



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

# **How the core values are implemented and interpreted throughout an organization**

**A case study of a family-owned shipping company**  
Master's thesis in Maritime Management

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Department of Mechanics and Maritime Sciences

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Master's Thesis

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## **Abstract**

Organizations can be structured in different ways, depending on industry and owner structure. Each organization also have their own specific goal and values. The values then form the company's culture and creates the internal rules of how the employees should act and treat each other, what the norms are. The aim with this thesis is to see what a family-owned shipping company wants to achieve by their core values, and further on to investigate if the written core values (espoused values) is in line with the culture that is present within the organization (enacted values). In order to reach the aim, literature related to family organizations and core values have been reviewed. In addition, interviews with employees working at the specific company have been conducted. The interviews were made in order to create an understanding of the actual culture that is present at the company today, and later on be able to compare those results with the core values that is stated by the company. In conclusion the case study states that the espoused values and the enacted values are to a great extent in line with each other. What is interesting though is that the balance between what is written and what is perceived is not due to the current management of company, but rather by the founding fathers.

## **Keywords**

Family-companies, Shipping Companies, Core Values, Culture

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Sally Johansson

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# **1. Introduction**

The success of a company and its ability to prolong in the future are for a large part determined by internal components of the organizations, such as organizational behavior and culture. These aspects within the company regards the working environment and the employee's perception of the organization. Every organization has their own specific culture that defines them. The culture is created by everyone who has worked and are still working within the organization, but it can be steered by the core values (Vallejo-Martos, 2011). The core values are defined words that the management group and/or the owners uses to describe the internal goals that the organization have. It states what and how they want their employees to behave and what the organization strive towards (Duh et al., 2010). The core values do not implement themselves just by being stated on a piece of paper, they must be followed by the ones leading the company in firsthand and then spread throughout the rest of the organization (Coleman, 2013).

Through this thesis a family-owned shipping company are chosen in which their core values will be addressed and further on compared with how the employees describes the company. The company is located on an island outside of Gothenburg and have six tanker vessels. The vessels operate for the most part within northern Europe and have a DWT of 19.000 to 22.000. It is now the second generation that is leading the company, but the third generation have also started to work within the organization.

## **1.1. Background**

### **1.1.1. Shipping Company**

The shipping industry has existed for over 5.000 years, and it has since the beginning played a vital role of the global development. There are several different types of organizational structures when it comes to ship owners. From big corporate with the management far away from the day-to-day work, to the privately owned small and tightly runed organizations (Stopford, 2008, p. 85). Managing vessels requires a lot of knowledge and skills and it is therefore common that the shipowner outsource some management areas. Depending on the owner, and the skills and knowledge that they already possess, the share of outsourced management are determined. Zhang and Tang state in their book (2022, p. 6) the different areas that are required in order to operate transportation with vessels on the global market are crewing, legal, operations, technical, commercial, financing and accounting. All different departments require their specific expertise, and these are in turn then also dependent on the internal environment of the shipping company. The question of which parts that are best to keep inhouse or to outsource is specific for each company since they all have different conditions for their operations (Jahn & Bussow, 2013). When it comes to family-owned shipping companies they are traditionally very conscious to whether they will outsource or not since they like to stay in control and nurture their legacy (Zhang & Tang, 2022, p. 8). Family firms are the most common business type in the world, and they are often both outperforming and out living their peers. One of the key factors for this is the fact that their strategy often focuses on protecting the legacy as well as nurturing the family resources (Belling et al., 2021).

### **1.1.2. Family-owned companies**

Family-owned businesses has some distinctive differences from other types of business, they are built upon a joint history and experiences as well as a common view of the goals for the future. Since families today are not as constant as it has been in before, the definition of family is no longer bound to the nearest biological family but also includes in-laws, aunts, cousins, ex-spouses, and the children's spouses (Carsrud, 2006). Which makes the whole definition of who is within the family and who is not even more difficult. The European Council (n.d.) defines a family business as an organization where the majority of decision-making rights are held by the person who founded the organization or a person who have inherit or been given shares of the business as children, spouses, parents, or children's direct heirs. As well as the fact that at least one of the family members as stated above, are a representative and involved in the governance of the firm.

### **1.2. Lack of studies**

After a thorough search through different databases at hand, not one article, research or other type of publication has been published in the area of family business, shipping industry and core values. There are other industries and segments that are family-owned that has been analyzed but shipping companies are still left outside. Research and articles comparing family-owned businesses with non-family businesses in general as well as within different areas of a company has been previously conducted (Carsrud, 2006; Duh et al., 2010). Further on, there has been several studies focusing on finding and creating some type of generalization for family-firms, to create a better understanding of this type of organization. During this report, the author has only found a few sources that addresses one specific organization and their values, first there is a Bachelor thesis from Jönköping University, addressing the core values in relation to a specific organization's internal communication (Abrahamsson & Ottenström, 2020). Another bachelor thesis from Karlstad business School addresses a staffing agency and if the employees know the core values of the company where they are hired (Gavell, 2017). All of the above previous research has been focusing on general aspects and features of a family-owned company or core values within a specific company, but none have focused on core values within a family-owned company that operates within the shipping industry.

### **1.3. Purpose of the work**

The aim of this thesis is to understand the importance of core values and how they are manifested as well as expressed throughout a family-owned shipping company. Further on to also understand how the culture and core values then are interpreted by the co-workers both at the office and onboard the vessels.

### **1.4. Objectives**

Research questions

- What are the company's purpose with their written core values?
- How is the organization described and perceived by the employees?

### **1.5. Limitations**

The thesis is limited to one family-owned shipping company based on the Island of Donsö in the archipelago of Gothenburg. The shipping company owns six tanker vessels in the intermediate size and transports liquid bulk. The execution of the interviews is limited to persons working at the company, in leading positions onboard the vessels as well as three persons working at the office.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Family-owned organizations

In order to create a better understanding of organizations and more specifically family-owned organizations this part of the theory is divided into seven categories. Each category represents a feature that is common within family organizations according to Brundin, Samuelsson & Melin (2014). The pattern of seven characteristics were discovered when they performed a case study of 20-family-owned companies. The characteristics are: Active and visible ownership, Stability in ownership and power, An industrial and long-term focus, Multiple ownership goals, Autonomy towards capital markets, Flexibility in governance structures and lastly, Identification. Additionally, the book *Hur moderna organisationer fungerar* [how modern organizations works] by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2021) will be used as it describes the more general aspects of an organization, regardless of the owner structure.

**Active and visible ownership** addresses the importance of owners being present and actively involved in management of the company. It also stresses that the owners should openly communicate the company's core values, in order to lead the organization in the right direction. **Stability in ownership and power** focuses on the importance of and the benefits that it carries when an organization as a consistent management. The fact that the leaders of the company has substantially longer tenures than in non-family companies and that is a great strength. **An industrial and long-term focus** points at the fact that family-owned companies often stay on course for their long-term goals. The goals stand for a deep interest in the core of the company and the willingness for the company to continue in the future. Further on it also address that the owners often have a profound interest in the industry and how that have generated in-depth knowledge and experience that other types of organizations lack. **Multiple ownership goals** explain the feature of how family-owned business often have goals that does not only focus on the financial aspects, but also on their employees and the community. Further on, they also have a stronger focus and goal on working in line with both the past generation and securing a future for the next generation. **Autonomy towards capital market** brings up the view of how family-owned company prefer to only use their own funds and capital and not be dependent on external actors. That this type of companies often uses their own resources than taking in external investments partners etc. **Flexibility in governance** addresses the appreciation of a flat and organic organization that is able to make rapid decisions. This possibility is possible due to the fact that the ownership and the management often overlap. Either the same persons sits on both chairs, or they are in close relation to each other. These short decision paths are a key strength for flexibility in governance. **Identification** is the last core characteristic, and it refers to the strong and unconditional commitment that the owners have towards their company. The owners are often raised into the business and have therefore creates a feeling of being one with the business. Since they have heard stories from the past about the older generations, they feel like they are destined to prolong the company and carry on its purpose (Brundin et al., 2014).

#### 2.1.1. Active and visible ownership

It is of high value that the owners aet an example for the rest of the organization to follow. An active and visible ownership plays a vital role within family-owned businesses since it they are a key for communicating the family values. A way of getting the values spread and known is for the family to be visible for the employees and active in the day-to-day work (Brundin et al., 2014). Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2021, p. 34) used the words formal features instead and described it as the active and visible ownership that can be connected to the sub-category of

goals and strategy aspects affect the organizations' ability to achieve motivation, legitimacy, efficiency, and it has a governing function. Another important aspect is communication, the owner must communicate with the rest of the organization in order for it to work in alignment with the goals and values that are set (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 254). The component of communication also relates to aspects such as exchanging information with on and other at work, in order to make the company move forward. Then there is the evolutionary process which addresses the organizations' ability to evolve in relation to the external forces in order to stay relevant for their customers (Carsrud & Brännback, 2012, p. 3). Communication addresses areas such as coordination and collaboration, decision making, learning and knowledge sharing, job satisfaction and legitimacy (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 254). Further on, there are three different systems that every family member who operates within the family business is a part of, the family, the ownership, and the business system. Depending on the system the individuals have different roles and expectations on them. The family business system address everything from the interdependent people that are an element of the system, both family and non-family members to the reason why the business to exist, the goals (Carsrud & Brännback, 2012, p. 3).

### **2.1.2. Stability of ownership and power**

Brundin, Samuelsson & Melin (2014) also describes the importance of consistency of leaders and owners within this characteristic. These factors are something that is much more common within family-owned companies than in non-family-owned companies. Connecting to Family-owned shipping companies and their specific traits, Zang & Tang (2022, p. 8) wrote in their book that family-owned shipping company especially want to keep the control of the organization and do not outsource different kinds of management as widely as other owner structured companies. A difference between a family-owned business and a non-family-owned business are that in the nonfamily case the main purpose of the organization is often to create as much profit as possible. In the family-owned case other factors may also play a vital part of the purpose. Such factors can be to provide job opportunities for family members as well as making sure that cultural traditions are maintained (Carsrud & Brännback, 2012, p. 4). Then the stability of ownership and power also can be connected to the organizational structure, which addresses the aspects of communication, productivity, decision making, conflict handling and innovation (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 65). Connecting to a family firm it is known that the strategies and performance within these types of organizations often are based on the values that the powerful actors have, hence the values that the owners and management group have (Picone et al., 2021).

