The Perception and Management of 24/7 Work Availability: Work-life balance in the tramp shipping industry

by

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May 2015

Master's Programme in Management

Abstract

Globalization, and fierce competition has been one of the main factors contributing to the increase of 24/7 work availability. 24/7 work availability is defined by the constant reachability of workers, and is regarded to be enhanced by the introduction and democratization of ICT. Arguably, constant work availability has shown to negatively affect individuals' work-life balance. To contextualize, as well as illustrate 24/7 work availability, the tramp shipping industry, which is characterized by high intensity and global logistics, is analyzed due to its full implementation of 24/7 work availability. This thesis aims to advance the knowledge on the sociology of contemporary work. Particularly, to comprehend how individuals in the tramp shipping industry perceive and manage 24/7 work availability, by applying boundary theory and to understand how boundary management can be utilized to establish work-life balance. In order to provide different perspectives to the central concept, literature and theory from various fields of research is thoroughly reviewed in the thesis. Boundary theory, person-environment fit model, and cultural theory are thus used as lenses and support the analysis of the collected empirical material. The empirical material is based on thirteen semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in the tramp shipping industry from different organizations. This thesis demonstrates that the workers perceptions are heavily influenced by the shipping industry's culture, and its survival is dependent on the industry finding workers with similar traits to ensure person-environment fit. The individuals management of 24/7 work availability seems to be determined by their professional goals, job identification, age, and experiences. In a society where unsustainable constant connectivity and availability seem to be of the essence, boundary management is raised as the main suggestion to establish work-life balance. In the long-run, this is found to benefit both employer and employee.

Key words: 24/7 work availability; boundaries; work-life balance; work-life conflict; tramp shipping.

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1　Introduction

Work hours seem to have undergone a transformation in definition. As a consequence of globalization, including an increase in competition, 24/7 work availability is now an expectation. 24/7 radio, media, restaurants, fitness centers, and stores are all 24/7 facilities that encourage constancy and strengthen the 24/7 economy (Crary, 2014). In this thesis, 24/7 work availability, which is the thesis' central concept, assumes incessant reachability of the worker, formally or informally expected by the employer. Accordingly, the concept disregards time and work schedules. With this as a backdrop, 24/7 work availability does not presuppose constant work, rather constant work availability and reachability.

Due to novel information and communication technologies (ICT), workers are able to remain connected and reachable at all hours, and every so often expected to be so and thus 24/7 work availability is enhanced. Whilst ICT facilitates individuals' flexibility as well as favours reciprocal and instant communication within organizations, it also causes conflict (Thomas, 2014; Mellner, Aronsson & Kecklund, 2014). Going from 'nine-to-five' to 24/7 work availability has led to an increase in workers' stress, constant friction between private and work-life, as well as the blurring of the line between the two (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Crary, 2014; Thomas, 2014). The latter is commonly known as work-life conflict, work-family conflict, or inter-role conflict, which are all synonyms for the same phenomenon (Frone, Russel & Cooper, 1997). Work-life conflict is recurrently defined as a discord between the different roles individuals tend to possess such as parent and worker (Mellner, Aronsson & Kecklund, 2014). Consequently, work-life conflict affects individuals' work-life balance, which is broadly interpreted as the harmony of expectations in regards to the allocation of time between work and private life (Thomas, 2014; Blazovich, Smith & Smith, 2014).

It can be argued that in some positions, in certain industries characterized by intensity, service dependency, and established decision-making processes, work hour reorganization has been necessary in the economical context that seems to be defined by globalization, fierce competition, and marketization (Crary, 2014). Managers and leaders may too be concerned by 24/7 work availability as they hold responsibilities and pressure to reach targets.

Swedish scholars Allvin, Aronsson, Hagström, Johansson, and Lundberg (2011) have identified traits of the 'new work life' that are highly intertwined with the increase in 24/7 work availability expectancy. The new work life essentially highlights the intensification of white-collar workers responsibility, and the individualization of work. Simultaneously, it is characterized by the deregulation of work, time and workspace. Moreover, the authors are concerned with the blurriness of individuals' boundaries in combination with ICT. This can become problematic and cause disequilibrium (Fonner & Stache, 2012). As a consequence to the new work life, and the subjectification of individuals by work many are experiencing health issues, private and work-issues (Fonner & Stache, 2012).

1.1 Problem Identification and Research Question

There has been a recent interest in the negative effects such of stress related diseases that 24/7 work availability has on individuals. From a humanitarian perspective, the sustainability of always being reachable is being questioned by related scholars, particularly when considering the increasing rate of 'burn outs' due to overwork and other physical as well as physiological effects (Allvin et al., 2011). As a response, and assisted by boundary theory, scholars concerned with work-life balance have recently studied the relevance of the installation of boundaries and their potential benefits (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000).

An industry that is defined by intensity, service dependency and established decision-making processes is the tramp shipping industry. According to our empirical material, 24/7 work availability and reachability is formally or informally expected in the industry. Due to the global nature of the business and thus the involvement of various time-zones, constant reachability is essential. In addition, in regards to the data collected, the industry seems to be characterized by the flexibility of work hours and places, suggesting that the distinction between private and work life is rather blurred (Allvin et al., 2011).

24/7 work availability is not novel to the industry. To the contrary, even before the introduction of ICT several interviewees described going to the office before and after work hours, as well as during weekends. This being said, workers in the twenty first century involved in shipping are more likely to ensure 24/7 work availability owing to ICT and particularly smartphones provided by employers.

To the best of our knowledge, few studies have investigated how 24/7 work availability is perceived by workers in 24/7 intensive industries, such as the shipping industry, and how workers attempt to manage, or achieve work-life balance. Notably, by gaining an understanding about real-life experiences, one may be able to develop ideas on how boundaries could be utilized in 24/7 work availability industries to establish work-life balance. Consequently, there is an attempt in this thesis to fill the stated knowledge gap, as well as to demonstrate its applicability to other industries.

Taking the latter into consideration, we developed an idea which we wanted to investigate with individuals working in the shipping industry. The idea is based on boundary theory, which argues for the construction of boundaries to benefit both private and work life (Ashforth et al., 2000). By asking shipping workers to specify certain free hours during which no phone calls, fax or emails, with the exception of urgent phone calls would be transmitted, we hope to gain a deeper understanding into how 24/7 work availability is regarded upon, as well as managed, and how boundary management can be utilized to achieve work-life balance whilst maintaining some type of 24/7 work availability in such an intense and competitive industry where time is of the essence.

Inspired by Buddhism, the idea in itself emerged from a conversation between the two of us discussing the impossible task of thinking of several things at the same time. Consequently, with a simple Internet search, the concept of boundary management was found, and we commenced to develop the thesis' framework.

With this as a framework two research questions are presented:

RQ1: How do individuals in the tramp shipping industry perceive and manage 24/7 work availability?

RQ2: How can boundary management be utilized by employees and employers to establish work-life balance?

1.2   Research Context: Tramp Shipping

Transporting over 90% of global trade volume, the shipping industry plays a fundamental role in the global economy (Stopford, 2008; International Maritime Organisation, 2008). Rapidity, volume and competition in international trade has been increasing over the past fifty years, which has facilitated national production through the import of raw materials and energy (Lee, Wan, Shi, & Li, 2014). Nevertheless, the shipping industry is prone to the 'shipping cycle', which is the occurrence of extreme high and low market rates for vessels and transportation of cargoes. These cycles are triggered by an imbalance in demand and supply of transporting units due to a fluctuation in the global economy and mismatching forecasts of ship owners.

Two main categories exist within the shipping industry; liner shipping and tramp shipping. In this thesis, the focus will be on the tramp shipping industry, which is characterized by irregular schedules and quite spontaneous voyages, as well as higher pressure, and stress levels due to the higher irregularity than in liner shipping (Harlaftis & Theotokas, 2004). To obtain business in tramp shipping besides offering good customer service and maintaining business relationship (Harlaftis & Theotokas, 2004), the freight rate; that is, the price for the transportation of goods, is crucial (Norstad, Fagerholt & Laporte, 2011). Comparable to other industries, ship owners can take advantage of scale economies by increasing their fleet size (Wu & Lin, 2015; Norstad, Fagerholt & Laporte, 2011).

The complexity of the market and the myriad of factors influencing rates, explains the origin of the continued pressure on individuals involved in shipping. When rates are sky high, time is of the essence; as timeloss often reflects in capital lost also. Besides the need for good service to nurture sustainable business relationships in times of bad markets, the need for rapid decisions, as part of operating efficiency, in any kind of market is crucial for organizations to survive in an industry marked by fierce competition. These two factors, and the fact that onboard personnel work continuously to ensure that vessels are running 24/7, constitute enough reason for the existence of 24/7 services in global shipping organizations.

1.3   Aim and Objectives

The aim with this thesis is to advance the knowledge of how individuals in the tramp shipping industry perceive and manage 24/7 work availability. In addition, after having obtained novel knowledge concerning the matter, the objective is to envisage possibilities on how boundary theory may be applied, and how boundaries can be used to attain work-life balance. The latter may be done through the identification of interviewees that successfully implement boundaries, and interviewees that do not.

The obtained knowledge on the utilization, and benefits of boundary management may be transferred into other sectors, which is additionally an objective with this thesis. Particularly as research highlights the benefits organizations could extract from workers attaining balance between private and working-life, and the importance of the creation of boundaries to encourage creativity and wellbeing.

1.4   Outline of the thesis

The thesis is outlined in the following manner: Chapter 1, the introduction, presents the problem identification and the research questions. Further a presentation of the tramp shipping industry is offered as well as aims and objectives. In Chapter 2 a theoretical and literature framework will firstly be provided. There, 24/7 work availability as a concept will be further defined as well as discussed. Additionally, previous research concerning the phenomenon has on work-life balance will be offered. Further, other related theories and models to the central concept will be reviewed with the aim to offer different perspectives on how 24/7 work availability can be perceived and managed. These are: boundary theory, person-environment fit model, and cultural theory.

Following the presentation of concepts, theories, and models the thesis' methodology will be examined in Chapter 3, describing research approach, design, and how the empirical material was collected and analyzed, as well as research limitations. Further in Chapter 4 the analysis follows. It demonstrates the empirical results and discussion for each of the two research questions. Finally, in Chapter 5, a conclusion is provided where the main findings and implications will be presented as well as recommendations for future research.

2 Literature and Theoretical Review

In this chapter the central concept, which is 24/7 work availability will be discussed. Aiming to provide different perspectives and to enhance the understanding of 24/7 work availability, boundary theory, person-environment fit model, as well as cultural theory will be introduced. Notably, various types of literature such as management, history, psychology, and culture related articles have been reviewed to broaden the perspective on the thesis' central concept.

2.1 24/7 Work Availability and Work-Life Balance

24/7 work availability "announces a time without time" and indicates never-ending work (Crary, 2014, p. 29). Consequently individuals' risk losing life-structure, particularly as time becomes homogenous and boundaryless (Allvin et al., 2011). Many scholars identify the reorganization of time and argue that temporal and spatially bound work is fading for managers, professionals and other white-collar workers in particular (Felstead, 2012). These transformations are asserted to have deep repercussions for individuals' experiences of work and private life (Felstead, 2012; Crary, 2014). Moreover, some scholars interested in 24/7 work availability see shift work as an important component when discussing the phenomenon, as it is "a necessity in essential services that need to be fully functional 24 hours a day, seven days a week." (Landy & Conte, 2013, p. 408). A myriad of organizations specifically search for young, ambitious individuals who are driven by passion and a will to assume responsibility and ownership of their professional achievements. Managers also argue: "global jobs require global minds that are readily available when real needs arise" (Thomas Dijon, email, April 18, 2015). There seems to be enough individuals who fight for these exciting jobs, and who desire to indulge in a certain lifestyle and live their dream. Often their social lives revolve around their jobs: if in doubt of the chosen lifestyle, and the environment will quickly reassure that everything is a normal state of affairs. The motivation and adrenaline that is drawn from the job, covers potential dissatisfaction. Interestingly, the individual's mindset and the surrounding make it easy to overlook signs of exhaustion.

As a potential reaction to the economical context and the arrival of ICT, many organizations have become more demanding, but simultaneously more flexible with their staff; encouraging flex work, telecommuting, and working from home (Allvin et al., 2011; Mellner, Aronsson & Kecklund, 2014). However, the flexibility entails unpredictability for the workers, as their work becomes less structured and more fluid (Allvin et al., 2011). In addition, many workplaces have become more individualized, meaning that it is difficult to delegate one's work to a colleague (Allvin et al., 2011). This situation potentially encourages working over-time from the office, or for work to continue when home. Interestingly it also seems to pressure *"presence besides illness"*, indicating that there might be a sentiment of work, or responsibility obligation as an underlying factor (Allvin et al., 2011, p. 195).

Addressing the latter, the "*presence besides illness*" may be explained by the Pygmalion or Rosenthal effect, which is arguably the most effective and cost-saving approach to motivate employees (Livingston, 1988; Allvin et al., 2011, p. 195). Livingston (1988) argues that managers are able to increase performance of employees by setting the right expectations, suggesting that high expectations in an employee ultimately lead to increased productivity. This theory is grounded in the importance of the right treatment, proposing that employees who perform well are not necessarily those who get paid well, but those who are treated well. Arguably, the right treatment causes employees to live up to expectations (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). However, to be able to act as a 'pygmalion-manager', industry knowledge and job skills are essential to appear confident and to gain the trust of the employees (Livingston, 1988). Relating this to 24/7 work availability being introduced by the organization through the supply of ICT, it appears logical that employees strive to increase their availability for the organization and the determination to serve clients' needs.

