insomnia due to the noise and the movement of the ship and the continuous changes in time zones. For long periods I was averaging 2-3 hours sleep per night which took a toll on me physically and mentally. Shore leave was allowed when the opportunity arose but the long periods in between ports were very hard to cope with and at times I became depressed and withdrawn from the other crew members.

Generally, the officers and crew were helpful and as supportive as they could be but there was little they could do to alleviate the isolation and exhaustion that I suffered.

Reaching this decision has been difficult for me considering how much time and effort I had put in during the induction phase at college. To now realise that this career choice is no longer a viable option and that I am simply not able to cope with or suited to life at sea is a hard pill to swallow. I honestly believe that were I to continue with shipboard training, my psychological and emotional wellbeing would be compromised and I fear that I may become a liability both to others as well as to myself.

### ***mental health and wellbeing – a note***

The above account provides only an outline of the detailed stories of despair contained within the interviews. In the detailed stories there were: instances of personal conflict between a cadet and another individual on board ship; examples of cadets struggling with the physical, social and emotional isolation of being at sea; and, reports of officers and crews who were perceived by cadets as ill equipped to support someone new to the experience of seafaring. For the cadets concerned, what seemed to be a combination of social, mental, emotional, and physical factors threatened to compromise what could be described as their psychosocial wellbeing. The mental health of seafarers has not received a great deal of attention from the research community (Bloor et al, 2000), and the report from a workshop held by the International Maritime Health Association in 2004 confirmed that there was limited evidence on the psychological and social impacts of seafaring on health and wellbeing, (IMHA, 2004). It has been suggested that whilst suicide rates are reported to be high amongst seafarers from some developed countries (Mayhew, 1999), poor mental health may manifest in less dramatic ways. Long hours, lonely watches, single person tasking, reduced crewing levels, and the pressure for fast turn around times are all cited by Bloor and colleagues as contributing to experiences of seafarer stress (Bloor et al, 2000). In addition the home/work interface, described by Hill (1972) as the oscillation between sea and shore, and the consequent separations from partner and family, is considered as one of the most significant causes of stress for seafarers (Parker et al, 1997; Thomas, 2002; Thomas et al, 2003). For those cadets who could not accept the constraints of shipboard life, or adjust to its traditional occupational culture however unreasonable it might have appeared, their experience of seafaring was demoralizing and they left training with a sense of failure and of disappointment.

### **ODD WOMAN OUT**

Much of the emphasis so far has been upon entry into male groups; the occupational studies that have been referenced include ironworkers (Haas, 1972) and the harsh environment of a factory ship (Bourassa and Ashforth, 1998), and most ships are also male domains. 95% of those responding to the study questionnaire were male. However, there were three female cadets interviewed, one deck cadet and two engineers, and their experiences of initiation into the overwhelmingly male shipboard culture warrant specific attention.

Aubert and Arner wrote of women seafarers as “... *an element which is entirely alien to the old tradition of the sea.*” (Aubert and Arner, 1965:252). The role of women in the contemporary Merchant Navy is considered to be under-investigated (Walker et al, 2003; ILO, 2003), despite the recognition by the International Maritime Organization that women could provide part of the solution to the global demand for seafarers (IMO, 1997). A study on women seafarers and global employment policies and practices, commissioned by the International Labour Office (ILO) and conducted by SIRC, showed that women continue to constitute a very small part of the seafaring labour force, and that their distribution is highly skewed, with far higher proportions of women coming from parts of Europe than from the rest of the world (ILO, 2003). Their research revealed that strong stereotypes of the abilities and characteristics of women pervaded the industry at all levels and in all sectors; such prejudices were overlaid with further stereotypes relating to ethnicity. Walker et al, exploring the construction of identities by female cadets in one UK Merchant Navy training college, noted how the cultures of the college and of shipboard life reinforced each other in what they described as “*rigid and ritualistic working patterns*” (Walker et al, 2003:289). They concluded that the training college did little to challenge gender regimes, but rather sustained masculine structures.

The three women cadets in this study – 6 of the 120 questionnaire respondents were female – were very forthcoming interviewees, and described in some depth their experiences of being at sea. Their impressions and reflections on life at sea have already appeared in both this and the preceding chapter alongside those of their male counterparts. However the interview extracts presented in this section illustrate specifically that for the women cadets a dual negotiation had to take place when they took up their training placements: firstly negotiating their position as women in a heavily male dominated occupation; and secondly, managing their entry as novices into the world of the experienced. For the female engineering cadets in particular, proving themselves capable of undertaking the duties of an engineer was challenging, and can be set in the wider context of the relationship between men and machines. Embodied practical knowledge about machines is an important way in which certain forms of masculinity are created, maintained, and enacted (Mellström, 2004). Drawing on a literature that explores technology as a masculine cultural expression (Cockburn, 1983; Faulkner, 2000), Mellström concluded that:

“Many men create truly gendered spaces through their interactions and relationships with machines. These homosocial masculine practices continuously exclude women and perpetuate highly gendered social spaces.”

(Mellström, 2004: 380)

In her exploration of recruitment and retention amongst women seafarers, Thomas (2004) also noted that the engine room, with its associated images of *'heat, dirt and sweat'* and physically demanding work tasks, was seen as the least suitable area for women's employment. Thomas's portrayal of the responses of male seafarers in relation to women whether cadets or qualified officers, was reflected perfectly in the comments of the two female engineering interviewees in this study. Thomas noted that prejudices tended to be manifested overtly as illustrated in the comment below:

Interviewee:

“My company kept on having this habit of putting ‘Mr \*\*\*’, so they were expecting two males. Then I showed up and it's like, you know, ‘I'm, I am, I'm Miss \*\*\*.’ “No, no, you can't be, we are expecting Mr \*\*\*” So, you ain't so lucky.”

(Interviewer: “[LAUGHS] And how did, how do you think they first saw you?”)

Interviewee:

“I don't know, it was a bit, a bit of like, you know, “women should be making coffee and tea”.”

(Interviewer: “They said that to you?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, “being a receptionist” and like, you know, gimme that bloody spanner.”

(Interviewer: “So once you showed that you could use the spanner as well as they'd done, or better, how ... ?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, they were all right with that, and then I proved to them that I can drink just as good as, as well and now even better than that.”

(Interviewer: “Do you think that was important?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah. If I could equal them, then they have no problem with it”

(Interviewer: “Sort of initiation sort of thing?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah. But since I've proved that I could do the work, it's like, “Yeah, OK. But now you'll get after our jobs.”

(Emma/04 – F/E/21/XL and interviewer)

Alternatively, and less obviously, prejudice was also made manifest in the belief that women could not perform the necessary tasks. Thomas described this response as a protective or paternal response, and this is well illustrated in the following extract:

Interviewee:

“I was the first female cadet they’d have, had ever had on, on, as an engineer, so it was a bit of a novelty for them [LAUGHS]. They were very unsure of me for, for a good, it lasted for at least the first month because obviously they’d rotated as well, so there was a different crew, after two weeks. So for at least a month I was putting up with, “Can I let her lift things up?” “Can I let her weld?” “Can I let her do this?” “Can I let her do that?” and “I dunno if she can handle it”. I’m not a wimp, wimpy girl, I’m not a girly girl, I don’t wear make-up, I don’t wear the frilly skirts or anything. I joined to be an engineer which means I get dirty, it means I get mucky, I get covered in grease, I have to lift heavy things, I have to weld and I can’t, just because I’m female and you know, I shouldn’t just be not allowed to do it. I had, to a certain extent, I had to tell them that it was OK. (Reactions) depended on who the person was that I was with. There was a great Second Engineer, he was realistic about everything and he treated me the way I wanted to be treated, but he was only on for a few weeks. Others were like, if I’d managed to do a bit of welding and it was mmm. I’ve worked in schools and have been alright, not fantastic but not crackpot either you know, and so, if I did a bit of welding, “Oh, yeah, that’s brilliant, that’s excellent. We had some welder on last week; he couldn’t weld for his life.” It was “ha, ha, ha.””

(Interviewer: “Like overdoing the sort of praise, really. . .”)

Interviewee: “It was nice but it was not what I needed.”

(Interviewer: “Not what you would have got had you been a male cadet, probably.”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah. I would rather them be realistic with me saying, “Yeah, that’s great. Let’s get on.” That’s more what I, what I would have expected, if you like.”

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL and interviewer)

These comments related to the work environment, but in keeping with the total character of shipboard life, female cadets found that they had to also prove themselves outside the engine room. For the two female engineering cadets being accepted required them to match up to men in the traditional male domain of drinking. What has been described as ‘laddish’ behaviour, and seen as a strategy of self-protection and acceptance by young men (Jackson, 2002), may also being adopted as a strategy by the female cadet quoted in the following extract. Earlier in the same interview this cadet had made reference to the heavy drinking culture of the ship on which she found herself for her first sea phase:

Interviewee:

“They were a bunch of alcoholics, so every night, they were drinking a bottle of vodka each. Being so close to Russia basically that’s all they drank.”

(Interviewer: “So they drunk in the bar, or they drunk in their rooms?”)

Interviewee:

“No, there was, there was no bar on board ship, it was basically the out deck outside.”

(Interviewer: “So, they were just sat outside?”)

Interviewee:

“Sat outside on the ropes, on the, like a car seat, just put up against the wall. Basically, the crew came down at night, who wasn’t on watch and just started drinking.”

(Interviewer: “Did you join in with that?”)

Interviewee:

“Most of the time [LAUGHS].”

(Interviewer: “Did you feel comfortable like that?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, you get used to it.”

(Emma/04 – F/E/21/XL and interviewer)

Whilst this cadet proved herself as a drinker, the other female engineering cadet did not want to join in, and described the response of others when she withdrew from this area of activity:

Interviewee:

“Drinking isn’t my big thing. I don’t go out and get ratted every night. I’m quite happy to sit and enjoy my own company or read a book or watch a film or things like that. When the guys decided they wanted to watch a film I’d sit with them and watch the film or we’d play scrabble or play darts, you know. But when they decided all they want to do is get drunk, they got annoyed because I wanted to go off to my cabin and do what I wanted to do. I don’t see what the problem was with that, myself. It just wasn’t what I wanted and they thought I was being anti-social.”

(Sarah/05 – F/E/21/XL)

Reluctance to participate in drinking sessions was not however confined to female cadets, and male cadets found a similar response if they declined to get involved. Similarly both male and female cadets gave examples of being physically challenged by others on board, sometimes with sexual overtones. In the following description, the same cadet recalled the relationship she had with a Chief Engineer on one sea placement. Whilst the account could be perceived as an abuse of power by the Chief Engineer, the cadet suggested that the Chief Engineer might be testing or teaching her something – an example of binging rather than bullying. Her comments suggest sadness that, unable to respond to her as someone she could learn from, as “*a knowledgeable engineer*”:

Interviewee:

“Then he (the Chief Engineer) started with the fighting things. He wanted me to respond to that. I don’t know whether he was, in his mind, testing me or whether he was genuinely trying to make me react. But he would quite often do things to try and make me you know do something back. So he’d do things like he’d grab around my throat or he’d grab around my face because he’s trying to fight. I thought “Why are you doing this?” And I didn’t understand it, I never reacted to him. And I never let him, you know, think that he was riling me but . . . I just stood there and looked at him.”

(Interviewer: “You didn’t say like “Get your hands off me”?”)

Interviewee:

“No, I waited till he was sober before I told him that you don’t do this.”

(Interviewer: “Were you frightened?”)

Interviewee:

“No, I wasn’t. Because from what I could see in his mind, he was either trying to teach me something or he was trying to see how I’d react. I said “I don’t want to talk to you because, at the moment, all I see is some drunken lout wanting to fight.” I said, “Whether you’re a knowledgeable engineer or not is by the by at the moment. I’d rather talk to the second.” And he said, “Oh, alright.” And that was the end of it. I went to speak to him a few times after that and he got all my reports finished, but it was really difficult for me to want to sit next to him at the desk and talk to him after that.”

(Sarah/05 – F/E/23/XL and interviewer)

Holmes and Schnurr (2006:33) contend that in all workplaces individuals unavoidably enact gendered roles, adopt recognizably gendered stances, and construct gender identity in the very process of interacting with others at work. In some occupations, ‘doing gender’ as they describe it is central to workplace performance and even with such a small sample of female cadets it was possible to see how gender structured their initiation into seafaring. The findings of Walker et al (2003) confirm that for female cadets, the loneliness and isolation of the seafaring experience was heightened for them as women because of their minority position. Relevant to the comments of the women cadets in this study, are the findings of Fuller et al (2005) on employers’ and young people’s perspectives on non-traditional occupational choices in UK Modern Apprenticeship Schemes. Their findings revealed that young people, and to some extent employers, held stereotypical views about male and female participation in non-traditional sectors. They suggest that the strong perception that young people were free to make the choice of work in any sector concealed the reality of the obstacles, citing: teasing; feeling isolated; and, workplace conditions, as examples of the barriers to be overcome. Whilst all three female cadets gave examples of these obstacles ‘in practice’,

all three had found ways in which to overcome them to the extent that they went on to complete their training.

## FELLOWSHIP

Aubert's observation that the ship has the potential to provide a "*warm social unit with close comradeship*" (Aubert, 1965:245) has already been noted and whilst the restrictions of shipboard life demonstrably had the potential for friction and conflict, they could also have the potential to generate a sense of solidarity. The following quotation from Conrad is a useful point of departure for a discussion of solidarity.

"Between the five of us there was a strong bond of the sea, and also the fellowship of the craft."

(Conrad, 1898/1975: 9)

On first reading, two sources of social bonding or cohesiveness between seafarers are readily apparent: the sea and the craft. However, the word 'craft' signifies not just the ship or vessel but also the craft of seafaring necessitating all the skills of shipboard life. Hence, this one line taken from Conrad's *Youth* can be interpreted as implying three sources of seafarers' cohesiveness: the sea, the ship, and their skills.

I have adopted Conrad's term '*fellowship*' for this section, in part due to Conrad's succinct but richly meaningful sentiments drawn from *Youth* but also due to its broader connotations. The sea, the ship, and seafaring skills generate a distinctive fellowship: a fellow in the broadest sense being someone who is a comrade. Bloor et al (2000) describe the very term comradeship as having its origins in the Spanish word "*camaradas*" which referred to Spanish mariners of the sixteenth century who shared the same sleeping chamber, and survived their epic voyages thanks to the mutual aid of their fellows (Perez-Mallaina, 1998).

Furthermore, in selecting '*The Fellowship of the Craft*' as the overall title of this chapter I was mindful of the phrase as representing the relationships essential to making life at sea at least tolerable and at best rewarding. As already recorded, even those cadets whose experiences were intolerable to the extent of abandoning their cadetship seemed to sense the attractiveness of the fellowship of the craft, despite the fact that they themselves could not fully commit to it or were actively repelled as interlopers. The captain who dismissed the cadet seeking 'good pay, holidays and a good career ladder' as

recounted under the heading on 'initiation and rites of passage' (p.169), may have seen the fellowship of the craft as *the* reason for being at sea rather than any of the reasons offered by the hapless cadet – but that is conjecture. Even so, '*The Fellowship of the Craft*' is offered as capturing an essential and enduring quality of seafaring of which the cadets were becoming aware.

On the other hand the expression, '*The Fellowship of the Craft*', could be considered archaic and as belonging to the time of sailing before the mast and epic voyages – the stuff of many a sea novel, including some of Conrad's works. As I have already suggested, many of the comments derived from cadet interviews can be understood in terms of liminality and difference, of seeking out a life that operates outside the constraints of normal time and space. '*The Fellowship of the Craft*' may be seen as characterising that life, and cadets' comments interpreted as trying to reach understanding of what it might actually mean when enacted. In the remainder of this chapter, this position is substantiated by further gleanings from Conrad and then by analyzing interview material, notably under the headings of '*peer support*' and '*officers: managers or mates*'.

The novel, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (Conrad, 1897/1982), focuses particularly on the fellowship on board ship, displaying Conrad's view that the sea provides the individual with a test of character and skill, as well as a test of the ideals of human solidarity (Baines 1960/1971:226). Conrad described this novel as "... an effort to present a group of men held together by a common loyalty and a common perplexity ... testing their faithfulness to the conditions of their own calling." (Baines, 1960/1971:567). The novel depicts the strengthening of the bonds of the crew to each other as they find themselves under extreme pressure. Passages of the novel are prone to overwriting, and the closing pages of '*The Nigger of the Narcissus*' show Conrad at his most fulsome in his description of the brotherhood displayed by the crew of the *Narcissus*:

"But at the corner I stopped to take my last look at the crew of the *Narcissus*. They were swaying irresolute and noisy on the broad flagstones before the Mint. From afar I saw them discoursing, with jovial eyes and clumsy gestures, while the life of the sea thundered into their ears ceaseless and unheeded ... I never saw them again. The sea took some, the steamers took others, the graveyards of the earth will account for the rest ... They pass and make a sign, in a shadowy hail. Haven't we, together and upon the immortal sea, wrung out a meaning from our sinful lives? Goodbye brothers!"

(Conrad, 1897/1982: 142)

Reference has already been made to the “glamorization” of shipboard experience and the suggestion that sea-stories from all eras romanticize the reality of life at sea including the notion of shipboard fellowship. Tellingly, Hill observed that whilst seafarers themselves often stressed the value of the *‘mutually supportive comradeship’* (Hill, 1972:70) that exists at sea, considering it to be altogether different from the relations between other men, it was particularly in retrospect that such positive aspects of the relationship between men at sea were stressed. Related to this observation, Collinson (1988) warns against the danger of romanticising the culture of shop floor humour, pointing out the linkages with working class group culture, masculinity, joking, and resistance. Collinson (1988:198) argued that the material realities of shop-floor life were far from romantic, and when combined with the symbolic preoccupation with working class masculinity, they resulted in relationships between men that were largely defensive and superficial. However, in an ethnographic account of the social structure of a research vessel at sea, Bernard and Killworth (1973) highlighted the way in which the seafarers saw the vessel as a way of life and a source of companionship, not just as a source of employment, with a member of the crew commenting: *“Sailors belong on ships and ships belong at sea. This is my house and the people I bunk up with are my buddies.”* (Bernard and Killworth, 1973:148)

Recognising and responding to the boundaries between the social interactions and the work-based interactions of officers and crew, suggested that cadets had already been actively socialized into the idiosyncrasies of ship life. Part of this understanding was learning that sociability on board required establishing a distance to ensure personal privacy. The extract which follows is reproduced at length as it is particularly articulate and revealing about the closely restricted exchange of personal information between seafarers:

Interviewee:

“I’ve never kind of, you don’t really talk personal with guys, if you know what I mean. You don’t really talk about wives and children and girlfriends and stuff, you kind of stay away from personal, so you don’t really get to know somebody personally, but you get to know them as a person, like, if they’re happy or whatever. But you don’t actually get to know them personally, like, their home lives and stuff. You tend to sort of keep away from that side of, that topic of conversation, which . . .”

(Interviewer: “For the reasons you’ve suggested? That actually people can’t handle that?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, well I think it’s ‘cos you don’t really know what’s going at home, what’s going on in their home life, so if you start asking questions about their wives and stuff and if their wives are getting divorced, or just asking about their children and their children are going through a hard time, they kind of, it brings back this sort of, opens a flood gate of what’s actually going on at home, and it annoys you because there’s nothing you can do about it. You’re stuck in the middle of the ocean and you can’t actually alter the situation at home at all, so you kind . . . so you stick maybe more with yarns, or sport, or . . .”

(Interviewer: So what are the sorts of conversations that you’ve had?)

Interviewee:

“[LAUGHS] You kind of, you just sort of tell salty seaman stories, just sort of like the experience you’ve had on ships and stuff, or when you’ve been ashore and you do have this, this great separation. You kind of only talk about your sea life, rather than your actual home life, and basically when you’re talking to somebody you’re talking sea life, rather than home life. You kind of talk as a seafarer rather than a human being, so that’s the kind of talk. The two topics nobody talks about is politics and religion. You stay out of politics and religion . . . and home life, so its kind of like, anything else, The three, the three things – yeah, like the three things, like not your home life, you as, a normal human being . . . it’s, it sounds really weak but it kind of just flows naturally, once you get used to it.”

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

The distancing described by the cadet that allows easy social interaction at sea is also related to managing the emotional divide between home-life and sea-life and has been recognised as a common device employed by seafarers to avoid experiencing intolerable conflict between the two. This approach to managing what has been described as the sea-shore oscillation (Hill 1972:59) and is more fully explored in Chapter Seven as cadets’ talk about how they view their future at sea.

### **Peer support**

The opportunity for cadets to confide in each other as peers and share personal information during their planned training at sea was relatively limited. Studies of occupational socialisation have often focused on the fellowship of trainees as a community who interact with each other, emphasising themes of group identity and group strategy (Becker, et al 1961; Melia, 1987; Coffey, 1993). Whilst the training colleges offered opportunities for cadets to interact with their peers for limited periods of time, the cadets interviewed usually, but not always, found themselves to be the only cadet on board during their planned training at sea. As the only cadet on a voyage, they represented their peer group, whilst being physically apart from them, bringing

attendant feelings of isolation. In an account of the training experience of teachers, Salisbury (1994) also described their feelings of vulnerability and isolation in the classroom which, as a learning environment for a teacher, is characterised by the absence of peers and the potential for peer support. Unlike the student teacher however, the isolation of the officer cadet is not relieved at the end of the working day. The deck cadet speaking in the extract below attributed much of his unhappiness to being the only cadet on each of his placements:

Interviewee:

“It’s like, I’ve always been the only cadet on board, every single one of my ships and it’s been a problem for me but I think I blame it, that’s, I think that’s, more, reasons why I’ve got so much stick . . . they really make you feel like you’re a hassle, so what they do is they make you work harder than the actual crew do.”

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

The description from another cadet suggested that the presence on his first trip of a fellow cadet had been supportive, particularly as the fellow cadet was more experienced:

Interviewee:

“It was a bit sort of daunting at first. . . but they put me on with another cadet who was in his third phase . . . so he knew what he was doing a lot more than me, so I sort of followed him around a bit. He got us to the ship alright and stuff, but if he hadn’t, I would of been a bit more sort of nervous about things . . . I was sort of a bit of an arsehole as soon as I was on the ship though, ‘cos I didn’t know my arse from my elbow, really. [LAUGHS]”

(Angus/04 – M/E/17/SS)

The deck cadet in the following extract described the situation in reverse, and how it felt to be the more experienced cadet, welcoming the novice on board. Although for this particular cadet, his training placements had left very negative impressions, he showed great determination to complete the course, and find work as a qualified seafarer. The following extract illustrated his dilemma in responding to the excitement of the first trip cadets whose enthusiasm he is keen not to dispel:

Interviewee:

“It’s the worst thing ever when you get a first trip cadet coming on board, you know, eyes wide open, you know, “Oh, this is gonna be great”, and you don’t know whether to let them down or, you know, or just to say, “Oh yeah, it’s brilliant”, you know? There was two deck cadets joined in New York. It was their first time, one of them was only sixteen and they thought, “Oh great”, you know, ship and everything and it really is, it’s difficult to, you really want to tell them, “Well don’t get too excited because it’s not exactly like it seems” but er, you see yourself in their shoes, you know?”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

Some cadets did describe forming friendships with cadets with whom they had a shared a placement; however others found that if they had nothing in common with their fellow trainee, this actually increased their feelings of isolation. The MNTB guidance (2006:19) does recognise that incompatible trainees can find themselves sharing a placement at sea but none of the cadets interviewed had found themselves in this situation.

### **Officers: managers or mates?**

Regardless of whether there were other trainees on board, all cadets had to manage relations with officers and crew and reach an understanding of how they fitted into daily shipboard life as officers of the future. Fricke (1973) and Encandela (1991) offer contrasting assessments of social cohesion on board ship based on similar perspectives. Fricke (1973), whilst agreeing that it is working, living, and engaging in interdependent activities with the same set of individuals which forms the basis for the development of an occupational community, argues that the differences in shipboard roles and responsibilities can create division. Encandela considers that shared living experiences at sea fostered camaraderie and a sense of community among workers, in spite of hierarchical arrangements, and that the combination of comradeship and hierarchy served the efficient operation of the ship (Encandela, 1991). That is, the concern here is whether an officer class enables or hinders fellowship.

As well as a captain, deck officers can include first, second and third 'mates'. In effect, the officers manage the ship and its crew. The use of the term 'mate' to denote a seafaring deck officer is to the lay person intriguing, particularly in the context of the ship hierarchy and the avoidance of over-familiarity – of being too 'matey'. This double meaning of the word 'mate' in the nautical context provides a handy label for the analysis and representation of this final section of the chapter in which one of the underlying themes of negotiating relationships is given a managerial perspective.

In the following interview, a deck cadet, having observed the way in which the hierarchy of the ship was observed in the social interactions between officers and crew, described his own attempts as a cadet to mimic the officers:

Interviewee:

“There was a, a sort of division of officers and crew that they didn't mind when you were all sort of working alongside each other and you're having a, a conversation. But they didn't really like ... the officers had their own Mess room to eat in and the officers' cabins were

nowhere near the crew's cabins and stuff. As long as you were, you were working with them (the crew) you could have a, sort of, rapport. If you were tying up or, or unlash the cords and stuff you could sort of talk to them and have a laugh and a joke but sort of while you were on off time, you didn't really socialise with the crew, you had your own places to go."

(Interviewer: "Were you, were you sort of told to do that or, or was it just something you said, just you needed to do, or-?")

Interviewee:

"You just kind of followed the other officers on the ship, you just kind of see what they get up to, 'cos that's what you're gonna be when you qualify."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

As part of the socialisation process, cadets needed to swiftly recognise what was expected of them both in working and the social situations and were sometimes helped in this by a helpful fellow seafarer:

Interviewee:

"Well there is, apparently, an etiquette where the crew have their own bar and their own eating area and we have our own bar and eating area and apparently its not politically correct for the cadets, or the British Officers to mix with the Filipino crew, or with their crew, whether they're Filipino or British. But I didn't always know that, so I sometimes went over. So someone said to me "You do know that you can get in trouble for doing that?" So yeah they, they didn't mind too much, so I think it's probably more if you're over there all the time and don't . . . I don't know really what the purpose of that is."

(Interviewer: "Keep some division and authority or something?")

Interviewee:

"Yeah, yeah, I think that's probably the reason, yeah. So when we had the Filipino Junior officers they, they seemed to not really come into the officers' bar which is quite odd, they seemed to go down to the Filipino bar which, I don't think they . . . like the Captain wasn't too pleased, although he didn't ever say much about it."

(Neil/04 – M/D/23/XL and interviewer)

The following quote illustrates the place of the ship's bar in helping cadets 'feel at home':

Interviewee:

"For the first week, you don't really know who you can talk to and who you can't 'cos like obviously you can't just talk to anyone because the Captain's there with his epaulettes on and he's like sat at the bar. You don't really know [LAUGHS] what you're doing or anything. But it was friendly and everyone was nice enough and they always do their best to make you feel at home and buy you drinks and stuff and, until you get used to it and then you're just part of the crew and you know, you sort of know your place and it's fine."

(Angus/04 – M/E/17/SS)

One cadet found a brief opportunity to step outside the hierarchical structure into which he fitted as an officer-to-be by associating with the crew in a gesture of solidarity:

Interviewee:

“In fact I found we were associating a lot more with the crew and ratings because, you know, they were on for a long time, and they sympathized with us and I actually found that I got along better with the crew and the ratings because, you know, they didn’t have any control, well, certainly, they, they didn’t have as much control over us . . .”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

One cadet, who subsequently left training, deliberately chose to spend his leisure time with the crew, indicating his distaste for the officers and further distancing himself from them, an action that heightened his own feelings of isolation as an officer cadet:

Interviewee:

“I played chess with the Filipinos and that’s what I think that’s, again, spurred some of the officers to, to . . . cos like, I got on very well with the Filipinos and I actually had more respect for them than I did the, the officers. I mean they’re, they’re paid peanuts and they, they’re actually happy.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

By coincidence, I also interviewed one of this cadet’s peers. Neither was aware that they had both been interviewed and in the following extract the second cadet is shown as commenting critically on the behaviour of the cadet who chose to associate with the crew:

Interviewee:

“There was just one cadet and he’s left now, he used to associate a lot with the crew but I sort of believe what I was taught by my, well my best friends who was the Old Man on the ferry I was on and he said, “Look, it’s all very well, you know, us being good mates and that but if you ever, if you were ever like caught drinking on board, or whatever like that, I’d have to sack you because otherwise it would be seen as favoritism. I think as well if you get too friendly with the crew, if, if you do try and be friendly . . . yeah, too, fam-, familiarity breeds contempt.”

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL)

An important point emerges from the juxtaposition of these two interview extracts – fellowship is not the same as friendship, nor does it mean equality between all those on board. Robert, who abandoned training, saw the traditional relationship between officers and crew as an unacceptable imbalance of power. Josh on the other hand would have recognized that there could be times when the ultimate safety of the ship and crew would depend on a hierarchical chain of command that could not be compromised by over-familiarity.

Although the hierarchy of the ship is always present, as Fricke (1972) has pointed out, no two ships are identical in their social structure or social interactions. Each combination of ship and crew required both cadets and all of those on board to re-assess what behaviours were appropriate and to make adjustments as necessary. These frequent readjustments have been recognized as a significant stressor for seafarers (Knudsen, 2004), although the ‘temporary membership’ of a total institution as Aubert describes it (1965: 257) can also be seen as a way of easing strains and group conflicts – every voyage has an end ... but fellowship endures.

## **5.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the majority of cadets in this study entered their Merchant Navy training in a positive frame of mind, but with little appreciation of the tasks they would have to perform, and what the day-to-day experience of shipboard life would mean for them; this was particularly true for deck cadets. The findings in this chapter confirm that the actuality of life at sea proved to be an unfamiliar experience to which cadets adapted with varying degrees of ease and success.

### **AN OCCUPATION SET APART**

Although the sea was already a familiar environment for many cadets on entering training, all the cadets interviewed in this study confirmed the impact of their first experience of shipboard life, in terms of its unfamiliarity. Interview conversations contained distinct stories of first voyage experiences, in the tradition of what one cadet described as ‘salty seaman stories’. Hill’s findings (1972) support the view that the first voyage is rarely a neutral experience and is one that leaves a particularly lasting impression. That cadets found shipboard life so unfamiliar, reflects the fact that seafaring is an occupation which largely takes place out of the public view. Despite the best efforts of seafaring recruitment materials to convey what is involved, it was only by actually experiencing shipboard life that the implications of being at sea became meaningful. Cadets rapidly realised the inescapability of their situation imposed by the isolation of the ship upon the sea, and by the demands of interrelated work and social relationships.

## **THE TOTAL CHARACTER OF THE SHIPBOARD EXPERIENCE**

The term total character is used by Goffman in referring to total institutions in which all aspects of life take place within highly restricted confines. On board ship work tasks, leisure activities, and the personal essentials of life took place within a limited space and with a limited number of individuals; this was not something which cadets had previously encountered. The questionnaire data suggested that for every cadet who found the total character of the ship to be oppressive, there was one who did not, and one who took a neutral position. Hill's findings support this variation in response, commenting that whilst a "*significant proportion*" of young men though not the majority (Hill, 1972:56), found their initial impressions of life at sea to be predominantly negative, "*a considerable proportion*" of new entrants experience no adverse reactions and describe the surprise and delight with which they first go to sea (Hill, 1972:57). Aubert (1965:245) considered that it is the isolation and total character of life on board which binds the identity of the seafarer to the sea and the living conditions of the ship. Conrad felt this equally strongly and commenting on the substantive content of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, he suggested that the difficulties which faced the crew took on a particular '*force and colouring*' because the very nature of conditions on board ship were ones '*of complete isolation from all land entanglements*' (Baines, 1960/1971:226).

The total character of shipboard life places particular pressure on managing relationships across work and personal boundaries. There was good evidence from the interview data that cadets were rapidly socialized into keeping a personal distance in their relationships with others at sea, and had insight into why this might be necessary. The survey data confirmed that very few felt they would confide in their fellow ship mates if they were feeling in low spirits. 4 of the 120 responding to the questionnaire said that they would confide in a senior officer and 14 would confide in another crew member. Hill (1972) saw this as a traditional response to seafaring life perhaps because seafarers themselves have found it to reduce tension on board.

## **A TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE**

Planned training at sea exposed cadets to initiation into a traditional occupational culture. Some of the cadets interviewed in this study clearly had difficulty in reconciling themselves to workplace exchanges and behaviours which other cadets saw as part of an

initiation process designed to toughen up the novice, and test their soundness and self-control. The findings suggest that the ship-board environment has similarities with the workplace environment described in other male dominated occupations (Haas, 1972; Collinson, 1988; Bourassa & Ashforth, 1998) and that the line between joking banter and humiliating ridicule was seen by cadets themselves as one of subjective interpretation. There was no evidence however in this study to support Hopwood's analysis that there are few problems of adaptation to life at sea because of a tendency for seafaring to attract those who find difficulty in adjusting to life in the wider society, or for whom life at sea was '*an improvement on their previous situations*' (Hopwood, 1973: 103). There is no other contemporary literature on cadets' experiences of adaptation to shipboard life with which to draw comparison.