### **2.1.3. Industrial and long-term focus**

This characteristic stress the strong and consistent connection to the core business and the willingness to prioritize future successes and relevant investments rather than the current profit margins (Brundin et al., 2014). This can also be connected to the subcategory of decision making. This area makes the organization be able to move forward, Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2021, p. 281) describes it as the decisions that are made make the employees know what they are supposed to do and to what extent. Decision making are made to achieve efficiency, organizational culture, power relationships, leadership as well as how goals, strategies and structures should be formed. A clear decision making creates a stable and long-term focus throughout the whole organization. Within family-owned organizations the decision making can also often be based on rules of thumbs. Which further straightens the connection of the current organization to the founding-father who created the practice, they stay on the same path as intended by the founders (Picone et al., 2021). Learning is another vital aspect connecting to the long-term focus, the importance of learning is stressed by the ability to adapt to the outside world, achieve long term competitive advantages, innovation,

efficiency and change (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 319). Connecting the long-term focus to the core values it is important that the organizations values and culture allow learning and development within the organization. If the values do not encourage the employees as well as the management group to learn new things and to be innovative it will not be able to develop to the same extent that it otherwise would (Sai Manohar & Pandit, 2014).

#### **2.1.4. Multiple ownership goals**

This characteristic points out the fact that family-owned businesses have a wider set of goals than non-family businesses. They do not only focus on financial goals but includes goals related to the employees, local community, next generation etc.(Brundin et al., 2014).

Multiple ownership goals can also be connected to the leadership aspects of the organization, good leadership are a way of achieving motivation among employees, create a good culture, lead change and adaptations as well as be a part of the strategy work, implementing it and to create efficiency (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 379). Further on, leaders and owners are also vital symbols of legitimacy since they often are seen as the face outwards for the organization (Dervishi, 2021). Looking at the organizational culture, leaders play a vital role here as well. The culture is formed out of the basic patters and assumptions from a group, both with aspects from previous working places as well as the new ones created when the group started to work together. The culture is there in order to help the members of the group to cope with problems of adaptations as well as internal integration (Fletcher et al., 2012). One of the corner stones of the culture are the values within the company, the values are there as guidelines for how everyone are supposed to act, behave and what mindset they are expected to have. Following up on the values, it is also important to state that it is not enough to have clear values, they also have to be implemented and followed by the people working within the organization, otherwise they are to no use (Coleman, 2013). This further leads to the difference between espoused values and values in use, hence the values that are officially stated in relation to the values that are followed. Are these two types of values in line with each other or are they different. These aspects are further brought up in the next chapters 2.2 and 2.3 regarding Values. Fletcher, Melin & Gimeno (2012) characterize that a family-owned company culture often is based on the values and principles that the founding father established. At the same time, they also stressed that culture is a dynamic phenomenon, hence it changes through time and circumstances. The culture evolves when the company as well as the employees evolve.

#### **2.1.5. Autonomy towards capital markets**

Family businesses often want to operate without financial capital from someone else, such as capital investors etc. They want to operate their business with their own capital and not have to be dependent on someone else, this can also be related to the hymn of “keep it within the family” that is common within these kinds of organizations (Brundin et al., 2014). It is well known that organizations are not only affected by their internal forces but also by external forces from the surrounding world. Whether they want it or not, an organization is always affected by some external aspects. It can be dependance, uncertainty, external pressure and legitimacy. Regardless of the type of organizational structure and ownership that is used, these external forces are the same and they need to be taken in consideration. Sometimes these forces might compel the organization to change or adapt (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 179).

#### **2.1.6. Flexibility in governance structure**

Within family-owned businesses the business, ownership and management often overlap which leads to a flat organization with high opportunities for rapid decisions (Brundin et al., 2014). An organizations capability to change can also be connected to this characteristic since the surrounding world are constantly changing the organization must be able to change with it, if they do no they might end up not surviving. Change connected to efficiency and

improvement of current processes as well as innovation are vital parts for the organizations ability to keep up with the outside world and establish (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 350). For a company, the ability to change are described by Metz (2021) first and foremost by the approval of change from the owners as well as the management. If they do not find change as a necessary requirement the company will be still standing. They are the ones controlling the firm and making the decisions, if they do not approve of a change, the organization eventually will not survive. When it comes to family-owned organizations and their ability and willingness to change the research are divided. Some argue that this kind of organizations has such strong beliefs of what they always have done are the correct way and they are therefore hesitant to change. Other research argue that family-firms has much shorter way for decision-making, hence they are more flexible for change and new technologies. Another factor is that they often have highly committed employees that are motivated and engaged to implement innovation and change if they believe in it (Belling et al., 2021).

### **2.1.7. Identification**

The last core characteristics is identification, here the uniqueness of relationship between the owners and the company as well as the sense of the owners being “one” with the organization is addressed. It is often characterized by the unconditional commitment the owners have towards the organization (Brundin et al., 2014). This specific area plays a huge role within the organizations and their ability to succeed since it is well known that the organization is nothing without its employees and their willingness to work (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 116). This further leads on to the motivational parts that exists within a family-owned business. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), motivation can be divided into two different types, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The whole society are built upon employees having extrinsic motivation towards their workplace and what they work with. Extrinsic motivation means that people are motivated by tangible things such as salary and social status that comes with the chosen work, they receive a separable outcome for the work that they do. Intrinsic motivation on the other hand is not as “easy” to provide as an organization for their employees. This type of motivation is individually defined and are dependent on what the individual herself find rewarding, interesting and enjoyable. It is not something that can be achieved by money or social status.

The degree of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation between non-family employees and family employees had been shown to differ. A non-family employee finds the individual success and income much more important than a family employee, hence a non-family employee works by the extrinsic motivation whereas the family employees do the work out of an intrinsic motivation to a greater extent (Mura et al., 2021). The importance of the family members that work within the organization and what type of motivation they are driven by also has a great importance for when it comes to next generation and the succession of the company. Gagné, Marwick, Brun de Pontet, Wrosch argues in their article (2019) that the future success of the company is determined by the intrinsic motivation that the successor has and how supportive the current leader is of preparation for the next generation ability to take over in the future.

## **2.2. Different levels of organizational culture - Schein’s model**

In order to further understand organizational culture and the different degrees of shown culture Edgar H. Schein have divided it all in to three different levels of culture. Schein is a well-known professor that is seen as the founding father for the theory of organizational culture (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 117). The levels reach from very tangible that you can see and feel too deeply embedded and unconscious. The three levels are defined as artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. In between these levels there

are norms and rules of behavior that further helps the members of the culture to understand the specific culture (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 42).

The first level are artifacts which can be described as a visible and feelable phenomena. This level includes the things that is perceived by observations from an external partner, such as its clothing, language, technology, as well as myth and stories told by the organization. The official list of values is also categorized as artifacts. Apart from the aspects that can be classified as the climate of the organization, this level also includes elements of processes and the structure of the organization. The artifacts are things that is easily seen and stated but then the interpretation of the artifacts is not that self-evident. The understanding of the meaning for the artifacts are dependent on the person trying to interpret it and that is in turn dependent on the previous cultural background and assumptions. It is therefore impossible to collect the correct view of an organizations artifacts by only observing, one must also ask the members of the culture to interpret them to get the correct understanding or become a part of the group. Then gradually the correct interpretation of the artifacts will become clear (Schein & Schein, 2016, pp. 42–43).

The second level regards espoused beliefs and values, these are instantly created and molded when a group of people are gathered and works together. The different beliefs and values from everyone will create a new and coherent espoused belief and values unique for the organization. If there is a clear leader of the group, that person's personal experience and assumptions will be the main foundation of the group with impact from the others. This leader can be the person who has the highest rank/roll within the group, or it can be the person taking the leading roll. When the espoused beliefs and values are set these will in turn also create moral and ethical rules that will guide and help people in the organization to know how to handle different key situations and what is seen as the right way to handle things. The fixed rules will then also be transferred to the new employees since they will be trained in accordance (Schein & Schein, 2016, pp. 44–45).

The third level addresses the basic underlying assumptions. Since the espoused beliefs and values only highlights a small part of the organizational culture the basic assumptions need to be understood, to see patters and predict behavior. This is created when the certain values and beliefs are repeatedly successful within the group that it becomes the only right way for a solution and eventually even becomes taken for granted. All other solutions will, by the group, be seen as inconvenient and inefficient. Once the basic underlying assumptions has been set it is very hard to change them. Since they have created a guiding map of how to think and act in certain situations, dealing with other people that have a different map or to change within the set map are both uncomfortable and creates vulnerability. The way that once was natural is not and one has to reprogram the map, turning the world upside down (Schein & Schein, 2016, pp. 46–50).

### **2.3. Core values**

Core values are used as a guiding tool and reference point to which decision and behaviors can be compared to determine if they are in line with the purpose and vision of the company. This points to the importance of core values and how they are the foundation that the strategy, structure, and culture are based on. The values are communicated throughout the organizations by the behavior and telling of what is right and what is wrong, good or bad. Another way for the values to be transmitted are through organizational artifacts. The values then represent the main pillars of the organization's strategy, structure, and culture (Rau et al., 2019).

There are several different theories and practice of how to implement core values in the organization, one approach is presented by Byrtek & Dickerson (2013), they have created an eight-step process of leadership actions. The first step is to articulate the values and create a meaningful and inspiring expression of it. Second step is to define the values and find a common meaning of them. The third and fourth step relates to the leader's responsibility to demonstrate the meaning of the values as well as get the employees engaged and to encourage value implementation. Then in the fifth step the focus is on system alignment to make sure that the core values can be implemented throughout the organization without obstacles or challenge existing processes. The sixth step regards reinforcements and value actualizations. Seventh step relates to the creation of measures to be able to assess the progress of the implementations of values. The last step focus on the measuring and monitoring of the values, to create the ability to assess the process of value actualization through a recurring process.

### **2.3.1. Espoused values vs. enacted values**

Values can be divided in to two categories, espoused and enacted values. The espoused values are the ones that are set by the owners and the management, the official stated values. The enacted values on the other hand are the values that are actually in use, the values that the employees work in accordance with and which they form their behaviour of. These two categories are in a perfect organization the same, the values set and promoted by the owners are the same that the employees live and act by, but this is rarely the case. When these two are in balance the company create a behavioural integrity, which leads to the fact that the employees trust their organization and believe that they are acting ethically. In an article written by Gopinath, Nair & Thangaraj (2018) they state that through a survey conducted with 130 companies they found out that 40% of the respondents was not aware of their companies' values. Since they were not aware of them, it is difficult to achieve a complete alignment between the espoused and enacted values. Even though the misalignment was so clear 60% of the respondents found their organization acting ethically while trying to achieve their business goals. The article further explains that the value congruence is dependent on how the organization works on closing the gaps by actively working on implementation of their value system and their behavioural integrity. The imbalance between these two will easily be picked up by a new employee that first go through the formal channels of information where the espoused values are manifested. Then when starting to work the enacted values are revealed, due to what the other employees do and how they act. When this occurs the level of balance or imbalance between the espoused and the enacted values are revealed (Schneider & Barbera, 2014, pp. 46–52).