24/7 work availability is not solely driven by the employer, but also by the employees themselves. Human nature stimulates individuals to strive for something higher or better, to be ambitious and to aim at esteem. Explanation for this phenomenon can be found in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, whereby he argues that individuals aspire to achieve certain needs, and once that need is fulfilled the next higher need is aimed for (Griffin & Moorhead, 2010; Pride, Hughes, & Kapoor, 2012). According to Maslow's first pyramid, which is ranked after importance, the highest, and most uncommonly achieved need is that of self-actualization. Esteem and self-actualization belong in the category of personal growth and development (Griffin & Moorhead, 2010; Pride, Hughes & Kapoor, 2012). Maslow (1943) claims that everyone is able, and desires to climb the hierarchical ladder but only unsatisfied needs stimulate ambitions. Being 24/7 work available, if not actually being officially stipulated in the job description, is for many a necessary stepping stone on the way to achieve esteem, in the form of achievement, independence, status, prestige and respect from others but also self-respect, if not self-actualization. Self-actualization contains realizing one's potential, personal growth and outstanding experiences (Maslow, 1943).

Studies have demonstrated that 24/7 work availability and work-life conflict have negative effects on individuals' health, affecting both the employer and employee (Kelly & Moen, 2007). Kelly and Moen (2007) and Joel Goh, Pfeffer and Zenios (2014) identify that depressions, headaches, insomnia, drinking problems, and cardiovascular diseases can be linked to work-life imbalance. Cable (2005) argues that the human circadian rhythm may be harmed by sleep deprivation, unplanned work extension, time zone shifts or on-call duties, which new work life sometimes embodies, which may result in consequences that greatly affect an organization and individuals such as an increase in stress, and exhaustion, as well as a decrease in productivity, absenteeism, and turnover (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Cable, 2005). As an example, 120,000 deaths and 5-8% of the United State's health care costs can be linked to mismanagement of the American work force, costing US employers between $50 and $300billion every year (Joel Goh, Pfeffer & Zenios, 2014; Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrel, 1990).

Considering private life, the literature suggests that it tends to become compromised particularly since the democratization of ICT (Crary, 2014). Even if some scholars assert that ICT brings the individual more choices and freedom, others believe that it causes work-life

conflict (Brynolfsson & Mcafee, 2014; Thomas, 2014). Because ICT facilitates being 24/7 work available, the action of bringing work to private domains is simultaneously effortless for the worker. Debatably, the new work life promotes constant brain stimulation, which is counter-productive and reduces individuals' creativity and productivity (Kets De Vries, 2014). Acknowledging the importance of attaining work-life balance, Kets De Vries (2014) highlights the benefits of attaining a balance between action and reflection, thus promoting 'doing nothing'. Having myriad things to do, including ICT might be addictive to individuals and may even suppress one's true state. Busyness and compulsory communication, which is sometimes impregnated into 24/7 work availability, can be counter-productive, whereas boredom, or doing nothing encourages individuals to innovate and think differently (Kets De Vries, 2014).

The spillover model asserts that work affects private life and *vice versa*, life's permeable nature often results in work-life conflict which limits individuals' vitality, and general wellbeing (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Allvin et al., 2011). Consequently, work-life balance is intertwined with the concept of 24/7 work availability. Wiese (2007) suggests that a high number of different roles increases the probability of role conflict and diminishes work-life balance. Nevertheless, a high number of roles provide various impulses for personal development (Wiese, 2007). White, Hill, McGovern, Mills and Smeaton (2003) found during their research on high-performance management practices, that it is the amount of work hours that triggers work-life imbalance. This being said, it must be stated that the quantity of experienced imbalance may be gender related (Allvin et al., 2011).

According to Mellner, Aronsson and Kecklunds' research (2014) patterns have been found, in that the majority of women tend to have difficulty obtaining work-life balance. Men however, who according to traditional gender roles have a less prominent mantle at home, successfully implement boundaries (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014; Perrone-McGovern, Wright, Howell, & Barnum, 2014). Nevertheless, both genders are asserted to be subject to societal expectations on behavior and yet simultaneously reinforce their distinct gender roles (Kerr & Multon, 2015). However, this view can be contested, as it would be unrealistic to assume that the totality of the global population does not disregard traditional gender roles influenced by culture, values, and norms (Huppatz, 2012).

Previous research has found evidence demonstrating that an established work-life balance has positive influences on professional aspirations as well as facilitates ethical decision-making (Blazovich, Smith, & Smith, 2014). In regards to organizations that encourage balance, studies suggest that they financially outperform other organizations that choose not to stimulate this behaviour. Employee-friendly organizations have higher market value of equity, better return on equity, and superior return on assets, furthermore, their ability to pay liabilities is higher, and chances to go bankrupt are lower (Blazovich, Smith, & Smith, 2014).

2.1.1 Boundary Theory

Assuming that 24/7 work availability "announces a time without time", it could mark the elimination of work/life boundaries (Crary, 2014, p. 29). Concluding that being reachable 24/7 is unsustainable due to human factors such as sleep, and other life activities, and

recognizing its impact on work-life balance, the construction of boundaries may be argued to reduce work-life conflict (Thomas, 2014).

Boundary theory is concerned with the transition process of the different roles individuals play in private and working-life (Fonner & Stache, 2012). Boundaries are most often installed to simplify and create order in different domains (Ashforth et al., 2000). Further, the process is characterized by a "boundary-crossing activity" where individuals shift between their daily roles (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 472). Arguably, boundaries can be physical, temporal and psychological; influenced by the environment as well as personal traits (Ashforth et al., 2000; Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014). Physical borders, such as walls and buildings, assist in defining where work takes place. Temporal borders, such as schedules, define when work and when family has priority (Clark, 2000). Psychological boundaries can be in the form of thinking, behavioural and emotional patterns, and thus enhanced by separate email accounts, separate mobile devices, and turning the phone off when entering one's private domain (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Clark, 2000).

Conversely, an individual's boundaries are defined by contrasting behaviours, rules, patterns, and cultures (Clark, 2000). Moreover, boundary studies tend to focus on time and space and when considering work role transitions it is argued that three realms exist: work-home, work-work, and work-other (Ashforth et al., 2000). Ashforth et al. (2000) define the realms as part of 'micro transitions', suggesting that the transition process occurs frequently, as opposed to 'macro transitions' that indicate a permanent alteration. Interestingly, it is contended that micro transitions, or switching of "cognitive gears" becomes easier with time as individuals tend to develop habits and thus comfort in the disengagement and reengagement of contrasting roles (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 472). Switching is cued externally (phone ringing) or internally (feel of hunger), and once stimulated a relatively automatic transition process including rites of passage proceeds.

The transition process is defined by a myriad of flexibility and permeability levels (Ashforth et al., 2000). In regards to boundary management, flexibility is defined by Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 474) as "the degree to which spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable". Permeability is considered to be "the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviourally involved in another role" (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 474).

With boundary theory in mind, boundary management can be regarded as the controlling of boundaries (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014). Additionally, it is the management of micro transitions. Interestingly, how the boundaries are controlled, or if controlled at all, depend on individual preferences for separating, or integrating domains. The integration of life domains is highly complex, particularly when the spillover of domains is experienced as disturbing due to the previously explained levels of flexibility and permeability (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Clark (2002) argues that the lowest likelihood for work-life conflict exists when boundaries are highly flexible whilst having low permeability. This is because the individual is more probable to be able to focus on one domain. Interestingly, boundary theory argues that if there is a high degree of difference between an individual's roles, the switching effort may be

difficult to overcome, increasing the risk of work-life conflict. In addition, relying on spillover theory, Clark (2000) asserts that the domains, or realms affect each other and thus are intertwined, suggesting that emotional, temporal, spatial, and social features accompany workers' transition process. However, borders seem to be more impregnable in the direction of the more powerful realm, and more frail in the direction of the less powerful domain.

A model that relates to boundaries is the demand-control model. The demand-control model is commonly applied when studying stress, work-life balance and imbalance. It argues for two important factors in initiating work related stress: work demands and work control (Landy & Conte, 2013). Work demands can be defined as the amount of workload and intellectual requirements of the occupation, and work control refers to the combination of independency and option to employ different skills (Allvin et al., 2011). Interestingly, Landy and Conte (2013) suggest that workers with occupations where the demand is high and control is low are at a greater risk to experience health issues (the opposite is true).

Acknowledging the latter, scholars supporting boundary theory urge individuals to construct boundaries, as it limits border blurring and encourages the focus on a singular role, avoiding confusion, conflict as well as stress (Ashforth et al., 2000; Fonner & Stache, 2012). Without boundaries, the spillover effects may be greater than if boundaries are installed. This suggests the necessity for workers to employ boundary management, meaning that workers should attempt to control where, when and how they work (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014). Possessing multiple roles such as worker and parent can be beneficial to individuals, as it maintains a life that is "interesting and meaningful" (Allvin et al., 2011, p. 133). Even realm interruptions are not necessarily negative for all individuals as it may provide a break and result in creativity (Westman & Eden, 1997). However, there might be a necessity to enhance workers' boundary management with the aim to encourage work-life balance (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014).

Touching on the latter, external factors such as work environment and internal factors influence individuals' preferences for the integration or segmentation of domains (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kossek et al., 2005). Additionally, the degree of identification of individuals' occupations and private domains may be a great influence on preferences (Clark, 2000). Ashforth et al., (2000) perceive role identification to occur when an individual partly or fully is defined by the role, or work occupation. Additionally, the higher the level of social affirmation and personal success, the higher the likeliness that one wants to bring the preferred role to other spheres as part of the self-concept (Ashforth et. al., 2000; Stryker, 1980). For instance if one empathizes greatly with one's occupation there is evidence to demonstrate that boundaries are likely to be highly permeable and flexible towards the favored role with a reduction of contrast between that role and others. Furthermore, individuals might find it easy to enter the favored role, but rather difficult to exit it. Whilst the physical transition might go smoothly, the psychological transition might require more effort. Additionally, it may be the individuals' level of self-regulation that determines boundary management (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014).

By developing self-control and other structural and planning skills, individuals are more plausible to manage boundaries successfully in the new work life context characterized by deregulation of work, time and workspace, as well as the utilization of ICT (Allvin et al.,

2011; Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014). The implementation of a cognitive-emotional segmentation strategy, such as mindfulness may be a tool to encourage self-regulation and improve individuals' attention towards an experience (Michel, Bosch, & Rexroth, 2014). Additionally, the practice of mindfulness would assist one in remaining in the present moment and 'letting go' when micro transitions occur (Michel, Bosch, & Rexroth, 2014). The strategy asserts that if individuals are able to refrain from ascribing too much importance to distressing cognitions and emotions, they can respond with less emotional reactivity (Feldman, Greeson, & Senville, 2010) and refrain from further analyzing, evaluating, reflecting, or otherwise reacting (Frewen, Evans, Maraj, Dozois, & Partridge, 2008; Ramel, Goldin, Carmona, & McQuaid, 2004).

To summarize, boundary theory is concerned with the boundary-crossing activity individuals execute when micro transitioning from one role to another. Arguably, boundaries are flexible and permeable and accordingly at times difficult to manage, particularly in a 24/7 occupation. By understanding boundaries and its theory, it becomes clear that 24/7 work availability is seen as an obstacle to boundary management. Spillover effects interrupt and cause work-life conflict which may affect all parties involved, including the employer. To diminish such complications, authors arguing for boundary management view the construction of borders, and practicing mindfulness as crucial.

2.1.2   Person-Environment Fit Model

The person-environment fit model is equally as relevant considering boundaries and 24/7 work availability. The relevance is justified in that individuals' strengths vary and not everyone fits equally to certain job requirements, which triggers that some individuals to experience stress and illness whilst others enjoy and flourish under pressure.

The model presents how characteristics of individuals and environmental context may influence behavior, frame of mind, reactions, and eventually mental and physical health (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Suitably, individuals' work experience is greatly shaped by their perception. According to Landy and Conte (2013), environment is considered to be an individual's occupation and organization. Other researchers distinguish between person-organization fit, person-job fit, person-group and person-person fit (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Kristof, 1996). According to the model it is the environment that is the demander and the individuals who are the responders, thus it is when the response corresponds with the demand that there is a good person-environment fit (Landy & Conte, 2013). The better the fit, the higher the satisfaction and success level at work (Holland, 1997). If there is a poor match, the risk of negative health and behavioral issues may arise (Holland, 1997).

Considering the importance of matching, the theory of work adjustment argues that work satisfaction occurs when a job meets the individual's needs, which may enhance the willingness to stay in the job. Additionally, satisfactoriness is the sum of the skills embodied in the individual, and the consequential ability to perform a job supporting the employers' wish to retain the employee. Consequently, the combination of the two concepts is commonly referred to as tenure (Hansen, 2013).