The interview data gave good reason to view cadetship as a rite of passage in the sense that it is a transformative process in which the transition is from non-seafarer to seafarer as well as, for many, from youth to adulthood. However there was little in the interview data to suggest that any widespread formal ceremonial rites existed as the cadets moved through their transition; this finding was in contrast of accounts of ceremonial customs practiced in the past.

The study included six female cadets of whom three were interviewed; of these, two were engineers. Clearly this was a very small sample; nevertheless, their accounts of being a woman in a man's world had an exact correspondence with Thomas's portrayal (2004) of women seafarers as they negotiated male attitudes that could manifest in over protectiveness or in unwanted interest. Handling these behaviours was in addition to adapting to the role of novice. The three young women interviewed displayed equanimity and insight in managing this challenging environment. In the ILO report on women seafarers (ILO, 2003:30), it was reported that ship owners and ship managers with experience of employing women were very positive about their performance and their impact aboard ships, including as Masters. The accounts of life at sea from the female cadets supported the view that despite the structural difficulties they faced, they were well positioned to make a positive contribution to the development of the female seafaring workforce.

## FELLOWSHIP AND ISOLATION

The findings reveal a range of approaches adopted by cadets to the shipboard environment. Two thirds of questionnaire responders chose assertiveness over 'keeping one's head down' as the preferred strategy for getting the best out of life at sea, possibly seeing it as the more 'masculine' response. Interview conversations however often suggested they thought otherwise, emphasising the success of 'going with the flow' in terms of adapting to shipboard life. The study recorded disturbing accounts of cadets who found themselves unable to deal with the situations in which they found themselves, and who interpreted the initiation process as one of unacceptable humiliation. The interview findings suggest that cadets did experience examples of fellowship and support on board, and that experienced crew members were seen to look out for those who might be struggling to adapt. However there were no examples in which cadets recalled the life saving camaraderie of the epic voyage, perhaps because of the limited nature of their experience, and their good fortune not to have been involved in perilous situations.

Responses to the initiation process cannot be entirely disentangled from the responses to actually being at sea and coping with confinement and a constrained lifestyle. It was a minority of cadets interviewed who described experiences of distress and harassment, but for those who did, it dominated their interview accounts; consequently these accounts have been given emphasis in this chapter. The findings showed that these cadets had extreme experiences of distress and, for those who resigned from training, a sense of failure and disappointment. However the difficulties they described were not just related to interpersonal difficulties with individuals, but reflected structural aspects of seafaring, and cadet training related to the total character of the experience.

# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **LIFE AT SEA: LEARNING THE ROPES**

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The form of account in this chapter differs in an important way from the previous two where the cadet data both led and drove the narrative with the other data-strands providing for the most part a supporting role. This chapter leads with a discussion of a number of discourses dealing with education in the workplace generating a number of organising concepts in the process. In the first sections of the chapter, selected cadet data are arranged and analysed under the headings derived from the organising concepts. As the chapter progresses, there is less reliance placed on the organising concepts; for instance, the heading of the final section is taken directly from the cadet data.

### THE SHIP AS A SITE OF WORKPLACE LEARNING

Aubert recognised that the ship could serve a training purpose by immersing the new recruit in the total character of the ship and “*its mode of life*” (Aubert, 1965:248). In the previous chapter the total character of the ship was seen to be fundamental to the learning experience of cadets as they accommodated, with varying degrees of success, a mode of life characterised by roles and relationships operating across work and off-duty boundaries, and by physical confinement and social isolation.

However, planned training at sea, besides exposing cadets to the intensity and ‘totalness’ of shipboard life, also required them to develop proficiency in a range of practical skills, essential to their future roles as deck officers or engineers. This process is described by the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) as one of achievement and development of professional competence over time, in which the academic knowledge covered in the classroom is integrated in the work based part of the programme (MNTB, 2006:11).

When deck officer cadets interviewed in this study talked about their decisions to go to sea, and what that meant for them, the futures they imagined were characterised by the opportunities for difference and for good pay, rather than proficiency in navigation and watch keeping. Very rarely did they mention the technical skills associated with seamanship or the practical tasks they would have to perform. This tendency was less marked amongst the engineering officer cadets who, if dismissive of deck skills, were

keen to acquire the technical skills they would need to maintain the engines for which they would eventually be responsible. This chapter focuses on the acquisition of the practical skills of seamanship, and presents cadets' varied perceptions of this aspect of their learning experience.

## **CHAPTER STRUCTURE**

Aside from this introduction, the body of this chapter is structured into two sections, each containing a number of sub-sections, and followed by a conclusion. The first and most extensive section opens by introducing the notion of *'workplace learning'*, suggesting it to be a complex and contested area of investigation. Amongst the plethora of discourses, apprenticeship is proposed as the most illuminating in terms of the cadet experience of *'planned training at sea'*. Consideration is given to cadetship as quasi-apprenticeship, a term taken from Melia's study of the occupational socialisation of nurses (Melia, 1987). Reference is made to the development of nursing as a profession rather than a craft, and parallels with seafaring are suggested. The experience of learning during planned training at sea is considered in the light of notions of *'expansive'* and *'restrictive'* learning; these notions have extended the traditional concept of apprenticeship. Aspects of the learning experience of cadets are presented in relation to the institutional arrangements, to participation, and to personal development, which are the key themes underpinning expansive learning. The examples given demonstrate the different approaches which cadets took to managing their learning, and the support, or lack of support, which they received from those around them during their time at sea. Their accounts reflect the wide-ranging experiences of cadets, and attention is drawn particularly to challenges of language and communication. Descriptions are offered of how cadets felt about their growing responsibilities and the prospects of danger at sea, danger sometimes compounded by the overlap of social and of work lives, a feature of the total character of life at sea.

The second section offers a reflection on seamanship based on an extract from Conrad's novella *'Heart of Darkness'* (Conrad, 1902/1973). In concluding the chapter, the linear progression of novice to expert is reviewed in the light of, as one cadet called it, a *'well worked circle of learning'* involving cadet, ship and college.

## 6.2 WORKPLACE LEARNING

For the majority of workplaces, including a ship, the prime reason for existence is the provision of services or the production of goods, with the aim of profit creation. As Keep and Payne (2002) point out, training is a derived need, and at best, a third order issue for organizations. Whilst they are not created for the explicit purpose of training, many workplaces are nevertheless the sites of formal and informal training and of learning which is technical, behavioural, and social. People going about their daily work activities find themselves, willingly or not, involved with trainees as part of “*an educational enterprise*” (Becker, 1972:108).

The notion of workplace learning encompasses a range of situations from ‘on-the-job training’ where learning is expected to take place through observation, assimilation, and emulation over time (Guile and Young, 1998), to structured pedagogic programmes delivered in the workplace. The work activities to be learnt may range from the relatively routine, to those involving sophisticated and evolving technologies, and will include work bound by strict regulatory frameworks, as well as those where practice has no legal constraints.

Given this diversity of educational approaches, of activities, of context, and of regulatory requirements, it is unsurprising that the terrain of workplace learning is described as “*complex, contextual and conflicted*” by Rainbird (2000:15). The discourses of: organisational relations (Rainbird, 2000); management education (Cunliffe, 2002); learning psychology (Vygotsky, 1978); activity theory (Engestrom, 2001); and, cultural anthropology (Lave, 1996), make their contributions alongside sociology’s occupational studies exemplified by Hughes (1958), Becker et al (1961), Geer (1972) and Prus and Irwin (1980/1988). Workplace studies, framed by the power relations between capital and labour, also bring a perspective to this domain (Beynon, 1973; Cavendish, 1982; Cockburn, 1983). Underpinning these varied disciplinary contributions are different learning theories, each of which emphasises different aspects of learning, and different assumptions about the nature of knowledge, knowing and knower (Wenger, 1998). In this plethora of discourses concerning workplace learning and training, it is apprenticeship as a model for the development of occupational skills, understanding, and

knowledge, which contributes most usefully to the analysis of the learning experience of cadets during their planned training at sea.

### **CADETSHIP AS QUASI-APPRENTICESHIP**

A definition of the institution of apprenticeship offered by Guile and Young is:

“The constellation of both legal and contractual rules and relations governing the status of employment, the associated workplace entitlements and the formal and informal educational process that socialize a young worker into the workplace and occupational culture.”

(Guile and Young, 1998: 188)

Ryan and Unwin offered a more specific definition:

“A structured programme of vocational preparation, sponsored by an employer, juxtaposing part-time education with on-the-job training and work experience, leading to a recognised vocational qualification at craft or higher level, and taking at least two years to complete, after requisite general education.”

(Ryan and Unwin, 2001:100)

Despite the resonance of these definitions with the training of Merchant Navy officers, their training is not considered in the UK as an apprenticeship, whether educationally, professionally, or institutionally\*. Although Gekara describes maritime education and training in the UK as unique in its *'blend of full time Higher Education and apprenticeship'* (Gekara, 2009), a very close parallel can be seen with nurse training, which also combines full time Higher Education with full time periods in the workplace. In her study of the occupational socialisation of nurses, Melia (1987) uses the term 'quasi-apprenticeship' in reference to nurse training. She considered student nurses' apprenticeship to differ from the 'traditional' craft apprenticeship in that student nurses moved frequently between work areas without any one 'master', spending much of their time working with, and learning from, non-qualified staff and from more experienced peers. Similarly, cadets move from ship to ship during their training, and whilst they had little opportunity to work alongside their peers, learning is acquired by working alongside all members of the crew.

\* No reference to apprenticeship could be found in the educational material for officer cadets during the period of this study. However, the website of the Merchant Navy Training Board (<http://www.mntb.org.uk/>) accessed in August 2010 describes the officer training programmes as 'an apprenticeship model of education' – offering a form of pragmatic validation for the approach and organising concepts used in this chapter.

Taking Braverman's notion of *'degraded work'* in which advances in technology have emphasised the divisions between the 'sophisticated' and the 'tedious' aspects of work (Braverman, 1974; cited in Melia, 1987:77), Melia applies it to patient care, which has been increasingly planned by qualified nursing staff, and carried out by the unqualified. Lost in this process, and at the expense of the care delivered to patients, Melia suggests, is *'the craftsman'*. She cites Braverman's discussion of the demise of the craftsman who was "... tied to the technical and scientific knowledge of his time in the daily practice of his craft." (Braverman, 1974: 443), and suggests that characterising nursing as a craft would place emphasis on the perfection of the skilled work of nursing, and less on achieving a place for the occupation among 'the professions' (Melia, 1987:184). Since Melia conducted her study in the mid 1980s, nursing has very firmly positioned itself as a profession, with degree routes to state registration, and a growing expectation that post-registration nurses acquire further academic qualifications.

The reason for outlining these changes in nurse training is the parallel with developments in Merchant Navy Officer training which have taken place since this study began in late 2001. Deck and engineering cadets now have the opportunity to enter their training as undergraduates, achieving Foundation Degrees in Marine Operations (FdSc) or in Marine Engineering (FdEng), with direct top-up pathways to BSc (Hons) Marine Operations Management or BEng (Honours) in Marine Engineering Management. These academic qualifications are in addition to the professional qualifications required by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Certificates of Competency. Whether, in the light of new academic routes of entry, seafarer officer training will increasingly position itself as a profession rather than a craft, is beyond the scope of this study. However, as Melia found in relation to nurse training, considering cadetship to be a quasi-apprenticeship, and drawing on the insights from the literature of apprenticeship, offers a useful lens through which to view the experiences of cadets during their planned training at sea, and the opportunities and barriers to learning they encountered.

## **APPRENTICESHIP**

The literature on apprenticeship in the UK emphasises its long history, from its origins in the Medieval Guilds, where it developed from craft-based occupations such as building and printing, into a wider variety of workplace settings such as engineering and shipbuilding, and further to include domestic trades such as plumbing (Gospel, 1995;

Fuller and Unwin, 1998). In the UK, the structure and format of government apprenticeships have come under successive review (DfES, 2002 and 2004; DIUS, 2008), and the current frameworks, designed by Sector Skills Councils offer two levels of apprenticeship, the first at Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework, and Advanced Apprenticeships which lie at Level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework. The practical training of cadets aboard ship includes completion of the MNTB Portfolio which takes cadets to NVQ Level 3.

It has been suggested that the attraction of apprenticeship as an educational model lies in the opportunities it presents for authentic experience, that is, for the access given to expertise and infrastructure that may be otherwise unavailable (Billett, 1994). For cadets the experience of planned training at sea provided learning opportunities that could not be replicated or simulated in any other environment other than aboard ship. Apprenticeship has also been traditionally associated with rites of passage (Lane, 1996) where a transformative process, from novice to expert and from youth to adult, takes place. Rites of passage were considered in the previous chapter as offering a perspective on occupational initiation.

Significant to the development of thinking on apprenticeship as a model for learning has been the work of Lave and Wenger, which had as its purpose: “... to articulate what it was about apprenticeship that seemed so compelling as a learning process.” (Wenger, 1998: 11; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Lave and Wenger sought to broaden the traditional concept of apprenticeship from that of a master/student or mentor/mentee relationship, to one of changing participation and identity transformation in a community of practice. In proposing a new conceptual framework, Wenger describes a social theory of learning in which the components include: meaning (learning as experience); practice (learning as doing); community (learning as belonging); and, identity (learning as becoming). The theory emphasises the collective basis through which individuals develop a social identity, learn new forms of social practice, and become knowledgeable, by which they mean the combination of knowledge and skill required to successfully operate within a community of practice (Guile and Young, 1998:183). Lave and Wenger offer what Fuller and Unwin (2003) describe as a rich conceptual framework for analyzing the process by which new entrants to an occupation, workplace or activity, become ‘old timers’, based on the notions of ‘communities of practice’ and ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. A

community of practice is defined by Wenger as:

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

(Wenger, 2006)

‘Legitimate peripheral participation’ is the term used to describe the way in which:

“Learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the socio-cultural practices of the community.”

(Lave and Wenger, 1991:29)

## EXPANSIVE AND RESTRICTIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Lave and Wenger’s work represented a significant new emphasis on what could perhaps be described, in the terms of this study, as the total character of the learning experience.

Fuller and Unwin suggest (2003) that further to the work of Lave and Wenger, the

**Chart 6/1** Features of expansive learning opportunities

<b>Institutional Arrangements</b>	
1	Access to a range of qualifications including knowledge based vocational qualifications
2	Explicit recognition in the employment relationship of, and support for, the apprentice’s status as a learner as well as an employee
3	Highly developed reification of apprenticeship, connected with practice and accessible to all apprentices.
<b>Participation</b>	
4	Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace
5	Primary community of practice has shared ‘participative memory’; cultural inheritance of apprenticeship
6	Breadth: access to learning fostered by cross–company experiences built into the programme
7	Gradual transition to full participation with apprenticeship aim of rounded expert/full participant
<b>Personal Development</b>	
8	Planned time off-the-job for reflection and exploration
9	Post-apprenticeship progression, availability of role models
10	Opportunities for personal development by extending identity through boundary crossing
11	Named individual acts as dedicated support to apprentice

(Adapted from Fuller and Unwin 2003)

approaches of different organisations to apprenticeship can be identified and mapped to a continuum that ranges from '*expansive*' to '*restrictive*' learning opportunities. Underpinning the expansive/restrictive continuum, they offer three inter-related themes of participation, personal development and institutional arrangements. The features they associate with expansive learning opportunities have been grouped by theme in *Chart 6/1* (above).

The notions of *expansive* and *restrictive* approaches to learning are used by Fuller and Unwin to identify the features of contemporary apprenticeship which offer or deny opportunities for learning. They argue that apprenticeships characterised by the features considered as *expansive* will create stronger and richer learning than those whose features are associated with *restrictive* learning opportunities. Aspects of the learning experiences described by cadets are related to features in the expansive-restrictive continuum, as identified by Fuller and Unwin.

#### **Access to a range of qualifications**

The expansive features of the institutional arrangements underpinning apprenticeship focus on: access to a range of qualifications including knowledge based vocational qualifications; explicit recognition of the dual status of the apprentice as learner and employee; and reification of apprenticeship. Reification in this context is considered as: firstly, the extent to which organisations have mapped out the knowledge, skills and tasks which have to be learnt in the workplace (the workplace curriculum), and structured a programme which gives learners access to them; and secondly, the extent to which knowledge and competence are codified in the formal qualifications accompanying the apprenticeship.

There can be no argument that the Merchant Navy cadets in this study had access to a range of qualifications both academic and professional. Deck officer cadets (also referred to as a navigation officer) and engineering officer cadets will proceed to professional certification from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). Deck officers maintain watches on the bridge at sea and about the ship in port. Their responsibilities lie in passage planning, the safe navigation of the ship, cargo loading and discharge, ship stability, communications and the maintenance of the hull and deck equipment. Marine engineering officers are responsible for the maintenance and operation of the ship's

main propulsion machinery and auxiliary plant. After gaining their first certificate of competency, junior officers prepare for the higher certificates of competency leading finally to Chief Engineer of Master Mariner certification. The cadets in this study could also gain academic qualifications in the form of Higher National Diplomas (HND) in either Nautical Science or Marine Engineering.

### **Codification of knowledge and competences**

In addition to the access to a range of qualifications, Merchant Navy Officer training can be said to have clear codification of the required knowledge and competences. This is perhaps because the requirement to be competent at sea manifests in very real and undeniable ways, and incompetence at sea has tangible and serious consequences. Political concern over seafarer competence and standards of maritime education and training has been fuelled, Sampson (2004) has suggested, by the number of high profile shipping accidents in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In consequence, the International Maritime Organisation developed a series of measures including the introduction of standards in certification and training via the Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) convention. These measures are directed at Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions together with an onboard corporate safety management system via the International System Management (ISM) code. The STCW standards have a direct relationship with the National Occupational Standards which cover seagoing roles in both deck and engineering departments. In her study of training and education for Merchant Navy Officers within the context of an international regulatory framework, Sampson (2004) concludes that these efforts have largely failed and that standards of seafarer competence are maintained by pressures from another direction – the vast financial penalties arising from accidents involving oil, gas and chemical pollution.

### **Use of portfolios**

Assessment of competence in the workplace has its particular challenges (Sandberg, 2000), and Wolfson and Willinsky (1998) point to the increased use of Portfolios because neither norm-based assessments nor criterion-referenced testing, have proved satisfactory. The use of Portfolios, they suggest, leads teachers and students to engage each other in dialogue, serving not only as a record of process and progress, but also as a focus of motivation and discussion for future directions. This, as will be shown, was the

case for some of the cadets interviewed in this study who felt well supported in the completion of their Training Portfolios by officers at sea, although others gave a less encouraging picture.

Cadets ascribed considerable significance to the completion of their Portfolios; this significance extended beyond the paperwork to encompass their experiences of learning, of being taught and, importantly, of believing themselves to be proficient in the skills of seamanship. The Portfolio is designed as evidence of '*proficiency in various tasks*' (MNTB, 2006). From 2010, the portfolios will be replaced with Training Record Books (TRB) which will also serve to provide evidence to the MCA of a planned and structured on-board training programme (MNTB, 2008). Cadets recognised that completing the paperwork of the Portfolio was not synonymous with learning the skills of seamanship with its material responsibilities and consequences, as the following interview extracts reveal:

Interviewee:

"I don't want to not know everything, you know. I want to make sure I know as much as I can. So I just spend, I try and take as much in as I can whilst I'm on board really."

(Interviewer: "And, and get your portfolio done ...")

Interviewee:

"Yeah, try and do that as well, yeah. Yeah I think, well I use my portfolio more because it has to be done. But erm, you know, it's more important to me, personally, to make sure that I actually know it rather than, sort of, you know, get the signatures down."

(Neil/04 – M/D/23/XL and interviewer)

One deck cadet implied that some of his fellow cadets were content to get their Portfolios signed off without having mastered the necessary skills:

Interviewee:

"Well, I think er, I was, well, certainly, there was some of the deck cadets with me er, who did tick a lot, a lot more [in their portfolio] than they had actually, you know, actually, well that we had done. But I think I was a bit more honest, I thought, well, there's no point in getting something signed off that I don't have any idea about."

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

Later in the same interview with this cadet, there was further confirmation of his anxiety that, although he might have ticked the boxes in his Portfolio and successfully completed his training, his underlying competence would at some point be found wanting:

Interviewee:

“Well, I think my main concern is because of how I have been trained, you know. It could, it could mean that I don’t know, because of the big, well, because of the lack of quality of training, it could mean, in the long run that, if you are employed that you could have an accident, due to, due to this, this fact, you know?”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

In the extract below from *The Mirror of the Sea*, Conrad suggests that seamanship is not something that can be feigned, “... *a ship will not put up with a mere pretender.*”

“Men, professors or coal-heavers are easily deceived; they even have an extraordinary knack of lending themselves to deception, a sort of curious and inexplicable propensity to allow themselves to be led by the nose with their eyes open. But a ship is a creature which we have brought into the world, as it were on purpose to keep us up to the mark. In her handling *a ship will not put up with a mere pretender.*”

and that,

“Of all the living creatures upon land and sea, it is ships alone that cannot be taken in by barren pretences, that will not put up with bad art from their masters.”

(Conrad, 1906/1975: 28 and 35; italics added)

Whilst it is the responsibility of the cadet to maintain and present the Portfolio for scrutiny as required, the Merchant Navy Training Board emphasises its importance for all parties, noting that the Master or the Chief Engineering Officer and the designated shipboard training officer will inspect and endorse the Training Record Books/Portfolios to ensure that the officer trainees maintain them properly as an ongoing record of their practical training. Completing of the Portfolio, MNTB guidelines suggest, is “*an efficient way of gathering and recording the evidence of proficiency in various tasks and projects needed for the award of an N/SVQ*” (MNTB, 2006:11). It is expected that this record will be monitored by the companies and colleges.

### **Multiple communities of practice**

A feature of expansive learning is the participation in multiple communities of practice, and cross-company experiences. The range of learning experiences open to cadets during planned training at sea is partly determined by the type of vessel, and the activities which the vessel undertakes. There is no requirement in the Merchant Navy Training Board Guidance (2006) that cadets should acquire their competencies on board different types of vessels, although this could be seen as a way of maintaining enthusiasm and motivation which the Guidance itself encourages. The NUMAST (2004a) survey of cadets’ views on their terms and conditions, reported that 238 out of 249 cadets surveyed

considered it would be beneficial to sail on a variety of different ship types. The survey report translated this into a recommendation that shipping companies should strive to ensure that cadets have maximum opportunities to gain seagoing experiences onboard as wide a variety of ships and in as wide a range of trades as possible. This view was supported by the following comment from a deck cadet who hoped that a placement on a different type of ship would give him additional practical experience:

Interviewee:

“I’m actually considering asking Ocean XL to get me on a deep sea ship, you know, not taking me away from this company but giving me a break, give me a deep sea trip. Give me some more experience because this company I’m at now, they’re standby supply. They don’t develop me, they don’t do cargo work, you do a bit of cargo work but its like twenty boxes, containers, small containers on the deck, there’s nothing, there’s no balance to it. It’s very empty, very, so I can’t get the practical experience for cargo, all I can do is learn the theory when I go back to college.”

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

Some placements, because of the nature of the vessel itself, or because of external forces, notably the weather, offered little learning opportunities, as one final year deck cadet found out on a placement aboard a lighthouse tender in the Orkneys:

Interviewee:

“It was a nice ship to work on. All mostly local crew, but we didn’t get much sailing under our belt because of the weather. We spent most days up at anchor or berthed, because we couldn’t work the helicopter. Yeah, storms when I was in Aberdeen, storms when I was up there, storms when I was on my third ship, quite a bumpy winter. We were taking supplies for the engineers, the engineers sometimes stayed in the lighthouse at nights and worked during the day, but it was mostly taking cement, concrete, solar panels, stuff like that to them. A nice wee job if you had it once you had your ticket, but not a lot to learn. I spent most of my time doing rules of the road and stuff like that. Wasn’t able to do much from my Portfolio there at all; it was really disappointing because at that point I already knew I was quite far behind in sea time with being sat at home for so long, waiting for ships. Yeah, spent most of the time just doing anchor watches; make sure we don’t drift, make sure all the equipment works. Stuff like that. That was basically all I really signed off on that ship, rules of the road, anchor watch stuff, couldn’t get much done at all.”

(Graham/05 – M/D/19/XL)

The range of vessels on which the cadets in this study found themselves during sea phases, is shown in *Table 6/1* (overleaf). The data were derived from the questionnaire in which cadets selected from a list, the type/s of ships on which they had planned sea training. The categories of ship correspond with the Lloyds Register classification of cargo carrying ships. In addition, 55% of cadets reported experience of other types of vessels

which included: dredgers; chemical tankers; cable ships; supply vessels; and, a reefer research ship. Of the 120 cadets who completed the Questionnaire, 20 had placements on two different types of vessels, 5 had been on three types of vessels and the remainder had experience of one type of vessel only.

The type of vessel, besides offering the opportunity for the development of specific skills dependent on the type of trade and cargo, also influences the size of the crew, and cadets experienced crew sizes ranging from six upwards. A workplace with small numbers of staff inevitably limits the chances that a trainee can find a particularly supportive individual who encourages their skills development; it also limits the opportunity to interact with peers with whom a trainee can discuss their work, and possibly find solutions to problems that arise. As noted in the previous chapter, cadets usually, but not always, found themselves to be the only cadet on board during their ship placements. Engestrom (1991) argues that an 'educative environment' is one where participants have plenty of opportunities for interaction; being the only 'learner' in the workplace can be problematic in terms of fostering opportunities for an expansive learning experience (Fuller and Unwin, 1998).

**Table 6/1** Cadet placements by ship type

Lloyds Register Basic Groupings	Ship Type as offered in questionnaire	Percentage of questionnaire respondents with experience on ship types
Tanker/Bulk Liquid Carrier	Oil Tanker	25%
	Gas Tanker	11%
Container	Container	25%
Passenger/General Cargo	Cruise Ship	2.5%
	Passenger Ferry	15%
Bulk Dry Cargo	Freight ferry	10%
	Bulk Carrier	15%

(Source: Questionnaire A responses)

### **Growing responsibilities**

The gradual transition to full participation with the apprenticeship aim of rounded expert/full participant is also considered to be a feature of expansive learning, and the development of a sense of responsibility could be seen as an integral part of the transition from novice to qualified seafarer. One of the main aims of planned training at

sea is the achievement and development of professional competence over time and it is to be expected that cadets would experience varying degrees of confidence about the increased responsibilities of each sea phase. Cadets, both deck and engineering, were particularly articulate about their feelings of responsibility as they began to realise the implications of the training choices they had made. Cadets in the following accounts used a mix of contrasting descriptors to describe the responsibilities ahead of them. They used a number of 'fearful' adjectives: *'terrifying'*, *'nerve-wracking'*, *'scary'* and *'anxious'*. They also used positive terms: *'good fun'*, *'really neat'*, and *'absolutely amazing'*.

Interviewee:

"The first bridge watch was terrifying. Middle of the Atlantic, there's only a couple of ships about, but it's still you're responsible for the whole ship and the crew and the Captain won't come up and see you unless you call him. The officers stay off the bridge so it's his to deal with. So it was quite nerve-wracking and it was night time as well which didn't help so you couldn't see anything. It was good fun, I enjoyed it."

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL)

Interviewee:

"There have been times when I've been scared about the responsibility that I would be ending up with. And I, I look at the Chief Engineers - the Chief Engineers don't really do a lot of engineering, they're a more, sort of management role. I look at the responsibility that they've got and I'm thinking, you know, do I really want that? And I think once I've been doing it for a while, it'll probably be alright because I'll know what my job is, I'll know what, what the law is, I'll know what I have to do. I suppose it's a lot of responsibility for a Junior Engineer, it's also a lot of responsibility for a Chief and that's scary [LAUGHS]."

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL)

Interviewee:

"It felt, although you knew, sort of in your subconscious, you weren't in charge of the ship, you still had this, sort of responsibility that you were in charge of the ship. And you're, you're, sort of, watching him (the senior officer), he's gonna write a report on you at the end of it, so you kinda felt it, a real sense of being part of the ship as well as, of being in charge. It was really neat."

(Interviewer: "Did you feel scared at all, were there scary times?")

Interviewee:

"I wouldn't, I wouldn't say scared, 'cos I think you know that he's there, so if anything had to go wrong, you knew he was there behind you to, to correct any mistakes you had; but I think when the time comes, when you are actually alone on the bridge and nobody's there to look after you, I think that's when you get a bit scared and sort of, a bit more anxious about what, [LAUGHS] what you're gonna do . . . The amount of responsibility and power that you do actually have over this ship and over the crew on the ship, is absolutely amazing."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

Hand in hand with the sense of responsibility went cadets' assessments of the dangerous nature of the work of a seafarer:

Interviewee:

"All the responsibility I was given was, I, I was pretty chuffed with it, cos I mean it, it was actually, they actually felt, cos it's such dangerous stuff. And I mean the risk of, basically its not so much dangerous, well, some of it is but the risk of pollution as well. And the collision of stuff like that and getting given some responsibility is actually quite, you know, a good, a good thing. So every time you got it I was quite chuffed and they'd say, "Oh go and do this, help me with this, go and do that." And it was quite, you know, a, a good thing."

(David/04 – M/D/19/AM)

Cadets recognised the danger inherent in the work: in the case of the cadet commenting in the following extract it outweighed the benefits of the job, a factor which contributed to his resignation from his cadetship:

Interviewee:

"To join a ship by a launch, you've actually gotta hop up and down with the ship moving and the, the little boat you're on and go up the ladder, the pilot ladder, and it went [ACTION]. They reckoned it was about a 6 foot swell and you've gotta jump on the ladder, grab it and hope your arm goes down. And there's a stage where, I actually saw a Nigerian guy, when he was boarding, he got on too soon, so the ladder was like that [ACTION] and the, the boat, the crew's like that [ACTION] and he almost, he almost lost his legs and it could happen so easily. When I joined it I had a rucksack and I went for it and there was a stage where I thought I was gonna go off and I, and there's little things like that, that I realise that the actual working environment is, is quite dangerous, you know? . . . I don't believe that the money is worth the risks, if you see what I mean – in my opinion."

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Another cadet felt strongly that he would refuse to carry out any activity if he felt it to be unsafe and to go against what he believed to be robust company safety policies:

Interviewee:

"Everyone's got different ways of doing things and if the Mate says do it that way, you do it that way. If it was something unsafe, and put my life, or other people's lives at risk, I would say no, I'm not doing it, I don't think it's safe."

(Interviewer: Has that happened to you?)

Interviewee:

"Yep, a couple of times I mean, yeah, you've only got one life. Look after Number One at the end of the day. I'm not risking my life for anyone. I mean I don't cut corners at all. Ace Marine have got laid down things to do everything; they've got checklists for checklists for checklists and my view is if the Company say you do them, you do them, I mean they're there for your safety. I mean, the Mates often cut corners and say, oh no, don't worry about that checklist, but then if something happens and you haven't done that checklist, and you

die, it's your life over with isn't it? I mean Ace Marine are paying you to be there, to do the job and if they say you've got to do these checklists, then you've got to do them, it doesn't matter how long it takes, 'cos I'm not risking my life just to cut a corner for the Mate, no way."

(Interviewer: "So there were a couple of occasions where you had to challenge them, what were they?")

Interviewee:

"Quite serious ones actually. Once I was on a small coastal tanker and they wanted me to go down a tank and they hadn't aerated it or gas tested it properly and I said 'No, I'm not going down there till you've tested it'. He goes (grumbling noise) "I'll have to fill out all the paperwork". It's my life- I'm not going down that tank just for you to clean it out."

(Brett/Pilot/02– M/D/18/AM and interviewer)

Issues of responsibility, of danger and of risk can also be set within the context of the total character of the ship. As already noted in the preceding chapter, distinctions between off-duty and work are not always easily made, and this was reflected in the descriptions of drinking and 'bar life' on board which featured strongly in the cadets accounts of planned training at sea. 20% of those who responded to the questionnaire and 17% of those interviewed felt that they were drinking too much. Studies of seafarer mortality have confirmed an excess mortality relating to alcohol consumption (Hansen and Pedersen, 1996; Roberts and Hansen, 2002). The following two extracts have been integrated into the discussion on responsibility because they highlight what can happen when the boundaries between the working and the off-duty worlds break down, and competence and safety are compromised:

Interviewee:

"But from what they've taught us, to what you learn in college, you see there, there's, and there's different systems all together there's, well, lack of a system. On the other ships . . . the last one was almost brand new but it was still never running like a ship should be running. The Chief Officer was drunk, constantly and we was on watch on our own and [LAUGHS] it's illegal to say the least."

(Mark/04 – M/D/24/XL)

Interviewee:

"Yep, yeah...it (alcohol) was just, whatever you wanted you could have, no problem. And the thing that I found, certainly with their ships, was there was a lot of times when the Officers were on the bridge and, in my opinion, they were unfit for, well, duty. And you always felt as if you had to be doubly on your guard in case they slipped up, you know, which doesn't really help at all, you know? And obviously not being fully aware . . . yes, yes, you almost felt like you had to be extra vigilant, in case they made a mistake. But obviously, we didn't feel that we had enough experience to notice, so a lot of the times we felt that something

could happen that we wouldn't have any idea that something was going wrong at the time, so we weren't able to actually point it out to them. And there was always, you never really felt unsafe, but there was always, at the back of your mind, thinking, well, this isn't good, you know? There was always a feeling that these guys weren't completely focused on their job, well obviously you can't be if you're drunk but [LAUGHS] you know. But again, we never felt we were able to complain to the Captain or anybody like that about them, you know? So it was difficult, a difficult position to be in, you know? But I haven't heard of many other companies where that happened, apart from this one, that's the thing."