### **2.3.2. Values within family business**

Values within family businesses are often more distinctive and sustainable focused than non-family businesses. The values shape the whole organization and are a vital part of the identity of the firm and to a greater extent than in non-family business (Parada et al., 2020). The values within a family-owned business are often established by the founding father and are nurtured from generation to generation. The values are originated form the owners' memories, personal experience, and background (Picone et al., 2021). Values within a family firm are also seen as a sustainable competitive advantage when it comes to performance and survival of the company. This is mainly due to the fact that the values often focus on long-term visions. As well as they are used as decision measurement for management as well as the employees to a greater extent than other types of organizations. The high level of shared values within a family-owned company will in turn create lower costs since the efficiency

created when everyone already knows what they are expected and allowed to do (Rau et al., 2019).

M-C Vallejo-Martos (2011) has in his article stated, defined, and summarized the four most common values that the theory states for a family-owned business. The first value is *Commitment*, addressing the extent of which an employee commits and identifies with the firm. Since the family owning the company already have a high degree of commitment, due to the owning and tradition connected to the company, this value also spreads to the non-family employees. Commitment can further on be divided in to three different parts, identification, involvement, loyalty. All these three parts stresses the fact that employees have easier to identify, get involved and be loyal to the company they work if it is a family-owned company. The second value is *Harmony*, focusing on the human relations within the company. Within a family company they commonly have an open atmosphere, hence it is a good place to work. They have low thresholds for participation in decision-making and are structured based on cooperation's which leads to higher trusts towards each other. Working environment, participation and trust are the three parts within the value of Harmony. The third value is called *Long-term orientation*, stressing the fact that family-owned companies are known to be more intrinsic motivated with their investments and future than other types of companies. The three different parts within this value are reinvestment of profits, level of indebtedness, and attitude towards risks. Here the aspects stated stresses the fact that that family-owned businesses have a constant underlying purpose of passing down the firm to future generations and not only to generate the largest revenues. The level if indebtedness as well as the attitudes of risks points on the fact that they want to keep the organization within the family as well as not risking the future of the firm. The fourth and last value are *Customer service*, within family-owned companies the customer service are often seen as one of their key strategies for competitiveness. Hence, their costumer focus is always prioritized (Vallejo-Martos, 2011).

### 2.3.3. Virtues – Aristoteles

Looking into the values one step further, one must address the virtues and more specific the Aristoteles virtues. Virtues are the character of a personality that are seen as desirable and good. They are expressed through both actions and purpose within the middle ground; hence they avoid excess as well as defect. The virtues feature the underlying character traits and the values the beliefs and behaviour of people (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.). Connecting virtues with family business and their values leads to the four cardinal virtues, *Prudence*, *Courage*, *Temperance*, and *Justice*. This relation is made in order to understand the virtues influence on the behaviour of people within an organization and how they are a part of the family-business ability to survive through changes and across generations (Parada et al., 2020).

Prudence can be defined as practical wisdom where a person acts in a certain way due to the specific context and situation, which are based on a set of rational choices. Family-business are well known to behave in a prudent way since their actions often are based on knowledge collected from generation to generation and their constant long-term way of looking at things. They long for disciplined growth that is transcending beyond the desire of pure profitability (Brenes et al., 2011). The next cardinal virtue is courage, here the focus lays on the individual's courage and ability to create habits that are based on bravery, integrity, and perseverance (Parada et al., 2020). In a family-owned business the succeeding generation have been raised in line with the founding fathers' values and the previous leaders are seen as role models for the next one. This leads to high integrity and perseverance since the current leaders know how he is supposed to act and therefore acts in confidence and in line with the

expectations (Picone et al., 2021). Temperance is the third cardinal virtue and addresses the aspects of self-control and moderation. For the family-business the strong sense of responsibility and loyalty among the family members creates a stable foundation to stand on which in turns leads the members to keep their temperance even during pressured moments (Parada et al., 2020). The last cardinal virtue is justice, focusing on the ability to treat everyone equally and with respect. This implies that there is a sound ethical principle within a set of rules and regulations which will ensure fair conditions for both family and non-family personnel (Samara & Paul, 2019). Within family businesses the treatment of employees is of great importance as to ensure that they are heard and that their opinions matter. It is common within a family business that the employees work within the company for a long time, and eventually becomes a part of the extended family, which then leads to profound respect and equal treatment (Brundin et al., 2014).

### **3. Methodology**

In order to answer the research question and to understand how the core values are used and handled within a family-owned shipping company, a case study and literature review has been conducted. This to create a deeper understanding of how it appears within the chosen organizations as well as what the theory states regarding the subject of core values and family business. To decipher the organizations culture different aspects must be observed or explored. Edgar H. Schein (2016) states that to create a deep understanding of an organizational culture one first must identify the artifacts and processes that are puzzling as well as finding out the espoused values. Then interview people within the organization to understand and get the answers to why things are done in a certain way, how the espoused values are implemented as well as understand the behavior within the day-to-day work (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 242).

#### **3.1. Case study research**

A case study research was be conducted to collect, present, and analyze data in a fair and correct way. It is a research method that are preferred to be used when the research question's purpose is to explain something, as in this thesis when the questions are based on "What" and "How". A known and well accepted definition of case study is the one stated by Robert Yin (2018, p. 15) He has divided the definition of case study as a research method in two parts, the scope, and the features. According to Yin the scope is that a case study is an empirical method that investigates within its real-world context, a case/phenomenon in depth. The part of the definition that addresses the features of a case study is the fact that it relies on sources of different kind as well as the fact that there are more variables than data points and one result. In this thesis the purpose is to investigate how it is inside the walls of the company, what the employees perceives of it and if it is in alignment with what the official goals and descriptions says.

The structure that the case study in this thesis has followed are based on Robert Yin's book: *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (2018). Yin presents a research process that at first may be seen as only linear but stresses the fact that it can also be an interactive process. The process includes six different steps: plan, design, prepare, collect, analyze, and share. Even though it can be seen as a linear process, Yin (2018) points out that one might have to go back and forth between different steps and re-do things to achieve the purpose of the research.

The first thing to address when starting case study research is, according to Yin, to plan. Which includes initial literature reviews, and meetings with supervisors as well as company representatives and an expert on the subject. The design of the case study will be a single case with a holistic design since the purpose of this thesis is to look in to one specific organization (one context) and further on only address the core values (one case). The potential of using this design is to achieve a deeper understanding of one specific family-owned shipping company and how their core values can be used. By excluding other organizations (contexts) to compare to as well as other types of management tools (cases) a thorough analysis of this specific area can be made. The next step within the case study was to establish a foundation and base for the data collection and analyze. This was conducted by establishing a good understanding of the topic being studied, making sure that the data collection will be performed in a way that protect the human subjects as well as create a case study protocol. Then the study entered the data collection phase, here interviews, surveys and additional literature reviews were conducted parallel to each other. When the data collection was

completed, the results were analyzed, discussed, and concluded in relation to the research questions. The last phase leads to sharing the results from the case study with an audience (Yin, 2018), which in this case will be through publication of the thesis as well as a presentation where relevant persons for the subject and thesis are invited to participate.

### **3.2. Literature review**

Secondary sources are used to collect data and knowledge of what is known before, what subjects has previously been addressed and the results that has been found. It does not collect new data or raw data but rather re-uses data that someone else has collected as a primary source. Another purpose of secondary data is to find “the gaps” in the literature that needs to be filled. This is one of the main objectives of why there are constantly new research projects created (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, pp. 217–241). A literature review was conducted to create a theoretical foundation to compare the findings from the case study on and to further be able to analyze the results. To find and collect relevant literature the search engine at Chalmers Library has been used as well as the Scopus database. Search words such as “Family business” “Core Values” “Values” “Organizational culture” and “Family motivation” were used to find relevant data. Through these search words the amount of hits was huge, for example the search word “Core Value” gave 7 million hits. In order to narrow down the hits, the search words were used in combination. Then a quick overview of the headings was conducted in order to find relevant data. For the literature that had a relevant heading according to the author, the abstract was read and if it still seemed to be relevant the author choose to read it. When articles and books were found via the Scopus database the technique of snowball sampling method was used to collect more relevant literature. Both backwards and forward snowballing has been used to understand and find the literature that are relevant to this thesis and to understand how well approved and re-used some of the sources have been in this field (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018).

### **3.3. Primary sources of data**

The primary source data collection for this thesis has been through empirical data from employees within the specific organization that is being addressed. There are different ways of collecting this type of data but one of the most common one, especially within a case study, are interviews. Interviews can be used to achieve a deeper understanding of the participants perspectives as well as find the explanation for “how” and “why” of key events (Yin, 2018, pp. 118–120). Further on, in appendix 5 the internal document stating the espoused values of the company is stated and they will be a part of the primary data collection.

#### **3.3.1. Qualitative data**

This thesis is mainly based on a qualitative approach as its primary source. The characteristic for qualitative research according to Billup (2021) that it is conducted in a natural setting where no factors has been changed. The specific participants are deliberately selected, based on their experience and knowledge. The data collection that will be conducted is in-depth interviews in a semi-structure structure as well as an internal document. A semi-structured interview is when the questions and the discussion are to some degree steered by the interviewer to stay within the relevant area and to address all the different subjects that the researcher want to focus on. On the other hand, the questions are open ended so even though they are addressing a specific area the interviewee chooses what they want to share and what they see s relevant/important. The questions are not structured as typical questions but rather pointing out themes of subjects to address. This will allow the interviewer and the interviewees to create an interactive process. Selection of the interviewees are a crucial part to

collect as much valuable data as possible (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, pp. 27–54). For this thesis, participants for the interviews have been thoroughly selected based on their knowledge within the subject as well as their position/working title at the specific company.

#### **3.3.1.1. Interview execution**

The selection of respondents was to ask all persons who is currently working as Captain and Chief Engineer onboard the companies' vessels. In total there were 26 persons working onboard who were asked to participate and 13 of them agreed to do the interview. Together with the CEO and the persons working at the Personnel department at the company's land organization there was a total of 16 persons were interviewed. Two of the persons who participated from the land organization are also part-owners of the company. These chosen positions within the company were chosen because they all have a key role when it comes to the culture both at the office and onboard the vessels. Everyone except one have or is working onboard the vessels as well as have conducted four years of higher educations to work onboard. Included in the education is several periods of being cadets, these periods have placed the respondents within different companies and different types of vessels, increasing their experience. In the table shown at the beginning of the Result chapter, table 1, the time and positions that the respondents have with this specific company is stated. The Captain and the Chief Engineer are the two persons of highest rank onboard and therefore also have the greatest influence of how the vessel should be handled, both operationally as well as culturally. The CEO are the one who guides the land organization towards the type of culture that the owners want. Further on, the personnel department are the link between the land organization and the vessels. Out of the persons who works onboard the vessel, 7 Captains and 6 Chief engineers participated. For the land-based organization, the CEO and the two people from the Personnel department participated.