The theory of work adjustment additionally introduces the concept of flexibility in regards to work satisfaction. Flexibility describes the duration between commencement of lacking correspondence until the point in time when dissatisfaction begins and change is desired and eventually performed. Hansen (2013) argues that individuals who are flexible endure discorresponence longer than inflexible workers. As a reaction to discorrespondence, individuals can *actively* attempt to change their environment or *react* by transforming themselves. The period of time during which individuals attempt to adapt to the needs before leaving a job is referred to as perseverance (Hansen, 2013). Perceived mismatch may be compensated through a supplementary fit; that is, correspondence of an individual with other co workers (Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Thus even though person-environment fit might not be congruent, individuals may still fit due to matching characteristics with others in the same environment. The distinguishment between subjective; that is, perceived, and objective fit is further presented by the theory. Hansen (2013) claims that the subjective absences of congruence is said to cause stress, and continued strain can ultimately lead to mental or physical illness . Simultaneously, high congruence leads to positive effects such as happiness and reassurance ((Hansen, 2013)-

To summarize, the person-environment fit model offers another perspective to 24/7 work availability and emphasizes the importance of the individual's traits matching with the organization and/or occupation, and co workers. The theory of work adjustment, which is related to the mentioned model, highlights the concepts of flexibility and its significant role in job satisfaction. Interestingly, the theory raises the difference between subjectivity and objectivity in regards to the matter.

2.1.3   Cultural Theory

Previous studies argue that 24/7 work availability and its direct causes such as globalization, fierce competition, marketization, and ICT has caused a transformation in culture and *vice versa* (Allvin et al., 2011). Simultaneously, it has been presented that psychological and physiological preferences and contexts influence boundary management (Ashforth et al., 2000). This may suggest the importance and the fundamental nature of culture regarding 24/7 work availability and boundaries. Importantly, individuals as well as culture are not static and thus are shaped by environmental context and other cultural boundaries such as gender, class and generation, and thus are occasionally subject to human agency (Maude, 2011).

Culture is stated to be omnipresent and thus influences an organizations' internal, as well as external operations, and relations (Schein, 2004). It is an invisible and self-contained process that embodies shared and learned experiences, meanings, values and understandings (Bauman, 1999; Schein, 2004; Alvesson, 2011). Further, it may be regarded as a system of beliefs, which enables cultures to resolve problems such as parenting and work-life conflict (Maude, 2011). Culture additionally tends to assume behavioural preferences in terms of what is 'right', which is commonly referred to as 'cultural ethos' (Schein, 1990; Bauman, 1999). It is thus simultaneously a concept that is detachable from individuals, which essentially provides structure as well as social identity, and thus differentiates cultures from one another (Bauman, 1999).

Scholars identify three levels of culture: Perceived artefacts, values and salient underlying assumptions (Schein, 1990). Artefacts can be manner, stories and myths which enhance and promote the culture in question, providing a certain belongingness and identity (Schein, 1990; Bauman, 1999). According to phenomenology, which is essentially the study of signs and views, artefacts are indicators and semiotic conceptions of individuals (Singer, 1984). Moreover, according to the triadic analysis of the sign semiosis, signs are highly interpretive and thus their significance differs (Singer, 1984). Values are commonly regarded as "emotion-linked beliefs" and thus greatly influence behavioural patterns (Maude, 2011, p. 33). Assuming its emotional nature, values tend to be unconscious (Schein, 1990). Further, scholars tend to differentiate between espoused and enacted values, suggesting the existence of a difference between stated values and performed values (Maude, 2011; Schein, 1990). Similar to the latter, salient underlying assumptions are commonly unconscious and may have roots in a culture's history (Schein, 1990). Assumptions are argued to influence behavioural patterns, emotions, perceptions and thought processes (Schein, 1990).

As culture is omnipresent, one can assume that habits are culturally dependent (Schein, 2004). Frykman and Löfgren (eds. 1996) consider a habit to be a tool that individuals use to ease everyday life, which facilitates our interests and purposes. In contrast, it can also be rather dictating, and thus becomes an obstacle rather than an ease. Notably, similar to culture, habits can change and also remain constant depending on inherited values, environmental context, and personal experiences. Most importantly, habits are argued to possess dynamic aspects and may change over time.

As seen, cultural theory argues the importance of culture in all things. Culture influences industries, organizations, groups, and individuals as it encompasses shared and learned values and assumptions. The three levels of culture (perceived artefacts, values, and assumptions) contribute to the structuration and identification process culture embodies. Artefacts, values, and assumptions further shape organizational and personal behavioral and thinking patterns. Additionally, habits are heavily culture dependent and perceived as tools for individuals to simplify their quotidian life guided by their cultural ethos. Finally, psychological and physiological preferences and environments influence boundary management and also alters 24/7 work availability.

2.2   Chapter Summary

In this chapter 24/7 work availability has been presented as constant work availability, which has caused the reorganization of work hours and workspace. Additionally, it has been stated that it is a concept that mainly applies to managers, professionals and other white-collar workers and industries where competition is high, and globalization is present.

24/7 work availability, accompanied by ICT, seems to have caused a blur between individuals' different domains such as private and work, resulting in work-life balance being difficult to maintain. As seen, this disequilibrium can have a myriad of consequences for an organization and the individual, thus it is preferable that both parties attempt to address the

issue. These consequences can be health issues, stress, and work-life conflict. Targeting the disequilibrium boundary theory may be of great relevance according to Ashforth et al., (2000) and Allvin et al., (2011). By constructing boundaries between different domains, individuals have the opportunity to focus on a singular role and avoid confusion, conflict, as well as stress and thus achieve work-life balance. The experienced stress and general discontentment may be a result to a poor person-environment fit. The person-environment fit model stresses the importance of a good match between individuals' characteristics and occupation or organization. Importantly, this thesis will merely focus on the person-environment fit in terms of the person-job-fit rationalized in the lack of compliance amongst researchers concerning the different aforementioned parameters. This decision is supported by that all interviewees conveyed a positive impression of person-organization, person-group and person-person fit. Further, justification is found in the disagreement amongst researchers regarding which parameters are important when identifying congruence, which is rooted in the subjectivity of importance (Judge, 2007).

Finally, culture has been presented as an underlying factor to achieve a successful construction of boundaries. Cultural theory can thus be utilized as a tool to understand reasons behind individuals' choices to prefer segmentation or integration.

In short, the combination of the three theories and models presented in this chapter provides us with what we define as a theoretical model to view 24/7 work availability from various angles. Thus the theoretical model underpins the thesis' analysis (Figure 2.1).
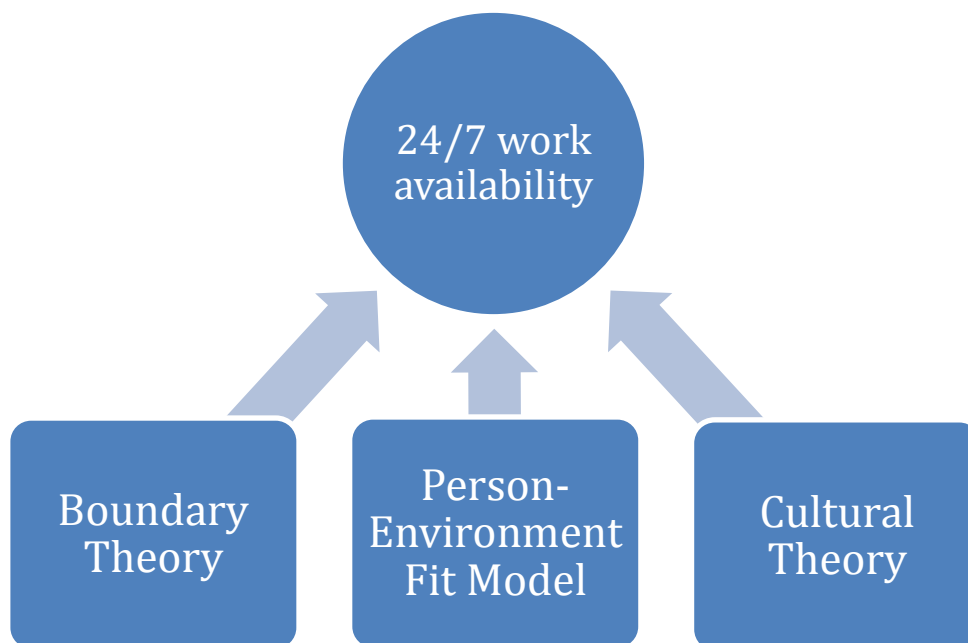

Figure 2.1: Theoretical model (own figure)

3   Methodology

In this chapter the methodology for the thesis will be presented and discussed in order to shed some light on how the thesis' research has been executed. This chapter will firstly outline the research approach, secondly the research design, followed by the data collection method, data analysis, and finally a brief presentation of the research limitations. In addition, it is important to mention that one of us possesses "membership status" with the interviewees, as well as with the industry of focus (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p.108). Throughout the process, this has been of great value as she shared her tacit knowledge and contacts. However, it should be stated that the unbiased perception of the second researcher throughout the research and analysis process was essential to maintain academic rigor.

3.1   Research Approach

From the outset of the research, it was decided to follow constructivism and pragmatism as research approaches. According to Creswell (2014), constructivism takes more or less an emic approach to issues, indicating that it argues for a native perspective. By using broad questions and interacting with individuals in specific contexts the researcher attempts to interpret meaning. Additionally, it is an inductive approach as the researcher does not commence the research with an absolute truth or theory (Creswell, 2014). Notably, by employing such methodology, as researchers we acknowledge that the meaning extracted and interpreted is influenced by external factors such as culture, history, and previous experiences.

Rather than focusing on theory and methodology, pragmatism emphasizes the research question in itself and attempts to understand it (Creswell, 2014). The understanding can be done by using a myriad of theories and approaches, suggesting that it is not committed to a singular worldview. This being said, pragmatism acknowledges the importance of the context the question occurs within (Creswell, 2014). Thus the shipping environment may affect the question, as well as influence the applicability of theories and models.

In regards to this thesis there has been an attempt to take an emic, as well as etic approach to the tramp shipping industry and theories. Nevertheless, an emic approach prevails as it is the empirical material that assists us in developing the analysis. Additionally, RQ1 (see p. 4) expects a rather descriptive answer and thus interviews had to be conducted in order to share narratives and describe the perception and management of 24/7 work availability. An inductive approach also enabled us to have the interviewees and their stories as a starting point.

Perceiving the thesis' research approach as interpretive, it appears evident that reflexivity is essential in such a study (Davies, 1999). It is crucial to apply reflexivity to ensure reliability of the interpretation. According to social science scholars, reflexivity is viewed as the

individual's and research approach's ability to affect the final product of the analysis (Davies, 1999). Accordingly, by being reflexive in methodology and analysis, and by acknowledging our different academic backgrounds in various deep discussions in the analysis process, we seek to take an objective approach, and to relativize our values, as well as expectations on what the empirical material demonstrates.

3.2 Research Design

From the outset of the research the preference for a qualitative research design emerged. This being said, a quantitative approach was briefly considered but discarded due to the expected advantages of qualitative research and consequent prospect to fulfill our research purpose. After concluding the wish to favor an emic approach, whilst still acknowledging an etic one to 24/7 work availability, and to conduct interviews with individuals involved within a sector where the phenomenon is highly applied, qualitative research seemed more suitable. In addition, there was a desire to share individuals' stories in relation to 24/7 work availability which could be enhanced by the potential advantages of applying a qualitative design. The main advantage of qualitative research we identified, and specifically of interviews, was that they encourage conversation and spontaneous reactions of individuals. By observing and analyzing interviewees impulsive reactions we believe to draw in-depth, and real-life conclusions rather than basing our analysis on answers where individuals have had time to think which is the case in quantitative surveys.

This being said, we did recognize that quantitative surveys allow the generalization of results due to the wider reach and larger amount of participants. Additionally, in regards to one of the models that make up our theoretical model, the person-environment fit model, it may be of importance to highlight that it is commonly used and applied with quantitative methods, calculating the polynomial regression and/or using response surface methodology (Kristof, 1996 & Hollyoak, 2014). However, researchers argue that the experienced fit is too subjective, and that the before mentioned methods partially lack strategies to incorporate all the model's different dimensions. Individuals' preferences and values are too diverse to rigorously measure and identify a fit that is based on a few common criteria. In view of the ongoing discussions concerning the most suitable criteria and measurements methods (Judge, 2007), based on Hollyoak (2014), we decided that the subjective sentiment of the employees will have to be in the foreground instead of identifying objective quantifiable parameters to determine person-environment fit. Therefore, this research will focus on the subjective perception of the employees, which aligns with the applied qualitative approach. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to identify an objective fit where deemed necessary to relativize or explain interviewees' perceptions.

Qualitative research supports the idea of studying individuals and gaining a deeper understanding in a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). This has arguably shaped the thesis as we have been guided by the collected empirical material. Nevertheless, some theory review has assisted us in finding an appropriate interview question, as well as shaping RQ2. RQ1: *How do individuals in the tramp shipping industry perceive and manage 24/7 work*

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availability? is analyzed through an emic perspective because there is a desire to describe and share tramp shipping workers' narratives (Lett, 1990). We believe it to be crucial to firstly understand the worker's perception and management of 24/7 work availability in order to finally take a step back. Doing this, and thus employing a deductive perspective in RQ2, one might be able to understand how the theoretical concept of boundary management can be applied, and arguably assist in achieving work-life balance. Therefore, RQ2: *How can boundary management be utilized by employees and employers to establish work-life balance?* is regarded and analyzed with an etic approach. By attempting to take such an approach there is simultaneously an intent to make the findings and analysis relatable to other 24/7 intense industries (Lung-Tan, 2012; Lett 1990).

Simultaneously, as it is the different themes found during the analysis that have guided and structured the results and analysis, the importance of the empirical material is further emphasized.