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

The extracts offer further insight into the impact of the total character of the ship and the complex boundaries between work and off-duty life, and also highlight the responsibility held by officers to avoid behaviours, including drunkenness which compromise the chain of command. Richard describes a position in which he and his peers felt that there was the very real potential for things to go badly wrong, but they had no expertise to recognise what making 'a mistake' might actually mean, or how they could put it right.

### **Support at sea**

The features of expansive learning which support personal development include, Fuller and Unwin suggest, the availability of role models, and the presence of a named individual who acts as a dedicated support to the apprentice. During sea phases two identifiable individuals are immediately responsible for the management of on-board training: the designated Shipboard Training Officer and the Company Training Officer. The Master (Captain) or the Chief Engineering Officer and the designated Shipboard Training Officer are expected to inspect and endorse the Training Portfolios or Training Record Books.

The hierarchy of officers and crew on every ship will provide cadets with exposure to the roles they can go on to fill if they progress post-certification. However, it has been observed that no two ships are identical in their social structure or social relations (Fricke 1972:45). Cadets in the previous chapter were shown to: assess the subtle variations in the behaviours and culture of each new ship and crew; decide what was expected of them; and, position themselves accordingly. A number of cadets encountered contrasting attitudes on different ships with respect to the support given to their training needs; much of this variety was attributed by cadets to differences in the personalities on board:

Interviewee:

“I think it depends on the mood of the person and also who the person is. Some people, they know it and they’d like you to know that they know it - and that you don’t know it!  
[LAUGHS] If you see what I mean!”

(Neil/04 – M/D/23/XL)

The comments of one deck cadet, who had experience on several different types of vessels, showed this variety of response and describes the lack of support experienced by some cadets:

Interviewee:

“It was a good crew - the two Chief Officers were really interested in doing our training. Whereas the last ship I was on, it was ex-fishermen who’ve only got tickets that allow them to work in the North Sea on small vessels and they know anybody they train up will be gunning for their job because they’ve got the right tickets and they haven’t. And they’re not really willing to do training and they’re not willing to take responsibility either. The Chief Mate was scared to sign anything off, in case you weren’t properly competent at it. It was like pulling teeth, trying to get signatures out of him. He’d keep saying he would do it, and then he’d say “Are you sure you can do this? Are you sure now? Are you sure though that you’re ready to be signed off?” Eventually you might get one signature out of three you’re needing or something like that.”

(Graham/04 – M/D/18/XL)

The comments above implied resentment amongst seafarers, a reluctance to support the training of those who would eventually be more qualified than themselves, and this was echoed in the comments of another deck cadet:

Interviewee:

“A lot of them, they just couldn’t be arsed. They reckoned “Oh I’m not getting paid enough to take somebody under my wing and train them.” And a lot of them would still be thinking, “Well that’s not very fair, how can he just do 12 months sea time and be qualified the same as me? I’m not going to let that happen, not on my ship.”

(Interviewer: “Resentment?”)

Interviewee:

“Yes, resentment, jealousy. It’s pure ignorance. It’s a lot of things mixed in. A lot of it too is they’re afraid that I’ll ask them a question that they don’t know how to answer. And then that’ll make them look like a fool as well. So you just stopped asking questions then. You ask questions, you’re made to look like an idiot. You just don’t want to ask because they’ll just trick you and talk to you like you’re an idiot. And they’ll tell you to f\*\*\* off and leave them alone, and all sorts.”

(Stuart/05 – M/D/20/XL and interviewer)

For other cadets the response they met could be considered as uninterested, rather than resentful. It was the view of the deck cadet reported in the interview extract below, that

whilst his Chief Officer was happy to sign off the tasks in the Portfolio, there was little substance to his interest; in his case the Portfolio could not be seen as a genuine tool for engagement between cadet and officer through which a meaningful educational experience had taken place.

Interviewee:

“Yeah, like they have to agree you’ve done certain tasks and yeah I, I managed to do all of the tasks and did all the reports. So I, I basically went round the ship on my own and did it, did it as it said in the portfolio.”

(Interviewer: “And was there someone to sort of overlook, or help you through?”)

Interviewee:

“There was a few - Fire Fighting and - what was it - First Aid scenarios that we did. There was only a couple, about two or three. The rest of the sort of report was sort of signatures where basically he just said, “Yeah, that’s great.” Stamped it, next one, next one, next one. So he didn’t really look through it, and say, “Right, yes, you have to do this, er, that’s really good but you have to go back and do this.” There was no feedback or anything, so he just said “Yep, its good, yep, it’s good”. So erm, that wasn’t very er, helpful.”

(Graham/04 – M/D/18/XL and interviewer)

As noted earlier, the MNTB guidance (2006) stresses the importance of cadets receiving training support from those who have an understanding of the cadet training programme and its specific objectives. The importance of this understanding is confirmed by Lehmann (2005b) whose research revealed that a lack of understanding of the institutional features of apprenticeship was compounded by uncertainty amongst workplace teachers, counsellors and co-ordinators over the work-based training programmes and apprenticeship training in general.

Interviewee:

“The Captain on the first ship did say at the start, “Right, I want you to know, you’re to complete the Portfolio.” In the requirements it says that he should really be looking at every couple of weeks or something but he only signed it right at the end, when we’d finished, you know, when we were signing off. And that was it, so I mean to be quite honest, if it wasn’t for the fact that we knew that we had to, you know, get the section one completed and we actually went ahead and did it, I don’t think, you know, we’d have gotten any of it done, really. You know? There was certainly no push to, you know, to get it finished which again I think was due to the lack of understanding of, you know, what was required.”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

### ***language and communication***

Related to the understanding needed by shipboard officers to support the training needs of cadets were issues of language and communication: The MNTB offers a weighted list

of the factors that need to be taken into account in assessing the suitability of ships for onboard training. Weighted factors attempt to introduce a degree of objectivity into the process of deciding what is a suitable ship for on board training: one factor relates to the working language of the ship (MNTB, 2006:17). A ship where the working language is English scores 0 points, part English and part other scores 5, no English scores 15. The higher the overall score, suggest the MNTB, the closer the scrutiny of the vessel concerned should be as a suitable training environment. In some cases the lack of understanding of their training needs was attributed by cadets to language difficulties; the comment below is taken from a disturbing account of sea time referred to in the previous chapter, in which tensions between nationalities ran high:

Interviewee:

“I did all my work, which was for the NVQ section on Officer of the Watch but erm because of the language barrier I, I couldn’t understand a word they were saying.”

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

Almost half of cadets surveyed in this study identified *‘meeting people from many different backgrounds’* as a career attraction, and described ways in which the impact of a multinational crew was seen as being *‘one of the best things’* about life at sea. Findings from an Economic and Research Council (ESRC) funded project studying transnational communities of seafarers reported by Sampson and Zhao (2003) suggest that many seafarers do have a decided preference for working within multinational crews where the social distance, tolerance and respect which people can afford others of different nationality make it easier to retain professional and non-conflictual relationships on board. However, language-related communication difficulties can present problems in the workplace, as Sampson and Zhao go on to suggest, ranging from the merely irritating to the potentially hazardous. In the interview extract below the cadet refers to language difficulties in which the *‘very limited knowledge of English’* which the cadet ascribed to the Chief Officer was seen as potentially compromising his training:

Interviewee:

“We have this Portfolio that needed completed and some of the things, we literally didn’t have a clue what it was asking us. And the biggest problem, as well, was, certainly on the first ship, he was an older Russian Chief Officer, who had very limited knowledge of English and we showed him the Portfolio and he really did not understand what exactly was written. And in some cases, you know, he was signing the, the Portfolio on what we had told him and it would really nasty or, you know er, trying to get ahead. We could of said it was anything, you know? It coulda been *‘clean your cabin,’* or something like that, when it was

meant to be ‘anchoring’, or something. But you know, they, they really didn’t have any idea what the English was for it, you know.”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

Sampson and Zhao observed that the working culture of the ship may not help, as the occupational hierarchy of the ship means that considerable power is exerted by senior officers over juniors – and cadets in particular. They make this point in relation to seafarers who are afraid that a lack of fluency in English may give the impression to their superiors that they are less than competent in other aspects of their job. This observation takes on a different complexion for UK cadets for whom fluency in English is not the issue, but rather the lack of fluency in the senior officers who ultimately have power over the successful completion of their Portfolio:

Interviewee:

“But at the end of the day I, I think the biggest problem, at the end of the day is he’s got to sign your Portfolio and that’s always one of the things you’re worried about. If you piss off the Chief Officer, what happens to your Portfolio, you know? Because, certainly with [*name of company*] I don’t know whether you know, certainly I’ve heard some people complaining and nothing’s happened, so I think that’s one of the big worries, you know, never to, you know . . . What the Chief Officer does and says is final because he’s signing your Portfolio and er the company aren’t gonna do anything about it.”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

The ESRC fieldwork which underpinned Sampson and Zhao’s paper exposed instances where poor on-board communication gave rise to job-related incidents with potentially serious consequences. They conclude that on any ship, safe working practices depend in part on ‘adequate communication’ between crew members; adequate communication, they suggest, is more than just an understanding of job-related terminology. For the cadets who found themselves on ships where very little English was spoken there is little doubt that this impaired the quality of their learning experience:

Interviewee:

“Well, the first trip was quite basic work, was a lot of chipping, you know, the, the odd paint thing and yeah there was some navigation work but not much. There wasn’t really any technical things needed to be explained, so I never found it a problem but I did think that, if I had to be told more complicated, like, how to work the radars or something, then the language might have proved a bit inferior. So that’s another reason, I actually wrote a letter and asked to, you know, to be put in the North Sea because, One, I wanted the shorter trips, and Two, that’s where the jobs were. Also I did think an English crew would help. I just could see it maybe being a problem, yes, and as things got more complicated.”

(Andy/04 – M/D/20/AM)

The comments of the cadet reported below expand on the language issue and also raise, in his own words, the need for 'equilibrium' between the responsibilities of cadets to get on with the work, and the responsibilities of the supporting organizations to ensure that placements are suitable; as a cadet representative of NUMAST, this cadet had a particular interest in the extent of trade union support for cadets:

Interviewee:

"I'll pick up on things I hear of from other cadets and I, I'll take it back to just sort of NUMAST and then take it back to the class and we have a discussion."

(Interviewer: "And what, what, what sort of things would that be, around that pay issue?")

Interviewee:

"Yeah about the pay issue, about the standard of ships and stuff like that. Some of the cadets go on really bad standard ships and some of them, one of my mates, went on a ship where they were all black African. There was no white British people at all. Not a racist thing. It was just the fact that that none of them spoke English and even the Captain was a black African and he's a, a white British cadet on this ship and [LAUGHS] and he had to get [LAUGHS], he came back after Phase Two at sea and he had no Portfolio finished, cos they didn't understand the Portfolio scheme and you couldn't get any Portfolio finished, cos they couldn't read the English."

I kind of felt that that was one of the big issues that we took up with them - that it's a bit ridiculous this, having to be a necessity to fill in your Portfolio, but then the company's sending you on a ship where you can't get anything done. So you have to sort of have a, an equilibrium between the company being sensible and sending you on a, a, on a normal ship and you being sensible and getting on with your work. You can't be getting on with your work if they [LAUGHS], if the ship doesn't know what it's supposed to be doing, So just, it's just really weird things that people I don't think have ever really taken the time to think about. Just kind of say, "Well, there's a ship, send a cadet on it." and not really thinking so much of it."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

In the extract below a NUMAST official outlined the official union view:

Interviewee:

"If a member requests assistance, and this includes cadets, the cadets will be referred to the industrial official . . . responsible for the cadets. It may be in liaison with the official responsible for that company and if it is a company ship matter, it will be dealt with. If it is a college matter, it'll be taken up with the official that is, that visits that college on a regular basis and if it is a matter of education and training, of a professional nature, because these things can often be very much interrelated."

(Trade Union Representative)

## Making the most of learning opportunities

For some cadets 'sea time', in addition to providing a supportive environment, really did give them the opportunity to apply classroom learning, illustrated by the palpable excitement in one deck cadet's account of applying his navigational learning:

Interviewee:

"When I first, like, I got my, my longitudes spot on, and I wrote it out, did this side, blah, blah, blah, blah, the 'R' position. Ran it up to where I thought I was from a particular GPS position. We've stayed for one hour, we've done 16 knots on this course, this is where I think we are and then, instead of using the GPS position to work out the position, I used this hexagon, just used that position; went "Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding"; did a bit of maths; what position was I in? We were in .2 of a mile, so my DR position was .1 of a mile out, so that was like, Wow! I've actually just worked out where I am from the sun, like I can do that, like, I, I couldn't do that like two weeks ago; I can do that now. Wow!"

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL)

However, not all cadets however found the application of theory to practice to be easy, or indeed relevant:

Interviewee:

"When I first got on the ship, it was worse I think (than the college). The theory doesn't really relate to what you're doing on the ship, in that everything I do in a classroom involves an equation of some description, or another, and numbers and calculators and, you know, that bit's the easy bit, if you like. The engineering, when I get into an Engine Room, it's completely different. I don't do any of the equations, I don't have anything to do with anything up there and in, in the lecture room. As far as I'm concerned, I check things are, are working OK and if they're not, if they're not working OK, I fix it, you know?"

(Interviewer: "Uhum [LAUGHS]. How do you know how to fix it?")

Interviewee:

"Well, it depends what's wrong with it. Its, its not something that you can write down on paper, you have to pull it apart, you know, look at it and work out what's wrong with it and then put it back together again."

(Interviewer: "Real problem solving on the job.")

Interviewee:

"Yeah, it's, its not something you can shove an equation into, you know? Thermodynamics and Mechanics, I do-, I don't, I'm finding it, I'm struggling to see where it relates and how often, how often I'm gonna use it. If I was building a ship, I think then probably I would use it a lot more often ,but when I'm actually just monitoring which, maintaining things I think that it's very, very different."

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL and interviewer)

With each new episode of sea time, cadets displayed a variety of approaches to managing their own learning at sea: 'standing up for oneself' was noted previously as a

strategy which a number of cadets adopted in managing relationships with others on board, and the interview extract below suggested the same assertiveness to be necessary in order to make the best of the learning opportunities at sea. This view is shared by Tanggaard (2005) who concluded from a study of male electromechanical apprentices in Denmark, that instruction in the workplace required the apprentice to request it or initiate it in some other way, creating difficulties for those apprentices not extrovert enough to seek out instruction.

Interviewee:

“Well I think study wise, you have to stand up, cos otherwise, I mean, people are busy and they don’t really have that much interest to come and approach you and say, “Well look, we need to do this for your Portfolio and we’re going to do this, do you want to help out?” Whereas, you know, if you know that something’s gotta happen, like, they’re gonna do a lifeboat launch and like a drill, or something, and you know that you’ve gotta have it signed off, they won’t come to you and say, “Look, do it!” You have to ask, “When are you gonna do it? Can I help out? Can I do this? This is what I need to do.” And then fine. But unless you sort of instigate it, they won’t actually come to you.”

(Interviewer: “Right, you, so you have to be, show interest and be kind of proactive really?”)

Interviewee:

“Mmm. That’s how, that’s what I found anyway.”

(Andy/04 – M/D/20/AM and interviewer)

One engineering cadet described in a pilot interview how much of the time he shadowed the ship’s engineers but it was his view that doing a task yourself proved the most effective way to learn:

Interviewee:

“You tend just to follow the engineers around day to day. If one has a big job on that you need to see, you shadow him for that situation. If there’s nothing major on, towards the end of the trip when you’ve got some experience, the Second Engineer gives out the jobs, tasks to do, gives you a bit of responsibility. It’s good that, you learn the job better when you do it yourself, rather than just watching someone.”

(Carl/Pilot/02 – M/E/21/AM )

The comments of a deck cadet who had just completed his final sea phase also favoured learning by doing and experimenting for yourself:

Interviewee:

“You just start tapping away and you find your own way about it, and that’s the way I do it myself now, especially on the last trip. The last time I was in college I got my Radio Officer’s ticket and all that kind of gear, so when I went back to sea, a lot of the kits are different makes, so they’ve got different ways of doing things on them. And you sit there pressing all

sorts of buttons, you know, sending stuff to other ships that you're not really supposed to be sending, instead of getting the instruction book out. That's how I've seen it done, anyway, so I do it myself like that. A lot of the time it's just kind of sat doing nothing. So you like to muck about with things, or apply things that you did in the college. I take a few of the notes I've written in the college away to sea, especially about the – you talk the theory here (in college), but the practical parts when applying out at sea, you really make a mess of it the first couple of times that you do it."

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL)

One of his peers, on the other hand, looked for direct teaching, brought his expectations of learning from the classroom, and unfortunately found himself waiting for instruction which never came:

Interviewee:

"He was more or less just getting at me for anything and asking me, "Why haven't you learned anything?" and I'd be telling him, like, "How do you expect me to learn, you're not telling me anything.""

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

Some cadets in this study were fortunate in receiving encouragement to broaden their work experiences at sea, encouragement that they then recognised and took up. Some did not however, always recognise the value of an educational opportunity: when one engineering cadet and his fellow cadet were exposed to the wider issues involved in the operational management of a vessel, they were not too sure what they had learned from the experience:

Interviewee:

"Yeah the thing is, they was very helpful on the first ship and then they all, like every week we used to sit down and go through what we'd done and what we needed to do. I don't know why but do you know they have a manager's meeting, you know. They have the top four, the Captain, Chief Mate, Chief Engineer and Second Engineer. Always meet every morning. For some reason they wanted me and \*\*\*to go in there as well."

(Interviewer: "That was good learning for you then?")

Interviewee:

"Well not really, we just sat there and er, [LAUGHS] it was nothing much. They just said what they were gonna do today. You know like, well, maybe about three o'clock we need the fire pump in the afternoon to do washing the deck, or something like that."

(Pete/04 – M/E/19/AM and interviewer)

There were examples however of where cadets felt frustrated by the tasks to which they were directed and which they considered to be menial:

Interviewee:

“But they, they just said I was employed as, as an AB basically cos they saw me as cheap labour. But then Ocean XL say, “Oh yeah but he, he’s getting his sea time,” which I wasn’t at all. I, all I was doing was, I was cleaning the toilets, I was scrubbing the decks and er, doing quite a lot of painting. And there I, there I was saying, you know, look I’ve gotta do these reports.”

(Interviewer: “Stuff on, do stuff up on the bridge?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, and they said, “No, you’re doing your, you’re doing your chores.” And I just thought, well, this is a complete waste of time, a complete waste of time cos I’m, I was in Phase Four which is, you’ve gotta be doing quite a lot of work really and then, just the, the crew were just nasty, really really nasty.”

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL and interviewer)

Lehmann (2005b) reporting on the experiences of Canadian youth apprentices found that in many cases students felt that they were not taken seriously in the workplace and that they were exposed to exploitation as cheap labour. Amongst some of the cadets interviewed in this study, there was a perception that the training element of the Tonnage Tax had encouraged companies to take on cadets as cheap labour but that there was no long term interest in employing them: this perceived impact of the Tonnage Tax is considered more fully in the following chapter.

### **Support from shore**

During sea phases, a formal responsibility for the training of cadets is given not only to the Shipboard Training Officer but also to the Company Training Officer who plays a significant role in the overall management of the training programme including liaison between ships, the colleges, the company, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). Whilst these individuals are clearly not easily accessible whilst cadets are at sea, there were cadets for whom the Company Training Officer provided genuine support when they were experiencing difficulties with placements at sea:

Interviewee:

“Ace Marine were very nice and I got on very well with (the Training Officer). He’s a lovely guy and he, he did, he phoned me, I was actually away for most of Christmas and I, I generally wasn’t in phone contact, I, I was away. I went direct to the hills and so he phoned and phoned and then he was away, so I phoned him back and, and I had a very good chat with him when he got back from his holiday which was, sort of, early January. He just wanted to know that I was alright really and, you know, I gave it, I wasn’t.”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Other cadets however found a disconcerting lack of interest from their training company:

Interviewee:

“I wrote a letter off three times. I wrote a letter to Ocean XL saying, this is a lie, what you say. I was doing pointless chores. I didn’t have any time off on Sundays for three, four weeks erm. The, the crew didn’t give me any, any time off to do any study or an-, any work. And then, then Ocean XL turned around and said, you know, you’ve not er . . . What have you been doing? Why haven’t you completed NVQ3? So it was . . . I mean they, they couldn’t care less at all. They didn’t say, Oh, what, why didn’t you do it, you know, was everything all right on the ship? They didn’t, you know, they couldn’t care less.”

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

Interviewee:

“Ocean XL don’t care, they never contact you, you want to know anything, you have to chase them and when I joined the second ship, I had worked for three ships, they’d got my home address and I had to phone them to ask which one I was joining and even then it changed on the last day. So, I mean, the communication between them . . . They don’t care I don’t care what, what they say, they just do not care. To them its just money and numbers.”

(Interviewer: “Has that left you feeling quite bad about it all?”)

Interviewee:

“I’ve seriously considered, especially this phase, leaving but to do what? You’ll have wasted so much time and so much effort to do what we’ve, I mean, the two sea trip phases were so bad that you can’t leave now because you’ve only one more to go and then that’s it.”

(Mark/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

The cadet speaking in the extract above did leave training shortly after this interview took place, even though he had stressed during the interview how much time and effort would be wasted if he did not continue. His efforts to engage his training company had proved unproductive and the following was an extract from an email which he sent to the researcher after his resignation:

Interviewee email:

“So two weeks later I was off to Hong Kong to join a container ship. I was in the totally wrong frame of mind by this time and never settled. I was angry and unsure what to do. I asked to go home in Korea - this time things went easier. I got home, called Ocean XL just after landing - they told me not to worry, that they were right behind me and then in the next breath they said I would have my money stopped without further notice. That was the last time I heard from them. I sent my fortnightly sick lines to them; not once did anyone contact me to ask how I was or when I would be back. I wrote a letter a couple of weeks ago asking to be relieved of my contract and they agreed.

I do still wonder what might have been, but with all the doom and gloom in the industry I don't regret my choice. It was a hard decision to make and one that drove me to the lowest place I have ever been. I'm glad to say that things are looking up - I feel for the first time in a

long, long time that I am getting away from this. It has played on my mind, it has haunted my dreams but I think I have managed to put it past me and feel ready to move on. I have had six long months to beat myself up and ponder what I want from life.”

(Mark/05 – M/D/24/XL)

Despite the ‘upbeat’ tone towards the end, this email qualifies as a further ‘*story of despair*’ in which the cadet Mark raises very clear issues about support from Ocean XL. Whilst the MNTB guidance is very explicit in the requirement to provide dedicated support to learners from individuals both on board and on shore, a requirement that is consistent with expansive learning, in practice cadets found that this varied between individual ships and individual companies.

### 6.3 REFLECTIONS ON SEAMANSHIP

This chapter has focused on the acquisition of the practical skills of seamanship. It has already been observed that Conrad suggested the greater the skills of seamanship needed to ‘master the craft’, the stronger the ‘*close communion*’ and ‘*intimacy with nature*’ which the seafarer will experience (Conrad, 1906/1975:31): this was certainly the case for the seafarer quoted by Sampson and Wu, who had little time for the bureaucratic requirements which squeezed out ‘*contact with the elements*’:

“Too many systems, I can’t oversee it [. . .]. Generally I like to sail. [The] best bits [of my job] are where you get in contact with the elements [...]. Seamanship. This is not seamanship [rustles papers] this is horseshit!”

(Container Vessel Officer quoted in Sampson and Wu, 2003:142)

Seamanship, it is suggested, requires an individual to possess not only professional competencies but also “*the capacity to use foresight and common sense, to make fullest use of seamen’s experience*” (Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 1943:4). Or, in the words of a deck cadet who was about to qualify, a seafarer ‘*understands what they’re doing when they’re at sea*’:

Interviewee:

“(A Seafarer is) someone who understands what they’re doing when they’re at sea. I, I’d say I’m training to be, I wasn’t a Seafarer but I’m training to be a properly competent Seafarer, if you like. I mean I enjoy being a Seafarer, I can do most of the things but I don’t think like, I think that’s an older person - you know what I mean? When you say Seafarer, you, like picture someone who’s slightly older. Someone, I mean someone with a bit of experience, I mean I don’t have that in the field I’m going into, I don’t have vast quantities of experience. So, I mean not yet, cos as I say, I’m training to be a Seafarer.”

(David/05 – M/D/20/AM)

The following extract is taken from an interview with a cadet who, the previous year had expressed the view of how daunting it was to be “... *looking at that big ship and thinking that you’re gonna be on there for three months ...*” (p.150). One year on, he expresses his confidence and pride in his progress in becoming a seafarer:

Interviewee:

“I feel quite confident, I know quite a bit about the tides and ships and all that sort of stuff. But also when people ask you what you do, and then you’ve got to tell them, you’re having to tell them each time, that’s what made it sink in that I’m a seafarer. It’s taken a while for it to sink in, but I do think I didn’t want to call myself a seafarer until I knew enough about it, but now I know quite a bit about the sea.”

(Neil/05 – M/D/24/XL)

### **SEAMANSHIP, CONRAD, AND SOMETHING UNMISTAKABLY REAL**

Joseph Conrad had much to say about the inescapable need for competent seamanship. Although couched in very different language from that used by the twenty first century cadets in this study, he offers insight into enduring aspects of seafaring and seamanship. In the following pages, some attention is given to his observations on the nature of seamanship, found, perhaps surprisingly, in the novella *‘Heart of Darkness’* (Conrad, 1902/1973), set as it largely is in the deep interior of the Congo. *‘Heart of Darkness’* is a tale within a tale: an anonymous storyteller sets the scene for Marlow’s account of a voyage he made by steamboat to find Kurtz, the ivory company agent whose corruption is a central feature of the story. Marlow comes upon a deserted hut of reeds downriver from Kurtz’s base:

“... by the door I picked up a book. It had lost its covers, and the pages had been thumbed into a state of extremely dirty softness; but the back had been lovingly stitched afresh with white cotton thread, which looked clean yet. It was an extraordinary find. Its title was, An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship, by a man, Tower, Towson – some such name – Master in his Majesty’s Navy. The matter looked dreary reading enough, with illustrative diagrams and repulsive tables of figures, and the copy was sixty years old. I handled this amazing antiquity with the greatest possible tenderness, lest it should dissolve in my hands. Within, Towson or Towser was inquiring earnestly into the breaking strain of ships’ chains and tackle, and other such matters. Not an enthralling book; but at the first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work, which made these humble pages, thought out so many years ago, luminous with another than a professional light. The simple old sailor with his talk of chains and purchases made me forget the jungle and the pilgrims in a delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real. Such a book being there was wonderful enough; but still more astounding were the notes penciled in the margin and plainly referring to the text. I couldn’t believe my eyes! They were in cipher! Yes, it looked like cipher. Fancy a man lugging with

him a book of that description into this nowhere and studying it - and making notes - in cipher like that. It was an extravagant mystery.”

(Conrad, 1902/1973:54)

Ambivalence is a major theme in this study and Conrad and the cadet Neil seem to share an ambivalence about the relationship between the artifacts of seafaring and being a seafarer. In the quote above, Neil makes reference to knowing “*quite a bit about the tides and ships*” but, whilst expressing pride in that knowledge, goes on to recognise that there’s more to being a seafarer than “*that sort of stuff*”. Similarly, Marlow in ‘*Heart of Darkness*’ whilst expressing delight at his finding of ‘*An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*’, nevertheless refers to its “*... dreary reading ... repulsive tables ... earnestly inquiring into the breaking strain of ships’ chains and tackle, and other such matters.*” Conrad and the cadet acknowledge the need for the likes of charts and tide tables and both take some satisfaction from the connection of those artifacts with both sea and seafarer. But they are ambivalent about formal knowledge and its connection to the sea because being a seafarer is not reducible to ‘*all that stuff*’. Neil makes his claim of being a seafarer by time spent at sea, and direct knowledge of it. Marlow in ‘*Heart of Darkness*’ draws attention to the notes in cipher, “*an extravagant mystery*” explained perhaps by the need of the seafarer to augment the “*unmistakably real*” with authentic knowledge of his own.

Marlow later returns the book to its owner, a young Russian seaman who had run away to sea, and who eventually finds himself in the thrall of Kurtz:

“I gave him Towson’s book. He made as though he would kiss me, but restrained himself. “The only book I had left and I thought I had lost it,” he said looking at it ecstatically.”

(Conrad, 1902/1973:77)

When Marlow and the Russian part company toward the end of the novella, the book is mentioned once more:

“One of his pockets (bright red) was bulging with cartridges, from the other (dark blue) peeped “Towson’s Inquiry” etc. etc. He seemed to think himself excellently well equipped for a renewed encounter with the wilder-ness ...”

(Conrad, 1902/1973:91)

Leavis’s interpretation of the significance of Towson’s book is that it is a symbol of tradition, sanity and the moral idea, found lying incongruously in the dark heart of Africa (Leavis, 1948). Sayeau, taking a less colonial view, argues that the entire novella is about

the nature of work at the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and considers Towson's book as offering a Utopian image of work, an "*unselfconscious approach to the craft of seafaring*" (Sayeau, 2006: 10).

For the young Russian seafarer, the codification of seafaring in the form of Towson's manual equips him, so he believes, for an encounter with the wilderness; but whilst it represents order, precision, and "*an honest concern for the right way of going to work*", there are still the unexpected challenges of the 'wilderness' – or the ocean – to contend with. It is suggested here that Towson's book, in codifying the practical knowledge needed to ensure the safe management and maintenance of a ship, offers '*something unmistakably real*' in a world open to subjective interpretation and uncertain meanings, characterised elsewhere in Conrad's writings as 'inscrutable' or 'inconceivable' or 'unspeakable'. In the ocean environment with its unpredictability and uncertainty, the rigorous skills of seamanship are not negotiable: as has been shown, cadets in this study were acutely aware that competence in seamanship was not something that could be feigned.

### **A WELL WORKED CIRCLE**

This chapter is brought to a close with a positive reflection on workplace learning, not just in the way in which those in training and those who are trainers can both learn from each other, but also on the interrelationship of college and workplace learning. Conventionally, apprenticeship has been characterised as a linear journey from novice to expert with responsibilities accruing to the apprentice as the journey progresses. Lave and Wenger, in their work on situated learning, make the assumption that novices progress from legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice to full participation, a trajectory which is facilitated by the 'experts' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Fuller and Unwin challenge this assumption (Fuller and Unwin, 2004) with empirical evidence that the concept of expert can mean different things in different organisational contexts, and that the roles young people play in the workplace are more complex than the concept of novice implies. They describe how young people help older employees to learn as well as vice versa, and suggest that this interaction across the boundaries of age, status, and knowledge characterises an expansive learning environment described earlier. This is well illustrated in the description below in which the cadet uses the

expression '*a well worked circle*' to describe the role of the cadet as a channel, not just for bringing new knowledge into the ship-board environment, but also learning from the ship back into the college:

Interviewee:

"You learn things here (the college), you apply them at sea, or some of them at sea, and them back to the college and they might ask you how you got on with x, y and z. What they taught you last here. And you'll say, "Oh, I did it but I found it didn't really work in that way, I found it worked better in that way." And they all kind of go through, they trap themselves in theory. But we take a lot of things, not just the way things are done out at sea, but also things about the ships as well back from sea. The plans and stuff like that, any kind of computer software, like stability software, you take back to the college because ships are advancing so much these days, the colleges find it hard to keep up with the newer ships. Although they'll teach you all about the celestial navigation and all this stability here and theory, but stability at sea, it's all done by computer, you don't work it in longhand. You punch figures into the ship and it'll tell you whether it's stable or unstable.

From here (the college) you're just learning the theory aspect and at sea you're actually putting it into practical use, or some of it into practical use. I can't say I've put everything into practical use that you've learned about. And other things you'll learn here, you'll take them to sea, and you'll go and do it. And someone else will say, "What you're doing?" "How do you do that?" And you just pass it on like that. They haven't been to college for years and it's something that's moved on but they haven't got to grips with it because, for that scene, they're not learning. The teaching environment, so in that way, you're helping them. When you're showing them how to do it you're reinforcing it into your own head. And then when you take it back to sea from here, you'll tell them how you do things. It's just kind of like, a well worked circle, you know."

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL)

## 6.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter has been upon the experiences of cadets as they sought to master the practical skills of seamanship through the competencies required for MCA certification. The perspective has been that of the cadets, and their recalled experiences have provided the main source of data, although relevant survey data has also been included. The writings of Conrad have been used to suggest continuity over time with issues concerning the nature of seamanship. In the absence of contemporary qualitative explorations of the cadet experience, it is suggested that studies of modern apprenticeship offer the nearest equivalent.

## **EXPANSIVE LEARNING IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS**

The learning experiences of cadets in this study have been viewed in the light of the expansive/restrictive learning continuum. The nature of planned training at sea demonstrates many features of expansive learning. These features have been identified as contributing to stronger and richer learning environments (Fuller and Unwin, 2003) and include: the access to a range of formal qualifications; the clear codification of competences evidenced by the Training Portfolios; access to multiple communities of practice in the placements on different vessels with different crews; designated individuals to provide both support and act as role models; and, a gradual transition in the acquirement of responsibilities. The institutional arrangements for planned training at sea fulfill these requirements for expansive learning and in this study there were good examples of the ways in which these features were translated into the everyday experiences of cadets at sea. However there were also examples of where these features were not reflected in positive, constructive individual learning experiences. It is suggested that the unique combinations of cadet, vessel, crew and officers resulted in learning environments which were unavoidably varied in quality. This variation in the characteristics of each placement would be true of any workplace learning experience. However the unique nature of each shipboard placement was magnified by the isolated and total character of life at sea and less open to scrutiny than might be the case in other occupational settings.