First an invitation e-mail was sent out to the Captains and Chief engineers, where the author of this thesis explained who she is, what she is going to address with her thesis and why. The e-mail contained information as per appendix 1 and described the subject and purpose of the thesis and what kind of questions the interviews would contain and ask them if they participated. When a respondent accepted to participate, he was handed the exact questions that would be asked in order to have the possibility to prepare before the actual interview, see Appendix 2. The interviews were executed mostly via Teams/Zoom and some over the phone. For the CEO and Personnel department, the author physically visited the office, asked if they would like to participate and offered them to read the questions in advance. The interviews were then also conducted in person at the company's office. The interview included questions related to the thesis topic as well as discussions regarding the internal document. All interviews were recorded to enable the author to transcribe afterwards. After the interview a consent form were sent out to all participants where they agreed on the terms related to how their interview will be handled and that they are aware that they can revoke their answers if they want, see appendix 3.

#### **3.4. Analysis of data collection**

The data that are collected through the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed in accordance with the thematic analysis. The process of analysis started as soon as the researcher notice themes, which were as early as during the data collection, during transcribing. Once the analysis of data were started, six different phases that were gone through in order to conduct a good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

First there was the familiarization of the collected data, here the author transcribed the interviews and then re-read the transcriptions in an active way to conduct a deeper understanding of what the interviewee meant and started to find patterns. The second step was to generate initial codes. Here, all the data that were collected through the interviews were analyzed to find interesting aspects. The aspects were then further studied to see if they occurred in different patterns. Coloring of the aspects/patters were then used in order to see if there are any reoccurring subjects that were addressed throughout all of the data. Thirdly the color-coded patterns and aspects were further analyzed to find themes. All codes were divided into at least one theme, some codes connected to several themes. The fourth phase addressed the reviewing of themes, here the themes that were earlier found were more deeply explored and refined. Some of the themes found in the former phase emerge to one, others were divided into more specific themes, and some became irrelevant when further analyzed. Once this was completed, all of the transcription was read again. This to ensure that the coding and themes were relevant and correctly understood in relation to the interviews and the subjects that the interviewees wanted to stress. Phase five comprised the defining and naming of themes, here the essence of each theme was identified and further on organized in a coherent and consistent account. Further on the themes got a short description, identifying the theme and stating a clear picture of the content for each theme, see appendix 4. The last phase was to produce the report, here the themes are presented and evaluated to inform the reader of what the author have found through the data analysis. The different themes are presented, and arguments based on the data that were conducted in order to answer the research questions.

### **3.5. Research ethics**

Throughout all the different stages the researcher needs to be ethical, this to ensure that the different sources of the research are treated correct and respectfully. Their integrity, dignity and rights are always of highest importance to ensure that the research is honest and truthful. The literature should be correctly referenced, and the interviewees credited for their empirical contribution (Denscombe, 2018, pp. 433–458). The respondents from the interviews were informed of the questions in beforehand, on order to ensure that they felt more comfortable with the interview. The interviews were recorded to ensure that the author did not miss any vital answers as well as being able to confirm what the interviewees stated. Furthermore, the respondents signed a consent form stating that they were aware of the purpose and how their answers would be used. The consent form also described the possibility for them to withdraw their consent and that the data they have created then would be deleted, see appendix 3.

## 4. Results

In this chapter the results from the interviews and the internal documents retrieved from the company will be presented. The internal document contains the company's Core Values and can be found in appendix 5. The results from the interviews are based on the collected data from 16 persons who works within the company, 13 of them works on board the vessels and 3 at the office. Two of the persons working at the office that were interviewed are also part-owners. The table 1 that is shown below demonstrates the title the respondents have, what title they had when they started at the company as well as how long they have worked for the company. Further on it also shows if the respondents did know about the core values prior to this thesis. The knowledge is divided into Yes, No or Partly, where partly stands for the respondents guessing or stating some of the core values. The themes that were collected through the thematic analysis of the interviews are: *Consistency, Communication, Trust, and Investments*. These themes are used in order to present and describe how the respondents perceive the organization. The themes can be seen as the enacted values of the company, the core values that are followed and real within the company according to the respondents.

Table 1

*Respondents of the thesis and their experience with the company and knowledge of core values*

Title	Started in the company as	Time in company	Knowledge of the core values
Captain no. 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> officer	17 years	No
Captain no. 2	Cadet	12 years	No
Captain no. 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> officer	10 years	Partly
Captain no. 4	Captain	14 years	Partly
Captain no. 5	Captain	9 years	No
Captain no. 6	Cadet	17 years	No
Captain no. 7	Cadet	25 years	No
Chief Engineer no. 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> engineer	20 years	Partly
Chief Engineer no. 2	1 <sup>st</sup> engineer	18 years	No
Chief Engineer no. 3	1 <sup>st</sup> engineer	6 years	No
Chief Engineer no. 4	1 <sup>st</sup> engineer	7 years	No
Chief Engineer no. 5	2 <sup>nd</sup> engineer	11 years	No
Chief Engineer no. 6	Chief engineer	4 months	No
CEO (owner)	Cadet	32 years	Yes
Personnel department no. 1 (owner)	Office	20 years	Yes
Personnel department no. 2	Cadet	20 years	Partly

#### **4.1. Espoused Values - Internal Document**

The company has six written core values, *Credibility* [Trovärdighet], *Safety* [Säkerhet], *Environment* [Miljö], *Social* [Socilat], *Economy* [Ekonomi], and *Quality* [Kvalitet]. Along with each core value the company have stated some bullet points to further explain their meaning of these words. *Credibility* is described as transparency, that they want to be transparent with the co-workers as well as to external parties and play with open cards. Further, that they believe in the future of the company and the next generation of owners and crew, as well as they trust their co-workers. *Safety* points towards the aspects of knowing what they are doing, that everyone has good knowledge and long experience in their work. Keeping an open communication with everyone, regardless of rank and then also to encourage innovation and smart solutions. The third core value is *Environment* and here the company describes their desire to reduce the company footprint, both in the small as well as in the big picture. Forth is *Social*, the point within this word is to state that “together we are XXX, everyone is needed”. Then they also explain the importance of everyone looking after each other making sure that they are alright and in good health. *Economy* notes that the company strives to do long term investments which creates added values for co-workers, costumers, and owners. The last core value that is stated is *Quality*, here the company stresses that they want to ensure that their crew are well trained for their job so that the vessel can perform the transportation in an efficient and safe way.

#### **4.2. Enacted Values - Interviews**

The themes that are chosen are used in order to divide the results from all the interviews into different categories. Each theme focusses on a specific area or peculiarity that the respondent addressed. The themes that will be presented below are *Consistency*, *Communication*, *Trust*, and *Investment*. Brought up in below subcategories are a summary of what the respondents addressed in their interviews in relation to each theme, a more detailed description of how many of the respondents who addressed the different themes is shown in appendix 6.

##### **4.2.1. Theme: Consistency**

The first theme to be addresses is Consistency. The respondents all have worked within the company for a long time. A majority of the persons working onboard the vessels have worked there since they were a cadet and then worked their way up to Captain or Chief Engineer. The same goes for the people working ashore, two of them started as cadets onboard the vessels and after they became officer or captain they went ashore and started working at the office instead. This results in a long and stable workforce within the company, out of the 16 persons who were interviewed 15 of them had been within the company for at least 6 years, in many cases up to 25 years. One person was newly hired and had only worked for two turns.

The CEO explained that since it is a family company the consistency of the owners as well as the feeling of the whole organization as one big family are substantial. He continues to describe that the company has several founding fathers, and it is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation who is leading the company. Further on, many of the founding fathers worked onboard the vessels full time and did the administrative work when they were on leave. In the same way many from the second generation started off, and it worked well until the demand from the external parties such as oil companies etc. became higher. Then they had to leave the life onboard and work full time at the office. This has resulted in a feeling of everyone are a part of the big family. The CEO describes that it is now the second generation that is leading the company and the fact that they are a large group of different people is something they uses as a strength.

Both persons from the personnel department pointed out that the founding fathers were the once creating the core culture of the company, that now has become the core values. This was created just by them being themselves and treating everyone the way themselves wanted to be treated. The second generation were then fostered into the same values, the same goes for the crew that was working onboard the vessels at the same time as the founding fathers were. They further pointed out that the culture is still the same thanks to the fact that the several of the captains and chief engineers who works onboard today were brought up by the founding fathers. This connection to the previous generation is something that people in every category of the respondents brought up. Captain no. 1 described for example the importance of the old generation and how they taught them how to be good leaders.

The theme of consistency can also be found in the crew onboard the vessel. Five of the respondents' stated that they have worked within the company since they were cadettes. Four of them stated out shortly after graduating school as 2<sup>nd</sup> officers or engineers and others came to the company later to in their carriers. Captain 4 explained that he worked as an able seaman at the company before going to school. He has since then been on several different shipping companies, both big and small, Swedish flagged and Danish flagged. After having tried out different shipping companies and different kinds of vessels he expressed the feeling of finding a good place to work.

*I used to say that, if you have been around at different companies and end up in something good, you know it – Captain no. 4*

The company have succeeded in keeping the crew, creating a consistency within the whole group of on-board personnel. This general consistency in combination with the fact that the crew get assigned one specific vessel and then get to stay there creates even more consistency. The co-workers are not only consistent within the company but also to each specific vessel. The turnaround of people between different vessels are low and this enhances the feeling of everyone onboard the vessel as one big family. One of the captains stated that he has been on the same vessel in eight years, and his reliever for 15 years. Then again, the personnel department points out that sometimes they make some changes of people between the vessels only based on their feeling of that it would be good for both the person being transferred, but also for the vessel. Sometimes people need a change of scenery and these vibes the personnel department often sense before the actual person who is being transferred are. They also stress the possibility to make a change in the crew if there are some people that cannot work together, they can then move one of them to another vessel where he is more suitable. The personnel department state the fact that sometimes two people that are very good at their jobs, but they just do not go well together. This aspect was also confirmed by the captains and chief engineers, they explained the fact that not all people work well together. The chemistry is not always right, but then the personnel department often receives hints on this, and they transfer the one who does not fit onboard that specific vessel.

The same goes for the consistency of the Filipino crew. Personnel department no. 1. explains that many of the Filipinos who are working onboard the vessels have been working for the company as long as the Swedish crew, or even longer. According to Captain no. 6 does this further enhances the consistency of the personnel and the harmony onboard. Even if there are two different cultures that are brought together on a vessel, the fact that they all have worked with each other's cultures for a very long time makes them understand and respect each other to a greater extent.

Another aspect that was brought up by the respondents were the feeling of everyone being a big family, nine of the respondents used the words “Family” or “Familiar” while describing the company, the rest of the respondents used other words that described the same feeling. A feeling of respect, inclusiveness, openness, and solidarity. Everyone feels engaged in the vessels as well as in the company, both the crew onboard, the people at the office and the owners. Chief Engineer no. 5 pointed out the fact that since it is a rather small company and family owned the crew onboard feels everyone care for each other and they always want what is best for the crew.

