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# **Singing in Fishing: A culturally-centred exploration of the meanings and functions of singing to sailors**

Master's thesis in Human Development, Psychology

Trondheim, spring 2014



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# Singing in Fishing: A culturally-centred exploration of the meaning and functions of singing to sailors.

A case of fishermen in Cape Coast, Ghana.

Master's thesis in Human Development

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## DECLARATION

I, **Christian Addo**, do hereby declare that except for references to other people's works, which have been duly acknowledged, this work was conducted by me under the supervision of **Professor Hroar Klempe** at the Institute of Psychology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim 2012/2013 academic year. This work has neither been submitted in whole nor in part for any degree in this University or elsewhere.

Signed .....

.....

Christian Addo

Date

(Student)

This work has been submitted for examination with my approval.

Signed.....

.....

Professor Hroar Klempe

Date

(Supervisor/Advisor)



## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to:

- All my sailors respondents in Cape Coast, Ghana
- My family
- Professor S. A. Danquah



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## **ABSTRACT**

The present study explores the meanings sailors make with their songs and the functions that are culturally pursued by sailors through singing. The study presents a model of functions of singing based on a qualitative approach which was developed after participatory, one-on-one and focus group interviews with 10 child sailors and 14 adult sailors. The model covers social, cultural and personal experiences with singing. Five main functions of singing were identified; singing for: intra-personal, inter-personal, spiritual, social and emotional functions. Some of the functions identified include singing to: ward off hunger, as a tool to attract fishes, as a tool for boosting self esteem and singing to keep in touch with the Supreme Being for: protection from the wrath of the sea god and protection of trapped fish from escaping. Future directions in cultural psychology of music, implications of the study for research and practice are also discussed.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Music making is a remarkable activity which dates as far back as human history. It is manifest in all human cultures and does different things in different cultures. The uses of music in one culture may overlap minimally with those derived of it from other cultures (Cross, 2001). In spite of its antiquity and ubiquity, it does not lend itself to a universal definition (Merriam, 1964; Mithen, 2005) and accounts of its origin are still open and highly speculative (Blacking, 1973; Radocy and Boyle, 1997).

There is a corpus of research which supports the adaptive role of music in child development. Cross-culturally, songs are used in adult interactions with children (Trehub, Unyk & Trainor, 1993; Trehub, Hill and Kamenetsky, 1997). A baby naturally responds to the soothing power of songs with singing subsequently being its first vocal expression before speech (Elmer, 2000; Welch, 2005). At home, a child hums to summon his strength for the schoolwork he has to hand in (Frith, 2002).

The presence of music in nearly all public and private spaces reveals its ubiquitous nature. Sloboda and O'Neill (2001), contend that day to day musical encounters are in the realm of the mundane in the sense that they accompany almost every aspect of our common place living routine. For instance, among the Frafra of Northern Ghana, a player of a one-string fiddle and a rattle player accompany teams of men who cut grass; with the workers swinging their cutlasses in time to the rhythm of the music with a remarkable effect on the speed of the grass cutting (Nketiah, 1974). Huron (2001) also reveals that the Mekranoti Indians who live in the amazon rain forest in Brazil, commit significant hours of the early mornings and evenings to singing.

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At the opposite of the ordinary/special spectrum, music is one of the mediums that has frequently been attributed with accompanying or inducing highly intense or passionate supernatural or ethereal experiences (Sachs, 1944). For instance, the shaman of the Sami population who settled mainly in Scandinavia could only walk on his knees over long distances if ritual songs were sung in the unique Samish way (Edström, 2003). In Malaysia, the dabus ceremony presents a scene of men singing Arabic songs in an effort to attain a deep trance. On attaining the trance state, they “perform astonishing feats such as walking on broken glass or tolerating red-hot chains placed around their neck with no ill effects” (Kartomi, 1980, p.116). The singing of songs and hymns in a Christian church is enough for worshippers to enter another level in the spirit and to begin speaking in unknown languages or in the shrine, invoke the gods to possess fetish priests and worshippers (Capers, 2010).

In addition to its everyday uses, music has played significant roles in war and peace time. The power of music to “affect, disturb, rouse and subdue has been used to great effect by monarchies, armies and governments throughout history” (Leyshon, Matless & Revill, 1995, p. 426).

The intriguing question is whether music serves similar functions cultures. The final answer to this question has not been found yet within music psychology (Boer and Fischer, 2012).

### **1.2 Statement of Problem.**

In contemporary times, more and more people have taken to listening to recorded music rather than singing (Schellenberg, 2005). In many industrialised economies, singing to oneself is viewed as a form of emotional expression which an ‘adult’ must desist from (Drew, 1937). “Adults now associate singing [...] with childish ways” (Portnoy, 1973, p. 89). Children are restrained from singing and socialised into keeping silent like their adult parents

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(Drew, 1937). Singing ought to be performed to a paying audience before it will be deemed necessary in highly developed economies.

In research, music behaviour has been explored in various disciplines including ethnomusicology, sociology and psychology. In psychology particularly, there seems to be more research works focused on topics surrounding *listening to music* as opposed to singing (McCaffrey & Good, 2000; Unwin, Kenny & Davis, 2002; Bailey and Davidson, 2002).

From previous research, the broad themes explaining why people listen to music have been put as either ‘intra-personal’ and/ or ‘inter-personal’ by function (Tarrant, North & Hargreaves, 2000; North, Hargreaves & O’Neill, 2000). The social functions of music are less attended to. The under-representation of social components in music research is significant; yet the neglect of culture in music psychology is even more profound (Boer and Fischer, 2012, p. 181).

Boer, Fischer, Tekman, Abubakar, Njenga & Zenger (2012) undertook a study exploring the functions of music listening across six diverse cultural samples (Germany, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines and Turkey). The results showed significant differences in the social and cultural functioning of music for each culture. For instance, listeners from more traditional cultures (Kenya and Philippines) used music more frequently for bonding with their most proximate social networks while people from secular cultures like Germany seem to experience this less frequently through music. Again, listeners from collectivistic and traditional backgrounds (Philippines) used music more frequently as a tool for affirming and developing socially desired values in themselves whereas people from individualistic cultures like New Zealand experienced this less frequently. The results of that research is an indication that the cultural and social peculiarities on the functions of music need to be explored more in research

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Studies have revealed that all the experiences individuals report in listening to music are also experienced by those who sing (Bailey and Davidson, 2005; Lob, Camic & Clift, 2010; Boer and Fischer, 2012). Does that mean that singing has no more uses beyond those known for listening to music? It does not appear that there is much contemporary research on singing which identifies functions of singing beyond those known for listening to music. Thus there seems to be a mass of research on singing which had identified diverse intra-personal and inter-personal functions of singing and either neglect, or in the minimum, accord little space to exploring the cultural specific and social functions of singing (Lob, Camic & Clift, 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2001; Clift, Hancox, Morrison, Hess, Kreutz & Stewart, 2010; Bailey and Davidson, 2005).

To the best of my knowledge, there is a need for more research that highlights the highlights the cultural specificities of the psychological functioning of singing. Thus in this present study, I significantly focus on cultural experiences in musical singing functioning. Put differently, the study focuses on what singing means to people in their culture. The second gap entails a paucity of research on non-Western audiences in psychological research. Only a limited number of psychological studies investigate musical experiences in non-Western samples (Tekman & Hortacsu, 2002) or compare limited samples from Western and non-Western samples (Boer and Fischer, 2012, Balkwill & Thompson, 1999).

### **1.3 The Contribution of Interpretive Literature on African Music**

Seeking to understand the meaning sailors make from their songs requires understanding *how* to explore meaning in Ghanaian music in general. To this end, early studies in ethnomusicology by two prominent writers in African music are helpful guides. One was Nketia (1962) and the other by Bebey (1975).

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Nketia (1962) admonishes that besides the music being made are happenings in the musical situation which are relevant to meaning. There are norms of behaviour in the musical situation itself which require notice and there are behavioural associations with the musical event which are considered a part of the meaning. In African music, he continues, there are a plural of meanings that are embedded in a single musical behaviour and these could be uncovered in deploying diverse investigative methods (pp. 2-4).

Bebey (1975) also points to the need to be knowledgeable of relevant cultural values in the Ghanaian setting since Ghanaian music is well embedded with cultural values which are meant to serve significant functions on the performers and listeners of music

Put together, both literature underscore the need to be equally concerned with adjunct behaviours that go with the singing as well the norms which constitute a part of the singing phenomenon. It finally advises the need to be sensitive to searching the cultural values embedded in the singing and the plausible psychological significance they serve.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Building on the above interpretive clues, I designed the study to explore the following questions:

- Why do sailors sing when at work?

Complementary to this question, subordinate other questions are implied:

- What are the cultural values embedded in the singing act?
- What is the psychological significance of such embedded cultural values?

### **1.5 Aims of the Study**

Based on the afore-discussed problem statement, this study seeks to:

- Explore the meanings sailors make from their songs.
- To explore the aims and functions which are culturally pursued by sailors through singing.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

It is hoped that findings of this present study will advance research by simultaneously exploring the intra-personal, inter-personal, social as well as cultural experiences with singing. Examining all four levels aims to gain a holistic picture of the psychological functions of singing beyond the conventional focus on intra-personal and inter-personal experience.

In collecting data from a non-Western culture, this present study will augment existing research with perspectives from a non-Western culture on the functions of music and singing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theory offers explanatory framework to find answers to questions (Creswell, 2009). In the present study, a cluster of functionalist theories on music, the flow theory and one concept are deployed in answering the research questions.

Functionalist theories on music may espouse *socio-functional reasons* why a group of people, in specific cultural settings will sing. These theories stand in contrast to evolutionary functional theories on music that touch on whether music does have any *survival value* to man (Pinker, 1997; Miller, 2000; Darwin, 1872; Barrow, 1995; Sperber, 1996; Kogan, 1997; Brown, 2000).

The ‘functions’ of music are often times interchanged with the ‘uses’ of music and Merriam (1964, chapter XI) spells out the difference between the two. She states that ‘when we speak of the uses of music, we are referring to the ways in which music is employed in human society’ (p. 210). So music could be *used* in fishing, marching, prayers, war and so forth and their respective *functions* could be to communicate with particular fish types, provide rhythm for synchronous movement, invoke the presence of the gods, incite arousal in the camp and so forth. “ ‘Use’, then refers to the situation in which music is employed in human action; ‘function’ concerns the reasons for its employment and particularly the broader purpose which it serves” (ibid).

For some evolutionary psychologists, for example Pinker (1997), Barrow (1995), Miller (2000) and Sperber (1996), these functional explanations for musical activity are purely at the level of the individual; for the sake of personal pleasure. For others like Brown (2000),

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the reasons for singing is beyond just the individual participant; the function is at the level of the group.

### **Blacking and Merriam's polysemic theory of music functions.**

This theory states that the music of any culture richly consists in meaning construction and the details of the musical act makes references to many things. It says further that the music of a society cannot be said to be explainable by a single or a set of factors; for it is an act that involves a multiplicity of references and meanings. For example, music can function as a means to communicating with the dead for the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, binding birds, souls, places, and people at a time or music can function in the restructuring of social relations (Blacking, 1976). The same sound patterns...can...have different meanings within the same society because of different social contexts (ibid, p. 237). According to Merriam (1964), a defining characteristic of music is that it has the capacity to lack consensual reference; it can be *about* something but its *aboutness* can vary from context to context and even within context (p.221)

### **2.1.1 Functionalist theories of music**

#### **Lomax's Social Solidarity Theory**

According to Lomax (1968), a principal function of music is to augment the solidarity of a group. Singing the same melody, dancing to the same rhythm, even utilizing the same pitch or the same levels of accent or any of the shared regularities of behaviour essential to song performance *arise from* and enhance a sense of community (p. 71)

*Solidarity* from its Latin word *solidare*, denotes a feeling of togetherness and a willingness to stay connected to others. A sense of solidarity amongst members of a group serves to maintain social ties by making people mutually obliged to be responsive to each others'



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needs. “Social solidarity is regarded as the glue that keeps people together, whether by mutually identifying and sharing certain norms and values, or by contributing to some common good, or both” (Komter, 2005, p.8). The display of solidarity to another, according to Komter (2005), creates a psychological feeling of indebtedness on the fellow so assisted and makes the fellow feel connected to the benefactor. This feeling of mutual indebtedness is essential for creating a lasting sense of togetherness amongst people.

In Ghanaian traditional music making, typified by the sailors singing style, there is at every instance, a member of the team who supplies the songs to which others sing the chorus (Nketiah, 1974). In this particular case of sailors, the dragging of the nets, the standing posture of the sailors and the finalisation of a hauling task are all regulated in unison with songs.

### **Brown’s functionalist theory**

According to Brown (2000), music is desired by a group because it offers opportunities for the formation and maintenance of *group identity*, for the conduct of *collective thinking* (as in transmission of group history and planning for action), and for *group catharsis*, the collective expression and experience of emotion. Brown’s theory agrees in many ways with several theories listed below as discussed by Huron (2001):

### **Social Bonding Theory:**

This theory postulates that singing is to create or maintain social cohesion. It contributes to group solidarity and promotes altruism. It is a way of synchronising the mood of many individuals in a larger group.

According to Levitin (2008), the preference of man in staying in proximity to others, as opposed to living in seclusion, “confers several significant advantages” as well as some inevitable “unpleasant by-products” (p. 48).. Living in large groups creates “social tensions”

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between individual group members and also amongst smaller groupings in the larger group (Ibid). These social tensions may occur when a member feels that his personal desires or wishes are being frustrated either by the entire group or a member of the group. Group members may also feel their personal space and privacy being compromised in group living. These tensions occasion divisions within groups and force individual members to withdraw from group living. Levitin (2008) argues further that “synchronous, coordinated songs” used by people in large living groups is what creates the “strongest bonds” between them and prevent them from breaking apart (p. 50).

Traditionally, living in large groups is actually what it means to be ‘*human*’ in many parts of Africa (Menkiti, 1984). The individual grows to discover himself strongly tied to extensive familial and communal networks. Large living groups offer a source of protection and provide varied avenues to seek help “in difficult hours” (Thomas, 2005, p. 22).

Applied to Ghana, historically, close residents in villages form communal work teams and took turns to help clear each other’s farm, create and clear footpaths and so forth (Nketiah, 1974). The unpleasant aspect of living in this large group could be that since farmers had unequal agricultural land sizes, those with relatively smaller land sizes may feel being overworked on others’ farms.

In the peculiar context of Ghanaian fishermen, they habitually cluster their canoes at a common beach- though every fisherman is free to seclude himself by choosing any other spot along the beach. As a disadvantage, sailors have to compete for safer zones-on the beach to dock their canoes and they also have to obey rules and custom imposed by tradition; no matter how strongly they disagree with it; sailors for example, are banned from fishing on some particular days of the week (Jojada, 2002).

**Group Effort and Rhythm Theory:**

The group effort theory maintains that music contributes to the coordination of group works, such as pulling heavy objects. It is “valued as a means of establishing behavioural coherency in masses of people” (Roederer, 1984). This theory ties in closely with the ‘*rhythm theory*’ (Lefebvre, 2004) which argues that the human body itself is fundamentally immersed in rhythm and it responds to rhythm; the sensation of hunger and thirst for instance, are rhythmic, repetitive biological urges just as the urges for sleeping and waking. The human person – with these internal rhythms, performs on external repetitive social rhythms like walking, working and so forth and in this dyadic relationship he finds harmony. Appropriated to this study, it follows that the human person desires and performs effectively when he is able to agree this internal rhythm with an external rhythm, say, one generated from sounds in music.

Rhythm in music is essential for coordinating the individual, incongruent activities (rhythms) that persons could engage in at any point in time. According to Levitin (2008), ‘rhythm in music provides the input to the human perceptual system that allows for the prediction and synchronisation of different individual behaviours’ (p. 50). The question is ‘how better is music over other means of synchronising individual behaviours – like using language or eye observation?’