## **RESTRICTED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Part of cadets' confidence over their competence as seafarers was related to the range of experiences to which they were exposed during planned training at sea. From the interview and the survey data it was clear that cadets had limited experience of different types of vessels; this issue proved for some a source of frustration particularly where a vessel offered restricted learning opportunities because of the nature of the trade, or sometimes because of unavoidable external factors such as the weather. There were several instances where cadets had requested their companies for a change of vessel type, but these requests were not always met. The limited range of training placements was a finding confirmed by the NUMAST survey (2004a) where cadets believed that training experience on different vessel types would extend their range of skills. Sometimes the opportunities for learning were constrained by the small crew numbers,

and the literature on apprenticeship has suggested that this can hamper educational interactions. The MNTB guidance on planned training at sea makes it clear that:

“Any tendency to involve (cadets) for long periods on boring, repetitive tasks, or simply to regard them as another member of the crew, is an utter waste of everyone’s time and must be avoided.”

(MNTB, 2006:9)

### **THE ACTUALITY OF COMPETENT SEAMANSHIP**

During the successive phases of planned training at sea, cadets are expected to *‘achieve and develop professional competence over time’* and to demonstrate this through the completion of the Training Portfolio. The study found that whilst cadets emphasised the importance of the Portfolio and the need to complete it as documentary evidence of their learning, there was a stronger focus from those interviewed, on the actuality of being able to perform the task. Cadets recognised that competent seamanship was not synonymous with simply getting the tasks in the Portfolio ‘ticked off’. In Conrad’s phrase, *‘a ship will not put up with a mere pretender’* (Conrad, 1906/1975:28) and cadets were very aware that the consequences of poor seamanship cannot be concealed. There was concern expressed by some cadets that when tested as responsible officers, their skills would be shown to be deficient. Cadets concerns over their competence may have been as much about their confidence as it was about a working knowledge of the technical tasks; however confidence is a necessary component of competence, and for some cadets the training process did not appear to have given them the confidence required. Equally there were cadets who were comfortable with the increasing responsibilities given to them and looked forward with a measure of excitement to the full responsibilities which awaited them as certificated officers.

### **SUPPORTIVE, INDIFFERENT, UNSUPPORTIVE: EXPERIENCES OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Given that ships, as with most workplaces, do not have training as their prime purpose, it is unsurprising that cadets encountered very variable levels of support and interest in their learning needs from qualified seafarers; attitudes ranged from the enthusiastic and genuinely helpful through the indifferent to the openly hostile. There is a temptation to attribute this simply to personality differences as one cadet suggested: *‘I think it depends on the mood of the person and also who the person is’*. Undoubtedly there will be

individuals who relish their teaching role more than others. However, there are underlying factors which have little to do with individual predilections. MNTB Guidance (2006) emphasises the importance of officers and crew having a proper understanding of the nature of cadet training and the roles which they are expected to fulfill. This has implications for their own training and continuing professional development in order to support cadets with up to date advice and guidance. For those officers with limited proficiency in the English language, the training of English speaking cadets could be seen as an added burden in already pressured jobs, a consequence of companies' enthusiasm for taking on cadets through the Tonnage Tax scheme. In addition, seafarers, particularly those less qualified, are largely working in an unpredictable job market and may resent cadets as a threat to their own jobs; this resentment was seen in accounts given by a number of cadets. The experiences of ships officers and crew on their role in training cadets, their own continuing professional development, and their perspectives on cadet attitudes, would provide a set of data complementary to the cadet experiences described in this study.

Regardless of the vessel type or crew size, cadets found themselves negotiating their own roles as novices and usually as the sole novice, within complex social and educational environments. They used a variety of approaches, examples were given of: cadets proactively managing their own learning; asking for help; following up gaps in their Portfolios; shadowing crew; and, experimenting with new tasks. Others took a reactive approach and there were examples of cadets disillusioned by what they perceived to be a lack of direct 'teaching'. Where cadets were offered opportunities for extended learning, these were not always recognised; this accords with findings from apprenticeship studies which have cast doubt over the effectiveness of developing transferable work skills in the workplace. The study found that in addition to variable support at sea, cadets also experienced variable support from their colleges and sponsors. Some individuals were singled out for praise for the pastoral support they offered, but there were strongly felt comments on the perceived lack of interest from some of the shore-based bodies.

## **PARTICIPATION IN A 'WELL WORKED CIRCLE OF LEARNING'**

The interview data also revealed that at times cadets found themselves to be a source of learning for others both at sea and in the colleges, operating a '*well worked circle*' of learning. This supports fieldwork findings from Fuller and Unwin (2004) which suggest that the pedagogical relationship in the workplace is not all one way, challenging assumptions on the linear progression from novice to expert within communities of practice.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN**

**A LIFE AT SEA:  
TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE**

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This, the fourth chapter of narrative analysis, accounts for the views of cadets on a future at sea once they had '*got their ticket*', that is, gained their first certificate of competency as Merchant Navy Officers. Their views are considered reflexively in the contexts of: the attractions which the cadets had originally seen in the life of a seafarer; their experiences of life at sea; and, the externalities which they saw as impacting on their futures.

### CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Aside from this introduction, the chapter is structured under the main heading of '*Talking about the Future*' and is divided into five sub-sections. The content represents cadets' views on their futures as qualified deck and engineering officers. Assisted by a theoretical perspective and existing research, the theme of 'hints of ambivalence' considered in Chapter Four is further developed.

The first two subsections recognise that cadets were able to project beyond their immediate situation and that their plans for the future have a foundation in their impressions of planned training at sea. These impressions range from those who envision a very positive future at sea to those who, in the most extreme cases, have resigned from training altogether. The third subsection focuses on the ambivalence present even at the extremes of the cadet experience and considers how Merton's typology of sociological ambivalence offers a way of interpreting the cadet experience in terms of structural determinants as well as individual personality and disposition. In the fourth sub-section there is an exploration of what Hill (1972) describes as '*the oscillation between sea and shore*', oscillation encompasses the tension of managing two separate but interrelated lives, and the movement back and forth between the two. Managing this oscillation is shown to be a challenge for cadets and one which they saw as having implications for a long-term future at sea. The fifth sub-section centres on the anxiety expressed by cadets over the perceived lack of job opportunities for junior UK officers. Cadets voiced their belief that the training component of the Tonnage Tax had not offered them the prospect of any 'real jobs' and has created training environments which have, in their view, benefited companies rather than cadets.

## 7.2 TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Through their responses to the questionnaire and in interview conversations, the cadets in this study were shown to be comfortable in thinking about what a long-term future as seafarers might mean for them and the impact this might have on the crucial domains of adult life, income, partners and family; this did not mean however that they were clear about the detail of how a career at sea might actually unfold.

### BEYOND GETTING THE TICKET

All cadets, with one exception, responded to the questionnaire item which asked how long they planned to stay at sea, suggesting that they were prepared to make some sort of projection beyond that of *'getting the ticket'*, that is certification as qualified UK Merchant Navy officers. The projections offered by cadets are shown in *Table 7/1*.

**Table 7/1**

Question responses: How many years do you think you might stay at sea after you qualify?

Years plan to spend at sea	Study sample (n=120)	As % of the sample
Not at all	1	0.8
Less than a year	1	0.8
1-5yrs	19	16
6-10yrs	36	30.3
11-20yrs	41	34.5
21+yrs	21	17.6
Invalid response	1	0.8

The questionnaire responses of those interviewed revealed a similar distribution: one cadet stated that he would stay less than one year – he was in fact one of the cadets who resigned; 4(16%) estimated they would stay between 1 and 5 years; 5(20%) planned for between 6 and 10 years; 12(48%) indicated that they planned to stay in excess of 11 years; with a further 3(12%) opting for 21 plus years.

In making predictions about their future at sea, it seems reasonable to assume that

cadets were to an extent matching the attractions they anticipated when they embarked on their cadet training, with their experiences of shipboard life. The questionnaire also asked cadets whether they believed that life at sea had so far lived up to their expectations: Of the 120 questionnaires returned, 77(64%) claimed that their expectations had been met, whilst 21(18%) said that they had not, and a further 21(18%) chose the 'don't know' option (1 response missing). Amongst the interviewees, 15(60%) said in their questionnaire responses that their expectations had been met, 7(28%) said they had not, and 3(12%) said they didn't know. As already noted in the methodology chapter, the percentages confirm some bias in the interviewee sub-sample of cadets towards those with a less than satisfactory experience of cadetship. However, the numbers are small; if two of the seven 'expectations not met' cadets had answered 'don't know' then the sample and sub-sample frequency distributions would again come roughly into alignment.

Hence, the questionnaire data suggests that many cadets (over 60%) found their expectations had been met and that over 80% intended to commit to a long-term future (more than 5 years) at sea. The significant difference between the two percentages is somewhat puzzling but, to some extent, can be explained as an artifact arising from the questionnaire prompts. This explanation does receive confirmation from the findings of a survey conducted by NUMAST in 2004, contemporaneous with the data collection period of this study. In the NUMAST survey (NUMAST, 2004a), in response to a prompt asking how long they planned to stay at sea, 34% of the sample of 249 cadets stated 'don't know'. In this study, the 'don't know' option was not available. The NUMAST figure of 34% is close to the 36% of cadets in this study who were either unsure or dissatisfied that their expectations were met. Whatever the true figures, it seems safe to record that a significant number of cadets (roughly one in three) were at best uncertain about their future and the prospect of satisfying their original expectations. The interview data provides further insight into these issues.

The interview data already presented in this study has revealed considerable variation in the way cadets experienced their planned training at sea. Variation in the ways cadets responded appeared dependent both on their individual dispositions and on the characteristics of each placement. Placement characteristics related particularly to the

officers and crew, but also to the types of vessels and of trade. Some placements offered a daily round of tasks that were seen by cadets as monotonous and menial; for other cadets in other placements, each day presented them with something different and challenging. The social life of a ship could feel welcoming and relaxing, whilst at other times the cabin provided a refuge from the taunting of shipmates. In some placements cadets felt well supported and encouraged in their learning, whilst other placements left cadets feeling neglected and dispirited.

This significant variation in individual experiences is an unsurprising consequence of the range of companies, vessels, crews, and voyages involved, indicating the ship as a highly inconsistent environment for training and for learning. There was however a fundamental aspect of life at sea to which all were exposed: the total character of the ship with its enforced distance from shore. This environment, which brought work tasks, leisure activities and the personal essentials of life within highly restricted confines, was experienced by all those on board, novice and seasoned seafarer alike. Whilst the status of a cadet would change once qualified, together with the actual tasks undertaken and the responsibilities assumed, the total character of the ship would not, although the type of trade would determine the time spent continuously in this environment, with deep sea vessels giving the greatest exposure to this total experience. Finding ways to ‘*get by*’ at sea had the short term aim of completing each placement, and the medium term aim of gaining the professional qualifications required to become a Merchant Navy Officer; but training at sea also gave cadets the opportunity to reflect on whether the intensity of the totalness of the ship was something they felt they could accommodate in the longer term.

Referring again to Melia’s study of student nurses, Melia found that those she interviewed were so preoccupied with “*getting by*” (Melia, 1987:15) on a day-to-day basis, that they had little time to think of how they might learn to do the work of qualified nurses. Following Olsen and Whittaker (1968) and Becker et al (1961), Melia considered it reasonable to assume that the students focused on adapting to current situations, to the exclusion of preparing for their role as registered nurses. It is suggested that in contrast to the student nurses in Melia’s study, the Merchant Navy Officer Cadets in this study did have insight into the long-term implications of the occupation through their exposure to life at sea. They experienced not just the totality of the experience

whilst on board, but recognised that the impact of life at sea extended beyond the confines of the ship, making itself felt on relationships with home both whilst they were away, and also when they were 'shore-side'.

As cadets talked about their futures, they moved between the attractions they had seen in seafaring, their experiences during different placements at sea, how they perceived a seafaring career impacting on their shore lives, and the externalities they saw as affecting their future. For the majority of cadets involved in this study, entry into Merchant Navy cadetship was their first sustained experience of physical, emotional and financial separation from their parents. 71% of cadets responding to the questionnaire were under the age of 21, and their reflections on their occupational futures could equally be seen as reflections on their transition into adulthood. The notion of transition has been raised previously in relation to cadetship as a rite of passage, a transformative process from non-seafarer to seafarer as well as from youth to adulthood. The issues which cadets raised in relation to the future: securing work and income; deciding what sort of lifestyle they actually wanted; and, the implications of 'settling down', have been considered important markers of adulthood in studies of youth transition. In an analysis and interpretation of the accounts of British and Finnish young people on becoming an adult, Gordon and Lahelma (2002) showed young people as identifying these same issues as important in accomplishing successful entry into adulthood. Their study however focused on 17-19 year olds who, unlike the cadets, had not yet taken the step into the world of work which is itself a major milestone in the transition to adulthood.

The fact that cadets were comfortable about thinking and talking about the future was consistent with findings from other studies of the life paths of young adults. Anderson et al (2002) suggested that despite a considerable sense of insecurity, their study group of young adults from a small Scottish town in the late 1990s had well-articulated ambitions and plans with respect to work and housing, and to have considerable commitment to childbearing and partnership. Bradley and Devadason's study (2008) of young adults in Bristol described them as '*the adaptable generation*' and found that most faced their futures with equanimity and resourcefulness. These two study groups had an age range of 20-29 years and 20-34 years respectively, and the young adults were involved in a range of labour markets; this contrasted with the age range of 16-26 in this study group, but more significantly, all those in this study had selected a vocational training in which a

clear career path was a key attraction, and this clearly gave a very specific focus to their reflections. Amongst cadets there was, as will be shown, an expectation that their training should lead to good employment prospects just as Vickerstaff (2003) in her examination of the experience of apprenticeship in the period 1945-75, found an attraction of apprenticeship to be one of getting a trade that would lead eventually to better prospects.

## **IMPRESSIONS FROM PLANNED TRAINING AT SEA**

The constructions cadets put on their 'imagined futures' were influenced by their experiences of planned training at sea, explored in the two preceding chapters. In this narrative summary of their impressions, the focus is initially on those cadets most enthusiastic about a future life as a Merchant Navy Officer, and then moves on to consider those more diffident about the future.

### **'It's got all the benefits for me'**

There were cadets who clearly looked forward to a job that they believed would offer them all that they had hoped for: the ocean environment; the opportunities for difference; lengthy periods of leave; good pay and career progression. These aspects were captured in the comments below from two deck cadets about to complete their training: the first had a definite position waiting for him on qualification; the second interviewee was waiting to hear from her sponsoring company whether she would be offered a post:

Interviewee:

"It's a good job. It's got all the benefits for me. I get a great wage - I will, when I qualify, get a great wage tax free. Hard work, four months away, then I get basically three months - 21 days or 20 days for every month. So basically I'll do four months away, three months home. I don't know any other job where you can get that, and promotion wise - I think if I work hard, by the time I'm 30, I could probably be sailing as a Captain. If I work hard, keep my nose clean."

(David/05 – M/D/20/AM)

Interviewee:

"I love it, I love it so much, aah! It's brilliant! I love being at sea, I love travelling, I love as I said, having the space. I love the work that's involved - the career opportunities, aye, just everything about it."

(Charlotte/05 – F/D/22/XL)

These cadets, and the majority of those who responded to the questionnaire, had said that the attractions of travelling, of a job that would take them out of the routine and the familiar were important factors in attracting them to a seafaring career in the first place. Those who were optimistic about a future at sea had found that being at sea had given them that experience. Despite the experience being 'challenging', the exhilaration of being in close contact with the natural world came through in interviews with both deck and engineering cadets, with males and females, with those who had almost completed their three year training, as well as those who had undertaken only one sea placement. For these cadets their experiences had given them enthusiasm to pursue a future at sea. Despite the transformation the industry has undergone in the century since Conrad was writing, his fiction featured the thrill of adventure that can be experienced by young seafarers: In '*Youth*', Marlow, recalling his experience a young second mate declares:

"And there was somewhere in me the thought: By Jove! This is the deuce of an adventure - something you read about; and it is my first voyage as a second mate - and I am only twenty. . . I was pleased. I would not have given up the experience for worlds. I had moments of exultation."

(Conrad, 1898/1975: 16)

Whether the excitement expressed by the cadets in this study would be sustained to any degree in the long term is uncertain, and the delight expressed could have been a reaction to an environment which was still comparatively new, even for those three years into their training and about to qualify. Hill in describing similar accounts from novices and from experienced seafarers of "*flying fish, dolphins and sunsets*" (Hill, 1972:59) noted ambivalence amongst seasoned seafarers as to whether this excitement would pall over time. Similarly, the excitement of visiting distant locations, seen by cadets as a major attraction of a seafaring career, might lose some of its appeal once it had become routine. Whilst Hill (1972) made extensive comment on the disillusion which leads seafarers to limit their stay in the Merchant Navy, his study group comprised a range of seafarers from cadets to those with over 40 years experience, and therefore not all of the views expressed have their counterpart with the views of the study group in this research. Hill's findings do suggest that occupational disillusionment is prevalent in experienced seafarers. Turning to Conrad for further insight into how disillusion might set in for the seafarer over time, there is the description of Jim, the central character of the novel *Lord Jim* (Conrad, 1900/1974:14), a description in which Conrad captures feelings of tension and ambivalence:

“Entering the regions so well known to his imagination, (Jim) found them strangely barren of adventure. He made many voyages. He knew the magic monotony of existence between sky and water: he had to bear the criticism of men, the exactions of the sea, and the prosaic severity of the daily task that gives bread – but whose only reward is in the perfect love of the work. This reward eluded him. Yet he could not go back because there is nothing more enticing, disenchanting, and enslaving than the life at sea.”

(Conrad, 1900/1974:14)

Whilst optimistic about their pay and promotion prospects, cadets did see securing a job as the first challenge. Once this hurdle had been overcome, they felt that they could look forward to a worthwhile salary on a career pathway which could lead rapidly to becoming a captain:

Interviewee:

“They’re always looking for officers on cruises, so if I’ve got experience on them, where there’s a better chance of getting promotion, hopefully I’ll try and get on the Super Yachts; a hundred thousand a year for a super yacht Captain. I would be pretty much in demand and because it’s the same calibre of people you’re dealing with as on the Super Yachts, you’d be pretty much in demand, so that’s hopefully the way it goes.”

(Graham/04 – M/D/18/XL)

The cadet Stuart registered similar enthusiasm to Graham:

Interviewee:

“I can see myself working my way up the ladder to eventually getting the Chief Mate’s ticket and then what my plans is to qualify almost straight away to Second Mate so that’s what’s keeps me motivated right now . . . and that means, straight away. I can study hard, I can work, then maybe, within six months to a year or whenever, I’m allowed to do the Chief Mates’, I can pay for the ticket myself, then start working, and then I’ll plan to work for as long as I need to.”

(Stuart/04 – M/D/19/XL)

However not all cadets had found the excitement they were looking for during their training, or felt enthusiastic about the salary and career opportunities.

### **‘It’s awful, absolutely awful’**

Disappointment with the training experience led some cadets to resign from their course, a stark fact not always congruent with what a cadet had said about their intentions for a seafaring career in interview, or marked down in the questionnaire. As noted in the methodology, attrition would already have had an effect on the sample in that some cadets who had enrolled would already have left before they could be recruited into the study. One year after the first interviews had taken place, five of the twenty-five cadets

originally interviewed, all male and all training as deck officers, had resigned. Three of these five had opted for 11-20 years as the length of time they planned to stay at sea and one had projected a career at sea of 6-10 years; only one cadet from this group had indicated that he would stay less than one year. Assuming that cadets completed the questionnaires in good faith, it can be said that the projections and aspirations set down in the questionnaire responses of four of the five who resigned clearly did not materialise. Looking more closely at this group, three of the five cadets gave very negative interview accounts of their personal experiences on board, some details of which were included as *'stories of despair'* in Chapter 5. One cadet was so unhappy that he had resigned by the time the interview took place, although he had said in the questionnaire response that his expectations had been met and he had projected a long career at sea. The comment below summed up his reasons for resigning, and whilst *'it was never one thing'*, negative encounters with individuals played a major part:

Interviewee:

"I don't think it was, it was never, it was never one thing. It was, I think, a whole combination of the environment and the people, and all the officers should I say, but not that particular crew. It was, not even a trip, or the people on that particular ship. I think there was a combination."

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

The other two cadets who had described very negative experiences, and who subsequently resigned, both hoped that future placements would offer better experiences, but were aware that their damaged confidence and disillusion would make it a struggle for them to complete the course. The remaining two cadets of the five who resigned gave no obvious indication of unhappiness at the time of interview. In the light of their subsequent resignations it is tempting to see their negative remarks in their interviews, as foreshadowing their decisions to leave, evidenced in one of their comments below:

Interviewee:

"When I'm finished, I can maybe try something else but I don't, well, I don't know, just smaller, smaller ships really, so then you can get off maybe and make short trips. I really wouldn't mind working in the North Sea, you know. I've got a few folk who do that and they survive, it's a kind of month on, month off. That seems a bit better than four months away, three months off. Three months is too long at home, four months is too long away, you know."

(Michael/04 – M/D/20/XL)

However the views voiced by these two cadets did not actually sound so very different from the views of many of the cadets who were still in training at the end of their final college phase, and who were unsure about the future.

## **AMBIVALENCE**

“...there is nothing more enticing, disenchanting, and enslaving than the life at sea’.

(Conrad, 1900/1974:14)

Those cadets enticed by the life at sea, and those so disenchanting that they left training altogether, nevertheless shared experiences of uncertainty and mixed emotions. Throughout the analytical chapters there have been illustrations of the tensions experienced by cadets between expectations and actualities as their training programmes unfolded. As cadets went on to talk about their futures at sea, the tensions took on other forms, equally characterised by ambivalence.

### **Ambivalence: using Merton’s Typology**

Ambivalence as a sociological concept owes much to Merton. Merton records that the concept of ambivalence has a long history as an *‘inner experience’*, with psychological and/or psychoanalytical analyses focusing on the “... *inner experiences and the psychic mechanisms released by efforts to cope with conflicting emotions, thoughts or actions.*” (Merton, 1976:3). Merton contends that sociological ambivalence is complementary and instrumental to psychological ambivalence, empirically connected but theoretically distinct (Donati, 1998). Merton gives the example of teacher/pupil relationships, subjected to many literary and psychological analyses that do not question the systematic differences in the structure of their relations or the field of activity. Merton offers a typology of sociological ambivalence (SA) with a ‘core type’ and five ‘extensions’. The core type (SA1) is conflict stemming from contradictory demands made on those who occupy a single status with a particular social role. From this core type, there extend five further types:

(SA2) Conflict within a set of statuses which an individual occupies;

(SA3) Conflict between different roles in one single status;

(SA4) Cultural conflict in shared basic values;

(SA5) Anomie in the opportunity structure; and,

(SA6) Conflict between different cultural groups.

Merton's concept of sociological ambivalence is recognised as '*powerful but problematical*' (Donati, 1998: 102) in part because it has to be applied in societies that are highly structured. The total character of the ship provides a highly structured environment, and whilst it is not straightforward to disentangle status and role, a difficulty recognised by Bates (1955) and by Gross et al (1958/1966), it is suggested that much of the ambivalence experienced by cadets has structural components. This suggestion is consistent with Merton's contention that ambivalence is built into the structure of social statuses and roles. The fit with the typology he describes is not exact but it nevertheless offers a helpful way of viewing the cadet experience.

The status of 'cadet' is taken as the starting point, Merton's core type (SA1). This status in itself exerts contradictory demands. Whilst so much of the experience of cadetship has been shown to be about reaching an acceptance of junior status, it is a status that by its very nature has to be left behind. No sooner has a cadet adapted than s/he is already required to move on to a further stage of training and responsibilities; that is, a development of the role – with the possibility of ambivalence recurring anew with each new placement. It is recognised that cadet status is both transitional and transient with role development that is not necessarily progressive.

This observation is aside from the conflict between different roles within the single status of seafarer officer cadet – Merton's type (SA3): on board ship their status as cadet required them to balance roles that had contradictory demands: as learner and as co-worker; in relation to crew members cadets were junior in terms of experience, yet they needed to relate to crew members in their role as aspiring officers. Even the roles themselves could contain contradictory demands; for example the novices who found themselves bringing to the ship new knowledge learned in college – the 'well-worked circle' of learning referred to in the previous chapter (p. 227).

For some cadets, ambivalence stemmed from the mismatch between their expectations and the actuality of their experience of planned training at sea – the life of difference was not quite as they had hoped. This could be interpreted as Merton's type (SA5) in terms of anomie in the opportunity structure. Further exploration of this interpretation links with the conceptual roots of '*anomie*' and Durkheim's concern with phenomena arising from industrialization. If 'the fellowship of the craft' is connected with Durkheim's

notion of *'organic solidarity'*, then we can understand some cadets as experiencing anomie two-fold. For some cadets, they are not only feeling the denial of their legitimate aspiration to 'the life of difference' promised by recruitment literature, but also, due to their transient status, they are not organically bound in the 'fellowship of the craft'. The following section of narrative links together a series of quotes and observations that illustrate Merton's concept of ambivalence as arising from anomie in the opportunity structure (SA5).

The changes in industry practice – of increased industrialization – in the form of fast turn around times in ports, the reduction in the length of shore leave, the use of single buoy moorings with no shore contact, recognised in the literature (Bloor et al, 2000), all meant that the opportunities cadets had associated with travelling and experiencing different cultures did not materialise, as the two cadets in the following interview extracts describe:

Interviewee:

"It was a SBM, which is a Single Buoy Mooring, which is a buoy like twenty miles off the coast, you can just about see land, just a buoy, you can go up to it and you've got to secure to it, and you've got a pipe and you pull it round the side and fill up. We were there for two weeks, loading. It was hell. It was really slow. Then it was across to America - didn't see anything there. Then 24-hour discharge and we loaded in Mexico two days later. Another 3 weeks - back across the Atlantic. Discharged in Portugal - 24 hours. Then it was down to West Africa again. Loaded again - back across to the States - another 3 weeks. So I got ashore . . . twice during the trip and then the third time I paid off. That was in four months, so in four months we were in port for about three, four days 'cos most of it was SBM work."

(Brett/Pilot/ 02– M/D/18/AM)

Whilst planned training at sea had taken them around the world, they realized that this could not necessarily be equated with their hopes of seeing the world, hopes which had not been satisfied:

Interviewee:

"Although I wanted to do it in school, it's turned out differently to what I imagined it was going to be."

(Interviewer: "Do you remember how you thought it was going to be?")

Interviewee:

"I thought it was going to be on nice ships, going away to Australia and then to Brazil, and then up the coast to America and then go to the Philippines and that. I thought it was going to be like that, two or three weeks in a port at a time. It's not like that at all. I think the company's kind of false advertised it to the folk who are coming."

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL and interviewer)

'Stephen' also suggested that there was more paperwork to be done than he had expected, and his comment which follows was reminiscent of the remark made by the Officer quoted in Sampson and Wu (2003:142) and referred to in the previous chapter on page 224: "*Seamanship. This is not seamanship [rustles papers] this is horseshit!*" For the experienced officer, the increasing volume of bureaucratic requirements had little to do with seamanship. For the cadet, paperwork had clearly not featured amongst the images he had of a Deck Officer's role:

Interviewee:

"From when I was in school, I thought it was going to be a brilliant life. Plenty of sun, seeing plenty of the world. But you don't get it, even if you go deep sea. You don't get it in that way, yeah. But with regards to all the regulations that are coming in with security and that after 9/11, it's just gone overboard and it's just become more, it's just another thing to do. You just think of signing bits of paper, like that, it's not a good job to do. It's when you're on a nice, long passage, everything's done and you can just sit and do your job proper. What you're trained to do is to navigate the ship, not to do all the paperwork. That's the good part of it."

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL)

Cadets did suggest that companies could have done more to paint a realistic picture of life at sea when recruiting cadets, but the difficulties of explaining the day to day actuality of life at sea have already been discussed in relation to the enclosed nature of the ship:

Interviewee:

"When I went for interview, they should have said, it's not as pretty as it all seems, you're going to have to work hard, there's going to be rough weather, you're going to miss Christmases and birthdays and stuff like that. You're not going to be paid much. That's another thing that they don't really kind of tell you, how much you're going to get paid. You might not get, you probably won't get to see the world. Even if you're deep sea ships, the chances of you getting a good run up the road and exploring places, they should have said you won't really get to see that. So I just think its false advertising on their behalf."

(Stephen/05 – M/D/19/XL)

Summarising so far, in relation to Merton's typology, there is some correspondence in the cadet data with types SA1, SA3 and SA5. I consider next cultural conflicts (SA4 and SA6).

With regard to Merton's identification of cultural conflict in shared basic values (SA4), no extensive evidence from the cadet data seemed to fit this type of ambivalence. In a way, this finding does make sense: being in training, the cadets were in the process of learning

the basic values of seafaring, although the exchange between the cadet and the captain (page 169) could be interpreted in the light of cultural conflict between the values of seafaring as held by the captain (unclear though these are) and the values of the cadet.

As far as 'conflict between different cultural groups' (SA6) is concerned, although cadets did make comment on language difficulties experienced at sea with officers who had poor command of English, there was no evidence in this study that cadets found conflict arising from cultural differences; in fact to the contrary, these were seen as a positive aspect of their experience. Cadets and engineers did report traditional banter between their cultural groups but this came over more as a source of seafarer camaraderie than conflict.

On the other hand, the following extract from an interview I conducted with a trade union representative is also interesting from the perspective of Merton's 'SA6' since his comments highlight '*cultural differences on ships*' as problematic:

Interviewee:

"People can have problems on ships. Again I think it's being away from home for the first time, there's also, there can be cultural differences on ships, between people of different nationalities. Quite clearly there are some individuals who are more open and more adaptable. Others can be a little bit more introverted and find it a lot more difficult and, and certainly the stresses and strains of a twenty-four seven environment. It is very different to the nine-to-five of a five day shore employment and clearly some people can cope with it and some can't but equally well. It's not only the cadets, there's, there's some of the Senior Officers, I mean [SIGHS] because of the lack of training over two decades, there's, some Senior Officers have never had cadets but they're now getting them for the first time so that in itself is bringing problems. Those that have cadets continually over the period and whose companies are committed to training and which supply information and training to their Officers, certainly do well and there tends to be less problems in the better quality companies."

(Trade Union Representative, 2004)

Whilst providing a contrasting view to that of the cadets in relation to 'SA6', the main interest of the Trade Union Representative quote is in his recognition of both psychological and sociological sources of ambivalence in the experience of cadets – taken up in the next two sections in the form of extended illustrations.

The first section, '*managing the oscillation between sea and shore*', provides an illustration of how a structural determinant of both cadetship and seafaring is open to

individual agency and disposition. This illustration can be seen as an example of sociological ambivalence stemming from the conflict within the set of statuses an individual occupies – Merton’s type (SA2). As an individual the cadet has to manage not only life at sea but also life shore-side where s/he continues to be seen as a seafarer.

The section, *‘securing employment’*, considers what is in effect a purely structural determinant of the cadet experience; as such, it proves difficult to align uniquely with a single category in Merton’s typology.

### **MANAGING THE OSCILLATION BETWEEN SEA AND SHORE**

Highly relevant to cadets thoughts on a future at sea was what Hill described as *‘the oscillation between sea and shore’* (Hill, 1972:59), and Conrad as *‘the rhythmical swing of a seaman’s life’* (Conrad, 1906/1975:3). Cadets talked not only about how they coped with being away from home when they were at sea, and how they adjusted when they returned home on leave, but also how they saw this as something that left them with mixed feelings, that is, with ambivalence about committing to a career at sea.

#### **Oscillation**

Seafaring work patterns show considerable variation, ranging from work which allows the seafarer to return home each night, to that requiring shore absence of months. A number of factors contribute to this variation: the nationality and rank of the seafarer; employer’s policies; the type of trade; and, the route sailed (Thomas, 2003). One of the cadets interviewed by Hill was told on arriving at Tilbury to join a tanker: *“We were going away for two years to Japan etc., so next day I packed and left well before it sailed.”* (Hill, 1972:55). None of the cadets in this study faced the prospect of a two year trip: time spent at sea never exceeded four months, but whether for two weeks, two months or four, cadets lived lives detached from family, friends, and the familiar features of everyday existence which they had previously taken for granted. Hill suggested that this oscillation back and forth across the boundary between sea and shore life dominates and characterises the life of the seafarer, *“marking him off most sharply from his shore based fellows.”* (Hill, 1972:59).