#### **4.2.2. Theme: Communication**

The next theme is communication, both the captains and the chief engineers stressed the importance of everyone feeling comfortable to talk to them. Even if it is difficult to achieve this since the set hierarchy as well as the differences in culture that are present onboard. Onboard the crew are mixed between Swedes and Filipinos, Chief engineer no. 6 explains the fact that this causes difficulties in sustaining an open climate were everyone dare to say if something is wrong or if something has happened. Further on he describes the culture that the Filipinos have and how they think that they should not say if something is wrong, they should have to fix it or hide it. If they come clean, they might get yelled at or fired. This is a part of the culture-clash that the Chief engineer no. 1 explains that they onboard work a lot with, and the dilemma are pointed out by the personnel department as well. Open communication where everyone is honest are of great importance for the company and everyone working onboard. Therefore, a lot of time onboard and from the office side have been devoted to trying to get the Filipinos to understand that they are encouraged to speak up and they will not be punished. This is not something that is done overnight, and the respondents stresses the importance of having a stable Filipino crew, so they get the chance and time to ensure this. Both the captains and chief engineers describe the fact that some of the Filipinos have been in the company for a long time, 10 to 20 years and how they after a while have now understand that they are encouraged to speak up. The personnel department also highlight the importance of the Filipinos that have long experience within the company and how they are an important key to enhance the process of getting a new Filipino to understand this. Despite these efforts it is difficult to say how well they have achieved in creating and open communication between the nationalities. Chief Engineer no. 6 states that since there are so many Swedes onboard the vessel one will never reach the same connection between Swedes and Filipinos as when the Filipinos are in majority or of higher rank. He describes in other companies where he has worked and the crew onboard consisted of a majority of Filipinos and with high ranks, then the communication was really open. Further on he explained that he do not think that kind of openness can be achieved when the crew consists of a 50/50 Swedes and Filipinos.

*It can be hard for the Filipino crew to open up to someone in my position. But I think we have come a long way in this company, and I believe that they know that my door is always open, no matter what – Captain no. 3*

The same way goes for the communication between the vessels and the office, if someone has something to say, a new idea, proposal, thought or complain they can turn to whoever they feel most relevant for the topic and present it. Several of the interviewed persons who works onboard mentions that they have been within the company for a long time, and that they all have become friends with the persons working at the office. They have everyone at the offices phone number and can therefore easily call them for whatever the reason is. The communication between the vessels and the office are easy and when you call, everyone

already knows who you are as well as your wife and kids' name. As captain no. 6 explained, you are not just a number on a paper, they really know who you are and while you have them on the phone you do not only have to talk about work, but you can also discuss family and interest etc. The communication is also very open when it comes to discussions of new ideas and how to handle certain situations. Both Chief engineer no. 1 and captain no 2 pointed out that you can have an open dialogue with the office and since the organization is very organic and flat your thoughts and ideas are well considered when a decision should be made. He also explains that the communication goes both ways, which is something he have understand is not so common in other shipping companies. Several of the respondents addressed the fact that the office is open for discussions and would rather have that discussion with the Captain or the Chief Engineer than making it all by themselves at the office and the just send out the directives. Another subject that captain no. 6 brought up was the lack of official performance reviews, where he as an employee got evaluated by the office and informed about what he does good and what he would need to improve at, for example to be promoted or so. According to him, such a review would be appreciated, especially by the people wanting to climb higher up in the hierarchy. The official performance review was also addressed by Personnel Department no 2, who explained that the company had these meetings some years ago, but they had to withdraw them. Due to the fact that they were drown out by all the complaints that the employees took the chance to tell during these meetings.

The willingness to share knowledge are a factor that are brought up by all addressed parties in the interviews, they state that they want to learn by each other. Several of the Captains and Chief Engineers mentioned how much they enjoy having cadets onboard who are eager to learn new things. Chief Engineer no. 2 explained that that is one of the best things about the work, that you get the possibility to share your knowledge and answer to questions which helps other understand. This was also brought up by Captain no. 3 who described the joy of being a crew with different experience, and how it is important to be open and even as a Captain reveal that he is not an expert. He continued to explain this and pointed out the importance especially since the technology are constantly developing and the tools and topics has evolved a lot since he was in school. He described that it is then important that he ask the cadet or the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer to help or explain things to him, which then also sets an example of how one should not be afraid to ask someone for help. Then he further explained it as a win-win situation, he learns something new and the person teaching him grows in confident since he has more knowledge on the subject than the captain.

#### **4.2.3. Theme: Trust**

The third theme is trust, several of the respondents who are working onboard described the trust that they feel like they have from the office. Chief. Engineer, no. 3 states that the office trusts the ones working onboard the vessel so much that they in many cases says that they should make the decision instead. He explained it like there are no strict hierarchy saying that the office or the owners shall make all the decisions, they rather have the ones onboard who have the problem in front of them to make the decision. Then he continued to explain that they are always welcome to call and discuss with the office but in the end, the office usually trusts the crew to make the call. This confidence that the office shows towards their crew was brought up by both Captains and Chief Engineers as very positive and one of the reasons for why they have stayed in the company for so long.

*We have a lot of own responsibility and independence, and that is something that defines this company. Something that I as a captain think is totally fantastic, that you can make your own decisions. That is, as I have understood it, not so common in other companies. – Captain no. 7*

On the other hand, some of the respondents also stressed the lack of decisions taken from the office, sometimes you want to have a clear directive of how to handle things. Chief Engineer no. 4 describes a feeling of the relation between the office and the vessel to become too friendly and familiar sometimes. Making the office uncomfortable to take decisions and figure out the right decisions by themselves. This feeling of becoming too comfortable and friendly with each other were also brought up by the personnel department, they both touched upon the subject of friendliness and how it can become a weakness instead of a strength in some cases due to the reluctance of dealing with the hard and tough parts. Having to put down your foot to force a change or to not become a push over.

Then again, the trust that has been built up between the vessels and the owner/office have also made the vessels becoming more self-handling. Captain no. 5 explained it as, since the two parties have worked together for such a long time, they have the same way of thinking and handling of issues. Therefore, when something occurs onboard the vessel, they do not have to call the office and ask how they are supposed to handle the matter. They already know and they are confident in taking care of it by themselves. Then he further explained that the matters that are handled onboard are often mentioned to the office in the end anyhow, but afterwards.

Further on, was this topic also brought up in the interviews with the persons working at the office. They also expressed the fact that they know the crew that well and that they have been within the company for so long that they trust them to make decisions for them, decisions that usually are taken by the office. The three respondents at the office also expressed a concern about the company losing some of their “we-feeling”. They pointed out the fact that there have not been any owners who works onboard the vessels for several years now and therefore they fear that for every year that passes the feeling of “We” fades. They describe it as it has now become a feeling of “we and them”. At the same time they also pointed out the fact that the next generation are currently studying to become Captains and they all have a hope of the “We-feeling” as well as the core values of the company becomes even more coherent when they start working onboard. Then the core family will be present out on the vessels and enhance the sense of one big family. On the contrary, this was not an issue that the interview persons who works onboard the vessel expressed. They brought up the trust that the office yields and how they are so secure in their relations to the office that they feel like they are a part of one big family.

#### **4.2.4. Theme: Investment**

The last theme that was found while analysing the interviews was Investment. Investment in the crew, the vessels, and the future. As pointed out above in the result, the persons who works at this company have done it for a long period of time. Several of the onboard personnel stated that they were cadets at the company while they were studying. Then when they graduated, numerous of them started working for the company right away. Others went to other shipping companies but were back again after a while. Captain no. 5 describes it as he did his last period as a cadet before graduation on one of the companies’ old vessels. The old captain called the office and said that he recommended them to hire him and during the last semester of his studies he then knew that he had a job as a second chief officer once he graduated. Since then, the captain no. 5 has stayed within the company and the same kind of story was told by both captains and chief engineers who participated in these interviews. The same approach is used today when the personnel department recruits. Personnel Department no. 2 described that it is highly meritorious if a person seeking a job at the company have

been a cadet at one of their vessels. Then they can get first-hand information from the persons who have worked with the cadet during this period if they believe him to be a match for the company. He further explained that they are putting a lot of time and effort in before they hire a new person, apart from an interview of the candidate they also try to meet the over a cup of coffee. Then he believes that the real personality of the candidate is brought to light and they can more carefully decide if this is a person who matched the companies criteria's. Personnel Department no. 2 believes that this is one of the founding stones of how they have been able to create such a stable and good team onboard each vessel. They are thorough with the recruitment and only chooses the one they truly believe are a good match. The in-depth recruitment is especially important since they most of the time hire junior positions in order for the company to be a part of their development so that they are moulded to the senior leaders that the company want. Then again, this investment is not always successful, both the onboard personnel and the respondents at the office stressed the lack of Chief Engineers and that there is a down going spiral within the whole industry. Once they have received the highest certificate and becoming a chief engineer several of them chooses to go work ashore instead.

Further on the company also invests time and money on their Filipino crew, Personnel department no. 2 stresses the importance of having a stable and reoccurring Filipino crew. This enhances the quality onboard in several ways, the consistency and communication that is mentioned in above sections as well as the knowledge of how things are done onboard each vessel are all pointed out. Moreover, Chief engineer no. 3 also specified the fact that the company allows everyone in the crew to take the online courses that are available. He explains that this is not common in other companies that everyone onboard gets an account to do the courses. The courses are mandatory for some positions onboard but not all and since each account costs money, shipping companies only creates accounts for the ones that have to have it. He then continues to explain that this is not the case for this company. Here even the lowest of ranks get to have an account, which is of high value for them. Once they get the directives of taking a course from the office the Filipino crew are the first ones to do them. They have a kind of eager to learn more from these online courses which most of the Swedish crew do not have to the same extent.

*The guys on board think it's fun to get these courses, it's useful. Just such a simple thing, it's also such a thing that makes the company stand out – Chief Engineer no. 3*

Another aspect that was brought up in the interviews was the fact that the company allows their young next generations that is in the ages from 16 and up to summer work onboard the vessels. The persons working at the office described this as a great opportunity for the young persons to learn and understand how it is to work onboard a vessel and then also to help them understand if they want to work onboard when they get older. The seasonal workers were also mentioned by some of the captains during the interviews, they thought it is fun to have young person's onboard who are eager to learn new things and that livens up the summer months a bit.

