

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Women in Maritime Communities:

A Socio-Historical Study of Continuity and Change in the Domestic Lives of Seafarer's

Wives in the Åland Islands, from 1930 into the New Millennium.

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD

in the University of Hull

by

Hanna Charlotta Hagmark, BA (Lund), MA

September 2003

Preface

In 1997, as part of a documentation project, I interviewed Åland seamen about their personal experience of work aboard steamships in the mid-twentieth century. All of the informants were retired and some of them were old enough to have served in the world's last fleet of commercial windjammers, shipping grain from Australia to England, rounding the notorious Cape Horn *en route*. Most of the interviews were conducted in the informants' homes, sometimes with their wives present. On the odd occasion, a wife would offer a few comments, but normally she would linger dutifully in the background, ready to serve coffee and cake when there was a pause in the interviewing and the tape recorder was turned off for a brief moment. There was one exception, however, an exception that ultimately led to the writing of this thesis. As I was leaving after one of these interviews, the seafarer's wife stopped me at the door. She put her hand on my arm, looked at me and said:

It's us you should interview. It was us that were left to cope with everything on our own while he was away for long, long periods. We took care of everything and then when he came home we were just supposed to let go and let him take over. He was used to being in command at sea, so he wanted to be in command at home as well.

As she spoke, it became clear to me that she was not just speaking for herself but on behalf of all other seafarers' wives of her generation. Her words were provocative, almost like a challenge, but at the time I did not know how to tackle it. The chance came a few years later when I was given the opportunity to study for a PhD. Faced with choosing an area of research there was no doubt in my mind that the topic of my thesis should be the role of women in maritime communities, in particular the situation of seafarers' wives in the Åland Isles in the twentieth century.

There are a great number of people to whom I am indebted. First and foremost I would like to give my sincere thanks to all the seafarers' wives who so openly and willingly

openly and willingly shared their experiences with me. It goes without saying that this thesis would not exist had it not been for their generosity. The friendship between the late Dr Basil Greenhill and Captain Justus Harberg was also paramount to my embarking on this project. It was their idea that the old maritime connection between Hull and Åland should be honoured by persuading an Ålander to study maritime history at Hull University. This led me down the academic path, and for that I am grateful. Throughout the project, I have been much reliant on my supervisor Dr David J. Starkey. He has given me invaluable advice and support regarding my academic work, helping me when I have been in danger of either steering off course or getting out of my depth. He has also very patiently dealt with my 'language deficiency' and 'itchy feet'. I also owe thanks to Dr Amanda Capern and Dr Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, whose comments and opinions have been very constructive to the organization of this thesis. I would also like to thank the staff at Ålands sjöfartsmuseum, in particular Henrik Karlsson and Anita Pensar, for countless favours over the years. Generous financial support has been awarded to me from Birka Line Abp, Ålands självstyrelses 75-årsjubileumsfond, Stiftelsen Hilda och Gustaf Eriksons samt Gustaf Adolf Eriksons understödsfond, Olof M. Jansson, Ålands Nautical Club and Ålands kulturstiftelse.

During my time as a research student I have met lots of people who in their own ways have meant a lot to me. Some I have lost along the way, others are still around; Henrice Altink, Dario Giovannelli, Simon Dorman, Krysia Mazic, Chris Gill, Jimmy Wong, Jeff Brady, Helen Horrobin, Neil Gordon, as well as the staff at the Hull University branch of Waterstones and the people at Hull's Maritime Historical Studies Centre (Blaydes House) and Haltemprice Judo Club. Vicky Williams has become a trusted friend, as has Michaela Barnard, fellow historian and personal shopper. Ida Toivonen has been a key person in my life for more than a decade, and together we have been through many mind-blowing experiences.

Finally I want to thank my family for always being there and for putting up with me during the completion of the thesis: my partner Andrew Cooper and our daughter Ylva; my parents Björn and Leena Grüssner and my siblings Pia, Ylva, Lasse and Kaj. I dedicate this thesis to my grandfather Erkki Veikko Waldemar Koskimies, who taught me this saying:

*Varjele Luoja ihmisen lasta
Merimiehen muijaksi joutumasta
Merimiehen muija ja kalamiehen koira
Ne yhdessä rannalla ruikuttaa*

*Oh Lord, save the human child
From becoming a seaman's wife
The seaman's wife and the fisherman's dog
Together they whine on the shore*

PREFACE	1
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY	12
2.1. STATISTICS	12
2.2. PERSONAL TESTIMONIES.....	14
2.3. ANALYSING PERSONAL TESTIMONIES	28
3. MARITIME COMMUNITIES	33
3.1. THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY	34
3.2. MARITIME COMMUNITIES	40
3.3. MARITIME ENVIRONMENTS	42
3.4. THE MARITIME ENVIRONMENT OF ÅLAND.....	54
3.4.1. <i>Dependency on the sea</i>	55
3.4.2. <i>Societal change</i>	58
3.4.3. <i>Occupational structure</i>	65
3.4.4. <i>Economic contribution</i>	69
3.4.5. <i>Åland's merchant fleet</i>	71
3.5. MARITIME PERCEPTIONS	80
3.6. THE MARITIME PERCEPTION OF ÅLAND	88
3.7. ÅLAND: A MARITIME ENVIRONMENT PERCEIVED?	99
4. THE LOGISTICS OF MARITIME FAMILY LIFE	102
4.1. PATTERN OF WORK.....	104
4.2. THE FIRST PHASE: DEPARTURE	111
4.2.1. <i>Preparing</i>	112
4.2.2. <i>Bidding farewell</i>	118
4.3. THE SECOND PHASE: MARITIME WOMAN ON HER OWN.....	121
4.3.1. <i>Adjustment to single life</i>	121
4.3.2. <i>Longing</i>	124
4.3.3. <i>Worry</i>	126
4.3.4. <i>Communications</i>	141
4.3.5. <i>Support</i>	156
4.4. THE THIRD PHASE: ARRIVAL	161
4.4.1. <i>Preparing</i>	161
4.4.2. <i>Homecoming</i>	170
4.5. THE FOURTH PHASE: MARITIME FAMILY TOGETHER	174
4.5.1. <i>Adjustment - again</i>	182
4.5.2. <i>Retirement</i>	187
4.5.3. <i>Conflict</i>	190
4.6. THE CYCLICAL COMMUTER MARRIAGE.....	199
5. RECONSTRUCTING MARITIME WOMEN	202
5.1. INDEPENDENCE.....	203
5.1.1. <i>The traditional ideal</i>	206
5.1.2. <i>The nurture and nature approach</i>	210
5.1.3. <i>The third way</i>	213
5.2. THE DUALITY OF SEAFARING LIFE	216
5.3. CHILDREN	218
5.3.1. <i>Maritime parenthood</i>	220
5.3.2. <i>Division of responsibility</i>	225
5.3.3. <i>Positive</i>	226
5.3.4. <i>Very positive</i>	229
5.3.5. <i>Negative</i>	231
5.3.6. <i>Very negative</i>	234
5.3.7. <i>Generations and attitudes</i>	236
5.4. WORK.....	240
5.5. MONEY.....	250
5.6. RECONSTRUCTION AND DISCOURSE.....	254
6. WITH A WILL THAT'S ALL HER OWN - SEAFARERS' WIVES IN MARITIME COMMUNITIES	257

APPENDIX 1	265
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ÅLAND SEAFARERS' WIVES	265
APPENDIX 2	267
BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF INFORMANTS	267
BIBLIOGRAPHY	268
PRIMARY SOURCES, PERSONAL TESTIMONIES	268
PRIMARY SOURCES, PRINTED.....	270
WEB SOURCES.....	271
SECONDARY SOURCES.....	271

1. Introduction

In Western Europe and North America, the process of industrialisation invariably entailed a degree of de-industrialisation, as the service sector engaged a growing proportion of the workforce and employment in primary and secondary industries contracted. For women, the twentieth century witnessed the retreat of the Victorian ideals of separate spheres and female domesticity. Not only were women given the vote and relieved of many economic restraints, they increasingly gained access to higher levels of education and took up employment outside the home, even after marriage and childbirth. Although not yet fully realised, by the end of the twentieth century, gender equality had replaced the ideal of separate spheres as the dominant discourse in society.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Åland was a remote outpost of the Russian Empire. In the wake of the Russian Revolution, however, Åland became an autonomous province within the newly founded Republic of Finland. Socio-economic developments meant that the Islands changed from being a pre-industrial agrarian community into a well-developed modern service society. The backbone of the Islands' economy, the shipping industry, changed dramatically too as it finally made the transition from sail to motor power. With the introduction of car-passenger ferries, Åland secured frequent and regular communications with mainland Finland and Sweden, a development that had widespread effects on Åland's economy. Like the rest of the western world, women's situation improved with regard to legal and economic rights, as well as educational and vocational opportunities. It was in this reality that the seafarers' wives of this study lived and functioned.

Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen observed that: 'If the maritime world can be thought of as having a gender, the world of the northern seas, as well as that of other seas, has very

definitely been traditionally regarded as a male one.’¹ Maritime history is usually associated with ‘iron men and wooden ships’ – or at least with men and ships, and most studies in maritime history focus on the economic and structural aspects of shipping, and on the men who worked at sea, on the docks, or as shipowners, shipbuilders, brokers and agents. Still, to achieve a better understanding of life in maritime communities it is also important to consider the women within them, and this study is first and foremost an attempt to focus on women’s experiences of maritime life. This is an under-researched field of study, which needs to be explored further, and by examining the life stories of seafarers’ wives and bringing to the fore maritime family life as experienced by these women, I hope to make a contribution to our understanding of maritime women.

The main aim of this thesis is thus to shift the focus from maritime men to maritime women and, in so doing, to begin to widen the scope of maritime history so that it encompasses all people whose lives are affected by the sea. It is designed to give maritime women a chance to make their voices heard and have their stories told. The term ‘maritime women’ is, of course, very broad and refers to a very diverse group of women. It includes all women whose lives are influenced by the sea in one way or another; women working at sea as crew members on all types of vessels, and ashore in sea-related industries, as well as the mothers, wives and daughters of fishermen, sailors, oil-rig workers and others who depend on the sea for their livelihood. This diversity necessitates a limitation of scope, and in this thesis the focus is on seafarers’ wives and their experiences of maritime life in the Åland Isles of Finland during the twentieth century.

The first objective of the thesis is to contribute to the discussion on maritime communities. Traditionally regarded as a topic for sociologists, anthropologists and ethnographers, the debate surrounding the concept of community is now increasingly

¹ D. Kirby & M.-L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas* (London, 2000) p. 231

engaging geographers and historians as well as social scientists. Here, the purpose of the work is to establish what particular characteristics make up the criteria for labelling any particular community 'maritime' and what different kinds of maritime communities exist. Several examples of maritime communities will be given within this context, with particular attention paid to the socio-economic and cultural set-up of the Åland Isles. To examine the process of continuity and change is, according to Elizabeth Roberts, the 'fundamental task' of social historians and the second objective of the work is to investigate change and continuity in maritime family life from a female perspective, based on the life stories of Åland seafarers' wives.² The analysis begins with an examination of the different phases of seafaring life as dictated by the seaman's departures and arrivals. How did the women handle the constant adjustments between single and couple life? What was it like when the seaman was at sea and how did life change when he returned home? Issues such as conflict, support and communications are discussed within this framework, as is the periodicity associated with seafaring life. The third objective of this study is to explore the relationship between reconstruction and discourse. This is achieved by using the broader themes that appeared in the data, i.e. the idea of independence and attitudes regarding child-rearing, work and money. By looking at how the informants reconstructed their subjective experiences, we learn how life story narratives are affected by the discourses available to the narrator, both at the time when events were experienced and when they were related. In attaining these objectives, the thesis will contribute to the historiography relating to maritime women.

It was not until the 1980s that any serious attempts were made to pull maritime women out from the periphery and into the mainstream, focusing on a number of gender issues in maritime societies, such as the division of labour on land and at sea, maritime marriages and family life. Before then, when women entered maritime history, it was either

² E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An oral history of working-class women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984) p.3

because they were exceptional women in a man's world – for example, female pirates and women-in-command – or they were mentioned incidentally in studies concerning maritime communities and the domestic lives of fishermen or seafarers. In *Living the Fishing*, Paul Thompson dedicated a chapter to 'Women in the fishing', while Trevor Lummis' study of East Anglian fishing communities included a chapter on female waged labour and dealt with the fishermen's wives in a chapter titled 'domestic life'.³ Women were given very little attention in Jeremy Tunstall's sociological study of Hull fishermen, but in both Sally Coles' and Jan Brøgger's anthropological studies of Portuguese coastal communities, women took centre stage.⁴ The effect of seafaring on family life was the focus of two recent sociological studies. Thomas Heikell investigated the topic from the seafarers' point of view, while Michelle Thomas, Helen Sampson and Minghua Zhao adopted the perspective of the seafarers' wives. In both studies, attention was given to the profound impact that the seafarer's working conditions have on his family ashore and the extent to which his occupation influences his relationship with his partner and children.⁵

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, articles on maritime women started to appear in historical journals, discussing maritime wives ashore and aboard ship, women's roles in maritime communities, as well as methodological problems in researching maritime women.⁶

In 1996, Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling edited a collection of ten essays concerning

³ P. Thompson with T. Wailey & T. Lummis, *Living the Fishing* (London, 1983); T. Lummis, *Occupation and Society: The East Anglian fishermen 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 1985)

⁴ J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen* (London, 1962); S. Cole, *Women of the Praia: Work and lives in a Portuguese coastal community* (Princeton, 1991); J. Brøgger, *Nazaré: Women and men in a prebureaucratic Portuguese fishing village* (Orlando, 1992)

⁵ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid varit välkommen, tror jag – Sjömannens anpassning till familjelivet*, (unpublished MA-thesis, Åbo Akademi, Turku, 2002); M. Thomas, H. Sampson and M. Zhao, 'Behind the Scenes: Seafaring and family life' in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, Cardiff University (Cardiff, 2001)

⁶ C. Sundqvist 'Kvinnor ombord' in M. Engman (ed.), *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, vol. 73, 3/1988 (Helsinki, 1988); R. Rønning Balsvik 'Kvinner i nordnorske kystsamfunn' in *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol.70, 4/1991 (Stockholm, 1991); Skotheim, 'Female labour in Stavanger 1875-1910' in P. Holm & J. Edwards, *North Sea Ports and Harbours: Adaptations to Change*, Fiskeri- og Sjøfartsmuseets Studierisere, no 1 (Esbjerg, 1991); B. Berggreen, 'Dealing with anomalies? Approaching maritime women' and A. van der Veen, 'Independent Willy-Nilly: fisherwomen on the Dutch North Sea coast, 1890-1940' in L. R. Fischer, H. Hamre, P. Holm & J.R. Bruijn (eds), *The North Sea: Twelve essays on social history of maritime labour* (Stavanger, 1992); I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke – ur hustruns perspektiv' in N. Storå and K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen: från livsform till yrke*, Meddelanden från sjöhistoriska museet vid Åbo Akademi no 20 (Turku, 1997)

gender relations in maritime culture. The work included explorations of the lives of female pirates and cross-dressers, women in the American whaling industry, the role of the captain's wife aboard ship, gender in the lives of Afro-American seamen, and history and gender in maritime fiction.⁷ Norling's interest in maritime history and women's history was further explored in *Captain Ahab had a Wife*, where she examined gender dynamics in the American whaling industry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By placing the concrete interdependence of maritime men's and women's work within the ideological interdependence of masculine and feminine gender roles, Norling revealed how the reality of maritime life conflicted with contemporary gender ideals.⁸ In David Cordingly's *Heroines and Harlots*, the tradition of highlighting remarkable women at sea was, to some extent, continued. He recounted the stories of a young captain's wife, a daughter of a lighthouse keeper and a female pirate, who were all exceptional in their own ways. However, he also paid attention to, and gave illustrative examples of, the numerous women, who experienced maritime life from ashore, from waterfront prostitutes to seamen's and fishermen's wives.⁹

The historiography of Åland's maritime pursuits exhibits a similar pattern.

While there is a vast literature relating to the economic and structural nature of the Islands' shipping industry, famous shipowners, captains and ships, accounts of life before the mast etc, maritime women are dealt with very superficially in historical publications.¹⁰ In order to find out about women's experiences of maritime life on Åland past and present, one has to turn to alternative sources, just as Brit Berggreen mentions in her article.¹¹ The works of Anni

⁷ M. Creighton and L. Norling, *Iron Men and Wooden Women: Gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world 1700-1920* (Baltimore, 1996)

⁸ L. Norling, *Captain Ahab had a Wife: New England women and the whaling industry, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill, 2000).

⁹ D. Cordingly, *Heroines and Harlots: Women at sea in the Great Age of Sail* (London, 2002)

¹⁰ G. Kåhre, *Den åländska sjöfartens historia* (Mariehamn, 1988); J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart med maskindrivna fartyg* (Mariehamn, 1995); D. Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation* (Lund, 1971); G. Sundberg, *Lundqvistrederierna 70 år* (Mariehamn, 1998); H. Svensson, *En obändig ålänning* (Mariehamn, 1998); M. Rosenström, *Fartyget, himlen och havet*, Meddelanden från Folkkultursarkivet no 16 (Helsinki, 1996); J. Örjans, *Boken om Pommern* (Mariehamn, 2002)

¹¹ B. Berggreen, 'Dealing with anomalies?' in L. R. Fischer et al (eds.), *The North Sea*, p. 121

Blomqvist, Sally Salminen and Ulla-Lena Lundberg fall into this category, as does Pamela Bourne-Eriksson's travelogues.¹² Kiki Alberius-Forsman's feature columns in the magazine *Finsk Sjöfart*, under the heading *Brev från frun* (Letters from the wife), offer a good insight into life of a modern-day seafarer's wife. A collection of the articles, which were based on her personal experiences and observations of seafaring life from the wife's point of view, was published in 1996.¹³ Such publications aside, the contribution of women to the development of Åland's maritime interests has yet to be assessed. In attempting to rectify this situation, use has been made of various primary sources. As the following chapter indicates, the chief source of evidence deployed in this thesis is the life story testimonies of Åland seafarers' wives

¹² P. Bourne: *Out of the World: Seafaring reminiscences* (London, 1935); P. Eriksson, *The Duchess. The life and death of the Herzogin Cecilie* (London, 1958)

¹³ K. Alberius-Forsman, *Sjöfarare och sjöfruar* (Mariehamn, 1996)

2. Sources and Methodology

This thesis is based on two types of primary sources, official government statistics and individual personal testimonies. The first set of sources is deployed in Chapter 3, where Åland's dependency on the sea is discussed for the purpose of establishing the extent to which the Archipelago can be classified as a maritime community. The second set of sources form the basis for Chapters 4 and 5. It is in these chapters that the experiences of Åland seafarers' wives are presented and analysed, raising our awareness of change and continuity in maritime societies and contributing to our understanding of the relationship between reconstruction and discourse. The methodology used in this study is informed by debates on the use of oral testimonies and life stories. *The Oral History Reader* edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, and Penny Summerfield's *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* are works which have contributed considerably to the analytical approach used in this study.¹

2.1. Statistics

The bulk of statistics used in this study were generated by government agencies, the most significant being compiled and published by *Statistikcentralen* (Finland) and *Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå* (Åland). There is a long tradition in Finland of collecting population data, stemming from the establishment of the *Tabellkommissionen* in Sweden, the world's first governmental statistical authority, in 1756. When Finland came under Russian rule, the collection of population data continued and in 1865 *Statistikcentralen* was founded. Parish records formed the base for data collection until 1950, when the census was based on questionnaires for the first time.² *Statistikcentralen* has published censuses for the population

¹ P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998); R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)

² Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå (ÅSUB), *Befolkningen 1749-1999: Ålands befolkningsstatistik 250 år*, *Befolkningen 1999:8*, *Statistikmeddelanden 30.12.1999* (Mariehamn, 1999)

of Finland in ten-year intervals from 1880. Two collections regarding the entire population were published prior to that date, one in 1865 and one in 1875. Since 1975, the population census has been published on a five-year basis.

The data collected at the record office of *Statistikcentralen* comprised information regarding the population according to occupation from 1900 to 1990. In 1900, the lay-out of the census noted A) head of household, B) family members, C) servants and D) servants' families according to occupation and sex for each parish in Åland. Water transport formed a sector and included all occupations related to seafaring, including occupations such as piloting and lighthouse keeping, shipowning, and harbour, canal and lock services, as well as seafaring. In 1900, hunting and fishing comprised a sector in its own right, but from 1910 they became sub-sectors of agriculture. There was also a general change in lay-out of the census from 1910. Group A was head of household, group B family members and group C family members who participated in A's work. This design was maintained until the 1950 census, when considerable changes were made. Instead of being distinguished by parish, the figures related to Åland as a whole. The population was divided into detailed groups of industry, separating the total population from the real workforce in each occupational sector. Thus, out of 1,444 people of Åland's total population listed under fishing, 646 were actually economically active in this sector. There was no distinction between men and women in 1950, but from the census of 1960 this feature was reintroduced.³

Since 1979, *Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå* (ÅSUB) has published a statistical yearbook. Initially, it was a bi-yearly publication, but from 1990 it has been published annually. To a large extent, the yearbook draws upon data supplied by *Statistikcentralen*, but it also contains information relating to aspects exclusive to Åland, such as regional economics, shipping and tourism. The data presented in these yearbooks, together

³ Finlands officiella statistik (FOS), VI C:102 1950 (Helsinki, 1956)

with a number of statistical reports published by ÅSUB, have been a vital source in this work.⁴ The statistics presented in section 2.2, dealing with the informants' background, were derived from the first set of questions in the questionnaires and from data collected during the interviews. These are presented in tabulated form for illustrative purposes and should be seen as indicators only.

The biggest problem encountered when dealing with statistical data that spans over long periods is the change in design that frequently takes place. Luckily, although there were several reforms in data collection and presentation, none of these were of significance for this study, mainly because the information required was of a fairly general nature. In cases where one set of data was incomplete, it was often possible to gain the information from other sources. The most problematic area was trying to compare the developments in Åland's merchant fleet in relation to those of the major maritime nations, since older data on the size of Åland's fleet was difficult to find and, when found, often given in net register tons or deadweight tons.

2.2 Personal testimonies

In this work, the term 'personal testimonies' refers to both written and spoken evidence. Although the researcher has less input into deciding what subjects are given the most attention and how thoroughly each area of inquiry is discussed, life story questionnaires come into being and are constructed in much the same way as oral sources. Because of the similarities, the same methodology can therefore be applied to both oral history interviews and life story questionnaires. Nonetheless, since oral history has received much more attention than has research based on written personal testimonies, methodological discussions often refer only to

⁴ ÅSUB, *Statistisk årsbok för Åland* (Mariehamn, 1979-2000); *Nationalräkenskapsdata för Åland, 1993-1996* (Mariehamn, 1998); *Befolkningen 1749-1999: Ålands befolkningsstatistik 250 år*, Statistikmeddelanden 30.12.1999, *Befolkningen 1999:8* (Mariehamn, 1999); *Sysselsatt arbetskraft på Åland 31.12.1998*, Statistikmeddelande 22.12.2000, *Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2* (Mariehamn, 2000); *Nationalräkenskapsdata för Åland, 1993-1998*, Statistikmeddelande 18.1.2001, *Nationalräkenskaper 2001:1* (Mariehamn, 2001)

the former kind of source. To avoid any confusion, personal testimonies are preferred to the term 'oral history' throughout this study, except when other texts are quoted.

As many historians have already noted, attempting to write the history of women inevitably means using a wide range of sources not typically associated with historical investigations, such as fiction, folklore and art.⁵ More than anything else, however, we rely on private journals, diaries and letters, and on women's personal stories and autobiographical accounts.⁶ The fact that much of the evidence is a product of the interaction between the researcher and the informants explains why some historians are sceptical about the validity of the data gleaned from personal testimonies. Instead of being contemporary with the event or period studied, as is usually the case with conventional primary sources, life stories are normally created in retrospect for a specific purpose and would not exist if the historian had not decided to ask a particular question.

Memory-based stories are always created as a dialogue, in the sense that they are the product of a relationship between the narrator and her audience.⁷ Because of this inter-personal characteristic, the quality of the life story material is largely dependent on successful collaboration between the historian and her informants. To create as favourable an interview situation as possible, the editors of *Listening for Change* advocated that life story interviews should be conducted in the informants' home. They further considered it as beneficial if the researcher and narrator are of the same sex.⁸ Akemi Kikimura argued that it

⁵ B. Berggreen, 'Dealing with anomalies?' in L. R. Fischer et al (eds.) *The North Sea*

⁶ J Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-1950* (London, 1995) p. 9; see also M. Luxton, *More Than a Labour of Love: Three generations of women's work in the home* (Toronto, 1980); E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place*; S. Berger Gluck & D. Patai (eds.), *Women's Words: The feminist practice of oral history* (New York, 1991); M. Chamberlain, 'Gender and Memory: Oral history and women's history' in V. Shepherd, B. Brereton & B. Bailey (eds.), *Engendering History: Caribbean women in historical perspective* (London, 1995); J. Virden, *Good-bye Piccadilly: British war brides in America* (Urbana, 1996); M.-L. Hinkkanen, 'Perhe-elämä aaltojen paella: Kateenien purjehtivat rouvat 1800-luvulla' in I. Malinen & M. Pelanne (eds.) *Nautica Fennica 2001-2002*, The Maritime Museum of Finland (Helsinki, 2002)

⁷ P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 20

⁸ H. Slim & P. Thompson, with O. Bennet & N. Cross (eds.) *Listening for Change: Oral history and development* (London, 1993), as presented in 'Ways of listening' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*, p. 116

is the researcher who has to assess the advantages and drawback of having personal ties to the community one is researching, 'since both perspectives have the possibility of distortions and preconceptions of social reality.'⁹ As an outsider, it is easier to claim objectivity. On the other hand, as an insider, one can discern attitudes that would perhaps pass others by.¹⁰ In this study, I, the researcher, found myself somewhere in between the two points. I was much younger than most informants and had no immediate experience of seafaring life. However, since I grew up in the Åland Isles, I was aware of the discourses that existed in Åland society. That half-way position turned out to be favourable. As members of the same community, the informants knew me in my other capacities as well as that of researcher. Sharing common ground alleviated nervousness and diminished the need to explain the broader contexts and consequently the informants' personal experiences could take centre stage without much delay.

The main source utilised in the discussion on maritime women is a collection of life story interviews and questionnaires from Åland seafarers' wives. The informants were selected on the basis of three key factors. The main criterion was that the informants had experience of life as a maritime woman, more precisely as the wife or cohabitee of a seaman. Whether they were still living together, widowed or divorced was irrelevant in this case. Another concern was that the women should have children together with their seafaring partners, since children were regarded as being a decisive part of the traditional nuclear family. A third feature was age. Since change and continuity in the life experiences of Åland seafarers' wives was the main objective, it was of significance to get as even a distribution of age as possible. To facilitate comparisons, the informants were divided into three groups, representing different generations of women. The characteristics of each generation cohort were as follows:

⁹ A. Kikimura, 'Family life histories' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*, pp. 140-144

¹⁰ A. Kikimura, 'Family life histories' and B. Bozzoli, 'Interviewing the women of Phokeng' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*, pp. 140-155

- Generation One; women whose husbands were retired, no children living at home, often retirees themselves.
- Generation Two; women whose partners were active in work, no children living at home, often working outside the home themselves.
- Generation Three; women whose partners were active in work, children living at home, some working outside the home while others were at home.

As historical researchers, we should, of course, always strive to get a sample group that is representative of the people or events we are studying. In reality, however, it is impossible to accomplish such a task. In this case, it was partly because of funding and time constraints, and partly due to the difficulties in locating informants, not least because not every eligible woman will agree to share her life story. Women who are disappointed with seafaring life may not be willing to participate in a study like this, especially if they are not prepared or reluctant to deal with their problems. Additionally, older women, women with language disadvantages, less education and low self-esteem are less likely to respond to life story questionnaires.

The questionnaire informants were chosen in two stages. In the first instance, friends and family were asked whether they knew of any women who met the norms that had been formulated. In this way, about thirty names were suggested, mostly women belonging to Generation Two. The staff at the Åland Maritime Museum helped in locating women from Generation One. As a result of these efforts, names of approximately thirty-five or forty possible informants were acquired. Since more informants were needed, new methods had to be deployed. The second stage in the search for informants was to consult *Åland 1993*. This book contains pictures of almost every house in the Åland Isles, listing the people who live in

them, when they were born, their relationship to one another, and what they do for a living. Although slightly outdated, it was the best source of information available. The book was used to identify each household where the man was a seafarer. The result was a list of maritime families in the Åland Isles, and questionnaires were sent to 300 of the women on this list.¹¹ The aim was to [?]as even a distribution as possible, between ages as well as ranks. Regarding age distribution, the process of selection was fairly easy. One hundred informants were selected for each generation group. However, due to the fact that working as an ordinary seaman or a mechanic is normally done only for a few years as part of the training to become a captain or chief engineer, the majority of women approached were the partners of officers and engineers. In Generation One, the share of men who held positions of command was eighty-three per cent. The corresponding figures for generations two and three were seventy-six and fifty-seven per cent respectively. The remaining share of seamen comprised ordinary deck and engine crew, radio operators, and catering and service crew. Cases where no information regarding position aboard was available were also added to the latter group.

The questionnaires that were distributed among the selected women during the summer of 1999 were designed with the help of anthropologist Judith Doyle at the School of Comparative and Applied Social Sciences at the University of Hull. The outline of the questionnaires was basically the same for the three generations. As the intention was to assemble accounts of individual women's experiences, not to collect data for statistical analysis, the questions in the questionnaires were deliberately left as open-ended as possible in order to give room for every woman to elaborate as much as she wanted on each question. The questionnaires extended to five sets of questions. The first was the most restrictive, seeking to obtain personal details such as year and place of birth, education and occupation. This information was collected in order to obtain some rudimentary statistics and basic

¹¹ Based on an estimated 18% of the male workforce employed at sea, there were ca 1,000 seamen in Åland in 1999. The share of married, widowed and divorced men among the male population over 15 years of age is ca 65%, which leaves us with 650 families that are or were of a maritime nature.

information about the informants. In the following sets, the questions were more open, enquiring about the expectations and previous experiences the informants had of maritime life, how they coped when their partners were at sea, and how they dealt with the seafarers' return and time at home. The last set of questions raised issues such as career and hobbies, domestic economy, children and independence.¹²

Although the intention was to get as varied a sample of maritime women as possible, fifty-nine of the seventy-five respondents were married, and no fewer than sixty-four women were, or had been, in a relationship with a mariner-in-command. Twenty per cent of the women, or sixty out of the 300 who were sent a questionnaire, replied. Although an equal number of questionnaires were sent to each group, Generations Two and Three contributed four-fifths of the returned forms. Fifteen women in total were interviewed for the study, five for each generation. The selection procedure for interviewees was similar to that used for selecting questionnaire respondents; a mix of personal recommendations, respondents to a public appeal and volunteers. The majority of women were contacted after they had been nominated by family, acquaintances or colleagues. Three women made contact after an article in the local newspaper, two contacted me after receiving the questionnaire, preferring to talk rather than write. One interviewee was contacted after she had returned the questionnaire. The interviews took place in the informants' homes and followed the same pattern set forth in the questionnaires. All interviews were tape recorded and lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes.

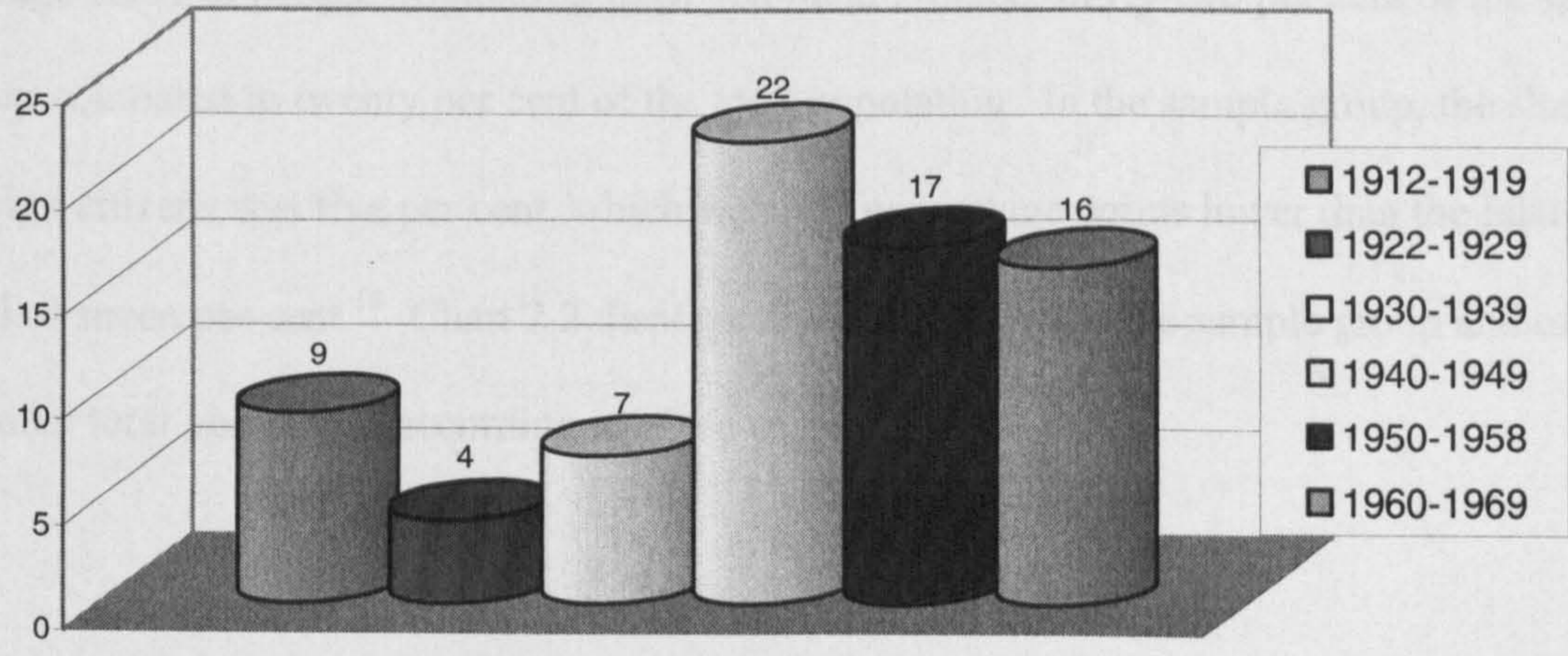
All in all seventy-five women shared their personal views and experiences of life as a seafarer's wife. Since all testimonies were anonymous, each was given an individual reference, which differed slightly depending on whether the testimony was oral or written. The reference code for oral testimonies denoted the generation group, the individual within

¹² The questionnaires are printed in Appendix 1

that group and the date the interview took place. Thus the reference G101-300799 tells us that this was woman number one of Generation One and that she was interviewed on 30th July 1999. As for written testimonies, each questionnaire that was sent out was marked with a reference to the generation group and then with a number from 001 to 100, since 100 questionnaires were originally sent out to each group. This explains the irregularity in the number distribution. Where the numbers exceeded 100, i.e. G1101, G1102 and G2101, it was because these informants were contacted after the initial 100 questionnaires had been sent out. Where the reference contains two numbers, for example G2[3]009, the questionnaire was originally marked as Generation Three, but based on the information submitted it was deemed to belong to the Generation Two group.

The age distribution among the informants is shown in Chart 2.1. It shows that women born before 1940 made up a relatively small part of the informants, which was mirrored by the fact that Generation One was the smallest of the three sample groups.

Chart 2.1. Informants by year of birth



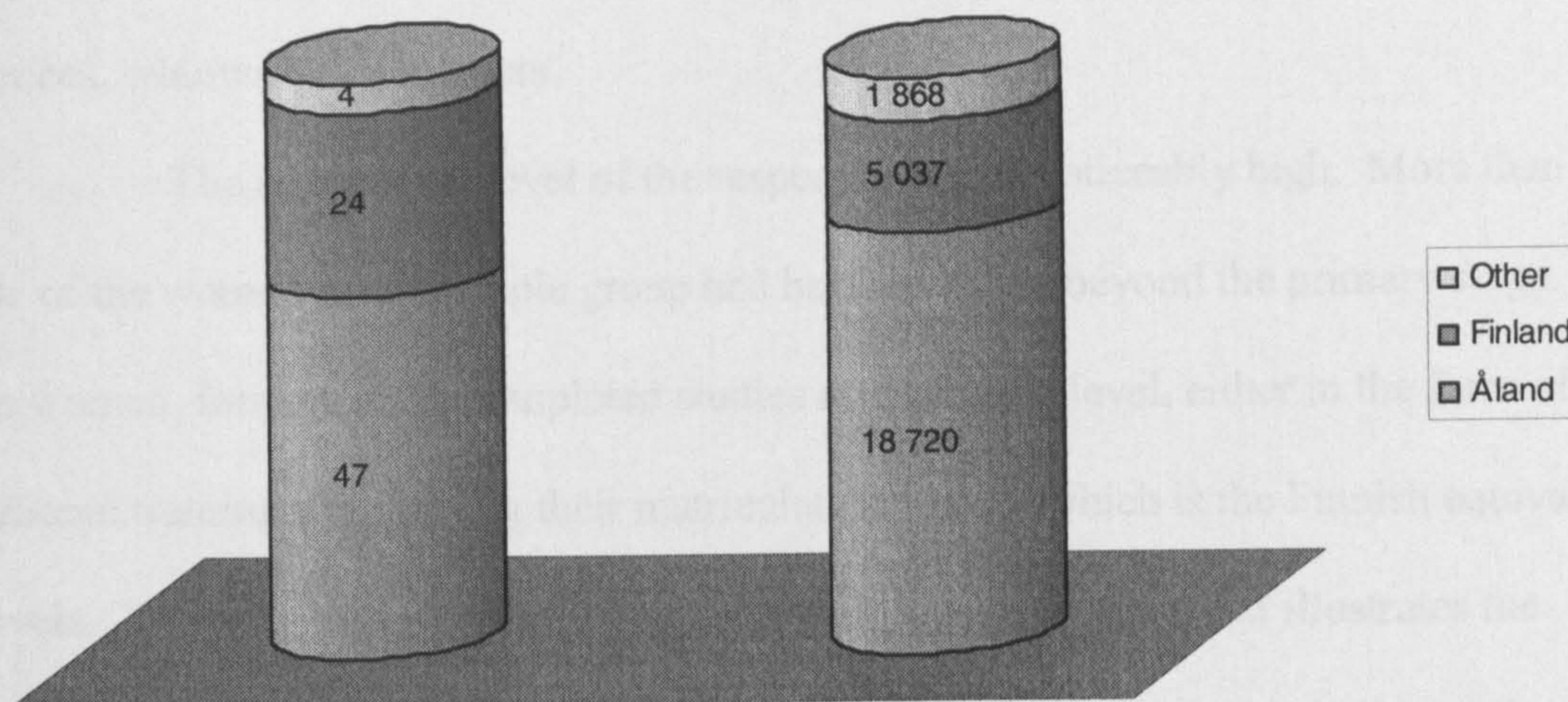
Source: Personal testimony data

All informants born in 1935 or earlier fall into Generation One. The majority of women in Generation Two were born in the 1940s, though two of the informants in this generation cohort were born in 1939 and five between 1950 and 1954. The division between generations two and three is not as clear-cut as that between generations one and two, which explains why some women born in the late 1940s and early 1950s are included in the Generation Three category. Nevertheless, the overlapping is marginal and almost three-quarters of the women in Generation Three were born in 1955 or later.

In all three categories, the majority of the women were from Åland, and together such 'native' women made up just under two-thirds of the informants. Of the remaining one-third, twenty-four women originated from mainland Finland, three had come to Åland from Sweden, and one had been born in England. Looking at the composition of Åland's total population based on place of birth, we find that the sample group is not too different in constitution compared to the population as a whole. In 1998, seventy-three per cent of Åland's population were native to the Islands. That was slightly higher than the sixty-three per cent of the sample group. The deficit of ten percentage points is due to a higher than average-share of people originating from mainland Finland; thirty-two per cent of the sample group compared to twenty per cent of the total population. In the sample group, the share of foreign citizens was five per cent, which was two percentage points lower than the Islands' total of seven per cent.¹³ Chart 2.2 displays the composition of the sample group and of the Islands' total population according to place of birth.

¹³ As a rule, using percentages for data with a total value of less than 100 is unadvisable. It is done here only to make comparison easier.

Chart 2.2. Informants and total population by place of birth



Sources: Personal testimony data; ÅSUB, *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1999*, table 2.10 (Mariehamn 1999).

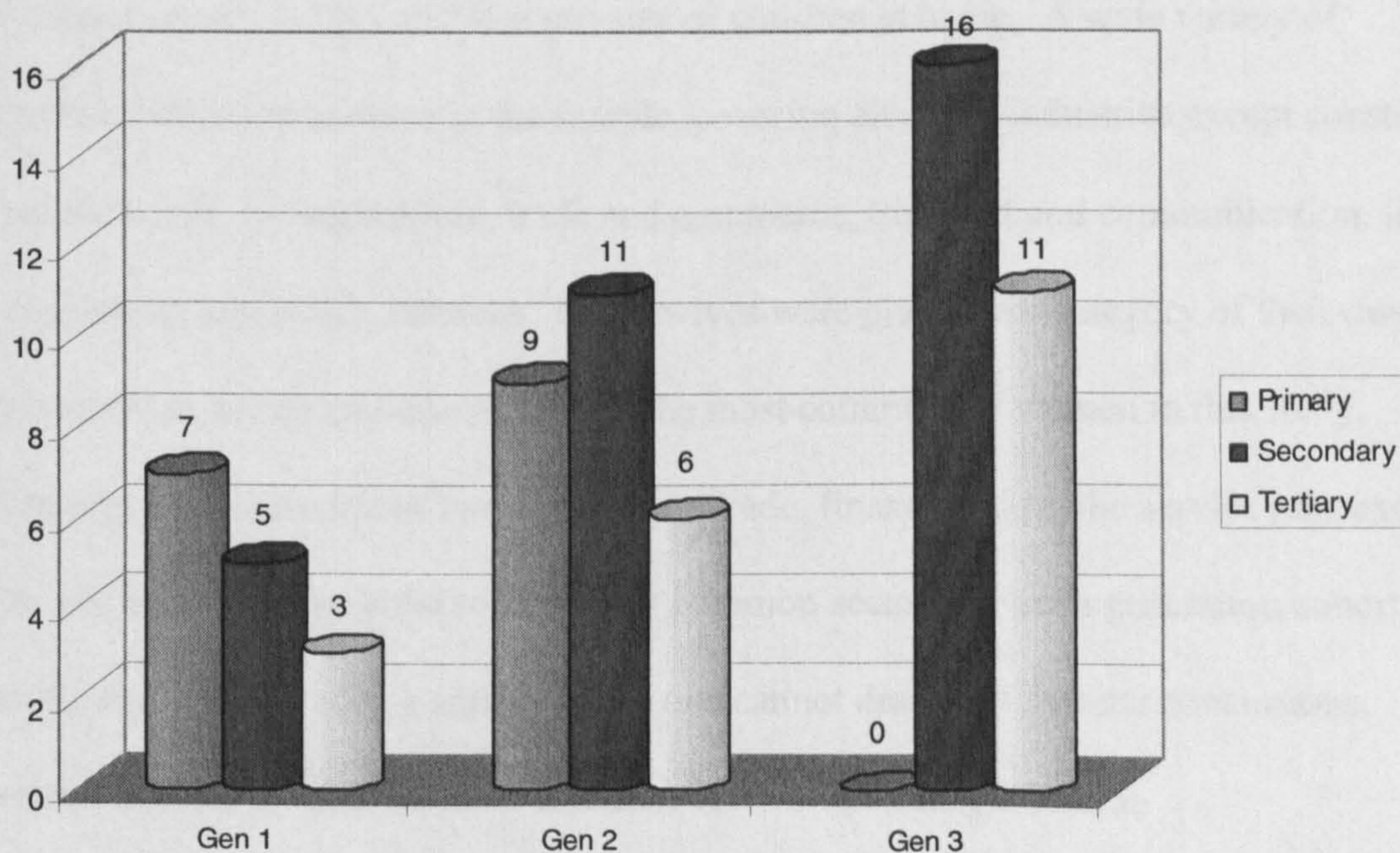
Marrying an Åland sailor was not the only reason why the 'non-native' women had moved to the Islands. Some came as children together with their parents, whereas the majority came to Åland either to work or to study.

The data on the marital status of the informants show that fifty-nine of the seventy-five women in the study were married. Seven women lived as cohabitees, five were divorced and four were widowed. Broken down into generational categories, it emerges that sixteen of the women in Generation One were married whereas two were widowed. There were no occurrences of either divorce or co-habitation. Married women made up the largest part in the other two generation cohorts as well, whereas co-habitation was only significant among the youngest group of women. Five of the informants were divorcees and two were widows. The degree to which the sample group correlated to the total population is more difficult to determine since the statistical information available does not compare with the sample to a satisfying degree. What the data do disclose is that in 1997 sixty-six per cent of all Åland families were made up of married couples with or without children living at home.

Co-habiting couples with or without children accounted for twenty-one per cent, and the remaining thirteen per cent were single-parent families, including unmarried single parents, divorcees, widows and widowers.

The educational level of the respondents was noticeably high. More than two thirds of the women in the sample group had been educated beyond the primary stage. Of these women, forty-one had completed studies at secondary level, either in the form of vocational training or by sitting their matriculation exams, which is the Finnish equivalent of A-levels. Twenty women had college or university degrees. Chart 2.3 illustrates the differences in educational levels between the generation cohorts. It also indicates that throughout the course of the twentieth century, women constantly moved towards higher stages of schooling.

Chart 2.3. Generation groups by degree of education

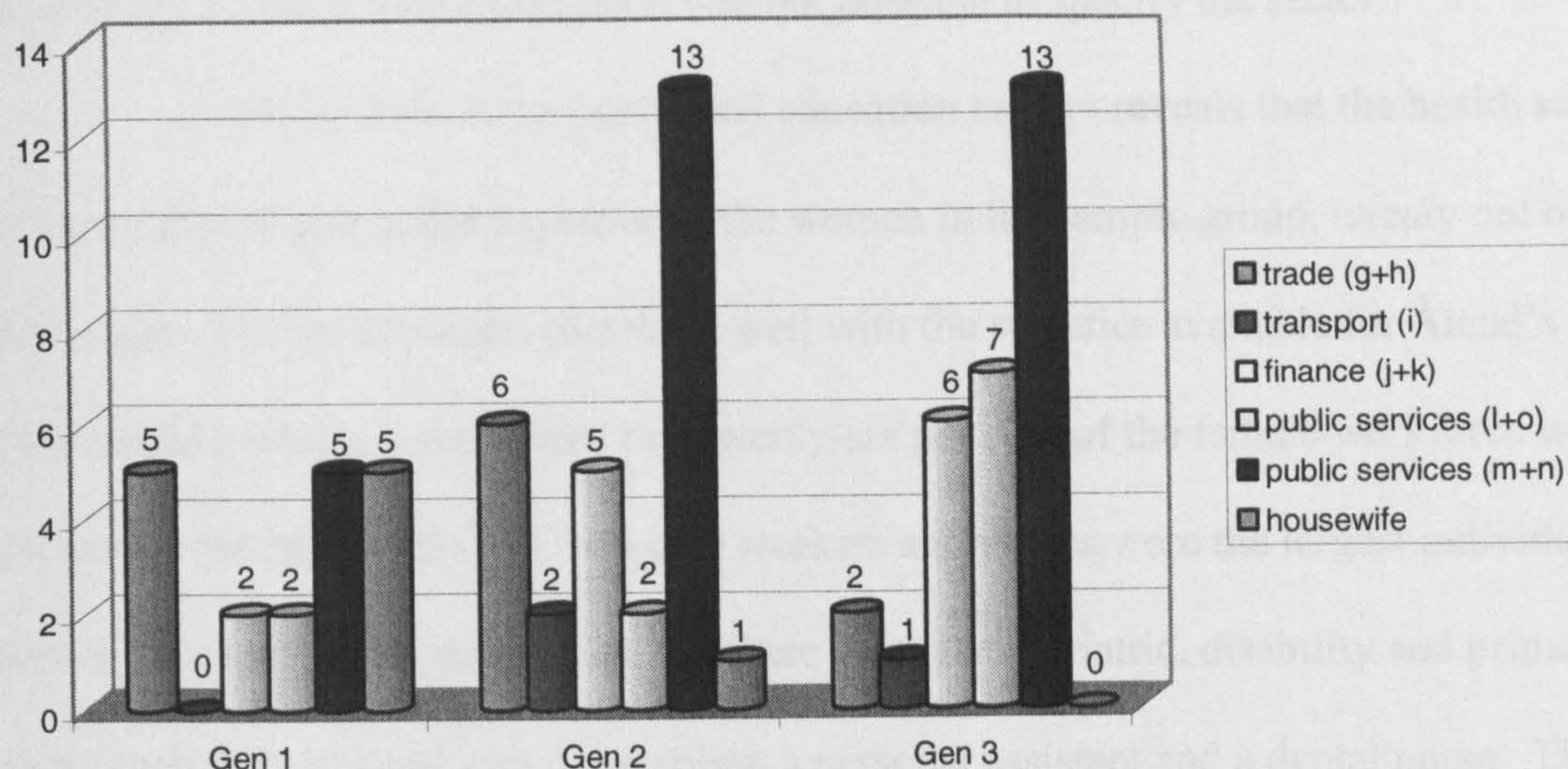


Source: Personal testimony data

The level of education was highest in the Generation Three group, where all women had received at least a secondary education. In Generation Two, nineteen out of twenty-eight women had studied beyond the compulsory stage, which equalled two thirds of the group. In Generation One, the share was slightly lower, eleven out of the eighteen women held a secondary or tertiary degree, which equalled three-fifths of the group. These data suggest that the sample group as a whole had a higher educational level than the total population. Figures for 1997 show that of women over the age of fifteen, fifty-one per cent were educated past the basic level, compared to seven in ten of the women in the sample group. The figures are not completely compatible since women still in education were excluded from the official statistics.

Although most women were or had been active in jobs outside the home, many of them stayed at home for longer or shorter periods when their children were young. Of the women active in the labour market, part-time jobs were relatively frequent, if not throughout their lives, then while they still had pre-school children at home. A wide variety of occupations were represented in the sample, covering all major industries except construction and manufacture, i.e. agriculture, trade and commerce, transport and communication, finance and real estate, and public services. Housewives were placed in a category of their own. Employment in health and education was the most common for women in this study, particularly so in generations two and three. Trade, finance and public service jobs excluding health and education were the second most common sectors for each generation cohort respectively, but with such a small sample one cannot draw any definite conclusions. Presented in chart 2.4 are the most common sectors for each generation.

Chart 2.4. Generation groups by sector of employment



Source: Personal testimony data

The sample group appeared quite representative in comparison with the occupational distribution among Åland's total female workforce. The only major difference was the low number of informants employed in the transport sector, which on a regional level employed over twelve per cent of the women (8.3 per cent in sea transport). The most rational explanation for this deviation from the regional norm is that it was almost impossible for both partners to work at sea once they had children, and in cases where both parents were seafarers, it was normally the mother who went ashore after the child was born.

From the chart we can see that the public and personal service sector employed forty-two women, of whom thirty-one worked in health and education, and ten in other service jobs. The finance and real-estate, and trade and commerce, sectors employed thirteen women each and these three groups together employed over four-fifths of the women. This figure was slightly higher than the equivalent for the total female workforce in Åland, of which seventy per cent of which was employed in these sectors. Three women worked, or had worked, in the transport sector. Six women stated their occupation as 'housewife', and of

these, five women were of Generation One. One woman in the entire sample group held an agricultural job and in four instances it was not possible to specify the sector.¹⁴

A closer look at the health and education sectors reveals that the health sector on its own employed just under a quarter of the women in the sample group, twenty out of eighty-eight. This information correlates well with the statistics available for Åland's population as a whole, which show that twenty-six per cent of the female workforce was employed in the said sector.¹⁵ Child care workers and nurses were the largest individual groups within the health professions, but there were also geriatric, disability and primary care workers, occupational and social therapists, a personal assistant and a dental nurse. The single most common profession, however, did not fall into this category but was to be found in the education sector, with nine teachers, as against eight child care workers and five nurses. Two teaching assistants made up the rest of the education sector. Beyond health and education, public and private service employment entailed jobs in administration, recreation and culture. Jobs in finance and real estate included banking and consulting, but also secretarial work and cleaning. The trade and commerce-sector included restaurants, hotels and other accommodation enterprises, as well as wholesale and retail businesses. The three women in the sample group, who had been active in the transport sector, had worked as radio operators, but left their jobs at sea when they had children. In the 1990s, their profession became obsolete and none of them returned to sea but the extent to which it would have been possible for these women to return to sea work, had they been given the chance, is uncertain. One of them continued to work in the transport sector, as a shipping clerk; the other women moved into totally different employment, one as a cleaner and one as a youth worker.

¹⁴ 14 women had held more than one job during their working lives. Of these, five had held jobs in different sectors, which is why the number of occupations within certain sectors (88) does not correspond to number of informants (75).

¹⁵ ÅSUB, *Arbetsmarknad 2000:2*

The most noticeable difference between the generation groups in the sample is that of housewives. In Generation One, being a housewife was one of the most common occupations, whereas there was only one woman defining herself as a 'housewife' in Generation Two and none in Generation Three. The small number of younger women in the sample group opting to stay at home correlated with the fact that women's share of the total workforce has increased steadily since at least the 1960s, so at the turn of the millennium, there were almost as many women as there were men in employment. However, the figures do not tell the full truth. Among the women of Generation One, many stated 'housewife' as their occupations whereas they had in fact worked. For example, one woman ran a bed and breakfast business in her home and another woman worked as a music teacher. In Generation Two, eight more women were in effect housewives despite stating their occupation as something different or had been at home for at least ten years with their children before taking up a job outside the home.

Self-evidently, the informants' husbands were all seafarers, or at least had been for some part of their lives. Captains, officers and chief engineers were the most numerous professions. No less than sixty-four of seventy-five men fell into this category. Four men were cook-stewards and five were crew. In two cases, the informants did not submit any information regarding their husbands' positions. When it comes to the type of shipping the husbands were involved in, the difference between Generation One compared to generations two and three was quite significant, and this was mainly due to the introduction of ferries in the waters surrounding Åland. Long-distance shipping was the only type of shipping in Åland until 1959, when the car-passenger ferries were introduced, and that serves as an explanation as to why all the men in Generation One spent most of their working lives in world-wide cargo shipping. Among the men in Generations Two and Three, there were some who had only worked on ferries and others who had only been on cargo carriers. However, the

majority of them had experience from both types of shipping. The opening of ferry services between Sweden, Åland and mainland Finland dramatically changed the characteristics of seamanship among Åland seafarers. Not only did the new enterprise offer jobs of the traditional kind, i.e. as officers, engineers, cook-stewards, deckhands and motormen, but it also offered a variety of other jobs, normally found on land only. As well as crew to run the ship, the car-passenger ferries required crew to cater for the passengers' needs, such as pursers, chefs, waiters, bar staff, shop managers, ^ssale assistants and cleaners. Women held many of these jobs, a fact that helped make the work environment aboard the ferries fundamentally different from that of cargo ships. Since the 1970s, the service crews on the ferries have been considerably larger than the operational crews. Still, the vast majority of informants in this study were married to men who worked, or had worked, as operating crew rather than as service personnel.

2.3. Analysing personal testimonies

Until the early 1980s, the view among psychologists and other scholars was that memories were stored as individual traces in the brain and could be recalled as whole entities.¹⁶

However, more recent research has contradicted this and the current theory is that memories are created on the spot when they are needed. This is the reason why memories more often than not are different each time they are recalled. It is natural to add, delete and alter details when narrating a remembered experience. People are often unable to distinguish an actual event from their feelings relating to that event and details other people have told them about it. This may be seen as evidence of the unreliability of memory as a historical source but, as Susan Engel pointed out, 'our memories are accurate enough that we find general agreement

¹⁶ T. Lummis, 'Structure and validity in oral evidence' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*, p. 273

with others about most of what has happened in the course of daily life.’¹⁷ Alistair Thomson agreed with Engel, saying that although historians who are looking for factual information might be disappointed, ‘oral testimony is essential evidence for analysis of the interaction between past and present, and between memory and mythology.’ He argued that it is important for historians to be concerned with how past experiences are interwoven with the present and it is in that context that the use of memories in historical research is validated.¹⁸

The credibility of oral sources is, as Alessandro Portelli pointed out, not necessarily linked to their strict observance of facts, ‘but rather in their departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge.’¹⁹ For instance, on the topic of worry, an informant in this study recalled an episode that took place during the Second World War. In her account, her husband was going with unspecified cargo from a port in northern Finland across to England and then on to America.²⁰ From a previous and unrelated interview with the informant’s husband a slightly different itinerary emerged. In his testimony, he left Åland in June 1939 and sailed from Finland to Hull with a cargo of pit props. The next leg of the voyage took him to a White Sea port to load a cargo of deals for Southampton. While the ship was unloading in Southampton, the war broke out. Upon arrival in Malmö, in southern Sweden, the seafarer commented that ‘the wives came aboard to visit the lost men’. He did not refer specifically to his own wife, and neither did she mention any visit in her narrative. One can assume, therefore, that she had been unable to make the journey. At this point in the story, however, the seafarer mentioned the loading of an unspecified cargo, as well as munitions, which was to be transported to England. Perhaps this was when he made that telephone call to his wife to tell her that he was on his way across the North Sea. The vessel crossed the North Sea in a convoy and reached Hull safely. After another trip between

¹⁷ S. Engel, *Context is Everything* (? , ?)pp. 6, 9, 16, 51

¹⁸ A. Thomson, ‘Anzac Memories’ in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*, p. 301

¹⁹ A. Portelli, ‘What makes Oral history Different’ in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*

²⁰ G103-020899

Scandinavia and England, the seafarer's ship was deployed between North Africa and France, before going across the Atlantic to America. When they arrived, the vessel was time chartered for a year by an American company and deployed on the east coast. In the late summer of 1941, the seafarer returned home.²¹ Despite what might be regarded as considerable differences in the two accounts, the main point of the woman's story does not change. What she described was the worry she felt for her husband's safety during the war. What the exact route was, on the other hand, was of little relevance in that context.