Being at sea and distanced from shore life, and being on leave and distanced from life at sea are, it is suggested, two aspects of the same condition, and fundamental to the

nature of seafaring. Thomas and Bailey (2006) in their study on the impact of intermittent partner absence on UK seafaring families also refer to the emphasis Hill places on the importance of this oscillation, and they select the following passage spoken by a Padre in charge of a Seaman's Mission to illustrate their point:

"A seafarer is a peculiar animal. He is a stranger when he comes ashore and is the odd man out in almost any situation. We cater for the loneliness of the seafarer – that might sum the whole thing up. When you come home you stick out like a sore thumb – the world has gone on without you and it is not going to stop to fit you into it. Often this is part of the loneliness of seafarers. A man goes to sea, he begins to look forward to coming home. He begins to wish his time away at sea, that's a dangerous thing for a man to do. He is in danger of losing his soul, I would say – his sense of being. He comes ashore and it's fiesta time for him and nobody else. All too often the leave you look forward to falls flat on its face."

(Hill, 1972:68)

### **'It's like two worlds'**

Being distanced from shore life was described as an almost liberating experience by some cadets. With few of the usual distractions of life's routines, it gave the opportunity to leave worries behind and to find ones 'own space'; this opportunity was seen as an attraction of seafaring by some cadets and has already been discussed in terms of liminality. The world of the ship and the world back home were described by some cadets as quite separate and something which had to be managed accordingly:

Interviewee:

"You go ashore and it's like two worlds. When you're on a ship, it's a different world from what you, when you're ashore, you know, you sort of like change, you wouldn't discuss things that you would discuss on a ship at home, quite so freely."

(Interviewer: "Well tell me more, tell me more about that, how it's different?")

Interviewee:

"It's just like, it's sort of like, you know, you're a little family on there. You discuss everything with them, you know, you trust 'em and you get home and it's sort of like, you try and keep a bit more to yourself and it's like, you know, you're a bit more free here, you know, you don't really care about your speech, you know."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

The Phase Five deck cadet in the foregoing extract suggests that the ship and shore are "*like two worlds*"; the female deck cadet in the following extract took this idea a stage further by suggesting that each world is inhabited as different persona, one socialised into what she describes as a "*standardised Merchant Navy way of life*" and the other "*a different person completely*" when at home amongst old friends and family:

Interviewee:

“Everybody when they go to sea acts a certain way when they’re at sea and it’s almost a standardised Merchant Navy way of life, which has got nothing to do with your behaviour at home or your interaction when you’re at home. It’s like my friends at home, if they came to sea with me, they would probably think I’m a different person completely. Folk that I sailed with, know me really well, but they don’t know what I’m like at home at all. And it’s like, my friends at home, sometimes I just feel like they don’t really know me that well because there’s a whole other side to me that they just don’t know.”

(Charlotte/05 – F/D/22/XL)

All human beings have to take on different personas as they move between the different parts of their lives. Workplace personas are likely to differ, and may even conflict with those people adopt in other settings (Watson, 2008). For a seafarer the management of their different persona has added complexity because the persona at sea encompasses a work persona; a non-work, social persona; and a private persona which is different again from the private and social persona on shore. These different personas have to be sustained over an extended period of time. Being able to see oneself as a “*sort of two-person self*” was presented by a number of cadets as a way of accommodating the need to repeatedly adjust, not just to the very different physical worlds of ship and shore, but also to the differing emotional demands of each:

Interviewee:

“But I think, through being a seaman, I think you [LAUGHS], I dunno, its a strange way of life ‘cos you’re going away and I think you’ve gotta have the sort of two-person self, where you can sort of leave your home life behind and go to sea and become a seafarer and then when you go home, you sort of leave your seafarer life behind and pick up being at home. I think that’s the main characteristic you need- to be able to divide home and sea.”

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

As will be shown this same cadet went on to speak of his own efforts to keep a separation between his sea and his shore lives using terms very similar to those used by Hill’s interviewees:

“A common device is for the seafarer to keep his home life and his ship life in two compartments so to speak, inside himself so as not to experience intolerable conflict between the two.”

(Hill, 1972: 61)

Seafarers interviewed in Thomas’s study of seafaring families also used the same terminology, talking of ‘*two lives, two selves, two worlds*’ (Thomas, 2003:35). This suggests these descriptions to be part of the traditional vocabulary of seafaring expected

and demanded as part of occupational socialisation (Reimer, 1977; Haas, 1972). The acquisition of “*this device*” was seen by the cadet quoted in the following interview extract as part of his initiation into seafaring, a toughening up process where experienced seafarers passed on their own coping mechanisms to the novice as a way of managing the different aspects of what was one lifestyle:

Interviewee:

“I think after the first sort of two, three weeks of it you kinda work out that they’re just trying to toughen you up so that they make you realise that you need this division, otherwise it does work on your head and being at sea is obviously hard enough and you don’t really need all this stuff running through your head at the same time [LAUGHS] as being at sea.”

(Interviewer: “So, on that first trip with the crew who were very friendly and that you got on with, it, was it almost as though they were trying to teach you a way of, kind of, controlling your own . . .”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, I think, ‘cos I spoke to the Captain of the first ship, he was really cool guy and I was speaking to him and he said that, the reason they do that is so that very early on in your seafarers life you can build up this wall so that later on in life, when something serious goes on, where its not your girlfriend, it might be your wife, or your children, or something serious goes on, you, that wall is there so you can handle it a lot better. ‘Cos he said to me there’s been a few guys who he’s gone on ship with, and who’ve sort of broken down through these feelings and, and had sort of cases at home where wives or children, and stuff’s gone wrong and they kind of break down on ship and you can’t really. And then when we’re in the Atlantic [LAUGHS] the last thing you need is some guy being crazy on the ship. So he said that that was the only reason. They weren’t, at the time it felt really harsh and nasty but when he kind of explains it to you, it’s a lot easier, but obviously if they explain it to you from the beginning, you wanna learn to do that, put that wall up and put it into a box and put it towards. . . so it was. . . it’s a handy piece of information.

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

The emotion management described by the cadet involved building solidarity with shipmates, and actively trying to contain the emotional pressures arising from absence from home (Hochschild, 1983; Holyfield and Jonas, 2003). Hill talks of a device, of compartments, and the cadet talked of a division, of building a wall, of putting one life in a box - the language of both surprisingly concrete and mechanical in contrast to the delicacy of the feelings themselves.

The need to create emotional distance whilst at sea would seem to be an enduring aspect of seafaring, despite changes in industry practices and improvements in

communications. Creighton's account (1991) of American mariners and what she describes as the rites of manhood, offers a perspective drawn from ship logs and diaries from deepwater vessels operating from the North Eastern United States between 1830 and 1870. She suggests that the distancing from relatives, particularly females, was a strategy by which deepwater sailors sought to protect and enhance the distinct masculine identities seen as necessary to the effective functioning of the ship:

"Within the forecandle, for instance, veteran seamen sought to enforce a behavioral consensus. Drawing on the power of social ridicule, old salts tried to shape neophyte seamen into tough-minded men who could sever sentimental attachments to women at home, particularly family members - sisters, mothers and grandmothers. Acceptance in the forecandle was contingent upon this shift of allegiance from home to ship, and upon the adoption of a veneer of steely fortitude."

(Creighton, 1991:148)

For Creighton's mariners, the severance of sentimental attachments may have been facilitated by the lack of communications technologies: even if those neophyte seamen found it difficult to manage their emotions, they had no recourse to the telephone or to email to connect themselves to those they cared about back home. Whilst there was recognition amongst the cadets interviewed in this study that emotions had to be kept in check, only two of the cadets who responded to the questionnaire said that they did not contact friends and or family whilst at sea. Mobile phones were an expensive option but were the form of communication used by most cadets; for both the cadets below, costs were outweighed by the importance of the contact with home:

Interviewee:

"I was running up expensive mobile phone bills of six, seven hundred pounds a time phoning home from abroad and stuff, phoning mates when they were around the world and stuff, phoning other cadets when they're in China and all sorts of stuff. That cost quite a lot but ..."

(Interviewer: "Yeah, well if that's what kept you going.")

Interviewee:

"Yeah, that's it, just, just hearing your mum's voice or a friend's voice is enough I think when, the times are a bit rough."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL and interviewer)

Interviewee:

"I need to be able to keep a contact on people which is another reason why I won't go deep sea for, like, periods of time 'cos I need to know that I can get hold of my mum, I need to know that I can get hold of my boyfriend, you know. I need to have that."

(Sarah/04 – F/E/22/XL)

One year later, the same cadet felt equally strongly about the need to feel in contact with “*the whole home life thing*”:

Interviewee:

“Mostly I wanted to know what was going on at home more than anything else. I wanted to know about the cat now, is he behaving? Because we just bought a cat the year before and she had kittens just before I left, so all these little tiny things running around and I wanted to know how they were getting on, how they were developing. Trivial stuff. Because I’d seen them being born and growing up to about this big [ACTION] and I just want to see how they were getting on.”

(Interviewer: “Because looking back at last year you know it was very important to you, being home?”)

Interviewee:

“Important, the whole home life thing is important. . . But it’s an inherent feeling you get, you need to talk to home, you need to be at home, you need to be with people you know.”

(Sarah/05 – F/E/23/XL and interviewer)

Although cadets offered quite detailed descriptions of their approaches to managing the separation from shore that included the compartmentalization of their emotions; letter writing – one cadet corresponded with seven pen pals; and, the frequent phone calls, there was nevertheless a sense amongst several interviewees that being cut off from the familiar, was not something to which many felt reconciled, certainly not in the long term. As one of the cadets who abandoned training commented:

Interviewee:

“I mean you’re away when you’re at sea, you’re away from your family, you’re away from friends, girlfriend, wife, whatever, and you’re just stuck with a load of disgruntled old sea dogs who don’t really want, who don’t want you to be there. And that whole, the whole thing, the whole ethos, the whole system just is, it’s awful. Who, who in their right mind would wanna do that?”

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

### **The separation from shore**

As young adults aged between 16 and 24 years of age, separation from shore life was about being distanced from their family, parents and siblings; from their peer group; and, from the possibility of maintaining a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship. Descriptions of what it meant for cadets to be distanced from shore life included views on the difficulties of maintaining a personal relationship:

Interviewee:

“When I first went to sea, ‘cos obviously I’d never been to sea before, I had a girlfriend. But then, you know, she obviously went to college and I went to see her, and I was telling all the

guys about it and they sort of automatically started winding you up about sending you a 'Dear John' and by the time you get home she'll have been with all these other guys, and you kinda get worked up about it, you do sort of get this sort of impression of what's going on at home and you start imagining."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

Interviewee:

"Yeah there's an Engineer who I like a lot at the moment and he likes me, but there's just, I know I cannot pursue my career if I, if I'm in love with somebody who's at home. I know how strong my feelings can be and I don't want that to happen so I'm just distancing myself, totally distancing myself. I love my career so much, I'm gonna get my Master's ticket and there is no way I'm gonna let a guy get in the way of that. I mean I've seen, I've seen other lassies ruin their career, I've seen guys ruin their career 'cos of lassies."

(Charlotte/04 – F/D/21/XL)

The questionnaire asked cadets if they thought that it had been difficult to sustain a relationship with a partner during their cadet training because of being away at sea. 59% felt that it had, whilst 13% felt it had not; 28% said they didn't know, suggesting perhaps that this was outside their experience. Hill's study contains a specific section entitled '*Sex and Marriage*' in which one of the interviewees remarked '*I'm not really home long enough to meet the right girl*' (Hill, 1972:75-80), and predominantly male working environments clearly limit the opportunities for male cadets who want to establish relationships with females. This area of personal life, including the issue of meeting a prospective boy/girl friend, did not feature to any degree in the cadet interviews I carried out. My position as a researcher old enough to be the grandmother of those I interviewed probably opened up some avenues of conversation, but equally it closed down others, of which I believe this was one.

In terms of general friendships, the response to a questionnaire item which offered options from a Likert scale on whether they found it difficult during cadetship to keep up old friendships from home, showed that just over half of the cadets in the study strongly agreed or agreed that they had found it difficult to keep up old friendships during their cadetship. It is possible that students in shore-based higher education might have felt the same, however cadets did indicate that the fact that their leave did not coincide with the vacation periods of students contributed to the difficulty of maintaining friendships (52 out of a possible 64 responses). Asked whether they felt that '*it's difficult for friends to understand what life at sea is like, so you have nothing in common anymore*' 31 of a

possible 64 felt that it did. The views of those who felt their seafaring experience alienated them from their non-seafaring peers were summed up in the following comment from a deck cadet:

Interviewee:

“I’ve got two friends I keep in contact with from school. Um, I sort of speak to them regularly and that, but I’ve sort of lost contact with that life. You go home, and you go down the pub but you feel like you’ve got nothing in common any more. It’s like, well, what’ve you been up to then. Well I’ve just flown back from Singapore, you’ve been here, there and everywhere; and what have you done? Well, nothing. Well, you lose everything you had in common with them. I’ve only got as couple of close mates I keep in contact with.”

(Brett/Pilot/02– M/D/18/AM )

However as has been noted previously, but the comments of others also suggested, paradoxically, that the recounted experience of seafaring can also provide the basis for the engagement, particularly when creating an impression of an enviable and exotic lifestyle.

### **Managing the sea/shore divide in the longer term**

The need to maintain an emotional distance between the worlds of ship and shore is not, it is suggested, confined to the novice but is present throughout the career of a seafarer. As one cadet suggested earlier, emotional distancing may be needed even more as family responsibilities grow and seafarers become less carefree than in their youth. Although Conrad was writing about an era when seafaring had different practices, he too makes reference to the very deliberate process of distancing from emotional attachments suggesting this to be a fundamental characteristic of seafaring that could be witnessed amongst even the ‘commanders of ships’:

“Some commanders of ships take their Departure from the home coast sadly, in a spirit of grief and discontent. They have a wife, children perhaps, some affection at any rate, or perhaps only some pet vice, that must be left behind for a year or more . . .I have known many captains who, directly their ship had left the narrow waters of the channel, would disappear from the sight of their ship’s company altogether for some three days or more. They would take a long dive as it were, into their state room, only to emerge a few days afterwards with a more or less serene brow.”

(Conrad, 1906/1975:5)

In her study of seafaring families, Thomas (2002) noted that it was the transitions between ship and shore which were reported to be the most difficult period of the work cycle as seafarers struggled to adjust to shore life, and their partners to being part of a

couple again. Thomas et al (2003), drawing on data collected from two separate studies (Kavechi et al, 2002; Thomas, 2002), note that relatively little attention has been given to the impact of prolonged absence from home on both seafarers and their families. The research that does exist suggests that a lifestyle of constant partings and reunions with the associated transitions between shore based life and the working environment of the ship may be problematic for seafarers and their families (Parker et al, 1997). A report by the Maritime Charities Funding Group (2007) commissioned to inform the policy and practice of maritime charities, confirmed that the transitions between sea and shore life and the consequent and constant re-adjustment for seafarers and their families, pose significant challenges. This report suggests that cycles of dislocation and readjustment seem connected to marriage breakups, and to decisions not to marry or form long-term relationships reflected in the high proportion of seafarers who are single. Reference is also made in the report to the emotional problems linked to separation, isolation and adjustment. Thomas and Bailey (2009), examining how work patterns and extended absence impacts on lives of seafarers and their families, concluded that temporal desynchrony was exemplified in reduced opportunities for couples jointly to produce temporal markers and share in significant calendar events. The missing of family occasions and the resulting feeling of exclusion was confirmed in the following interview extract:

Interviewee:

“Yeah, you know, I missed, I missed some big family occasions, and I missed a sort of engagement party, the wedding and there’s a few things like that that actually did start playing up my realisation that, actually, you will miss some important dates like, I don’t know, babies being born and, you know, occasions that you can’t repeat...”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Within other occupational groups characterised by continuous cycles of partings and reunions, evidence of impact on families is more mixed. Amongst wives of offshore oil workers, a triad of symptoms, anxiety, depression, and sexual difficulties was identified in women referred to psychiatric clinic (Morrice and Taylor, 1978). They proposed that “Intermittent Husband Syndrome” encompassed three types of response: those wives who found it impossible to accustom themselves to this occupational demand and became anxious and depressed; those who soon learned to cope and came to enjoy responsibility and freedom; and, those who remained resentful and angry whether their

husbands were home or away. Subsequent investigation of this phenomenon (Morrice et al, 1985) suggested however that these categories were stereotypes which were oversimplified, that the reactions of most wives were altogether more complex and that the majority of wives appeared to tolerate or even thrive on their style of life

The key finding from more recent research on work-life balance in military families was that wives were more stoical and resilient to the demands of what is seen as a 'greedy institution' than their soldier husbands thought them to be (Dandeker, 2006). Coser (1974) depicted a greedy institution as one which makes total claims on its members and seeks exclusive and undivided loyalty from them. For those wives the financial security provided by army life outweighed work-life tensions, and whilst this is not referred to in Morrice's study, oil-wives may also have enjoyed a good level of family income as result of their husband's employment. Financial security is not however a characteristic of the seafaring occupation; seafarer families headed by people under 40 years of age have been recognised as being particularly affected by poverty and debt (MCFG, 2007) and, it is reasonable to assume that this additional stress was not experienced by the military wives in Dandeker's study.

The research on seafaring families referred to earlier (Thomas, 2002; Thomas et al, 2003; Thomas and Bailey, 2006 and 2009), and Sampson's exploration (2005) of the lives of women married to Indian seafarers, focus on mature adults often with children, where absence from home impacts on family dynamics, on parental roles, and on their relationships as long term couples. Thomas (2003) noted that the presence of children particularly changed the experience of seafaring and that whilst they could make separation more manageable for the partner at home giving a new focus and interest, they could bring increased social isolation, and a new set of difficulties for the partner returning to children who had changed and who maybe no longer recognised their role as a parent.

The focus on mature adults and families is in contrast to the majority of cadets in both the survey group and the interview subgroup, who considered themselves to be without a partner (72% and 61% respectively). For one cadet interviewed who was in a long-term relationship with a partner, and who was the only interviewee to have parental

responsibilities, separation from his young stepdaughter, proved highly stressful and confirmed the findings of the above studies:

Interviewee:

“My girlfriend really hates it. Her daughter, I would say she does miss me, I mean we spend a lot of time together and . . .”

(Interviewer: “When you took the decision to, to join, was it something your girlfriend was. . .”)

Interviewee:

“I told her from the start that I would be going away and she acknowledged what I said but never really thought what it meant. And she told me, she said her daughter was just crying and then when I didn’t phone, which really made matters worse. I’m phoning from Egypt. Someone was crying and . . .”

(Interviewer: It’s horrible for you?)

Interviewee:

“I don’t know what you can say to that. She’s crying, her daughter gets upset and doesn’t understand it.”

(Mark/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

For the majority of cadets in this study family responsibilities were however a distant prospect, and yet they made the assumption that a future at sea would be difficult to balance with the family life and that it was not something they saw as working for them in the long term. For the very enthusiastic female deck cadet there was the assumption that family life might mean that she would look for a job ‘shore side’:

Interviewee:

“Yeah, definitely, I mean I, I’m female, I’m gonna want to have kids And I figure if I get a Masters’ ticket and then if, well, basically then if a relationship comes along, then that’s fair enough. And then I’ll have more opportunity for a shore side job. I mean, I see myself wanting to be a full-time mummy anyway [BOTH LAUGH] when it comes to that but I really don’t want that to happen until I’m in my thirties.”

(Charlotte/04 – F/D/21/XL and interviewer)

Male cadets also mentioned family commitments as something that might curtail a sea-going career, certainly deep-sea:

Interviewee:

“If I had a commitment back here, then I might have to think about going on, not going on the yachts ‘cos they tend to be further away from the British Isles, so you’d probably have to get something a little bit closer to home - possibly even go for a land job.”

(Nathan/04 – M/D/17/XL)

Interviewee:

“I’ve got a friend, his Dad was in the Royal Navy and he was separated from his Mum and he was away for like three or four months at a time and my mate really resents his Dad ‘cos even though he like gave him everything and everything like that, he did, he never wanted for anything but he resented the fact his Dad was never there when he was like, his Dad was at sea when he took his first steps, when he said his first words and stuff like that so he sort of resents him for that. You never hear from him, so. . .”

(Interviewer: “So that’s going to be important?”)

Interviewee:

“I wouldn’t want that, I wouldn’t want, I wouldn’t want my kids to turn around and say, ‘well, you were never there for me’.”

(Josh/04 – M/D/24/XL and interviewer)

It could be argued that cadets’ experiences of managing the oscillation between sea and shore were comparable with the experience of their peers in higher education whose return home during vacations would also mean recurrent readjustment between two very different lifestyles. However it is likely that for higher education students this would be resolved when their studentship ended and employment made it necessary to settle in one place. For cadets the continual readjustment was not a passing feature of their cadetship, but would be an ongoing characteristic of a seafaring life: they recognised this, and this did lead some to consider whether it would be a long-term career for them.

The cadet experience of separation and of transition into adulthood and into working life would seem to be more extreme than that of their peers in other forms of higher education as a consequence of the inescapable nature of the separation from home; of the limited nature of communications whilst away at sea; of the lack of peer contact; and, of the unique nature of day to day life at sea. When industry commentators on Hill’s findings suggested that disillusion accompanies the practice of any career or profession, Hill’s response was that most careers do not impose constraints on “*contracting a marriage and raising children*” (1972: 86). As a female engineering cadet commented ‘*it’s not just a job*’, but a ‘*whole different lifestyle*’ which, in her view, required you ‘*to get into and get used to*’:

Interviewee:

“If the person can’t like it, or do the job, or understand that it’s not just a job, it’s a whole different lifestyle that you have to get into and get used to, if they can’t accept that, or get along with that, then there’s no point in them being here.”

(Emma/04 – F/E/21/XL)

The following reflections from two cadets also convey strongly the notion of seafaring as an occupation that offers a lifestyle and not just a job. The first interview extract is from a cadet who resigned from training, bitterly disappointed at the way things had turned out for him. Despite his own disappointment, he described the commitment to a lifestyle that he had been looking for, but failed to find:

Interviewee:

“I always hoped that I’d do a job that I’d have all my heart in and I believed in it, and I, and I loved it, and that’s what I was aiming for. I used to work for a farmer and I used to see that farmers are very much, that’s their life and soul and they are farmers, you know, it’s their lifestyle. It’s their animals and everything, I suppose. If you look at that in the seafarer, particularly if the Captain has been through all the ranks and is still there as a Captain, then perhaps it’s the same passion, you know?”

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

In this second extract, a male deck cadet described how he saw the training as a process during which the seafaring lifestyle and the socialisation process, takes an increasingly strong hold:

Interviewee:

“I think to, to start the cadetship you sort of have that sort of glimmer of what it is and then when you actually go through it you get it, it kind of builds up and then eventually, like, we all talk about it every day, we can’t wait to get back to sea and go and go away and get back on ship and stuff. It’s really [LAUGHS] it’s re-, for people shore-side, you try and explain it to them and they kind of think it’s a bit weird that you don’t wanna stay here. But its not that you don’t want to stay here, you just, I dunno, the, the lifestyle at sea, you’ve just gotten used to it and, you like that kinda lifestyle and that’s what you wanna get back to.”

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

The extended impact of seafaring across work and non-work boundaries both aboard ship, and across the boundaries of sea and shore, is critical to the notion of seafaring as a ‘total occupation’. The emergence of this notion is seen as the third phase in the research design of this study where, based on the descriptors of cadet experience, the conceptual and the empirical aspects of inquiry are brought together. This will be a focus of the final chapter of this thesis.

In addition to the concerns over the impact of the oscillation between ship and shore, cadets also had a major concern over actually securing a job at all; weighing up of their prospects of employment once they had qualified is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

## SECURING EMPLOYMENT

Anxiety about securing employment post-qualification was clearly articulated by cadets who felt that they had been let down on two counts: firstly, that they had been led to believe that there was a good job market for qualified UK Officers – and they no longer saw this as being the case; secondly, they believed that the Minimum Training Obligation (MTO) component of the Tonnage Tax had increased the numbers of cadets funded by companies who had no intention of keeping them on as qualified officers, and this was a source of some resentment. *'You've not got a definite job, you've not got a definite future'*, said one final year cadet who was about to qualify as a deck officer. Historically, life in the Merchant Navy would have never offered certainty of employment (Hope, 2001), but it was clear from interviews with cadets that most had expected a 'definite future' when they started their cadet training but many had since come to fear that they might not find a job – and not one at a salary they felt worthwhile.

Heery and Salmon (1999) defined job insecurity along three dimensions: as a property of jobs; as a property of the environment in which jobs exist; and, as a property of the subjective experience of workers in terms of cognitive and affective attitudes towards security. In an analysis of insecurity and long-term employment, Doogan suggested the most important of the environmental factors to be: *"... the greater exposure of the workforce to market forces during the last fifteen years and a growing awareness of its instability."* (Doogan, 2001:436). As one of the most globalised of all workforces, seafarers, cadets desiring to be part of that workforce are highly exposed to market forces (SIRC, 1999; Gekara, 2008). Burchell et al (1999) in their study of job insecurity probed employees' fears of redundancy to reveal anxieties that encompassed a wider set of anxieties and fears than those generated by actual job loss. These anxieties were related to personal circumstances such as age, transferability of skills, and responsibility for dependents. The cadets in this study were trainees rather than employees, and their anxieties over poor job prospects led them to wonder if their training had been worthwhile and question the value of starting it in the first place. Starting on the path to becoming a seafarer would, they feared, potentially end before it had begun.

### **'Why am I doing this training if nobody is going to employ me?'**

On my first visit to conduct pilot interviews, the cohort of cadets about to complete their training with one of the companies had just been told that there were no jobs for them.

The air of despondency which hung over the group made the task of engaging them in discussion of life at sea particularly difficult as they faced the future with anxiety. By the time I came to undertake the main interviews, the jobs situation had not improved. For the cadets in this study their own experience was the reference point when they talked about poor prospects as either they, or their classmates, failed to secure the guarantee of jobs on qualification:

Interviewee:

“At the moment, I’m in a class of - I think there’s 23 of us, possibly 26 in my class at the moment, and out of 26 of us there’s only maybe 12 cadets that have been offered a job. There’s a few others that want jobs that haven’t been offered jobs, and there’s a few that are not interested like myself and a few more mates, who are not interested in having jobs. For the ones who are that haven’t been offered a job, it just seems to be the way that things are going. I don’t think the money is as much as they hoped for. Because when we first joined as cadets, we got offered the world and offered all the money under the sun. I don’t think it’s the rate that they hoped for, but at least it’s something.”

(Interviewer: “So the others are feeling a bit disillusioned?”)

Interviewee:

“Yeah, I think there’s a few that, obviously it’s been a hard slog for three years to try and get through and try and get your Officer of the Watch ticket, and for some people who do want to be at sea, I think they’re kind of feeling a bit let down by the whole system.”

(Dan/05 – M/D/22/XL and interviewer)

Another interviewee made the comment that gives this section its heading:

Interviewee:

“And you know, as a young officer in training you’re told all these great things, you know, great job, great wages and all the rest of it. You go out there and nobody wants you because they can have an Indian officer at half the price. Nightmare. It’s disappointing I think because we’re looking at a dying job, if you know what I mean. We’re looking at “Why am I doing this training if nobody is going to employ me?”

(Sarah/05 – F/E/23/XL)

As suggested in the foregoing comments, both these cadets had felt that good job prospects had been emphasised to them when they embarked on their officer training. One cadet who talked at some length about his anxieties of finding work, had asked his parents to support him in getting a Heavy Goods Vehicle license as a fall back position should he not find a job at sea:

Interviewee:

“So far, we’ve had no indication whether they will give us a job or whether they’re looking to employ us. They’ve given us no idea of what the wages or whatever would be, they’ve given us no idea of what ships they maybe want us to go on or whatever. They just don’t

give the impression that they're really bothered or they really care whether anybody does decide to go with them or not. Because I think they've got plenty of European officers anyway, so at the end of the day it's not doing them any good employing us because they're spending more money. So I think really it's going to be a case of take whatever you can get, whatever money you can get and whatever job you can get, and try and climb up the ladder as quickly as possible, and then when you do get to Chief Officer level, well that's when you start to get the benefits.

(Interviewer: That's a very philosophical view of it.)

Interviewee:

"Well I've had too long to think about this on the ships, this is the thing . . . a lot of time to think about it. This is what I decided I'd have to do."

(Interviewer: I imagine you'd be trying not to think about it now because you're trying to focus on your exams.")

Interviewee:

"Yes, just trying to pass every one at the end of the day and then worry about where I'm going to get a job, what company or what type of ship or even, but it does make it a little bit more difficult because you've not got a definite job, you've not got a definite future. Not completely foolproof or safe, you can't say for sure "Yep, as soon as I qualify I'll be earning money". Well that's why, for my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday I've asked my parents to put me through the HGV license just in case this all falls flat on its face. This is a problem, there's still a worry that maybe this - I've done this three years and I'll be better off doing something else."

(Richard/05 – M/D/19/XL and interviewer)

In his analysis of the industry view of the Tonnage Tax, company recruitment strategies, and commitment to training, Gekara (2008) provides a useful background to the comments of the cadets in this study. He gives examples of ex-cadets who gave poor prospects of future unemployment as one of the major reasons for dropping out, reporting the cadets who dropped out as saying that they had been influenced by media reports of job shortages. However all the cadets in Gekara's study were interviewed after they had resigned their cadetship, and there may have been an element of post-hoc rationalisation in the reasons they gave for their decision to quit. The cadets in this present study who resigned from training, and who had expressed their unhappiness during interview, did not mention job shortages as a reason for leaving. Interestingly the shortage of British officers had been seen initially by the cadet talking in the following extract, as an incentive rather than a disincentive to train as a cadet. His assumption, which he later came to question, had been that there was a lack of supply of British officers, rather than a shortage of demand:

Interviewee:

“At the time I thought that due to this lack of British officers, that there was gonna be plenty of jobs. I’d heard good things about the pay etcetera, which made me think, well, six months of working a year and, you know, I’ll come back and six months or a year off, you know? I find then that it’s not taxed and I thought, well, you know, great! What could you get better? But, actually, knowing what I do now, I realise that there isn’t so many jobs, you know, available and that the pay has kind of fallen really, you know. So at the time I’d signed, it looked really good. But I think if I’d researched it a bit more, I might have found, you know, that it wasn’t quite so good, you know.”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL)

The McKinnon Report (2006) commissioned by The Chamber of Shipping and NUMAST to shed light on the current and future employment position of Junior UK Officers provides a context for the anxieties of cadets over job prospects. The report is of a postal survey involving 133 shipping organisations with a 43% response rate: those who responded were training 74% of all British office cadets and employed 48% of British officers currently at sea. The conclusions the authors drew from their study are set out in Textbox 7/1.

**Textbox 7/1:** Extract from the McKinnon Report (2006:30)

- that the companies claimed they would be definitely or probably be recruiting as employees 92% of cadets currently in training;
- that they expected their demand for Junior Officers to increase by 19% between 2005-2007 and to continue to increase (but by an uncertain amount) over the next ten years;
- that the proportion of officers in the British fleet who are British will decline slowly over the next few years because new British officers will not be recruited at a rate sufficient to replace those already employed. 32% of the companies expected a significant change in the nature of their companies need for Junior Officers over the next three years which commonly meant switching from British to non-British junior officers.
- that most employers are content with their recruitment and retention policies but a significant minority are worried about the future;
- that most employers are satisfied with the quality of their junior officer recruits.

However, as Gekara (2008) has pointed out, the McKinnon Report draws its conclusions from company statements of expectation rather than a firm commitment by companies to employ British junior officers.

Given the commissioners of the report, it would be surprising if companies were to be less than positive about their employment plans, although there was recognition that training opportunities and job opportunities did not necessarily match up. One company was quoted as saying:

“British cadet training is still probably the best in the world. Tonnage Tax has created a healthy training environment but this must be backed up by ‘real’ jobs. Too much training is being completed without adequate vacancies at junior officer level.”

(McKinnon Report, 2006: 27)

The anxieties of cadets over poor job prospects should also be seen against the backdrop of the UK Seafarer Statistics. The cadet interviews in this study took place mainly in 2004 and also in 2005, but the numbers of UK seafarers active at sea has been declining since 2002, the earliest year for which estimates are available for all groups. The most recent figures (Glen et al, 2010) show the total number of UK seafarers active at sea in 2009 as *‘about 9%’* lower than in 2002, and *‘about 13%’* lower than in 2006. The number of certificated officers in 2009 was 11% lower in 2009 than in 2006, but it is suggested that this difference may be exaggerated due to the timing of certificate revalidations. It is also noted that if newly eligible groups are excluded from the figures, the number of certificated officers in 2009 was 20% lower than in 1997. Against this overall decline the 2008/09 figures showed around 890 new entrant officer cadets, the highest number since the current system began in 1999. These figures suggest that cadets’ anxieties about entering the job market were not unfounded.

### **Cadets’ perceptions of the Tonnage Tax**

Fundamentally a tax incentive forming part of the UK government’s strategy to revive the UK shipping industry in the late 1990s, the introduction of the Tonnage Tax initiatives has been described in Chapter 3 of this thesis. The initiative included a training element requiring companies to train UK cadets under the Minimum Training Obligation (MTO). The literature on the impact of the Tonnage Tax suggests that it is the MTO which has been the least successful element (Inland Revenue, 2004; NUMAST, 2004b; HoC 2005a; Leggate and McConville, 2005; Gekara, 2008), with cadet training levels are still lower than initially projected and the number of qualified British officers has continued to decline.