In connection to the previous theme the trust that the office has towards their crew also enhances their willingness and openness to invest in new technology as well as new spare parts for the existing vessels. Chief engineer no. 4 described the fact that as long as he gives a clear reason and can argue for it, he often gets the office onboard with the purchase or investment. He points out that the office often sees the same things that he does and then also understands that these kinds of things will soon pay back themselves. Lastly there is the

investment of new vessels, the CEO described the recently ordering and development of two new vessels have been a vital key for the company's future. Not only as the practical thing of a new vessel that are built with the newest technology in order to minimize the emissions etc. but also since it ensures the crew that there is a future within the company. They are investing in the future, and they will have the need for the crew for a long time ahead. The CEO described the fact that is has been a long time since the company built their own vessels, they have bought on the second-hand market instead. Although at the same time did their competitor build new vessels. This created an uncomfortable feeling amongst the crew, especially when the company sold one of the vessels and did not show any signs of buying a new one. When he then did a trip to Manila to the crew management firm that they use the personnel department, who have sensed this uncertainty among the crew, encourage the CEO to show some blueprints of the new vessels that they were planning to build. He did and once the information about the possible new buildings were spread a calmness were laid over the crew again. The CEO stresses the importance to be transparent towards the crew to show them the reality of what is going on, both the fun parts but also the not so fun parts.

## 5. Discussion

The aspects that the respondents have stressed throughout the interviews are describing the same thing that the company's core values are trying to state. They have used different words, but the subject and areas that they describe is the same. Then again it is important to keep in mind that the core values that the company has are fairly standard and general, all companies that wants to create a good impression has these kinds of words written, it is the reality and the truthfulness of them that is the difficult part. Below discussion is divided into the same themes as the result and each them is then connected to the theory as well as the actual stated core values that the company have.

### 5.1. Theme: Consistency

The first theme to connect with the theory is consistency. According to Gagné et.al (2019) the common features within a family-owned organization is that they have owners who are intrinsic motivated, and they then pass on their motivation to the next generation. The consistency in leadership and management is also a common feature for this type of business (Brundin et al., 2014), this relates to both the owners and the second generation who are taking care of the company and has done it for a long period of time now. The fact that several of the owners also works at the office creates a strong relationship between the owner and the daily operations, which in turns leads to a mutual understanding and the possibility for fast decision making. Another interesting aspect is that not all owners are working within the company, they choose other professions. The fact that the part-owners are not forced to work within the family business is another aspect that strengthens the motivation. The ones who work at the office have chosen to do so; they are not doing it out of obligation. Additionally, there is also the fact that the leading roles onboard the vessels, the captains, and the chief engineers, also have stayed within the company for a long time. Which further enhances the theme of consistency that the interviews have presented to the theory. Vallejo-Martos (2011) stated several common core values within a family-owned business and one of them were the word *Commitment*. The company have succeeded to create a strong commitment from their employees since they stay within the company for a long time. A key for this is probably the fact that they, in their recruitment strategy tries to hire those who have been cadets onboard their vessels. Those persons that they have been a part of their education and in that way given them something of value, a good place to learn. By taking on cadets the company have the chance to show their vessels and their crew to the students in an honest way and in return they get to see and understand what type of person the student is, and if he fits in with the company's values. The ones who get an employment after being a cadet already know what they are given and the same goes for the company. This can also be connected to another of Vallejo-Martos (2011) common values, *Harmony*, which focuses on the human relations within the company and that the employee's personality goes in line with each other and the company.

Another aspect where the result from the interviews and the core values of the company aligned with the theory are that the founding fathers are the ones who have created the company culture and values (Fletcher et al., 2012). They have nurtured the next generation of owners as well as the crew, who has been in the company for such a long time that they sailed with the founding fathers. Several of the captains that were interviewed mentioned the old generations and how they have so many stories that they could tell about them. As stated in the result, did these founders not just nurture their own children of how to run the company, they also molded the young crew who sailed with them back in the days, and many of those sailors are still with the company today.

This fact, that the captains that have sailed with the owners, are a big reason for why the espoused core values are in line with the enacted core values. At least according to the respondents who works ashore. Since the office have not promoted or sent out the written core values, they believe that the reason the culture and the spirit onboard the vessel is in line are linked to the first generation of the owners. They are the ones who worked their entire lives onboard the vessels and they are the ones who set the standard of how these vessels should be handled and perform. This can then also be connected to Aristoteles virtues and the cardinal virtue of Prudence. Prudence defines the practical wisdom that form the organizational culture and survives across generations (Brenes et al., 2011). The first generation did not only share their knowledge with their own children, but they also shared it with the ones they were working with and in this way, the prudence is not only persistence due to the second generations and their sharing of the culture. It is also achieved by the non-family employees who also saw the way to behave in accordance with the previous generation at first hand.

Connecting the theme, Consistency, with the core values that the company have stated there are several words that can be matched with what is described under the theme. Credibility [Trovärdighet], Safety [Säkerhet], Social [Socilat] and Quality [Kvalitet], all these specific words describe aspects of how the company want to be. The alignment can be confirmed by the fact that the respondents all states that they have works a long time at the company which goes in line with and enhances all four of the above core values. They want to be credible and that is confirmed by the fact that they are the same type of company as when the founding fathers created it and they are staying on the same course of how this company should be. The second core value that can be connected to the theme is Safety. They want co-workers who are secure in and well prepared for their position onboard the vessels. Then there is Social, the company wants the crew to be well both physically and mentally. Everyone shall be seen and cared for and understand that together they are the company. Lastly there is the quality, where everyone shall be well trained in conducting what is expected from them, which is addressed by the fact that the ones onboard have been within the company for a long time and at different positions making them aware of what is expected from each position.

## **5.2. Theme: Communication**

Connecting the theme of Communication to the literature it is clear that the communication aspect of a company is of high importance, it is a big part of the organizations ability to exist. Everything within a company must be communicated in some way since it is of grate important for the company's ability to evolve and move forward. A company must communicate with both their employees as well as their customers to stay relevant and evolve together with the rest of the world (Carsrud & Brännback, 2012, p. 3). According to the respondents the company are good at listening and has often an open dialogue and discussion with those who are effected/involved, and that is a key in order for them to evolve. The theme of communication can also be connected to Aristoteles cardinal virtue Justice. Here the implementation of ethical principles is set in order to insure fair conditions. Treating everyone equally and with respect, regardless of if there are family or non-family employees (Samara & Paul, 2019).

Communication can also be connected to the organizational structure. Here it is clear that the company have a flat organization were everyone are being listened to and can say what they think and want. An aspect that is common within family organizations are stated in the article by Brundin et.al (2014), where they state that the ownership and the management often

overlap, and this leads to a flat organization with an ability to take rapid decisions and has a high possibility for opportunities. This is for example described by Chief Engineer no. 1 and no. 3 since they both expressed the ability to discuss solutions and opportunities with the office and that they are a part of the decision making. The cardinal virtue of Justice can also be connected to this since there is a profound respect and equal treatment of the employees, regardless of if they are a part of the family or not. Everyone is being listened to and their opinion matters (Samara et al., 2019). The willingness to share knowledge are also a part that Captains and Chief Engineers brought up, this is something that is important for the culture onboard. If the persons who are of the highest rank onboard are open and what to share their experience and knowledge with the junior positions, they set an example. Captain no. 3 stressed the importance of communication going both ways. He does not only have to be open and share his knowledge, but he also must be open to learn. The fact that a captain who has the highest rank onboard shows that he wants to learn something from another more junior positions sets a clear example of how communication and knowledge sharing shall be. The importance of learning is vital for an organizations ability to develop and improve (Sai Manohar et al., 2014) and for a family company the commitment also entails that the employees' feel confident in sharing their knowledge with the others since it is advantages for the company (Vallejo-Martos, 2011). Further on, this also addresses the aspects of good leaders and leaderships within a company and how that is a part of creating a good culture (Jacobsen et al., 2021, p. 379).

The feeling of getting listened to enhances the employees job satisfaction and motivation. Since several of the part-owners also works at the office their motivation can, to a great extent, be classified as intrinsic motivation by default. Mura et al. (2021) explained the fact that family employees automatically have a higher degree of intrinsic motivation since they have a personal bound to the success of the company. They see the past and the future of the company as something of high value that they want to nourish. It is much more difficult to create an intrinsic motivation among the non-family employees. Although the fact that several of the respondent stressed the high level of communication leads to the belief that the company have succeeded to implement some level of intrinsic motivation among the non-family employees. They stressed the fact that the organization within this company is something of high value for them, the open communication, trust, and stability, which is all pointing at some level of intrinsic motivation. Then there is the even more difficult part of creating some intrinsic motivation with the Filipino crew, for it to become something more than just working due to obligation and money for them.

The Filipino culture differ from the Swedish culture in so many aspects, and communication are one of them. Both Captains and Chief Engineers brought up the difficulties in getting the Filipino crew to speak up and to not be afraid. If a person does not feel comfortable to speak up, regardless of if it is due to the cultural background or the culture of the company, that person will never create intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Being afraid to say something or to be honest inhibit the person's ability to lower its guard and to enjoy their work. If someone has the feeling of always have to look over one's shoulder or to lie in order to be allowed to continue to work, they will never find satisfaction with their work. Then again, as the Personnel department no. 1 pointed out; it is of high importance to have these Filipinos who have been within the company for 10 to 20 years in order to tear down these walls of in-secureness. Despite the time in the company the differences in culture will always be there and it will therefore always be some imbalance within communication.

Even though the industry demands a set hierarchy for the crew onboard the vessel, the company tries to make the climate onboard as open as possible where everyone feels free to speak up. The company's core value *Credibility* [Trovärdighet], *Safety* [Säkerhet] and *Social* [Socialt] stresses the importance of open communication. One can say it is one of the cornerstones of the company, the dialogue shall be open and free between the office and the vessels as well as between the different ranks onboard the vessels. They want to point to the fact that everyone should feel comfortable to speak to the person in charge. The climate onboard and towards the office becomes much better if this is achieved as well as the fact that the risk of an accident can be prevented or handled before it has escalated. Further on the core values stresses the desire of being transparent, they want the crew onboard the vessel to know what is going on in the company and for them to understand the reasons for the decisions. Another statement that is emphasized in the core values are that they want everyone to feel like they are a part of the company, which related to the fact that everyone should be listened to, and decisions are made together. The respondents described that they are a part of the decision making for the specific vessel that they are on, but no one described a scenario where the decision that they were a part of affected the other vessels as well. The decision making that the respondents feel like they are a part of seems to only be true to the decisions made for the vessel they work on. Further on, the core value relating to socially can also be strongly connected to communication, here the focus lays on respect and care for each other. If one feels like they are being listened to and that their opinion matters, mutual respect arises. The same goes for the open communication onboard the vessel, if everyone are encouraged to speak up and that they are a part of the decision making the social aspect of the working environment are also cared for. People want to be heard and if they feel like they are, they enjoy working and sees it as something more than just plain work. They get attached to their work and nurture it, as well as enjoying their working assignments. The lack of official performance reviews was addressed as an improvement point that the company could work on. An official meeting where an employee gets to ask about the future chances of promotion etc. are something that the company could implement. But at the same time, as the personnel department stressed in their interview, they have never had so many problems and aspects to consider when they had official performance reviews. It is therefore important that these types of meetings are devoted to the employees work and what they can do to enhance their chances of a promotion. Not to be a meeting where the employees get the chance to describe everything that he/she personally think the company shall do, change, improve or handle.

