

Indian Seafarers' Experiences of Ill-Treatment Onboard Ships

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Abstract

This thesis investigates seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard ships. A sociological approach to ill-treatment is adopted, with a focus on characteristics of the work environment onboard which affect seafarers' experiences of and responses to ill-treatment.

A qualitative approach was employed to understand seafarers' perceptions of ill-treatment. Semi-structured interviews based on the Negative Acts Questionnaire were conducted with seafarers and managerial personnel from one multinational and one Indian company. The seafarers were drawn from all ranks. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that seafarers' perceptions, experiences and responses to ill-treatment were heavily influenced by characteristics of the work environment, including industry and company norms such as short-term contracts, the hierarchy, onboard, distance management and HR policies and training.

Seafarers encountering ill-treatment can choose to exit their situation, raise their voice or remain silent. The findings showed that while support structures such as grievance procedures and union membership existed for seafarers experiencing ill-treatment, the majority of seafarers chose to remain silent because of complex interactions between a variety of workplace features. Fears included job insecurity, concern for career advancement, fear of blacklisting and personal financial concerns. Those seafarers that did choose to escape their situations found that there could be repercussions on their finances and their career ambitions, or that exercising their voice resulted in a reshuffle of seafarers but nothing of import changed.

The professional socialisation process and culture onboard the ship are very important in influencing seafarers' perceptions of ill-treatment, and play a role in the occurrence of preventative behaviour and use of coping mechanisms. In addition, the industry norms of short-term contracts, the purported manning crisis and a race to the bottom mentality force seafarers to be highly insecure in their jobs and encourage them to accept their situation until they can escape it.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

2 nd E	Second Engineer
2 nd O	Second Officer
3 rd E	Third Engineer
3 rd O	Third Officer
4 th E	Fourth Engineer
AB	Able-bodied Seaman
BWBS	British Workplace Behaviour Survey
CDC	Continuous Discharge Certificate
CE	Chief Engineer
CO	Chief Officer
DG Shipping	Directorate General of Shipping, India
ECSA	European Community Shipowners' Association
ETF	European Transport Workers' Federation
FOC	Flag of convenience
FOSMA	Foreign Owners Ship Managers' Association
FSUI	Forward Seaman's Union of India
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
IBF Agreement	International Bargaining Forum Agreement
IC	Indian Company
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMEC	International Maritime Employers' Committee
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
INSA	Indian National Shipowners' Association
ISM Code	International Safety Management Code
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MASSA	Maritime Association of Shipowners, Shipmanagers and Agents
MLC	Maritime Labour Convention
MORI	Market and Opinion Research International
MNC	Multinational Company
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUI	Maritime Union of India
NUSI	National Union of Seafarers in India

OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OS	Ordinary Seaman
SOLAS	International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea
STCW	International Convention for Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers
TCC Agreement	Total Crew Cost Agreement

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The shipping industry is a vital facilitator of world trade and it is generally acknowledged that approximately 90% of world trade moves by sea (IMO 2012). World trade is characterised by the lowering of national barriers and the deregulation and liberalisation of markets (Notteboom 2004) and the shipping industry's close affiliation with world trade means that their fortunes rise and fall in tandem. The shipping industry has changed drastically in the last four decades, responding to an increased pace of globalization with greater technological advances, increasing global trade and various economic downturns.

There are thought to be more than 1.2 million seafarers around the world, of which Indian seafarers account for almost 7% (Drewry 2009). The multinational nature of the crews and the increase in Indian seafarers was preceded by the rise of use of flags of convenience.

Leading up to the 1970s, the majority of ships carried their country of origin's national flag and as a result, were constrained to follow the associated national regulation. This included stipulations on the nationality of the crew, and the terms and conditions of the crew's contracts. Subsequently, the effects of deep recessions in the world economy in the early 1970s and then early 1980s on sea trade (Stopford 2013) encouraged struggling ship owners to begin to "flag out" to flags of convenience to save labour costs (Gekara 2009). This process entailed registering their ship with a country that was not their country of origin to take advantage of the lack of enforcement of regulation. For example, when they flagged out, the restrictions imposed on the number of foreign seafarers that could sail on a national flagged ship no longer applied, which meant that they were free to pursue cheaper labour from other countries. Although multinational crews onboard ships are nothing significantly new in the maritime industry, they are more the norm now than the exception. In the 1970s, there began a visible shift away from the more regulated, unionised and expensive seafarers of the "traditional" maritime countries, such as the UK, Denmark, Germany and Norway to the less regulated and cheaper seafarers of Asian and

Eastern European countries, such as the Philippines, India, China, Poland and Ukraine (Kahveci and Nichols 2006; Winchester, Sampson and Shelly 2006). This is why there is a global market for seafarers today.

Additional benefits to ship owners from flagging out were the lower taxes involved, and because the FOC states did not actively check for compliance with international regulations, ship owners that flagged out could delay costly updates to their ships without fear of being fined. Kahveci and Nichols (2006) have explained that “a flag of convenience may be said to exist where there is no genuine link between the flag state and the ships on the register, and what is not in doubt is the importance of lower crewing costs” (pg. 18). There were several impacts of this change. Firstly, Lane (2000) has said that this process “...severed the link of common citizenship between shipowners and seafarers and between training and certification and flag state. It also signalled the diminution of comparable levels of competence and remit across all flag state administrative agencies” (pg. 7). The generally uniform levels of training and wages that had been maintained amongst seafarers of the OECD countries which owned the largest merchant fleets (Denmark, UK, Norway, Germany) were suddenly rendered less significant as cheaper labour began to flood the market. Currently, the majority of seafarers are hired from developing economies (Wu and Sampson 2005). These countries are often criticised for their insufficient strategies or lack of state legislation to prioritise seafarers’ welfare over commercial motives. This has led to many health and safety concerns, stemming from questions about the quality of training and education that seafarers received before beginning to sail (*Ibid.*).

The problem with flags of convenience from the point of view of the seafarers was that they enforced little to no regulation on the ships carrying their flag. This meant that those regulations which had been devised by supranational agencies such as the ILO and the IMO to protect seafarers, cargo and the environment were in effect, useless, as they were not being enforced.

Another consequence of the recession was the need for ship owners to consider cost-cutting strategies. This manifested itself in two choices – ship owners could choose to outsource crewing management to a third party, or create wholly or partly owned subsidiaries of the personnel management function, or create their own approach which utilised both options (Progoulaki 2006). These shifts in employment methods led to a rapid rise of ship management companies in the 1980s. These are

third-party companies which offer management services to ship owners, ranging from sourcing the crew to offering full technical management of the ships. Some of them were the result of ship owners expanding their services in a bid to utilise spare management capacity in the recession (by offering their services to other ship owners), and others developed when companies sold off their interests in other areas to become specialists in logistics (Alderton *et al.* 2004, pp. 20-21). Ship management companies became increasingly attractive in a time of recession when ship owners were compelled to cut costs and they turned to these companies for economies of scale and access to untapped pools of labour (Mitroussi 2003). In addition, in markets such as Hong Kong, financial speculators bought ships and then needed third-party managers to operate them, and if the speculators became bankrupt, the banks which then owned the ships continued to need third-party management as well. Some ship owners created specialist subsidiaries or in-house departments which focused entirely on the technical management of ships, and these were then involved in mergers and takeovers during the 1980s and 1990s, leading to the creation of the large-scale ship management companies that are common today (Alderton *et al.* 2004, pg. 20).

Ship owners are now heavily dependent on intermediaries such as manning agents and/or ship management companies to access the seafarer labour pool. This is because the seafarers can be drawn from a variety of countries depending on the needs and preference of the ship owners, and the ship owners themselves do not have the networks and expertise required to organise and manage the crews to ensure that they are both low-cost and effective (Progoulaki 2006). Bloor and Sampson have outlined that “today ship operators typically contract with ship managers for the supply of ship labour, who, in turn, recruit qualified labour through their local agents in developing countries and transitional states” (2009, pg. 716). The seafarers who are hired through this outsourced function tend to have different contracts, both in terms of contract length and wages, depending on the ship operator and ship sector (Bloor and Sampson 2009, pg. 713). This reliance on manning agencies and their temporary contracts has raised concerns about the impact on the working lives of seafarers, particularly with regard to the potential for stress, poor motivation and high levels of job insecurity (Couper 2000).

Ship management companies are now an important part of the shipping industry, and are the world’s largest employers of seafarers (Alderton *et al.* 2004, pg. 20). They are responsible for injecting some semblance of stability into the shipping labour market

as they need a consistent and reliable labour supply. Ship management companies grew increasingly popular because they established themselves a network of contacts with local manning agencies, trade unions, training institutions and marine academies (Progoulaki 2006). Many of the larger ship management companies have started to become involved in the training and certification of officers and the training of ratings as well. InterManager, an international trade association for the shipmanagement industry is composed of members that are “in-house or third party ship managers, crew managers or related organisations or businesses from throughout the shipping industry” and collectively, they manage more than 4,370 ships and approximately 250,000 seafarers (InterManager 2011). This indicates the scale on which third party management companies now operate within the shipping industry.

While the larger ship management companies and their associated crewing agents tend to follow international labour regulations, there are also reports of smaller and less sophisticated crewing agents who engage in illegal transactions with seafarers. The role of the employer is called into question as the research on crewing agencies suggests that they are unscrupulous in their dealings with the seafarers they hire, demanding money for poor-quality training and not being diligent in their checking of seafarers’ qualifications in order to expedite their departure for the ship (Bloor and Sampson 2009). They can also trap seafarers in a financial bond, withholding their wages from them in order to ensure that they finish their contracted term onboard to the satisfaction of the ship owner (ILO 2001). This serves to highlight the vulnerability of seafarers as workers in this highly globalised, cost-driven, deregulated and liberalised industry.

Concurrent with this background of the industry, consider the knowledge that seafaring is one of the most dangerous occupations in the world (IMO 2014). In addition to high rates of accident and injury in the workplace, seafaring is also characterised by high rates of suicide (Roberts and Marlow 2005). This clearly raises concerns for the mental health of seafarers and has been linked to fatigue and mental stress, both dangerous for workers already based in a dangerous environment. In this context, Walters and Bailey (2013) have pointed out the dearth of attention that has been paid to the issue of ‘bullying and harassment’ onboard ships (pg. 63). A recent article reviewing the current status of research on the mental health of seafarers highlighted the need for more research (Iversen 2012). Iversen (2012) found that amongst the many stress-inducing changes in the workplace

characterised earlier, the effects of bullying and harassment onboard could lead to anxiety and depression, and in extreme cases, suicide.

This is echoed in the land-based literature on the effects of bullying and harassment, which tend to be measured in two ways. One is to assess the effects on the organisation and the other is to explore the effects they have on the individual.

Vega and Comer (2005) have commented on the costs to the organisation that are a result of bullying. These are primarily the cost of replacing employees who have left as a result of bullying, an increase in employee absenteeism, a reduction in performance and the loss of innovation and/or creativity (pg. 106). It has also been suggested that bullying in the workplace can lower morale, mar the organisation's image, and lead to higher legal costs (Rafferty 2001). However, it has been argued that ill-treatment can result in benefits to the organisation as well, and understanding its interaction with management control forms the basis for a key argument in this thesis.

The effects of bullying on the individual can be severe, resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder-like symptoms in some cases (Matthiesen and Einarsen 2004; Mikkelsen and Einarsen 2002; Leymann and Gustafsson 1996; Tehrani 2004). In other cases, victims can experience anxiety, depression, insomnia, stress and general ill-health (Hoel *et al.* 2004). Hoel *et al.* (2010) have explained that different types of bullying appear to result in different outcomes in terms of the effect on the victim. For example, bullying which was specifically targeted at an individual most strongly resulted in psychosomatic complaints and depression (pg. 368). This is supported by Vartia (2001), who asserts that, "of the different forms of bullying, an attack on the person's privacy or personal derogation has shown the strongest and most consistent correlation to psychological ill-health" (pg. 63). Vartia (2001) has also concluded "that especially becoming a target of bullying, but also observing bullying in one's work unit, is a significant stress factor related to health risk" (pg. 67).

In addition, it appears that the health effects of bullying continue to linger after the victim has stopped being bullied, and although levels of stress may decrease, they still remain higher than they were before the victim began to be bullied. There are also financial costs to the individual, stemming from lost days of work, as well as potential medical bills to cover the health effects of bullying (Giga *et al.* 2008).

However, Hoel *et al.* (2010) have suggested that similar to the problems with the reported organisational costs of bullying, it is not necessarily the case that bullying results in higher levels of ill-health. The causal link remains improved and it is possible that people who are more susceptible to ill-health are more likely to report themselves as targets of ill-treatment or are more susceptible to ill-treatment (Hoel and Cooper 2000).

Taking the vulnerability of seafarers as workers and the evidence demonstrating the importance of research in this area into account, this thesis adopts a more sociological approach to the idea of 'bullying and harassment' and uses the term 'ill-treatment' as identified by Fevre *et al.* (2012). The study considers unreasonable treatment and disrespect and denigration of seafarers onboard. A sociological approach not only encourages the investigation of environmental factors within the workplace but also allows a more macro-level consideration of the context in which the workplace and its employment practices function. This helps to provide an understanding of the ways in which commercial pressure and industry norms influence the employment relationship and therefore affect employees' experiences of ill-treatment, and will provide clearer insight into steps that can be taken to address these issues.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

To set the stage for the thesis and introduce the conceptual framework, the next chapter covers a series of interconnected topics based in the world of work. It draws links between features of the work environment and the occurrence of ill-treatment. The chapter begins by gaining an understanding of the need for dignity at work and the evolution of the study of ill-treatment in the workplace. It then considers the literature which explores employees' potential responses to ill-treatment. Having established potential organisational and industry-wide features of the workplace that influence ill-treatment, the chapter will then explore the globalised work environment within which ill-treatment can occur, outlining the place of human resource management (HRM), collective bargaining and the use of short-term contracts. Finally, the chapter turns to the social environment within which ill-treatment occurs. This includes consideration of the social interaction between colleagues as well as control methods imposed by management.

The third chapter outlines important aspects of the shipping industry in which this study is based. A brief introduction to important economic, technological, social and organisational developments in the industry over the last four decades has already been provided earlier in the introduction chapter. Chapter 3 will continue from that point to sketch the supra-national regulatory framework that governs seafarers and introduces the trade unions that engage in collective bargaining on behalf of the majority of Indian seafarers. The next section explains those facets of life onboard a ship that have been identified as important structural features in the previous chapter, detailing the hierarchy, socialisation process and social life and communication of seafarers. Finally, the chapter will consider existing maritime literature on health and safety, as well as older records of ill-treatment onboard ships. It ends with a consideration of four research questions that demonstrate the need for an interpretive sociological approach to the study of ill-treatment, namely: How do Indian seafarers perceive ill-treatment? How do different features of the work environment influence the occurrence of ill-treatment of Indian seafarers? How do Indian seafarers respond to ill-treatment? How do Indian seafarers cope with ill-treatment onboard?

Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter, and will outline studies undertaken on ill-treatment, as well as studies in the maritime literature, to arrive at a two-staged research design which will answer the questions elicited from the previous two chapters. It will detail the use of a qualitative approach which entailed interviews and document analysis, as well as use of fieldwork notes from observation at two companies based in Mumbai, India. Consideration is also given to the process of access negotiation, selection of respondents and the site of research, and data and document analysis. The chapter ends with a reflexive account of the research process, and ethical considerations.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are data analysis chapters and present the data elicited from the fieldwork in accordance with key themes that emerged from the analysis, and that address the research questions. Therefore, chapter 5 introduces the two companies that form the basis of the study. Particular attention is paid to their recruitment and retention of seafarers, presence of grievance procedures and presence of unions. The second half of the chapter presents seafarers' perceptions of management and vice versa, and their perceptions of what ill-treatment is, thus answering the first research question.

Chapter 6 addresses the second research question and is concerned with those features of the work environment which influence the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard as well as seafarers' ability to respond to it. This includes a focus on the effects of professional socialisation, the presence of a strict hierarchy, the necessary use of distance management, and the application of the human resource appraisal policy and training on management methods.

Chapter 7 considers seafarers' key fears for financial and job security and career advancement, and how these affect ill-treatment. The next two sections focus on seafarers' use of individualistic prevention strategies and coping mechanisms onboard. Thus, the third and fourth research questions are addressed.

Chapter 8 is the discussion chapter which brings together the themes identified and explored in the preceding three chapters and considers the ways in which the literature and the findings can inform each other. It explores this under the umbrella themes of formal mechanisms of management control onboard; informal management control; rhetoric versus reality; coping mechanisms; and response options. It also critically examines the relevance of the Indian context and ends with consideration of features of the work environment which proved to both enable and hinder the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard.

The final chapter summarises the key findings and highlights the thesis' original contribution to literature. It also offers policy recommendations on how to approach certain key issues that were highlighted in the research, before acknowledging the limitations of the study and offering suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Ill-Treatment in Land-Based Workplaces

2.1 Ill-Treatment in the Workplace

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first explores what ill-treatment in the workplace is, beginning from recognition of the importance of dignity at work to determining what is meant by ill-treatment for the purposes of this thesis. The second section considers responses to ill-treatment in the workplace. The third section draws upon literature that explores the creation and role of human resource management, the implications of temporary contract work and the control of labour by management. The final section looks at socialisation and the role of identity in the workplace.

2.1.1 What is ill-treatment in the workplace?

The Kantian idea of dignity is a good starting point from which to trace the way in which dignity at work has been approached. Kant believed that dignity is above all values and has an intrinsic worth and is an end in itself. It therefore has a moral dimension, meaning that it represents a choice between right and wrong. He explains that “skill and diligence in labour have a market value; wit, lively imagination, and humour, have fancy value; on the other hand, fidelity to promises, benevolence from principle (not from instinct), have an intrinsic worth” (2008, pg. 57).

The ethical interpretation of this moral consideration of dignity has informed discourse on the right to dignity in the broader global context and has formed the basis of several supra-national organisations which were formed after World War II (Perry 2005). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states in the Preamble “Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (UN 1948). This reaffirms the approach to dignity as a basic human right and therefore suggests that it should be something which should be protected and maintained in the workplace, along with other basic human rights.

The discipline of psychology began to focus on violations of dignity at work, through disrespect and denigration and physical violence, in the work of Scandinavian researchers in the 1980s (Einarsen *et al.* 1994; Leymann 1996; Bjorkqvist *et al.* 1994). There was a shift of interest from bullying in schools to bullying in the workplace. Different terms were coined and various definitions applied to enable quantitative research in the field. Some of these terms include bullying, harassment and 'mobbing', and researchers from different disciplines applied their own understanding of the terms, sometimes based on the national tradition they were researching in.

Bullying is an ambiguous term and is therefore difficult to define. However, it is important to try to understand it because it is the term most widely used in the literature when referring to incidents of disrespect and denigration in the workplace. Einarsen has tried to condense the various interpretations of bullying into a single definition which states that,

“bullying has been defined as all those repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment” (1999, pg. 17).

He further emphasises that the two common characteristics of all instances of bullying are that they occur regularly and over a period of time, and that they constitute aggressive behaviour that is intended to be and/or perceived to be hostile by the recipient (1999, pg.18). The importance of the frequency of bullying is something which has been continually reiterated in the literature (Einarsen *et al.* 1994; Rayner 1997; Hoel and Beale 2006), however this relies on a psychological approach that emphasises the personal characteristics of the people involved. For example, in parallel with school bullying, the bully may naturally have a forceful personality with certain aggressive tendencies, and the bullied person may be shy and non-confrontational (Coyne *et al.* 2000).

As research into bullying became more prolific and gained media interest (Lee 2000), researchers began to consider different approaches to the issue. They focused more on organisational causes of workplace bullying such as organisational culture, organisational change and work design (Salin and Hoel 2011). This allowed for an

increasingly sociological approach to the subject which was concerned with the social and organisational factors that influenced the occurrence of bullying in the workplace (Fevre *et al.* 2012). These developments in the field introduced new and different terms to describe the phenomenon, such as workplace incivility (Pearson, *et al.* 2001), negative behaviour (Burnes and Pope 2007), ill-treatment and trouble at work (Fevre *et al.* 2012).

The term 'workplace incivility' was defined by Pearson *et al.* through the use of a robust research process using mixed methods over a period of 3 years and targeting different occupational groups in the United States. They said it is;

low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others (2001, pg. 1397).

The consideration for violation of 'workplace norms' speaks directly to sociological ideas of moral understandings and dignity in the workplace, and demonstrates a more sociological approach to ill-treatment in the workplace. Significantly, it omitted the necessity for actions to be 'repeated', as in Einarsen's (1999) definition above. Burnes and Pope (2007) drew on this approach and used a questionnaire with quantitative and qualitative elements to evaluate employees' experiences of workplace bullying and 'incivility' in two NHS trusts. They turned to the term 'negative behaviour' to define incidences that were classed as incivility and could not strictly be defined as 'bullying', but were as significant as 'bullying' in their adverse effect on employees' well-being and performance. This led to their suggestion that it is important to consider employees' negative experiences in the workplace that exist outside of the psychological approach to 'bullying'.

In 2009, Fevre *et al.* published a study of fair treatment in the workplace based on a survey of a representative sample of the population in the UK. A factor analysis of the results elicited 3 types of negative behaviour: unreasonable management; personal denigration or disrespect; and violence at work (Fevre *et al.* 2011). These factors constitute an attack on an individual's dignity at work. Their use of the term 'negative behaviour' throughout the report signified a shift away from the stricter definition of 'bullying' or 'harassment'. In their book 'Trouble at Work', Fevre *et al.* (2012) postulated that the term 'negative behaviour' was still mired in attributing blame to

people, and in order to remain open to the idea of a bullying organisation, as suggested above, the term 'ill-treatment' was better suited. Throughout the remainder of this thesis, 'ill-treatment' will be the term used to refer to the collective negative behaviours of unreasonable treatment, incivility and disrespect in the workplace, except when referring specifically to someone else's work.

Ill-treatment in its various forms is often but not always perpetrated by managers (Pearson and Porath 2005). For example, drawing upon an analysis of a sample of 88 European studies, Zapf *et al.* (2011) found that 65.4% of victims were bullied by supervisors, whereas 39.4% were bullied by colleagues and 9.7% were bullied by subordinates. This demonstrates that while supervisors are involved in perpetrating ill-treatment a majority of the time, there is a strong possibility of colleagues or subordinates being the instigators, which snapshots the complexity of ill-treatment in the workplace.

However, Liefoghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001) have posited that workplace bullying can also occur in a depersonalised form, with the employees attributing bullying behaviour to the organisation or management as a whole, instead of identifying one person as the perpetrator. This has been supported by D'Cruz and Noronha's (2009) research into call centre employees in Mumbai, India, in which they found that organisational practices and processes could perpetrate ill-treatment in the workplace.

2.1.2 The employment context and responses to ill-treatment in the workplace

Responses to ill-treatment, as with responses to any negative event within an organisation, result in two choices – exit or voice (Hirschmann 1970). Employees can choose to either voice their problems and seek help, or they can exit the firm. Critics of Hirschman's work point out that he did not take into account that voice can be exercised in a collective and individual manner (Dowding *et al.* 2000) and focused on unions as the only option when many more are available.

However, there is a third option, that of choosing to remain silent. Donaghey *et al.* (2011) have explained that this is a choice that employees make when using their voice might bring about adverse consequences for them, such as retaliation. Silence is also chosen in situations where the management discourages disagreement with

its policies or if the employees feel that voicing their concerns will not bring about any change as management will simply ignore what they have to say (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin 2003). Choosing silence may also signify respect for the power dynamic in the company, which may be a result of cultural influence.

It is important to know about the three ways of responding to ill-treatment because of what the choice of response says about the work environment. Of course, it can be argued that personal characteristics are involved, but essentially, people will respond in the way that they (1) feel able/allowed to and; (2) feel they can get away with minimal fallout to their own job security. Following on from this, Freeman (1980) has found that unionised workers are less likely to exit the organisation compared to non-unionised workers. He suggests that this is because the union gives them the option to exercise their voice and find a solution instead of having to choose exit, even when controlling for factors such as length of tenure with the company. So consider here that the important question is; how do different environmental/structural aspects of the workplace have an effect on how a person will choose to respond to ill-treatment?

It is important to consider here that any response to experiencing ill-treatment constitutes a process in which the victims must make a considered decision. Fevre *et al.* (2012) point out that “employees take a great deal of persuasion to be convinced that their employer is *not* treating them reasonably” (pg. 39, original emphasis). They suppose this is because employees, particularly those in the lower levels of organisations, rationalise the behaviour of their employer by taking into account the way their organisation operates in the broader economic market. Fevre *et al.* (2012) believe that the higher ranked employees may be more cynical but will nonetheless expect to find rational reasoning in their workplace. If they experience unreasonable treatment and find that the organisation is not behaving in a rational manner, that is, not operating to maximise productivity and efficiency, their trust in the organisation is violated. This indicates that there is a significant link between organizational trust and ill-treatment, that is, violation of trust can itself constitute ill-treatment.

This reluctance to take action can also be attributed to the socialisation process explored earlier, in two key ways. The first is the extent to which the employee is influenced by the organisational culture around him, as the people he works with “can help him interpret (or misinterpret) the events he experiences so that he can take appropriate (or inappropriate) action in his altered situation” (Van Maanen 1978, pg. 20). The second is, as Salin (2003) has suggested, that some victims may consider

complaining about ill-treatment to be a sign of disloyalty against the organisation, and therefore they refrain.

D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) have identified a process that Indian call centre workers undergo when they experience bullying which sheds light on the importance of their perceptions of ill-treatment and how this further influences their response to it. The first stage in this process is confusion, as the workers do not realise they are being bullied. They attribute any irregular behaviour to the stresses of the job and assume that it is something which is shared by all the employees working in that high-pressured environment.

They then begin to realise they are being targeted and share their observations with their colleagues and friends and family outside the workplace in order to gain clarity and support for their situation. In the next stage, they approach HR and maintain a positive outlook but are not helped, and on the contrary, are attacked for being troublemakers. This leads to the last stage in which, disillusioned, they choose to exit the organisation. Throughout this process, D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) emphasise the importance of the informal support networks, which throws into sharp focus the situation of seafarers, who are quite isolated from their own informal support networks for prolonged periods of time. In addition to this, it is clear that D'Cruz and Noronha concluded that HRM creates an environment in which bullying is able to thrive and may even be encouraged, results which closely echo ideas put forth by Lewis and Rayner (2003).

Employers' anti-bullying policies are implemented in many workplaces in the UK but Lewis and Rayner (2003) have identified several problems with these. The first is that if, as research suggests, it is the case that the managers themselves are bullying their employees, there is a clear conflict of interest between what they are doing and any supportive measures that they are supposed to take to help the victims of bullying in the workplace. In addition to this, Beale and Hoel (2011) tell us that if managers are being bullied by fellow managers or more senior management, they may not want to express support for any subordinates who are experiencing similar problems. This examination of an organisational feature that is supposed to support employees who have experienced ill-treatment, quite clearly illustrates that as part of their decision making process, workers must consider the likelihood of action being taken in response to their complaint. If they do not have trust in their managers'

ability to support them, they are more likely to choose to remain silent or exit the workplace.

Secondly, Lewis and Rayner (2003) call the involvement of the HR function itself into question, as once again, there can be a conflict of interests. This is relevant for when the anti-bullying policies at managerial level have failed, as seen above. For example, an employee may wish to call upon a formal grievance procedure and pursue it to an employment tribunal, but it is in the interests of the HR department to protect the company from litigious action and it may therefore discourage the employee from pursuing their legal right. The lack of autonomy of the HR function from senior management means that despite its purported role as being there to help employees, they are limited in this by their inherent loyalty to the management. The repercussions for the employees, then, are that even if they choose to voice their complaint, they may not be successful, and not only will this mean their case is not resolved to their satisfaction, but also that others who observe their situation will be more likely to choose exit or silence should the same happen to them. Going beyond the theoretical arguments of Lewis and Rayner, Fevre *et al.* (2012) found that not only did employees fear that their attempts to find support from their managers and company would be unsuccessful, but they also feared the repercussions of raising their voices at all, not wanting to be 'blacklisted' or have their 'cards marked' in a way that would impede their future career progression (pg. 220). Rayner and Lewis (2011) have addressed some of these concerns by suggesting practical steps that companies can take to increase the efficacy of their policies against ill-treatment. These include suggestions to carefully arrange the sequence of the policy and maintain open lines of communication between departments.

It has been suggested by Roscigno, Lopez and Hodson (2009) that wage differentials may make a difference to the extent to which people experiencing denigration may be able to turn to support. For example, they posit that poorly paid workers may be easier targets of bullying as those who are well paid are likely to be in positions closer to their supervisors in the hierarchy. They may therefore be more highly educated or possess greater insider knowledge and be more willing to access grievance procedures and other forms of support. However, this can be refuted in two ways. First, as found in the British Workplace Behaviour Survey (BWBS) (Fevre *et al.* 2012), permanent staff with managerial responsibilities are more likely to experience unreasonable treatment than those without managerial responsibilities. Secondly, the better-paid employees are also more likely to experience unreasonable

treatment than less-paid employees. These theories suggest there is room for research to be conducted which explores the relationship between hierarchical position and the experience of ill-treatment.

2.2: The Formal Control of Labour

This section focuses on the effect of changing economic pressures on the use of non-standard forms of employment, a decline in collective bargaining and the rise of human resource management (HRM). These will be considered in a Western context, as that is the genesis of the HRM models that have been exported around the world, and this will be followed by a section which considers HRM in the Indian context.

2.2.1 Non-standard forms of employment

One of the most important changes in the make-up of the workforce is the increase in non-standard forms of employment. This term includes but is not limited to part-time workers, contract workers and temporary workers and these workers are also referred to as the contingent workforce. Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003) refer to the 1999 Labour Force Survey statistics from the UK to highlight a five percent increase in part-time workers from 1984 to 1999, and an increase of 1.7 percent in the number of temporary workers from the early 90's to 1999 (pg. 669). They also state that there has been a change in the composition of non-standard workers, to incorporate more professional and managerial workers, as seen in Labour Force Survey 1998, which showed an eight percent increase of temporary workers in the top three occupations in the Standard Occupational Classification between 1991 and 1999 (Hoque and Kirkpatrick 2003, pg.669). There has been debate on the rising rates of non-standard forms of employment and whether this results in a growing insecurity of work. Fevre (2007) has argued that there is a lack of evidence for the causal link between non-standard work and job insecurity and refers to the Work Employee Relations Survey data from 1998 and 2004 to show that employees in the UK were feeling more secure than before. He refers to Green's (2006) data to explain that employees' perceptions of job insecurity rose and fell in tandem regardless of whether they were permanent or temporary workers. This does not mean that temporary workers do not feel more insecure than permanent workers, but as Benito (2004 *in* Fevre 2007)

pointed out, the relationship between temporary work and insecurity is more complex and mitigated by other factors such as health and previous experience of unemployment (pg. 527).

Possible reasons for the marginalisation of temporary workers in the workplace have been suggested by Kalleberg (2000), who explained that in Europe, countries with more rigid labour laws have higher rates of short-term or fixed-contract workers than countries with more relaxed labour laws. This suggests that organisations like to have the freedom to hire on more workers or disengage them as required, which is the main perk for companies of hiring fixed-contract workers. The other advantage is cost. Temporary workers are cheaper to hire and maintain as their salaries are generally lower than those in permanent work and they receive fewer benefits (Webb 2007). However, it has been suggested that the implications of being a temporary worker are not the same across the spectrum of occupations. The expected marginalisation of temporary workers may not be applicable to those who are at the higher end of spectrum, as seen by Cam, Purcell and Tailby (2003). They found that those contingent workers that work in professional occupations have pay that is higher than average and have high levels of human capital (pg. 74). However, the contingent workers that do not work in professional occupations are low-paid and poorly-trained.

Regardless of the differences between experiences of professional and non-professional temporary workers, it is still argued that temporary employees in general will be more marginalised at work compared to permanent employees (Mallon and Duberley 2000). Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003) utilised the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey of employees to analyse the impact of non-standard work at management and non-management level and found that both professional and non-professional temporary workers were less likely to have received training and developmental opportunities compared to permanent employees. They also found that professional temporary workers were less likely to be consulted about their views on future plans for the workplace and changes to work practice compared to permanent employees (pg. 679)

For the purposes of this study, the concern is that the increased insecurity that stems from a short-term employment contract puts the employer in a very strong position to negotiate various aspects of working life, including work intensification and pressure to admit concessions in order to keep their job. The reason this is so important to

consider is that seafarers are engaged on temporary contracts and the relevance of this to their experience of and response to ill-treatment should not be understated. Hodson, Roscigno and Lopez (2006) have argued that, as guarantees of job security increase organisational trust, “decreased job security can lead to distrust and to an environment prone to bullying” (pg. 386). Furthermore, Emma Calvert (2010) has found that in the private sector in Ireland, employees were more likely to have experienced ill-treatment if they were in precarious (or non-standard) forms of employment, whereas the opposite was true of the public sector.

2.2.2 The decline of unions

Writing from an industrial relations perspective, Ironside and Seifert (2003) frame the concerns associated with contingent work within a larger context. They argue that the employer-employee relationship is constructed in such a way as to allow for ill-treatment to occur, because of the serious power imbalance between employer and employee, and because of the basic nature of the capitalist employment relationship, which exploits the employees. They assert that industrial relations should act as a suitable champion of the welfare rights of employees when the evidence points to existing strategies, policies and practices by the company and national or international legislation having failed.

In addition to the rapid changes in the workplace such as deindustrialisation, a shift from the manufacturing to service industries and the changing nature of work, is the concurrent decline in collective bargaining through trade unions. This has been well documented in EU countries (Sano and Williamson 2008) and evidenced by the decline in trade union membership even in countries that traditionally had high levels of trade union membership, such as Sweden, where membership fell from 80.6% of wage and salary earners in 1999 to 67.5% in 2012 (OECD 2014). The move from manufacturing and heavy industry to a greater emphasis on the service sector signified a broader spectrum of changes than just the obvious shift in skill sets. It precedes variation in the patterns of employment and the resultant changes in the needs of workers. Seeing that a trade union acts as a representative of the workers and all its roles are reliant upon the fundamental fact that it exists to engage in collective bargaining and provide its members with services that they require, it is apparent that a sudden shift in needs of the workers will result in the redundancy of the union until it recognises this and changes itself to match (Hancké, 1993).

One of the purposes of unions is to provide workers with a 'voice' and allow them to express their opinions (Pencavel 2005). However, with the emphasis on individualisation of the employment relationship, employers pushed for the need to engage with workers on an individual basis (Storey and Bacon 1993). Therefore, growing individualisation also posed a threat to trade union membership as trade unions represented collective will and action and this was being undermined by growing recognition of individual workers under HRM practices (Deery and Mitchell 1999).

2.2.3 The rise of human resource management

In the UK, the development of the human resource management function was preceded by the existence of personnel management. This had taken on 5 key roles by the end of the 1970s, consisting of the collective bargaining role; the implementer of legislation role; the bureaucratic role; the social conscience of business role; and a growing performance improvement role (Cannel 2004 *in* Bloisi 2007, pg. 9). The discourse was very much rooted in industrial relations, trade unions were involved in negotiations and personnel management was seen as 'workforce-centred' (Bloisi 2007, pg. 12). It was, therefore, supposed to act as the middle-man between workers and management, conveying the needs of each to the other. The distinction from HRM lies in the perception of HRM as a management function and is involved in the continuous development of its people for the growth of the company, from a strategic perspective (Guest 1987). Guest explains HRM as encouraging high commitment from the employees and being based on an individual, high-trust relationship between employees and employer. The distinction between personnel management and HRM seems to show a glaring lack of concern for employees' welfare. However, this is partially addressed by the classification of 'hard' HRM and 'soft' HRM made by Storey (1989). 'Hard' HRM stems from the American tradition and relies on the view that a company's employees should be treated as a business resource in a way that will best achieve the organisation's goals (Bloisi 2007, pg. 23). This is a blatantly exploitative approach to the management of labour.

'Soft' HRM is not about directing workers to do as required, but about winning their trust and having them commit to the company's goals and visions of their own volition. To facilitate this, Guest has said that "organisations need to construct a 'new

reality” (1999, pg. 6), and organisational culture and organisational commitment become key to achieving this. The criticism of ‘soft’ HRM is that it appears to be a more appealing approach than ‘hard’ HRM due to its purported consideration for the workers, but it is instead an isolating and subtle control mechanism employed by management (Keenoy, 1990; Legge, 1995; Willmott 1993). Truss *et al.*’s 1997 study looking at eight in-depth case studies based in well-performing private sector companies in the UK revealed that none of the companies employed either a purely ‘hard’ or purely ‘soft’ model of HRM. In fact, they found that while the rhetoric was often that of ‘soft’ HRM, the reality of the policies and practices was ‘hard’ HRM, indicating that ‘soft’ HRM was being used as the sugar to coat the bitter pill of ‘hard’ HRM. They further suggest that the difference between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ HRM should be remembered when conducting research in the area so as to gain deeper insight into what is rhetoric and what is reality for the workers.

In their 2011 review of existing literature on bullying in the workplace, Beale and Hoel theorised that rather than focusing on the costs of bullying to management, there was evidence to suggest that it may be in the employer’s interests to allow some elements of bullying in the workplace to function as a form of managerial control, explaining that workers may be more compliant and productive when working in a ‘climate of fear’ (pg. 12). They posited that this could be a new point of departure for sociological contributions to the field, as it conceptualised bullying as a feature of the capitalist employment relationship. The costs of ill-treatment to the organisation have been used to encourage management to employ prevention measures (Giga *et al.* 2008), but Beale and Hoel’s (2011) theory suggests that in some situations, the benefits of tacitly allowing ill-treatment may outweigh these costs. Similar thoughts were put forward by Fevre *et al.* (2012), who found that managers played a dominant role in promoting trouble at work and benefited from the aggressive management tactics that influenced the performance of employees. For example, the financial advisors in a financial services organisation reported experiencing more negative workplace behaviours than other groups of employees, often relating to deliberate humiliation or aggression to do with their performance and not meeting sales targets. They also reported that a manager would aggressively manage a failing advisor so that they would leave the organisation without having to be made redundant (Fevre *et al.* 2012, pg. 137). In this case, it is clear that it is actually financially beneficial for the company to allow ill-treatment, as they are able to dispose of a weak performer without having to pay compensation for their decision. The financial services organisation had formal HR procedures in place that were available to the employees

experiencing ill-treatment, but in this case, none of them made any formal complaints, citing a lack of trust in the procedure.

This basic dichotomy in its nature continues to exist. On the one hand, HR represents the dictates of management and on the other, it is supposed to provide support structures to its employees. It is a discipline at war with itself, particularly if one considers that management will always prioritise its commitment to profit over the well-being of its employees (Renwick 2003).

There is also a move in some organisations towards strategic HRM, which is considered to be a higher management function and is therefore aligned with the goals of higher performance for higher profits (Becker and Huselid 2006). This includes the implementation of HR roles such as 'business partners', which definitively separate themselves from the 'personnel' functions of HRM and focus on the strategic, 'higher' functions which focus on deploying the organisation's human resources for the best result in terms of performance and profits for the shareholders (Harrington *et al.* 2012).

2.3 III-Treatment in a Globalised Workplace

2.3.1 A globalised workplace

Blyton, Heery and Turnbull explain that "an overarching effect of the twin forces of globalization and financialization – between them incorporating a range of developments from rapid industrialization of economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China to spreading trade liberalization and deregulation – is an intensification of competition and an accelerated drive to maximize (short-term) returns, partly through securing lower costs and particularly, lower labour costs (Cappelli, 1999; Sennett, 2006)" (2011, pg. 5). The international competition put greater pressure on organisations to perform to higher standards in order to survive.

In addition to the shifts in the workplace explored in the previous section, globalisation presents a threat to the continuity of jobs within one country. Multinational companies now had the option to prioritise their profits and access workers in other countries who may provide the same service for a lower cost, and

this raised new fears of a potential 'race to the bottom'. A factor that could be considered an impetus for a race to the bottom is the "microeconomic leakiness" that Palley (2004) discusses. This is the most relevant to the idea of a race to the bottom because "increased microeconomic leakiness enables firms to use the threat of job relocation to win wage and workplace concessions" (Palley 2004, p.26). Moreover, this begins to have an impact at a national level because MNCs are able to employ similar tactics on a grander scale. Although this was a threatening concept to the OECD countries of the global North, it meant that the countries who won new jobs were also under threat of eventually becoming out priced by other countries of the global South who were competing for the foreign direct investment. These general trends were also experienced in the shipping industry, as will be seen in the next chapter. The combination of job insecurity from temporary contracts with an appreciation for the macro-level threat of the possibility of sourcing seafarers from a different country, can filter down to have a profound effect on experiences and responses to ill-treatment onboard ships.

Harvey *et al.* (2009) postulate that bullying may be more prevalent in global organisations because of the cultural and sometimes physical distance between management and the workers, allowing less surveillance and interference than would otherwise be possible. This, they say is also related to employees working in a 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1977), where cultural differences mean that it is easier for management to pay less attention to the employees and a type of 'out of sight, out of mind' culture prevails. Rayman (2001) also approached the issue of dignity at work from the broader perspective discussed earlier, asserting that the global economy currently promotes and follows a bottom-line mentality, and this prevents workers from attaining dignity at work. This is relevant to the case of seafarers, as problems with 'decent' work have been addressed at the highest levels of supra-national regulation, namely with the ILO and IMO. This will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter on the maritime context, however, it does raise questions about the extent to which workers feel the effects of this supposed 'bottom-line mentality' in their dealings with ill-treatment.

Harvey *et al.* (2009) also posit that the type of legal framework that may be implemented to counter bullying in the workplace is still establishing itself in the developed economies and this has not yet gained much momentum in the emerging economies (Yamada 2003). This lack of a common legal framework coupled with the lack of managerial supervision leaves workers in a global organisation particularly

vulnerable to bullying. The validity of this concern for seafarers will also be addressed in the next chapter through references to supra-national legislation.

