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'Here today, gone tomorrow': the risks and rewards of port chaplaincy

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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the findings of an ESRC-funded project about religion in the context of the international global shipping industry, with particular focus on the work of port chaplains. We describe the physical, emotional, spiritual and financial risks involved in port chaplaincy work, and the way this form of religious employment is distinctly gendered. But the risks and challenges of port chaplaincy are considered alongside its intrinsic rewards and potential for professional fulfilment, most especially through the traffic of material goods and the sharing of hospitality that enable relationships between chaplains and seafarers. Our work contributes to the scholarly field of workplace chaplaincy by providing an empirical case study of port chaplains who typically operate as 'lone workers' as they minister to seafarers whose labours are so vital to the global economy. We consider the fact that lone workers can be vulnerable to exclusion from effective management practices which otherwise assume face-to-face interaction.

KEYWORDS
Port; chaplaincy; seafaring; lone-worker

Introduction

Much of our understanding of religious phenomena is derived from research conducted on dry land. But what about religion 'at sea', or at the water's edge? A small multi-disciplinary research team conducted archival and ethnographic research to find out more about the historic and contemporary role of religion 'at sea' and on its borders in ports. Our findings have addressed issues around the management of ethnic and racial diversity on board ships (Sampson et al. 2020), the 'working theology' of Filipino seafarers (Smith et al. 2021) and an evaluation of how seafarers view the work of chaplains to the maritime industry (Cadge et al. forthcoming).

This paper places our findings about the ministry and perspectives of port chaplains at centre stage, with particular emphasis upon the way in which chaplains manage the physical, spiritual, emotional, and financial risks involved in their work. However, this is placed alongside the intrinsic rewards of employment that has potential for considerable

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'job satisfaction' and meaningful exchange of material cultures – in the form of reciprocal gift-giving and hospitality – as a result of the relationships chaplains are able to broker and develop. But in their service of a multi-professional, multi-cultural, multi-faith and highly international workforce, usually in the liminal spaces between dry land and deep ocean (Cadge and Skaggs 2019, 2018), port chaplains are often a professionally isolated and lonely group of religious specialists. They can easily fall between the cracks created by the regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles of port operations and shipping companies, the financial fragility of the religious organisations that employ them or support their voluntary work, and their typical disconnect from the more routine and visible operation of church institutions. Chaplains – as a group of religious professionals – are often described as 'multiply marginal'(Pattison 2020), but this seems especially the case in relation to port chaplains. In many ways, loneliness, vulnerability, and isolation 'at work', are common to both seafarers and chaplains, but for different reasons. In relation to chaplains, the economic models that drive the international shipping industry leave little room for the religious or spiritual care of those who work at sea and funding for the missionary organisations that have historically supported port chaplaincy is under pressure. While chaplains are respected for their welfare provision by shipping companies, and although some ports may offer rent-free premises (but potentially little more than a portacabin), there is a lack of real investment in port chaplaincy by the maritime industry.[1] When this scenario is combined with the typical isolation of chaplains from the church/es and their associated congregations, it means that port chaplaincy can be one of the most isolating of religious occupations. This is compounded by the nature of the shipping industry and the transience of crews. Apart from regular ship services known as liners (usually ro-ros or container ships) where chaplains might see the same seafarers on a regular basis most ships are in ports for relatively short periods of time – perhaps no more than 24-hours or less (Sampson 2013; Alderton et al. 2004; Sampson and Bin 2003) – meaning that port chaplains typically work with those who are literally 'here today, and gone tomorrow'.

Where many industries on dry land are recognising the added value that can come from employees who feel that their religious and spiritual identities are recognised and supported at work (Waller 2012; Seales 2012; Savage 2012; Hicks 2003; Saks 2011; Miller, Wambura Ngunjiri, and Lorusso 2018) the maritime trade has not, especially in relation to religious identity and practice at sea (as opposed to within ports). In our research, seafarers reported that overt public expression or discussion of religion, or accommodation of religious practices that may inconvenience others, can be a potential source of conflict in a highly risk-averse environment. This means it tends, by and large, to remain a private matter while out at sea (Sampson et al. 2020) which may be one reason for lack of industry attention or investment. But this only adds to the significance and importance of seafarers being able to access chaplains while in port, acting as they do as a vital 'bridge' between sea and land (Montemaggi 2018).