Gekara (2008) draws on primary data from shipping companies and training institutions

in addition to data from cadets who had dropped out of cadetship. His interviews with shipping company personnel provide insight into the outcomes and impacts of the Tonnage Tax from a company perspective and provide complementary data to the perceptions of the Tonnage Tax given by the cadets interviewed in this study. Gekara found that of the shipping company managers he interviewed, 95% suggested that UK citizens are not willing to work at sea and that very few want to train as sea cadets. The explanations which were offered were: an increasing number of career alternatives; the perception that seafaring is too hard, stressful and emotionally draining; and, the perception that seafaring has become a third world occupation. Gekara suggested that the opinions he gathered were offered as justification for companies' preference for employing non-UK officers because of the lower employment costs. There appeared to be no acknowledgement on the part of the shipping companies however that some ships offered such poor training environments and/or that sponsoring companies offered so little support that even motivated cadets gave up on their training.

Criticisms of the Tonnage Tax from the cadets in this study related to employment prospects and the belief that cadets were taken on with no real intention by companies of offering them a job after qualifying, and that in *'grabbing the benefits'* as one cadet put it, some companies had no regard for ensuring good training conditions. The comment below is from a cadet who resigned from training. His negative experiences of life at sea included criticism of the lack of support from his company; in this extract he refers to his view of the Tonnage Tax:

Interviewee:

"The Tonnage Tax as well, I mean, the Government created training opportunities, like they usually do, but no real jobs. I mean there's no, no necessity that they've got to give us jobs at the end of this. I mean if they had some sort of clause that would force them to."

(Mark/04 – M/D/24/XL)

A fellow cadet, also with Ocean XL, had continued his cadetship despite experience of difficult placements at sea but was also concerned about poor employment prospects which he attributed to the Tonnage Tax:

Interviewee:

"This is the big problem, this Tonnage Tax, it's creating a lot of Third Officers with tickets but no experience, you know? Certainly I don't know of any one British Officer at the minute that they employ, you know?"

(Interviewee: "Really, you don't?")

Interviewee:

“No, not one. It just seems that they are grabbing the benefits of Tonnage Tax and then throwing everybody out, and that I think that really should be something to be addressed. You know, they should be taken on, like with these cadets, or they should be monitored as to the amount that they can take on, because I think it was something stupid that they took on last year. It was well into the hundreds anyway, you know?”

(Richard/04 – M/D/18/XL and interviewer)

There were a number of cadets in this study who displayed cynicism towards the MTO component of the Tonnage Tax, suggesting that cadets had suffered under the initiative whilst companies had benefited:

Interviewee:

“They’ll tell me at the end of the day whether my company wants to keep me on, or whether they can offer me work, or whether they can just let me go. It’s quite uncertain. It’s the same with a lot of the boys in the class. They’re employed by companies that are now foreign crewed, they’re the only Brits on the ship and at the end of the day the companies they work for won’t be taking on Brit officers at the end of the day.”

(Interviewer: “Because they just won’t pay that well?”)

Interviewee:

“They get Tonnage Tax relief for having cadets, and they just want that, and then once their cadetships finish, that Tonnage Tax relief goes and away they go.”

(Graham/05 – M/D/19/XL and interviewer)

In the next two interview extracts, deck cadets Dan and Josh make further comments on the Tonnage Tax as being a ‘*farce*’ and ‘*not too sure it’s working for us*’, respectively:

Interviewee:

“The system’s letting the cadets down quite a lot, and they’re not very happy about it, I don’t think the cadets are very happy about it, and the Government just doesn’t seem to care so we’re kind of stuck in the middle, we just have to put up with it. Because I think that the Tonnage Tax system that the Government’s got is a bit of a farce to be honest.”

(Dan/05 – M/D/22/XL)

Interviewee:

“British officers per ship have gone down. At least, a couple of years ago it was more than half the officers on British ships were British, now it’s less than half. So I don’t know how the Tonnage Tax is working for us. It’s obviously working for the companies, because they’re making more money, but I’m not too sure it’s working for us”.

(Josh/05 – M/D/25/XL)

One cadet complained about the role of Ocean XL itself:

Interviewee:

“They [Ocean XL] don’t actually care what happens to them [cadets] and the fact is that

they're just there to make the money off the cadets. They'll recruit as many as they can and they get this scheme called the 'SMarT' scheme which is a funding scheme which reduces the amount of Tonnage Tax each company has to pay through the government."

(Sam/04 – M/D/22/XL)

Cadets obviously recounted their own experiences to each other and drew comparisons about their placements and particular shipping companies, for example:

Interviewee:

"There were a few cadets phoned home and I heard they've come off ships. Aspire [*pseudonym of shipping company*]... that's who it is. They've over 100 cadets and there's quite a few ships. . . if you can handle it. Everybody's saying it, everybody knows. . . I've heard of a few cadets who've flown home from Australia... I think I may have been lucky. I mean I didn't enjoy my time at all, the working time. I enjoyed the time I saw other countries. My experience was that, but there's a lot of folks I've heard of had a lot of bad things, worse than I had."

(Calum/03 – M/E/24/XL)

The training element of the Tonnage Tax is not without its problems, and has not achieved what was intended. Glen's written evidence to the Transport Committee in 2004 stated that whilst he was of the opinion that the Tonnage Tax has had a significant impact upon the cadet intake, the long-term prognosis for UK active officer numbers was not good (HoC, 2005a). Concerns were also seen in the following extract from the interview with the representative from NUMAST:

Interviewee:

"The Tonnage Tax does have its problems. It's not linked with flag and furthermore there is no employment link. While supportive of the Tonnage Tax in its introduction and implementation - and it has been much criticised but then this is perhaps a, a lack of realisation of the world that we now live in where we do have a mobile workforce. Clearly we would like to see improvements, and submissions have been made to government for improvements in the Tonnage Tax, where there is an employment link, particularly with junior officers on some types of vessel, so that it will actively encourage the training through to a higher certificate level, be this Chief, a Chief Mate, or Second Engineer, so that they, they can then really get employment either ashore, or in senior positions in the international fleet, or indeed in, in other companies. So yes, Tonnage Tax is good but needs to be better."

(Trade Union Representative, 2004)

Gekara's assessment of the Tonnage Tax (2008) confirms that the anxieties expressed by the cadets in this study over their employment prospects would seem to have had substance.

## **7.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This study has revealed that despite the difficulties of imagining a future in an occupation that is out of public view, cadets were clearly able to talk about what a career at sea might mean for them; the sort of lifestyle it would offer; and, what the longer-term implications might be. All cadets who responded to the questionnaire, with one exception, were prepared to give a projection of how long they might stay at sea once they had *'got their ticket'*. 49% opted for up to 10 years. This figure was much larger than the 25% of cadets responding to a NUMAST survey (2004a) who had said that they had wanted a career of ten years or less, although the two surveys are not directly comparable in size or in question options. The knowledge that certain cadets in this study had left training made it possible to consider their responses to this question in the light of their resignations: this revealed firstly that aspirations for a career at sea did not always materialise; and secondly, that having expectations met during training did not necessarily lead to a future seafaring career. The interview data shed light and gave depth to the questionnaire responses, revealing a range of views on a seafaring career from enthusiasm to disillusion, underpinned by varying degrees of ambivalence.

In talking about their futures once they had qualified, cadets focused on securing work and income; deciding what sort of lifestyle they wanted; and, the implications for a partner and family. These areas of focus were compatible with the markers of adulthood identified in Gordon and Lahelma's study of youth transitions (2002) and the findings of other studies (Anderson et al, 2002; Bradley and Devadason, 2008) which show young adults to have well articulated ambitions and plans to achieve them with respect especially to work and housing.

### **CADETSHIP AS TRANSITION**

It was suggested that the inescapable nature of the separation from home; the limited nature of communications whilst away; and, for the most part, the lack of peer contact conspired to make the cadet transition into work and adulthood especially challenging. The status of cadet itself was one of transition which would by its very nature have to be left behind. Findings showed that the content of cadets' work experience; the fact that leave periods did not routinely coincide with student vacations; and, having money to spend, unlike most students, could all contribute to setting them apart from their peers.

Paradoxically, the glamorous image of the seafarer and the more exotic stories of seafaring life were used by cadets to engage their peers for whom seafaring was an unknown world.

### **FROM ENTHUSIASM TO DISILLUSION: AN OCCUPATION OF DIFFERENCE**

Enthusiasm for a career at sea encompassed those who had specific plans and timescales for career progression, and those who were less clear about the detail. The data suggested that for these enthusiastic cadets planned training at sea met expectations in opening up a career offering difference, with the opportunities to travel, to enjoy the ocean environment, to have work which offered a lifestyle and not just a job, to benefit from lengthy leave periods and to have good pay and career progression. Whether they were still being influenced by the novelty of being at sea, and whether these views would be sustained in the long term was conjecture, although Hills's study (1972) suggested that it would not, as one of the reasons given by seafarers in his study for leaving the sea was that the exotic life was in fact far more limited than they had imagined it would be.

At the other extreme were those cadets who abandoned their training before completion. Of the five who left, three had expressed disillusion about their experiences of a seafaring career, derived from placements that they perceived as unsupportive, and sometimes as unsuitable. Unsuitable training placements were seen as being related to the training element of the Tonnage Tax, the Minimum Training Obligation (MTO). The MTO was the object of direct criticism, with cadets suggesting that companies had no real intention of employing them once qualified, seeking only to benefit financially from the MTO. Of the five cadets who resigned and the additional two interviewed whose experiences at sea had been particularly unsatisfactory, all bar one were employed through Ocean XL but placed with a number of different companies.

### **A SENSE OF AMBIVALENCE**

Those cadets enticed by the life at sea, and those so disenchanted that they left training altogether, nevertheless shared experiences of uncertainty and mixed emotions. This chapter has brought a focus to the tensions and mixed feelings depicted throughout the analytical chapters and has characterised them in terms of ambivalence. It is suggested that much of the ambivalence experienced by cadets had structural components, a

suggestion consistent with Merton's contention (1976) that ambivalence is built into the structure of social statuses and roles. The junior status of cadet with its inherent contradictions, sometimes negatively reinforced on ships with little regard for learning or training, provided a structural component of the cadet experience that could otherwise be interpreted as resulting from individual disposition and agency.

It is suggested however that the main source of ambivalence identified in this study, experienced even by those at the two ends of the spectrum of responses to cadetship described earlier, was specific to the seafaring experience of 'totalness'. Totalness is seen as encompassing both the total character of the ship and the permanent tensions set up by the oscillation between ship and shore. This oscillation is recognised as a fundamental and structural tension in seafaring life noted in Conrad's writing. Cadets talked about how they tried to manage the emotions set up by this oscillation and there were examples of advice given to them by experienced seafarers. The advice given was compatible with other accounts of how seafarers manage this tension.

Ambivalence also took into account the perceived lack of job opportunities. This was a structural component of the cadet experience over which individual agency and disposition had little impact. Cadets expressed concern about the job market, and some believed that job prospects had been misrepresented to them, suggesting them to be better than they actually were. The data presented by Gekara (2008) showed that some companies openly acknowledged that British cadets were more costly for them to employ and took advantage of cheaper labour worldwide. Data from the UK seafarer statistics showing increasing cadet numbers matched by decreasing UK seafarer numbers, confirmed that cadets' anxieties over job prospects did have a basis.

#### **'NOT JUST A JOB': EXPOSURE TO THE TOTAL CHARACTER OF SEAFARING**

The experiences of cadets during planned training at sea were as trainees not as qualified seafarers. Nevertheless their placements at sea exposed them to the total character of the ship and to the inevitable distancing from shore, experiences which applied to cadets and seasoned seafarers alike. This gave cadets insight into a future at sea which was in contrast to studies of occupational socialisation which suggest that the training period gives little exposure to the ways of the occupation (Melia, 1987). Cadets understood that in choosing to become seafarers they were choosing a lifestyle and *'not*

*just a job*'. For some this was the very attraction of seafaring with the commitment this implied; others were less sure. This study showed that cadets saw the continual movement back and forward between life at sea and life on shore as an integral part of the life as a seafarer, and one that could not be avoided. Other studies of lifestyle occupations have confirmed that constant readjustments between work and home can present significant challenges to family life (Parker et al, 1997; MCFG, 2007). Although these have been studies of mature adults often with family responsibilities, unlike the cadets in this study, the impact of seafaring on life shore side had significance for all the cadets in this study and featured strongly in their assessment of a future at sea.

In terms of managing the sea/shore divide whilst they were on board ship, cadets were seen to employ a number of strategies, compartmentalizing their emotions yet using email, post and phone call communications to maintain their connection with shore-life. The language they used to describe how they managed this was identical to the language found in other studies that report this phenomenon (Hill, 1972; Thomas, 2003), suggesting that this is part of the traditional occupational vocabulary of seafaring.

This chapter has presented data showing a wide range of responses to the prospects of a future at sea. Cadets' experiences of planned training at sea have been shown to give cadets insight into life as a seafarer. The recognition that seafaring is 'not just a job', and has implications that extend beyond the workplace to encompass non-working life, was central to cadets' reflections on a future at sea.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

**LANDFALL:**

**A REFLEXIVE CONCLUSION**

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## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

Landfall in nautical terms is the end of a sea journey, the sighting or making of land; a good landfall is *'in conformity with the navigator's reckoning and expectation'* (Webster, 1996). To continue the metaphor, the landfall of this study brings to an end a research journey of exploration in which the *'reckoning and expectation'* of the navigator has developed during the course of the voyage itself. This chapter looks back upon the voyage from the new vantage point which has now been reached.

In methodological terms, this chapter is the reflexive conclusion of what has been an emergent research process. It documents the third and final phase of the research design, and aims to give further coherence and cohesion to the study as a whole. Following Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) the term reflexive is employed to describe the way in which the findings from the analytical chapters are themselves used to generate a further interpretation of the data, bending and folding back on themselves in a final iterative cycle.

This further cycle has resulted in the creation of what Jameson describes as 'a generic window' (Jameson, 2005:22) through which the data, representations and findings are (re-)viewed. The window is constructed from four aspects of the cadet experience operating in dynamic interplay: 'ambivalence', 'totalness', 'calling' and, 'tradition'. These four aspects are also constituted in terms of a construct that I have called 'total occupation'. The internal validity of the construct, total occupation, is tested by viewing the 'landscape' traversed in this study through the generic window that bears its name. The possibility of viewing other occupations and activities through this window raises the question of whether 'total occupation' might have external validity; this question becomes the point of departure for further research and new journeys.

## **8.2 REPRESENTATIONS OF CADETSHIP: REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT**

In this study's methodology chapter, I stated my aim of gaining understanding and generating knowledge (page 10). In that same chapter, I also considered the nature of representation, particularly in terms of the efforts of social scientists and novelists to communicate aspects of the social world of interest to them (page 55). In reviewing the

findings of the study, I return again to my original aim concerning knowledge and understanding and their relationship to representation.

So far, the study has offered two representations of seafarer cadetship. I critically review those representations and then indicate the motivation for one further application of the key processes of refining / integrating / accounting which underpin the development of the representations (*Chart 2/2*, page 42).

The first representation took the form of the extended narratives of the four previous chapters. These analytic chapters unfolded sequentially, mirroring the progress of the cadet journey through training. The first chapter explored the origins which cadets ascribed to their decision to join the training programme; the attractions they saw in a seafaring career; and, the expectations they held. The second chapter presented cadets' experiences of planned training at sea, documenting their introduction to the unfamiliarity of life at sea, and their initiation into a complex web of relationships where personal, social, occupational, and educational worlds were intertwined within the confines of the ship. The third chapter continued the focus upon life at sea with an emphasis on the ship as a training and learning environment; the acquisition of the skills of seamanship and the accompanying responsibilities. The fourth chapter looked forward as cadets talked about how they saw their futures at sea; their anxieties about securing employment; and, how they saw themselves managing the oscillation between sea and shore as an inescapable condition of seafaring. In all four chapters the words of the cadets themselves formed the substantive content around which the other study material was woven. Taken in their entirety, these four chapters provide a narrative representation of seafarer cadetship in which understanding has been conveyed through the words of the cadets in interaction with other data-strands.

The second form of representation of officer cadetship is to be found in the findings in the conclusion of each analytical chapter. Here, the findings that emerged were gathered together under a number of headings intended to capture their essence. The analytical process which began with the identification of broad topic areas from the interview data, moved through fragmentation of this data into more refined indices, eventually resulted in further and final classifications. The term I used for these final classifications are the concise descriptors of the cadet experience, and these are set out in the following chart:

**Chart 8/1** Concise descriptors of cadet experience

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chapter Four</b></p> <p><b>A Life at Sea: Origins, Attractions and Expectations</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chapter Five</b></p> <p><b>Life at Sea: The Fellowship of the Craft</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A love of the sea: the importance of the sea environment</li> <li>• Links to family tradition</li> <li>• The opportunity for difference</li> <li>• A sense of calling</li> <li>• Hints of ambivalence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An occupation set apart</li> <li>• The total character of the shipboard experience</li> <li>• A traditional occupational culture</li> <li>• Fellowship and Isolation</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chapter Six</b></p> <p><b>Life at Sea: Learning the Ropes</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chapter Seven</b></p> <p><b>A Life at Sea: Talking About the Future</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansive learning in restricted environments</li> <li>• Restricted learning opportunities</li> <li>• The actuality of competent seamanship</li> <li>• Supportive, indifferent, unsupportive: experiences of a learning environment</li> <li>• Participation in a 'well worked circle of learning'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cadetship as transition</li> <li>• From enthusiasm to disillusion; an occupation of difference</li> <li>• A sense of ambivalence</li> <li>• Not just a job: exposure to the total character of the ship</li> </ul>

There is a marked contrast between the two 'modes of representation', most obviously in terms of the number of words required for narratives and for charts. This contrast is also demonstrated by considerations of the extent to which the representations convey understanding and knowledge. The narrative representation is 'rich' in terms of understanding; the emphasis is on what Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000:84) describe as a venturing into '*other individuals' meaning-fields*' which increases the self-understanding of the researcher as well as their understanding of others. However the knowledge content of the narrative representation is hard to discern in any rapid fashion. Knowledge is embedded within the narrative itself, and only acquired by reading the account word-by-word and line-by-line.

On the other hand, what the concise representation offers in terms of codified knowledge it lacks in respect of detailed understanding. In a way, the two distinct representations satisfy both the needs of the novelist in the social scientist and the scientist in the social researcher. Alternatively, from the perspective of accounting, the two representations combined not only 'account for' (narrative accounting) but also

provide a 'statement of account' (concise representation). Essentially the two representations are seen as complementary.

In reviewing the narrative and the concise representations, it needs to be remembered that the former generated the latter. This simple observation caused me to reflect once more on the long succession of processes which had transformed the words of the cadets into the descriptors of the cadet experience; the conversion of data into information and, provisionally, knowledge. This further reflection led me to question whether in fact the descriptors of the cadet experience actually represented a true landfall or were perhaps just grounding on a sandbar. As I looked back on the whole journey of the study, what began to emerge was not just a way of looking backwards with clarity but of looking forwards. It was in this way, through a final act of reflexivity that the notion of the total occupation began to appear.

### **8.3 CADET EXPERIENCES OF OFFICER TRAINING: REVIEW & INTEGRATION**

Even the most casual of readings of the descriptors in *Chart 8/1* might lead to a reaction that they were haphazard, 'a hotchpotch'. With the likes of 'love of the sea' alongside 'from enthusiasm to disillusion' and 'fellowship and isolation', the task of providing a coherent patterning to the descriptors over and above what had been achieved in *Chart 8/1* seemed impossible. I searched for tropes that might be helpful in piecing the descriptors together, considering metaphors such as quilting (Saukko, 2000; Flannery, 2001) but failed to find anything I felt lent further insight. White's comment (page 27) on the contrast between the orderly world of academic discourse and the disorder of the real world took on added significance: perhaps my study would have to conclude that the pattern of cadet experience was 'disorderly'; but I was uncomfortable with that conclusion, it felt too *extreme*.

Reflecting on this position of extremeness provided the insight for completing the study in keeping with the reflexive orientation. I recalled that Aubert and Arner's (1965) analysis of the social structure of the ship focused on the Norwegian oil tanker, not because it was representative of all ships, but because it presented an extreme situation which allowed comparisons to be drawn with other work environments. Focusing

attention on the extremes of the cadet experience might also prove illuminating. As on numerous previous occasions, the principle of always returning to data proved reliable.

I took the example of one cadet from each end of the spectrum of cadet experience. I selected David (pseudonym) as a cadet whose enthusiasm for a career at sea was palpable and infectious – as he said, “*It’s got all the benefits for me!*” In the two interviews I conducted with David it was clear that he saw opening up before him a career of difference that was allowing him to pursue a love of the sea, and an enjoyment of the ocean environment. He saw it as giving him access to an occupation with a longstanding and distinctive tradition – and to continue his own family tradition of seafaring. David’s planned training at sea had given him the opportunity of shore leave in other countries, and he had enjoyed the experience of a multiethnic workplace. He was in his own words ‘*pretty chuffed*’ about the levels of responsibility he had already been given, and valued the promise of responsible and worthwhile work. In the interviews with David he felt that life at sea offered the potential for good pay and career progression. Nevertheless he was well aware that over the years to come he might no longer view these opportunities as worthwhile and attractive, perhaps because the novelty of the seafaring experience would diminish, or perhaps because they would be difficult to reconcile with his expectations of family life.

Equally vivid in my memory was Robert’s (pseudonym) expression of bitterness and disappointment with his experiences at sea; the example I selected from the other end of the spectrum of cadet responses. Robert displayed profound disillusion which resulted in him having abandoned training just days before our interview took place. He told me that the main attraction of seafaring had been the periods of leave which he had hoped would allow him to pursue his love of mountaineering. Once at sea he found the pressures of the physical confinement and the restricted diet, the total character of shipboard life and, the distance from family and friends to be oppressive. He found these features to be magnified by what he perceived as hostile and unsupportive attitudes from those involved in his training at sea, and initiation processes which he interpreted as ones of unnecessary humiliation. Robert’s decision to leave training was however taken with regret. Despite the fact that he had not entered training with a strong motivation, his regret at giving up the programme was perhaps best revealed in the juxtaposition of the following two interview extracts. The first is his wistful description of

the Master on one of his sea-trips; the second is Robert's comment on himself following an unpleasant exchange with a Master on another of his placements at sea:

Robert:

"I think he loved it, at sea, he loved it ... I mean he did, you know, he was a generally nice guy ... he was into windsurfing and sailing at home . . . and he was passionate about the sea. And you know he would take you on the bridge wing some nights and just sort of say, 'look, there's so and so stars and there's Orion's Belt' and you know actually I think he was so knowledgeable about his thing that I suppose he was more at home at sea . . ."

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Robert:

"I realised that perhaps he had seen, perhaps he had seen through me and in, in my work, I dunno, but perhaps, perhaps I wasn't cut out for it."

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Robert's final comment on leaving training was: "*I always hoped that I'd do a job that I'll have all my heart in . . .*"; for him, this was not to be seafaring.

David and Robert have been chosen to illustrate the extremes of experience, but being located at the extremes did not mean that their responses to cadetship and to seafaring were without ambivalence. For David, ambivalence could be seen in his thoughts about the future: would he relish a seafaring life in years to come when he had a family and had perhaps become desensitized to the excitement of the ocean? For Robert, there was ambivalence in his regret that seafaring would never be for him the meaningful 'occupation with heart' that he sought.

Ambivalence was common to the extreme positions of David and Robert; so I returned again to the theme of ambivalence already encountered in the narrative and the descriptors.

## **AMBIVALENCE**

"... the most fundamental characteristic of social reality, namely ambivalence."

(Donati, 1998:109)

Moving from the extremes illustrated by David and Robert, the ambivalence apparent in their experiences is found in the mainstream of cadet responses and identified in the descriptors. Ambivalence is perhaps a universal characteristic of the human condition. According to Donati (1998), Merton's view was that ambivalence is fundamental to social

reality. Whatever the precise standing of ambivalence in human affairs, it is not unexpected that it would form an integral part of the response of the cadets to both the experience of cadetship, and towards a future in seafaring. Whilst their ambivalence was embodied as mixed emotions and uncertainties, influenced by individual personality and disposition, it was seen, in the light of Merton's typology of ambivalence (1976) as having a sociological dimension.

As I looked back on the findings of the study hints of ambivalence were first seen in the way in which cadets had begun to temper their expectations of adventure and excitement as a consequence of the actualities of shipboard life. The incorporation of 'reality elements' into the unfolding process involved in the entry into an occupation is not confined however to seafaring (Becker and Geer, 1958; Psathas, 1968; Geer et al, 1970).

Their status as cadets also gave rise to ambivalence: the status of cadet would, by its very nature have to be left behind. No sooner did a cadet adapt to the status and role expectations arising from each placement, than s/he would already required to move on – both in terms of a further stage of training and responsibilities but to another placement with slightly different expectations and demands. At sea the status of cadet required the balancing of roles that had contradictory demands: as learner and as co-worker; junior to the crew in terms of experience, yet senior in the roles to which they aspired. Whilst intensified by the environment of the ship, these ambivalences could equally well be applied to learners in other workplace settings.

It is suggested however that the main source of ambivalence identified in this study, experienced even by those at the two ends of the spectrum of responses to cadetship described earlier, was specific to the seafaring experience of 'totalness'. Totalness is taken here to encompass both the total character of the ship and the permanent tensions set up by the oscillation between ship and shore. It is to totalness that I now turn my attention.

## **TOTALNESS**

Goffman's concept of the total institution (1961/1991) was the starting point for the notion of totalness in the narrative representation of cadetship. The key element of the

total institution proposed by Goffman which relates to the ship and is extensively explored in this study is that all aspects of life – work, recreation and personal activities, such as eating and sleeping – are brought together within the same physical arena and cut off from the wider world. Within the confines of the ship physical, social and work relationships have to be negotiated between often very limited numbers of individuals. A number of commentators have explored the application of the concept of total institution to the ship (Aubert, 1965; Aubert and Arner, 1965; Zurcher, 1965; Nolan, 1973). In the most detailed and explicit application of the concept of the total institution to the ship, Aubert draws comparison with the ‘totalness’ of the cloister and remarks that:

“The actual conditions of the seaman, imposed on him by the isolation and the total character of life on board, bind his identity to the sea and its living conditions with a consistency and purity, not unlike that of the monk’s devotion to God”.

(Aubert, 1965: 256)

For the cadets in this study, adjustment to the total character of the ship and the intrinsic isolation was seen as central to their experience of shipboard life. It is suggested here that totalness does not however apply solely to the ship but to seafaring itself, by virtue of the impact of seafaring on shore life. Hill (1972) describes this aspect of seafaring as the oscillation between sea and shore. The impact of oscillation has an effect on seafarers: being at sea and distanced from shore life, and being on leave and distanced from life at sea are, it is suggested, two aspects of the same condition, captured in the poem which Creighton (1991:160) records from the diary of a nineteenth century seafarer on a deep water vessel operating from the North Eastern United States:

It was morning and I longed for evening  
It was evening and I longed for home  
I was at home and I longed for the sea  
Now where shall I fly to amuse myself  
But alas (I) know of no place excepting  
I could combine land and sea together

(in Creighton, 1991:160)

Oscillation also has a well documented impact on the families of seafarers (Thomas, 2003; Thomas and Bailey, 2006 and 2009). In talking about their futures once they had qualified, cadets placed great emphasis on the implications for a partner and family of a career at sea. The extended placements at sea experienced by cadets exposed them to

the total character of the ship and to the inevitable distancing from shore, giving them insight into a future at sea. Cadets well understood that in choosing to become seafarers they were choosing a lifestyle and *'not just a job'* and this is reflected in the concise descriptors generated from the analytical chapters.

### **AMBIVALENCE & TOTALNESS - AN IMPOSSIBLE DYNAMIC?**

I could now make further sense of some of the descriptors of the cadet experience (*Chart 8/1*) in terms of a dynamic between ambivalence and totalness, a symbiotic yet conflicting relationship fundamental to the seafaring experience. But what about the other descriptors – the apparent hotchpotch? My reflections on the remaining descriptors, contextualized by the inherent tension between ambivalence and totalness led to the question of why would the majority of young people continue with their cadetships and a career of seafaring?

It has already been suggested in this study that the cadet transition into work and adulthood is especially challenging. As recorded, although five of the cadets in the interview sample had resigned from training during the course of this study, four had completed their training by the time of my final contact with them in June 2005, and the remaining sixteen had effectively completed as they were sitting their oral examination the following month, an assumption confirmed as correct with the training colleges.

Hence, I looked amongst the descriptors of cadet experience for the reasons which kept cadets in training, and by implication, seafarers in their occupation; for balancing factors in the dynamic between ambivalence and totalness. The prospects of a good salary, as has been noted, had featured infrequently in the interviews with cadets, and could be considered as a general attraction of any employment – although a good salary was mentioned as a source of ambivalence by those who feared the 'money trap' which high pay could bring. Focusing upon the concise descriptors, and remembering that these had been generated by the narrative representation, there were two factors that came forward; these factors are calling and tradition.

### **CALLING**

It has been a clear finding of this study that the decision to enter into seafaring was seen by the majority of cadets involved as a positive choice. Two thirds of cadets in the sample

had reported a long-standing attraction to going to sea, a view expressed equally by both deck and engineering cadets. An active desire to 'go to sea' was not however necessarily associated with the tasks involved in seafaring. The interview data suggested that cadets applied or transferred what could be described as a calling towards the sea with its pleasures and sense of adventure, to the activities of seafaring. Deck cadets particularly were focused on the beauties of the natural environment, the opportunities for difference and an adventure ethic, rather than the acquisition of specific workplace skills. 'Love of the sea', selected as an attraction of seafaring by half of the questionnaire respondents, was chosen by a significantly greater number of deck cadets than engineers, suggesting that the sea as an occupational environment was more important to deck cadets than to engineers. The subjective features of a seafaring career as put forward by cadets themselves including the enjoyment derived from the sea as a natural environment and the potential job satisfaction arising from the opportunities to experience difference. These were noted in the set of concise descriptors as features shown to draw many cadets, but not all, towards a career at sea, an idea which can be related to the notion of a calling. The sense of calling has increasingly been seen in the academic literature as an important subjective career phenomenon (Hall and Chandler, 2005; Duffy and Sedlacek, 2007; Dik and Duffy, 2009; Hunter et al, 2009; Dubrow 2010) and as something that can give meaning to a particular activity including employment. Returning to the illustrations at the extreme of the cadet experience, David talked extensively about the subjective attractions that drew him to seafaring; Robert's decision to pursue a career at sea had been determined by the extended leave periods and the potentially good salary.

## **TRADITION**

Related to but separate from the notion of calling, the second aspect of the cadet experience put forward as mitigating the ambivalence-totalness dynamic is that of tradition. In the context of this study, tradition is interpreted both in terms of a family history and of an occupational tradition. Taking each in turn, a family tradition of seafaring was shown to apply to 55% of the study sample, a finding comparable with that in other studies (Hopwood, 1973; NUMAST, 2004a). The questionnaire data had shown that those cadets with seafarers in the family were more likely to claim a long-standing attraction to the sea, and the interview data supported the emphasis which cadets

placed on their family history of seafaring. Hill (1972) observed this emphasis as a characteristic of seafarers, noting that in cases where there was no obvious relative at sea, the seafarer would try to search for one as though to provide a rationale for his decision to go to sea. Hunter et al refer to '*a family legacy*' (2009:179) as an external source of influence that compels or motivates a person towards a particular life role.

Whilst half of cadets claimed a family tradition of seafaring, half did not. However the interview conversations indicated cadets' awareness that they were entering into an occupation which in itself had a longstanding tradition. The degree to which cadets accepted the traditional hierarchies and acknowledged a very masculine occupational culture has been shown to be central to cadets' experiences of planned training at sea. Cadets responded with varying degrees of personal comfort/discomfort to workplace exchanges and behaviours designed to toughen up the novice, and test their self-control. Whilst some traditional features of the practice and culture of seafaring have largely disappeared as a result of changes in working practices (Sampson and Wu, 2003; Mack, 2007; Bloor, 2010a), the notion of being part of a recognised occupation with a long history could be discerned in the interview exchanges with cadets; one described being able to call yourself a seaman as "*a privilege and an honour*":

Interviewee:

"I think it's a privilege and, and an honour to be able to, to call yourself a seaman, personally. When you're actually in there, that environment and people start to see what it's all about, it is, a very impressive, I think it's a very, a proud thing to be doing."

(Dan/04 – M/D/21/XL)

Looking at the importance of tradition in respect of David and Robert, it was noticeable that David, with a strong family tradition of seafaring, had commented on his own relaxed attitude to responding to the traditional culture, the banter, the bar life, respecting the traditional divisions between officers and crew. Robert on the other hand had described how difficult he found it to accept the ship-board traditions:

Robert:

"We had to sit on a different table to the officers and so we had our back to them and at dinner one day he was talking about me and I just, I felt so angry. I think I just felt that that's just not a good working environment, is it? It's not healthy for your mind . . . I basically thought well I don't wanna be in their circle, which is the bar and corridors and the Mess, so I would just go to the room quite a lot and read, sort of keep myself away from them . . . Oh God, you know?"

(Robert/04 – M/D/24/AM)

Had Robert joined *'their circle'*, accepted the tradition and committed to the totalness of the shipboard hierarchy with its social as well as its work implications, it is likely that the ambivalence he experienced would have been reduced: he would have joined the *'fellowship of the craft'*. In this way, commitment to the *'totalness'*, which is an inescapable aspect of seafaring, becomes a way of reducing ambivalence: conversely, fighting against the tradition increases ambivalence.