Indeed, it is plausible in some cases for members of a group to just look at what the mentor or the leader is doing and imitate same- for instance, in marching, but when humans are engaged in such heavy, manual tasks, as undertaken by sailors, looking at others in order to maintain motor synchrony would not be the best option. In the rhythm of any music are sounds of varying pitches and this varying sound pitch levels is significantly what the sailors depend on

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to coordinate the movements of those in front with those at the end of a hauling rope. Levitin (2008) argues that:

sound has advantage over vision – it transmits in the dark, travels around corners, can reach people who are visually obscured by trees or caves. Music, as a highly structured form of sound communication, [enables] the synchronisation of movement even when group members couldn't see each other (p. 50).

### **Conflict Reduction Theory:**

This theory holds that music is preferred by a group of people as a way to reduce interpersonal conflict. Implied in this theory is the assertion that group living could give rise to personality conflicts between members of large living groups. This occurrence of friction amongst members of large living groups is a near certainty and its impact goes against group feelings of togetherness (Johnson and Johnson, 2000).

Music may enable “the explosion of creativity” (Merriam, 1964; p. 223) – where group members are at liberty to create their own songs. And this avenue music provides is what members of large living groups use to “let off steam’ and [...] to resolve social conflicts” (ibid).

According to Levitin (2008), “frictions within a group could be smoothed out by promoting feelings of togetherness. Without explicitly requiring [...] an apology, the strong emotional bonds created by synchronized music-dance [allows] both parties to save face and to set their differences aside” (p. 53).

### **Transgenerational Communication:**

This theory postulates that music might be used as a useful mnemonic conveyance for useful information. This raises the question as to whether music is language in itself. Merriam

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(1964) addresses the question in submitting that “music is not a universal language, but rather is shaped in terms of the culture of which it is a part” (p. 223). He adds that “while we know music communicates something, we are not clear as to *what, how, or to whom*” (p. 223; italics added).

This use of music for transgenerational communication seems a well-developed skill in the Ghanaian society. Gregory (1997) describes the use of music by the Ashanti people of Ghana who submitted to British rule in 1900: the British Governor was greeted with ceremonial talking drum music which only the Ashanti listeners were able to translate as saying “slowly but surely, we shall kill’! This example may serve to indicate that the use of music as an in-group means of communication may equally be a favoured idea among sailors but we are not clear to what and how.

Among Ghanaians, another plausible area of music use for communication is religion. According to Thomas (2005), in traditional African societies, religion plays a vital role in the life of an entire group of people and music is the prime means of communication between people and the cosmos – which includes the gods, ancestors, God and other spiritual forces. Mithen (2005) lifts this argument to a universal level. She states that “music is used everywhere to communicate with, glorify and/or serve the divinities identified within any particular culture” (p. 13).

Traditional African societies hold very rich mythologies and beliefs about the order of things in the universe and these myths – which will be discussed later, give rise to ceremonial rituals and other sacred practices like singing. One of such practices performed with songs is worship or thanksgiving. According to Thomas (2005), “worship is ... accorded to the Supreme Being [as it is to Him] to whom man owes his own being and [it is Him] who is the Determiner of man’s destiny” (p. 82). This act of worship performed with songs extends to

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other gods and spiritual beings as well for “the people believe that if worship is given to these divine beings regularly and in the right manner, all will be well with man” (p. 82).

### **2.1.2 The Flow Theory**

Postulated by psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1997; 2008), this theory describes a psychological phenomenon that is associated with indulgence in any activity – like singing, studying, working, and ultimately makes performance on the said activity enjoyable. This phenomenon known as *flow* – is ‘the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter’ (2008, p. 4). A state of *flow*, facilitates the concentration of attention, leads to loss of sense of time and leaves no ‘psychic energy’ (1997, p. 136) to focus even on ‘something painful or disturbing’ that otherwise would have been attended to (2008, pp. 119). In flow, an activity becomes intrinsically enjoying and a person feels adequate in meeting the task’s challenges.

### **2.1.3 The Concept of Culture**

Culture has been a difficult term to use in both everyday and scientific discourses in the history of human sciences (Valsiner, 2007, p. 8) since ‘the concept of culture lacks a unanimous definition’ (Rundmo, Granskaya and Klempe, 2012, p. 1261).

While the remit of some definitions is broad, others are less so. For instance, a society’s culture, according to Goodenough (as cited in Geertz, 1973), ‘consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members’ (p.11). In the view of Geertz (1973) however, ‘culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behaviour patterns- customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters-as has by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms-plans, recipes, roles, instructions- for the governing of behaviour’ (p. 44). According to Hofstede (1984), ‘culture is the collective programming of the mind [i.e, thinking, feelings and actions] which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.” (p. 51). Taking it from a different angle,

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Kluckhohn and Kelly (1945) argue that “by culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men.” (p. 78) whilst Lederach (1995) submits that “culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them” (p. 9).

By way of summarizing the above definitions, culture is that which distinguishes one group of people from another, it is that which explains why people act, think and relate with each other the way they do. It is what explains nearly everything at the intra-personal and inter-personal levels.

There are at least four main theoretical approaches to understanding the role of culture in any contextual setting (Rundmo et al., 2012): culture as artefacts (Cole, 1996), culture as social organisation (Douglas, 1970), culture as value exchange (Hofstede, 1980) and culture as symbol exchange (Valsiner, 2007). In this study on music- which explores why sailors sing- the last two conceptualisations of culture will be adopted for use.

Culture as ‘value exchange’ focuses on the values and beliefs of a people- which in turn guide their actions. According to Kluckhohn (as cited in Hofstede, 2001), the “essential core of culture consists of traditional [...] ideas and especially their attached values” (p. 9). A value is “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions” (Kluckhohn, as cited in Hofstede, 2001, p.5). These ‘values are invisible until they become evident in behaviour’ (Hofstede, 2001, p. 10). Values and beliefs are perceivable as mental software that guide behaviour.

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The other conceptualisation of culture- as ‘symbol of exchange’ by Valsiner, (2007), conceives culture in terms of communication. Culture is viewed here as communication styles prevalent in given social settings. “Communication is more than pure language. Within a culture there are many different sign systems used for communication such as gestures, paintings, music and even behaviour” (Rundmo, et al., 2012, p. 1262).

In the present study, attention was focused on: the inherent arrangements in the calling of songs, when specific songs are sung as well the meanings singers and other sailors make from songs. In the process, several observations were made and sailors’ accounts were obtained and the meaning of the data such collected were explored by paying attention to the role of cultural values in shaping the data.

Finally, in a cultural and ethnographic research of this nature, it is to be expected that logic is helpful only to a little extent in understanding the behavioural observations and the reasons people assign for their actions. The perspectives brought on board through the concepts of culture- thus: as values, beliefs and communication- will be important in exploring what values, beliefs and communication styles there are in the sailors’ singing.

## 2. 2 Review of Related Studies

Research on music have had diverse aims but each one of them and all collectively, sought to explore the *functions* music serves in diverse *use* situations. By research design, these studies have been either experimental – where experimenters used either physiological or neurological measures whilst trying to control the impact of other values in assessing the functioning of the musical stimuli, or have deployed self-reports for the purposes of data collection. Some of these studies are reviewed below.



### **2.2.1 Music and affect regulation**

Trehub and her colleagues have conducted a handful of experiments with songs on infants. These experiments evidenced favourable consequences of maternal singing on infant arousal through cry reduction, sleep induction or positive affect (Trehub and Trainor, 1998; Trehub and Schellenberg, 1995; Trehub, Unyk & Trainor, 1993; Trehub, Hill and Kamenetsky, 1997).

In few such experiments (Trehub and Trainor, 1998; Masuyama, 1989), it appears that songs serve personal ends for singing mothers. It was self-soothing; providing a safe outlet for negative as well as positive feelings

### **2.2.2 Music and Social Bonding**

In other experiments, it was observed that maternal singing seems to strengthen the emotional ties between mother and infant (Dissanayake, 2000; Trehub, Hill and Kamenetsky, 1997). In like fashion, singing in other context has also been shown to reduce the psychological distance between singer and listener (Lomax, 1968; Pantaleoni, 1985).

Purcell and Kagan (2008) conducted a quasi-experiment where employees were engaged in group-singing lessons. In that experiment, many reported feeling bonded to their colleagues with whom they sang. Similar findings were found in another experiment conducted by Grape, Sandgren, Hansson, Ericson & Theorell (2003).

### **2.2.3 Music and Mood Management**

Thayer and his colleagues have carried out a number of studies concerning how people regulate their moods. One study attempted to determine what people do to try to get out of a bad mood. The third most frequently reported activity was listening to music (Thayer, 1996). Thayer, Newman and McLain (1994), carried out a similar study to determine what people do to raise their alertness or energy level. Listening to music was the fifth most reported activity.

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In another study investigating what people do to reduce nervousness, tension or anxiety, listening to music was the third most mentioned activity (Thayer et al, 1994).

In another field study conducted on how people modulate their depressive moods in real life, Thayer, et al., (1994), discovered that music was one key means people utilised.

In another study, Lob, Camic and Clift (2010), sought to understand how individuals use community group singing as a response to adverse life events. They found that singing provides a multiple of psycho-social functions which individuals draw on when experiencing adverse life events. Among the many functions it served, singing was spoken about 'as a way of accessing and expressing difficult emotions, and was seen as a safe, controlled mode of expression which helped to connect to difficult emotions' (p. 50).

### **2.2.4 Music and Stress Management**

Stress is a causal factor in both physical and psychological illnesses (Pervin and John, 1997).

One strategy for coping with stress, according to a study by Miluk-Kolasa and Makejek (1996) is to promote relaxation through music. In that study, in-patients recorded increases in physiological measures of stress when they were told that they had to undergo surgery. Having assigned the in-patients into experimental and control groups, each experimental group member was made to listen to music of their choice. Physiological measures taken moments after showed remarkable decrease in stress indicators for those in the experimental group.

In the same study early mentioned - conducted by Lob, et al., (2010), they found also that 'singing in a group can provide structure and routine which help to maintain a sense of normality when life is feeling chaotic' (ibid, p. 47). They came to understand also that group singing was known to 'provide a form of escapism and distraction from stressful lives by keeping the mind occupied and focused' (ibid, p. 48).

#### **2.2.4 Music and Pain Control**

Good, Stanton-Hicks, Grass, Anderson, Choi, Schoolmeesters & Salman (1999) conducted a study involving hospitalised patients who had undergone diverse medical surgery. To ease the pain, post-operative patients were traditionally put on analgesic medication but patients still complained of unbearable pain. As part of the experiment, some postoperative patients had to listen to their favourite music and their subsequent sensation of the postoperative pain was to be compared to a control group of other patients who were only been administered with traditional analgesic medication.

Results of the study showed that sensations of pain were drastically low when music was introduced to patients. The power of music to perform this function, according to Good et al. (1999), is because music distracts the mind from the pain. They further explained that the introduction of music presents a favourable alternative to the hypothalamus which selectively picks up the pleasurable sounds from the music instead of propagating pain impulses to the central nervous system.

#### **2.2.5 Music and Satiation**

In a neuro-physiological test undertaken by Salimpoor, Benovoy, Larcher, Dagher & Zatorre (2011), subjects were required to listen to their self-selected music and in doing this they reported experiencing chills and intense pleasure. The conclusion drawn from the study was that the intense pleasure experienced when listening to music is associated with dopamine activity in the mesolimbic reward system. It further says that this pleasure is comparable to one experienced from more basic stimuli like food.

This finding by Salimpoor et al., (2011) had been predated by an earlier one by Blood & Zatorre (2001), wherein subjects were similarly allowed to select and listen to a music of their own choosing. The findings of that experiment concluded that the hypothalamus triggers neurons which transmit sensations of satiation to the brain when it perceives some stimuli.

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Music was found to recruit the neural systems of reward and emotion similar to those known to respond specifically to biologically relevant stimuli, such as food (p. 11823).

### **2.3 Fishing and Singing Contexts in Ghana**

#### **2.3.1 Population and distribution of fishers in Ghana**

Ghana has a large coastal belt which stretches about 539 km (GhanaWeb, 2013) from Half-Asini in the south-east to Denu in the South-west of the country. In Ghana, coastal and fish resources are generally treated as a common property' (Marquette, Koranteng, Overå & Aryeetey, 2002, p. 325) so most residents along the coasts- adults and children, take on fishing as an economic engagement. Of these, the prominent fishing communities are the Fante, Ga and Ewe.

Fish; a cheap source of protein in Ghana, enjoys constant demand throughout the year. However, fishing in Ghana is dominantly traditional in technology and the craft frequently used 'is a large dug-out wooden canoes' with fishers using either wooden paddles or outboard motors to set it sail (ibid, p. 324) and these traditional fishers provide a significant portion of the national fisheries catch and fish protein needs.

#### **2.3.2 Nature of fishing Occupation in Ghana.**

Canoe sailors generally set sail in the early mornings between 1am and 2am. They sail far in shore to cast their nets and remain on the sea afterwards for an average of 3 hours before pulling on the ropes and cast nets. The high seas are reported to be cold and the sailors have had to endure this coldness each time they set sail (Marquette et al, 2002). The up-hauling of the cast nets could last between 3 and 6 hours.

There are two extreme types of sailing canoes, each marked by its capacity. There are the very large canoes which can accommodate between 20 and 40 sailors and the very small

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canoes which take onboard a maximum of 6 sailors. For a description of the fishing crafts being referred to here, the rendition below by Marquette et al, (2002) is perfect:

The fishing craft used by fishers in [*Ghana*] and elsewhere across West Africa is the dugout canoe. The design is symmetrical, double ended, and carved from a single log of wood known in Ghana as the *wawa* tree. The canoe is built from a relatively small tree, and the topside planking is added to increase the depth and width. Canoes generally range in size from between about 3m to 18m long and 0.5m to 1.8m wide, and may use different sources of locomotion. Larger canoes are propelled by outboard motors of 40 hp on average, while smaller ones may use a sail or oars. The crew on the canoe working the set and drift nets is from 4 to more than 10 people, depending on the canoe size. Some large canoes even may have crews of more than 20. (pp. 326-327)

On the large canoes, all seines, cast nets, fuel and other resources for the sail are provided by one person; who is often times the owner of the canoe. Such canoes stay on deep seas for weeks or a month before returning to shore. Crew on these canoes are remunerated at the end of the voyage by the owner of the canoe. There are pre-defined levels of seniority and the remuneration one receives is tied to his rank on the team. The largest portion of proceeds goes to the owner of the canoe.

On the smaller canoes, each crew member has his own cast nets and consequently owns all fish that his net traps. Team mates however contribute money to buy fuel for the journey and share in any expense that they incur upon setting sail. For instance, if the outboard motor gets damaged whilst they are inshore, crew on the canoe will have to contribute money to repair or replace it. Each sailor has a particular canoe in which he usually works and that he could call his permanent work station but in some cases, for instance in cases of ill-health of a crew

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member, another sailor who does not normally work in a canoe could be asked to join the existing team.

On returning to shore, sailors are normally assisted by others onshore to pick up fish from the nets. This often times involves women, who are related in some way to the sailors. The whole chain of fishing is highly gendered. Setting sail is predominantly done by men whilst women are assigned the role of processing and selling the catch in the open market (Marquette et al, 2002; p. 327). These *fisher women* as they are popularly called, come to negotiate the price of the catch with the sailors and are given the catch on credit to sell in the open market. They are then expected to return to pay the sum agreed after sales.

### **2.3.3 Traditional Songs in Ghana**

In Ghana, songs are very pivotal in communal life in general and in personal lives in particular. It is very common to see a person singing whilst walking up the street. It is even more common to see sellers in the markets and corners of streets singing to attract passers-by to their wares (Nketiah, 1974).

Nearly all ceremonies in Ghana are accompanied by singing. Songs either mark the commencement of an event, a particular stage in the event or mark the end of a ceremony (ibid). The choice of songs at any event as well as the timing of the introduction of a song is not haphazard; it is highly regulated.