Life story narratives no longer cause as much controversy as they did only a couple of decades ago. The debate regarding the nature of oral narratives and personal reminiscences and their validity for historical research has forced historians who rely on these kinds of sources to be self-critical in their approach. One consequence of this introspective criticism is that a methodological and theoretical framework has emerged, making life story research more structured and analytical.²² Subsequently, the attitudes towards oral sources among academic historians have become less hostile. Despite the progress, however, scepticism towards research based on subjective experiences is still evident. Perhaps it is the historians' everlasting quest for 'the objective truth' that has made academics so suspicious about the use of both sources based on reminiscence. Magnus Wikdahl suggested that it is because historians concentrate on establishing the course of particular events and actual conditions that they prioritise contemporary sources over memories. Ethnologists, on the other hand, are generally more concerned with how the subjective experiences of events influence subsequent actions and attitudes. As a result, they regard personal reminiscences as more constructive than information from contemporary sources.²³

²¹ Interview with seafarer IG, 23 April 1997

²² See Part I in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader*, pp 1-100

²³ M. Wikdahl, *Varvets tid: arbetarliv och kulturell förändring i en skeppsbyggerstad* (Stockholm, 1992) pp. 15-16

When analysing life story accounts that focus on personal experiences, there is no empirical or quantifiable data available to verify the objective truth of what is being said, since that truth does not exist. But each story, although subjective, does not exist in isolation, separated from the cultural and material reality of society. On the contrary, it is a product of the discourses available to the narrator, both at the point of experiencing and of recollecting. One can argue, therefore, that even if each story is unique, the way in which they are 'remembered and reconstructed is collective.'²⁴ Furthermore, the relationship between the subjective and the objective works both ways, which means that in telling their individual stories, the informants use cultural stereotypes and available discourses as reference points for expressing and making sense of their own experiences. Thus, in order to make a valid contribution to our knowledge of maritime communities and the women within them, the personal testimonies collected for this work have to be understood as drawing upon, and contributing to, the discourse of maritime women in Åland society.

Since it is I, the historian, who has collected and interpreted the personal testimonies that form the main source of this thesis, I have to account for my own voice in the material. In my reading of the life stories collected for this study, I will draw upon ideas of discourse analysis and social constructionism for interpretation. When looking for change and continuity, I will not be content with noting what aspects of seafaring life altered over the course of the century and what aspects remained the same, but I will also try to account for how these themes are dealt with in the individual stories. In the discussion of the relationship between discourse and reconstruction, I identify the stances that the informants adopted in their presentation of the self and I point to the major discourses that influenced the reconstructions. I further attempt to demonstrate how the women negotiated their position between reality and ideal and what strategies they deployed when past actions and present

²⁴ M. Chamberlain, 'Gender and Memory' in V. Sheperd, B. Breton & B. Bailey (eds.), *Engendering History: Caribbean women in historical perspective* (London, 1995) pp. 95-96

attitudes were difficult to combine. In doing this, I do not claim to be telling the objective truth of 'how it really was', since there is no hard primary source material available to verify my interpretations. What I can claim, however, is that I have used my best judgement to analyse the autobiographical accounts entrusted to me, and present in this thesis is *my* reading of how seafarers' wives in twentieth-century Åland experienced maritime life and how the ideologies and mythologies present in common discourses affected reconstructions of these experiences.

3. Maritime Communities

This study is concerned with the role of women in a society that largely relies on the sea for income and employment. In assessing the contribution of women to such activities it is important to examine the notion that these women formed part of a ‘maritime community’.

This is not an easy feat since the concept of community in itself is not easy to describe. Over the centuries, numerous scholars and schools have tried to give a satisfactory definition of ‘community’, and this chapter begins with a discussion of the debate concerning the concept of community. After examining the ideas and terminology of prominent sociologists such as Tönnies and Durkheim, attention is afforded to maritime communities. In the second part of the chapter, two kinds of maritime community are identified, the first being labelled ‘maritime environment’, and the second labelled ‘maritime perception’. Three key facets of the ‘maritime community’ are introduced in this chapter; location, dependency and perception.

Existing examples of different models of maritime community are deployed.

Since this thesis focuses on seafarers’ wives in the Åland Isles, it is important to introduce the geographical, economic and cultural environments in which these women lived. The geographical distinctiveness of the Åland Isles is described and the Archipelago’s economic dependency on the sea both in terms of employment and income is discussed. The socio-economic changes that occurred during the course of the twentieth century are also investigated. A distinctive form of de-industrialisation – termed ‘de-agriculturalisation’ due to its particular characterisations – is revealed. Åland’s economic dependency on sea-related industries is assessed and the development of the Archipelago’s merchant fleet is examined before the perceptual significance of the maritime element is discussed. In the section dealing with socio-cultural aspects of maritime communities, the influence of the sea *per se* on the Archipelago’s art and culture as well as on the islanders’ sense of self is debated. Finally, the

evidence presented is used to make a judgement as to what kind of maritime community the Åland Isles was at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

3.1 The concept of community

The concept of community has been a well-debated theme for the last two centuries. The arguments are complex and there is a vast body of literature on the subject. From the literature, it becomes clear that although sociologists, anthropologists and ethnologists, as well as historians, have tried to come up with a satisfactory definition for community, the concept still causes as much debate as ever. In their book on community studies, Bell and Newby identified de Tocqueville, Comte, Tönnies, Le Play, Marx and Durkheim as the founding fathers of sociology. They further stated that the interest in community studies had sprung from the American, French and industrial revolutions. With the changes that took place as a result of new political ideologies and increasing industrialisation in the western world, for nineteenth-century sociologists, 'community' came to symbolise the good life of the past, in contrast to present 'society'.¹ Over time, views on community have changed. It is no longer the opposite of 'society', nor is it synonymous with a past way of life or to the isolated rural village. Structural functionalism has given way to an approach where the community is considered a symbolic rather than a structural construct and emphasis is put on the meaning its members give to it.

In his principal work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, first published in 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies introduced his thoughts on the dualistic societal structure of the world he found himself in. Tönnies' contention was that *Gemeinschaft*, often translated as 'community', could be divided into three main categories; *Gemeinschaft* by blood, of place and of mind and he described the link between the three as such:

¹ C. Bell & H. Newby, *Community Studies: an introduction to the sociology of the local community* (London, 1971) pp. 21-22

The first or kinship *Gemeinschaft* signifies a common relation to, and share in, human beings themselves, while in the second one such a common relation is established through collective ownership of land, and in the third the common bond is represented by sacred places and worshipped deities.²

In other words, within the *Gemeinschaft* there was a solidarity encompassing not only the locality but also religion, work, family and culture. It was a society of intimacy, stability and close personal knowledge. It was also traditional, homogenous and immobile, and it could be difficult for a person to achieve status and wealth on the basis of his or her merits.³ Opposed to the *Gemeinschaft* was the *Gesellschaft*, translated as 'society' or 'association'.

Tönnies contrasted this form of social cohesion to that of *Gemeinschaft* by pointing out that in the *Gesellschaft*, despite superficially resembling the *Gemeinschaft* in its structure, each individual 'is by himself and isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others'.⁴ It referred to everything that *Gemeinschaft* was not; the impersonal, heterogeneous, mobile and large scale. Whereas kinship, neighbourhood and friendship were the central aspects of the *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* was characterised by a certain singularity. All activities were 'restricted to a definite end and a definite means to obtain it'.⁵ Tönnies considered family life to be the basis of life in the *Gemeinschaft*, and he saw villages and towns as an extension of this kind of life. The key component was that profit was not an issue. In the rural *Gemeinschaft*, the economy was based on the household, which was more or less self-sufficient. The exchange that took place in its urban counterpart was a necessity between various trades rather than a desire to make a profit. The town was the most complex form of *Gemeinschaft* and the similarities with family life less pronounced in comparison with the village. When a town developed into a city, these characteristics were lost. Within the *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, commerce was the main object, and both goods and labour

² F. Tönnies (transl. C. P. Loomis), *Community and Association* (London, 1955) p. 48

³ C. Bell & H. Newby, *Community Studies*, p. 24

⁴ F. Tönnies, *Community and Association*, p. 74

⁵ C. Bell & H. Newby, *Community Studies*, p. 25

were seen as commodities to be bought or sold. Furthermore, in the *Gesellschaft* it was only the rich and cultured who were 'really active and alive', while the lower strata were forced to conform to standards set by the upper classes. Tönnies argued that the lack of *Gemeinschaft* led to antagonism within the *Gesellschaft*, particularly so 'between the rich and so called cultured classes and the poor or the servant class, which try to obstruct and destroy each other'.⁶ Influenced by Marx, Tönnies saw this relationship extended to the capitalistic state, which to the lower classes became an enemy, serving the needs of the capitalists rather than those of the masses. He considered the class struggle to be the means by which *Gesellschaft* would eventually be replaced by the communitarian life of the *Gemeinschaft*.⁷ In the final chapter of his book, Tönnies wrote that *Gesellschaft* led the common people to ruin and the only way for these people to attain any power was through a revolution, a revolution that would most likely destroy the society and state in which they lived. He concluded:

The entire culture has been transformed into a civilization of state and *Gesellschaft*, and this transformation means the doom of culture itself if none of its scattered seeds remain alive and again bring forth the essence and idea of *Gemeinschaft*, thus secretly fostering a new culture amidst the decaying one.⁸

Emile Durkheim also saw two forms of social cohesion, and he described them as based on 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity'. In his seminal work, *De la division du travail social*, first published in 1893, he debated the relationship between the individual and social solidarity, and his conclusion was that the character of social solidarity changed with the progress of human kind and the steadily growing division of labour.⁹ The division of labour was the central concept in Durkheim's thesis and, in contrast to Tönnies, who saw the division of labour as the basis of the class struggle, which would eventually lead to revolution and a return to the small-scale family life of *Gemeinschaft*. Durkheim regarded the division

⁶ F. Tönnies, *Community and Association*, pp. 265-267

⁷ J. Freund, 'German Sociology in the Time of Max Weber', in T. Bottomore & R. Nisbet (eds), *A History of Sociological Analysis* (London, 1979) pp. 156-157

⁸ F. Tönnies, *Community and Association*, pp. xxi, 270

⁹ E. Durkheim (transl. G. Simpson), *The Division of Labour in Society* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1960) p. 37

of labour as the prerequisite for progress in any human society.¹⁰ He argued that it was an increase in specialisation that facilitated the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity. A society based on mechanical solidarity was characterised by a small and isolated homogeneous population, among which the division of labour was undeveloped and based on co-operation rather than specialisation, a result of the members' inability to tolerate dissimilarities. Attitudes and beliefs were uniform throughout the society, and social links between individual members were based on custom, obligation and sentiment. Societies based on organic solidarity, on the other hand, had a larger population spread over a wider geographical area and the division of labour was thought of as being highly specialised. Individuals were linked socially by contracts, not by sentiment, and a person's place in society was based on his or her occupational function rather than on kinship bonds. Moreover, due to the failing importance of kinship and custom, individuals gained a higher degree of autonomy in this type of society.¹¹ Unlike Tönnies, Durkheim found both spontaneity and a capacity to regenerate and renew in modern large-scale societies. Instead of seeing people inhabiting more extensive social habitats as being ego-focused and isolated from each other, Durkheim argued that the individual differences were integrated into a complex but harmonious whole, to which each individual contributed with his or her specialised activity. The basic difference between mechanical and organic solidarity societies lay in the individual's relationship to society. In the former, society was based on similarity, with beliefs and sentiments held in common by its members. The latter was more heterogeneous and the differences between the members made them integrate and collaborate with each other, subsequently promoting interdependence and solidarity.¹²

The Chicago school was initially based on urban studies by, among others, Robert Park and Louis Wirth, and later, through the work of Robert Redfield, it also came to

¹⁰ E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour*, pp. 39-46

¹¹ K. Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Foundations of modern social thought* (London, 1995) pp. 128-131

¹² E. A. Teryakian; 'Emile Durkheim' in T. Bottomore & R. Nisbet (eds), *Sociological Analysis*, pp. 197-198

include comparative studies of rural and urban life. In the structural deterministic tradition of this school, rural or 'folk' society was the antithesis of the urban society, and as one moved along the scale from rural to urban, the closer one came to 'the loss of community'. That urban societies were more complex than their rural counterparts was a view shared by early Chicago scholars like Park and Redfield. People in rural societies were thought to interact with each other as whole persons, whilst people in urban environments played a number of different roles depending on the situations they found themselves in. This was a result of the specialisation that was a characteristic of city life, which in its turn was promoted by the division of labour. Apart from being simpler, community life was also considered to be marked by egalitarianism. According to Anthony P. Cohen, the notion of egalitarianism often resulted from absence of formal structures of class and power and the failings of the ethnographer to detect the variety of informal criteria on which status was determined and society stratified. He further argues that when a community communicates as an entity to the outside world, it has to form its message to represent all its members, and this usually entails generalisation and simplification, which easily can be interpreted as egalitarianism.¹³ A focus on form rather than substance was typical of the structural functionalism of the Chicago tradition, and thus the idea that the less isolated a community became, and the more it came into contact with urban centres, the closer it came to losing the qualitative dimensions typical of the 'little community'.

Cohen's main contribution to the discourse of community is his contention that instead of concentrating on the lexical meaning of the word community, more emphasis should be put on the use of it. He suggests that the way in which the word 'community' is used implies 'that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative

¹³ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1989) p. 33

groups.’ In his view, the identity of a community is epitomised in its boundaries, and therefore it is around the boundary that we should concentrate our analysis of it.¹⁴ Cohen also highlights the importance of symbolism in the construction of community and community boundaries. He points out that it is only through the use of symbols that unclear concepts, like, for instance ‘love’, ‘justice’ and ‘community’ can be used. The embodiment of community is that its members make, or think they make, the same sense of things. Also, they believe that the sense they make is different from that made by others elsewhere. Thus it is through the commitment to a common body of symbols that the community becomes real to its members. However, it must be noted that the sharing of symbol is not necessarily the same as the sharing of meaning.¹⁵ Sometimes members of a community are unaware of the different meanings they attach to a symbol, but even at times when they do recognise differences among themselves, they still feel that they have more in common with each other than with members of other communities. The way a community works is that it allows, through the use of symbols, for individuality within it, without compromising the impression of uniformity it expresses to the outside world *through* its boundaries.¹⁶

Thus, following Cohen’s theories, the existence of community does not lie in its structural boundaries, but in its members’ awareness of the vitality of its culture. The symbolically constructed community becomes a repository of meaning and a referent of the identity of its members. In this way, community becomes almost synonymous with culture, if by culture we denote the interaction between human beings, which is the definition ascribed to it by Swedish ethnologist, Magnus Wikdahl. According to Wikdahl, it is through different forms of interaction that human beings obtain common experiences, values and actions, which then become the traditions and cultural patterns of a specific group.¹⁷ Wikdahl’s theories are

¹⁴ A.P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, p. 12

¹⁵ A.P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, p. 16

¹⁶ A.P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, pp. 18-19

¹⁷ M. Wikdahl, *Varvets tid*, p. 10

based on the works of Czech philosopher Karel Kosík, in conjunction with Marx's materialist approach to history. His conclusions are that culture is a constantly changing phenomenon; an on-going process that, as a result of human actions, transforms one culture into a new one. Furthermore, he argues that culture is neither necessarily tangible nor explicit, and people are not always conscious of its existence. Depending on the disposition of each specific group, its culture can be anything from a vague feeling to a well-defined and distinct awareness of one's characteristics compared to that of other groups. However, any given culture stems from a constantly changing reality, or materialism, which continuously changes the prerequisites for that culture. Despite this, it is not reality that determines how a culture develops, but how this reality is perceived by the people and how they respond to their experiences of it. Thus, Wikdahl describes culture as 'a transformation process, where people successively learn to handle the material frameworks, but where they also constantly are forced to work on and change their subjectivity.'¹⁸

3.2 Maritime communities

The ideas and debates of 'community' have changed considerably over the last one hundred years, moving away from structure and function to symbolism and meaning. Cohen's discussion on boundaries, identity and symbolism, and Wikdahl's ideas on the interaction between materialism and subjectivity have become the dominant factors in identifying communities, and in the following attempt to create an acceptable definition of 'maritime community' the significance of culture and identity in the process is left indisputable. For, although location and dependency are important features, they are not the determining ones.

As with communities in general, the definition of maritime communities remains vague and elusive. Proximity to the sea or some other major water system should be a prerequisite and, thus, the smallest common denominator for all maritime communities.

¹⁸ M. Wikdahl, *Varvets tid*, p. 12-13 (author's translation)

This point notwithstanding, two key variants of maritime communities can be identified. The first kind of maritime community can be described as physical and tangible, often restricted to a particular geographic location, such as smaller islands, fishing villages and port cities. In other words, it is places where the maritime element is of direct significance for the populations' means of communications, livelihood and economic prosperity. Another term for this type of maritime community could be 'maritime environment', drawing attention to its direct dependence on the sea for its existence. The port of Gothenburg in Sweden is one such place, as are the Faeroe Islands and the fishing town of Gloucester in Maine, US.¹⁹

The other kind of maritime community is of a more ethereal nature, and the term 'community' can appear somewhat misleading, since it does not denote a clearly defined area. It is a conceptual idea of the sea as a significant part of a people's image of themselves and their cultural identity. It is in this sense that whole nations, such as Australia, Britain and Greece can be regarded as maritime communities. Although not directly affected by the sea, people not reliant on the sea for their daily bread or people living in the more central parts of such places may still feel an emotional bond with the sea, stemming from a general consensus among the nation's inhabitants on the significance of the sea in their history and culture. In order to highlight the abstract characteristic of this type of maritime community, where the intellectual agreement of the sea's importance is the key component, the term 'maritime perception' is deployed. Importantly, communities described as either maritime environments or maritime perceptions can differ significantly from one another. Equally, one single community can display characteristics typical of both a maritime environment and a maritime perception.

¹⁹ See A. Björklund, *Hamnens arbetare: En etnologisk undersökning av stuveriarbetet i Göteborg* (Stockholm, 1984), J. P. Joensen 'Maritime Communities in the Faroes in the Age of the Hand-line Smack' in L. R. Fisher et al (eds.), *The North Sea*; S. Junger, *The Perfect Storm* (London, 1998)

3.3 Maritime environments

There are a number of varieties of maritime environment. To begin with, island environments are different from coastal and estuarine environments in that they are often more isolated and show a higher degree of self-sufficiency. Another significant distinction lies in the kind of maritime activity in which the communities engage. Some communities rely solely on one industry, whereas others support and are supported by a much wider range of industries.

There is further a difference between, on the one hand, communities that are directly involved in maritime activities and, on the other, communities whose dependency on maritime activities are less pronounced. As a result, a maritime environment can be simple or complex, active or passive, and located on islands as well as on mainland coasts, estuaries or lakesides.

In a recent article, David J. Starkey deals with the dependency on sea-related industries in British coastal communities 1870-1914. Using male employment figures from the population censuses of 1871 and 1911, he presents three different forms of employment profiles; one where a large maritime workforce in absolute terms constitutes a relatively small part of the total workforce, a second type where a wide range of sea-related industries together employs a sizable portion of the population, and finally a third type that is very heavily reliant on a single maritime industry.²⁰ The latter two types of employment profiles closely resemble the complex and simple maritime communities put forward in this thesis.

Smaller islands are maritime communities – or environments - almost by default, since the inhabitants depend on the sea for communication and transport. In addition, sea-related industries, such as shipping and shipbuilding, fishing and sea-side tourism, often constitute a significant part of the island community's economy. Maritime environments can vary considerably in terms of their relationship with the sea. For example, whereas some islands have a high concentration of maritime industries and take an active interest in

²⁰ D. J. Starkey, 'Concentration and Dependency? The distribution of Britains maritime industries 1870-1914' in L. M. Akveld, F. Loomeyer & M. Hahn-Pedersen (eds.) *Financing the Maritime Sector* (Esbjerg, 2002)

developing these, Jersey and Guernsey have developed in other directions, away from direct involvement with the sea. For over three centuries, from the late sixteenth century, the Channel Islanders were engaged in a plethora of maritime endeavours, such as fishing, shipping, shipbuilding and even privateering and smuggling. In the late nineteenth century, however, the islanders' inability to transform from sail to steam-powered ships resulted in a change in their economic relationships with the sea as it took on a more passive form of dependency. At the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century, the Islands' merchant fleet was almost non-existent and transport between the Channel Islands and the English coast was conducted by steamships owned by English railway companies. As it turned out, it was the regular and relatively fast services that these steamers provided that laid the foundations for the Islands' post-shipping economy, with frequent services opening up the British market for agricultural produce from the Channel Islands, and introducing the Islands as a holiday destination to the mainland Britons. In the twentieth century, finance and banking proved to be a lucrative industry, thanks to the favourable tax legislation of the Islands. The Channel Islands' relationship with the sea has therefore become passive, and the inhabitants have to rely on others to provide them with the maritime services they need for their existence.²¹ Recent statistics show that the financial services sector contributes almost forty-six per cent of Guernsey's economy and as much as fifty-five per cent in the case of Jersey. This is comparable to the contribution of the shipping industry to Åland's economy, which in 1998 was forty-five per cent.²²

In contrast to the passive maritime environment of the Channel Islands, the Shetland Islands show completely different characteristics. Here the relationship to the sea is very active, as the main source of Shetland's income and employment lies in the fishing industry. In 1999, deep-water fishing, fish processing and aquaculture employed 1,351

²¹ A.G. Jamieson (ed.), *A People of the Sea* (London, 1986) p. xxxv-xxxvi

²² 2001 Economic & Statistics Review, Guernsey, http://www.gov.gg/esu/stats_rev_2001_frame.htm, Jersey Government Website, <http://www.gov.je/>; ÅSUB, Nationalräkenskaper 2001:1

people on a full-time basis, with another 1,269 people working either part-time or in ancillary jobs. With the total workforce estimated at around 11,900, more than one in five Shetlanders were thus directly dependent on the island's fishing industry.²³ It is not merely in the island's labour market that the reliance on fisheries is apparent. In 1999, Shetland's fisheries comprised some eighteen percent of the value of Shetland's total economy, making it the single largest contributor. In a report published by the Shetland authorities in 2001, the following was said with regard to economic performance:

Of greatest significance was the continued increase in fisheries output in 1999. This was caused by an increase in salmon production and fish processing which more than offset a fall in fish catching.²⁴

Although oil production operations, which in the case of off-shore drilling is a maritime venture, still 'provides a significant input to the local economy' it employs significantly less people than do the fisheries.²⁵ Shetland displays something that could be termed 'single industry dependence', denoting the significance of one particular maritime activity for the community's prosperity.²⁶

This form of single industry is even more marked in particular areas of Shetland.

Paul Thompson singles out Lerwick, Burra and Whalsay as the three principal fishing communities in Shetland that grew after the First World War. The development of these communities signalled a break with the seasonal fishing in which the crofters traditionally engaged. The fishermen in Lerwick were mainly immigrants from the area around Moray Firth on the Scottish mainland. The means they employed was inshore line fishing, a technique that was also adopted by the local fishermen in Burra and Whalsay.²⁷ Burra had a prosperous fishing community before the First World War and from as early as the 1890s

²³ Shetland in statistics 2001, <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/stats/statsframe.htm>

²⁴ Shetland in statistics 2001, <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/stats/statsframe.htm>

²⁵ Shetland in statistics 2001, <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/stats/statsframe.htm>

²⁶ A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay: symbol, segment and boundary in a Shetland island community* (Manchester, 1987) pp. 5-11; P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, pp. 308-358

²⁷ P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, p.327

many Burra men were wholly reliant on the sea for their income. At this time, the fishermen on Burra also showed signs of entrepreneurial drive. They were Shetland's first lugger owners (1876), they were the first to get involved in the Western Isles and English herring drifting, and in 1908, they were the first to replace their traditional *fourareens* with dual-purpose motor boats. In the interwar years, however, it became increasingly hard to survive by fishing alone and the population of Burra began to decline as men and women left to find employment elsewhere.²⁸ Whalsay, to the east of Lerwick, showed similar development patterns to Burra. The main difference was that the people of Whalsay continued to combine crofting with fishing, which gave them something to fall back on. Still, like Burra, the interwar years witnessed a decline in population due to emigration, with a high proportion of young men leaving the island to join the merchant marine.²⁹

Whalsay is the focus of Cohen's study on cultural symbolism in an age of great social and economic restructuring. In his introduction to Whalsay, he refers to the interwar herring fishery as a 'crucial introduction for Whalsay fishermen to independent fishing and ownership'. On its own, however, this activity was not enough since its seasonality and low profitability made it practically impossible for the fishermen to generate enough capital to build a modern fishing fleet.³⁰ The opportunity for development came in the form of returning merchant navy men. As had been the case in the interwar period, the time immediately after the Second World War saw a high proportion of the island's young men leave their homes to join the merchant navy. To what extent this was a part of a conscious effort to raise money for future investment is not discussed, but the fact is that many of these men eventually returned to Whalsay. The money they had earned during their years in the merchant marine was invested in modern, dual-purpose fishing boats, suitable for both white fishing and drift netting for herring. Due to their versatility, these vessels were a sound

²⁸ P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, pp.327-330

²⁹ P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, p. 330

³⁰ A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay*, p. 6

investment and stimulated considerable growth in Whalsay, with men fishing on a full-time basis.³¹ What further pushed Whalsay to the forefront of Shetland's fishing communities was its continuous investment in new boats and gear. An interesting feature of the Whalsay fishing community is that the structure of ownership has not changed despite constant modernisation of the fleet. As a result, all members of the crew – including the skipper – hold equal shares in vessel and gear. What has changed dramatically, however, is the scale of ownership. Between 1974 and 1986 the capital value of the fleet increased at least four-fold and, according to Cohen's estimates, stood at £25 and £30 million in 1986. Bearing in mind that Whalsay's population was c. 1,000-1,100 individuals, their achievement were very remarkable indeed.³² The development of the island's fishing fleet and the transformation of fishing into a full-time occupation was mirrored by developments in other spheres of Whalsay life, of which the establishment of a fish factory in 1970 was one of the most important facets, offering employment to both men and women on the island.

A different example of single industry island communities can be found on islands in the Aegean and Ionian archipelagos where shipowning was the dominant industry. In her study of Greek shipowning between 1945 and 1975, Gelina Harlaftis shows that although ownership was restricted to particular families, the industry had a profound effect on the rest of the islanders too. She argues that in the same way that kinship and geography affected ownership structures, so it affected the recruitment of crews. It was common among shipowners to hire their crews among their home islands' populations. This argument was sustained by the high percentage of Greek seamen originating from the Islands and by the fact that during the period studied, most of the working population of Chios, Andros, Cephalonia and Ithaca were seamen. The preference of employing the crews locally was particularly true in the case of officers, who in some cases were poor relatives of the shipowners. The officers'

³¹ A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay*, p. 7

³² A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay*, pp. 7-8

position, in terms of employment, was fairly secure and could also be the basis of further career moves. Harlaftis notes that 'it was not unusual to find that the more able ones would become managers of local offices, participate in co-ownerships, and eventually become shipowners themselves'.³³ The custom of hiring crews locally and within a family sphere resembles that prevalent on Whalsay, where 'kinship and affinity provide the core of the combination'.³⁴ Similar tendencies can be noted in the Åland Islands, both in relation to ordinary crew members and to officers. Although kinship ties have lost their significance when hiring crews, Åland vessels still have a high proportion of Ålanders among their crews, particularly among their officers. Shipowning, however, is still kept within particular family circles.

Shifting the focus from islands to coastal, estuarine and lakeside communities, it becomes apparent that although these communities might not be as heavily reliant on a particular water system for communication and transport, they can still be just as dependent on maritime industries as their island counterparts. Port cities, fishing villages and seaside resorts all depend on the sea for their prosperity and are thus likely to be maritime communities in the environmental sense at least. The Swedish city of Landskrona, the focus of Wikdahl's study on working-class culture, serves as a representative example of what could be described as an active simple maritime environment. Wikdahl argues that seventy years of shipbuilding in Landskrona created a specific shipyard culture among the town's people. With approximately forty per cent of the city's industrial workers employed at the yard in the mid-1970s, the shipyard culture reached further than the yard workers, encompassing the workers' families as well as the yard owners and managers and their families. Moreover, with the shipyard being Landskrona's main industry, the fate of the shipyard had a notable effect on the rest of the city. Landskrona's dependency on the

³³ G. Harlaftis, *Greek Shipowners and Greece 1945-1975* (London, 1993) p. 19, see also pp. 9-23

³⁴ A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay*, p. 49

shipyard for its prosperity became evident when the shipyard was declared bankrupt in 1983, and the entire city was badly hit by its closure.³⁵ With the demise of the shipyard, Landskrona was transformed from being an active maritime environment to a city where the relationship to the sea was relatively passive.

Situated on the Humber estuary, the city of Hull displays several characteristics associated with an active complex maritime environment. Apart from its geographical location, Hull's economy is significantly reliant on various sea-related industries. Writing in the early 1960s, Jeremy Tunstall stated that Hull was first and foremost a port and distribution centre. He based his statement on the fact that the transport and distribution sectors employed the largest number of people in the city.³⁶ At the time of Tunstall's writing, Hull was still England's third port, and despite losing this position towards the end of the millennium (ranked fifteenth in 1999 and 2000³⁷), the port remained important for the city's economy. Forty years later, on the Associated British Ports' home page, readers are informed that 'the Port of Hull is one of the UK's leading foreign trading ports'.³⁸ On the same site it was also stated that:

The port's position on the north bank of the River Humber also provides a major geographical advantage for transport links in to and out of the UK. As a result, the port has very strong short-sea trade links with Europe, Scandinavia and the Baltic, in addition to world-wide deep-sea services. Hull is also well connected to the UK's national motorway network, allowing a market of 40 million people to be reached within a four-hour drive. In addition, there are direct rail connections to the deep-water berths in King George Dock. Hull is the UK's leading timber port, and is the only passenger port on the Humber estuary, handling some one million passengers a year.³⁹

This passage is a promotional text, but it serves to illustrate the port's diverse activities. The significance of the Scandinavian and Baltic timber trade, a centuries-old activity, is clearly

³⁵ M. Wikdahl, *Varvets tid*, p. 9

³⁶ J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 76-77

³⁷ Transport statistics, Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions, UK, <http://www.transtat.dtlr.gov.uk/tables/2001/provport/provport.htm>

³⁸ Associated British Ports, <http://www.abports.co.uk/customer/ports.htm>

³⁹ Associated British Ports, <http://www.abports.co.uk/customer/ports.htm>

shown, as are the links with north-western Europe. The North Sea passenger traffic is also mentioned, and so are the world-wide services offered. Furthermore, there is a reference to the landward transport facilities, connecting Hull with the rest of the UK via rail and road. The diversity of Hull's industries are further commented upon by David J. Starkey and Craig Lazenby, who observe that Hull's waterfront was dominated by 'major port facilities, shipping companies and shipbuilding enterprises'.⁴⁰ The major difference between Landskrona and Hull lay in the diversity of Hull's maritime and maritime-related industries. In the case where one of the industries failed, as did the city's fishing fleet in the 1970s, Hull did not 'cease to exist', although this was the outcome predicted by a number of fishermen in Tunstall's study.⁴¹ One could, of course, argue that the downfall of the fishing industry in Hull led to the extinction of Hull's famous fishing quarter, Hessle Road. That is not the whole truth, however, since local residents had begun to move out to the newly built housing estates provided by the council before the industry collapsed. Moreover, the area was scheduled for demolition, which would have resulted in relocation for the inhabitants regardless of the fortunes of the fishing industry.⁴²

Fishing communities seem to have received more attention in comparison to other maritime communities, perhaps because of the romanticised image they conjure up. Thompson referred to 'Biblical resonances of Galilee, echoes of childhood hymns, nostalgia for the last true hunters plying a trade that goes back to the very origins of humanity'.⁴³ Another reason for this tendency could be the recent decline and restructuring in the industry, which would explain the willingness among anthropologists to study economic and social

⁴⁰ D. J. Starkey & C. Lazenby 'Altered images: Representing the trawling in the late twentieth century in D. J. Starkey, C. Reid & N. Ashcroft (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries : the Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000) p. 169

⁴¹ J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 78

⁴² J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 158

⁴³ P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, p. 3

change within these communities.⁴⁴ In his article on English and Welsh fishing communities, John Walton identifies two main types of fishing communities, one being 'traditional' and the other 'occupational' or 'working class'. The 'traditional' communities are marked by 'shared values and a wide diffusion of capital among the members' and the 'occupational' community is made up of a wage-earning workforce.⁴⁵ The Shetland island community of Whalsay, as presented in Cohen's study, fits Walton's description of a 'traditional' fishing community, whereas Fleetwood or Grimsby could be used as examples of the 'occupational' variant.

The coastal village of Vila Chã features in Sally Cole's anthropological study of women, work and social change. In many ways it is representative of the traditional type of fishing community presented by Walton. In her introduction, Cole states that she chose Portugal because of the rapid socio-economic and political change that had taken place in the country after the April Revolution in 1974 and the slow economic growth that had preceded this event. More specifically, she chose to focus her study on the coastal regions in the north of the country 'where fishing was an important part of the traditional economy, an area that has been among those of most intensive industrialisation in the contemporary period'.⁴⁶ The village where Cole undertook her research had 3,000 inhabitants who were employed in four main sectors: agriculture, fishing, factories and construction. The fishermen and their families lived along the coasts, whereas the landowning agricultural population lived further inland. Factory and construction workers lived either among the maritime population or on the north and east outskirts of the village.⁴⁷ Although the study was not directly concerned with the theoretical debate on maritime communities, it still provides us with enough information to analyze Vila Chã in this context. Firstly, it becomes clear that the fishing population lived slightly apart from the main part of the village in two hamlets that were more

⁴⁴ see for example A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay*; S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*; F. L. Jocano, *San Antonio – a case study of adaptation and folk life in a fishing community* (Quezon City, 1976); P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*

⁴⁵ J. Walton, 'Fishing Communities, 1850-1950' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, p. 128

⁴⁶ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, p. xiii

⁴⁷ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, p. 5

or less self-sufficient. It was on the beach that most of the maritime activities took place. There lines and traps were baited, nets mended, catch sorted and boats and gear tended to. This was also the location of the fish auction and where the women collected and dried seaweed during the summer. Parallel to the beach ran a street with two small general shops and a couple of cafés. This street, according to Cole, was ‘the heart of the fishing community’.⁴⁸ Vila Chã was thus not a ‘pure’ fishing community, but as Walton pointed out, it is doubtful if such a thing ever existed.⁴⁹ Like Hull’s Hessle Road, the fishing community in Vila Chã formed a separate enclave within a larger entity. The difference between the two communities lay in the structure of the fishery.

Vila Chã did not have a fishing community proper until the late nineteenth century. Prior to that, the villagers’ relationship with the sea was of a passive nature, restricted to *lavradores* (landowning agriculturalists) harvesting seaweed for fertilisation. In the 1880s, due to a number of factors, an increasing number of the village people turned to maritime activities for economic sustenance, laying the foundations for an active maritime community. These people went under the name *pescadores* (fisherfolk) and were in most cases landless or in possession of insufficient land to sustain a household.⁵⁰ The nature of the Vila Chã fishery up until the mid-twentieth century was described as:

a small-scale, inshore fishery based on household production of seaweed and pilado fertilizers and on both net and hand-line fishing from small boats. Little capital outlay was required for the boats, nets, lines and other gear, all of which were made in the parish and were maintained by household members.⁵¹

The 1950s and 1960s was a period of structural change in the industry with the introduction of outboard motors, nylon nets and new gear. The system prevailing in 1985, when Cole conducted her research, was established by the early 1970s and was characterised by equality

⁴⁸ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, p. 7

⁴⁹ J. Walton, ‘Fishing Communities’, in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England’s Sea Fisheries*, p. 128

⁵⁰ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, pp. 5, 18

⁵¹ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, p. 20

and partnership. All but a few of the fishermen owned their own boat and gear. The norm was for the fishermen to work in pairs, using both men's vessels alternately but employing personal gear, thus maintaining equality in terms of capital investment and status. The partnership between the fishermen extended to their wives, who jointly unloaded the vessel, sorted and sold the catch and shared the earnings equally. The organisational differences between Vila Chã and Whalsay lie in the type of fishing they were engaged in. Despite this, both of them can be described as 'traditional' fishing communities in the sense given to the concept by Walton.

This organisation, as we shall see, was completely different to that found in Hull. In Hull the fishing community was of an 'occupational' character, and the bulk of the city's fishing activities were concentrated to the area of St Andrew's Dock and Hessle Road. This part of Hull was regarded by both the Hessle Roaders themselves and the rest of the town's population as a separate entity. Victor Bailey, in his study of Victorian city life, noted that the relative isolation of Hessle Road and the fish docks from the rest of the city in conjunction with a mutual dependence on the fishing industry 'created a tight-knit community'. Bailey further remarked that only a small part of Hessle Road's population was fishermen but that the industry nonetheless dominated the community.⁵² The same observation was made by Tunstall when he carried out his survey in the late 1950s. According to his sources, the proportion of fishermen living within a one-mile radius of the fish docks in 1955 was approximately one in ten of the adult male population. Regardless of the seemingly low proportion of fishermen and of the presence of other large occupational groups, there was no doubt in Tunstall's mind that it was the fish-dock that gave Hessle Road its defining character. Not only did the kippering ovens dominate the skyline and the smells from the fish-meal plant infuse the air, but when adding all other categories of resident

⁵² V. Bailey, *'This rash act': Suicide across the life cycle in the Victorian city* (Stanford, 1998) pp. 119-12 as cited in J. Walton, 'Fishing Communities,' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, p. 128

workers who earned their livelihood from activities related to the fish-dock to the fishermen, Tunstall concluded that 'the fish-dock as a whole is easily the main employer of the district's men'.⁵³

The organisational structure of the fishing industry in Hull was based on a wage-earning workforce employed by trawler owners who themselves did not join the crew aboard. One explanation of such a development was that the city had no indigenous fishing tradition, but was created when fishermen from the south moved into the area with their trawlers in the mid-1800s. Robb Robinson ascribes the new markets for fish that were opened up by rail as the primary reason behind the development of a trawling fishery based on the Humber. From supporting seven fishing vessels in 1840, the number of vessels exceeded 400 in 1875. The ownership structure in Hull in the age of sail was characterised by individuals owning one or more vessels. As their fleets grew, most of them stayed ashore to manage their businesses from their newly acquired uptown houses. As land-based businessmen, the smack owners were also able to gain access to the local business and financial circles.⁵⁴ The ownership structure changed with the introduction of steam trawlers. The capital required for the purchase of one steam trawler exceeded the resources of single smack owners and as a result limited liability companies emerged. The introduction of steam into the fishing industry in the last decades of the nineteenth century affected not only the ownership structure, but the crews as well. A consequence of not having an indigenous fishing community was that there was no natural breeding ground for crews. Instead, crewmembers were recruited from amongst the inmates of workhouses, reformatories and charitable institutions across the country.⁵⁵ This recruitment pattern was particularly widespread during the initial period of fishing in Hull. Although this system had a very high labour turnover, some of the recruits

⁵³ J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 85

⁵⁴ R. Robinson, 'The Line and Trawl Fisheries in the Age of Sail' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, pp. 77-78

⁵⁵ R. Robinson, 'The Line and Trawl Fisheries' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, pp. 78-79

must have settled down in Hull, for already toward the end of the Victorian era, Hessle Road had gained a reputation as the city's fishing quarter, supplying the fishing industry with new workers as sons followed in their fathers' footsteps.⁵⁶ The type of fishing community that grew forth in Hull was of a working class nature and very different from the communities in 'traditional' Vila Chã and Whalsay. Similar 'industrial' fishing communities developed in Grimsby, Milford Haven and Fleetwood.⁵⁷

3.4 The maritime environment of Åland

The Åland Isles are made up of approximately 6,500 islands and situated between Finland and Sweden in the northern part of the Baltic Sea, at the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia. Based on what was said previously about island communities, Åland's geographical character alone, a group of small islands linked together by an elaborate system of bridges, embankments and wire ferries, would positively render it a maritime community in the environmental sense. In a brochure written as an accompaniment to an exhibition produced by the Åland Maritime Museum in 1998, Åland's physical environment was described in the following way:

The landscape of the Main Island is dominated by coniferous and deciduous forests, beautiful meadows and cultivated fields, interspersed with lakes and bays. Rocks of red rapakivi granite smoothed by the latest Ice Age are characteristic of the outer archipelago. The mosaic of skerries and shallow strands make waters hazardous for inexperienced sailors, but on the other hand, there is no tide to consider.⁵⁸

Åland's total land area is 1,400 square kilometres (885 sq. miles), but most of the islands are very small and only 200 of them are inhabited. The majority of the inhabitants live on the main island and more than half of these live in the Islands' only town, Mariehamn, which was founded in 1861. From 1749, when records began, and throughout the nineteenth century, there was a constant increase in the population of the Åland Isles. During this period the

⁵⁶ J. Walton, 'Fishing Communities, 1850-1950' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, pp. 128, 131

⁵⁷ R. Robinson, 'Steam Power and Distant-Water Trawling' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, p 210

⁵⁸ G. Sundberg (transl. J. Palmer), *The Last Windjammers – Grain Races round Cape Horn* (Helsinki, 1998) p. 6

number of people on Åland grew almost three-fold, from 9,000 to 24,800. The trend was broken by emigration to America, which caused the population to decrease quite significantly during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Thereafter, there were two decades of population growth before the emigration wave to Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s caused the numbers to go down again. However, in the last thirty years of the twentieth century the population of the Åland Isles increased by 5,000 people and in 1998 the number of inhabitants was in excess of 25,600.⁵⁹

3.4.1 Dependency on the sea

According to Basil Greenhill, it is the sea that has given Åland its current prosperity. In contrast to shipping communities in New England and the Maritime Provinces in Canada, where money generated from shipping enterprises was invested in landward industries, Åland shipowners, like the fishermen on Whalsay, had no choice but to keep re-investing their profits in shipping. Thus, while Americans and Canadians on the eastern seaboard ‘turned their back on the ocean’, leaving behind desolate and depressed seaport towns, Åland and its inhabitants focused their efforts on the sea, and so became one of the most affluent areas in Scandinavia.⁶⁰ Greenhill goes as far as to suggest that the development of the shipping industry on Åland was the Islands’ version of an industrial revolution.⁶¹ Much the same sentiment is echoed by Ulla-Lena Lundberg, who writes:

What happened on Åland was only a part of the developments that took place all over Western Europe. For Åland’s part, the ferry traffic and the mass-tourism it generated was equal to the industrialisation and rationalisation that was the motor of the trade and industry in other places. Åland has always had a low level of industrialisation and has generated its incomes from the sea.⁶²

⁵⁹ ÅSUB, Befolkningen 1999:8

⁶⁰ B. Greenhill & J. Hackman, *The Grain Races* (London, 1986) p. 25. For more information regarding the decline in the Maritime Provinces of Canada see E. W. Sager & G. E. Panting, *Maritime Capital: The shipping industry in Atlantic Canada 1820-1914* (Montreal, 1990)

⁶¹ Y. Kaukiainen, *A History of Finnish Shipping* (London, 1993), p. 124

⁶² U.-L. Lundberg, *Allt man kan önska sig* (Helsinki, 1995) p. 101

Historically, Åland's shipping industry has its roots in farming, which was the main occupation until well into the twentieth century. As early as the fourteenth century, farmers from the Islands built small ships to transport surplus produce, fish and firewood to markets along the rim of the northern Baltic. It was not until the nineteenth century, however, that shipping started to develop into an industry of its own, freeing its ties with farming. The main reason for this was the abolition of several mercantilist trade restrictions, both domestically and internationally. In 1830, a change in Russian legislation made it possible for vessels from rural areas to trade anywhere in the Baltic and Åland vessels began to sail to ports along its shores with their farm and forest products. During this period, Åland shipping was developing into a carrying trade, transporting the goods produced and consumed in other countries. Initially, Åland vessels engaged in the coastal trade to and between Finnish mainland towns. In the 1840s, when sawmills opened up on the northeast coast of Sweden, Åland vessels took part in the shipment of wood products from there to Stockholm and later also to Denmark and Germany. From 1856, Russian law allowed vessels from rural areas to trade beyond the Danish Sound, and almost simultaneously the Danes abolished the Sound Toll. Thus the North Sea was opened for the Ålanders. In 1868 there was a complete liberation of maritime trade by Russian law and since then Åland vessels have been engaged in world-wide shipping.

Even during its most rapid period of growth in the first half of the 1870s, the Islands' shipping was structured as a farming-shipowning enterprise. The vessels were locally built, often by the farmers themselves, who then held shares in the vessel in accordance with their investments, which were money, material or labour. This type of joint ownership declined in the 1880s and 1890s and gave way to a more modern type of shipowning. The owners were no longer farmers but professional shipowners, and the vessels were not locally built wooden ships but larger second-hand tonnage acquired from abroad.

During the time when farmer-shipowning was the norm, vessels only sailed between May and November. During the rest of the year they were laid up at home. With the development of professional shipowning and the acquisition of bigger vessels, year-round deep-water sailing became more common. The Baltic and North Sea trade routes however remained important throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 1920s saw the transition from sail to engine powered vessels among the Åland fleet, initially in the form of second-hand tonnage, and later, purpose-built vessels ordered for specific trades. With the opening of ferry services between Finland, Åland and Sweden a new form of shipping was introduced, a form that proved to be of great importance to the Islands' economy. Not only did the car-passenger ferries generate good incomes for their Åland owners and create job opportunities both at sea and ashore, but as a result of the ferries, the Islands' tourist industry also boomed.⁶³

At the end of the twentieth century, Åland was heavily reliant on tertiary industries, both for employment and income. The tertiary industries include a plethora of activities, which all offered employment and generated money to various degrees. The data for Åland indicate a very high degree of dependency on the sea, in terms of the number of job opportunities at sea and also in the income generated. Throughout the twentieth century, sea-related jobs, essentially those in fishing and the sea transport industries, accounted for about thirteen to nineteen per cent, with the exception of 1900, when it reached twenty-eight per cent.⁶⁴ Many other occupations have links to the sea, such as piloting, lighthouse-, canal- and dock services, banking and insurance.

The tourism sector is also heavily influenced by the sea. In 1997, almost half of the income generated in private sector industries was assumed to be related to tourism. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Mariehamn was marketed as a health resort, complete with a spa hotel, doctors, nurses and even bathers. The era was not long-lived and ended when the

⁶³ Ålands Landskapsstyrelse, *Sjöfartspolitiskt program för Åland* (Mariehamn, 1999) pp.18-20

⁶⁴ FOS: Statistiska meddelanden no 63 (1979), VI C:102(1956), VI C:103(1963), VI C:104(1973), VI C:106(1983), 1-8(1993); ÅSUB, *Arbetsmarknaden* 2000:2

newly built hotel burned to the ground in 1916. In the interwar period, it was common among affluent city-dwellers to spend a few weeks each summer in the countryside, and Åland was a popular destination among people from both the Finnish and Swedish sides.⁶⁵ It is, however, the regular ferry services that have had the most significant impact in establishing Åland as a holiday destination. In 1958, before the introduction of the first ferries, the number of visitors arriving in Åland was 39,500. Only two years later, the figure had increased to 101,000 visitors, and in 1998, more than 1.6 million tourists disembarked in Åland.⁶⁶ Initially, the ferries served merely as a means of transport, but from the 1980s, with the launch of several luxurious cruise ships, the voyage itself became a holiday. On the eve of the twenty-first century, the ferries were the backbone of Åland's tourist industry. Statistical information from 1997 shows that tourism accounted for just under forty-eight per cent of the total GDP. Of that share, approximately ninety per cent related to international seafaring.⁶⁷

3.4.2 Societal change

During the course of the twentieth century, major structural changes took place in the economy and society of Åland. From being a predominantly agrarian society at the beginning of the 1900s, it was a flourishing modern service society by the turn of the millennium. The changing occupational structure of the Åland Isles during the twentieth century suggests that a pre-industrial society evolved into a post-industrial or de-industrialised society. In comparison with the rest of Scandinavia and Western Europe, Åland was late in relinquishing its dependency on agriculture. Britain was the first country to become industrialised. The process began in the 1760s and continued at least until the 1830s. Belgium was the first country on the Continent to become industrialised, which was achieved by the 1870s. From

⁶⁵ G. Högman, *Den åländska kvinnans historia 1700-1950* (Mariehamn, 1990) p. 365

⁶⁶ ÅSUB, *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1999* (Mariehamn 1999) table 6.9

⁶⁷ ÅSUB, *Nationalräkenskaper 2001:1* (international incl. traffic with mainland Finland)

Belgium the process of industrialisation spread into France and Germany.⁶⁸ The Scandinavian countries, including Finland, were among the fastest growing economies in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, both in terms of output and income.⁶⁹ The decline in Swedish agriculture began in the late 1800s, and continued for a century. In the 1970s, when employment in agriculture had been reduced from seventy-five to only a few per cent, the decline halted and stabilised. As the agricultural sector contracted, so the manufacturing and service sectors grew. Around 1930, the majority of the working population was employed in the manufacturing and construction sectors. The growth continued for another thirty years. Although smaller, the service sector increased at a similar rate to that of the secondary industries throughout the period. In the 1960s, as manufacturing and construction declined in employment terms, the service sector continued to grow. By 1970, more than half of the Swedish workforce was engaged in service industries, while in the early 1990s the figure was over seventy per cent.⁷⁰

When Åland finally abandoned its agricultural past, however, it went straight from being a society heavily reliant on primary industries, to a society in which the majority of the population was employed in tertiary sector jobs, without going through an industrial phase. Using Rowthorn and Wells's definitions, there are two extreme forms of de-industrialisation, positive and negative, although most advanced countries fall somewhere in between these two poles. Accordingly Rowthorn and Wells, positive de-industrialisation is:

the normal result of sustained economic growth in a fully employed, and already highly developed, economy. It occurs because productivity growth in the manufacturing sector is so rapid that, despite increasing output, employment in this sector is reduced either absolutely or as a share of total employment. However, this does not lead to unemployment, because new jobs are created in the service sector on a scale sufficient to absorb any workers displaced from manufacturing.⁷¹

⁶⁸ S. Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest, The industrialization of Europe 1760-1970* (Oxford, 1981) p. 3, 93-106

⁶⁹ S. Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest*, p. 233

⁷⁰ L. Schön, *En modern svensk ekonomisk historia* (Stockholm, 2000) p. 15

⁷¹ R. E. Rowthorn & J. R. Wells, *De-industrialization and Foreign Trade* (Cambridge, 1987) p. 5

Negative de-industrialisation is described as:

a product of economic failure and occurs when industry is in severe difficulties and the general performance of the economy is poor. Labour shed from the manufacturing sector [...] will not be reabsorbed into the service sector. Unemployment will therefore rise.⁷²

The authors also describe a third type of de-industrialisation, that which occurs as a result of changes in a country's foreign trade, with a net shift from the export of manufactured goods to the export of other goods and services. The result is a movement of labour and resources away from manufacturing, causing the proportion of employed people in manufacturing industry to decline.⁷³

In order to de-industrialise, one would assume that a country or region first has to go through a phase of industrialisation. Industrialisation can be described as a phase of rapid decline in the number of people employed in agriculture, while absolute and relative numbers of employed people in non-agricultural jobs increased considerably. Employment growth occurred both in manufacturing and construction, which could develop due to technical innovations, such as improved manufacturing equipment, and the use of new energy sources and chemical processes. Following the rise in these industries, other activities, predominantly in transport, retail and wholesale distribution and finance, expand to a similar level. Simultaneously, the government begins to develop its administration as well as community services. As the economy develops, other activities, aimed at serving either production or consumers, also emerge and expand. The main characteristic of the industrial phase, however, is the rise in people employed in the secondary sector.⁷⁴ Industrial economies have tended to mature before de-industrializing. This process is characterised by a continuous decline in agriculture as a source of employment, whereas there is a rise in employment in most of the service industries. An increasing number of people are employed

⁷² R. E. Rowthorn & J. R. Wells, *De-industrialization*, p. 6

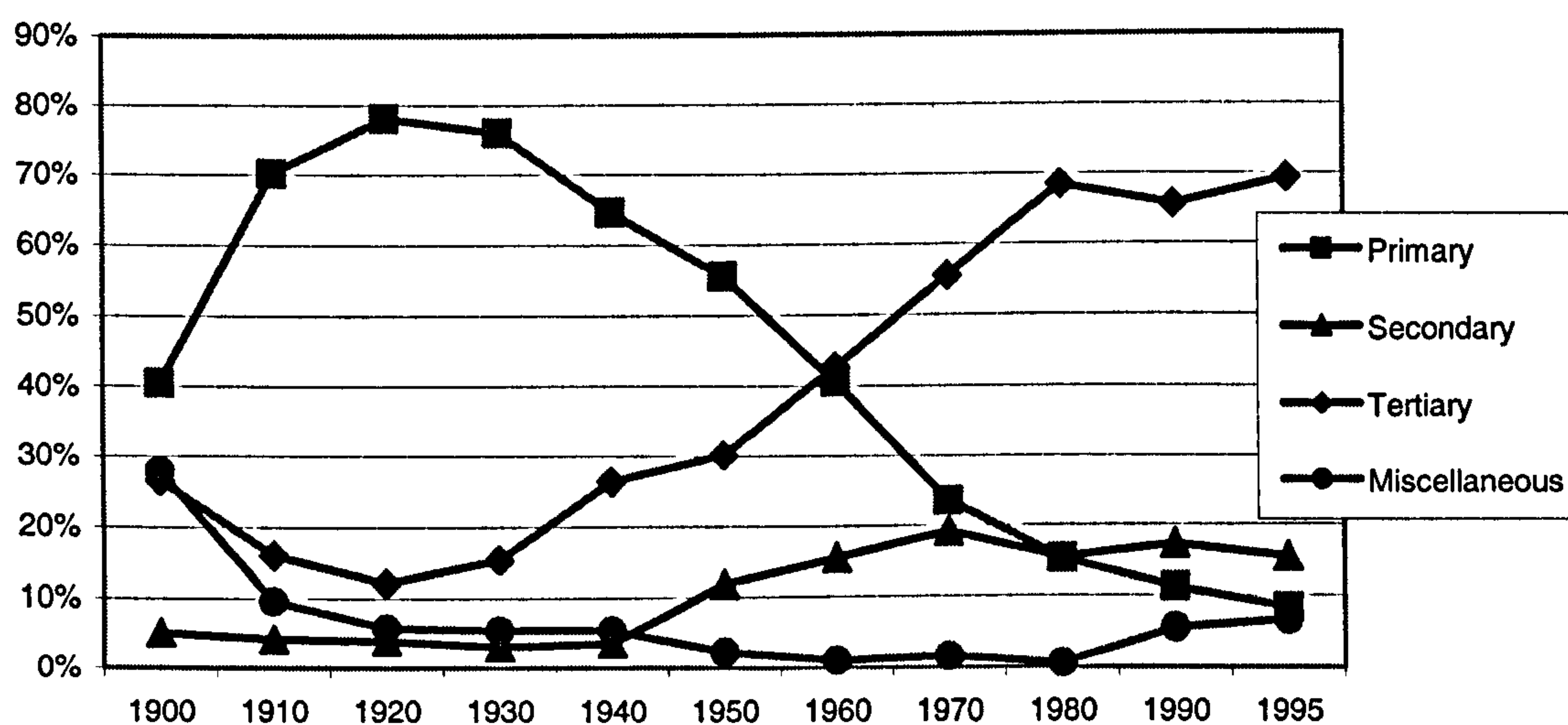
⁷³ R. E. Rowthorn & J. R. Wells, *De-industrialization*, p. 6

⁷⁴ L. Schön, *Svensk ekonomisk historia*, pp. 77-78; R. E. Rowthorn & J. R. Wells, *De-industrialization*, pp. 8-9

in community services and in producer services, for instance accounting, consultancy and finance. Transport and distribution services, on the other hand, stabilise or experience a marginal decline. According to Rowthorn and Wells, 'de-industrialisation occurs when agriculture is no longer a major employer, and when further expansion in the non-domestic services must necessarily be at the expense of industry.'⁷⁵

During the course of the twentieth century, major changes took place in Åland's economic and social structure. In essence, from being a pre-industrial society at the beginning of the century, it evolved into a typical post-industrial one by the 1990s. By focusing on the developments in the Islands' occupational structure, various phases of the transformation can be detected. Chart 3.1 shows the relative proportion of employed people in the primary, secondary and tertiary industries over the last century.⁷⁶

Chart 3.1. Size of total workforce in main industrial sectors, Åland, 1900-1995, per cent



Sources: FOS: Statistiska meddelanden no 63 (1979), VI C:102(1956), VI C:103(1963), VI C:104(1973), VI C:106(1983), 1-8(1993); ÅSUB: Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2

⁷⁵ R. E. Rowthorn & J. R. Wells, *De-industrialization*, pp. 9-11

⁷⁶ Primary industries are farming, fishing and forestry; secondary industries are manufacture and construction; tertiary industries are commerce, transport & communications and services. The section of miscellaneous includes people with unknown occupations and, until 1940, casual labourers.

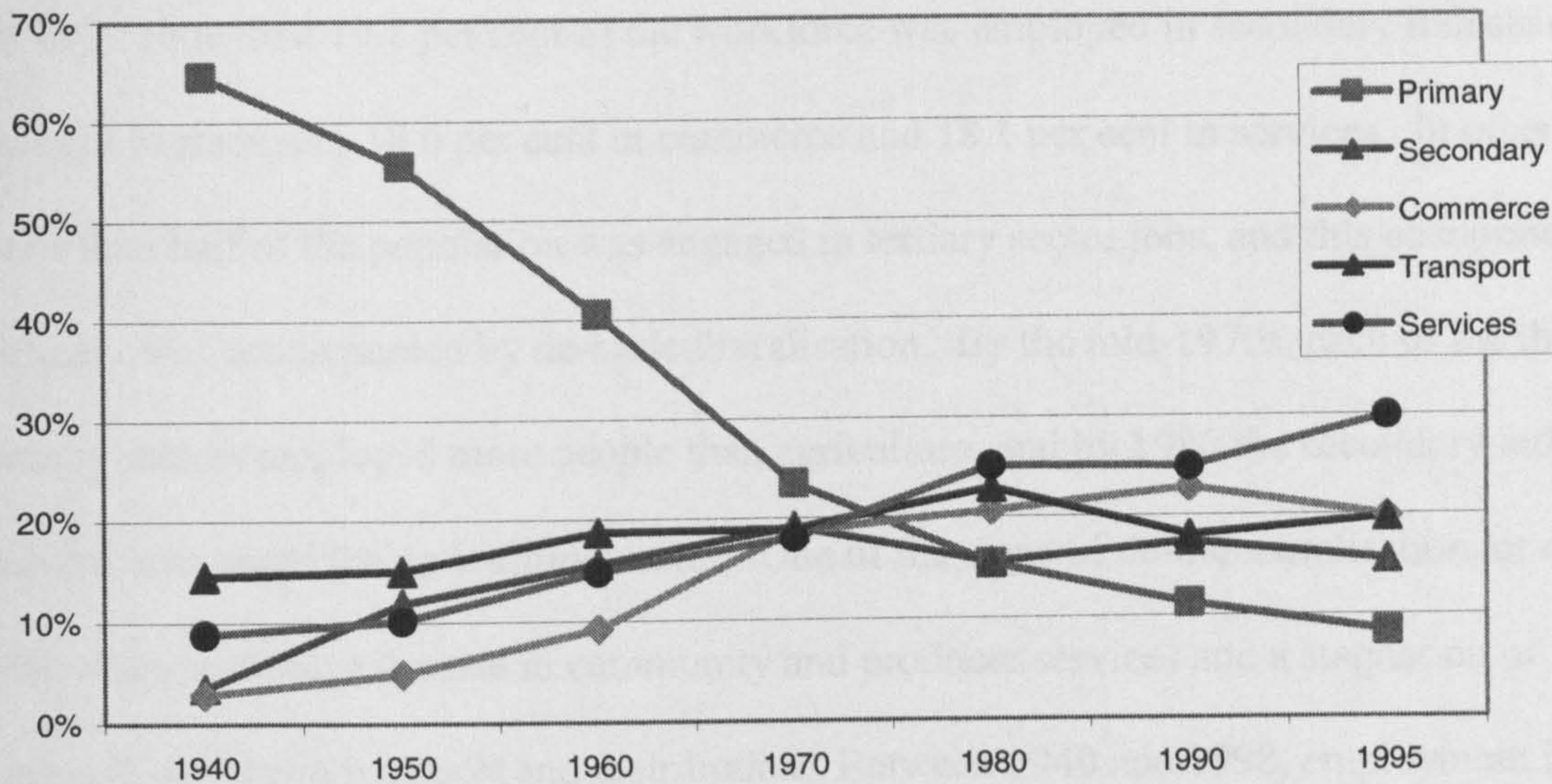
The primary industries were predominant during the first half of the twentieth century. Farming was by far the most common occupation, and Åland was at this time a 'traditional' agricultural society, in which the majority of the population obtained a livelihood from farming and fishing. Between 1900 and 1920, the number of people employed in the primary industries rose very sharply, while both the secondary and tertiary sectors contracted. It is unclear what caused the primary industries to grow so rapidly during this period. One part of the explanation might be that different criteria were used when classifying occupations. It may be that the decline in the category of casual labourers was caused by re-classification or by a more accurate specification of occupation, resulting in a large number of the casual labourers and people from the 'unknown occupation' category being recorded as agricultural workers. It is also possible that people with multiple occupations chose to state farming as their main occupation as opposed to something else, for example, shipowner or seafarer. In the early twentieth century, shipowning and seafaring were still very closely connected to farming. It was not uncommon for heads of households to be at sea for most of the year, leaving another family member - often the wife - in charge of their farms. It could also be assumed that if the prospects of gain were bleak for the shipping industry in any particular year, farmer/sailors would stay at home on the farm. Notwithstanding these suggestions, the full explanation to the rise of the primary industries between 1900 and 1920 remains obscure.