3.3   Data Collection Method

In order to gather data for our research we conducted semi-structured interviews in English, asking one *sole hypothetical open* question (Hamilton, 2014) to thirteen interviewees who are employed in various positions in the tramp shipping industry: operations manager, managing director, shipbroker, port captain, legal and commercial support. Asking the same question in a similar timespan of fifteen minutes to all interviewees enhanced accuracy and credibility, due to the fact that all interviewees had equal chances to convey their thoughts and express their reactions.

3.3.1   Interviewee selection

To illustrate the perception and management of 24/7 work availability, an industry where the concept is highly experienced was chosen: The tramp shipping industry. Utilizing the industry as a context provider, the totality of the interviews were conducted with individuals involved in commercial positions in the sector across the globe, of both genders, diverse ages, and family status, as well as different organizations, facilitated us in comprehending our topic of study and obtaining a holistic perspective (Creswell, 2014).

The criteria for the selection of the participants mainly followed extreme case sampling (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, it should be noted that not only extreme case sampling was executed. As the interviews advanced, interviewees recommended us to other individuals in the industry they thought would add additional value. Therefore one can state that one-third of the interviewees were gained through snowball sampling (Creswell, 2014). Employing snowball sampling besides extreme case sampling, enhanced the chances to create a more objective and thus rather reliable picture of the individuals working in the tramp shipping industry (Creswell, 2012). Our perception is that snowball sampling added value especially

because pure extreme case sampling and the acquaintance with the interviewees may have jeopardized validity and reliability of the research.

There was an attempt to limit the interviews to fifteen minutes after having acknowledged that the interviewees are people in demand, pressured by work as well as private life. As Master's students, we anticipated that by limiting the time and informing the time schedule prior to the interview, the interviewees are more likely to be concise and answer directly, rather than avoiding the question. In addition, literature suggests that by constraining time, one is more likely to be successful in obtaining interviews, which we were (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

3.3.2   The Interviews

The interviewees were initially approached by email where we presented ourselves and the aim of the thesis and interview. Following the interviewees' acceptance, they were provided with a document (see Appendix A) where our basic definition of boundary management was stated, as our question depended on the understanding of its definition:

"It is the internal or external creation of boundaries that serves as a tool to distinguish between work and private life."

In the document (see Appendix A) the interviewees were informed that if we would need to refer to them in our final work, their names would be replaced by aliases. Finally after obtaining the interviewees' verbal consent to use the information extracted from the interviews, the interview could commence.

Prior to the interviews, we contemplated the phrasing of the question we wished to ask the interviewees. Inspired by Narin, Munro and Smith (2005), who assert that the questions asked must invite the individual to answer, we realized that finding 'the perfect' question might be difficult. Thus asking a question that was too complex and thus intimidating the interviewee had to be avoided, particularly since one of us knew most of the interviewees. Additionally, the complexity of uncovering one question was rationalized because we wanted to avoid asking a closed 'yes' or 'no' question, as it would not give us the qualitative approach we desired (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Scholars argue when conducting qualitative interviews, the researchers are asking the participants to tell their story (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). With this in mind, the following identical hypothetical open question was chosen and asked to all interviewees:

For instance, you would be asked to specify certain free hours during which your organization would not forward any emails/fax/phone calls, with the exception of urgent phone calls. Tell us about your thoughts about this idea.

Striving to limit personal factors interfering with the question, the query was identical in the totality of the interviews (Davies, 1999). In addition the question was phrased with the aim to invite the interviewees to share their thoughts so we could gain a deep understanding about their general view on boundaries in every-day life. We purposely left room for the interviewees ideas, impressions and even concepts we ourselves might have not had

considered so far (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Answering the question, the interviewee was given the opportunity to speak as freely as possible about whatever came to mind. However, it must be mentioned that the views of the interviewees are culturally dependent, suggesting that the information provided is filtered through their environment, personality, language barriers, and other influencing factors (Creswell, 2014).

Due to the geographic dispersion of the interviewees, Skype or telephone interviews were opted for. A potential downside of virtual interviews is the lack of direct contact and thus as a researcher one is not able to interpret with all of the senses. This indicates that one is not able to comprehend facial expressions and physical movements which may add extra value to the analysis (O'Toole & Were, 2008). Most importantly, the researchers cannot immerse themselves in the interviewees' natural habitat and accordingly cannot interpret the environmental context (Narin, Munro, & Smith, 2005; O'Toole & Were, 2008). However, acknowledging the aforementioned negativities of virtual interviews, our perception and experience of the interviews was positive as the interviewees negotiate and trade regularly via phone, making them experts in telephone communication. Plausibly, the virtual aspect facilitated the conversations as none of the parties involved were expected to be physically present, particularly as the majority travel quite a lot and work in different time-zones.

3.4   Data Analysis

The empirical material was thoroughly reviewed and clustered into themes according to which the presentation of the research results and discussion develops in this thesis.

To avoid memory failure, which would negatively affect the validity of results, the interviews were tape recorded, and we both took notes after as well as during the totality of interviews. This was of great assistance in making sure we both had identical raw empirical material to commence the analysis process. In order to enhance the quality of our analysis, separate notes were taken during the interviews, and a content summary was produced immediately after the interviews in order to preserve the general tone of the interviewees. With hindsight this approach added value as discussions were triggered which consequently helped us throughout the data analysis process. Furthermore, our diverging backgrounds, shipping, trade and transport and cultural analysis and international relations, added diversity to the discussion, which certainly enhanced the thoroughness of the interpretative process.

Although discussions regarding the content of the interviews have taken place during the data collection, we still followed a "bottom-up" approach afterwards (Creswell, 2012, p. 237). This includes initial data exploration, discussion of our notes and summaries, as well as repeated listening to and extracting data from the tape-recordings. The aim was to achieve a general sense for our empirical material and to identify broad themes in order to analyze the content.

Meantime, code words were collected and evaluated to help identify themes and descriptions potentially reflecting data subdivisions (Tesch, 1990; Creswell, 2012). Afterwards more

specific data was allocated to more general codes and themes, following an inductive approach. Throughout the analysis process we were continuously counter checking our coding and initial interpretations with the raw empirical material collected. Notably, interviewees that did not correspond to specific themes were accounted for and raised in the discussion to provide a holistic perspective. Arguably, the latter became beneficial to the analysis as a discussion was stimulated and reflexivity was endeavored.

Some of the themes are rather obvious and were almost expected, others were rather unexpected or a little more demanding to classify as for some of the interviewees the reason to do 24/7 work availability appeared slightly abstract and not pronounced. To offer a holistic perspective, the result and discussion of *managing 24/7 work availability* is structured in layers (Creswell, 2012). Within the themes the stories of our narrators are presented. In the discussion part we attempt to interpret the meaning of the results by reflecting on the impact of the findings on the existing literature and theories to identify confirmations or contradictions. The conclusions for RQ1 are closely tied to the empirical material. Conclusions and subsequent suggestions for RQ2 are partially tentative and further research is recommended. Although it is emphasized that the tramp shipping industry has unique characteristics, the findings for RQ2 on the applicability of boundary management are versatile and may be generalized, whilst some of the findings in RQ1 are rather shipping specific.

3.5   Research Limitations

As a consequence to the undersized academical knowledge and research of the tramp shipping industry, and related 24/7 work availability, our research choices can be viewed to be our limitations. Acknowledging that there are various other approaches to pursue, such as mixed methods which would incorporate quantitative aspects, we deemed it important to create a foundation with solid qualitative research to identify the shipping individuals' perception and strategies to manage 24/7 work availability. Importantly, this research should first and foremost be considered as starting point, as it appears that there is vast potential for future studies.

3.6   Chapter Summary

In this methodology chapter research approach, design, collection of data, its analysis, and research limitations have been presented and discussed. Constructivism and pragmatism were chosen as main philosophies as an emic approach and the importance of the research questions are emphasized, even though an etic approach is favoured in RQ2. It was presented that thirteen individuals from various occupations in the tramp shipping industry were interviewed during fifteen minutes. Additionally, an identical question that invited the interviewees to discuss boundaries was asked. Finally, the analysis was primarily done

through coding where themes and layers were identified and subsequently interpreted.

4 Analysis and Discussion

This Chapter presents both the findings and the discussion. The findings related to RQ1 will be presented in relation to how the individuals *perceive*; that is, "interpret or regard something in a particular way" (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2015) followed by a discussion. Then the findings related to *manage*; that is, "succeed in surviving or in achieving something despite difficult circumstances" (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2015) 24/7 work availability will be presented, followed by a discussion. Next, the RQ2 results are presented followed by a discussion. The Chapter concludes with a summary highlighting the main findings.

Descriptions of the interviewees' occupations can be found in Appendix B and C. In addition, the totality of statements and information are extracted from the interviews conducted from 3rd – 22nd of April 2015.

4.1 Results RQ1: How do individuals in the tramp shipping industry *perceive* 24/7 work availability?

When conducting the thirteen interviews with individuals involved in the tramp shipping industry, the totality of them perceived 24/7 work availability as a phenomenon that is to be expected in the sector. Accordingly, 24/7 work availability is regarded as constituting a *"key part to the sector's profile"* (Peter Fischer). Nevertheless, shipping organizations seem to differ in whether or not they choose to officially stipulate the expectancy of being available around the clock in the employment contract. Thus, this expressed expectancy can be formally or informally required. The expected 24/7 work availability may be regarded in various facets, however five prominent themes were identified on how 24/7 work availability is perceived amongst the interviewees: normal, part of the chosen lifestyle, enhanced by ICT, obstacle to work-life balance, and a cause of stress, and other health issues.

4.1.1 24/7 work availability: a normal state of affairs

All thirteen interviewees regard 24/7 work availability as normal and thus highly integrated into their daily work, for example: *"clients expect you to be available"* and *"not picking up is not an option"* (Rebecka Forest and Mette Langaard). Interestingly, whilst they were aware of that this type of work differs from the norm, the interviewees still considered it to be 'their' normal.

Operations Manager, Jonathan Eck argued for the relevance of the phenomenon in the shipping industry and particularly in his occupation:

"I am responsible for my vessels, so ensuring continuous work availability is absolutely fine in my opinion".

The latter is a rather consistent perception of 24/7 work availability which is further highlighted by statements such as *"it is the way it has to be".* Attempting to initiate change in their specific organizations, some of the interviewees shared that they had previously proposed alternatives to 24/7 work availability. However, the organizations rejected the ideas as constant work availability is not novelty to the industry and it would be burdensome to change the status quo. In regards to this discussion, some organizations proclaimed that 24/7 work availability must be accepted if there is a wish to be involved with the tramp shipping industry.

4.1.2   24/7 work availability as part of the lifestyle

Throughout the conversations, it became apparent that the majority of interviewees, considered the shipping industry and 24/7 work availability as a lifestyle choice. Prior to entering the business most of them were aware of its nature and accepted it; it is rare that 24/7 work availability is a surprise.

Numerous phrases in line with *"one has to get used to the job and deal with it"* (Max Grimme) were uttered throughout the interviews, as 'dealing' with constant availability one may be able to ensure financial security and material possessions. Additionally, hard work is compensated by the organizations. Many interviewees shared positive stories concerning social gatherings, dinners, and travels. With this in mind, because most of the younger individuals interviewed desire to develop their careers as well as live the 'shipping lifestyle'. They expressed admiration for workers in higher positions ensuring availability as well as travelling the world, expanding their social networks.

4.1.3   The connection between 24/7 work availability and ICT

Following the conversations, the intertwinement of 24/7 work availability and ICT became apparent, and in particular between the phenomenon and mobile phones. The usage of mobile devices and how it facilitates and encourages 24/7 work availability was at least mentioned once by every interviewee.

All interviewees communicated that they possessed a Smartphone, often a Blackberry, provided by their employers to ensure work availability. Prior to the introduction of ICT, workers spoke of times when it was required to go to the office during weekends and occasionally nights because it was the sole way to communicate with coworkers and vessels. In contrast, possessing a mobile device, the workers are able to take their work wherever they go, which according to some provides them greater freedom, particularly since it suggests fluidity of workspace. Nevertheless, for some it may rather have a negative connotation as the action of *"constantly checking becomes addictive"* (Sebastian Hansen).

Due to ICT it is easier for shipping workers to be on the *qui vive*. Numerous spoke of Blackberry's trademark, the blinking red light alerting unread messages, or missed phone calls. No matter where or when, when the light flickers, the majority of the interviewees stated they would most likely take up the phone to see the importance level of the situation. Accordingly, this red light arguably seems to cause stress and complications as many feel obliged to look. Thus for some, ICT enhances the blurring of the boundaries between work and private life.

4.1.4 Work availability as an obstacle to work-life balance

Work-life balance was alluded to a myriad of times throughout the conversations. In light of 24/7 work availability, it was seen as an obstacle to equilibrium, or cause of work-life conflict. The fact of always being on-call, or being aware of that an email or phone call may occur has been the source of disputes between private and work domains for many interviewees.

These conflicts have undertaken several forms depending on the interviewee's age and family situation. Shipbrokers in their mid-to-late twenties without children, admitted to occasionally feeling work intrude on leisure time, such as when having to answer phone calls during social gatherings with friends and family. Fifty-something and married Rebecka Forest too spoke of the misplaced interruptions, and asserted that 24/7 work availability is a barrier to organizing her private life. The latter may agree with what Senior Operations Manager, Xiaoyi Lee presented as the sentiment of constantly being alert and that "*you always have it in the back of your mind*". She argued that due to the nature of the industry, one is not capable of escaping work, even when being at home.