### ACCOUNTING FOR THE CONCISE DESCRIPTORS

In re-arranging the concise descriptors in terms of ambivalence, totalness, calling and tradition (see *Chart 8/2*) it could be seen firstly that in the initial re-arrangement there were descriptors which could be considered as illustrating more than one aspect of the cadet experience; and secondly, that there were some descriptors which were not easily placed within the re-arranged chart.

Taking each point in turn, there were possibilities for seeing descriptors in more than one light: for example, *'a traditional occupational culture'* could be seen as a subjective career attraction that might add to the sense of calling; the importance of the sea environment could be interpreted as part of the tradition as well as contributing to the sense of calling. Fellowship and isolation whilst linked closely to totalness, could in turn could be seen as part of the tradition of seafaring. In short, each descriptor contained depths and complexities revealed in the narrative representations.

**Chart 8/2** Initial re-arrangement of the concise descriptors of cadet experience

AMBIVALENCE	CALLING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hints of ambivalence</li> <li>• A sense of ambivalence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of calling</li> <li>• A love of the sea: the importance of the sea environment</li> </ul>
TRADITION	TOTALNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to family tradition</li> <li>• A traditional occupational culture</li> <li>• The actuality of competent seamanship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not just a job: exposure to the total character of the ship</li> <li>• The total character of the shipboard experience</li> <li>• Fellowship and Isolation</li> </ul>

Turning to those descriptors that were not placed within this initial *'re-arrangement'* there were those that related to seafaring as an occupation of difference; chapters four, five and seven had all generated descriptors reflecting this aspect of cadetship and of

seafaring. These three descriptors were:

- The opportunity for difference
- From enthusiasm to disillusion; an occupation of difference
- An occupation set apart

Here again, these descriptors could be seen as having multiple interpretive possibilities: 'difference' had been identified as an attraction of seafaring and could be seen as fitting equally well within 'tradition' and within 'calling'. Equally the narrative representation made it clear that 'difference' was inextricably linked with 'separateness' which in turn could be equated with isolation. Seeing difference in this light would lead to these descriptors fitting into the aspect of 'totalness'. Focusing closely on these descriptors in this way confirmed that they made sense in the light of the four key aspects identified and also that the fit was necessarily open to different layers of interpretation.

The next step was to consider those descriptors that remained 'unaccounted for': these were as follows:

- Expansive learning in restricted environments
- Restricted learning opportunities
- Supportive, indifferent, unsupportive: experiences of a learning environment
- Participation in a 'well worked circle of learning'
- Cadetship as transition

The fundamental difference between these descriptors and those that had been 'allocated' as in the foregoing description, was that they stemmed from the training experience rather than the seafaring experience; the need for competent seamanship would persist post-cadetship, and in the progression from a junior to a senior officer, there would be a continuing need to learn and acquire further knowledge. However the overall emphasis in this set of descriptors relates more to cadetship than to the occupation of seafaring. It has been apparent throughout this study that planned training at sea exposed cadets to aspects of the seafaring experience that would endure after their certification as officers. Aspects of the cadet experience would fall away on 'getting the ticket', leaving those aspects compatible with seafaring, not just seafaring cadetship.

## 8.4 A WINDOW ON CADETSHIP CONSTRUCTED

Through the further iteration of constant comparison outlined above, four *‘aspects’* of the cadet experience had now been identified: ambivalence, totalness, calling and tradition. Within and between these aspects there were multiple possibilities for interpretation and this was particularly the case for those descriptors relating to the notion of *‘difference’*. There were also five descriptors that were noted as relating to the transitional nature of cadetship rather than of seafaring itself.

Working with the four aspects of cadetship, for instance, experimenting with Venn diagrams and investigating the possibilities of a semiotic square, led to what was perhaps the obvious – that they could be put together as a frame. This idea in turn led me back to Goffman whose essay on frame analysis (1974) has given rise to the wide use of framing perspectives in social science (Benford and Snow, 2000).

For Goffman, frames denoted *“schemata of interpretation”* that enable individuals *“to locate, perceive, identify and label”* (Goffman, 1974:21) occurrences within their life space and the world at large. Williams and Benford (1996) have pointed to the ambiguity of *‘frame’* as a metaphor: on one hand a frame is used in the sense of a *grammar*, structure in which meaning is contained. On the other hand it is used in the sense of a boundary that keeps some elements in view and others out of view. The frame I have put together addresses the ambiguity of the metaphor, being both made from the very substance of the research material, and being used to view the research material.

It was essential that the frame allowed the four aspects to interact in a way: that was not reductionist; that reflected the dynamic processes essential in their relationship; that captured the interplay of agency and emotion with structure; and, that did not oversimplify the subtleties and complexities of the cadet experience as though there were some single reality. That is, I wished to avoid the shortcomings of using a frame as identified by Benford (1997) who also reminds us not to forget that frames are modes of interpretation that are socially/culturally constructed. In order to meet the essentials outlined above, and following Jameson who uses what he refers to as a *‘generic window’* (2005:22), the result has been to conceive of the frame as a window. Taking the metaphor of the window, its *‘construction’* can be envisaged as follows:

- ambivalence and totalness, the two fundamental and interdependent aspects, are constituted as the horizontal sections of the window frame;
- because the relationship between ambivalence and totalness is dynamic and potentially unstable, their correlates in the window are prone to collapse without vertical supports;
- 'vertical stability' is provided on either side of the window by the remaining aspects of calling and tradition.

Hence the generic window described has four sides tagged ambivalence, totalness, calling and tradition. The generic window bears the label, 'total occupation'.

## **8.5 TOWARDS A TOTAL OCCUPATION**

It was noted in Chapter One that the title of the thesis suggests both the transitional nature of cadetship during which cadets moved towards the 'total occupation' of seafaring, and 'total occupation' as a construct emerging from the final cycle of the reflexive research process. Associated with *Chart 8/1* and the generic window is the construct of 'total occupation'. In one way, both *Chart 8/1* and the generic window 'stand for' – represent – the construct of total occupation. *Chart 8/1* and the generic window offer insights into the experience of seafaring cadetship; they are also tools or devices for viewing the nature of seafaring more generally.

From the perspective of pragmatism, what counts in language is the word, term or concept *in use*. When the generic window labeled 'total occupation' is used to view a social world then it will generate a coherent and cohesive account of that world. As noted earlier, the window 'works', in part, because it is constituted of the material of that social world.

Even so, given the emphasis placed in this study on representation, attempting to find an alternative 'expression' for the total occupation is a necessary task. Chapter Three recorded 'notes towards a definition of occupation' (p.67) that featured a list comprising: pay, status, role, skills, competencies, training, certification, regulation, culture and tradition. The list made no claims to being exhaustive or universally applicable to all occupations. The study of seafaring cadetship has covered all elements in the list. Most notably, the study has also featured ambivalence, totalness, calling and difference as

central to seafaring. A further important issue for the seafarer cadet is that the many of the challenges accompanying the transitional status of cadetship are not resolved on 'getting the ticket'.

For the sake of 'representation completeness', the following definition of total occupation is put forward, even though it may prove less useful than *Chart 8/1* or the generic window:

In a '*total occupation*', there are significant barriers to entry into a workplace that is set apart from society at large to the extent of imposing isolation and confinement on the workforce. The totalness of this work environment intensifies the ambivalence which is core to the human condition in terms of generating spatial and temporal conflicts in the occupancy of workplace and other societal roles. These conflicts are manageable by individuals with recourse to a personal calling or cultural tradition.

Thomas and Bailey's description (2009: 626) of seafaring as an '*extreme occupation*' in terms of the demands of the life-work organization lends support to the emerging definition of total occupation in relation to seafaring. Although the relevance of the construct to occupations other than seafaring is beyond the scope of this study, it is nevertheless appropriate to consider its application in relation to occupations other than seafaring; the after-word to this chapter addresses this issue.

## **8.6 LOOKING THROUGH THE GENERIC WINDOW**

The generic window is a tool or device and as such is best demonstrated in action. What can be seen by looking at the study material through this window created from ambivalence, totalness, calling and tradition? The view from a window is not fixed but changes depending on where the viewer stands in relation to the window. Moving close up reveals a wide panorama of the experience of seafaring cadetship; a view that includes peripheral features, for example, the idiosyncratic comments of a single cadet. Standing far back from the window limits the scope of what can be seen; what comes into view then is highly representative of the total occupation, for example, those cadets who became seafarers. The view from the window depends not just on the position of the observer but on what is being observed. The window frame is not fixed in size. For the cadets who could not endure the conflicts of their apprenticeship, they can only be viewed through a narrow horizontal slit compressed by their unresolved tension between

ambivalence and totalness – they have been squeezed out of the social space of the total occupation.

The generic window is now used to view the ‘landscape’ of seafaring cadetship. Of course, the metaphor of ‘seascape’ might be considered more appropriate than landscape in this study. However, initially landscape is used since it is the recognized term in policy, business and organizational discourses (Cabinet Office, 2002; Drejer et al, 2005; Crossman 2010) as representing structural (topological) and surface (topographical) features of a phenomenon. The landscape metaphor takes in the interactions between people, places, policies, technologies, histories, and so on – all the elements that combine to produce a human landscape. In the following sections, the generic window will be used to look back on the data-strands of this study: the cadets who have populated the seafaring landscape at the time of this study; UK Shipping policy, specifically the Tonnage Tax: Joseph Conrad, where the metaphor of seascape is adopted; and finally, the research literatures.

#### **CADETS IN THE LANDSCAPE**

Standing at a distance from the window the figure of David is clearly in the frame: his commitment to a total occupation had hints of ambivalence, but these were largely reserved for the future. Other individuals can be picked out from that viewpoint: Nathan (pseudonym), the youngest of the cadets interviewed, who spoke of his commitment and determination to succeed in a seafaring position. With a strong family tradition and having *‘always wanted to do something with the water’*, Nathan seemed to be completely at ease with the shipboard culture, and relatively untroubled by the isolation from shore life. Charlotte (pseudonym) is there, the exuberant deck cadet who appeared on her first ship in a pair of high-heeled shoes and who learned to handle the macho environment of the ship with a lighthearted humour. Charlotte had entered the training from a seafaring background but had never seen herself as drawn to it as a career had until she actually experienced life at sea. Her final remark to me was one of great optimism:

Charlotte:

“I feel privileged that I’ve got such direction. I’ve got a career that I love. I know exactly – well not exactly, but I’ve got the gist of it – I know that I’m going to be successful whatever I do.”

(Charlotte/04- F/D/21/XL)

In one sense, Robert can no longer be seen through this window. His ambivalence reached a point that made it impossible to continue with his cadetship, overwhelmed by the totalness and without recourse to any calling or tradition. He left the frame – and yet viewing Robert’s experience through the window of total occupation does make sense; he provides the spectral negative to David’s positive. A full philosophical exploration of ‘negation’ is beyond the scope of this conclusion. Suffice to say that perhaps Robert inhabits this landscape in ghostly form accompanying Lord Jim, “*irresolute and silent, like a ghost without a home*” (Conrad 1900/1974:67) – two figures not at home in the total occupation of seafaring.

Likewise, Robert’s peers, Mark and Sam (both pseudonyms), who had grown up by the sea and had come to seafaring having respectively run a pub and taken a science degree. Both left their training with great disappointment, the ambivalence of their experiences squeezing out all possibilities of a future in seafaring; an ambivalence structured by the totalness of the experience and their isolation in environments which were not conducive to learning. This observation returns us to Benford’s warnings that framing can lead both to reductionism that tends to *‘psychologize what is sociological’* (Benford, 1997:422), and to reification which treats socially constructed ideas as though they were *real*, leading to the neglect of human agency, and the neglect of emotions. Seeing their experiences in terms of a total occupation recognises that they did have agency, whilst acknowledging that their responses were also a result of structure, of features in the landscape.

### **UK SHIPPING POLICY THROUGH THE GENERIC WINDOW – THE TONNAGE TAX**

Can the window be used to view the policy or legal aspects of the seafaring environment and its landscape? This study has focused on just one aspect of maritime policy - the UK Tonnage Tax: cadets saw the training element of this policy as having a negative effect on their job prospects with the mismatch between increasing cadet numbers and decreasing numbers of UK Merchant Navy junior officers. Whilst the policy may have been intended to stabilize and increase the UK seafarer workforce and acknowledge its importance as part of a wider UK maritime tradition, for the cadets it had unanticipated consequences (Merton, 1936) which actually increased their ambivalence.

Cadets also perceived that in their desire to benefit financially from the Tonnage Tax there were companies who accepted cadets into poor training environments: this has been illustrated in some detail in this study. To this extent it could be said that the policy actually deepened cadets' sense of isolation and magnified the totalness of their experience.

The generic window is also useful in looking at policy in terms of calling and tradition: although the majority of cadets in this study saw entry to seafaring as a positive choice, it is possible that the policy drive to increase cadet numbers has drawn in cadets with less sense of calling or of tradition than might previously have been the case. Recruitment literature that emphasizes the attractions of the sea rather than of seafaring itself may be unhelpful in the longer term.

In summary, the generic window does 'work' when held up to the policy environment using the example of the UK Tonnage Tax. For cadets the feature it created in the landscape might not have been permanent but for them it was a hazard rather than a haven.

### **THE SEA, THE SHIP & CONRAD**

We can hold up the generic window and view in perspective another data-strand, the writings of Joseph Conrad. His personal seafaring experiences have become part of this study, both through his musings in *The Mirror of the Sea* (Conrad 1906/1975), and his fictional sea studies with their loosely autobiographical origins. During Conrad's life as a working seafarer, he moved from the centre to the margins in our view of total occupation. As a young person, although he had no family tradition, he was drawn to the sea with a self-confessed passion, a sense of calling. However as the years went by his own commitment to seafaring became increasingly ambivalent; in the early 1890s, after over a decade at sea, his letters to his aunt suggested that he was becoming dissatisfied with a world where his vision was '*circumscribed by the sombre circle where the blue of the sea and blue of heaven touch without merging*' (Sherry 1972:64) and his life as an active seafarer ended after some twenty years at sea.

Conrad's contribution to the landscape of total occupation is however more than his presence as an individual. His fiction conveys to others aspects emblematic of the

collective seafaring experience, the fellowship, the isolation, the traditional culture – and the ambivalence which are part of the total occupation. His writings also emphasise the importance of two features so obvious and so fundamental to seafaring that without them there is no occupation of seafaring, total or otherwise. Those features are the sea itself and the ship. For Conrad, as for Aubert, the identity of the seafarer is bound to the sea and to the living conditions of the ship. Conrad wrought his tales of the sea from the safety of the land – one way of reconciling the ambivalence of ship and shore. But somehow Conrad remains the marginal, immigrant seafarer, more a figure in a shifting seascape than settled in the English landscape; a creature defined by the ambivalence of his status and position, the totalness of his craft, and an uneasy union of calling and tradition.

### **REFLECTING IN THE WINDOW-GLASS – THE RESEARCH LITERATURES**

This window has offered a way of looking at this study that differs from the representations found in Phase Two. It has required theoretical inputs from the concepts of the total institution, and of sociological ambivalence: without them ‘the window’ could not have been constructed. The literatures associated with the sense of calling and tradition, both familial and occupational, have played an important part in building the landscape whilst the actual piecing together of ‘the window’, has benefited from the research literature on frame analysis.

Mindful of Becker’s remark that *“You can’t make science if you can’t find anything to generalize about”* (Becker, 2003:662), my desire has been to ‘make science’, to move this study *‘beyond the single case’* (Shaffir and Pawluch, 2003:906) perhaps in the way that Conrad(1983:421) wanted in *“The Nigger of ‘The Narcissus’”* to *‘connect the small world of the ship with that larger world’* - the novella both connects and is the connection.

Dewey considered that the journey of inquiry through experience or the experiential world involved transformations achieved by *“... means of operations of two kinds ... one kind of operation deals with ideational or conceptual subject matter ... The other...is made up of activities involving the techniques and organs of observation.”* (Dewey, 1938:117). The window is an attempt to connect the conceptual and the empirical aspects of inquiry, representing a transformation of the data generated in this study and the theoretical considerations which have been part of the analytical processes.

## **8.7 REFLECTING ON THE LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY**

Part of the learning during the course of this journey has been the extent to which research is the art of the possible. The limitations of the study in part reflect the practical constraints which imposed themselves upon the research design. The study offers a representation of cadet views captured in the fleeting space of an interview and in the moments of completing a questionnaire. Observation of cadets in their workplace may have permitted a more extended and interactive exploration of their views in a less constrained time frame but was not a practical possibility.

The length of time taken to complete this journey – nine years – has posed particular methodological challenges. Developments in the research fields, in training provision, in policy evaluations have been taken into account in the reflexive iterations of the analysis; whilst the cadet data was, as noted above, captured in one moment of time, interpretation has within reason accommodated the unfolding phenomenon of cadetship. By contextualizing the study within a wider policy time period and drawing upon historical sources, it has been possible to distinguish between the time-bound experiences of the cadets and enduring aspects of seafaring.

Looking at the study sample, it was noted in the chapter on methodology (page 35) that the nature of recruitment may inevitably have introduced a systematic bias to the research because of its voluntary nature. The samples were drawn from a population that had already undergone attrition and the residual population was likely to contain a relatively higher number of favourably disposed cadets. However the spread of views within the sample suggests that response was not confined to those with more dramatic experiences of cadetship.

A limitation of the study is the extent to which two potential sources of bias could have been further explored. The first relates to the relatively high number of 'older' cadets in the interview sample: 71% of the total sample was 21 years of age and under. In the interview sample this percentage was 44%. The study placed some emphasis on experience of cadetship as a transition into both the world of work and into adulthood. The position could be taken that the very young cadet could find the separation from home and the immersion in a totally unfamiliar way of life to be more difficult to adapt to

than the older cadet who might already have had some experience of the world, and particularly of independence from parents. Taking this position it is surprising that of the five cadets in the interview sample known to have resigned two were 24 years of age and one was 22. The two older cadets had both had experience at University prior to joining the deck cadet training programme with the freedoms of a college lifestyle; perhaps their age and experience made it harder not easier to comply with shipboard life. This would seem to be a worthwhile area for further investigation.

The other area of potential bias which has not been explored in the study is variation in the 'training provision'. The emphasis in the study has been on planned training at sea; the extent to which the three different colleges influenced cadets and helped them to integrate the ship and college experiences has not been extensively explored. Related to this, the two shipping companies and the training company may have introduced a bias with the selection process leading to sponsorship being more rigorous with one company than another. This too offers further interest.

The study has permitted a view of cadets in particular groupings however a limitation of the study has been the extent to which the dynamics of these separate groups has been explored. Although the number of female cadets in this study reflected the overall ratio of male to females in the wider seafaring population, there were nevertheless only six women involved in the sample and three interviewed. The female cadets who were interviewed did reveal varying levels of ambivalence as did their male counterparts, particularly in relation to a longer term future at sea and their future roles as mothers. Another dynamic which could have sustained further investigation was that between the deck cadets and the engineering cadets. Whilst the analysis did reveal differences in their views of cadetship, this theme could have been further developed. Likewise the data offers the potential to further investigate inter-company differences and the consequent impact on the cadet experience.

Reflecting on the strengths of the study, I propose two: firstly, the study has drawn out a wealth of original data on the subjective views of Merchant Navy Officer cadets, views which have not previously featured in the contemporary research literature. The openness of cadets and the resulting richness of detail and insight in their interview accounts were to a degree unexpected; this was particularly the case given that the study

sample consisted of young men, who are not characterised as the most forthcoming of interviewees.

Secondly, I suggest that the study has created a fuller picture of cadetship by introducing the selected writings of Conrad. This has made it possible to highlight enduring aspects of the seafaring experience which hold true despite the significant changes in shipping practices. The introduction of this material responds to Becker's call to find creative ways of telling about society which may require moving beyond the '*disciplinary fence*' (Becker, 2007a: xv).

## **8.8 AFTER-WORD**

As this concluding chapter was being redrafted for the last time, I came by chance upon an on-line interview ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/other\\_sports/cycling/8785976.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/other_sports/cycling/8785976.stm)) with a young professional road cyclist. As a boy the young man had a passion for cycling which drew him into the world of extreme racing. He described the isolation in which he found himself; connections with his family and his former life were severed as he underwent a punishing training regime. His cycling peers and coaches became his only contacts and his life revolved around the racing circuit. Part of the culture of extreme cycling is the use of performance enhancing drugs. The young man described how over a period of a year or so, the culture of professional cycling absorbed him. He moved from a position that held drugs to be completely unacceptable, to one in which he felt unconcerned about risking his health and compromising his ethics, to finally where he fully accepted the performance enhancing drug-taking as legitimate. His drug usage eventually led to public exposure and disgrace as a 'drugs cheat'. On-line responses to the interview included severe criticism of the young cyclist as weak and corruptible, unable to withstand peer pressure, expecting sympathy where he deserved none.

It occurred to me that viewing his story through a window in which ambivalence, totalness, calling and tradition operate in a dynamic interplay, perhaps offered a particular way of seeing his experience as more than the result of a flawed personality. The totalness of the professional cycling world into which he was drawn, cut off from all that was familiar; the force of his calling towards the sport; the pull of tradition in the culture of competitive cycling; and, the varying degrees of his ambivalence towards the

demands of that world, structured his experience, and his downfall. Hold the window up to this young cyclist and you can see him through it, suggesting that total occupation might offer a way of looking at activities beyond the world of seafaring, and not necessarily related only to paid employment. In methodological terms, the notion of a total occupation may have an external as well as an internal validity and perhaps opens up further research possibilities. Whether there is the possibility of viewing other occupations or activities through this window becomes the point of departure for further research. Certainly seeing my own experience of nurse training through the window has given me the opportunity for self-reflection, consistent with a reflexive methodology, and offering an appropriate personal end to this research journey.

This study is however about the experiences of young people as they prepared and were prepared for a future as seafarers and it should end with a reflection on their centrality in this study. Becker remarked that *“No-one I studied ever cared much about what I wrote; they had far more important things to worry about.”* (Becker, 2007b:36), and this is probably true of the young people in this study who have now moved on to another phase of their lives. However it has remained very important to me that I have done justice to their voices, as individuals and as a group: voices that have largely gone unheard in the past. As this study has unfolded, cadets have talked about their training experiences with the full gamut of emotions including humour, excitement, sadness and, anger. In searching for just one expression of cadetship that might represent my own lasting impression of the cadets, I have selected one which captures the seriousness of the occupation for which they were training. The cadets I met were fully aware of the occupational responsibilities that lay ahead for them and looking through the window for the last time, I see the cadets and the occupation for which they were training with both admiration and respect.

Interviewee:

“I think that when you’re a cadet, you have the sense of – well I have no responsibilities and I just do what I’m told and keep my head down and keep out of mischief. But then ... you get taught what it’s all about and how much is actually involved and what kind of figures you’re talking if anything goes wrong, jail time and everything else. And you sort of wake up to the fact that in a couple of months you will be qualified, you will be the officer on the watch and if anything does go wrong, it will be you that’s standing in court.”

(Dan/05/D/22/XL)

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# **Appendix 1**

**Example of Indexed Page from Hill (1972)**

164. A 25-year-old Second Officer said, "The older ships are generally the happier ships—the ships where the accommodation wasn't so grand—things appear much tougher and rougher—the people are much more friendly and everyone got on better. On modern ships, they are air-conditioned, but it's more divided. Everyone goes into their own cabins and that's their house. It's like suburbia at sea and that's all it is. Older ships make people mix more. There's no air-conditioning, so people go up on the verandah with a couple of cases of beer and have a sing-song."

B12 ✓  
165. In other ways too the seafarer experiences modern developments as removing some of the real and symbolic satisfactions of seafaring or as distorting or devaluing certain skills. One example occurs in the modern passenger liner explicitly designed as an hotel rather than as a mode of transport and relying for its economic survival on skills of catering rather than seamanship. A further instance is the container ship, where the seafarer loses the satisfaction of knowing what cargo is being carried and plays little part in its handling and stowing. The individual skills of navigation are also perceived as being increasingly eroded by technology.

c) *Alienation from the Shore*

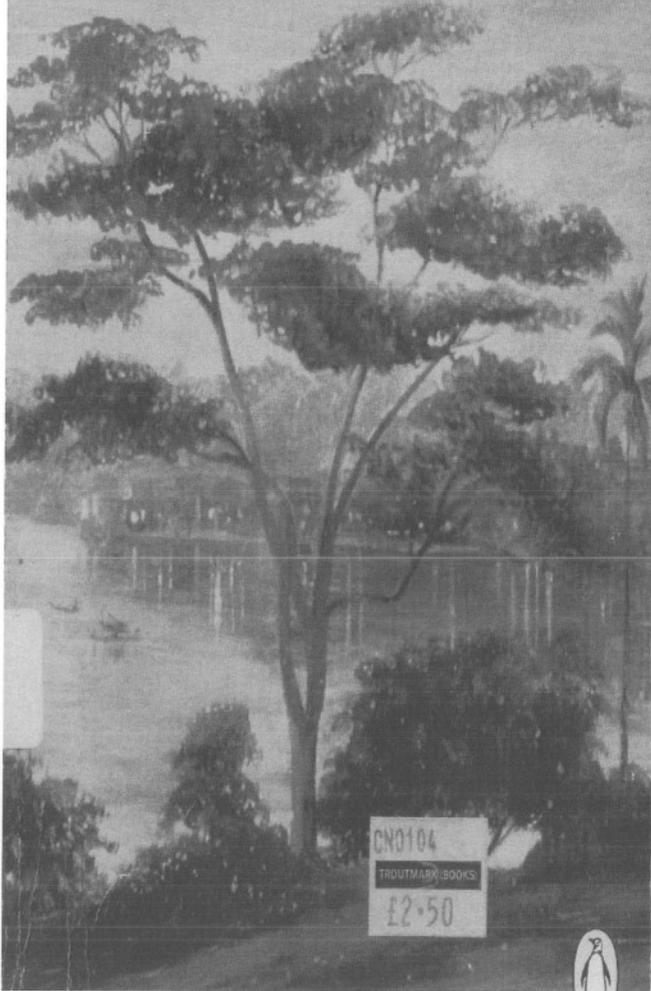
A1313 ✓  
A1211 ✓  
166. If one had to select one word to describe the seafarer's relationship with the rest of society that word might be "alienation". To some extent this arises as a result of what is often termed the "unnatural" life that the seafarer has chosen but the problems inherent in this are said by seafarers to be exacerbated by the attitude of those on shore and the widest consensus of agreement among seafarers concerns the relation between ship and shore. From all ranks at all levels one hears the view that between the shoreside officials of the shipping company and the seafarer there is a wall that is extremely difficult to penetrate. "Shoreside", it is said, "just don't want to know." They treat you "like bits of machinery" and so long as they man the ships so they can sail are relatively indifferent to the sailor's needs. They don't tell you when you are sailing, where you are going, how long you will be away, when you go on leave, etc., etc. Moreover, it is noticeable that these complaints that the sailor is treated as less than human are not only

## **Appendix 2**

**Example of Indexed Page from Conrad (1898/1975)**

JOSEPH CONRAD

*Youth and The End of the Tether*



CN0104

TROUTMAYR BOOKS

£2.50



400 tons, had a primitive windlass, wooden latches to the doors, not a bit of brass about her, and a big square stern. There was on it, below her name in big letters, a lot of scrollwork, with the gilt off, and some sort of a coat of arms, with the motto "Do or Die" underneath. I remember it took my fancy immensely. There was a touch of romance in it, something that made me love the old thing – something that appealed to my youth!

x 'We left London in ballast – sand ballast – to load a cargo of coal in a northern port for Bangkok. Bangkok! I thrilled. I had been six years at sea, but had only seen Melbourne and Sydney, very good places, charming places in their way – but Bangkok!

'We worked out of the Thames under canvas, with a North Sea pilot on board. His name was Jermyn, and he dodged all day long about the galley drying his handkerchief before the stove. Apparently he never slept. He was a dismal man, with a perpetual tear sparkling at the end of his nose, who either had been in trouble, or was in trouble, or expected to be in trouble – couldn't be happy unless something went wrong. He mistrusted my youth, my common-sense, and my seamanship, and made a point of showing it in a hundred little ways. I dare say he was right. It seems to me I knew very little then, and I know not much more now; but I cherish a hate for that Jermyn to this day.

'We were a week working up as far as Yarmouth Roads, and then we got into a gale – the famous October gale of twenty-two years ago. It was wind, lightning, sleet, snow, and a terrific sea. We were flying light, and you may imagine how bad it was when I tell you we had smashed bulwarks and a flooded deck. On the second night she shifted her ballast into the lee bow, and by that time we had been blown off somewhere on the Dogger Bank. There was nothing for it but to go below with shovels and try to right her, and there we were in that vast hold, gloomy like a cavern, the tallow dips stuck and flickering on the beams, the gale howling above, the ship tossing about like mad on her side; there we all were, Jermyn, the captain, every one, hardly able to keep our feet, engaged on that gravedigger's work, and trying to toss shovelfuls of wet sand up to windward. At every tumble of the ship you could see vaguely in the dim light men falling down with a great flourish of shovels. One of the ship's boys (we had two), impressed by the weirdness of the scene, wept as if

C1/1/1

B12

# **Appendix 3**

## **Pilot Interview Schedule**

## Pilot Interview Schedule

### March 2002

- I anticipate each interview lasting about an hour and a half
- I will introduce the research topic and my own professional background and interests
- Assurance re. confidentiality and consent to record interview
- Establish background of individual, age, stage of training, motivation for career at sea
- Tell me about life as a cadet ...at sea
  - Tell me about the things that are particularly good
  - And the things that aren't so good
  - Relationships with crew
    - Who do spend time with
    - Time on your own
    - Nationalities
  - Off duty life
    - What do you enjoy doing
- Tell me about life as a cadet.....in college
  - Tell me about the things that are particularly good
  - And the things that aren't so good
  - Relationships within college staff/other cadets
- Difference between experiences at sea and in college
- How does all this relate to life at home?
- Their future plans
- Their general views and ideas on the research topic

# **Appendix 4**

## **Profile of Interviewees**

**Profile of Main Study Interviewees**

<b>Identifier</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age at first interview</b>	<b>Course Deck (D) or Engineer (E)</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Month and year of first Interview</b>	<b>Month and year of second interview</b>
1. Emma	F	21	E	XL	C	March 2004	Completed
2. Nathan	M	17	D	XL	C	February 2004	Not Available
3. Dan	M	21	D	XL	B	March 2004	June 2005
4. Luke	M	17	D	AM	B	March 2004	Not available
5. Jack	M	20	D	XL	C	January 2004	Resigned
6. Stuart	M	19	D	XL	A	May 2004	May 2005
7. Josh	M	24	D	XL	C	January 2004	May 2005
8. Andy	M	20	D	AM	C	February 2004	April 2005
9. Mark	M	24	D	XL	A	May 2004	Resigned
10. Angus	M	17	E	SS	B	March 2004	Not available
11. Calum	M	24	E	XL	A	November 2003	Completed
12. Graham	M	18	D	XL	A	May 2004	May 2005
13. Sam	M	22	D	XL	C	February 2004	Resigned
14. Rory	M	20	D	XL	A	November 2003	Not available
15. Stephen	M	18	D	XL	A	November 2003	May 2005
16. Richard	M	18	D	XL	A	May 2004	May 2005
17. Sarah	F	22	E	XL	C	February 2004	April 2005
18. Ian	M	23	D	SS	A	February 2004	April 2005
19. Neil	M	23	D	XL	C	May 2004	May 2005
20. Michael	M	20	D	XL	A	May 2004	Resigned
21. David	M	19	D	AM	C	February 2004	April 2005
22. Charlotte	F	21	D	XL	A	May 2004	May 2005
23. Pete	M	19	E	AM	C	March 2004	Completed
24. Robert	M	24	D	AM	C	February 2004	Resigned
25. Alan	M	19	E	XL	C	March 2004	Completed

# **Appendix 5**

## **Study-Specific Questionnaire**

SIRC  
Logo

Unique  
Number

**Questionnaire A**

1. Your age

yrs

2. Which gender are you? Please tick whichever box applies

F

M

3. The name of the town or place you call home \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which training course are you taking? \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g. Deck Officer/Engineer)

5. Which college are you studying in? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who is your sponsoring Company? \_\_\_\_\_

7. When did your training begin?

mth

Yr

8. How long have you spent at sea since your training began?

mths

days

9. How many sea trips have you undertaken?

10. Which type/s of ships have you been on as a cadet? Tick as many boxes as apply.

- a. Container
- b. Oil Tanker
- c. Gas Tanker
- d. Passenger Ferry
- e. Freight ferry
- f. Cruise Ship
- g. Bulk carrier
- h. Other -  Please Specify \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please read the following statements:

A "I just sort of stumbled into cadet training. It wasn't planned really. It gives me qualifications and pays me. I can't say I always had a lifelong ambition to go to sea"

B " Going to sea is something I've just always wanted to do, it has always held an attraction for me"

Which statement better reflects your own point of view? Tick one box

A	B
---	---

12a. Had you any experience of being at sea before you started your training? E.g. Sea Scouts. Please tick whichever box applies

Yes	No
-----	----

If you have answered No, go straight to Q13a

If you answered Yes, go to Q 12b



12b. Please describe what experience at sea you had?