It is estimated that ninety percent of the world's cargo is transported by the efforts of those involved in the shipping industry . . . cargo upon which we all depend for so many of our 'everyday' household goods (George 2014). And yet, this dependence on the work of seafarers has not led to the emergence of a more sustainable economic model for the work of port chaplains who attend to their spiritual and religious needs, alongside their broader welfare needs. Chaplains provide a vital social service support to crew; were their work to diminish or

disappear, it would leave seafarers without any real port-based support (Palmer and Murray 2016). Our research provides evidence for the value of port chaplains as they support a group of modern-day workers who are easily overlooked, undervalued, vulnerable to exploitation, and who take considerable risks in transporting the material goods upon which global economic trade depends. Much of the work of port chaplains takes place 'behind closed doors', or at least in physical spaces that are hard to access for a range of regulatory and bureaucratic reasons. This paper opens these doors, thereby illuminating the risks, rewards and relationships that underpin the valuable work of modern-day port chaplains.

Methodology

The data underpinning this paper was collected as part of a three-year ESRC-funded project entitled: 'Religion in multi-ethnic contexts: a multidisciplinary case study of global seafaring' carried out between June 2017 and December 2020.[2] Our project sought to find out how religion is practiced and expressed by seafarers working within the international shipping industry, as well as the extent to which their religious and spiritual needs are addressed by those who work for one of the various international maritime chaplaincy organisations. We were aware of the long history of port chaplaincy via organisations such as the 'Mission to Seafarers' (established in 1856) and so examination of archival material enabled us to understand contemporary provision through an historical lens. In terms of ethnographic data collection, a full-time researcher spent 89 days at sea on two different vessels interviewing seafarers and undertaking non-participant observation. This was supplemented by spending six months in two different UK ports interviewing chaplains and accompanying them on ship visits, alongside interviews with chaplains based around the world who were met at chaplaincy conferences. Seafarer centres run by different faith-based organisations in these ports provided a physical base for this phase of the data collection. Our dataset was subject to thematic coding via CAQDAS software (NVivo 12). Via detailed evaluation of the findings emerging from some thirty-seven principal NVivo 'nodes', this paper illuminates the work of port-based chaplains in detail. Our research questions pertaining to chaplains revolved around issues of theology, professional self-identity, the enabling and constraining structures and circumstances surrounding their work, and their capacity to deliver pastoral care to ethnically and religiously diverse crews.

About the chaplains

Among the ten chaplains whom we interviewed, there was an equal number of men and women. Five were associated with the 'Mission to Seafarers' (Anglican) while the remainder were affiliated to the Apostleship of the Sea (Roman Catholic), the Sailors Society, and a Seamen's Mission based in Germany. Four of the ten were UK-based, with the remainder in Myanmar, Hong Kong, Brazil, Australia, Canada and Germany. The youngest chaplain was only twenty-two years of age, and the eldest was sixty-three. With the exception of three relatively youthful chaplains, the majority of the rest were in their fifties and sixties, confirming our impression that port chaplaincy is predominantly the work of older people. This becomes relevant when considering the future of the profession, and the 'risky' aspects of the work.

None of the chaplains we interviewed had embarked on theological training or religious ministry with the intention of serving in port chaplaincy as an ultimate outcome. Four were ordained, six were not, confirming the findings of previous research with (Catholic) port chaplains (Montemaggi 2018).[3] They were all, to some extent, 'accidental' chaplains, who seemed to find themselves undertaking this form of work as a matter of serendipitous personal connection and opportunity (Gilliat-Ray, Mansur Ali, and Pattison 2013; Beckford and Gilliat 1998). In some cases, these were 'maritime' shaped: for example, one chaplain had worked as a tour guide on an historic ship, another had a straightforward 'love of the sea', and a third chaplain had a relative who had served as a seafarer. In other cases, the circumstances that had driven them towards port chaplaincy were more explicitly 'religious', derived from previous experience of salaried chaplaincy work (in hospital), as an extension of a parish role, or as a natural development of work associated with mission and evangelism. What was especially evident among all our interviewees was the extent to which they recognised, sometimes retrospectively, a 'calling' to port ministry, and saw it as offering a felicitous circumstantial convergence of biography, vocation, and opportunity. Irrespective of their previous work or experience, there was a sense in which many of our interviewees were driven by an ethic of Christian service to others. But this was tempered by an awareness of the need to be non-discriminatory and not necessarily because they intended to enable 'conversion'. One interviewee was clear: 'we are not going on ships to proselytise'. But behind their distribution to seafarers of reading material (including newspapers, religious information), gifts (woollen hats, chocolates/food), communication devices (portable WiFi, SIM cards) or more religious items (rosaries, prayer cards) there was a recognition that these material means of assistance were vital avenues for relationship-building which may lead to more directly religious or spiritual conversation or assistance (Montemaggi 2018).