24/7 work availability puts a strain on many interviewees' private relationships. Single mother, Mette Langaard shared without embarrassment, that her work as a Commercial Supporter is invariably prioritized over her five year old son. Mette Langaard recognizes the discomfort experienced in regards to this conflict, yet she states that this behavior is expected from her employer. Due to her private situation, the employer has agreed to be rather flexible with her core working hours so she can attempt to nurture her son. Thus, she claims to be in a "give and take" situation where her employer is already very flexible with her so she has committed to always be available as requested by her employer. Furthermore, being a single mother, she feels the need to work harder "*to prove that she is a good investment*" as there is fierce competition in the industry. Regardless of age or family situation, the majority of interviewees are not able to completely disregard their profession even during vacation. Interestingly, numerous workers never take advantage of the 'out of office' notification that the majority of organizations offer during workers' absence (Mette Langaard). The 'out of office' notification is a service that can be activated to automatically reply to incoming emails to inform one's non-availability.

Family man and Managing Director Wei Chao contrasted the other twelve interviewees when conversing about work-life balance in relation to 24/7 work availability. Whilst perceiving constant availability as normality, Wei Chao did not express any concerns about the phenomenon. Every interviewee demonstrated passion for their work and industry, the

Chinese Managing Director viewed his profession as recreation and accordingly did not recognize any negativities concerning 24/7 work availability.

4.1.5 24/7 work availability as cause of stress and pressure resulting in health issues

Some interviewees linked 24/7 work availability to stress and pressure, which for at least three of the interviewees resulted in health issues. There is pressure on the workers to be successful, provide excellent service, ensure availability, and thus secure customer satisfaction. Notably, according to the interviewees, the origin of the stress and pressure is situated both in the workers themselves and the organization. Illustrating this with the shipbrokers interviewed, the insurance of appropriate service and customer satisfaction is essential as both the employer and the broker are highly dependent on sales. Additionally since the majority of stakeholders expect instant communication with the shipping organizations, pressure seems to be inescapable.

It has been stated that shipping is an industry where time is of the essence. By dismissing 24/7 work availability one loses time, which is converted to losing financial capital, and clients according to Petra Auberlen, Senior Operations Manager. Accordingly, time scarcity or time pressure adds to the perception of 24/7 work availability. Xiaoyi Lee shared that there is a continuous psychological pressure that keeps one in a state of alertness. Even if one is "*really, really drunk*" there is a little part of you saved for work matters and on stand-by for when something important arises.

As stated, associated health-issues to 24/7 work availability were additionally raised during the conversations. Numerous shared stories of coworkers that had not been able to cope with the expected 24/7 work availability of the industry and incurring health problems as a consequence were common. Olof Sonesson shared his personal experience with such issues caused by the constant nature of shipping.

Olof asserted that due to the high stress levels of 24/7 work availability, the consumption of alcohol and tobacco in large amounts was quotidian over eighteen years ago. Whilst doing his best to ensure 24/7 work availability he simultaneously neglected his spouse and children, which resulted in a divorce and the separation of his family. In 1997-1998, the father of two got burned out. At this time, Olof was suffering from general bad health and was diagnosed with tinnitus in both ears due to stress and exhaustion. Almost eighteen years later, Olof acknowledges the difficulties to "*switch-off from the testosterone-loaded boys-game*", and encourages workers to be mindful and attempt to attain life equilibrium.

To summarize, the majority of interviewees had a similar perception of 24/7 work availability. In particular that is was seen as a normal state of affairs, and obstacle to work-life balance. Additionally besides the connection with ICT, themes were found in interviewees regarding 24/7 work availability as part of a lived, or desired lifestyle, as well as a cause of stress, and other health issues.

4.2 Discussion RQ1: How do individuals in the tramp shipping industry *perceive* 24/7 work availability?

In regards to the perception of 24/7 work availability, there were five distinct themes identified in the empirical material. Relating the themes to theory and literature we are reminded that psychological and physiological dispositions, including environments influence how phenomena are perceived (Schein, 1990; Bauman, 1999; Maude, 2011).

4.2.1 24/7 work availability: a normal state of affairs

Contemplating on the conversations with individuals involved in a highly intense and 24/7 work availability dependent industry, 24/7 work availability appeared to be characterized and perceived as '*normal*'; it was almost as if this idea was impregnated in the individuals' minds.

One may assert that the normality of the phenomenon is saturated within their systems of belief and thus part of their personal culture. However, such a cultural ethos, which assumes behavioral preferences, may also be defined by the shipping industry or specific shipping organizations (Bauman, 1999). Yet as the empirical material is retrieved from several shipping organizations one may argue for shared and learned experiences, meanings, values and understandings in the industry as a whole (Schein, 2004; Alvesson, 2011). Accordingly, sharing the understanding of that 24/7 work availability is to be expected and normal, encourages and potentially identifies the industry and its workers (Bauman, 1999). Essentially, 24/7 work availability becomes an important component in the shipping norms (Schein, 1990).

By having a culture in common, individuals tend to identify to a certain group and feel camaraderie (Maude, 2011). This identification process seems rather vital for the majority of the interviewees, particularly as they expressed the sentiment that they fought together to ensure 24/7 work availability. Moreover, recognizing that 24/7 work availability goes against the norms, numerous interviewees spoke of a categorization: 'normal' versus 'abnormal' and that work availability has become *their* normal. Arguably, this would indicate a sentiment of 'us' versus 'them', which further enhances the cultural membership and identification process (Bauman, 1999). The common sentiment of working with a concept many are unfamiliar with, may strengthen interpersonal bonds within the industry or organizations. In addition, regarding culture as a system of beliefs that distinguishes one group from another, finding common assumptions such as 24/7 work availability being a normal state of affairs, and the abnormality of other types of work enhances the shipping culture (Bauman, 1999). This may partially be a reason for why the individuals also accept 24/7 work availability. Clearly the fact that it is regarded as 'normal' facilitates the endurance, with material preferences potentially acting as an encouragement.

Assuming that environments influence how individuals regard 24/7 work availability, the person-environment fit model is applicable (Schein, 1990; Bauman, 1999; Maude, 2011). The model essentially suggests the influence individuals' characteristics and the environment has

on behavior, perception and health; one may propose that the shipping industry has a preference for specific personal traits (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). By attempting to recruit individuals with certain traits and values, organizations may ensure conformity, and person-environment fit, incorporating all dimensions in addition to person-job fit, and thus potentially avoiding dissimilarities in perception and behavior. Accordingly, it becomes clear that the survival of the tramp shipping industry's perception of 24/7 work availability depends on the systems of belief tendencies new workers possess, as it is cultural concepts that influence behavioural patterns (Schein, 1990; Maude, 2011). Including industry culture and the person-environment fit, it might be a possible answer to why the totality of interviewees saw 24/7 work availability as *'normal'*.

4.2.2   24/7 work availability as part of the lifestyle

Empirical material suggests that 24/7 work availability can be regarded as part of a lifestyle choice, or more specifically as a side-effect that the workers deal with in order to achieve a desired lifestyle. Excluding the phenomenon of focus, this lifestyle tends to include good financial position, material possession, and for some of the interviewees, status. During the interviews, numerous interviewees spoke of the parties as well as travels they feel privileged to do as part of the lifestyle, and which occasionally make up for 24/7 work availability. Even if the majority view's this type of work to be an obstacle to work-life balance, it is the feeling of belonging to a group and culture that encourages the workers to attempt to ensure 24/7 work availability. Particularly as the impression left after the conversations was that there are strong interpersonal bonds within different organizations.

For younger workers in the tramp shipping industry this lifestyle might not yet have been achieved and thus admiration for those who have achieved it may be of relevance. For instance, there where narratives of individuals working a lot and being reachable at all times, that were told during the interviews. Arguably, the protagonists in the stories were regarded as role models. New workers and younger workers may thus hear these narratives and strive for what potentially is an ideal or an artefact or myth. This may be a factor that enhances and promotes the perception of 24/7 work availability and the general industry culture (Schein, 1990; Bauman, 1999).

4.2.3   The connection between 24/7 work availability and ICT

After reflecting upon the empirical material collected, the connection between 24/7 work availability and the usage of ICT became clear. The collected data agrees with Crary's (2014) conviction that ICT has increased the inescapability of 24/7 work availability. However, some interviewees highlighted the freedom and flexibility ICT has given them, which would relate to Brynolfsson and Mcafees' idea (2014). As alluded to by the interviewees, ICT allows for "compulsive communication" and the ability to remain reachable through various mediums such as email, SMS, social media, Skype, phone calls etc. (Kets De Vries, 2014, p. 9). Additionally, it appears that through the mere provision of ICT, employees experience a tacit

expectation to maximize use of the device, to be available and determined to serve clients' needs; underlying reason may be the Pygmalion Effect.

Regarding the aforementioned blinking red light alerting of emails and phone calls, the sentiment of having to be constantly work available becomes apparent. Accordingly, the light becomes the symbol, or sign of 24/7 work availability reinforcing the individual's conception of the light (Singer, 1984). Notably, if other non-shipping individuals would see the same red light, they may not semiotically conceive 24/7 work availability, as it is not in their system of beliefs.

ICT often being regarded as addictive additionally became apparent, with it being interpreted as having habitual characteristics. However, as this type of ICT usage was connoted with negativity for the interviewees, literature suggest that it is a dictating habit, preventing the individual from structuring and simplifying everyday life (eds. Frykman & Löfgren, 1996). This would relate to what some of the interviewees considered as the negative spillover effect of 24/7 work availability.

4.2.4   Work availability as an obstacle to work-life balance

Both the literature and the thesis' empirical material suggest the intertwinement of 24/7 work availability and work-life imbalance (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Allvin et al., 2011). A mutual sentiment of almost all interviewees was that constant availability or alertness has been the catalyst for numerous disputes between private and work domains. As they attempt to ensure work availability, the challenge seems to lay in the workers' micro transitions as their work boundaries are highly flexible and high permeable (Ashforth et al., 2000).

The workers' flexibility is high due to the usage of ICT, supporting the fluidity of both workspace and work hours. The permeable nature is suggested by the interviewees' feeling of always being alert and thus psychologically remaining in their work domain whilst physically being in the private one. Accordingly, the nature of the workers' occupation, additionally suggests the relevance of the spillover theory when discussing work-life conflict and work-life imbalance. It is evident that different domains indeed affect each other, however the work domain seems to be the more powerful one as its boundaries seem to be more impenetrable (Clark, 2000).

Scholars interested in work-life conflict argue that the experienced level of conflict is gender related (Allvin et. al., 2011) and that women arguably have more difficulties obtaining work-life balance (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014; Perrone-McGovern, Wright, Howell, & Barnum, 2014). In regards to the empirical material collected, this theory could not be supported, although woman stated repeatedly that they experienced the necessity to work harder to keep up with the concurrent men. Nevertheless, no higher work-life imbalance was reported. One possible interpretive explanation could be that tramp shipping is a very masculine industry with female employees also having a tendency to think and act accordingly. The latter would intertwine with what was presented earlier when discussing the industry's culture and the personal-environment fit model, indicating the existence of

organizations' preference to recruit individuals with similar personal traits, values and assumptions (Schein, 1990; Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998; Maude, 2011).

4.2.5   24/7 work availability as cause of stress and pressure resulting in health issues

Numerous interviewees spoke of related stress, pressure, and health issues to 24/7 work availability. The constant work availability was a cause of the mentioned effects. The person-environment fit model suggests that the reason why some individuals experience stress and illness is that they have a poor person-environment fit (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). However, this would simultaneously indicate that the majority of interviewees are not appropriate for the industry or organization. The latter can be questioned as many expressed great passion for their occupation and sector, as well as work satisfaction. However, the person-job fit may potentially be incongruent, which can be supplemented by excellent person-organization, person-group or person-person fit (Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Alternatively, the interviewees could be highly flexible in the sense of the work adjustment theory that is; overcoming discorrespondence through stretch in order to achieve a subjective fit. This suggests that some of the individuals perceive compatibility even though objectively it is not the case (Hansen, 2013). As Hansen suggests, this would result in stress, the sentiment of pressure, and health issues (2013).

The demand-control model may be applied to the interviewees' stress and health issues. As previously stated, the shipping workers commonly experience a heavy workload and are pressured to provide good service by ensuring 24/7 work availability amongst other things. Evidently their job demand (workload, and intellectual requirements) is very high in most occupations we have interviewed (Landy & Conte, 2013). Their job control is similarly rather high, as many are encouraged to take decisions and have the opportunity to learn additional skills at work (Landy & Conte, 2013). Thus, shipping workers' job control level contradicts the model's conclusion suggesting that low job control increases the risk of stress. The workers stress levels and health issues may rather be a consequence of 24/7 work availability and thus not rely on the work's demand and control.

To summarize, it has been found that the shipping culture and its maintenance through attempting to ensure person-environment fit has great influence over the interviewees perception of 24/7 work availability.

4.3   Results RQ1: How do individuals in the tramp shipping industry *manage* 24/7 work availability?

Whilst the interviewees' perceptions of 24/7 work availability were congruent, their strategies to manage it differ. The interviewees have been distinguished into two groups: Integrators of work and private spheres, and installers of boundaries. Further subcategories are presented. Whilst all interviewees have certain physical and temporal boundaries in the form of offices,

and core working hours, they do get blurred by the utilization of ICT. Therefore, an emphasis will lay on psychological boundaries such as behavioral patterns, thinking, and emotions. Notably, whilst gathering the empirical material it became apparent that the integration of both spheres, work and private, is the norm. Thus, none of the interviewees can be described as a separator. Further, it also became evident that no assistance is provided to workers who might experience work-life imbalance.