In addition to Harvey *et al.*'s theories, Noronha and D'Cruz's (2009) research on call-centres in Mumbai further illustrates the ways in which the nature of a globalised workplace can contribute to what they termed an "oppressive work regime" (pg. 31). Their research explored employees' subjective experiences of work and highlighted the bearing that the global nature of the supply chain had on the extent to which the employees would acquiesce to their employers' wishes. The workers' heightened awareness of the 'race to the bottom' mentality of the organisation's clients translated into pressure to constantly perform at the highest level or risk the company losing the contract. Focusing on a national context will provide the opportunity to explore these ideas in greater detail. To that end, a brief introduction to workplaces in India with a focus on the rise of human resource management entails the bulk of the next section.

2.3.2 The Indian context

It is crucial to recognise the "...work situation as a social construct whose structure depends on the social processes that shape the work domain..." (Geertz 1973, pg. 25). This indicates that the way in which an organisation functions depends heavily on the way people behave and interact in the workplace. In relation to this, the culture of the workers has a direct impact on the way in which they interact within the workplace.

There is a large amount of literature referring to the impact of culture on the ability of multinational companies to function successfully in their varied locations. Culture can be described as a "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (Hofstede 1980, pg. 25) which indicates that people who share a culture will share certain values and expectations from their way of life. Forster reinforces this by explaining that, "A person's perceptions, attitudes, motivations, values, learning experience and personality are all, to a very large extent, shaped by culture" (2000, pg.63).

It is often acknowledged that HRM practices must sometimes be adapted to accommodate the national cultural context within which a certain company is operating (Haier Case Study, 2004). The same must apply to seafarers, as although they are a global workforce, they are still very much grounded in their own national

context. Their country of origin, in most cases, determines their education and subsequent training at sea and as a result, their attitudes, behaviour and expectations from the job. This is reflected in Gahan and Abeysekera's work (2009), which brings together the cultural conditioning of the individual as well as the individual's self-construal and links these to the work values an individual has. They also point out the relationship between work values and values held in other domains of life which appears to suggest that culture, combined with national context, plays a key role in determining expectations from life as a seafarer.

India was a state-regulated economy from achieving independence in 1947 until 1990. In June 1991, after the Gulf War, oil prices rose dramatically and India fell into economic crisis as the foreign exchange reserves plunged to \$1.2 billion which was "barely sufficient to pay for two weeks imports" (Ahluwalia, 1994: 7). Inflation peaked at 17% in August 1991 and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund offered to rescue India provided that India shifted from its policy of high regulation to a 'free market economy' (Bhatnagar 2009). The changes that resulted led to the liberalisation of foreign investment, which in turn introduced a drastic rise in foreign competition for Indian firms (Budhwar 2003). Indian organisations have come to recognise that in order to be able to compete with foreign firms, they will need to adopt new technology, improve their products and reduce costs of production by investing in the development of their human resources (Budhwar 2003). This led to companies having to rethink their business strategy and HRM rose to greater importance. Sparrow and Budhwar elaborate that "They must cope with new problems of de-skilling, re-skilling and multi-skilling, work force reduction policies, retention and career development issues" (1997, pg. 228). In order to cope with the seismic shift in the type of demands placed upon companies, "this requires considerable change in the attitudes, working systems and human resource skills of Indian organizations" (Sparrow and Budhwar 1997, pg. 228).

The reason the Indian context is so important here is because Indian organisations were suddenly put upon to change their methods of working in order to compete with the influx of foreign firms (Venkata Ratnam 1995). Although HR systems already existed in India before the advent of MNCs, their arrival increased the pace of development and change in the field of HRM in India. This suggests that instead of having the opportunity to organically grow their own HRM systems, it is possible that they imported HR paradigms that existed elsewhere, as many Indian managers have been trained in the West and the Indian management institutes have adopted a

Western approach themselves (Budhwar 2003, pg. 134). This 'cut and paste' method could have resulted in HRM existing only as a ghost function – there in name but not in substance. This is exacerbated by the lack of implementation of labour law in India (Venkata Ratnam 2009) Another potential problem with HRM systems in India is that when they are imported by multi-national firms into local offices, there is no guarantee that these were tailored to the local environment as they should be which can lead to problems with implementation of the HR practices and policies, particularly with recruitment and training methods (Budhwar, Björkman and Singh 2009). Indeed, this resonates with fears that the HR function is being used as a tool of managerial control. This idea is further explored in relation to ill-treatment in the workplace in the next section.

At this point, it is important to consider some of the socio-cultural aspects of Indian society which make it unique so as to better understand the challenges of an Indian workplace, particularly in relation to the existence of ill-treatment. "Indian society is relational, with social affiliations providing belongingness and support" (D'Cruz 2012, pg. 9). What this means is that it is a culture in which nepotism and favouritism are rife, and personal interaction and affiliation are guided by a range of influences, including class, caste, ethnicity, occupation, religion, region and kinship. People belong to different social groups based on the factors mentioned above, and personal and economic interaction is often directed by their networking within these groups.

All of these socio-cultural characteristics point to a highly complex and constantly shifting work environment, dependent as it is on various forms of hierarchy. Accordingly, ingratiation is considered to be an acceptable means of improving one's situation, provided that the supervisor has the flexibility to make that decision (Pandey and Bohra, 1984). Ingratiation has been defined as "a class of strategic behaviours illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities" (Jones 1964 *in* Pandey and Bohra 1984, p. 381). Pandey and Rastogi (1979) found that people were more likely to employ ingratiation in competitive circumstances. It is a feature of workplace politics and can be built upon the networking groups based on common social features which were discussed above.

In terms of ill-treatment, people's involvement in the same social group is a major factor because these social groups are based on the characteristics of Indian culture

mentioned earlier. If they are, then it is possible to reach a resolution informally as they are more likely to avoid conflict and more concessions will be made on either side. However, if they are not in the same social group, it is likely that the one higher in the hierarchy will be able to exploit the other's position, or the two will need to split and be apart from each other completely, unable to come to any resolution (D'Cruz 2012).

Budhwar (2000) has identified Indian workplaces as similar to a feudalistic set-up, which allow "favouritism, discrimination, manipulative behaviours and corruption to exist" (*in* D'Cruz 2012, pp. 16-17). This, combined with the points explored above, paints a vivid picture of the type of work environment one can expect in India and raises questions on two counts – firstly, how these characteristics manifest themselves in a workplace that attempts to socialise national characteristics out of its workers, and secondly, what role they play in contributing to the work environment in a way which may or may not encourage ill-treatment.

2.4: Organisational Control through the Work Environment

The existence of ill-treatment in the workplace is contingent on the work environment, which is composed of many facets. The most important of those interrelated features that can provide employers greater control over their employees are explored in this section.

2.4.1 Socialisation and professional identity

Organisational socialisation is the process by which employees are moulded into workers that have taken on expectations of behaviour that belong to a certain workplace. Individuals are socialised into a culture from early on in life, and this guides their outlook, and how they experience and respond to the world (Goslin 1969). A similar process is undertaken again, when an individual enters a new workplace and undergoes organisational socialisation (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003).

Organisational socialisation has received attention in academic literature from the 1960's, with Schein (1968), Van Maanen (1978), Feldman (1981) and Fisher (1986)

developing theories about the ways in which individuals adjust to their role in an organisation. Chao *et al.* 1994 undertook a review of organisational socialisation and sought to identify different domains of the job which require different processes of socialisation. They have explained that socialisation applies unevenly to different domains of the job, and that individuals that are well socialised in one domain may not be as well socialised in another. The employees' levels of socialisation in different domains will have varying impacts on different areas of their working life. The six domains identified by Chao *et al.* are: performance proficiency; people; politics; language; organizational goals and values; and history (1994, pp. 731 – 732). Chao *et al.* (1994) undertook a longitudinal study to explore the effect of these different domains of socialisation on career effectiveness and found significant results, primarily that those employees who were better socialised across all domains also had better prospects for career effectiveness.

Feldman (1981) identified three distinct stages in which organisational socialisation occurs. The first is “anticipatory socialization” which refers to the learning done before joining the organisation; the second is “encounter” in which a new employee joins the organisation and may experience some shifts in values, skills and attitudes; and the third is “change and acquisition” in which the employee has learned all the skills for their role and settled into the norms and values of their group (Feldman 1981, pg. 310). The first phase can refer to the training or education that an employee undergoes before being employed by the organisation and this is when the first adjustments to identity can be seen. Hughes (1956 in Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann 2006) said that medical students “may be expected to get not merely a better notion of the skills required, of the tasks to be performed, of the roles to be played . . . but also to adjust his conception of his own mental, physical, and personal aptitudes, his tastes and distastes” (1956: 24 in Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann 2006, pg. 237). This suggests the idea that professionals, at least, begin to change and develop their professional identity in the very first stage of socialisation.

Wenger (2000) has explained an idea similar to Feldman's second stage of socialisation – “encounter”. He has written that when an individual enters a workplace, they enter into a community of practice and an existing social learning system, which they become a part of. This is the method by which they absorb practical knowledge about their role as well as knowledge about the social values and conduct associated with the role and the work culture. This is reiterated by Van Maanen (1978), who expounded that, “any person crossing organizational

boundaries is looking for clues on how to proceed. Thus colleagues, superiors, subordinates, clients, and other work associates can and most often do support, guide, hinder, confuse, or push the individual who is learning a new role” (pg. 20). Therefore, the secondary or informal socialisation process bequeaths the expectation of modes of behaviour to new employees. In this way, they learn not only how they are expected to behave, but also how they can expect to be treated in the workplace. This is extremely important to their perceptions of what constitutes ill-treatment in the workplace, and can also have a knock-on effect on how they feel they are supposed to react to ill-treatment, as seen in Section 4 of this chapter.

Wenger (2000) has said that organisations not only have their own social learning system, but exist within a wider social learning system which incorporates their industry. Therefore, employees just starting their careers will also be socialised into the wider norms and practices of the industry when they begin their first job. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) discussed the different socialisation strategies that organisations can employ to mould the identity of their employees, asserting that undesirable characteristics could be stripped away from a new recruit during their initial year in their work environment. This could be achieved through a divestiture socialisation process in which the newcomers undergo harassment from experienced members and are made to do low-level work for a time until they embrace the desired values (pp. 64-65). They also explain that the extent to which this process is uncomfortable for the employee depends on how different their values were to begin with.

In more recent writing, Webb (2006) has identified three ways in which organisations attempt to exert control by regulating the identity of their employees, of which the first two are relevant to this study. The third is emotional labour which applies to work which is customer-facing and is not relevant to the seafarers in this study. The first way is by constructing a ‘we’ and engaging the employee in the corporate culture. Resonating with Guest’s (1987) comments on the use of organisational culture to draw employees into committing to the company, this method articulates a ‘corporate culture’ that employees can buy into and increase their commitment to their work. In this method, they encourage people to achieve an identity for which the values and direction have been established by the company.

The second way is by “using teamwork to create self-managed identification with organisational goals” (Webb 2006, pg. 157). For this, the company creates media

induction programmes and social activities that embody corporate values and encourages employees to take part. However, Webb emphasises that it is teamwork which really facilitates the inculcation of a set of shared values into employees through utilising the team dynamics such as peer pressure and self-surveillance (McKinley and Taylor 1998 *in* Webb 2006, pg. 157).

The reason why employees would fall for these strategies and buy into the corporate identity is because "...people struggle to achieve, but continue to need, a secure sense of self. Insecurity is exacerbated by the organisational demands of continuous adaptability to new problems, changing project teams and responsibilities" (Webb 2006, pg. 161). In effect, this makes them more susceptible to adopting the professional identity offered to them at work.

At this point, it is pertinent to consider Fournier's idea that the conferring of 'professional competence' upon the employees allows management to govern the actions of those employees from a distance, maintaining the illusion of autonomy but severely limiting it at the same time (1999, pg. 282).

Indeed, this subtle form of control was noted by D'Cruz and Noronha (2006) in their research in call centres in India. They noted that the notion of professionalism was conveyed to new employees at every step of their induction into their workplace, and continuously through their training as well. This resulted in "an internalization of the notion such that agents' senses of self change to embrace the direct and indirect behavioural and cognitive correlates of employer-defined professionalism" (pg. 346). Once the idea had been adopted by the call centre agent, it drove them to regulate their own behaviour at all times and strive to excel in order to maintain a 'professional' standard at all times. The truly curious nature of this act by management is that, not so long ago, a call centre agent would not have been considered a professional. Fournier finds this "casual generalisation of the notion of professionalism" (1999, pg. 281) to be a true sign of management's intentions, but concedes that the process could also be a means to market themselves in a more appealing light to consumers, or in this case, their clients. However, management's exertion of control over employees through the identity regulation process has also been documented by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and management's moulding of employees to better serve the employer's interest, has been suggested by Hatch and Cunliffe (2006).

As organisational socialisation impacts the formation of professional identity and these contribute to the organisational culture, it raises the question of the link between organisational socialisation in the different domains identified by Chao *et al.* (1994) and the effect of these on the work environment in such a way as to generate conditions for ill-treatment. Seafarers are professionals who carry out their duties at a distance from management, and the question of whether this professionalism is used against them can elicit an insight into the causes of ill-treatment onboard ships.

2.4.2 Politics in the workplace

Politics in the workplace have been studied for decades, and Gandz and Murray (1980) conducted a study to investigate workers' perceptions of the concept, relying on questionnaires mailed out to former graduate and current part-time MBA students drawn from a range of public and private organisations. They found that their respondents found politics to be "talk about deviations from techno-economic rationality" (Gandz and Murray 1980, pg. 248), which means it was about "those issues and processes involving change in a context that does not permit strict cost/benefit analysis with widely shared criteria" (Gandz and Murray 1980, pg. 239). They found that politics was perceived to exist more in the discretionary organisational processes, and that it was perceived to be more prevalent in the higher management levels. However, as per their hypotheses, they found the responses to be extremely varied and thus concluded that workplace politics should be seen as "a subjective state in which organizational members perceive themselves or others as intentionally seeking selfish ends in an organizational context when such ends are opposed to those of others" (Gandz and Murray 1980, pg. 248).

Allen *et al.* (1979) also conducted research into political tactics used by employees in organisations, by interviewing chief executive officers, staff managers and supervisors in different organisations in the electronics industry in Southern California. They coded eight different types of political tactics identified by the respondents, these were: attacking or blaming others; use of information; image building/impression management; support building for ideas; praising others, ingratiation; power coalitions, strong allies; associating with the influential; and creating obligations/reciprocity (*Ibid*, pg.79). Of these tactics, some, such as ingratiation and power coalitions, overlap with the social characteristics embedded in Indian culture and organisations. Allen *et al.* (1979) found that all three levels of

respondents reported similar tactics being used across organisations and that many of these tactics were proactive and for self-promotion rather than reactive and for protecting their interests (pg. 82). The authors refrained from determining if the use of these tactics was 'good' or 'bad' for the organisations and the employees.

In terms of the implications of workplace politics for ill-treatment in a workplace, high internal competition in an organisation can result in bullying being used as a strategic tool to manoeuvre the career ladder. Salin's (2003) work supports this as she explained that the act of bullying is not necessarily due to psychological factors such as personality, but can be the result of a political approach, which necessitates the denigration of the competition in order to make oneself appear to be a more attractive employee for career advancement. It can also be due to reward systems that are in place and Salin (2003) suggests that this can encourage ill-treatment in two ways.

The first is if people work harder to gain the rewards, and their peers disagree with this approach and resort to ill-treatment to punish their over-achieving colleague. The second way is based on a vertical approach, that is, that superiors under pressure to meet performance targets can resort to ill-treatment to force subordinates to work harder and perform higher. This line of thought begins to reinforce that which was previously encountered in the globalisation section. There is considerable potential for management to not only disregard ill-treatment but actively use it as a tool to increase employee performance.

2.4.3 Organisational trust and organisational culture

Pearson and Porath (2005) identified that an organisational culture characterised by tolerance for incivility and disinclination to confront it significantly contributed to the occurrence of ill-treatment. Fevre *et al.* (2012), found in their case study of a global engineering company (referred to as Strand Global Systems (pg. 167)) that exemplary low levels of ill-treatment were grounded in employees making a marked effort to be sensitive and civil and maintain a positive work environment.

2.4.4. Summary

The literature explored throughout this chapter has shown how the study of bullying in the workplace can be taken on from a sociological perspective, shifting the focus to ill-treatment and exploring the influence of characteristics unique to the work environment. In the second section, we saw how some of these environmental forces act upon employees to influence their decision-making process when choosing to respond to ill-treatment. In the third section, we examined how human resource management has increasingly taken on a more prominent role in employment relations, stripping power away from the former, more collectivist approach. The last section explored the control that management exerts over the socialisation processes, the HR function and the organisational culture clearly demonstrate the need to consider their effects on the presence of ill-treatment in the workplace. While exploring these ideas, many questions arose about the viability of some of these concepts in an Indian, and distance-managed work environment. These will be further focused through the next chapter, which introduces the maritime context and details specific aspects of shipboard life.

Chapter 3: Ill-Treatment in the Shipboard Work Environment

3.1 Introduction

There are many assumptions made in the land-based literature with regard to the various ways in which dignity at work is attacked and how workers are able to respond to this. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the unique context of the shipping industry in which it appears. The opportunities for attacks on dignity at work through ill-treatment are increased by the presence of a strict hierarchy and isolation of the workplace. The willingness and ability of workers to respond to it are potentially decreased by the same factors. The focus of this study will be to determine the extent to which this may be true for Indian seafarers.

For example, Einarsen *et al.* (1994) postulate that for workplace bullying to occur a victim needs to be forced into an inferior position, but in a hierarchy onboard a ship seafarers are already slotted into predetermined inferior and superior positions. However, the focus of this study is specifically on denigration and unreasonable treatment and these may interact differently with the presence of a hierarchy on board ships. Indeed, an alternative outcome to Einarsen *et al.*'s approach is implied by Fevre *et al.*'s (2009) findings on the probability of managers experiencing more denigration than workers. These contradictions highlight the need for fresh research contributions to this area, not just in the context of seafarers and maritime literature, but also the broader debate surrounding ill-treatment in the workplace.

The way in which seafarers who have experienced ill-treatment choose between the traditional responses of exit, voice and silence, will provide an insight into the interaction of the employment relationship and the employment context. This is particularly in light of the limitations that their workplace and the regulation of the industry impose upon their choices, which will be explored in further detail in this chapter.

All research done in land-based work environments is reliant on certain assumptions, namely that people are able to leave the workplace at the end of the day/end of their shift, and are able to have physical access to support systems (whether formal, such as HR managers or unions, or informal, such as family and friends), but all of these assumptions are problematic in the context of a workplace on board a ship. The

reasons why they are problematic will be investigated in greater detail in this chapter, which explores the maritime industry as a workplace.

3.2 The Shipping Industry

3.2.1 Technological innovation and changes in the industry

The continuous integration of automated systems into the running of ships has had many effects on the way in which ships are now run, and consequently, the experiences of seafarers on board. Technological change has affected the equipment on board a ship, on both the engine and the deck sides. Alderton *et al.* explain that “the main effects of deck and engine-room automation and integration have been a reduction in manning levels and changes in work organization and shipboard environment” (2004, pg. 23). These changes include the time and length of seafarers’ shifts and the training that they must have to operate the new equipment.

In addition to this, technological development led to the introduction of satellite communication on board ships in 1976 (Alderton *et al.* 2004). This meant that the isolation of the ships at sea was broken. In terms of management, ship owners and managers were able to track their ships better and also convey their directives to the Captain faster and more frequently. It also meant that maritime emergency communications were improved and that response time to emergencies was vastly reduced. Alderton *et al.* assert that “the use of satellites for better fleet communications, data transfer and operational control is revolutionizing the way ships are managed” (2004, pg. 23). The integrated systems and the satellite communication also meant that the role of radio officer was rendered obsolete as the task required different training and could easily be assigned to a navigational officer. All of these changes in the traditional roles of seafarers signify work intensification as technological advances signalled a dramatic reduction in crew size on board ships (Alderton *et al.* 2004).

Keeping pace with these changes were advances in shipbuilding technology which meant that ship sizes were increasing, and the entire process of loading and unloading bulk carriers, tankers and container ships was made much more efficient (Alderton *et al.* 2004). A direct consequence of this increased efficiency was faster turnaround for cargo ships when they are in port, which means that seafarers have

much less time ashore and in some cases, even getting out of the port was difficult because of the dangerous machinery being operated. In addition to this, changes in the layout of cities and the modernisation of ports has resulted in some port terminals being located very far from the city centre. For example, travel from a new terminal in the port of Rotterdam to the city centre can take one hour and costs approximately 200 Euros for a round trip (Sampson and Wu 2003, pg. 146).

The events of 9/11 also had a significant impact on seafarers' ability to have time ashore and led to the introduction of stricter security measures in ports and on ships as they were identified as an area of risk (IMO 2011a). In response to 9/11, the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS code) was developed, which called for stricter security measures to be taken in port facilities and onboard ships. One negative consequence of this has been the difficulty of seafarers getting shore leave when the ship is in port, despite the ILO's Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention which was revised post-9/11 in 2003, and which states that "For the purpose of shore leave seafarers shall not be required to hold a visa" (ILO 2006). Access to American ports is notoriously difficult, where officials have been known to refuse seafarers shore leave even if they have all the required documentation (Graham 2009).

The picture painted by the points above explains some of the ways in which seafarers are less able to escape the work environment onboard the ship for even a short period of time.

3.2.2 Changes in shipboard life

The majority of seafarers work on a contract basis, with the contract length being determined by their rank, with considerable variation between nationalities and different employers. In general, ratings can work from between 6 months to 12 months at a time, and officers work from between 3 or 4 to 9 months at a time (Alderton *et al.* 2004, pg.116). A significant fact is that in the new labour countries, seafarers tend to be only paid for the length of their contract, that is, the time that they are sailing. While their pay is generous and comparable to highly paid land-based occupations for the time that they are sailing, this is mitigated by the fact that they then have no income for as many months as they choose to/have to stay on shore.

Although wages and working times are under supra-national regulation, the reality of shipboard life where life-threatening emergencies can arise, means that seafarers often have to work over-time and may or may not get paid for this, depending on their contract and their employer (Kahveci and Nichols 2006). The smaller crews on board ships coupled with faster turnaround times in ports mean that there is more work to be done in a shorter period of time and there are fewer people to do it (Alderton *et al.* 2004). This affects the mental and physical health of seafarers as they are more isolated both on board ships and less able to go ashore which can lead to depression, and they are also under stress from their intense workload which can lead to fatigue. Aside from their inability to escape these conditions until the end of their contract, a more immediate consequence of all these factors is the increase in risk of industrial injury (Kahveci 1999). Not only is the risk of injury higher, but according to Kahveci (1999), crew members also often do not want to seek medical attention for their injuries for fear that they would be repatriated and then declared unfit to sail, in which case their livelihood would be gone.

3.3 Regulation

3.3.1. Introduction

Regulation of seafarers' working lives has been in place for decades, and in some cases even for over a century. Concerns for safety at sea have always been a driving force for the formulation of such regulation, although the reasons behind this can be perceived to vary.

The need for international regulation to ensure safety at sea manifested itself in conventions put into place by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the 1920s onwards and later, the creation of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) by the United Nations in 1948. The ILO came into being in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War when there was a growing demand for social reform, which would include decent labour standards upon which lasting peace could be based (ILO 2011a). It has been argued that economic factors were a key impetus for the creation of international labour regulations, to try and prevent a 'race to the bottom' in which firms would compete with each other on the basis of their

labour costs (Palley 2002). The ILO necessarily focused on issues related only to the labour force at sea, and several conventions were introduced which related to the welfare of seafarers, such as the Minimum Age (Sea) Convention in 1920, the Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention in 1926, the Shipowners' Liability (Sick and Injured Seamen) Convention in 1936 and the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention in 1958 (ILO 2011b). The IMO also had a clear focus on safety at sea and drafted conventions in addition to the labour conventions already created by the ILO. This initial focus on safety expanded to include environmental concerns and a more direct focus on 'the human element', namely the seafarers on board ships. These priorities took the form of three major conventions from the IMO, namely the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS); the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, (MARPOL); and the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) (IMO 2011b). While these go a long way towards regulating their respective areas, there still existed a number of ILO conventions that were fragmented, not up to date, and which had no real power to respond to the contravention of these conventions. A primary reason for this was the way in which responsibility was apportioned, usually to the flag state, and this was becoming increasingly irrelevant as irresponsible flag states sold their flags of convenience to ship owners and managers looking for a good deal without the intention or means to enforce international regulation on the ships on their registers.

This problem led to the creation of port-state control, which is a mechanism by which ships entering the national waters of a country are subject to inspections by the port state control officer, to ensure that international maritime conventions such as SOLAS, MARPOL and STCW are being followed (Paris MoU 2010). The Paris Memorandum of Understanding (Paris MoU) is concerned with the application of port-state control in Europe and the East coast of Canada, and although initially formed in 1982 by 14 countries, now has a membership of 27 countries. There are also corresponding organisations around the world, such as the Indian Ocean MoU, Asia-Pacific MoU and Riyadh MoU among others (IOMoU 2011). The Paris MoU has a shared database into which details of each ship inspection are entered, and these can be accessed by the other ports that are governed by the Paris MoU. This is done because port-state control cannot inspect every single ship that comes into the port. They use a system of targeting, where they take into account previous inspections, as well as the age of the ship and its flag when deciding whether an inspection is warranted (Bloor 2003). If a ship is found to have deficiencies but they are not bad

enough to cause the ship to be detained, the details of the deficiencies will be recorded and the ship will be subject to closer inspection next time. If a ship is so sub-standard that it is not deemed fit to sail, it can be detained and this can incur heavy costs on the ship owner, thus encouraging them to rectify the deficiencies as soon as possible (Bloor 2003).

3.3.2 The MLC 2006

Both the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have contributed significantly to the existing international standards of health and safety and welfare of seafarers. Among the most important of these is the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC), produced by the ILO, which has consolidated and updated more than 65 international labour standards related to seafarers that have been adopted over the last 80 years (ILO, 2014a). This convention is particularly important because it consists of legally binding standards as well as non-mandatory guidelines, thus circumventing the ILO's long-standing problem of not being able to enforce the guidelines and standards that it sets out. In this case, the standards within the convention are international law which can be used to prosecute any wrong-doing. It is also identified as the "fourth pillar" of quality shipping, along with the IMO conventions SOLAS, STCW and MARPOL (Graveson 2008).

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) requires all ships that fly the flag of a member state of the ILO to have drafted and implemented on-board complaint procedures (regulation 5.1.5) as well as onshore seafarer complaint-handling procedures (regulation 5.2.2) (ILO 2014a). The MLC affects ships of all member states of the ILO that have ratified the convention and it is implemented with a system of certification which ensures that the appropriate standards are being met. In addition, because of a clause of "no more favourable treatment", ships of non-ratifying states that visit the foreign port of a ratified state will also be inspected for compliance with the MLC 2006 by the port-state control (ILO 2014b).

The MLC 2006 entered into force on 20th August 2013, and has now been ratified by 61 countries¹ (ILO 2014b). India has not yet ratified the convention, but it does offer Indian-flagged vessels the option of a voluntary compliance letter, which they will be

¹ As of 1st June 2014

able to convert to a voluntary compliance certificate when India does ratify. This encourages Indian-flagged vessels to comply with the MLC 2006 despite non-ratification by India and makes it easier for them to pass inspection when visiting the port of a ratifying country.

3.3.3 Problems (gaps and issues with implementation of regulation)

Seafarers fall into a unique niche in terms of employment protection, because of the nature of their work. International law states that while sailing, seafarers are under the law of the flag State of the ship they are sailing with because the ship carries that nationality regardless of the actual geographic location (ITF, 2009). It is therefore easy for all the different actors in the maritime industry to absolve themselves of any responsibility towards seafarers and expect the flag state to impose regulations. In previous years, it was true that the ILO and IMO could only make recommendations and regulations and did not have much power to take action if these were not followed because they were not generally legally binding. However, this has changed now that the MLC 2006 has come into force.

Congruent to the ILO's aim of "decent work for all" (ILO 2014c), the Maritime Labour Convention has incorporated recommendations with regard to the implementation of grievance procedures both onboard and onshore, but there is a problem with this. The grievance procedures are purely with regard to the terms and conditions of employment, such as compensation to be awarded in the event of injury (ILO 2014a), but do not specifically address any issues that the seafarers may have with unreasonable treatment on board ships. In no area of the convention is there a focus on lack of respect or denigration at work, although mention is made of the seafarers' general "right to health protection, medical care, welfare measures and other forms of social protection" (ILO 2014a, Article IV). The MLC 2006 has been prepared to plug some of those gaps in implementation and policing that proved so troublesome to the previously existing ILO and IMO regulations through its introduction of the "no favourable treatment" clause. However, as compliance will still need to be enforced through port-state control, it is still entirely possible for ships to pass through ports without being inspected if they are not obviously sub-standard or manage to evade random checks.

The relevance of the MLC to matters of ill-treatment lies in the interpretation and application of the country that ratifies it. Each country that ratifies the MLC must

demonstrate how its maritime laws match the MLC regulations. In some cases, this can include specific reference to ill-treatment, as in the case of the Dutch. When the Dutch were required to check their regulations in order to ratify the MLC 2006, they incorporated their existing Occupational Safety and Health Act into the legislation. This means that seafarers on Dutch flagged ships have the right to not experience sexual harassment, bullying and violence.

All in all, supra-national legislation has continued to make progress in the direction of attaining dignity at work for seafarers, however, more specific references to denigration at work within the terms of bullying and harassment are only to be found in union literature. and even then, there is no indication of whether the implementation of these pieces of paper actually have any impact on seafarers' experiences of negativity in the workplace.

3.4 Trade Unions

One way in which seafarers can still express solidarity with each other and fight for their collective rights is by joining a trade union. However, in India, trade unions established close ties with political parties during the fight for independence and this has never really changed. Consequently, people who are external to an organization can be elected to lead a union, and this is a popular way to enter politics and rise in the ranks of political parties (Ramaswamy, 1983). In addition, due to the large number of trade unions (only seven workers are required to be willing to form a trade union in order to be able to do so), those unions of an economic as opposed to political inclination do not necessarily do better, as they do not have the pulling power of the political unions (*Ibid.*). Unions engage in collective bargaining in India but agreements are not adhered to as they are in say, France, where the law (specifically the *erga omnes* clause) underpins the implementation of collective agreements (Vernon, 2006). Thus, it is apparent that trade unions in India are not necessarily closely affiliated with the interests of their members, and the large number of unions also means that their collective power is not as significant as it could be.

Turning now specifically to the seafarer context, there are two main seafarer unions in India: The Maritime Union of India and the National Union of Seafarers in India (which is ITF-affiliated). NUSI deals more with the concerns of deck and engine ratings and cooks and stewards, and MUI membership is composed of merchant

navy officers. There is a third union, the Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI) which also primarily focuses on ratings. All three of these unions are affiliated to the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

The two most prominent unions, MUI and NUSI collaborate together in the form of the Indian Seafarers Federation. These unions negotiate terms of employment with organisations such as the Indian National Shipowners' Association (INSA), the Foreign Owners Ship Managers Association (FOSMA) the Maritime Association of Shipowners, Shipmanagers and Agents (MASSA) and the International Maritime Employers' Committee (IMEC). Due to the global nature of the industry, a global approach to governance is required and this comes in the form of the ITF, a global federation of transport workers unions which has done much to highlight and begin to address problems that seafarers encounter overseas. For example, in cases of unfair criminalisation of seafarers after a maritime accident, the ITF is able to mobilise a louder and more widespread protest compared to what national unions would be able to accomplish alone. The Indian seafarer unions have a history of difficult relations with the ITF, as in the 1970s, the NUSI in particular initially resisted attempts to implement ITF approved wages. They perceived it as "a Western-dominated protectionist union agenda" (Lillie 2004, pg.52). Eventually, the ITF established the Total Crew Cost (TCC) concept, which allowed recruiters to negotiate their own rates with the affiliated unions so long as they met a basic ITF-determined labour cost level. This spawned the use of dual wage structures where shipowners kept two sets of accounts, one which demonstrated that they met the minimum cost level and one which documented what they actually paid out to the seafarers. As the labour supply market grew to incorporate more Russian and Eastern European seafarers, the Indian unions began to adopt the TCC wage rate and now ensure that their members are given ITF contracts with fair wages and terms of employment. However, what continues to be of interest is Freeman's assertion (found in the last chapter), that unionised workplaces have lower rates of exit because the union provides workers with a voice. The distance between the ship and shore makes the role of the union both more vital and more difficult to carry out. Will seafarers perceive the unions to have a significant role to play in addressing unreasonable treatment and denigration onboard?

3.5 Hierarchy

3.5.1. Chain of command

The role classification onboard a typical seagoing merchant vessel consists first, of a distinction between deck, engineering and galley career paths. Then there is further separation in a hierarchy between officers and ratings. On the engineering side, the highest ranking officer is the Chief Engineer, followed by the 2nd Engineer and 3rd Engineer and sometimes a 4th Engineer depending on the requirements of the vessel. On the deck side, the highest ranking officer is the Chief Officer, followed by the 2nd Officer, 3rd Officer, and so on (Kahveci and Nichols 2006). The Master, or Captain, of the ship rises through the deck side and has command of and responsibility for the whole ship, although he is usually paid the same as, or slightly more than the Chief Engineer onboard (Drewry 2009). For ratings on the deck side, the highest positioned is the Bosun, followed by the AB (able-bodied seaman) and the OS (ordinary seafarer). On the engineering side, ratings are headed by a Fitter, followed by a Motorman and an Oiler or Wiper. Finally, in the galley, there is a Chief Cook who supervises the Second Cook and Mess Man (Kahveci and Nichols 2006, pp.100-104).

Alderton *et al.* (2004) explain that ships “have formal hierarchical structures, where officers form approximately 40 per cent and ratings 60 per cent of total complements” (pg. 98), and that these hierarchies are usually quite inflexible. Sampson and Thomas further elaborate that “the occupational hierarchy aboard most ships is so important that it is quite usual for crew members to introduce and refer to themselves and others by rank, rather than name” (2003, pg. 169).

The hierarchy onboard a ship is complex and its enforcement and effect can vary according to company policy and the leadership style of the senior officers (particularly the Captain) onboard (Sampson 2013). Lane (1986) has written about how the divide in the hierarchy between officers and ratings can provide the most friction. He explains that the social division between the ratings and officers onboard the ship reflects their differing social backgrounds, and that officers often express a sense of personal superiority over the ratings which can create resentment and antagonism among crew. Therefore, it is not that the ratings resent the hierarchy *per se*. It is due to the way in which officers wield social superiority, which is separate

from the technical expertise that they are given respect and admiration for. Lane gives an example of officers being allowed to smoke in the wheelhouse whereas ratings were not allowed to do the same in the same location (pg. 153), and this was attributed to differences in class background. Lane's example stems from a particularly British context which may or may not be relatable to the Indian context. It would be interesting to see if Indian seafarers express similar feelings about class divisions between the people who are officers and those who are ratings. What would be particularly relevant would be to explore the effect that such feelings may or may not have on their experience of denigration or unreasonable treatment on board ships.

In addition to the differences between the broad categories of officers and ratings, there can be differences between ranks within each of these categories. Lane gives the example of a crew member from a liner who spoke of the stereotypes associated with different ranks, for example, that ABs (able seamen) have a macho image as they perform tasks needing physical strength and dexterity outdoors, whereas cooks and stewards were considered to be doing 'women's work' as they prepared the food. Perceptions such as these of others' ranks provide another interesting insight into possible sources of friction that may result in ill-treatment onboard. This is corroborated by the general division between deck, engineering and galley crew members. However, Lane (1986) has provided a caveat that explains that despite the possibility for resentment between seafarers of different ranks onboard, the shared experience of seafaring often goes a long way to modifying this, leaving a delicate balance in the workplace between antagonism generated by a strict hierarchy and the knowledge that in the end, they were also a 'brotherhood' (pg. 178).

The chain of command permeates the shore office of a shipping company too, as senior officers are accorded greater time and attention than junior officers or ratings as they are more valued employees, probably having been with the company longer, and/or harder for the company to hire in the first place. In addition, senior officers maintain more regular contact with managers on shore in the course of their regular duties while sailing (Alderton *et al.* 2004). Therefore, a senior officer may have direct access to a senior manager onshore, whereas a rating might first have to speak to a secretary or junior manager. This may vary according to a company's own work culture and how they choose to interact with their seafarers and will provide some

insight into how effective company policy can be in terms of helping seafarers with their response to ill-treatment.

3.5.2. Socialisation of expected behaviour

In the wider literature on organisational structure, some parallels can be drawn between the hierarchy onboard ships and the paramilitary organisation of institutions such as the police and fire service (Archer 1999).

First and foremost, the education and training systems of these institutions are very similar, in that they are designed to impart discipline and order along with the required academic learning. For example, people training for the Engineering stream onboard can attend the oldest institute in India, the Marine Engineering and Research Institute in Kolkata, which requires that cadets be in uniform at all times during training. There is a list of additional rules pertaining to expected conduct for all hours of the day, setting out hostel discipline and detailing the amount of leave they are allowed². Most pertinent is the regulation that, “Cadets must carry out all written and verbal orders of authorities and rank holders promptly without argument” (MERI 2001). Finally, the Directorate General of Shipping (DG Shipping), India, has expressly stated that a “High standard of paramilitary type of discipline is maintained in this Institution” (DG Shipping 2010a). Similarly, people training for the nautical stream (deck side), can complete a BSc in Nautical Sciences or do pre-sea training and the focus, apart from academic studies, is to “inculcate officer like qualities and a high sense of discipline in the cadets” (DG Shipping 2010b). It would therefore be possible to identify the hierarchy onboard a ship as a paramilitary bureaucratic structure, similar to that found in police institutions. This has been described as a complex structure which is designed to maintain an optimal level of control and coordination (Maguire 2003, pg. 98).

² To better understand the strictness of life in these Indian training institutes and the paramilitary parallel, consider the following features of training from this Indian example: 1st, 2nd and 4th year cadets are allowed 60 days leave per year and 3rd year cadets are only allowed 30 days leave per year. In addition, cadets are allowed a maximum of 15 days’ medical leave per year and must apply for “late passes” if they wish to stay out as late as 10pm. They may meet guests between 5:30 to 7:30pm in the lounge, only use the recreation room during the specified times and must take their meals/tea, etc. in the dining hall at the specified timings only (MERI 2001).

It has aims similar to those of a traditional police academy, in which the focus is on the chain of command, discipline, following rules and procedures (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). Despite attempts to introduce a more democratic approach to problem-solving and community policing, the policing 'sub-culture' which consists of the paramilitary environment quickly dominates trainees' development once they are in the real world (Hodgson 2001), demonstrating how strong this form of organisation is.

The socialisation of accepted behaviour in a workplace leads to repercussions beyond just the victim's suffering. To the employees who witness managers and/or others bullying people in the workplace, it seems to be given tacit acceptance because no action is taken in response. This can create a 'mimicking' process where the witnesses proceed to bully others, as Zellars *et al.*'s (2002) found in their study of the Air National Guard in the United States and their military supervisors. The main relevance of the comparison of the seafaring context to a land-based structure is the prevalence of denigration and unreasonable treatment found to exist in these organisations at an institutional level.

However, to limit the discussion to only paramilitary institutions is reductive as the close interaction between a strict hierarchy, strong socialisation and the occurrence of ill-treatment can exist in organisations not described as paramilitary institutions. This was seen in Randle's (2003) longitudinal study of the self-esteem of pre-registered nurses in England over a three year period. She found that through the training process to become fully qualified, nurses experienced and witnessed bullying by higher ranked qualified nurses and were socialised into finding it acceptable. They then became part of the pattern and turned to bullying others when they become senior. Other studies of ill-treatment in nursing have found that the strict hierarchy has a significant impact on the occurrence of ill-treatment and that it strongly affects nurses' decisions of how to respond (Daiski 2004; Johnson 2009). Quine (2002) found that junior doctors also experience high levels of ill-treatment while they are in training, as did Scott *et al.* 2008. These examples of research are rooted within strongly hierarchical workplaces and raise the question of whether the strict chain of command and structure of organisation incorporates a tendency to allow behaviour that constitutes ill-treatment.

3.5.3. Social life and communication onboard

Sampson and Thomas (2003) have explained that seafaring is one of a few unique occupations “where divisions of occupational status extend to dominate not only work but also leisure time” (pg. 172). Therefore, it is important to pay some attention to the way in which social interaction occurs on board ships outside of a work context, as it is one part of the structure of the overall environment in which seafarers operate.

In Lane’s appraisal of the British merchant marine, he acknowledges the spread of ‘democratic sentiment’ in the 1980s (1986, pg. 171), through which crew and officers were becoming more aware of the fact that they are all human beings, and all equal. This manifested itself in different ways, including more use of first names when they addressed each other instead of only using ranks or last names as may be found in the navy. The area in which it seemed most relevant was the messing arrangements, which traditionally involved the officers and the crew eating separately, and possibly being given different quality food, whether due to company policy or because the Chief Cook thought that is how it should be. However, Alderton *et al.* (2004) have stated that, “in general officer/rating separation is normal and off-duty social interaction between higher and lower ranks is infrequent” (pg. 98). Reflecting on the messing arrangements that Indian seafarers have when they are sailing may contribute to the picture of how they interact on a social level onboard ships and add another dimension to the work situation in which they may or may not experience denigration and/or unreasonable treatment.

Lane (1986) explains that “stripped to its essentials, the object of hierarchy is to ensure that the officers are able to subordinate the crew to the interests of the shipowner” (pg. 173). Sampson and Zhao (2003) also comment on the working culture onboard ships, saying that “senior officers exercise a considerable amount of power over juniors and even more over ratings” (pg. 36). Kahveci *et al.* (2002) have noted that on ships where the master encouraged the crew to be sociable, there was a high degree of social integration through parties and games. However, if the master was reticent, the crew tended to follow his lead and remain more isolated. This is reiterated by Sampson (2013), who said “On board, the captain is still ‘king’ and controls not only the work aboard the vessel but the living arrangements, and to a great extent, the out of work activities of all crew.” (pg. 79). It appears that in the maritime context, it is the type of management implemented on board by the Master

and the impact of their leadership style that is important. This is similar to findings by Fevre *et al.* (2012), Vartia (2006) and Ashforth (1994).