The daily ministry of port chaplains

We were able to build a comprehensive picture of how port chaplains fulfil their roles as a result of our interviews with them, observation carried out in seafarer centres, and by questioning seafarers about their work. A picture emerged of an occupation that involves a range of very practical 'facilitative' tasks and services, occasional emergency responses, extensive fundraising, a good deal of pastoral listening, and an ability to undertake one of the classic hallmarks of chaplaincy work, namely to 'loiter with intent' in anticipation of picking up 'passing trade' (Johnston and McFarland 2010; Pattison 1994; Miller 2007). Theirs is 'a ministry of presence' according to one of our interviewees. A number of chaplains spoke about the spontaneous conversations that had arisen simply by hanging around in the public spaces that seafarers occupy on vessels, when they are not at work, such as the crew's mess. When conversations do occur there were some distinctive themes such as helping seafarers to cope with difficult conditions on the ship (such as lack of culturally appropriate food, feeling endangered, homesickness), helping them to communicate with their families by enabling internet access or providing SIM cards, making arrangements to transport them to shopping centres or seafarer centres during their brief stopover in port, and helping them to cope with their absence from family occasions such as births,

marriages or deaths. The long contracts that seafarers are bound by (which could be up to twelve months, but often about nine months) mean that chaplains will almost inevitably hear at some point about relationships in the lives of a seafarer that have stretched to breaking point.

Port chaplains share with their counterparts in other sectors a willingness and capability to deal with emergencies, such as a sudden (or suspicious) death on board. In these cases, the coastguard may well ask chaplains to be ready to board a ship coming into port in these circumstances.[4] Regardless of sector, chaplains are the 24/7 'ambulance service' of their institutions, and their role gives them a particular kind of agency to reach everyone, irrespective of their status, rank, or position. While port chaplains do sometimes perform religious services (such as a Mass) on board vessels or in seafarer centres, our dataset reflected some noticeable silences in relation to sacramental or ritual functions.

Risks

This brief description of the activities and conversations that might occupy the time of port chaplains masks some of the complexities of their work, and most especially the considerable risks they take in order to carry out their role. Port chaplains have to be able to manage and overcome a range of physical, emotional, spiritual and financial risks, all of which begin with the bureaucratic and practical business of being in and around a potentially dangerous industrial environment (Cadge and Skaggs 2019). Acquiring port 'passes' (either on a daily basis, or periodically) are just the first of many obstacles. The spatial dynamic of ports require chaplains to know where and how they can travel around the dock area within the constraints of Health and Safety protocols that protect them – at least in principle – from moving cranes, forklift trucks and other vehicles. Similarly, the geographic scale of many modern-day ports means that chaplains may have to travel either on foot (or by car) a considerable distance in order to reach particular ships. This makes their work physically demanding, potentially dangerous, and often frustrating if the size of the port prevents them from visiting as many ships as they would ideally like. Boarding a ship may require some degree of physical agility, bravery, good balance, and no fear of heights; even the gangway onto a ship may present a logistical challenge. And of course, there are some ships carrying or loading dangerous cargo that chaplains cannot board, even if they wanted to.

The chaplains we interviewed made relatively little reference to the physical stresses of boarding ships but had far more to say about the frustration of meeting a 'lukewarm' reception once aboard, especially if reaching the ship had been tiring in the first place.