4.3.1   Integrators of work and private spheres

Five of the interviewees revealed to not have any boundaries at all. The reasoning varies from career ambitions to job identification and thus viewing the integration as a lifestyle choice.

4.3.1.1.   Temporary Integrators

Shipbrokers Sebastian Hansen and Jonathan Eck clearly articulated that 24/7 work availability is the nature of their job. When aiming at a successful career development, they have to assimilate with 24/7 work availability. Nevertheless, the two young shipbrokers believe that this type of working is temporary:

"*When I have a family, it will be different*" (Jonathan Eck).

It is a lifestyle that has to be ensured during a particular timespan in order to arrive at the desired outcome, thus it justifies their acceptance of 24/7 work availability.

Although other interviewees have used the term "*addiction*" when discussing ICT, Sebastian Hansen and Jonathan Eck clearly appeared to be addicted to regularly checking their phones and do not seem to have any strategies on how to cope with it (Sebastian Hansen). Both express the pressure of the industry, which seems to have influenced their perception of what is demanded of them. Sebastian admits that even when being on holiday he struggles to relax. Both agree that 24/7 work availability is the '*deal of the game*' and both are strong integrators. One could argue that their perception of the requirements of the job causes them to not actively manage their dealing with ICT and the constant availability, as they are continuously on standby for any kind of work related request. Both men are young and aspiring to develop their careers stating that they can hardly imagine pursuing 24/7 work availability for the rest of their working life.

4.3.1.2.   Job identification and lifestyle

Chinese Managing Director Wei Chao showcases total identification with his job. Although, he argues that the intensity is much less than in the past due to the industry's economic problems, and changes in the organization's design and structure, his form of managing the high intensity is to integrate and to become one with the job. Contrasting the other interviewees, Wei Chao admittedly enjoys checking work related emails after office hours and considers it as leisure time. Further, the Managing Director's wife works at the same

organization, which he argues facilitates his work availability as she has a tendency to understand the demands of the industry.

As seen, single parent Mette Langaard is undoubtedly constantly connected as "*not picking up*" is never an option. When we spoke with Mette she was on vacation, yet she had not used the 'out-of-office' notification. The Commercial Supporter justified her constant work availability due to the individualization of her job, which is enhanced by the lack of backups, and due to her level of seniority, which incorporates extensive responsibilities. Other reasons are such as there would be an overload of messages and emails that she would have to attend to after the vacation were also raised. Although she seems to be boundaryless due to her job dependency and the organization's willingness to cooperate, she would appreciate being able to dedicate 'quality time' to her son. Yet, 24/7 work availability appears crucial for her to maintain her job. Accordingly, 'no pain, no gain' appears to be her credo, accepting repetitive periods of stress-related illness and consequent absence from work. In parallel, a rather sever impact of her constant connectivity and integrated work lifestyle is that her son refuses to speak to anyone on the phone as he regards the phone as his enemy.

4.3.2   Installers of boundaries

The interviews revealed that the majority of our interviewees exercise some kind of self-control to create boundaries. Most evident boundaries are temporal boundaries where the interviewees have stipulated a certain amount of hours per day prohibiting phone usage. Additionally, these boundaries could also be categorized as psychological and more precisely behavioral boundaries where mobile devices are kept separate. Underlying reasons appear to be consideration towards family, as well as a fear of potential negative experiences, particularly after having experienced negativities such as health issues, or family disputes.

4.3.2.1.   Consideration towards the surroundings and themselves

Some interviewees expressed having been asked by relatives, or partners to minimize spillover of work into their private life. Therefore we consider their stimulant for boundaries as being considerate towards their surroundings, as well as themselves as a reaction to work-life imbalance consequences.

After having experienced some private life disturbances, three female interviewees claimed to have created certain boundaries to prevent continued spillover from work into private life. Interestingly, the installation has progressed over time and has come as realizations after working more than ten years within the same organization. Their work experience, together with age has taught them the importance of allocating a certain amount of leisure time.

Operations Manager Justin Gröber, has been asked by his partner to attempt to install boundaries in order to encourage leisure time. His partner experienced the negativities of Justin Gröber constantly being alert, for example, during dinners and other social gatherings. In addition, the Operations Manager also confessed certain frustration, as he experienced difficulty falling asleep and relaxing. Consequently, he attempts to practice some mindfulness

or to apply temporal boundaries: Justin deliberately passes certain hours of the day without checking any incoming emails. Moreover, he installed what can be seen as a behavioral boundary in the form of maintaining a second mobile phone for private matters. Additionally, he shows clear signs of annoyance with the continuous connectivity and would find relief if he would not need to ensure 24/7 work availability.

Many of the interviewees who allowed themselves the installation of boundaries opt for informal boundary management by exercising self-control and demanding the same from others. Fleet Manager Peter Fischer, urges other workers to carefully consider at what times to approach others and to follow what he considers to be the golden-rule; "*treat others as you yourself would like to be treated*". Further, with the assistance of ICT, he argues that he does not feel stressed by 24/7 work availability. He seems to have control over his life and work situation and states that it is up to every individual to deal with such demands in a responsible and sustainable way.

4.3.2.2. Application of boundaries due to negative related experiences

Comparable to Peter Fischer's argumentation, Olof Sonesson claims that the successful management of boundaries is highly dependent on self-control and life experience. As previously presented, Olof used to dismiss boundaries, which had tremendous effects on his health and marriage. Although, the employer interfered and offered him strong boundaries, he is still not always able to maintain them. Creating certain hours without any reachability, and practicing mindfulness, he is now able to remain in good health. Notably, Olof considers the organization responsible to assist in managing the 24/7 work availability.

Max Grimme installs boundaries, however struggles to maintain them. During four to five hours a day, the Senior Operations Manager strives to avoid any mobile devices. In addition, the necessity for boundaries and mindfulness is highly demanded by his wife and also reasoned in a past stress-related 'break-down'. Knowing about the downsides of continuous connection, and labelling the Blackberry as addictive and disturbing, he clearly states that his self-control is sometimes not strong enough.

In this section 24/7 work availability has been connected to stress-related health issues and the decrease in job performance. Additionally, three-quarters of the interviewees express work-life imbalance which negatively affects their families. Interestingly, since a few have partners working in the same industry and thus accept the life situation, the number of interviewees with work-life imbalance could potentially be higher. However, exploring this matter further exceeds the scope of our research. Further, work experience and age has been identified as important factors whether or not one chooses to install boundaries.

4.4 Discussion RQ1: How do individuals in the tramp shipping industry *manage* 24/7 work availability?

Below, the previously presented themes will be discussed in relation to theory and literature.

4.4.1 Integrators of work and private spheres

There are myriad of reasons for boundaryless living. Often it depends on the perception of job requirements, or an existing personal situation. Furthermore, some organizations might explicitly express that 24/7 work availability is required and thus the employees have to adhere to this. More common is nevertheless, that the necessity of constant availability is implied through the organization's culture and coworkers' behavior.

Through the provision of ICT and installation of role-models, employees are triggered to increase their availability for organizational needs. This behavior can be explained with the motivational Pygmalion effect. The theory says that employees strive to fulfill the expectations their superiors have conveyed (Livingston, 1988). Therefore, 24/7 work availability does not need to be explicitly stipulated in the employment contract, it is sufficient if the organization's culture and role-models set examples.

Further justification can be found in one of the characteristics of the new work life, which is the increased individualization of work (Allvin et al., 2011) and the industry's global nature causing constant communication. Moreover, a tendency has been identified where mostly singles or individuals with partners working in the same industry integrate work and private domains. Finally, personal ambitions to harness one's image as well as to foster one's career may be included in the justification.

4.4.1.1. Temporary integrators

The blurring of work and private domains is particularly noticeable in the individuals who have high career ambitions. Such individuals claim to be 24/7 work available under the assumption that this will be for a certain period of time. Linking this back to the perception of what is necessary in order to reach a certain goal, their individual conception drives their motivation to provide continued connectivity. Arguably (with exceptions), the shipping employees basic needs are satisfied and they therefore strive for esteem and self-actualization (Griffin & Moorhead, 2010; Pride, Hughes & Kapoor, 2012). Maslow's hierarchy serves as an explanation for the motivation and power to cope with what individuals perceive as straining.

Analyzing this behavior with the person-environment fit model and the theory of work adjustment, one may argue that a potential lack in congruence between the person and the tramp shipping and more specifically the job environment, is covered by high flexibility of the employee and other significant environmental factors (Hansen, 2013). Sebastian Hansen

and Jonathan Eck are aware of their discorrespondence or dissatisfaction yet their inner motivation to perform well provides them with the required flexibility. It will be up to the individual and their perseverance to actively change their environment or to react by adapting to the situation they are in. According to Hansen (2013) if nothing is changing in the long run, the amount of dissatisfaction might lead to termination of the job contract or illness of the employee.

4.4.1.2. Job identification and lifestyle

A couple of interviewees shared that it is common to disregard and to not take advantage of the 'out-of-office' notification, which may be considered as an extreme version of boundarylessness. Besides actual job dependency as a driver for prolonged boundarylessness, full identification with one's job and the shipping culture may be reason enough to pursue this lifestyle (Clark, 2000). As previously argued, the shipping culture is very strong and especially good at enhancing a 'we-feeling'. In addition, it seems as if employers specifically hire individuals possessing those characteristics to achieve a high person-environment fit. The congruence of person and environment facilitates satisfaction and therewith sustainable 24/7 work availability.

Often personal traits are influenced by one's national culture and education (Maude, 2011). Interestingly, two of our interviewees have commented on the "*extraordinary Asian work-mentality*", which was immediately confirmed when interviewing Wei Chao (Thomas Dijon, Xiaoyi Lee and Wei Chao). It appears that individuals that experience subjectively or objectively a mismatch with the shipping environment are able to overcome the discrepancy by exercising flexibility. The flexibility can be stimulated by passion for the job or interest to reach a career goal. Alternatively, individuals might change to a less demanding position or install boundaries.

4.4.2   Installers of boundaries

It has repeatedly been confirmed, explicitly or implicitly, that the shipping occupation constitutes a lifestyle choice. Although, living the lifestyle of choice minimizes the risk of dissatisfaction (Clark, 2000), interviewees who argued for a certain level of mindfulness expressed less discontentment and improved work-life balance during the interviews.

Half of the interviewees stated to have experienced strong work-life imbalance and consequently created boundaries to improve their situations (Ashforth et al., 2000; Fonner & Stache, 2012). Besides consideration towards one's self, individuals are also driven by the aim to allocate time and attention to the important people in their lives. Looking at the totality of interviewees, an age and social status pattern in regards to the creation of boundaries was identified.

The five to six individuals who construct boundaries to reduce work-life conflict possess either a considerable amount of work experience, cohabit, or have children. The empirical material shows that often significant others or children express annoyance when the main

focus is continuously on work (Mette Langaard, Max Grimme, Kate Frank). In order to achieve balance between the different roles and depending on the level of identification with either work or family, individuals are willing to adjust to meet the expressed expectations and to receive confirmation (Clark, 2000).

4.4.2.1. Consideration towards the surroundings and themselves

One interviewee expressed extreme struggle in switching "cognitive gears" and has a tendency to get mentally stuck in his work (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 472). Therefore the installation of behavioral and psychological boundaries in the form of not checking incoming messages from two hours before going to bed, until arriving to the office the next morning, became vital for Justin Gröber. This, in addition with the physical boundary of leaving the workplace facilitates mindfulness. Furthermore, he sometimes deliberately "*leaves the phone in the bag*" (Justin Gröber) and uses a second phone for private matters and as an alarm clock, which avoids checking emails straight after turning the alarm off. Justin's intuitive choice for separate devices confirms boundary theory, arguing that psychological and behavioral boundaries may enhance separation and thus reduce permeability of the work and private sphere. Boundary theory further argues that reduced permeability helps in achieving work-life balance which Justin's interview confirmed.

Only one interviewee expressed good abilities to maintain boundaries with being mindful and ignorant to the Blackberry's red-blinking light throughout a whole night and deliberately 'doing nothing', ultimately becoming more productive and creative (Kets de Vries, 2014).

4.4.2.2 Application of boundaries due to negative related experiences

The interviewees whose work-life imbalance ultimately led to a separation from their partner have experienced constrained vitality and general wellbeing (Kelly & Moen, 2007; Allvin et al., 2011). Whilst a quarter of the interviewees had experienced stress-related health issues such as burnout syndrome, one showcased a very extreme example of repeated sickness with consequent reduced productivity and regular absenteeism (Allvin et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2000; Cable, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2014).

The expressed necessity of strong integration of both spheres combined with an existing private situation and the requirement to secure income, forbids the installation of boundaries. Mette Langaard goes as far as to be "*present besides illness*" which is striking from a human and economical perspective (Allvin et al., 2011, p. 195). Neglecting sickness, Mette commonly attempts to work from either the office or home, which arguably prolongs her recovery whilst her productivity might be reduced. Myriad reasons motivate her to work during sickness; the individualization of her work as a commercial supporter which additionally includes consequent responsibilities, and her status as a single-mother. Working whilst having a child constitutes a dilemma for Mette particularly when her five year old son is sick, she feels obliged to find a solution in order to ensure her 24/7 work availability. In contrast Olof Sonesson and Max Grimme have realized that "*you cannot buy quality time with*

your family" (Olof Sonesson) and that the creation of behavioral, or psychological boundaries is vital to sustain health and work-life balance.