Chart 3.1 shows that a trend shift took place in the 1920s, because from 1930 onwards, employment in the primary industries began to decline, as employment in the tertiary sector started to grow. Within forty years, the primary industries, which at their peak in 1920 had employed nearly eighty per cent of the workforce, dropped to forty-one per cent. In the same time span, the tertiary industries grew from employing just over ten per cent of the economically active population to occupying the majority of the people of Åland. From the turning point in the late 1950s, when the tertiary industries overtook the primary, the

former continued to increase their share of the workforce and by 1998 over seventy per cent of the population was employed in tertiary jobs. Over the same period, the primary sector continued to diminish in importance and engaged only seven per cent of the workforce in 1998. The secondary industries, however, remained at a very low level until the 1940s, when they grew from four to twelve per cent in ten years. They proceeded to expand until 1970, when almost twenty per cent of the workforce had jobs in this sector. In 1980, despite a decrease, the secondary industries surpassed the primary and by the last years of the twentieth century, accounted for some fifteen per cent of the workforce.

There are some signs of industrialisation. One characteristic is a decline in the proportion of people working in agriculture. The statistical data show that for every decade from 1920 onwards, agriculture employed fewer and fewer people. Another sign is a rise in transport and commerce, as well as expansion of community services. In Åland, the transport sector started to grow at the same time as agriculture began its decline, and a decade later a noticeable rise in services could be seen. Commerce had been on the increase since the turn of the century, but it was nevertheless the smallest of the tertiary industries in 1920 and remained so for another fifty years. However, the main characteristic of industrialisation is the rise in the number of people employed in the secondary sector. For Åland's part that did not occur until 1940 and even when it did happen the tertiary sector already employed far more people. This development supports the argument that there was never a proper industrial phase in Åland's socio-economic history. Instead, Åland went directly from being a pre-industrial to a post-industrialised society. Chart 3.2 displays the changes in distribution of Åland's total workforce between various industrial sectors from 1940 to 1995.

Chart 3.2. Size of total workforce in various industrial sectors, Åland, 1940-1995, per cent



Sources: FOS: Statistiska meddelanden no 63 (1979), VI C:102(1956), VI C:103(1963), VI C:104(1973), VI C:106(1983), 1-8(1993); ÅSUB: Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2

De-industrialisation occurs when agriculture is no longer a major employer, and when the growth in employed people in tertiary jobs takes place at the expense of jobs in the secondary sector. However, since there was no real industrial phase in Åland, and both secondary and tertiary industries expanded simultaneously at the expense of agriculture, it is perhaps inaccurate to talk about de-industrialisation. Instead, 'de-agriculturalisation' is a more appropriate term for the process. This is not a unique Åland phenomenon, as a similar development pattern is to be found in any place where pre-industrialisation prevailed longer than in surrounding areas, and where natural resources were scarce, thus limiting the scope for manufacturing industries.

The decline in Åland agriculture, which began in the 1920s, continued throughout the century. By the mid-1950s, the secondary and tertiary sectors together employed more people than agriculture and the other primary industries and by 1960, the

tertiary sector on its own had outgrown agriculture. This suggests that de-agriculturalisation had begun. On closer inspection, the real shift seems to have occurred in the 1970s. The data for 1970 show that 19.1 per cent of the workforce was employed in secondary industries, 18.9 per cent in transport, 18.6 per cent in commerce and 18.1 per cent in services. In other words, more than half of the population was engaged in tertiary sector jobs, and this economic maturity was accompanied by de-agriculturalisation. By the mid-1970s, each of the three tertiary sectors employed more people than agriculture, and by 1980 the secondary industries had also surpassed the agricultural sector. One of the signs of de-industrialisation, or de-agriculturalisation, is the rise in community and producer services and a stagnation or marginal decline in transport and distribution. Between 1940 and 1998, employment in community services grew considerably from nine to almost thirty-three per cent and commerce went from employing three to more than twenty per cent of the population. Transport and communications, on the other hand, only increased its share by some five percentage points, going up from fourteen to nineteen per cent.

3.4.3 Occupational structure

Throughout the twentieth century there was an almost constant rise in the absolute size of the workforce, with a greater proportion of the population in work than had been the case in the nineteenth century. From the 1920s, roughly half of the population was working, whereas in the late nineteenth century, the workforce made up only about one-third of the whole population. The low share may have been due to emigration to America, which occurred around that time and took young, able bodied men away from the Islands. The increasing number of employed people from the early twentieth century could be explained by a change in the age structure of the population and in an increasing number of women going out to

work. In 1960, women made up thirty per cent of the workforce. This figure had risen to thirty-five per cent by 1970 and in the late 1990s almost as many women as men worked.⁷⁷

In 1960, farming was the most common employment for both men and women, with thirty-one per cent of working men and forty per cent of working women being active in farming. However, put together, the tertiary industries employed a larger proportion, engaging thirty-nine per cent of the male and fifty-two per cent of the female workforce. For men, the most common occupation after farming was seafaring, which employed almost twenty per cent of the male workforce. For women, jobs in the service sector accounted for thirty-two per cent and jobs in banking and retail occupied some fifteen per cent. Only one in a hundred women worked at sea. Ten years later, in 1970, the situation was fairly unchanged with regard to the male component of the workforce. More changes were to be seen among the female workers. Only nineteen per cent of the female workforce was active in farming and instead it was the service and commercial sectors that employed the majority of the women, twenty-nine and twenty-eight per cent respectively. The number of women at sea had also risen and accounted for almost five per cent of women at work.⁷⁸

In 1980, no less than twenty-three per cent of the men worked at sea, making seafaring the most common type of work among Åland's males, while farming only employed seventeen per cent. As for the female workforce, the situation did not change much, with some sixty per cent of women working in services and commerce and only twelve per cent in farming. However, the proportion of women working at sea had risen to over nine per cent. During the rest of the twentieth century, these trends remained largely unchanged. Most women worked in services and commerce, while farming had completely lost its significance as a major employer. Data from 1996 and 1998 show that seafaring was by far the single most common occupation among Åland's men, occupying some eighteen per cent of the male

⁷⁷ FOS: Statistiska meddelanden no 63 (1979), VI C:102(1956), VI C:103(1963), VI C:104(1973), VI C:106(1983), 1-8(1993); ÅSUB, Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2

⁷⁸ FOS: VI C:103(1963), VI C:104(1973)

workforce. In comparison, less than twelve per cent of the men were employed in manufacturing and just over nine per cent in the construction industry, which both had an even higher proportion of male workers in relation to female than did seafaring.⁷⁹

In comparison to its Nordic neighbours, the transport sector was notably important in employment terms for the Åland population, as shown in Table 3.1. In 1995, in all the Nordic countries, public services accounted for between thirty and forty per cent of jobs. The second largest employment sector was manufacturing, ranging between seventeen and twenty per cent, with the exception of Norway, where eighteen per cent of the workforce was employed in trade and seventeen per cent in manufacturing. Disregarding Norway, where it was in second place, trade was the third most important sector, providing work for thirteen to seventeen per cent of each country's workforce. The transport sector featured at the bottom of the employment table in all of the Nordic countries, including Norway, a country well known for its shipping industry. For Åland's part, however, the transport sector employed almost one fifth of the Islands' working population, making it the largest employer after the public sector, which employed just under one third of Åland's workforce. Like its neighbours, trade was the third most important sector, followed by manufacturing.

⁷⁹ FOS: VI C:106(1983), 1-8(1993); ÅSUB, Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2

Table 3.1. Total employed workforce by industrial sector, Åland and the Nordic countries, 1995, per cent

industry	Åland	Finland	Denmark	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
agriculture	8.4	7.0	4.9	9.5	5.1	3.1
manufacture	10.3	21.6	19.0	17.9	17.1	20.1
construction	5.3	4.9	5.8	6.8	5.8	5.8
trade	12.4	14.5	17.3	16.7	17.9	13.5
transport & communication	19.7	7.5	6.6	6.5	8,0	5.8
finance	7.4	11.1	11.0	9.3	9.3	10.6
public services	29.9	31.1	34.8	33.2	36.4	41.0

Source: ÅSUB: *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1999*, table 15.14

With a high proportion of men working at sea, one can assume that seafarers' wives made up a considerable part of the Åland community. There are no available statistics regarding the proportion of married and unmarried seafarers, but there is nothing in the literature to suggest that Åland seafarers were less likely to marry than men ashore. This contrasts with the stereotypical Jack Tar of the sailing ship era, who was an itinerant adventurer and whose landward commitments never reached further than Sailortown, a place Stan Hugill eloquently described as 'a world of sordid pleasure, unlimited vice and lashings of booze'.⁸⁰ Åland seafarers have always been regarded as respectable citizens locally, and to be married to one was regarded neither as tragic nor remarkable. In contrast, an Åland seafarer's wife of Swedish origin claimed that in the agricultural society where she grew up nothing was more pitiable and tragic than being a seafarer's wife.⁸¹ In a travel journal from 1871, a visitor noted that Åland women, more than women elsewhere, had to learn to deny themselves a lot:

She is hardly even fully aware that she owns a friend for life, before he is pulled away from her. Out at sea is his home, there he wrestles with dangers and maybe with

⁸⁰ S. Hugill, *Sailortown* (London, 1967) p. xviii

⁸¹ G3001

death, while she works in the quiet home and hardly has time to think of the one she loves out there, and for whom worry fills her bosom.⁸²

Although not all women on Åland were seafarers' wives, their numbers must have been fairly significant for the author of the quote above to choose to let the circumstances of the seafarer's wife symbolise those of all Åland's women.

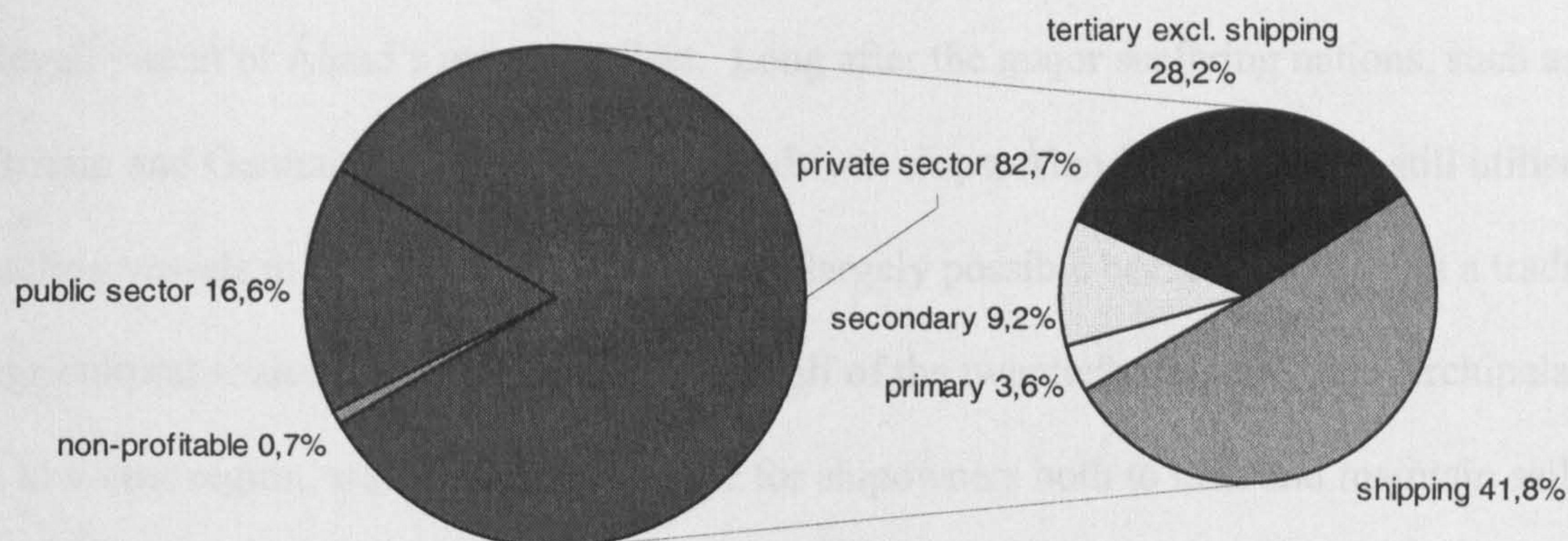
3.4.4 Economic contribution

The role of specific industries in a region's economy is, together with the distribution of the workforce among the various industries, an important indicator of the region's socio-economic status. For Åland's part, regional accounts show a high dependency on revenues generated in the tertiary industries. Chart 3.3 shows GDP by economic activity in 1997. The private sector industries have been separated into primary, secondary and tertiary. In the chart, the shipping industry has been given its own segment, and its large share of GDP is clearly evident. More than half of the income generated in the private sector was related to shipping. In 1997, GDP in basic values was over € 692 million, of which over eighty per cent came from private industry, while the public sector and non-profitable activities made up the rest. The activities found within the public and non-profitable sectors were all within the service sector and consequently eighty-seven per cent of Åland's revenues originated in tertiary industries. Almost half of this contribution came from the shipping industry. In contrast to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, where financial services form the basis of the economy, the shipping industry fulfils such a role in Åland.⁸³

⁸² E. Nervander, *Sommarresor på Åland, Åländska klassiker I* (Mariehamn, 1983, orig.1872) p. 62, author's translation

⁸³ Isle of Man Government, www.gov.im/infocentre/stats.asp, 2001; Economic & Statistics Review 2001, Guernsey, www.gov.gg, 2001

Chart 3.3. GDP by industrial sector, Åland, 1997, per cent



Source: ÅSUB: Nationalräkenskaper 2002:1

A comparison between GDP in 1975 and 1997 reveals that there were no major changes, though the public sector was slightly larger in 1975, the private sector was accordingly a few percentage points smaller. The primary and secondary sectors accounted for twenty-three per cent, while the tertiary sector totalled seventy-seven per cent. The shipping sector alone accounted for thirty-six per cent of the total GDP and just under half of the total contribution made by the private sector. Its share of the tertiary industries was as high as it was in 1997. The most noteworthy change was the total increase in GDP during this period, from € 89 million to € 692 million.⁸⁴ These figures show GDP in current prices. Using the cost-of-living index, the difference lessens, but is still considerable. GDP in 1975, at 1997 prices, equalled € 320 million.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ ÅSUB, *Statistisk Årsbok för Åland 1999* (€ 1.00 equals 5.95 Finnish markka)

⁸⁵ Cost-of-living index, October 1951 = 100, Official Statistics of Åland

3.4.5 Åland's merchant fleet

A parallel can be drawn between Åland's societal development as a whole and the technical development of Åland's merchant fleet. Long after the major seafaring nations, such as Britain and Germany, had shifted to motor-driven ships, Åland's shipowners still utilised sailing vessels in the world trades. This was largely possible because Åland was a traditional agricultural society until well into the first half of the twentieth century. The Archipelago was a low-cost region, which made it possible for shipowners both to man and maintain sailing vessels and still make a profit. Since there were no manufacturing industries on Åland, shipowners re-invested their profits in shipping, thus gradually increasing their resources. It took some time before enough money had been made to make it possible to buy the first small second-hand steam- and motor ships, but once that step was taken it did not take long for the Åland fleet to become one of the youngest and most advanced in the world.

In a letter to the editor of the local newspaper *Tidningen Åland* on 5 February 1927, an Åland shipowner wrote that in order to keep the Islands' shipping industry alive it was necessary for it to undergo serious modernisation to catch up with the rest of the world and remain competitive in the international market.⁸⁶ Shortly afterwards, the transition from sail to engine powered vessels began in earnest and within fifty years Åland had caught up with the world's leading shipping nations with regards to technological advancement. In 1935, roughly nine-tenths of Finland's merchant marine was engine powered (largely by steam). Sailing tonnage made up 61,200 gross tons, of which eighty-seven per cent was registered in Åland.⁸⁷ The high proportion of sail tonnage on the Islands was linked to its large fleet of windjammers. Still, there were clear signs of change in the Islands' fleet. Within five years, from 1930 to 1935, there was a five-fold increase in steam tonnage so that in 1935 it measured some 35,000 gross tons. Motor ships were still a rarity, accounting for no

⁸⁶ *Tidningen Åland*, 05/02/1927

⁸⁷ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 137 table 42, J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, p. 13

more than two per cent of the total tonnage.⁸⁸ In 1951, the composition of the fleet had changed significantly; eighty-eight per cent of the total tonnage was steam powered, motor ships made up seven per cent and only three per cent were sailing vessels. The remaining two per cent were sailing vessels with auxiliary motors.⁸⁹ This brought Åland in line with the rest of the country, where the ratio of steam, motor and sail was eighty-three, fourteen and three per cent respectively.⁹⁰ From the 1940s, the number and tonnage of motor ships increased steadily, surpassing steamships in the mid-1950s. By the mid-1970s, the Åland fleet consisted solely of motor ships with an average age of ten years per gross ton, compared to forty years per gross ton in 1950.⁹¹

During the first half of the twentieth century, Åland vessels were chiefly deployed on a tramp trading basis, whether they were powered by sail, steam or diesel. In the 1950s, the Islands' shipowners increasingly specialised and diversified. Since a high-quality modern fleet was a prerequisite for diversification, investment in purpose-built vessels began. Initially, specialisation focused on tankers and refrigerated vessels. It was later followed by investment in car-passenger ferries and dry-cargo carriers. In the peak year of 1975, the Åland fleet included fourteen car-passenger ferries, fifteen refrigerated carriers, sixteen tankers and thirty-one general cargo carriers. Although tramping, mainly in the form of time-charters, still continued in the second half of the century, liner traffic and shipping management increased. Oil tankers were chiefly deployed on the North Sea and Mediterranean spot markets, but also in trans-oceanic traffic.⁹²

With the exception of disruptions caused by the world wars, Åland's merchant fleet experienced, in accordance with the general world trends, a stable tonnage increase during the first eight decades of the twentieth century. In terms of tonnage the Islands'

⁸⁸ J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart* p. 13

⁸⁹ *Ålands sjöfart* (Mariehamn, 1951) vol. 2

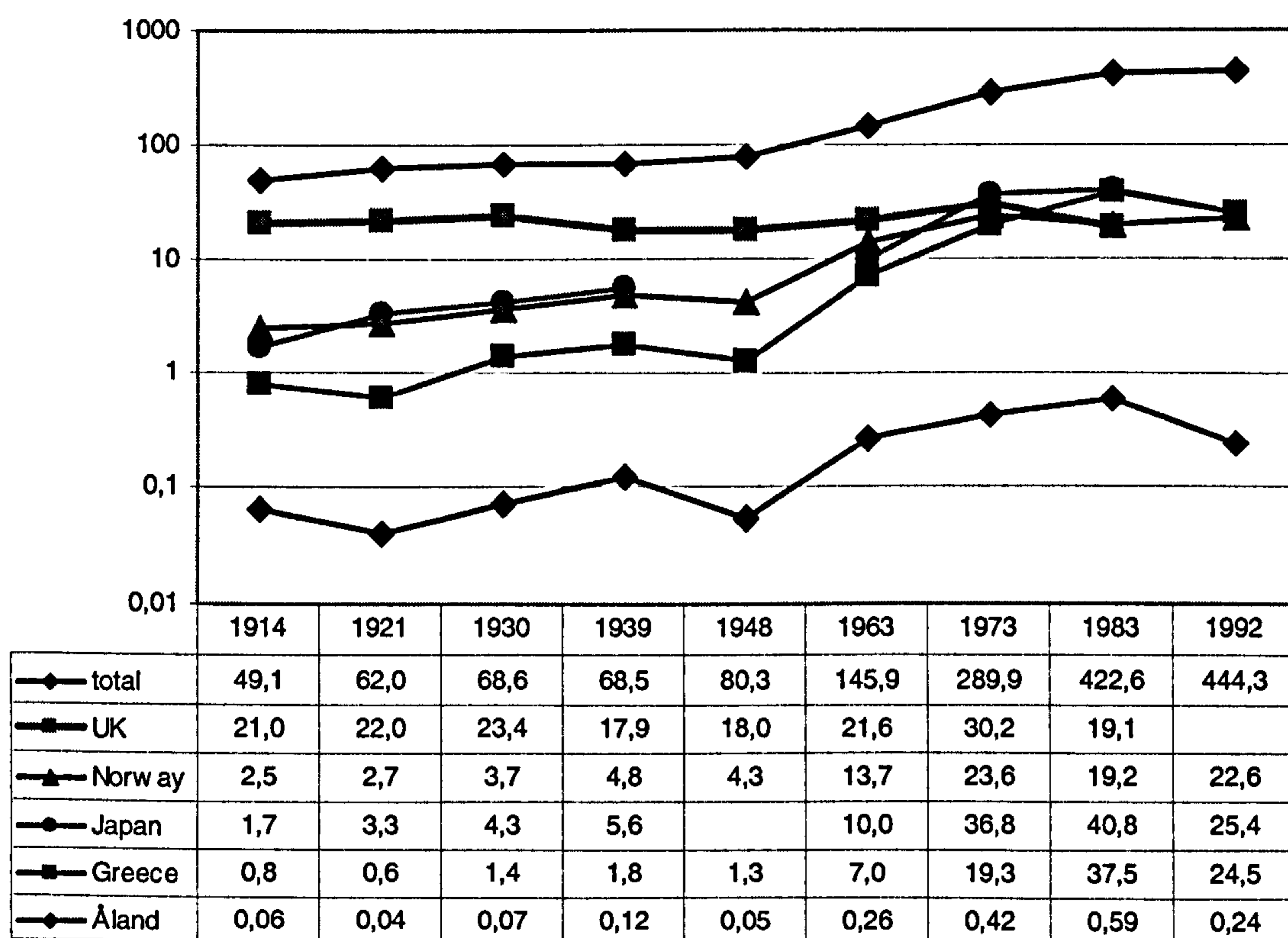
⁹⁰ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 161 table 48

⁹¹ J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, pp. 13, 170

⁹² J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, pp. 26-27, 47, 135, 170

merchant fleet hit its highest point in 1981 at 735,000 gross tons – a fourteen-fold increase from 1946, when the combined size of the fleet was a mere 52,800 gross tons. In contrast, in roughly the same period, Finland’s tonnage multiplied by a factor of 8.8 and world merchant tonnage increased five times.⁹³ Chart 3.4 offers a comparison of the developments in the Greek, Norwegian, British and Åland merchant marines. Although only a fraction of their size, the chart shows that the trend in Åland was similar to that of the major maritime nations.

Chart 3.4. Tonnage growth in selected national fleets, 1914-1992, (000,000 grt)



Sources: G. Harlaftis, *Greek-owned Shipping*, tables 6.3, 8.3, 9.7; G. Kåhre, *Den åländska segelsjöfartens historia*, p. 471; J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart med maskindrivna fartyg*, pp 13, 170; G. Kåhre, *Ålands redarförening 1934-1959*, p. 62; ÅSUB, *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1979*, table 9.4; ÅSUB, *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 2000*, table 6.1

Note: Following years are different for the Åland data; 1921=1920, 1948=1946, 1963=1965

⁹³ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 161, table 48 and J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, p. 170

In the course of the twentieth century, the UK lost its position as owner of the world's largest merchant fleet. In the late 1960s, the UK was surpassed by Japan, and it was overtaken by Greece in the mid 1970s and by Norway a decade later. At the end of the Second World War, Japan's fleet was negligible, but it made a speedy recovery, more than trebling in size between 1963 and 1973. The development of the Norwegian and Greek fleets followed each other closely until the 1970s, when the absolute size of the Norwegian fleet began to decline and Greece continued to increase its tonnage. A decade earlier, Norway's share of the aggregate world tonnage, like Japan's, had started to fall. In the period 1983-1993, both the Greek and Japanese merchant fleets declined in size and in their share of world tonnage. Norway, on the contrary, largely due to the introduction of the Norwegian international ship register (NIS), increased both its tonnage and share of the world fleet, and thus drew level with the top two maritime nations. With a half-percentage share of the world market, Finland remained a marginal player on the world's oceans. Still, the tonnage increased continuously from the end of the Second World War to the early 1980s, from 267,000 gross tons to over 2.3 million.⁹⁴

Åland seems to have mirrored the developments of the Greek fleet. Indeed, there are some similarities between the two in the interwar period; both fleets grew rapidly through shrewd deals and good business connections. H. Clarkson & Co Ltd in London was the main agent for Åland shipowners. Co-operation began in 1905 and remained important throughout the century. Over time, a personal bond between the firm and Åland shipowners developed, partly as a result of many Ålanders spending some time with the firm before taking up office in one of the Islands' shipping companies.⁹⁵ Much of the Greek expansion in the interwar period emanated from the Greek shipping offices in London. Co-operation between Greece and the Greek community in London facilitated a fruitful exchange between

⁹⁴ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 161, table 48 and p. 179

⁹⁵ J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, p. 166

the ‘knowledge of – and connection to – the London maritime market on the one hand, and on the structure of the Greek fleet – based on kinship, common island origin and single ship ownership – on the other’.⁹⁶ Kinship and single ship ownership was also an important factor in Åland shipping circles. In the post-war era, the similarities were mostly superficial and can be explained by the general world trends.⁹⁷

In 1973, OPEC dramatically increased oil prices, resulting in economic recession in the western countries and a decline in seaborne oil trade. The oil crisis put an end to the almost continuous growth, economic as well as commercial, that the world had seen since the end of the Second World War. Between 1948 and 1973, the volume of world-wide seaborne trade grew by more than 600 per cent, and the majority of the growth was in the volume of oil transports.⁹⁸ In 1948, oil’s share of the volume of seaborne trade was forty-three per cent; fifteen years later, oil accounted for no less than fifty-eight per cent of the total volume.⁹⁹ The increase in world demand for oil stimulated an increase in the world fleet’s tanker tonnage, both in absolute and relative numbers. Although the large oil companies owned a sizable share of the world’s tanker tonnage, there was plenty of room for independent shipowners to enter the market. Åland shipowners entered the tanker market on a small scale in the early 1950s, and although their impact on the world scene was minimal, the enterprise developed rapidly and soon became one of the cornerstones of the Islands’ shipping industry.¹⁰⁰

The decline that had begun with the oil crisis in 1973 picked up momentum in the early 1980s. In retrospect, the 1980s proved to be a decade filled with crises, of which the worst occurred between 1982 and 1983 and again between 1985 and 1986. A number of factors played a part in the contraction. On an international level, the key factor was the

⁹⁶ G. Harlaftis, *A History of Greek-owned Shipping* (London, 1996) p.194

⁹⁷ G. Harlaftis, *Greek-owned Shipping*, tables 9.6 and 9.7

⁹⁸ G. Harlaftis, *Greek-owned Shipping*, p. 247

⁹⁹ G. Harlaftis, *Greek-owned Shipping*, table 9.1

¹⁰⁰ J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, pp. 17, 43-47, 66-68, 115-116

considerable decline in demand for tonnage and falling freight rates, which was a result of the slow growth in international trade and surplus tonnage.¹⁰¹ For the Finnish shipping industry, hardened competition, particularly from vessels in open registers, together with ever rising crewing costs on domestically registered vessels, worsened the situation. In the period 1970-1981 there was a six-fold increase in crewing costs for vessels registered in Finland, which compelled shipowners either to sell or adopt a new approach to shipowning. In 1987, the Finnish fleet was only just over a third of the size it had been in 1983. Much of the loss was a result of Finnish shipowners registering their vessels under flags of convenience. In 1985, the domestic tonnage amounted to 1.6 million gross tons, but if tonnage registered under foreign flags is included the figure rises to 2.4 million. Åland shipowners were the first in the country to flag out on a large scale. According to Yrjö Kaukiainen, this was because of the Islands' large number of second-hand ships, which were 'cheap tonnage, mainly employed in the cross-trades, and the owners simply could no longer afford the high Finnish labour costs.'¹⁰² Between 1981 and 1987, the Åland fleet declined from 734,000 to 159,000 gross tons. Registering vessels in low-cost countries enabled Åland shipowners, particularly those engaged in tanker shipping, to expand their fleets. In 1992, twenty-seven tankers with Åland owner-interests were registered abroad, their joint cargo capacity amounting to just under three million tons deadweight. As well as flagging out, shipowners, who were forced to sell their fleets, could move into management, where their expert knowledge was sold to other shipping companies.¹⁰³

As has been pointed out, the car-passenger ferry traffic between Finland, Åland and Sweden became the backbone of Åland shipping in the 1980s when much of the cargo traffic was crippled by falling freight rates and high manning costs. Table 3.2 depicts the

¹⁰¹ G. Harlaftis, *Greek-owned Shipping*, p. 258

¹⁰² Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, pp. 179-180

¹⁰³ J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, pp. 47, 115-116, 167-169

decline that took place after 1975 and also shows that ferries came to make up an ever larger share of the fleet.

Table 3.2. Åland's merchant fleet, gross register tons, 1975-1998

year	total grt	passenger ships	
		grt	% of total
1975	626 490	50 075	8
1980	608 949	102 943	17
1985	415 581	114 700	28
1990	226 500	192 472	85
1995	310 871	211 185	68
1998	353 165	268 150	76

Source: ÅSUB: *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1999*, tables 6.1, 6.2

Between 1975 and 1998, the ferry tonnage increased steadily and its share of the total fleet rose considerably, leading to increased regional income and new job opportunities both at sea and ashore. Furthermore, the ferry traffic provided Åland with fast and reliable transport, to the benefit of all sectors. The effects were first and foremost noticed in commerce and tourism and also in sectors such as financial services, international shipping consultancy and logistics. Moreover, the ferry service facilitated the development of Åland's manufacturing industry. For small companies specializing in carpentry, metal, plastic and food manufacture, the regular communications with the nearby mainlands opened up new markets and made expansion possible. The ferry traffic also impacted on the agricultural sector, with specialised crops and their high profit margins playing an increasingly important role.¹⁰⁴ Kaukiainen notes that in the second half of the twentieth century the geographical structure of Finnish foreign trade and transport changed in favour of the Baltic. This change highlights the

¹⁰⁴ Ålands landskapsstyrelse, *Sjöfartspolitisk program*, p. 20

importance of the ferry traffic between Finland and Sweden. Although mass tourism was the main reason for growth, it was stimulated by the rising significance of long-distance lorry services.¹⁰⁵

By the mid-1970s, the total income from car-passenger ferries matched that of tanker freights, and the economic effect of the ferry traffic is obvious in its contribution to the Islands' economy.¹⁰⁶ Despite the enormous decline in cargo tonnage, the income generated by the transport sector - of which sea transport made up approximately ninety per cent - continued to grow. In 1975, the transport sector's contribution towards total GDP was c. € 35 million (€ 127 million at 1997 prices). In 1997, the corresponding figure was almost € 320 million. More importantly, the sector's relative share of GDP had also increased by ten percentage points to forty-six per cent. The increase was almost exclusively the result of the rapid expansion in the passenger traffic.¹⁰⁷

The decline in tonnage naturally affected the number of employed in the industry, but the fall was not as sharp as that of tonnage, again, due to the growing ferry traffic. There was a notable rise in the number of people employed in Åland vessels from 1960 to 1980, when the numbers dropped slightly and levelled out. More salient, however, was the increase in the number of people employed in passenger ships. In 1960, a year after the first ferries were put into service, the crews of these ships accounted for less than four per cent of the total. Only fifteen years later, the ferry crews had risen more than thirty-fold in absolute numbers, from 50 to 1,430, making up almost half of all crew members in Åland-owned ships. The proportion of ferry employees in relation to the total number of crewmembers continued to grow to the point where, in 1998, less than ten per cent of the total numbers of crews on Åland ships were working in cargo carrying vessels. Kaukiainen notes

¹⁰⁵ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 167

¹⁰⁶ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 167

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find information regarding Åland's national accounts for the years prior to 1975 and thus it has not been possible to determine to what extent the shipping industry contributed to the GDP in the earlier part of the century.

that in 1989 some sixty per cent of Finnish seamen served on ferries, and of these, four out of five were part of the catering and service crews.¹⁰⁸

The crews on Åland vessels were not necessarily from Åland. A majority of the crew members, especially those working aboard the passenger ships, were from other regions, mostly from mainland Finland and to some extent from Sweden. In the inter-war period, and before the commencement of the ferry traffic, seamen from mainland Finland made up approximately one-third of the crews on Åland vessels. An explanation of this situation can be found in the requirements in Finland for officers to have sailing ship practice in order to obtain Master Mariner certificates and in the lack of qualified engineers during the introductory period of steamers and motor-ships in Åland. In the years 1970-1989, the number of non-Åland seamen in Åland vessels increased from ca 750 to 2,500. Subsequently, at the end of the period, almost eighty percent of the crew in Åland vessels came from other localities than Åland, presumably mostly mainland Finland and Sweden.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, many Åland seafarers worked on non-Åland vessels, as Table 3.3 illustrates.

Table 3.3. Åland seamen employed in non-Åland vessels, 1970-1998, numbers

year	total Åland seamen	of which in non-Åland vessels
1970	1 246	593
1980	1 810	665
1990	1 564	984
1998	1 656	856

Source: FOS, VI C:104(1973), VI C:106(1983), 1-8(1993); ÅSUB: Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2; ÅSUB: *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1982*, table 9.10; ÅSUB: *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 2000*, table 6.5

¹⁰⁸ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 182

¹⁰⁹ FOS, VI C:104(1973); ÅSUB, *Statistisk Årsbok för Åland 2000*, table 6.5; J. Harberg, *Åländsk sjöfart*, p. 172

In 1980, thirty-seven percent of Åland's seafaring population could be found working in foreign vessels, but by 1990 the share had increased to sixty-three percent. The development can partly be explained by the transfer of ships to open registers, i.e. flags of convenience, which began in the early 1980s. Åland seafarers working in ships with Åland ownership interests registered under convenience flags were registered as working in non-Åland vessels. The majority of Åland seafarers working aboard non-Åland vessels, however, were employed in ships registered in mainland Finland or in Sweden. Many of these ships were ferries engaged on the Finland-Åland-Sweden route. In 1998, the number of Åland seafarers working aboard non-Åland vessels had contracted slightly to fifty-two per cent.¹¹⁰

3.5 Maritime perceptions

Frank Broeze identified three major themes in his study of Australia's maritime history. These were the control of sea space, the taming of distance and how Australians live with the sea. In contrast to the first two themes, which remain fairly exclusive to Australia, the third theme raised by Broeze is relevant to all maritime communities, i.e. the issue of how people live with the sea. In his study, Broeze did not only consider the logistical and economic consequences inherent in maritime nations, but also social and cultural ones. Thus, without making a direct reference to it, he lent support to the idea of two different forms of maritime communities; an environmental and an perceived form, which can exist separately from each other or in symbiosis.

From an economic point of view, Australia shows signs of being a passive maritime environment, relying on other nations' fleets to carry her considerable exports. Her own fleet is small and mainly engaged in coastal trades. According to the *CIA World Factbook*, at the beginning of the new millennium, ninety-nine per cent of Australia's imports and ninety-six per cent of her exports were carried by sea. Of the approximately 500 million

¹¹⁰ ÅSUB, *Statistisk Årsbok för Åland 2000*, table 6.5

tonnes of cargo moving in and out of Australian ports annually, one-tenth was domestic traffic.¹¹¹ Despite the huge shipping activity, Australia's fleet is minimal and mainly engaged in domestic shipping. Figures for 2000 indicate that the national merchant fleet consisted of fifty-five vessels and employed less than 2,200 seamen.¹¹² Other Australian maritime activities are offshore oil drilling and shipbuilding, of which the latter saw something of a revival in the 1990s. In 1996, the industry employed 6,700 workers and nine out of ten ships built in Australian shipyards were exported. Still, shipbuilding only contributed 1.5 per cent of manufacturing exports and the workforce represented less than 0.75 per cent of the total manufacturing workforce.¹¹³ The evidence supports the description of Australia as a relatively passive maritime community in economic terms, but seen from a socio-cultural viewpoint, Australia takes an active interest in her maritime resource, as Broeze pointed out:

Ports, however, are only one aspect of Australians' marriage with the sea: most Australians live on the rim of the continent and most would regard the beach – complete with sharks and lifesavers – as a vital component of Australian life. Indeed, during the 1930s era of Art Deco and fascist aesthetics, the virile, bronzed lifesaver became one of the strongest images symbolising Australia's complex national identity.¹¹⁴

With Broeze's statement, we move from the rather narrow concept of 'maritime environment' to something much larger and more abstract, something that in this study is termed 'maritime perception'. In the case of Australia, the maritime perception involves beach life and maritime related pastimes, such as swimming, surfing and sailing. The bronzed lifesaver is still a relevant image of the national identity, as is the Iron Man victor.¹¹⁵ Specific female national icons are not as obvious in the discourse of Australia's national identity. To the extent that there is such a thing, it is likely to be either the Iron Woman, a feminisation of the

¹¹¹ Corporate Information, www.corporateinformation.com/ausector/shipping.htm

¹¹² Maritime Union of Australia, www.mua.tcp.net.au/pages/blue.html

¹¹³ Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, Australia, www.isr.gov.au/industry/marine/ships.pdf

¹¹⁴ F. Broeze, *Island Nation: A history of Australians and the sea* (St. Leonards, NSW, 1998) p. 2

¹¹⁵ The Iron Man competition is a triathlon consisting of 3.8 km swimming, 180 km cycling and a complete marathon distance of 42 km.

life saver and the Iron Man, or the tanned and toned beach bum, symbolizing a healthy and active lifestyle. This point apart, Broeze maintained that the maritime element played a dominant role in the creation of a national identity, evident not only in the population's self-perception but also in the nation's body of art and literature. To stress the Australians' understanding of themselves as a 'water people' he cited novelist Robert Drewe, who said: 'The Australian spirit ... is primarily a search for physical and emotional comfort which seems only attainable with a glimpse of the ocean in the mind's eye'.¹¹⁶

John Keegan states that: 'the sea is English, to outsiders and insiders alike',¹¹⁷ arguing that although there are many other places in the world where the sea is never very far away, e.g. the rest of the British Isles or the islands and peninsular states of the Mediterranean, none of them conjure up an image of the sea. The fact that this claim is likely to be strongly rejected by the Greek Islanders and many others is not really relevant for this study. More interesting is his claim that the English relationship with the sea is an emotional and social affair. His argument indicates that a people's tie to the sea is not necessarily dependent on location and economics but that it can also be bound to an idea or set of ideas that the sea represents. This statement also supports the idea of a perceived maritime community. Even more intriguing, Keegan proposes the existence of a specifically English maritime perception. After discussing Britain's strategic position and political organisation as a cause for the country's military and economic maritime success, Keegan turns to the impact *Pax Britannica* has had on English culture, referring to the influence of the sea in English art, literature and music, drawing attention to the sea as an influential factor in the lives of the English people.¹¹⁸ Keegan argues that the cultural bond between the English and the sea stemmed from the tradition of families taking seaside holidays together. The significance of the seaside is further strengthened in Walton's book on holidays and resorts in the twentieth

¹¹⁶ F. Broeze, *Island Nation*, p. 250

¹¹⁷ J. Keegan; 'The Sea and the English' in E. E. Rice (ed.) *The Sea and History* (Stroud, 1996) p. 143

¹¹⁸ J. Keegan, 'The Sea' in E. E. Rice (ed.) *The Sea and History*, p. 148

century, wherein he claims that the seaside had been of economic, as well as of social and cultural significance for Britain, and England in particular.¹¹⁹

Michel Mollat du Jourdin investigates the influence that the sea has had on the European continent, historically and culturally. He tries to establish who the people of the sea are and how the sea affects them, stating that:

Not content to be just a workplace, it [the sea] took complete possession of the men, women and children who lived from it; it fashioned their lives, their mentality, their gestures; it was a cultural mould. It turned them into people of the sea, that is, people – or, better, communities – living from the sea, through it and for it.¹²⁰

Mollat du Jourdin voices the opinion that everybody in a maritime community is a seaman, thus giving the word ‘seamen’ the same lexical meaning as the French term *gens de mer* or German *Seeleute*.¹²¹ The point made is that although the majority of people in a maritime community might never actually work at sea, they still share the same set of values and traditions. Despite this, there are obvious differences between the larger part of the population and the limited group of people who go to sea for work; ‘In the first case the sense is social, psychological and ethical; in the second, professional and technological, economic and military’.¹²² Mollat du Jourdin also draws attention to women’s situation in maritime environments, pointing to the solitude and waiting they have to endure, the anxieties, anguish and burdensome responsibilities they are faced with during their husbands’ absences.¹²³ He makes no distinction as to where these maritime women come from; suggesting that their experiences are very similar on whichever coast or island they live. Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, on the contrary, contends in her discussion of maritime women in the Baltic and North Sea region that the use of the term ‘maritime women’ is anything but straightforward as it ‘covers

¹¹⁹ J. K. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and resorts in the twentieth century* (Manchester, 2000)

¹²⁰ M. Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea* (Oxford, 1993) p. 153

¹²¹ A more accurate expression to use in this case would be ‘seafolk’, or simply ‘people of the sea’, which is the literary translation from both French and German.

¹²² M. Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea*, p. 154

¹²³ M. Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea*, p. 154

an enormous variety of experience spanning the different regions and micro-regions of the northern seas at a time of momentous change within the maritime industries'.¹²⁴ Regional and generational divergences are to be expected, but a number of parallel experiences among maritime women from all corners of the world and of varying ages are also present, such as the fear for husbands' and sons' health and safety while at sea and the responsibilities entailed in single-handedly maintaining home and family. Economic issues are another area where commonalities can be found both in reference to time and space. Differences are marked by maritime activities, social structures on micro and macro levels as well as time.

Apart from extensively influencing the lives of the members of the world's maritime communities, the sea has also played a significant role in the various art forms, i.e. literature, visual arts and music, proving that the maritime perception often reaches much further than the borders of the physical maritime environment. Whereas Keegan focuses his attention on England, making out that no other country's art has been inspired by the sea to the same extent as England's,¹²⁵ Mollat du Jourdin suggests that the maritime element has been a muse for artists across Europe. He states that it is not through literature alone that Europeans have expressed their interest in marine elements; it has also been done 'by graphic images and musical evocations.'¹²⁶ In music, composers like Sibelius, Elgar and Britten are said to blend romantic nationalism with the sounds of the sea, whereas other composers, such as Tchaikovsky, Ravel and Debussy were more inspired by the sea in its own right and their ambition was to describe the sea's varying moods through music. As examples of how the visual arts have been influenced by the sea, Mollat du Jourdin mentions the tapestry of Bayeux, Renaissance paintings by Van Dyck and Van de Velde and later works by artists such as Turner, Pissarro and Monet.¹²⁷ The Skagen School of artists got its name from its

¹²⁴ D. Kirby & M.-L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas*, p 232

¹²⁵ J. Keegan, 'The sea' in E. E. Rice (ed.) *The Sea and History*, p. 149

¹²⁶ M. Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea*, p. 211

¹²⁷ M. Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea*, p. 211

location in the fishing village of Skagen in northern Jutland and was the prime location for Scandinavian naturalists and neo-romantic painters. The artworks depict vistas of beaches and the North Sea as well as still lives of situations in the local fishing community. Among the colony's artists some of Scandinavia's best-known artists are to be found, notably P. S. Krøyer, Anna and Michael Ancher and Christian Krogh.¹²⁸ From Mollat du Jourdin's discussion, it can further be assumed that artists living on the rim of the world's oceans or in other places with marine features have been influenced by local seascapes and attitudes. Broeze proved this point by showing how Australia's native population recorded a wide selection of maritime themes in their paintings. He also brought into light the 'urban and maritime elements of the nation's identity' visible in paintings by Australians of European decent.¹²⁹

In the European body of literature, a large selection of maritime topics have been reflected upon, and during the course of time, these have contributed to a common maritime European identity. The dual characters of the sea; dangerous and unpredictable at the same time as soothing and reassuring, have been portrayed in similar ways by writers from all parts of Europe. Joseph Conrad has been described as the epitome of the European maritime writer due to his cultural heritage, seafaring experience and ability to describe the shifting temperament of the sea.¹³⁰ On the American side of the Atlantic, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) is perhaps the best known maritime novel, but the theme has also been explored by others. In her 1896 novel *The County of the Pointed Firs*, Sarah Orne Jewett described the complexities of life in a small Maine coastal community, a theme repeated in her other novels and short stories. The New England coast was also the scene for Sebastian Junger's non-fictional work *The Perfect Storm*, published a century later. The basis for the book was the so-called Halloween Gale of 1991 that struck the American eastern seaboard.

¹²⁸ Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark, <http://www.aarhuskunstmuseum.dk>, <http://www.artnet.com>

¹²⁹ F. Broeze, *Island Nation*, pp. 224-225

¹³⁰ M. Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea*, pp. 201-210

The story is based on interviews with people who experienced and survived the storm: fishermen, yachtsmen, rescue crews and their families. The focal point of the story, however, is on the doomed crew of a Gloucester swordfishing boat that perished in the event. Despite being largely factual, the book reads like a novel and was popular enough to make it into a big screen film in 2000. In Australia, the body of literature with maritime themes was very limited up until the 1930s, when the sea, at last, was emerging as an influential source of inspiration. The pivotal work that came to promote a maritime literary body was a historical novel called *A House is Built*, written by two women under the pseudonym M. Barnard Eldershaw and published in 1929. Alan Villiers made an enormous contribution to the genre through his books on popular Australian maritime history and his own seagoing experience, his best-known work being the autobiographical *The Sons of Sinbad*, published in 1940. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the maritime theme had expanded to include the beach and with it associated activities, experiences and symbolisms, effectively described and interpreted by authors such as Drewe and Tim Winton.¹³¹

In 1880, in his novel *Garman og Worse*, the Norwegian author Alexander Kielland described the inhabitants of coastal communities as a quiet and outward-looking people. He wrote:

What the sea is for those who live on the shore, no-one may know; for they say nothing. They live their entire lives with their faces turned towards the sea. The sea is their company, their adviser, their friend and their enemy, their livelihood and their churchyard. That is why it is a relationship with few words, and the gaze which looks out over the waters changes according to the mood the sea inspires – sometimes trusting, sometimes half-fearful and refractory.¹³²

This extract gives the reader an idea of the complex relationship people who live along its rims have with the sea. It also fits the stereotypical image associated with isolated maritime communities, where the people are somewhat backward and disinterested in what goes on in

¹³¹ F. Broeze, *Island Nation*, pp. 235-239

¹³² A. Kielland, *Garman og Worse* (Oslo, 1985) as quoted in D. Kirby & M.-L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas*, p. 39

the world beyond the community's boundaries, in the more densely populated areas. But even in maritime communities that are modern and cosmopolitan, similar traits are found. The dual role of the sea, at the same time friend and enemy, bread-giver and life-taker, never ceases to influence the people who live by and off it. This complexity is also what makes the sea such a fascinating element for artists, composers and authors, who look to it for inspiration, and for tourists, who come from inland to enjoy the recreational pastimes the sea has to offer.

The idea behind the 'maritime perception' is much harder to define than that of the 'maritime environment'. The presence of the maritime element in a community's art and culture is one indication of the strength of its link to the sea, but it is by no means the only, or even the most important one. It is a people's awareness of their own uniqueness in relation to others that is at the core of any community and therefore, when looking to establish whether or not a community is a maritime community, an attempt to measure the presence of a maritime culture among its members has to be made. If the members of a community feel that the sea bears a significant meaning and forms an important part of their identity, it can be assumed that they inhabit a maritime community. For members of maritime communities, the marine element forms a vital part of life even if they are not directly dependent on it for their livelihood. It is a means of recreation, as well as a source of comfort and inspiration. In communities where the maritime perception is strong, it is the sea *per se* that carries meaning, not so much how it is used. Typical for smaller maritime communities, such as small islands and coastal areas, is that their members often claim that they find living without access to the sea a virtual impossibility. Recreation automatically involves water, be it boating, fishing, swimming, surfing, sunbathing or merely a stroll along the beach. Members of these communities sometimes claim that going down to the seaside just to watch the movements of the ocean gives them peace of mind. In larger maritime communities, such as whole nations,

where the connection to the marine element is of a more abstract nature, the direct involvement in maritime activities or the sea's immediate presence is not as important. Instead, the maritime theme is given significance through artistic and cultural expression. It can also emerge in a people's common identity, as in the case of Australia's life saver, or in a nation's awareness and preservation of its history.

3.6 The maritime perception of Åland

The word *insular* is described in the Oxford English Reference Dictionary as 'of or like an island', 'separated or removed, like an island', or as being 'ignorant and indifferent to cultures, people etc., outside one's own experience; narrow-minded'.¹³³ The lexicology implies a link between islands and small-mindedness. The assumption that islanders are somewhat disinterested in the wider world and prone to introspection is not difficult to appreciate. Island communities are often regarded as being remote and isolated, attributes associated with ^{a?} certain degree of ignorance. The water that surrounds the islands restricts access and so renders communications more difficult, and with lack of communication comes isolation. There are a number of characteristics associated with isolated communities, such as a high frequency of intermarriage, low levels of education and a distinctive regional dialect.¹³⁴ Less contact with the outside world results in a lesser need for physically isolated communities to defend themselves from external influences, and in that respect distance and seclusion can be seen as a means for maintaining their specific cultural identity. This strategy, however, is proving increasingly difficult in an era when both transport and communications are being revolutionised, and the tourism industry is making even the remotest of places accessible. Before long even the Pitcairn Islands will be just another stop on the backpacker's tour around the world. Despite numerous social and economic

¹³³ J. Pearsall & B. Trumble (eds.), *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996)

¹³⁴ C. Ellis, *Fisher Folk* (Kentucky, 1986) p.127

advantages, the increased contact with the outside world can be a threat to a community's traditional structure and vitality. Anthony P. Cohen states that although a community's 'cultural integrity' is not solely dependent on its isolation, it certainly is of assistance. An increase in external influences gradually wears down the community's structural foundations.

He further contends that:

In order to maintain itself the community must throw up a new line of defence, one which is impervious to the insinuations of infrastructure and the central dissemination of 'culture' and information.¹³⁵

The way forward is to replace the structural foundations with symbolic ones, which is what the people of Whalsay have done, according to Cohen.

Åland cannot be regarded as being isolated. On the contrary, Åland could be called a 'cosmopolitan island'.¹³⁶ Situated as it is, in the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia, it has always served as a bridge between Sweden and Finland, and influences from even further away were brought to the Islands by visitors from abroad or by native sailors returning home. Åland served as a trading place for the Vikings, Hanseatic merchants occasionally stopping there on their way to or from Turku and Viborg, while French monks of the Franciscan Order founded a monastery on one of the outer islands. The official mail route from Stockholm to Turku and St Petersburg, established in the eighteenth century, went over Åland, and with the introduction of long-distance seafaring in the nineteenth century, new ideas and influences were brought to the Islands. Since the 1960s, frequent and regular ferry traffic drastically reduced the time and effort in travelling and thus made both mainland Finland and Sweden seem much closer than ever before. To a large extent, it is the island's dependency on shipping that has forced its inhabitants to interact with the outside world to a much larger extent than would have been the case had they engaged solely in agriculture and subsistence fishing.

¹³⁵ A. P. Cohen, *Whalsay*, p. 11

¹³⁶ The author would like to thank Gelina Harlaftis for the idea of cosmopolitan islands.

Åland's political status is also relevant, since it has contributed to the particular mentality of the Islands' inhabitants. The Åland Isles is an autonomous region of the Republic of Finland, a status assumed after a dispute between the Islanders and the Republic. When Finland gained independence from Russia in 1917, the people of Åland sought to be reunited with Sweden, largely because they feared losing their culture and language. Before coming under Russian rule in 1809, all of Finland, including Åland, had been part of the Swedish kingdom, and consequently Swedish was the language of the aristocracy. Swedish was also the language of the bourgeois, used in administration, education and business. Apart from being spoken by the upper and middle classes, Swedish was also spoken by the lower classes in Ostrobothnia and along the south west coast, including the Åland Isles. When Finland became a Grand Duchy of Russia in 1809, Swedish remained the official language, despite being the first language of only fifteen per cent of the population.¹³⁷

In the 1820s and 1830s, Hegelian romantic nationalist currents and Herder's theories on the importance of language for national identity led to an enormous interest in 'native' Finnish culture among the country's Swedish-speaking educated elite. One of the most notable effects of the national-romantic movement was the construction of a Finnish grammar and the emergence of a significant body of distinctively Finnish art, music and literature. In the early stages of the romantic nationalist movement, most of the literature was written in Swedish. From the 1860s, however, texts written in Finnish became increasingly common. The language question also affected the Grand Duchy's administration and politics. In 1863, Finnish was confirmed as the official language next to Swedish. That the language question had gained enormous importance is evident also when looking at the political groupings that took place in the mid-1800s. The two main fractions in the early stages of Finnish party politics were the Finnish nationalists (Fennomen) and the Swedish-speakers

¹³⁷ F. Singleton, *A Short History of Finland* (Cambridge, 1989) p. 76. See also E. Juttikala & K. Pirinen, *Finlands Historia* (Stockholm, 1968), pp. 250ff; E. C. Thadén (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1851-1914* (Princeton, 1981) pp. 399-401

(Svecomen), and their political agendas were mainly separated by their views on language. These political groupings maintained their places until the early 1890s when the language question was rendered less significant when the first wave of Russification struck the country.¹³⁸ The truce did not last long and the language question emerged once more as a major political issue in the wake of Finland's independence from Russia in 1917 and the civil war that followed.¹³⁹

The language situation was slightly different on Åland, since the Islands were totally Swedish-speaking. With Finnish gaining increasing ground in mainland Finland, the people of Åland were concerned that they would not be able to protect their language and culture once Finland had become an independent state. The only solution to the problem seemed to be a reunion with Sweden and a petition was sent to the Swedish king requesting incorporation into his kingdom. However, the newly-founded republic was not willing to relinquish any territory and the dispute was settled by the League of Nations in 1921, when it was agreed the Åland should remain part of Finland but as an autonomous province with guarantees safeguarding its language and culture. Over the years, the judicial powers of the Åland government increased and at the end of the twentieth century, Islanders enjoyed one of the most extensive forms of regional autonomy in the world.¹⁴⁰

On a structural level, it could be argued that Åland displays many of the characteristics of Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*, Durkheim's mechanical society and the 'little community' of the Chicago school. The population of Åland is very homogeneous in ethnicity, culture and class. This can be confirmed by statistical information such as place of birth, language, education and income. At the turn of the millennium, seventy three per cent of Åland's population had been born there and ninety four per cent of the inhabitants spoke

¹³⁸ F. Singleton, *History of Finland*, p. 80; see also B. Anderson (transl. S.-E. Torhell), *Den föreställda gemenskapen: Reflexioner kring nationalismens ursprung och spridning* (Gothenburg, 1992) pp. 73, 79

¹³⁹ H. Meinander, *Finlands Historia 4* (Helsinki, 1999), pp. 80-86

¹⁴⁰ H. Meinander, *Finlands Historia 4*, pp. 73-75

Swedish as their first language.¹⁴¹ Other features are more difficult to prove and have to be assessed by other means. In this case it is done primarily on personal experience, as a native of Åland. One such feature is kinship, which is a dominant element in Åland society. It may not be as strong nowadays as it was earlier, but people are still, to some extent, judged by their name and not on merits. Equally, you are expected to know who people are and whom they are related to. The importance of kinship is also evident in the local newspapers. Any feature article about a person will contain a reference to his or her family background. Further, the sense of belonging is strong. It is common among young Ålanders to move away from the islands for some time to study, work or travel. After some years abroad, however, many return to settle down, while those who remain abroad often maintain a strong link with Åland through regular visits. In *Åländsk odling* 1997, one woman said that although she had lived abroad for more than a decade, she still felt that she was a 'one hundred per cent-Ålander', while another woman, resident in Stockholm, spent almost every weekend at her summer house in Åland.¹⁴² In addition to the more general characteristics of small communities, the Islands' autonomy from Finland enhances the feeling of uniqueness and separation, as does the fact that Swedish, not Finnish, is the language spoken on Åland. Nevertheless, despite the insular characteristics, the population at large is also well-travelled, well-educated and very aware of what goes on in the wider world. Indeed, as pointed out previously, Åland displays cosmopolitan rather than insular features, largely due to the Archipelago's geographic location and socio-economic structure. According to Cohen's theories, Åland's structural boundaries should have suffered a severe weakening from its contact with surrounding communities. That may be true, but as Cohen predicted, symbolic boundaries have taken precedence. These boundaries are evident in a strong sense of local identity and in a clear awareness of traditions and culture. An important symbol for Åland is

¹⁴¹ ÅSUB, *Statistisk årsbok för Åland 1999*, tables 2.10, 2.13

¹⁴² *Åländsk odling*, no 57 (Mariehamn, 1997) pp. 51, 163

its special status as an autonomous region, supplying the population with an abundance of symbolic capital, such as the government, the flag and the stamps. Another symbol for the Åland identity is the sea, resting on age-old traditions of the first settlers arriving by some form of sea-going vessel, making a living on the barren skerries by hunting seal and fishing.

The impact of the sea is very apparent in the literature and in the art of the island. An extensive part of Åland's literary body is concerned with the sea, looking at it from various viewpoints. A number of authors have based their writings on their own experiences of working at sea, for example Uno Salminen and Elis Karlsson.¹⁴³ Karl-Erik Bergman finds inspiration for both his poetry and prose in his work as a fisherman, with the sea and life in the archipelago as recurring themes in his work. Leo Löthman is another Åland author who has used his own maritime experiences as an inspiration for his literary endeavours.¹⁴⁴ Female authors of Åland have been more inclined to write about living *with* the sea, since that is how they most often have experienced it. The exception is Pamela Eriksson's travelogue from her voyage aboard the *Herzogin Cecilie*, on which her husband was captain. The book was originally published in English under the title *The Duchess* (1958) and two years later in Swedish. Sally Salminen's novel *Katrina* (1936), which perhaps is the best-known Åland novel outside of the Islands, follows the life of an Åland seafarer's wife and in doing so gives an insight into the maritime woman's lot at the same time as describing the developments of Åland shipping in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁵ The novel's heroine was not an Ålander herself, but was lured to the Islands by a native sailor promising her blue apples and other lies. The novel, which was liberally based on real-life characters, depicts the inequalities that existed between the rich shipowners, landowners and captains and the poor men and women who had to make a living serving these people at sea and on land.