### **5.3. Theme: Trust**

The theme of trust and the results that is show in the previous chapter can also be connected to Aristotle's cardinal virtues, all four of the cardinals are touched upon in this theme. They all address different aspects of trust in how the family and non-family employees are taught, and that they trust them to act in accordance with the core values of the company (Parada et al., 2020). Chief Engineer no. 3 pointed out the fact that the office often trusts the crew onboard the vessel to make the right decision. They have confidence in them deciding how to handle things. The office does not show any need for controlling them or to micromanage, they have a good collaboration instead. This kind of trust is based on the way the founding fathers acted and behaved. If they had a lot of trust in their co-workers and the successors, that kind of trust becomes a part of the culture and spreads out throughout the whole organization (Fletcher et al., 2012). Then Chief Engineer no. 4 also pointed out the lack of decision making that sometimes occurs. He stressed the fact that the trust have in some cases tipped over to create reluctance. The relation between the office and the vessels have become too much of a family and therefore the office sometimes is reluctant to make the decision. He expressed a desire to sometimes get a clear and straight answer of how to proceed. Both in relation to the

company policy but also in relation to external parties. In this case it seems like the decision making, that in accordance with the theory in many cases within family business are based on rule of thumb set by the founding fathers (Picone et al., 2021). This approach might have worked back in those days but since the demand from the external parties have increased, these rules might have to change. Both the founding fathers and the second generation all seems to have worked very hard on erasing the line between the family employee and the non-family employee. But now it shows that some kind of line might be necessary to have anyway, it has a purpose. Even though the owners seem to think that there is a lack of “We-feeling” among the employees, it seems like it is too strong in some areas. There might be an imbalance, in some respects the “we-feeling” are too strong and in others it is too weak.

Further on, the theme trust can be connected to the company’s core value of *Credibility* [Trovärdighet], *Social* [Socialt] and *Quality* [Kvalitet]. Since trust are built upon a mutual feeling between two parties it is clear that both the office and the crew have to have it in order for it to exist. The respondents described the confident that they have when it comes to knowing what the company wants. The office and the owners have during a long time included and described their way of reason and make decisions so now the Captains and Chief engineers know how they are supposed to act, even before they loop in the office. This kind of trust can only be built upon transparency, respect, and long-term perspective. The office believe that they have been transparent and willing to share their decision-making path with the crew and this have then led to the crew being taught how they themselves shall decide. Which might be the case since the feeling of trust and ability to make their own decisions were described by the respondents working onboard the vessels. Trust then also is connected to the core value socially. Since the founding fathers have created this culture of everyone matters and shall be treated equally, they have implemented a trustworthiness that is spread throughout the company. Although trust and the core value of socially are a vital part of a company in order for it to work without fiction the respondents stressed that they might have become too trustful. They pointed out that since they see each other as family the possibility for the persons working at the office to make the decision have become low. Sometimes the crew misses to have someone taking the decision for them, there are situations where two options are as good, they might differ a bit but in the big picture they have the same outcome. This further lead on to the core value of quality, which relates to the trust that the crew have the right knowledge and experience in order to conduct their work correctly and in accordance with the company’s wishes. Many from the crew have been with the company for a long period of time and this have created a trust from the office that they believe the crew can conduct the transportation safe and correct. They know what is expected from them and they are confident that they have the capability to achieve it. The company does not have to be worried that the crew will fail in something, affecting their relation to costumers or their reputation. They trust the crew in full and that is something that the crew in turn feels and grows with.

#### **5.4. Theme: Investments**

The theme Investments points to the fact that the company wants to make long term investments, in their vessels but also in their personnel. An aspect that is common within family companies are exactly that, they look for long term investments as well as the fact that they value their employees. They rather focus on what is best for the company in the long term than making fast and more money (Carsrud & Brännback, 2012, p. 4). The company wants to invest in their employees by offering them their first job and then nurture them along the way so that they become the type of leaders that the company wants. They are from the start formed in line with the core values and the company’s culture. Unfortunately, this is

something that is not always working in the advantage of the company, from the start they show their commitment to the new employee, but the commitment is not always mutual. The personnel department expressed their frustration regarding this fact. Even if they choose to, time after time to invest in Swedish engineers, they still end up without Chief engineers. The company choose the more costly way of recruiting, to provide the newly graduated students with a job, and hoping that they will stay within the company all the way. But more often than not, when the employees have gotten enough sea time and can collect their certificate, they choose to leave the company and go ashore to work instead. Here one can clearly see that it is the lack of or weak intrinsic motivation that are a source of issue. The employees do not have enough intrinsic motivation to stay at sea and within the company. The extrinsic motivation such as more time at home is more compelling than staying onboard.

For a chief engineer who has gotten their certificate the job opportunities to work closer to home are just dropping in. These opportunities only arises after they received their certificate so they must work onboard until then, but after that they can choose to leave. This is a problem that the company, along with the rest of the shipping industry in Sweden have. They cannot keep their Chief engineers, even if they invest in them since the day they enter the working-life they cannot seem to get awarded with keeping them onboard. The Chief Engineers who participated in this study were all happy with their work so it does not seem to be something specific in the work description that may be the cause. The same goes for the captains, the problem of them going a shore once they received their highest certificate are not as substantial. So, there is probably not a problem with the company or the general industry. As Ryan & Deci (2000) explained in their article, it is much more difficult for an organization to achieve intrinsic motivation for their employees than extrinsic. Hence, if their employee has a non-existent or weak intrinsic motivation they can easily, without hesitating quit their work and start somewhere else. The key is therefore to achieve some intrinsic motivation among the employees since that ensures them to resist other job opportunities to a greater extent.

Since investments regards both the mental and physical investments that the company take in their employees as well as their vessels, the company's core value *Safety* [Säkerhet], *quality* [kvalitet], *environment* [miljö], and *economy* [ekonomi] and can be connected to it. Investment in safety and quality can be linked to the fact that the company wants everyone who works inboard to keep learning new and relevant things. This is partly done by demanding everyone to take online courses. The open communication and encouragement of learning from each other are also a proof that the company wants to invest in their employees. The constant learning enhances both the safety work onboard as well as the quality since everyone in the crew are up to date with the latest regulations of how to handle specific situations. Environmental investments can be related to the new vessels that they have. The company see a future and want to make investments that are long-term as well as trying to lower their environmental footprint. Then there is the economical core value, this can also be connected to the new vessels that they company have. As the CEO described, the ordering of the new vessels was not only a step towards vessels that are better for the environment, but they also showed that they see a future with the company and their employees. Another economical investment aspect that the company does are the investments in the existing fleet. As the Chief Engineer no. 4 explained are investments in spare parts or new technology often granted as long as one have a good explanation and argument of how the investment will be beneficial for the company in the long-term. The last core value of the company to be connected to this theme are quality. As stated, several times before, is the company always looking at it for the long-term, both when it comes to the employees as well as their

investments in vessels. They want it all to be of high quality so that it is sustainable in the long-term and does not quit or break.

### **5.5. Methodology discussion**

The chosen way of conducting this case study was by doing a single case design with one context. The alternative way of conducting the case study would be to conduct several parallel contexts and/or cases to analyze the differences and similarities between different organizations (Yin, 2018, p. 48). Since the purpose of this thesis was to look in to one specific company and to create an understanding of how the core values are implemented and interpreted a single case design with one context seemed appropriate. This thesis is built upon interviews with respondents working at the chosen company that was targeted, which makes this thesis a qualitative study (Billups, 2021).

The interviews were held mainly via Teams/Zoom but three of them were conducted over the phone instead. The depth of the interviews was relatively the same, regardless of how they were communicated. Although two of the interviews were conducted over the phone and the respondents were in the middle of doing something else, which made them not as focused as the rest of the respondents. Having the ability to see the respondents face also had an impact on the outcome of the interview due to the fact that the author then could add their body language and face expression in to the analyze. Since the majority of the interviews were conducted in a way where the author could interpret the face expression etc. the interviews were over all well executed and led to data that were of good use to the result.

### **5.6. Quality of the research**

All research should be evaluated to assure the usefulness and quality of the research. Determining the quality for a qualitative methodology are diverse. There are no set criteria's available as there is for a quantitative methodology. For a quantitative study the validity and reliability are the two aspects determining the quality of the research (Symon et al., 2018). Bryman and Bell (2015) therefore recommend that the quality of this kinds of research is tested through the aspects of *Credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*.

#### **5.6.1. Credibility of the research**

It is in this aspect important to test and make sure that the outcome of the research and the theory presented is in line with the data collected. The credibility of the research is therefore determined by the sampling method, and choice of samples (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The number of response plays a strong part of the credibility of this thesis. Out of 29 persons who were asked, 16 participated in interviews. Of the total 26 persons working onboard the vessels in leading positions 13 of them participated, leading to a data collection from 50% of the company's employees who met the requirements. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to ensure that the data could be reviewed, which further enhances the credibility of the data that is presented. However, all the interviews were held in Swedish, which means that they then have been translated into English by the researcher, which in turn can have a negative impact on the credibility of the data. This due to the fact that some words in Swedish do not have a direct translation into English, hence the meaning might of the whole sentence might shift a bit.

### **5.6.2. Transferability of the research**

Here the external trustworthiness is assessed and determines whether the outcome of the research can be generalized or not. If the research can be transferred to another similar case study and generate the same conclusions. As well as if the outcome is relevant in other contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since the limitations of this study are so specific that it only focuses on one shipping company that is family-owned the same outcome will not be achievable for another chosen company. But the outcome can be seen as relevant in other contexts since it can be used in order to compare this specific company with for example shipping companies which has another owner structure.

### **5.6.3. Dependability of the research**

This aspect focuses on the reliability and deterrability of qualitative research. Reliability is commonly used to determine how stable a result or conclusion is, and if it holds to be repeated with the same outcome (Hammond & Wellington, 2021). Dependability of the research involves transparency of the research process, which can be achieved by thorough documentation of the research process and analysis. Further on, dependability can be increased by discussions regarding the research questions, data collection and methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In order to achieve dependability of the research the interviews were recorded, a detailed description of the analysis is stated, as well as all the information that has been given the respondents are attached to this thesis. Although, it is also important to address the strong relation between the researcher and the chosen company and how that might have affected the receiving and collecting of information. It may have been so that the collection of data might have gone more easily and smooth than if another person would have done the same case study. Therefore, conducting the same case study again, within this time frame might be difficult.