After Olof's break-down, he found a hobby other than work where he could finally exclude work and ICT. Although he occasionally still struggles to adhere to strict boundaries: "*it is easy to fall back into old patterns (...) because you like it*", he attempts to stick to clear work hours and goes hunting. The fifty-five year old continued and stated that he has commenced to see the benefits of leisure time, and simply think about other things, which relates very well to Kets De Vries (2014) study about the benefits of doing nothing. Kets De Vries (2014) argues that by no-action one has the opportunity to recover from work which results in more creativity and productivity at work.

Both themes, consideration and experienced negativities, can be related to the person-environment fit model and subordinated work adjustment theory. These concepts help explain the differences in perception of the stress and management of 24/7 work availability. The concepts illustrate the differences in individuals' ability to react to the demands of an industry and the extent to which the 24/7 work availability influences the individual's health and contentedness (Landy & Conte, 2013). Interviewees such as Wei Chao, Kate Frank, Petra Auberlen, Rebecka Forest and Xiaoyi Lee, who also have plenty of job experience, might showcase an appropriate fit. Interestingly, they found ways on how to cope with the continuous availability without compromising their contentness. Whilst the environment is comparably similar for all interviewees, the mentioned individuals expressed the least dissatisfaction.

Juxtaposing the individuals who have experienced stress-related health issues, one can argue that their person-environment-fit or more specifically person-job fit might be less congruent. Applying the concept of flexibility and perseverance discussed by the theory of work adjustment to Mette Langaard's experiences, one could argue that she is highly work flexible and thus her health is continuously compromised (Hansen, 2013). Max Grimme and Olof Sonesson have reacted differently: although they might not constitute a perfect match, confirmed by their experienced issues, they have reacted by changing their behavior aiming to increase tenure; that is, rising their own satisfaction to be able to increase satisfactoriness. All three have strong interests in performing their job, however Max and Olof arguably took a step back and created boundaries, reacting to their experienced strains of 24/7 work availability. Taking this into consideration, it can be discussed which method is the most sustainable.

To conclude, the negative impacts of 24/7 work availability on employees' health were confirmed by some interviewees. Arguably it is the exercised flexibility covering the person-environment or person-job mismatch that is the cause, which leads to stress and ultimately illness. However, confessing that the environment is the same for all interviewees and that almost all of them expressed discontentedness, one may question the likeliness to fulfill the fit and the sustainability of the concept of 24/7 work availability.

4.5 Results RQ2: How can boundary management be utilized by employees and employers to establish work life balance?

The research revealed that living without boundaries and not at least temporarily taking a step back from work is not sustainable in the long-run. The majority of interviewees living boundaryless either believe to do so temporarily, express some discontentedness, or indicate health issues. Chinese Wei Chao appears to be the exception by entirely merging and identifying himself with the job. All interviewees who expressed to have developed from boundaryless living to living with boundaries arguably do so for a reason.

With the aim of understanding how boundary management can be utilized to establish work-life balance, one identical question was asked to the interviewees:

For instance, you would be asked to specify certain free hours during which your organization would not forward any emails/fax/phone calls, with the exception of urgent phone calls. Tell us about your thoughts about this idea.

The majority of interviewees were initially quite opposed to the presented suggestion, particularly because 24/7 work availability is perceived as normal and which has been "*like this for decades*" (Jonathan Eck). Additionally, the opposition was enhanced by their conviction that boundaries would impede revenue and negatively affect the industry's, or organizations' credibility. Moreover, another reason offered was the individualization of work. However, almost all interviewees confirmed that they would personally appreciate having external boundaries and that it would be a great help, and relief.

Analyzing the interviewees' answers has revealed that boundary management and consequential mindfulness are part of their central concept to attain work-life balance. Below we will explore our interviewees' strategies, and their reaction to externally created boundaries. Consequentially we have divided the analysis of RQ2 into individuals opting for boundaries achieved through self-control, and boundaries with external assistance. Derived from the results we attempt to find general guidelines for co workers in the tramp shipping industry, or others in similar industries.

4.5.1 Self-imposed boundary management

Our research revealed that some interviewees self-imposed their boundaries. Although, the trigger might be external or due to experienced negativities related to 24/7 work availability, the boundary as such is self-imposed and maintained in a similar fashion. Thus the upkeep of it, is strongly dependent on self-control. Interviewees gave examples of temporal and psychological boundaries.

As mentioned before, Justin Gröber shared that he has separate email accounts and phones for private and work matters. Besides the running costs for the private phone, which he claims to

pay happily to achieve peace of mind, the micro transition process between the two spheres is and has to take place more deliberate due to the additional barriers. Accordingly, the separation between the work and private sphere is clearer.

Max Grimme and Xiaoyi Lee shared that they impose temporal and psychological boundaries. They have certain hours during which they deliberately do not check their incoming messages on any device. Xiaoyi stated: "*As a person who is on a 24/7 work availability contract, it is up to me to set up my personal boundaries to find a balance*". Thus it is her choice to find an adequate method to maintain her personal wellbeing. If for instance there is anything out of the ordinary or important occurring, she is more inclined to ensure work availability. If not, although she carries her Blackberry with her, she does not look at it, unless it rings. Further, the Senior Operations Manager stated that she believed that if the creation of boundaries does not occur, the risk of getting attached to mobile devices and work is high, which according to her is "*not good*".

Whilst Xiaoyi Lee claims that it does not take her any effort to ignore her phone, Max Grimme admits that he often struggles, even going so far to question if the boundary maintenance costs more energy than not having any boundaries. Senior Operations Manager Max shared that if he knows that he might be receiving an email, he feels obliged to look at his device. However, if he would have been more "*self-controlled I would not need to look at my phone*".

Other interviewees such as Kate Frank and Petra Auberlen do not check incoming emails on Saturdays. Petra turns off her Blackberry's red light to minimize the risks of being tempted to look after core working hours. Installing minor boundaries has allowed the Senior Operations Manager to "*feel that you relax more and not constantly think about what is going on and hoping everything is okay*". Moreover, according to some interviewees, it is about arriving tothe point that one has done everything possible at work during working hours which facilitates the self-imposed boundaries.

Fleet Manager Peter Fischer who from the outset was opposed to boundaries, has certain psychological boundaries mainly in the form of considering if the timing is adequate to approach others: "*you have to take responsibility for yourself, and others. So you don't email or call if it is not really urgent*".

4.5.2 External boundary management

Due to its global nature, competitive characteristics, and unique culture, the shipping industry appears to not be an industry that is overly concerned with its employees work-life balance. Although a few occupations allow shift-work, it has been expressed to be mainly inconceivable in the shipping industry due to the individualization and organization of the jobs and the consequent complexity of handovers.

Consequently, only a few of the interviewees have dealt with externally imposed boundaries. Rebecka Forest, working as operations manager with a ship broker, has shift work that she shares with another colleague, and pointed out the positive aspects of not being continuously

responsible and available. By having every second weekend, and week evenings allocated for leisure, Rebecka Forest is able to organize other activities and attempts to find equilibrium. However, she confessed that if she had children, she would have had to organize her work situation differently.

Following Olof Sonesson's health breakdown, his employer imposed physical, temporal, and behavioural boundaries. The boundaries reportedly offered him relief after not being able to exercise sufficient self-control during many years. The organization relocated him, gave him strict work hours, and monitored his ICT usage, actions that he solely sees positively. Thanks to the provided boundaries during a period of six months, Olof's stress levels reduced significantly and his alcohol and tobacco consumption decreased. As a result, fifty-five year old Olof has had the opportunity to find leisure activities and attempt to create work-life balance.

Max Grimme and Petra Auberlen conveyed alternative versions of external boundaries. Petra suggested organizations should offer sports or language courses, whilst Max gravitates towards non-work time in form of a nudge: organizations should announce a target amount of '*offline-hours*' per week, which the employees could collect whenever they want.

4.6 Discussion RQ2: How can boundary management be utilized by employees and employers to establish work-life balance?

In order to discuss how boundary management can be utilized to establish work-life balance, there is a need to remember how boundary management can be defined. Mellner, Aronsson and Kecklund (2014) view the administration of boundaries to be concerned with the control of domain blurring. Simultaneously individuals' management and control of boundaries, is about their preference to integrate or separate work and life domain. Further, the employment of boundaries is argued to minimize the occurring problems during micro transitions, and also diminishes the domains interrupting one another (Ashforth et al., 2000). With this as a backdrop, and the interviewees stories and reactions on how boundary management can be utilized to establish work-life balance, the discussion will be divided into individuals who opt for self-imposed, and those who opt for externally imposed boundaries.

4.6.1 Self-imposed boundaries

Half of the employees interviewed practice self-imposed boundaries such as switching off phones, and keeping devices separate. However, the study additionally suggests individuals struggle to maintain these installed boundaries.

Some interviewees argued that their energy levels are drained in attempting to maintain their boundaries, and to remain in their present domain. The latter may be due to the work domain being considered as stronger by the interviewees in comparison to the private one, causing

spillover effects or the blurring of the two domains (Clark, 2000). Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.4 the level of permeability and flexibility of work is of great relevance to the handling of 24/7 work availability. Clark (2000) argues that, the higher the identification with one's work role, the higher the likelihood of bringing that role into other domains. Due to the strong job identification of all interviewees and arguably shipping workers in general, the flexibility and permeability levels are high, indicating a more burdensome self-imposition of boundaries.

The reviewed literature and theory emphasizes the importance of the ability to focus. This can be achieved through the concept of mindfulness which facilitates self-regulation, and thus the controlling of boundaries between domains (Michel, Bosch, & Rexroth, 2014). Learning how to disengage from one domain to further engage and specifically focus on another may address some of the expressed sentiments regarding the difficulties to uphold boundaries.

As stated, boundaries are constructed to simplify and organize one's domains (Ashforth et al., 2000). With this in mind, by applying boundary management and mindfulness, individuals may reduce chaos and facilitate, or alternatively block micro transitions. Applying these concepts may be of great benefit to both the workers and their employer, as it would reduce work-life conflict, avoiding the limitation of vitality, wellbeing, and thus simultaneously increasing productivity, and efficiency (Kelly & Moen, 2007). Essentially, the empirical material demonstrates that the workers who had self-imposed boundaries need assistance with how they can enhance what they are already practicing, as they expressed a myriad of times that free time and boundaries make them feel good and arguably more productive when working. In addition, understanding the industry's inescapability to 24/7 work availability, assisting workers in the self-imposition of boundaries may be suitable. Max Grimme confirms the necessity for a change in the handling of 24/7 work availability: "*Lots of people think about to restrict themselves, and lots of people fail*". Thus it may be of great relevance to the employees who favor self-imposed boundaries, to enroll in mindfulness workshops where the individual is in focus and learns how their own boundaries, their management, and their attentiveness can be further enhanced. Online mindfulness workshops, as presented by Michel, Bosch and Rexroth (2014) could become part of low-cost, yet effective organizational health and work-life balance programmes. Reportedly, mindfulness can help segmentators as well as integrators in attaining focus, as the integrator can profit from limited mind wandering and the ability to detach, and thus become more efficient (Michel, Bosch, & Rexroth, 2014).

Furthermore, employees that do not yet practice any self-control could be offered workshops to improve time-management, and to learn about the installation of temporal and psychological boundaries. Besides workshops offered by experts within the field, colleagues could share through storytelling and in-house workshops some of their basic behavioral boundaries such as separation of phones, turning off the "red-blinking light" and other simple strategies to achieve some boundaries. Whilst older and more experienced workers might be perfectly aware, the basic steps offered could be of great advantage to younger and less experienced colleagues who have not yet attempted to exercise any kind of self-control.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the employer has an interest in assisting in the creation of workers' boundaries. Particularly as previous research regarding the matter has demonstrated

that organizations that encourage work-life balance financially outperform the ones that do not (Blazovich, Smith, & Smith, 2014).

4.6.2 External boundary management

The interviewees questioned the feasibility of external boundaries; nevertheless the research identified the existence of an underlying dissatisfaction with the status quo, which is 24/7 work availability. Furthermore, the repeatedly expressed difficulties with the maintenance of self-imposed boundaries and its exclusivity to the more experienced workers justifies elaboration of externally imposed boundaries.

As expressed by Olof Sonesson, and Rebecka Forest the external imposition of boundaries such as the stipulation of work hours is highly beneficial. It allows them to organize other things than work during certain weekends and week evenings, and improves their life quality. Both of them shared that during times when no such external boundaries exist, their work-life balance is disturbed.

Previously it has been argued that by installing boundaries the micro transitions become more difficult and thus domains are organized, which relates to what Olof Sonesson and Rebecka Forest shared during the interviews (Ashforth et al., 2000). Whilst it becomes apparent that shift-work is not a feasible form of external boundaries for most shipping workers due to the individualization of work, alternative strategies need to be tested.

Our interviewees were asked about the imposition of external boundaries, namely temporal and behavioral boundaries. Notably, when asked the question, the interviewees expressed personal interest in the idea, and were rather receptive.

However, the shipping industry is dominated by the new work life which is characterized by the extensive usage of ICT, the increase in work responsibilities, and the individualization of work (Allvin et al., 2011). The nature of the interviewees' work, and customers expectations causes work-life imbalance and may therefore influence the success of external boundaries, too. Customers or service providers might feel disappointed and "*ultimately turn to the competition*" if non-availability is repeated (Rebecka Forest). On a practical note: during non-working hours the sender of an email could receive an automatic reply, which informs them of the next time when emails will be checked and an urgency phone number. Nevertheless, further tests on feasibility and side-effects go beyond the scope of this research. Acceptance of this tool will surely shock old-established shipping employees, yet, it might be a step towards achievement of sustainable job satisfaction.