¹⁴³ U. Salminen, *Till sjöss* (Jakobstad, 1977), *För om masten*, (Jakobstad, 1978), *På bryggan*, (Jakobstad, 1979); E. Karlsson, *Mother Sea*, (London, 1964), *Havet är mitt hem*, (Stockholm, 1965), *Pully-Haul*, (London, 1966), *Cruising off Mozambique*, (London, 1969), *Två skepp*, (Mariehamn, 1988)

¹⁴⁴ Mariehamns Stadsbibliotek, Åland, www.mhbibl.aland.fi/forfattare

¹⁴⁵ G. Högman, *Den åländska kvinnan*, pp. 510-515

Another author whose prose was much inspired by the sea was Anni Blomqvist, most famous for a series of novels based on Maja, a fisherman's wife and her life on one of the outer islands in the Åland archipelago.¹⁴⁶ Blomqvist began her literary career with an autobiographical book, *I stormens spår* (1966), writing about life as a seafarer's wife and life in the archipelago. The book grew out of a personal tragedy, the loss of her husband and oldest son while they were on a fishing trip. Twenty-six years later, she wrote her last book, brought about under the same circumstances as the first. Her other son, too, had died while out fishing and in her book *Havet finns inte mer* (1989), she writes about that loss. In a trilogy by Ulla-Lena Lundberg, Åland's maritime history is depicted through the actions and observations of a seafaring family, starting in the farmer-skipper era, leading into the time of the great windjammers. The trilogy ends with a fictive anthropologist's observations of the modern ferries in the 1990s.¹⁴⁷ The female characters presented in the works of Salminen, Blomqvist and Lundberg are to a large extent related to an existing discourse of strong maritime women. Equally, it is through books like these that such a discourse is maintained.

Visiting writers and poets, such as the Finnish poets Elmer Diktonius and Arvid Mörne, were also inspired by the sea. In a poem named *Åländsk symfoni* (Åland Symphony), Diktonius captures the essence of the sea and its constant impact on the Åland and its people.

1. Like white wolves hunting
 crests of waves on a ferocious sea.
 Taste of salt in the air,
 scent of pine on the shore,
 hissings, fizzings
 splashes and roars.
 A martial song
 in green - blue - white the lot -
 There the sun's
 glitter-golden sword glimmers

2. My open window
 Sucks the ocean's roar,
 My open heart
 Beats in sync with the ocean.
 Like the rainbow,
 The tip of my soul dips
 Its tongue in the bosom of the sea,
 Carries on its bumpy back,
 In rhythmical thrusts,
 Its primeval pith to me

¹⁴⁶ G. Högman, *Den åländska kvinnan*, pp. 524-525

¹⁴⁷ U.-L. Lundberg, *Leo* (Helsinki, 1989), *Stora världen* (Helsinki, 1991), *Allt man kan önska sig* (Helsinki, 1995)

3. Domineering sea wind
pressed fir against rock -
it wanted to be a green tower
but became just a chastised mat
under the tempest's trampling foot.
Still, still:
flat-chested
it cries out
with piercing needles in the air
for new battles.

4. Headwind-gull flutters,
shrieks half-choked,
glides away,
remains still.
There a broad shouldered breath of wind
with berserk-fists clasps its shoulders,
it drops,
shivers,
the wing is almost broken -
a somersault: it is saved! ¹⁴⁸

The poem is a powerful representation of the sea an integral part of the Åland psyche. The sea encircles the Island and encroaches upon its very life. It has powers beyond its material being, for it is through the sea the Island defines its existence and the Islanders' understand their identity. In the first verse, Diktonius gives the sea a warlike character, a savage and potentially fatal element and in verses three and four the defiant and unrelenting nature of the Åland Islander is likened to a stunted pine tree and a wind beaten seagull. It is in the second verse of the poem, however, that the strong emotional bond between the Ålanders and the sea is particularly evident. Here, Diktonius sexualises the relationship between land and sea. The Island is the woman, who through her 'open window' receives, in 'rhythmical thrusts', the elixir of life from the masculine sea.

The sea is also a recurring theme among artists. According to Susanne Procopé-Ilmonen, arts director at the Åland Art Museum and her assistant Ingela Lönnqvist, various shades of blue are predominant in paintings by Åland artists, as well as in other art forms, e.g. textiles and ceramics. Many paintings depict shores and boat houses, and an outward-facing perspective is very common.¹⁴⁹ The maritime theme is even more pronounced in the public artworks dotted around Mariehamn, Åland's only town. No less than six out of eight sculptures relate to Åland's maritime tradition. *Mannen vid ratten* (Man by the Wheel) was unveiled in 1939 and shows a sailor stood at the helm. The statue was meant to serve as a

¹⁴⁸ E. Diktonius 'Åländsk symfoni' in W. Nyman (ed.), *Åländsk antologi* (Ekenäs, 1977) p. 128, author's translation

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Susanne Procopé-Ilmonen and Ingela Lönnqvist, 2000

reminder of the harsh life of sailors and a memorial to those lost at sea. *Havets folk* (People of the Sea) is a tribute to the Islands' shipping tradition.¹⁵⁰ At least three more sculptures in the town are linked to the sea. One of them, the AICH-monument in the shape of an albatross, was undraped in 2000 in memory of the world's last fleet of commercial windjammers and of the men who sailed in them. The other three are *Ståtbådan*, a symbol of Åland's distinctiveness, *Anadyomene*, named after Aphrodite, the goddess who rose from the sea and finally, a monument in memory of the local shipowner Algot Johansson.

The sea figures in music, too. The Åland 'national anthem', written by Johan Grandell in 1921, clearly indicates the significance of the sea, describing how the Islands were born out of the sea. More recently, in 2000, a composition named *Havsoratoriet* (Sea Oratorio) by Peter Lång was performed for the first time. Based on actual correspondence between a seaman and his wife in the early twentieth century, it aims to describe the emotional duress of both seafarer and wife. In May 2002, an opera titled *Rödhamn* was premiered at the Finnish National Opera. The opera was composed by Ålander Lars Karlsson and inspired by real-life events. *Rödhamn* is a remote island in the Southern Åland archipelago, once a pilot station and the principal setting of the opera, in which the main character is *Rödhamn*'s pilot and lighthouse keeper. According to reviews in the local newspapers '*Rödhamn* has a unique authenticity, not only in retrospection. Present day seafaring is also brought to the fore'.¹⁵¹

The sea also features strongly in the way Åland markets itself as a holiday destination. With less understanding of Åland society and without the evidence of a long-standing link between the sea and the arts, one could argue that the Ålanders' relationship with the sea was but a social construct of today, created as a marketing gimmick. The island is described as a place for 'close to nature' experiences, including many sea-related activities,

¹⁵⁰ S. Procopé 'Skulpturerna kring Esplanaden i Mariehamn' in *Åländsk odling*, no 55 (Mariehamn, 1995)

¹⁵¹ *Nya Åland*, 10/06/2002

such as boat racing, sailing, wind surfing, canoeing, fishing and relaxing by the seaside. Many of the events which take place during the tourist season play on Åland's maritime heritage, or are otherwise linked to the sea. Being the home of the world's last ocean-going merchant sailing fleet, much of the Islands' maritime history is related to this. The collections in Åland's Maritime Museum are primarily concerned with this period, and the link is further enhanced by a museum ship, the four-masted barque *Pommern*, moored next to the museum. Several other museums display links with the Islands' maritime heritage, for example the Hunting and Fishing Museum, the Mail Boat Museum, *Pellas* - the Shipmaster's House and the Archipelago Museum. In the last decades of the twentieth century, there was an upsurge of interest in other aspects of Åland's seafaring traditions. Since the late 1980s, a yearly event, called *Ålands sjödagar* (Åland's Sea Days), has put the Island's shipbuilding and peasant seafaring tradition in focus. Following old drawings, three replicas of typical Åland wooden vessels were built in the 1980s and 1990s, and continue to be used for a number of activities, ranging from camp schools for children, party venues, boat races and cruises in the local archipelago. Åland is an obvious location for maritime conferences and conventions of all kinds, and no tourist arriving in the Islands can avoid noticing the pride the Åland people take in their maritime tradition. Basil Greenhill comments:

When they [the tourists] cash their traveller's cheques at one of the branches of the Ålands Bank they will find models and photographs and paintings of sailing ships used as the principal motif in the interior design. They will find the same in the Hotel Archipelago. [...] They will find that the memory of sailing ships, large and small, is perpetuated in modern Åland in shops, in public buildings, in private houses and apartments, indeed everywhere.¹⁵²

The sea is an inescapable part of Åland society. That this notion is more than a social construct of the late 1990s is demonstrated in literature from earlier in the twentieth century. Writing in the 1910s, Hugo Sommarström claimed that shipping, fishing and hunting were

¹⁵² B. Greenhill & J. Hackman, *The Grain Races*, p. 28-29

important ancillary activities for most farmers. Only in the outer archipelago were people solely reliant on fishing and Sommarström called these people ‘the sons of the sea’. Like so many others writing about fishermen, he described them as a race apart, praising the bravery of the men and women ‘who constantly are prepared to face death, to fight the dangers to dare life and home to secure the scarce and dull food’.¹⁵³ As for the effect of the sea on the Ålander, Sommarström argued that the impressions and experiences of far away voyages that sailors brought back to the Islands contributed to the formation of the Åland identity. ‘Old traditions and cosmopolitan views’ were joined, transforming the Ålanders from conservative islanders to enlightened farmers, fishermen and seamen.¹⁵⁴ With this remark he suggested that seafaring activities did not only influence those who went to sea but the entire population.

Prevailing discourses in the late twentieth century continue to suggest that the perception of the sea among the population on Åland is very strong, and that there are very few Ålanders who could imagine living away from the sea.¹⁵⁵ Due to the geography of the Islands, the sea is ubiquitous, and most families have either summer houses by the sea or sailing or motor boats; many have both. Most recreational activities, particularly in the summer, focus on the sea. But the sea is not just a factor in people’s activities. It also carries a strong symbolic meaning. It serves both as a boundary and a bridge to the rest of the world. At the same time as it serves as a very tangible and real border line between their community and the rest of the world, the sea is also a link to that same outside world. It is from the sea that the Ålanders receive their livelihood and often it acts as a source for mental and physical wellbeing, offering comfort and hope. In 1997, the topic of the annual publication *Åländsk odling* was Åland identity. In the introduction, professor Bo Lönnqvist claims that all Ålanders have ‘experienced dependency on the sea as a resource of power in many different ways’. He further states that the word *sea* in itself holds a prominent position in the Åland

¹⁵³ H. Sommarström, *Åland i forntid och nutid*, (Stockholm, 1919) pp. 47-49

¹⁵⁴ H. Sommarström, *Åland*, p. 158

¹⁵⁵ See *Åländsk odling*, no 57 (Mariehamn, 1997) Thematic issue titled *Åländsk identitet* (Åland Identity)

vocabulary; that it serves as a tool in the creating of a specific Åland identity.¹⁵⁶ In the book, fifty individuals, representing ‘different professions and population groups on and outside Åland’, were interviewed. With maritime industries employing such a large number of the population, it was not surprising to find a sea captain, a chief engineer and a shipowner among the fifty informants. More noteworthy, however, was the fact that one of the informants was present as a representative of Åland seafarers’ wives. She was the only person to be identified through her spouse’s profession rather than through her own. The same phenomenon was apparent in a temporary exhibition at the Åland Museum in the summer of 2000, called *Åländska kvinnoporträtt* (Åland women portraits). There were writers, labourers, politicians and doctors among the thirty-nine women presented in the exhibition, as well as two women interviewed in their capacity as seafarers’ wives. Again, these two were the only women to be presented in their role as somebody’s wife. This suggests two things, namely that the seafarer’s wife holds a prominent place in the gallery of Åland ‘national’ characters and that she is regarded as a good representative of the maritime community that is the Åland Isles.

3.7 Åland: a maritime environment perceived?

It is more or less impossible to establish any immutable criteria for identifying a maritime community. Instead we can define a number of characteristics that are indicative of the parameters and constituents of such a community. These characteristics determine whether the community in question can be cast as ‘environmental’ or ‘perceived’ in nature, or a mixture of the two. The first two traits are location and dependency, which serve to identify likely maritime environments. Proximity to a water system is an essential element of a maritime environment, which is why these are to be found on islands, along coastlines and on the banks of estuaries and inland waterways. Dependency on the local maritime milieu, either

¹⁵⁶ B. Lönnqvist, ‘En icke ålänning’ in *Åländsk odling*, no 57, p.13

directly, as in the case of Iceland and its fisheries, or indirectly, like the Isle of Man and its favourable tax regime and associated international shipping register, is also a critical facet of a maritime environment. The third characteristic differs from the former two in that it relates to a perception of the marine element in its own right and the influence this has on popular culture and identity. Whereas the first two traits limit the parameters of maritime communities, the third does exactly the opposite. It allows for the existence of perceived maritime communities, where it is the people's emotional association with the water around them that is of significance, not locality or dependence. Arguably, the strongest sense of maritime affinity is found among the members of small island communities. For them the maritime element is often inescapable, an integrated part of the communities' survival strategy and a seminal medium in the creation of identity and culture.

In the case of the Åland Isles, evidence relating to the existence of a maritime community is abundant and unequivocal. Geographically, Åland is surrounded by the sea, which, with countless fjords, bays and straits, breaks up the coastline, penetrates the landmass and forms an inescapable, ubiquitous presence. In economic terms, the sea is also an influential factor. From early times, sea-related activities, such as fishing, shipbuilding and piloting, fashioned the population's welfare, either as a primary source or as a supplement to other activities, mainly farming. Shipping and farming were still closely intertwined at the dawn of the twentieth century, but as the Åland economy matured that tie was severed. The biggest sea-related industry, in terms of employment, was seafaring. So long as agriculture remained the main source of employment for the male workforce, seafaring came as a good second. As de-agriculturalisation proceeded, seafaring became the leading occupation among Åland's men, with one in four or five of the male working population engaged at sea. With respect to revenues generated by maritime activity, shipping accounted for more than two fifths of the Islands' GDP in the late 1990s.

The impact of the sea on the Archipelago's population was manifest in the popular perception of Åland as a maritime community. Not only was this clearly evident in the lifestyle choices of the Åland people, but also in literature, art and music. The sea inspired both local and visiting artists. Their work became part of the cultural reservoir from which the people created a common identity and a stock of shared symbols, one of which was the seafarer's wife. These symbols, in turn, were used to create new *symbolic* boundaries when the old *structural* boundaries fell apart as a result of increased contact with other communities. The sea, in other words, was perceived by the Ålanders as very significant to both their individual identity and their communal sense of belonging.

The geographical, structural and cultural characteristics of the Åland Islands fits the criteria for maritime communities set out in the beginning of the chapter. As an autonomous island-community, heavily dependent on the shipping industry for its prosperity, the Islands formed an archetypal maritime environment. Furthermore, with a population that, metaphorically speaking, dipped the tip of its soul into the sea to find the energy needed to maintain a strong sense of self in a world that was becoming increasingly uniform, it was evident that Åland was also a perceptual maritime community. Accordingly, we can safely conclude that in the late twentieth century, Åland came as close as could be to forming a 'model' maritime community.

4. The Logistics of Maritime Family Life

The semantic denotation of 'maritime women' is open to debate. Some scholars have preferred to narrow it down to include only women who for a longer or shorter period live or work aboard a ship.¹ Other researchers, for example Brit Berggreen, have chosen to also include 'women who take an active part in maritime hunting'.² The definition given to 'maritime women' in this thesis is laid out in the introduction, where the term is defined as including 'all women whose lives are influenced by the sea in one way or another; women working at sea as crew members on all types of vessels and ashore in sea-related industries, as well as the mothers, wives and daughters of fishermen, sailors, oil-rig workers and others who depend on the sea for their livelihood'. This description closely follows that which Anniemiek Van Der Veen has applied to 'fisherwomen' in the Dutch North Sea fisheries. By her definition, fisherwomen comprise 'all women who were socially or economically tied to the fishery, such as a fisherman's daughter or wife, or an employee in some branch of the fishery'.³ Van Der Veen further notes that the interwoven structure of fishing communities produced women who were 'maritime women' in more than one capacity. Her example is the fisherman's daughter who was working as a net mender and later became a fisherman's wife. A similar structure can be found in most maritime communities where the sea-related industries employ a large proportion of the workforce. Multi-layered roles like these were present, for example, among the *pescadores* in Sally Cole's study of the Portuguese coastal village of Vila Chã, as well as among the whaling communities in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century New England as presented by Lisa Norling.⁴ In Åland, occurrences of multiple roles were still frequent at the end of the twentieth century, with the most common case in point

¹ C. Sundqvist, 'Kvinnor ombord' in M. Engman (ed.), *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, vol. 73, 3/1988, p. 492

² B. Berggreen, 'Dealing with anomalies', in L. R. Fischer et al (eds), *The North Sea*, p.112

³ A. Van Der Veen, 'Independent Willy-Nilly', in L. R. Fischer et al (eds), *The North Sea*, p.182

⁴ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*; L. Norling, *Captain Ahab*

being the seafarer's daughter who through marriage became a maritime woman in her capacity as a seafarer's wife. Inasmuch as there was a tradition for sons to follow in their fathers' footsteps, it was likely that a seafarer's daughter and a seafarer's wife would one day find herself a seafarer's mother as well. Women who chose to pursue a maritime career themselves were likely to meet their future partners at sea and so end up with a two-fold maritime role, both as mariners and as mariners' wives. There were several women in the sample who exhibited multiple roles similar to those outlined above. At least eighteen of the informants were daughters of mariners, while three of them were mariners themselves and two reported that their sons had pursued a career at sea. There was also a daughter who was said to be 'longing for the sea',⁵

In this chapter we will examine the pattern of seafaring life as it was experienced by the seafarers' wives who produced evidence for this study. Early on it became evident that time was a reoccurring topic and seafaring life assumed a cyclical character. Thomas Heikell found that time also took a central position in the reconstructions presented to him by the seafarers in his study. He distinguishes between two phases; time at home and time at sea.⁶ In this study, the two phases described by Heikell are modified to incorporate also the seafarer's departures to sea and his returns home. Ingrid Kaijser, too, mentions the periodicity as an inescapable part of life for seafarers' wives past and present in her article on Swedish seafarers' wives.⁷ Based on the information gathered for this study, a generalised sketch of seafaring life has been drawn up. It contains four distinct phases; firstly, preparation for the seafarer's departure and his actual departure; secondly, life without the seafarer; thirdly, preparation for the seafarer's return and his reception; and finally, life with the seafarer at home. The preparation for the seafarer's departure was both a physical and mental exercise, which involved the entire seafaring family. The seafarer's departure was

⁵ G204-290799

⁶ Thomas Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*

⁷ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke' in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, pp.38, 41-42

followed by a period of adjustment, during which the wife and children settled back into the routines that they had devised for day-to-day life while the seafarer was absent. The period of single-parent life was discontinued and a new stage entered into when the home-based family members began to get ready for the seafarer's return. This phase of seafaring life was concluded by the seafarer's return and his reception. As soon as the seafarer had returned home, another period of adjustment started, this time in order to incorporate the seafarer into the family sphere. The circle drew to a close when this, the fourth phase of seafaring life, moved into the first phase and the family commenced preparations for the seafarer's next departure.

4.1 Pattern of work

One of the most notable characteristics of seafaring marriage was the amount of time the spouses spent separated from each other. Over time, many things surrounding the seafarer's absences have changed, such as length of time away at sea, relief systems and means of communication while at work. Despite this, the fundamentals were still the same; the seafarer left his family for the sea and his wife remained ashore to cope with home, work and children as best she could. In the early twenty-first century, the work/home ratio for a Finnish seafarer was roughly fifty-fifty, but only a couple of decades previously, the time the spouses spent apart had been far greater than the time they had together.

The length of the seafarer's absence depended largely on the type of trade in which he was involved, the general rule being that the closer to home the trade routes took him, the shorter the stay at sea. At the turn of the twentieth century, the standard duration at sea for a seaman on the Åland ferries was one week, followed by one week's leave. In the Baltic, North Sea and North Atlantic trades, the periods at sea for a Finnish seaman ranged from four to eight weeks, after which he was normally allowed leave for an equal length of time. Some companies operated a system whereby the standard time was one month on and

one month off, apart from one seven-week shift a year. This double shift was used to ensure that crew members got to spend every other Christmas at home.⁸ For seafarers on world-wide trade routes, spot traders in particular, the work/leave intervals were slightly more irregular, with time aboard lasting between three to six months and the duration of leave sometimes being less than time spent at sea. The relief system practised in the late 1990s was relatively new. It was not until the 1970s that a 2:1 relief system was introduced, which gave seafarers the right to have one week off for two weeks at work, and although shipowners were not obliged to do so, from the last decades of the twentieth century, most seemed to operate according to a 1:1 system.⁹ In Sweden, the 1:1 system was introduced in 1974, after threats of a mass strike among Swedish seafarers.¹⁰

Looking at historical data regarding Åland's shipping enterprises and the duration of absence from home, the rule of nearby routes and shorter periods at sea holds true. As long as Åland shipping consisted of farmers transporting their surplus produce to towns and markets on neighbouring mainlands, voyages seldom lasted longer than a couple of weeks. The duration depended mostly on the time it took the farmers to sell their products and to buy goods that could not be obtained on the Island. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Åland vessels operating in the Baltic and North Sea were at sea for seven or eight months of the year, leaving Åland in late spring and returning in time for Christmas.¹¹ For sailors aboard ships engaged in world-wide spot trading, time at sea in the first part of the twentieth century could sometimes last several years. However, as the opportunities for sailing vessels declined and finally almost exclusively comprised the Australian grain trade to Europe, shipboard time would be roughly ten months, with two months unpaid leave during

⁸ G203-230799

⁹ Mikael Brunila, *Från samma båt till olika sidor om bordet, Finlands Skeppsbefälsförbund* (Helsinki, 1982)

¹⁰ Ingrid Kaijser, 'Sjömansyrkets villkor' in U. Djerw & I. Kaijser (eds.) *Sjömansliv – berättelser från två sekler, Sjöhistorisk årsbok 2000-2001* (Stockholm, 2000)

¹¹ H. Hagmark & M. Barnard, 'Åland shipping and Hull's Baltic Timber Trade' in B. Karlsson et al (eds) *Sjöhistorisk årsskrift för Åland*, vol 12 (Mariehamn, 2000)

the vessel's summer lay-up in Åland. For seafarers on engine-powered ships, which finally displaced sailing vessels in the late 1930s, the time at sea was much the same as for those on sailing vessels.

In this study, women of the first generation testified that their husbands would be at sea for twelve to eighteen months after which they signed off and spent anything from a couple of weeks to a few months at home before signing on for a new voyage. Based on cases where detailed information regarding the seafarers' voyages was given, it was possible to obtain an overview of the developments in this area, and it became clear that a major shift took place in the 1970s. After that date, voyages lasting much longer than six months did not feature in the material, and time on leave was often equal to time spent at sea. As late as in 1988, however, there was still evidence of seafarers working for six months with only two months holiday.¹² Terms of employment differ not only in time but also in place. There was little difference in the length of contracts between Swedish and Finnish seamen in the late twentieth century.¹³ In Britain, leave periods varied from equalling the time spent aboard to a ratio of two to one, where shipboard stay was twice as long as time on leave. For Chinese seamen working on foreign ships, the situation was very different. They regularly worked for longer than a year before they were allowed three to four months leave.¹⁴

Another trait apparent in the data was a tendency among seamen to change trades throughout their career. In most cases, this meant moving from some type of long-distance trade to a job aboard an Åland ferry, but it could also mean transferring to a different shipping company or trade route, or a decision to leave the sea for a job ashore.¹⁵ Of the seamen in Generation One, seven of the eighteen men continued to work the deep-sea trades,

¹² G2029

¹³ Ingrid Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke' in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.41

¹⁴ M. Thomas et al, 'Behind the Scenes' in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*

¹⁵ The term "long-distance" is used in a very broad sense in this study, effectively denoting every kind of seafaring apart from the ferries that traffic the route Finland-Åland-Sweden and the Åland inter-island ferries. The reason for this broad use is that although trade routes and types vary a great deal, the time the seafarer is away from home is considerably longer than it would be if he was working on a ferry (one to six months compared to one to two weeks).

whereas five men changed from long-distance trades to ferry trafficking and six men left the sea for careers on land. Among the men in this generation who transferred to work on ferries, the move usually occurred towards the end of their careers. There were two main reasons for this pattern. First, in their youth, the option of working on a ferry had not been available. Second, it seems to have been the policy of some shipping companies to bestow the position of ferry captain as a reward to master mariners who had served the company loyally in foreign trades for many years. Some of the Generation One informants testified that for a seafaring couple who had spent most of their married life apart, a few years on the ferries towards the end of the husband's working life gave them a chance to get adjusted to each other before the seafarer retired.

The most notable difference between Generations One and Two was that in Generation Two the ferries played a much more prominent role, which to some extent affected the way in which the women prepared for their husbands' returns. Whereas all Generation One seafarers had been working most of their careers in long-distance trades, over half of the men in Generation Two had been sailing in deep-sea trades as well as on ferries, most of them transferring to ferry jobs once they had married and started a family. Just over one-third of the men in this generation had worked aboard cargo carriers in international traffic exclusively, whereas four of the twenty-eight men had been working on ferries only. The work patterns of the seafarers in Generation Three resembled that of the preceding generation with regard to movements between work places. More than two thirds of the men in Generation Three, twenty out of twenty-eight, had experience of working both in long-distance shipping and on local ferries. At the time data were collected, thirteen men were working on ferries and ten were engaged in deep-sea trades. Five men had left the sea for jobs ashore, of whom three were maritime-related.

The attitude among Generation One women towards their husband's work on ferries was generally perceived much more positively compared to their younger counterparts. One of the interviewed women exclaimed: 'It was paradise, it was!' when asked about the period when her husband was working on the ferries.¹⁶ Another informant, also of Generation One, described the period during which her husband worked on the ferries as 'a wonderful time'. She and their sons had the possibility of joining the seafarer aboard at any time. Her husband was the captain of the ship and she was treated accordingly; for instance; she could go to the *smorgasbord* before anyone else.¹⁷ Contrary to that statement was the comment from an informant in Generation Two, who said: 'I thought week on-week off would be a dream come true, but it didn't turn out as I had expected it to do.'¹⁸ What the informant referred to was partly her increasing worry about her husband's fidelity and partly her loss of control in the home, issues which will be discussed in section 4.3.3.

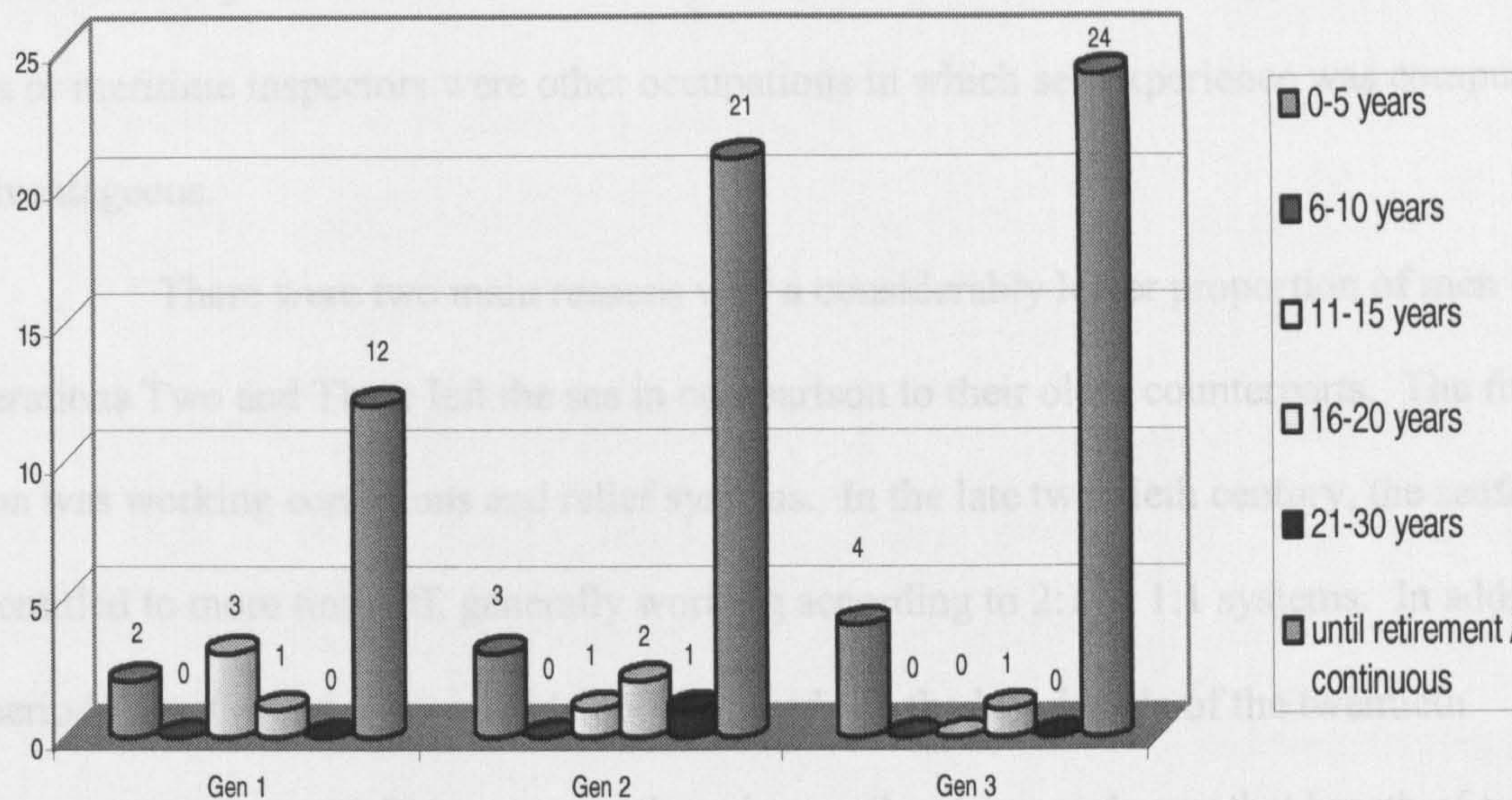
Not all of the informants' husbands had worked at sea all their lives. Some went ashore during the first years of their marriage, others much later. However, as chart 4.1 illustrates, the majority of men, fifty-seven out of seventy-five, were either still working at sea or had done so until retirement.

¹⁶ G103-020899

¹⁷ G1058

¹⁸ G205-290799

Chart 4.1. Husbands' years at sea after marriage, by generation group



Source: Personal testimony data

The proportion of men in Generation One who left the sea for a land-based job was considerably higher than that in the other two generations in this study.¹⁹ One rationale lies in the long periods the seafarer had to spend away from home. The year-long voyages and the brief visits at home were perhaps acceptable for a young man without any commitments.

However, once a sailor married and got a family of his own it became harder for him to leave the home and to stay at sea for the length of time which was then the norm. Family commitments were often the chief reason behind a seaman's decision to give up his job at sea.

Separation from one's family and pressure from one's partner and children is also noted by Michelle Thomas, Helen Sampson and Minghua Zhao as one of the most significant factors influencing seamen to leave the sea.²⁰ Once they went ashore, the type of work ex-seamen engaged in varied. Engineers had a natural advantage over captains and deck officers in that

¹⁹ Generation two comprised seafarers still active in the work force but with grown up children. Seafarers in 'generation three' were the youngest ones and their children were still living at home.

²⁰ M. Thomas et al, 'Behind the Scenes' in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, p.138

they could more easily transfer their skills to a land-based job. However, shipping companies could occasionally offer their officers land-based positions within their shipping operations. Pilots or maritime inspectors were other occupations in which sea experience was compulsory or advantageous.

There were two main reasons why a considerably lower proportion of men from Generations Two and Three left the sea in comparison to their older counterparts. The first reason was working conditions and relief systems. In the late twentieth century, the seafarer was entitled to more time off, generally working according to 2:1 or 1:1 systems. In addition, the periods spent at sea were considerably reduced. In the last decade of the twentieth century, seamen very rarely spent more than six months at sea, and even that length of time was seemingly unusual. Most commonly, seamen worked for one to four months, followed by an equally long stay at home. This, together with improved communications, helped the seafarer to maintain a closer relationship with his family than was the case previously. The second reason was the ferries, which offered a halfway solution for seamen who wanted to be closer to home, but who also wanted to keep their seafaring jobs. Regular ferry traffic was not introduced until 1959, and during its initial stage, it did not offer as many job opportunities as it did in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In other words, seamen in Generation One were not in a position where they could choose as freely as could the seamen of Generations Two and Three. Another point to remember is that the younger men were still active in the workforce, so there was still time for them to change their minds and switch to land jobs. Supporting the argument that there was more freedom for the later generations of seamen to choose their line of trade, was the fact that roughly half of the men in Generations Two and Three had worked both on ferries and in long-distance shipping. Some had moved from long-distance to ferries and others had spent a couple of summers on the ferries while in training and then taken up a position on a cargo carrier in international traffic.

4.2 The first phase: departure

Preparations for the seafarer's impending departure began towards the end of his period ashore. The time spent on preparations depended largely on the length of his current leave and his next period at sea, and it involved not only him but also his wife and children. For ferrymen, who were at sea for no longer than a week or ten days at a time, the preparations were less rigorous than those of a seafarer engaged in longer trade routes. All seamen interviewed by Heikell, for example, felt that the last days or week of their time on leave was lost to them. They were unable to start on a new project and daily life was increasingly revolving around the impending departure.²¹ Seamen, particularly those who had more than a couple of weeks off, often took on different kinds of projects while they were at home. It could be anything from arranging video tapes in alphabetical order to building an extension to the house. Whatever the project, it had to be concluded or prepared for a longer break before the seafarer left. The seafarer also had to make sure that his clothes and the other things he needed for work were ready to be packed. His wife often helped him with this. Apart from packing, they also discussed practical family matters that were expected to arise during the seaman's absence. The wives, too, had to prepare themselves for being alone with all the responsibilities again. Sharing the physical preparation could facilitate the spouses' mental preparation of the impending separation, as one of the informants of Generation Three said: 'A couple of days before he's due out I start to think that I'll have to sleep alone again, how it is going to be while he is out and what I can do to make time pass quicker'.²² It was also important for the seafarer and his wife to prepare their children for their father's departure, especially ^{with?} when young children. They needed to be reassured that their father was not leaving them permanently, that he would come back. This could be a complicated task, since small children do not have a rational concept of time. One informant found that one of the most

²¹ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, pp.42-43

²² G302-090799

distressing aspects of bringing up children with a seafarer was to explain to children who were too young to understand why their father was 'suddenly completely gone'.²³

Among the women in the sample, there were twenty who in their narratives described the parting as difficult, something the older women never got used to and the younger women, whose husbands were still working at sea, would never become accustomed to. Then again, there were twenty women who claimed that they had, to different degrees, adjusted to these partings, including two women who actually preferred their respective husbands' absence. Moreover, no less than thirty-five women, almost half of the sample group, declined to comment directly on the issue. The reason for this cannot be uniformly explained. In some women's reconstructions there was generally little room for emotional reflections, and thus no place to address this particular issue. In other accounts, the narrators reconstructed themselves in such likeness to the stereotypical straight-thinking and capable seafarer's wife that separate comments on their abilities to cope with the seafarers' departures would have jeopardised the validity of their construction of the self. It was, in other words, implicit that they dealt with the partings as something inevitable and nothing to fuss about. Finally, the way the question of the seafarer's departure was presented in the questionnaires did not directly encourage women to elaborate on the preparations and actual departure. Instead, the question was aimed more at the women's situation while the seafarer was at sea. These issues fall under the second phase of the seafaring lifecycle, which was characterised by the seafarer's absence.

4.2.1 Preparing

The informants in Generation One said very little about their preparations of the seafarers' departure, although it was in this generation that one would assume that the need for preparations was the greatest. The men were absent for very long periods, sometimes over a

²³ G3086

year. The possibilities of communicating were limited. There must have been much for the spouses to arrange prior to the seafarer's departure. The lack of details about the preparations could be explained by the unregulated working conditions. Seafarers were often only employed for a voyage or set of voyages, after which they signed off and went home and waited for a shipowner to call when there was more work available to them. As a result, seafaring life could be 'very abrupt', as one woman wrote. She complained that her husband was often compelled to stay aboard longer than initially agreed and that he could be called back out at very short notice without having had sufficient time at home.²⁴ The system of employment offered little security, and it is likely that seafarers feared that declining a job once would jeopardise their future chances of getting a job with that particular shipping company. There was a hint of hopelessness in the informant's discussion on the topic, mixed with annoyance and discontent that shipowners should have such power over her family life.

Women of Generations Two and Three were slightly more forthcoming in their discussions on preparations for departure. One informant's account contained many references to anxiety. In it she mixed descriptions of practical preparations with her own feelings about the forthcoming departure:

The day you find out that he's going out, one slowly begins to prepare oneself. It immediately feels heavy, I think. The suitcase is taken down, it has to be packed. He ponders what to take, brings it out and I put it in the suitcase. The thoughts run to and fro, how long is he going to be away? How am I going to cope? To be well, hoping everything will work at home. The boiler usually stops just after he has left. It's a lot.²⁵

Clearly, bearing the full responsibility for family and home was a heavy burden for this informant. Comments such as 'it immediately feels heavy', 'the thoughts run to and fro' and 'it's a lot' suggested that this woman did not appreciate being left alone. Her husband worked on an oil tanker in world-wide trade, working eight months at sea followed by four months of

²⁴ G102-120799

²⁵ G2055

leave. The long separation and limited communication opportunities might have contributed to the informant's sense of anxiety. In this section of the questionnaire, she appeared more concerned with her own situation than that of her husband, wondering how she would cope and if 'everything will work at home'. But there were also passages in the narrative that expressed concern for her husband's wellbeing. The informant also described the process by which she and her husband together packed his suitcase. The process was a very tangible way for both parties to come to terms with the pending separation, in which the cooperation in the simple task of packing became a symbol of her acceptance of his job obligations and of his desire to include her in his working life. It was also a time for discussing the practicalities of the coming period of separation.

Departure-related stress could also be the cause of conflict. One woman stated that it was almost a ritual for her and her husband to have arguments just before her husband's departure and straight after his return. However, she was also quick to add that the arguments were never very serious and always cleared: 'I was born an optimist. It will be alright, no matter what problems may arise.'²⁶ The fashion in which the story was constructed placed this informant's story within a discourse that supported the image of the unsentimental, down-to-earth seafarer's wife. In her narrative, the arguments were referred to in a very casual way. They were not to be taken seriously; they were simply a part of the ritual. Anxiety linked to departure did not only affect the women, but also the men. A study conducted by the Australian Maritime Safety Association in the late 1990s showed that the transition phases between work and home was the greatest source of stress among seafarers.²⁷ The seafarers in Heikell's study were also reported to find the time leading up to departure difficult. The

²⁶ G2029

²⁷ A. W. Parker, L. M. Hubinger, S. Green, L. Sargaent & R. Boyd, *A Survey of the Health, Stress and Fatigue of Australian Seafarers* (Canberra, 1997) as presented in M. Thomas et al, 'Behind the Scenes' in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, p. 118

seamen felt themselves to be 'somewhere between the home and the ship'.²⁸ A woman of Generation Two revealed with obvious pain that towards the last years of her husband's seafaring career he would drink heavily for several days prior to his departure. In the narrative of her husband's alcohol abuse, there was an underlying tone of unease and even fear. Having been brought up in a teetotal environment, she claimed that she felt uncomfortable about alcohol. She made further references to her inexperience when she wrote: 'if you're not used to alcohol in your home it is unpleasant and disgusting with drunken people'.²⁹ In this case, the seafarer left the sea permanently to work ashore. The reason for the career change was said to be that the seafarer had earned all his retirement years at sea, but was too young to retire. Legally, there was nothing stopping him from continuing at sea, but the excessive drinking leading up to departures would suggest that he was a reluctant seafarer. Although seafaring is often regarded as a high-risk profession with regard to alcohol abuse, this was the only story with direct reference to alcoholism. In a couple of other cases the issue was commented upon but only in passing and without direct bearing on the informants or their husbands.³⁰

All disagreements and arguments had to be resolved before the seafarer left for work, according to a woman of Generation Three. If not, the problems would grow and eventually become irresolvable. She argued that because she and her husband were constantly forced to tackle their differences, problems were always solved before they could cause any real disruptions to the relationship.³¹ A similar stance was taken by another Generation Three informant. She wrote that both she and her husband suffered from separation anxiety, which manifested itself in arguments breaking out over petty things. However, the arguments were never left unsolved and the couple never parted in anger. On

²⁸ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 43

²⁹ G2[1]054

³⁰ e.g. G202-080799, G301-130799, G302-090799; see J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, pp. 135-138; T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 34

³¹ G305-100100

the contrary, they always 'tried to make their last night together as delightful as possible'.³² These reconstructions emphasised the narrators' desire to demonstrate that their marriages, despite their obvious deviation from the cultural norm, were very healthy; perhaps even more so than 'normal' land-based marriages.

The human being is a creature of habit and as time went by many seafarers' wives learned to appreciate the time they had to themselves. In many seafaring families, the seafarer's visit was regarded as a break from the norm, and although his presence was appreciated, his departure was also a relief for all parties involved. With the seafarer gone, the rest of the family could return to their day-to-day routines.³³ There were women who stated that they were now almost looking forward to their husbands' departures, whereas when they were younger, they used to panic at the thought of being on their own.³⁴ A young woman said that she used to be appalled when she heard older seafarers' wives say that they longed for their husbands to go back to work, but that she later began to better understand their sentiments.³⁵ Another woman stated:

My feelings when he leaves are mixed, but since I've always lived like this - and want to live like this - it feels quite good. I know he'll be home again after four weeks, but it sometimes feels like dying a bit each time he leaves.³⁶

Despite outspoken reports of a desire to be alone again, it would be hasty to assume from these comments that the women were unhappy in their relationships, for this was rarely the case. The above quotation illustrates the mixed feelings that the partner's departure could evoke. At the same time as the informant felt good about getting some time to herself, she also said that saying goodbye felt 'a bit like dying'. Positively anticipating the seafarers' departures was linked to the habits the women got into during their husbands' absences, for

³² G3086

³³ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.67

³⁴ G301-130799, G3001, G3090, G2029

³⁵ G301-130799

³⁶ G3090

although the presence of the seafarer was in most respects welcomed, it also unsettled the routines that the wife had set up for herself. For these women, when the end of their husbands' stay at home began to draw to an end, they started looking forward to getting back into their routines. Time to oneself was frequently presented as a valued aspect of seafaring life. Many informants agreed that life took on a slower pace when their partners were at sea. There was more time to meet up with girlfriends, go to evening classes, read books and generally just do their own things:

One positive side with being alone is that you have a certain freedom, which isn't bad. You plan the day as you please and you don't have to serve that much either. The laundry basket doesn't fill up as quickly; dinners are easier, less visitors and parties. It's simply a slower pace.³⁷

Very typical among the women who made these kinds of comments was the simultaneous assurance that they meant no harm, that they did indeed like having their husbands at home and that it upset them to bid farewell, as illustrated in comments such as 'it sometimes feels like dying a bit'. It appeared important to them not to present themselves as cold-hearted or selfish. In the words of a woman of Generation Two:

I sometimes feel that it is nice when he leaves because then I can do what I want. I don't mean to be mean and he says the same thing; that it's going to be nice to leave. Then everything is fine next time he comes home.³⁸

Narratives of this kind – that is stories of women who, despite enjoying their husbands' presence, also awaited his departure - were usually constructed by women who seemed to possess a high degree of self-reliance and who appeared well-adjusted to maritime life.

There were, however, also women who welcomed their husbands' departure precisely because they preferred to be on their own. One informant felt that it was only when she was alone that she could be at ease with life:

³⁷ G3003

³⁸ G20104-290799

I have positive expectations when he leaves for work. I believe that that is when I get into my own rhythm and get to do things I can't do when he is at home. I think being alone is my natural state and that is what I'm striving for.³⁹

Another similar response came from a woman who said she was happy when her husband came home, but even happier when he left. During the week he was at work she could be herself and the children did not have to worry about making too much noise around the house.⁴⁰ Comments like these were very rare in the sample, but to positively anticipate the seafarer's departure was probably more common than the data of this study would suggest. One of the characters in Ulla-Lena Lundberg's novel, a seafarer's wife, said that her reason for looking forward to the week her husband was at work was that it gave her a chance 'to catch her breath'. Before each return, she cleaned the house from top to bottom, prepared the food and 'stood there as some kind of leisure time therapist, whose only task was to make sure it was nice, nice all the time'.⁴¹ This was probably quite a common scenario, at least in the beginning of a relationship when there was still a feeling of insecurity regarding the permanency of the relationship. By being 'the good wife' the women hoped to turn their men into faithful husbands, eager to come home to their awaiting families. However, as time went by, the women tired of playing this game, but they also found that patterns set out in the beginning of a relationship are hard to alter. Therefore, to avoid confronting the problem, some women kept up appearances while their husbands were at home and then used the time they had to themselves to recharge their batteries for the seaman's next return.

4.2.2 Bidding farewell

When all the preparations had been completed, it was time to say goodbye. This was often a sad affair, but for the maritime family it was also one of seafaring life's inevitabilities. A few

³⁹ G2050

⁴⁰ G2088

⁴¹ U.-L. Lundberg, *Allt man kan önska sig*, p. 113

of the women described their farewell rituals in their narratives. The most detailed illustration was given by one of the younger women:

We shield our eyes for as long as possible from the date. But we make the actual farewell rather short not to drag it out. As my partner works now, we take him to the airport, we get out of the car and say goodbye there. Then we take off, the girls and I, once we've seen daddy enter the airport. At that point you think: Why are we doing this to ourselves!? It becomes EMPTY.⁴²

In her description, the informant explains how the actual departure was made as brief as possible, even the trip from home to the airport was cut short by saying goodbye on the car park rather than wait in the airport lounge for the plane to take off. The last sentence is a reference to the emotional aspect of the parting, stressing the emptiness she felt. Throughout the collected data, the vast majority of women expressed feelings of emptiness and loneliness in connection with the seafarer's departure. One of the older informants said that she used to cry each time she and her husband parted, and she remarked on the great sense of emptiness her husband's departure brought on her. She admitted that the same feeling of loss and emptiness she had felt at her husband's departure to sea was still evoked each time her retired husband went to their summerhouse in the archipelago and she stayed in town.⁴³ A Generation Two informant said in her interview that although she perhaps did not cry anymore, saying goodbye was something she would never be able to adjust to.⁴⁴ Reconstructions of this type, in particular among the oldest generation of women in the study, were sometimes followed by statements of a stoic character. One woman said that although it felt empty when her husband left, there was nothing you could do about it for such was seafaring life.⁴⁵ Another woman stated: 'Of course it was sad when he went away, but you were accustomed to that'.⁴⁶ A third woman made a very similar statement, saying: 'It was

⁴² G305-100100

⁴³ G102-120799

⁴⁴ G202-230799

⁴⁵ G1102

⁴⁶ G1025

tragic when he left for work, but it became a habit.' She further demonstrated her stoicism by pointing to the uselessness of being stood crying on the quayside: 'He still won't come back'.⁴⁷ These attitudes were not as prominent among the younger generations of women, but they did exist. One woman of Generation Three commented on her husband's departure with a fairly off-hand attitude: 'When it is changing-day aboard there's nothing else to do but to leave – no big deal.'⁴⁸ A woman in the middle generation said that: 'If you have accepted your husband's job you take it as a natural think that he leaves for work.'⁴⁹ However, the difference between these women's situation and that of the older stoics was enormous. Whereas the younger women's husbands sailed on the ferries and thus worked very close to home and according to a week on-week off schedule, the older women were faced with up to a year of separation.

The wives did not necessarily feel sorry for themselves. They also showed a lot of concern for their husbands' wellbeing and for the fragile relationship between father and children. One informant from Generation One said: 'It was sad for me to see him go, but even worse for him. It weighed heavily upon him having to leave his children just as he was getting to know them better.'⁵⁰ This comment was echoed by another woman, who stated that she always cried a little when her husband went to work. It was 'sad when he left and the children had started to become familiar with him.'⁵¹ For Generation One in particular, the father and child relationship was often very weak since the seafarer seldom had more than a couple of weeks – a month at the most – at home before he was due out for another long voyage. For the younger women, too, the relationship between the seafarer and his children was an important issue. Many of the Generation Three informants mentioned that after they

⁴⁷ G104-030899

⁴⁸ G3012

⁴⁹ G2036

⁵⁰ G105-040899

⁵¹ G103-020899

had become parents, their husbands' return to work had become much harder for both spouses. For some seafarers, fatherhood was the reason for them going ashore permanently.⁵²

4.3 The second phase: maritime woman on her own

Once the seafarer had left for work, his wife began her process of adjusting from couple life to single life. The process was different for every woman, and was naturally much dependent on the type of shipping in which the seafarer was engaged. There was great difference between being alone for one week compared to six months; and there was a clear distinction between the three generation cohorts. Women of Generation One spent a considerably larger proportion of their lives apart from their spouses, with fewer opportunities to communicate during the periods of separation. The two younger generations of women did not experience the same degree of separation, partly due to shorter and better regulated working periods and partly due to improved communication. Nonetheless, there were plenty of examples where the husband was at sea for three to six months and at home between one and three months, i.e. according to a 2:1 rota rather than 1:1.⁵³ A few women of Generation Two had experienced similar circumstances to those of their older counterparts, where the husband had been absent for seven up to eleven months followed by only a month's leave.⁵⁴ Even in the late 1990s, there were evidence in the sample of Åland seafarers being absent for eight months with only four months' leave to follow.

4.3.1 Adjustment to single life

<i>Vinden drar</i>	<i>Wind will blow</i>
<i>Skeppet far</i>	<i>Ship will go</i>
<i>Bort till fjärran land</i>	<i>Away to distant land</i>
<i>Och sjömansgossens lilla, lilla vän</i>	<i>And sailor-boy's little, little friend</i>
<i>Står sörjande på strand</i>	<i>Stands crying on the shore</i>

⁵² G1045, G3095, G305-100100, G302-090799; see also K. Alberius-Forsman, *Från kollämpare till kavaljer: Sju maskinbefäl berättar*, Ålands Maskinbefälsförening (Mariehamn, 1992) pp. 25, 47

⁵³ G3063, G3088, G3078, G3098, G3095, G2029

⁵⁴ G2049, G2012

In the introduction to maritime women in her book *Den åländska kvinnans historia 1700-1950*, Gyrid Högman cites the well-known Åland folk song above. As Högman points out, the song clearly demonstrates the different gender roles; the man goes to sea while his ‘little friend stands crying on the shore’. However, Högman also draws attention to the fact that the seafarer’s wife had to dry her tears quickly and get on with her chores.⁵⁵ Högman’s study focuses on women’s situation prior to World War Two, but the narratives presented in this study suggest that the situation was still much the same in the last years of the twentieth century. One informant said:

Despite only wanting to cry and sulk, it hasn’t been possible. I have taken care of our children and it isn’t possible to just sit down and wait for him to come back, but I think you learn to push away waiting and longing and deal with everyday-life as it comes along.⁵⁶

Here we are presented with a reconstruction that is almost identical with Högman’s stereotype. The informant refers to the impossibility of giving in to the desire to ‘cry and sulk’ and the necessity to get on with life to the best of one’s abilities.

The time it took for the women to adjust to single life ranged from a couple of days up to a fortnight and it was, again, relative to the time of their respective husbands’ absences. In her narrative, an informant, whose husband was in long-distance shipping, said that during the first days after her husband’s departure she did not have the energy or will to do anything; no cooking, no cleaning, not even needlework. But after those initial days ‘you got used to it and everything started to run again’.⁵⁷ Some of the informants married to ferrymen claimed that they needed no time to adjust since the seafarer’s arrivals and departures were so frequent and regular.⁵⁸ One informant wrote: ‘When my husband started

⁵⁵ G. Högman, *Den åländska kvinnan*, p.403

⁵⁶ G2029

⁵⁷ G3086

⁵⁸ G2036, G3010, G3012

on the ferries it was almost like having him at home.’⁵⁹ There were many women in the sample who commented on their initial feelings of longing and emptiness and the time it took to get into single-life routines, while a considerably smaller number of women reconstructed in detail their routines for coming to terms with their changed situation. One of the exceptions was a young woman’s presentation of her process of adjustment, in which she stressed her identity as an active person:

I’m a person who DOES. I do manual labour more or less. Take walks with the girls and the dog. Try to have projects of the more strenuous kind to begin with. Then it turns into photo albums, the girls’ first books, the diary and similar pottering.⁶⁰

The actual process of adjustment is very visible in the account. From her initial focus on hard physical work, the pace lessened as she became increasingly accustomed to her new situation. A seemingly similar approach was presented by an informant of Generation Two. She claimed that she became ‘super efficient’ the first few days after her husband had left for work. She was not as detailed in her description, writing simply that she thought being active was a good cure for ‘departure depression’.⁶¹ How she kept busy was left unsaid, but based on other comments in her story, it is likely to have been through sport, gardening and housework.

A recurring theme in both interviews and questionnaires was that many women kept household chores to a minimum while their husbands were at home. In effect, this practice served two causes. The main purpose of the habit was, of course, to give the spouses more time with each other, something that was particularly important in cases where the time together was limited. Nonetheless, once the seafarer had gone to sea again, there was plenty to keep the wife occupied. One informant wrote that she did not feel particularly sociable during the first couple of days of being alone, that she preferred staying at home. Her main

⁵⁹ G2022

⁶⁰ G305-100100

⁶¹ G203-230799

reason for not wanting to meet people was that she ‘did not think they would understand how difficult everything felt.’ This statement was followed by a reference to the housework she had left undone. ‘And then you had lots to do about the household because I left that, thought I’ll do that when we are alone.’⁶² Another informant wrote about how she would ‘get started with laundering, ironing, cleaning, baking’ when her husband went to work.⁶³ In neither story was housework presented as a direct means of adjusting to single life, but it nonetheless served to take the informants’ minds off the initial feeling of loss and helped them in the switching from one life to another.

4.3.2 Longing

It was not only during the early part of the second phase that feelings of loss and longing occurred. One informant wrote that since her husband had transferred from the tanker trade, which kept him at sea for six months, to working one month on and one month off on a cargo carrier, the departures were less dramatic. She nonetheless found that during each period of absence there were ‘always a couple of tough days/weeks but they can crop up even in the middle of the period or towards the end’.⁶⁴ Although it was perhaps more overwhelming for the wives of long-distance seamen, the feeling of loss also emerged in stories told by women whose husbands worked on the ferries. A ferryman’s wife wrote: ‘I miss him most when I experience something special, a good film in the cinema for example. “He should have seen this”. Then it can feel lonely’.⁶⁵

Lisa Norling notes that only on a few occasions did eighteenth-century New England whaleman’s wife Lydia Almy want her husband at home to perform specific tasks, mostly she ‘missed having him there to confide in, to comfort her, and to share her

⁶² G2049

⁶³ G3050

⁶⁴ G3063

⁶⁵ G3001

concerns'.⁶⁶ The same was true for the informants in this study. What the women missed most was being able to share their thought^s and feelings with their husbands. As for specific occasions when the women in this study claimed to have missed their husbands the most was during holidays, when the children were ill or when they were forced to make important decisions. One woman wrote: 'The worst moments have been when the children have been ill and you have no-one to share responsibility and worry with'.⁶⁷ Another woman reflected over the many Christmases she and her children had spent alone.⁶⁸ For several years the latter informant's husband worked all winter. He left in October and returned in April, and she said: 'It was sad during holidays when all families were together'.⁶⁹ The inability to spend time as a whole family was a recurring topic. One woman of Generation One said that watching families out on a stroll on Sunday afternoons sometimes made her wish she had never married a seaman. During the week, she was too busy to think about it, but the weekends were different: 'Sunday was family-day, like'.⁷⁰ Another woman of the same generation echoed this sentiment. She too described the weekends as the time when she missed her husband the most, saying: 'when the family should have been gathered you were alone'.⁷¹

Maybe it was to cope better with their longing that a few of the informants pointed out that land-based marriages were not infallible either. One of them said that she used to envy couples who could spend every day together, but eventually she came to realise 'that neither was that so great for some people'.⁷² Almost as if trying to decide which was better, a Generation Three woman pondered:

⁶⁶ L. Norling, *Captain Ahab*, pp. 77-78

⁶⁷ G3013

⁶⁸ G201-060799

⁶⁹ G201-060799

⁷⁰ G102-120799

⁷¹ G101-300799

⁷² G1061

Everything has its advantages and drawbacks. Undoubtedly is that week he has off better than a weekend. You see those who work nine to five ashore; that they are so tired when the weekend arrives that nothing gets done.⁷³

In the informant's narrative, having a full week together was an advantage. However, what she saw as a drawback was the lack of shared everyday experiences, such as having dinner together and then sit^{two} down to watch the news. She missed the day-to-day routines and claimed she 'would not mind some monotonous routine from time to time'.⁷⁴

4.3.3 Worry

Seafaring has always been a dangerous profession, and although the work environment aboard ship is in many ways safer now than it was as recently as in the 1970s, accidents still happen. At first, one might associate maritime hazards with a fully loaded chemical tanker caught in a storm out on the big oceans, or a cargo carrier loading hazardous goods under unsafe conditions in an understaffed port, or an oil tanker approaching the Persian Gulf in wartime. However, for most Ålanders, mariners and landlubbers alike, the *Estonia* disaster was a reminder that accidents can happen closer to home; that a big, modern cruise ship operating so close to home can sink.⁷⁵ This might explain why weather conditions were the primary cause for concern in the narratives presented by most of the women in this study, much more so than, for example, infidelity and drunkenness. Bad weather and storms were the first and often only factors these women mentioned in connection with worry, closely followed by fears for accidents aboard or at port during loading and unloading. Infidelity was mostly mentioned in passing, if mentioned at all. References were usually made to third parties and general opinion rather than to personal experience. It is possible that the informants chose not to discuss their concern for infidelity in the interviews and questionnaires, instead making the

⁷³ G301-130799

⁷⁴ G301-130799

⁷⁵ It was in September 1994 that the ferry sank in Finnish waters en route Tallinn to Stockholm. It was the biggest maritime disaster in Europe since the World War Two. Only 137 of the 989 passengers survived.

maritime woman's concern as to whether or not her husband would return home alive the focus of attention.

The information collected showed that there were three main ways in which women reconstructed their lives in relation to the apprehensions of seafaring life. First, the informants emphasised their anxieties regarding their husbands', as well as their own, wellbeing. In the second kind of narrative, women admitted that they felt some anxiety, but in contrast to the former group they were able to be rational about their fears and thus push them away to some extent. The third group claimed not to feel worried at all.