Kahveci *et al.* (2002) explain that the occupational culture onboard a ship is so strong and so rooted in the rigid occupational hierarchy and formal rules that the resulting social distance also facilitates the transfer of seafarers from one ship to the next as they follow the same routine, only surrounded by different people. This peculiar aspect of seafaring life is a key point to consider in relation to both the presence or absence of unreasonable treatment and denigration onboard ships and also, the possible ways in which seafarers can respond to them if they do occur. First, it is relevant to exploring the extent to which seafarers experience unreasonable treatment or denigration onboard ships because the social distance could either prove to be a facilitator of ill-treatment through the power relations it imposes, or it could act as a protective mechanism in which personal interaction and expectation of professional conduct mean that the opportunity for ill-treatment is limited. Secondly, the impact of short-term contracts on the seafarers' responses to ill-treatment will also be interesting. They may promote a culture of silence, as seen in Fevre *et al.*'s work and mentioned in the previous chapter, or that they may be instrumental in providing seafarers the opportunity to raise their voice once their contract is over.

It has also been suggested that the occupational culture can make national identity largely redundant on a day-to-day basis. Borovnik has postulated that seafarers "set up an occupational-social identity with their international peers on board ship that has a limited function during periods of employment and runs parallel to their national-cultural identity" (2005, pg. 137). Through this, it is apparent that occupational hierarchy also provides a measure of constancy in the continually changing work environment of seafarers. This suggests that the regulatory effect of the hierarchy may function to mitigate the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard and warrants deeper consideration.

In contrast to what Borovnik suggested, Kahveci *et al.* (2002) found that, on ships with fewer than three nationalities, the transnational amiability was weakened and social behaviour and spatial division were renegotiated along national lines. They give the example of a ship where everyone below the rank of second officer and chief engineer was classed as a rating and consequently denied access to officer facilities, only because they were all of the same nationality (pg. 11). This type of behaviour would constitute ill-treatment onboard and the colonial character of this example

echoes the work of Mirchandani and Maitra (2007) who posit that post-colonialism characterises global subcontracting chains and this directly impacts the global workers in them. Examples such as these seem to suggest an opportunity and impetus for ill-treatment to occur onboard, and whether it is then found to exist or not can be explained in some measure by returning to the contradiction between Kahveci *et al.* and Borovnik's observations. That is, cultural divides may be a factor that contributes to or detracts from the existence of ill-treatment onboard ships.

In addition, research indicates that seafarers of different ranks across the hierarchy perceive risk differently (Bailey *et al.* 2006). This variation in perception which corresponds to differences in rank suggests that rank can have a significant impact on a seafarer's perception of life onboard ship. This raises the question of whether the perception of what constitutes ill-treatment may also differ across different ranks. If this is the case, the research on rigidly hierarchical organisations in section 3.5.2 can be used as a parallel to probe the extent to which hierarchical structure affects seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard.

3.5.4 Hierarchy on shore

The other way in which seafarers experience control flows from the organisation which has hired them. This can be more complicated than it seems, as seafarers can be hired by a manning agent who arranges their contract with a ship management company or a ship owner, in which case they are not controlled directly by the manning agent, even though their terms and conditions would have been negotiated by them.

A useful distinction in types of managerial control identified by Andy Friedman in 1977 can be used to better understand this. Friedman (1977) postulated that there are two functions of management. One is to control basic activities of the firm, such as input materials and instruments of labour, and the second one is to control labour or "exercise authority" over them. It is the latter which is of interest in this study. Friedman wrote about a strategic choice that management can make between deploying responsible autonomy or direct control. These forms of control are important because they can affect the extent to which ill-treatment is experienced by seafarers.

It is postulated that, in seafaring terms, examples of both types of strategies can be found. In this, Bhattacharya's (2009) thesis provides an important contribution to the maritime literature on the subject of seafarer-manager relationships. His research on occupational health and safety practices onboard ships drew out problems in the social relations that are related to the implementation of the International Safety Management code. In particular, he commented on the lack of trust between seafarers and shore managers, referring to the seafarers' perception of the managers' hidden agenda, and the managers' attempt to apportion blame for whatever problem had arisen. Their relationship is characterised by distance and therefore relies on bureaucratic measures of control, such as paperwork and continual directions relayed via email (Bhattacharya 2009). In this, it appears the conflicts arise from the responsible autonomy which must be accorded to the Masters due to the distance factor.

However, Bhattacharya further elaborates on the top-down management techniques employed by shore managers, explaining the shift of responsibility for carrying out actions from them to the Master of the ship. Therefore, if shore managers want something done onboard, they communicate this to the Master, and he has the responsibility of conveying it to the rest of the crew onboard and seeing it done. In this, it appears that the senior management (the top four officers) onboard the ship exercise direct control over the rest of the crew. It suggests that in this type of control, when "top managers try to subdue or limit workers' independent control over their actions once particular tasks have been assigned or general orders given" (Friedman 1977, pg.48), there is potential for ill-treatment to occur. Again, the extent to which this occurs may be mitigated by other structural factors which have been discussed earlier.

In addition to all the characteristics of the hierarchy discussed above, there are also the specific pros and cons of communication on board. There are certain duties and privileges associated with each rank, and the Captain, as Master of the ship, has final say about all incoming and outgoing communication to and from the ship. In accordance with his rank, this responsibility takes into account his years of experience and encourages the attempted resolution of any conflicts and/or problems on board the ship before they are brought to the attention of the managers onshore³.

³ This information was gleaned from the feasibility study, details of which can be found in section 4.3.1 of the next chapter.

3.6. Attacking Seafarers' Dignity at Work

3.6.1 Introduction

In this section, the extent to which attacks on seafarers' dignity at work through ill-treatment such as unreasonable treatment and denigration take place on board ships will be investigated. Reference will be made to the structural factors that affect the occurrence of ill-treatment and the ways in which seafarers can respond to it.

As mentioned earlier, supra-national regulation by the ILO with regard to the need for complaint procedures both onboard ships and onshore has been developed in the MLC 2006. However, more specific guidelines for employers of seafarers on bullying and harassment have been published by the ITF and pertain to:

- The abuse of power to control, influence or affect the job of a seafarer
 - Behaviour that may publicly humiliate a seafarer in front of others
 - Threats concerning a seafarers' employment
 - Non-verbal harassment such as the display of offensive publications, posters or literature
- (ITF, 2012a)

These are suggested guidelines that were developed from a report published jointly by the European Community Shipowners' Associations and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ECSA and ETF 2005). The ITF has also included a provision in their Standard Agreement, Total Crew Cost (TCC) Agreement⁴ and the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) Agreement⁵ addressing equality and stating:

Each seafarer shall be entitled to work, train and live in an environment free from harassment and bullying whether sexually, racially or otherwise

⁴ When the ITF was having problems gaining widespread acceptance of its standard agreement, it established the Total Crew Cost (TCC) concept, which allowed recruiters to negotiate their own rates with the affiliated unions so long as they met a basic ITF-determined labour cost level (Lillie 2004).

⁵ "IBF Agreements are only available to ship owners that are members of one of the ship owners' associations that sit alongside the ITF in the International Bargaining Forum (IBF). IBF Agreements vary in content but all fulfil minimum criteria. Employers negotiate their own IBF Agreement with the local union, normally once a year" (ITF 2008a).

motivated. The company will regard breaches of this undertaking as a serious act of misconduct on the part of seafarers (ITF 2012b).

Currently, there is no research in the ITF literature that explores the extent to which these guidelines have been used to draft policies by those companies that are covered by ITF agreements. There is some mention made of employers' grievance procedures, however this does not exist in the Standard ITF agreement and is only seen in the TCC Agreement and the IBF Agreement. The ITF IBF Agreement does state that;

The company shall ensure that a fair, effective and expeditious on-board procedure is in place to deal with reports of breaches of employment obligations and with seafarers complaints or grievances. The procedures shall allow seafarers to be accompanied or represented during the procedure and provide safeguards against victimization for raising complaints that are not manifestly vexatious or malicious (ITF 2012c, pg. 14).

There are also more general references made to "any" grievance procedures that a company might have in both the TCC and IBF agreements, implying that not all companies have them. However, there is no available data on the extent to which ship owners and ship management companies have implemented grievance procedures on board their ships. More pertinently, research in both the maritime health and safety literature and HRM literature indicate that there is a gap between the existence of procedures onboard and their implementation in practice. Exploring the occurrence of ill-treatment in organisations that already have grievance procedures in place will help to gauge the efficacy of the ITF's initiatives in the fight against ill-treatment onboard.

3.6.2. Occupational health and safety

While academic attention has not been paid specifically to ill-treatment defined as unreasonable treatment and disrespect and denigration onboard ships, much of the literature surrounding health and safety onboard draws upon the limitations of the hierarchy on communication onboard, and the underlying social relationships that influence the success or relative failure of policies. In research based on 5 case studies of shipping companies, Sampson, Bailey and Ellis (2013) investigated how

ship-based and shore-based staff differed in their perceptions of risk management and how this affected the correct usage of company policies on safety management. They found that despite the companies having official written policies and communicating them verbally to the seafarers along with messages of commitment to safety onboard, the seafarers distrusted their sincerity. This was because the seafarers were afraid of the potential of being blacklisted in the industry, or being given bad reports which would count as a black mark against them and impede future employment. These concerns are similar to the ones outlined in land-based literature by Harrington *et al.* (2012) and Fevre *et al.* (2012).

The 2001 ILO report on the impact on seafarers' living and working conditions of changes in the structure of the shipping industry (ILO 2001) highlighted the practice of blacklisting in the industry as a concern for seafarers. Blacklisting prevents seafarers from being able to pursue a career in the industry and can be used as an effective threat to manipulate them. For example, the ILO (2001) report discusses the case of a Turkish crew that was abandoned and did not complain to the authorities for fear of being blacklisted (pg. 89). When wages remained unpaid and the owner could not be contacted, they contacted the authorities and began a court case. Two years after this incident, many of the crew remained unemployed by anyone in the industry, demonstrating how real the threat of blacklisting can be.

3.6.3. Ill-treatment onboard ships

Ill-treatment in the context of this research is constituted by unreasonable treatment and disrespect and denigration of workers, as reviewed in the previous chapter. A key problem in discussing unreasonable treatment as separate to denigration which usually arises from colleague interaction is that "management" can mean different things to different ranks. To a senior officer on board the ship, "management" would mean the company on shore, or it could be referring to himself and his authority and responsibilities on board the ship. However, to a junior officer or a rating, "management" could mean the senior officers who are running the ship or the office on shore. Therefore, a variety of examples could be termed unreasonable treatment, depending on the rank of the seafarer and their perception of the instigator.

There are numerous examples in the literature of seafarers being exploited and mistreated. Although many of these cases deal with wage disputes and issues of

abandonment, criminalisation and lack of prompt medical care, they are all related to the broader topic of dignity at work. Examples of wage disputes include stories of seafarers being told they would receive the last instalment of their pay once they arrived home, only to find that this never materialised (Couper *et al.* 1999). There continue to be cases of abandonment, where ship owners, often unable or unwilling to fund the maintenance and running of the ship, simply cut off contact with the crew when they are in port, effectively leaving them without appropriate travel documents or the wages they were due for months of work (Seafarers' Rights International 2011). The seafarers are then dependent on the welfare services they can contact in port to provide them with basic amenities such as food and drinking water and must wait for the port authorities to work out how they will be repatriated. In June 2014, the ILO had 160 vessels listed as abandoned (ILO 2014). This figure only constitutes those vessels that have been officially reported as abandoned to the ILO and does not account for crews that "may have been forsaken but not officially abandoned" (Seafarers' Rights International 2014). Cases such as these demonstrate the negligible value that seafarers hold for their employers beyond their labour, and no recognition of their human rights.

In another case expounded by Couper *et al.* (1999), a chief engineer suffered burns to his face and legs after an accident onboard but was not allowed to seek medical attention by the Master as he did not think his injuries serious enough, despite the appeals of the other officers onboard. Eventually they arrived at port and the chief engineer was ordered to be repatriated by the port authority, at which point he returned home to be met by his wife who had not even been informed of his injuries. In this case, the chief engineer expressed his disgust at the way he had been treated and elaborated that despite his rank, he had been treated abominably, and he did not like to think how the situation would have progressed if it had been a rating who had been injured. This implies that ratings are perhaps more likely to suffer ill-treatment onboard ships and this is one question that will be explored in greater detail in this study.

With regard to denigration onboard, Chapman (1992) gave the example of a Filipino electrician who was publicly reprimanded by the new captain of the ship, causing him to offer his resignation in humiliation at what had occurred. The captain accepted the resignation without knowing why it had been offered and the electrician was replaced. There was no mention of whether the electrician had to pay for his own repatriation, or if the captain had asked him why he was resigning, and how this was

communicated to the ship owner. However, it demonstrates how an incident of denigration can result in the seafarer choosing to exit the situation, which is costly and troublesome for both him and his employers.

Alderton *et al.* (2004) also explain that despite the attempts of well-meaning shore managers to implement policies to protect seafarers, the nature of the job is such that the power relations onboard the ship are camouflaged by the strict hierarchy and the frequently changing complement of seafarers which has isolated them. In addition, the distance between shore office and the onboard ship environment means that managers can not verify the management style that the master and/or senior officers have adopted. This, Alderton *et al.* say, is exemplified in the case of the *MV Green Lily*, a ship that continued to sail in bad weather at the insistence of the master while the officers junior to him who felt he was making a mistake did not feel able to challenge his authority. The ship sank off the coast of the Shetland Islands in 1997 and the master's management style was identified as partly responsible for the incident in which a helicopter winchman lost his life.

A survey on seafarers' working conditions by MORI for the ITF in 1996 drew on 6,504 completed questionnaires from seafarers in 93 countries (Ipsos-MORI 1998) to reveal that,

Of all nationalities, Filipino and Indonesian seafarers suffered most physical abuse in the year preceding the survey and 18 per cent of all seafarers endured mental abuse. Interestingly, 'junior officers reported the highest incidence of abuse at 26 per cent'. Some 4 per cent of all seafarers reported that their families had been threatened in the previous year. In terms of trade union rights, 14 per cent of all seafarers reported receiving warning against contacting trade unions (MORI in Couper *et al.* 1999, pg. 61).

This provides an idea of the extreme conditions that can exist onboard ships, when appeals for help are also limited by the isolation in which seafarers work. This will form the basis for the second part of this research study, which is to explore the ways in which seafarers are able to respond to ill-treatment.

Based on existing maritime literature, it appears that it is often difficult to cultivate sustained or long-term friendships amongst seafarers sailing together as they join and leave the ship on different schedules and are of different nationalities. Interaction

amongst seafarers from different countries can be made problematic by differences in language and culture, variations in wages which can create differences and the fact that “the social relations of seafarers’ employment are experienced as a series of discontinuous encounters” (Kahveci *et al.* 2002, pg.9). Indeed, with the differences in contract length, seafarers often sail with their colleagues for a single voyage after which they take their leave period and join another ship with a completely different crew (Alderton *et al.* 2004). This creates a situation in which seafarers are not afforded the opportunity to realise their collective power, or take advantage of interaction with others to gain some measure of social validation of their experiences.

Chapman (1992) gives the extreme example of a case from 1984, when a Filipino bosun killed his Norwegian first mate. Investigation revealed that the first mate had been consistently taunting the bosun and one day the bosun, who had displayed no signs of bad temper prior to this incident, snapped and attacked the first mate. In his assessment of the situation, Chapman says that he believes the difference in nationality could have contributed to what happened, as when the bosun was initially being harassed, he did not respond or defend himself, in accordance with his Filipino culture, which Chapman felt does not encourage rebelling against authority. Although such ideas were widely accepted in the early 1990s (when Chapman wrote his book), Alderton *et al.* (2004) have asserted that upon close contact with people of other nationalities in multinational crews, seafarers often learned that national stereotypes were false and did not bear up under prolonged contact.

3.6.4. Responses to ill-treatment onboard

In relation to how one would respond to ill-treatment onboard a ship, Sampson and Thomas (2003) stated that as researchers onboard a ship, and becoming a part of that isolated environment, it was difficult to know whether one would “report’ an incident to others for fear of social disruption. It may additionally be difficult to determine who to report an incident to given that it could, for example, involve the behaviour of a senior officer and even a Captain or Chief Engineer” (pg. 181). One of the female researchers experienced a worrying incident where she was verbally abused and physically intimidated by the Captain of the ship she was sailing on and for the entire period of 16 days, she was banned from speaking with other members of crew, and was limited to remaining in her cabin and going to the mess hall, where she sat alone at a table she had been allocated. When she requested the Captain if

she could use the telephone or send an email, she was prohibited from doing so and could not disregard this as all communication had to go through the Captain. This example of a researcher, sanctioned to be on board as a 'guest' by the ship owner, being treated in this way raises questions about the ways in which seafarers may be suffering harassment and abuse at sea. In the case of the seafarers themselves, Bailey (2006) found that upward communication was severely limited by the hierarchy, and this raises questions about seafarers' access to support when they are considering responses to ill-treatment.

In a demonstration of the limited options that harassed and/or abused seafarers can have, Chapman tells the story of four Sri Lankan crew members who had not been issued shore passes but circumvented the guard posted at the gangway to reach the security office, and refused to return to the ship. The security personnel contacted a chaplain for help and when he arrived, he discovered that the officers on the ship were Greek and the chief engineer had slapped one of the crew members. They did not want to continue to work in abusive conditions and the chaplain helped them to be repatriated, but Chapman (1992) said that the officers continued to think that they had left because they were not 'manly' enough to continue to sail.

Communication is key to responding to an incident of ill-treatment in any circumstance, but is particularly vital and potentially problematic for seafarers onboard a ship. This is compounded by several factors, a few being that there is a strict chain of command that is expected to be followed in reporting any problems, and this may lead straight to the person that a seafarers wants to complain about. While it is possible for the seafarer to bypass this person and continue up the chain of command, such an approach has the potential to cause problems for the seafarer should he be 'found out' (Sampson and Thomas 2003). So what becomes a point of interest is – to what extent are seafarers suffering from ill-treatment hampered by their limited access to communication?

3.7 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore Indian seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard and thus add to the wider literature on ill-treatment in the workplace. Shipboard work is particularly interesting because of its unique combination of workplace characteristics – the globalised supply and labour chain, and more

specifically, the workplace as social and leisure space, distance management, and the quasi-military hierarchy onboard.

The indications from the literature explored in the last two chapters are that seafarers are vulnerable workers and likely to be subject to ill-treatment onboard. Combining the concerns raised in chapter 2 and refined in chapter 3, the following four primary research questions will be explored throughout the remainder of this thesis. How do Indian seafarers perceive ill-treatment? How do different features of the work environment influence the occurrence of ill-treatment of Indian seafarers? How do Indian seafarers respond to ill-treatment? How do Indian seafarers cope with ill-treatment onboard?

The nature of these questions indicate a need for a deep understanding of the seafarers' own perspectives of their work environment and information regarding the support structures that are available to them. This required careful consideration of appropriate methodologies to employ in the research design to answer these questions. This process is explored in chapter 4: Methodology.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a reflexive account of the process by which the research was designed to best address the research questions. It was a two-stage process as the design changed after the feasibility study was conducted. This research was focused only on Indian seafarers as opposed to seafarers in general, because this would limit the effect of cultural factors which may otherwise differentiate between the expectations and experiences of seafarers of different nationalities. In addition, India is one of the top 10 seafarer supplying nations in the world and Indian seafarers represent approximately 6.8% of the 1.2 million seafarers in the global merchant navy. The research was conducted in Mumbai because it is the busiest deep-water port in India and that is where many ship management companies have offices.

In this chapter, details of the research process are provided including how access to the participants was secured through negotiation. This is followed by an account of the research methods which were used, namely semi-structured interviews, and some document analysis. Finally, the politics of research are touched upon in exploring a reflexive approach to this project, and important ethical considerations will be laid out.

4.2 Research Design

When considering research design, one must define the paradigm of inquiry that will ultimately inform the methods employed during the course of the research. This paradigm is composed of one's ontological and epistemological standpoints, as Hughes has explained, "every research tool or procedure is inextricably embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and to knowing that world" (1990, p.11). Therefore, in order to arrive at a suitable methodology, researchers should first identify their ontological leaning. This is done by determining what they perceive to exist in the world, and so deals with categories of realism, or what is construed to be 'real' or truthful in what surrounds us.

The philosophical basis for my research will help identify its ontological leaning. In order to achieve this, it must first be understood that the key feature of social science

that distinguishes it from others is its exploration of human society. This focus on the social aspects of humans as opposed to the biological or physical, rests on our ability for reflexive thought. This allows us to identify and analyse our own social interaction, thereby gifting us with an added dimension of thought and perception that is not found anywhere else in the animal kingdom. For me, this fundamental fact is the first building block of my ontological outlook. The social sciences are a study of society, which according to Hughes, was “a product of the human mind, was subjective, emotive as well as intellectual” (1990, p.90). Therefore, it can only be understood in a way that acknowledges this variability in its content.

When considering what constitutes reality, the capacity for divergent individual thought plays a significant role and I move to consider the various names and definitions allocated to the behaviours that were to be studied in this research project, be they ‘bullying’, ‘harassment’, ‘mobbing’, ‘negative behaviour’ or ‘ill-treatment’, as seen in chapter 2. These suggest that different interpretations of such behaviour are constructed based on different actors’ own ways of making meaning, and researchers’ means of understanding them. Several realities of the behaviour in question are created by the differing perceptions of various actors, each stemming from a construction of reality through their actions and interactions with other people (as suggested by Berger and Luckmann in 1967).

Therefore, my research position is rooted in a relativistic ontology and transactional epistemology, in keeping with a social constructivist paradigm as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). It relies “as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell 2003, pg. 8), results in “the production of reconstructed understandings of the social world” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, pg. 184) and lends itself to the production of multi-voiced texts.

According to Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) stance, my identification with the constructionist social science perspective means that the research ethics are automatically less concerned with subterfuge and involve obtaining participants’ fully informed consent. This will be explored further in section 4.5. However, to arrive at the decision to use qualitative methods to address the research questions required reference to existing research in the relevant fields.

The research questions designated at the end of chapter 3 were very open-ended and required an interpretive approach. Much of the empirical research in the field of

ill-treatment relies on quantitative survey methods in order to measure the prevalence of ill-treatment in a certain field, or even country. Fevre *et al.* (2010) point out the difficulties that can be experienced in gaining access to national data and not all such studies are representative of the population, which detracts from their relevance.

Liefooghe (2003) conducted a qualitative study investigating the ways in which employees conceptualized bullying in the workplace and found that use of the term incorporated more of an organizational dimension than had been considered. This indicates the value of exploring employees' perspectives of ill-treatment. D'Cruz and Noronha (2009) also conducted a qualitative study consisting of unstructured narrative interviews using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, in order to achieve their aim of exploring employees' subjective views of work. Once again, this provided insight into the complex conceptualization of bullying and the necessity of considering an organizational perspective. This indicated a need for Weberian *verstehen* (understanding) in the constructivist approach as opposed to explanation of any phenomenon (Johnson 1998).

As there was a lack of previous research in the maritime literature directly related to the sociological approach to ill-treatment that is the focus of this study, I had to refer to studies that were similarly explorative of a relatively under-researched area in the maritime field. Fittingly, there is some constructionist research being conducted in the field of shipping, often ethnographic work such as Sampson's (2005), which explored the way in which seafarers share spaces that transcend ethnicity when they sail with international crews. There have been other ethnographic studies carried out that related primarily to seafarer welfare, such as Bhattacharya's (2009) study on the impact of the ISM code onboard, and more qualitative studies such as Anand's (2012) thesis on work, skills and identity in the maritime sector.

Thus, qualitative methods were chosen for my study because they best fit in with the constructionist character of my own research and best fulfil the need for *verstehen*. Qualitative research "typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (N=1), selected purposefully" (Patton 2002, pg. 230). It entails the use of units of analysis for case studies and comparisons, based on distinctions such as whether the subject of research is geography focused, activity focused or time based (Patton 2002).

The ethnographical research in the maritime context, by its nature entailed observation. However, unlike Sampson's and Bhattacharya's studies where they were guaranteed of observing some action related to their subject of study, there would be no such guarantee were I to choose to board a ship for fieldwork. Although the absence of ill-treatment could have been treated as a result in itself too, I chose instead to focus on semi-structured interviews to gain a deep understanding of the ways in which the seafarers conceptualized ill-treatment and how they were able to respond to it. This would be the best method for me to answer my research questions.

In light of this, and the other studies mentioned above, I chose to address my research questions with a qualitative study that entailed the use of semi-structured interviews. Bearing in my mind that my research, although sociological in nature, is descended from the work of psychologists and there continue to be large quantitative surveys in the field that reflect this, I revisited Fevre *et al.*'s (2010) modified use of the negative acts questionnaire (NAQ) in their British Workplace Behaviour Survey (BWBS) in order to adapt it for my own use.

The questions are drawn from the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) as used by Fevre *et al.* 2010, who had in turn taken the NAQ as modified by Hoel and Cooper (2000) from Einarsen *et al.* (2003). Fevre *et al.* (2010) conducted cognitive testing on this modified NAQ in order to determine the extent to which the questions were understood similarly by different groups of respondents. They found that it was very difficult to achieve a single definition of 'bullying' which would be understood similarly by different groups, and chose to revise the instrument on the basis of the results of the cognitive testing. This revised battery of questions then formed part of their BWBS. They end with the recommendation that it does not appear to be fruitful to apply pre-existing definitions and values for 'bullying' and 'harassment', without adaptation for the individual circumstances of their research context. They further recommend that in the case of smaller sample sizes, conducting a qualitative study would yield much more helpful and contextualized data than a quantitative survey.

Having already decided on an interpretive approach in response to the nature of my research questions, it was prudent to consider the size of the sample and the respondents for the fieldwork. Initially, it was thought that researching officers' views of the hierarchy and their relationships with shore management in particular, would provide sufficient data that could be analysed to elicit their experiences of ill-

treatment. The emphasis on only one company instead of a wider sample of Indian seafarers from different organizations was to ensure that when analyzing the data, any emerging themes could be traced back to specific company practices. Bearing in mind the lack of recent research in the area of ill-treatment onboard ships, and the limitations of time and finance, it was deemed appropriate to carry out a qualitative study which would “explain the contextual issues and explanations for workplace bullying in that particular setting” (Fevre *et al.* 2010, pg. 83).

It was decided that a feasibility study would provide a good opportunity to gauge the validity of my semi-structured interview approach and establish initial access negotiation with the company. However, through the initial interviews, as well as informal conversations with the employees there, it quickly became clear that the study should include ratings in the sample as well. Bearing in mind the strong role that the organization might play in influencing seafarers’ experiences of ill-treatment, the study was further expanded to include another company, an Indian company (IC), for comparison purposes. Therefore, the research was conducted in two stages – there was one trip during which a feasibility study and many of the officers from the multinational company (MNC) were interviewed, and in the second, much longer trip, I was able to gain access to an Indian company and commence interviews there as well. The exact process is detailed in the section below.

4.3 The Fieldwork

The study was conducted over two separate trips to two companies based in Mumbai, India. One was a large multinational company (MNC) with a large office based in Mumbai and the other was a large Indian company (IC) also based in Mumbai. Initially, only access to the MNC was negotiated, and the first trip was in January 2011, lasting approximately 3 weeks. I refer to this as the first stage or first phase of the fieldwork. A feasibility study was conducted and after a few minor changes to the interview structure, interviews with officers commenced. All the officer interviews for the MNC were completed at this time, and I returned to Cardiff to commence transcription and begin identifying the themes and codes which were most prominent.

In July 2011, I returned to Mumbai for a period of just over 2 months, intending to interview ratings and more managers at the MNC and negotiate access to an Indian

company. Once access was achieved, officers, ratings, managers and one union official were interviewed in the IC. This constituted the second stage or phase of the data collection. In September 2011, I returned to Cardiff having completed my fieldwork.

4.3.1 The feasibility study

A pilot study can be useful in many different ways and can significantly contribute to the success of the final study. It is “intended to assess the adequacy of the research design and of the instruments to be used for data collection” (Wilson 1996, pg. 103). It is recommended that to successfully pilot a research design, the research instruments, in this case the semi-structured interviews, should be carried out with a sample that will be representative of the final study. This was not possible in the context of this study, particularly with regard to the managers, as there are a limited number of them and any interviews carried out with them will need to be included in the final study. However, it was possible to pilot the interviews with the officers.

Wilson (1996) suggests that conducting a pilot in a qualitative study gives the researcher the opportunity to create a set of codes which can then be ready for use in the main study. To do this, it is essential that enough interviews with the right people are carried out. However, the “pilot” study which was planned for this research was not a pilot study in the strictest academic sense. It was intended to be more of a feasibility study, conducted to negotiate access and ensure that the research design which has been formulated, is implementable on a practical level.

This feasibility/pilot study was necessary to ensure that I was as aware of any potential problems with access or arranging interviews as possible before the actual fieldwork commenced. The piloting element was also vitally important in the long term to ensure that I was prepared for any unexpected reactions from the seafarers and able to respond suitably (for example, by phrasing certain questions in another way or by directing them to a suitable support structure if necessary).

It was a very useful exercise, as it did result in a broadening of my research scope to include ratings in the sample would provide a good opportunity for comparison. In addition to this, I realised that including an Indian company may provide a good element of contrast to the multinational, in terms of the organisational culture the

policies and procedures in place. The reality was different, as is discovered in the subsequent chapters of the thesis, but the original expectation was that significant differences would be found.

At the time of the feasibility study, I had not been to Mumbai for any sustained period of time, and therefore in addition to negotiating access, a part of the aim of a feasibility study was to ensure that I became more familiar with the city. This also gave me an opportunity to ensure that the practicalities of carrying out the interviews were possible in the very different research setting that I was entering. I checked to make sure that I was able to book a suitable room in which to carry out interviews. I also used this time to identify a suitable counselling centre and support structure for the seafarers in case they need referrals as a result of issues discussed in the interviews.

Lastly, I endeavoured to conduct two to three semi-structured interviews with Indian seafarers to pilot my questions and ensure that the research is feasible. I followed all the proper ethical procedures with regard to providing all information about my research, showing them the participant information sheet and getting properly informed consent. The ethical implications of my research are outlined in greater detail later on in this chapter.

4.3.2 Access negotiation

Access was negotiated largely by networking through personal and professional contacts as friends and members of my family have been in the industry for the last 30 years. The people already in my network were approached by email and telephone calls to arrange face to face meetings, in which the aims of the research and the terms of access were discussed. For example, I explained that I need to speak to Indian officers and ratings, but I also emphasised that under no circumstances would the results of the interviews be made available to the organisation. Unlike I had initially feared, this did not prove to be a controversial point in the negotiations.

I have always been aware of seafaring as a profession because my father was a seafarer and he has continued to work on shore in the industry for the last 25 years. Most recently, he has held a senior management position in the multinational

company (MNC) which is included in this study. Access to the MNC was available through him as he arranged an introduction to the General Manager of the Mumbai office. I emailed the General Manager to request access, briefly explaining the purpose of my research and an initial meeting was organised to discuss the aims of the research and terms of access.

Access negotiation is always an ongoing process and I was prepared for this when I embarked on my research. When I decided to expand the research sample to include an Indian company, I reached out to personal contacts (mostly family friends) that worked with Indian ship management companies and may be able to provide access. One such contact agreed to provide access. It was a small Indian ship management company that managed around 20 ships. The size of the company would have provided an interesting contrast to the policies and procedures implemented in the very large multinational company, which manages over 600 ships worldwide.

However, the size of this Indian company made it very difficult to have access to the seafarers. After initially negotiating access, it was agreed that I would be informed when seafarers were due to come through the office, on their way to join a ship or having just signed off. Two weeks passed during which I continued to interview ratings at the MNC but I was not contacted by the Indian company. When I contacted them, I was told that only 2 seafarers had passed through the office during that time and they were not always scheduled visits. Simply going to the office every day would not ensure that I would have contact with seafarers, so they agreed to get in touch when they were expecting someone to pass through. However, it was obvious that waiting for this company to get back to me would not elicit results quickly. There was also no guarantee that I would be able to speak to seafarers from the full range of ranks in the hierarchy, which was crucially important to my research.

Due to this difficulty of finding available seafarers to speak to, I began looking at other companies that I could potentially gain access to. Through the father of a friend from university, I was able to organise a meeting with a senior manager and a recruitment manager at another Indian company. They were very accommodating and supportive of the qualitative nature of the research. As this company managed around 80 ships, they usually had at least a small number of officers and ratings passing through their offices every day. I visited the offices over two days to gauge the frequency with which I would be able to conduct interviews, and assess if I would be able to speak to seafarers from every rank. Over these two days, it was clear that

there was a steady flow of seafarers through the offices of the company and it would be easy to have access to them, much like in the MNC. Therefore, I withdrew from my agreement with the smaller Indian company. They agreed that that was a sensible decision as I was having trouble accessing any seafarers in their offices, and wished me luck with my work.

4.3.3. The respondents

This study was focused primarily on seafarers but the views of the shore managers were important to provide an additional frame of reference for the seafarers' comments. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with officers and ratings spanning all the ranks in both companies. Three shore managers who were directly involved with the management of the sea-going personnel were interviewed in each company. 26 seafarers were interviewed from the IC – 15 officers and 11 ratings. A total of 41 seafarers were interviewed from the MNC, with 25 officers and 16 ratings. The reason that more seafarers were interviewed from the MNC is because that is where the feasibility study interviews were conducted (with 5 officers), and the initial focus of the study was on officers only, which meant that more interviews were conducted with them in the first stage of the fieldwork. A union official in the IC was also interviewed. All in all, a total of 74 interviews were conducted over fieldwork spanning approximately 3 months. The interviews ranged in length from between 20 minutes to 90 minutes, with the majority averaging around 40 minutes.

I interviewed both engineering and deck officers in order to gain a better understanding of the hierarchy onboard and how organisational control is exerted through relations with managers onshore. Junior and senior officers were included to get a range of opinions about the hierarchy and I also interviewed managers in both ship management companies to ask them about the grievance procedures they have in place for seafarers, both onboard ship and onshore. In addition to this, I asked them how often their procedures were actually used by seafarers for those aspects of ill-treatment that are the focus of this study. This was done to provide some idea of the perception of employers about the existence and importance of issues of disrespect and denigration in the workplace.

4.3.4 Sampling and sample size

My primary approach when selecting people to conduct semi-structured interviews was largely opportunistic or emergent sampling, where I undertook sampling “to take advantage of new opportunities during actual data collection” (Patton, 2002:240). This method helped avoid the gaps that are often left by purposeful sampling, because it is not possible to observe everything and interview everyone. Opportunistic sampling is an ideal method with which to ensure that all opportunities for gathering information are taken, so as to produce more coherent and comprehensive results. It also allows for unforeseen but information-rich cases to be interviewed on an impromptu basis, yielding genuine results that are not coloured by the interviewer’s own biases (*Ibid.*).

It was difficult to choose a number of interviews which would be sufficient to elicit all the data that was required for this study as qualitative data is, by definition, not a measurable quantity. The concept of saturation has been suggested as a guide to determine sample size. This is the idea that qualitative researchers should continue conducting interviews and gathering data until they reach a point where nothing ‘new’ is emerging from the data. Critics of this approach have suggested that experienced researchers will be able to continue examining and familiarising themselves with the research subject to continue finding ‘new’ data (Strauss and Corbin 1990). However, they concede that this is very subjective and that it is important to recognise the point at which the ‘new’ data is not adding anything to the overall framework of the study. This ensures that an excess of data does not overwhelm the researcher and make it difficult to draw useful conclusions from their study. This was the approach I used in the first phase of research.

However, in the second phases of research, keeping the aim of my study in mind, that is that I wanted to interview seafarers from all the ranks, I tried to ensure that I interviewed at least one, but preferably two, seafarers from each rank in each company. Using a list of 17 ranks as a loose guideline⁶, this meant that the minimum possible sample would have been approximately 34 seafarers, and if I gained sufficient access to all the ranks, then the largest would be 68 seafarers. This is no longer opportunistic sampling, but stratified sampling, and was necessary to ensure

⁶ The ranks used were: Captain, Chief Engineer, Chief Officer, 2nd Engineer, 2nd Officer, 3rd Engineer, 3rd Officer, 4th Engineer, Chief Cook, Messman, Pumpman, Wiper, Fitter, Oiler, Bosun, AB and OS.

that all ranks were represented in my pool of respondents. While my actual sample size was a total of 67 interviews with seafarers across both companies, this was skewed in favour of officers, and in favour of the MNC due to the earlier opportunistic sampling method (and including the three interviews from the feasibility study).

The sample of ratings from the IC was limited by the need for the seafarer to have previously worked with the company. Due to their recently changed recruitment method (explained in detail in chapter 5), it was difficult to find access to ratings who fulfilled this criteria. However, I managed to interview at least one seafarer from each rank in both companies. By the time this aim had been accomplished, I did feel that I had reached saturation point in terms of the data, despite it no longer being opportunistic sampling.

Only 6 managers (3 from each company) and one union official were interviewed. The interview with the union official from NUSI (the ratings' union) was very much the result of opportunity and was not planned. It does not feature heavily in the analysis chapters to come, but it did provide some measure of awareness of the union's view of ill-treatment onboard.

The main reason for this imbalance in interviews per group of interviewees is that the research questions were more focused on the seafarers instead of the other groups and therefore I needed a wider variety of opinions and thoughts from the seafarers. The managers and the union official were interviewed to provide an additional frame of reference for the seafarers' experiences.

4.3.5 Language

The majority of the seafarers I interviewed were fluent in English as they needed it to communicate while sailing. Those who were not comfortable speaking English were fluent in Hindi, which is my mother tongue, so we were able to communicate fluently during interviews. All seafarers were given the option of conducting the interview in either English or Hindi, whichever they preferred. All of the officers in particular, from both companies, chose to be interviewed in English. In the IC, 9 interviews with ratings were conducted primarily in Hindi. There was no danger of lack of expertise with the language because all the technical terms they referred to were in English. In

the MNC, 12 interviews with ratings were conducted in Hindi and one was conducted half in English and half in Hindi (according to the wishes of the respondent).

All the managers chose to be interviewed in English and were comfortable expressing themselves in that language. The union official was interviewed in a mix of Hindi and English (mostly Hindi). Therefore, a total of 23 interviews out of 74 were conducted in Hindi.

4.3.6 The method – semi-structured interviews

In accordance with the interpretive approach necessary to yield data suitable for answering the research questions, I made use of a semi-structured approach in interviewing the junior and senior officers, ratings and managers. The questions in such an interview are open-ended and allow the participant to respond in their own words. They are also not supposed to be asked with any particular phrases or in any specific order, which allows the interviewer to adjust the direction and content of the interview depending on what has already been discussed, and based on the understanding of the interviewee (Wilson 1996). Therefore the questions in the semi-structured interviews were mostly asked in a flexible way that allowed further probing into the answer that was given, particularly if it revealed surprising or unexpected information that added something extra to the picture of the seafarers' experience. The most important aspect of this type of interview was that it allowed the interviewer to "enter into a dialogue with the interviewee" (May 2001, p.123) but the presence of some structure also established the main topics under review.

Such an approach ultimately led to a better understanding of the participant's views in their own language that showcased their perception of the key topics, which is the aim of the study. The fundamental advantage of using this open-ended approach was to elicit information that may not have fallen within the realms of the interviewer's expectations but can prove very useful nonetheless.

In this method, it was important to establish a sense of rapport and trust between the interviewer and interviewee, so the interview was conducted as a quasi-conversation which required the flow of information to go both ways. I did this by engaging in small talk before commencing with the interview and making sure that they felt comfortable in the environment in which the interview takes place. It is also vital to listen carefully

to what the interviewee is saying and respond appropriately as this builds trust and also lets the interviewee know that his or her opinions are being valued (Kvale 1996). Such an approach also encourages the interviewee to feel relaxed and hopefully, to volunteer relevant information which the interviewer may not know to ask about.

During the interviews, all respondents were first asked about their understanding of ill-treatment. This was done to establish their perception of events that occurred onboard and which could then influence their response to ill-treatment. However, aside from this specific question, I tried to ensure that I did not use terms from the literature throughout the interview, such as ill-treatment or denigration, as the seafarers may not be familiar with the context in which I am using them. Opening these phrases up and using more exact terms such as “shouting” or “spreading rumours” enabled the participant to respond more freely without being hampered by jargon which is not necessarily familiar to seafarers. This was also in response to Fevre *et al.*'s (2010) criticism (stated earlier), of imposing a standardized definition of ill-treatment on the respondents. Making this choice also negated the need for a filter, which would otherwise have been required to ensure the participant's familiarity with the terms used (Foddy 1993, p.102).

In addition to this, use of phrases such as “*your view*” in the questions circumvented the potential for confusion in the level of social generality of the respondent. In this way, they knew that their answer must represent own opinion as opposed to a community one (Foddy 1993, p.82). It is important to provide the participant with a response framework to avoid confusion on their part and mine. The modified battery of questions from the British Workplace Behaviour Survey (Fevre *et al.* 2012) was a part of this strategy, along with its value in helping to gauge the difference between seafarers' perceptions of ill-treatment onboard and their actual experiences of it.

However, I did not include the questions about physical violence in my semi-structured interviews. This was done partly to keep the focus of this study narrowed solely on unreasonable treatment, incivility and disrespect, in accordance with the research questions. However, it was also indicated by the result of informal conversations with current and ex-seafarers (including colleagues in my department). They concurred that it was clear that physical violence was decreasing onboard and was certainly much reduced compared to 15 years ago. This was corroborated by reports such as Borch *et al.* (2012), who found that, in the case of Danish seafarers, maritime-related deaths decreased significantly between a period of 1986 to 2009.