There are special songs that are marked out for twin ceremonies. Such songs are not sung elsewhere except during the performance of special ceremonies for twins. Songs that are sung during funerals are very different from those sung during weddings or naming ceremonies. There are special drums that are only beaten and rhythms that are only played to mark the enstoolment of kings and chiefs. Drums and music played for kings are not played for ordinary men. Musical equipment and songs are dedicated to events and persons. During the

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installation ceremony for a king, tribes under his sovereignty come forth to sing and dance special songs that mark out their identity and ancestry. Each tribe has its own song. Conversely, there are special rhythms that are only played when a king or chief passes on (Nketia, 1974; Chernoff, 1979).

At the shrine, there are songs that are sung by the priest and his followers to excite and invoke the gods and to usher the priest or priestess into a trance. Such songs are not sung at home for they are believed to be inviting of the gods anytime they are sung (Nketia, 1974). The use of songs for transition into trance states is not only recorded in Africa. In Norway, the *noaide*, sang special songs to usher themselves into trance states and could perform extra-human feats like walking on their knees or bare-footed on broken bottles (Edstrom, 2003). In Malaysia, men sing an Arabic song that usher them into trance states following which they can tolerate red-hot chains placed around their neck with no ill effects (Kartomi, 1980, p.116).

There are also the warrior (*asafo*) songs sung by search parties and men in times of war. There are hunters' songs only sung by hunters when they are hunting in the ticket. Fishermen also have their songs that they use for their work.

### 2.3.3.1 Sailors' Songs

These are songs sung peculiarly by sailors during work at sea and never at home or during rest at the beach. They are used in hauling canoes down into the sea or up shore to dock. In shore, they are sung when sailors are setting sail, hauling up fish nets with catch and when on their return journey to shore.

'*Afrafoɔ nyum*' is the general name in Fante for all sailor songs and its musical form is solo and chorus. Terry (1921), however referred to sailor songs in general as *shanties*. With

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respect to the source of these *afrafoɔ nyum*, some are adaptations of popular songs which had some words modified. Others are situational and emergent constructions in response to anything in their social environment. In respect of the words, most sung verses are commonly known by all sailors, the rest are improvisations by the lead singer and the topics are varied.

*Afrafoɔ nyum* may be roughly divided as regards their speed into two classes: (a) fast (b) slow. The former class of songs are deployed when sailors want to make long continuous pulls on the ropes. The call outs are short and fast, followed by fast responses. This class often accompanies the hauling of canoes which are a long distance away from their final resting place or for hauling up a fish net which is deep in sea. The latter class is deployed when sailors want to make short, paused pulls on the ropes. They are often deployed in hauling canoes which are a short distance away from its final resting place or for hauling up fish nets which are a short rope deep in the sea. The call outs are long and slow and are met with slow short responses. By way of contrast, there is much greater tune and variety of rhythm for the former than the latter. Call outs of an *afrafoɔ nyum* could be made by any sailor. Any sailor could also take over the lead singer role when a song is sufficiently sung and the fellow has in mind another tune that flows with the rhythm.

### 2.3.3.1.1 Some sailor songs

Many were the songs that the sailors sung whilst undertaking work and the following is a few I was able to record. Most songs seem associated with particular tasks. A few other songs seem usable across a number of tasks.

#### (1) Songs used In hauling canoes into the sea

Call: Heeeebaaa lo !



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Response: Hee-ba !

Call and response go repeated over and again.

**(1) First Song sung when fish is trapped**

Call: *edza huyɛn m'bo -ee, fayɛn bo nn kyɛyɛn ! (Tone is up)*

Response: *edza huyɛn m'bo -ee, fayɛn bo nn kyɛyɛn ! (Tone is down)*

**(1) Song sung when hauling up fish nets**

***Song One:***

Call: eee, amanko ! (first stanza)

Response: Anko !

Call: Amanko ! (second stanza)

Response: Anko

*Both stanzas go repeated.*

***Song Two:***

Call: *Kooko !*

Response: *Hwɛ wu nyanku nenim !*

Call and Response go repeated over and again.

**(1) Song sung on return journey when no catch or little catch is made**

Call: *Kooko !*

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Response: *Hwɛ wu nyanku nenim !*

Call and Response go repeated over and again.

**(1) Songs sung in hauling up a canoe to dock**

**Song One**

Call: ee, Mose ! Mosee !!

Response: Ahoo !!

Call: Mose ! Mosee !

Response: Ahoo !!

Call and response go repeated over and again.

**Song Two**

Call: Heeee baa !

Response: Hee-ba !

Goes repeated over and again.

**Song Three**

Call: ee edzuma e, edzuma e

Response: edzuma !

Call: Yaaba edzuma, *yɛpɛ edzuma o !*

Response: *eedzuma !*

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Both stanzas go repeated over and again.

### **2.3.5 Traditional Beliefs and Practices in Fishing**

The following discussions of Ghanaian traditional beliefs are not peculiar to sailors; they actually are generally-held beliefs in the Ghanaian society which the sailors equally find relevant for their work and hold firmly on to.

#### **2.3.5.1 The Supreme Being and fishing**

The concept of the Supreme Being, also described as God with a capital ‘G’ appears to be common to all Ghanaian societies. This is not only peculiar to Ghana. According to Thomas (2005), ‘in traditional African societies, religion plays a vital role in the life of [the people] (p. 83). The traditional African, according to Thomas, is ‘very spiritually minded and prays continuously for the wellbeing of his family and community’ (p. 18) and the object of his worship is of a Supreme Being in whom he believes ‘man owes his own destiny and who is the Determiner of man’s destiny’ (p. 82). According to a Ghanaian professor in Sociology, Nukunya (2003), the Supreme God is generally held by the African to be the creator of the world and everything in it as well as the source of all power operating in it (p. 56).

In fishing, sailors believe that the Supreme God sees them wherever they are on the sea and could hear them. They believe He is the one who could protect their lives as well as their vessels and is the final authority to determine whether or not they make a catch.

#### **2.3.5.2 The smaller gods and fishing**

The smaller gods, unlike the Supreme Being are never considered ultimate in terms of their powers. They are controlled by the Supreme Being and derive their powers from him. According to Thomas (2005), ‘most traditional African people believe that the Supreme

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Being placed the lesser gods or divinities in charge of earthly matters' (p. 132). It is also believed that a person ought to maintain harmony both with his neighbour and the divinities. With the specific case of lesser gods or divinities, a person ought to make sure that he is in harmony with all of them to secure cosmic harmony. A breach of any of these harmonies is sin and 'Africans are fully aware of the consequences that occur from sin-disharmony (p.132) and the 'divinities are usually responsible for carrying out the punishment for such offenses' (Ibid). A key means of re-connecting to the Supreme Being and the divinities is through worship, praise and thanksgiving (Thomas, 2005). According to Thomas, the 'people believe that if worship is given to these divinities regularly and in the right manner, all will be well with man' (p. 82). It is generally believed that these lesser gods and divinities inhabit objects like stone and rock, trees, rivers, sea, lagoons et cetera (Nukunya, 2003).

For sailors, issues concerning only three of these gods are important; the stone god, the sea god and the tree god. Of these, the most feared is the sea god. It is believed to be fierce and unforgiving of sins committed by a sailor against his fellow human. Should the offended curse the sailor by invoking the sea god, the sailor so cursed is sure not to return ashore on setting sail. A sailor ought to make sure in general that he is pure each time he wants to enter the sea or sail over it. Tuesday is dedicated to the sea god and fishing on Tuesdays is a taboo (Opoku, 1978, p. 60). However, on the Ewe coast, fishing on Tuesday is no taboo (Nukunya, 2003, p. 57).

At the fishing community where I collected my data are countless number of stone gods. The sailors believe that the stone gods perceive them as being their *grandchildren* and so protect them from the power of foreign gods that seek to do them harm. The stone gods are believed to manifest as humans and scream to awaken sailors each time canoes are been washed away by the sea at midnight.

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It is a traditional belief that trees have their own spirits. Consequently, libation is poured to the spirit of the tree before felling. Sailors believe that the spirit/soul of the canoe does not die or depart from it when fell. It continues to reside in the canoe and this spirit is gendered; a male or a female spirit. A sailor is expected continually to perform on some traditional practices to ensure that he pleases and finds favour in the eyes of the spirit in the canoe. When pleased, the spirit in the canoe is believed to take control of the canoe and leads it to where there is abundant fish in deep seas. This account was corroborated by Jojada (2002) during his research in Ghana which involved fishermen.

### **2.3.5.3 Fishing and Divination.**

Divination is the practice of actively seeking the assistance of the smaller gods. It rests in the belief that the smaller gods can be requested upon to effect desired changes in any given circumstance. Instances for which divination may be required by a sailor include: trying to find the cause of misfortune or his failed attempts at sea, what to do to ensure he makes a bumper catch. In divination, the sailor enquires about himself and his work (Nukunya, 2003). It is however closely related to another concept known as sorcery. In sorcery, the sailor seeks spiritual assistance so as to effect evil ends on another sailor. However, in the pages that follow, the word divination is use interchangeably to mean sorcery as well.

Generally, sailors are very conscious of themselves and their environment and are quick to detect when something happening to them or their family is a supposed effect of sorcery from another sailor. A sailor will earnestly seek the assistance of a spiritualist to know exactly who is harming him and to undo the sorcery. It is a taboo to fetch sea-water left in another man's canoe. It is believed that such water is the easiest means by which sailors could divine against each other. It is believed that in divination, such water is used to immobilise the spirit in the canoe so as to prevent the canoe from making any further bumper catch. The following is a

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case narration by a child sailor that reflects how important the belief shapes the conducts of a typical sailor.

### 2.3.5.3.1 Case example of the role of beliefs and smaller gods in fishing

*I work in that black and white painted canoe you see over there. It belongs to my uncle. My elder brother and I were the first to be assigned control over it when it was bought many years ago. Each time we set sail, you could be sure that we were going to return home with a bumper catch, regardless of the season. One day we had a misunderstanding with our uncle and he decided to dismiss us. He assigned the canoe to other sailors. Soon afterwards, catch levels recorded by the canoe began to fall. The catch level dwindled to a point where my uncle suspected that either we (those he dismissed) or some other sailors had divined against the canoe. So he went to see a diviner to enquire. At the shrine, the diviner invoked the spirit of the canoe. It was a female spirit. The diviner asked of the spirit why the canoe was no longer making catch as before. The spirit of the canoe told them that she was displeased with the fact that we had been dismissed from the canoe. She said we (my brother and I) had found favour in her eyes and she led the canoe to regions where we always made bumper catches to demonstrate how well she liked us. She then advised my uncle to return the canoe back to us if he wanted to re-instate his catch levels. My uncle returned home and called me and my elder brother and narrated all that had happened to us. He then apologised and then re-assigned the canoe to us. Since then till now, the canoe has never witnessed a dip in catch levels. (Child Sailor, 2).*

The traditional belief in the efficacy of sorcery in fishing is not a case peculiar to Ghana in Africa. In the Yam Islands, close to the Pyagin Peninsula, it is believed that should a villager wish someone "bad luck" at fishing, that person will be unsuccessful. Furthermore, if anyone should speak badly about someone who is fishing, goes through his or her belongings, asks

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where he or she is, or argues with members of his or her family, that person will return with few fish. Lack of success at fishing may also be attributed to a death in the family. Should a pregnant woman walk near where others are fishing, it is believed that they will have difficulty catching anything (Fuary, 1991, p. 151).

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## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Data Collection Site

Cape Coast is the data collection site. It is the regional capital of the Central region which borders the Atlantic Ocean on the south, Greater Accra region on the west, Eastern region on the north and Western region on the east (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

Up until 1877, Cape Coast was the capital of then Gold Coast (now Ghana). It was the first part of the country to be introduced to formal classroom education before spreading to other parts of the country (Ghana Ministry of Tourism, 2012).

Cape Coast was a key transit route used during the trans-atlantic slave trade. Prominent castles and forts built for the purpose remain to date (Graham and Seaton, 2001). The region is therefore a very popular tourist attraction. For the residents, being observed and filmed by tourists as they work is a routine occurrence which they have come to both approve of and expect when a researcher sets foot in their community.

Indigenes in Cape Coast are mainly of the Fante speaking tribe of the Akan language and fishing is the primary economic activity for those who live along the coast. According to Atta-Mills, et al. (2004), it was the 'fante fishers from Ghana who introduced ocean fishing to communities along the coast of the country' (p.13). All norms, meanings as well as values encapsulated in sea-faring were founded and established by the Fante sailors before being copied by sailors of other ethnic groups (Jojada, 2002). In spite of this reputation, fante fishermen are generally poorly educated (Atta-Mills, et al., 2004; Pauly, 1976).

A child sailor in this community could either be working with a parent, an extended family relation or might have self-migrated to the location for the purposes of finding work.

## **3.2 The Study Design**

### **3.2.1 The Qualitative Approach**

The study is to explore what meanings underlie the singing behaviour of sailors. A qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate for the study design. Rather than pre-defining and impugning preconceived factors and values as underlining the singing behaviour, qualitative methodology bears promise to foster nuanced and complex understanding of the ‘culturally constituted and variable character of the psychological phenomena’ and values (Ratner, 1997, p. 31). More precisely, this study sets out to investigate how singing serves any functions for the sailor. In order to produce deep and broad understanding, I triangulated the qualitative methods by deploying participant observation, group discussions and personal interviews. This way, I avoided the use of “pre-conceived variables” that could have precluded my identification of participant’s own ways of making sense of their behaviour.

### **3.2.2 Participants/sample**

The study reported here was designed to develop an understanding of the observed phenomenon of singing at work. This aim was achieved gradually as data was being simultaneously collected and analysed. As more and more themes kept emerging, I kept sampling more respondents whose responses either illuminated earlier emerged themes or brought up entirely themes altogether. New themes stopped emerging after about 18 interviews and an acceptable, conceptualised understanding of the functions of the singing phenomenon evolved after 24 interviews.

Respondents for the study totalled 14 adult sailors and 10 children sailors. These were fishermen who have been in sea-faring for not less than 5 years. Included in the adult sample were also retired sailors. Retired sailors were involved based on the assumption that they could offer relevant historical background and could shed greater insight in areas where the younger generation of sailors are less informed.

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Purposive sampling technique was used to select the children and most of the adults for the study. A prospective child respondent had to have a parent or guardian from whom permission could be sought. These child sailors aged between 15 and 18 years.

My choice of the particular fishing community for data collection was because I noticed that sailors regularly reported at that beach for work unlike many other sites. Prior to interacting with the respondents, I met with a chief sailor (apofohene) from whom I sought permission. He in turn led me to his fellow sailors to interact with.

### **3.2.3 Materials**

Audio recorder, video recorder, notebook, pen and interview guide were used to collect the data. The audio recorder was used to capture discussions in both in individual and focus group discussions. The video recorder was used to capture scenes of teams of sailors singing whilst undertaking work.

In order not to obstruct the flow of respondents, I used the pen and notebook to take note of salient points that needed to be further developed. The semi-structured interview guide served as a guide during the interviews. It contained the key areas that were to be enquired about (see appendix A).

### **3.2.4 Method Triangulation**

Method triangulation is here defined to mean the data collection strategy where three qualitative methodologies are deployed in the same study. In this study, I triangulated the methods because the study was very ethnographic and this particular society of sailors was unfamiliar to me. I therefore deemed it appropriate that I do participant observation, interview and focus group discussion as a comprehensive strategy to accessing detailed and rich data.

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The participant observation enabled me to watch sailors as they went about their tasks with songs. It afforded me an opportunity to join the sailors on the ropes. This was a way of getting me known and liked by the sailors in general.