13a. Did you do any other paid job before starting your cadetship? (don't count jobs you may have done while you were in school)

Yes



If you answered Yes, go to Q 13b



13b. Please describe the last job you had.

No



If you have answered No, go straight to Q14

13c. How long were you in that job?

Yrs

Mths

Wks

14. When you first thought about marine cadet training was it because of

a. Careers Advice at school or college?

b. Magazine/Newspaper Advertisement

c. Job centre Advertisement

d. Word of mouth

e. Other

Please Specify \_\_\_\_\_

15a. Have any of your family been seafarers? (e.g. Merchant Navy, Royal Navy, Fishing etc.)

Yes

No

If you answered Yes, go to Q 15b

If you answered No, go straight to Q16

15b. Please describe who they were (eg. mother, uncle) and what was the last job/s they had.

16. Which of these reasons attracted you to a career at sea? Tick as many boxes as apply

a. See the world

b. Good pay

c. Love of the sea

d. Learn skills you can use in land jobs

e. Others find it glamorous

f. Leave behind worries of everyday life

g. Meet people from many different backgrounds

Other -

Please Specify -----

17. Do you believe that so far, life at sea so far has lived up to your expectations? Please tick one box

a. Yes

b. No

c. Don't know

18. Please read this statement:

" I think that being at sea teaches you how to get on with people from different backgrounds, with different nationalities and different ages. It develops your social skills."

Please tick the box that best describes how you feel about this statement

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

19. "It's difficult being cooped up with the same people all the time. It gets you down. You can't really get away from them, you're either working with them or in the bar with them."

Please tick the box that best describes how you feel about this statement

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

20a. When you have free time at sea do you socialise with others?

Please tick one box

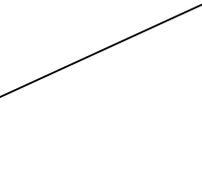
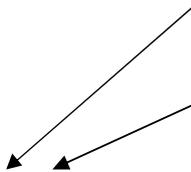
Very often

Often

Occasionally

Rarely

Never



Please go to Q20b

If you have answered Never, go to Q21



20b. When you are socialising at sea do you spend time with the following groups? Tick as many boxes as apply.

a. Other cadets ( if on board)

b. Crew

c. Senior Officers

d. Junior Officers

e. Other,

Please describe\_\_\_\_\_

21. When you have free time on your own at sea which of the following do you do? Tick as many boxes as apply

a. Read

b. Write letters

- c. Watch videos
- d. Listen to music

- e. Listen to the radio

- f. Nothing in particular

22. Which of these three statements do you think **best** describes you? Tick one of the boxes

- a. " I am very sociable and prefer being with others rather than in my own company"

- b. " I am quite sociable but I enjoy my own company too"

- c. " I prefer keeping myself to myself"

23. Do you feel lonely when you are at sea? Please tick one box

Very often

Often

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

24. Do you feel lonely when you are in college? Please tick one box

Very often

Often

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

25. Please consider this statement and then tick one box

" I would describe my ability to get on well with others as.....

a. "Better than most"

b. "About average"

c. "Weaker than most"

26. Your experience at sea will be as part of multi-national crews. Which statements describe your feelings about this aspect of ship life? You may tick more than one box,

a. "I find it adds variety and interest and I value it"

b. " It doesn't bother me much, I don't really think about it"

c. "It makes me feel uncomfortable, relationships can get very tense"

d. " Some nationalities are great to work with, others are really difficult"

27a. Please tick the box that **best** describes how you feel about this statement

"During my cadetship I have found it very difficult to keep up most of my old friendships from home"

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If you have ticked either of these boxes, go to Q27b

Go straight to Q28

27b. What do you think the reasons for this could be? Tick the boxes which you feel are true for you.

a. "It's difficult for friends to understand what life at sea is like, so you have nothing in common anymore"

b. "When you're home on leave, your friends are in work or college. You have free time when they don't"

c. " I always have money to spend when I'm on leave, most of my friends don't"

d. "Their lives have moved on and I feel out of touch with them"

e. Other

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

28. Please tick the box that **best** describes how you feel about this statement

" Going away to sea makes you appreciate the friends who matter to you back home".

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

29. Which of these best describes your own current circumstances?

Please tick all of which apply

Married

Partner  
(more than one year)

Partner  
(less than one yr)

More than one partner

No current partners

30. Do you think that during your training it is difficult to sustain a relationship with a partner because of being away at sea? Please tick whichever applies

Yes

No

Undecided

31a. Have you ever had a personal relationship with a crew member on the same ship which started when you were at sea?

Yes

No



If you have answered No, go straight to Q32

If you answered Yes,  
Go to Q31b



31b Did this relationship continue when you left that ship? Please tick one box.

Yes

No

32. Please tick the box that best describes how you feel about this statement

"One of the things I like about being at sea is that you can get away from your relatives"

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

33a. When you are at sea, do you contact friends and /or family?

Yes

No

If you answered Yes, go straight to Q 33c

If you have answered No, go to Q33b

33b. "I don't contact friends &/or family when I am at sea because....."

Please tick the box that best describes your reasons

- a. I like to keep my life at sea and life on shore quite separate
- b. I don't have anyone I want to keep in touch with
- c. The practical difficulties of keeping in touch are too great
- d. Too expensive
- e. Other

Please specify\_\_\_\_\_

Now go straight to Q34

33c. Tick whichever boxes apply; you may tick more than one box.

By post

By phone

By email

By fax

Mobile

Satellite

Shore-based

Other: Please specify\_\_\_\_\_

33d. How often do you make contact with friends and/or family when you are at sea?

At least daily

At least weekly

At least monthly

Less than once a month

34a. Would you describe yourself as a healthy person for your age? Please tick either box.

Yes



Go straight to Q35a

No

→ Please go to Q34b

34b What health problems do you have? Please describe

35a. Are you a cigarette smoker?

Yes



Go to Q35b

No

→ Please go straight to Q36a

35b. How many cigarettes do you smoke in a day on average?

0-5

6-10

11-20

21+

35c. Have you ever tried giving up smoking?

Yes

No

36a. Please tick the box that best describes how often you drink alcohol

- a. Daily
- b. More than once a week but not daily
- c. Once a week
- d. Very occasionally
- e. Never  → Go straight to Q37

36b. Do you ever worry that you might be drinking too much?

- Yes       No  → Go straight to Q37
- ↓

36c. Have you ever sought advice because of this?

- Yes       No  → Go straight to Q37
- ↓

36d. Who have you asked for advice?

37. How important do you think food on board can be? Tick the boxes you feel reflect your views. You can tick more than one.

- a. "A good cook can really improve morale on board"
- b. "A poor cook, no-one turns up for meals and less socialising is done"
- c. "Food becomes very important when you are sea; it's something to look forward to"

d. "It doesn't bother me particularly if the food isn't that great"

g. "It's difficult to eat what you'd call a healthy diet"

h. "I really look forward to being able to eat whatever and whenever I want"

38. What is your own opinion of your weight the moment? Please tick the most appropriate box.

a. "I think I'm just about the right weight for my height"

b. "I'd actually like to put on more weight"

c. "I think I'm probably overweight but it doesn't bother me"

d. "I'm definitely heavier than I should be but I don't do anything about it"

e. "I am overweight and I'm actively trying to reduce it"

f. "My weight varies a lot depending on whether I'm at sea or at home"

g. "I'm probably underweight but I'm not trying to put on weight"

39. Is the difficulty of taking exercise at sea (excluding work itself) something which you find frustrating?

Yes

No

40. If the ship you are on has a gym, do you use it?

Yes

No

41a. On any of your sea trips, has there been a ship's doctor available?

Yes       No  → Go straight to Q42a

↓

41b. Have you ever consulted the ships doctor?

Yes       No  → Go straight to Q42a

↓

41c. What was the reason for your consultation? (remember your responses will not be traceable back to you)

42a. Have you ever consulted the health services in college?

Yes       No  → Go straight to Q43a

↓

42b. What was the reason for your consultation? (remember your responses will not be traceable back to you)

43a. Do you feel in very low spirits when you are at sea?

<input type="checkbox"/>				
Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

Diagram showing arrows: An arrow from 'Very often' points to 'Often'. An arrow from 'Often' points to 'Often'. An arrow from 'Occasionally' points to 'Often'. An arrow from 'Rarely' points to 'Never'. An arrow from 'Never' points to 'Never'.

If you have ticked any of these boxes, go to Q43b

Go straight to Q44

43b. When you feel in very low spirits at sea, what do you do? Please tick whichever boxes apply

- a. Nothing and hope it passes off
- b. Talk things over with another crew member as a friend
- c. Talk to a senior officer
- d. Contact friends/family onshore
- e. Seek medical advice
- f. Other,

Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

44. In your experience, do you feel that to get the best out of life at sea do you think it is better to:

- a. Be assertive and stand up for yourself
- or
- b. Keep your head down and avoid trouble

Please tick one box.

45 Leading on from that, which description best fits you IN GENERAL? (We all respond differently in different situations) Please tick one box.

a. Assertive

or

b. Lacking in confidence

46. Please could you read this story:

James has just completed his Deck Officer training. He's got a position as a Third Mate and will be off on a 4-month sea trip soon. While he was a cadet, he ran up a lot of debt which he has to clear. He isn't looking forward to going to sea but doesn't know what other job he could get which would pay him as much. He calls it "the money trap."

46a. Do you think James will remain as a seafarer for the next

Less than a year

1-5yrs

6-10yrs

11-20yrs

21+yrs

Please tick the box you think most likely.

46b. Do you feel you are in "The Money Trap"?

  
Yes  
No

47. At this moment, how many years do you think you might stay at sea after you qualify? Please tick the box you think most likely.

Less than a year

1-5yrs

6-10yrs

11-20yr

21+yrs

Not at all

Go straight to Q49

48. If you gave any answer to Q47 other than "not at all", what would be your own reasons for staying at sea after qualifying: Please mark the boxes 1,2,3 etc through to 8 in order of most importance to you with 1 as the most important.

- a. See the world
- b. Good pay
- c. Love of the sea
- d. Good career prospects
- e. Learn skills you can use in land jobs
- f. Others find it glamorous
- g. Leave behind worries of everyday life
- h. Meet people from many different backgrounds

Now go straight to Q50

49. If you answered "not at all" to Q47, what do you intend doing? Please tick the box you think most likely.

- a. Find a job on land
- b. Take up Further Education
- c. Other
- d. Don't know

50. Another story:

"Mike does four month deep sea trips. He enjoys life at sea. His wife stays at home. They have agreed that a ship is no place for a married couple although others may do it. Mike knows his wife wants to start a family and is getting impatient with his long absences. He worries about what is happening back home while he is away"

Do you think Mike will:

a. Remain as a seafarer for his career and continue to worry about home?

b. Remain as a seafarer and accept the difficulties this causes at home?

c. Get a land job and settle down?

d. Get a land job and always feel restless?

Please tick the box you think most likely.

51. If you were Mike what do you think you would do in his circumstances?

Please tick the box you think most likely.

a. Remain as a seafarer for his career and continue to worry about home?

b. Remain as a seafarer and accept the difficulties this causes at home?

c. Get a land job and settle down?

d. Get a land job and always feel restless?

52. "I enjoy life at sea. I can't really find the words to describe it. There is nothing else like it"

Please tick the box that best describes how you feel about this statement

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

53. In your experience, do you think most cadets would:

a. Agree

b. Disagree

with the statement above. Please tick one box.

54. "Life at sea? There's nothing to do. You just spend the time just wishing you were somewhere else."

Please tick the box that best describes how you feel about this statement

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

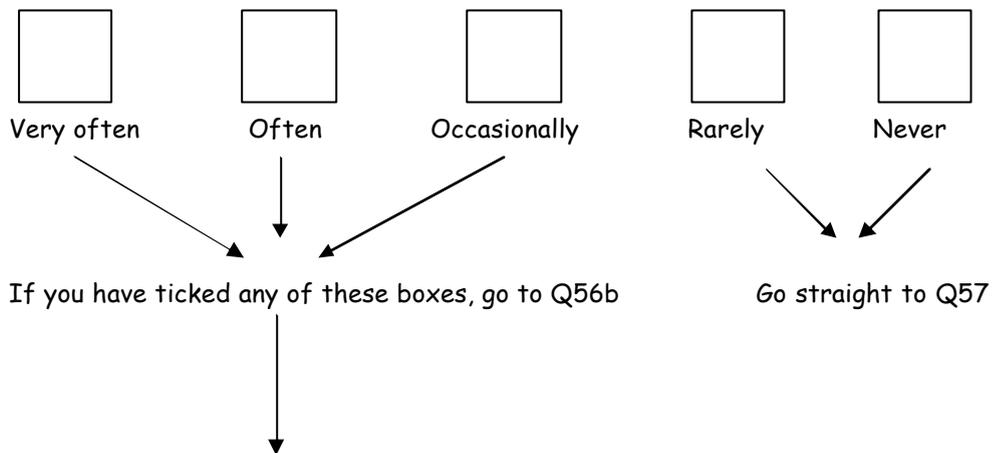
55. In your experience, do you think most cadets would:

Agree

Disagree

with the statement above. Please tick one box.

56a. Do you find yourself bored by life at sea? Please tick one of the boxes



56b. Are any of the following explanations for the boredom at sea? Please tick whichever boxes apply for you:

- a. Limited social life
- b. Lack of choice in everyday matters (eg Food)
- c. Monotony of the tasks
- d. Feeling in low spirits
- e. Physically confined

AND FINALLY!

57. Is there is anything you would like to add on how you feel about your life as a cadet? Please feel free to write here.

# **Appendix 6**

## **General Health Questionnaire**

## **Scaled Version of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg and Hillier 1979)**

We should like to know if you have had any medical complaints, and how your health has been in general, *over the past few weeks*. Please answer ALL the questions on the following pages simply by underlining the answer which you think most applies to you. Remember that we want to know about present and recent complaints, not those that you have had in the past. It is important that you try to answer ALL the questions. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

### **HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

#### **A1 Been feeling perfectly well and in good health?**

Better than usual      Same as usual      Worse than usual      Much Worse than usual

#### **A2 Been feeling in need of some medicine to pick you up?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **A3 Been feeling run down and out of sorts?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **A4 Felt that you are ill?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **A5 Been getting any pains in your head?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **A6 Been getting a feeling of tightness or pressure in your head?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **A7 Been having hot or cold spells?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **B1 Lost much sleep over worry?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

#### **B2 Had difficulty staying asleep?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**B3 Felt constantly under strain?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**B4 Been getting edgy and bad-tempered?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**B5 Been getting scared or panicky for no good reason?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**B6 Found everything getting on top of you?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**B7 Been feeling nervous and up-tight all the time?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**C1 Been managing to keep yourself busy and occupied?**

More so than usual      Same as usual      Rather less than usual      Much less than usual

**C2 Been taking longer over the things you do?**

Quicker than usual      Same as usual      Longer than usual      Much longer than usual

**C3 Felt on the whole you were doing things well?**

Better than usual      About the same      Less well than usual      Much less well

**C4 Been satisfied with the way you've carried out your tasks?**

More satisfied      About the same      Less satisfied than usual      Much less satisfied

**C5 Felt you were playing a useful part in things?**

More so than usual      Same as usual      Rather less than usual      Much less than usual

**C6 Felt capable of making decisions about things?**

More so than usual      Same as usual      Rather less than usual      Much less than usual

**C7 been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?**

More so than usual      Same as usual      Rather less than usual      Much less than usual

**D1 Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**D2 Felt that life is entirely hopeless?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**D3 Felt that life isn't worth living?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**D4 Thought of the possibility you might do away with yourself?**

Definitely not    I don't think so    Has crossed my mind      Definitely have

**D5 Found at times you couldn't do anything because your nerves were too bad?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**D6 Found yourself wishing you were dead and away from it all?**

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**D7 Found that the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind?**

Definitely not    I don't think so    Has crossed my mind      Definitely have

Many thanks for completing this questionnaire booklet. Now that you have filled it in, please remember to put it in the stamped addressed envelope and post it back to me! Your views are important and your help is much appreciated.

Elizabeth Gould

# **Appendix 7**

## **Main Interview Schedule**

## **Main Interview Schedule**

*"The essence of questioning is to lay bare and to keep alert for possibilities"*  
Gadamer, H.G., 1979, in Rabinow P. and W.Sullivan Eds. *Interpretive Social Science*. Berkley: University of California Press

These interviews will be with cadets who have already completed and returned the questionnaires. The interview schedule is developed from the pilot interviews and group interview already carried out in April and June 2002. These preliminary interviews helped me to formulate my thinking on the research topic and isolate possible themes; the responses have informed Questionnaire A and this interview schedule

I anticipate each interview lasting about an hour with a maximum of one and a half hours.

### **1. Research Study Information**

- Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed
- Recap on the purpose of the research. The questionnaires and the interview data are about the same topics.
- Mention my own professional background and interests
- Assurance re. confidentiality and anonymity and obtain consent to record interview

### **2. Personal Details**

- Can you start by just telling me a bit about yourself:
  - your age
  - where you're from
  - the stage of training you have reached
  - why you chose a career at sea

### **3. Experience at sea so far**

- Can you tell me about the sea trips you have done so far?
- Which of those trips did you enjoy most/least
- Why?
- How do you feel about your next sea trip?

### **4. Relationships at sea**

- I wanted to ask you about life at sea first of all
- What has been your experience of getting on with other members of the crew?
- How does a multinational crew affect life?
- How would you describe the social life you have at sea?
- Have you been a sea with female as well as male seafarers?
- (if yes) how do you think that affects the interactions of the crew?

- Other cadets have described the demarcation lines between officers and crew as difficult to get used to, do you have any views on this?
- Anything more?

#### **5. Feelings about being at sea**

- Can you tell me what words you would use to describe your feelings about being at sea? (If stuck refer back to adjectives which appear in the questionnaire; offer one positive and one negative eg boring, stimulating)
- Some cadets have tried to describe to me the very powerful attraction of the sea for them. How does such a feeling seem to you?
- Do you feel differently about the sea when you are at sea and when you are back onshore?

#### **6. Emotional health**

- The following questions are linked to the ones above really.....I've used the phrase emotional health, because I want to know about how it feels to be a cadet at sea. Can you help me understand that? (If stuck go on to next question)
- Can we talk about the things that might upset you when you are at sea?  
Can you remember an example of when you got angry?  
Have there been times when you felt frightened at all?  
Has there been an occasion when you have felt really sad?
- And positive times, when you have felt really happy?
- I am also interested in what could be described as moods .....  
Do you get lonely when you are at sea  
Is boredom something you experience when you are at sea?

#### **7. Relationships at home**

I've asked you a lot about actually being at sea but the questionnaire also asked quite a lot about keeping in touch with family and friends back home.....

- How do you feel about keeping up with relationships at home when you are at sea? A) with family b) with friends
- Do you mind if I ask if you have a girlfriend right now?
- *If yes:* Can you describe your relationship with her?
- How do you think your being at sea affects that relationship?
- And sexually?
- *If no:* Do you think being at sea has made this difficult?
- Has being at sea affected any past relationships you may have had?
- Can you tell me about your feelings when you are about to return home from sea?

### **8. Physical health**

The questionnaire had a whole section on what I'd describe as the more physical aspects of health:

- How would you describe yourself in terms of physical health?
- Have you had any health problems?
- If yes, what have you done about them?
- Cigarettes
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Weight
- Importance of food at sea
- Taking exercise
- Sexual health
- Seasickness?
- Sleeplessness

### **9. College Life**

I'm interested in the whole of the training programme which you undertake and so I'd like to ask you a bit about your time in college

- How do you feel about the College
  - a) as a place to be
  - b) as a training institution
- What do you like/dislike about the College
- Do you think your views on College life have changed in the time since you started?
- How do think the College blocks prepare you for being at sea?
- (Depending on response)...Do you think the training could be done differently?

### **10. Views of the Future**

- When you think about the future, how do you see it looking for you?
- (If forsee a life at sea), can you describe it?
- Do you see yourself as a Master, chief engineer?
- Is there a type of trade you would particularly want to work on, (cruise ships?)
- (If forsee leaving the sea), why would this be and what do you hope to do?
- Why do you think it is getting so hard to recruit and retain seafarers?
- What do think companies could do to make working life better for seafarers?

### **11. Self description**

- Can you give me a quick description of yourself as a person....a sort of pen picture? What do you think you're like? ( if they have difficulty refer to questionnaire question 45 on being assertive/lacking in confidence) If they give adjectives, ask for an example eg, can you give me an example of where you have been lacking in confidence?

- How do you think your friends would describe you?
- Do you think that you have changed as a person over the past year?
- What has caused those changes?

**12. Concluding Questions**

- Interview is now over, are there any other comments that you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
- Many thanks for participating
- I hope that it will be possible to re - interview you again in a years time (explain why)

# **Appendix 8**

## **Final Indexing Framework**

# **The Cadet Experience as Seafarer**

## **A: RELATIONSHIPS**

### ***A/1: WITH OTHER SEAFARERS*** (At sea)

- A/1/1: WITH CAPTAINS
- A/1/2: WITH OFFICERS
- A/1/3: WITH OTHER CADETS
- A/1/4: WITH NON –OFFICERS
- A/1/5: GENDERED RELATIONSHIPS
- A/1/6: INTERGENERATIONAL
- A/1/7: HARASSMENT/BULLYING
- A/1/8 MULTI-CULTURAL AND RACIAL
- A/1/9 CREW IN GENERAL

### ***A/2: BACK HOME***

- A/2/1: WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS WHILST AT SEA
- A/2/2: SUSTAINING PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS
- A/2/3: WITH SPONSOR COMPANY

### ***A/3: HANDLING RELATIONSHIPS - EMOTIONAL***

- A/3/1: COPING STRATEGIES WHILST AT SEA
- A/3/2 LOW SPIRITS/DEPRESSION/LONELINESS
- A/3/3: RECONCILING SEA AND SHORE LIFE (OSCILLATION)
- A/3/4: PREPARING TO RETURN TO SEA

### ***A/4 SOCIAL***

- A/4/1: USE OF ALCOHOL
- A/4/2 LEISURE TIME

### ***A/5 VIEW OF SELF***

- A/5/1 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
- A/5/2 AS SEAFARER

## **B: TASKS/COMPETENCES**

- B/1: COMPLETING PORTFOLIO
- B/2: DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES
- B/3: SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY
- B/4: MONOTONY OF JOB/BOREDOM
- B/5: HARD WORK
- B/6: AT RISK
- B/7: INITIATION
- B/8 VIEWS re COMPLETION
- B/9 COMPETENCE OF OTHERS
- B/10 THE CADET ROLE

## **C EXPECTATIONS, ASPIRATIONS AND ANXIETIES**

### ***C/1 EXPECTATIONS***

- C/1/1 PRE COURSE EXPECTATIONS
- C/1/2: MATCHED EXPECTATIONS
- C/1/3: EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS
- C/1/4: REGRET AND FAILED EXPECTATIONS
- C/1/5 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SEAFARER
- C/1/6 MIXED RESPONSE TO EXPECTATIONS

### ***C/2 ASPIRATIONS***

- C/2/1: FOR CAREER AT SEA
- C/2/2: FOR SEA RELATED JOB ON LAND
- C/2/3: FOR NON-SEA RELATED JOB ON QUALIFYING
- C/2/4: FOR GAINING TICKET
- C/2/5: UNCERTAINTY RE ASPIRATIONS

### ***C/3 ANXIETIES***

- C/3/1: ABOUT FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS AT SEA
- C/3/2: COMPATABILITY WITH FAMILY LIFE
- C/3/3: FINANCIAL ISSUES

## **D MISCELLANEOUS**

### ***D/1 PHYSICAL HEALTH***

- D/1/1: SLEEP
- D/1/2: WEIGHT
- D/1/3: FOOD

### ***D/2 TONNAGE TAX***

### ***D/3 ATTRITION RATES***

### ***D/4 PAY***

### ***D/5 METHOD***

# **Appendix 9**

## **Example of Cadet File**

**Example of a Cadet file created from relevant interview extracts.**

**Code A/2/1 Relationships back home**

**Cadet 22**

**Page 8 Line 23**

So er, I offered to do two trips back to back, so that woulda been er, sixteen weeks but er, my dad fell really ill in hospital and

*Ah*

Erm, well, they didn't expect him to survive more than a week,

*Oh*

I discovered when I got back

*Oh dear*

I didn't know that, cos nobody told me but erm, it was, I, I knew my dad wasn't well, I knew he was in hospital and er, aye, yeah, I shouldn't of offered to do

*Oh, bless you*

Two trips back to back, I ended up leaving after a few months but

*What, they rang?*

The email, the email system had gone down after about two and a half months and it, the cost of phoning home, I just, I couldn't afford to phone home

*Mmm, mmm*

And my mum was there and like, they had, testing his health.

*Where do you, oh in, , the hospital?*

Yeah, so its, yeah it was, I was stuck on a boat and my dad was in hospital and he was getting.

So, yeah, it was, it was hard because

*Yeah*

Erm, being in a foreign country, I, I couldn't, there wasn't anybody I was gonna speak to about it

*No, no*

The crew had changed and although I still got on really well with all the crew, I didn't know them well enough to talk to anybody, I'd, I had, I'm the sort of person who bottles things up a lot anyway, so I wouldn't have actually gone and said to one of my friends, I don't suppose

*Mmm, mmm*

But when there wasn't anybody there that I could even say to

*Mmm*

Made it a bit harder but er, erm, no, it was a brilliant trip, anyway but I'm certainly glad to be back [home]

*But then, your mum said you, rang and said you need to come home, or what?*

Well, no, my mum, my mum would always be like, you know, she's career first, career first, then

*Protect you from -?*

Yeah, yeah, definitely. I mean, she didn't even tell me how ill my dad was, it wasn't 'til I'd got back that I found out that they hadn't expected him to still be alive. Once I got off erm, once I got off the vessel, it took another five days or something before I got home anyway

*Oh, Golly*

So, I mean, that was alright, it was a nice wee holiday for me but

*Ahah*

But if I'd have known how ill my dad had been, I wouldn't a

*You'd have been -*

*Taken that long*

*Panicking a bit*

So, yeah, my mum knew that as well, which is why she didn't tell me

*Mmm, mmm, mmm*

She knew, she said, like, 'come home' and it, if we'd a been out at sea, it could of taken up to two weeks for me to get home, so

*Right, right*

I think that's why my mum's never said anything

*No, so what happened when you got back to Glasgow to see him?*

Er, well, mmm, my dad went and the day that I got back was the day that he'd had tests and he was, [in trouble] but erm, that was er, the beginning of December and I, I was starting back at college on the sixth of January

### **Page 27 Line 28**

if one of my friends came back, [and they'd been to London], I'd be like, 'wow,

*Yeah LAUGHS*

tell me all about it' but I normally go back to **Eilog**, some friends that haven't really left the island and they, they don't like to hear it

*Mmm*

partly because they're jealous but partly because they just can't relate to it at all

*No, no*

And er, to start with, I mean I'd gone back from London, I was like, "well . . ."

*Yeah*

wanting to tell them loads of stories

*Yeah*

And it felt like a big kick in the teeth when I couldn't, so by the time I'd been away to sea, I knew that I couldn't come back and

*Mmm*

Like go er, ranting

*Mmm*

and raving about, like, all my stories

*[Mmm]*

but erm, I certainly, I always have an adjustment couple of days, first couple of days I get back from, whether its back to **Eilog** from Glasgow, or from sea

*Uhum*

it always, it does, like, I'll go quiet for a couple of days, whereas if

### **Page 30 Line 14**

I mean, my snobbish side comes back, I do, sort of, look down my nose a bit at my friends and I don't like doing that but I know that I've, they're with me on the same level and I just know that I've experienced so much more, I know so much more than them and I wish it could just *show* them everything that

*Yeah*

I've seen, you know?

# **Appendix 10**

## **Example of Coding and Linking Data**

<b>Integrating Interview and Questionnaire data on relationships</b>		
<b>Coding Category when analysing Interview Data</b>		<b>Questionnaire data</b>
<b>A/1 Relationships with other seafarers</b>		
A/1/1	With Captains	
A/1/2	With officers	
A/1/3	With other cadets	
A/1/4	With non-officers	
A/1/5	Gendered	
A/1/6	Intergenerational	
A/1/7	Harassment/Bullying	
A/1/8	Multi-Cultural and Racial	A26
A/1/9	Crew in general	A18, A19
<b>A/2 Relationships back home</b>		
A/2/1	With family/friends whilst at sea	A27, A28, A32, A33
A/2/2	Sustaining partner relationships	A,29,A30, A31
A/2/3	With sponsor Company	
<b>A/3 Handling Relationships - Emotional</b>		
A/3/1	Coping Strategies whilst at sea	
A/3/2	Low spirits/ Depression/Loneliness	A23,A24,A43
A/3/3	Reconciling sea and shore life	
A/3/4	Preparing to return to sea	
<b>A/4 Social Relationships</b>		
A/4/1	Use of alcohol	A36
A/4/2	Leisure Time	A20, A21
<b>A/5 View of Self</b>		
A/5/1	Personal Characteristics	A22,A25,A44,A45
A/5/2	As seafarer	

# **Appendix 11**

## **Cadet Training Course Details**

## Deck HND Programme Structure

<b>Phase Location</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Phase Objective</b>
Phase 1 At College	6/8 weeks	Introduction, safety, general ship knowledge, and underpinning knowledge for N/SVQ (Level 2).
Phase 2 At Sea	24 weeks	Introduction to life at sea. Practical training and collection of performance evidence for N/SVQ (Level 2).
Phase 3 At College	23 weeks	Review of progress, assessment for N/SVQ (Level 2). HND Part 1 studies and underpinning knowledge for N/SVQ (Level 3).
Phase 4 At Sea	32 weeks	Practical training and collection of performance evidence for N/SVQ (Level 3). Navigational bridge watchkeeping.
Phase 5 At College	13 weeks	Interim review and assessment and completion of underpinning knowledge of N/SVQ (Level 3).
Phase 6 At Sea	32 weeks	Completion of N/SVQ performance evidence. Completion of bridge watchkeeping.
Phase 7 At College	28 weeks	Final assessment of N/SVQ (Level 3), completion of HND Part 2, and preparation for MCA OOW Oral Examination.

Source: Ship Safe Training Group <http://www.sstg.org/>

## Engineering HND Programme Structure

<b>Phase Location</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Phase Objective</b>
Phase 1 At College	15/26 weeks	Introduction, safety, general ship knowledge, and initial underpinning knowledge for N/SVQ (Level 3) and workshop training.
Phase 2 At Sea	24 weeks	Introduction to life at sea. Practical training and collection of performance evidence for N/SVQ (Level 3).
Phase 3 At College	40 weeks	Review of progress, and further underpinning knowledge for N/SVQ (Level 3).
Phase 4 At Sea	24 weeks	Practical training and completion of performance evidence for N/SVQ (Level 3). Engineering watchkeeping.
Phase 5 At College	24 weeks	Final assessment of N/SVQ (Level 3), completion of HND Part 2, and preparation for MCA OOW Oral Examination.

Source: Ship Safe Training Group <http://www.sstg.org/>

# **Appendix 12**

## **Explanation of Codes, Acronyms and Conventions**

## APPENDIX 12

### Explanation of codes, acronyms and conventions

<b>Key to codes</b>	
<b>Code</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
F	Female
M	Male
D	Deck cadet
E	Engineering cadet
AM	Ace Marine*
XL	Ocean XL*
SS	Star Shipping*

\* Pseudonyms

<b>Guide to acronyms</b>	
<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Referent</b>
CEC	Certificate of Equivalent Competency
CCM	Constant Comparative Method
CTC	Core Training Commitment
DWT	deadweight tonnage
EPA	End of Period Adjustments
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EEA	European Economic Area
FCC	First Certificate of Competency
FOC	flag of convenience
FdSc	Foundation Degree (Science)
FdEng	Foundation Degree (Engineering)
GHQ	General Health Questionnaire
HND	Higher National Diploma
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITF	International Transport Federation
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MET	Maritime Education and Training
MCFG	Maritime Charities Funding Group
MNOFP	Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund
MNTB	Merchant Navy Training Board
MREC	Multi-Research Ethics Committee
MSSC	Marine Society and Sea Cadets
MTO	Minimum Training Obligation
NUMAST	National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers
OOW	Officer Of the Watch
PILOT	Payments In Lieu Of Training
RMT	Rail, Maritime and Transport Union
SF-36	Short Form-36

SIRC	Seafarers International Research Centre
SMaRT	Support for Maritime Training scheme
SMD	Safe Manning Document
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
S/NVQ	Scottish/National Vocational Qualification
STCW	Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping
SWG	Shipping Working Group
TRB	Training Record Books
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Services

<b>Use of selected punctuation symbols</b>	
<b>Symbol (description)</b>	<b>Use</b>
... (three full stops, no spaces)	to indicate where text has been deleted from a quote
. . . (three full stops with spaces)	to indicate an interviewee pausing in interview transcripts
" " (pair of double inverted commas)	to indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the start and end of direct quotation from an interview or other data source, with attribution;</li> <li>- a phrase used directly a quote, usually with attribution</li> </ul>
' ' (pair of single inverted commas)	to indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a phrase taken from a source without attribution;</li> <li>- emphasis;</li> <li>- where a term is being introduced, the term being in italics;</li> <li>- reference to key phrase or term</li> </ul>
[ ]	To indicate relevant non verbal input eg [LAUGHS] [ACTION]