> . . . the port won't offer you transport and you just feel like you went through all these hoops just to try to get to that ship and then you go on board and they're like "we don't need you". So yes, that kind of stuff is frustrating and sometimes it can make you be like "oh, why am I even doing this"?

However, over time and with the accumulation of experience, chaplains usually acquire skills and techniques to help them get past the 'gatekeeper' on the gangway to reach seafarers who may be very appreciative of their visit.

But even having negotiated safe physical access, and perhaps overcome mixed responses, boarding a ship is almost always a gendered experience in both positive and negative ways, and for both chaplains and seafarers. Half our sample of port chaplains were women and could reflect on the way their gender both enabled and constrained their work. One interviewee was able to articulate both aspects, and this particular interview extract is worth citing at length:

> There are some things that are advantageous, for example like I'm a lot less threatening when I go on board a ship in my little [brightly coloured] hat like nobody is thinking I'm there to spy or you know I'm not as aggressive and I think it's also nice for seafarers to have a woman on board a ship because they don't usually see many women in a long time. So I can bring sort of a new perspective or I can remind seafarers of their daughter or their wife or their mother or you know . . . so that side of it is really nice but also I think it comes with a load of disadvantages . . . like I'm not as respected I think when I go on board a ship or like for example, yesterday when I went visiting with [my colleague] they come and they shake his hand and they ask to see his ID and it's like I'm just ignored you know. I'm not really seen as important enough to take my ID or shake my hand, I'm kind of like the one accompanying them. I think this does come also with cultural differences because different cultures view women in different ways and a lot of cultures don't think that women can be . . . any sort of religious leader so that can be a challenge for me as well. And there's been a few times when I don't feel safe on board the ship too where I know I'm not necessarily in an environment where I'm going to be like thought of as a person and more thought of as an object. Like I did have one time I went on a Romanian ship and they were kind of like really sketchy when I went on board there, there was like a lot of smoke in the air and it was really weird and then the chief cook came to me and he was like "here come in the galley with me" and he just pulled me in the galley and then he tried to touch me so I had to run away. So yes there are times when you don't feel so safe but [Religious Charity 1] gave me like an alarm that I wear round my neck so if I don't feel safe I can press it in an emergency, but I don't really know how much it's going to work.

While port chaplains of either gender risk being greeted with a 'mixed' reception when they board a ship on account of their religious occupation, the sense of rejection is compounded even further when there is an obvious disregard for female ministry. Despite these instances, our female interviewees could focus on the enabling aspects of their gender instead, and the fact that seafarers were potentially more likely to share and discuss with them family issues or relationship breakdowns, their own physical vulnerability or experiences of bullying (which can extend to sexual assaults), and other 'emotional' or mental health issues. There seems to be no 'perfect' solution to the gendered aspects of port ministry, and chaplains have to become adept at playing to the strengths of their gender as far as possible. But gender may not be the only reason for an 'unceremonious ejection'. Crew (or captains) who have perceived themselves to be on the receiving end of proselytism in the past may be more likely to view all port chaplains negatively, without discrimination, in future. Chaplains need to know not only how to board a ship (if they are given permission to do so by the Captain), but also when it's time to leave.

Port chaplaincy is by definition an occupation that will expose its workers to a variety of faiths, nationalities, cultures, and languages (Montemaggi 2018; Palmer and Murray 2016). Many seafarers working in the international shipping industry hail from the Far East (Philippines, China, Indonesia) but there are also sizeable numbers of Indians and Europeans (who tend to hold officer ranks) (Ellis and Sampson 2008; Winchester,

Sampson, and Shelly 2006). During the course of our project, chaplains talked at length about what they regarded as some of the defining qualities and characteristics of Filipinos, Russians, Latvians, and Croatians. Although English is the language of the maritime industry some chaplains had acquired a basic understanding of the 'working language' and vocabulary of ships crewed by particular nationalities. An ability to greet people in their own language provides a 'way in' to pastoral conversation. But while seafarers may be able to communicate basic needs or problems, chaplains were aware of their own limitations if there is a clear language barrier preventing more in-depth 'talk'. This can be compounded even further if chaplains sense that captains are 'filtering' information. The risks and consequences of misunderstanding – in all senses of the word – are quite evident thereby making port chaplaincy a potential exercise in diplomacy, let alone pastoral care.