I then performed individual and focus group discussions after these initial observations. I interspersed these interviews with more careful observation so as to better understand some of the assertions respondents made during the interviews. A detailed description of the data collection methods I used is below:

### **3.2.4.1 Participant Observation**

#### **3.2.4.1.1 Observation at the shore**

I employed participant observation to gain a realistic understanding of the situation in which songs are used as an accompaniment to work. I joined sailors under the shades to observe if they did sing when they were not working. At work, I observed when they sang and what kinds of songs were sung with particular tasks.

According to Bernard (2001), participant observation “involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives (p. 136). In doing so, I sought to achieve rapport with respondents. In the qualitative paradigm, “rapport is a distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism” (Glesne, 2006, p.110) and its value is to “encourage informants to talk about their culture” (Spradley, as cited in Glesne, 2006).

In achieving rapport, it was necessary to re-consider the impact of my person on the data collection. I had to give thought to my own social role and that of interviewees and to acknowledge the power differentials between them (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). According to DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006), “the goal of finding out about people and

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establishing trust, is best achieved by reducing the hierarchy between informants and researcher' (p.317).

In reducing this perceived social hierarchy, I ensured that my dressing was neither too simple nor too professional. Whilst I risked not being taken serious in the former, prospective respondents were going to feel intimidated if I appeared as the latter. To establish a congenial and friendly atmosphere, I bought basic needs such as food and water for the respondents when they hinted need for them. Culturally, it is inappropriate not to respond to the needs of a person rendering you assistance, especially so when you are in a position to be perceived as capable. This was consistent with Glesne (2006), who cautions that "in order to maintain access, you need to act continually in culturally appropriate ways" (p. 111).

Many potentially informative scenes worth more careful observation and enquiry came up whilst observing the fishermen at work but "by the time one has noted a behaviour, the scene of interest might have moved on" (Esternberg, 2002, p.62). In addressing this, I deployed a video recorder to capture some of the scenes that were observed when sailors were singing whilst hauling their canoes as well as other scenes that were informative in illuminating themes that were emerging.

### **3.2.4.1.2 Example of Observation at the shore- Canoe hauling**

When a team of sailors wishes to launch its canoe into the sea or move it to a safer location on shore, it does so in the following manner:

Two wooden planks are placed in parallel on both sides of the canoe and they are positioned such that much of the length of these planks extends either beyond the bow or stern of the canoe. The direction in which the canoe is to be moved instructs where the extensions of the planks point. A round, hollow steel beam is then placed across these wooden plank extensions. Two very long ropes are tied to either side of a thwart and are manned by as

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many hands as their length will admit. A sailor also manning the ropes, then *raises a song* by singing the first line. By this, he lays down the tune to which his fellow sailors render the chorus, giving a pull on the ropes at required points in the music. And as they do, the round steel beam aids the movement of the canoe over the planks. This continues till they reach their intended destination.

### **3.2.4.2 Personal Interviews**

#### **3.2.4.2.1 Interviews with Children**

To deeply explore the personal views of child sailors on the essence of singing in their performance of work, I interviewed four child sailors. All of them were interviewed at the shore. All the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

#### **3.2.4.2.2 Interviews with adults**

I also used one-on-one interviews to explore individual adult sailors' views on the function of singing in the performance of work. I interviewed four adult sailors. It was meant to unearth any differences their accounts may have with the child sailors. All interviews were held at the shore and they lasted between 60 and 80 minutes.

### **3.2.4.3 Focus Group Discussions**

I deployed the use of focus groups to access both the normative views sailors hold about singing at work and why they think that way. According to Kitzinger (1995), focus group interview is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experience and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (p. 229). I also used it to tap into the many different forms of communication sailors use in their day to day interactions including jokes and teasing (Freeman, 2006). According to Kitzinger (1995), access to such variety of communication "is useful because people's

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knowledge and attitudes are not entirely encapsulated in reasoned responses to direct questions” (p. 229).

### **3.2.4.3.1 Focus Group Discussion with child sailors**

Six child sailors took part in this focus group discussion. None of them had earlier been involved in the one-on-one interview. It was held at a location of their choosing quite removed from the shore.

As a prelude to the interview, the participants sang many sailor songs which they had me record. An interesting observation was made here: one of them would suggest to them to envisage themselves undertaking particular tasks and as he did, the group would immediately change the song that was being sung.

During the substantive interview, participants freely corrected each other where they recognised that a colleague had misunderstood a question. They also felt at ease to let out accounts which contradicted their colleagues’. The entire interaction went smoothly and uninterrupted

In a hierarchical society as Ghana, it is unlikely that this gain could have made if both children and adults were put in the same focus group.

### **3.2.4.3.2 Focus group discussion with adult sailors**

The focus group discussions with adults emerged naturally. Whilst engaged in one-on-one interview with respondents, their friends would voluntarily join the discussion and supply their own responses to questions directed at the target respondent. Such interviews were no longer regarded as personal interviews. I had to recognise the joiners’ presence and their views since it is culturally impolite to ask of them to excuse us. This was consistent with Marshall (1996), who offered that in making selection for a focus group, it is crucial to

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equally consider the “spatial and situational influence and to explore these to one’s advantage to create focus groups” (p. 524).

There were three such focus group discussions and it consisted of two, three and five members. These discussions were very congenial since members were very familiar with each other. I considered an interaction with two respondents a ‘group’ since according to Frey & Fontana (1991), a “group could refer to a dyad as well as a large assembly of respondents” (p. 176). These focus group discussions occurred at the shore and they lasted between 80 and 105 minutes.

### **3.2.5 Language used for Data Collection**

In this study, the choice of language was important since its approach seeks to elucidate the cultural quality of the psychological undertones of the singing behaviour and the cultural qualities of psychological phenomena reside in its language (Ratner, 1997).

The respondents articulated their views in the local fante dialect whilst I communicated principally in the Twi dialect of the Akan language since I am not a proficient Fante speaker. The communication was smooth and respondents had no difficulty understanding me. On my part, to validate my understanding of some responses, I reworded and reposed the same questions along the course of the interaction.

### **3.2.6 Reliability and Validity**

The above concepts are measured separately in the quantitative paradigm. In the qualitative paradigm however, “terminology that encompasses both such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness is used” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600).

In this study, I thoroughly document and report all the procedures that were used in the study investigation for the purpose of the reliability of the results (Opare-Henaku, 2006). In the data



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collection process, I consciously sought for negative cases and un-confirming evidence so as to test limits and refine themes that were emerging in the process (Ratner, 1997).

### **3.3 Data transcription and Analysis**

The importance of data transcription, as an active first step in the analysis of data in the qualitative paradigm is underscored by many works (Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000; Bailey, 2008; Esternberg, 2002; Bucholtz, 2000).

In this study, I adopted the word-for-word method of transcription and the style adopted was to as much as possible, make the transcript “retain links to oral discourse forms” (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 1439). For the purposes of easy analysis and interpretation, all interview recordings were translated and transcribed as much as possible into English except for some phrases and expressions for which no close associate was found in English and which cultural and psychological meaning would be sacrificed if re-coined into an English fit. Such expressions were captured in the exact language term they were put.

As a check on the accuracy and dependability of the transcripts, I sought the assistance of one fellow Ghanaian researcher who is a native Fante to listen to each tape and compare what was said to what I captured in the transcripts.

In line with the principles of qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Forman and Damschroder, 2008), data collection and analysis were done concurrently. I did an initial transcription and data analysis after each day on the field to get a hunch of what was themes were evolving. I consequently reviewed the research questions and updated the interview guide with questions that further explore the emerging themes. Saturation was deemed to have been reached at a point when no themes were emerging.

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On completion of the data collection, I randomly picked up six interviews for the preliminary analysis. The first stage began with each transcript being broken down, line by line, into constituent meaning units (Ratner, 1997; 2002). Often, a sentence could break down into two or more meaning units. In other cases, a meaning unit spanned several sentences. Depending on the density of meaning contained in a transcript, between 30 and 50 meanings were identified per interview.

During the initial stages of coding, I organised themes/ meaning units into open codes which were basically descriptive in nature. Next, I found the relationships between codes and grouped functionally similar codes under the same category. The remaining transcripts were subsequently analysed using the same process above. Most noted categories already existed but a few more had to be created to cater for the new that emerged.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

#### **3.4.1 Approval from Ethical Boards**

The duty to treat every respondent as a fellow human and to reduce any harm to the participant is fundamental to the conduct of scientific enquiry and its importance is well amplified in many works (Esternberg, 2000; Glesne, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

In the light of these ethical requirements, I made a copy of my detailed protocol available to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). On satisfying its ethical requirements, NSD subsequently issued me an approval for the study to be carried out (appendix B).

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In Ghana, I sought for research approval from the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR). Upon satisfying all requirements of the institute, I was then also issued with an ethical clearance certificate from the institute (appendix C).

### **3.4.2 Informed Consent**

Consent; a competent participant's voluntary expression of willingness to participate in a research process is very fundamental to integrity, not just to therapeutic but equally to non-therapeutic researches as this one (Leikin, 1993; Miller and Nelson, 2006; Morrow and Richards, 1996; Glesne, 2006; Harcourt and Conroy, 2005).

To ensure that the respondents' participation was borne out of full knowledge and voluntary, I unambiguously explained to all prospective participants the aims of the research, the forms of participation being requested of them as well as their right to terminate their co-operation at any point in the course of the interaction.

For prospective child participants, their assent was subject to permission sought from their parents (Miller and Nelson, 2006; Harcourt and Conroy, 2005). I personally met with parents of prospective child respondents to explain the aims of the research and to seek their consent by handing them the consent form (see appendix D). Respondents were also handed the consent forms to endorse (see appendix E). Only few respondents (adults inclusive) however bothered to endorse the consent forms. The ultimate concern of most of them was being sure that the tape was recording all that they were saying.

### **3.4.3 Confidentiality**

In fulfilment of confidentiality requirements, I translated and communicated details of the confidentiality clause as contained on the consent forms and assured each participant of confidentiality of their identity. They were equally assured that nothing about them was going

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to be communicated to enable location of neither their work location nor their personal identities.

In confiding their identity in transcription, alpha-numeric codes were used in place of their actual names. By way of illustration, 'AF1' and 'AF2' referred to 'adult fisherman number 1' and 'adult fisherman number 2' respectively. Whilst 'CF1' and 'CF2' referred to 'child fisherman number 1' and 'child fisherman number 2' respectively.

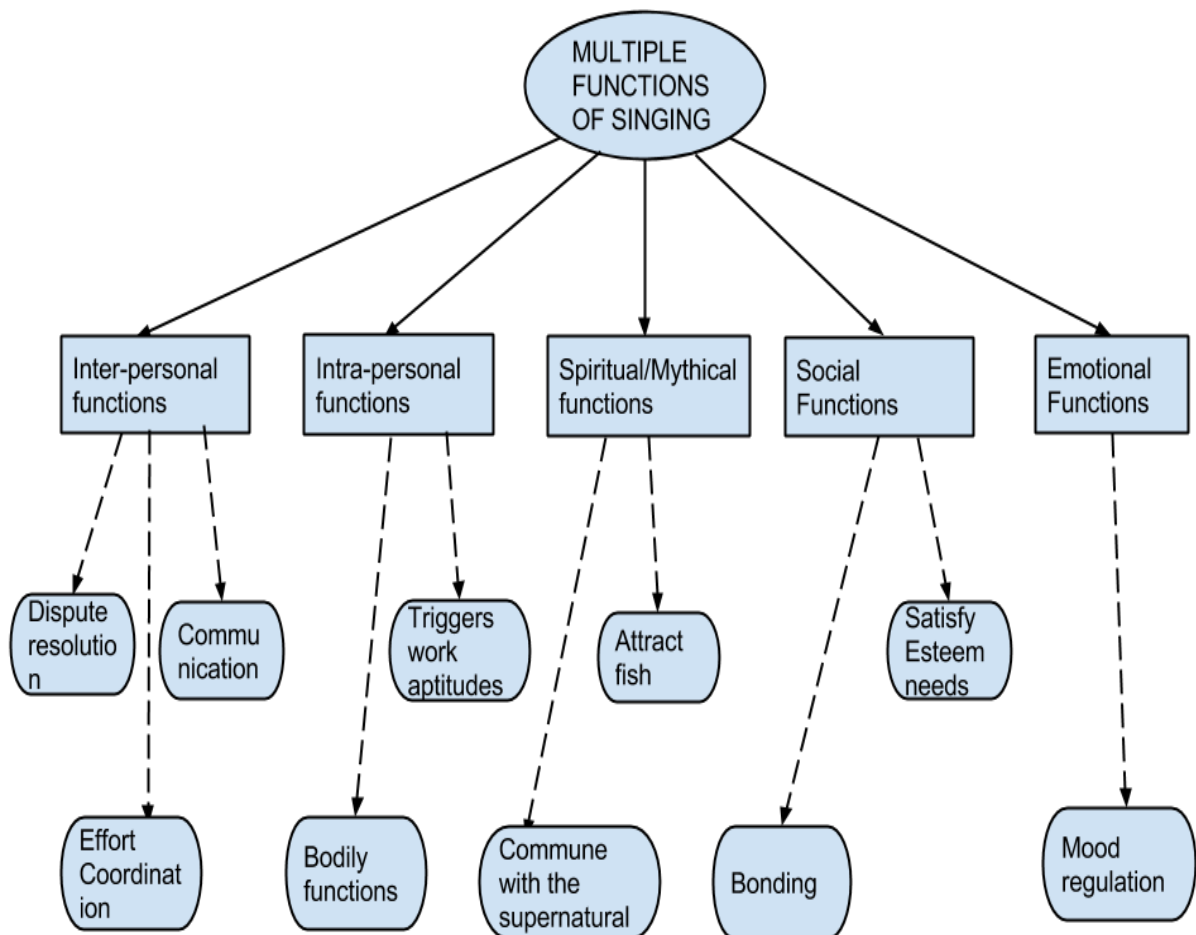
Throughout the study, all interview and video recordings remained in my custody and control and were securely password protected. All recordings were however destroyed after the end of the study.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results and Discussion

This study sought to understand the phenomenon of singing by sailors, paying particular attention also to how culture influences the meanings sailors' produce and/or make from singing. From the data, the findings of the present study are summarised by the conceptual model below (Figure 1, below).



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From the analysis, as shown by the model above, there emerged five main thematic categories of the functions of singing with subcategories iteratively generated from the data. These thematic functions are: inter-personal functions, intra-personal functions, spiritual/mystical functions, social functions and emotional functions. The following sections will discuss the emerged themes and findings in the light of the people's culture, the theoretical perspectives and other relevant studies.

### **4.1. Inter-personal functions**

The inter-personal functions of singing consist of three sub-categories: dispute resolution, effort coordination and communication.

#### **4.1.1. Dispute resolution.**

For sailors, what seems to come foremost is the need to maintain a congenial, mutually equitable atmosphere with one another. All other forms of communal relationship build upon this (Thomas, 2005). Consequently, work tasks that involve others – for instance, hauling of a fish net, proceed smoothly when there is a fundamental sense of harmony among members. Members do however offend each other and songs, as reported below by an adult sailor, are the mediums used by the offended to carry across their displeasure to the offender (s).

*Some sailors invent songs to communicate what is in their hearts. For example, some sailors coin songs where they feel that they are not getting a fare treatment from the canoe owner who is also a member of the team. In such instances, the referent deduces that the song is coined up for him, takes it in good faith and ponders over the real message that was being put across. (Adult Sailor 6).*

In this form of dispute resolution, the intended target/recipient of the song's message is unnamed but members on the team are in no doubt as to whom it is meant for. This soft means of resolving conflicts, per the accounts of Chernoff, is a practice that is rooted in the

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Ghanaian culture. And the cultural value underlying this soft means of pointing to a fellow's offending behaviour is to make it tolerable for the offender to accept his offense and to save his face. Chernoff (1979) recounts that:

*In many African societies, someone with a grievance may hire a songwriter to prepare a song which states the problem: a song may exceed the boundaries of social propriety without giving undue offense, and at the same time, people attracted to the song will be more accessible to its argument and may help induce a miscreant to make amends (p. 71).*

From the data, the use of songs as a socially acceptable means of venting hostility and airing grievances makes it possible to say what may otherwise be unsayable. It does appear that the quality sailors' songs' have, of not naming their targeted recipients is what makes such songs achieve their aim.