During the course of the interview, when asking respondents about their experience of each item on the battery of questions, I tried not to prompt them initially, so they could respond in a way which would further display their perceptions of what is considered ill-treatment in academic literature. However, if they were unsure of what type of acts might constitute a certain type of ill-treatment, I sometimes gave them examples. Although it could be considered to be leading the interviewee by providing them with examples of ill-treatment, such an approach is necessary sometimes. It helps them consider and discuss incidents which they may not perceive to be particularly important or out of the ordinary, or to be something which can and should be addressed in their workplace. It is, in essence, an attempt to make the familiar, strange to them.

To illustrate this, I have included my modified version of the battery of questions from the BWBS. The prompts in brackets were not read out loud to the respondent and were initially for my information. They stemmed primarily from conversations with seafarer and ex-seafarer friends that gave me ideas of ways in which those negative acts could be manifested onboard. This was so that I would be better able to explain a question if necessary, in a context the seafarer would be familiar with. This way of thinking also helped me to generate the appropriate Hindi translation of the standard battery of questions in collaboration with a translation company.

The seafarers were asked whether they have experienced any of the following over their last 3 voyages. This number was chosen because depending on whether the respondent was an officer or a rating, it meant the questions would not go further than five years into the past. A note was made of occasions where they had said yes, and the details of these incidents provided the basis of much of the interview.

- 1) *Someone withholding information which affects your performance (e.g. not specifying the timescale in which a certain task needs to be completed).*
- 2) *Pressure from someone else to do work below your level of competence.*
- 3) *Having your opinions and views ignored.*
- 4) *Someone continually checking up on you or your work where it is not necessary (i.e. giving the impression that they do not trust in their level of competence).*
- 5) *Pressure from someone else not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. being discouraged from using support structures in place for people to attain*

dignity at work; more tangible breach of contract such as withholding pay or delaying repatriation because replacement crew could not be/were not found).

- 6) *Being given an unmanageable workload or impossible deadlines (this may particularly come up in the context of smaller crews increasing the amount of work to be done in port and/or at sea).*
- 7) *Your employer not following proper procedures (e.g. sailing on a substandard vessel; prioritising the transport of the cargo over the health and safety of the crew).*
- 8) *Being treated unfairly compared to others in your workplace (e.g. respect and deference being given to others by breaking the hierarchy, according to their nationality or nepotism; credit for a task being given unfairly to someone else).*
- 9) *Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.*
- 10) *Gossip and rumours being spread about you or having allegations made against you.*
- 11) *Being insulted or having offensive remarks made about you.*
- 12) *Being treated in a disrespectful or rude way (e.g. respect not being accorded to their rank; age; number of years at sea/in the industry; intrinsic knowledge).*
- 13) *People excluding you from their group.*
- 14) *Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.*
- 15) *Persistent criticism of your work or performance which is unfair.*
- 16) *Teasing, mocking, sarcasm or jokes which go too far.*
- 17) *Being shouted at or someone losing their temper with you.*
- 18) *Intimidating behaviour from people at work (e.g. threatening their job if something is not carried out to their satisfaction; threatening to withhold pay, leisure time, etc.).*

Standard battery of questions (Adapted from Fevre *et al.*'s (2010) revision of the NAQ for the BWBS).

4.3.7 Site of research

In both companies, the seafarers were approached when they were visiting the offices for a training course, before signing on to a ship, or having just signed off. This meant that most of them were unable or unwilling to schedule separate appointments for the interview, as they were not based in Mumbai and were in transit. Those seafarers based in Mumbai were also only willing to agree to the interview if it could be done on the same day because they did not want to have to commute if it was not necessary. To illustrate the context of the commute, it was monsoon season during the 2 months of the second stage of my research and travel

time in Mumbai can double due to bad traffic jams when it rains heavily. A one-way journey to the IC which could take me one hour on a good day with no traffic, would take 2 hours if there was rush hour traffic, and up to 3 hours if it was raining heavily as well.

As most of the seafarers were reluctant to schedule the interview for another day, I made every attempt to see them on the same day because I knew I would not be able to get the same opportunity again. The seafarers who were in the offices for training courses in the MNC very kindly agreed to an interview during their lunch hour in the conference room (they did not have the time to go out for lunch). This approach did raise the danger that some of the interviewees may have rushed to finish the interview quickly, however, some of them even delayed returning to their seminar to finish the interview properly. Others who were going to join a ship and had to make it to their flight later the same day were also very kind in donating an hour of their time to my research.

In both companies, I was generously given the use of either a small conference room, or if this was in use, an unused office or larger conference room to conduct my interviews in. This helped address the potential issue of the limited time that most of the seafarers had and also meant that I was not unduly isolated in a strange city. The rooms provided privacy and were away from the noise of the office, thus making it easier to understand the recording of the interviews later. The onus was on me to ensure that the room chosen was convenient for both parties but also did not imply that I was gathering information for the company that employs them, as this could have made them more reticent with regard to any comments they had about their relationship with managers. As discussed earlier, trust is a vital part of the interviewer-interviewee relationship for a successful research endeavour.

Although initially worried about how comfortable the seafarers would feel responding freely, it quickly became apparent in the feasibility study that the use of a small unused conference room provided sufficient privacy for the seafarers to be very open in their responses. This openness remained the same with the ratings who were interviewed in the offices. All respondents were given a choice to schedule an appointment at another time, or to conduct the interview in a small cafe across the road (the only viable option for conducting a private interview in the immediate area). Only three ratings opted to conduct the interview in the cafe, these were all quite short interviews and the seafarers did not appear comfortable enough to be open in

their responses. This may have been because they were worried that they would be overheard by someone that they knew from the office. In contrast, the interviews conducted in the conference room elicited more useful insights into seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard.

Only one interview with a manager in the IC was conducted in his office because all the others sat in an open-plan office with a desk within hearing distance of other people. Therefore, I interviewed the managers in the conference room as well. I also took field notes based on ongoing conversations with the managers over the days that I spent in the offices. The one conversation with a union official based in the IC was also conducted in an unused office. His colleague accompanied him during the interview, at his request and the interview was not recorded.

4.3.8 Field diary

Although this was not an ethnography and observation was not a specified aspect of the research design, I did spend some many weeks based in each company's office, and was thus able to observe the way in which they interacted with the officers and ratings. At the end of each interview, I made notes about an individual's details or important thoughts that I wished to record, as very early on into the fieldwork, I could see themes emerging through the interviews. This formed part of my field diary, and I also recorded notes about observations I happened to make, usually when a particular interaction struck me as out of the ordinary, or different to what I expected to see. The daily recording of this data constituted an additional contribution to the interviews that were recorded, as they reminded me of informal portions of conversation that may not have been caught on the digital voice recorder.

4.3.9 Data analysis

Subject to the interviewees' consent, the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed and securely stored on the computer. Analysis of the data can potentially be just as problematic as actually compiling the data. This is because the way "the researcher conceptualizes the field of study" (Sapsford and Abbot 1996, p.318) has a direct impact on the way the data is "coded, clustered or segmented for analysis" (*Ibid.*). This means that someone else's analysis of the same data could result in

entirely different and possibly even contradictory conclusions to mine, or that they could decide to pay particular attention to another aspect of the data.

I decided to use computer aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) to assist my analysis of the interviews, although I also kept field notes and referred to them to check for nuanced phrases and descriptions of actions. The key to using CAQDAS is to understand its importance as a *tool* for coding and retrieval to assist analysis and the most important point is that the actual *analysis* of the data will be done by me. A CAQDAS programme simply aids in making the data more well categorized, easily accessible and therefore makes the process of analysis faster (Lewins 2001). It is rather like filing handwritten notes according to colour-codes that will help to efficiently identify the specific codes whenever they are needed.

There are several considerations that led to this decision. First, the knowledge that I had vast amounts of data in the form of transcriptions of interviews meant that limiting myself to large piles of hard copies of notes (even if well-organized) would not contribute anything to the process of analysis. Secondly, I acknowledged that it would be very easy to rely on ATLAS.ti to the point where familiarity with the various nuances and alternative accounts in my own data becomes compromised. To limit the effects of this, I also kept hard copies of the notes that were supplemented by my field journal and referred to them periodically. This helped to retain the concept of the interviews as a whole, although the instant retrieval of source data in ATLAS.ti meant that I was actually closer to the particular themes and categories that I identified.

The interviews that had been recorded were transcribed over a period from September 2011 to January 2012. The interviews conducted in Hindi were translated and transcribed in English. To ensure that my understanding and use of the language was correct, I sent two 30 minute samples from different interviews to a translation and transcription service and compared their translation to my own. My translations were very similar to their translations, with the added advantage of being able to provide the right context for what was being said, based on the tones in the recordings but also my own memory of the interviews and field notes that I wrote afterwards.

The analysis of the qualitative data required some thought as the way in which the information is approached would have a direct effect on the results which were elicited. Therefore, in keeping with the interpretive aim of this study, I employed

thematic analysis to find relevant themes hidden in the data and create a rich and more encompassing picture of seafarers' perceptions and experiences of ill-treatment. This is where the usefulness of the semi-structured approach becomes more obvious, as it made comparison of interviews easier. This is because even though the wording and order of questions may have been changed in the course of the interview, they all covered a minimum of the same basic points or themes. Thematic analysis involves the reduction of field data (captured in the form of transcribed interviews and observational notes) into broad themes and categories which outline and capture the phenomenon being studied (Aronson 1994).

However, one of the problems encountered with using an itemised list of examples of ill-treatment (the standard battery of questions on pg. 71) in the semi-structured interview was that it initially hindered the emergence of other data. I was so focused on finding the answers to the types of ill-treatment that had been previously established in land-based studies that I had to revisit the data several times in order to identify other patterns and themes emerging. Coding using the research questions instead of letting the data speak for itself and generating codes (and therefore theory) is also a danger with thematic analysis.

The actual interpretation of the data was done through thematic analysis. This type of analysis was composed of both an inductive and deductive approach to have a rigorous analytical frame (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). The first part was inductive, where initial interviews were read and re-read to identify themes that were relevant and recurring across different interviews. This part of the analysis process was done manually, both after the feasibility study and the interviews in the main sample so that the data became familiar and I did not rely on CAQDAS to identify themes for me. An example of a theme that emerged from this process was 'abuse of hierarchy', with the sub-themes of 'delay in sign-off', 'work during rest hours', and 'threatens him with sign-off'. Another major theme was 'socialisation', with the sub-themes of 'family rhetoric', 'peer-regulation' and 'isolation'. However, revisiting the data repeatedly meant that the final coding structure was different in its organisation of themes⁷. The themes and their sub-categories were assigned codes to enable the development of a template which was then applied to the remaining interviews to pick out similarities and differences. That was the deductive approach and the point at which the CAQDAS package was most useful in its supporting role (Coffey and

⁷ The final coding structure can be found in Appendix D of the thesis.

Atkinson 1996). The deductive approach aids in theory-building as the results are more easily related to literature and contribute to building good conclusions (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). Therefore, the thematic analysis of my data allowed me to remain closely engaged with the data and the constant movement between interpretation and revisiting the data itself, helped break the process down into more manageable sections so it did not become overwhelming (Charmaz 2006).

4.3.10 Document analysis

There was an element of document analysis in my research design. This type of analysis pertains to primary data sources, and I examined HR policies and union policies with regard to dignity at work, and supra-national regulations as well as the Indian governments' guidelines with regard to seafarer welfare. Therefore, the primary data sources consisted of a mix of organisational policy as well as publicly available documents. There are also secondary data sources which will be examined with regard to this study.

Finnegan (1996) has explained that the analysis of documents needs to take into account several factors. Among these is the distinction between the researcher's intention to use the document directly or indirectly. If I approached the document with a view to use it directly, I would simply lift the information contained in it and use it as I found it. If, however, I viewed it indirectly, I paid attention to other factors, such as the audience for which the document was originally written. This entailed an interrogation of sorts, of the integrity of the information contained in the document. It meant that when I was looking at an HR grievance procedure, I had to investigate who it applied to and corroborate what it said with data from the interviews, which informed me of how frequently this procedure was used. In another example, in chapter 3, there was an example of guidelines pertaining to the bullying and harassment of seafarers, compiled by the ITF. It was encouraging reading, but closer inspection showed that they were only guidelines and there was no indication of the extent to which even ITF-affiliated unions have acknowledged or implemented these guidelines.

Re-reading my field notes and mining them for data also provided a form of document analysis. They often described the atmosphere and idiosyncracies of an

interview and minor observations about the way in which I saw seafarers and managers interacting.

Secondary data analysis incorporates the review of relevant literature that was conducted in the previous chapter as it explored concepts and research conducted by others in relation to my research questions. It necessitated the same precautions as the primary data analysis, if not more, because the author's interpretation of the original sources must be taken into account as well. Included in the secondary data analysis were also articles from respected industry magazines and trade journals which can prove to be a useful barometer for the concerns of seafarers in the industry, outside of the more official and/or academic writing.

4.4 Reflexivity

The richness and scope of the data that can be gathered from an interview relies upon the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee and this can be impacted by their perceptions of each other. The politics of research carry great import for the success of my interviews and therefore the depth of material mined from them. This has been supported by Doucet and Mauthner (2008), who explain that "...both the interviewer's and interviewee's *perceptions* of social, cultural, and personal differences have an impact on the power relationship in the interview" (pg. 332). Naturally, this then affected the results yielded from my analysis and the final conclusions of the study. In the interests of transparency of the research process, it was therefore vitally important to look at various factors in my research that had an impact on the power relationship between me and the interviewees.

If I felt that the respondent felt disconnected from me, I offered some snippets of my own background (my father was a seafarer) and shared some of my experiences of the shipping industry so that they felt more able to reciprocate. This formed the essential "small talk" which was mentioned in the interviews section of this chapter.

An important part of gaining the trust of the respondents was to present myself as separate from the company, especially as all but 3 interviews were conducted in both the companies' offices. To achieve this, I dressed in conservative Western business-casual wear, which set me apart from the other women in both offices, who tended to wear Indian business casual outfits. I was also personally more comfortable and felt

more professional in Western wear, which helped me to make my respondent feel comfortable too. I also ensured that I carried my business cards, identifying me as a member of Cardiff University and lending tangible weight to my assertion of who I was and why I wanted to speak to them. These conscious decisions, combined with the information sheet and consent form, reassured them that I was not employed by the company and would keep the interviews confidential.

In addition, although I am of Indian origin, I have never worked in a business environment in India. So, although I am fluent in Hindi and able to communicate with Indians of different backgrounds in social settings, I did have to keep an open mind and readjust my approach on some points. For example, I had to be sensitive to the differences in the backgrounds of the officers and ratings. Generally speaking, the ratings were more comfortable speaking in Hindi and accompanying this was the cultural difference of not being comfortable shaking someone's (especially a woman's) hand. After noticing this on two occasions, I took my cues from the seafarers – if they held out their hand, as most officers did, then we shook, but otherwise I did not make contact and said “hello” with a nod of my head, to which they responded in kind. I felt that this seemingly small point was essential to making the interviewee feel comfortable with the interview and put their trust in me.

With my father working with the MNC (but not in the Mumbai office), I did not try to hide my connection to the industry, as I felt that would be unethical. I mentioned that my father had been a seafarer in general conversation and this usually elicited interest and further conversation. While I did not try to hide my connection to my father, I also did not use it as a part of my introduction because I did not want to influence the seafarer and the interview. This did not consist of any conscious subterfuge on my part, as my father and I do not have the same last name, and he had helped me to arrange access through the manager of the Mumbai office but he was not physically there. A senior officer I was interviewing told me he knew my father and both my uncles (who also work in the shipping industry). While I did find that odd, it was rare for any of the interviewees to be interested in who my father was.

Another situation I did not expect arose from some seafarers' expectations that I would be able to help them in some tangible way. On one occasion in the IC, two seafarers asked to speak to me. They had heard from a friend that I was interviewing seafarers and they wanted to ask me to find them a maritime lawyer to protest a case

where one of them had been charged for his repatriation even though he had had to sign off on medical grounds. I did explain to them that I was not a lawyer, nor was I in a position to plead their case with their company (which was not included in my study). However, I then promised to email them names of maritime lawyers based in Mumbai who might be able to help them, which I did.

On another occasion, a rating worried for his job with the MNC asked me to intercede on his behalf. He was not one of my interviewees but again, had heard from someone that I had been conducting interviews and had misunderstood why I was in the company's offices. He may have heard from someone that I knew one of the senior managers in the company. In this case I had to tell him that I could not do anything to help him but wished him luck. Both of these situations reflect the regard in which researchers can be held, the trust that is invested in them and how important it is to carry out research responsibly so that it can contribute something good to the respondent's lives.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

My application for ethical approval was based on a careful understanding of ethical issues that could arise based on the British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines (BSA 2004). Fieldwork and data collection was only commenced after receiving approval from the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

There were many ethical problems to be considered, although some have been explored earlier in a different context. I carefully considered and adhered to the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee requirements for ethical research. Arguably the most important ethical issue is that of informed consent. The potential ramifications and the safekeeping of the data were discussed in detail with each participant both in advance and then again before beginning the interview. Confidentiality was also promised to all the participants and all the data has been anonymised so that only I know who the participants are. They were also free to withdraw their consent at any time. All of these facts were explained on a participant information sheet which was distributed to the respondents before the interview. Once they had read the sheet and I had verbally explained it and received confirmation of their understanding, I asked them to sign a consent form. The

participant information sheet had been translated into Hindi for those seafarers who were not comfortable communicating with English. Additionally, I have anonymised any references that the participants made to other people and/or organisations. This was done to ensure that the participants did not suffer any ill-effects as a result of partaking in this research.

A fundamental aspect of considering the ethical ramifications of any research project centred around long-lasting psychological, emotional and/or physical distress that may result from the research. In the case of this project, physical trauma was not a possibility. However, depending on the experiences of individual seafarers, it was possible that unpleasant memories of denigration may unsettle them emotionally and result in some psychological distress. To circumvent this, I ensured that I had informed them that they were free to refuse to answer any questions that they did not wish to address, and I was careful in my dealing with issues that may be sensitive by asking them if they wished to change the topic. This did impede my research sometimes, but there were three seafarers who acknowledged that they had experienced ill-treatment but that they did not wish to explain what it had been because they did not like to think about it.

In addition to this, I enquired in Mumbai about support structures and counselling services available to seafarers so that I was in a position to recommend these in case a seafarer suffered distress when discussing their experiences. There is a centre, Idnani's Medical Clinic and Welfare Centre, based in Colaba, Mumbai, which is near the port and provides counselling and health awareness services among others. The chances of the seafarers needing this were slim because I had narrowed down the topic of research to exclude any physical violence or harassment, but it is known that verbal abuse can also cause emotional trauma (Matthiesen and Einarsen 2004; Mikkelsen and Einarsen 2002). As it happened, none of the seafarers I interviewed were interested in hearing about counselling services or support structures beyond what they already knew – that is, the company itself and their union.

Another key ethical issue is the potential repercussions for the seafarers themselves as they work on very delicate contracts that are short-term and easily broken, and could have a direct effect on their livelihood if they are identified as saying something negative. To prevent this from happening, as referenced earlier, the careful arrangement of a room in which the interviews took place ensured that the study

participants are not put in a position where their employers become aware of any sensitive views that have the potential to threaten the seafarers' employment.

A potentially thorny ethical issue was the employment of my father with the same MNC, although he was not based in the Mumbai office. I had gained access through a senior manager in the office and as mentioned above, do not have the same name as my father. While his connection brought me access, I did not want to scare off any seafarers that would think that I was acting as a spy of sorts for management. Rather surprisingly, it felt to me that the seafarers were very open and honest with me, even if they knew who my father was. It could have been because I did not actively hide my connections. If the topic came up in general conversation, as it often did, I did not withhold the fact that my father worked for the same company, albeit in a different location. Some seafarers spoke to others before they came in and were aware of my connection. I did however, reassure the respondents that any information they shared with would remain confidential, and I found it easy to be completely professional in that regard.

In terms of the document analysis aspect of the research process, I maintained ethical behaviour by ensuring that I observed all copyright laws and did not misrepresent the data that I found. I also referenced accurately throughout the thesis to give due credit to the original authors of any ideas. To be guided in the ethical dilemmas detailed above, I adhered to the ethical guidelines laid out by the British Sociological Association and followed the recommendations of the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

Chapter 5: A Supportive Work Environment?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter has a dual purpose. The first part of this chapter will familiarise the reader with the structural aspects of the support that seafarers can expect from shore if they encounter a problem onboard. Thus, it will explore the rhetoric that both companies feed the employees, focusing particularly on management gems such as “we need your support so we can support you”. It will also include a discussion on both companies’ recruitment and retention policies, their grievance procedures, and the level of union presence.

This will set the stage for the second part of the chapter, as armed with information about both companies, it will investigate trust in the different employment relationships. Thus, management’s perspectives of seafarers as workers will be covered, including their attitudes towards officers and their perception of ratings as “easily replaced”. In addition, officers’ views of management and their motives will be explored to provide a glimpse into the complexity of their interdependent relationship, as they perform a managerial role onboard themselves. This leaves them in a position where they must enact shore management’s edicts but also look after the interests of seafarers onboard. They have greater access to shore management to put forth their own requests, and often feel as if they are an extension of management onboard. The contrast with the managers’ views on this will prove interesting, as to them, senior officers are still very much seafarers and are ultimately directed by shore staff and corporate policy. Finally, ratings’ views of management will also be examined as they are in the most vulnerable position in terms of support from management.

The two companies in this study are the multinational company (MNC) and the Indian company (IC) and they are different in some significant ways. These differences primarily pertain to the recruitment of seafarers, their contracts with the company, the grievance procedures in place and the presence of unions in each company. The two ship management companies in this study both have large offices established in Mumbai, India, where the interviews were carried out.

A comparison indicates that similarities as well as differences between the two companies will be explored. The most important way in which the companies are similar is in relation to the office politics and the way that relationships with employees onshore can transcend the distance between ship and shore and affect the options employees have to respond to ill-treatment while sailing. In addition to this, they both adhere to the industry standard of offering temporary contracts of employment that was seen in chapter 3.

5.2 The Multinational Company

The Indian office of the multinational company (MNC) is part of a wider network of offices around the world that function almost as individual ship management companies by competing for and obtaining contracts available from ship owners in their region. Other offices are based in Greece, China, Singapore and Germany among others.

The MNC is capable of drawing from its worldwide recruitment centres and employing multinational crews for the ships that they manage, depending on the demands of their client. The ships that they manage are also flagged in a variety of different countries, including purported flags of convenience, as described in chapter 3. This means that, technically, the ships that they manage are subject to the national variations in interpretation of international maritime law put down by the ILO and IMO. More specifically, the consequences of this are that the actual regulation of the ships and the seagoing personnel is subject to international law.

5.2.1 Recruitment and retention of officers

The MNC offers temporary contracts to officers but re-employs them on a regular basis, depending on their performance during previous contracts and the need of the company at a particular time. Contracts range from a duration of 3 months to 6 months with the average being 4 months. Officers complete the length of their contracts and inform the office of when they will be ready to take on another contract. Based on the interviews with managers and the seafarers, the usual pattern for this is for officers to have 4 months onboard a ship and then 4 months off. This type of employment means that neither the company nor the seafarer are tied into a permanent contract, although the rolling temporary contracts often result in a long-

term relationship and some senior officers had been with the company for over 15 or even 20 years. However, this series of temporary contracts also means that the officers are not paid during their time 'off' the ship and benefits such as medical and life insurance are not available.

There are standard HR policies in place across all the MNC's global recruitment centres which govern the recruitment of officers. In addition to rigorous inspection of all required training and certification, officers are required to have a certain personality type which is considered to suit seagoing life. Recruiters are told not to allow "the wrong kind of people to slip through". When asked to specify who these wrong kind of people might be, a manager said they are "drifters, mercenary types who are there only interested in the money but they have no commitment, no engagement with the job". He linked this to problems with safety onboard the ship and specified that a lack of interest in what they are doing can lead to accidents onboard. Currently, the company uses psychometric tests to gauge the personality of cadets being recruited. These tests are not used for experienced hires as it is assumed that they already have the personal traits required for the job.

In keeping with this theme, the MNC offers training courses in 'soft-skills' for officers and technical superintendents as they need to have the skills to be diplomatic and maintain cordial relations in the work place. One manager stressed that some seafarers have a "bad attitude" and this can be addressed through proper training. He also termed the courses "further professional development" and explained,

It gives the seafarers good management skills. Most of the younger ones these days want to come in, do their contracts and get out. They will be looking for a move once they're reached a high position and this is something being done in other industries as well. (Mgr 2 – MNC)

The MNC invests time and money in ensuring that seafarers who are long-term employment prospects are recruited and then continues to invest in improving managerial skills to maintain high rates of retention as well. As seen in the literature review in chapter 2, organisational control can be exerted through the formulation of a professional identity and the expectations of behaviour that come attached to that, and the MNC's investment in the recruitment process and training of its personnel implies a high degree of this.

Pay-scales are different according to country of origin across the company's different offices. However, all Indian officers are employed on the same pay scale, although sometimes pay is individually negotiated by officers who have offers of higher wages from other companies. As seen in chapter 3, certain ranks, particularly experienced senior officers, are in high demand in the industry and certain concessions can be made to retain exceptional and/or long-serving personnel at the company's discretion.

5.2.2 Recruitment and retention of ratings

Ratings are seen as less valued in the industry in general as there is currently a surplus of ratings in relation to the demand, as established in the maritime literature review. This factor, in addition to the less operational responsibility that most ratings are given onboard, means that their pay is much lower than that of officers and they are also considered by managers to be "easily replaceable". However, in the MNC, they still go through an interview process and are chosen based on experience in addition to their training and certification.

Ratings are also employed on temporary contracts, usually 9 months in duration. The pattern of employment tends to be 9 months onboard and then 3 months off. Ratings are re-employed by the MNC depending on their performance during previous contracts. They do not have access to the management training courses and seminars that are available to the officers.

5.2.3 Grievance Procedures

The MNC has formal grievance procedures in place. A recruitment manager said that both officers and ratings are made aware of the availability of these procedures to them before they go onboard.

The official procedure for making a complaint requires seafarers to follow the chain of command, which means informing their immediate superior of the problem. In cases where the complaint is with the immediate superior or the seafarer is uncomfortable approaching him, he should go to the head of his department. This would be the Chief Engineer for the engineering department or the Chief Officer for the deck department. If the superior officer that the seafarer approaches is unable to resolve

the problem, he will pass it up along the hierarchy until it eventually reaches the Master if need be. If the problem is still unable to be resolved, the Master can then forward the problem to the company' shore office. Depending on the nature and urgency of the problem, they will either send someone out immediately to investigate (this could be a technical superintendent or a fleet personnel manager), or they may delay a while if a superintendent is scheduled to visit the ship anyway and the problem is not urgent. Alternatively, they may call other officers onboard to ask their opinion of whatever the incident was, to get a clearer picture.

A manager gave the example of one case in which a cadet was being targeted by the captain. One day, the captain told the cadet to climb up to the top of the 'monkey island'⁸ and keep watch there. The cadet did as he was told and while he was up there, the captain blew the horn. The cadet immediately came down and wrote out a complaint to the company detailing how the captain had been harassing him and that he now could not hear properly and wanted to be repatriated. He insisted that the captain send this email out to the office (as all communication must go through the captain), which he did so. The office responded by demanding a reply from the captain and when he gave an unsatisfactory written reply, they sent out a superintendent to investigate the situation and the cadet was subsequently repatriated and upon further investigation and corroboration from the other crew and officer's reports, the captain was later also let go. This is a case of an exemplary response by the company to a complaint by a seafarer who was comfortable asserting his right to contact the shore office.

However, if seafarers feel unable to follow the chain of command in making their complaint for any reason, they are informally told that they can contact office staff onshore and their complaint will be responded to. This is not the official procedure but the manager said that the company understands that "there may be occasions when it is not possible to follow the chain of command because the complaint regards a superior ranking officer". Although the office is supposed to maintain a log of the complaints that they receive, they do not insist on written communication if the complainant is uncomfortable with this. The manager says that their priority is to make sure they are being told about the problems as and when they happen so that they can take appropriate action. Contact outside of the official route is generally

⁸ The 'monkey island' is also known as the ship's upper bridge and is the highest accessible point on a ship.

made by phone but also occasionally through letters sent from ports by seafarers who may not have uninhibited access to communication onboard the ship.

If the complaint is by an officer about the work of a crew member, there is also a procedure to be followed. The rating has to be given two verbal warnings in front of witnesses, with sufficient time to improve his knowledge/behaviour between warnings, before he is logged in the logbook (again in front of witnesses), at which point he would be repatriated. This procedure also gives the MNC's recruitment centre the satisfaction of knowing that the seafarer is not being dismissed for no reason as it costs them money every time they have to replace someone who is not doing their job properly. This builds in an extra level of accountability when it comes to the early dismissal of seafarers.

The MNC does have a whistle-blowing policy in place so that seafarers can report bad practice or problems anonymously, and the designated person is a loss prevention safety and quality manager, who is more highly placed than a superintendent, as a superintendent might have "a natural tendency to avoid reporting problems on the ships he is responsible for" in the main office. The contact details for this person are supposed to be provided at a pre-departure orientation seminar.

Seafarers are also informally told to contact their recruitment manager at the office if they encounter any problems, and formally they are informed of the complaints procedure at their pre-sea briefing. Once they are onboard the ship, the contact details for the shore office and the superintendent are posted on a bulletin board in the common areas for easy access.

5.2.4 Union presence

As has been seen, the MNC promotes its own in-house methods of responding to ill-treatment and makes the seafarers aware that it will attempt to help them deal with any problems. Correspondingly, union presence is low in the office as they do not have their own office and union representatives are not often seen on the premises, apart from times when they are negotiating new collective bargaining agreements. In addition, the unions do not appear to be held in very high regard by the seafarers as a MNC rating explained,

I don't know the union. We just have to sign up with them, because everyone does, so I did and now they just take my money and that's it. I don't want to get more involved with them, they are like thugs you know.

I: How are they like thugs?

They just take the money and then I never see them again. I don't think I would go to them if I had any problems. Anyway, in this company, there are less problems, this is a good company.

A senior officer also commented,

Yes the union is more for the ratings. We have our own union if we have any problem but no one really goes to them. Of course I am a member, you have to be, but there are other people to help you first.

This suggests that the unions for both officers and ratings, while having high subscription rates in the MNC, are not considered to be a viable source of support by the seafarers themselves.

5.3 The Indian Company

The Indian company (IC) is based in Mumbai and operates only Indian-flagged vessels and recruits only Indian crew. They are therefore subject to close scrutiny from the Indian Ministry of Shipping and must closely follow the guidelines set out by the Directorate General of Shipping with regard to policies and procedures that cater for the welfare of seafarers.

5.3.1 Recruitment and retention of officers

Officers are recruited through advertisements in national newspapers or on the website, or are recruited as trainee seamen and retained and promoted through the ranks. The pattern of employment is similar to that of the MNC as officers sign on for temporary contracts of a duration between 4 to 8 months, depending on the type of vessel they are sailing on. Officers also have the option of attending training seminars in 'soft skills', such as management methods, while they are 'on leave', or not sailing.

Unlike the MNC, although the personality of the cadets being recruited is important, there is no psychometric testing. There is an interview process. The IC also prefers to retain senior officers as it is difficult to meet client demand for experienced officers to run certain types of ships. There is a standard pay-scale that is applied across the board so the officers know what to expect. One manager mentioned in conversation that it is possible to also individually negotiate to an extent, depending on personal circumstances and demand, as in the MNC, however, this is not official.

5.3.2 Recruitment and retention of ratings

The recruitment of ratings in the IC is very different to that in the MNC. Until recently, the IC used to operate a roster system in which ratings were signed on to the books for the rest of their working lives and were therefore well known to the shore personnel and were entitled to certain benefits like holiday pay. However, they have phased out this type of employment as it was proving more expensive than the temporary contracts used by other companies. Now, only the older ratings who will be retiring soon remain on the roster, and the new system operates in a different way.

The positions that need to be filled are advertised in national newspapers and on the website and a day and time are set for all the applicants to come to the IC's office building. Recruitment managers then meet them and call out the vacancies one by one. The recruitment is based on a 'fair' system whereby ratings who have not worked for the longest period of time get first priority in being given the job. For example, in 2011, if a position for an oiler is called out, all applicants for the oiler position put their hands up. If there are quite a few, the managers start from a point 3 years previously and call out "*who last worked in 2008?*". Once the hands go up again, they verify that these people have the required experience, training and certification and collect their continuous discharge certificates (CDC)⁹. This process continues in chronological order until all vacancies for that position have been filled. Then they move on to the next advertised position. The managers then take the

⁹ A CDC is a seafarer's identity document which proves the bearer to be a qualified seaman under the requirements of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping. It also serves as a record of all his seagoing experience and is signed off by the Captain at the end of every voyage.

shortlisted seafarers up to the office to process the documents and guide the applicants through the procedure to be followed before they are officially accepted.

Due to the method of recruitment, there is no guarantee that once a rating has been employed by the IC, that they will be invited back for further contracts, because they are no longer drawn from an existing roster of ratings. They will have to go through the same process again, and it is partly a matter of luck whether they will be able to get another contract, because priority is given to those seafarers who have not been working the longest, and in the words of a manager, therefore “need it more”). Ratings tend to work for a duration of between 8 to 12 months at a time, depending on the type of vessel that they are on.

In general, the IC ratings seemed more relaxed about their job and confident that they would not be made to work longer hours than their contract. This could be because of union support, as suggested by the recruitment managers, although this could also be because the majority of ratings in this study were on the roster and had been with the company for a long time.

5.3.3 Grievance procedures

Like the MNC, the IC also has formal grievance procedures that can be activated by seafarers who experience ill-treatment. However, unlike the MNC, the IC does not expect for this service to be used by ratings in practice. When asked whether there was a grievance procedure available to ratings, a manager said,

If the ratings have a problem, it is not for us to solve, they have other people they can go to. They have DG Shipping¹⁰, they have unions. Okay, the officers are different, for them there are all these policies.

This was technically incorrect, as the grievance procedure in the IC is officially supposed to apply to both ratings and officers, but the discrepancy demonstrates the gap into which ratings at the IC fall.

¹⁰ DG Shipping stands for the Directorate General of Shipping India, which is an office of the Indian Government’s Ministry of Shipping and deals with the implementation of shipping policy and legislation of the maritime industry. For more information, refer to DG Shipping (2014) in the bibliography.

The official complaints procedure is similar to that in the MNC. A complaint should be made to the immediate superior in the chain of command, and this is passed along if unresolved until it reaches the Master, who then decides whether to inform shore office. At times, this route is circumvented if the person the complaint is against is placed higher in the chain of command than the complainant. In theory, once an official complaint is made, a procedure committee is supposed to be convened to discuss the merits of the case. This committee is made up of senior managers and each complaint and the results of each case are supposed to be submitted to DG Shipping to help ensure that the procedure is being followed. They are supposed to investigate each complaint by getting in touch with the person the complaint is about and asking for their point of view along with other witnesses before making a decision. The officers have access to details of the complaints procedure in their handbook, but are not usually verbally reminded of it before joining a ship, as in the MNC.

The IC also encourages seafarers to follow an informal route to resolving problems as this is potentially less troublesome for the company and the seafarer involved. A manager said that sometimes officers called to vent about their problems and wanted advice on how to deal with a situation with another seafarer onboard, but did not wish to take it further by making a formal complaint. In this case, he said

It helps if we are just there to listen and give them some advice, because many times the problem can be resolved by talking instead of bringing us into it, which will only make it worse.

However, this is true only of officers as, “The ratings don’t trust us. Even if we tell them to come and tell us all their problems, they won’t do it because that trust is not there”. This is a marked difference in attitude from the MNC manager and their policies. However, the IC managers appear content with the status quo and the new recruitment method means that interpersonal relationships are rarely built between the managers and the ratings, unless they are the existing older employees on the roster.

The IC also has a box located in the foyer of the main building which allows seafarers to make anonymous complaints, but these are supposed to be more to address corruption in the office than personal complaints.

5.3.4 Union presence

The IC has a strong union presence in their offices, as union representatives from ratings' unions spend time every week in an office allocated to them, and are available to the ratings should they have any cause for complaint.

The IC and some IC ratings quoted the union as being a source of support whereas the MNC ratings generally said that they would not go to the unions for help. However, those who did suggest that unions would be a viable source of support were those who had not experienced any ill-treatment. Of those who had experienced ill-treatment, the IC ratings expressed that they would not approach a union for help because they could not be relied upon to have the rating's best interests at heart. One IC Wiper explained,

Okay I have a problem onboard. But if I go to the union, he will only take on my problem if it is good for him, if it shows him in a good light. Otherwise he will just hide it and then I will still have a problem.

Another rating expressed his doubt,

I will tell you one thing. These unions are only good if you have been with them a long time or you know someone at the top. Then they will help you because they are your friend. For someone like me, I just joined two years ago, no one knows me, they will just tell me not to make trouble.

The stronger physical presence of unions in the IC suggests that they are there to pick up where the IC leaves the ratings without support, as a manager explained that the company's grievance procedures are not meant for the ratings in practice. The awareness of the ratings as unionised is particularly a view expressed by the managers and the officers onboard ships, one of whom said,

I can't even tell them to work that much because they'll suddenly decide it's too much and stop working and I have to help keep the ship on schedule. They have their unions you see, so you can't tell them anything.

It appears from comments like that that the roster ratings were in a strong position to use their unionised workplace as a threat against working outside of their work hours. One rating commented,

What can they do? They know we will go straight to the union and tell them what is happening. They cannot do this, they cannot make us work in our rest hours. We work according to our contracts and that's all we'll do.

However, this rating did not report experiencing ill-treatment himself. There is a strong contradiction here between the support that an ill-treated seafarer perceives to be available, compared to one who has not been ill-treated.

5.4 A Brief Comparison of the Companies

The two companies have many similarities. Both are leading ship management companies and have highly developed levels of HR policies and procedures designed to comply with international legislation, as well as set the benchmark for best practice in the industry. They are both different from the norm explored in chapter 3, in that they do not rely on an external manning agent to supply the seafarers for their ships. They also offer in-house training programmes and have unionised workplaces with collectively bargained contract agreements. They are both recognised brands in the industry that seafarers aspire to work in as they offer good rates of pay.

The main differences lie in the way they recruit ratings. Although the IC has implemented a shift in recruitment method for their ratings, it was difficult to find ratings who had worked with them before, as the new recruits were all chosen from a large pool of fresh applicants. Therefore, much of the data of the ratings in the IC is based upon the views of the roster ratings that have been with the company for a long time. They are called to go on ships on temporary contracts, much as their counterparts in the MNC are, and that makes their views comparable.

The other key difference between the two companies is the visibility of unions in the office. Although all the seafarers in the MNC were members of their respective unions, none of them cited a union as a valid source of support. The managers and officers also did not mention the effect of the unions in the way their ships are run,

unlike the IC officer in the last section. The import of the unions in the comparison between the two companies is perhaps best articulated by this Oiler (a roster rating) from the IC:

The union watches over us here, so there is equality between the officers and the ratings, I don't have any problems here. But the other companies, they have policies where they don't listen to people in lower posts, they only listen to people in higher posts. In this company, they speak to you differently, they don't treat you badly, you can mix with them. You can't do that in other companies. In other companies, if they tell you to work 10 hours extra, you have to do it. Here, you have 8 hours duty, and then you're finished, unless there is some emergency. In the other companies, the Chief Engineer and 2nd Engineer have too much power, you have to wait for them to tell you to knock off, you can't just look at the time and go at the end of your duty. (IC 7 – Oiler)

The Oiler had not worked with any other companies and was basing his opinion on reports that he had heard from friends working with other organisations. As with the rating who advocated for the union in the last section, this Oiler also did not report experiencing ill-treatment himself. His positive endorsement of the union is based on his observation that the union provides the ratings with greater power than they would be entitled to as lower-ranked members of the hierarchy in other companies.

However, there were enough similarities in the experiences of the seafarers in both companies that the support systems offered by both companies. From this point on, they will be referred to as one joint sample of Indian seafarers, unless a point is to be made about a key difference between the two companies.

5.5 Perceived Value of Seafarers to the Organisation

The views of seafarers' value to the organisation were similar across both the companies and therefore, in this section, the results are discussed as general findings that are applicable to employees from both companies.

5.5.1 Management's perspectives of seafarers

The managers in both companies seemed to convey both a varnished and an unvarnished view of the seafarers. In the more polished view, managers from both companies insisted on what was articulated by this manager from the MNC, who said that HR is considered very central because the ships are all being run by people, and they have to be the right people. This means that they have to start with the right recruitment, the right retention measures and of course the right training for them. In his words;

If we get these three right, then our ships will run flawlessly. And if we don't get it right, then we can keep on putting in as many superintendents as we like and it'll still be a mess. Things can go very wrong – our business depends on our performance, and our performance depends on the people on our ships.

This certainly recognises the value of the seafarers as a resource that needs to be carefully cultivated for the organisation. However, it does not indicate any particular concern for their welfare, and this continued to be apparent in small comments in interviews with the other managers. The most prominent idea was that seafarers, especially ratings, could be easily replaced. There was also clearly a respect for the time and money that the company invests in training its officers, as seen in previous sections outlining their continuing professional development. This is exemplified by this manager from the MNC when asked about the importance of retaining seafarers;

Yes, of course that is one of our primary objectives right now. You know about the manning crisis¹¹? Okay, so, retention of the best seafarers means that we are staying ahead of our competition, it gives us the advantage, because of the manning crisis. We have to hold on to our officers, other companies are constantly trying to poach them. Because, you know, we train them up really well, that takes an investment, and then if they go somewhere else, we are losing that money and have to start again.

I: *What about the ratings?*

Ratings are there of course... but there is no shortage of ratings. There is surplus. So, of course, the good ones we keep and some have been with us

¹¹ Refer to chapter 3 for a discussion about the purported manning crisis in the industry.

for a very long time. They are hard workers and we keep calling them back. But if they cause any problems, then we have to replace them, there are many others looking for jobs all the time.

I: *What kind of problems?*

Like if they are not doing their work properly, not doing as they're told, not listening to their Bosun or Chief Officer. Sometimes they will fight [argue] with each other and then we have to give sign them off. We cannot have trouble like that, they need to concentrate on their work, otherwise they will not pay attention to their safety and that is how accidents happen.