Between the physical dangers of boarding a ship and the risk of outright rejection, there is another extreme. Much of the work of port chaplains can be downright monotonous. Boarding a ship and finding out what seafarers may need means considerable repetition of activities and conversation, day in, day out. Furthermore, there may be no immediately positive outcome from a ship visit. In these instances, chaplains may not be able to derive much satisfaction from their ministry and may have to trust (in God) that it has been helpful, to someone: 'the biggest part is that you showed up . . . like if nobody comes to visit a ship then seafarers are even more isolated'.

Woven into the accounts we heard of physical, emotional, and spiritual 'risk', we also heard frustrations surrounding the financing of port chaplaincy work. Some chaplains spend considerable time trying to secure donations of money or material goods in order to perform their role.

> I don't have enough money – it's just strictly a matter of economics. We have . . . our funding is . . . it's not sustainable at this point. But it's getting to the point where it feels like we're all about the fundraising and not about the work. So this year we all had to take a 50 percent cut in pay. And that was incredibly difficult. For all of us. I'm being paid half time but I'm certainly working well over my limit. And that's been really difficult because my job actually grew this year because of the third station. I've opened that, that's my baby, I put that whole thing together, got all the funding, found the trailer, moved the trailer, painted the damn trailer. I mean it's just . . . I did everything in there. I spent hours on the floor on my belly picking dry paint off the vinyl tiles. Yeah, it's been a really tough year for us.

This extract says a great deal about the personal investment that many port chaplains make in their work and the sacrifices they are willing to make, to the extent that some chaplains have on occasion provided hospitality to crew members, in their own homes. We heard other accounts of personal sacrifice and willingness to 'go the extra mile', such as taking clothing and other essential items to seafarers who had to leave their ships due to illness. But all this doesn't amount to a sustainable economic model for port chaplaincy in the long-term, and points to the future vulnerability of the profession and the individuals who are employed within it.

Rewards

There is of course a flip side to the potential isolation, vulnerability, dangers, and precarious nature of port chaplaincy. It would not have endured for so long, were it not intrinsically and usually rewarding in myriad ways, and its financial insecurity need

not define its future. So, with isolation and potential loneliness comes an ability for chaplains to exercise a degree of self-directed autonomy, and the agency to organise the working day or week with some flexibility. With the risk of linguistic 'misunderstanding' comes the opportunity to explore new languages and cultures. Some ships and their crews are 'regular' arrivals in some ports and enduring relationships can be fostered, sometimes leading to email and social media contact between seafarers and chaplains long after a ship has left the port. For every 'unceremonious ejection' there are positive stories about the vital and successful intervention of a chaplain that can literally travel around the world via the networks that constitute shipping companies and crews.

Chaplains do not undertake their work in the expectation of any material benefit, but there is nonetheless an exchange of material goods that seems to be an intrinsic part of their work and points to the potentially very rewarding aspects of the role. When chaplains visit a ship, they will typically take with them a range of religious and non-religious paraphernalia, some for sale and other as gifts. Phone cards, woollen hats, chocolates or other foodstuffs, prayer cards or rosaries … these can be part of the essential kit list for a port chaplain. Without any expectation of receiving anything in return, chaplains can nevertheless find themselves as dinner guests on board a ship in port, sampling the exotic menu of cultures far away. On occasions such as this, chaplains can derive pleasure from a sense of 'acceptance' by the crew, and a recognition of their mutual belonging – albeit in different ways – to an unusual social world.

As well as receiving occasional gifts or hospitality, chaplains are also the brokers of material exchanges between others. Those chaplains whose port ministry is an extension of their work in a parish can be in a good position to inspire and motivate their congregations to support the work of seafarers in material ways. Churches sometimes rally round to make up gift parcels for seafarers, perhaps at Christmas or Easter time, thereby complementing the pastoral work of chaplains. Chaplains might also find themselves helping seafarers to source souvenirs and gifts for their families. When this entails the receipt of money, it is indicative of the degree of trust that seafarers are able to invest in chaplains, though it is not unknown for chaplains to make purchases from their own pockets so that seafarers can 'pay them back' another time. Inevitably, and like chaplains in many other sectors, port chaplains often find themselves working more hours than they are paid for, but this seems to be a price they are willing to pay for working in a field that some of them regard as a 'blessing'. 'Sometimes we seek to be a blessing to those we serve. But sometimes those we serve end up being a blessing to us'.