This use of songs for dispute resolution is in line with the conflict reduction theory. This theory recognises that conflicts are inescapable in large living groups and it argues that by being open to everyone's creativity, songs provides an avenue which members of large living groups use as a medium to 'let off steam' (Merriam, 1964, p. 223) and reduce interpersonal conflict. With songs, offended persons do not explicitly request for an apology from their offenders; they save face for the offenders and compel them to amend their ways. In the words of Finnegan, 1997 (as cited in Levitin, 2008), songs in large living groups, 'provide opportunity for expressing complaints without disturbing the social order'.

### **4.1.2 Effort Coordination**

The use of songs for effort coordination is one of the major themes that emerged in the data.

An adult sailor, in explaining how they use songs in effort coordination, submits that:



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*Songs have timings in them and we haul with the timings. Without songs, we work to our leisure. Songs force us to respond to the efforts of our fellows” (Adult Sailor 10).*

Describing what the concept of timing is in singing and how they use this timing in work, a child sailor replies:

*For example, we have a song called ‘heebalo !’. The caller shouts ‘heebalo !’ and the others respond ‘heeba !’. The timing on this song requires all to make a pull on the ropes after responding ‘heeba !’. (Child Sailor 9).*

From the data, it appears that sailors’ desire for timing in group work is to establish behavioural coherency in the exertion of effort. It is to afford each individual person an opportunity to predict when what is to be done. It aligns individuals’ rates of performing work to a common rhythm. Songs are deployed in group task undertakings because the rhythm in songs allow for the synchronisation of individual efforts. The rhythm seems to allow for the harmonisation of push and pull efforts of those in front with those at the back in hauling tasks. The rhythm establishes an unbroken connection between all members of a group undertaking regardless of where they are standing in relation to the object being hauled.

The achievement of harmony in effort exertion makes it possible to include everyone in group tasks as opposed to work situations where only a few are those exerting efforts. This was put as following by some sailors:

*In the absence of songs, some people become lackadaisical. You may exert all your energy in the work but your colleague wouldn’t. (Adult Sailor 8).*

*People become lackadaisical in the way they work where no song is sung. So a song tunes everyone’s mind to the job. (Child Sailor 10).*

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This functioning of songs seem very consistent with the group effort theory which postulates that group singing is desirable for the coordination of efforts. The harmony in effort exertion that is achieved by supplying an external rhythm; i.e. songs, to which all individual sailors subject their individual work rates or rhythms is also explained by the rhythm theory which avers that harmony is achieved when the human body is able to apply its innate biological rhythms to an external or social rhythm like songs.

### **4.1.3 Communication**

From my observations, individual and group interviews with sailors, it was revealed that the singing of a song by any small group of sailors conveys a message to all other sailors within earshot and the message is the conveyance of an open invitation to everyone else to come and offer a helping hand. This theme was expressed by an adult sailor as follows:

*Even when someone is not part of the team, it is the songs that quicken the fellow and draws him into joining us haul a canoe” (Adult Sailor 8).*

The songs draw others who are distance away from the centre of the singing activity. It reveals an unbroken connection between those who are working and singing on shore and their counterparts who were outside the perimeters of the shore and were drawn to offer assistance.

My observations revealed however that these invitations were not binding on those who heard them. They appear to be an open invitation as one cannot pinpoint any particular sailor the songs are inviting; it invites everyone and no one in particular. From the data, the invitation is to everyone because anyone (non sailors as well) could respond by joining on the haul and it is to no one in particular because no one has a personal responsibility to respond to the invitation.

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From the data, it appears strongly that this use of songs to invite others to offer help is driven by a cultural value in the belief that: no man has a sole responsibility for any problem; the solution to any difficulty is the responsibility of his society at large (Gyekye, 1996). And this contrasts sharply with the concept of task responsibility elsewhere. According to Lomax, ‘in highly individuated cultures, like [Europe], task responsibility is likely to remain the concern of the individual or a small coterie of specialists working together [...]’ (1968, p.170).

This feeling of togetherness and willingness to stay connected to others, brought on by singing, is explainable by the solidarity function of music which states that music augments the sense of solidarity among members of a group and makes people mutually obliged to be responsive to each other’s needs. And it is also explainable by the social bonding theory which states that music maintains social cohesion among groups of people and promotes altruistic behaviour between group members- a behaviour which was observed in this sailors’ community.

Songs are not only invitations at others to assist with work. From the data, songs sung by any group of working sailors are also invitations to others to make investments towards their own future. A child sailor said:

*Some of the songs are slow paced and others are fast paced. Fast paced songs are very exciting. That is when you realise that more people start trooping in to help with the haul. They will help you haul up your canoe so that you also help with theirs tomorrow” (Child Sailor, 9).*

To a sailor therefore, hearing other sailors sing at work is an opportunity for him to invest his efforts in their work and to consequently expect similar assistance from them in future. From the data, this use of songs to communicate open opportunity to others to invest in their future is driven by the cultural value in the need to create “social capital” (Portes, 1998) for oneself.

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The social capital being a circle of persons one has helped in the past and from whom one can justifiably expect help in future.

The need to create social capital for oneself derives one of its sources from traditional proverbs the sailors are very familiar with and often recite. Few are:

*The right hand ought to wash the left hand so as to expect itself to be washed in return by the left hand.*

*In taking care of another's interests, your own interests are equally protected.*

*If you fail to allow your brother to take his ninth bite of food, you will also not take your tenth bite.*

These proverbs point out the cultural wisdom in engaging in altruistic behaviour and they reveal, at a basic, the peoples' philosophical background for ceasing such opportunities to help each other.

### **4.1.3.1 Findings on Inter-personal functions of singing**

On the inter-personal level, the analyses revealed that sailors use the instrumentality of singing to softly get across their grievances to offending persons and to compel them to change their ways.

Song type, sound pitch and song tempo are elements used by sailors to dictate the pace of work and to co-ordinate the efforts of all involved in the group task undertaken.

Sailors also use singing as tool to invite all others within reach to come and assist with work that is underway. The hearing of sailors' songs is also understood by fellow sailors as an open opportunity to assist a fellow in need now whose help may in turn be needed in future.

## 4.2 Intra-personal functions

From the data, it was revealed that singing performs a number of intra-personal functions for the singing sailors.

### 4.2.1 Bodily functions

From the interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that singing was conceived as a cultural tool for reducing the sensation of hunger for food when at work. A child sailor expressed it saying: *“When we sing, we get excited...the singing makes you not feel hunger”* (Child Fisherman 3).

This conception of songs as attenuating the sensation of hunger seems to be a crucial function to sailors given the fact that hauling of fish nets whilst in deep seas for instance can take between 3 and 6 hours to conclude; sufficient a time to sense hunger on such an exacting manual work. Answering the question on how reliable songs are in curbing hunger, an adult sailor responded:

*Even if you hadn't eaten before commencing work, the singing will satisfy you. You will not feel hunger.* (Adult Sailor 3).

Another child sailor responded:

*In singing, you wouldn't even know that time is passing by. Before you become aware, you had finished the work and it is when you stop singing that you now sense hunger”* (Child Sailor 8).

These accounts of reduced sensation for hunger on singing seem much of an ephemeral experience since the described experience wanes as singing is put to a stop. The function appears to persist only during the duration of work and not as a permanent answer to hunger. Indeed, the sailors' account of this function served by singing is very explainable by

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Czikszentmihalyi's flow theory. According to this theory, this experience of the sailors' is brought on because they are in a state of flow. In a state of flow, whilst working, singing, etcetera, people get so involved in the activity that nothing else seems to matter. This state of *flow* facilitates the concentration of attention, leads to loss of sense of time and leaves no mental energy to focus even on something painful or disturbing like hunger that otherwise would have been attended to.

Besides being conceived as cultural tool for curbing hunger, from the data, it was revealed that singing is also conceived as a cultural tool for soothing pain associated with tough manual work. A child sailor describes it in this response:

*The weight of fish we often haul up is very great; your palms hurt and that is when we spontaneously call a song. With songs you no longer sense the pain in your palms as you would have. It is only when you are done with the task that that you begin to sense some pain (Child Sailor 7).*

An adult sailor also confirms it this way:

*Drawing on the fish nets is really back-breaking and when a song is introduced then we do not sense the pain (Adult Sailor 12).*

From these responses it can be inferred that singing ushers sailors into a state of therapy where they are not disturbed by the pains associated with their work and the importance of this singing function to sailors was succinctly summarised by a child sailor this way:

*If you do not want to feel pains when working, then sing. Then you can work longer hours (Child Sailor 6).*

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By getting engrossed in what they do, such that the sailors do not sense a disturbing stimulus like pain, the sailors are, according to Csikszentmihalyi, in a state of flow and their experience is explainable by the flow theory.

Besides the afore-discussed functions, it was also revealed from the personal interviews and focused group interviews that singing is culturally conceived by the sailors as a tool for managing fatigue and stress associated with the physically demanding nature of their work.

This was expressed by a child sailor this way:

*When you do not sing, you soon sense fatigue. When you sing, you do not sense weariness” (Child Sailor, 8).*

An adult sailor also put it this way:

*When you do not sing, you will sense the burden of the work on your shoulder (Adult Sailor 5).*

The importance of this function of singing was revealed in the following child sailor’s reflection:

*We set sail every day. How could we if we were not singing? Stress would have killed us (Child Sailor 3).*

This experience is equally explainable by the flow theory which argues that a state of flow engages concentration and leaves no psychic energy for one to sense a disturbing stimulus as fatigue or stress.

### **4.2.2 Triggering Work Aptitudes.**

From the personal interviews and focused group interviews, the data revealed that singing is conceived by the sailors as a tool for triggering the appropriate aptitudes needed for their work. From interactions with the sailors and the data, it was revealed that the physically

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demanding nature of their undertakings requires that sailors are resilient, energetic and enthusiastic. In the sailors' reflections, it was apparent that these work aptitudes are imbued on them through singing. This was seen in the following responses by both adult and child sailors:

*Without songs, we cannot do anything. Singing makes everyone energetic* (Child Sailor 1).

*When it rains, it gets more difficult to haul up the fish nets. When your grip on the rope is firm, then you can pull on the rope and you sing to give you that strength to haul up the nets.* (Child Sailor 3)

*Singing introduces excitement and activism into the performance of the work”*

(Adult Sailor 4).

*When there is no song, laziness will find its way into the work. Even if people had energy to work, they will still be lazy* (Child Sailor 2).

*“...for example, some people take tobacco to get strength. Others go the gym to build their stamina. All these are unnecessary in this job. Just sing. All those virtues will come on you automatically”* (Adult Sailor 10).

From these sailors' responses, one could infer that the sailors are left bereft of work aptitudes in the absence of songs. To them therefore, singing is the way to garnering work aptitudes.

This account by the sailors is very consistent with a tenet of the flow theory which states that people who are in flow are especially likely to feel “strong”, “active”, “concentrated” and “motivated” (Czikszenmihalyi, 2008, p. 158).



#### **4.2.2.1 Findings on Intra-personal functions of singing**

On the intra-personal level, the analysis revealed that singing is conceived by the sailors as a tool for curbing the sensation of hunger when at work.

It is also conceived by them as a tool for soothing pain associated with tough manual work.

The data also revealed that sailors conceive singing as a tool for managing fatigue and stress associated with the physically demanding nature of their work.

Finally, the data shows that to sailors, singing is the surest way to acquire all appropriate aptitudes relevant for their work.

### **4.3 Spiritual/ Mystical functions**

Singing for spiritual or mythical functions was one of the major themes that emerged from the data. Myths, according to Thomas (2005), are the stories that explain a people's religion. They provide answers concerning the nature of existence and the cosmos. Myths also provide answers to questions that experience alone cannot reveal to us (p. 84).

#### **4.3.1 Commune with the Supernatural**

From the data collected through personal interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that singing is conceived as a means of establishing and reconnecting to supernatural powers for specific ends. According to Thomas (2005), traditional African societies hold very rich mythologies and beliefs about the order of things in the universe and these mythologies and beliefs play a vital role in the life of an entire group of people and underlie all their actions. One of these beliefs traditional African societies hold, according to Thomas (2005) and Nukunya (2003), is the belief that mankind is helpless and vulnerable to all manner of

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spiritual forces. By this, traditional African societies desire constantly to be in harmony with all spiritually relevant forces and they do this through prayer, praise and worship.

Worship and praise, according to Thomas (2005) is accorded to the Supreme Being who is revered as the determiner of man's destiny and to whom man owes his very being (p. 82). And this act of worship is extended to other gods and spiritual beings as well for "the people believe that if worship is given to these divine beings regularly and in the right manner, all will be well with man" (ibid).

### **4.3.1.1 Communion with Supernatural for Divine Protection**

From the interview and focus group discussions, the data revealed that sailors believe that diverse forms of calamity could befall them on deep seas and so they use songs to keep in touch with the Supreme Being for divine protection. The divine protection they seek is from the wrath of the sea god which is instigated by some sins they might have committed, curses pronounced over them by other people and/ or from natural disasters.

Characteristic of pre-sailing formalities is for all sailors to say a prayer; either alone or as a group for divine protection and so forth. "Prayer is a very important feature of African worship. It is a means by which man makes a devout supplication to, and enters into communion with, the object of worship" (Thomas, 2005, p. 20). Prayers are usually a time when the people offer thanksgiving or make petition to the divinities (Ibid). Sailors typically begin their prayers by singing and then singing of religious songs is resumed after prayers as they prepare to set sail. Their fear of the sea-god was explained by the following adult sailor:

*The sea is a very powerful god. If anyone invokes a curse and summons you to the sea then you must know that you will not be forgiven. You will surely fall off the canoe into the deep sea and when you do, no one can rescue you (Adult sailor 4).*

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This belief was corroborated by a retired sailor in a rhetorical question posed at me:

*If the sea is not a god then what could it be? If such vast, endless water is not a god, then what is it? If anyone invokes the sea-god against you, you are finished” (Adult Sailor 5).*

The sailors’ fear of the sea-god, as shown by the text data above, is grounded in their reverence of it as a swift judge and an unrepentant executioner who is instigated into action by curses said by offended neighbours. This belief in curses as instigating the sea-god was expressed by a child sailor as follows:

*What is important is not to offend your fellow human to warrant his/her cursing you. This is the only situation under which the sea gets angry. So each time you are about to set sail, you need to re-examine yourself to be sure that you are ‘clean’ (Child Sailor 5).*

Since sailors share this cultural knowledge of the sea, it is sound to infer that a sailor in this community only sets sail when he knows that his hands were not ‘dirty’ and had offended no one. From the interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that it is however impossible to know where a curse could be coming from since a curse could be incurred not just by one’s actions but by the actions of other close family relations a sailor has no control over. Consequently, a sailor could not be certain whether there is a lingering curse in the ‘air’ and by this, could not be sure of the outcome of the voyage prior to set off. Setting sail therefore comes as a risky gamble with one’s life; a sailor is prone to diverse natural catastrophes and other ‘occurrences that defy traditional logic’ (Thomas, 2005, p. 99). Even natural catastrophes such as storms and turbulent sea waves are not treated as mere mundane occurrences in traditional African society. In traditional African societies, it is understood that “all events that occur in this world mirror what is happening in the unseen world” (Ibid).

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Mbiti (1990), phrases this sensitivity of the African to spiritual matters by saying that “wherever the African is, there is his religion [...]” (p. 2). According to Thomas (2005), these natural catastrophes are interpreted as either punishments or messages from the divinities and the worst of such natural catastrophes is drowning and/or the destruction of sailors’ canoe on deep seas.