Some reconstructions of the first kind contained elements of suffering, which drew attention to the hardships of seafaring life. In one of these narratives, the informant wrote:

I was worried. I knew they were out in storms and security aboard is clearly exaggerated. I worried he'd fall ill or that an accident would happen, e.g. during loading and unloading.⁷⁶

The main concern expressed in this passage was for the seafarer's welfare aboard while at sea and in port. There was also an obvious hint of anger in the informant's remark regarding shipboard safety. What had caused the sceptical attitude towards security aboard was left unexplained, but it is possible that it was related to a previous experience where safety measures had not been up to standard, causing, or nearly causing, injury. Another informant also showed concern for her husband's health in her narrative, but in this case it was not to do with shipboard safety but with the fact that seafarers were seldom able to take a day off work if they were unwell, an aspect of seafaring life not often brought into light.

I have been worried at extremely hard storms and so on, how he is going to control the ship. I have also been worried about his health because many times he has left for work with colds and fevers, things you would stay at home for ashore.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ G3003

⁷⁷ G2019

A Generation Three woman presented a very evocative picture of the worries seafaring life brought upon her in a narrative constructed around the anxiety she suffered during bad weather

The novel thing was the worry you felt when it was bad weather at sea. Uncountable are the nights you've laid awake and said prayers for his boat when you've known he's been on his way over to England with a steel cargo and you've heard that hurricane storms have been predicted on those waters. You closely followed the weather forecasts in the countries they visited. You switched on the radio immediately as you woke up to hear that no boats had gone down. You barely dared leave the house on days after stormy voyages because you wanted to be in when he called to say they had arrived.⁷⁸

Neither of these women denied or made any excuses for feeling worried. Instead they stressed the torment they were constantly faced with as seafarers' wives. One informant remarked that although she knew that she would never know until afterwards if her husband had been through rough weather, she could not help worrying when the winter storms were howling outside her window. Logic told her that he was in another part of the world and that a storm at home did not automatically mean there was a storm where he was. However, logic does not always rule the mind. In this particular case, the informant was able to draw upon her own experience. During a voyage with her husband, their ship was caught in turning ice and nearly broke up. They were saved in the last minute by an icebreaker.⁷⁹ This incident made her realise how vulnerable a ship was to the forces of nature, so each time the weather was bad her thoughts would drift back to her near-fatal experience. A woman of Generation Three confessed that if she was unable to get through to her partner on a stormy night, she could see before her how she was trying in vain to 'make calls to a telephone on the bottom of the sea'. She found it impossible to sleep during stormy nights and if the telephone rang early in the morning she was convinced something bad had happened. She blamed her worry on her vivid imagination and youth. She believed that older women had learnt how to repress

⁷⁸ G3076

⁷⁹ G102-120799

these kinds of feelings. For her, an inexperienced maritime woman, on the other hand, it was easier to 'give into imagined horror scenarios'.⁸⁰

Women from all three generation cohorts fell into the second type of reconstruction, in which respondents admitted some degree of worry, but stressed their ability to control their feelings. This was the version to which most of the informants in the sample subscribed. To be slightly worried showed compassion, and to be able to reason one's way through the worry demonstrated the resourcefulness that was the seafarer's wife's most distinctive characteristic. A woman of Generation One admitted that she sometimes worried about stormy weather and 'because horrible accidents sometimes happen aboard – collisions – fires and explosions', but she was quick to make it clear that as a seafarer's wife you had to overcome these feelings, stating in the next sentence that 'it wasn't possible to live with anxiety and worry'.⁸¹ A similar attitude was expressed by an informant of Generation Two, who admitted to being concerned about storms and accidents followed by the statement: 'you learn to live with it'.⁸² Among these women, being able to control one's worry was to mature as a seafarer's wife, and consequently, many women developed an ability to push away anxieties. In some narratives, the women placed emphasis on how they had learnt to deal with their worries. An informant belonging to the middle generation of seafarers' wives said that she worried much more when she was younger. She was also of the opinion that there were 'different kinds of worries for different stages in life'.⁸³ Although subtle, the comment referred back to her own worries regarding infidelity and alcoholism, which she had felt when her husband took a ferry job. As she grew older, her worries were projected towards her husband's health and general wellbeing. A similar process of maturity was expressed by a woman in the Generation Three cohort, who wrote:

⁸⁰ G301-130799

⁸¹ G1061

⁸² G2096

⁸³ G202-080799

During the first years I suffered from jealousy, but I have stopped worrying, it wears me down too much to imagine things that have no substance. If I know that there are storms etc. in the area where the ship is I surely feel uneasy. But I know that they get weather charts per satellite and can go around or edge the storm.⁸⁴

Bad weather was frequently used to illustrate the women's capability to manage their feelings.

The rationale was that although it was bad weather at home that was not necessary^{ily} the case where the husband was. One woman said that although her thoughts were with her husband 'when the autumn storms play at their worst' there was nothing she could do but to wait for him to get in touch with her again.⁸⁵ Another woman in the study wrote that she sometimes worried, and conceded that her feelings of uneasiness were most commonly evoked by storms and bad weather at home. In the next sentence, she dismissed her own fears by pointing out how unfounded they were. She used the aforementioned rationale and said: 'He was perhaps at the moment in Japan or Hong Kong, Florida, Ireland or on his way through Panama to the Pacific'.⁸⁶

To completely avoid thinking about the hazards facing their partners at sea often proved difficult, but many women tried their best to do so. Under these circumstances distance simplified matters. Firstly, Åland vessels in long-distance shipping were usually deployed on the spot markets and subsequently their voyages did not follow a predetermined pattern. The women were often unaware of their husbands' routes until they arrived at their destination and telephoned home. Under these circumstances, it was easier for the women to tell themselves that the storm howling outside their house was of no consequence to their husbands' vessels and even if they had full access to the world weather forecast it was of no use since they did not know where exactly their husbands were at that moment in time. If the men were working on trades closer to home, it was not quite as simple to remain indifferent.

This argument was effectively exemplified by a woman in Generation Three, when she

⁸⁴ G3083

⁸⁵ G3088

⁸⁶ G2054

described how she found it easier to keep back apprehensions as long as her husband worked on the tanker spot trade market compared to when he was working on a cargo ship in the Baltic and North Seas: 'When he was out on the world's oceans I never knew what weather and wind was like, this has been worse when he's been trafficking Finland'.⁸⁷

The stoic attitude towards anxiety was particularly pronounced among the oldest informants. The argument that they could not know what kind of weather their husbands were faced with was a recurring theme. One of the women said:

I wasn't worried. I thought that even if it is windy here it might be nice weather there. You couldn't go around worrying. Then I wouldn't have been able to live. If you worry about the weather and his life in port it won't work, then you're not suited to be a seafarer's wife.⁸⁸

In this passage the informant clearly stated her views of what characterised a seafarer's wife, and to worry was not acceptable. This was by far the strongest statement of its kind and it was not echoed by many others. A few of the informants simply stated it was not in their persona to worry. For most women, however, it was more a matter of coming to terms and learning to deal with their anxieties than of being able to completely ignore the issue. 'You tried not to worry because there was nothing you could do about it anyway' was probably the most accepted approach.⁸⁹

One would perhaps have expected a high degree of religiosity in a community so dependent on the elements and particularly among maritime families. Both Lummis and Thompson pay attention to the significance of religion in fishing communities. Thompson writes: 'Fishermen are as renowned for their religious enthusiasm as for their susceptibility to superstition – and rightly so. For you can find churches, chapels and mission halls as widely scattered round the coasts as taboos. This is so on both sides of the Atlantic.'⁹⁰ He continues

⁸⁷ G3063

⁸⁸ G103-020899

⁸⁹ G105-040899

⁹⁰ P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, p. 203

to account for the congregational preferences on the North American east coast, in Britain and in Scandinavia. In Sweden the fishing communities set up independent Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal churches, while many Norwegian fishing communities turned to the Pentecostal church or to Laestadianism. No such developments were evident in Åland, where the established Lutheran church was – and is - more or less non-contested by other denominations. Furthermore, based on the informants' testimonies, religion does not play a central part in the lives of Åland seafaring families. Only one woman in the sample group explicitly claimed to find solace in religion and she wrote: 'I am not worried, either for my own or my husband's sake. That is because of my Christian faith; I always leave all my troubles in the hands of our Lord'.⁹¹

Eight of the women in the Generation One cohort experienced the Second World War as married women and most of them reconstructed their experiences from that period in their narratives. Because this was a period of great unrest that affected all parts of society, it was not surprising to find that the reconstructions of wartime experiences contained many references to the anxieties the women lived through. The dangers that faced seafarers at this time were numerous and their wives were well aware of them. Port cities were under attack from bomber planes, the oceans were littered with mines and patrolled by U-boats, ships crossed the sea at night without lights to avoid being detected, and whole crews were captured and put in camps. A woman, who got engaged on Christmas Eve of 1939 expressed both apprehensions and hope in her reminiscences of the war:

The war raged during our first 5-6 years. And the fear and worry that something would happen were probably what you thought most of. I had a brother then who was interned in Germany so I was aware of what my life would be like.⁹²

The informant's husband worked on the North Sea trades during the war and it is likely that his vessel called at Finnish and Swedish ports at regular intervals. The assumption is based

⁹¹ G2093

⁹² G1081

on the informant's testimony that she was able to meet her husband. She wrote that she travelled ✓ and 'we met fairly often and then we lived very happily'. Despite a lot of worry and economic hardship, the informant insisted she remembered those years in a positive way.

Even women, who elsewhere in their narratives stated they were not the worrying kind, admitted to being concerned at this particular point in time. These were extreme circumstances and therefore the statements cannot be regarded as contradictory, but need to be considered separately. The same informant who claimed that you were not suited to be a seafarer's wife if you were of the anxious type, admitted that she felt worried when her husband called her from a port in northern Finland to tell her he was going across to England and then on to America with unspecified cargo.⁹³ For the first two years of the war she was alone at home with a baby and with very little information about her husband's whereabouts since their contact was very restricted during this period and the few letters that reached her were all heavily censored. This was the one time in her narrative when she could allow herself to worry without compromising her image of herself as a competent seafarer's wife.

In another wartime reconstruction, the bliss of engagement did not last very long. Three weeks after her betrothal, the informant received news that the Germans had confiscated the ship in which her fiancé was sailing, and the crew had been interned. This episode of her life took a pivotal position in the narrative and was clearly a traumatic experience. She described how she took up employment in Helsinki only to be closer to the shipping company 'in the hope of contact possibilities'. Through friends in Sweden they managed to exchange a couple of heavily censored letters. According to the informant, the ship was confiscated in January 1944 and in mid-December news reached the informant that all interned Finnish sailors in Norway had been transported 'like animals' to camps in Germany. When the news came, the informant was on her way to sit an exam and she wrote:

⁹³ G103-020899

‘With less you can lose your breath. I declined the planned exam and noted that the period of engagement had been all but romantic’. Although the informant described the year that followed as very difficult, she played down her personal suffering in her reconstruction. She pointed out that there were many others who shared the same fate, and through the shipping company she came in contact with women and families, whose men were, as she put it, ‘in the same boat’. In a vivid account, she then described the escape of her husband and a couple of his fellow prisoners from the camp where they had been held prison. ‘With bullets whizzing around the boat they had managed to crew and under much duress and hardships’ they reached Sweden in May 1945 and from there they continued to Finland ‘through mined waters without navigation aids’. Together at last, the couple got married and began to plan their future life. ‘But that bliss was short-lived’, because judicial consequences followed the escape and there was another six months’ imprisonment and questioning before he was freed at last and they could start their life together. The informant’s account of her wartime experience was concluded in the autumn of 1946 when her husband began studying for his captain’s qualifications and she took up a teaching position: ‘we were happy to be able to live together those few months’.⁹⁴

There were two other women in this generation group who recounted episodes during the war when they had been separated from their husbands for a considerable period of time. In one case, the husband was captured while sailing on the Norwegian coast during the last year of the war. The informant spent over a year without any information of her husband’s whereabouts, a period she described as ‘anxious times’.⁹⁵ In the other case, the story began in the spring of 1940, when the seafarer left his newly wedded and pregnant wife for what was supposed to be a seven-month voyage. The informant received a letter from her husband the following year, saying that their ship was about to leave the US homeward-

⁹⁴ G1093

⁹⁵ G105-040899

bound. In the course of events, however, he did not return until the summer of 1945. The episode was recounted in a completely different tone from the previous account. In a very matter-of-fact manner the informant first described how it happened that her husband came to be absent for such ~~an~~ along time, followed by an almost equally detached account of their lack of contact:

I got one letter where he wrote that now we are loaded for the home voyage, but... So you did get upset. We had difficulties keeping in touch then. A few years passed when we knew nothing of each other. Then he thought of sending the letters to his sister in Sweden, so that's how it continued.⁹⁶

For a period of more than five years, this informant was separated from her husband and for several years without knowing what had happened to him. She had received a letter informing her that he was on his way home, so for a good few months she must have been expecting him home at any minute. It must have been a time of intense worry, but there was no indication of this in her reconstruction. The closest she came to express her anxiety was the comment: 'so you did get upset'. This attitude was consistent throughout her story, a very matter-of-fact approach which was signalled already in the first sentence of the narrative where she wrote: 'My husband-to-be was working at sea when we decided that we should belong together, so I knew exactly what I got myself into. My father was at sea, you see.'⁹⁷

Generation One women were not the only informants in the sample who described their wartime experiences. With seafaring being an international occupation, seafarers sometimes sail on routes that take them through war zones. Throughout the war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s and later, during the Gulf War, tanker ships continued to go through the Persian Gulf for oil. To operate in war areas is a risky business, and seamen

⁹⁶ G1102, to send letters via relatives in neutral Sweden was a way of circumventing the problem of communication between enemy nations. Finland was allied with Germany between May 1941 and August 1944, which meant that Finnish vessels and seamen were legitimate targets for the Allied forces. After Finland broke her alliance with Germany, Finnish vessels and seamen became legitimate targets for the Germans, which explains the confiscating of Finnish vessels and capturing of Finnish seamen.

⁹⁷ G1102

who decide to do so are compensated with substantial war bonuses. An episode related in a narrative from a woman of Generation Three gave a vivid illustration of the numerous hazards that still faced seafarers in the late twentieth century. Her husband sailed all over the world and until the late 1990s he was at sea for four to six months at a time with only two to four months at home. When questioned about a maritime woman's worries, she wrote:

Today my husband is working as a pilot in Angola. He is away for four weeks and at home equally long. So now I think it's quite nice when he leaves. Naturally I'm still worried since there is a war both in the Congo and in Angola. The flights down are also dangerous. Air Angola isn't exactly Finnair. I also worry about his piloting. Getting aboard old boats on old ladders can be risky. Ashore you're running the risk of getting malaria. (He should take malaria pills all year round, but the side effects of the medication are so severe that he doesn't take them.) In the early 1990s my husband worked on ships that sailed between Singapore and Hong Kong. I then worried about pirates and monsoons. During the war in the Persian Gulf my husband was there. The bonus money was welcomed but the worrying was horrendous. Sailing between North and South America has its risks too. So there's been a lot to worry about. I sometimes think that the seafarers of today must have had quite a few dangerous adventures.⁹⁸

Despite the numerous reasons for the informant to feel anxious, such as war, safety on planes and ships, malaria, pirates and bad weather, the tone of the narrative was almost light-hearted. Later in the narrative the informant drew attention to the nature of the human mind and to our ability to forget past worries. When preparing to write about her life as a seafarer's wife this informant had looked through her collection of correspondence and in doing so, she found there a host of old worries that she had long forgotten about. In the narrative she commented: 'Writing now, I realise how incredible the human nature is. I had forgotten about all these old worries. You live in the present.'⁹⁹

Jack Tar has a woman in every port, or so it is said. This image was supported through interviews with seamen, through whom it became apparent that extramarital relations were common and also regarded as normal, and that a seaman who remained faithful to his wife was seen as something of an exception. One seaman said: 'It's kind of rare, they do exist

⁹⁸ G3098

⁹⁹ G3098

but... they belong to a minority'.¹⁰⁰ Although fewer than expected, there were women who mentioned anxieties regarding sexual infidelity. The issue of faithfulness was mostly commented upon in cases where the husband had transferred to a position aboard a ferry. For women with husbands in the long-distance trades, there was widespread opinion, quite contrary to the seamen's statements, that since the 1990s, time in port had become so short and the work so stressful that the seamen no longer had the time or the energy to go out to sample the attractions of foreign sailortowns. Nevertheless, trust was still of essence, as one of the respondent stated:

Jealousy can be another reason to worry. There are so many rumours about sailors and their life aboard ship and in port. That's never been a problem for us. We trust each other completely. Also, I've been aboard so much that I know how long and hard the days are and that there's no time in port nowadays. Neither am I of the jealous kind. I can also tell by the way he acts when he comes home that he's completely sex-starved.¹⁰¹

Trust should not require any proof, but this woman still found it necessary to justify her trust by displaying her knowledge of her husband's working conditions. A strikingly similar statement was made by another woman, who wrote that she trusted her husband completely and the[^] added in brackets: 'they have hardly any time in port so you don't have to worry ✓ about a rowdy port town life'.¹⁰² Why did these women deem it necessary to follow up their declarations of trust with this type of justification? One reason could be that the image of the boozing, womanizing sailor still held a prominent position in Åland society and by explaining the nature of contemporary working conditions, the women strove to change this stereotype. Another possibility, which might be slightly more uncomfortable and delicate, was that the women did not completely trust their husbands and through this rationalisation they tried to convince themselves, as much as anyone else, that their husbands remained loyal to their ? wives despite the temptations on offer in foreign ports.

¹⁰⁰ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.54

¹⁰¹ G3086

¹⁰² G3095

The concept of the promiscuous activities that take place aboard the ferries was given more credence through a narrative in which the informant claimed that she never worried about her husband cheating on her while he was working in long-distance shipping. Those kinds of thoughts only surfaced when he transferred to the ferries. She said: 'I started to worry he wouldn't stay faithful, and I soon realised infidelity was in the picture. I never worried about that when he was in long-distance shipping'.¹⁰³ Despite attempts to sort matters out, their relationship ended in divorce. According to the informant, her relationship with her husband was not very good, and although it might not have lasted even if he had remained in long-distance shipping or if he had gone ashore, she was positive that his ferry job largely contributed to their deteriorating relationship. She lost her trust in him. In another case, quite opposite to the aforementioned, the informant expressed her complete surprise at her husband's infidelity:

I never thought he would be unfaithful. I knew it could happen but I never thought it could happen like it did. I didn't even believe it when I found out. I thought he'd see sense, and that his other relationship would come to an end. I would have accepted that. I never thought it would lead to divorce.¹⁰⁴

The husband had formed a relationship with a woman he met at work on the ferry. The outcome in this case was divorce and the informant blamed the environment aboard the ferries for it. There, a one night stand was given room to mature into something more permanent. She granted that it was not always possible to resist temptation and that she was able to handle that. In her view, infidelity was very common in relationships, almost something to be expected. Her point, however, was that it was inexcusable to let a one night stand develop into a proper relationship, which was what had happened to her husband and his lover. In this case, it ended in divorce, but in other cases the spouses were able to sort things out. One woman mentioned that her husband had a child with another woman between his and his

¹⁰³ G205-290799

¹⁰⁴ G304-070799

wife's two children. Again, the affair developed while the husband was working aboard one of the ferries. Maybe as a result of his affair and its aftermath, the man left the sea and found a job ashore.¹⁰⁵

An informant who had herself worked on a ferry and thus claimed to be aware of the extent to which extramarital relations occurred in that environment also brought up the subject of infidelity in her narrative. She claimed to suffer with the men and women who were at home, ignorant of their spouses' affairs. She said:

There's a lot of that on the ferries. They work so intensely together. It's a completely different kind of life. Maybe they don't think they are being unfaithful. They have one life there and another one at home. There's a lot of partying aboard. People get drunk and then a lot of stupid things happen.¹⁰⁶

Despite her own experiences, she claimed not to worry about her husband cheating on her. She trusted him completely. She told of occasions when people had said 'poor you' to her when she had mentioned that her husband worked on the ferries. When she had asked why, they had responded by saying that they knew what kind of things went on aboard. On declaring her trust in her husband, the reply she got was that many women had trusted their husbands. Not surprisingly, she found all of this rather disheartening. She also noted that the comments she got were more derogatory when she said that her husband was a seaman rather than an officer.

It has been difficult to comment on the issue of infidelity when such a small number of the informants chose to discuss it at all in their interviews and questionnaires. However, of the little information there was, it appeared to be a commonly shared view that infidelity was part of life aboard the ferries and that it was the ferry-folk rather than the 'real seamen' who cheated on their wives. The rowdy Jack Tar, who used to spend all his money on booze and women in foreign ports, was by the end of the twentieth century, too tired and

¹⁰⁵ G3038

¹⁰⁶ G301-130799

too over-worked to find the energy to go ashore, if time would ever permit it. Instead, we were presented with a new character, the Tom Proxy, who had one wife ashore and one aboard. A man, who in the eyes of Jack Tar and his family was not even a 'real seaman', but somebody who never ventured upon the vast oceans and who saw his family every week. The fact that, in the mid-1990s, the Swedish broadcasting company chose to set the scene for a new soap opera aboard a car-passenger ferry on a line between Sweden and Finland could serve as another piece of evidence of the ideas people have of what goes on aboard the ferries. Apart from being closely associated with ferry work, jealousy and the linked concern about infidelity seemed to be most pronounced in the beginning of the relationship. As the women grew older and the relationships became more stable and secure, the fear of betrayal lessened and instead most informants seemed more concerned about the partner's wellbeing.¹⁰⁷

In none of the testimonies was there any mention of the informant herself or any other seafarer's wife being unfaithful to her husband while he was at sea. This was not very surprising since infidelity was completely contrary to the established discourse on the characteristics of seafarers' wives. Seafarer's wives were supposed to be waiting on the shore, not showing any signs of sexual needs. Only two informants discussed their own sexuality explicitly, both of them of Generation Three. One of them mentioned the difficulty in 'switching her sexuality on and off'. She also referred to occasions where she had had a night out while her husband was at sea, 'flirting as much as one could, then yawned and went home. Alone'.¹⁰⁸ This story, although touching on forbidden territory, remained within the boundaries of what was accepted in society. Yes, she did flirt, but it was only for self-reassurance, not to initiate an affair.

Apart from adhering to the accepted behaviour, the close-knit community kept a keen eye on the seafarer's wife, making sure she behaved appropriately. A first generation-

¹⁰⁷ G202-080799, G203-230799

¹⁰⁸ G3003

narrative illuminated the kind of control society had on these women. In her testimony, the informant reconstructed an episode where her husband had just returned home and they decided to go together to *Socis*, a popular dance restaurant. Later, a relative of hers told the informant that she had heard from a friend that the informant 'had been at *Socis* and had a man with her'. The relative's friend had not been aware that the man was the informant's husband and in the narrative the informant used this episode to illustrate the tight control society exercised over seafarers' wives. She supported the common view among women of this age cohort that it was unacceptable for women to go out on their own.¹⁰⁹ It was not only among this generation of women that the societal control was felt, however. An informant from Generation Three testified that she too felt that she was being kept under surveillance if ever she went out to a night club or to a party.¹¹⁰

4.3.4 Communications

Having the means to communicate has been shown to be of great significance for seafaring couples separated by work, since communication was important 'to allay fears, to maintain close relationships, to improve seafarers' morale, to relieve stress (on board and at home) and to maintain relationships with children'.¹¹¹ Based on this, it was not surprising that the informants in this study found maintaining some kind of contact between the seafarer who was out at sea on the one hand, and his family at home on the other, a very important issue. Women frequently expressed a desire to share everyday events with their husbands, to be able to talk about issues that they did not want to discuss with anyone else, and to ask for their husbands' advice on various matters. And although the news was old, it was a generally accepted view that it meant a lot for the seafarers to receive personal letters and the local newspaper when the agents came aboard with the ship's mail. The level to which

¹⁰⁹ G105-040899

¹¹⁰ G303-140799

¹¹¹ M. Thomas et al. 'Behind the Scenes', in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, pp. 131-132

communication could take place was dependent upon two main factors; firstly, the generation cohort to which the informant belonged, and, secondly, the kind of trade in which the seafarer was employed. The younger the women were and the closer to home the sailor worked, the easier it was to keep in touch.

For women of Generation One, keeping in touch was far from simple, something that was duly stressed in the informants' statements regarding the issue. 'It wasn't easy' was a recurring phrase in the samples.¹¹² There was no need to question the legitimacy of the comments for, in terms of communications, the situation was not much different for the Generation One women in this study than it had been for their nineteenth-century counterparts. As has been pointed out by many scholars, despite the introduction of wireless communications, letters remained the main means of keeping in touch for seafaring couples well into the twentieth century.¹¹³ By stating that she 'learnt to write letters all the time', one informant indicated that this was the only way in which she could communicate with her husband.¹¹⁴ The lack of communication that the oldest women in the sample had to endure was often contrasted with the seemingly easy life of modern-day seafarers' wives. One of the older women claimed that it was impossible to compare her generation's experiences with those of today's women. She said: 'You'd think it was two hundred years back in time this, even though it was so recently'.¹¹⁵

The *then-now* dichotomy that emerged from the narratives was prominent to a varying degree. In some of the accounts it took centre stage, for example emphasising the trouble the seafarer had to go through to make a telephone call 'in those days' compared to

¹¹² G1081, G1067, G101-300799

¹¹³ D. Kirby & M.-L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas*, p. 245-6

¹¹⁴ G1102

¹¹⁵ G104-030899

'nowadays'.¹¹⁶ In a similar account, an informant made an even stronger statement about the differences between communications then and now. She said:

You couldn't call. It wasn't then telephones so that you called like you do now, no, but you got letters and then they were somewhere else already when you got the letter so what you had asked or told was old. You didn't get any advice for anything. You had to decide for yourself.¹¹⁷

Through these personal narratives, the informants made it clear that their experiences were fundamentally different from those of younger seafarers' wives. The second informant in particular stressed not only the near impossibility of communicating by means of telephone, but she also pointed out the effects of the limited contact, of which the lack of advice was a key issue. It appeared that she found not receiving any guidance at times when it was sought both frustrating and exhausting.

Other informants were more subtle in their use of the *then-now* discourse.

Instead of making direct comparisons, they paid more attention in their reconstructions to the infrequency with which letters arrived to the right address or the impossibility of privacy when speaking over the radio. Informants described the intricacies of sending letters to, and receiving them from, their husbands. The wives' letters had to go through either the shipping company or the agent in the seafarers' next port of call. The husbands' letters came via the same route in reverse. One woman blamed the ship chandlers for the delays: 'they [the letters] could be sent ashore with the ship chandlers and they forgot them in their pockets so they were three and four weeks old before the letters came'.¹¹⁸ Due to the problems of sending and receiving mail, letters routinely arrived long after they had been written, if they arrived at all. For this reason, it was often unfruitful to wait for an answer to one letter before

¹¹⁶ G1081

¹¹⁷ G105-040899

¹¹⁸ G103-020899

writing the next, something one informant pointed out by saying: 'it wasn't always so that you replied to a letter, you just wrote a letter'.¹¹⁹

A narrative, which also contemplated the problems of communications within the *then-now* dialogue, differed in that it displayed an element of pain, which was not evident in the previous reconstructions. The informant focused her account on the difficulties of keeping in touch and on disappointments in connection with missed telephone calls and lost letters.

He called when he could, but in those days it wasn't as simple as nowadays to connect a call. Sometimes he didn't get through and that made me very disappointed, especially when the operator had announced that a call was coming in. I wrote to him several times a week, but sometimes my letters didn't reach him. A tramp ship could get its destination changed in the last minute, and then my letters got to the wrong port.¹²⁰

The informant did not originate in the Åland Isles, but had moved there as a result of marrying an Åland seafarer. She admitted in her testimony that she had not prepared herself for the 'culture shock' of moving to Åland and she voiced the opinion that seafarers' wives born in Åland were better equipped to cope with seafaring life, 'since it was part of the Åland culture that girls married sailors'.¹²¹ Finding herself in an unfamiliar environment probably made her more dependent on her husband's letters and telephone calls, compared to the women born on Åland, who were surrounded by family and friends whom they could count on for support. It was clear that she did not hear from her husband as often as she had wished, and she admitted to reproaching him for not writing to her more often. For some reason, however, she felt guilty about doing so. She wrote that she 'unfortunately' reproached him, followed by a justification of her husband's infrequent contact, avowing she never realised how little spare time he actually had while aboard.

¹¹⁹ G101-300799

¹²⁰ G1067

¹²¹ G1067

Apart from the *then-now* aspect, women of Generation One also discussed the nature of their communication as an independent issue. One of the informants stated that her husband was not a very keen letter-writer, so the letters she received from him were both infrequent and brief. She, on the other hand, wrote 'many pages and often'.¹²² With letters being their only apparent method of communication, theirs seemed to have been very much a one-way conversation. Although that might be the stereotypical image; the woman being the communicator, it also worked the other way around. One woman praised her husband's letter-writing efforts by contrasting them to her own. She recounted how she had received eight letters from her husband without managing to write even one.

[He] was very good at writing letters. This one time I had received eight letters and I hadn't sent a single one. That time he called from somewhere far away and wondered if I was ill or what was wrong. It was just that I had so much around me so I didn't sit down that often, which he did, sat each and every day and wrote long letters. He was good at that, and always called from the ports.¹²³

In the reconstruction of this episode, she initially presented herself in a fairly bad light in relation to her husband, who was described as 'very good at writing letters'. After illustrating her husband's devotion through his letters and finally the telephone call, she again used a contrast to justify her position. Whereas he clearly had enough spare time to sit down and compose long letters 'each and every day', she had a household and a family to look after, which took all her time and effort. In cases where both parties found it difficult to write, which happened, they ended up with very little information of what was going on in each other's lives.

Telephone calls were more of a complement than an alternative to letters for keeping in touch for this generation of women, but that was only if you had a telephone. None of the women listed telephone calls as their main form of communication, but in a few cases they seemed to be on a par with letters. There was one case in which the informant

¹²² G1065

¹²³ G102-120799

stated that her husband had made a deliberate choice to work only in European waters so that he would be able to reach his family by telephone if necessary.¹²⁴ Women, who initially relied solely on letters for communication, found it a relief when later in life their husbands were able to use the telephone as well. That way they were able to talk directly and get straight answers to brooding questions. However, telephone calls were expensive and could only be made when the ship was in port, and as has already been discussed, there were often problems with connections. Privacy was another problem, since anyone could listen in on telephone calls made over the radio. The result was that only the most urgent practical matters were discussed and issues of a more private nature had to be dealt with in letters or when the seaman returned home. Regarding radio telephones, one informant said: 'it wasn't at all to talk about any secrets for, no...'¹²⁵

The third means of keeping in touch was for the spouses to meet when the seafarer's ship was in port near home or else the wives could join their husbands' ships for a voyage. It was normally the women who travelled to visit their husbands' ships but occasionally the seafarers would get a weekend off to pay their families a flying visit. 'Near home' was a relative term. It usually meant a Finnish or Swedish port, but it could be anywhere in Europe. A woman, who for a brief period worked in Stockholm, wrote:

Fortunately, my husband's ship came to Sweden from time to time, so that I could meet him. Sometimes I got a few days off and I travelled to Norway or Finland to meet him, and occasionally I was allowed to accompany the ship for a shorter voyage.¹²⁶

Several other informants recounted how they would make various child care arrangements and then travel all around Scandinavia to be reunited with their husbands for a couple of days or to sign on for a voyage.¹²⁷ In those days, turnaround time in port was often relatively long,

¹²⁴ G1093

¹²⁵ G105-040899

¹²⁶ G1067

¹²⁷ G103-020899, G105-040899

from a couple of days to a couple of weeks, providing the spouses with opportunity to spend quality time together. Towards the end of the twentieth century, due to containerisation and more effective cargo handling in ports, turnaround times were dramatically reduced.

Research has shown that this development has had serious implications for seafarers' wives in some parts of the world. Thomas, Sampson and Zhao report that in China, for example, where women have rarely been allowed to sail with their husbands, port visits have traditionally formed an important part of maintaining contact. Seafarers' wives would travel for days with their children to see their husbands, but whereas they previously could expect to get at least a few days together, they were happy if they made it to the port before the ship set out again.¹²⁸

A few women hinted that the prospect of travelling the world with their husbands had been regarded as one of the perks of marrying a seaman. One informant stated that one of her expectations when marrying had been the opportunity of seeing the world. Unfortunately, that never happened and the furthest she ever travelled with her husband was to the north of Sweden.¹²⁹ One interviewee spent a six-week honeymoon aboard her husband's ship. It was not, however, much of a honeymoon in her opinion. Her husband worked constantly and the ship was 'rickety'. She occupied herself with reading, crosswords and needlework. Among this generation of women it was fairly common for wives to join their husbands aboard and the informant counted herself lucky to have the company of another woman for parts of the voyage.¹³⁰

Spending some time aboard their husbands' ships often made it easier for the wives to deal with the lack of communication once they were back home. This was not only evident from this study. Thomas, Sampson and Zhao reported similar findings in their study

¹²⁸ M. Thomas et al, 'Behind the Scenes', in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, pp. 127-128

¹²⁹ G104-030899

¹³⁰ G101-300799

on seafaring and family life.¹³¹ Time spent aboard gave women an insight into their husbands' working environment and his duties, and they got to know the people with whom their husbands were working. In a narrative quite apart from the rest, the informant reconstructed her maritime experience around her first voyage with her husband's ship. She described her shipboard experience in a very dramatic fashion, such as her encounters with 'the sea and its changes, from mild caresses to frightening aggressiveness', and the sense of freedom she felt inside regardless of 'the mood of the sea'.¹³² After having experienced one voyage and after having spent her first Christmas as a married woman alone, the informant left her job and accompanied her husband on every other voyage for the next eight years. This couple had no children, which made this arrangement feasible. If there were children in the family, the wives had to postpone extensive travelling until their children were adults.

For the women of Generation Two, keeping in touch with their men became much easier as time and technological advancements progressed. In the late 1990s, seafarers could communicate with their wives through fax, e-mail and mobile telephone calls. However, most of the women in this generation knew what it was like to wait for letters and the occasional telephone call, since it was not that long since the drastic improvement in communications took place. A large proportion of women reflected on this in their interviews or questionnaire replies, making the *then-now* dichotomy that ran through the Generation One-narratives a significant issue for this generation of women too. The difference was that the women of Generation Two were able to draw upon personal experiences when discussing the differences between 'then' and 'now'. Most of the women with husbands in long-distance trades relied on letters rather than telephone calls during their first years together because, as one informant pointed out, 'still in the late 50s you didn't call each other that often. It was

¹³¹ M. Thomas et al., 'Behind the Scenes' in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, p 126

¹³² G1004

bad reception and very expensive'.¹³³ It became evident from the narratives that owning a telephone was not a given thing even as late as in the 1960s. In one account, the informant mentioned that after she got married, the couple got themselves a telephone and that put an end to the letter writing.¹³⁴ Another woman revealed that she did not own a telephone but after her betrothal she could go to her future parents-in-law and he would call her there.¹³⁵

The advances of telecommunications and the personal experience of these within the *then-now* dichotomy were well illustrated in the following comment:

Nowadays we keep in touch several times a week, by satellite telephone, GSM, normal telephone or fax. It was different twenty years ago; then I could get a letter or a telephone call a month.¹³⁶

The central theme of this statement was reproduced in several other narratives, in which the informants described how technology had impacted on their ability to keep in touch with their husbands. One of them wrote that letters used to be the only way to communicate, 'but now we have GSM, so we can talk at least once a week when he is away'.¹³⁷ Another woman recounted: 'we used to keep in touch through letters, but now we e-mail of course or call'.¹³⁸ For women, and men, who were not such keen letter-writers, the advances in telecommunications were welcomed. One informant stressed in her testimony how she initially had *had* to write letters and expressed relief when her husband was able to call her regularly.¹³⁹

Naturally, there were significant differences in the ways maritime couples were able to keep in touch depending on the types of trade in which the husbands' ships were deployed. For women whose husbands worked in the worldwide trades, particularly on

¹³³ G2049

¹³⁴ G203-230799

¹³⁵ G2[1]054

¹³⁶ G2093

¹³⁷ G2029

¹³⁸ G2[3]009

¹³⁹ G2022

tankers and other spot traders, keeping in touch was difficult and letters continued to be an important means of communication. The periods at sea would last between four and eight months and several months could pass without any contact. One informant explained that if her husband's ship was deployed on a particular route, almost like a liner, she was able to calculate roughly when her husband would reach port and when to expect a telephone call from him. During the short period he was working under these circumstances, she was also able to send letters direct to the agent in his next port of call. For the most part, however, she had to send her letters to the shipping company and rely on them to forward the correspondence.¹⁴⁰

The practice of sending letters through the shipping company was widespread among the wives of deep-sea sailors, since it was so difficult for the women to know exactly where their spot-trading husbands were or where they were bound. The shipping company then forwarded the letters and parcels intended for the seamen to the agent in the ship's next port of call. This was, in many informants' views, the reason why the agent's visit was so eagerly anticipated aboard ship. In a bitter reconstruction, one informant recalled getting a telephone call from the shipping company about a week before her husband was due back home after a long spell at sea. To her surprise and anger two carrier bags full of letters from her to her husband awaited her, some over five months old. There was much resentment evident in her account of the event:

They [the shipping company] should know how much a little letter or card means to a seaman. Among the first thing they ask when the agent comes aboard is 'have you got any mail?' My husband has received official mail from the company but not private. When he asked for it they said it would cost too much to send it. Trifles!¹⁴¹

The experience was so significant to the informant that she explicitly stated that the bitterness she felt about it forced her to reconstruct it in her narrative. The disappointment is

¹⁴⁰ G201-060799

¹⁴¹ G2055

understandable. Not being able to share what went on in each other's lives, in one form or another, widened the emotional distance between the spouses and made it more difficult for them to adjust to each other again when the seafarer returned home. Being aware of what was going on at home could also aid the seafarer's return and stay ashore in more general terms.¹⁴² In this particular case, the informant saw it as her duty to write to her husband and in her narrative she explained: 'every Sunday I wrote to him. It was my job so to speak'. Thus, in addition to the lack of contact the undelivered letters caused, they also made it appear as if she had failed her duty.

A category of seamen that was almost non-existent in Generation One, but which made up a recognisable part of the Generation Two cohort was that of ferrymen. The issue of communication opportunities between the ferrymen and their wives was almost superfluous, since it was relatively straightforward. Even during the week when the men were at sea, there was plenty of opportunity to keep in touch. Telephone calls and text messages were the most common methods, and if need be, the women could go down to the ferry terminal and meet their husbands while the ferry was in port. It was even possible for the ferrymen to sleep at home if the ferry was in port overnight. One informant reconstructed the period her husband worked on the ferries in a positive way. She recalled how she and their children would often spend the weekend aboard and how they were able to speak on the telephone every day: 'it felt almost as if I had him at home'.¹⁴³ The testimonies given by wives of ferrymen in Generation Three were very similar to those given by women in Generation Two. It was telephone calls and text messages that were the main means of communication. The frequency of contact varied from a couple of times per week to every day. How often couples kept in touch depended, of course, on personal choices and needs. One woman said that she spoke to her partner at least once a day. To her, if anything out of

¹⁴² T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.67

¹⁴³ G2049

the ordinary happened, it was self-evident that she would want her partner to be the first one to know about it. The narrative led on to the issue of not being able to share everyday events and also to the discomfort of having to handle situations over the telephone that would normally have been dealt with face-to-face, such as bereavements.¹⁴⁴

The progress of telecommunications in the twentieth century was the hallmark of the narratives of Generation Three. Two of the women in this generation did experience a couple of years during the late 1970s and early 1980s, at the beginning of their seafaring lives, when letters and the odd telephone call were the principal means of communication. One of the reconstructions could just as well have been from a Generation One or Two informant.

The first time (during our time) he left it was a very long wait – 8 months, then only a short time at home and then off again. Naturally it tore inside me but in those days we wrote long letters to each other and a call now and again via Helsinki Radio – so not too open and personal conversations.¹⁴⁵

The informant also recalled the pleasure she got from bringing her letters to the shipping office and the chats she had there, a testimony that presented the shipping companies in a rather different light to the bitter narrative related earlier. It can be assumed that this informant was able to communicate more effectively with her husband later in life, but there was no further mention of the issue in her narrative. After 1985, her husband gave up worldwide shipping to work six weeks on and off in European waters, and that should have improved communication opportunities. For some reason, however, the informant preferred to reconstruct her experiences in accordance with the more traditional and romanticised discourse of seafarer's wives, accentuating the long absences, the sporadic contact and the links with the shipping official and other seafarers' wives. In contrast, the other of the two informants emphasised the changes that took place. She reminisced: 'We wrote letters and

¹⁴⁴ G301-130799

¹⁴⁵ G3088

called now and again, when it was possible. The telecommunications have advanced so much so after a couple of years we stopped writing'.¹⁴⁶

It was evident from the Generation Three narratives that letters had become unnecessary and that e-mails, faxes and SMS text messages had become indispensable tools of communication. The primary channel for communications, however, was the telephone, for although e-mails and other methods were seen as very useful, it was not quite the same thing as actually speaking directly to one another. One informant said that even if it was expensive, she felt it was necessary to speak over the telephone at least once a week, in addition to e-mailing. E-mail was a very useful tool in her opinion, but it could not replace the intimacy of telephone conversations.¹⁴⁷ Another woman said that it was not the content of the conversations as much as the conversation itself that was important.¹⁴⁸ Not all women benefited to equal degrees from the telecom revolution. For informants with partners working in world-wide shipping, the situation was slightly more difficult than for other women in the study. Telephone calls could only be made by satellite, which rendered them extremely expensive, while letters were slow to reach their recipients. Under these circumstances, the fax served as the main method of communication, with perhaps one fax a week in each direction. Faxes were seen as a good substitute for letters and they also facilitated more direct communication. Copies of sent and received fax correspondence were saved just like letters. One informant said that she kept a scrap book of her and her partner's correspondence for her daughters to read once they were old enough.¹⁴⁹ Faxes were supplemented by telephone calls when the seafarers reached port. One of the narratives took an approach that resembled the *then-now* perspective of Generation Two. She pointed to how they used to be apart for periods lasting up to six months, during which 'it was mostly contact per letters that were sent

¹⁴⁶ G3003

¹⁴⁷ G302-090799

¹⁴⁸ G305-100100

¹⁴⁹ G305-100100

via the office, so you often had to wait for quite long'.¹⁵⁰ Still, most of the women had always been able to contact their husbands at anytime they had the urge to do so. In the majority of cases, a couple of telephone calls a week, as well as e-mails, faxes and/or SMS text messages seemed to be the norm for spousal communications.

Despite the technological advances, letters continued to be written, mostly by the women. The wives sent not only letters but also parcels with sweets, newspapers, photographs and other personal greetings. It was an established consensus that seafarers appreciated this, a concept plainly expressed in the following reconstruction:

I know he isn't much of a letter writer, but he likes to receive letters. Seamen like getting personal letters when the agent comes aboard with the mail and they also like reading the local newspapers. They get a bit upset if they don't get anything with the post.¹⁵¹

Letters were also the medium for discussing problems of a more sensitive nature and to express emotions. It was for this reason that letters did not become totally obsolete, even though other methods of communications had taken precedence in terms of regular contact.

One woman regretted no longer being able to write to her husband for, in her opinion, 'letters were better, really. Telephone becomes so shallow.'¹⁵² Two other women described awkward silences during telephone conversations, where both wife and husband would be stuck for conversation topics. One of them described her telephone conversations as tedious:

A bit tedious conversations when they only were about where they were, when they got there, when they were going to leave, if we were fine, if anything special had happened and what bills had been paid.¹⁵³

The importance of letter-writing was articulated by a woman who was of the opinion that all couples should be given the opportunity to write to each other, saying; 'You are loving and

¹⁵⁰ G3090

¹⁵¹ G303-140799

¹⁵² G3001

¹⁵³ G2005

caring towards each other in a very special way, and it's all there, in black and white, and you can imbibe it again and again.'¹⁵⁴

No doubt the recent developments in the field of communications have been of enormous benefit to anyone wishing to keep in touch with friends and family far away, which in this case are the seafarers and their families. Until the 1970s, the main means of communication was letters and the occasional telephone call, something experienced in full by the women in Generation One. The women of Generation Two were also familiar with the difficulties of having to wait for letters and telephone calls at irregular and infrequent intervals. However, since the 1990s, they had become used to keeping in touch with their husbands on a regular basis at least a couple of times a month but more commonly a few times a week, using telephones, mobiles, faxes and e-mail. The same was true for the third generation of seafarers' wives, very few of whom knew what it was like having to rely on letters for communicating with their husbands. To these women, letters were tokens of affection, since they no longer served as a means of keeping in touch. Still, the increased frequency of contact also had its drawbacks, particularly for seamen in long-distance shipping. Although it sounds like a contradiction in terms, the intensified contact with the family at home could in some cases make life at sea more difficult. By constantly getting news from home, the seafarer became more aware of what he was missing, with the result that he would become more homesick. A woman, who had worked in long-distance shipping herself, testified that while she was at work she removed herself so much from her life ashore that she found it difficult to even remember her own telephone number. Her point was that by being mentally thus far removed from life ashore, shipboard existence was made easier. With increased communications, however, that kind of isolation was no longer possible to maintain, and she claimed that her husband found it more difficult to be away from home since they had

¹⁵⁴ G3042

been able to communicate more often and regularly.¹⁵⁵ Her argument was echoed in another narrative, in which the informant voiced the opinion that in order to cope with the extensive absences, seamen in worldwide shipping had to be able to ‘switch off’ their thoughts about what was going on at home. She admitted that she too switched off, arguing that the emotional disconnection helped them both to cope with the separations. She further mused whether this detachment would explain why her husband was such a poor letter-writer, ‘because when you write all your emotions surface and that would be too painful’.¹⁵⁶

4.3.5 Support

To have someone to turn to for support is something most human beings appreciate, and in this respect the seafarer’s wife is no exception. But whereas most married couples are able, and expected to turn to each other for support in the first instance, the same option is not always available to maritime spouses. Instead, the seafarer’s wife has to rely on family and friends to lend a hand when needed. The informants’ reconstructions of the issue showed the many different forms support could assume. It could be a handy father or brother-in-law to call when the boiler broke down in the middle of winter. It could be an aunt or neighbour to leave the children with when she needed to go to the doctor’s. It could be another seafarer’s wife to spend Christmas with when both their husbands were out at sea. It could be work colleagues to socialise with, and it could also be a mother or best friend to turn to when everything seemed to be on top of her and she felt that she could not cope on her own.

Despite an extensive number of women who recalled getting sufficient support from people around them, there were also a few testimonies of the opposite, cases where the women felt they were left to manage on their own as best they could. Perceptions of isolation featured prominently in these reconstructions, and were more common among women who

¹⁵⁵ G204-290799

¹⁵⁶ G201-060799

had moved to Åland as a result of their marriage. Women who were born and brought up on Åland had the advantage of having their families and friends close at hand, so although they were without their husbands, they normally had a well-established social sphere to rely on for succour. The situation was different for women who had moved to Åland when they got married. To these women, it was particularly important to build up a good relationship with their in-laws and, if that failed, actively to try to make friends through work or other activities outside the home. However, it takes time to build up a new social network, and it is even more difficult for women who are not active in work outside the home, which was the case if the informants were young mothers caring for their babies at home. Not knowing where to turn for temporary child minding prevented them from joining clubs and associations that would have served to widen their social spheres. Families-in-law could offer some support, but not all the informants felt able to turn to them other than in emergencies. One informant pointed to this in her recollection of being a young mother settling in to a new environment:

When the first child was born he [the husband] was out four months in a row, and that was quite hard since I had just moved to Åland and didn't have any other acquaintances than his relatives, who were also strangers to me.¹⁵⁷

The informant related how she had later managed to build up a network of friends through 'work and other activities as well as the children's friends' parents'. In another narrative, the lack of support was even more urgent, as the following reconstruction shows:

You got a very big responsibility when you had to cope on your own long periods with two infants and with Finnish as mother tongue and alone without relatives. I didn't have that many acquaintances either in those days. I had a boy 1 year 6 months when I was going to give birth to another child. I didn't even know where to put the boy if I had to go into labour. Luckily my husband came home the day before delivery.¹⁵⁸

There was no mention of in-laws throughout the testimony which would suggest that the informant had little contact with them, that they were living beyond reach or were deceased.

¹⁵⁷ G2[3]082

¹⁵⁸ G2088

Whatever the reason, it was clear that even in times of emergency, such as the one described here, the idea of turning to the seafarer's family was an unthinkable alternative.

It was clear from the data that family and friends were an important part of the wife's safety network, but the views among the informants on the need to have other seafarers' wives in their circle of friends were divided. There was no official society of seafarers' wives in Åland, although it should be noted that *Sjömansmissionen* (the seamen's mission) to some extent filled that purpose for the oldest generation of informants. For the younger women, however, combining work and family left little time for voluntary work of that kind and since their partners spent comparatively much more time at home the women had less need for a 'sea wives' society. Kaijser comments on the loss of the solidarity among women that traditionally existed in seafaring communities. She identifies modern-day relief-systems and women's work outside the home as the main causes for this development.¹⁵⁹

Nonetheless, some of the younger women voiced the opinion that they would have appreciated the company of other seafarers' wives, especially during the years when they were at home with young children. Many women found this particular time of their lives fairly isolated, and although they had support around them, they felt reluctant to ask constantly for babysitting services. One informant said that although she knew that there were other women in her situation she did not want to intrude. However, looking back she admitted it would have been a good idea to have contacted other seafarers' wives to build up some form of network.¹⁶⁰ Other women were of the opposite opinion. They were happy with the friends they had and did not see the point in being part of a 'seafarers' wives society'. One informant pointed out that, at least in her view, friendship had to be based on more than the common occupation of the husbands, saying that she would rather socialise with 'normal' people since, as she put it, she had 'enough of my own problems to listen to others

¹⁵⁹ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke' in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.44

¹⁶⁰ G203-230799

people's.'¹⁶¹ Furthermore, in a community with such a large proportion of the male population employed at sea, it is not surprising that a considerable number of the women in this study were in a situation in which their friends had also married into seafaring life. Neither was it uncommon to meet and make friends with women who also happened to be married to seamen. To some extent, the desire to belong to a network of seafarers' wives was linked to the self-sufficiency of the women. The more secure they seemed in their role as seafarers' wives, the less their need for such a society appeared to be. Another factor was whether or not the women were from Åland. A woman, to whom seafaring life was something new and unfamiliar, often appreciated the support she could get from another woman, who perhaps was more familiar with that particular way of life.

The inability to turn to their spouses in times of need was not a frequently mentioned grievance in the testimonies for this study. It was occasionally tangible when the women considered their lack of communication, when they discussed their desire to share everyday events with their spouses. However, in a couple of narratives, the informants made it clear that the person they would have preferred to be supported by was their husband. One informant explained that 'it isn't everything you want to talk to an outsider about or ask about help for something'.¹⁶² Another informant stated that her worst experience of being a seafarer's wife was when she had to tell her husband that his father had passed away:

That was the worst thing I've experienced as a seafarer's wife, when I first for hours tried to get through to the captain's telephone, when I asked to speak to my husband and had to give him the news of death over the telephone. He started to cry and we were so far apart and the reception was crackly and bad. I was pregnant and also felt a great loss after my father-in-law, who didn't get to meet his grandchild. That time we really would have needed each other's closeness and support.¹⁶³

To lose a child must be one of the most painful experiences for any parent to go through, and for a couple having to deal with such a sad event while separated must add to the pain. Such

¹⁶¹ G201-060799

¹⁶² G2055

¹⁶³ G3086

an experience was dealt with in a Generation Three narrative, in which the informant began her discussion on the issue of having children with a seafarer by saying: 'Children, yes.

Herein lays both the sorrow and joy of our lives.' At six months pregnant, the informant went into labour, but the child was stillborn. She spent two weeks in hospital, while her husband was aboard a ship in the South China Sea. She wrote:

During these two weeks of distress, I felt very lonely. His ship was on its way from Japan. I called the shipping company and they got a message out of what was about to happen. I talked to him from somewhere when I was in hospital. When he arrived in Hong Kong, I had given birth; at first they wouldn't let him come home, but when the management at the shipping company heard that there was also going to be a funeral, relief was arranged for in Singapore, where the ship arrived three days later. After this, I had to fight to keep my nose above the water surface.¹⁶⁴

The joy that the informant mentioned came when the couple were informed they had been selected as suitable adoptive parents for a little baby. On this occasion, too, she was alone since her husband was at sea. Via the shipping office she sent out a telex that he was about to become a father.¹⁶⁵

Through these last two reconstructions, the reader's attention is drawn to one of the fundamental differences between land-based and maritime marriages already hinted at in the beginning of this section, i.e. the lack of spousal support and the problematic of experiencing with each other both ordinary and extraordinary events in what should be a shared life. Under circumstances where a wife intuitively would look to her husband for encouragement or help, the seafarer's wife is forced to turn to other people in her surroundings, such as family, in-laws, friends or other seafarers' wives. In this study, most women did have that support, but for the unlucky few who did not have it, the burden of seafaring life could at times be very heavy.

¹⁶⁴ G3083

¹⁶⁵ G3083

4.4 The third phase: arrival

The third phase of seafaring life began towards the end of the seafarer's period at sea, at the point where his wife, mentally and physically, started to prepare herself and her environment for her husband's return. This was the moment when the maritime woman got practical preparations going, such as cleaning, cooking and baking. It was also the point in time when she could finally permit herself to long for her husband and begin to count the days to his return. Several women mentioned their habit of counting days and hours to their husbands' arrival home, but only one of them explicitly discussed the importance of allowing oneself to long for one's returning partner. Her mental preparation for her husband's return was constructed around her letting herself feel her yearning for him and then, when he arrived, to be completely absorbed in his presence. To her, the climax of the reunion was 'indescribable'.¹⁶⁶

4.4.1 Preparing

The preparations prior to the seafarer's return could be seen as a way in which the women readied themselves for their 'other life', the one where there were two adults in the house. There were, of course, varying degrees of excitement and preparation in the sample group, which depended on matters such as the length of the seafarer's absence, the state of the relationship and on personalities. Generally, the longer the seafarer had been gone, the more thorough the preparations prior to his return were, but even if the seafarer had only been away for a week, he was often eagerly awaited. Despite this, and in the same way that the seafarers' wives displayed mixed feelings towards bidding farewell to their husbands when they left for work, so the seafarers' return could evoke a range of emotions in the women. Although most women claimed to be looking forward to the return of their husbands, it was not without a degree of trepidation that they did so. There were, furthermore, a couple of

¹⁶⁶ G305-100100

women who stated that they were happier when he was away and that the thought of having their husbands at home again was disheartening rather than uplifting.

The amount of time the spouses were kept apart played an important role in how the women perceived and executed preparations and receptions for the returning seamen. For women who had experienced both types of shipping, the excitement surrounding the husband's return lessened once he began working on ferries. In the quotation below, the informant reconstructed her preparations while her husband was in long-distance trades as an occasion of joy and celebration, an event that was eagerly anticipated. The tone changed significantly when describing her husband's return while working on the ferries. The absences were so short and the returns so frequent that there was no need for celebration.

It was a festive day when he returned. The entire house was cleaned. There was good food and my mood was high. That was what it was like when he was in long-distance trades. When he started on the ferries life became a bit more normal. The expectations were not so big. We saw each other so often anyway.¹⁶⁷

From this extract, it is clear that the celebratory air that surrounded the seafarer's return from the deep seas was replaced by a notion of normality. The same change in attitude was evident in an account by a Generation Three informant. She began by describing how she prepared for her husband's approaching arrival after a couple of months away at sea, and of the immediate time after his return. The narrative was full of expressions of excitement:

The days before he is due home, I get a surplus of energy. I clean the entire house, sort out the garden, wash the car, bake and potter about. I am on such a high, full of energy and longing that it is sometimes difficult to sleep. We feel the same happiness as when we were newly wed and we can't get enough of each other during the first days. We make love several times a day and we live in a state of bliss, which I don't believe exists in a relationship where both spouses are at home every day.¹⁶⁸

The tone of the narrative changed when later in the testimony she reconstructed her husband's returns after he got a job on a ferry and thus spent every other week at home. The excitement

¹⁶⁷ G2101

¹⁶⁸ G3086

was replaced by level-headedness. The change in her husband's work pattern resulted in a calming down of all aspects of the seafarer's homecoming. Although she continued to bake and make the bed with clean sheets, she no longer tidied the house and garden to the same extent as she had done before. Such composure also extended to the emotional aspect of the return, and lovemaking could wait until the evening.¹⁶⁹

Compared to the other two generation groups, very few of the women in Generation One elaborated on their feelings regarding the return of the seafarer or on their preparations. The reason for the limited reconstructions in this age cohort on the issue could be down to a generational difference in reporting personal experiences. Instead of talking about their feelings, the respondents in Generation One spent more time reconstructing tangible preparations, although this aspect was also under-represented in the testimonies. In most of the narratives the informants mentioned cleaning as part of the preparation process, occasionally in conjunction with other similar tasks. The lack of attention to this issue in the narratives is interesting since the seamen in this generation were away for such long periods and their time at home was very brief. One would assume that the wives felt at least the same amount of excitement that their younger counterparts demonstrated in their narratives. One informant, however, created a relatively thorough account of her preparations:

Several days before his return, I started to clean, bake, wash and put everything in order so that I would be able to be together with him as much as possible during the short period he was at home. It weren't long vacations, at the most two weeks.¹⁷⁰

In this reconstruction, there was a similar degree of excitement to that evident in the two previous quotes. The reason the informant stated for giving the house a good going over was that it left her with less housework to do while her husband was at home. This was probably the case for many of her contemporaries, although no-one else was as specific about it. With so little time on their hands, the women strove to keep the chores to the minimum, thus

¹⁶⁹ G3086

¹⁷⁰ G1081

maximising their time together with their husbands. Similarly, the older informants in Kaijser's study seemed to have spent much energy on cleaning and baking prior to their husbands' return. This was interpreted as a way of coping with the 'unreasonably high expectations' on the time together as husband and wife.¹⁷¹ Only one informant discussed her emotions regarding the seafarer's return by briefly mentioning that although she was longing to see her husband again, it was not without feeling slightly nervous at his impending return. The reason for her nervousness seemed to relate to fundamental problems in their relationship. She began her narrative by saying that if she had known how her life was going to turn out she would not have married a seaman.¹⁷² After reading the testimony, however, the problem did not appear to be that she was married to a seaman as much as the seaman to whom she was married. A number of serious differences appeared that had more to do with personal incompatibility than with the effects of seafaring work.