Ultimately however, it is the spiritual labour of direct and immediate pastoral care that is at the heart of what makes port chaplaincy rewarding, especially if chaplains sense that there has been a Divine hand of intervention in a particular visit.

> On occasion I have had some ship visits where I leave and it's like wow, it's really like ordained that I showed up at this moment in time and I was able to be there to talk to this crew. Like one time we had a ship coming into [place] and we already knew that one of the seafarers on board was missing like before they showed up something had happened, nobody knows the truth even to this day if maybe he committed suicide, maybe it was a medical emergency, maybe something went wrong with equipment I don't know but the seafarer was gone. So we had a report from the police saying like listen you'd better go on this ship when it comes in because we have this issue and so we went on board this ship and it was like wow, if the chaplains hadn't been there nobody would be there for these guys who are feeling this

hurt, this loss, this confusion. So it was a special moment to be there to support because these guys they were processing and they just wanted to talk you know, I don't know that we really helped them solve anything but it was just the fact that they had someone to vent to, they had a listening ear, they had someone who was open because they were going through a lot.

Whether reciprocity takes the form of material gifts, the loan of money for a shopping expedition, hospitality, or mutual affirmation, this can be indicative of a depth and quality of relationships and trust that go well beyond individual chaplains and seafarers. The reach of these actions extends to the communities and families that seafarers have left behind, binding port chaplains into a complex and potentially very rewarding web of international connections.

Relationships

As with the work of chaplains in virtually all sectors, good port chaplains need to be experts in rapid relationship-building, adept at 'reading' a social situation quickly and accurately via the nuances of body language, tone of voice, or disposition.

when I heard about it I was like . . . this is the easiest thing ever . . . like all you have to do is walk on board and talk to people . . . and then I just started to do it and then I realised it's actually very . . . it requires a very high level of skill and concentration and trial and error. You never know who you're going to meet on board you have to be ready for anything and you have to be ready for any situation. When you're going on board it's like that's their workplace and their home at the same time, so you have to be super respectful.

Experienced chaplains understand the importance of relational transactions which, at face value, may appear superficial but can form the pastoral core of their work. For example, when a seafarer shares a family photograph with a chaplain, this is not merely the exchange of images. A photograph of a wife or child provides the means for conversation about relationships and family which may be happy, or sad, but almost inevitably about the pain of absence and distance. By showing a photograph of loved ones back home, a seafarer is signalling a willingness to talk, to reveal something of their identity, and perhaps also their need to expose their 'heart and soul'. Seafarers carry their own emotional cargo on long distances across many months, and, depending upon fellow crew members, chaplains might turn out to be their only 'friend in the port'.

Chaplaincy centres can provide valuable physical spaces for meeting the religious or spiritual needs of seafarers, as can the mess area on a ship. But good chaplains are likely to recognise the value of liminal spaces where crew can have a 'quiet word'. When chaplains are able to provide transport for seafarers to visit centres or shopping areas, these journeys in cars or minibuses provide an ideal opportunity for 'listening to their stories', and potentially the chance to engage in explicit religious or personal 'talk'. 'Travel', as the sociologist John Urry notes, 'can involve entering an unbounded "out-of-time" zone' (Urry 2002, 271) that allows for a breakdown in the 'expressive coherence' of socialised 'performing' selves (Goffman 1959, 63). So, although seafarers are in a constant state of 'travel', their ships are their workplaces and there is little scope for breakdown in

'expressive coherence'. This makes the journeys they might take with a chaplain a very different kind of 'travel', and one that can enable an opportunity to drop their usual working 'performance'.