### **5.6.4. Confirmability of the research**

Bryman and Bell (2015) refer to the research confirmability as assuring that the study has been carried out in good faith. It focuses on verifying that the researcher has not have any personal intentions to change the direction of the research or its outcome. The motive for this research has been solely for academic purposes and to achieve a pure understanding of the relation between the espoused values and the enacted values. However, it is also important to mention that the researcher have previous relationship with the chosen company, and that is why this thesis focused on them. The respondents were informed that their answers will be kept anonymous, but due to the connection between the researcher and the company the respondent might have had a reluctance to be brutally honest when it come to the negative sides of the company. Although this is not something that was perceived by the researcher, except for one respondent who expressed his concern regarding this. He then chooses to express the negative aspects in a broad and general way instead of addressing specific items. However, since he still felt comfortable to describe it in general the connection to the company should not have had much of a negative impact on the result

## 6. Conclusion

In order to answer the purpose of this thesis, how the core values of the chosen family-owned shipping company are implemented and interpreted two research questions have been addressed. The questions were “What are the company’s purpose with their written core values?” and “How is the organization described and perceived by the employees?”. The purpose of the company’s core values is to create a sense of family and that everyone is important. The core values want to stress the fact that the employees are the core of the company and their well-being as well as their opinion matter to a great extent. Then again, the core values also consist of those types of words that one might think is just words, words that they are required to have in order for it all to look good towards external parties. Important to stress is also that these words and subjects are brought up by the interview respondents as well, so they might not only be hollow words. The document stating the core values also have bullet points under each core value, which creates a deeper understanding of how the company really want to be.

It is clear that the company has not succeeded in informing the employees about the core values. The only two respondents who knew about the exact words were the CEO and Personnel Department no 2. These two were also the two respondents that are part of the owning families, which means that they have been involved in creating these core values and approved them. Then there were four respondents who could guess some of the words, but the remaining respondents were totally unaware of the official core values. The description of the company that the respondents gave was divided into themes. Each theme described attributes of the company that the respondents pointed at, the themes were *consistency*, *communication*, *trust*, and *investments*. Consistency stressed the long-term employment that the company have succeeded with, the founding fathers, as well as the feeling of one big family. Then the theme communication described the openness between the vessel and the office as well as the encouragement of everyone’s having the courage to say what they want. The third theme was trust and here the feeling of confidence, reliance, and freedom that the crew onboard have is expressed. The last theme addressed the willingness to invest in the future of the company, both when it comes to new vessels, new spare parts as well as investment in their employees. What was interesting when comparing the employee’s description of the company with the core values was that they were very much in line. Even though only two persons knew the core values, every one of the respondents’ addressed aspects that were in line with the core values.

The main reason for why the company in some ways have managed to create this type of culture is the founding fathers. Especially that the enacted values lines up with the company’s espoused values since the company have failed to inform the employees about them. The founding fathers are the ones who have laid the ground for what later became the core values. They are also the ones who have worked onboard the vessels, creating the culture that now has become the culture of the company. The importance of the founding fathers work was also addressed by all three working at the office, they were fully aware of their predecessor's importance to the company. The difficulties that the company have ahead is that they really have to focus on implementing the espoused values and to not only rely on the founding father’s work. It has worked for the company due to the fact that their employees stay within the company for a long time, but as time passes those people who actually worked with the founding fathers will become fewer and fewer. This will lead to a weaker connection between the culture and the espoused values. It is therefore of high importance for the company to get a grip of this and work towards that every employee knows the core values by heart.

## **6.1. Future research**

This thesis focused only on one Swedish family-owned shipping company, for future research it would be interesting to compare different kinds of companies regarding their core values. Comparing a family-owned shipping company with a corporate owned shipping company or a Swedish owned family company with one from another country. Another interesting aspect would also be to include a broader group of people for the interviews, other positions onboard the vessels as well as other departments at the office. Or to only conduct a follow-up on this case study to see if there have been any changes or improvements since this one. To see if the employees in the future can state the exact core values that the company have written and if the culture are the same or if it has changed.

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## **Appendix 1: E-mail invitation for participation**

Hi!

My name is Sally Johnsson, and I am currently writing my Master Thesis to finish my education within Maritime Management, the subject of my thesis is *XXX* and their core values. I am wondering if I could interview you regarding this and ask questions like, how it is to work in *XXX* and if there is a special “*XXX Spirit*”. The interview can take place in Gothenburg, at *XXX* office or via Teams/Zoom, your choice. Before the interview I will send out the questions so that you have time to read through them and think about the answers. The interviews will be recorded in order to make sure that I don't miss anything you say, when the report is done, the recordings will be deleted.

The purpose of my thesis is to investigate what the official core values of *XXX* is and then compare them with the values that are lived by throughout the company. In order to understand if the reality match with what's written and official. The idea is that I will interview both person at the office as well as onboard the vessels to get a clear picture of how it really is.

Core values are a few words that the management of the company decides to create a foundation for how they want the culture to be. These words can then be used as guidance in the daily work and assures that all the employees have the same base for their decisions. Core values sets the norm of what is right and what is wrong, it's the things that makes you know how the leaders and management want you to act.

I am hoping to through this report create an understanding of how it is in reality so if you don't know what core values *XXX* has it is ok, that kind of the point of why I am doing this report. The results of this report will be presented anonymous so it is only me who will know who said what, you will be named Capiatin 1, Chief Engineer 3 etc.

## **Appendix 2: Interview template**

*Translated from Swedish to English*

### **Questions for the Captains, Chief Engineers, and Personnel Department**

- How long have you worked for the company?
- Explain what your service is
- Do you like the company and its culture?
  - What is good?
  - What is less good?
- What is special about the company? What makes them stand out from other workplaces you've been to?
- Do you know what the company's values are for some?
  - If not, what do you think they could be for some?
  - These are the company's core values
  - What qualities do you think the company's values & values want to emphasize?
- The values and culture that you have on board, do you think they are in line with what the office has in mind, or do they differ?
- How do you create the culture, values, and jargon on board among the crew that you think fits into the company?
- How the information and knowledge about the culture and norms is spread, what is right and wrong action / behavior
  - On board
  - From the office
  - Between the vessel and office
- Something you want to add?

### **Questions for the CEO**

- How long have you worked for the company?
- Explain what your service is
- What is special about the company? What makes them stand out from other workplaces?
- What are the company's values?
- What would you say the values and core values mean for the company?
  - What is the purpose of the value words?
  - What qualities does the company's values & values want to emphasize?
- Are they used as a tool in the organization?
- Are the values used as a basis for decision-making?
- How are the values communicated to the organization?
  - How are the values spread around the company's "spirit"?
  - Do employees know what the values are?
- Do you feel that you live as the values teach?
  - Partly in the office but also towards the crew?
- How do you carry on the culture, values and jargon in the office and on board among the crew that you think fits the company?
- Something you want to add?

## Appendix 3: Consent form

*Translated from Swedish to English*

### Consent form for participation of a case study

This master thesis is conducted by Sally Johnsson and aims through a case study to examine the core values within the family-owned company XXX. The purpose is to investigate if the espoused values are in line with the culture and enacted values that the employees within the organization have and live by.

- I..... Give my consent to participate in this case study.
- I know that I can withdraw my participation at any time and that my answers then won't be used in the case.
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent regarding the interview within two weeks of the interview and that all the material related to me will be deleted.
- I understand that my participation means that my answers will be used as data in the case study and that it will be published.
- I know that my answers will be held anonymous
- I agree that this interview will be recorded.

Sally Johnsson, Phone: 0763399706, E-mail: sally.johnsson@gmail.com

.....  
Time & Place

.....  
Sally Johnsson

.....  
XXXXXXXXXX

## Appendix 4: Description of themes

### Consistency

The theme of consistency is in this case related to the patterns of *time in company, family and owners*. It describes the fact that the willingness to stay within the company for a long time, such as the respondents have, is a key for their stability and harmony within the company. Further on it also relates to the pattern of family and owner, how the owner behaves and act in relation to the rest of the organisation. As well as the description of that it is not only the owner family that are a part of the organization, the whole organization is like a family, regardless of if you are an owner or not.

### Communication

The theme of communication is based on the patterns *Family, espoused core values, independence, core values achieved, non-compliance with the core values and improvements possibilities*. It is within this theme the open communication on different levels and between different departments are addressed. The organizational structure that the company seems to have and how that is seen as one of the strengths of the company. This theme is also in direct relation to the written core values of the company since they also point out the key of communication. Further on does this theme also address aspects of improvements and where the company does not achieve compliance with the written core values.

### Trust

The theme of Trust relates to the trustworthiness that is current between different departments/areas/persons. Patterns such as *Independence, Family, Self-confidence in work, and improvement possibilities*. How the respondents address the confidence that they have in their work due to the trust that they feel from the office. The trust has then also generated independence among the employees and the responsibility that comes with it. In this theme, subjects such as openness, freedom and confidence are focused on.

### Investment

This last theme focusses on the economic and social investments that the company does. Here patterns such as *Time in company, Family, Owners and Core values achieved* were addressed. How the respondents describe the company as not only striving to make the most money and profit, but how they believe in their employees. This theme also addresses aspects that is stated in the written core values as well as the way the owners and office acts within this subject. The way that everyone acts and what is taken for granted and how that has an effect on the employees in company as well. The description of those who often are neglected and the material investments that are often pushed aside, but how the company works in minimizing that.

## **Appendix 5: The Companys Core Value**

*English translation of a Swedish document*

### **Credibility**

- Transparency
- Resistance to Scrutiny
- Long-term – we believe in the company’s future
- We invest in the next generation, both when it comes to owners and co-workers
- We know what we are doing – The co-workers have good knowledge and long experience
- We trust our co-workers

### **Safety**

- We know what we are doing – The co-workers have good knowledge and long experience
- We reach further than what the rules and regulations demand, trying to be one step ahead
- Have an open dialogue regardless of position, everyone should dare to say something
- Invest in simplicity in order to minimize risks in both soft and hard aspects
- Encourage innovation and smart solutions from co-workers

### **Environment**

- Decrease the company’s footprint in both the small and the big picture
  - o Work to reduce the negative impact that is connected to the daily operations onboard
  - o Continuously strive towards new technical solutions that help the company reduce their impact on the environment

### **Social**

- Together we are “*Company name*” – everyone is needed
- Every co-worker should be treated with respect
- We shall all contribute to keep an eye on each other’s mental health
- We care about maintaining a good physical workplace in order to take care of our co-workers and to counteract work-related injuries
- In order to encourage and maintain a good health, the company shall supply with opportunities to exercise and to eat healthy
- Dare to ask your co-workers for help – regardless of rank

### **Economy**

- Long-term investments that create added values for our co-workers, costumers, and owners
- A sound financial development where reinvestments are made with a focus on the environment.

### **Quality**

- Each co-worker shall be well trained for their position in order to perform the transportation in an efficient and safe manner
- We invest in vessels and technology of high quality in order to secure a long service life and the ability to deliver what we promised.