From the interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that the sailors understood singing – praises and worship, to be an effective means of getting in touch with the Supreme Being who they believe is able to stop the sea-god from visiting calamity on them and their vessel. The songs are meant to draw the Supreme Being’s attention on them as they sail across the fearsome sea. An adult sailor expressed it this way:

*No one knows what will befall him in deep seas. So we pray throughout the sail; prayers do not end at the shore, the songs are also prayers” (Adult Sailor 9).*

### **4.3.1.2 Communion with Supernatural Being for Catch Success**

From the interviews and focus group discussion, the data revealed that sailors use songs as a tool to communicate with the Supreme Being and to ask of Him to protect their fish catch and to prevent their heavy nets from breaking and/ or the trapped fish from escaping the nets. When such songs are sung and how sailors achieve such spiritual function with songs was described by an adult sailor this way:

*We cast the fishnets into the sea and after a few hours, we try to pull on the ropes and when we sense heaviness in the net then we know that fish has been trapped. It is then we begin to sing a song which goes like this ‘edza huyɛn m’bɔ-ee, fayɛn bɔnn kyɛyɛn’ (Adult Sailor 7).*

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The song in-text literally translates as '*father, have mercy on us and forgive us our sins*'. Referring to the Supreme Being as '*father*', the sailors express their belief in Him as one who has ultimate power to frustrate their success at sea as a punitive measure for sins they might have committed as individuals or as a group. The forgiveness they therefore seek is to put them in good standing with their God to forestall any frustrations on their catch.

This spiritual function of singing is hinged on a theological basis – on the conception of God as a spiritual being who is merciful, punishes for sins but forgiving, able to give material blessings but can be restrained from blessing by sin and is, as Thomas (2005) puts it “...the Determiner of man’s destiny” (p. 82). He is, to the traditional African, the one who determines what his life outcomes will be and how (Nukunya, 2003). This theological conception of God and success was confirmed by an adult sailor who responded to my question on why they sang such a song at such moments. He said:

*Fish trapped in the net could still escape from the nets. The net could also break. So such a song is a communication between us and God to offer what we are seeing in the nets to us. He should gift us the catch (Adult Sailor 7).*

The meaning the sailors make when the fish nets break or fish escapes from the nets is interesting; to them it indicates that God had not protected their catch for if He did, their nets will not break nor the fish escape. This is the cosmic significance of the breakage of their nets.

Per their conception of God, from the data, He will not bother to help them only when they had sinned. This is the personal significance they make of the breakage of their fish nets and that is where songs are used to seek for mercy and forgiveness. These dual meanings sailors make on breakage of their fish nets agrees with some assertions made by Thomas (2005). He said that the notion that nothing happens in this world without having individual significance

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and universal significance is a widely accepted phenomenon in traditional African societies (p. 99). Thomas also observes that in traditional African societies, all events that occur in this world are believed to mirror what is happening in the unseen world. So in the text data above is revealed the cultural perspective of the sailor in respect of who owns his success at sea, who can sustain this success and what he must do to maintain this success.

### **4.3.2 Singing to Attract Fish - Mystical Function.**

From the interviews and focused group discussions, the data revealed that sailors use songs as to a tool to attract fishes into the fish nets. This was put this way by an adult sailor:

*When we sing, it drags fishes into the nets. They love music (Adult Sailor 8)*

And it was also confirmed by a child sailor when he said that:

*There are times when you begin singing and you immediately see that the fishes begin swimming into the fish nets (Child Sailor 9).*

This cultural belief that songs attract fishes seems to rest on the belief that singing, as opposed to playing recorded music, is what is charming to fishes. An adult sailor disclosed this while answering my question on why recorded music was not played:

*The fishes love the human voice. Playing the music over a tape player will rather scare them away. They love our voice; they love human voice.*

(Adult Sailor 3).

This study is not the first to record real life instances where animals are said to be lured into traps, apparently by songs. Nketiah (1974) makes an account of how wild bush animals are flushed out of their hiding by songs. In Etruria, at the sound of the appropriate music, crabs

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are induced to quit their holes, emerge from the sea and follow the direction of the music into their capture (Portnoy, 1973, p. 196).

The particular phenomenon of ensnaring fish with songs is a custom that goes beyond Africa. Luomala (1980) narrates her experience living with the natives of Gilbert Islands in the Republic of Kiribati, close to Australia. She recounted that indigenes gathered at the shore, as part of fishing, to sing magical songs to encourage a shoal of fish they have sighted to remain for months (p. 548).

Sanderson (1971), renders an ethnographic record of how common the custom is in Europe: fishermen in Sicily would sing a particular song repeatedly to attract particular kinds of fish; sailors in Ireland and Scotland are said to sing nice soft songs that attract fish to their capture. Before hauling their nets, fishermen in Kvarsebö, in Östergötland, in Sweden “would read the Lord’s Prayer and sing psalms in order to get a big catch” (p. 296).

Fishes are said to leap to the tune of *songs* and swim into nets spread for their capture by Egyptian fishermen (Portnoy, 1973, p. 196).

### **4.3.2.1 Findings on Spiritual/ Mystical Functions of singing**

The data revealed that sailors sing to gain a spiritual contact with the Supreme Being for protection over the lives and vessel as they sail across the fearsome sea which may want to punish them for curses said over any of them by an offended neighbour.

They also sing to ask of the Supreme Being to protect their catch and prevent their heavy nets from breaking and/ or the trapped fish from escaping.

The data finally revealed that use singing as a tool to attract fishes into the cast fishnets.

#### 4.4 Social Functions of Singing

The use of singing to procure some *social functions* was one of the major persistent themes that emerged from the interviews and focused group discussions. The social functions of singing, from the data, are comprised of those functions that: i) endear sailors to each other ii) mark out individual sailors as members of a larger group iii) boost individual sailors estimation of their self worth in the group.

##### 4.4.1 Bonding

To use singing as a way of bonding with one another is one of the desired reasons why a sailor sings. From my observations, interviews and focused group discussions, the data revealed that individual sailors rarely sung when they were mending their broken nets alone. On the other hand, when a broken net is being mended by two or more people, singing will be heard. A child sailor, in response to my question on why he was not singing whilst mending his nets, responded:

*I am not singing now [whilst mending net] because I am working alone. I could but I do not need to. If a friend had held a portion of the net and were working with me, then I would be excited and call a song for us to sing together (Child Sailor 8).*

This child sailor discusses when a *need to sing* arises in net mending: a *need to sing* arises when work is jointly performed with others. And this *need to sing* arising from joint work seems to be driven by sailor's desire to establish mutual bonds with the colleague with whom one works. It seems to be driven by a need to establish a 'we feeling' (McMillan and Chavis, 1976) in performing joint work. Singing seems to be desired as an indication that a group of persons are working together; as being in a community.

An adult sailor, answering the same question, responded:



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*We feel ourselves as brothers when we sing together. When your brother comes to assist you in mending your net then you will feel like singing. (Adult Sailor, 6).*

The adult sailor clearly confirms how that singing is able to evoke feelings of brotherliness with a work colleague and the desire for this bonding becomes the *need to sing* in joint task performances.

Among sailors, we can therefore infer that music making is desired as a social event. This is exactly what the African musicologist, Nketiah says, namely that “music making in traditional African societies is generally organised as a social event” (1974, p. 21). By a social event, it is implied that it is preferred that the ‘other’ must be present for a need to sing to arise and the participation of the ‘other’ in singing is not because singing cannot be done in the absence of the ‘other’ but rather that the singer wants to use singing as an avenue to establish his feeling of membership or oneness with the ‘other’. Singing is used to establish a sense of community, a feeling of bonding with fellow colleagues.

### **4.4.1.1 Identity marking through Singing**

From the interview and focused group discussions, the data revealed that sailors desire to sing as a tool to communicating their identity as sailors. Individual sailors understand singing of sailors’ songs as their firmest proof of membership to a larger society of sailors. This was expressed by a child sailor this way:

*The songs we sing and the way we sing is different you know. You can only learn it by being a sailor. So for me, it is your knowledge of the songs that lets me know whether you are a sailor or not (Child Sailor 9).*

This was confirmed by an adult sailor in the following response:

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*You know, every occupation has its song that goes with it. Hunters have their songs. Farmers have their songs as well and so do us sailors. That is how it is. It is only by what you sing that we can tell whether a fellow is a sailor or not (Adult Sailor 11).*

For a sailor to distinguish himself from ordinary landmen, his singing of sailors' songs is the indubitable proof. Singing sailors' songs is an identity marker that is meant to reveal one's identity as a sailor. To know sailors' songs is to mark out oneself as a sailor and the converse is true; not to know how to sing sailors' songs is to cast doubt on one's claim to seamanship. In response to my question on how I could identify sailors amongst the lot at the shore, an adult sailor responded:

*It is easy. You do not need to ask anybody. Just observe the fellow. The type of songs he sings tells it all (Adult Sailor 6).*

From this response it is clear that singing sailors songs is construed to be an *in-group marker*. Singing sailors' songs sets the in-group of sailors apart from the larger out-group of non-sailors. It is an effective means of setting oneself apart from general others.

To know sailors' songs is to mark out oneself as a sailor and the converse is true; not to know how to sing sailors' songs is to cast doubt on one's claim to seamanship. To know sailors songs and to sing them therefore is to validate one's social identity as a sailor.

This use of songs to communicate one's identity is not exclusive to sailors only, it is cultural. According to Bebey (1975), in many parts of Africa one does not need to ask to know another's identity. By the song the fellow sings and enjoys one could always tell who s/he is and where s/he hails from.

This apparent exclusiveness of some songs for sailors as a marker of their identity is also consistent with the account of Nketia (1974) who recounts that in Ghana and in many parts of

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Africa, specific groupings like hunters, warriors, et cetera, have their unique songs and these songs are owned by their performers and they mark them from other groups of people.

### 4.4.2 Singing as a Tool to Satisfying Esteem Needs

The use of singing as a tool to boosting the self esteem of fellow sailors was one of the recurrent themes that were revealed in the data collected. From the interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that composed in any sailing team are sailors of various age brackets and differential years of sea-faring experience; there are children, middle-aged men and aged men. One will also find those who have been at sea-sailing over decades as well as new recruits. The data revealed that in the inherent structure for the calling of songs, the aged and more experienced sailors purpose to boost the self esteem of the young sailors and the new recruits. How they do this was put this way by an adult sailor:

*Calling a song is open to everyone. Whether you are a child or an adult, you can call a song that will be responded to by everyone (Adult Sailor 6).*

The phrase ‘calling a song’ relates to the moment where a sailor is leading his colleagues in singing by supplying the songs and verses to which his colleagues respond. This adult sailor’s response makes it clear that any sailor, regardless of his biological age and years of experience in sea-faring, is given same rights as the aged and the more experienced from the very outset.

This phenomenon of opening up song calling to everyone does not appear to be peculiar to sailors for it has already been observed as a cultural thing by Bebey. He noted that in African cultures “any individual who has the urge to make his voice heard is given the liberty to do so; singing is not a specialised affair. Anyone can sing and, in practice, everyone does”. (1976, p. 115). The open nature of song calling seems to be driven by the cultural value of singing as a divine ability that is evenly endowed everyone by the Supreme Being. It also

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seems to be driven by the cultural belief in singing as a desirable activity that ought to be encouraged, harnessed and openly indulged in. The effect is to consequently make all sailors believe that singing is not a basic human instinct to be done away as one ages as it is popularly believed in some Western countries (Drew, 1937). These cultural beliefs and values were contained in the following response given by a child sailor:

*You know singing is like football. It is a God-given ability with some knowing how to play better than others. Even me as a child, I do know how to sing the songs better than some adults and some other children also know how to sing better than me* (Child Sailor 5).

The peculiar effect of this open calling structure seems intent on registering in the minds of the young and new recruits that they are as endowed as the aged and the well experienced. The fundamental principle behind this seems to be to communicate to all sailors that *no human is more important than the other*. It is to improve each caller's personal sense of importance and feelings of usefulness. For the child sailors and young recruits, it serves as a tool to building up their assessment of self worth. The practice is able to boost their confidence and their plausible leadership skills. A child sailor, describing what he feels when calling a song responded:

*It is a great feeling for me as a child when I lead the singing when working with the adults* (Child Sailor 2).

In response to my question about why they availed song calling to everyone, an adult sailor responded:

*It is how we were also trained. We want to give everyone the opportunity to explore their potentials* (Adult Sailor, 5). Another adult sailor responded:

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*If we don't them how can they take over from us? We do that to encourage them and to make them feel good. It gradually makes them assertive and courageous (Adult Sailor 8).*

Clearly, the practice of affording new recruits and child sailors the opportunity to take up the challenge of leading adults and more experienced fellows in work by calling songs is to psychologically satisfy esteem needs in these youngsters and new recruits and the satisfaction of esteem needs as Maslow (1998) submits, leads to “feelings of [...] being useful and necessary in the world” (p. 176).

### **4.4.2.1 Singing to declaim one's competence**

From the interviews and focused group discussions, the data revealed that singing is used by some sailors to declaim their competence to their colleagues and to improve their colleagues' assessment of their worth.

From the interviews, the sailors revealed that frequently, sailing teams request of other sailors who are not members of their team to join their crew on a sail. In respect of such invited sailors, little may be known about their enthusiasm and abilities at sea-faring. According to the data, such 'new-hires' use singing and song calling to certify themselves and to convince everyone on board of their knowledge of the rudiments of sea-faring. An adult sailor, in discussing this matter said:

*If you find yourself working with another team in another canoe, you ought to sing even more. On a new team, you will need to do whatever will make them attest that you joining them really improved work. (Adult Sailor 12)*

A child sailor also said:

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*On joining a new team on a new canoe, you will need to prove to know the rudiments of the job which includes singing and injection activism into the work (Child Sailor 8).*

It does appear that one justifies the nomination made of him by others and clears himself of any doubts about his knowledge of the job details by seizing the opportunity to *call songs*. Not to seize the opportunity to call songs is to invariably cast doubts on one's abilities in seafaring matters. In response to my question about how sailors in general perceive 'new-hires' who display depth in singing, an adult sailor said:

*It is the songs that we use in doing the job. Singing is everything. So we need people who are good at singing. So when you join another team on another canoe and you display good singing skills, you will be warmly admired by everyone (Adult Sailor, 5).*

The cultural understanding therefore is that a man's dexterity is embedded in his singing prowess. Consequently, to call songs is accepted as an indubitable mark of one's enthusiasm and abilities and it is to improve others assessment of one's worth on joining new work teams.

### **4.4.2.1.1 Findings on Social functions of singing**

From the data and the analysis above, it is revealed that sailors use singing as a means of fostering bonding with their colleagues when working on common tasks.

They also use singing as a way of validating their social identity as sailors.

Song-calling is used by older and more experienced sailors as a tool to psychologically satisfy the esteem needs in youngsters and new recruits in their fold.

Sailors who join already existing sailing teams also use song-calling to declaim their competence to their colleagues and to improve their colleagues' assessment of their worth.

#### **4.5 Singing for emotional functions.**

The use of songs for emotional functions was one major recurrent theme in the data. From the interviews and focused group discussions, the data revealed that for sailors, the outcome of a day's voyage leaves sailors either feeling elated and happy or on the contrary, feeling frustrated and depressed. The data revealed that for either mood, the sailors deploy singing as a tool in expressing, managing and containing their emotions.