Because of the similarity in work patterns, women in Generations Two and Three experienced their husbands' returns in a very similar fashion. Cooking and cleaning seemed to have been part of the 'welcome home' ritual. By having the house neat and tidy and by ensuring that there was good food and drink at hand the women wanted to make their husbands feel that they had been missed and were welcome home. This sentiment was clearly expressed in a statement by a Generation Two informant:

I normally try to make sure that it is neat and tidy at home, that there is something tasty to eat and drink, that the sauna is warm etc., so that he feels welcomed.¹⁷³

Like the women in Generation One, seafarers' wives of the younger generations also aimed to finish off as many chores as possible before the seafarer returned in an attempt to reduce the volume of housework, thereby increasing the amount of 'quality time' they would have

¹⁷¹ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke' in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.40

¹⁷² G1065

¹⁷³ G2093

together. An informant of Generation Two emphasised that she deliberately made preparations to minimise housework in order to maximise time spent together as a family:

It was always good when my husband was about to come home. The children and I cleaned and tidied so that everything was neat at home, because during the first days there was no time for such mundane things. Instead we spent time together and with our respective families. Every day was festive during the first period, before one got into the normal routines. Everything at home was so well-prepared.¹⁷⁴

The stress of the narrative was on the joy she and the children felt and how 'everything at home was so well-prepared'. In a very similar reconstruction another Generation Two woman stated that everything had to be in perfect order when her husband arrived since she did not have time for any house work when he was at home.¹⁷⁵ Other factors influenced the informants' preparation routines. A woman of Generation Two suggested that expecting the seafarer's return was almost like expecting a guest to the house.¹⁷⁶ If you are expecting visitors, it is only natural that you would wish to present your home in the best possible light. Another woman of the same age cohort reconstructed an event in which the neighbour's cows had destroyed her carefully tended vegetable garden the night before her husband's return. She expressed a lot of anger, which initially seemed slightly excessive, but placed within the discourse where the seafarer's return was likened to receiving a guest, her feelings were more understandable.¹⁷⁷

There were women, who were of the opinion that seafarers liked it to be neat and tidy at home and that they found it hard to cope with change. In one of her columns Alberius-Forsman' writes: 'It has to be neat and tidy when a seaman comes home. Otherwise there is a danger that the seaman loses his temper. The home doesn't look the way he imagined for weeks and months, you see'.¹⁷⁸ A woman of Generation Three said that she

¹⁷⁴ G2049

¹⁷⁵ G204-290799

¹⁷⁶ G202-080799

¹⁷⁷ G203-230799

¹⁷⁸ K. Alberius-Forsman, *Sjöfruar och sjöfarare*, p. 11

cleaned because ‘seamen want to have orderliness around them. They want everything to be at home just as they had imagined it while at sea’.¹⁷⁹ This view was echoed in another narrative in which an informant stated that her husband would get very annoyed if the house was messy. She, however, felt that looking after children, pets and home, as well as keeping a full-time job, was more than enough without having to scrub the house from top to bottom every time her husband was due home. Having been alone with all the housework for a week, she felt she deserved a break when the seafarer came home.¹⁸⁰ However, by no means all seamen required a clean house to come home to, or at least the women did not want it to appear that way in the narratives:

The preparations for his return are mostly linked to having everything tidy, so as not having to get cleaning straight away – not because he demands it. Especially before we had children, I used to bake a lot, filled the freezer with this and that. He, who hadn’t eaten home-made cakes for a long time, really appreciated it. And for me it was a way to pass time.¹⁸¹

In this quote, the informant was careful to point out that her husband did not demand that she cleaned but that she did so by her own account. She claimed it was a way for her to fill the time of waiting. It was also a statement of her autonomy. She wanted to ensure that the image she presented of herself was that of a woman who did not follow any man’s order but decided what she wanted to do for herself.

As was pointed out earlier, the length of the seafarer’s absence was pivotal to the preparations, but other factors such as personalities and the state of the relationship also influenced the process. We have already encountered one woman who felt she had enough to do without having to clean the house especially for her husband’s return. Her husband worked on the ferries, which also de-dramatised his return home. Another ferryman’s wife commented on her husband’s returns by saying: ‘since he comes and goes so often it is

¹⁷⁹ G3001

¹⁸⁰ G3010

¹⁸¹ G3083

completely natural'.¹⁸² It is not surprising that ferrymen's wives were less excited about their husbands' homecomings, but a similar attitude was evident among women whose seafaring husbands had changed to shorter shifts. When her husband changed from working four months on and two months off, to four weeks on followed by four weeks off, one of the informants indicated that since her husband came home so frequently there was no need for any major preparations, whereas another informant reflected that she was more nervous about the return during the first couple of years, before they had any children.¹⁸³ She did not, however, give any reason for her nervousness. Maybe she was unsure whether their time apart had changed their feelings for each other. That was the reason given by another informant, who commented: 'You were of course a little tense and nervous. Would it feel like before? Was the "magic" still there?'¹⁸⁴ Judging from the narratives that these women had constructed, they seemed to have been able to keep the romantic affection alive in their relationships. That was not always the case, and in a narrative filled with disenchantment, the informant stated: 'Nowadays I don't prepare in any particular way for the homecoming. In the past it was of course different when you had just fallen in love'.¹⁸⁵

Although the majority of informants constructed narratives in which they were pleased and excited to have their husbands back home, there was also evidence of subordinate, contradictory discourses within which women reconstructed their apprehensions towards the seafarer's impending arrival. Instead of feeling expectant and happy, one informant stated that already a couple of days before her husband returned home, she was filled with negative expectations. Her narrative was dominated by painful reconstructions of a dysfunctional relationship, and considering that her husband worked aboard one of the nearby ferries, thus working according to a week on-week off system, there can only have

¹⁸² G2[3]082

¹⁸³ G201-060799

¹⁸⁴ G3003

¹⁸⁵ G3[2]009

been very few days when this informant felt at ease with her situation.¹⁸⁶ Another informant said that during the week her husband was at home, she felt as if she was his servant, constantly attending to him.¹⁸⁷ A third informant found that her life became very stressful when her husband worked aboard ferries with every other week off. On top of the much more serious issue of mental and physical abuse, the constant pressure of having the house neat and tidy for the husband's return was an additional burden that, according to the informant herself, wore her down.¹⁸⁸

The wives also had to prepare the children for the return of their fathers, a meeting that was not always without its problems. Heikell draws attention to this in his study, where he notes that the reunion was not always happy. For some children, meeting their father was frightening as well as exciting, and there were occasions where the children did not recognise him immediately. The seafarers, however, were careful to point out that it never took long before the children accepted them back.¹⁸⁹ Similar experiences were mentioned by Åland seafarers, interviewed by Kiki Alberius-Forsman in 1992.¹⁹⁰ Admittedly, this was less of an issue for ferrymen's children than for children of seamen who were engaged in long-distance shipping. Age was also significant, for as children grew older, their improved perception of time, as well as a better understanding of their fathers' work, simplified the task of explaining who was coming home, where he was coming from and why. The point about children was particularly conspicuous in the narratives of the oldest generation of women. Four out of eighteen informants in this generation group mentioned having witnessed their children questioning their fathers' presence and rights. In three cases, this was after prolonged absences due to the Second World War. There was the aforementioned seafarer who was gone for five years, and whose initial absence scarred the father-son relationship for

¹⁸⁶ G2050

¹⁸⁷ G2088

¹⁸⁸ G205-290799

¹⁸⁹ T. Heikell. *Nog har jag alltid*, p.59

¹⁹⁰ K. Alberius-Forsman, *Från kollämpare till kavaljer*, pp. 16, 22, 51

life.¹⁹¹ When the seafarer finally was able to return home, his wife and their five-year-old son, whom he had never seen, welcomed him. The informant described her experience of their meeting with the words 'you were completely bewildered'. Clearly the reunion was an emotionally overwhelming experience for the informant, and also a disappointment. Contrary to her expectations, father and son did not bond in the way she had hoped they would, and the initial absence of the mariner remained evident in the father-son relationship throughout their lives.¹⁹² The other two seafarers were absent for one and two years respectively. In the testimonies, the women reconstructed the scepticism and suspicion with which the children viewed their fathers, describing how they did not recognise them. One of the children was reported to have proclaimed: 'That man is not allowed to be with my mum'.¹⁹³ In the fourth case, the seafarer was engaged in long-distance shipping. As was the norm in the 1950s and 1960s, he spent the largest part of the year at sea - sometimes more than a year - followed by a month at home. In her reconstruction, the informant related an episode in which, upon the seafarer's return, his daughter, aged five, asked him if he was really her father. A year or so later, the seafarer was working ashore. The informant claimed that this episode had such an impact on her husband that it made him leave the sea. However, although there was undoubtedly truth in that statement, one should not overlook the informant's influence in the matter. In an earlier part of her life story, she clearly stated that she did not appreciate life as a seafarer's wife and was very pleased at his decision to leave the sea.¹⁹⁴

From the sample one could note that on a fairly regular basis, due to a shortage of relief crew, seafarers were asked to stay on for another voyage, although they were due to sign off for their holidays. Having prepared for, and anticipated, the reunion, especially after a long absence, news of this kind was not well received. The seafarer's prolonged stay at sea

¹⁹¹ G1102

¹⁹² G1102

¹⁹³ G105-040899

¹⁹⁴ G1045

could cause severe distress for the entire family, and especially for young children. One informant remembered how this would lead to arguments between her and her husband, but the outcome was usually the same; his return was postponed by another couple of months. In her narrative, she directed her disappointment at her daughter. For a young child it was hard to comprehend why suddenly she had to wait two more months after having been told that her father would be home very soon. The informant expressed her discomfort at the task and stated in her testimony that: 'As adults we were able to adjust to the disappointment but for our daughter it was more difficult'.¹⁹⁵

4.4.2 Homecoming

After all the waiting and longing, the return of the seafarer was a cause for celebration. Having cleaned, baked and cooked for days, the seafarer's wife smartened up herself and the children and prepared for a festive dinner. The seafarer very often brought back gifts for both his wife and children. Looking at the preparations and reception from a more symbolic viewpoint, the activities described in the samples could be seen as a form of thanksgiving ritual. The seafarer had returned to his family safe and sound, something for which all parties were grateful.

One informant was of the opinion that the good thing about having her husband at sea was that when he returned it was 'like falling in love again'.¹⁹⁶ She was not alone in her views. There were several other women who followed this line of reasoning. One of these women said:

I am of the opinion that it is healthy for a relationship to have a break from each other. You kind of rest in order to fall in love again. And again in your own husband. Practical, really!¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ G1061

¹⁹⁶ G302-090799

¹⁹⁷ G2029

Similar attitudes were evident among Swedish seamen's wives, who have been said to 'appreciate living in a marriage that never becomes humdrum but on the contrary is characterised by constant rekindling'.¹⁹⁸ Still, after having been alone for a long time it was not always easy to slip into couple-hood again, and although one woman described the initial stage of her husband's stay at home as bliss ('we were nothing but happy and in love'), there were other women who found it slightly more complicated.¹⁹⁹ Among the testimonies of the oldest age group in particular, there was evidence of a certain degree of unease. After almost a year apart, the informants recalled sometimes feeling slightly tense around their partners, as if they were 'facing an entirely new situation'.²⁰⁰ Very few women in the sample spoke directly of their sexuality, but dealt with the subject by the use of more subtle references:

Sometimes it would be difficult to fulfil all the expectations you had on each other upon the husband's return. The feelings could be hard to interpret but after a day and night or two you reached the same wavelength.²⁰¹

In the few cases where sexuality was discussed, the informants belonged to the younger categories. The most personal account was given by a woman in Generation Three. After a lengthy absence she found it very difficult to accept her husband back into her life. Whereas he had been working on a cruise ship in the US, she had been at home with a baby and a young child. His had been a life of luxury, 'with attendants, who cleaned his cabin, dinners with passengers, tennis, parties etc.', a life completely different from hers. In her reconstruction she likened her husband to a stranger and wrote: 'It was a completely absurd situation that this strange man could lay claim to sleep in my double bed'. She found it even more difficult to conceive of being intimate with him and they had to start from scratch to rebuild their relationship, which in this case they managed to do. In her narrative the informant questioned whether it would be useful to study the situation around the seafarer's

¹⁹⁸ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.42

¹⁹⁹ G102-120799

²⁰⁰ G103-020899

²⁰¹ G1061

return in order to be able to avoid or alleviate 'typical periods of crises in maritime families'.²⁰² The informant was a social therapist, which explains her interest in studying the effects of the seafarer's return.

In cases where the seafarer was away for longer spells, i.e. working on trades other than the local ferries, many informants claimed they tried to push aside any differences of opinion in order to make the first couple of days as pleasant as possible. For many informants it also seemed to be customary to have good food and wine at home. For instance, comments like the following were common: 'For more than twenty years we have celebrated his return with good food and drink, the table beautifully laid out. A small feast'.²⁰³ Although the effort of preparing good food and drink was surely appreciated, the informants testified that it did not always work out as planned. If the seafarer had had a long journey home, perhaps being en route for the past twenty-four hours, he was too tired for anything but a good night's sleep. One informant said that after a couple of years she learnt not to waste time cooking candle-lit dinners on the day her husband returned home. In her reconstruction of the return she wrote that all her husband managed to say when he arrived home to the carefully cooked meal was: 'Another day' before staggering off to bed, leaving her alone with her dinner.²⁰⁴

Most women seemed to understand their husbands' need to relax during the first days, but they found it difficult to explain this to their young children, who were often eager to tell their fathers what they had been doing while he was away, curious as to what gifts he had brought them and longing to spend time in his company. One woman said that she sometimes felt sorry for her husband because of all the expectations his family and friends had on him while he was at home. In her opinion, he never got any time to really relax.²⁰⁵

²⁰² G3078

²⁰³ G3088

²⁰⁴ G2055

²⁰⁵ G202-080799

There was also concern among the women for the levels of stress their husbands had to endure while at work. With larger and increasingly modern vessels, crew size in relation to tonnage diminished. There used to be at least three officers and as many engineers aboard a ship, but towards the end of the twentieth century many vessels sailed with only two officers and one engineer. Between 1960 and 1980 crew sizes on Finnish cargo vessels in international traffic decreased from eleven jobs per 1,000 gross ton to only four.²⁰⁶ This phenomenon was not restricted to Finnish seamen. Two separate studies, one conducted by the National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Transport Office in 1995, and another from the Seafarers International Research Centre in Cardiff in 2000, reported escalating levels of stress among seafarers caused by reduced crewing levels and job security and increased work load and automation. Wives of British seafarers found that their partners were worn out and stressed when they returned home from sea, and that many of the men had difficulties winding down and adjusting to family life.²⁰⁷

It was not only long-distance sailors who were too worn out for anything but bed when they came home. For women whose men worked week on-week off on the local ferries, the first day seemed to be the most difficult one. Although away for much shorter periods, work aboard ferries was stressful and took its toll on the seafarer, which meant that he was tired when he returned home. This situation was supported by findings presented in Heikell's study, where seamen mentioned how their need to rest due to work-related stress infringed on their leave-time. Their testimonies showed that the first days ashore were wasted, since the seamen were too tired to engage in anything at all.²⁰⁸ In situations where the wife was very excited to see her husband again, but he was tired and only wanted to sleep, conflict sometimes arose. With time, however, these women learned not to expect too much during the first day or so:

²⁰⁶ Y. Kaukiainen, *Finnish Shipping*, p. 176, table 58

²⁰⁷ M. Thomas et al, 'Behind the Scenes', in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, p 125

²⁰⁸ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.36

Now that he is older and really tired and worn out after working shifts and from finding it increasingly difficult to sleep aboard, I have learnt not to arrange for anything during his first twenty-four hours at home. [...] After a day and a good night's sleep, he becomes normal again.²⁰⁹

A similar reconstruction was presented by another informant, who described how disagreements occasionally arose when wife and children were full of excitement, eager to tell the seafarer about what had happened in the past week, and the seafarer, on the other hand, was worn out after irregular and stressful shifts.

The most difficult day is the first day my husband is at home off duty. All of us, both the children and I, have so much to tell him. My husband is often tired the first day from all his night watches aboard. I bubble with energy and he's sitting half-asleep in the couch. But after one night's sleep everything is back to normal.²¹⁰

In her narrative she also revealed that while her husband was at home on leave, she tried to be available to him as much as possible and once he was rested they used to enjoy some good food and drink together. One informant was of the opinion that a seafarer should spend his first day off in a hotel to rest, saying that: 'after that he might be able to cope with family life'. Other informants were not as extreme, but almost all women whose husbands worked on the ferries agreed that the first days could be conflict-ridden due to the excitement of the wives and the children in conjunction with the seafarers' tiredness. To avoid arguments and to make the return as problem-free as possible, the women made sure not to have anything planned for the first day. Another method was for the wife to make some arrangements for herself on the day of her husband's arrival home.²¹¹

4.5 The fourth phase: maritime family together

With the seafarer back ashore, the maritime family looked like any other 'normal' family, but that was only on the surface. In a similar way that the seafarer's wife had to adjust to being

²⁰⁹ G2019

²¹⁰ G3012

²¹¹ G3050

on her own, she – together with the rest of the family – had to adjust to the fourth phase of maritime life, i.e. being together as a family. As in every other phase, time was the ruling factor and the specifics of each return depended largely on how long the seafarer had been separated from his family and on how long he was going to be staying with them. If the husband was only at home on a short visit after a considerably long period at sea, which was often the case for women of Generation One, the wife was more likely to be lenient towards the seafarer's wishes and also more patient. If, on the other hand, the seafarer would be spending several months at home or if he was working according to a regular 1:1 system, the wife would probably expect him to take an active part in the daily household routines. Even under these circumstances, however, there were informants who tended to let the seafarer have his own way, often in order to avoid conflicts.²¹² There were, self-evidently, individual differences as to how women coped with adjusting to two-adult family life and how they experienced the changes. Whereas one woman in the sample claimed that daily routines did not change much with her husband's weekly arrivals and departures, another woman experienced a similar situation very differently. She claimed that 'even though he is only gone one week I get into a routine of my own which is so to speak shattered when he comes home'.²¹³

From the testimonies given by the women in the sample, we can conclude that life changed in many ways when there were two adults in the family again. In the majority of narratives, the changes were reconstructed as being mostly of a positive nature, as there was another grown-up to discuss problems with and another pair of hands to help with the chores. Readjustment to conventional family life was not without its share of problems, however, and even in largely positive reconstructions there was room for conflict. The topic of the arguments varied but the underlying reasons were often the same. One of these reasons was

²¹² G3005, G304-070799

²¹³ G3065, G3050

that the seafarer's wife too easily forgot that there was another opinion to take into consideration and another person's plans to remember. Another reason was the disruption of the daily routines that the maritime woman lived by while she was coping with family life on her own. On the other hand, when the seafarer was at home, he could take over some of the household chores. This was much appreciated, especially among those women working outside the home. One informant testified that her husband took over most of the household tasks when he was on leave, and that he always had dinner ready for her when she returned home from work. The informant admitted to quite enjoying the service provided by her husband and that she sometimes found it hard having to do everything herself again when he returned to sea.²¹⁴

'The difference is actually enormous', a ferryman's wife commented in her reconstruction of her husband's homecoming.²¹⁵ This view was shared by the majority of informants, and their testimonies contained numerous references as to how the return of their respective husbands changed the ways in which their daily lives were led. The most appreciated change was that the women no longer single-handedly had to be responsible for the home and children. The woman quoted above preceded her statement with a description of how her daily life changed with her husband's return. He was the one who got their children ready for school in the morning and when she came home after a day's work, dinner was already on the table. Among the testimonies of the two younger generations, this was a frequently occurring reconstruction. When the husband came home, he took over some of the household chores. The same habit was not as evident among the oldest generation of women, probably due to the nature of the seafarer's stays at home. Among the women in Generation One, a couple of informants mentioned that their husbands had taken over cooking dinner, but

²¹⁴ G3088

²¹⁵ G3025

other than that, there was no evidence of the men helping in the household.²¹⁶ In one of the Generation One narratives, the seafarer spent the better part of one year at home recuperating after six months in hospital. In her reconstruction of the episode, the informant emphasised the positive influence it had on the relationship between father and sons, while at the same time testifying that in those days the home was not considered a proper place for a man. She wrote:

During the period of convalescence he could spend time with the children and roam with them in woods and fields, while I had schoolwork and Mrs S. took care of the household chores.²¹⁷

The informant was working full-time outside the home, which was rather unusual for women of this age cohort. Still, rather than sharing the maintenance of the home with her husband, as was common among the younger women in the sample, she had a hired help to take care of the 'household chores'. Heikell writes that the older seafarers in his study were more likely to regard their time ashore as vacation and therefore less likely to participate in the daily household chores. Younger seamen, on the other hand, took much greater responsibility for housework, which he ascribed to their awareness of the gender equality discussion.²¹⁸

It was not only the practical help that was welcomed. On a mental level, too, the presence of the seafarer was appreciated. Many informants expressed relief at having another adult to share the domestic responsibilities with. The pressure of coping on one's own was taken away, and they could allow themselves to relax a little. One informant said that when her husband was at home she felt she could have 'a bit of a holiday'.²¹⁹ In another testimony, a woman described the changes wrought by her husband's presence at home as follows:

Daily life as such changes in that I don't have to cook for 4 weeks, I can spend time doing homework with the children or iron or just be left in peace and he looks after the children. I can walk around town shopping in peace and quiet without having to hurry

²¹⁶ G101-300799, G102-120799

²¹⁷ G1093

²¹⁸ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p 50

²¹⁹ G3014

to pick up children and quickly home to cook dinner as soon as I leave work. I feel freer when he is at home and we can share everything.²²⁰

The reconstruction stressed the difference between her two ways of life and there were several references to the relief the seafarer's return brought with it. Although she concentrated her narrative on the practical issues of cooking and childcare, she included in it comments on how she was able to 'spend time', how she could 'be left in peace', and not 'having to hurry'.

These comments suggest that she felt stressed while she was on her own, that she constantly had to rush from one chore to another in order to keep on top of things. On leaving her work place she had to rush to the shops before rushing to pick up the children and then rush home to cook dinner. After dinner, she had to help the children with their homework but also take care of the most urgent household tasks. Perhaps she left the more time-consuming chores until the weekend, and perhaps the children helped out as well. Still, it seems quite clear that this informant's life was made considerably easier when her husband returned from the sea.

That this was the case was not only suggested indirectly in the reconstructions of daily routines, but also explicitly in the last sentence of the quote. She claimed that she felt 'freer' when her husband was at home. The stated cause behind her sense of freedom was that she was able to 'share everything' with her husband. This enabled her to do one thing at a time without feeling rushed. Furthermore, sharing childcare and household tasks with her husband meant that she could have some time to herself.

Interestingly, the chores taken over by the men were often gardening, cooking and taking care of the children, whereas the women were left with more mundane tasks such as cleaning, laundry and ironing. Research has shown that this division of labour was related to whether a chore could also be regarded as a hobby.²²¹ Both cooking and gardening qualified as hobbies, while it would be hard to find anyone listing cleaning and ironing as a

²²⁰ G3090

²²¹ M. Korhonen, *Isyyden muutos. Keski-ikäisen miesten lapsuuskokemukset ja oma vanhemmuus* (Joensuu, 1999) p.217 as presented in T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 39

chosen leisure activity. And although it might not be a hobby, caring for their own children seemed to be a task most seafarers found pleasure in doing. They were particularly keen to spend time with very young children, which according to Heikell was due to 'the children growing up so fast and because they [seafarers] due to their absence lose out on so much anyway'.²²²

The seafarer's stay at home also influenced the family's social life. The effects varied. In a few cases, the seafarer wanted to cocoon his family, leaving room for very little interaction with the outside world. For others the opposite was true and the seafarer's return meant a busier social agenda, as suggested in the following statement:

There are more arrangements and wider social involvement when he is at home. When I'm on my own I take it easier and spend more time at home in peace and quiet.²²³

In the narrative, their busy social lives were contrasted to the slow life the informant lived while she was on her own. This seemed to be the norm in the majority of cases. When the seafarer was at home, more things were on the agenda and demands for the seafarer's attention came from many different directions. First, it was the wife and children who needed to spend time with the seafarer as a complete family unit. Then, it was the seafarer's parents who wanted to make sure their son was fine and in good health. Finally, there were other commitments such as visiting older relatives and catching up with friends. The demands could sometimes be overwhelming and in one narrative the informant expressed her concern that the seafarer never got time to relax when he was at home for precisely these reasons.²²⁴ Her concerns mirrored Heikell's findings. In his study he points out that time played a central role in seafarers' lives and that many seafarers felt that they had no control over how they used their 'own' time while ashore on leave. This was further complicated by the fact they also had little control while at sea. The shipping companies decided the seamen's periods at

²²² T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.41

²²³ G3063

²²⁴ G202-080799

sea and ashore, while shipboard time was determined by the work that had to be done. Despite having free time, the seaman was not able to leave his work place and he had to be prepared to have his free time interrupted if duty called.²²⁵

Among the oldest generation of informants it was commonly regarded as inappropriate for women to go out to any kind of entertainment establishments on their own and most of them acted accordingly. This led to some restrictions in the women's social lives, particularly among women who were unwilling to attend weddings and other private functions without the company of their husbands. Although restricted, the women did not live in complete isolation. There were acceptable pastimes for women and among the informants there were some who were active in choirs or in the seamen's missions, while others met up with their friends over cups of coffee and needlework. The husband's return, however, facilitated a different kind of social life. It enabled the women to go out to restaurants and dances, and it also made possible socialisation in a mixed gender environment as opposed to the largely single sex circles that the women moved in while the seafarer was absent. The first thing one informant wrote in her discussion on the effects of her husband's return was: 'It was always fun when he came home. Then we spent a lot of time with our friends and invited guests home'.²²⁶ The prominent place of this statement in the narrative suggested that for this informant, a more active social life must have been closely linked with the seafarer's presence.

There were also reconstructions in which the seafarer's return resulted in less social interaction. One narrative in particular suggested that most of the seafarer's stay was spent in a close-knit family circle. On several occasions the informant said she 'let go of everything' when her husband came home and that their daughter did the same. The image presented through the reconstruction was of father, mother and daughter doing everything

²²⁵ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 22

²²⁶ G1058

together without letting anyone else in to their sphere.²²⁷ Not all narratives showed the same level of agreement and intensity, however. In some instances, the seafarer was said to prefer just being with his family and was not interested in having other people around, whereas wife and children would have liked to have been more social and active, and that this could at times lead to conflicts. One informant asserted that 'there is no-one as home-loving as a seafarer', referring to her husband's desire to just stay at home with his family while she had hoped to do 'lots of things'.²²⁸ A singular account came from an informant who wrote that at the beginning of their relationship she and her husband had a wide and active social life but that 'now one lives almost in isolation'.²²⁹ At an earlier stage of her reconstruction, she wrote that when they met, her husband had been extrovert and pleasant but as time went by he changed completely. She seemed to imply that this change came from working on the ferries. After her husband's retirement, she herself took a job on one of the ferries and she wrote that she met enough people while at work so during her week off she only wanted to be on her own. The narrative showed that to some people the stress of seafaring life had an adverse impact on their social life, which in turn affected their families.

Also for friends of the seafaring couple it could be difficult to know what was appropriate to do. From one reconstruction it became evident that friends of the informant were at a loss as to how to behave. The informant wrote that their friends would not come to see them when her husband was at home because they thought the couple should be allowed to 'enjoy each other's company in peace'. To this attitude she proclaimed: 'All that is wrong! Of course we both needed to spend time with other people (although not the first day)'.²³⁰ The absence of their friends caused the seafarer to think that people did not want to see him and in the narrative it became the informant's task to sort out their social life. Maintaining a

²²⁷ G204-290799

²²⁸ G203-230799

²²⁹ G2088

²³⁰ G2049

social life could also be complicated by the seafarer's irregular working hours. An informant, whose best friend was also married to a seafarer, claimed that her biggest social problem was to find a weekend where both their husbands were at home.²³¹ In one of her columns, Alberius-Forsman draws attention to this aspect of seafaring life. She describes the attempts by two 'sea wives' to get together one weekend evening together with their partners. Talking in August, the earliest possible date turned out to be some four months later.²³² Another woman, whose spouse had gone into piloting, reconstructed one part of her narrative around the effects her husband's irregular hours had on her social life. As senior pilot, the informant's husband was on constant call in case of any emergencies and therefore there was always an element of uncertainty to his stays at home. Her husband could 'leave in the middle of the night and come home a couple of hours later, or be away for 1 day up to 8 days'. Although the informant appeared to cope well with the irregular time schedule, she did point out that their social life suffered from it. She was reluctant to invite couples since she did not like the idea of being left alone with them in case her husband was called out.²³³

4.5.1 Adjustment - again

In the reconstructions regarding the seafarers' returns, the aspect most commonly commented upon was the issue of adjustment. Incorporated in this issue was everything that had any bearing on the women's switch from single to couple life. It could be the seafarers' ignorance of domestic routines and the effect his arrival had on said routines. It could also be that the women either felt a lesser degree of independence with their husbands at home or the opposite: the seafarer felt there was no room for his views in the home. The dual impact of the seafarer's return was clearly demonstrated in the testimony of a woman in Generation Three:

²³¹ G3010

²³² K. Alberius-Forsman, *Sjöfruar och sjöfarare*, p. 117

²³³ G3078

Practically speaking, everything becomes easier. [Husband] largely takes care of the household, at the same time there is another person to consider, an additional opinion on everything. There are more discussions about e.g. the children's behaviour, at the same time as everything is more fun when you are two.²³⁴

in sentence?
Initially, the first paragraph the informant pointed to the practical help her husband's presence brought with it, something she appeared to have appreciated. This extra help did not come for free, however, and the price was that she no longer could do everything her own way, but that she had to consider her husband's opinion as well. In the reconstruction, the price of lessened autonomy seemed to have been worth paying since 'everything is more fun when you are two'.

To all of a sudden have another person to take into consideration when making decisions was a recurring theme among the narratives. Lack of communication and difficulties in understanding each other's needs further complicated the adjustment process. Closely related to this issue was the problem some women had in letting go of the notion that the supreme responsibility for home and children was theirs. In one of the testimonies, a woman wrote that although she appreciated being able to share the responsibilities with her husband, she still felt she needed to have overall control of how things were managed.²³⁵ Being unable to let go of this feeling and failing to acknowledge the opinion of the returned seafarer could be the cause of discontent and conflict. One informant explained that having got used to making all the decisions herself during the week her husband was at sea, she upheld the same degree of autocracy when he was at home too. She continued her story with a reference to 'the numerous occasions' she had forgotten to tell her husband in advance that she was going out for the evening, for example to visit a friend or to take part in a leisure activity. The attitude in the related episode was one of almost defiant independence. That her habit of overlooking her husband was not 'experienced so positively by the man' did not seem

²³⁴ G3001

²³⁵ G2005

to bother her much.²³⁶ What lay behind her apparent nonchalance can only be speculated.

Looking at the testimony as a whole, one likely rationale was that the informant, consciously or subconsciously, exaggerated her self-reliant position in order to ensure she came across as a strong and independent woman.

Not all women, however, held on to their independence as strongly as did the last two informants. Some narratives were reconstructed in a softer tenor, in which the ability to be perceptive of the other person's needs was the key point. One informant reconstructed the impact of her husband's return on daily life thus:

Now you are two about housework and other things, previously everything was done by one person, but with consideration and good will and a bit of lenience most things will turn out right²³⁷

A very similar reconstruction was presented by an informant of Generation One, in which she also stressed the importance of mutual understanding and of listening to each other's opinions.²³⁸

A few of the informants suggested that they lost some of their autonomy when the seafarer returned home and wanted to be in charge of the family. The feeling of lost independence was closely related to a feeling of being controlled once the seafarer came back. While the women were on their own, they did not have to discuss their plans with anyone, but did things as and when they pleased. The need to inform somebody else about their plans evoked feelings of no longer being fully in charge of their own lives. There were different degrees to which the women felt controlled. For most women it was only a minor inconvenience, but for others, it was a cause for much concern and discomfort. One informant appeared to be only mildly annoyed at the inconvenience of informing her husband

²³⁶ G3010

²³⁷ G2052

²³⁸ G102-120799

of her whereabouts, and she commented on the issue in a fairly off-hand fashion.²³⁹ Another woman, on the contrary, testified that she felt ‘as if I have to account for everything that I do and am going to do. It is as if everything I do and say is being questioned’,²⁴⁰. This was the same informant who had nothing but negative expectations in connection with her husband’s return. She also wrote:

It is the entire time schedule that changes, from me doing things at my own pace to having to take into consideration that it is two of us. I know I’ll adjust to couplehood; it’s only on the inside that the protest lives on.²⁴¹

This statement bore some resemblance to another reconstruction, in which the informant felt that her husband undermined her self-confidence when he took over tasks she had handled without any problems while he was at sea. As an illustration she mentioned that she was more or less forced to give up the responsibility for the household economy when her husband began working on the ferries. To the informant this was equal to a vote of no confidence and it left her doubting her own abilities.²⁴²

From the testimonies presented by the informants in this study, it was clear that the seafarers’ returns caused disruptions of varying degrees to the women’s lives. Whether the seafarer’s return was regarded as positive or negative, the main issue discussed in the narratives was the changes in daily routines as single-parent practices gave way to two-adult family life. It was not only the fact that the routines set up by the wife in the seafarer’s absence were disrupted by his return that caused disruption. There was evidence that suggested that the seafarer brought some of his work routines home with him. One of the less welcome changes appears to have been stricter time keeping. Aboard ship everything was run by the clock and there was more than one woman who drew attention to the importance of cooked meals as well as to the seafarer’s preoccupation with time schedules and set routines.

²³⁹ G2005

²⁴⁰ G2050

²⁴¹ G2050

²⁴² G205-290799

One informant mentioned that she ‘spent more time by the stove when he was at home’ and she further commented that ‘there were times to keep’.²⁴³ Likewise, another woman expressed that to her the hardest part of her husband’s homecoming was the increased timekeeping it involved.²⁴⁴

Occasionally, the seafarer brought another, even less welcome habit back home with him. This was the habit of being in charge. The strong identity that captains and other officers sometimes found through their profession is commented on in Kaijser’s study, where she notes that the hierarchical system shipboard made it difficult to adjust to family life ashore. One of her older informants explained a captain’s needs to be served and obeyed thus: ‘A commander is closest to God, he is the boss and responsible for everything, so it is completely natural!’²⁴⁵ The image of the stern captain coming home from sea only to take over at the helm at home was a familiar stereotype in the Åland Isles. First-hand accounts of this were revealed in casual conversations with children and wives of seafarers. There were, however, only a few such references in the life story material used in this study. Apart from the reconstructions presented previously in the text, there was one other direct reference to this stereotype. An informant of Generation One wrote that her husband took over her ‘entire person’ when he came home, and she wrote: ‘I did things I didn’t want to do because he demanded it’. The narrative continued with her finally reaching a point where she would no longer take it. That point, however, came very late in life, when the informant had already been married for fifty years. She ended her narrative with the words: ‘Nowadays we respect each other and have a good life’.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ G2101

²⁴⁴ G201-060799

²⁴⁵ I Kaijser, ‘Sjömannens yrke’, in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.39-40

²⁴⁶ G1102

4.5.2 Retirement

In a fictional interview presented in *Allt man kan önska sig*, the informant describes her husband's retirement as if 'somebody had forced a gigantic dog on you that follows you whatever you do and that has to be cared for and fed'.²⁴⁷ This was an apt description of what many women felt when their husbands left the sea for good. Retirement was one of the biggest adjustments in family life and it ^{was ?} particularly hard if the seafarer had to go ashore involuntarily, e.g. due to illness or redundancy. In these cases, the feeling of being unwanted or useless added to the difficulties of adjustment. The wife of a seaman, who had been forced into retirement due to illness, reflected over her husband's situation:

His work was everything to him. The sea is in his blood and it was a tragedy having to end his working life prematurely. He finds it hard to find his identity anywhere else. I think it would have been easier if he had had his work place and colleagues available to him. Now all the strings were cut straight off and he got a serious illness instead.²⁴⁸

In this excerpt, the informant highlighted two of the effects a maritime career could have on seamen. Firstly, the strong sense of identity their profession seemed to give them and secondly, a lack of colleagues to socialise with outside work. As a result, when they retired, the seafarers could end up feeling at a loss. If the seafarer had to leave his work involuntarily, as was the case in the above account, personal identification with occupation was difficult to maintain and could leave a void in the seafarer's life. As for the latter consequence, the lack of colleagues was less noticeable during active service, since the seafarers generally preferred to spend their time ashore with their families. When the seamen retired, however, they soon realised that their former colleagues were no longer available to them. The retirees noted that their former co-workers preferred to spend their free time with their families, just as they themselves had done during their active career. Although all Åland seafarers were affected by this to some extent, it was more pronounced amongst those who had worked in vessels with

²⁴⁷ U.-L. Lundberg, *Allt man kan önska sig*, p. 184

²⁴⁸ G2005

non-Åland crews, since their former colleagues lived much further afield. In addition, seafarers often lost contact with old friends, which further emphasised the seafarer's isolated position ashore. The lack of close friends outside the family sphere has been noted in other studies too. Pärssinen mentions seamen's difficulties in creating and maintaining normal relationships ashore, while several of Heikell's informants claimed they felt uncomfortable around people other than the immediate family. They also mentioned that people who were not used to the rhythm of seafaring life had difficulties understanding and adjusting to them.²⁴⁹

Whether the seafarer's retirement was regarded as positive or negative, it no doubt meant a massive change for all concerned. Among the women in the Generation One sample group, the feelings were mostly of a positive nature. Looking back, some women found it astonishing how they had managed to keep the marriage going at all. One informant said: 'The emotional side of the marriage had to be kept to a minimum. In retrospect, when [husband] has been retired since 1985, it is unbelievable that we could accept being apart'.²⁵⁰ This was the only direct comment on the emotional strains that the long absences had on the relationships. Most other informants remarked on the retirement years in much more general terms. One woman wrote: 'The best thing to have happened was when he retired'.²⁵¹ Another woman stated that: 'The day he came home to stay I felt gratefulness and joy, a new life begun'.²⁵² The oldest generation of women seemed to appreciate their husbands taking over some of the responsibilities - usually to do with bills, since the children were often grown up by the time the seafarer retired. One informant described her husband's retirement

²⁴⁹ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.65

²⁵⁰ G1061

²⁵¹ G1100

²⁵² G1004

as the beginning of a second honeymoon. With their children having moved out they could devote their time to each other, making up for all the lost years.²⁵³

Still, returning ashore was not always that smooth, and although couples might have been spared major conflicts, the adjustment often involved a few strands of irritation. Lack of independence, in the sense of not having time to oneself was a point many women brought forward in connection with their spouses' retirement from the sea: 'It felt good when he retired, but I missed having my own time and I think he felt the same.'²⁵⁴ One informant mentioned that while her husband was at sea she never had any arguments with him, but when he took a job ashore there was more room for discussions.

He left the sea fifteen years after we got married, and then there were sometimes discussions regarding child-rearing and house maintenance, things I was used to take care of on my own. Also, when he was at home, he wanted me to give him all my time, not realizing that children and housework took time too.²⁵⁵

However, the same informant also pointed out that because her husband left the sea for a job ashore, the transition into retirement was easier, giving them time to get used to each other. For other women, their husbands' work on the local ferries served much the same purpose. The narratives described how the seafarer would spend a week at home, getting used to life ashore, followed by a week at sea, when both husband and wife got some time to themselves. The next time the seafarer returned home, things were much the same as when he had left and he might even have remembered where to put the plates and how much a litre of milk cost. Moreover, the actual return became less dramatic since it happened more frequently. One woman reconstructed her experiences thus:

It was a bit problematic in the beginning of my husband's retirement. I wasn't used to having him around all the time. I did certain things when he was away. I didn't have to consider him, didn't have to cook if I didn't feel like it. It felt strange. The week

²⁵³ G1030-20899

²⁵⁴ G1058

²⁵⁵ G1081

on-week off period prepared us. I'm sure it would have been a greater adjustment had he come home straight from long-distance shipping.²⁵⁶

All the typical elements were included in the narrative. The first issue was the informant's adjustment to her husband's constant presence and subsequent demands for her time and attention. Second was the reference to how the period on the ferries had been used as an induction to retirement, followed by a final comment on her conviction of the benefits of this preparatory period. For the seamen themselves, creating their own routines was important, as was having a hobby or project to keep them busy.²⁵⁷

It is not yet possible to compare how the three generation of seafarers' wives dealt with retirement; however, it appears likely that when the time comes the women of Generations Two and Three will be faced with similar adjustment quandaries as those of Generation One.

4.5.3 Conflict

The major difference between conflicts that occurred in land-based marriages and those that took place between maritime couples was that there was less time in which to have arguments as well as to make up afterwards. Even the actual act of arguing could be conflict-laden in that the spouses might feel guilty for wasting precious time quarrelling. These ambivalent feelings were evident in one comment where the informant stated that immediately after her husband's arrival she would often find his habits annoying when she 'instead should be so happy that he's back'.²⁵⁸ Another informant confessed that although she could get irritated when her husband did not find things around the house or when he put things in the wrong places, she tried her best to ignore it in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts. She knew that

²⁵⁶ G101-300799

²⁵⁷ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.44-45

²⁵⁸ G3063

once he went out to work she could do things her own way again.²⁵⁹ In one reconstruction, the reasons behind the conflicts were described as insignificant. Instead it was the arguments *per se* that were portrayed as important:

It is part of the routine that there's some arguing when he comes home. He's tired and I'm tense and that always leads to conflicts, but now that we've been married for so long we always manage to sort things out. You live and you learn. He's got two completely different lives, one aboard ship and one at home, but I too have two lives. One with him, a man in the house, and one when I have to take care of everything on my own and those lives are poles apart.²⁶⁰

In the first section of the extract, the reader is informed that the reasons behind the spouses' arguments were superficial and without bearing on the state of the relationship. They were caused by exhaustion on the seaman's part and excitement on his wife's. The subsequent arguments were merely part of the homecoming ritual. This informant belonged to the category of women who through their narratives conformed to the dominant image of the Åland maritime woman. Comments like 'You live and you learn' were typical among these women. Through the use of such remarks, the women wanted to display their capacity to deal with the harsh realities of seafaring life. In the above reconstruction, the informant also referred to her dual lives, something discussed in several other narratives in this and other studies.²⁶¹ In this particular instance it was the adjustment to the 'other' life that caused the arguments rather than any fundamental differences in opinions between the spouses. Some of the informants denied having any conflicts, whereas others made sure to point out that arguments cropped up in all marriages – land-based as well as maritime.

There were clear distinctions between the ways in which the oldest generation of informants dealt with the topic of conflict compared to the younger age groups. The older informants were less prone to discuss any disagreements or problems they might have experienced, whereas the younger generations of women seemed more open about their

²⁵⁹ G204-290799

²⁶⁰ G2029

²⁶¹ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p. 41;

conflicts and the reasons behind them. Considering the nature of seafaring prior to the 1970s, it was not surprising that the informants in Generation One presented the time the seafarer was at home as very precious for the entire family, and, if at all possible, conflicts were to be avoided. The same trend was apparent among the oldest informants in Kaijser's study. As far as possible, problems were trivialised and ignored in order to avoid arguments during the seafarer's short and precious time at home.²⁶² The majority of informants in the oldest generation either did not mention anything about conflicts or claimed that there were no arguments when their husbands returned. One of these women, however, admitted that her memory could serve her wrong, reporting that: 'There were no conflicts as far as I can remember, but it is so long ago so you've forgotten a thing or two'.²⁶³ Even the women of this generation who did mention having disputes with their men, claimed that these were minor, that the most part of the husband's visit was spent in perfect harmony. To what extent this was actually the case and to what extent the reconstructions of harmonious and conflict-free returns were affected by the habit of older informants not to complain was difficult to judge. Considering the recently discussed narrative, in which the informant waited for fifty years before she put her foot down, the claims of perfect harmony lose some of their credibility. That there were no arguments as such was not necessarily evidence of a conflict-free relationship, but the conflicts were perhaps taking place inside the women.

From the testimonies given, one can distinguish three recurring reasons for arguments. First, it was the break in routines that the seafarer's return caused. Secondly, it was the clash of interests that arose when the family members at home had been looking forward to doing all the things they had postponed until the seafarer's return, but were unable to do because the seafarer was exhausted after long shifts and only wanted to relax. The third issue that frequently featured in the women's reconstructions as a cause of conflict was child-

²⁶² I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, pp.40-41

²⁶³ G1100

rearing. A couple of informants mentioned that the seafarer's concept of time – or lack of time – could lead to arguments. It seemed hard for some men to realise that time did not stop at home just because they were gone, that things could wear out or occasionally break, and even though they mowed the lawn and paid the bills before leaving, the grass did not stop growing and new bills kept coming.²⁶⁴ One woman said that her husband would ask her to do things while he was at sea without realizing how much time it would take her to do it and that she perhaps had made other arrangements.²⁶⁵ Another issue mentioned was the added mess in the house the seafarer's return brought with it: 'The conflicts have mostly been about that which I call mess but he doesn't, and the daily rhythm – I have to go to work in the mornings. We have never argued about money'.²⁶⁶

With one parent at sea, routines seemed to play an important role in keeping things running smoothly. When the seafarer returned, however, these routines were disturbed and that sometimes led to irritation:

Naturally, conflicts crop up every now and again. When you are alone with everything, you have to create routines to cope with day-to-day matters. When he [husband] comes home these routines are upset. He doesn't always know what I allow the children to do. Maybe he's of a different opinion.²⁶⁷

In the initial part of the reconstruction, the informant expressed her need for routines in order to cope with her everyday life whilst her husband was absent, followed by a reference to how these routines were broken with the seafarer's return. From the second part, the reader is able to conclude that the disruption of routines was closely related to child-rearing issues. It becomes clear that the seafarer was unaware of the rules his wife had given to their children, and that he did not always agree with them. Thus, in this narrative, disrupted routines were synonymous with different views on upbringing. The comment that the seafarer might be 'of

²⁶⁴ G203-230799

²⁶⁵ G3098

²⁶⁶ G3083

²⁶⁷ G3081

a different opinion' could also be interpreted as the woman finding the consideration of another point of view as disrupting her routines. She was not alone in finding it difficult to let go of responsibilities. Another woman in the third generation of informants found it problematic when her husband came home and 'suddenly demanded to be important and indispensable to the family'.²⁶⁸ Broken routines were not exclusive to seafarers' wives.

Bäck-Wiklund and Bergsten found that women, regardless of background, experienced their partners' attempts to get more involved in domestic life as both disruptive and insulting.

According to the women, the men made it more difficult for the women to maintain the routines they had devised for daily living.²⁶⁹

It was predominantly the informants of Generation Three who discussed the problems of broken routines. There was no obvious explanation for this tendency, but it could be related to the changes that took place in seafaring life during the second half of the twentieth century. As long as the seafarers' returns were short and infrequent, they assumed a festive air, and because of this celebratory nature, the disruption of mundane daily routines caused by the seafarer's return was both expected and welcomed. Additionally, due to the short duration of the visit, it was easier for the women to overlook any annoyances. But while this rationalisation serves to elucidate the first generation's attitudes, it cannot be used as readily among the informants in Generation Two. In these cases, one could refer to a gradual reconciliation towards the nature of seafaring life. An informant of Generation Two pointed to this issue in her testimony. She said that when she was younger she was more likely to 'react and protest', which was why she found seafaring life more difficult as a young woman. She continued by stating that once she had decided to accept her lot, she found it easier to 'find the positive in the situation'.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ G3001

²⁶⁹ M. Bäck-Wiklund & B. Bergsten, *Det moderna föräldraskapet: En studie av familj och kön i förändring* (Falun, 1997) p. 148

²⁷⁰ G203-230799

The seafarer's view on domestic routines was tentatively displayed in one of the testimonies. In the narrative, the informant mentioned that she had felt as if her husband criticised the way in which she had carried out things in the home during his absence. After a serious discussion, however, it was revealed that he did not mean to pass judgment on her, but that he felt lost and wanted to know where things were and how they were done in order to feel included in the day-to-day routines.²⁷¹ This particular piece of evidence suggested that the men, to a certain degree, existed in the periphery of the family sphere. They were aware that their presence upset certain domestic routines, but unaware as to what exactly these routines were. Findings presented in Heikell's study support^s the theory. He perceives a distance between the seaman and his family, which he puts down to the seaman's ignorance of his family's daily routines.²⁷² ✓

The issue of the seafarer's tiredness and the family's expectations was to some extent discussed in the section on the third phase and will be further developed here. The most commonly presented attitude was that this was more of an adjustment issue and once the seafarer had been allowed to catch up on his sleep the problem was solved. Occasionally, however, the contrasting needs of the seafarer and his family could cause conflicts. It was in families where the seafarer was working on the ferries that these problems were most prominent. One explanation could be the intensity of the job. In the late 1990s, a ferry could have up to six entrances to port and as many departures in the course of twenty-four hours, some of them in the middle of the night. As a result of this, the workload was very heavy, arguably more so than on most cargo carriers. Furthermore, since the time at home was shorter, there was less time in which to acclimatise before having to leave anew. The week on-week off rota was therefore regarded as being too intense. Accepting the unfeasibility of a

²⁷¹ G3025

²⁷² T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 48

rota where the seafarer was at sea for one week followed by two weeks off, one informant said that she would prefer it if her partner could work in two-week intervals:

It would be easier if he worked for two weeks and had two weeks off. Then he'd have time to acclimatise, all three of us would. You'd have time to do something. It wouldn't just be those five days that it in effect is in the end. You have one day of travel at each end.²⁷³

The comment brought into light the tight time schedule the ferrymen's families lived by and how the first and third phases of seafaring life chewed away valuable time from the fourth phase.

Another illustration where tiredness led to arguments was when both parties were tired and felt they were entitled to some rest; the seafarer because he had just come off his shift and therefore deserved to relax, and the wife because she had been coping on her own for a long time and wanted some relief.²⁷⁴ More than one informant claimed in their narratives that conflicts could also come about when the she was 'excited and chatty' as she finally had another adult at home, whereas the seafarer was too tired and not particularly responsive or communicative.²⁷⁵ Further, the expectations placed on the seafarer were sometimes too high. Frequently, the maritime wife needed help with small repairs and there were issues she wanted to discuss. With reference to the need for repairs, one informant wrote that she would hire professionals to help her with things she could not do herself while her husband was at sea rather than wait until her husband's return. She continued her testimony saying:

I don't think you should wait with all repairs and such until he's home. Then he can think there's so much work that he won't bother doing anything at all.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ G301-130799

²⁷⁴ G301-130799 and G3010

²⁷⁵ G3050 and G2[3]085

²⁷⁶ G2093

Heikell mentions that awaiting repair work was a major stress factor for returning seamen. He argues that it was not the work in itself that caused the stress, but that the seafarers lost control over how to use their own time. That they were also at home on leave, or as many saw it, on holiday, further added to the tension.²⁷⁷ Heikell later expresses surprise at the fact that instead of seeing these tasks as confirmation of their importance to the family, the seamen saw it as a burden.²⁷⁸

Due to the absence of the seafarer, the wife was forced to raise the children more or less single-handedly. Although most women in the study felt that they got the support they needed from their husbands, others were not so lucky. In one of the testimonies, the informant claimed that the biggest bone of contention in her marriage was the issue of child-rearing. She regarded herself as being better suited to raise their children since she was the parent who was constantly present. She was also one of the women who felt that they did not receive enough support in this matter from their husbands.²⁷⁹ What each woman meant by support varied. In the above case, support seemed to be synonymous with agreement, whereas in other cases it referred to help or emotional involvement in the children's lives. Whether or not the seafarer was supportive, the children's upbringing and behaviour was an issue that featured frequently as a cause of conflict. It could be that the husband thought that the wife was being too easy-going with them or the opposite, where the wife thought that the seafarer made too much fuss.

In one narrative, conflicts between husband and wife were presented as non-existent, whereas arguments often occurred between the seafarer and his teenage daughters. According to the informant, the seafarer had difficulties accepting people turning up at strange hours and the phone ringing in the middle of the night. In his view, his wife was too lenient. However, the reconstruction also contained elements that linked in with earlier

²⁷⁷ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 38

²⁷⁸ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.50

²⁷⁹ G2[3]009

discussions on adjustment. The narrative was sensitive to the seafarer's awareness of his wife's role as principal carer for the children; he did not want to come home and start giving out new rules, overriding his wife's decisions. That was something his father, a sea captain, had done and he had always disliked it. According to the informant, this was why the situation was so problematic for the seafarer. At the same time as he did not want to be like his father, he still found some things very difficult to accept.²⁸⁰ A similar but less complex reconstruction was presented by an informant of Generation One, who described how her husband and their teenage daughters would get into arguments because he expected them to be home earlier than they were used to. In this case, the reasons behind the arguments were explained as being the seafarer's difficulties in coming to terms with his daughters' transition into adulthood.²⁸¹ It was not only teenage daughters who were affected by their fathers' inability to realise that time did not stop at home when he was not around. Judging from the following quotation, it is evident that sons too could be on the receiving end of the seafarer's sometimes over-protective attention:

We could disagree a little about the children's upbringing. For example, I thought he helped them too much with things they could cope with on their own, but at the same time I understood him. It was hard for him to realise how quickly a child grows up. To him they were still daddy's little boys.²⁸²

The woman behind this narrative was not alone in considering the seafarer to be too helpful towards the children. A woman in Generation Three felt that her husband was softer towards their children than she was. Even though she explained his softness with his irregular contact with their children, she was not uncritical of him. To her it seemed that although men did not want to take an active part in the bringing up of their children, they nonetheless wanted the children to be well-behaved or else they got very irritated.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ G201-060799

²⁸¹ G102-120799

²⁸² G2049

²⁸³ G305-100100

Only one woman in the whole sample spoke openly about physical abuse. Her reconstruction started with her husband getting a job on one of the ferries. It continued with her becoming suspicious of him having an affair and when she queried him about it her husband turned aggressive and abusive. Her story contained many elements typical of abused women.²⁸⁴ Initially, she isolated herself to hide her cuts and bruises, feeling ashamed, blaming herself. Later she found support in a neighbour, another seafarer's wife with similar experiences. This woman offered the informant a safe haven when things were bad. After a serious crisis, the tone of the narrative changed and the informant described how she finally realised that she was not to blame, and how she began to create her own life through work and vocational training and, as the final step, how she divorced her husband. The informant elaborated on her belief that infidelity was very common among ferry crews, but that people kept it quiet. Rather than losing a nice house and high status, people chose to stay in an unsound relationship. When she began her process of freeing herself, she felt that she became a threat to some of her friends. According to her, she did something that maybe they too wanted to do but did not manage or dare. To leave one's home with its economic security was a very difficult thing to do.²⁸⁵

4.6 The cyclical commuter marriage

Based on the findings in this chapter, it can be concluded that the life of a seafarer's wife took on a cyclical character. By looking at each of these four phases in turn, examining the informants' perceptions of them, it became evident that one of the most decisive factors for how the cycle of seafaring life was experienced was the length of the seafarer's absences and his time ashore. For women married to ferrymen, the spin of the cycle was very short, something that could cause stress and a feeling of constant disorder. The longer cycles were

²⁸⁴ P. E. Eliasson, *Män, kvinnor och våld: Att förstå och förändra våldsamt beteende* (Stockholm, 2000) pp.46-48

²⁸⁵ G205-290799

marked by more permanency but also by longer periods of adjustment on both sides of the seafarer's absence. A number of informants remarked in their interviews and questionnaires that they had what they called 'ideal periods of absence', referring to the ideal length of their husbands' periods at work and at home. These differed considerably, from one week to several months. For all seafarers' wives, however, the impact of the seafarer's work pattern on his family's life was absolute. Most aspects of her life were affected; her work, her social engagements, her ambitions and her opportunities. Her physical as well as emotional life rhythm was influenced by her husband's schedule of work.

Generational differences and similarities regarding experiences drew attention to both change and continuity in the conditions under which Åland seafarers' wives lived their lives. Women's social status changed radically during the course of the twentieth century, and by the late 1990s, there were as many women as men active in work outside the home. Progressive Scandinavian family politics served to give women increased social and economic security, while the introduction of affordable household equipment made housekeeping easier.²⁸⁶ For seafaring families specifically, the most notable changes lay in communications and working conditions. Improvements in both areas allowed for more interaction between the spouses. Maritime couples of Generation One were very restricted in their means of communication while the seafarer was at sea, and time spent together was short and irregular. For the younger generations, continuous developments in telecommunications resulted in more frequent and regular contact whilst the couple was separated. Also, the introduction of the 2:1 and 1:1 systems meant that the spouses had more time together, and the seafarer was thus given the opportunity to play a more central role in the family than his predecessors ever could. The continuity in seafaring life was primarily displayed in the adjustment between single and couple life. Although shorter periods of absence and lengthier

²⁸⁶ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.41

stays ashore made life easier in many ways, all informants regardless of age mentioned the period just before departure and after arrival as a time when they had to adjust themselves to their 'other' life. From this discussion, it also became evident that seafarers' wives of all three generations led something that here has been termed 'dual lives'. The informants claimed that they lived two separate lives; one when their partner was at home and one when he was at sea, a phenomenon that Kaijser notes among her informants too.²⁸⁷ Other aspects of the continuity factor were the longing for physical contact and sharing of everyday events, as well as a tendency to worry about the weather and seafarer's health and wellbeing aboard. This served as a reminder that although life at sea and life as a seafarer's wife had changed in many ways during the last century, the fundamentals of maritime life remained the same. For although seamen had more time at home towards the end of the twentieth century, and even though communications had improved dramatically, the maritime couples were nonetheless physically separated for lengthy periods. This resulted in the women creating their own routines while the seafarer was absent, which meant constant adjustment and re-adjustment – a form of dual existence. Furthermore, life at sea was still associated with many dangers, and like their older counterparts, the young wife's main concern was to get her seafaring husband home alive and well.

²⁸⁷ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.41

5. Reconstructing Maritime Women

The primary aim of this chapter is to highlight of the different kinds of discourse apparent in the reconstructions presented in the study, and how they were deployed by the three generations of women. So, after having examined the rhythm of matrimonial seafaring life in Chapter 4, attention will now be turned to some other aspects of seafaring life that could be discerned in the narratives, issues that were not directly affected by the mariners' arrivals and departures. Firstly, we shall consider the notions of independence and duality that were evident in the narratives and how they concur with the dominant discourses and attitudes prevalent in Åland society. Secondly, the women's experiences and reconstructions pertaining to child-rearing will be discussed, followed by ideas linked to work and money.

The informants' experiences as seafarers' wives will be set against the popular and established ideas of what being a maritime woman entails. Awareness of what the principal discourses communicate about seafarers' wives in Åland is imperative, since these debates are the frame of reference for the informants' reconstructions of their maritime selves. Not only do personal accounts draw upon existing discourses available in society, but these discourses, in turn, are influenced and maintained by subjective experiences. Some informants will create their experiences so as to fit the prevailing images of a seafarer's wife's attitudes and characteristics, whereas others will seek to distance themselves from the stereotype. The dominant discourse in Åland casts the seafarer's wife as being strong and independent. She is a 'no nonsense' woman, efficient, practical and steadfast. This image is not only engrained into the Åland psyche through fictional works, in which heroines such as Salminen's Kartina and Blomqvist's Maja become icons of womanhood, it is also present in factual writings. Reading Högman's history of Åland women, it is the discourse of hard-

working, capable women that flows off the pages in the chapter on maritime women.¹ Field observations, such as the interviews and questionnaires used in this study, can also reveal much about established attitudes in a society.