Despite the potential loneliness of their day-to-day work, port chaplains work within and across a complex web of institutional relationships including port authorities, shipping companies, their sponsoring religious organisation/s, and the network of Christian organisations that serve maritime industries around the globe. Their scope for relationship-building is extensive and international, making them 'human sign-boards' who can facilitate and enable information-sharing and support for a wide range of stakeholders. Given the nature of their work, this can include brokering pastoral care for seafarers of other faiths, and several chaplains recounted stories of their efforts to enable Muslims (in particular) to practice their tradition. One chaplain collected a captain from his ship during Ramadan and took him to a restaurant so that he could break his fast late in the evening, long after the cook had finished his work.

Chaplains recognise their limitations when it comes to supporting those of other faiths, especially in emergency situations or following a death on board a ship. They could see that simply having 'contact details' for an Imam was probably not enough. On the whole port chaplaincy doesn't seem to have reached a stage of being truly multi-faith, certainly in comparison to other chaplaincy sectors. This is a reflection of its history and funding, However, from 2019/2020 the Mission to Seafarers has committed to use a donation from Seafarers UK to increase the diversity of its personnel, and to meet the needs of seafarers from other faiths more extensively (Mission to Seafarers, 'New grant to increase and diversify our volunteer base', accessed 8.12.20).

Implications & discussion

There are relatively few contemporary empirical studies of workplace chaplaincy (Wolf and Feldbauer-Durstmüller 2018) making the research findings reported in this paper a valuable contribution to a growing field of literature and the scope for theoretical development. What is clearly apparent from our research is the degree to which the organisational and structural arrangements that determine the work of port chaplains – or indeed any chaplain – are significant in shaping their day-to-day lives which carry implications for all those concerned with their ministry.

In a major recent study of chaplaincy in the UK carried out by the Christian think-tank 'THEOS', an important distinction is made between chaplains who work *within* an organisation, and chaplains who work *with* an organisation (Ryan 2014) Chaplains who work *within* an organisation will typically find themselves embedded in a hierarchical structure that frames their day-to-day work and employment terms and conditions in myriad ways, from recruitment to retirement. In contrast, chaplains working *with* orga-nisations (such as port chaplains) may find themselves working within highly variable structural arrangements that have consequences for issues such as autonomy and account-ability, access to employee benefits, opportunities for continuous professional develop-ment, the scope to work as part of multidisciplinary teams, or the potential to shape institutional policy, as just a few examples. Many chaplains working *with* organisations effectively operate as 'lone workers' and typically occupy liminal occupational spaces. So, given the clear growth in the numbers of paid and voluntary chaplains now working *with*

a wide spectrum of public and private institutions associated with culture, education, emergency services, justice, transport, and so on (Ryan 2014), it is important to consider some of the implications of their structural and organisational situation.

Take, for example, the question of 'health and safety'. Unlike chaplains who work *within* organisations, chaplains who find themselves occupying 'multiply marginal' (Pattison 2015) positions working *with* organisations appear to lack the kind of access to employee well-being and occupational health support typically associated with a large hierarchical organisation (such as counselling). Associated with this structural liminality is the question of 'voice' and representation in relation to issues of well-being and safety. Although chaplaincy bodies will have a 'duty of care' towards their employees or volunteers, in many cases this is unlikely to be available 'on site'. The spatial and temporal distance between chaplains working *with* an organisation from those who bear ultimate responsibility for their welfare and security can become mutually disadvantageous when it comes to health and safety (Nayani et al. 2018). For those responsible for the management of chaplains, the lack of opportunity to observe the extent to which health and safety protocols are being observed on a day-to-day basis limits the occasion for them to share information, to re-evaluate what counts as risk, or to model good health and safety behaviours. Meanwhile, chaplains may lack occasions for informal sharing of health and safety information, or the opportunity to observe good working practices from their managers. In a context where 'management practices assume face-to-face interaction' (Nayani et al. 2018, 124), 'lone worker' chaplains present a challenge to prevalent assumptions and norms. Given the global shift towards greater lone working (from home) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is clearly a case to be made for reconsideration of management principles and practices which pay more considered attention to the management of 'lone workers'.