##### **4.5.1 Mood regulation through singing**

From the interviews and focused group discussion with the sailors, it was revealed that feelings of frustration and depression set in when sailors make little or no catch in compensation for the financial costs that went into the sail as well as for the risks to which they exposed themselves. From the interviews, the sailors revealed that the financial costs sailors incur in setting sail comprise those related to the purchase of fuel for their outboard motor and those incurred in the purchase of new fish nets. As discussed earlier, each sailor is also exposed to the plausible risk of execution by the sea-god – for unknown sins, on each and every sail. They also have to endure the cold sea breeze for hours. In regulating their depressive mood, sailors sing songs to cheer each one up, make fun of the loss situation and to induce laughter. One of such songs is this simple one:

Call: *koko!*

Response: *Hwɛ wu nyanku nenim !*

The call for this means nearly nothing but the response literally translates as “*look at your friend in the face*”. Asked why they would sing such a song, an adult sailor responded:

*You know, we set off with a common aim of making a catch so we could make money.*

*We buy gallons of fuel for the outboard motor too so everyone naturally begins to*

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*mourn the waste of time and money that has gone into the voyage and so we sing such a song to ask members not to feel alone in the mishap. We ask each person to look the other in face as a way of asking them to cheer up (Adult Sailor 8).*

From the interviews, it was apparent that singing such songs creates a ‘we feeling’ for sailors as a group as opposed to feelings of being left alone to moan over one’s loss.

On the contrary, when sailors make a bumper harvest, the songs they sing is different. Such songs are for merry making and for thanksgiving to the Supreme Being, who decided to reward their efforts this time. One of such songs is:

*Danasi danaasi, da Onyame na si (2x)*

*EfrisE oye, na nadɔ yE dɔ ɔ su.*

The song translates thus:

*Give thanks, give thanks to God (2x)*

*For He is good and His mercies endures forever*

Asked why they would sing such a song, a child sailor responded:

*We get overjoyed and that is how we celebrate it (Child Sailor 5).*

An adult sailor also answered:

*Whether we make a bumper harvest or not, it is God that gives. And so if He rewards us with a bumper catch, we have to rejoice and give him praise (Adult Sailor 6).*

Clearly, in either emotional state, it is apparent that music is used in here to synchronise the moods of many individuals in a larger group and that is exactly what Huron (2001) postulates in his social solidarity theory. The nature of this emotional function served by sailors’ songs



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is also consistent with Brown's (2000) theory which states that music is desired by a group of people because it offers opportunity for group catharsis; the collective expression and experience of emotion.

### **4.5.1.2 Findings on Emotional functions of singing**

From the data and analysis, it was revealed that in instances little or no catch is made on voyage, sailors regulate their states of depression by singing songs that cheer up each member of the team, induce laughter and compels them to avoid brooding over the loss situation.

In times of bumper catch, sailors sing to express their joyous emotional states.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Overview of findings

The present study looked at the phenomenon of singing in fishing vis a vis the meanings sailors make with their songs and the functions that are culturally pursued by sailors through singing. From the data analysed, five major recurrent themes emerged, namely, singing for the pursuance of: Interpersonal functions, Intra-personal functions, Spiritual or mythical functions, singing for Social functions and singing for Emotional functions.

The findings from the present study indicate that in Ghana, singing in fishing is closely connected to the aim sailors intend to achieve across diverse work situations and conditions. Every sung song is for the procurement of specific ends.

Regards Interpersonal functions, the study shows that singing is used as an avenue by both child and adult sailors to carry across their hurts, discomforts and sentiments to colleagues who have offended them and to compel offenders to change their ways without explicitly mentioning the name of the offending fellow in the song but with fellow sailors left in no doubt as to the true meaning of the song and the person to whom it is addressed. This finding indicates that in sailors singing, great importance is paid to an inherent cultural structure used both for encoding messages in songs and the decoding of same in colleagues' songs. Success at encoding messages in songs depends on mastery at the cultural skill for the unobtrusive conveyance of information and this is a skill which according to the findings, all sailors seem to develop as part of their vocation. It bears mentioning that this function seems achievable by sailors because members in this community are at liberty to create their own songs and this has availed room for sailors to use this medium to "let off steam and to resolve social

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conflict” (Merriam 1964, p. 223). Clearly, this functional use of singing is consistent with the conflict reduction theory postulated by Huron (2001) which states that music is preferred by a group of people as a way to reduce interpersonal conflicts.

The study also showed that sailors use songs as a means of coordinating the actions of all members involved in a joint task. The songs provide a rhythm that sailors use in predicting when they are to exert their next effort as well as the duration over which the effort should be exerted. The songs connect those in front to those farther away from the task by supplying a clear rhythm that communicates what next is to be done. This finding implies that in sailors’ singing, selection of songs is done not haphazardly; they are task informed. Again, the relationship of word stress, pauses and tempo in songs to group effort exertion signify the importance of these elements of music in communicating meaning to all members in joint work teams. This functioning of songs is consistent with the effort coordination theory by Huron (2001) which argues that music is desired by a group of people for the coordination of group efforts and it is also consistent with a tenet of the rhythm theory by Lefebvre (2004) which states that harmony is achievable when the human body is able to apply its internal, idiosyncratic rhythms to an external rhythm like song.

Again, the finding of the present study also shows that singing is a cultural tool that sailors use to call on other colleagues to help them with physically demanding tasks. Thus, to sailors, the hearing of sailors’ songs sung by colleagues means that a request is being made on them to come and assist with work that is underway at the location of the singing. At the call of a song, other sailors distance away from the site where hauling is underway, troupe in to offer their assistance. This finding implies that singing is an activity that brings together all mutually bonded persons and reveals an unbroken connection between those who are onshore and their counterparts distance away. This finding also partly explains why sailor songs appear only to be sung in the course of work.

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From the study, the hearing of sailors' songs is also an opportunity for sailors to render altruistic assistance to their colleagues and to consequently expect a reciprocal gesture in future from those colleagues they helped. Indeed, this understanding of the meaning of songs and the need to render altruistic assistance to those in need is culturally influenced by numerous traditional proverbs and maxims that sailors repeatedly recount in defence of their altruistic behaviour on hearing sailors' songs. This finding implies that the hearing of songs is understood by sailors as an avenue to create social capital for themselves which will accrue to their benefit in future when they are also in need of altruistic assistance from others. Clearly, the ability of singing to bring displaced persons together on a task is consistent with by the social solidarity and social bonding theories which states that music makes people mutually obliged to be responsive to each other's needs, maintains social cohesion and promotes altruism. It is also consistent with the trans-generational theory of music which avers that music might be used as a useful mnemonic conveyance of useful information; which is in this, a call on colleagues to offer assistance and a proclamation of an opportunity for each sailor to invest in a venture that will accrue to his benefit in future.

On intra-personal functions served by singing, the study showed that singing is conceived as a tool for reducing the sensation of hunger when at work. Being able to persist for longer hours in work is understood to accrue from singing. To complement work with singing is therefore to lay the foundation for what could pass for long hours of work. This experience is however ephemeral since the described experience wanes as singing is put to a stop. This finding indicates that in sailors' singing, their taste of songs and the sing selection of same is need-fulfilling and may not easily be added to or subtracted from by a non sailor.

Additionally, the study showed that singing is conceived as a cultural tool for soothing the pain associated with tough manual work. Singing ushers sailors into a state where they do not feel the bodily pains that they otherwise would have experienced in the execution of work.

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By relieving pain, singing may partly explain why sailors are able to continue in their undertakings day after day.

Studies in other research areas have also made similar findings on the ability of music to reduce the sensation of pain. In a qualitative study, Bailey and Davidson (2002) explored the effects of group singing with members of a choir for homeless men. One of the major themes that emerged from their study was the ability of singing to make individuals not feel the pains associated with physical ailments.

In another research, Good, et al., (1999) conducted a study involving hospitalised patients who had undergone diverse medical surgery. To ease the pain, post-operative patients were traditionally put on analgesic medication but patients still complained of unbearable pain. As part of the experiment, some postoperative patients had to listen to their favourite music and their subsequent sensation of the postoperative pain was to be compared to a control group of other patients who were only been administered with traditional analgesic medication. Results of the study showed that sensations of pain were drastically low when music was introduced to patients.

Additionally, the present study shows that the singing of songs is a way of garnering strength, energy, motivation and such-like work aptitudes that are needful for performance of sailors' work. The inverse is also claimed to be true, namely, that the absence of songs leaves sailors feeling empty and bereft of the requisite aptitudes for undertaking their tasks. The possibility of music to imbue energy, strength and vitality has also been reported in a study conducted by Saarikallio and Erkkila (2007).

On spiritual functions of singing, the study showed that sailors sing to keep in touch with the Supreme Being for divine protection from natural disasters and the wrath of the sea god which is instigated by certain sins they might have committed and/ or curses pronounced over

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them by others. The study indicates that sailors' use of songs for this divine protection function stems from an ontological belief they have of the sea god as a swift judge who instantly convicts wrong doers of evil and as an unrepentant executioner who mercilessly visits offences with a death penalty. Sailors' singing on deep seas is therefore understood to be a means of getting in touch with the Supreme Being who they believe is able to stop the sea god from visiting calamity on them and their vessel.

On same spiritual function, the study also shows that sailors use singing to ask of the Supreme Being to protect their fish catch and to prevent their heavy nets from breaking and/or the trapped fish from escaping their nets. From the study, sailors enter into such communion with the Supreme Being when they sense heaviness in their cast nets and the primary request they make of the Supreme Being in singing at such moments is to look on them with mercy and grant them what they see in the cast nets. They use songs to seek forgiveness of sins; to put them in good standing with the Supreme Being who they know has ultimate power to frustrate their catch success for they believe that it is only by having their sins forgiven that the Supreme Being will confirm their catch success.

These findings indicate that sailing with its outcomes does not begin nor end at the shore; what happens outside the shore in a sailor's relationship with other people affects one's prospects and outcomes in fishing. At the same time, what happens on sea reflects what is happening out there and/ or in the spirit realm one has no knowledge about; a tragedy on sea may mean a curse had been imposed over the victim and to make little or no catch may also mean that a relevant spiritual being is displeased.

Additionally, the study showed that sailors use songs as a mystical tool to attract fishes into the cast fish nets. This use of songs to bait fish is anchored on a cultural belief that the melodious human voice is appealing to fishes and that same drift towards the direction and

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source of sung music for to hear the songs better whence they are trapped. This finding that songs can be used to attract and lure animals has also been reported in an ethnographic study by Nketia (1974). Other research works by Portnoy (1973), Luomala (1980), Sanderson (1971), also have accounts of fishing communities in diverse cultures using songs to attract and trap fish.

On social functions of singing, the study shows that sailors use singing as a way of bonding with one another. A sailor mending his fishnets alone rarely sings but a need to sing arises when he is joined on the task by a fellow sailor and this singing is to establish a feeling of oneness with the assisting fellow. Singing is deployed in such moments as an indication that a group of persons are working together; that they are in community. Such singing is to create a bond between one and his work colleague. This finding is consistent with other research findings on singing. Lob, Camic and Clift (2010) conducted a qualitative study to understand how individuals use participation in group singing as a response to adverse life events. Their result revealed that individuals use participation in group singing as an opportunity to establish bonds with others which unity feels like a substitute family and they feel a sense of belonging as result of such singing.

Additionally, the present study indicates that sailors sing as a tool to communicate their identity as sailors. It is an identity marker that is meant to reveal one's identity as a sailor. Singing sailors' songs is used to communicate one's membership to a larger group of workmen known as sailors. The implication of this finding is that for anybody displaying good sailors' song singing skills, the fellow should either have had a long stint with sailors and nautical affairs for it is the only way by which one could gain such expertise.

The study further indicates that singing is used as a tool by the experienced and elder sailors to boost the esteem of younger sailors and new recruits. From the study, experienced sailors



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achieve this aim by making the atmosphere conducive for these youngsters and new recruits to lead the former in singing and work by calling songs that is unanimously responded to by all. The fundamental success such an arrangement achieves is its ability to improve these young sailors and new recruits personal sense of importance and feelings of usefulness in relation to their elder sailors. In same study conducted by Lob et al. (2010), they found that the challenging nature of singing made individuals experience a sense of achievement which in turn had positive effects on their self esteem and confidence.

Again, the study showed that sailors invited to join existing teams on sail use *song calling* as a tool to declaim their competence and knowledge of the rudiments of the job. A sailor's dexterity in sea-faring is deemed to be reflected by how well and how long he can lead in song calling. The implication is that, for sailors who join existing teams on work, not to seize the opportunity to call songs is to invariably cast doubts on one's abilities in sea-faring matters. Not to call songs is to project one's image to his work colleagues as being lazy and indolent.

Finally, the present study shows that sailors engage in singing as a tool in expressing, managing and containing their emotions associated with happy or sad outcomes of their voyage. When frustrated and depressed by little or no catch, sailors use songs to cheer themselves up, induce laughter and to make them hope for better days in future. This finding is consistent with other research conducted by Bailey and Davidson (2002, 2005) first involving homeless men and second involving people living in impoverished circumstances. In both studies, they found that singing provide an escape to individuals from having to brood over sad and emotionally disturbing happenings. Individuals achieve inner balance by using the medium of singing to let out their various frustrations in life.

## **5.2 Limitations of the Study**

The study procedure helps unearth the cultural-specific functions that singing serves for sailors. This however did not go flawless as had been hoped for.

On the field, interactions with research respondents were either interrupted by their colleagues, their fiancées or creditors. Colleagues and friends of respondents joined and interjected discussions that were intended to be personal interviews and in most cases, supplied their own answers to questions posed before target respondents could respond. It is not possible to tell how their interjections and submissions quelled the views of target respondents. I cannot tell what information I was denied in the individual interviews by such distractions.

Fiancées and creditors often made financial demands on respondents which consequently threw respondents off their concentration and line of reasoning. In some cases, respondents' responses seemed less rich and detailed after they had been so distracted.

Finally, during my interaction with a child sailor, one adult sailor shouted at him to be weary of me since I may have been sent by the government to investigate the gains they make. According to him, there had been such instances in the past where there had increases in the prices of fishing equipments days after some researchers came to the shore to interview them. Though it is inestimable, it is however probable that I may have been denied access to some unknown information because some sailors had positioned me as a spy for the government and so they might have kept themselves at a distance to avoid interactions with me.

### **5.3 Strengths of the Study**

Regardless of the afore-mentioned weaknesses, this study presents significant insights into the phenomenon of singing in fishing. The study uses cultural-specific factors to understand the phenomenon. It illuminates some of the cultural-specific spiritual, social, inter-personal and intra-personal motives for singing. The present study, through empirical data from sailors in Ghana and other existing research, has provided broader understanding into the phenomenon of singing.

### **5.4 Implications and Recommendations**

#### **5.4.1 Cultural Psychologists and Research studies on the phenomenon of singing**

For cultural psychologists and research studies that focus on the functions of music, the study presents important pathways for broadening understanding on the subject matter. First, the study calls into importance the need for research to be sensitive to the social and cultural functions of music which is often less concentrated upon. For these socio-cultural functions may not be universal in character. What pertains in one culture may not be easily extendable to other cultural contexts.

The study further expresses the value in exploring the beliefs and cultural philosophies of a people in understanding their music. Such beliefs and cultural epistemologies may have significant impact on the uses and functions that music may be serving for the people.

Spiritual/mystical functions that do not follow any clearly logical deduction are plausible functions that may be served by a culture's music. This makes a demand on researchers to continuously maintain an open mind on the field which is a requisite for tapping into all such functions.

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Again, the study brings to bear the need for research to be careful at exploring a people's cultural values since these values may be heavily resident in how their music is performed and the need to protect their values may influence the reason(s) for which music is performed.

In order to fully understand the music of any people, the present study calls into importance the need for researchers to exercise greater care to muster the skill at decoding the messages that have been codified in the songs.

The present study also points to the high premium that cultures may place on the type of songs they sing as well as the order in which they are sung. These may play functions that are cultural specific.

As a final pathway, this present study makes it evident that the functions of singing are not limited to those derived from listening to music. The former seems to encompass more functions that may vary from one socio-cultural context to another. A study conducted by Unwin, Kenny and Davis (2002) sought to explore the benefits people accrue from partaking in group singing as opposed to merely listening of vocal music. In their study, trends were observed whereby the singing group showed greater positive changes in mood compared to the listening group.