5.1 Independence

The current scholarly debate as to the degree to which nineteenth-century maritime women can be regarded as independent has been discussed by David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen. Despite considerable disagreement on the issue, the broadly held viewpoint is that although maritime women were perhaps more independent than other women, they were forced to be so by the circumstances in which they lived, since, in the nineteenth century, coastal as well as other communities were still fundamentally patriarchal, 'where women were backers-up to the male work'.² Kirby and Hinkkanen have further pointed to the fact that there were substantial differences between maritime communities within the North Sea and Baltic region. In the Dutch fishing communities of Vlaardingen, Katwijk and Scheveningen, for instance, Annemiek van der Veen's research demonstrates that fisherwomen felt that their independence was a heavy burden and were quite happy to give it up on their husbands' return. In contrast, David Papp presents evidence of Åland women being very reluctant to hand over the role as head of household to the homecoming husband.³ In 1983, Paul Thompson wrote that among fishing families in East Anglia and the Shetland Islands, women had 'the possibility of achieving, within the fishing family, a degree of independence and power which is unusual'. He pointed out that this tendency could also be found elsewhere in the world, for example in Japan, Malaysia, Ghana, Spain and in coastal regions of Scandinavia. He further stated, however, that women did not automatically gain increased

¹ S. Salminen, *Katrina* (Södertälje, 1976, orig. 1936); A. Blomqvist, *Vägen till Stormskäret* (Tammerfors, 1968); G. Högman, *Den åländska kvinnan*, pp.402-436

² D. Kirby & M.-L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas*, p. 240

³ A. van der Veen, 'Independent Willy-Nilly' in L.R. Fischer et al (eds.) *The North Sea*; D. Papp, 'Gode Make! Min Gumma! En brevväxling mellan Tilda Mattsson och hennes man skepparen Matts Mattsson' in *Skärgård*, no. 2 (Turku, 1985) as presented in D. Kirby & M.-L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas*, p. 240

independence or respect just because their husbands were absent or because they had a large economic responsibility. Thompson concludes by stating that ‘the power and responsibility, in short, is shaped by a complex interaction of economy, social attitudes, law, religious doctrine and family need – within which the formal law, local convention and actual practice of inheritance are simply one significant and revealing element’.⁴ Sally Cole cites Thompson, together with Brøgger and Lisón-Tolosana, in her discussion of the construction of the maritime households in Vila Chã, Portugal. She writes:

Although it has generally been assumed that a pattern of male inheritance and virilocal residence prevails in fishing communities [...] there is abundant evidence that a pattern of women’s inheritance of property and uxorilocal and uxorivicinial residence similar to the pattern found in Vila Chã is common in many of the world’s smaller fishing communities...⁵

The matrilocality was also evident in Grimsby and Hull, according to the findings of David J. Starkey and Craig Lazenby, and Tunstall contended that the wives of Hull fishermen turned to their mothers for ‘understanding, companionship, help with her children, and a chance of escaping sometimes from what is otherwise the prison of her home’.⁶ In the Swedish community of Tjörn, seafarers’ wives were incorporated into a collective, and supported each other while their husbands were at sea. This tradition faded in the 1960s as the structure of shipping changed and with an increasing number of women going into paid employment.⁷

As for this study, one of the questions posed in the questionnaires sent out to Åland seafarers’ wives and asked during the interviews was whether these women felt more independent than women whose men worked ashore. I had expected a resounding Yes, but as it turned out – and as I should have realised – it was not as straightforward as that. It was not possible to place the informants’ attitudes concerning maritime women’s degree of

⁴ P. Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, pp.177-178

⁵ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, p. 59

⁶ D. J. Starkey & C. Lazenby, ‘Altered Images’ in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England’s Sea Fisheries*, p. 171; J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 161

⁷ I. Kaijser, ‘Sjömannens yrke’, in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p. 42-43

independence into straightforward categories such as 'independent' and 'not independent', since the word 'independence' could be used to describe a number of different things. It was used to denote self-confidence and personal integrity, as well as to refer to an ability to cope on one's own, of being dextrous and a practical problem-solver. Moreover, a few informants regarded independence as synonymous with being economically self-sufficient. Common to all informants was an awareness of the discursive stereotype, and in their reconstructions the women placed their own experiences in relation to this image. I think it is noteworthy that women who wanted to distance themselves from the stereotype showed more awareness of its existence than did women who conformed to it.

Despite a plethora of differing attitudes, an attempt was made to sort the reconstructions into thematic groups. Sixty-two of the seventy-five life stories dealt in some way with the idea of independence, and these accounts were placed into three groups.⁸ The first and biggest category consisted of reconstructions that predominantly followed the discourse of the strong and independent seafarer's wife, made thus through her experiences of maritime life. This category accounted for almost two in five narratives, twenty-nine accounts in total. The second category, which consisted of nineteen accounts, also comprised narratives in which the women presented themselves as independent. The significant difference was that they did not necessarily feel more independent than any other group of women. Their sense of strength and assurance did not only stem from their maritime experiences, but also from other factors, such as inherent personality traits and non-maritime events. Some of these reconstructions stated that the informants' inborn autonomy was the sole source of independence, and thus totally unrelated to her being a seafarer's wife. The third group was made up of fourteen narratives contrasted with the two previous types. In six of these accounts, the informants claimed that they were not at all independent, at least not in

⁸ The proportion of each group was calculated as a proportion of all life stories, including those where no reference to the topic was made.

the sense of possessing the vast reservoir of confidence generally associated with maritime women. In the remaining eight accounts, the informants either stated that their independence was none the greater than any other woman's or that they were unsure as to what extent their situation differed from that of women whose husbands worked ashore. Finally, it should be pointed out that although the reason for a woman's independence was not always explained through her maritime lifestyle, but was said to be either innate in the informant or had been gained through other experiences, about two-thirds of the reconstructions did infer that being on their own had given them the practical skills to cope with the daily management of the household, even if it had not always given them confidence and self-assurance.

5.1.1 The traditional ideal

The stereotypical characterisation of an Åland maritime woman is that of a strong-minded and resolute woman, multi-skilled as well as self-confident, and perhaps even somewhat domineering. This image was adopted by just under two-fifths of the informants in this study. It was not, however, exclusive to Åland women. This was also the image to which the older maritime women in Cole's study likened themselves, and Kaijser argues that since seafarers' wives spent so much time alone and had to assume greater responsibility than other women, they gained self-confidence and a very independent position.⁹ Although this attitude was significant in all three generations, it was more common among the older women. Both in Generation One and Generation Two, nearly half of the reconstructions followed this line of reasoning, compared to less than a third of the accounts in Generation Three. Typical of these reconstructions was the tendency to state that the informant's particular circumstances as a seafarer's wife was the reason behind her said independence, implying that she would have been less accomplished had her husband worked ashore. Such a comment came from a

⁹ S. Cole, *Women of the Praia*, pp. 28-41; I Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.39

woman in Generation One, who openly admitted that she did not think she would have been as independent as she was had her husband not worked at sea. To the researcher, this remark appeared slightly out of line with the general tone of the narrative, wherein the informant stated that not everyone was cut out to be a seafarer's wife; that you had to be of a certain type to cope with that kind of life.¹⁰ The conflicting comments showed that the informant was to some extent eager to identify with the mainstream discourse of acquired independence, but was unable to do so without contradicting other parts of her narrative. The reason behind her desire to do this could partly be related to a desire to fit in. In her story, the informant displayed signs of isolation despite living in Mariehamn. She claimed that she felt 'like an immigrant', moving from her native outer island into town. In her opinion, seafarers' wives from the main island were surrounded by old friends and were near their families. It was clear that she found it nigh on impossible to find her way into their circle. Many of these women had husbands that shared ships or worked for the same company, contributing to the camaraderie. The informant's husband, on the other hand, worked for a Swedish company and thus had no workmates on Åland. That, in turn, meant that the informant was unable to socialise with the wives of her husband's colleagues in the same way as wives of seamen on Åland-owned vessels.

This reconstruction was an exception and most accounts were seemingly consistent in tone. Women stated how they had adjusted to their situation and, in doing so, had learnt how to cope on their own. Some women stressed their transformation into a seafarer's wife, describing how they had grown with the responsibilities put on them. Others contrasted their situation with that of women whose men worked ashore, emphasising the increased responsibility that a seafarer's wife had to shoulder.

¹⁰ G104-030899

It is self-evident that we as seafarers' wives become more independent. We have a completely different responsibility for children, house and home etc. And you have to make your own decisions.¹¹

An interesting aspect of this quotation was that the informant was not only referring to herself but appeared to speak for seafarers' wives as a collective. In doing so, she intuitively suggested that all maritime women shared the same experience. This could serve as evidence of how ingrained the stereotypical image of the maritime woman was in Åland society, for although seafarers' wives were forced to cope on their own as best they could while their husbands were at sea, it did not, as we shall see, necessarily make them feel any more independent.

Compared to the other two generations, fewer third generation women presented themselves in accordance with the dominant discourse of maritime women, but those who did, did so wholeheartedly. They would make it obvious that they thrived in their role and that they would not want to change anything. One informant proudly proclaimed: 'I think I'm more independent than women whose men work ashore and I think that is a strength; as a matter of fact I wouldn't want to change anything.'¹² Another informant wrote:

I consider myself more independent than many other women. You are forced to deal with so much more when you are a seafarer's wife. Many who have their men on 'home turf' take so much for granted and whine over trifles, for example that the husband is going away for 1-2 days. I feel strong! I would not want to exchange my seaman!¹³

In both accounts, the informants stressed that they 'wouldn't want to change anything'. This was a powerful way of signalling their contentment with their situation. It was almost as if they felt that they had to prove something to the rest of society. And admittedly, despite being one of the most common professions in Åland, at the end of the twentieth century, seafarers were still attributed with some of the old vices associated with the profession -

¹¹ G3088

¹² G3070

¹³ G3081

drinking and womanising in particular. There was ample evidence that the wives were faced with insinuations from people around them, doubting their partners' character. Maybe this was why they felt they had to state their contentment so clearly. Age was another factor, for, as one informant pointed out, you are more remonstrative when you are young. With time you mellow and accept your situation, recognise your limitations and make the best of what you have got.¹⁴

Perhaps the 'mellowing with age' syndrome explains why older women usually were more careful in their approach. Despite claiming that they generally felt more independent than women who had their partners at home, informants of Generations One and Two were more willing to acknowledge that they too experienced moments of insecurity.¹⁵ In cases where the informant appeared very self-sufficient, they still recognised that the strong sense of independence that they as seafarers' wives felt they possessed was more complex than just being able to cope well on one's own. For when the husband returned home, some women found it difficult to let go of their autonomy, continuing to make all the decisions without much consideration for the seafarer's opinions. During the seafarer's active period this was more easily overcome, but when the seafarer retired ashore, for whatever reason, the situation became more difficult to handle. One informant wrote:

I believe I'm much more independent than women whose men work ashore; yes, and that is the seafarer's wife's big problem. You're supposed to cope on your own, the household economy, and all the practical stuff and first and foremost you are almost solely responsible for your children. This is fine but the problem is that when he is at home I feel it is my responsibility to make him feel manly and important. Seamen want to be much more masculine than many other professionals.¹⁶

In this case, her husband had to retire from the sea prematurely and she continued by saying: 'You have to attempt to create a completely new life and try to make him feel important at

¹⁴ G203-230799

¹⁵ G2049

¹⁶ G2005

home. Maybe it would have been better not to be such an independent woman then'.¹⁷ This account followed the outlines for the stereotypical view of maritime women, but it also reminded the reader of the negative effects it could have on a relationship.

Most reconstructions that followed the central line of debate were relatively positive in the attitude they conveyed. They stressed how maritime life had made them stronger and more confident in their own abilities. There were cases, however, where adherence to the dominant discourse, i.e. the ability to cope as a seafarer's wife, was pushed to the extreme and the self-presentation resembled self-sacrifice more than independence. There was one such narrative in the sample, presented by a woman of Generation Two. She claimed that seafaring life had made her more resilient to hardship and more appreciative of 'friendship, compassion and love'. She described her marriage as unhappy and her husband as a miserable recluse. Nonetheless, as if to demonstrate her strength, she stated that her compassion was certainly strong enough to keep living with her ageing husband. She ended her narrative by saying 'such is life', and one can almost hear the valiant sigh with which she said it.¹⁸ This could be interpreted as the attitude of a strong and resilient woman, but was in fact a good example of how the dominant discourse also produced 'martyrs'.

5.1.2 The nature and nurture approach

Accounts that took the second discursive position stressed both nature and nurture as significant elements in the women's sense of independence. To a varying degree, they also downplayed the impact of seafaring life on this issue. One of the women admitted that although there was an element of truth in the saying that seafarers' wives became more independent through the particulars of seafaring life, she found it somewhat overrated. In her

¹⁷ G2005

¹⁸ G2088

view, personality was equally important.¹⁹ The same view was expressed in a narrative by another seafarer's wife of the same age, who said that in order to cope with her life situation, the maritime woman needed to be 'quite independent and fond of solitude'.²⁰ Innate independence was frequently placed alongside independence gained from life as a seafarer's wife in this group of reconstructions, particularly among the two older cohorts. In one reconstruction, it was a child's handicap that was given as the main reason for independence, while the strength of coping alone with day-to-day life and the problem of letting go of her autonomy when her husband was ashore took a more peripheral place in the narrative.²¹ One informant claimed that if she had not been of an independent nature she would not have achieved all she had done. However, she continued by saying that she had also 'learnt to be independent'.²² This was an attitude prevalent in the majority of accounts in this category. In some accounts, factors other than personality and maritime life were said to have influenced the informant's character. One example of this was a narrative in which the informant accredited her independence to the loss of her parents at the age of eight. However, her reconstruction also contained episodes that illustrated her adjustment to maritime life and how it had taught her to be independent. In several places, the informant attested how she had 'grown with the tasks'.²³ One such episode was where she described her role in the building of their home, but the most poignant example was a stillbirth that the informant experienced early on in her marriage:

The year prior to the birth of the oldest son, I experienced a premature birth, despite among other things a seven week stay in hospital. At that occasion too H was tied up with his work without any possibility of taking leave. Birth, christening, funeral – all on my own, but with the support of good friends. For H this event was difficult too. But in both fortune and hardship you grow in your role. You had to learn to stand your ground and be diligent.²⁴

¹⁹ G201-060799

²⁰ G204-290799

²¹ G2029

²² G103-020899

²³ G1093

²⁴ G1093

This was a woman who never explicitly proclaimed her independence, but with short sketches of this type, she managed to exude an air of humble self-confidence. The attitude permeating from the reconstruction as a whole was epitomised in the last two sentences of the quote above. Each event in life, whether good or bad, served to build a strong character. This was also an attitude that was evident in the life stories presented by the oldest generation of women in general, not only in this category. This was a generation that had experienced the aftermath of the First World War, felt the blow of the Great Depression and begun their adult life in the shadow of the Second World War. Perhaps this had taught them not to complain openly, but to cope as best they could with what they had. Despite this, none of the informants in Generation One presented themselves as martyrs, at least not to the same degree as the Generation Two informant discussed earlier.

The 'nature-nurture' position was the most popular category among Generation Three narratives. Ten of the twenty-eight women in this age cohort presented narratives that followed this discursive pattern. The corresponding number of narratives in this group made by women in Generations One and Two were three out of eighteen and six of twenty-nine respectively. Furthermore, six of the eight women who asserted that they were of an independent nature and would have been so irrespective of their partner's occupation, belonged to Generation Three. The two other women who took this stance were of Generation Two. As will be demonstrated in the discussion on work and leisure, younger women displayed a higher propensity to present themselves within an individualistic discourse. Therefore it was not surprising to find many women proclaiming that their sense of independence had little or nothing to do with their husbands' choice of occupation. One informant claimed that she was 'of a stubborn and independent kind' and had been so since her teenage years.²⁵ Another woman said that she had always been confident of her abilities

²⁵ G3038

and she did not think that it was dependent on her choice of partner. On the contrary, she felt that she and her partner had got together 'because we have discovered qualities in each other that suit this kind of life'.²⁶ The equation of independence and seafaring thus took on a different shape. Not only were women who married seafarers forced to obtain a certain level of independence in order to cope on their own, but this narrative seemed to imply that self-reliant women and seafaring men made a good match. For a strong-minded woman who thrived on responsibility, partnership with a seaman meant that she could maintain her sense of independence as she was left to manage her and her children's lives more or less according to her own design. For the seafarer it was reassuring to know that he had left house and children in the hands of a capable woman. This attitude was supported not only by the informant above, but by other women who claimed that life with a seafarer suited their independent disposition, that they probably would not cope living with a man who worked ashore.

5.1.3 The third way

The third discursive position evident in the data was that in which the informants positioned themselves in opposition to the central discourse. In all, only two women of each generation did not consider themselves independent, either in relation to other seafarers' wives or in general. Despite acknowledging their ability to cope on a practical level while they were on their own, their narratives did not project an image of the strong and confident character that formed the basis of the traditional ideal, and which was also widespread in the nature-nurture approach. The women nonetheless showed an awareness of the prevailing image by setting it against their narratives. That the ideal of the maritime woman as a self-sufficient and versatile person could be regarded as detrimental rather than beneficial was stated very candidly in the following excerpt: 'Compared to women who have their husbands ashore, I

²⁶ G305-100100

am expected to be independent but it only gives me a feeling of failure'.²⁷ This quotation demonstrates the informant's consciousness of how the society in which she found herself expected her to behave, but instead of giving her encouragement these expectations only served to make her situation more conflictual.

An issue that ran through most of the narratives in this group was the meaning of independence. Two women, who had both divorced their seafaring husbands, raised this question explicitly. One of them said that although she was capable of many things, she was still financially dependent on her husband.²⁸ The other woman said that there were several kinds of independence and although she coped with daily life, she confessed that she 'was on her tiptoes' while her husband was at home.²⁹ The same ideas were evident in a third narrative, in which the informant commented:

The question of independence is a difficult thing. Sometimes I think I've been independent but as soon as my husband came home that came to an end. We have had many difficult years when my husband has been at home through early retirement. I struggle each day to make my voice heard and for my independence.³⁰

This statement signalled the confusion the informant felt on this particular subject. While she was on her own, she felt that she coped well and could handle her situation. She felt confident and self-sufficient, just as a seafarer's wife should, according to the societal consensus. A certain degree of acclimatisation was an unavoidable part of the seaman's return in all maritime families. In the majority of cases, the different parties managed to negotiate their space and role in the family successfully, to find an equilibrium that suited all family members. In this particular testimony, however, it appeared that the informant was unable to maintain her status when her husband returned from sea. The exact reason behind this remains hidden from the reader, but there was doubtless something in the seafarer's

²⁷ G2050

²⁸ G205-290799

²⁹ G304-070799

³⁰ G1065

character that made it impossible for his wife to feel like an able and confident woman while he was at home.

The remaining eight accounts in this category dealt only very briefly with ideas of independence. In half of them, the informants professed that they were unable to tell if they were more independent than women whose husbands worked ashore. One of the women commented that whatever the degree of her independence, she still envied women who had their husbands at home.³¹ Another woman commented that she found it difficult to determine whether or not she was more independent since her husband's work on the ferries did not take him away from home for any length of time. The same opinion was voiced by another informant, the difference being that she also stated that she was forced to be independent when her husband was at work.³² This comment was another reminder of the different meanings of independence. The other informants did not regard themselves more independent in relation to other women. In one account the informant was of the opinion that 'most women nowadays are incredibly independent'.³³ Perhaps this was true, but possibly it was unwise to pose the question whether maritime women were more independent than women whose husbands worked ashore, for in contrasting these two groups of women, a divide was implied that might not have existed in reality. Nevertheless, the topic had to be approached in some form, and by presenting informants with the discursive stereotype they were given the chance to agree with it or to reject it to varying degrees. The result was a debate that clearly illustrated the complexity of the idea of independence and it also brought to light the subordinate discourses on the subject that existed in Åland society at the turn of the millennium.

³¹ G2[3]009

³² G2036

³³ G2055

5.2 The duality of seafaring life

Although there were enormous differences between life as a seafarer's wife in the early twentieth century and towards the end of it, there were still aspects of that life which remained the same. One of those similarities was the sense of leading two separate lives; one in which the women were alone with all the responsibility for children and home, and one in which their husbands were at home to help them. This aspect of seafaring life was touched upon in various ways in nearly every life story in this study, and it is also noted by Kaijser, who notes that periodicity and recurring departures results in 'the wife leading one life when the husband is away and one when he is at home and these two lives are very disparate'.³⁴ The fact that it had become easier for spouses to keep in touch towards the end of the period did little to affect the feeling of living two separate lives. On the contrary, there were more direct references to the idea among the younger women, which suggests that the idea of dual lives had become a more pronounced discourse.

The issue that seemed to affect the way in which this duality was perceived the most, was the time the seafarer spent at sea and at home. The longer the seafarer was away, the more detached he became from life ashore and the more time there was for the wife to establish her own routines. Nonetheless, even the ferry-folk found that their daily routines changed according to which week it was and they tended to lead their lives on a week on-week off basis. This pattern was illustrated by a comment made by a woman in Generation Three. She said: 'You don't go around constantly thinking that you are a seafarer's wife, but whenever you are planning something you check whether he's off or at work. You lead your life in a week on-week off pattern'.³⁵

There was some ambiguity in the discussions surrounding the debate on dual lives. At the same time as it was pointed out that regular mealtimes and set routines became

³⁴ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.41

³⁵ G301-130799

more important when husbands were at home, that the laundry basket filled up quicker and that the house got messier, the informants simultaneously said that they were able to leave most of the housework to their partners – including grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning and laundry. The reason for such equivocal statements could be the process of adjustment, which was discussed in Chapter 4. From being solely responsible for keeping everything up and running while the seafarer was away, there was suddenly another person to consider. So, although it was a relief for the wife to have another adult to share the workload with, it was also difficult for her to let go of the feeling that the ultimate responsibility was hers. An informant, whose husband was away for up to six months at a time, summarised her experience in these words:

He's got two completely different lives, one aboard and one at home, but so have I. One life with him, a man in the house, and another one when I have to take care of everything on my own, and those lives are totally different. Life is much easier when he's at home, but it is difficult not to stick my nose in it, which you have to do when you're alone. He wants to be in charge, naturally, and it's not always easy to give in all the time.³⁶

Most women in the study appeared to cope well with seafaring life. Despite minor conflicts and a never-ending series of departures and returns, they appeared to be happy with the lives they were leading and they seemed to cope well with shifting between their two worlds. However, there were women in this study who found themselves disillusioned and very weary of seafaring life. One informant, in particular, presented a reconstruction that was full of discontent. She described her relationship as 'painful and tiring'. As for the concept of dual lives, she stated that she did not know which one of her worlds was the real one and continued by saying: 'maybe my life is only parentheses'. The major reason for her constant identity crisis was 'the never-ending switching from single life to couple life. It's a constant adjustment from one to another and it erases the boundaries for who I am'.³⁷ This aspect of

³⁶ G2029

³⁷ G2050

the duality of seafaring life is given very little room in the wider discourse of Åland seamen's wives, and it does not appear to have attracted much attention in the scholarly debate on maritime women.

5.3 Children

It is not within the scope of this thesis to study how the relationships between seafarers' and their children were affected by maritime life, but other studies show that their children take centre stage in most seamen's lives.³⁸ There was nonetheless scope for the women's reflections on raising a family with a seafarer. Substantial differences in attitudes to this particular form of family life were displayed throughout the sample, ranging from the very positive to the very negative, with a wide dispersal of positions distributed between these two extremes. The women discussed the relationship they had with their children, to what extent and how it was shaped by the absence of the children's fathers. There was also room for the informants to express their views on the relationships between their husbands and children.

Although a family unit can consist of only husband and wife, a family is generally assumed to consist of a married couple and their children, the so-called nuclear family. Writing in the early 1980s, G. Allan argued that despite an increase in cohabitation, divorce and single-parent families, the norm was nonetheless a family 'based on a married couple with children committed to a permanent relationship'.³⁹ It is possible that instances of alternative family compositions have increased in the UK over the last two decades, but it can be assumed that families consisting of a married couple with children remained the most common family structure into the new millennium. In Åland in 2000, the two most common types of families were married couples living with children (thirty-five per cent) and married couples living without children (twenty-nine per cent). The number of co-habiting families,

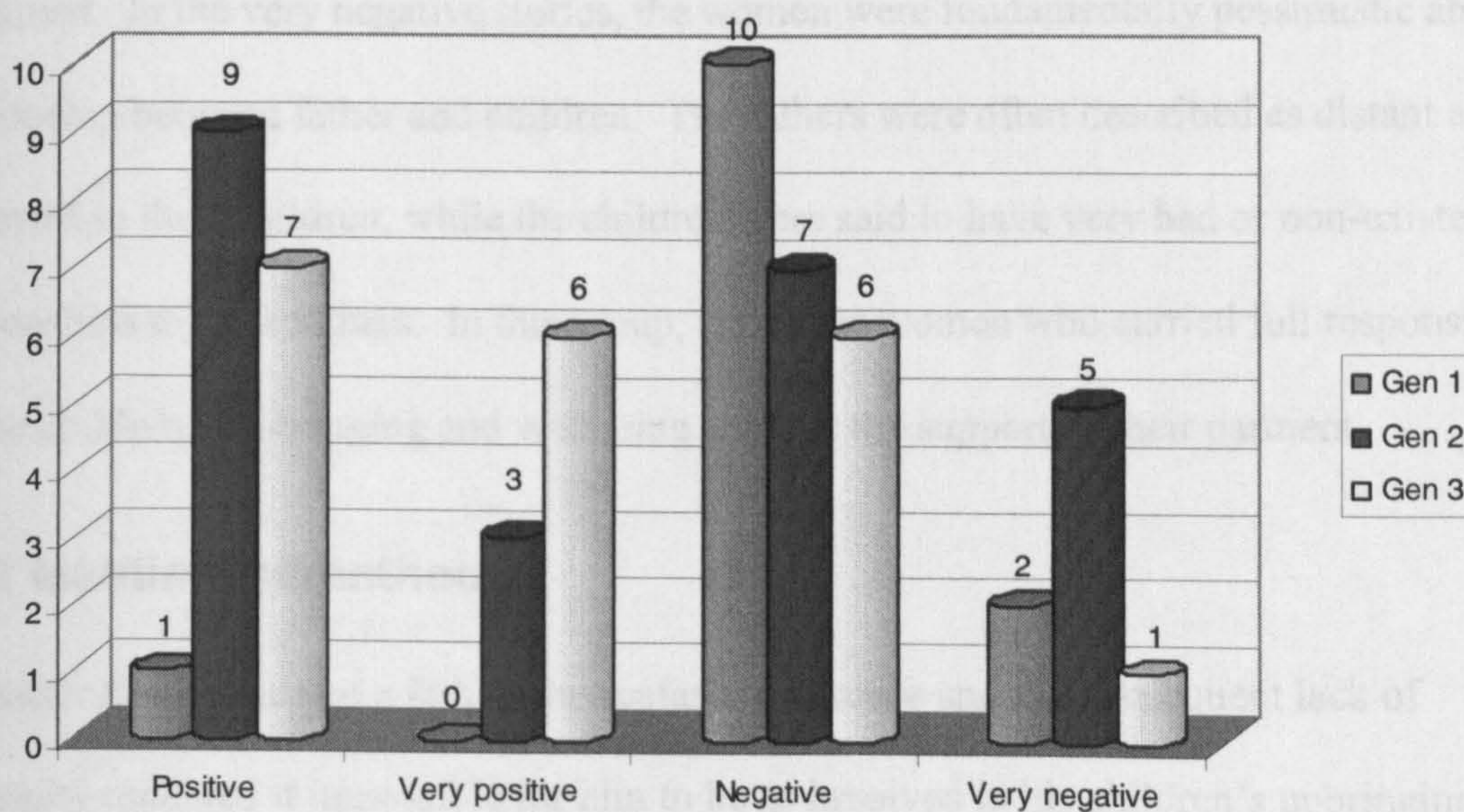
³⁸ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p.57

³⁹ G Allan, *Family Life* (Oxford 1985) p. 167

with and without children, made up just under twenty-three per cent, while single parents with children accounted for approximately thirteen percent. Compared to a decade earlier, the share of married families with children at home had decreased by seven percentage points whereas co-habiting couples with children had increased by three per cent. There were also more single parent families in 2000 than had been the case in 1990.⁴⁰ In this study, the share of married women was slightly higher than the regional average; fifty-nine out of seventy-five women were married. The rest of the sample comprised four widows, five divorcees and seven women living as cohabitees.

Four main attitudes towards having children with a seafarer were evident in the testimony of informants: positions; positive, very positive, negative and very negative. The generational distribution is shown in Chart 5.1.

Chart 5.1. Attitudes towards maritime family life



Source: Personal testimony data

⁴⁰ ÅSUB, Befolkningen 2001:8

Women who described the relationship between father and children as healthy were considered to hold a positive position. These women's narratives differed from those of a very positive stance in that they nevertheless regarded their partners' work situation as a negative factor, overcome by the seafarers' conscious effort to build a sound relationship with their children. Women who took a very positive position in their reconstructions projected views that seafarers did not miss out on their children's lives at all. There were frequent references to 'quality time' and how the seamen were 'one hundred per cent dads' when they were on leave. In some reconstructions, polarisation was evident between land-working and seafaring fathers, of whom the latter were deemed to be as good as, or superior to, the first group of fathers. Negative attitudes were apparent in narratives in which the nature of seafaring life, not the seafarer himself, was blamed for causing a fragile relationship between father and children. The seafarer was said to make a conscious effort to catch up with his children while on leave or, in some cases, make up for lost time with his grandchildren after retirement. In the very negative stories, the women were fundamentally pessimistic about the relationship between father and children. The fathers were often described as distant and not interested in their children, while the children were said to have very bad or non-existent relationships to their fathers. In this group, it was the women who carried full responsibility for the children's upbringing and wellbeing without the support of their partners.

5.3.1 Maritime parenthood

No matter how dedicated a father, the seafarer's absence and the consequent lack of continuity rendered it impossible for him to be as involved in his children's upbringing as he might have liked. Perhaps ferrymen had more chance to make a real input in raising their offspring due to their short absences and their closeness to home, but it was nonetheless the women who carried the main responsibility. As a result, two questions arose from the material. The first asked whether children growing up in maritime families were more

independent than other children, while the second concerned the bond between mother and children.

A woman in Kaijser's study felt that she had to account to her husband for her children's behaviour:

It was my responsibility that the children were well-behaved and clean and all of that...and healthy, and did well in school...it was I who had to make sure they got what they needed for life. But he was always in the background. It was kind of as if you answered for the result.⁴¹

She further felt she had to take on the role as a strong woman to fight against 'the outside world'. It was a common notion among the informants that they demanded more from their children than did their husbands. As the only parent at home, seafarers' wives felt that they had to be fairly firm with their children. An older woman commented: 'I think I was stricter, but then again, it was down to me to make sure everything worked'.⁴² One of her contemporaries acknowledged that she was probably the more dominant of the spouses, and justified this by saying that since the children only had one parent at home she was forced to be quite strict.⁴³ Similar concerns were raised by a woman of Generation Three. She, too, was of the opinion that she required more from their children than did her husband. It was important for her to encourage their daughters to become independent and capable of managing things on their own, such as eating, getting dressed, walking up and down stairs, and tidying up after themselves. She said:

Maybe it's because he is away so much that he – when he is at home – wants to carry, feed and spoil the children. But then, when I'm left alone with them again, they have to be able to do things themselves.⁴⁴

She and her partner had agreed that she should be responsible for their children's upbringing, and that the rules she had set during his absence remained unchanged when the seafarer was

⁴¹ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.40

⁴² G105-040899

⁴³ G103-020899

⁴⁴ G305-100100

at home. The agreement was founded on her desire 'to spare the girls from the changes that come with having Dad at home and having Dad away at work'.⁴⁵ It was not only in comparison with their partners that maritime mothers claimed they demanded more independence from their children, but also in relation to other mothers. A long-distance seaman's wife commented that she and her children were 'very close to each other' and that the children had 'been taught to take responsibility and to help out at home earlier than other children'.⁴⁶

Like many others, one informant described how, because of her husband's occupation, she felt that she had an 'extra close' relationship with her children. Although this special bond was cherished it also had its drawbacks, in that she sometimes felt that it resulted in a subtle exclusion of the seafarer from this very tight-knit sphere. She described it as 'a pact in the family, me and the children against him'.⁴⁷ Another informant thought that their child was more likely to turn to her with any problems, saying: 'If there is anything special, our daughter turns to me, even if my husband is at home. It makes him feel a bit pushed out, but it's only natural that children turn to the parent who is at home the most'.⁴⁸ Statements of this kind suggested that the seafarers' time away from home and family could have a serious effect on the internal dynamics of the family, and despite conscious efforts to negotiate his place as an integral part of the family unit, the seafarer was left somewhat on the periphery. Even in cases where the informants claimed that their husbands and children had a good relationship, they maintained that the children were more likely to turn to them rather than to their fathers with their more delicate and sensitive worries.⁴⁹ This could be interpreted as the children displaying a sense of distance from their seafaring father, but equally it could be due to women being perceived as more capable of dealing with these issues by their children.

⁴⁵ G305-100100

⁴⁶ G3088

⁴⁷ G3001

⁴⁸ G3083

⁴⁹ G101-300799, G202-080799

Research has shown that men and women, irrespective of profession, interact differently with their children. According to an American study, fathers of the late twentieth century interacted more with their children than did their fathers, but the direct responsibility for the children's care and wellbeing was still the mother's domain, whether or not she was working outside the home. The same situation is prevalent in Swedish families, and therefore likely to be the case on Åland as well. Whereas the mother is the caring parent, the father takes on the role as playmate.⁵⁰

The strong bond that existed between the seafarers' wives and their children could be contrasted with the fathers' uncertainty regarding how to deal with their offspring. The seafarer's absence made him detached from family life and subsequently it was difficult for him to follow his children's development. One informant said ^{that?} meant that it was close to impossible for a child to form a really close relationship with a father who spends as much time away from his family as does a seafarer. The real time spent apart is lost forever and cannot be compensated. She continued: 'It is his great sorrow that he has lost their childhood and that is irreparable'.⁵¹ In interviews with seamen, this statement was validated. It transpired, rather tragically, that although their children constituted the central part in many seafarers' lives, they did not think of themselves as having a part in their children's lives.⁵² Adding to the seafarers' dilemma was the fact that due to their ambiguous role in the family, they did not always feel confident in setting rules or criticising their children. Heikell shows that there is also great consensus among seamen that it is the women who raise the children, and they are worried about stepping on their wives' territory by getting too involved.⁵³

The upset of conventional family dynamics could potentially lead to conflicts either between father and children or between the spouses. In two separate reconstructions

⁵⁰ M. Bäck-Wiklund & B. Bergsten, *Det moderna föräldrarskapet*, pp. 75-76

⁵¹ G201-060799

⁵² T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 67

⁵³ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 60-61

from women of different age groups, conflict arose between the seafarer and his teenage daughters.⁵⁴ These incidents were discussed in Chapter 4, and it was the lengthy absences that, in these narratives, were blamed for the conflicts. Difficulties in communications between the seafarer and his children were another upshot of the seafarers' absences. One woman confessed that their children would talk to their father [✓]through her, for example asking [✓]her about the seafarer's plans instead of asking him directly.⁵⁵ These kinds of problems seemed to be especially pronounced during the children's teenage years. Adolescence is a stressful time for most parents, as well as for their children, but arguably more so for maritime families. The seafarer might have problems asserting his authority since his absences, in the eyes of his adolescent children, have disqualified him from the role as their fosterer. In such a situation, the seafarer will perhaps feel more comfortable leaving his wife in charge of the situation. There were, however, both first- and second-hand accounts indicating that some seafarers preferred to be in charge at home as well as at sea. An informant of Generation Two recalled her husband talking about his father, who was a captain. When he came home, it was he who set the rules in the house, overthrowing any decision or arrangement that his wife and children had agreed upon in his absence. As a child, the informant's husband used to get very upset by this and therefore made a conscious effort not to put his family through the same emotional stress. This proved harder for him than he had expected when his daughters reached their teens, and conflict arose between the seafarer and his daughters as a result.⁵⁶

Despite the official discourse of gender equality, society is still not gender equal and the responsibility of caring for children often falls on the woman, regardless of the man's occupation.⁵⁷ What makes families in which the father is physically absent over extended periods different from other families is that the mother has no immediate adult support in her

⁵⁴ G102-120799, G201-060799

⁵⁵ G3096

⁵⁶ G201-060799

⁵⁷ Y. Elvin-Nowak & H. Thomsson, 'Motherhood' in *Gender & Society*, vol. 15, no 3, (London, 2001) pp. 409-410

task since, at the end of the day, there is no father with whom to discuss childcare matters. The mother is thereby forced to devise her own strategies to keep family life functioning, which may lead to the father feeling excluded from the childrearing process when he returns home. In this study, such a phenomenon was particularly pronounced in cases where the seafarer was engaged in long-distance shipping, and in cases where time ashore was considerably shorter than time at sea. Similar traits were evident in several other studies of maritime family life. Like some of the informants in this study, many fishermen's wives from Hull and Grimsby felt that they had to act as both mother and father to their children.⁵⁸ In Tunstall's study, the seamen seemed at a loss as to how to relate to their children. He noted that:

The fisherman remains something of a stranger to his children. Men at sea talk a good deal about their 'bairns' but the attitude seems disinterested and more like that of an uncle than a father. Some men try to compensate for their absence by giving lavish presents to their children.⁵⁹

Tunstall also mentioned cases in which the fishermen's children, like those of Åland seamen, had not recognised their fathers.

5.3.2 Division of responsibility

In about a quarter of the life story accounts (five in generations one and two, and eight in Generation Three) insufficient information regarding child-rearing was provided to place the informant in any of the aforementioned categories. In four of these cases, the reason was that the couple had just had their first child and therefore they had not yet had much experience in that particular area of family life. In other cases, the seafarers had taken jobs ashore just prior to, or soon after becoming fathers. There was also one informant who appeared to be childless. In some cases, the informants were uncertain about the cost of raising a family with

⁵⁸ D. J. Starkey & C. Lazenby, 'Altered Images' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries*, p. 171

⁵⁹ J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 162

a seafarer. Such a reconstruction was presented by a woman who began by saying that the most negative part of maritime family life became apparent to her when she and her spouse became parents. In her subsequent reconstruction she articulated her concerns:

The newborn babies change so much if he's gone for 1-2 months. The slightly older children don't recognise him when he comes home and when they are around a year old, it is difficult to explain why he is suddenly gone. One of our daughters in particular has always been very attached to her dad. It is with tear-filled eyes I've seen her sit with his picture in her lap, sniff his pillow and hug his working overalls still hanging in the hallway, or to explain to them why he has to leave when they are too young to understand.⁶⁰

Several areas in which the nature of the seafarer's job infringed on his relationship with his children were emphasised in this short quotation. The first aspect was how much the seafarer lost out on in his children's development, particularly in the early years. The second aspect was that of the children not recognising their father upon his return, and, lastly, the problematic task of explaining the seafarer's departures. Nonetheless, the informant found it difficult to know if her husband's absences had affected their children in a negative way, since he had been at their disposal twenty-four hours a day while on leave.

5.3.3 Positive

Informants in the positive category emphasised their belief that the seafarer was an active father, but they also showed awareness of the downsides to maritime family life, which was exemplified by comments such as:

I don't think he loses out on the children's growing up, but parent-teacher meetings, arrangements and rules become my responsibilities. It's easy to take that onboard since he is often absent. You notice the mistake when it is so far gone. Such things are probably easier to share when the husband is land-based.⁶¹

Here some attention was paid to the contrasts of land-based and maritime life. Although the reconstruction was created in a positive mode, assuring the seafarer's overall participation, the

⁶⁰ G3086

⁶¹ G3050

informant acknowledged the drawbacks of maritime family life. It fell to her to take care of most of the practical childrearing issues, issues that she would have preferred to share with her husband but was unable to do.

Women who felt that they were able to share the care of their children with their husbands on almost equal terms tended to give positive or very positive accounts of maritime family life. Ferrymen were arguably in the best position to do so, for not only did their work pattern follow a strict week on-week off rota, but their shifts were short and they were near to home. In an emergency, a ferryman would normally be able to come home within less than twelve hours – and even faster if the ferry was on its way to Åland. One informant commented that during his week off, her husband used to keep their children at home from kindergarten, and when they started school, they would go straight home rather than to after-school club.⁶²

It was stressed in one of the positive reconstructions that although the seafarer's wife would often develop a particular bond with the children, it was still possible for the husband to make up much of the lost time if he wanted to. This informant mentioned that her husband had been at home for six months and a year respectively to care for their newborn babies.⁶³ In another account, the seafarer stayed at home for two years to look after the couple's three children, one of whom was still an infant. The informant was convinced that the seafarer had been able to create a special bond with the youngest child, and she regretted that they had not made the same arrangements for their older children:

I wish it had been the same for the others. Now in retrospect I see how positive it has been, even though we not always agree on childrearing, but we discuss our way forward. Masculine and feminine views often differ, but nothing's wrong with that, both are needed.⁶⁴

⁶² G2025

⁶³ G3001

⁶⁴ G3025

An article by Philip Hwang gives support to the informant's conviction. Although he agrees with the general argument of fathers as playmates and mothers as carers, he contends that fathers who have taken out paternal leave and have taken direct responsibility for their children tend to interact with their children in the same way as mothers.⁶⁵ Her husband was a ferryman and, in line with the rest of her reconstruction, she mentioned that he spent his week off with the family and that he had planned his shifts and holidays around the births of his children.

Only one informant of the oldest generation of women gave a positive account of her experiences in this field compared to nine and seven respectively in Generations Two and Three. Despite being fairly critical in tone, the active role the seafarer was said to have played in the children's upbringing placed the narrative in the group of positive reconstructions of parenthood. The foundation for the seafarer's close relationship with his sons was laid during a lengthy period of convalescence during the children's pre-school years. The fact that the informant herself worked, gave father and sons a lot of time on their own. When the seafarer returned to work, the relationship was maintained through correspondence, shipboard visits during school holidays and shared activities during the seafarer's periods on leave. The seafarer further chose to work only in European waters due to the superior communication possibilities that were available, compared to world-wide shipping. To further stress the positive picture of the seafarer as a father, the informant stated that in adulthood the sons had been grateful towards their parents for actively encouraging the father-son relationship.⁶⁶ In an account given by a woman in Generation Two, time aboard ship and frequent communication by means of telephone or letters were similarly mentioned as important tools for establishing and maintaining a good relationship between father and sons.

⁶⁵ P. Hwang, 'Pappa – före och efter födelsen' in P. Hwang (ed.), *Spädbarnets psykologi* (Stockholm, 1999) p. 241

⁶⁶ G1093

She was of the opinion that all the events in their children's development had been reinforced in her memory because she had been forced to recount them to her husband.⁶⁷

5.3.4 Very positive

There were nine women who regarded maritime family life as something very positive, three of whom belonged to Generation Two and six to Generation Three. It is likely that none of the narratives offered by women of Generation One fell into this category because of the prevailing working conditions, particularly the length of absence in relation to leave. Another explanation can be found in a change in discourse regarding gender roles. From the 1930s through to the 1960s, when the older informants were raising their families, childrearing was regarded as a woman's job. Since the 1970s, gender equality has been high on the political agenda in Scandinavian society, creating a discourse of equality that states gender as an irrelevant factor to a person's ability to act successfully in both the public and the private spheres. By the turn of the millennium, men and women were expected to assume equal responsibility for child-rearing and household tasks, although, in reality, women took on the greater part.⁶⁸ By presenting a picture of a caring father who devoted all his free time to his children, the informants were able to conform to the contemporary ideal, even when they *de facto* had been nurturing the children on their own. Additionally, it was expected that fathers themselves would be keen to be as involved in their children's upbringing, since this was no longer considered to be women's work to the same extent as it had been earlier in the century.⁶⁹ It would have been surprising to find Generation Three women admitting that their husbands regarded childrearing to be a woman's job, whereas it was perfectly acceptable for an older informant to do so. By referring to her husband as 'of the old stock', a Generation One informant showed her awareness of the pronounced discourse at the time of the

⁶⁷ G2049

⁶⁸ Y. Elvin-Nowak & H. Thomson, 'Motherhood as Idea and Practice' in *Gender & Society*, vol.15, no 3 p.409

⁶⁹ M. Korhonen: *Isyyden muutos*, p.43 as presented in T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, p. 8

interview, at the same time as that comment justified her taking full responsibility for raising their children.⁷⁰

The very positive attitudes were often symptomatic of the lengthy stays at home that seafarers of the younger generations enjoyed. Another feature of the very positive position was a propensity to highlight the quality time the seafaring father spent with his children. This was contrasted with the abundance of time land-working fathers had at their disposal to spend with their children but, according to the narratives, they failed to use effectively. In one such comment, the informant stated that since the seafarer had been responsible for the children's care while ashore, he had developed a very close bond to them. 'In a way', the informant claimed, 'he's been able to spend more quality time with his children than have fathers who are ashore'.⁷¹ Another informant declared that her husband was a 'present father for his children'. She further believed 'that he is more at home than the average man in an Åland family'.⁷² The women in this category were also of the opinion that the seafarers did not miss out on their children's lives and developments, as is suggested in this quotation:

My husband has always planned work around the pregnancies and childbirths and has therefore been a great support and participant. When our youngest son was born he took out paternity leave and also parental leave 2.5 months. Since he's been working according to a 1/1 system he's generally spent much time with the children, more than "normal land-working" fathers, I believe.⁷³

Here, the informant stressed the support and involvement her husband displayed with regard to the couple's children and their upbringing. The seafarer's decision to deploy his rights to paternity and parental leave was used to demonstrate the seafarer's devotion to his children. The fact that working 1:1 gave him plenty of time to spend with his children further emphasised his role as a caring father who took an active part in raising his children. There is

⁷⁰ G101-300799

⁷¹ G203-230799

⁷² G3078

⁷³ G3063

no need to doubt that this seafarer was very concerned with his children. However, even though he did spend as much time at home as he did at sea, he was nonetheless absent for a month at a time. How these periods of absence affected the relationship between father and children was not discussed, but it is difficult to imagine that they would have had no impact at all. This aspect was typically overlooked by the informants who took a very positive position in their reconstructions of family life.

5.3.5 Negative

Negatively positioned reconstructions placed the blame for a frail father-child relationship on the seafarers' working conditions ^{rather} than on the seafarers themselves. This allowed the informants to express their pessimistic opinions of maritime family life without vilifying the seafarer and making him out to be a bad father. Overall, this was the category that absorbed the highest number of reconstructions, but it was only among the oldest generation that it was the primary position. Ten of the twenty-three accounts stemmed from Generation One informants. The accounts varied considerably in tone, from one verging on the very negative to narratives that also included some positive elements. In order to present the seafarer as a caring father, some women tried to account for their husbands' feelings upon departure. They sympathised with their partners, describing the distress the seafarers were said to experience when they had to say goodbye to their children just as they were beginning to feel relaxed in each other's company.⁷⁴ This approach was mainly used by informants in Generation One, whose husbands did not enjoy the same degree of time off as did their younger counterparts, but younger women also commented on their husbands' distress on their departure.⁷⁵

Most informants in this category agreed that the seafarers did miss out on a very large part of their children's lives, which in turn had a number of consequences for family

⁷⁴ G103-020899, G105-040899

⁷⁵ G305-100100, G3095

dynamics. In one narrative, the informant boldly stated that ‘seamen in long-distance shipping should not have children’, since both father and children lose out on so much. Typical of this group of reconstructions, the informant was nevertheless quick to restore her own partner’s image by implying that this did not apply to her situation since her husband was, what she called, ‘fond of children’.⁷⁶ A younger woman stated that she personally would never cope with being separated from her children the way her husband was, but despite saying that her husband probably lost out on more of their children’s lives than she could ever imagine, she did evoke an image of him as a caring father. She mentioned how he would devote his time off to the family and how he spoiled his daughters with affection.⁷⁷

One informant wrote that she referred to ‘my children’ more often than to ‘our children’, and she questioned whether that was more common in maritime marriages. She was not the only woman to point this out, but it was not within the scope of this study to determine to what extent that was true. Typical of this attitude, the informant maintained that the relationship between father and children was sound, at the same time as she stated that she felt as if she had raised her – or their – children almost exclusively on her own, and that her husband had lost out considerably. She further commented that she regarded any criticisms relating to the children as a personal failure in the same fashion as the children’s success was hers too. It was noteworthy that while she gave her partner some credit for their children’s accomplishments, she did not do the same when it came to the children’s less commendable actions and adventures. She said:

I think I have raised them pretty much on my own, so I can get very upset if there are conflicts with the hubby about the children. I take it very much as personal failures. When the children do well I also take it personally, even though I know my children have always had quite a good dad in the background. He’s very fond of his children.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ G1061

⁷⁷ G305-100100

⁷⁸ G3098

By taking the blame for *her* children's failures and affording her husband some credit in *their* children's success, she was able to downplay the consequences of the seafarer's absences in respect of the children's behaviour.

A number of reconstructions focused on the seafarer's relationship with his adolescent offspring. One informant attributed her partner's problems of understanding their teenage children to his absences during the children's earlier years:

But there is, no doubt, a lot that he missed out on during the children's years of growing up. Maybe that is why he sometimes finds it harder to understand them. Discussions around the dinner table, I've missed that too. He said to me how he wanted it but the unpleasant things he left to me. He wanted to be a kind dad.⁷⁹

From this episode, it was clear that the seafarer felt unable to deal directly with his children with sufficient confidence and therefore chose to exert his influence through his wife. In a comparable illustration, the informant testified that the seafarer had spent much of his time looking after and caring for their children, 'especially when they were little', although 'he has not been so good with troublesome teenagers but preferred sitting in front of the TV'.⁸⁰ She continued by saying that she was aware of her children thinking that while they had been given money from their father, he had not given them enough of his time, i.e. enough attention. The informants reconstruction fell within the negative position, so despite being fairly critical in her view on the relationship between father and children, she tried to restore her husband's character by expressing her opinion on the matter, which differed from their children's. She claimed that she found their comments rather upsetting since she knew 'that he had tried in his own way' but that, particularly as he got older, work drained him of 'all his energy'. The week he was at home was just enough for the seafarer to recuperate before he had to go back to sea again. In a way, this informant's reconstruction epitomised the negative position; allowing the nature of her partner's working conditions to justify the poor

⁷⁹ G2055

⁸⁰ G2019

relationship between him and his children and thus removing the direct responsibility from the seafarer himself.

5.3.6 Very negative

The very negative accounts made up the smallest of the four categories, even though it was only marginally smaller than the very positive position. The accounts were presented with varying degrees of discontent, but all displayed the basic elements that characterised this group. In these testimonies, the lack of emotional bonds between the seafarer and his children was one of the main pointers, together with a feeling that the informant had been responsible for raising the children on her own without any, or very little, support.

The most negative reconstruction was created by a woman in Generation Two. Although childrearing was not the only reason for her pessimistic views, it was evident that the problem of bringing up a family in this kind of marriage was responsible for a considerable part of her disillusionment. On this issue she commented:

Unfortunately, my husband has little contact with the children. They are like strangers to him. I received no support in raising them. If the children do anything wrong, it is my upbringing that is to blame. He has missed rather a lot when he doesn't know his children.⁸¹

This quotation contains both key elements that are representative of the very negative reconstruction. Firstly, there is the estrangement between the seafarer and his offspring, indicated in comments such as 'they are like strangers to him' and 'he doesn't know his children'. Nowhere in the narrative did the informant offer a story that would serve to redeem the seafarer of his shortcomings, rather the contrary. She described her role in the marriage as that of a 'childminder and maid'. Although the seafarer was said to have been 'babysitting' his children during his week off, it was not described as a means by which the seafarer made up for lost time with his children, which would have been the case in reconstructions of the

⁸¹ G2088

other three categories. On the contrary, the very phrase 'babysitting', rather than 'caring for' or 'looking after', suggested to the reader that this was a chore rather than a privilege or enjoyment. So, even though the seafarer was given the opportunity to spend real time with his children, it did not appear to promote a stronger father and child relationship. Secondly, the lack of support in the children's upbringing was stressed. Not only did the informant feel that her husband was unsupportive, he was even presented as critical of her childrearing methods. This feeling was repeated in another account in which the informant was of the opinion that she had 'received more criticism than support' from her husband when it came to childrearing.⁸²

Yet another negative reconstruction came from a woman, who began her narrative by stating that if she had been aware of the full implications of maritime family life she would never have married a seafarer. In her view, she had not been given enough support and her children, who had wished for a father who was at home and a constant part of the family, had instead been brought up by their mother alone and subsequently found it difficult to communicate with their father.⁸³ A similar view was evident in a narrative in which the informant expressed the burden of the role as a sole carer was a burden: 'it isn't easy to be both mother and father at the same time'. It was her explicit opinion that a child fared best when brought up by both parents and that it was inevitable that there should be a certain degree of detachment in the relationship between a seafaring father and his offspring as a direct result of his absences from the family.⁸⁴

The critique of the seafarer as a father did not only revolve around poor relationships between the seafarers and their children and the deficit of assistance or encouragement regarding the children's upbringing. One informant questioned her partner's emotional capacities. Her husband worked in long-distance shipping during the first two

⁸² G2[3]009

⁸³ G1065

⁸⁴ G2[1]054

years of their firstborn child's life, and thus he spent two nine-month periods at sea with three months in between. This was part of his training and the informant wrote:

I experienced this as torture for all senses. He was no doubt strong to so systematically work towards his certificates to completed schooling. He thereafter went ashore, but we did not get the valuable baby-time back. A person who does this, I have wondered, cannot be very emotionally bound to his nearest.⁸⁵

Although the seafarer went ashore only two years after their first baby's arrival, the informant nonetheless felt that she had to a large extent raised their children on her own, and while she was hesitant as to how much the seafarer's initial absences and subsequent shift work had influenced his relationship with his children, she experienced her bond with their children as 'very strong', much stronger than that to their father.

5.3.7 Generations and attitudes

The analysis of the prevailing attitudes in the three generation groups showed that women in Generation One were more negative in their views on raising a family with a seafarer.

Twelve women presented either very negative or negative reconstructions of this aspect of maritime life, while only one woman had positive experiences. One probable reason for the high proportion of negatively positioned narratives was the fact that in none of the other generation cohorts did the men spend as much time away from home as did the first generation of seamen. Absences of nine months and over were commonplace and opportunities for communication were limited. Due to lack of continuity, which was caused by their sometimes erratic working patterns and prolonged absences, seafaring fathers in this generation group had less input in the nurturing of their children than had fathers with land-based jobs and seamen of later generations. Subsequently, they were more dependent on their wives' judgements regarding childrearing. It has also been argued that the seafarer's short and infrequent visits made it very difficult for him to find his place in the family, both

⁸⁵ G2054

emotionally and structurally. Since the wife was used to caring for the children on her own, she was subconsciously reluctant to let her husband have too much input in to the children's upbringing. As a result of his uncertain position, the seafarer chose to separate himself from his family even when he was at home.⁸⁶

Only one of the negatively positioned narratives, however, fell into the very negative category, indicating that although the situation was far from ideal, the seafaring fathers were not made personally responsible for their failure to take an active part in their children's lives. Even the one very negative reconstruction, in which it was clear that the seafarer had failed to engage in his children's lives during his time at home, the informant was reluctant to accuse him explicitly of not caring. The strongest statement was probably that in which the informant said that her husband had completely lost out on his children's growing up and that that was evident in their relationship. Other allegations were made more subtly through a number of remarks implicating the seafarer's shortcomings. One such comment was that the children's grandfather became their *bona fide* father figure whereas their real father was merely somebody who showed up every now and again. The transient quality of the seafarer's visits to his home was blamed for the near impossibility of establishing family life. During at least twenty years, the seafarer worked on year-long contracts punctuated by short leaves, approximately one month in duration. Later in his career, he worked under more regular conditions, six months at sea followed by six months at home. Both during his month-long holidays and later, his six months of leave, it seemed that the seafarer failed to engage in his children's lives. According to the informant, her husband would spend most of his time off ship in the outer archipelago of Åland, where he originated. Since the family lived in Mariehamn, where his children went to school and his wife worked, the seafarer missed out on this opportunity to become an active member of the family. Moreover, judging

⁸⁶ I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', in N. Storå & K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen*, p.39

from the manner in which this was presented in the narrative, it appeared that it was a conscious choice on the seafarer's part not to get too involved with his family. To further highlight the distance between father and children, the informant used her son's expressed sadness that he never got to know his father properly or learn more from him about life in the archipelago.⁸⁷

The division between positive and negative reconstructions was more evenly distributed in Generation Two. Twelve women expressed negative experiences and twelve women showed a more positive outlook. Most of the reconstructions, nine in all, fell into the positive category, but there were also five women, whose narratives suggested a very negative attitude towards family life with a seafarer. The greater dispersal between positions could be seen as reflecting the greater variety of working conditions available to the seamen of this generation. The older women of this group of informants had had similar experiences of maritime family life as had the first generation of seafarers' wives in this study, with very extensive absences and equally limited means of communication. The younger informants, on the other hand, benefited from the improvements in maritime work regulations and telecommunications, making their experiences similar to those of Generation Three. A big difference was made by the opportunities offered to new fathers by the local ferries. To transfer from long-distance shipping to ferry traffic was a viable option for most seafarers of this generation, facilitating a more tangible role for the father in family life. Seventeen men in this category had at some point in their married life worked on the ferries, and all but two of them had transferred permanently to ferries shortly after becoming fathers.

The discussion on parenthood within a maritime setting presented in the reconstructions of women in Generation Three showed a predominantly positive attitude. Thirteen narratives were positive in their tone compared to only seven narratives exhibiting a

⁸⁷ G104-030899

negative stance. The preponderance of positive attitudes was further substantiated when considering the extreme ends of the spectrum. There were no less than six very positive responses in the sample compared to only one very negative reaction. This display of attitude was very different from Generation Two, where the very negative responses were greater than the very positive narratives by five to three. The marked change in attitude cannot solely depend on improved working conditions and superior means of communications, but must be found in a change in attitude regarding parenting and the role of the father in bringing up offspring. As mentioned previously, late twentieth-century Scandinavian society saw gender equality as one of the most pronounced discourses, and it influenced the way in which almost every aspect of life was discussed⁸⁸. The reconstructions of maritime family life were only one area where the equality discourse demonstrated its influence. Thus, when discussing the role the seafarer played in caring for his children, many women in this generation – especially the youngest of them – presented stories that conveyed an image of both parents taking equal responsibility in nurturing their offspring. This change in dominant discourse, from separate spheres to gender equality, was the most significant determinant when explaining the three generation groups' different attitudes towards maritime family life. For although working conditions gradually allowed for more input in childrearing from the seafarer's side, his absences continued to place him on the periphery of family life. Life without the seafarer present was regarded as the state of normalcy for most women in all three generations, whereas the seafarer's sojourns ashore were a break from the norm.

⁸⁸ Y. Elvin-Nowak & H. Thomson, 'Motherhood' in *Gender & Society*, vol. 15, no 3

5.4 Work

In feminist and women's studies a lot of attention is given to women's work, both in and outside the home.⁸⁹ This particular aspect of maritime women's lives was given very little attention by the informants in the questionnaires and in the interviews. The lack of attention should not, however, be taken to suggest that this part of the women's lives was of little significance to them. A more plausible explanation for the lack of information lies in the fact that the women were approached in their capacity of seafarers' wives, and so the rhythm of seafaring life, the sense of leading dual lives, together with the issue of independence received most of the informants' attention. Subsequently, because many informants chose to ignore the questions regarding work and money, or only dealt with them in a very superficial manner, has precluded the possibility to make any certain quantifiable statements regarding the informants' attitude on these issues. Nonetheless, from the background information given in the questionnaires, it became clear that the vast majority of informants took an active part in work outside the home, although it appears as if many of them stayed at home for longer or shorter periods when their children were young, or that they chose to work part-time. Whereas women in all three generation groups were active in paid employment to a fairly equal degree, the material suggested that there were considerable differences concerning views on financial matters.