This dialogue provides several insights into how seafarers are viewed by the managers onshore. There is absolutely a dichotomy in the value of officers and ratings to the company. However, despite the surplus of ratings, they are not cavalier about replacing them, and as seen in the previous section, the MNC does operate a procedure in which ratings must be given verbal warnings and cannot be summarily dismissed.

Through observations of the office staff interacting with the seafarers in both companies, it quickly became apparent that there were some key differences. In the MNC, the seafarers were generally in the office for a reason and had been called, either to attend training or prepare their papers before they joined a ship. They were greeted by the person dealing with them, and were always polite in their manner towards them. In contrast, in the IC, the ratings that were chosen through the new recruitment method were handled in a different way, as described in these field notes:

The managers here seem quite condescending, as if they are doing the ratings a favour by appointing them. Judging by the desperation of some of the ratings attending the selection, they are. The entire process of having documentation authenticated and stamped is quite long and requires the rating to be directed from desk to desk in order to complete all the tasks. There are a lot of hoops for them to jump through and often it seems that they are not given clear directions on where to go. This results in many ratings aimlessly milling about with their papers, or waiting in long queues to see someone who would stamp their paper for them. I observed at least 4 ratings shuttling back and forth between desks with all their important papers in hand, waiting to be told where they should go and then being reprimanded for not

having completed the process in a timely manner. Two men were here for the second day as they hadn't managed to complete the process the first time around. At times, raised voices were used to manage the ratings, because it was noisy with a crowd of ratings all packed in together and managers' tempers seemed to be fraying in the heat generated by the excess bodies. This is quite different to the way in which ratings are managed in the MNC. The IC staff appeared a little overwhelmed by the selection process and grew more frustrated as the day wore on, although they did endeavour to be as polite as possible to the seafarers under the circumstances.

As part of the introduction, or re-introduction to the company, this sets the stage for how ratings perceive themselves in terms of the pecking order of the company. The lack of respect observed, both during the selection process and in conversations with managers who often dismissed ratings when discussing seafarers' welfare, firmly reinforces to the ratings that they are not valued by the company. They have physically seen for themselves the tens of men competing for the same job and know that the slightest mistake can mean dismissal from the running. This is a marked difference to the way in which the roster ratings navigate the office, making small talk with staff and chatting with the union representatives.

In both companies, managers referred to what will be termed the 'family rhetoric'. This is the idea that ratings should live onboard as a 'family' and as part of their pre-sea briefings, ratings and in some cases junior officers as well, were told to "work well together on the ship and live like a family. Don't get into trouble and take care of each other". This is an important concept and significant in management's control over seafarers.

5.5.2 Officers' perspectives of management

There is a significant difference in junior and senior officers' perceptions of management. Senior officers are the top four ranked officers onboard the ship. They all have the option of directly contacting the shore office if they need to, although the 2nd engineer usually goes through the Chief Engineer or the Captain first. However, together the senior officers are considered by the company to form the management team onboard the ship. In that sense, they are an extension of the company and intended to carry out its objectives onboard the ship. Therefore, the senior officers

are in much closer contact with shore management and more closely associated with the organisation's goals, however, this brings its own pressures with it. Captains carry the responsibility of ensuring that the ship is running to schedule and function with a combination of autonomy and direct control. They are most frequently in touch with shore office and receiving detailed instructions on courses of action, but they are also responsible for everyone else onboard the ship. This duality in their work masks their own vulnerabilities from other seafarers. Although they are perceived as being very powerful, they themselves are aware that they are also on short-term contracts and technically expendable. This Captain explains how the company may react if he has problems with the crew onboard;

If I start mishandling the ship and the crew and I'm making mistakes, the company will tell me where to get off, they can't lose money because of me. And once that happens, who else will hire me? They'll tell everyone that I'm a bad risk (MNC – Capt 3).

Note that in the Captain's understanding, the stress is on the company's worry over profit margins and the productivity of the crew, not the involvement of ill-treatment. Indeed, it does not seem that ill-treatment registers very strongly on the company's radar, but that will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Lack of autonomy in deciding their career path was a frequently cited issue by Captains, as was their feeling of being over-monitored by shore office. Of all the ranks, they displayed the most awareness of the company's aims and how this affected their own career trajectory, as this Captain explained;

Employers are out for their own profit, they'll keep pushing for me to go on car carriers even if I don't want to, because they know I'm good at it and they want the best for their company, not the best for me [which would be to gain experience on different kinds of vessels]. So I have to understand this, not feel aggravated or frustrated about it, and just work with them while it's right for me, and then keep making my own path that suits what I need, because obviously no one else is going to be looking out for me and my interests.

This was a view echoed by other Masters, acknowledging that the company will continue to make decisions that are in its best interests even to the detriment of the seafarers' progress. This disillusionment contrasted with the views put forth by more

junior officers, who were inclined to look upon the company more generously and allocate better motives to them, as exemplified by these comments from a 2nd Officer from the IC;

If we work hard, the company grows up and if the company is doing well, our job continuation will be there. If you don't work then the company is going to lose quite a lot and they won't need us anymore.

This linking of the company's well-being to the officer's own career path is both a logical conclusion by seafarers and also the result of explicit instruction from the managers. They encourage this view as a way of making their employee's aims identify with their own, through explaining this to them in pre-sea briefings and training seminars. The difference between the views of senior and junior officers is best explained by the difference in their proximity to the shore office. Senior officers maintain greater levels of communication with shore managers on a regular basis and the managers also make them privy to more detailed information about the company's operations. This conferring of commercial responsibility on to the seafarers is another way to control their work and focus them on achieving the company's desired outcomes.

Junior officers have little to no contact with shore management when they are onboard, similar to the situation of ratings. They are also wary of the senior officers because they defer to their superior place in the hierarchy. Despite both companies' assurances of being open to informal complaints, junior officers in both companies understood this to be a facade which they should not take at face value. This is articulated by this 2nd Officer from the IC:

And if the senior officer doesn't like the junior officers, then he makes sure that life is made miserable for the junior officers. Though the organisation here tells us to come and report to them, but a person like me, what happens when I face trouble onboard. I sort it out there only, otherwise I tolerate and keep quiet. But if I start coming and complaining to the office over here, to the company, then it will be like "haan [yes], look, this fellow's complaining over senior officers" and that would be a bad thing against me" (2nd O – IC).

The 2nd Officer here indicates a propensity to keep silent if he encounters ill-treatment, and implies that he expects the ill-treatment to involve superior officers. All

of these features of ill-treatment will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapters. The key point for the moment is to note the junior officer's deconstruction of the perceived meaning behind management's words.

The study shows that seafarers perceive the combination of commercial forces and the personal financial situations of lower-ranked seafarers to create a blanket of silence. They have read and repeatedly heard the news of a manning crisis in the industry, due to which experienced senior personnel are difficult to find and consequently, the company needs to retain their senior officers. Therefore, if another seafarer was to make a complaint against senior personnel, the company would be much more likely to disregard the complaint as biased or untrue because this would provide them with the result that suits them best. The popular perception among junior officers and ratings is that the company would prefer to retain the senior officer and quietly terminate the contract of the junior officer or rating who is perceived to be more easily replaceable. This 4th engineer's comments reinforce the wariness and distrust of the 2nd Officer above;

Why should they listen to me when the Captain is there and he is much more important, why will they get rid of him? They will get rid of me and then what will I do with no job? I am just starting out, they say we should tell them our problems but I know, all my seniors said I should just stay quiet and quietly keep listening, and I can take my money and go home at end of contract” (MNC – 4th E).

This highlights the 4th engineer's underlying fear that the employer will prioritise the greater commercial value of the senior officer over their duty to address complaints as they should under the HR policy. The inclination of the seafarer to safeguard his current employment and continue to earn money is also clearly outlined, as is the source of such thinking – his 'seniors' being those officers who are ranked higher than him, not just the 'senior officers'.

As mentioned in the review of the maritime literature in chapter 3, and in the introduction to the companies in previous sections of this chapter, officers have always been considered more valuable to management than ratings because of their skills and higher wages. Greater attention is always paid to their retention because they are the ones who hold the responsibility of piloting and maintaining the ship, and according to managers, there is great risk of skilled senior officers being poached.

The over-emphasis on the value of officers and the reported surplus of ratings has tipped the balance in a delicate situation. Ratings are considered to be extremely expendable, as seen in this manager's comment about the existence of grievance procedure in the IC;

Yeah, ratings are there but really the policy is more for officers. The ratings have their union that they go to for help and they don't need to be trained like the officers. Okay, technically, the policy is there for ratings also but I have never seen it being used for them (Manager 3 IC).

This manager initially did not even mention the applicability of the policy to ratings because he did not think it was relevant. He cited unions as the obvious support structure for ratings, but it has already been shown that unions are not considered to be viable sources of support for ratings who have experienced ill-treatment.

5.5.3 Ratings' perspectives of management

In the same vein as the officers, ratings too have a clear distrust of how far the company intends its offers of support to extend. These are manifested in the example from the Bosun below;

Before we join the ship they tell us everything, all the details and to listen to the Captain, don't get into fights [arguments]. If we have a major problem, we can tell the Captain, or if we have a phone, we can call the company directly and report what is happening. But that's only if it's a very big thing, otherwise little things keep happening...because they won't listen to us anyway, they'll listen to the Chief Officer and Captain. And if we try to send a report, they'll put it in our record that this man is troublesome and then they won't give a job here again. This did not happen to me, it happened to my friend, the Captain was harassing him and he gave a report to the company and then they put it in his report as well that he's trouble. So now it's difficult for him to find a job easily (MNC – Bosun 2).

The Bosun has highlighted some key issues here. The first is the company's interest in having a peaceful working environment onboard, or at least not be troubled with news of what is occurring on a regular basis. The 'big thing' that the Bosun refers to

as a priority of the company entails potential health and safety or technical problems, both of which can have a direct impact on the safe and efficient operation of the ship. The second is his perception that the company really does not care about anyone beyond the senior officers' opinion and he reinforces this by listing the negative consequences of exercising voice in response to ill-treatment. It is clear that the Bosun does not believe the company's invitation to share problems with them, and indicates a high level of distrust in this aspect of the employment relationship.

The knowledge that the priority of the companies is their profits, despite the company's rhetoric of interest in seafarers welfare, is outlined by another Bosun:

They tell us that if Captain or officers are doing something wrong, we should report it to them. The Captain has a phone, we also have our [mobile] phones and we do report them if something big happens. The rest of it, they won't listen to us. "

I: Something big?

Yeah, like a big safety issue or something. Other than that, why should they care what is happening between us onboard, we take care of it there only.

(Bosun – MNC)

Again, there is a strong belief that unless the problem is directly concerned with the safe operation of the ship, the company will not be interested. This is reiterated by this OS:

These things happen, like if there's an argument, and someone informs the Chief Mate. He'll pretend to listen and be nice and then turn around and come down on the person who informed, saying that you are making trouble. He'll send a bad report to the company and when the Captain sees it, he'll want you out. It happens a lot, you can avoid it by sucking up to the Captain and watching out for the Chief Mate. You should just watch, don't talk, and whatever you hear should go out the other ear. (MNC 9 – OS)

These comments resonate with findings from the maritime health and safety literature which highlights the discrepancy between have exposed some of the issues surrounding ill-treatment onboard.

One source of the distrust between seafarers and management is that they have observed ill-treatment occurring and other seafarers trying to exercise voice and failing to effect any real change. This AB, who chose to sign off from a ship when his Chief Officer swore at him, then found himself in a difficult situation again:

Did you find out what happened to the Chief Officer?

Yes, he's been made Captain now, he's still with the company. Two years after that, I had to sail under him as Captain for 4 months.

How was that, how did it make you feel?

What could I do, it's a matter of my job, I just stayed quiet and did my work. I can't leave this industry, I've already been in this line for too long, I can't start over again. We go for the money but I won't listen to someone swearing at me. (MNC – AB)

As others did, he speaks of being stuck in the profession, and more than that, he had to suffer the ignominy of working with the same Chief Officer, who had now been promoted to Master of the vessel. This clearly shows that the decision he had made to complain and exit the situation, while not resulting in him losing his job, had also clearly not had a detrimental effect on the Chief Officer's career. The situation results in him peeling back his emotions to rely on the one reason he finds himself still sailing – to keep making money in the only industry in which he has trained.

These statements of mistrust in the organisation have laid bare some of the key themes which will be explored through the next two data chapters. Before progressing to that, the next section briefly examines differences in understandings of ill-treatment which vary considerably by rank.

5.6 Respondents' Understanding of Ill-Treatment

All seafarers interviewed were asked if they had experienced 'negative behaviour'. The responses varied quite significantly across ranks, indicating different interpretations of the term. In general, senior ranked officers and senior ratings encountered some ill-treatment stemming from their subordinates. They also considered ill-treatment between lower ranked colleagues as their problem, as they viewed keeping the peace onboard as part of their mandate. Both officers and ratings did report encountering ill-treatment from their superiors. Senior officers also reported

what they considered to be ill-treatment from 'shore staff'. That term does not refer to the company's management staff onshore, but to the port state control officers, superintendents and immigration officials that they must deal with while they are sailing.

In addition to differences in interpretation of the term 'negative behaviour', seafarers could view the same behaviour as being negative or "just the way it is". Their perception of the behaviour would then inform their response to it. Part of the reason for these differences is that progress through the ranks signifies more experience working onboard and therefore, greater time engaged in socialisation into the workplace culture, both formal and informal. This is explored further in the next chapter. However, those seafarers who encountered ill-treatment from their superiors generally perceived it in three ways. The first was to attribute the ill-treatment to personal conflict between the superior and themselves; the second was to attribute the superior's behaviour to gossip being spread by colleagues; and the third was to rationalise the superior's behaviour in order to minimise its impact on them.

The broad categorisations of the crew onboard a ship are the senior officers, the junior officers, ratings, and galley crew. These different groups can have different perceptions of ill-treatment.

5.6.1 Officers

One way in which senior officers perceived ill-treatment was in their dealings with 'shore staff'. Their experiences of ill-treatment were often rooted in their interactions with port state control officers, immigration officials who did not grant shore-leave (despite it being a legal requirement of ILO regulation), and occasionally superintendents from the company.

Another type of ill-treatment that officers identified was not being given enough information to do their job properly. In such a case, the superior is hurt by a subordinate's reluctance to be trusting and most importantly, forthcoming about the work being done. The superior considers ill-treatment to be the withholding of information which affects his own performance, as this Chief Officer experienced;

I am in charge of a whole department, I expect my subordinates to be very frank with me. Sometimes there's a problem and this guy signs off, then when the next guy signs on and tells me the problem, it hurts. It's affecting my performance and my plans. It's a reflection of trust – they don't trust me. (IC9 – CO)

This illustrates the management mindset of the senior officers, who are concerned with the commercial aspect of running a ship as well as the technical aspect. It also demonstrates their investment in the company's success and that they consider the brand name of the company to be important. Together, these show the extent to which the management rhetoric reflects the commercial pressures of the industry and how these interact with ill-treatment onboard.

Junior officers did make some references to arguments between colleagues when asked about ill-treatment, but most that had experienced ill-treatment were quick to respond with accounts where the perpetrator was their superior. This will emerge more thoroughly throughout the next chapter.

5.6.2 Ratings

The galley crew are in a state somewhat betwixt and between that of other ratings and officers. They are technically ratings, but they are in control of a very valuable resource onboard – the food. This accords them importance in practical terms onboard, even if they are considered beneath the ranks of officers, as they have power over other seafarers' quality of life onboard. They also have greater interaction with officers on a regular basis than most ratings onboard and report directly to the Chief Officer and Captain. This blurs the usually strong lines of distinction between the officers and ratings in the strict chain of command. The cooks themselves acknowledge the advantages of their position, as one said "I don't have any problems with anyone, they are all very nice to me because they want to keep eating nice meals! They always thank me for the cooking" (MNC – Chief Cook). This is not to say that they never encountered ill-treatment but their initial response was that they were well insulated from it because of their removed position from the hierarchy.

Ratings' perspectives of ill-treatment tended to veer towards contractual mishaps, such as not getting paid on time, withholding over-time pay, and being forced to work

outside of hours in a non-emergency situation. They did not immediately think of the types of ill-treatment in this study, such as unreasonable treatment, incivility or disrespect. When asked about the more specific examples of ill-treatment from the modified negative acts questionnaire, they acknowledged that they occurred but that it was 'normal' for it to happen. This normalisation of situations that seem like ill-treatment in land-based workplaces is generated by the socialisation process, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

This section has established officers' and ratings' views of what ill-treatment entails. The next chapter explores their experiences of ill-treatment and how they responded to it. The discussion chapter will investigate differences between their views and their experiences and the reasoning behind these.

Chapter 6: Workplace Characteristics Influencing Experience of Ill-Treatment Onboard

In this findings chapter, we will consider the ways in which different aspects of employee relations and the work environment interact with each other to shape the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard ships. This will include seafarers' experiences of as well as responses to ill-treatment. The categories identified in this chapter, while important on their own, are all inextricably linked to each other and each case of ill-treatment and consideration of response contain overlaps between these categories. The four categories explored in this chapter are professional socialisation, hierarchy, distance management and HR policies and training.

6.1 Professional Socialisation

The unique features of the working environment onboard a ship, explored in previous chapters, include the socialisation of seafarers into their chosen profession. As Van Maanen and Schein explain, "...organizational cultures arise and are maintained as a way of coping with and making sense of a given problematic environment" (1977, pg.2). As discussed in the earlier maritime literature chapter, there is a significant amount of physical risk involved in working onboard a ship, and this inspires the need for a structure which allows prompt response to high pressure situations. This can also be found in the culture of paramilitary organisations which face high levels of physical risk, such as the fire service (Archer 1999). One way in which this is expressed is through the existence of a strict hierarchy of ranks, which is integral to the shared values of seafarers onboard ships and contributes to the workplace culture.

Workplace culture consists of beliefs, values, attitudes, norms and accepted procedures (Volti 2008, pp. 215-216). Workplaces have subcultures that operate through informal, colleague-based socialisation. These can often be aligned with organisational goals and are referred to as positive subcultures (Volti 2008). They impart values that encourage behaviour that meets the organisation's expectations.

The first type of socialisation that seafarers experience, the 'anticipatory' socialisation (Feldman 1981) that occurs before they join an organisation, has been explained in chapter 3. The secondary, professional socialisation that seafarers experience upon

their entry to their working environment emphasises the importance of hierarchy to provide a disciplined and uniform working environment necessary to survive the difficult nature of life at sea. When people integrate into a hierarchy and take on the mantle of a rank, they are also taking on the responsibilities of the broader professional identity associated with the industry and their rank in particular. Part of this process includes learning how to conduct oneself in different situations onboard, whether that involves knowing who to eat meals with or learning how to respond to others' behaviour in the expected way.

There are many shared values associated with the professional identity of a seafarer. These are the result of the processes of socialisation described earlier, and include the belief that the personality of seagoing personnel is of a certain 'type', as this 2nd Officer from the MNC explained, "you have to be calm, you cannot just go making trouble". He further elaborated that the most important personality traits appear to be open-mindedness and tolerance, and added:

Right from the bottom to the top, you have different characters out there...there are different types of people and you have to deal with them.

A Bosun from the IC concurred;

The whole ship runs on mutual understanding. Everyone is different so you have to understand that and be open-minded. We shouldn't talk about religion and politics and their families. Some people don't like some jokes so you have to be very careful.

This was a sentiment that echoed throughout the different ranks and in both companies and may be acting as a type of filter to their interpretation of ill-treatment. This would mean that these notions of open-minded tolerance and understanding, whether they stem from personality traits, initial training, experience onboard, further training, or some combination of the above, do affect the extent to which seafarers view certain types of behaviour as negative, and certainly mitigate their response to such behaviour.

6.1.1 Peer-regulation

The discipline and values taught to seafarers during their initial training have been discussed in chapter 3. However, seafarers' experiences while sailing develop and continue to inform their perceptions of ill-treatment. There is a positive effect of socialisation in which seafarers learn how to contribute to a positive shipboard culture by engaging in peer regulation and preventing problems before they escalate into larger ones. For example, when asked about inter-personal relationships onboard ships and gossip and rumours in particular, one 2nd Engineer commented,

We are trained to leave those topics, never talk any personal things, never talk politics, never talk religion, never talk gossip onboard, because earlier there have been incidents where people have felt something, some fighting and all may take place on board, so stay away from those gossips. Maybe people are talking but I don't go [there].

What do you mean by 'trained', how do you learn these things?

Oh, through experience. You cannot stop people from talking if they want to. But you learn to stay away from it and don't listen to others when they are talking all this. (IC – 2nd E).

This demonstrates that seafarers learn from previous experiences of sailing onboard and tailor their behaviour to meet requirements taught to them during their training. It also indicates that as seafarers gain experience through time spent sailing onboard, they take preventive action to avoid the escalation of interpersonal problems. This is explored more in the next chapter. Peer-regulation protects seafarers from behaving in a way that will get them in trouble. In addition to the unpleasant environment that people would have to work in if problems escalate onboard, this can start affecting seafarers' work and have serious implications for the continued health and safety of the seafarers onboard, as evidenced by the results of studies mentioned in chapter 3. It also reflects badly on those involved and experienced hands take an almost paternalistic attitude towards the less experience seafarers, expounding on the need to follow the rules as explained by this Wiper;

Sometimes there are problems onboard, because not every man's mind is the same, and everyone speaks properly to each other. They're not allowed to swear or create problems, because if they do, we can go straight to the Captain and there will be log entry.

So have you ever seen this happening or experienced it?

Well there was one time, but we didn't tell the Captain, we just solved it amongst ourselves. Because we told him that if it goes to the top, there will be a log entry, and this is a ship job, not a job in your own house, you need to be careful and behave yourself. Then he understood, they do understand if you explain it.

So what exactly happened that was offensive?

I can't even remember what he said, we were all just sitting around together and you know, sometimes people say things and it goes too far. He was joking around and he went too far, so then we had to explain to him, we said, "Listen, you can't do this stuff onboard a ship. You have to behave properly".

(IC 4 – Wiper)

In this case, the seafarers demonstrate that they discipline each other to maintain the expected standard of behaviour and prevent the generation of a negative work environment. The 'proper' behaviour that this Wiper refers to is also learned through both the formal and informal socialisation processes. It has a positive effect on the work environment as shared experiences onboard foster expectations of behaviour from the seafarers, which are passed on through a continuous cycle of socialisation to every new seafarer.

There is a need for seafarers to carefully consider the possible results of any action they may want to take in response to ill-treatment, and this is highly informed by peer-regulation and the socialisation process in general. This is illustrated in a case when a subordinate (Trainee OS) felt targeted and found it frustrating to have the quality of his work questioned when he felt he had been a good worker:

There was one time, I was cleaning and the Bosun came on rounds with the Chief Officer and said, 'why are there spots? I told you to clean it properly'. I told him sir, it can't get any cleaner than this. Then I said to the Chief Officer also, sir, please can you come and check, I've cleaned it. Well, he couldn't go completely against the Bosun, so he said 'yeah, it's mostly done, there's a little bit left, just do it once more'. Okay, he had to say that, but I felt bad because I worked so hard to make sure it was done properly, and still the Bosun is coming and shouting at me and complaining in front of the Chief Officer. But these things keep happening, it's ship life. (MNC 5 – Trainee OS)

Here, the OS is clearly confident in the quality of his work, and in this case, the Bosun's actions display both mistrust, but also a political agenda. He was doing rounds with the Chief Officer, to whom he has to prove that he has the work in hand, and he does this by demonstrating an eye for detail by noticing spots that were not easily visible and simultaneously asserting his authority over his subordinate. The OS' appeal to the Chief Officer shows how humiliated he felt, but what is interesting here is that although he felt he was right, the fact that the Chief Officer did not fully agree with him was attributed to the Chief Officer's obligation to maintain good relations with the Bosun to ensure the smooth running of the ship. The OS felt that the Bosun was targeting him and although the OS did ask for help, he did not find the overt support he wanted. A token response was made, but eventually the situation reverted to how it had initially been, except that the OS was now aware that visibly going over the Bosun's head in the chain of command would not help to change his situation. When he discussed it with colleagues, he was told;

They said, 'don't feel so bad about it, it's okay. He has to say something in front of the Chief Officer, he will say it. Just listen quietly and do your work well and don't take these things to heart. Let him keep saying whatever he wants'. So then I thought okay, I will just get used to this, even if I don't think it's right, I should just keep quiet.

As he was a trainee OS at the time, one can consider this to be a part of his informal socialisation into the work culture onboard the ship. Here it is clear to see how the peer-regulation has influenced the OS' perception of the incident, diminishing its importance and encouraging him to choose silence when he is inclined to exercise voice.

As mentioned earlier, there is also a paternalistic attitude which takes into account the wellbeing of the seafarers involved and encourages more experienced or senior ratings to help save ratings from themselves. This is exemplified by this Pumpman from the IC;

He will make a mistake and get into trouble. Then when he's sent home and he has to try and find another job while his family needs money, he will regret it all. We try to help him understand that.

This almost benevolent approach can have a preventive effect on the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard as it averts the escalation of interpersonal problems. It also teaches seafarers the value of silence even when encountering ill-treatment from superiors. The need for peer-regulation can, to some extent, be attributed to a 'family rhetoric', which is explored in the next section.

6.1.2 Family rhetoric

As was discussed in chapter 3, the dangerous nature of seafaring and the need to follow health and safety best practice at all times adds a different dimension to seafarers' life onboard. It provides a background of stress to their job and everything that they must do. It also generates a keen awareness of how much the seafarers need each other to keep the ship working smoothly and safely. The stress results from a clear understanding of the dangers of the job and their responsibility to maintain safety, not just their own, but their colleagues' as well. The idea of depending on every other seafarer onboard to do his job properly to ensure everyone's safety may also act as a bond which prevents them from behaving rashly. There is the idea, prevalent among ratings in particular, that everyone onboard should live together as a family and employ high levels of tolerance and respect that are associated with that. This is a notion which is taught to them during their briefing before joining the ship, as seen in the last chapter. It is then reiterated by officers if problems do arise onboard. It was actively mentioned by many ratings in interviews, and none of the officers referred to the concept except in relation to the ratings, as this Captain did:

We tell them [the ratings] they must be like a family, otherwise they start fights and all onboard and we can't have that. They must try and live together and realise that we all must take care of each other. (IC – Capt 3)

There is an element of condescension in this attitude and, in further conversation, he implied that officers were not in need of such rhetoric to regulate their behaviour, as if they were in greater command of their emotional faculties than ratings. The reason why this is important is because, if ratings are encouraged to believe they are living in a family-like atmosphere, they will be more readily forgiving of faults and disputes and more prone to compromise. While this is not a bad thing in itself, it does contribute to an atmosphere in which intolerance of ill-treatment is not encouraged

and this in turn can lead to more serious incidents being swept under the rug, as seen in some examples in the previous chapter. In essence, it detracts from the emphasis on professionalism which is promoted amongst officers and contributes to the gap between officers and ratings. This is important because if a seafarer encounters ill-treatment and chooses to speak out, policy in both companies is that ratings should follow the chain of command and communicate their concerns to officers. If there is a wide gap between the two types of rank, this hinders the ratings' desire and ability to protest their treatment. This hindrance was also identified by Bhattacharya (2009) in the context of upward risk communication in relation to breaches of health and safety onboard.

Among the ratings there is a real sense that they take on the rhetoric about living "like a family" that is given to them. They appear to be very aware of themselves as a group of ratings very separate to the officers and they actively try to preserve the peace by regulating each other's behaviour, as this Bosun explained;

Sometimes people get into arguments, because they don't like each other's work so they keep needling each other, but we don't let it develop too far. If it becomes a big thing then we need to take it to the officers but we don't like doing that. Because once it gets to the officers, someone might get signed off, and that isn't good (MNC – Bosun 2).

As seen above, there is a sense that a rating's behaviour onboard represents the group of ratings and they try to maintain good relations with the officers and shore office. This bond is articulated as the feeling of 'family' onboard and although the officers rarely used the word, it has been reiterated by almost every rating who was interviewed. An OS recalled how he was taught by more senior ratings that he should maintain a cool head and be tolerant of everyone because;

We all live together nicely, like a family. How else to live when we must stay together for 9, 10 months? (IC – OS).

One Bosun said;

We are like a family here, we must all do our work properly and look after each other. If we don't help each other, who else is there, so far from home to help us? (IC – Bosun)

This rhetoric is reinforced to each new member onboard the ship, especially in the ratings' departments and gives new seafarers a clear idea of how they are expected to behave with each other. Part of the impetus for this is the clear awareness that they do not have any option but to deal well with each other. This draws on another aspect of family life - the fact that you cannot choose your family, but must interact with them as they are. There is no escape from your family and eventually you learn to compromise in order to maintain peace. An AB who had not experienced ill-treatment but had seen some colleagues dealing with it, also commented on how living onboard was like living in a family;

Okay, sometimes there are problems and people fight, you know, first they were best friends, then they become like enemies. But you know, for us, who've been sailing for a long time, we know that you have to live like a family, So, okay, you fight but then you have to become friends again after that, you know like brothers in a family, they keep fighting but then it's not so serious, after some time you have to become friends because where will you go? You keep seeing the same person again and again, until when will you not talk to him (IC – AB).

Here, the AB has articulated his understanding of the family rhetoric and explained how he applies it to ill-treatment onboard. It is clear that the family rhetoric is required to provide a familiar context and structure to living life onboard, as evidenced by the AB's allusion to 'brothers in a family'.

6.1.3 Company brand and loyalty

Another way in which the organisation subtly influences the seafarers' responses to ill-treatment is through developing a brand image and capitalising on their standing in the industry. As mentioned in the last chapter, both organisations are recognisable brands and are valued by seafarers for their competitive rates of pay and good working conditions. This results in seafarers feeling fortunate for working with either one of the companies and can affect their response to ill-treatment.

The brand is important. This company is a good company, everyone knows it, they have awards and they give good salary. I wanted to work here and I am happy, it is better than other companies I have worked in. (2nd O2 - MNC)

When seafarers respect the brand they are working for, they are more inclined to buy into the organisation's goals. This is reflected upon by Dutton *et al.* (1994), who found that when an organisation has an attractive image, its employees are more likely to align their self-definition with the organisational definition. They further explain that when the organisation provides images that signify what it means to be a member of the group, this has a significant impact on the employees' self-definition. Despite the distrust in the employment relationship seen in the last chapter, it is still possible for seafarers to be dedicated to their organisation. This can be explained by pinpointing the source of the distrust mentioned earlier, namely the perceived different values of ranks to the company. It is possible for distrust and loyalty to co-exist, as they pertain to different categories. Loyalty stems from organisational commitment, whereas the distrust is categorised under organisational trust.

Loyalty to the company can be reinforced by the organisation through corporate culture and the employee's tenure with the company. This in turn can lead to repression of voice in response to ill-treatment. This includes a willingness to take on whatever's thrown at them or go above and beyond the call of duty as part of a symbiotic relationship in which the company takes care of the seafarers and the seafarers take care of the company by carrying out their duties diligently and refraining from 'making trouble'. A more cynical interpretation of this is that seafarers are happy to commit to their companies as a reflection of professional pride and the prestige associated with a good brand name. Although this does not diminish their awareness of their standing in the company, nor promote greater levels of organisational trust, it does achieve the company's aim to align the seafarers' identity closely with the organisation's goals. This is clearly stated by a manager from the IC who said,

We are known by everyone, we make sure that we offer the right incentives to attract the best people so that we can provide the best service to our clients. That is what we are here for.

6.1.4 Commercial pressure and professional responsibility

Another way in which the organisation promotes its goals amongst seafarers is by making them aware of the commercial pressures experienced by the company and involving seafarers in this by virtue of their professional identity. That is, they promote an awareness of commercial pressures as a way of carrying professional responsibility for the quality and efficiency of the work being done onboard. All seafarers, regardless of their rank or employer, are aware of the commercial pressure to ensure a ship runs to schedule. It appears to be an idea that is engrained in all seafarers before they are sent to join a ship. As one 2nd Officer said;

If we work hard, the company grows up and if the company is doing well, our job continuation will be there. If you don't work then the company is going to lose quite a lot and they won't need us anymore (IC – 2nd O2).

This shows the extent to which they are being encouraged to adopt the company's goals as their own. By instilling a sense of the global competition in the seafarers, the employers are able to tie the seafarers' success with the company's success. Therefore, it appeared through many seafarers' comments that they took on a personal responsibility to contribute to the company's success, as a Wiper explained;

We must work hard for the company because they are depending on us to do the job right. If we do not work, they will lose the contract and then they will ask us, why did you do not do your best work? So we work hard and when the company is happy, the Captain is happy and then we are also happy (MNC – Wiper).

This is a very strong message and one that seafarers take to heart, prioritising this over their own needs, not least to maintain their jobs. The personal emotional and mental investment that the company encourages in their employees means that they have less work to do when it comes to motivating their workers as the seafarers have already adopted the company's aims and ambitions as their own. The commercial concerns of the company are embedded in the employees and this goes some way in governing their actions onboard the ship, possibly to their detriment and for the gain of the employers, particularly in relation to responses to ill-treatment.

Seafarers were often told that they are adequately recompensed for the work that they do and the time they have to spend away from their family. In addition to the notions of professionalism discussed in earlier in this chapter, this rhetoric is widespread and fosters an almost complacent attitude in which seafarers see their situation clearly and accept their circumstances, as is clearly expressed by this 2nd Officer;

You cannot compare land-based job with ship job. And I knew all this [the working conditions] was coming, I was very aware of this field. So it's nothing like that, it's okay. This job...it's okay, nothing much, because we have to do, because limited persons are there, jobs are day by day increasing, running of ships is increasing, charterer's pressure is increasing, that is why salary is also increasing. So what I am saying is if people are interested in the money, they should also be interested in the work. If I'm expecting that I will get more and more, I will also expect this, that I will work more and more. So there are situations we have to handle, but it's not a big problem that people are killing me onboard. Nobody's hitting me (IC – 2nd O).

This comment also delineates what some seafarers see as serious transgressions (physical violence) to the exclusion of all other types of ill-treatment. The 2nd Officer feels able to put up with certain degrees of pressure and ill-treatment because that is what he feels they are paid for. However, he draws the line at physical violence. It is another indicator of the way in which their perceptions of ill-treatment inform their experience of it and response to it.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the senior officers are the most aware of the pressures on the company and have to adopt them to a certain extent in order to perform their job well and demonstrate their commitment to the organisation. As they hold positions of great responsibility onboard, they do not like to involve the company in the day-to-day running of the ship. This is explained by this Chief Officer;

Shipping is a very investment-heavy industry and something that starts as a small problem can become a big problem, then you have to get the company involved and there are delays and financial losses and it affects the reputation of the company as well. (IC9 – CO)

The Chief Officer's explanation demonstrates his internalisation of the company's goals, as he refers only to the repercussions on the company, and conveys a sense of his professional responsibility to keep that from taking place.

Although the commercial pressure exists across all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, the extent to which it influences their behaviour is seen to be different. For example, a Captain is most in touch with the shore office on a regular basis and carries great responsibility for ensuring the ship runs to schedule. However, captains are also the senior most rank and thus highly sought after in an industry which professes to be experiencing a lack of experienced senior shipboard personnel. Therefore, although they can be said to be experiencing the heaviest commercial pressure, they also have in their arsenal a bargaining tool which they can employ to relieve some of the weight, namely, their own professional worth. However, lower ranks, particularly lower ranked ratings and officer cadets are less sought after in the industry and also carry little responsibility for dealing with the commercial pressure. Thus, it can be argued that although they experience less direct commercial pressure, there is more anxiety and financial pressure tied into their performance than the higher ranks. They need to perform their roles perfectly as they can be dismissed more easily and experience difficulty in finding further employment.

In a broader sense, more officers than ratings expressed concern with their promotion prospects and career progression, both with their employer and within the industry as a whole. This demonstrates a keen awareness of their market situation and professional worth. It could serve as a contributing factor to the propensity of seafarers to choose silence, as although the officers may not be as dependent on their next pay packet as most ratings, the employer could also potentially respond by continuing to employ the officer but not promoting him. Thus, the company would not lose experienced and valuable personnel, but would be able to limit the seafarer's authority and the seafarer would also stay with the company. One Chief Officer had used his voice to make complaints to the company about a Captain. He was retained by the company but has remained a Chief Officer for the last 8 years despite having already obtained his Master's certificate.

All of the abovementioned points about formal and informal socialisation and professional identity are ways in which the company can exert some organisational control over the conduct and performance of the seafarers so as to best achieve its aims. They are, in effect, methods through which management can mould seafarers

to their desired modes of behaviour. These desired behaviours are reinforced periodically through the use of family rhetoric and peer-regulation. In the light of this knowledge of the socialisation process and the control that management exerts in shaping seafarers' professional identity, this thesis will now consider the impact of certain structural aspects of the shipboard work environment on ill-treatment.

6.2 Hierarchy

The rank a seafarer holds onboard has a significant impact on how they perceive ill-treatment, the type of ill-treatment that they experience, and how they choose to respond to it. The most important part of the hierarchy is the top-down flow of communication, as well as the access to ship-to-shore communication which is determined by one's rank. These two aspects of the hierarchical system onboard are further interlinked with professional socialisation, distance management and HR policies and training.

The hierarchy creates a framework in which ill-treatment occurs in different ways, including the power to demand seafarers carry out extra work, humiliating seafarers in connection to their work, and threatening them in order to make them behave as the superior wants.

6.2.1 Extra work

One way in which the existence of a strict hierarchy contributes to ill-treatment is through the delegation of extra work. As is commonly known in the industry (Sampson 2013, in times of rough weather or an emergency, seafarers work outside their designated work hours and understand that they have to do this to keep the ship running and to keep themselves safe (Sampson 2013). This was candidly acknowledged by all the respondents in the study. However, some seafarers identified being assigned work both outside of their job description and outside of their work hours in non-emergency situations, as a form of ill-treatment. This type of behaviour was enacted through the power conferred on superiors by the hierarchy, as found by this 2nd Officer who was bewildered by the unreasonable nature of what he was asked to do;

There are many things, like suppose when I am getting rest, then some senior is calling me and doing some unnecessary business which could be done thereafter also, after my rest period, or in my watch also, and nothing necessary is going on but he called me, he is my senior, he is having the authority, he can call me up...why he is calling me? If I don't get sleep then how I will work? (IC – 2nd O)

In this example, the 2nd Officer understands that his senior is exercising his authority over him, which he believes is without reason. He chose not to exercise voice in this situation, and finished his contract, however, this is not always the case with seafarers who experience ill-treatment through the allocation of extra work. Although the terms of the contract are clearly laid out and the 2nd Officer was aware of how much rest he is entitled to, his senior was still in a position to supersede the authority of that legal document with his own rank, relying on the power of the hierarchy onboard to give him that privilege.

As the 2nd Officer expressed above, in addition to being given extra work, a central concern is that this work is allocated during seafarers' rest hours, which they need to be able to perform the rest of their duties to a high standard. This is echoed in the case below, where the allocation of extra work was used as part of a programme of harassment stemming from personal differences;

There was a Chief Mate once, when I was a trainee OS, we got along well for the first three months because we are from neighbouring states. Then someone said something to him about me. Then he started cursing me, saying I am not doing any work, he started calling me during my rest period, telling me to do work. He didn't like any work I did, even when I did it right, and the Bosun had checked also. (MNC 9 – OS)

This type of problem was not limited to ratings or officers, and the reasons for it were not always as clearly perceived by seafarers as in the example above.

6.2.2 Insults

We have seen that the way in which the hierarchy contributes to ill-treatment onboard is because it places seafarers in a vulnerable position under the power of their superiors. This can manifest itself in cases where seafarers suffer threats and insults

and is not limited to only officers or ratings. This type of behaviour is enabled by power differentials onboard and when it is between people in similar ranks, it is often part of a broader political agenda to discredit the other person and contribute to their own career advancement. In most typical cases, seafarers do not exercise their voice and choose to remain silent in response to ill-treatment. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons, including the expenses that can be imposed when choosing to repatriate themselves and possibly damaging their standing in the company. In one case, a 2nd Officer endured insults over a period of 3 months, which included shouting and swearing;

Last ship was okay, before that it was horrible for me. Because I had a Master over there, who used to drink heavily. And every night I used to get the midnight watch, from 12 to 4 in the morning. He used to come completely drunk with the glass in the [unintelligible], setting a bad example on this other crew members who are keeping a watch with me, he used to tell them to go out. He used to use all abusive languages, used to drink, used to shout, scream, and it was, okay, it was open sea and all, it was okay, but I had to go out and keep my watch also. There was no peace of mind over there. (MNC 17 – 2nd O)

He suffered verbal abuse from the Master and did not respond except to try and minimise his time around the captain. He did not complain about his treatment to anyone and chose to remain silent and wait for his contract to finish.

However, not all ill-treatment needs to be perpetrated over a long period of time for seafarers to respond strongly. The example below illustrates how decisively they can react when they feel they have been insulted beyond what they can reasonably tolerate;

There was a Chief Officer, I had an argument with him. He called me, Bosun and another AB to do some work and we went and saw that everything was in a mess, he had done something wrong. So I said to him, if you wanted something done, you could have called me. I said that because there is such a mess and it is our area so we only are supposed to take care of it. He swore at me and so we had an argument. There is swearing and then there's swearing beyond the limit [the kind that insults family members]. I called the superintendent directly and told him I want to sign off. He came and got us signed off. But we had to pay for it ourselves. I told the company, you call the Chief Officer because it was all his

fault, he should be paying for me. Then nothing happened, that money I paid for the flight is gone. They got us other ships to go on within 15 days, so that was good. (MNC – AB)

The Chief Officer in this case had no reason to respond to the AB in the way that he did. He was not unduly provoked and his loss of control over his tongue led to the argument and the two ABs and Bosun deciding to leave the ship. This case demonstrates the consequences of seafarers raising their voices in response to ill-treatment and brings up some unique points in that the usual constraints of communication, cost and consequence did not affect the seafarer's decision. Firstly, the AB had been working in the industry and with the company for a long time and so felt that he was in a position to circumvent the chain of command and directly contact management for help. This enabled him to respond decisively to what was a culmination of small incidents but may not be considered a serious case of ill-treatment by some. Secondly, the action taken in response to his use of voice was that the Chief Officer was not put out by what had happened, whereas the ratings who chose to exit their situation incurred costs that they did not recover. They were clearly in a position to afford those costs, which not every seafarer would take on. Thirdly, the AB was confident of two things – that that he had no dependents relying on his steady income at the time and that he would be able to find more work quickly (again, this is due to his long experience with the company). In this case, he was re-hired and not discarded or branded a 'troublemaker' as seafarers often fear they will be. This case represents some measure of positivity and largely relies on the AB's long tenure with the company to resolve the situation satisfactorily.