Chaplaincy work is assumed to be an intrinsically rewarding sphere of professional religious work that gives individuals an opportunity to fulfil a 'calling' to offer spiritual and religious service to others (Todd, Cobb, and Swift 2015; Gilliat-Ray, Mansur Ali, and Pattison 2013). However, our data seems to show the need to discriminate and differentiate more precisely the assumed origins and nature of these intrinsic rewards within specific chaplaincy sectors, and perhaps especially for 'lone worker' chaplains who may be less likely to receive feedback from colleagues or managers. Unlike many other spheres of chaplaincy work, the bureaucratic and structural arrangements that shape the work of port chaplains – *especially those governing health and safety* – have a significant and determining impact on their modus operandi and consequent opportunity to derive intrinsic rewards from their interactions with others – either colleagues or clients. They require permission to board the ship, they are usually escorted while on board, and their work is usually highly monotonous; this paper has mapped some of the very clear risks that port chaplains take in order to undertake their ministry. The particular structures and constraints that shape their work have subsequent consequences for their scope to derive satisfaction and intrinsic rewards from their ministry, as compared to many other forms of chaplaincy work. But in our data, it becomes clear that it is precisely the lack of intrinsic rewards – as conventionally understood in chaplaincy literature and discourse – that seems to provide many port chaplains with their distinctive feeling of fulfilment in much of their work. It is the acts of sacrifice – personal, emotional, physical, financial – that seem to generate their sense of reward rather than other, more typical ways in which chaplains gain a sense of having 'done a good job' (Gilliat-Ray, Mansur Ali, and Pattison 2013).

Conclusion

As religious professionals serving in secular worlds, chaplains, like seafarers, operate 'between two worlds' (Holst 1982; Sullivan 2014; Cadge 2012). Their work involves the management of relationships and structural arrangements that can pull them in opposing and conflicting directions, between their 'sending' religious institution, and the sector in which they are employed. Port chaplains are perhaps uniquely able to appreciate the 'betweenness' of the world occupied by seafarers as they manage the constant disruption of living and moving between short periods of time at home, and long periods of time at sea. As transnational workers, seafarers live in 'more than one social space' (Sampson 2013, 13), and have 'a foot in two cultures, two societies, two countries, at the same time' (ibid.). It is a form of transnationalism that isn't just about 'spanning territorial boundaries' (ibid.) but managing to live physically, emotionally and mentally in more than one place at a time. The vocabulary of transnationalism doesn't yet seem able to encompass the work of (port) chaplains and those whose work may not involve the crossing of borders nor the traversing of physical space, but remains in all other respect 'transnational'.

It has not been difficult to prove the value of port chaplaincy via qualitative research methods; our project enabled chaplains to articulate their largely unseen contribution to the shipping industry. But neither they, nor we, could disregard some of the developments in shipping technology and communications that are likely to make their role vulnerable in the future. Port operations are becoming increasingly automated in the form of 'robot'/autonomous surface ships (Kim et al. 2020), which are likely to enable cargo to be loaded and unloaded more quickly than ever. Some chaplains could see that a time may come when there simply won't be an opportunity to 'hang out' in the crew mess. Vessels are increasingly able to provide internet/Wi-Fi access, removing one of the key services that chaplains and chaplaincy centres have been able to offer. This has pushed one chaplain towards thoughts of a 'virtual seafarer centre', but whether such an entity could replace the embodied presence of a chaplain is debatable.

While feeling personally supported by port chaplaincy organisations, some chaplains were simultaneously critical of them for having insufficient regard for the future challenges of the profession and their failure to keep pace with the rapidity of change in the maritime industry. None expressed optimism for the future. Just as the turnover of ships in many ports mean that crew are 'here today, and gone tomorrow', there is a chance that the same catchphrase might become equally applicable to port chaplaincy itself, especially without the investment necessary to support this form of work in the future. The diminishing of this sphere of religious work would be detrimental to the overall health and welfare of seafarers, thereby risking the wellbeing of the very people whose labours sustain the global economy upon which we all depend.

Notes

1. Chaplaincy organisations such as the Mission to Seafarers will have connections to shipping companies and port authorities, usually to try to secure donations from them. Indeed, some companies make donations, but as the paper suggests, this is not on any large scale.
2. ESRC reference number: ES/N019423
3. Consequently, some wore clerical collars and others did not, though most chaplains wore high viz clothing and ID lanyards.

4. If a death occurs at sea, the normal practice is for the body to be kept in cold storage until reaching port.

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