In contrast to Hull and Grimsby fishermen, there was little evidence to suggest that Åland seafarers strongly objected to their wives working in paid employment.⁹⁰ The considerable number of women in all three age cohorts who were active in paid employment hinted that Åland seamen had more in common with the Finnish seamen presented in Heikell's study. The interviewed seamen described work outside the home as a necessity for

⁸⁹ E.g. R. Rønning Balsvik, 'Kvinner I nordnorske kystsamfunn' in *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol.70, 4/1991; M. Luxton, *More Than A Labour of Love*; E. Roberts, *A woman's place*

⁹⁰ D. J. Starkey & C. Lazenby, 'Altered Images' in D. J. Starkey et al (eds.) *England's Sea Fisheries*, p. 171; J. Tunstall, *The Fishermen*, p. 161

the women's wellbeing. Heikell's observation of the informants' tendency to point out that the work their wives did was not for economic benefit but for the benefit of her own mental health is interesting. In downplaying the women's economic contribution, the men were able to maintain their idea of themselves as the family's main provider.⁹¹ In a way, then, the attitude among Finnish seamen was not that different from that of English trawlermen, only the former were more subtle in their remarks. Why this should be the case could be explained in terms of working conditions and work patterns. Both the harder environment aboard and the shorter time ashore, made trawling a more extreme occupation than merchant seafaring, which arguably led to increased *machismo* among the trawlermen and also a more traditional view on men's and women's places in society. The difference also ought to be put in relation to how dominant the debate on gender equality was in the respective societies. It may be that equality between the sexes was a more pronounced discourse in Finnish society and therefore Finnish men dealt with the issue of women's work differently. By saying that they thought it was important that women were active in the public sphere, they were seen to support the dominant discourse, but by downplaying their wives' economic contribution, they maintained their image of themselves as head of household.

For women of Generation One it was more or less taken for granted that it was the husband who should work and thus support the family financially. Although a surprisingly high number of the women of this generation worked outside the home, their contribution to the household seemed to have been regarded as pocket money. The reason for this was that most of the women were employed on a casual or part-time basis, looking to occupy themselves and socialise rather than pursue a career or work for economic gain. The situation was quite similar in Generation Two, of whom only a few stated financial concerns as the reason for obtaining work outside the home and many stayed at home with their pre-

⁹¹ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, pp. 54-56

school children, or had part-time jobs. One woman explicitly stated that she 'didn't have to work for financial reasons, only to come out'.⁹² Furthermore, with a full-time job it was hard for the seafarers' wives to visit their husbands aboard ship, as another informant testified:

As a seafarer's wife it was almost impossible to have a job. If you were going to meet, it was the wife who had to travel and in those days there were no kindergartens so mum had to be at home.⁹³

For some women, including the informant quoted above, the chance to fulfil career goals appeared later in life. When her husband retired from the sea fifteen years into their marriage, she took up employment again and worked for twenty years as a retail manager.

Lack of childcare facilities made work outside the home difficult and in some cases caused women to give up jobs against their will. Shift and night work was particularly difficult for seafarers' wives to maintain, since that made them reliant on resident childcare. One informant had to give up her job despite really enjoying it, when her mother remarried and was no longer available as a nanny.⁹⁴ The problem of irregular working hours was no different for informants of the other two generation groups. A woman in Generation Two had to give up her job as a paediatric nurse because she was unable to find suitable childcare for her son. Working in a hospital meant that she had to work shifts and when she could not arrange a live-in nanny she had to give up her job. For more than ten years, she worked as a private child minder in addition to doing occasional shifts at the hospital when her husband was at home on leave. Not being able to return to paediatric nursing, she eventually settled for a job in a long-stay hospital where she was able to work part-time and without night shifts. In the interview, it is clear that having to give up her chosen profession in favour of less desirable alternatives caused her a great deal of emotional stress. She admitted that her husband's occupation was the primary reason behind her need to make these choices, and

⁹² G1045

⁹³ G1081

⁹⁴ G102-300799

despite asserting that she did not feel any bitterness or resentment towards him personally for this, she was quite clear about the impact a seafarer's job has, not only on his own life, but also on his family's choices regarding work and leisure.⁹⁵

This insight was echoed by an informant in Generation Three, who established that it was impossible for a woman to focus on her career once she had opted to have a family with a seaman. She still counted herself as lucky. By working in a field where freelancing was an option, and with parents-in-law willing to babysit, she was able to attend seminars and work after nursery hours, thus maintaining some contact with the working world.⁹⁶ A less fortunate informant wrote that she still regretted giving up her job at sea, because 'I have not liked any other job ashore as much'.⁹⁷ She was not the only woman to have held a job at sea. In total, there were three women in the sample group who had worked at sea, excluding women who had done the occasional voyage to accompany their husbands.⁹⁸ All three women had met their future husbands while at sea, and they had all gone ashore when they had started a family, since they regarded it as an impossibility that both parents should work at sea. This was also the case with a young female chief engineer. Despite her husband working ashore and thus theoretically able to take on responsibility for family and home, she gave up her job at sea when she had her baby. She did not seem to regret it too much, but she did state that although she had the loveliest little boy and a partner who comes home every evening, she still missed the tanker boats and long-distance seafaring.⁹⁹

The majority of informants seemed to agree that being a maritime woman meant that all aspects of your life were affected to a varying degree by your partner's job. Still, there were fourteen women who stated that they did not think that their husbands' chosen career had had an effect on their own choices of work and leisure activities. The question

⁹⁵ G203-230799

⁹⁶ G3063

⁹⁷ G3076

⁹⁸ G204-290799, G2029, G3076, G3082

⁹⁹ K. Alberius-Forsman, *Från kollämpare till kavaljer*, p. 58

posed in the questionnaires read: 'In what way has your husband's job affected your^r life in terms of *choice* of work and leisure activities' (italics added), and it was interesting to see that some women used the phraseology of the question to downplay the effect their partners' profession had had on their lives. This meant that women who were already active in a job or had finished their training for a particular profession could claim that their partners' job had no bearing on their choices of work since they had already made that decision. That they stayed at home after their marriage to take care of house and children was not seen as of any relevance. Equally, if the women did not participate in any leisure activities, their husbands' profession was also deemed extraneous. When reading these reconstructions, some appeared to contain contradictory information. As an example, in one narrative the informant pointed to the tiresome arrangements she had to deal with each time she wanted to attend an event that required a babysitter. The need for a babysitter was, of course, closely related to her husband being absent, but despite this she later commented in her narrative that she did not think that her husband's job had had any bearing on either her work or leisure activities.¹⁰⁰

Despite some seemingly contradictory and confusing statements, the absence of the seafarer did indeed seem a minor inconvenience rather than a major disruption in some of these cases. As we shall see, the women who felt that their husbands' line of work had little or no bearing on their own professional choices displayed a number of mutual characteristics. The first two features were the women's background and the type of seafaring in which their men were engaged. Eleven of the fourteen women were either native to Åland or had moved there with their parents or to study or work. These women had a wider social network to rely on than had women who had come to the Islands as a result of marriage. As for the type of seafaring the men were deployed in, more than half of the women in the group, including the three non-native women, were married to seamen who either worked aboard the local ferries

¹⁰⁰ G3090

or who had left the sea less than ten years into the marriage. Emotional factors also played a critical role. Women who were positive about their spouses' occupations, or who regarded themselves as independent, were less likely to think that their lives were ruled by external factors. In addition, since the life story approach is subjective in its nature and the informant will use it to create a self-image that she feels comfortable with, one should also take into consideration the influence various discourses will have on the narratives. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, one of the stronger discourses on work in Scandinavia was that women had the same right to a career as men. This debate was closely linked with the one which promoted individualism before collectivism.¹⁰¹ This could help to explain the generational distribution among the women who claimed that their husbands' work was of no consequence. Nine of the fourteen women belonged to Generation Three, four belonged to Generation Two and only one of the women was of the oldest generation. Among the younger informants it was not as socially acceptable to give up one's own career in order to stay at home and look after house and children as it had been for previous generations. By stating that they were unaffected by their husbands' work, the women signalled that they were independent individuals, free to pursue their own personal aspirations.

The number of women who stated their occupation as 'housewife' was considerably larger among Generation One informants than in the other two age cohorts. There were five women in Generation One who described themselves as housewives compared to only one in the middle generation and none among the women of Generation Three. However, when reading the narratives in full, it was yet again noticeable how dominant attitudes influenced the informants' responses. The questionnaire asked for 'present occupation', which might explain why some of the informants in Generation One recorded 'housewife' in the answer field when in fact they had worked, others only stated 'pensioner'

¹⁰¹ T. Heikell, *Nog har jag alltid*, pp. 4-8

without any more detail as to their profession prior to retirement and some women did not write anything at all. When asked how she coped with loneliness one 'housewife' wrote that she was supported by family and friends 'and then I had my job as a music teacher'.¹⁰²

Another informant, who left the field for 'present occupation' blank, set up business with her husband when he went ashore some eleven years after their marriage, which she took an active part in running.¹⁰³ These two women answered the question regarding their 'present occupation' literally, possibly because they had no need or desire to present themselves through their work.

On the other hand, there were women in Generation One who took more pride in their professional careers, stating their present occupation as 'retired' this or the other. One informant in particular, a retired teacher, seemed to identify strongly with her professional position. Throughout the narrative the reader was reminded of how important her work was to her. At one point in the narrative, she recalled how her husband, after their children were born, wished to be the sole provider and that she would 'devote herself to home and children'. She did not grant her husband his wish but continued to work part-time in a kindergarten initially, and as a full-time teacher when her youngest child was two years old. The informant's decision to go against her husband's wishes could be interpreted as a gendered conflict between traditional male sexism and progressive female egalitarianism. However, there was nothing in the narrative to suggest that the informant's decision caused any longstanding problems for the couple or that it was based on anything else but a love for her job. The strong identification with her job was reinforced in another section of her reconstruction, in which she stated:

When H had obtained his master mariner certificate, I was addressed as 'Mrs Captain' but I declined that. I was of the opinion that I had my own professional title if need

¹⁰² G1100

¹⁰³ G1102

be. According to Åland tradition, however, it was common with this kind of addressing.¹⁰⁴

Again, the reader was reminded of how important the informant's professional position was to her. She had no desire to be identified in terms of her husband's occupational status because she was a person in her own right with her own title 'if need be'. Not only did this informant display the highest degree of resolve in her own peer group, but she also came across as one of the most strong-minded and self-aware women in the entire sample.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, when women in Generation Two married and started family life, it was still socially acceptable for women to stay at home and look after children and household, and many women did so in spite of the fact that only one of them stated her occupation as 'housewife'. Through their narratives it was unveiled that at least one in three women in this generation group stayed at home with her children for five years or more, and those who re-joined the workforce typically took part-time or casual jobs to begin with. As an example, one informant stated her occupation as *merkonom*, which is a lower mercantile qualification rather than a professional title. This would suggest that she never actually worked in the field she trained for, and further into her narrative the reader subsequently learns that the informant had 'mostly been at home, a housewife'.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, she belonged to the group of women who claimed that her husband's job had had no effect on her choices of work and leisure, and she continued her narrative by saying that 'his job has not influenced me at all and leisure activities he wants me to have and says nothing when I attend them'.¹⁰⁶ For a number of women the thought of going back to work felt alien and illogical while their husbands were at sea. One woman exclaimed that she did not for a moment contemplate working as long as her husband was working on long-distance

¹⁰⁴ G1093; There is no equivalent of the Swedish word 'kaptenska' in English, here translated as Mrs Captain. The word referred to the wife of a sea captain and had nothing to do with the woman's own occupation.

¹⁰⁵ G2055

¹⁰⁶ G2055

trades.¹⁰⁷ Another informant displayed the same attitude in an episode where she reconstructed a discussion between her and her partner regarding the family's economy. The topic was whether her husband should change from ferries to long-distance shipping since that would enable him to earn more. That she should get a job was presented as an impractical option on the grounds that 'when one person is away, the other needed to be at home'.¹⁰⁸ The informant did eventually take up employment outside the home but refrained from stating whether the reasons behind it were social or economic.

Among the women of Generation Three, working outside the home was very common, although only a few women actually commented on their professional careers. One informant wrote that she had always worked full-time, whereas another stated that: 'everyday-life with full-time job, home and children take so much of my time that I haven't got a big hole to fill with other activities.'¹⁰⁹ One informant moved from part-time employment to holding a management position once her children were old enough to cope on their own and she could spend more time on herself.¹¹⁰ No-one in this generation cohort described herself as a housewife, possibly due to the stigma associated with the word. One could argue that to this generation of women, 'housewife' sounded outdated and carried with it an image of an oppressed woman forced to stay at home by old-fashioned, sexist principles, an image to which this generation of liberated, post-feminist women could not relate. These women belonged to an age in which choice was the mantra and therefore it was important for the women who did stay at home to look after house and children to communicate to the reader that they did so out of their own personal choice, not because they were coerced. There were several means by which the informants could validate their position. The first was to state as their occupation whatever position they had held or vocation they had qualified for prior to

¹⁰⁷ G2101

¹⁰⁸ G202-080799

¹⁰⁹ G3083

¹¹⁰ G3014

becoming mothers, which explains why there are no 'housewives' present in the sample.

Another means was to show that the time at home with children had been used productively, as did the informant who pointed out that 'while the husband was at sea I was mostly at home, but studied at the same time'.¹¹¹ A woman, who had trained to become a nurse after marriage, mentioned in her narrative that she secured permanent part-time employment before starting a family. The choice of taking a part-time job rather than working full-time was justified by highlighting the welfare of her children: 'It feels extra important that I am at home as a safe, stable point since he is away a lot'.¹¹² Later in her reconstruction, it transpired that she had 'on the whole been mostly at home' looking after their six children, who were all under the age of twelve. In this reconstruction, the reader is first told that the informant has both a good education and a permanent job, followed by a demonstration of her concern for her children, displayed through her choice to stay at home to provide them with a 'safe, stable point'.

Another informant, a teacher, claimed that she was '100% mother and enjoys it'. She asserted that her choice to stay at home with her children was not related to her partner's job, but that she would have done so whether or not he had been at sea. This assertion was consistent with the image that she presented of herself throughout her testimony, that of a strong and independent woman. The choice she had made was hers alone, but she also recognised that her choice was facilitated by the financial rewards of her partner's job. The informant also stated a desire to raise her children herself, questioning the point of having children only to place them in the care of others.¹¹³ This argument was used by other women too. An informant in the generation above used the same argument to justify her decision.

She wrote:

¹¹¹ G3038

¹¹² G3086

¹¹³ G305-100100

When my maternity leave was up we thought it would be for the best that I stayed at home henceforth. Moreover, I saw no logic in me going away to look after other people's children and to have somebody else looking after mine.¹¹⁴

Although the decision to stay at home was not the informant's alone, but a joint agreement with her husband, the informant strengthened her position by professing her opinion regarding the logic of the arrangement. It was her personal view that the rational thing to do for her, a trained child carer, was to stay at home to raise her own children. Two other trained child carers in the sample used the same line of reasoning to substantiate their staying at home with children.¹¹⁵

5.5 Money

In any family where one parent is absent for prolonged periods, the parent staying at home has to take on the responsibility for the management of the household. That includes not only childcare, household chores and hands-on repairs but also practical financial matters, since the absentee's working situation renders it impossible to take on any ongoing commitments. This was as true for the wives of eighteenth century Nantucket whalers as it was for the wives of nineteenth century Norwegian fishermen and twentieth century Australian oil rig workers.¹¹⁶ Thus it was expected that the informants in this study would claim to be responsible for day-to-day economic matters, such as paying bills and completing tax return forms. Bigger expenditures and investments, it transpired, were often discussed before any action was taken.

Lummis notes that 'one common purse managed by the women' was the custom among late nineteenth and early twentieth century East Anglian fishermen, but he also observes that the length of the fisherman's absence had a considerable impact on how economic responsibility was shared. The longer the absences, the greater the women's

¹¹⁴ G2036

¹¹⁵ G2029, G2022

¹¹⁶ See L. Norling, *Captain Ahab had a Wife*; R. Rønning Balsvik, 'Kvinner I nordnorske kystsamfunn' in *Historisk Tidsskrift* vol. 4/1991 and unrecorded interview with Australian oil rig worker's wife, Dec 2001.

control over the income was.¹¹⁷ A few differences between the three groups regarding attitudes towards money emerged, which reflected more general trends in society. To the oldest generation of women, it was taken for granted that the money earned was a common asset. In all but two cases, it was the men who earned the bulk of the family's income, while the women managed it while the seafarer was at sea. The older informants in this study showed awareness and acceptance of the presumed gender characteristics of their time. Despite coping well on their own in their husbands' absence, upon the seafarers' return the women seemed relieved to be able to hand over typical male tasks, including the home's finances. This attitude resembled the findings made by Norling in her study of seafarers' wives in nineteenth century New England, from which she concluded that even the strong and independent seafaring wives in these maritime communities were unable to resist the contemporary ideals of Victorian domesticity. On the contrary, she noted that most of these women 'seemed to have subscribed just as whole-heartedly to pervasive ideas about female character and social roles as any other white, middle-class American women of the period'.¹¹⁸ In other words, maritime women had to conform to two contradictory discourses that existed in the society in which they lived. One was the discourse of the strong and independent seafarer's wife; the other was of women's subordination to men. Each woman had to negotiate her own position between those two ideals, and often it resulted in some form of compromise. Whereas some of the informants succumbed to the discourse of women's subordination and gave up the financial control in favour of their husbands, others found their position somewhere in between the two ideals. Many informants stated that despite being grateful to have been relieved from the responsibility, they found it hard to let go completely, maintaining in their reports that they still kept an eye on things to make sure everything was

¹¹⁷ T. Lummis, *Occupation and Society*, pp. 134-135

¹¹⁸ L. Norling, *Captain Ahab*, p. 3

taken care of properly.¹¹⁹ Their responses suggested that although they outwardly played a subordinate role in the running of the family's economy, the women maintained some degree of control internally. Only two women in this generation saw themselves as their respective household's financial manager even when the husbands were at home. They demonstrated a clear awareness of their real contribution to the family's economy and their role as managers, one of them even dubbing herself 'Chancellor of the Exchequer'.¹²⁰ These two women differed from the other informants of the oldest age cohort in that they both had held continuous full-time employment, thus contributing at a similar level to their husbands to the joint economy.

A difference in attitudes regarding the financial aspects of family life began to appear in the reconstructions by the middle generation, where an increasing number of informants commented that the financial responsibilities were a joint venture between husband and wife, even though it was mostly the women who took care of the practicalities. The change in views could arguably be held down to the fact that many more women in this group were working full-time. A more evenly balanced fiscal contribution to the family funds, together with other influences, such as the rise of feminism and of a debate promoting equal rights and responsibilities between the sexes, contributed to the shift in tone between this generation of women and their older counterparts. Still, it was common for the husband to take over the financial side of the household when he retired, took a landward job or was ashore on leave. In three cases, the husband was said to be responsible for the economy even while working at sea. This was possible since the men worked in local waters and on short shifts. In one of these instances, the informant signalled strong discontent with the arrangements. She had been responsible for this area while her husband was working in long-distance trades and felt she had handled it competently. Her husband's decision to take over

¹¹⁹ G101-300799, G105-040899

¹²⁰ G1061, G1093

the economy was interpreted as a vote of no confidence by the informant and she felt that she had lost an important role.¹²¹

To women of Generation Three, a joint economy was not as self-evident as it was for women in the two older generations. Although most of the third generation women who chose to comment on the issue claimed responsibility for the practical financial management, there were more references, both direct and indirect, to the spouses keeping their incomes separate. That separate accounts were common in the 1990s was supported by findings in Bäck-Wiklund's and Bergsten's study. They show that it was common for Swedish families to have two money pots; a household pot and a maintenance pot. The woman's income went into the first pot, and it was used to pay for food and other daily expenditures as well as for clothes for her and the children. The man's wages, which were often greater than the woman's, were to cover rent or mortgage payments and maintenance relating to their accommodation and possessions. One informant in this study mentioned that she had experienced some economic difficulties during her partner's most recent absence. She had no access to his money and had found it difficult to live on her maternity pay alone. As a consequence, the couple had agreed to have some money transferred from his account to hers, but there was no mentioning of a joint account.¹²² Another woman stated that since her partner earned more than her, he took care of 'the larger expenditures', which again would indicate separate economic units.¹²³ The tendency among the youngest informants to see their and their partners' incomes as separate from each other was compatible with the rise of individualism as a dominant discourse in society. This debate enunciated that each individual should be a self-contained unit, and dependency on others, particularly across the gender boundaries, was regarded as a failure. In this mental milieu, having to rely on their partners

¹²¹ G205-290799

¹²² G303-140799

¹²³ G3095

for money could cause serious distress, as this informant displayed in her reconstruction of her financial situation:

I have no incomes of my own at the moment, so he pays for most things. I don't really want him to, but that's how it is. I don't want to feel indebted. It hurts my sense of pride that he even has to pay for my clothes.¹²⁴

The informant had previously run her own business but gave it up in favour of looking after her and her partner's child. She had, in other words, gone from being a modern businesswoman with her own income to taking on the traditional role of a housewife with no money to her name and thus completely dependent on her partner for financial support. It was clear that the informant regarded a personal income, separate from her partner's, as important and she pointed out that she wanted to start working again as soon as their child was old enough.

5.6 Reconstruction and discourse

As discourses are always based in a historical and social context, it was expected that informants in the three generation cohorts would present their life stories differently, each group reflecting their own era. However, since all informants told their stories at the same time, they were also expected to show awareness of contemporary discourses in the society to which they all belonged. The issues that were considered were independence, duality of life, child-rearing, career and economy.

From the discussion on independence, three discursive positions were identified. The first position was a traditional ideal based on the image of seafarers' wives as 'no-nonsense' women, who had gained both self-confidence and resilience from their experiences of seafaring life. This was the most common position among informants of generations One and Two, while women of Generation Three were more inclined to take the nature-nurture

¹²⁴ G302-090799

approach, which was the second discursive concept identified. The nature- nurture approach downplayed the effects of maritime life, and focused more on inborn personality traits and the impact of non-maritime events on the informant's ability to cope with her life situation. Individualism was a strong influence in the majority of reconstructions in this category. There was also a third way in which the informants could present their experiences, and that was to juxtapose their stories against the central discourse stipulated. This could be done directly or indirectly, but common to all informants who placed their narratives in this category was a more pronounced awareness of what the stereotypical seafarer's wife should be like. Regardless of how the informants reconstructed their stories in relation to the discourse of independent maritime women, they all appeared to agree with the idea of seafaring life being dual in nature. The only noticeable distinction between the age groups was that younger women made more direct reference to the phenomenon, explicitly talking about the duality of maritime life. This would suggest that this particular debate had gained a more central position by the turn of the century than it had held earlier.

The most conspicuous discourse apparent in discussions on childrearing, work and finances was that of gender equality. The issue of childrearing proved a textbook example of how discourses change over time and colour narratives. Virtually all positive or very positive reconstructions of raising a family with a seafarer came from younger informants. Although this was partly due to better working conditions, one could not overlook the debate on gender equality that gained in strength over the last decades of the twentieth century. By the late 1990s, the father was expected to take an active part in raising his offspring, so by presenting a positive image of this particular aspect of maritime family life, the informants were able to conform to assumed contemporary ideals. The older informants, who had been raising children in a time when that was considered a woman's job, had less desire to place their reconstructions within the aforementioned discourse. Their

stories were almost exclusively placed within the category of negative experiences, but blaming external factors rather than the seafarer for an unstable father-child relationship.

Apart from gender equality, the reconstructions regarding work and money were also affected by the rise of individualism in society. By looking at the attitude to housewives, one was able to observe how both these ideals had shaped the narratives. Almost one third of women in Generation One put down 'housewife' as their occupation, even if they had in fact been engaged in paid employment for a large part of their adult lives. For these women, being at home to look after house and children conformed to the discourse of gender roles that was dominant at that particular point in time. By stating 'housewife' as their occupation they displayed awareness and acceptance of that particular discourse. One woman in Generation Two and none in Generation Three called herself a housewife, despite many of them being at home with children. This tendency suggested that younger women were keener to place their experiences within the late twentieth century ideal of equality and individualism. Generation Three women, who effectively were housewives, were particularly careful to stress that it had been their own personal choice to stay at home, not something that had been forced upon them. In the discussion on household economy, economic independence held a salient position in the reconstructions made by younger women. Separate accounts and the importance of an income of one's own featured more prominently in their narratives compared to those of the older informants.

6. With a Will that's All Her Own – Seafarers' Wives in Maritime Communities

The lyrics below were found in a diary kept by the wife of a Nantucket captain during her three years at sea aboard her husband's whaling vessel in the mid-nineteenth century. Had they been written in Swedish, they could have been the words of an Åland seafarer's wife:

I have made up my mind now to be a Sailors wife,
To have a purse full of money and a very easy life,
For a clever sailor Husband, is so seldom at his home,
That his Wife can spend the dollars, with a will that's all her own,
Then I'll haste to wed a Sailor, and send him off to sea,
For a life of independence, is the pleasant life for me.
But every now and then I shall like to see his face,
For it always seems to me to beam with manly grace,
With his brow so nobly open, and his dark and kindly eye,
Oh my heart beats fondly towards him whenever he is nigh,
But when he says; Good bye my love, I'm off across the sea
First I cry for his departure; Then laugh because I'm free,
Yet I'll welcome him most gladly, whenever he returns
And share with him so cheerfully all the money that he earns
For he's a loving Husband, though he leads a roving life
And well I know how good it is, to be a Sailors Wife.¹

Lisa Norling used the song to illustrate the prejudices she had when she started her project. As it turned out, these differed greatly from the findings of her research. Her area of interest was the extent to which the gender ideology of separate spheres, which emerged in the nineteenth century, also influenced women in maritime communities. Her assumptions, based on her preconceived ideas about the strong and independent maritime women of coastal New England, were that these women would have been indifferent to the perceptions of women as delicate and sensitive, dependent on the strength and rationality of men. As she was to

¹ 'The Nantucket Girls Song' as featured in L. Norling, *Captain Ahab*, p. 262

discover, however, notions of Victorian domesticity permeated these communities and became the dominant ideal.²

When I embarked on this research project, my expectations were also coloured by notions of the kind of women who became Åland seafarers' wives. From the reconstructions presented to me of maritime women's day-to-day life, a picture emerged, which largely cohered with the stereotype. The picture painted was of a strong and resourceful woman, able to juggle family, work and household commitments with seeming ease; a woman who rarely complained, despite at times being faced with immense hardships. When her husband returned home, she let him take his place as the family's head, herself staying in the background and making sure everything worked as it should. However, despite the seemingly strong consensus between the societal stereotype and the informants' reconstructions, there were also tales of disillusionment, disappointment and feelings of failure, which challenged the dominant image of the seafarer's wife and made visible subordinate discourses that existed within Åland society in the twentieth century.

The first of the objective of this thesis was to make a contribution to our understanding of the concept of community. Although maritime communities – fishing communities in particular – have been the focus of several studies, no conscious attempt has been made to establish what kinds of community can be called maritime. Despite a tendency to be restrictive, definitions offer a frame of reference that facilitates comparisons. Here, three aspects – location, dependency and perception – were established as criteria to define maritime communities. Based on the relative prominence of each aspect, two types of maritime community were identified; one called 'maritime environment' and the other 'maritime perception'. Maritime environments were further divided into active or passive,

² L. Norling; *Captain Ahab*, pp. 262-270

simple or complex. It was also contended that communities could be either maritime environments or maritime perceptions, or both.

The criteria established were applied to Åland's socio-economic and cultural structure to sustain the contention that the Islands were, and remain, both environmentally and perceptively maritime. The Archipelago was a maritime environment through its geographical characteristics and socio-economic structure, while it was a maritime community in the perceptive sense due to the prominent position the sea held in the Islanders' collective identity and their symbolic capital. In the course of this investigation, it was evident that shipping formed the basis of the Islands' economic prosperity, both in the employment opportunities that it offered and the income it generated. This aside, the study revealed pattern of economic development that differed from that evident in most Western industrial societies. As Åland transformed from a society heavily reliant on its primary industries to a modern service society, the industrial phase was by-passed. In these circumstances, it was misleading to talk about de-industrialisation. Instead, the process was described as *de-agriculturalisation*.

Change and continuity are significant themes in all historical studies, and the second objective of this work was to address these themes in relation to maritime family life from a female perspective. Of the many changes that occurred through the course of the twentieth century, the most palpable were improvements in working conditions and communications. The year-long separations and short unpaid holidays that were an integral part of seafaring life in the early and middle parts of the century were unthinkable by the 1990s, when shipboard time exceeding six months was infrequent, and most seamen worked according to 1:1 or 2:1 agreements. This development was paralleled by changes in communications, with both the means and the frequency of contact improving dramatically over time. Until the 1950s, seafarers and their wives communicated almost exclusively by

letter, occasionally supplemented by phone calls. As the century wore on, phone calls became more frequent and gradually took over from letters as the main means for communications. The last two decades of the twentieth century saw rapid advances in the field of telecommunications, with increased access to faxes, mobile phones and e-mail for ordinary people, making daily contact between the seafarer at sea and his family ashore not only possible but also common.

The significant impact that these changes had on maritime women's lives was evident in the way the different generation cohorts reconstructed their stories. Older seafarers' wives adopted a *then-now* discourse in their reconstructions, and in doing so distanced their experiences from those of their younger counterparts, sometimes even arguing that the latter were not 'real' seafarers' wives. The *then-now* approach was also utilised by women in the middle generation, albeit differently. It was used to describe how their own lives had changed over the course of their married lives, since they had themselves experienced and benefited from the technological advances. The youngest women, however, were not in a position to compare, and their reconstructions tended to focus on the pros and cons of the various forms of communications available to them rather than on how different their situation was compared to their older counterparts. Not all changes that occurred led to improvements, however. The down-sizing of crews, reduced job security in conjunction with increased workload and automation contributed to escalating levels of stress among seamen. Studies into seafarers' health reveal that seamen in the 1990s were exhausted and stressed when they returned from sea, and that many of them had difficulties unwinding and adjusting to family life.³

The cyclical nature of a seafaring marriage is a precondition for continuity in conjugal maritime life, a characteristic likely to remain unchanged since a career in seafaring

³ M. Thomas et al, 'Behind the Scenes', in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, p 125

will always entail periods of physical separation. Within this framework, the two most prominent features of continuity were, as experienced by the informants in this study, the duality of life and the continuous adjustments between life on one's own and life together with one's partner. These features were closely interrelated, for it was in the switch from one life to the other that the need for adjustment was evident. Despite changes in working conditions, informants from all three groups reconstructed the periods immediately prior to, and straight after, departures and arrivals as times of adjustment to their 'other' life. The shift between life as a single parent and as a whole family was described as a relatively painless exercise in most narratives, but the data also contained reconstructions in which the continuous adjustment from one life to another was described as problematic. In some cases, the duality of seafaring life had severe repercussions on the informants' sense of self, leading to depression and identity crises.

Longing and worry were other features of continuity, which, like adjustment and duality, were a consequence of the spouses' physical separation. The inability to spend time as a whole family was the main theme running through reconstructions of longing, regardless of the generation to which the narrators belonged. Reconstructions of worry focused almost exclusively on concerns for the seafaring husband's shipboard health and safety. Infidelity was given very little room in the narratives, but from the data available a new discourse emerged, which reflected developments in the shipping industry. As long as the seafarer was employed in long-distance shipping, the wife's worries revolved around his physical and mental wellbeing. If the husband held a position aboard a local ferry, however, the issue of infidelity was much more likely to feature in the narrative. The traditional sailor stereotype, the boozing and womanising Jack Tar, who used to spend his hard-earned cash in the infamous red-light districts of the world's port cities, had by the late twentieth century turned

into a responsible family man. The new actor on stage was *Tom Proxy*, the two-timing ferryman who kept one woman ashore and one aboard ship.

The third objective of this study was to explore the relationship between reconstruction and discourse. The analysis made visible the extent to which social ideals feed into subjective identity, but also how common discourses are constructed and sustained through individual narratives. Since each generation group was marked by the discourses available to them when they experienced different phases of seafaring life, each informant was a product of her own social and temporal milieu, a fact that was evident in the individual reconstructions. Simultaneously, since all informants lived in the same society at the same time, all reconstructions featured awareness of contemporary debates and ideals. Because the image of the seafarer's wife was socially constructed through common discourse, there was also noticeable agreement in the individual experiences of life as a seafarer's wife.

In reconstructing their experiences, the informants were often forced to negotiate their stories around conflicting discourses – both contemporary and separated in time. For women in Generation One, the most conspicuous conflict was women's subordination to men in opposition to the ideal of the strong and independent seafarer's wife. At the same time as the women were expected to show capability in managing their families while the husbands were at sea, they were supposed to acknowledge men's authority. Whereas some women took pride in their independence, other felt that their position as seafarers' wives forced them to relinquish their femininity. A similar situation was apparent in Summerfield's study, where the conscripted women had to find an acceptable position between doing masculine jobs and maintaining their classic feminine roles.⁴

The revival of the feminist movement in the 1970s challenged the established discourse of good housewifery and gave rise to the discourse of gender equality that was so

⁴ P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, pp. 78-105

prominent in the late 1990s. Although women in Generation One were also influenced by this, it was among the other two groups that the impact was most noticeable. Gender equality was still a new phenomenon when informants in Generation Two became wives and mothers. It was still both common and widely accepted for women to become housewives upon marriage. For the women of this generation, therefore, the discursive conflict between the housewife and the career woman was a conflict separated in time. This was particularly evident in the conspicuous lack of self-appointed 'housewives' in relation to the number of women in this age group who did not return to paid employment after childbirth. For informants in Generation Three, the ideal of equality and career was even stronger in common discourse. Growing up in a society where each individual was to be a self-supportive unit and where dependence was seen as a sign of weakness, it was important for the women to be able to motivate giving up a career and an income of one's own in order to stay at home to look after children and house. Women who were on maternity leave made a point of stating their intention to return to work as soon as possible, and despite often being tired from combining parenting with work, women did not regard staying at home for much more than a year a viable option. To be a housewife was not acceptable and, therefore for women who chose not to go back to work when their maternity leave came to an end, it was important to be able to justify that decision. Here, discourses on motherhood that stressed the mother's accessibility, as described by Ylva Elvin-Nowak and Heléne Thomsson, served as a means for justification.⁵

The ultimate aim of any researcher is to make a valid contribution to the existing body of knowledge in her particular area of study. In meeting the three objectives set out in the introduction, it is hoped that this study has achieved its main aim, namely to widen the scope of maritime history by shifting the focus from maritime men to maritime women.

⁵ Y. Elvin-Nowak & H. Tomsson, 'Motherhood' in *Gender & Society*, p. 414

Using the personal testimonies of Åland seafarers' wives, this case study has contributed to the historiography of maritime communities and women's position within them, and in doing so, it has brought into the spotlight aspects of maritime life that up until now have been largely obscured. However, with every study conducted and every topic investigated, new areas for research are opened up and new queries pose themselves. On completing this study, I find many areas that require attention. There is, for example, scope for detailed research into the idea of independence and the interaction between common discourses and individual experiences. Changing attitudes towards gender roles, particularly in relation to childcare and domestic management is another area that would benefit from more research. It would be interesting to see how the changing discourses of gender relations have impacted on women's marriage expectations and the organisation of family life. The experiences of seafarers' wives in Second World War is yet another area that would be fascinating to explore further, especially among those whose husbands were captured or who remained incommunicado for years or more. These three topics could no doubt be supplemented by a dozen more, and by utilising other sources and methods many new lines of enquiry could be opened up. I hope that this study will inspire more research into the lives and experiences of women in maritime communities.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Åland seafarers' wives

A. Background: (circle or fill out)

1. Year of birth: _____
2. Place of birth: _____
3. Education: _____
4. Present occupation: _____
5. Father's occupation: _____
6. Mother's occupation: _____
7. Marital status: *Cohabitee* *Married* *Divorced* *Widow*
8. Year of marriage or when you moved in with your partner: _____
9. If you are divorced, when did you separate from your partner? _____
10. If you are widowed, when did your partner pass away? _____
12. Briefly account for your partner's career, position aboard, type of seafaring, length of time ashore and aboard:

	POSITION	TYPE OF SEAFARING	TIME ON/OFF	YEAR
E.g.	<u>Engineer</u>	<u>Local ferry</u>	<u>week-week</u>	<u>1967-83</u>
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

B. Expectations: Did your partner work at sea when you started dating? What were your expectations of a life with a seafarer? Did you have any idea of what was awaiting you? Where your expectations met?

C. When he was at sea: How did it feel when your partner went to work? Did you miss him? What did you do to ease the longing? Did you worry? What did you worry about? How did you keep in touch? Was there anyone at home, e.g. family, friends or other seafarers' wives who could give you support? Were there positive sides to being alone?

D. When he came home: How did it feel when your partner came home? Were there conflicts? What about? Did you prepare in any particular way for your partner's homecoming? How was your daily life affected? What was it like when he retired and stayed ashore for good?

E. Being a seafarer's wife: In what way has your partner's occupation affected your life regarding choice of work and hobbies? Who is responsible for the household economy and how does it work in practice when your partner is at sea? What is it like to have children with a seafarer? Was he around when you were pregnant and when you gave birth? Do you think he lost out on much of your children's childhood? Did you get enough support with raising your children? Compared to women whose men work ashore, do you think you are more independent or is there no difference?

Appendix 2

Background information of informants

Place of birth	Generation 1	Generation 2	Generation 3
Aland	13	18	16
Finland, mainland	4	9	11
Other	1	1	2

Marital status	Generation 1	Generation 2	Generation 3
Cohabitee		1	6
Married	16	24	19
Divorced		2	3
Widowed	2	1	1

Education	Generation 1	Generation 2	Generation 3
Primary	7	5	
Secondary	5	15	16
Tertiary	3	6	11
Unknown	3	2	2

Partner's position	Generation 1	Generation 2	Generation 3
Deck officer	10	10	16
Engineer	6	15	7
Stuert	1	2	1
Skipper			1
Ordinary seaman		1	4
Unknown	1		

Occupation	Generation 1	Generation 2	Generation 3
Housewife	7	1	
Agricultural work			1
Nursing	1	2	2
Child care	1	5	1
Geriatric nursing		2	
Social therapy			1
Occupational therapy			1
Dental nursing			1
Disability care			1
Primary care			2
Teaching	4	2	4
Teaching assistant		2	
Youth work			1
Cultural work			5
Retail	3	3	2
Commerce	1	7	5
Tourism	1	1	1
Civil service	1		3
Translation	1		
Radio operator		1	1
Matron		2	
Cleaning	1	3	
Kitchen assistant	1		
Unknown	1		

Bibliography

Primary sources, personal testimonies

Oral testimonies

Generation One

G101-300799, woman born 1929 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G102-120799, woman born 1931 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G103-020899, woman born 1916 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G104-030899, woman born 1926 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G105-040899, woman born 1918 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

Generation Two

G201-060799, woman born 1954 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G202-080799, woman born 1946 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G203-230799, woman born 1947 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G204-290799, woman born 1949 in Sweden, husband's occupation: engineer

G205-290799, woman born 1943 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

Generation Three

G301-130799, woman born 1969 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G302-090799, woman born 1969 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G303-140799, woman born 1969 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G304-070799, woman born 1957 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G305-100100, woman born 1967 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

Written testimonies

Generation One

G1004, woman born 1935 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G1025, woman born 1918 in Åland, husband's occupation: stuert

G1041, woman born 1927 in Åland, no information on husband's position

G1045, woman born 1918 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G1058, woman born 1930 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G1061, woman born 1932 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G1065, woman born 1934 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer

G1067, woman born 1922 in the UK, husband's occupation: deck officer

G1081, woman born 1919 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G1093, woman born 1918 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G1100, woman born 1919 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G1101, woman born 1917 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G1102, woman born 1912 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

Generation Two

G2005, woman born 1953 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G2012, woman born 1941 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

G2019, woman born 1946 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer

G2022, woman born 1948 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2025, woman born 1951 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2029, woman born 1948 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2033, woman born 1946 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2036, woman born 1944 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2049, woman born 1942 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2050, woman born 1941 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2052, woman born 1947 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2054, woman born 1947 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2055, woman born 1939 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2088, woman born 1949 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: ordinary seaman
G2092, woman born 1941 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2093, woman born 1947 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2096, woman born 1951 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2099, woman born 1948 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: stuert
G2101, woman born 1947 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2[1]050, woman born 1939 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G2[1]054, woman born 1940 in Åland, husband's occupation: stuert
G2[3]009, woman born 1950 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer
G2[3]085, woman born 1944 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer

Generation Three

G3001, woman born 1955, in Sweden, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3003, woman born 1956 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: engineer
G3005, woman born 1965 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3010, woman born 1962 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3012, woman born 1953 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3014, woman born 1954 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G3025, woman born 1961 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: ordinary seaman
G3038, woman born 1965 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: ordinary seaman
G3039, woman born 1966 in Åland, husband's occupation: ordinary seaman
G3050, woman born 1961 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G3063, woman born 1966 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3070, woman born 1952 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G3076, woman born 1953 in Åland, husband's occupation: skipper
G3078, woman born 1961 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3081, woman born 1960 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G3082, woman born 1948 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3083, woman born 1951 in Sweden, husband's occupation: engineer
G3086, woman born 1961 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3088, woman born 1954 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3090, woman born 1958 in Åland, husband's occupation: engineer
G3092, woman born 1961 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3095, woman born 1969 in Åland, husband's occupation: deck officer
G3096, woman born 1957 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: stuert
G3098, woman born 1951 in mainland Finland, husband's occupation: deck officer

Primary sources, printed

Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå (ÅSUB), Mariehamn

- *Statistisk årsbok för Åland* (1979-2000)
- *Nationalräkenskapsdata för Åland, 1993-1996* (1998)
- *Befolkningen 1749-1999: Ålands befolkningsstatistik 250 år*, Statistikmeddelanden 30.12.1999, Befolkningen 1999:8 (1999)
- *Sysselsatt arbetskraft på Åland 31.12.1998*, Statistikmeddelande 22.12.2000, Arbetsmarknaden 2000:2 (2000)
- *Nationalräkenskapsdata för Åland, 1993-1998*, Statistikmeddelande 18.1.2001, Nationalräkenskaper 2001:1 (2001)
- *Familjer och hushåll på Åland 31.12.2000*, Statistikmeddelande 2.1.2002, Befolkning 2001:8, (2002)

Finlands officiella statistik (FOS),

- Bidrag till Finlands Officiella Statistik, Öfversikt av Finlands befolkning den 31 December 1900
- Bidrag till Finlands Officiella Statistik. Öfversikt av Finlands befolkning den 31 December 1910
- Bidrag till Finlands Officiella Statistik, Öfversikt av Finlands befolkning den 31 December 1920
- Bidrag till Finlands Officiella Statistik, Öfversikt av Finlands befolkning den 31 December 1930
- Bidrag till Finlands Officiella Statistik, Öfversikt av Finlands befolkning den 31 December 1940
- Befolkningsstatistik, 1950 års allmänna folkräkning. Befolkning efter näringsgren och yrkesställning, detaljerad gruppering, VI C:102 1950 (Helsinki, 1956)
- Befolkningsstatistik, 1960 års allmänna folkräkning. Befolkning efter näringsgren och yrkesställning, detaljerad gruppering, VI C:103 1960 (Helsinki, 1963)
- Befolkningsstatistik, 1970 års allmänna folkräkning. Befolkning efter näringsgren och yrkesställning, detaljerad gruppering, VI C:104 1970 (Helsinki, 1973)
- Befolkningsstatistik, 1980 års allmänna folkräkning. Befolkning efter näringsgren och yrkesställning, detaljerad gruppering, VI C:106 1980 (Helsinki, 1983)
- Befolkningsstatistik, 1990 års allmänna folkräkning. Befolkning efter yrkes och socio-ekonomisk ställning, 1-8 (Helsinki, 1993)
- Statistiska meddelanden, no 63 , Befolkningens näringsgren 1880-1975 (Helsinki, 1979)

Tidningen Åland, 05/02/1927

Nya Åland, 10/06/2002

Web sources

2001 Economic & Statistics Review, Guernsey at

http://www.gov.gg/esu/stats_rev_2001_frame.htm

Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark at <http://www.aarhuskunstmuseum.dk>,

<http://www.artnet.com>

Associated British Ports at <http://www.abports.co.uk/customer/ports.htm>

Corporate Information at

<http://www.corporateinformation.com/ausector/shipping.htm>

Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources, Australia at

<http://www.isr.gov.au/industry/marine/ships.pdf>

Isle of Man Government at <http://www.gov.im/infocentre/stats.asp>

Mariehamns stadsbibliotek, Åland at <http://www.mhbibl.aland.fi/forfattare>

Maritime Union of Australia at <http://www.mua.tcp.net.au/pages/blue.html>

Shetland in statistics 2001 at <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/stats/statsframe.htm>

Jersey Government Website at <http://www.gov.je/>

Transport statistics, Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions, UK

at <http://www.transtat.dtlr.gov.uk/tables/2001/provport/provport.htm>

Secondary Sources

Ålands sjöfart, vol. 2 (Mariehamn, 1951)

Åländsk odling, no 57 (Mariehamn, 1997)

Ålands Landskapsstyrelse, *Sjöfartspolitiskt program för Åland* (Mariehamn, 1999)

Ålands museum & Ålands konstmuseum, *Åländska kvinnoporträtt: Sommarutställning 2000* (Mariehamn, 2000)

Alberius-Forsman K., *Från kollämpare till kavaljer: Sju maskinbefäl berättar*, Ålands Maskinbefälsförening (Mariehamn, 1992)

Alberius-Forsman K., *Sjöfarare och sjöfruar* (Mariehamn, 1996)

Allan G., *Family Life* (Oxford 1985)

Anderson, B. (transl. S.-E. Torhell), *Den föreställda gemenskapen: Reflexioner kring nationalismens ursprung och spridning* (Gothenburg, 1992)

Bäck-Wiklund M. & B. Bergsten, *Det moderna föräldraskapet: En studie av familj och kön i förändring* (Falun, 1997)

- Bailey V.**, *'This Rash Act': Suicide across the life cycle in the Victorian city* (Stanford, 1998)
- Bell C. & H. Newby**, *Community Studies: An introduction to the sociology of the local community* (London, 1971)
- Berggreen B.**, 'Dealing with anomalies? Approaching maritime women' in L. R. Fischer, H. Hamre, P. Holm & J.R. Bruijn (eds), *The North Sea: Twelve essays on social history of maritime labour* (Stavanger, 1992)
- Berger Gluck S. & D. Patai** (eds.), *Women's Words: The feminist practice of oral history* (New York, 1991)
- Björklund A.**, *Hamnens arbetare: En etnologisk undersökning av stuveriarbetet i Göteborg* (Stockholm, 1984)
- Blomqvist A.**, *I stormens spår* (Helsinki, 1966)
- Blomqvist A.**, *Vägen till Stormskäret* (Tampere, 1968)
- Blomqvist A.**, *Havet finns inte mer* (Helsinki, 1989)
- Bottomore T. & R. Nisbet** (eds), *A History of Sociological Analysis* (London, 1979)
- Bourne P.**, *Out of the World: Seafaring reminiscences* (London, 1935)
- Bozzoli B.**, 'Interviewing the women of Phokeng' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)
- Broeze F.**, *Island Nation: A history of Australians and the sea* (St. Leonards, NSW, 1998)
- Brøgger J.**, *Nazaré: Women and men in a prebureaucratic Portuguese fishing village* (Orlando, 1992)
- Brunila M.**, *Från samma båt till olika sidor om bordet, Finlands Skeppsbefälsförbund* (Helsinki, 1982)
- Chamberlain M.**, 'Gender and Memory' in V. Sheperd, B. Brereton & B. Bailey (eds.), *Engendering History: Caribbean women in historical perspective* (London, 1995)
- Cohen A. P.**, *Whalsay: Symbol, segment and boundary in a Shetland island community* (Manchester, 1987)
- Cohen A. P.**, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1989)
- Cole S.**, *Women of the Praia: Work and lives in a Portuguese coastal community* (Princeton, 1991)
- Cordingly D.**, *Heroines and Harlots: Women at sea in the Great Age of Sail* (London, 2002)

- Creighton M. & L. Norling**, *Iron Men and Wooden Women: Gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world 1700-1920* (Baltimore, 1996)
- Diktonius E.** 'Åländsk symfoni' in W. Nyman (ed.), *Åländsk antologi* (Ekenäs, 1977)
- Durkheim E.** (transl. G. Simpson), *The Division of Labour in Society* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1960)
- Eliasson P. E.**, *Män, kvinnor och våld: Att förstå och förändra våldsamt beteende* (Stockholm, 2000)
- Ellis C.**, *Fisher Folk* (Kentucky, 1986)
- Elvin-Nowak Y. & H. Thomsson**, 'Motherhood as Idea and Practice: A discursive understanding of employed mothers in Sweden' in *Gender & Society*, vol. 15, no 3 (London, 2001)
- Engel S.**, *Context is Everything: The nature of memory* (New York, 1999)
- Eriksson P.**, *The Duchess: The life and death of the Herzogin Cecilie* (London, 1958)
- Fischer L. R., H. Hamre, P. Holm & J.R. Bruijn** (eds), *The North Sea: Twelve essays on social history of maritime labour* (Stavanger, 1992)
- Freund J.**, 'German Sociology in the Time of Max Weber', in T. Bottomore & R. Nisbet (eds), *A History of Sociological Analysis* (London, 1979)
- Giles J.**, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-1950* (London, 1995)
- Greenhill B. & J. Hackman**, *The Grain Races* (London, 1986)
- Hagmark H. & M. Barnard**, 'Åland Shipping and Hull's Baltic Timber Trade' in B. Karlsson et al (eds) *Sjöhistorisk årsskrift för Åland*, vol 12 (Mariehamn, 2000)
- Harberg J.**, *Åländsk sjöfart med maskindrivna fartyg* (Mariehamn, 1995)
- Harlaftis G.**, *Greek Shipowners and Greece 1945-1975* (London, 1993)
- Harlaftis G.**, *A History of Greek-owned Shipping* (London, 1996)
- Heikell T.**, *Nog har jag alltid varit välkommen, tror jag: Sjömännens anpassning till familjelivet*, (unpublished MA-thesis, Åbo Akademi, Turku, 2002)
- Hinkkanen M.-L.**, 'Perhe-elämää aaltojen paella: Kateenien purjehtivat rouvat 1800-luvulla' in I. Malinen & M. Pelanne (eds.) *Nautica Fennica 2001-2002*, The Maritime Museum of Finland (Helsinki, 2002)
- Högman G.**, *Den åländska kvinnans historia 1700-1950* (Mariehamn, 1990)
- Hugill S.**, *Sailortown* (London, 1967)

- Hwang P.**, 'Pappa – före och efter födelsen' in P. Hwang (ed.), *Spädbarnets psykologi* (Stockholm, 1999)
- Jamieson A. G.** (ed.), *A People of the Sea* (London, 1986)
- Jocano F. L.**, *San Antonio: A case study of adaptation and folk life in a fishing community* (Quezon City, 1976)
- Joensen J. P.**, 'Maritime Communities in the Faroes in the Age of the Hand-line Smack' in L. R. Fischer, H. Hamre, P. Holm & J.R. Bruijn (eds), *The North Sea: Twelve essays on social history of maritime labour* (Stavanger, 1992)
- Junger S.**, *The Perfect Storm* (London, 1998)
- Juttikala E. & K. Pirinen**, *Finlands Historia* (Stockholm, 1968)
- Kåhre G.**, *Den åländska sjöfartens historia* (Mariehamn, 1988)
- Kåhre G.**, *Ålands redarförening 1934-1959* (Tampere, 1959)
- Kaijser I.**, 'Sjömannens yrke – ur hustruns perspektiv' in N. Storå and K. Montin (eds), *Sjömannen: från livsform till yrke*, Meddelanden från sjöhistoriska museet vid Åbo Akademi, no 20 (Turku, 1997)
- Kaijser I.**, 'Sjömansyrkets villkor' in U. Djerw & I. Kaijser (eds.) *Sjömansliv: Berättelser från två sekler, Sjöhistorisk årsbok 2000-2001* (Stockholm, 2000)
- Kaukiainen Y.**, *A History of Finnish Shipping* (London, 1993)
- Karlsson E.**, *Mother Sea*, (London, 1964)
- Karlsson E.**, *Havet är mitt hem*, (Stockholm, 1965)
- Karlsson E.**, *Pully-Haul*, (London, 1966)
- Karlsson E.**, *Cruising off Mozambique*, (London, 1969)
- Karlsson E.**, *Två skepp*, (Mariehamn, 1988)
- Keegan J.**, 'The Sea and the English' in E. E. Rice (ed.) *The Sea and History* (Stroud, 1996)
- Kielland A.**, *Garman og Worse* (Oslo, 1985)
- Kikimura A.**, 'Family Life Histories' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)
- Kirby D. & M.-L. Hinkkanen**, *The Baltic and the North Seas* (London, 2000)

- Korhonen M., *Isyyden muutos. Keski-ikäisen miesten lapsuuskokemukset ja oma vanhemmuus* (Joensuu, 1999)
- Lönnqvist B., 'En icke ålänning' in *Åländsk odling*, no 57 (Mariehamn, 1997)
- Lummis T., *Occupation and Society: The East Anglian fishermen 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 1985)
- Lummis T., 'Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)
- Lundberg U.-L., *Leo* (Helsinki, 1989)
- Lundberg U.-L., *Stora världen* (Helsinki, 1991)
- Lundberg U.-L., *Allt man kan önska sig* (Helsinki, 1995)
- Luxton M., *More Than a Labour of Love: Three generations of women's work in the home* (Toronto 1980)
- Meinander H., *Finlands Historia 4* (Helsinki, 1999)
- Mollat du Jourdin M., *Europe and the Sea* (Oxford, 1993)
- Morrison K., *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Foundations of modern social thought* (London, 1995)
- Nervander E., *Sommarresor på Åland, Åländska klassiker I* (Mariehamn, 1983, orig.1872)
- Norling L., *Captain Ahab had a Wife: New England women and the whaling industry, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill, 2000)
- Nyman W., (ed.), *Åländsk antologi* (Ekenäs, 1977)
- Örjans J., *Boken om Pommern* (Mariehamn, 2002)
- Papp D., *Åländsk allmogeseglation* (Lund, 1971)
- Papp D., 'Gode Make! Min Gumma! En brevväxling mellan Tilda Mattsson och hennes man skepparen Matts Mattsson' in *Skärgård*, no 2 (Turku, 1985)
- Parker A. W., L. M. Hubinger, S. Green, L. Sargaent & R. Boyd, *A Survey of the Health, Stress and Fatigue of Australian Seafarers* (Canberra, 1997)
- Pearsall J. & B. Trumble (eds.), *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996)
- Perks R. & A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)
- Pollard S., *Peaceful Conquest, The industrialization of Europe 1760-1970* (Oxford, 1981)

- Portelli A.**, 'What Makes Oral history Different' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)
- Procopé S.**, 'Skulpturerna kring Esplanaden i Mariehamn' in *Åländsk odling*, no 55 (Mariehamn, 1995)
- Roberts E.**, *A Woman's Place: An oral history of working-class women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984)
- Robinson R.**, 'The Line and Trawl Fisheries in the Age of Sail' in D. J. Starkey, C. Reid & N. Ashcroft (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries: the Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000)
- Robinson R.**, 'Steam Power and Distant-Water Trawling' in D. J. Starkey, C. Reid & N. Ashcroft (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries: the Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000)
- Rønning Balsvik R.**, 'Kvinner i nordnorske kystsamfunn' in *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol.70, 4/1991 (Stockholm, 1991)
- Rosenström M.**, *Fartyget, himlen och havet*, Meddelanden från Folkkultursarkivet, no 16 (Helsinki, 1996)
- Rowthorn R. E. & J. R. Wells**, *De-industrialization and Foreign Trade* (Cambridge, 1987)
- Sager E. W. & G. E. Panting**, *Maritime Capital: The shipping industry in Atlantic Canada 1820-1914* (Montreal, 1990)
- Salminen S.**, *Katrina* (Södertälje, 1976, orig. 1936)
- Salminen U.**, *Till sjöss* (Jakobstad, 1977)
- Salminen U.** *För om masten*, (Jakobstad, 1978)
- Salminen U.** *På bryggan*, (Jakobstad, 1979)
- Schön L.**, *En modern svensk ekonomisk historia* (Stockholm, 2000)
- Singleton F.**, *A Short History of Finland* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Skotheim R.**, 'Female Labour in Stavanger 1875-1910' in P. Holm & J. Edwards, *North Sea Ports and Harbours: Adaptations to Change*, Fiskeri- og Sjøfartsmuseets Studierie, no 1 (Esbjerg, 1991)
- Slim H. & P. Thompson, with O. Bennet & N. Cross**, 'Ways of Listening' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader* (London, 1998)
- Sommarström H.**, *Åland i forntid och nutid*, (Stockholm, 1919)

- Starkey D. J.**, 'Concentration and Dependency? The distribution of Britain's maritime industries 1870-1914' in L. M. Akveld, F. Loomer & M. Hahn-Pedersen (eds.) *Financing the Maritime Sector* (Esbjerg, 2002)
- Starkey D. J. & C. Lazenby**, 'Altered Images: Representing the trawling in the late twentieth century' in D. J. Starkey, C. Reid & N. Ashcroft (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries: the Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000)
- Starkey D. J., C. Reid & N. Ashcroft** (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries: the Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000)
- Summerfield P.**, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998)
- Sundberg G.** (transl. J. Palmer), *The Last Windjammers – Grain Races round Cape Horn* (Helsinki, 1998)
- Sundberg G.**, *Lundqvistrederierna 70 år* (Mariehamn, 1998)
- Sundqvist C.** 'Kvinnor ombord' in M. Engman (ed.), *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, vol. 73, 3/1988 (Helsinki, 1988)
- Svensson H.**, *En obändig ålänning* (Mariehamn, 1998)
- Thadén E. C.** (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1851-1914* (Princeton, 1981)
- Teryakian E. A.**, 'Emile Durkheim' in T. Bottomore & R. Nisbet (eds), *A History of Sociological Analysis* (London, 1979)
- Thomson A.**, 'Anzac Memories' in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *Oral History Reader* (London, 1998), p. 301
- Thompson P. with T. Wailey & T. Lummis**, *Living the Fishing* (London, 1983)
- Tönnies F.** (transl. C. P. Loomis), *Community and Association* (London, 1955)
- Tunstall J.**, *The Fishermen* (London, 1962)
- Thomas M., H. Sampson and M. Zhao**, 'Behind the Scenes: Seafaring and family life' in *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, Cardiff University (Cardiff, 2001)
- van der Veen A.**, 'Independent Willy-Nilly: Fisherwomen on the Dutch North Sea coast, 1890-1940' in L. R. Fischer, H. Hamre, P. Holm & J.R. Bruijn (eds), *The North Sea: Twelve essays on social history of maritime labour* (Stavanger, 1992)
- Viriden J.**, *Good-bye Piccadilly: British war brides in America* (Urbana, 1996)

Walton J. K., 'Fishing Communities, 1850-1950' in D. J. Starkey, C. Reid & N. Ashcroft (eds.), *England's Sea Fisheries: the Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London, 2000)

Walton J. K., *The British Seaside: Holidays and resorts in the twentieth century* (Manchester, 2000)

Wikdahl M., *Varvets tid: Arbetarliv och kulturell förändring i en skeppsbyggerstad* (Stockholm, 1992)