6.2.3 Threats

Threats are used in two different ways onboard, either as a way to get people to do their work quietly and without complaint, or in response to threats made by others. Threats can be very straightforward and usually serve to demonstrate the power that a senior officer has over the fate of a rating;

That Chief Mate I had a problem with, he threatened me. He said he would ruin my career, he would write such a bad report that I could never get another job again. (MNC 9 – OS).

These types of threats can present very real danger to a seafarer's career when carried out, as seen in the last chapter which explained reporting practice in both companies. This is further explored in the HR policies and training section in this chapter.

The hierarchy onboard can affect response in the most practical sense. When seafarers have a problem, they must report it to their immediate superior who then has the power to decide whether it should be pushed further up the chain of command, effectively giving them the opportunity to stifle complaints at source. This is somewhat encouraged by the company, as seen in the last chapter, as they tell seafarers to 'behave well' and solve their problems onboard. Despite the high turnover of seafarers onboard, the automatic status accorded to each rank in the hierarchy can mean that ill-treatment can continue beyond the perpetrator's time onboard, as seen in this case;

Once the environment onboard has changed, there won't be peace until all the people have finished their contracts and gone. If the Chief Mate has a problem with me, but he's signing off, he can tell the next Chief Mate, 'watch out for this one, he's no good'. The new Chief Mate might decide that's not true, or he might just automatically listen to the old Chief Mate and that means there's no relief for you until the end of your contract, when you finally sign off. (MNC 9 - OS)

In the case above, the OS had tried to complain about the Chief Officer's behaviour to the Captain, who had brushed him off. However, even if action had been taken against the Chief Officer, the OS must consider that the Chief Officer still has the power to make life difficult for him with the new Chief Officer. The OS' decision to approach the Captain with his problem, as per the chain of command, only gained him threats from the Chief Officer and created disillusion with the validity of his supposed support systems. When the Chief Officer signed off, he informed his incoming replacement about the supposed ineptitude of the OS and warned him to be careful when working with him. The new Chief Officer did not listen to his predecessor and made his own judgement about the capability of the OS. However, the OS was very aware of his vulnerable position and was braced for the situation to continue until he could finally sign off, reinforcing the belief in the individual ranks of the hierarchy and the power of superiors over their subordinates. As with much of the data presented here, stress must be placed on the OS' own perception and

interpretation of the situation. While it is true that he was threatened with the continuation of ill-treatment, this threat was not commonly reported by other seafarers.

The more prevalent types of threats were related to 'bad reports', which are explored further under HR policies, and the threat of blacklisting.

6.2.4 'Politicking'

Indulging in behaviour in the workplace that is to an employee's own advantage while possibly being to the detriment of others, is also known as engaging in politics (Gandz and Murray 1980), or as termed here, politicking. It has been identified in the literature as contributing to ill-treatment in the workplace as it can entail employees ill-treating others to demonstrate their own success and high performance (Salin 2003). This caused problems across all levels of the hierarchy, even the senior officers. When a senior officer is promoted and wishes to establish himself in the new position, he can try to achieve this by demanding his subordinates work harder to bring their performance up, as this Chief Officer explained;

The problem what happens is like now today I'm a Chief Officer, I became Captain, this is my first ship, I want to prove myself to the company, that is my priority so sometime I might overdo things you know. And I'm not a full Captain, I'm not a full Chief Officer, I'm stuck somewhere in between you know, then I'm poking in Chief Officer's work as well. So these things do cause problems onboard.

This was reiterated by other officers who said that sometimes new Captains could be over-zealous in wanting to make sure that everything ran smoothly, so they made everyone work extra hours. This particularly affected the other officers, but could filter down to affect ratings' work schedules as well. As seen earlier in the chapter, being given extra work in a non-emergency situation constitutes a form of unreasonable treatment, and can be particularly dangerous for health and safety onboard.

The lack of trust that seafarers have in the employment relationship is reciprocated by management onshore, particularly with regard to ratings, and this mistrust is also manifested onboard between senior officers who form the management group onboard, and their subordinates. This mistrust between senior seafarers and their

subordinates is also manifested in 'playing politics' to safely navigate a potentially treacherous work environment. Most seafarers demonstrated an awareness of others 'playing politics' and used it as part of their decision making process when responding to ill-treatment, as this Chief Cook did:

So how do you deal with it if someone is constantly criticising your work?

Just keep quiet, think about your family and just keep quiet. Because it is very difficult to find a job in India.

Is there anyone you can speak to when you are feeling bad about this?

No, it's better not to speak to anyone and just keep quiet, because in my practical experience, if you speak back to him, then he'll feel insulted because he thinks he's the boss and I'm nothing. So then he will send a bad report and then they might give a chance but they might not, and then you have to find another company. I've seen it happen to two of my friends. Because you know what happens, if you agree with everything the Captain says, and don't do the work, the Captain will not notice so much, and then if there's a problem, then he will take the side of the guy who's buttered him up.

So there's some politics going on?

Not some, a lot, too much (MNC – Chief Cook 2).

This exchange with a Chief Cook touches upon many of the themes that have been discussed up to this point, such as the effect of the hierarchy and the popularity of silence and non-exit as a response to ill-treatment. There are two really interesting points in the Chief Cook's quote. The first is the reference to how difficult it is to find a job in India. It speaks of his motivation for remaining silent, along with his need to support his family. The second is the suggestion that politicking can be used as a defence mechanism if ill-treatment is encountered.

As politicking is inherently about manipulating people and relationships with them, it either signifies mistrust in the employment relationship, or fosters mistrust in others who observe someone else engaged in playing politics. An example of an implicit insinuation of mistrust in an informal situation, was being constantly supervised closely when it was not deemed necessary. If seafarers were watched too closely, it was felt that there was no trust in their ability to do the work, as one 2nd Engineer explained:

Sometimes you have some Chief Engineers who are always watching what I am doing, always asking questions. But he won't ask me the questions, he's asking others about me, 'is he doing his work properly?'

How did that make you feel?

Mm...it's politics. Of course you feel bad, it feels like they are questioning our trust. They are not trusting. Okay, it's shipping, you can't trust anyone fully, but some trust has to be there, otherwise you cannot spend six months there. Otherwise you will be on duty 24 hours, you cannot sleep. Some Chief Engineers are like that, 18 hours, 20 hours, they're standing in the engine room, they're going there for small things, that is not necessary. (IC 8 – 2nd E)

In this case, 'politics' to the 2nd Engineer meant that attempts of the Chief Engineer to make sure operations ran as smoothly as possible to safeguard his own job, and achieving this by going behind the 2nd Engineer's back, almost like surveillance. The implied lack of trust made the 2nd Engineer care less about doing his work diligently;

I know he will keep coming and checking so okay, let him come and do it. He could do it himself only, why am I here?

The 2nd Engineer's explanation that it is about politics raises the consideration that the Chief Engineer could have been behaving this way for one of two reasons. The first could be that he was simply asserting his authority over the lower ranks, in a show of power, whether to frustrate them on purpose, or ensure that the work was done to his standard, it is impossible to know but examples of both have been encountered earlier in this chapter. The second reason could be that he thought only he could get the job done best, and this directly calls into question his belief in the training and ability of his subordinates, which is hurtful to them. The 2nd Engineer thought that the Chief Engineer was behaving in this way as a direct response to his quality of work, which was a hurtful situation.

Several seafarers referred to the Indian nationality as contributing to a work environment in which politicking was the norm, one of whom was this AB:

Some people can get very close too quickly. And then you know, with Indians, there's constantly politics, they'll try to find out some information and then go behind your back and talk rubbish to make friends with the Bosun. If he isn't interested, then they'll try with the Chief Officer. I don't get involved, if they

want to talk about me, they can make up something, but I don't tell them anything. (IC – AB)

This AB designated political manoeuvrings in the workplace to an Indian characteristic, implying that politicking is particularly prevalent on all-Indian crews, which is where he worked as he was with the IC.

6.3 Distance Management

Distance management has generally been explored in management literature as posing problems related to managing performance from a distance and ensuring outcomes (Hertel *et al.* 2005; Siebdrat *et al.* 2009). However, employees' problems with lack of adequate support have also been cited, as in a study about the effects of distance management on the retention of remote area nurses in Australia (Weymouth *et al.* 2007). This study found that lack of support from managers combined with poor communication led to higher levels of frustration and stress and ultimately, a high turnover of remote area nurses in Australia. Another commonly cited problem was a difficulty in taking leave due to lack of staff replacement. These issues in communication, lack of trust in management and difficulties in taking leave emerged from interviews with seafarers on the subject of their responses to ill-treatment.

The idea that distance management may encourage an atmosphere in which ill-treatment can run rampant because of the lack of managerial supervision is largely mitigated by the presence of the hierarchy onboard. Due to the nature of the hierarchy, there are checks and balances in place that mean that the kind of ill-treatment discussed in the last section is not the norm. The main issue with distance management, apart from the practical problems outlined below, is the lack of trust in the company. This is compounded by job insecurity, which is discussed in the next chapter. In this section, we will look at how personal relations with shore office can span the distance and achieve results and also how the hierarchy and distance from management work together to create problems for seafarers onboard.

In this case, the 3rd Engineer is experiencing unreasonable treatment by being compelled to carry on sailing when his contract has officially ended.

The worst thing is when your contract is completed and it's time to sign off and the company doesn't have officers for your relief so you have to keep sailing...that is the worst feeling, the contracts should be shorter. 9 months is a long time, you don't feel good, you feel bored looking at the same faces and then if you have to stay longer, it's too much. (IC – 3rd E)

What prevents him from citing the end of his contract and leaving at the next port? Two reasons have been suggested for not choosing to exit in these circumstances. The first is that doing as the company asks creates goodwill which may help the future career of the seafarer as this 3rd Officer explained, "If they ask, I will do it because then later they will be able to see on my record that I am a good worker. I want to keep working for this company." The second reason is loyalty to the company and the concurrent identification with the organisation's goals, as well as professional pride, as this 2nd Officer said,

If I get up and leave, the ship will not be able to go to the next port and the company will lose money. They need everyone to do their jobs, if they are having a problem, of course I will not just go. When I have a problem, they are also there to help me.

Problems with signing off can be a type of ill-treatment for some seafarers because the Master has to be involved in forwarding requests to the company and then relaying their response to the seafarer. This puts the Master in a position of great power with regards to deciding who he wants to allow on and off the ship, as one 2nd Officer discovered:

When I was a cadet, the company sent the Captain a letter saying it was time for me to be signed off. He did not show me that letter only. I was in touch with the company and I was having information that it is time for my sign-off and the letter has been issued from the company, but he was not in the mood to sign me off. So he was not showing me that letter and that order from the company and when I asked him, he was shouting at me, 'am I your personal assistant or something, why should I show you letters from the company'. But then I went into his cabin when he was not there and picked up that letter and I showed it to him. He just ignored it. I was supposed to sign off in my tenth month and he held me there for an extra five months. The ship was going around the coast and the office sent the letter two or three times but he kept

ignoring it. The company sent relief also but he was directed to another ship because the Captain said no. In the meantime, my family was pressurising to the office and then they sent my relief. Actually, at the time I finally could sign off, there was no means of getting off except by chopper, and that would be expensive. So that was also one reason I was stuck there a bit longer. (IC – 2nd O 2)

The previous case exemplifies the way in which a Master can abuse his power. When he was a cadet, the 2nd Officer was forced to continue to sail almost as long as the Master wanted, according to the Master's schedule and completely negligent of the signed legal contract which allowed the 2nd Officer to be relieved. What is particularly interesting about this story is the way in which the company appeared to bow to the captain's will, despite there being relief available on time. The captain refused the company's attempts to repatriate the seafarer, by, as the seafarer explained, telling them that the seafarer wanted to prolong his contract onboard. As in a similar case, the second officer turned to his family for support as he did not feel able to go over the captain's head himself. This is related in part to issues of job security, which will be explored more thoroughly in the next chapter.

As seen in the previous example, communication is not the only reason that seafarers suffer delays in being relieved. They are also subject to the company's convenience in terms of the schedule of the ship that they are on. If they are at a port which is on the other side of the world, the company may choose to delay repatriation by offering excuses until the ship is closer and it cheaper to fly the seafarer back. In the most extreme effect of problems with signing off was this 2nd Engineer's experience;

I had a problem with signing off once, my wedding was scheduled for July, after my 9 month contract was over, but we didn't touch an Indian port so I couldn't get signed off and stayed on the ship for one year. My wedding got delayed, then it got cancelled because they [prospective in-laws] said if this is happening now, what will it be like later when my wife and children need me? (IC – 2nd E 2)

He went on to explain that he could not afford to pay for his own repatriation and he was therefore dependent on his employer's whims. These problems with signing off appear to be common but they do not always relate to victims being forced to work

onboard against their will. In some cases, senior officers may need to have a subordinate signed off because he is not carrying out the work properly, and in this case repatriation can also be slow, which can endanger safe working practice onboard, as this Chief Officer suggested,

It's a problem when you have got a subordinate whom you cannot trust and you want to get rid of him and the company's saying that we don't have a reliever. He will be messing up the work in the meantime and I must find a way to get it done without involving him. It puts pressure on everybody (MNC – CO).

A 2nd Engineer gave a more detailed account of the type of sustained problems that can develop onboard, particularly in a situation where the Captain is newly promoted and does not want to demonstrate incompetence by having to involve the company:

On my last ship, there was a 3rd Engineer, oilman and 5th Engineer who got along quite well. They formed a group with one or two others and spent a lot of time together. The 3rd Engineer then started to instigate the Oilman, telling him, 'don't do your work, if a senior gives you work, don't do it, go sit on the chair of the Chief Engineer and 2nd Engineer', basically causing problems like this. We tried to solve it but it didn't work so the matter went to the Chief Engineer, and then the Captain... The Captain explained to them, scolded them, and threatened them a little bit also, telling them about the competency report and that if they continued to behave in this manner, he [the Captain] would finish them by sending a very bad competency report to the company. Then they wouldn't be able to get a job with this company again. The Captain said he scared them a little bit, so then they cooled down and did their work properly. These problems had carried on for 3 or 4 months, then it finally got solved just before I signed off. (IC – 2nd E)

To the senior officers, this is a form of ill-treatment, because they are not able to fulfil their jobs while the person working under them is not carrying out his role properly. This was found in seafarers' perceptions of what constitutes ill-treatment, as seen in the last chapter.

In the following case, a 2nd officer explains his rationalisation for choosing not to raise his voice when he experienced ill-treatment.

When we have problems, that time we have to contact the company, somehow we have to contact. If we contact directly, then there will be big issues onboard. The Master is the in-charge of the ship, if he stops me calling, and if I ignore that and still call, he can't do anything...but it will cause big problems onboard the ship. So that's why I call home and home will call to the company and company will call to the ship. So it's better to go around like that. This work is serious work, you cannot work with so much tension because you will create some accident. Unless and until you get down, you have to perform your best. (MNC – 2nd O)

This example illustrates several points of interest with regard to the limitations that the distance management together with hierarchy, imposes. The first is the fact that circumvention of the hierarchy is not considered to be a viable option as it can lead to friction onboard which can have a negative impact on health and safety. The second is that the 2nd officer did not feel physically constrained by the captain's refusal to let him contact the company directly. Instead, he asserts his ability to do this if he wanted to, but concedes that he prioritises a more harmonious and safe working environment over his need to defend himself. However, the underlying point here is that he *is* physically constrained from leaving his workplace immediately after he has lodged a complaint. The delay between asking for repatriation and actually being repatriated is what acts as a barrier to the 2nd officer and results in him choosing silence. He, too, referred to his job role and the need to meet his standards of professionalism and get the job done to the best of his ability.

Aside from the obvious logistical problem of not being able to physically leave the ship at the end of a workday, or whenever they please, some seafarers are also limited in their means of communication to the outside world. This can both contribute to ill-treatment and hinder responses onboard. Much of the effects of communication on ill-treatment onboard actually stem from a lack of or withholding of opportunities for communication between ship and shore, chiming with the Equality Challenge Unit's (2007) finding that ill-treatment is often not just about what is done but what is not done or withheld from others.

As has been explored in the maritime chapter, control over ship-to-shore communication belongs to the senior officers and often, permission for younger officers and ratings to use the communication facilities comes down to the captain's

decision. As Sampson (2013) has explained, captains' management methods vary greatly from ship to ship and directly influence the working environment onboard. In some cases, a seafarer feels able to circumvent these limitations, as above, and chooses not to, and in others, he finds more unconventional ways of getting his message out. In practical terms, a captain has the power to delay the repatriation of his juniors in two ways. One is to reject shore managers' calls for repatriation of a seafarer and the other is to block a seafarers' request for repatriation.

The hierarchy which grants the power of communication to senior officers seriously affects the extent to which seafarers are able to exercise any level of autonomy;

You have to come through the channel of Chief Officer and Master, but if you fight with Chief Officer, then? If you fight with both Chief Officer and Captain onboard, then? What are you supposed to do? Because communication system they [Master and Chief Officer] having only. Last time only I faced such a problem when I have to get down. Actually after 9 months, I was planned to get down, but then I wanted to get down [early] so then I went to the Chief Officer and said, please Sir, forward my message to the Captain and he can send to the office. He said I will not do. I go to the Captain directly, he said no, you come through the channel, you come through the Chief Officer. Chief Officer said I will not go. Captain said why you came directly and then Captain get annoyed and he said I will not send. Then I said okay sir, I will call to the company directly. 'No you're not allowed to call'. Then I called to my family and my family called to the office. I called my papa and told him the situation, then he called to the office and then the process started. (IC – 2nd O)

In this example, we see that the second officer was, firstly, not comfortable directly circumventing the authority of his senior officer, as has been seen in other cases. Secondly, the only way he could find a way to sign off was by appealing to his family, who then contacted the shore office and they requested the repatriation that the seafarer was entitled to. There are several underlying themes here. The second officer initially followed protocol but when he was rebuffed, he continued up the chain of command. When the captain refused to acknowledge his request as it had not come through the right channel, the second officer was also denied the opportunity to go over the captain's head and appeal to shore office directly. The second officer went on to explain that he felt like a child, having to go to his father for help even

though he was earning and supporting his family at the time. He felt that it detracted from his professional standing and also diminished his role in front of his family. His comments on this also illustrate how desperate he felt in his situation, because he risked the loss of face in front of his family to find a way to sign off from the ship. The second officer opined that the chief officer was determined to make the second officer stay onboard for as long as the chief officer was there so that he would not have to get used to working with another second officer.

This was a recurring problem for many seafarers, regardless of company, although it tended to affect officers more than ratings as they are considered more valuable and harder to replace on time than ratings.

As we have seen, the necessary use of distance management can prompt cases of ill-treatment, primarily through the limitations on communication that it and the hierarchy bring. Distance management also means that seafarers either choose silence in response to ill-treatment, or are penalised for voicing their concerns by having to pay for their own repatriation, or suffering loss of face if forced to approach their families for help. The object lesson here is that even if seafarers are able to face down one obstacle, they often encounter others that eventually result in them having to choose silence.

6.4 Appraisal Policies and Management Training

There are two main ways in which HR policies can directly foster ill-treatment onboard and influence responses to it. These are through the existing policy of using appraisal forms for seafarers onboard, and the new training courses that are run for the new generation of officers passing through the company's offices.

6.4.1 Appraisal reports

The interviews with managers and access to the appraisal form elicited the information that there is a system of performance appraisals which is applied to seafarers onboard ships in both companies. The appraisals were not being carried out in the way they are designated to, in either company.

According to a manager in the MNC, an appraisal form should be completed every three months by officers onboard the ship about their junior personnel. The form requires them to have discussed the contents of the form and for the person that it is about to have signed it to demonstrate this. As with the use of appraisal forms in other industries, the manager identified that it should enable them to “pinpoint training needs that will help seafarers improve their performance and development” and thus continue to be an asset to the company. However, interviews with the seafarers demonstrated that this aim was not the only purpose of the form.

The first key indication of this was that the seafarers perceived the appraisal form as an official report which could be used to report them to shore management for a bad attitude or unprofessional behaviour, or if their work was not up to the standard required. There was no associated face-to-face conversation and it was rare for the senior officer to ask his junior to read and sign the report before it was sent to shore office, as one 3rd Officer explained,

I know the appraisal report, the company's procedure is like that, if I write an appraisal report about you, you have to read the copy and sign it. This is my fifth contract and I've never seen or signed my appraisal report. (MNC 12 – 3rd O)

The 3rd Officer further observed that the report would be stored at shore office until the seafarer returned from his current contract at which point, if the report had been negative, he would be asked his view on it. It is clear that there are many deviations from what the managers explained the performance appraisal means and the way it is meant to be administered.

Secondly, there were significant variations in the managers' attitudes towards negative reports about seafarers, depending on a combination of the seafarers' age, rank and experience with the company. When asked how he would react to a negative report about a rating, one manager said,

It depends...see, usually if a rating has been given a very bad report, we just won't ask him to come back to us, he can find work somewhere else. If he has been with us a very long time or we know that the senior is inexperienced and new and the rating is an old hand, then we will investigate more and ask him questions about why he got such a bad report. But usually, the point of an

appraisal is to help with training and development and deciding promotions for the officers (IC Mgr 2).

As indicated, the managers did pay attention to the appraisal process to identify training and development needs for the officers and the company does provide a range of seminars and workshops that allow these needs to be met in-house. The officers themselves were mostly ambivalent about the appraisal process, although they did say that it was not always done to schedule and sometimes they missed two or more in a row. This indicates that the appraisal process, although in place on paper, and genuine in its purpose with regard to the officers, is clearly not a priority with management onshore.

The ratings' appraisal forms contained different meaning to the officers' and were not used to identify training needs. Instead, their primary purpose appeared to be to measure the performance of the ratings and assess if their work was up to the required standard. This is elicited from interviews with ratings who explained that they feared that their superiors would use the appraisal form as a way of reporting them for bad attitude or bad behaviour, as this rating in the MNC complained;

They're not following the company procedures, like if I'm the 2nd Engineer, I don't like you, I just write something and send. Now he can write whatever he wants about me but there is another page for my feedback and sign and I'm supposed to get my copy of it, but I've never seen this happen. (Oiler 2).

The managers said that they had asked officers why the forms were not being completed as they should be and were told that the officers prefer to “stick to the old ways” and do “confidential” reports. This is primarily because they do not want the seafarer they must continue to work with, to know that they are sending a negative report. The reasoning provided by senior officers onboard for choosing to ignore the official appraisal process is that, if they are sending a negative report, they are worried that if they communicate their discontent to the person, there will be problems with working onboard. Unlike most workplaces onshore, this may lead to actual, physically dangerous working conditions onboard, as many seafarers have explained that discontent amongst seafarers can lead to accidents where serious injury or even fatalities can occur (see section 4.4.1).

The managers accepted this reasoning and explained that despite teaching seafarers how the appraisals should be done properly, there is a reluctance to carry out appraisals as they are intended and they could not force them to do it correctly. One commented;

See, we know that they are not doing it properly but what can we do? They need to send the reports confidentially otherwise they say there will be trouble on the ship, egos clashing and many arguments and we can't afford to just have everybody stop working. Better to let them finish, then later if it is a big thing, we can ask the seafarer why he behaved like this. If we do it when they are on the ship, it's just a headache for everyone. (Mgr 2 – IC)

The managers' comments indicate apathy on their part with regard to making changes, as they see no need to change the status quo. This reluctance to change on the part of the managers also reinforces the seafarers' perception of the greater value of the senior officers and the expendability of the ratings. However, a large part of their motivation is likely to be their interest in the successful completion of the voyage to keep their clients happy and their profits intact.

There were two main ways in which the misuse of appraisals influenced ill-treatment onboard. The first was that it created potential for ill-treatment to occur. As in one example, an officer sent a negative report about a rating, accusing him of inferior work. The rating was not re-employed by the company for a period of one year, which was longer than the three month break he had expected. He had been told about the negative report and he said his protests against its veracity were disregarded. His belief was that the only reason he had been re-called was because they required a man of his skills and could not find anyone else at short notice, not because they had re-assessed the situation and chosen to believe that he was in the right.

The second way in which this potential for abuse of the appraisal system has an effect is on the way in which seafarers are able to respond to ill-treatment when it occurs. Instead of being a transparent appraisal process, it acts as a threat that seafarers in more senior positions can hold over their subordinates. This was demonstrated earlier in the hierarchy section of this chapter, and despite the prevalence of ratings mentioning their fear of a 'bad report', it can also affect senior

officers themselves, as this Chief Officer in the IC said of his experience working for a Captain that denigrated his work:

Sometimes you have to make a lot of compromises because if you hit back, or argue back or something, not that you're wrong, but he will make some confidential report where he would like to take on everything. Even if you work all along perfectly, just that you got head-on [had conflict] with him in some situation, he will not forget, but he will forget all the rest and he will prefer to take on you just about that time.

How are you able to respond?

We are not able to react, yes. But in the sense that, I could have reacted to any extent, but then some resentment is generally shown in return and again, that confidential report thing will come up. We are not here to fight, but he might take on there [make an issue of it] and that might affect your career, later on.

Me: If someone makes a confidential report, what are the consequences, is it brought up when you're on shore?

No, but it matters at the time of promotion. Normally you won't know about the report, but it is there, affecting your career. I have been a Chief Officer for 8 years now, and still no promotion to Captain. (CO – IC)

In this case, according to the Chief Officer, the appraisal was used to make a determination about his promotion prospects, but it had been conducted as a 'confidential report' that he was not able to see until after he had finished his contract on that ship. As this is his perception of what happened, it is possible that the Captain was not at fault, but it does demonstrate the belief at all levels of the hierarchy, that the appraisal process is a sham and is not used as it is supposed to be.

6.4.2 Management training and a 'generation gap'

Another way in which HR policies affect seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment is through their training courses which teach 'new' management methods of a more collaborative nature to the upcoming officers. This can result in what feels like a generation gap between two seafarers onboard, as the management methods of the

older one may feel outdated and more autocratic than what the younger seafarer expects or responds to. This is explained by a Chief Officer's feelings,

Sometime you find very senior masters who probably because when they became Master or when they were sailing as a junior the environment was different. Now it is different. You know we are like going to be very honest we are going more toward the Western approach you know, to make that gap a bit narrower but the old Masters sometimes they feel that and then the gap is (..) is big like Master doesn't think that Chief Officer is is like second in command or his subordinate they think that these are different sets of officers, that is second officer, third officer, Chief Officer, and the captain you know sometime they are not willing to take advice. Even if you give advice *matlab* [meaning] it's it's like sometime they feel offended you know, thinking "this is my decision" sort of thing, "you have changed this without my notice" or something like that... (MNC 1 – CO)

Here there is a clear indication that this Chief Officer feels that a different or more cooperative management style, which he identifies as being a "Western approach" is coming into play onboard. This is indicative of a general shift in both companies which are embracing HR ideals that were cultivated in Western working practice first. Later in the interview he explained that there were many management courses offered to officers in the shore office and some included lessons on how to manage the people onboard the ship. The gap that he is discussing is not an age gap per se, but a generational gap in the sense that seafarers who were trained later, were taught a different management style, and their experience of professional socialisation, which is driven in part by older experienced seafarers onboard, clashes with this somewhat.

Several officers from the IC in particular also identified a 'generation shift' as a cause of ill-treatment on an interpersonal level. They cited the presence of older personnel as problematic because they had expectations of behaviour which are different to the 'newer' generation, which is more exposed to ideas such as 'team management' and decision making as a process which includes discussion with colleagues. Here, it is apparent that changes in management's expectation of workers' behaviour have filtered through the training apparatus and had an impact on seafarers' expectations of behaviour onboard the ship. While theoretically, this appears to be a move toward

more progressive management styles, it has in practice resulted in conflict between old and new expectations onboard.

An articulate Master explained one situation but he did not want to be recorded and so the following extract is from the interviewer's notes taken during the interview;

Once when they were on a car carrier, and he was the Master and he had a Chief Officer who was older than him and walked around with dirty overalls (which they can't do, they even have Velcro instead of buttons and special rubber safety shoes), which could have scuffed/dirtied/ruined the cars. The Master told him to clean up and follow the rules, and the Chief Officer did not want to listen and started saying things like, "you weren't even born when I started working on ships". So the Master said to him, "listen, why don't you ask for relief instead of me pushing you out". Then the Chief Officer broke down and said "sir, let me finish my contract, I have to support my wife and family, and if I get sent off, I'll have to pay my own airfare", but by this point the Master said the Chief Officer wasn't responsible enough and he couldn't give him another chance so he sent off a memo to the office, and they took one month to find a replacement. When he finally left after working for that month, he was verbally abusing the Master as he went. (MNC 14 – Capt)

This recollection raises many important themes, not least a key point which has been raised in previous chapters – that the Master chooses the style of management that they want to apply onboard and they have the power to not tolerate a single mistake if they do not want to. They can choose to have zero tolerance for mistakes, however, the interesting part of this story is the reason why the Chief Officer was defiant in the face of the Captain's wishes. He made it clear that he felt that his age and experience carried more weight than his actual rank onboard, despite the rank being the tangible expression of the hierarchy in which they function. The Master's reaction to this also seems extreme, but it clearly expresses his understanding that rank supersedes any other considerations that the Chief Officer had. It is clear that in this case, they both tried to prioritise those attributes which would have granted them greater power in the situation – the Chief Officer tried to emphasise the weight of his experience and the Master held up his rank. The Master's approach is the one that is supported by the company and his wishes were upheld in this case.

This is a good example of a case where hierarchy and socialisation, HR policies and distance management all contributed to a situation in which both the Captain and the Chief Officer felt ill-treated and action had to be taken to sign the Chief Officer off.

In this chapter, we have seen the ways in which certain aspects of the work environment and employment relationship onboard ships such as the hierarchy, socialisation, distance management and HR policies and training can shape the occurrence of ill-treatment and affect seafarers' responses to it. These influences may be either positive and/or negative and often work in tandem or against each other to mould seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard. In the next chapter, we expand to a more a macro approach and explore those characteristics of the industry that also contribute to seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment, namely the use of short-term contracts, the "race to the bottom" mentality and the effects of the manpower shortage.

Chapter 7: Fears Impeding Response to Ill-Treatment and Coping Mechanisms

7.1 Factors Influencing Response to Ill-Treatment Onboard

The first part of this chapter is concerned with factors influencing seafarers' experiences of and responses to ill-treatment which are external to the company and its control. This consists of seafarers' personal financial circumstances as well as fears for job security and career advancement. The second part of this chapter will explore seafarers' use of preventive measures and coping mechanisms for ill-treatment onboard.

7.1.1 Financial pressures

Throughout the data presented in the last chapter, it has been shown that on occasions when seafarers choose to exercise their voice and/or exit the situation, they have to pay for their own repatriation. This can understandably act as a barrier to choosing exit and persuades seafarers to remain silent. It has also been found that in addition to the cost of repatriation, seafarers' financial commitments can persuade them not to jeopardise the income from the remainder of their contract by exiting. Although loss of income is clearly the driver behind fear of losing their jobs, seafarers did articulate some of their own specific financial situations which encouraged them to remain silent when faced with ill-treatment. Seafarers often supported not only their own nuclear family but also contributed to a 'joint family' living situation in which they supported their parents, and in one case, younger siblings as well.

What do you think about when you feel this way, how do you want to react?

Look, I just need to focus on doing my work and keeping my job. I will tell you, my parents are elderly now, the whole household runs on my income alone. My younger brother is finishing his engineering degree, I hope he finds a good job. I want him to do well. My daughters are very young, 15 and 17, they are still in school and need to finish their studies. Then they should go to college. That is very important these days. Then, when they get married, I will have to cover the costs. These days, weddings are very expensive. So I have to think far ahead and save enough money for everybody. I don't have any sons, so we will have to keep some savings for ourselves too. Otherwise, who

will look after us when we are elderly? I have to keep working as well as I can, for as long as I can. I can't get involved in any trouble. So if anything is happening to me, if it is not killing me, I can bear it. It's no problem. After I finish my contract, I can come home and be with my wife and my daughters. Then who knows about the next contract, it can be a different ship, different Captain, no problems. (IC – CO2)

Fear of loss of income is naturally associated with job insecurity, however, this Chief Officer's comments touch upon some financial obligations which are fairly typical of Indian society. The first is that he is responsible for the well-being of his parents and the education of his younger brother, who all live with his own nuclear family in a joint-family living situation. The second is his assumption that he will be paying for his daughters' weddings when they come of age. The third is that he does not expect to have anyone to look after him when he is retired because he has no sons. These points are rooted in Indian cultural beliefs and may be purported to influence his decision-making process when responding to ill-treatment.

In addition, as implied earlier, a seafarers' personal financial situation affects the extent to which he allows impediments to his exercise of voice. Choosing to exit, whether by way of complaint or excuse, will result in the termination of his current contract. He must therefore carefully consider if he is in a position to risk loss of his future income.

7.1.2 Job security and career advancement

This section is about the way in which characteristics of the shipping industry influence the employment relationship of seafarers. One key aspect of this is the close-knit nature of the industry and knowledge that most recruitment offices have of others in the same region. In the seafarers' view, if their contracts are prematurely terminated, it only takes a phone call and casual use of words such as 'troublemaker' for the prospective employer to determine that the seafarer is not to be re-employed in the industry. The term 'blacklisting' was used by one Captain who explained that if you argue with one person in the office, because the shipping world is so small and everyone knows everyone and it is all interconnected, seafarers can get blacklisted with all the other ship management companies and/or owners. He indicated that the same holds true of other ranks onboard a ship as well. His view was;

You don't work hard, you make trouble and you're gone, and if you're gone, you're gone for all the other companies as well, no one wants to hire a trouble-maker, they also don't want any problems with incompetent crew (MNC – Capt 3).

It therefore appears that the threat of blacklisting works on two levels – to prevent seafarers from perpetrating ill-treatment in the first place as it can have a negative impact on their career, but also, conversely, to prevent seafarers from complaining if they do experience it. Seafarers may see it as a deterrent to behaving negatively but it depends on the combination of other factors that are unique to that seafarer.

There is a basic lack of trust between the seafarers and shore management which stems from the seafarers' own recognition of their expendability to shore management. They are very aware of the extent to which rank influences how seriously a complaint is taken. This has consequences which extend much farther than the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard, as it also affects seafarers' willingness to report on contravention of health and safety regulations, as observed by this OS;

The safety officer is the Chief Officer, if he isn't paying attention, what is the point us saying anything? If we say too much, he'll say, leave the ship, and sign us off.

Can they have you signed off like that?

Yeah, they can do it for their own ends, and the office people will listen to them only, they will ignore us. Because there are very few Chief Mates available... there are a lot more ABs and OS'. The ship can't run without a Chief Mate and it takes a very long time to find another one (MNC9 – OS).

This is a very clear explanation of the world view which informs ratings' interactions with shore management and reinforces what was found in chapter 5. It is also concurrent with the literature discussed in chapter 3 about how the proper implementation of health and safety regulations is impeded by top-down communication flows and seafarers' lack of organisational trust. The OS' explanation above showcases the common perception amongst ratings that they have much less value to shore management than the officers do. This idea influences all of their dealings with the shore office, so that they are hesitant to express their problems and they also understand that their vulnerability in terms of employment extends beyond

the termination of a single contract. They hope for repeated contracts with the same company and if they let the shore office know of their problems, the seafarers feel that it is unlikely that they will be given future work with the company. The perception of ratings as easy to terminate and replace is absorbed by senior officers as well, and they perpetuate this attitude of shore management onboard the ship, as seen in the OS' experience;

Did you ever try to talk to the company or someone about it?

I went and spoke to the Captain, he called me and the Chief Mate and the Bosun together. The Captain asked, what happened, and the Bosun told him it's the Chief Mate's fault. So the Chief Mate said, okay sir, either he will stay or I will stay. So then the Captain had to think about what to do. Then he turned to me and told to behave properly and do my work well. He couldn't say anything to the Chief Mate.

When that didn't work, did you think about taking it further?

If I didn't want to work or return to work in this company, then I would have taken some action.

What about support from the company? Do they tell you to come to them with problems?

Not just this company, all the companies say that. But nothing happens. The Captain will only mail the company about things he thinks are important. He'll do it for officers, he won't do it for crew. Whatever the reason is, the company will only listen to the officers, never the crew (MNC 9 – OS)

It appears from this example that the rating was convinced of his own expendability and this restricted his voice onboard and reinforced the idea that the company would not support ratings if they found a way to circumvent what was effectively a gag. In many cases and because of the common perception of lack of trust in the employment relationship, many ratings gag themselves as a matter of prudence, as this Engine Saran (rating) did;

In my last ship there was a problem with the piston rings and I had an argument with my superior. Then I got down at the next port because my contract was finished. That was lucky, because some people have all these inferiority complexes onboard. Best thing to do is do your job and finish the contract. It's a question of keeping your job, you want to be re-employed (IC – Engine Saran).

This shows silence as a type of coping mechanism when dealing with ill-treatment as it is used to insulate the rating from further harm. All of the incidents of ratings being made to feel like they are expendable are rooted partly in the truth of a surplus of ratings, but also in the willingness of management to let ratings be aware of this. Even more than the short-term contracts, which can be and are often implemented in a rolling fashion, the awareness of their own expendability to shore office makes ratings feel vulnerable.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, silence is not limited to ratings alone. Officers also choose silence in response to ill-treatment, and the factors influencing their decisions are very similar to the ratings. While ratings fear not being re-employed by their company, officers are more concerned with their career advancement if they are not yet in the senior most position (i.e. either Captain or Chief Engineer). Both ratings and officers choose silence to protect themselves from the company's perceived intolerance for being 'troublemakers', as explained by this 3rd Officer;

Mostly if something happens, if I'm not getting along with the other workers, I'll ask for sign off and join some other ship, if I'm not happy on this ship. It's the best thing according to me, rather than fighting and taking the matter up and all, and everybody getting involved, that is more troubling than changing ships. Because then it goes on the record and if it happens again and again the office will say you are the one making trouble. I want to do well in this company, it is better to keep quiet and do your work, even if you have to change to another ship (IC- 3rd O).

This 3rd Officer is confident that his request to be signed off will be granted and he will then be able to sign on to another contract with the same company. This could be partly influenced by his greater ability and willingness to pay for his own repatriation as a way of catering to his own needs but not creating a record of 'troublemaking'. It also indicates greater job security than the ratings as well as a simultaneous lack of trust in the employment relationship, as expressed by the fear of impediment to career progression. Ratings also have access to escape routes, but their situation is made more precarious by their own perceptions of management, officers and their own value to the company, as seen in chapter 4.

As mentioned in chapter 5, cooks tended to view themselves as being removed from the hierarchy, special in a way that meant they did not encounter ill-treatment. However, despite their distance from the traditional hierarchy, they were still very much subject to the their four senior officers' command and this did cause ill-treatment;

Once I was on a ship and there was a Chief Engineer... I don't know what happened to him or what, but I cook for everyone, I give everyone food and I gave him also. He said to me, you're putting something in my food. I said, I'm giving you the same food as everyone else. He said to me, no, I know you're putting something in my food, I'll throw you off the ship. What he thought I was putting in it, I don't know. So then I gave him another plate I had dished out, I said, ok, eat this instead. Then I called the company, he's saying like this to me, what should I do? The company said, he's very senior, he's not alright in the head, just ignore him. I said no I don't want to listen to all this, and there's just 3 weeks left on my contract, please sign me off. So they said ok, and they signed me off.

I: So you managed to get signed off right away?

No, actually they had some problem finding my replacement so I ended up finishing my last 3 weeks. But they said to me, as soon as we find a replacement, we will sign you off.

I: And did the Chief Engineer continue to accuse you during the rest of the 3 weeks?

Yes, he kept saying what he was saying but I just ignored him after that, I was just waiting for my sign-off. What can he do? I told the company already what was happening. (IC- Chief Cook)

The cook's confident use of voice in this case indicates that he was not worried about losing his position with the company, or that he genuinely felt threatened by the Chief Engineer's paranoid and threatening behaviour. This was because he had been trained in the company's in-house training programme and was familiar with both how the company worked and with some shore managers. What is really interesting here is the way in which the company responded. They validated his complaint with an affirmative response and then said they could not find him a replacement right away. Their listening to him comforted him and as he only had 3 weeks left, he did what other seafarers do when they choose silence, he ignored the ongoing criticism and looked forward to signing off. He said he was fortunate in that the Chief Engineer

did not come to know about his request to leave, as this could have made the work environment awkward and uncomfortable for the remaining 3 weeks of his contract. This example demonstrates the difference that simply discussing the problem and the available options for response, can make to a seafarer's ability to deal with it without having to exit. However, the end result was the same – he completed his contract and escaped the situation, with no change having been effected for either party, as far as he knew.

Having explored different types of ill-treatment that occur, and the seafarers' responses to them, the next section looks at prevention and coping strategies that exist onboard.

7.2 'Prevention is Better than Cure' – Individualistic Prevention Strategies

In chapters 1 and 2, questions were raised about the role of the hierarchy onboard and its effect on ill-treatment. Thus far, the data has illuminated the various ways in which seafarers can experience ill-treatment onboard ships. This section will explore different strategies that seafarers employ to prevent the occurrence of ill-treatment in the first place. There are two main ways in which this is achieved, through evasion, which entails the use of voluntary social isolation, and through pre-emptive or first-instance blocking. As with all experiences of ill-treatment, use of these strategies is extremely dependent on the seafarers' rank and own experience of sailing, and personal factors. As has already been discussed in the socialisation section, there are two non-individualistic ways of preventing ill-treatment from escalating, which are peer-regulation and the involuntary social isolation imposed by the nature of the work.