As previously stated, the high level of job identification and the high group conformity in the shipping industry hampers distancing oneself from one's work role. Clark (2000) argues that the higher the identification, the higher the flexibility and permeability towards the stronger, meaning the work domain. Whilst this is certainly connected to numerous positive aspects, the flipside of the coin is that employees will always find it difficult to detach.

As a response to the interviewees expressed frustration and high energy consumption for the upholding of boundaries, and that numerous have rather poor self-imposed boundary management; assisting the employees with externally imposed boundaries might simplify employees' lives. Particularly, it may aid in achieving the aim of boundary management which is to reduce chaos and simplify work-life domains (Ashforth et al., 2000). Notably, the transition process becomes automatized and unconscious after it has been performed a number of times (Ashforth et al., 2000). Especially, external triggers such as incoming emails on the work phone can transfer the worker straight back into the work domain. Therefore external boundaries may take the form of a habit breaker, as they could target individuals' habits of immersing themselves into 24/7 work availability. Because external boundaries would interfere with habits, for individuals that do not yet practice boundary management, the imposition of it might be experienced rather turbulently.

Simultaneously, externally imposed boundaries constitute an active adjustment of job requirements on the employer's side and would therefore arguably enhance the person-environment fit. As elaborated earlier, the required flexibility to overcome a possible person-environment or person-job mismatch appears for some interviewees straining and consequentially diminishes productivity and state of health, which could ultimately lead to contract termination (Hansen, 2013). Adjusting the work environment, achieving therewith better person-environment fit encourages workers satisfaction and thereby efficiency, productivity, and state of health (Holland, 1997; Hansen, 2013). Increased job enjoyment positively affects job performance, customer and stakeholder satisfaction and therewith financial performance (Blazovich, Smith, & Smith, 2014).

Acknowledging the interviewees reactions of the imposition of external boundaries, and how it would jeopardize organizations' and the industry's financial capital, and credibility towards customers, the discussion of organizations prioritization is of relevance. The empirical material conveys that the tramp shipping industry puts an emphasis on revenue and addressing customers' demands rather than their human capital. This prioritization may have transferred to the individuals' mindset and culture, and thus resulted in an acceptance. However, in times of increased stress-related absenteeism in service industries this prioritization might need to be reconsidered (Kelly & Moen, 2007). This suggestion is enhanced by the empirical material's demonstrated need for change:

> *"lots of people think about what one can do, but no one has found a solution yet"* (Max Grimme).

4.7   Chapter Summary

In this chapter the results and analysis for both RQ have been presented. Firstly the tramp shipping workers' perception of 24/7 work availability was outlined and five themes were identified: normal, part of the chosen lifestyle, enhanced by ICT, obstacle to work-life balance, and cause of stress, and health issues. Further it was argued that the tramp shipping culture and its maintenance through hiring the right characters in the attempt to ensure person-

environment fit is an influential factor in the perception of 24/7 work availability. For the researcher that was not acquainted with the industry or workers, 24/7 work availability perceived as normal was highly surprising as she had never been in contact with this way of working.

Secondly, the interviewees' management of 24/7 work availability was outlined and further discussed. A difference between individuals opting for boundaries and no boundaries was made as an attempt to categorize the data in layers. The second layer contains four themes within the two first layer categories: Temporary integrators, job identification and lifestyle, consideration towards the surrounding and one's self, and application of boundaries due to negative experiences. Interestingly, a gender pattern was not found. Rather that boundary preference was affected by job experience, age and private situation. It seems to become more relevant to create boundaries when family exists or advanced job experience allows doing so. Further, personal aspirations for self-actualization provide the necessary flexibility to overcome incongruences in person-job fit, besides outstanding person-organization, person-group and person-person fit, which were all described positive. Significantly, most interviewees attempt to establish boundaries, yet fail.

Finally, how boundary management can be utilized to establish work-life balance was answered. The results and discussion was divided into individuals opting for boundaries achieved through self-control, and boundaries by external assistance. Derived from the results, two main suggestions were provided: mindfulness workshops to address the needs of workers favoring self-control; and externally imposed boundaries for individuals who believe to benefit from further structuration. Both methods support the attentiveness to one's existing domain and to ultimately achieve work-life balance. Nevertheless, as researchers we favor externally imposed boundaries as we have seen evidence of self-imposed boundaries to fail.

5   Conclusion

This thesis has advanced knowledge of the sociology of contemporary work, and more specifically of the tramp shipping industry. The desire to do so derived from a conversation between the two of us discussing the implications of new work life. It seems as if western society expects us to perform in all arenas, and to possess wide social networks. Contemplating on this, it appears contradictory: How can one sustainably succeed in multiple domains, knowing we only have 24 hours a day? As Kets de Vries and Crary point out, never pausing is mentally and physically straining. Consequently, *burnout* has become a household word. Scholars interested in work-life balance argue the same contradiction. They find this mentioned strive to shine everywhere to cause imbalance. Further, as we spend the majority of our active hours working, the work domain seems to be the most prominent one, and thus strongly affects the rest of one's life. For many it is the only thing they do.

Contrasting contemporary life, our parents were offered fewer options and thus had fewer expectations, and less pressure to perform in all domains. Just two generations ago many were born into a profession. Individuals tended to stay in their natal regions, traditional gender roles were more pronounced, instant virtual communication was unthinkable, and production and consumption was mainly local. Looking at the twenty first century, our parents tend say some things were certainly *better in the past.* We however, disagree. We see the benefits in having multiple choices, being able to travel the world whilst staying connected with friends and family as it gives us freedom and the opportunity to experience things our parents never did. Nevertheless, we must admit that contemporary life can be hectic and distractive due to the overwhelming amount of options, information and goals we desire to fulfill.

The tramp shipping industry, the field of our research, embodies the stated sentiments and issues and therefore is a suitable example of contemporary work life. Yet, our empirical material demonstrates that tramp shipping employees enjoy their work and pressure as they are ambitious and strive for self-actualization. However, their pursued unique lifestyle includes the problematic 24/7 work availability. As seen whilst their profession choice is taken deliberately, it does not imply that it is sustainable. Therefore, the *problem* of 24/7 work availability is highly complex, also considering that the industry clearly dictates the need for it. The employers however should commence to recognize employees' struggle, and conclude that if there is no functional human capital, financial capital will be negatively impacted as well. Organizations are commonly interested in ensuring the quality of employees work experience; however, many seem to forget that employees usually have a life outside work, too.

Blazovich, Smith and Smith (2008) are strong supporters of the idea that organizations that foster employees' work-life balance financially outperform those that do not. Because of the global economic crisis in 2008, numerous shipping organizations are fighting for survival. Consequently, employers and managers lack energy, and attentiveness to cater for employees' work-life balance. We oppose the latter as we agree with scholars concerned with work-life balance that in the long run *happy employees are productive employees.* Thus we wonder if

there is a method to ensure the industry's 24/7 work availability whilst establishing workers' essential work-life balance, as we do not predict a conscious change in contemporary work life any time soon. Perhaps academics are up for the challenge.

5.1   Thesis contributions

In this thesis we have used a combination of theories and models to understand 24/7 work availability that may have not been combined before. Our theoretical model (see Figure 2.1) underpins the analysis of the empirical material. By merging boundary theory, person-environment fit model, and cultural theory a deeper understanding, and new perspectives of 24/7 work availability have been provided. Cultural theory allowed us to understand that 24/7 work availability is highly culturally dependent, and our research confirmed that 24/7 work availability is part of the industry's culture. Further, it was identified that the rules of the person-environment fit model partially apply. Shipping individual's desire to achieve a professional goal or to be member of the culture and its lifestyle amplifies their flexibility to overcome the experienced job specific strains of 24/7 work availability. Albeit the research has been alluding to interviewees' person-job misfit, only few negative examples, such as break-downs or resignations, were raised. Arguably, this could either indicate that individuals regard the shipping membership status as more important than their private lives, or that a holistic approach is suitable. The latter would emphasize the importance and weight of the other dimensions of the person-environment fit model and culture.

Remembering the lessons from the two mentioned theories, boundary theory was applied. As boundary theory never has been applied before to the tramp shipping industry, it became evident that one cannot solely expect boundary management to succeed without acknowledging the industry's culture, and individuals. The theoretical model gave us the proper base to further develop practical suggestions to the industry, and other 24/7 industries.

After having listened to the interviewees, we realized that constantly being 24/7 work available is not viable in the long run, however, the needed change will not come from inside the industry. Thus, in this thesis we have offered two core suggestions: the enhancement of self-imposed boundaries; and the implementation of new types of externally imposed boundaries, considering that shift-work is not feasible for most shipping occupations. Consequently, this thesis has contributed with how boundary management can be utilized in a 24/7 intense industry.

5.2   Future Research

Testing the practical feasibility of the main suggestions went beyond the scope of this study, consequentially, future experimental research should be conducted. As a result of the main findings in the thesis, this study constitutes a foundation and justification for the testing of externally imposed boundaries to establish work-life balance in a 24/7 intense industry. By

testing the implementation of external boundaries in a real-case experiment, applying a mixed-methods approach, feasibility and acceptance could be tested. More specifically we would suggest to have a test group that stipulates certain free hours during which no phone calls, fax or emails would be forwarded, with the exception of urgent phone calls, and to compare their level of wellbeing with a control group. We highly recommend to research further potential forms of external boundaries that would address industries' needs whilst concurrently warranting employees' work-life balance.

Having done this research, we remain excited about the complexity of the 24/7 work availability problem. As asserted in the thesis, there is a need for change, however there is by far no perfect solution available yet. Thus, we are impatient to see the developments in how 24/7 work availability can be better managed both in research and praxis, and we hope to be part of this journey.

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Appendix A

We are currently finishing our Master of Science in Management at the University of Lund, Sweden. In order to finish successfully we are writing a thesis concerning **24/7 work availability**.
We regard 24/7 work availability to be characterized by being reachable around the clock, flexibility and unpredictability. Some scholars argue that this availability is enhanced by new information and communication technology, as well as 21st century globalization.

Our aim with the thesis and this interview is to find how managers can administrate 24/7 work availability, balancing private and work-life as well as ensuring the organization's profitability. Thus, if agreed, we will use information extracted from this interview, and if we refer to you directly we will use another name.
We will try and limit this interview to 15 minutes long.

Definition of Boundary Management
Because we are curious about your thoughts on the creation of boundaries for 24/7 work availability in your organization, we would like to share our interpretation on boundary management, as we believe it will help you to interpret our question.

"It is the internal or external creation of boundaries that serves as a tool to distinguish between work and private life."

Thank you for your participation,
Best Regards,
Ida and Sophie
email: sophie.pritschau@gmail.com and/or tka13ibu@student.lu.se.

Appendix B

Jonathan Eck, Operations Manager, Germany, twenty-four years old;

Peter Fischer, Fleet Manager, Germany, forty-one years old;

Max Grimme, Senior Operations Manager, Germany, thirty-four years old;

Mette Langaard, Commercial Support, working in Germany, forty years old;

Sebastian Hansen, Shipbroker, German, working in Denmark, twenty-eight years old;

Petra Auberlen, Senior Operations Manager, Germany, thirty-something years old;

Olof Sonesson, Insurance and Legal Supporter, Danish, working in Germany, fifty-five years old;

Wei Chao, Managing Director, China, fifty-seven years old;

Rebecka Forest, Shipbroker, British-Portuguese, working in Austria, fifty-something years old;

Xiaoyi Lee, Senior Operations Manager, Chinese-Canadian, working in Germany, thirty-seven years old;

Kate Frank, Port Captain, United States of America, thirty-seven years old

Justin Gröber, Operations Manager, Germany, thirty-one years old.

Thomas Dijon, executive vice president, Swiss, employed in the United States, forty-seven years old

Appendix C

<u>Job descriptions:</u>

To provide additional context to the results and discussion, the occupations of our interview participants are worth presenting. Firstly, shipbrokers are viewed as negotiators between stakeholders, such as ship owner, operator, and cargo owners, also termed charterers or between the buyers and sellers of ships. The shipbroker finds support by an operations manager, who is regularly taking over all commercial and operational responsibilities after the broker has concluded the contract.

The operations manager is therefore responsible for timely intervention once necessary. All other interviewees are employed in ship owning organizations in various different positions. The fleet manager is responsible for the technical functionality of the vessels, ensuring continuous operationality of the vessel. A managing director ensures that ships are employed and continuously contribute to the revenue of the organization. Besides this, our interview partner is also head of the Shanghai office.

Commercial Support is responsible to secure business partner satisfaction, the organization of organization wide consolidations and requires to embody commercial, operational, technical, legal and psychological knowledge to ensure success in negotiations. Operations manager on the ship owner side are fully responsible for the execution of the voyage, creating stowage plans, ordering fuel, planning the whole voyage turnaround. The job is characterized by multitasking, continuous switching between inflowing emails, phone calls, the 'actual' work and spontaneous problem solving are of the essence. They find support by port captains, who have the local technical knowledge in ports, and the legal department, which assists in all kind of legal matters and claims handling that goes beyond the capacity of the operations manager.

Considering that shipping workers operate within different time zones, it is evident that it is an industry where 24/7 work availability is inescapable.