It is recommended that future research consider cross-cultural studies that compare and contrast the functions that are served by singing in specific contexts like fishing, farming, hunting and so forth. It is further recommended that future studies investigate plausible health benefits that accrue from singing, for sailors per se. Such studies could look specifically into health problems like asthma and insomnia and the impact of singing on them, as this current study found evidence of health benefits accruing from singing. It is believed that such studies could help uncover more health potentialities embedded in the act of singing.

#### **5.4.2 Programmes that exploit the functions of music.**

The study of music has traditionally been considered synonymous to the study of aesthetics (Dewey in Popp, 1998). Consequently, classroom lessons in music have classically been focused on teaching *about music*. Far more common, this is about the elements of music—viz., melody, harmony, rhythm, form, timbre – and other musical terminology. These attempts however, typically fall short of making any lasting impact on students (Regelski, 2005, p. 15). In addition to teaching these and not in place of, music lessons in schools could focus on helping students acquire skills at extracting meanings from the songs of cultures. Music lessons could also be interested in exploring how these elements of music shape the meanings that cultures purport to make in their music. The curriculum for music education ‘will benefit from taking into consideration how, why, and when music is used in society’ (Regelski, 2005, p. 20).

The findings of the present study are also beneficial for groupings of people who are removed from their families; for example, hospice homes, asylum camps, child social welfare centres, witch camps and so forth. An important means to make them feel homely, bonded and belonged is to engage them in group singing practices (Unwin, Kenny & Davis, 2002; Cohen, Perlstein & Chapline, 2006) and to use the lead song singing roles as opportunities to boost the self esteem of specific individuals who may have been identified as being on the low. Same may hold for confined prisoners. From the findings and literature, group singing may ease tensions and foster bonding between individuals as well as between members of rival gangs who are distrustful of each other. Anshel and Kipper (1988) undertook a study to explore the impact of group singing on trust and cooperation; one for another, and they found that engaging in group singing activities did increase the trust persons had for one another. In another study examining the impact of group singing which involved female prison inmates,

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Silver (2005) found that group singing fostered bonding between the inmates, eased tensions that existed prior and built mutual trust among the inmates.

In residential communities, community singing groups may be an option out of loneliness, boredom and may foster comradeship amongst residents and ultimately improve people's wellbeing (Clift, Hancox, Morrison, Hess, Kreutz & Stewart, 2007).

In the care and institutionalisation of homeless people, encouraging personal and group singing may be a way to help people regain their inner balance, regulate their mood and enliven their spirits (Bailey and Davidson, 2002; 2005).

The study finding is also beneficial to clinicians and paramedics. As a compliment to medical procedures and treatment, it may be beneficial for clinicians and paramedics to consider allowing patients to both make and listen to music. An increase in patients' confidence, hope and tolerance to pain may be some of the consequent benefits (Dianna and Gavin, 2004). Like exercise, singing may prove to be a simple, cost effective therapeutic intervention in vulnerable and depressed groups such as chronic pain patients thereby reducing the cost of healthcare while simultaneously enhancing the quality of life (Ibid, p. 241).

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## APPENDIX A

### Type A: Individual Interview

#### Interview Guide (semi-structured)

##### Knowledge about the timings for singing

- i. Do you usually sing? Is singing something you normally do?
- ii. When do you sing? What time of the day do you normally sing?
- iii. Why do you sing at such times of the day?
- iv. Under what situations do you sing / what situations in those times make you sing?
- v. Why do you sing under such situations?
- vi. Do you always sing whilst fishing?
- vii. What kind of music do you normally sing?

##### Interactional effect of singing and hard work/fishing

- i. How important is singing in your work?
- ii. At what times, when you are at sea, do you sing?
- iii. What does not singing take away from your work?

##### Group singing

- i. Do you sing together with others?
- ii. In what situations do you sing together?
- iii. How do you feel anytime you hear others sing at sea?

## Singing in Fishing

- iv. Who do you expect to hear you when you sing at sea?
- v. What does it mean to know sailor's songs?

## Singing and space

- i. Do you have a work location you can say is yours?
- ii. How important is singing in communicating your part-ownership of the territory?
- iii. Have you ever joined others to work in their canoe? Did you sing there?

## Singing and beliefs

- i. Are there any songs you often sing when you are mending your nets, going ashore, casting the net, drawing the catch in-shore and returning from shore? Why?
- ii. When wouldn't you sing in-shore? Why?
- iii. Are there any days in the week or any month wherein you cannot sing at sea or are required to sing only some songs? Why?
- iv. Who changes the song when you are singing together?
- v. Can a child change the song? Why?

## Singing and mate attraction

- i. Do women also sing at sea?
- ii. How do you feel when you see a woman who knows how to sing?
- iii. Is your knowledge of songs doing you any good in your interaction with women?/  
what good thing does your singing ability do to your relationship with those of the opposite sex?



## Singing in Fishing

- iv. How is your singing affected when you know that a lady is listening?

## Children, Music and Fishing

- i. Do you (a child) sing while working at sea?
- ii. How important is singing to you at sea?/ why do you sing at sea?
- iii. When wouldn't you sing at sea? Why?
- iv. How did you learn these sea-fishing songs?
- v. Have you ever composed your own song at sea?
- vi. Have you ever introduced a new song when you were singing with adults? Why?

## Ending Remark

Let me summarise the main points of our discussion (I present a resume of the responses to the key questions). Is this summary complete? Are there any additions or changes you would want to make?

Thank you for your time and patience.

## Singing in Fishing

### **Focused Group Discussion**

#### **Type B: Focus Group**

##### Guiding Areas

- a) Timings for Singing
- b) Effect of singing on fishing
- c) When songs are not sang
- d) The reasons for singing
- e) Rules for change of song when singing together
- f) Uses of music in daily lives
- g) Importance of songs in hetero-sexual mate attraction

APPENDIX B: APPROVAL FROM N.S.D

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Hroar Klempe  
Psykologisk institutt  
NTNU  
7491 TRONDHEIM

Harald Håvågsgate 29  
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Tel: +47 55 58 21 11  
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nsd@nsd.uib.no  
www.nsd.uib.no  
Org.nr: 085 337 884

Vår dato: 08.05.2012      Vår ref: 30250 / 3 / 031      Deres dato:      Deres ref:

**TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER**

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 26.04.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

30250	<i>Music in Fishing: A study looking at how fishermen in Cape Coast in the central region of Ghana use music to manage their lives</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Hroar Klempe
Student	Christian Addo

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, [http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/foesk\\_stud/skjema.html](http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/foesk_stud/skjema.html). Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 10.08.2013, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

  
Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

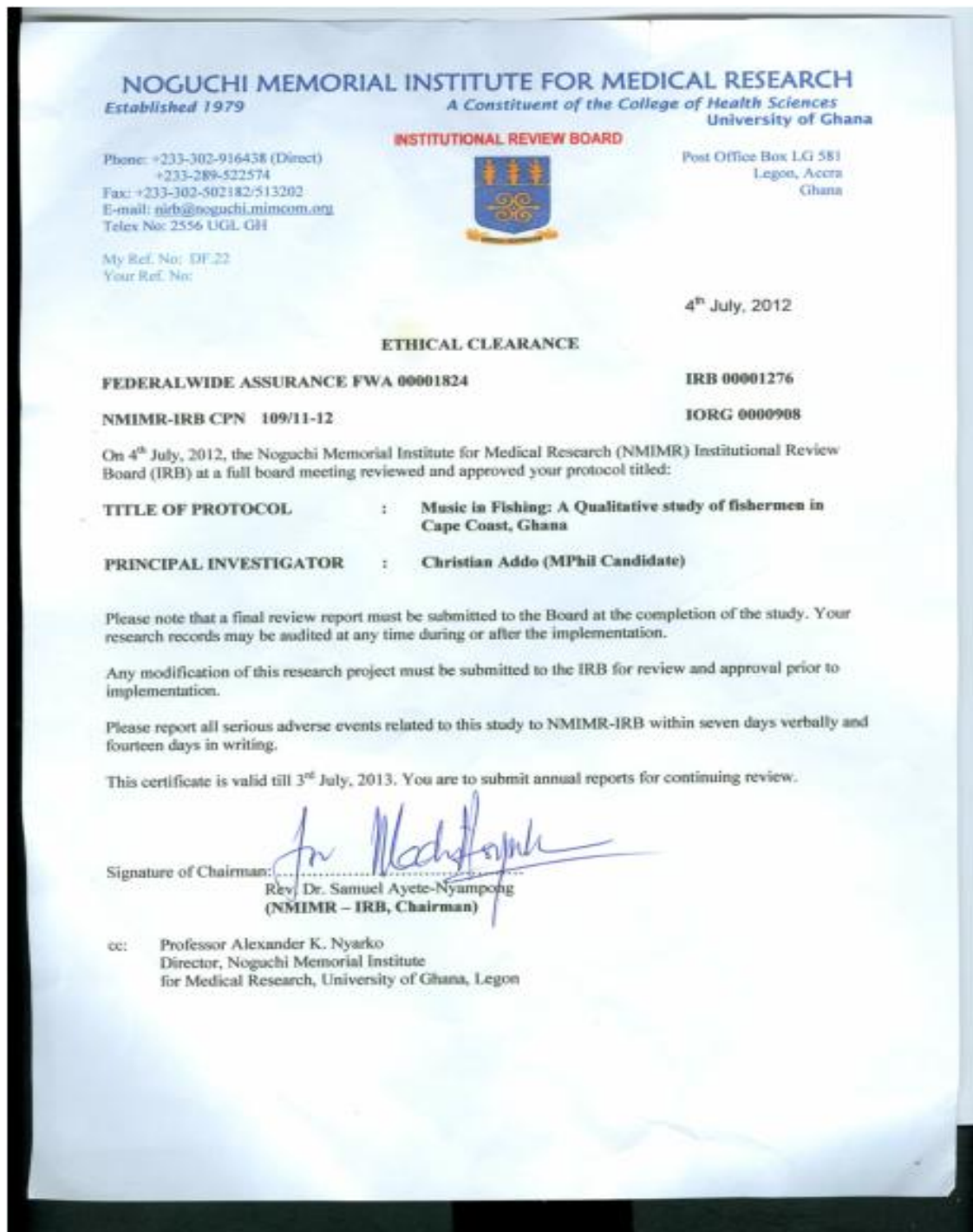
  
for Kjersti Håvardstun

Kjersti Håvardstun tlf: 55 58 29 53  
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering  
Kopi: Christian Addo, Herman Kragstveit 12-42, 7050 TRONDHEIM

Avdelingskontor / District Office  
OSLO: NSD, Sjøveier 110A, Postboks 1805 Blindern, 0316 Oslo, Tel: +47 22 85 02 11, nsd@nsd.no  
TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7050 Trondheim, Tel: +47 73 58 35 02, tjene.nsd@ntnu.no  
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## Singing in Fishing

**APPENDIX C: APPROVAL FROM NMIMR**



## Singing in Fishing

## **APPENDIX D: PARENT CONSENT FORM**

Title: Music in fishing: A Qualitative study of fishermen in Cape Coast, Ghana

Principal Investigator: **Christian Addo**

Address: Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). 7491, Trondheim,  
Norway

### **General Information about Research**

The objective of the research is to understand the real-life use value of singing in hard work like fishing and also to explore the meaning and motives behind the singing live of fishermen at sea. As a means of collecting data, your ward may be asked to participate in one or more of three forms: he will be engaged in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, he may also be asked to participate in a focused group discussion with his peers and he may be captured on video when he is singing at sea. The data collection period will last for three weeks

### **Possible Risks and Discomforts**

It is foreseeable that capturing your ward on video when singing at sea may be discomforting. There however are no foreseeable risks to your ward or work in participating in this research.

Singing in Fishing

### **Possible Benefits**

To society, this research will help in coming to terms with the real-life use-value of singing in doing hard work like fishing. And to your ward, it will help in communicating the motivation(s) behind his singing live at sea.

### **Confidentiality**

Your ward's name, the name of his vessel nor any information that relates to him and his place of work will not be made known or disclosed. Audio and video recordings made of him will be securely kept by the researcher and will be destroyed after the end of the study.

### **Voluntary Participation and Right to Leave the Research**

Your child is free to decide whether or not he wants to participate and when he does, he can also stop participating at any time if he feels uncomfortable. No one will be angry with him if he decides not to participate or chooses to discontinue his participation.

### **Contacts for Additional Information**

You may ask me any questions about this study. You can call me at any time 0279 093676 or talk to me the next time you see me. You may also contact my supervisor, Hroar Klempe on [hroar.klempe@svt.ntnu.no](mailto:hroar.klempe@svt.ntnu.no)

### **Your ward's rights as a Participant**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR-IRB) and the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). If you have any questions about your wards rights as a research participant you can contact the IRB Office between the hours of 8am-5pm through the landline 0302916438 or email addresses: [nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org](mailto:nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org) or



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[HBaidoo@noguchi.mimcom.org](mailto:HBaidoo@noguchi.mimcom.org) . You may also contact the chairman, Rev. Dr. Ayete-Nyampong through mobile number 0208152360 when necessary.

### **PARENT AGREEMENT**

The above document describing the benefits, risks and procedures for the research title (Music in fishing: A Qualitative study of fishermen in Cape Coast, Ghana) has been read and explained to me. I have been given an opportunity to have any questions about the research answered to my satisfaction. I agree to allow my ward to participate as a respondent.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Name and signature or mark of volunteer

#### **If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:**

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the parent/guardian. All questions were answered and the parent of the ward has agreed that the ward take part in the research.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Name and signature of witness

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Name and Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

## Singing in Fishing

## **APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Title: Music in fishing: A Qualitative study of fishermen in Cape Coast, Ghana

Principal Investigator: **Christian Addo**

Address: Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). 7491, Trondheim,  
Norway

### **General Information about Research**

The objective of this research is to understand the real-life use value of singing in hard work like fishing and also to explore the meaning and motivation behind the singing live of fishermen at sea. As a means of collecting data, you may be asked to participate in any of three forms: you may be involved in one-on-one interview with the researcher, you may be asked to participate in a focused group discussion with their peers, and you be captured on video when you are singing whilst working at sea. The data collection period will last for three weeks

### **Possible Risks and Discomforts**

It is foreseeable that capturing you on video when singing at sea may be discomforting. There however are no foreseeable risks to your person or work in participating in this research.

## Singing in Fishing

### **Possible Benefits**

To society, this research will help in coming to terms with the real-life use-value of singing in doing hard work like fishing. And to your person, it will help in communicating the motivation(s) behind your singing live at sea.

### **Confidentiality**

Your ward's name, the name of his vessel nor any information that relates to him and his place of work will not be made known or disclosed. Audio and video recordings made of him will be securely kept by the researcher and will be destroyed after the end of the study.

### **Voluntary Participation and Right to Leave the Research**

You are free to decide whether or not you want to participate and when you do, you can also stop participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable. No one will be angry with you if you do not want to participate or choose to discontinue your participation

### **Contacts for Additional Information**

You may ask me any questions about this study. You can call me at any time 0279 093676 or talk to me the next time you see me. You may also contact my supervisor, Hroar Klempe on [hroar.klempe@svt.ntnu.no](mailto:hroar.klempe@svt.ntnu.no)

### **Your rights as a Participant**

This research has been reviewed and approved in Norway by the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services and in Ghana by the Institutional Review Board of Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR-IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you can contact the IRB Office between the hours of 8am-5pm through

Singing in Fishing

the landline 0302916438 or email addresses: [nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org](mailto:nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org) or [HBaidoo@noguchi.mimcom.org](mailto:HBaidoo@noguchi.mimcom.org) . You may also contact the chairman, Rev. Dr. Ayete-Nyampong through mobile number 0208152360 when necessary

### **RESPONDENT AGREEMENT**

The above document describing the benefits, risks and procedures for the research title (Music in fishing: A Qualitative study of fishermen in Cape Coast, Ghana) has been read and explained to me. I have been given an opportunity to have any questions about the research answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate as a volunteer.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Name and signature or mark of volunteer

#### **If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:**

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Name and signature of witness

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Name Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

## Singing in Fishing