7.2.1 Evasion – social isolation

Seafarers lead an isolated existence onboard ship, partly fostered by their working environment and conditions, and partly created by themselves. One way in which seafarers are isolated onboard is because of their work environment, as the isolation stems from the type of contracts and work schedule that they have. A Bosun from the IC said:

We only have 4 or 5 people in our crew. 2 or 3 of them are usually on duty. We meet up for meals, usually not more than 4 of us. Usually, engineering ratings, deck ratings, they have to stay on watch as well.

As seen in chapter 3, crews onboard ships have shrunk, there are fewer people to do the work, and this means that seafarers do not always have their rest period at the same time. This severely limits the time that they spend interacting with each other outside of work hours and has a positive effect on the prevention of ill-treatment between colleagues as there is less time for arguments to develop. In addition, seafarers join and leave the ship at different times so even if they did become friends with their colleagues, they may not be able to remain friends for long. It was emphasised that once seafarers took their leave, they chose to forget all about the ship and the people on it and were rarely interested in maintaining contact with colleagues once they were onshore, as this 3rd Engineer commented;

After sign off, some people I think like to stay in touch but I don't. What is the point? When I'm home, I'm with my family and what was onboard the ship stays there. I could see them again or I could not. I don't need to be friends with everyone. (MNC – 3rd E2)

As seen in Chapter 3, the structure of the industry and the way in which ship management companies function mean that it is entirely plausible for seafarers to never again work with the same people once their contract is over. This may make the prospect of 'making friends' less appealing and would also help to explain why the family rhetoric that the companies dispense to their lower ranked seafarers is so important for binding them together.

Even with all the imposed isolation existing between seafarers onboard, they are still working in a total institution where they also live and it is inevitable that they will continue to see their perpetrator. Therefore, some seafarers choose to isolate themselves beyond the imposed isolation mentioned above. They may choose to remain cordial but distant from their colleagues onboard so that they would not get "over-familiar" with each other and cause ill-treatment to occur. One Oiler explained;

Some people come and make friends too fast and think they know everything and they are the best friends but actually they don't know and then one day

someone will say something wrong and they will hate each other and there will be problem (MNC- Oiler).

He said maintaining social distance to some extent prevented problems such as unnecessary arguments and general ill-feeling which would affect their co-workers and might spill over into their working hours. This is reiterated by an Oiler from the IC:

This company is good, they treat us well, we always get our pay, good food, rest hours, so then all those little little things don't matter. If someone is talking disrespectfully to me, okay, that's fine, I am here to do my work and I'll do it, no need to think too much about other people's thoughts. Once I am finished with my work and meal, I can go to my room, I don't need to sit and listen to the others. (Oiler – IC)

The problem was likely to grow if other seafarers took sides and left one party feeling more isolated. Indeed, one 3rd Officer said;

You can't afford to have problems with people onboard because then you still have to spend the next 6 months with them. The situation can become worse and worse, I've seen it. So it's better to just keep your distance in the first place (IC – 3rd O)".

Here, he was referring to two ratings who had quickly become close friends after starting their voyages around the same time, but who felt comfortable around each other even if they did not know the other very well. About 6 weeks after they joined, one of them made a joke about the other's family (both having shared personal details about themselves) and found himself completely rebuffed. They argued and this escalated until they would not speak to each other unless work required it. Not only was it uncomfortable for the seafarers involved, but it also contributed to an unpleasant and tense atmosphere during meals and other recreational periods for everyone else. In addition, some seafarers took sides and supported one party over the other, which further fostered discontent onboard.

In a similar vein, One 2nd Officer explained that;

Familiarity breeds contempt, problems happen when you go to people's cabins and start drinking together and spending time together, like if he has a girlfriend, they'll start passing lewd comments you know, and then the peace and harmony is spoiled, then they're not talking to each other and that affects the work also. I normally avoid, I don't get too close to people, and yet not far away either. I have to balance my situation, not too friendly, but even when they are going shopping and all, I don't go with them, they see what I'm buying and say why? In India you'll get it cheaper (laughs). Then they start calculating and then discussing. Nowadays because of workload there's less time to do all this, but still some people do it, normally on longer voyages because there's more time. (MNC – 2nd O).

Here, the 2nd Officer is taking proactive steps to prevent ill-treatment before it occurs, or to prevent escalation of problems. Consequently, many seafarers can and do choose to maintain a distance from their colleagues during their rest period. This is also particularly important because it has implications for the occurrence of ill-treatment as well as how seafarers are able to respond to it. It initially acts as a type of pre-emptive measure to prevent ill-treatment from occurring.

When ill-treatment does occur, the family rhetoric and the extent that peer-regulation goes to, suggest that the other seafarers onboard can provide support. However, due to the length of the contracts, it can be difficult for seafarers to form close friendships with each other and when these are lacking, they have no emotional or mental support onboard. A 2nd Officer explains this;

If something happens onboard, you know, you get depressed. And depression sets in. And at least when you're at home, you can pour your heart out to your wife and kids, or a good friend. But we don't know who's good and who's bad over there [onboard] because we spend such a short time, in a few months you cannot decide that person's character, what he'll be. (2nd O2 – MNC)

This wariness of forming close friendships with other seafarers is also tied into many seafarers' awareness of the politics onboard and a general need to hold back from getting entangled in it. This also contributes to social isolation as a choice and can

act to prevent ill-treatment from taking place, particularly the kind between colleagues. It is, of course, far more difficult for isolation to be used as a preventive measure against ill-treatment perpetrated by superiors as they must still continue to work.

A notable point is that the decision to hold oneself apart was more common amongst the officers than the ratings and this could be because they felt more compelled to maintain personal distance to exert an air of authority when required. This was endorsed by a Captain who said;

Sometimes at a shipboard party, the juniors have drinks and I also have a drink and they get over-friendly and then the next day, they've forgotten that we're not actually just friends, but there are ranks to follow (MNC – Capt).

The Captain felt that mingling during the party led to the loosening of the rigid hierarchy which meant that junior officers felt they could now discuss their opinion with their Captain without going through the chain of command. To the Captain, it also meant that the juniors were being disrespectful by approaching him with jokes or personal comments during working hours. In addition to this, the Captain feared that in a work situation, the juniors would not be as inclined to follow his orders without question if they felt that they were friends. Therefore, the hierarchy is actively reinforced by senior officers in order to prevent what they would perceive to be ill-treatment in terms of incivility and disrespect.

It is also possible that more officers were able to adopt social isolation as a preventive measure because they are not subject to the family rhetoric to the extent that ratings are. Therefore there is less possibility of any tension arising from being encouraged to adhere to the family rhetoric while simultaneously trying to isolate oneself.

7.2.2 'Blocking'

'Blocking' as a preventive measure had to be employed subtly and could exist in a collective sense – as seen with peer-regulation in the last chapter. However, individuals also took steps to respond firmly in the first instance when they encountered ill-treatment. This required great courage as it involved risking their jobs

and the possibility of blacklisting. Those seafarers that chose to undertake such an action tended to be secure in some significant way in their position before they took this step. For example, one cook who countered an attempt to assign him extra work explained that;

Sometimes if you are not clever, they will pile extra work on you. They'll say 'oh, the last trainee did this so you also have to do it', even though I know it isn't my job. I don't run from doing my work, but they keep giving extra work.
(Trainee Cook- MNC)

The Trainee Cook chose to resist in the first instance and refused to do the extra work that was allocated to him. In this case, knowledge of the exact terms of his contract helped him to stand firm, and the result was that the extra work was allocated to an OS for whom it was not in the job description either.

'Blocking' can also be done pre-emptively, as has already been explained in the politicking section of chapter 6. Briefly, this is when seafarers can form networks with a view to having a support system in place in case of ill-treatment. This tended to happen if a seafarer had observed or been told about the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard.

7.3 Coping Mechanisms

When seafarers encountered ill-treatment onboard and went through a decision-making process, they often chose to remain silent and also not exit the situation. This was for a variety of reasons that have been presented in previous chapters, including fear of job loss, blacklisting, personal financial considerations, and so on. When seafarers continue on in the situation where ill-treatment occurred or is continuing to occur, they employ one or more of these coping mechanisms, which include rationalisation, diminishing the ill-treatment and finally, inner strength and pride. All three of them can work in tandem for maximum effect.

7.3.1 Rationalisation

This method involved rationalising the ill-treatment as a way of understanding its occurrence and feeling more equipped to deal with it in silence. Seafarers who chose

to remain silent often vocalised a rationalisation about the perpetrator without being prompted to do so. Their natural inclination was to try and understand why the perpetrator had acted the way he had. For example, this 2nd Officer who experienced 3 months of verbal abuse from an alcoholic Captain, mused about the motivation for his behaviour;

My impression about him was that he was not happy with his family. There's something going on between his parents and his wife. And it just slipped out once. He said "my parents"... and I said listen, this is your family problem you know. Don't tell me anything. It's not good to, you know, I'm not interested in your family matters. I said don't tell like that. But it slipped out. But he's having a problem, the best thing if you're having a problem at home I would think is to go home. But then they want the money also. And they don't want to go home and solve their problems. (MNC – 2nd O)

The 2nd Officer's assessment of the Captain's motivation for drinking so much and harassing him reassured him that he was actually the stronger party in the equation. This type of rationalisation confers a type of power on the victim of ill-treatment as once he feels he has understood the perpetrator's behaviour, it is no longer bewildering and unexpected. Once it has been defined, it can be dealt with.

Normalisation of certain occurrences onboard occurs through socialisation and can also act as a type of coping mechanism. For example, when asked about shouting and insults onboard, many seafarers responded that this was 'normal' and occurred when seafarers were dealing with news from home or were under pressure for some other reason, as articulated by this Trainee OS from the MNC:

Sometimes there is a lot of pressure, and I may not understand at that time what kind of pressure my superior is under, why he is shouting at me. But I need to keep cool because if at that time I lose it and shout back, then there will be big problems. So I just need to keep quiet and do the work.

This rationalisation is often used in conjunction with one or both of the other coping mechanisms.

7.3.2 Minimising of ill-treatment: ‘No one’s killing me’

An effect of the informal socialisation processes onboard is that seafarers’ definitions of ill-treatment are varied and can be quite different to the types of behaviour identified by the literature. This is evident from the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the perceptions of ill-treatment section in Chapter 5. While it may seem the case that seafarers were simply not affected by the type of ill-treatment they were interviewed about, the data presented in the preceding chapters indicates otherwise. The gap exists between their experience of ill-treatment onboard, and their reluctance to perceive it as such. This reluctance is useful as a coping mechanism because it allows them to diminish their experiences, thereby minimising the need to react to it.

Seafarers were aware of the existence of behaviour that would be defined as negative according to land-based literature, but they themselves did not volunteer it as an example of ill-treatment. This indicates that their socialised, professional personas choose to overlook this behaviour as negative because it prevents larger problems from developing in a work environment that they are always aware is limited in its physical capacity for change. Essentially, they know they have to spend a certain length of time onboard and are required to have greater resilience to gossip and rumours to enable them to perform their job as efficiently and effectively as possible. The importance of learned values from training and experiences in the workplace cannot be over-emphasised as it is vital in informing their expectations of ill-treatment. This in turn, affects their response to ill-treatment as their reaction to something which is not recognised as truly ill-treatment will naturally be smaller in scale compared to an event which they identify as being offensive.

7.3.3 ‘Inner strength and pride’

The final way in which seafarers cope with experiencing ill-treatment is to fall back on their strength of character and pride to support them so that they are able to withstand the behaviour until they or the perpetrator finishes their contract and leaves. Thinking back to the external pressures upon seafarers and the lack of interpersonal space, it becomes evident that seafarers feel compelled to withstand as much as they can so that they can continue to have a job and be paid. This feeling, coupled with a keen understanding of how the industry works, leads them to ignore the well-meaning “call if you have a problem” that is offered by shore office. A 2nd

Officer explained vividly how he felt when he considered how to respond to ill-treatment he had experienced;

I always feel like, you know, why should I come and complain to them. I try my best to solve the problem onboard only. 'Coz they have lots of headaches on their shoulders also, to manage a big organisation like this. And you cannot just go crying, you know, like a small baby, like he broke my toy on ship you know. If you can take, you take, if you can survive, you survive, you know. And if it's like the water is coming up to your neck and you're about to drown then you can tell them, that way. (MNC – 2nd O)

The comparison of his problems onboard the ship with that of a child's argument over a toy can be viewed as diminishing the scope of the ill-treatment, as seen in the previous section. Although his words indicate he was possibly trying to put his experience in perspective, his tone of voice when discussing what had happened, was quite distressed. It appeared as if he was trying to justify to himself why he had chosen to remain silent and not to complain. In addition, treating the problem as unimportant makes it easier to ignore while it is happening and can also help a person convince himself that his lack of response is justifiable because "it is not such a big thing". This highlights the way in which a macho facade can be a useful tool for seafarers to draw strength from and sustain them through negative experiences. This 2nd Officer had lost sleep and lost weight and had been very unhappy for the 3 months he was sailing with the perpetrator of ill-treatment, his Captain. Putting on an uncaring face felt to him, as if it was the best way to deal with the situation as above all, it would not give the Captain the satisfaction of seeing him upset. The difficulty with using this as a coping mechanism is that he continued to hold in his feelings and reaction to his experience and had not spoken of it to anyone even when he got home. He was only able to articulate what happened and his feelings about it for the first time in the interview with the author. Afterwards, he expressed relief and said he felt lighter, indicating that carrying the memories of that time with him had been a long-term repercussion of experiencing ill-treatment onboard. This echoes Lewis' (2004) findings that there is often a feeling of continuation due to a lack of closure for victims of bullying.

Another explanation for relying on this coping mechanism could be to combat feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment that victims often feel. Lewis (2004) identified that victims of bullying can experience shame that stems from feelings of

powerlessness, humiliation and inferiority (pg. 295), and this adds another layer of complex decision-making to the 2nd Officer's determination to remain steadfast in the face of ill-treatment.

The sense of pride that seafarers took in 'staying strong' and putting up with ill-treatment can also be seen to resonate with Fevre *et al.*'s (2012) findings that employees who experienced ill-treatment were proud of their ability to stand up for themselves and had a strong self-image (pg. 121). However, their sense of pride was also rooted in an appreciation for their job, which they did not want to lose because of experiencing ill-treatment. Onboard, the main motivating factors for staying strong and silent appear to be the need for job continuity, the discipline that they have been socialised into and a sense of professional responsibility which has also been encouraged by the company.

Chapter 8: Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to map out seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard ships. As seen in chapter 3, there is literature which has explored ill-treatment in the shipping industry, but this is outdated and refers primarily to the 1980s and 1990s. The shipping industry has undergone many changes in the time since then and this provides a useful opportunity to marry academic theories in the fields of sociology, organisational control and human resources with the existing research on the welfare of seafarers onboard ships.

This chapter has three aims. It will seek to unravel some of the contradictions in the results presented in the previous three chapters. It will also explore links between key themes in order to better map the interplay between factors influencing ill-treatment onboard. Finally, it will revisit academic literature presented in the first two chapters to provide conceptual underpinnings to the ideas presented here.

The initial assumptions, based on the review of the literature in earlier chapters, that seafarers are constantly in a vulnerable position onboard and may be subject to high levels of ill-treatment appear to have been unfounded. The levels and types of ill-treatment onboard are concurrent with recent research into ill-treatment in workplaces on land, including a study in the UK (Fevre *et al.* 2012), and various workplace studies in India (D'Cruz and Noronha 2009) and the United States (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy and Alberts 2007). The majority of seafarers in the study did not report having experienced ill-treatment, and the minority that did, tended not to perceive it as ill-treatment, or they diminished its significance as a coping mechanism. The evidence presented in chapters 5 to 7, however, demonstrates that there is ill-treatment onboard ships, defined by unreasonable treatment and disrespect and denigration. Characteristics of the shipboard workplace such as the hierarchy, distance management and management control through HR and socialisation, can both limit and enable ill-treatment onboard.

There are several parallels to the hierarchical work cultures discussed in Chapter 3. One is the way in which some ill-treatment is used as a disciplinary mechanism and training tool to shape new seafarers' professional personas. This was seen in chapter 5 when several seafarers discussed the way ill-treatment had been used to discipline the ranks, but that this did not happen anymore. However, in Chapter 6, we saw that these incidents did still occur, albeit through different means, but to explicitly achieve

the same thing. These incidents included humiliating seafarers in connection with their work, making them perform the same task repeatedly, and even in one case, instructing a cadet to stand at the top of the monkey island for two hours until he felt weak. These patterns run parallel to other strongly hierarchical professions such as policing and nursing. Archer found that, in the fire service in the UK, the normalisation of behaviours that would be considered negative was a part of the socialisation process made up of four stages – acceptance, normalisation, indoctrination and preservation of hierarchy (1999, pg. 94). All of these features have been found in the seafarers' workplace as demonstrated in the data chapters. However, much of the ill-treatment that Archer discusses is consciously carried out as a part of the organisational culture, as a way of incorporating fire service men into the group. This is not the case with the ill-treatment that was discussed in the interviews in this study, beyond some mention of 'hazing'¹² which took place during initial training at college¹³.

This is significant because it indicates that seafarers are not overtly coerced into joining the professional group. Their adoption of the group's values stems from the more subtle methods of the socialisation processes and management methods of control discussed above and in chapter 6, and are the product of the company's design (regardless of whether that is by formal design or not).

8.1 Formal Management Control

This section explores three ways in which management is able to exert control over its seafarers – through the hierarchy, the level of autonomy granted to seafarers at sea, and the introduction of new management techniques through training.

¹² 'Hazing', also known as 'ragging' in the Indian context, is "any disorderly conduct that has the effect of teasing or handling with rudeness any student, which causes or is likely to cause annoyance, harm or to raise fear in a junior so as to adversely affect the psyche of the junior." (Garg 2009, pg. 263).

¹³ This was not included in the study as the seafarer was not with either of the two companies or even onboard a ship at the time of its occurrence.

8.1.1 Socialisation and the hierarchy – variations between ranks

Seafarers often mentioned that there was little expectation of ill-treatment because of the nature of the job – they are expected to be professionals and there are guidelines about conduct onboard. However, when questioned about specific types of ill-treatment, they often responded with the idea that it was ‘normal’ and to be expected. These expectations have been developed on three fronts – firstly, through the discipline taught during their initial pre-sea training, particularly for officers during their higher education and cadetship; secondly, through experience of life onboard ship and the sharing of stories between newcomers and experienced hands; and thirdly, through continued training provided by both companies for officers and ratings which inculcate management values. This mirrors Feldman’s (1980) outline of the process of socialisation, as discussed in chapter 2. Much of the existing literature linking professional socialisation to experiences of ill-treatment relies on studies where employee interaction with clients constitutes a major concern (D’Cruz and Noronha 2009). This is quite different to seafarers’ work environments as they have no direct contact with their shore-based clients.

For seafarers, learning to follow the rules of the hierarchy is an important part of the socialisation process. In exploring the maritime context in chapter 3, the question was raised of whether the strict chain of command and structure of organisation incorporates a tendency to allow behaviour that constitutes ill-treatment. The seemingly contradictory evidence presented in the previous chapters illustrated the hierarchy as both limiting and enabling ill-treatment. For all seafarers, the hierarchy adds discipline and direction to their work environment (Sampson 2013) but for the minority that experience ill-treatment, the hierarchy may stifle their responses to ill-treatment.

The postulation (put forth in chapter 6) that longer experience working onboard provides a longer time for seafarers to be socialised into the company’s desired professional identity was found to be mitigated by the seafarers’ rank. The most senior officers that constitute the management onboard, namely the Captain, Chief Officer, Chief Engineer and 2nd Engineer, all interact with shore personnel for operational matters. This exposes them to the company’s objectives, both formal and informal, and allows them to see past management rhetoric. The end result is that once they achieved these higher ranks, they expressed greater cynicism of the company’s willingness to look after their welfare beyond doing what they could to

retain the officers. This bolder stance may merely be a representation of their greater access to voice, in that they felt more confident expressing their own views rather than repeating what they had been fed by their organisation, as lower ranks seemed to do. Although senior officers had greater ability to exercise their voice in terms of critiquing operational issues onboard the ship, they were just as inclined to choose silence when confronted with ill-treatment.

It is also apparent from the data chapters that seafarers' perceptions of fellow seafarers and the company inform their reaction to ill-treatment. It is an indicator of their trust in those relationships and reflects the parameters that they feel they are bound by. However, it is also clear from the contradictions presented in the data that seafarers' perceptions of other seafarers and the company do not match the reality, or indeed, others' perceptions of the same. Although to the subordinates, the Captain, Chief Officer and Chief Engineer are the top of the chain of command, they are very much subject to the company's schedules and needs. For example, although Captains are the ultimate authority onboard and much of the ill-treatment discussed by the respondents was related to the Captain in some way, it is also true that the Captains experience the greatest amount of commercial pressure, as well as work intensification in the form of paperwork and micro-management by the companies (Bhattacharya 2012b). None of the Captains reported any ill-treatment onboard while in their post as Captain, but they did report feeling insecure in their jobs and described the intense pressure that they are under to ensure that the company's goals are met;

When I can't handle the crew on my own, the company will start to think maybe I shouldn't be doing this job. I can't go irritating them for every little thing. Ok yes, if there is a safety issue then of course I want the guy gone. But if not... I don't need to hear every little thing they [ratings] think is wrong (IC – Capt 2).

Job insecurity was found to be a concern of seafarers of all ranks, including the senior officers that the junior officers and ratings see as powerful. The extensive literature on non-standard forms of work in chapter 2 demonstrated the way in which the employer is in a strong position to negotiate the employment relationship, and this has been proven throughout the previous data chapters, when discussing seafarers' fear for their job security contributing to their silence in the face of ill-treatment. This also suggests that the manning crisis mentioned in chapter 3 and

perceived by seafarers to contribute to their job insecurity, is not as all-pervasive as it appears to the ratings. That is, throughout the data chapters, and as seen above, it has become apparent that despite the ratings' view of the Captain as very powerful and even untouchable, the reality is different. The Captain is responsible for executing the will of the organisation by delivering its service in order to ensure the company's profits. Concurrent with his mantle of ultimate authority onboard, the Captain is also ultimately responsible for negative situations that develop on his watch. This can result in the company assessing him negatively, particularly if the situation resulted in costing the company time and money, as seen in Bhattacharya's (2009) findings about the allocation of blame by management.

In chapter 5, it was found that all the seafarers drew on the idea of the manning crisis and their socialised perspectives and felt that the organisation would always prioritise the concerns of officers over ratings due to their different value to the company as human resources. This was found to be true to an extent, as interviews with managers revealed that they do value officers more than ratings. One result of this was that ratings cited choosing silence in response to ill-treatment due to their perception that the company will always listen to the officers and act as the senior officers recommend. However, this was not always the case as both companies do try to be fair (or possibly minimise their recruitment costs). In response to a seafarer exercising voice, what takes place is a shuffling of personnel, so that the lower-ranked person is signed off, and has to pay for their own repatriation, but then they are soon given another ship to work on so they do not entirely lose out on what would have been the rest of their contract.

One of the pressure points for seafarers is their perception that the office values officers more than ratings. This is a point of view that was unofficially endorsed through the interviews with managers in both companies and the ratings see themselves as expendable. However, when seafarers speak about having "10 people behind me" for the same job, it is also a reference to the type of pressure that everyone in India experiences all their lives, with any job. It is something so normal, so ingrained in their natures from the very first day of school, that it naturally breeds an inclination to bend to authority and minimise the possibility of being made the target of redundancy. So for the ratings, the fear of being expendable because of the manning crisis is not so much a new form of pressure as a reinforcement of something they have been conditioned into from their time growing up in India.

For the company, the effect of the 'manning crisis' is that they do value their officers more than ratings. This is because they invest a lot of time and money in training their officers and 'poaching' of highly qualified personnel was cited as a legitimate concern by managers. However, just as the company's concern for their investment drives the prioritising of officers over ratings, so does the concern for their profits and continued business development drive their prioritising of the client over the needs of their officers. This helps to explain why seafarers have the skewed perceptions they do.

Both the companies invest time, effort and money in vetting and recruiting officers and are naturally reluctant to lose them and be forced to repeat the process. The MNC also invests time in recruiting their ratings, taking them through an interview process, which the IC does not, as seen in the last chapter. Although this may indicate that ratings in the IC are even more expendable, it is also true that the IC has more of a union presence in their offices compared to the MNC (see chapter 5), which protects ratings from arbitrary and unfair dismissal. This can mitigate their ability to let go of the ratings, particularly because in the sample of ratings from the IC, most were existing roster ratings. These contradictions highlight some of the discrepancy between the perceived value that seafarers, particularly ratings, think they have to the company, and their actual value. The ratings are not as expendable as they perceive themselves to be, and despite the threats and general fear of being dismissed, it does not appear common for seafarers to be blacklisted or even let go from the company. Senior ranks are, however, clearly prioritised when there is conflict onboard. If a subordinate exercises voice, they are removed from the situation, and if a superior exercises voice, it is still the subordinate who is signed off.

In chapters 5 and 6, it was found that the gap between officers and ratings is emphasised by the different ways in which managers treat them, and their own perception of their value to the company. It was inferred that a greater gap between officers and ratings would lead to greater hesitancy to communicate problems up the chain of command, thereby discouraging ratings to report ill-treatment, or causing them to cut short their contract with an excuse.

Experience of seafaring (and time exposed to socialisation), as well as a seafarers' rank also influence the way in which seafarers employ preventive strategies against ill-treatment. As seen in the last chapter, the trainee cook felt that he was in a strong enough position to resist attempts to assign him extra work. This was based on a

combination of his previous experience, when his Chief Cook taught him to keep his distance from other seafarers onboard, his own knowledge of exactly what his job entailed and the unique direct line of access that Cooks have to the senior officers. This reinforces how important flow of communication is when considering ill-treatment, particularly in the context of seafaring because it is distance managed. This was found by Bhattacharya (2009) in his study of how distance between ranks impeded the communication of information related to health and safety onboard. As with other aspects of experience of and response to ill-treatment, this is yet another parallel with the existing research on the occupational health and safety of seafarers. The similarities elicit the key influence of structural aspects of the shipboard work environment on seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment.

Incidents that senior officers identify as ill-treatment by subordinates are usually responded to by use of voice compared to incidents involving superiors, because they are able to use their rank to address the situation. As mentioned earlier, some of the ill-treatment that senior officers experienced involved their subordinates preventing them from successfully carrying out their jobs. Voice was usually exercised, but the result was not always immediate or satisfactory as even the Captain is still subject to the convenience and will of the company. When the situation is reversed, Captains can be reluctant to involve the company when other seafarers try to exercise the option to exit their situation. As one Captain said,

We don't know when they will actually be signed off, and meantime there will be disruption onboard. Also the company doesn't like it if I can't manage my people, it's a hassle and costly for them. I am supposed to help prevent that by managing the people properly.

This indicates two things – first, as found in section 6.4.1 on appraisals, some Captains do try to minimise conflict onboard if they can, because it helps them to run their ship more smoothly. Second, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, Captains are also vulnerable to threats to their continued employment and may act to prevent this, which can result in ill-treatment for the seafarers that they are responsible for.

In cases where seafarers continued to ask to be signed off at the end of their contract, the Captains and/or Chief Officers were very reluctant to let them go. The subordinates commonly felt that this was because they were good workers. This rationalisation of the ill-treatment helped seafarers feel valued and as if they were

needed to stay because of their value to the operation, as opposed to because of ill-treatment from their superior. However, Captains were reluctant to bring the matter to the attention of the company because it does create work for them and they have to try and find a suitable unscheduled replacement. It is also costly to the company regardless of the seafarer taking on his own repatriation costs, and the Captains do not want to be perceived as the reason for extra costs by the company.

The ratings seem to be much more inclined to spent rest periods interacting with each other and looking out for each other compared to the officers, partly because of the family rhetoric they are socialised into. However, some of them also choose to hold themselves apart. Generally speaking, more of the officers spoke of isolating themselves during their rest period. This may be partially due to their shorter contracts compared to ratings, so they are able to reconnect with family and friends after a much shorter period of time, anywhere between 6 to 8 months.

Other workplaces with a 'paramilitary' hierarchy (as mentioned in chapter 3: Archer 1999; Zellars *et al.* 2004; Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010) may be able to draw from the duality of hierarchy and socialisation in the seafaring context presented here to inform their own research. These studies perhaps miss an opportunity to consider the possibility of employing hierarchy and socialisation to achieve a workplace with minimum occurrence of ill-treatment. As seen through the results in this thesis, these features of a workplace are not inherently bad and can discourage ill-treatment just as they can encourage it.

Indeed, the implications for other organisations that host a high incidence of ill-treatment but do not have 'paramilitary' hierarchies (such as nursing and medicine: Randle 2003; Quine 2002) are that they too, may be able to subvert the negative attitudes and behaviours perpetrated through socialisation. Management's attitude to ill-treatment is an important step in addressing ill-treatment (Lewis 2006), and a supportive work environment can 'buffer' employees from ill-treatment (Quine 1999). However, there is potential for this to be expanded to identify hierarchy and socialisation as receptacles to spread management attitudes with more positive effects. For example, a zero-tolerance approach to ill-treatment could be reiterated and fostered in the organisational culture through management training and seminars and most importantly, made visible by swift acknowledgment and decisive response to ill-treatment when it does occur.

8.1.2 Distance management

As with professional socialisation, distance management in the human resource management literature is always approached from the point of view of the company and is centred on maintaining high levels of performance. However, in this study, the effects of distance management are seen from the point of view of the employees. The primary issue which is at the centre of ill-treatment in this category are the barriers to communication imposed by the hierarchy, and by company expectations imbued through informal socialisation. These barriers to communication are solely applicable to the employees – contrary to the emphasis that Harvey *et al.* (2009) laid on the implications of distance management involving less surveillance and less interference, shore management can and does closely monitor the progress of the ship and keeps in regular contact with the senior officers (indeed, this is how they manage the limited autonomy of Captains, explored in the section below). The shore managers have as much access to the seafarers as they need to successfully achieve high productivity and good performance through using the top-down communication and the hierarchy. They are therefore not interested in changing the status quo (see section 5.5.1 on manager's perspectives of seafarers in chapter 5). However, the junior-level seafarers onboard have limited access to ship-to-shore communication and this constitutes a significant factor in their experiences of ill-treatment, as seen in section 6.3 detailing problems with timely sign off in chapter 6.

The shipboard work environment as a globalised place clearly favours the employers and can present many challenges to seafarers. Addressing ill-treatment in this environment would require an external influence, possibly characterized by trade unions, as suggested by Ironside and Seifert (2003).

8.1.3 The allocation of work – autonomy and generation gaps

Many ratings, particularly in the IC, mentioned that they are not encouraged to use their initiative in their work and are essentially assigned work to complete over a certain period of time. This work is then supervised by a superior officer, depending on the department that they are in and the type of work that it is.

To some extent, the expected lack of autonomy in their work eliminates the potential for unreasonable treatment in the form of having their opinions and views ignored, and not being given enough information to do their job properly. The literature

suggests that lack of sufficient autonomy in the workplace can constitute ill-treatment (Bolton 2007; Rayman 2001), but this does not satisfactorily explain why more senior officers reported experiencing more ill-treatment than junior officers and ratings. This is better explained by Fevre *et al.*'s (2012, pg. 205) finding that it is the mismatch over the employee's expectations of autonomy and the control that management is willing to give them, which can contribute to ill-treatment. That is, Fevre *et al.* (2012) found that employees who experienced reduced autonomy were more likely to feel ill-treated than those whose low autonomy was part of their job. This certainly helps to explain many of the ratings' apparent contentment with the low level of autonomy they are allocated, whereas feelings of being ill-treated were expressed by both officers and ratings who found their expectations of autonomy different to the reality of their experience.

Another point is that the incidents that constitute ill-treatment, such as having opinions and views ignored and work being affected by the withholding of information, apply less to the ratings because they are given quite specific tasks to do every day and they have little autonomy in how they do their work. Although the family rhetoric is there to promote feelings of community, and they do have loyalty to the company (a sense of 'don't bite the hand that feeds you'), they suffer less from the commercial pressure of ensuring a ship is running to time, compared to the officers. This contrast is particularly stark in the IC, where the ratings report clocking on and off on time and for whom a typical comment is put forth by this Wiper, "I just come and do my work that they give me, work hard, then I go home", whereas the officers, to varying degrees, spoke of their responsibility to maintain the schedule, additional paperwork and preparations for meeting with various inspectors when in port.

The limited autonomy granted to the senior officers appears perfectly gauged in its scope. That is, the company must cede some autonomous responsibility for the running of the ship to the senior officers. Attached to this is the transferring of the stress caused by the commercial pressure to run the ship to schedule. However, as the ratings had little autonomy in how they were able to do their job, this did limit certain types of ill-treatment as mentioned above. In addition, they were more able to maintain their contracted hours of work compared to senior officers, who reported often working overtime because of the paperwork they had to fill out. The senior officers were given the illusion of autonomy so that they would carry full responsibility for a voyage, but felt that they had very little real control over running the ship.

Several of the Captains felt that they were micro-managed, especially the older ones who had experience of a different management style with less management rhetoric involved (according to them).

It may seem that including a question about having opinions and views ignored when interviewing people who function in a rigidly hierarchical workplace is moot. The logical assumption, based on studies of hierarchical organisations which discuss the need to follow orders and respect for the hierarchy (Archer 1999; Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010), is that lower-ranked workers would expect that their views and opinions will not be considered. However, it was primarily this question which elicited indications of the generation gap onboard ships. The more recently trained officers had been trained in collaborative work methods and that is the style of leadership they expected to find. In their view, some of the more experienced senior officers ignored this new training and chose to impose the top-down management style that they were more comfortable with. Concurrently, those junior-ranked officers who were older in age and more experienced in years than their superiors had to struggle with their expectation of the respect due to their age. This could just be an indication of the types of clashes that exist between new and old generations in all workplaces, but as has been discussed in chapter 6, this generation gap did provide the basis for conflict and led to ill-treatment, and senior officers especially were aware this. This Chief Officer explained his reasoning and a possible solution;

The only problem comes when you have aged staff working below you. That time, like, misunderstanding is always there. What they feel [is], [with me] being young and somebody junior to me is older... he obviously is feeling bad about it that he is working at a junior rank. But it's up to their competency, if they don't have the certificate, they'll work at a junior level. So you have to see, in general the office should see that everybody is around the same age bracket onboard the ship, it will be very efficient. If you have got a 50 year old Chief Engineer, you can have everybody around that age working under him. Because they work in a certain way, then they will be more open to their seniors, if the person giving instructions is more senior [in age], then it will be more accepted, generally. Because they will be working in the same mindset, same concerns that they have learned over the years. (IC – CO)

The Chief Officer's feelings were echoed by the other 'new generation' senior officers from both companies, demonstrating the magnitude of the problem to them and it was featured in some types of ill-treatment that were discussed in the chapter 6.

Finally, experienced ratings that had previously been granted greater autonomy in how they did their work found that problems could be caused when younger officers who are ranked higher than them did not grant them the same level of autonomy. In cases such as these, it is easier for them to be given less autonomy in the first place instead of conflicting directions. The presence of the generation gap is what exacerbated the conflict surrounding autonomy for the Oiler:

I have been working onboard ships for 20 years and I know there is a big difference between these kids' [4th Engineer] theory and how to do it practically. They want to do everything according to theory, then it takes a long time and the 2nd Engineer comes and asks me, why is this taking so long, you should show him how to do it properly. They want different things so in that situation I just listen to everybody and do what they tell me. It is easier for me and otherwise their feelings will be hurt, because they have a higher rank." (IC – Oiler)

8.2 Management Control Through Informal Processes

8.2.1 Family rhetoric and peer-regulation

Webb's (2006) outline of ways in which an organisation can exert control through the professional identity of its workers helps to explain the effectiveness of the family rhetoric. As seen in chapter 2, one way in which organisations do this is by encouraging their workers to buy into a corporate identity which identifies with the organisation's goals. The family rhetoric is an effective way of delivering and maintaining expected modes of behaviour among seafarers. This is apparent in the use of the family rhetoric by the companies, particularly for the ratings. It works on multiple levels. Firstly, it gives seafarers a familiar concept to hold on to when they will be far away at sea from their usual social support circles. It suggests bonding, support and a positive environment. Secondly, it reflects some of the less positive aspects of 'family' – the idea that family cannot be chosen and that you must learn to compromise and get along with whoever they are. Thirdly, it associates a sense of

belonging with the seafarers' work and living environment – which is provided by the organisation, thus associating itself with the role of benefactor or protector. This is further reinforced by the strong brands of both organisations and encouragement for company loyalty¹⁴.

What is interesting to note is not only the many ways in which the idea of family is mentioned by seafarers and managers, but also the absence of them. The ratings who discussed the need to 'live like a family' onboard stipulated different situations in which they thought that concept was useful and applicable. They all involved keeping the peace, and although the ratings spoke of 'helping each other', this was more in the context of mediating disputes and encouraging silence through peer-regulation. The majority of these consisted of peer-regulation of arguments with colleagues and the need to look after each other in case of an accident, however, they do not mention the 'family' onboard when discussing support in the face of ill-treatment. This clearly delineates the talk of family to what it is – rhetoric that is not tangible when it comes to needing support.

The family rhetoric was only mentioned once by an officer, in the context of applying it to officers onboard, but this only reiterated the inefficacy of the term when applied to officers;

You see, still there are many like, among the officers, that don't want to work as a united family. Though we have lots of seminars out here, we discuss a lot of things, but it's always the blame game starts once you're on the ship. "Ok, look at this person, he's not doing his job like this."(IC – 2nd O)

His comment about the blame game indicates the lack of cohesion among the officers compared to the more collective identity shared by the ratings and reinforced by family rhetoric. This may be a by-product of the greater responsibilities shouldered by officers onboard and their accountability to shore management, in addition to the fact that shore managers themselves are often looking to allocate blame for incidents onboard (Bhattacharya 2009).

¹⁴ This does not apply to the newly recruited ratings of the IC as they know that their prospects for being re-hired rely more on chance in the next selection process. Refer to Chapter 5 for an explanation of the selection process and to Chapter 4 for information about their representation in the sample.

Delbridge and Keenoy (2010) explain that, when exploring the context in which HR policies are implemented, “it is important to note that language is never neutral – it always implicates and privileges particular social values if not also specific socio-economic interests.” (pg. 804). This helps to explain the significance of the ‘family rhetoric’ which was used so extensively by managers for ratings in both companies. The deliberate use of this language is part of the construction of the seafarers’ identity while they are onboard, and is used almost exclusively in reference to ratings.

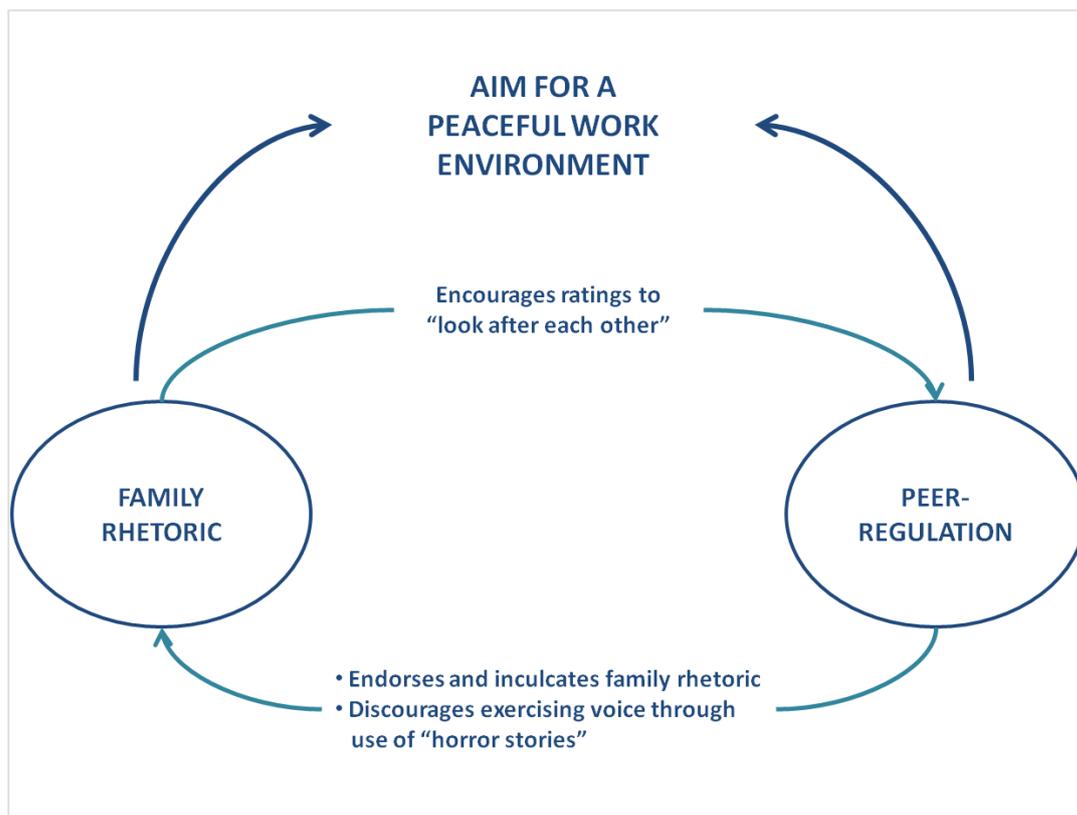
It has become increasingly apparent throughout the analysis of the data that the type of ill-treatment that concerns this study and is the subject of research in land-based literature does exist onboard ships. Certain aspects of it, such as disrespect and denigration, and being humiliated in connection with your work by a superior, have been normalised. This has been done largely through peer-regulation, which involves counselling seafarers about the behavioural expectations of the organisation. These normalised forms of ill-treatment are accepted onboard but only to a certain extent. Generally, the pattern is that restraint is encouraged in all aspects of interacting with other seafarers. This helps to defuse negative situations, such as sustained arguments or insults, from escalating into bigger situations which would require the intervention of senior personnel.

Therefore, peer-regulation can be employed as a prevention strategy against the escalation of negative situations, not to stop them from happening at all. In chapter 2, Webb’s (2006) discussion of teamwork inculcating shared values into employees was mentioned. She identified peer pressure and self-surveillance as characteristics of teamwork which are employed by management to infuse management goals as drivers of behaviour onboard. This idea came through clearly in the last chapter, where the section on peer-regulation was a sub-set of the theme of socialisation. The data indicated that all forms of socialisation, whether formal or informal, were implemented (and in the case of peer-regulation, encouraged) by the organisation to develop ideal worker identities.

As seen in chapter 5, the extensive peer-regulation onboard often extends to preventing ill-treatment between colleagues from escalating, as the seafarers must live together for the rest of their contract and would prefer to do so peacefully. This peer-regulation is largely located amongst ratings, although officers also engage in

informal onboard socialisation through communicating with peers. However, it was more widely reported among the ratings, as was use of the family rhetoric.

It is very difficult to discuss the causal link between peer-regulation and family rhetoric. The most accurate representation would most likely be a mutually symbiotic relationship. A peaceful work environment is beneficial to the seafarers' productivity and welfare onboard, and is therefore desirable for the organisation. One way of achieving this is through use of the family rhetoric to achieve the company's goals. This family rhetoric relies on telling the ratings to "look after each other" onboard, which encourages peer-regulation. In return, the informal socialisation embodied in peer-regulation reinforces the value of the family rhetoric and discourages exercising voice. The family rhetoric and peer-regulation are engaged in a self-sustaining, dependent relationship. Working together, they collectively take on the responsibility to prevent 'trouble' from occurring onboard, and thus contribute to the organisation's aims. It is also sensible for the seafarers to actively engage in maintaining a peaceful environment because they will be working and living there for the entirety of their contract. The mutually dependent relationship is expressed in the diagram below:



The importance of promoting a sensitive and civil organisational culture in preventing ill-treatment at work has been noted by Fevre *et al.* (2012), as seen in chapter 2. This is a rational approach to mitigating the potential for ill-treatment as studies have shown that tolerance for incivility and disrespect in the workplace contributes to a toxic work culture within which ill-treatment can flourish (Pearson and Porath 2005).

It is interesting here to refer to an alternative literature that can have a bearing on this finding of the family rhetoric onboard ships. The most pertinent is social identity theory, a social psychological concept which relies on social identity to “be understood as that *part* of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel 1981, pg. 255). This provides an additional dimension to our understanding of the extent to which seafarers can be affected or controlled by their socialisation into the collective professional identity of a seafarer (whether officer or rating). Supporting this, Randle (2003) has commented on how the desire to maintain membership of a social group may be a motivating factor in conforming to standards of behaviour, which informs the finding in this thesis that peer-regulation is an important component of the process of socialisation.

8.2.2 The threat of blacklisting

Blacklisting has been mentioned by other seafarers in this study and has been discussed in maritime literature as inducing fear for their careers in seafarers (Bhattacharya 2009, Bailey 2006, Sampson 2013). As all the seafarers in this study were currently working with a company, none had experienced blacklisting personally, but many mentioned it as a distinct possibility, despite not having heard of it happening to anyone in their own social circles. This ‘general knowledge’ of the way the industry works is obtained through the informal socialisation process that was explored earlier in the chapter. In the data, seafarers mostly spoke of ‘difficulties’ in finding another position, or having to wait longer than usual to be assigned another contract within the same company, but not the impossibility of finding another seafaring job again. Despite this, it is apparent that the threat of blacklisting is taken very seriously by the seafarers, and as seen in the last chapter, it is used to manipulate seafarers onboard. The threat of blacklisting can only be used between a superordinate and his subordinate to be effective and in this study, has been limited

to interactions onboard, that is, between the four senior officers and their juniors. The best practice approach of the MNC and IC meant that the threat was never verbalised in the context of shore management – seafarer interactions. The threat of blacklisting has also been documented in the land-based ill-treatment literature (Fevre *et al.* 2012).

8.3 The Indian Context

In chapter 2, there was a section on the ‘Indian context’, which pertained to literature about Indian workplace culture and the development of HRM in India. The point of including the literature was to provide a framework from which to reference how important cultural characteristics might be in an industry where socialisation plays a large role in allocating uniform professional identities to seafarers. The questions were firstly, how these characteristics manifest themselves in a workplace that is distance-managed, and secondly, what role they play in contributing to the work environment in a way which may or may not encourage ill-treatment.

The Indian context could be found influencing the data in subtle ways throughout the last three chapters. One way in which it was present was in seafarers’ arguments and conflict stemming from regional differences. This was a common occurrence but according to the seafarers, it rarely escalated into very serious cases of ill-treatment (mostly due to peer-regulation).

While the hierarchical ranks are known to be strong, they could, on occasion be superseded by country affiliations, as Kahveci *et al.* (2002) found. As seen in the section ‘politicking’ of chapter 6, it is apparent that Indian seafarers found that there was more potential for conflict when they were working within a purely or mostly Indian crew compared to a multinational one, because it offered the opportunity to create alliances on the basis of regional and/or linguistic commonalities. This resonates with Alderton *et al.*’s (2004) finding that seafarers prefer to work in multinational crews, as seen in chapter 3. The existence of the networking groups within the workplace provided avenues for workers to form exclusive interactions which superseded the existing hierarchy and other aspects of work culture that the seafarers have been professionally socialised to expect. This was mentioned by both junior officers and ratings in both companies, as seen in chapter 5.

With Indian seafarers, this manifested itself in the use of common regional backgrounds to 'ingratiate' for shipboard politics, a characteristic of Indian workplaces identified by Pandey and Bohra (1984). This occurred when lower ranked seafarers curried favour with superiors in order to further their career and used this access to spread false allegations about work colleagues, which was a form of ill-treatment reported by some ratings who had felt unfairly accused. The results indicated that the networking groups formed primarily along regional lines. This may be explained by the peer-regulation which frowns upon talk of caste, religion and politics as these can be contentious topics (see section 6.1.1), leaving region and its associated language as the basis for splintering. While hierarchy was usurped by the formation of the networking group, strong taboos maintained by peer-regulation appear to remain in place. This may also be a reflection of seafarers' perceptions of themselves. One of the personality characteristics repeatedly expressed by seafarers as essential to being successful at sea was open-mindedness. This, combined with the peer regulation of suitable topics for discussion may contribute to the lack in reports of splintering along religious, caste or political lines.

The influence of the Indian context is also found in Indian seafarers' awareness of competition for their jobs and their commitment to supporting multiple family members. This impacts their decision-making process as they need to consider whether they can risk the possible consequences of taking action. In Hofstede's analysis of workplace cultures, he found that Indian workers scored very highly in power-distance, that is, their proclivity for accepting inequalities in power in the workplace (Hofstede 2001). This can also contribute to the Indian seafarers' inclination to choose silence when faced with ill-treatment, in addition to the structural and personal factors explored in the last chapter.

8.4 Rhetoric versus Reality

8.4.1 Human resources policies

As Bhattacharya (2009) found, the seafarers are basically mistrustful of management and this has come through in their experiences of and responses to ill-treatment as well. They do not believe in the system of the appraisal, particularly ratings as it is mostly used as an arbitrary feedback form for them.

It is clear that there are major differences in the seafarers' perceptions of how the company would react, and the actual reactions of the company in cases where it has been involved. This reflects the differences between the existence of complaint and grievance procedures and seafarers' scepticism of them. This is not to say that the company is purely innocent, as became clear from the discrepancy between telling the seafarers "you can always call us if there is any problem" and then reminding them to "be safe, be like a family over there and don't cause trouble". This paternalistic attitude chimes with the Indian cultural tendencies of the workplace as identified in chapter 2.

There is a conflict between company policy and the way managers intend it to be used (and subsequently, the way it is used onboard). This conflict appears in two cases in particular. The first is the way in which appraisals are used and misused, as was explored in the last chapter. The second is the disregard for company policy which clearly outlines grievance procedures and requires formal steps to be taken. This is hardly ever done, in either company. In chapter 2, existing literature on HRM suggested that 'soft' HRM consisted of rhetoric which made it easier to accept the 'hard' HRM made of policies and procedures (Keenoy 1990; Legge 1995). However, based on the seafarers' experience of the appraisals process in chapter 6, it seems that even the 'hard' HRM seems like rhetoric to the seafarers. In this thinking, there was a difference between seafarers who had experienced ill-treatment and those who had not. As with the unions, those who had experienced ill-treatment did not believe that approaching a formal support structure would be helpful, whereas those who had not experienced it were much more positive in their approach, as this Chief Officer from the IC said:

The company has a lot of proper procedures and I'm sure they are looking into people's complaints, the only thing is that, I don't know how many people are going for it. But I know one thing, when we actually put it on paper, that we have a problem, the management is taking up the issue, they respond.

This Chief Officer had no experience of lodging a formal complaint himself, nor did he know anyone who had. His insistence that putting problems in writing would make management pay attention is probably true, but as he said, very few people actually did this.

There are some differences in the HR procedures of the two companies studied. There appeared to be different organisational cultures in both companies, as seafarers with the MNC cited greater trust in the company but equally great reluctance to take advantage of opportunities for support. Seafarers with the IC cited less trust in the company's willingness to provide support and therefore did not seriously consider the idea of appealing to them for help. Despite these differences, ultimately, the experiences of ill-treatment and outcomes of any action taken were remarkably similar in both companies, suggesting that it is something beyond organisational culture which affects the way in which ill-treatment occurs onboard. This is identified as industrial norms, or the culture of the workplace which is characteristic of the industry. Shipboard workplaces are shaped specifically to allow seafarers to slot in and out of posts on different ships on their various contracts without having to spend too much time acclimating to their environment, and this enables the employers to shuffle seafarers easily if they encounter problems and exercise their voice.

8.4.2 Unions

In chapter 3, a question was raised about the role of unions in addressing unreasonable treatment and disrespect and denigration onboard ships. The comments made by seafarers and managers in chapter 5 indicated a dichotomy in seafarers' views of the usefulness of unions for this purpose. Seafarers who had not experienced ill-treatment themselves were content to report that if they ever did encounter that situation, they would be able to approach their union for help. Those seafarers that had themselves experienced ill-treatment or had friends who had, said that the unions were not considered to be a realistic source of support in response to ill-treatment. The reasons varied but the basis was always a lack of trust in the union's ability to effect a solution or permanent change. None of the seafarers who opted to exercise voice in response to ill-treatment chose to be supported by their union. This may be partly due to the fact that union representatives do not sail onboard ships in the two companies and are only available to seafarers onshore. Many seafarers indicated that they 'had' to join their union to work in the company and they only thought of their union when their financial contribution was paid out. The majority of seafarers (especially the officers) did not appear to have built relationships with their union officials, thus contributing to their dismissal of the union as a recourse for help in response to ill-treatment.

The definition of ill-treatment in this thesis as unreasonable treatment and disrespect and denigration seems to be a real issue here, as noted through the seafarers' reluctance to designate their experiences as ill-treatment. As with many other avenues of help, 'harassment', 'bullying', 'ill-treatment', 'negative behaviour' and similar terms seem to have slipped through the cracks. Fevre *et al.*'s (2012) work found that one cause of ill-treatment could be inadequate change management and four out of the five companies they researched were in the midst of a transition from collective bargaining to a more individualised work environment. In this study, while the seafarers are all unionised, they are simultaneously subject to an individualised workplace in which there are grievance procedures and they are encouraged to communicate with management about their problems. This does leave them caught somewhat between two support structures, with the result that neither is used efficiently in response to ill-treatment.

8.4.3 Regulation

The MLC 2006, as seen in chapter 3, is termed the fourth pillar of international maritime law but it does not provide for seafarers to protest against the type of ill-treatment in this study. There is vague use of the word 'welfare' and any focus on this is up to the ratifying country's interpretation of the regulation and application to their law. As mentioned in chapter 3, the Dutch case is interesting because they applied their existing Occupational Safety and Health Act to their maritime law, citing it to be for the welfare of seafarers. As in its existing form, it required employers "to ensure that the psychosocial aspects such as sexual harassment, bullying and violence do not cause harm to the workers" (EU-OSHA 2010, pg. 35), this has automatically become a proviso for Dutch-flagged ships to follow with regard to their seafarers. However, this is not currently a part of the Indian legislation being drafted in preparation for ratification of the MLC 2006. With both companies being examples of leaders in the field, and having HR policies to provide support in the event of ill-treatment, is it necessary to refer to the gaps in the legislation? The answer is yes, because when legislation exists, there are external checks and balances in place which govern the extent to which companies' policies are effective. Without this, organisations are in a position to pay lip service to ideal HRM practices without implementing them to their potential, as was discovered to be the case in chapters 5 and 6.

8.5 Coping Mechanisms

8.5.1 Politics

Employing voluntary social isolation as a preventive measure against the possibility of ill-treatment can have unintended consequences. As seen in the 'politicking' section of chapter 7, in cases where others are engaging in politics, a seafarer isolating himself from the problem also limits his access to the solution that 'playing politics' can offer. That is, although limiting interaction with others does reduce the chances of certain types of ill-treatment, it can also leave him vulnerable to false allegations of others who engage in politicking for their own benefit. The act of refraining from politicking himself also limits his choice of support options if his superiors are on the side of the 'rival' seafarer, as was explained by the Chief Cook in chapter 7.

The use of politics in the workplace as a sign of ill-treatment has been suggested by Salin (2003) and explored in the literature in Chapter 2. Zapf and Einarsen also found that "Bullying as micropolitical behaviour indicates harassment of another person in order to protect or improve one's own position in the organisation, or it may be done in order to weaken the position and reputation of a potential rival" (2011, pg.187). This was evident in the data in chapter 5, and numerous mentions of it in interviews and more casual conversations with seafarers. However, the evidence from this study can expand on this to include another way in which ill-treatment and politicking interact. It was found that politicking could be employed as a preventive measure and a coping mechanism instead of only a tool for career advancement. This is not to say that seafarers identified someone who may ill-treat them and pre-emptively befriended them. However, it was the case that seafarers may choose to ingratiate themselves with higher ranked seafarers in order to have another support structure to rely on. This requires re-thinking politics or politicking as a feature of the workplace that can be used to inhibit or enable ill-treatment.

Comments of seafarers indicate that this type of networking is done specifically to prevent or counter ill-treatment instead of focusing on the positive aspect, for example for career advancement. As with hierarchy, politicking itself is a feature of the workplace which can both induce ill-treatment, and help to protect seafarers from it. This type of pre-emptive measure taken by seafarers illustrates the awareness that

they have of the potential need to respond to ill-treatment in their workplace and is evidenced by the lack of trust between seafarers and managers as seen in Chapter 4. The drive to network as a supportive measure in case of negative situations appears to be a result of their job insecurity within the industry. This does coincide with Salin's (2003) understanding of the effects of external pressures on the occurrence of ill-treatment.

Beyond this, we can turn once again to Social Identity Theory as Farrell (2001) did, where "the individual defines him- or herself partly in terms of salient group memberships. Identification is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to a group, involving direct or vicarious experience of its successes and failures" (Ashforth and Mael 1989, pg. 34). This can explain how politicking may be encouraged by the need to maintain a positive social identity (and therefore high self-esteem) by associating with members of high status groups.

8.5.2 Tenure

In both the IC and MNC, the company's trust in the seafarer's version of events is often linked to the seafarer's tenure with the company and his record of employment. As seen in the last 2 chapters, there are cases where ratings have chosen to exit their contract, paid for their own repatriation and then requested and been assigned a new ship within a short period of time. In these cases, the seafarers had worked with the company for a long time and felt comfortable voicing their complaints to shore office. However, it was still the ratings that were shuffled instead of the officer, as has been found to occur in land-based work environments too (Fevre *et al.* 2012). This is due to a clear priority of the company to retain the more senior ranking seafarers whenever possible, although they have taken action against even senior officers as required. This approach to the relative expendability of employees depending on rank corroborates extensive maritime literature documenting the vulnerability of seafarers.

Long tenure with the company and in the industry can also have a negative effect on seafarers' responses to ill-treatment. If they are older seafarers, they can feel trapped in their profession. They do not feel inclined to re-train for a new profession at this late stage in their career because of the temporary loss of income and fear of the unknown. They find deviation from a professional life in one industry is a scary prospect. This means that, unlike the younger seafarers who spoke of transitioning away from shipboard roles in the future, the older seafarers were more likely to

continue seafaring until retirement. Consequently, they must more carefully consider their career trajectory when choosing a response to ill-treatment.

8.6 Response Options

Much has been written to build upon Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty. This framework is most useful for understanding the decisions made by seafarers when faced with ill-treatment. Dowding *et al.* (2000) critiqued the body of work that relied on Hirschman's theories and expressed the need to acknowledge that using voice could draw on avenues other than unions. They also contemplated the decision-making process that leads to employees' exit, voice or silence in organisations. They identified a decision-making tree which took into account the stages at which employees reassessed their level of satisfaction with their situation.

When a seafarer chooses to exit their situation, the chances of being assigned another ship depends on how close he was to the end of his previous contract, the reason behind his exit, the availability of a new position and the company's trust in him. In cases where the seafarer was close to the end of his previous contract and chose to exit, he did not choose to sign on to another contract right away, and took his break. In cases when the seafarer was mid-way through his contract, he did try to pursue another position with the company. If a seafarer chose to employ an excuse to exit his situation, he had to follow it through and go home to attend to the 'family emergency'. However, if a seafarer exited on the basis of a complaint of ill-treatment, the company was aware that he was looking for a fresh contract to sign on to. In this case, of course, depending on the rank of the seafarer and the nature of the incident and subsequent complaint, the employer could choose not to re-hire the seafarer, if it seemed like he was 'troublesome'.

8.7 Features of the Workplace that Inhibit and Enable Ill-Treatment

These are features of the workplace that contribute to the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard, but are also poised to be used for positive response to ill-treatment. These do not consistently contribute to ill-treatment in a negative or positive way, but vary in their effects depending on the other features of the workplace that are involved in the situation. The seemingly dual function (enabler and/or inhibitor) of these features

demonstrates that the mere removal of these features will not result in an automatic reduction in the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard. They have all been shown to contribute to problems with ill-treatment, but when they interact with other features, they can also act to mitigate the very same problems. Therefore, in addressing problems of ill-treatment, it is the intent behind the use of these features which should be governed with checks and balances. These features include the hierarchy, autonomy granted to seafarers, workplace politics and short-term contracts.

The relationship between employer and employee is complex and mediated by the larger scale of the balance (or imbalance) of power between employers in the shipping industry and seafarers in general. This follows on from the general structure of the working life of seafarers onboard ships – their isolation from others onboard and the hierarchy which appear to serve as deterrents for the occurrence of ill-treatment. However, these factors can both discourage ill-treatment onboard ships, but also serve as encouragement to remain silent should ill-treatment take place. It seems that there exists a counter-intuitive relationship between the silencing effect of these factors, which one may assume would encourage ill-treatment as chances of repercussions are slim; and their dampening effect on occurrences of ill-treatment. This was similar to what was found by Fevre *et al.* 2012.

Short-term contracts have been cited in the literature as contributing to job insecurity and detracting from trust in the organisation, circumstances that can lead to ill-treatment (Hodson, Roscigno and Lopez 2006). As the seafarers were employed on short-term contracts, the expectation was that this would lead to high job insecurity and low trust in the organisation, which was seen in data on responses to ill-treatment (job insecurity in chapter 6 and perceptions of management in chapter 4). The only link between job insecurity and the occurrence of ill-treatment was through politicking (see chapter 5), when seafarers acted to secure their interests while negatively affecting others. However, as seen in chapter 6, there was a significant effect of job insecurity on seafarers' responses to ill-treatment, and this was mitigated by several other factors.

The rolling short-term contracts make it easier for all actors to ignore incidents of ill-treatment. Seafarers who suffer ill-treatment know that they will eventually be able to escape their situation. This encourages them to choose silence instead of trying to change it or address the problem. In the majority of cases in this study, the perpetrator of the ill-treatment is also able to carry on working. In cases where

seafarers do exercise voice, the company is able to take advantage of the short-term contracts to redirect seafarers into other contracts without losing their investment in their training.

Referring back to the literature discussed in Chapter 2, it is also evident that similarities exist between seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard ships and the experiences of those in land-based workplaces. This study has sketched an outline of seafarers' perceptions and experiences of ill-treatment, and how their responses are tempered by their work environment. Bringing together existing research on seafarer welfare with the sociological literature on ill-treatment, as well as management literature on managerial control mechanisms has supported the reasoning that ill-treatment of Indian seafarers as defined in this thesis, has not yet received sufficient attention in the shipping industry. This approach is amplified by a lack of motivation to change. General guidelines and support structures are in place but the gap between policy and practice means that seafarers continue to choose silence or a silent exit.

8.8 Summary

Short-term contracts are so much the norm of the industry that other factors such as the hierarchy enable seafarers to continue working in a similar environment on every ship, at least in terms of workplace culture and structure. There are regulatory mechanisms in place – for example, seafarers are physically isolated from sources of support but they know that when their contract ends, they will be able to exit their work environment and have a very good chance of not having to work with the same people again. They also work within a very strict hierarchy which establishes a chain of command and maintains discipline, so while it gives seafarers the opportunity to abuse their position of power, they are also able to use their authority to defuse difficult situations. Peer regulation is also often employed to prevent ill-treatment but when ill-treatment has already occurred, the same peer regulation encourages silence and acceptance of the status quo. These conditions create a perfect storm for the occurrence of ill-treatment, which is why ill-treatment does not affect all seafarers and occur frequently, and also why they choose to react with silence.

The groundwork for a tailored employee identity is laid through socialisation in training and pre-sea meetings with management, where they teach seafarers

expectations and the family rhetoric. Then, this influences seafarers' perceptions of ill-treatment, which are further informed by changes in rank and experience of ill-treatment, whether personally experienced or witnessed. There are also certain unchangeable characteristics in play, like the short-term contracts, the hierarchy and the distance management, which are representative of industry norms. With all of these factors interacting with each other differently for each individual, experiences of ill-treatment are varied and include: difficulty with timely sign-off, threats, insults and extra work. Similarly, responses to ill-treatment vary drastically depending on other influencing factors and a seafarer's own personality. Seafarers have different personal reactions to ill-treatment depending on their perception of it, and these are tempered by other considerations, such as their trust in the employment relationship, job insecurity and reliance on financial remuneration.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

This concluding chapter will revisit the research questions and summarise the key findings. It will also highlight the original contribution of this thesis, limitations of the study, policy recommendations and avenues for further research.

The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore Indian seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment onboard ships. The underlying research questions probed their perceptions of ill-treatment; how features of the work environment influenced their experiences of ill-treatment; how they were able to respond to ill-treatment, and how they coped with ill-treatment. Semi-structured interviews with seafarers across all ranks and managers in two companies provided data that was thematically analysed to yield results. A number of key findings emerged, often corroborating existing results in the field.

Ill-treatment is a relatively new term that has been employed in the sociological literature that grew from a psychological and psychosocial approach to bullying and harassment in the workplace. In recent years, much research has been conducted in this area and it continues to elicit new links between organisational features and the occurrence of ill-treatment. However, no such study has yet been undertaken in the maritime context. As seen in chapters 1 and 2, some literature does exist on seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment. However, this was outdated and required the incorporation of new literature to freshly understand this constantly developing industry. Much of the literature on maritime health and safety has reflected on impediments to organisational trust and differences between seafarers' perceptions of risk compared to the actual presence of risk. Importantly for this study, the health and safety literature elicited socio-cultural characteristics of the work environment onboard ships and outlined characteristics of the shipping industry that impeded open communication between seafarers and managers. However, it primarily linked these characteristics to maritime outcomes such as the effects on accident and injury reporting, fatigue and risk perception (Sampson, Bailey and Ellis, 2013; Bhattacharya 2012a). While this literature is a useful start to the discussion, this thesis has provided a point of departure by focusing on seafarers' experiences of the sociological notion of ill-treatment, and situating the results in the ill-treatment and human resource management (HRM) literature. While safety is important and the mental health of the seafarers is one of the most important reasons to delve into ill-

treatment onboard, these remain on the periphery of the more interesting results that emerged from the study, as will be explained in the section below.

As this was a sociological study, the focus was on organisational factors and the more general features of the shipboard work environment. To answer these questions, a qualitative approach was adopted, in which respondents from all ranks in the hierarchy were sourced in two companies based in Mumbai, India. As explained in chapters 4 and 5, one was a multinational company and the other an Indian company. The two companies were both leaders in their field and both had extensive HR policies and procedures in place to govern seafarers and provide support should they require it.

Not all seafarers experience ill-treatment onboard ships. Those that do, do so through a mix of shipboard management style and interaction with their peers. Seafarers' responses to ill-treatment are the focus of the majority of this thesis as they depend on a range of variables, including familial responsibility, personal pride, organisational trust, rank (job security), length of contract remaining, professional expectations, workplace culture and workplace socialisation. Despite any or all of these variables affecting seafarers' decisions, an important point is the mismatch between the existing avenues of support for seafarers and their distrust of and disappointment in these avenues of support. These include their fellow shipmates, their company, their union and supra-national legislation, for which a solution needs to be found.

9.1 Key Findings

Broadly speaking, Indian seafarers experienced different forms of ill-treatment onboard ships, but the most significant and widely reported included delays in signing off and the misuse of appraisal forms onboard. Both of these forms of ill-treatment (explored in chapter 6), represent the companies exerting their managerial control over their employees and management's unwillingness to address the issues corroborates literature which suggests that it may be management's interest to allow some types of ill-treatment to take place. Seafarers also reported various acts of unreasonable treatment such as harassment that included allocating extra work outside of work hours in non-emergency situations, and the withholding of information that prevented others from doing their jobs properly. Lastly, there was

evidence of disrespect and denigration which led to arguments and constituted ill-treatment onboard.

As established in the literature in chapters 2 and 3, and then elicited from the data in chapters 5 to 7, there is a gap between the established channels of support available to seafarers experiencing ill-treatment, and their perception of how genuine that support is. The purported support structures included unions, which all the seafarers were members of, and the formal HR grievance procedures of both companies. In most cases, seafarers did not take advantage of even informal offers to report trouble onboard, as was the intention of the companies. They gave seafarers both messages, the one encouraging them to contact the office if they required help, and the other essentially suggesting to them that they should not need help. Before every voyage, seafarers and ratings in particular are told to 'behave properly' and not cause trouble onboard.

Much of the seafarers' work environment is controlled by management, firstly through formal structures and processes, such as the hierarchy, HR policies and training. Secondly, it is regulated through informal control mechanisms such as the family rhetoric, peer-regulation and the threat of blacklisting.

Workers have three options when choosing how to respond to ill-treatment – exit, voice or silence. The most common response to ill-treatment was for seafarers to be silent and not exit. Others chose a silent exit in which they left without articulating their true motives in leaving. The minority chose to exercise voice and of these seafarers, all the ones of a lower rank were moved to other ships. This involved difficulties with finding suitable replacements to allow sign off, issues with costs of repatriation, and finally, the mixture of luck and planning that determined if seafarers would be able to join another ship quickly.

Seafarers' responses to ill-treatment are influenced not only by management control strategies but also the inherently exploitative nature of the industry which is expressed in the way contracts are structured and where labour is sourced. That is, the initial shift in labour source countries from the traditional maritime nations (UK, Germany, Denmark) to new labour countries (India, Philippines, Poland), occurred in order to provide companies with a competitive advantage. Indian seafarers were selected for their lower wages and they continue to be valued for that reason, in addition to their work ethic and good command of English. This now acts as a threat

against seafarers – they are told that they should operate within the expected parameters of behaviour, otherwise international ship owners will not want to hire them anymore. The expected behaviour does not include asking for a wage increase.

Aside from considerations of familial responsibilities (financial commitments and support), personal pride and the need for dignity affect seafarers' handling of ill-treatment. In some cases, personal pride meant that the seafarer chose to use voice, which was unusual. In other cases, pride allowed seafarers to stand strong and cope with the ill-treatment they were experiencing.

Ill-treatment onboard ships shows similar patterns of occurrence to those found in reports from land-based workplaces (such as Fevre *et al.* 2012). This included the findings that middle managers are under the most pressure, which in the case of seafaring, translates to Chief Officers. Seafarers also identified with their land-based counterparts in their fears about job security, career advancement and workplace politics. They also demonstrated an unwillingness to identify ill-treatment as ill-treatment, which meant that their perceptions of events were particularly useful in trying to decipher

One way in which ill-treatment onboard was different from land-based workplaces was that it can be caused by the generation gaps onboard ships. This was the result of rapid changes in the industry's structure and the Indian economy, which meant that seafarers no longer considered seafaring a career for life and chose to leave once they achieved a high rank. This left a vacuum at the top of the hierarchy and encouraged rapid promotion of younger seafarers into top positions. This created conflict in two ways – one was when management styles did not meet expectations between older generation superiors and younger generation subordinates. The other way was when the older generation subordinates clashed with the younger generation superiors.

The interest in ill-treatment onboard ships arose because it is a unique work environment which has not been explored in that context yet. However, managers should be interested in the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard because of its effects on employee well-being and turnover. Although this study found that the majority of seafarers remained silent when they experienced ill-treatment, this did not necessarily mean that they did not choose to exit their situation. Many of them reported using excuses to exit their contracts early, despite the penalty of having to

pay for their own repatriation. Seafarers that choose to exit are not the only ones who have to bear the costs as the company also has to find their replacement and pay to send them to the ship. In addition to this are the incalculable costs of seafarers' mental ill health which can arise as a consequence of experiencing ill-treatment. In terms of costs to the company, the links between stress and fatigue and consequent accidents and injuries (Roberts and Marlow 2005) that then require costly delays to ships have been well documented.

Perhaps due to the particularities of the sample (both companies are highly regarded and well-known brands), blacklisting was used as a threat and cited as a concern but there was no mention of any experience of blacklisting, either to the seafarers themselves, or to others in their experience. Clearly, seafarers who had been blacklisted would not be currently working with either company and therefore would not be included in this study. However, despite the fact that seafarers also did not report knowing anyone else who had experienced blacklisting, the threat was an effective one and taken very much at face value by the seafarers. Therefore, it would be premature to term it more rhetoric than reality, and certainly warrants further investigation in future research.

Two key ideas which are encouraged by the company and maintained by seafarers are the family rhetoric and peer-regulation. These are confined largely to the domain of ratings and rely on a mutually symbiotic relationship to create as civil a work environment as possible, and limit the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard. Land-based literature which recognises that incivility can act as a gateway to more harmful forms of ill-treatment recommends that an organisational culture that actively promotes civility is essential to preventing the escalation of ill-treatment (Pearson *et al.* 2001). In this context, the two companies in the study demonstrate a best-practice approach to maintaining amiable relations onboard, through their emphasis on family rhetoric to encourage the seafarers to be considerate of each other's sensibilities.

Delay in signing off was a common complaint in both companies, almost achieving the status of a 'norm'. This primarily affected officers and this was not a consistent complaint of the ratings. Despite some of the ratings' disdain for the efficacy of unions, this difference between officers and ratings' experience may well be indicative of the unions' greater influences over contract-related problems for ratings in both companies. Although unions represented officers and ratings from both

companies, officers did not report the possibility of union support as a viable option for themselves. If they did mention it, it was always in reference to the ratings.

The hierarchy was not used to explicitly encourage ill-treatment as found in other rigidly hierarchical organisations such as the fire service (Archer 1999) or the police (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). However, the purpose of the hierarchy requires top-down communication to be an integral part of it and this, combined with the need to follow orders places seafarers in a position of power which can be abused and result in ill-treatment. The added restrictions on access to ship-to-shore communication that are imposed by the companies, do contribute to a work environment in which response to ill-treatment is severely inhibited.

Both officers and ratings were found to have low levels of organisational trust but high levels of organisational commitment, tempered with a keen sense of professional responsibility. Due to the lack of trust in the employment relationship, shipboard management's leadership style (typically led by the Captain), becomes even more important. If the Captain succeeds in winning the trust of his subordinates, this promotes trust as well as commitment in the organization as a whole.

The managers from both companies believed in their own best practice and did not find the type of ill-treatment explored in this study to be significant. Their reluctance to make any changes to the status quo is a reflection of their belief that nothing is wrong enough to require fixing. As they provided better remuneration and higher standards of care for their seafarers compared to the industry norm in India, they could not believe that their seafarers were anything less than safe and content while working on their ships, particularly as many of those who do experience problems with this, never report them.

Many characteristics of the work environment onboard were found to play a dual role in both enabling and inhibiting ill-treatment onboard.

9.2 Original Findings

This thesis has explored Indian seafarers experiences of ill-treatment onboard ships managed by two companies based in India. While existing maritime literature in different areas such as occupational health and safety has identified shipboard

characteristics that influence a seafarer's actions onboard, there has been no previous study of the type of ill-treatment that was explored here. An original contribution of this work is to the existing literature on seafarer welfare. The study has relied on a sociological approach to ill-treatment and draws upon management and HRM literature to explain the occurrences of ill-treatment that have been reported. In comparison with earlier maritime literature about seafarers' welfare, it features as an example of how ill-treatment can occur even on ships run by organisations that adopt best practice in their management of seafarers. This elicited the importance of industry norms such as the hierarchy and short-term contracts, as well as the restrictions on communication.

Professional socialisation is usually explored in business literature from the point of view of the businesses – how to mould employees into high performance people. This study makes the link between their professional socialisation and how this affects their ability to respond to ill-treatment onboard ships. This is supported by existing research in two areas. The first is research into call centres in India conducted by D'Cruz and Noronha, which explained how the training and supervision of employees conferred upon them characteristics of a perfect professional employee. The side effect of this was that their notion of professional identity constrained the way in which they could react to ill-treatment that they experienced. The difference from this study was that much of the ill-treatment was through customer interaction, which is a different focus to the more isolated work environment onboard ships. The other relevant literature here was discussed in chapter 3, and included Bhattacharya's (2009) study which identified social relations onboard, as well as Sampson, Bailey and Ellis (2013), who focused particularly on the gap between required health and safety practices and their implementation. Both these studies found that social relations onboard such as the hierarchy and the way in which seafarers communicated (top down or bottom up) had significant bearing on their ability to trust the organization when they claimed to be putting the seafarers' interests first. Similar issues with trust were revealed in this thesis and had a direct impact on seafarers choosing not to avail themselves of support structures provided by the organization.

This study adds an extra layer to this existing information, by explaining that the fear of job loss and blacklisting stems from different types of socialisation onboard and is even tacitly encouraged by the organisation as it acts as a form of behavioural control. It also found that in the case of older hands, they had additional constraints

upon them. Firstly, they spoke of *knowing* that nothing could be done to change the situation, and when pressed upon why they thought that when they were explicitly told otherwise by the company, they cited their loyalty to the company and unwillingness to cause them trouble. So even the positive side of employer relations which result in loyalty to the company and identification with the company's goals can contribute to seafarers choosing silence when experiencing ill-treatment. Secondly, they often supported a variety of relatives and had to be careful about the impact on their personal financial situation.

The research has yielded many seemingly contradictory results. These signified a system of organisational and personal factors that co-exist in a delicate balance. As elicited from chapters 2 and 3, there is great potential for there to be a significant amount of ill-treatment onboard, yet the study has found that the amount and type of ill-treatment onboard closely mirrors the amount and type of ill-treatment found on land. While this was not a comparative study, this awareness of the seeming 'normality' of the results is what prompted a deeper investigation of the ecosystem of factors which interact with each other to both allow ill-treatment and temper its occurrence. This led to the idea of organizational features which have dual functions. That is, depending on the individual situation, these features (such as the hierarchy, short-term contracts, and blacklisting) can play either a positive or negative role in the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard.

The identification of management's use of the family rhetoric is an interesting and unique finding because it has so many layers that make it useful to management. On the surface, it is merely a way of telling seafarers to behave nicely and interact well with others onboard the ship. However, the term also suggests bonding and support and gives seafarers a familiar social structure to relate to. It draws upon a key aspect of family – the fact that they are not chosen, but must be supported anyway, and so it encourages cooperation. It also puts the organisation in the role of the parent, further cementing their position to control the operation of the ship. Finally, the word 'family' has strong connotations in the Indian context, because the majority of the seafarers cite the need to support their family as the reason they chose to sail. They assert that they can and will do anything for their family. This strong rhetoric prompts the use of peer-regulation to moderate the behaviour of fellow seafarers and prevent escalation.

Finally, the short-term contracts common in the industry allow seafarers to be more willing to put up with ill-treatment because they know that it will end eventually.

Despite not being afforded the option of going home to escape their colleagues after work as people may in land-based workplaces, seafarers are still able to remain silent and not exit until their contract expires because of its short-term nature. This is also helped by the industry norm of changing crews regularly, making it entirely possible for the seafarer to never meet the perpetrator of ill-treatment again.

9.3 Policy Recommendations

In light of the academic literatures presented in chapters 2 and 3 and the analysis of data from chapters 5 to 8, it is clear that there is need for further work in the area of ill-treatment onboard ships. As it stands, there are four recommendations that can be made to begin to address some of the ill-treatment that seafarers experience onboard.

The first addresses the need for better legislation. The Dutch government has recently amended sections of their Occupational Safety and Health Act to accommodate seafarers in accordance with MLC 2006 (Netherlands Shipping Inspectorate 2013). This includes a section providing for the employers to look after the psychosocial aspect of their worker's lives. The Dutch maritime law interpretation does state very clearly that problems should be resolved onboard as much as possible, but they have provided seafarers on Dutch flagged vessels with an avenue for complaint online, on their website. They also suggest that seafarers follow the chain of command and address complaints to their superiors, and take advantage of their right to go directly to the Master, and then the ship owner (presumably before they then go to the national maritime authority). This sounds similar to the system already in place within the companies but as mentioned, these companies represent best practice in the industry in India and other companies may not be doing the same. In this case, it is important for legislation to be ready to fill the gap. The reason why the Dutch example is referred to is because they specify that sexual harassment and bullying should not be allowed onboard ships, which is more specific than the MLC 2006 itself. If India follows the example of the Netherlands, She will have provided Indian seafarers with an extra measure of protection.

The second recommendation is for companies to improve seafarers' access to the internet while they are onboard, and this is already being implemented as far as possible in some companies. However, both companies based in India in this study

have not yet allowed internet access to their seafarers onboard, due to high costs. As technology continues to advance and grow cheaper, access to the internet will allow seafarers to have both access to familial support while onboard and also a means of communication should they be caught in an untenable situation, as some respondents in this study were.

The third recommendation is for companies to continue to try and incorporate a more participatory style of management. While the clash in management culture did create problems onboard, it is vital to encourage easier flow of upward communication for seafarers to have more options to exercise voice. While it is understandable and acceptable that the hierarchy remain in place to ensure the smooth functioning of the vessel and a command structure to weather emergency situations, it is also possible to adopt a more democratic style of decision-making onboard.

This can be facilitated by more frequent management meetings being conducted onboard, as well as the involvement of the top management onboard in communications with shore office. As it stands, there is too much reliance on the Captain and his style of leadership in ensuring that the shipboard environment is a safe one for seafarers' physical as well as mental health.

Finally, contradictory messages should not be conveyed to the seafarers regarding the use of HR policies and grievance procedures. This would require some changes in the organisational culture of both companies, as the line managers who currently say that seafarers may contact them, simultaneously stress the importance of following the chain of command in the hierarchy and doing their best to resolve conflicts onboard. In addition to verbal contradictions, the seafarers notice that even if they exercise voice, the most action that is taken is to repatriate the lower-ranked seafarer and move him to another ship, but no significant steps are taken to address the ill-treatment or effect longer-term changes. Simply verbalizing policies for seafarers will not help the situation. Re-training would be required for the line managers to ensure that they are delivering the policies and demanding that, for example, appraisals are filled out as they should be.

9.4 Limitations of the Study

As with most doctoral theses, this study had its limitations. As has been noted in the methodology chapter, the fieldwork was bound by time and money constraints, as most PhD studies are, and I was the sole researcher.

There were three main ways in which this study could have benefitted from a broader approach. Firstly, due to the ongoing changes in the way the IC recruits ratings, the sample was split between roster ratings and some new ratings who had previously worked with the company. A larger representation of the IC ratings recruited in the new method may have yielded different data. Alternatively, it could be considered fortuitous that the research was conducted with roster ratings that were being phased out and are no longer accessible to researchers.

Secondly, the study could have incorporated a wider range of interviews to represent more views on ill-treatment within the shipping industry, including union representatives and officials with the Directorate General of Shipping, which is the regulatory body for the shipping industry in India.

Thirdly, the study relied entirely on semi-structured interviews with Indian seafarers. It could have benefited from observation onboard a ship to provide a better-rounded picture of the shipboard environment in which ill-treatment can occur. However, as ill-treatment is not expected to be found on every voyage of every ship, and is not experienced by every seafarer, it would be difficult to contrive to sail on a ship which fulfilled the requirements of the study.

Finally, while the topic of research was novel at the time of its conception and during fieldwork, over the last 3 years, newly emerging literature in maritime health and safety began to establish many of the key results about shipboard social relations that emerged here (for example: Bhattacharya 2012a; Bhattacharya 2012b; Sampson, Bailey and Ellis 2013).

9.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This research has opened the door to many more questions regarding seafarers' experiences of ill-treatment, and there are several avenues of research that would bear closer inspection. Firstly, the type of companies in the sample could be expanded to encompass ship owners and manning agencies. This would create a reference point to see if any lack of or difference in HR policies and other structural aspects of their workplaces, has a significant impact on the occurrence of ill-treatment onboard. It would be particularly interesting to investigate whether a larger or smaller proportion of seafarers experiences ill-treatment, and whether having access to different support structures (if any), alters their reticence in reporting ill-treatment.

Secondly, this area would benefit from research into different nationalities' experiences of ill-treatment. Although the data posits that the shipboard structure and industry characteristics along with socialisation work to eliminate national characteristics from seafarers, this study has elicited some data which suggests that cultural differences may hold, particularly on ships with single or dual-nationality crews. This would provide the opportunity to draw links between existing research on transnational crews onboard and a sociological understanding of ill-treatment.

Research focusing on other nationalities in relation to some of the specific results found in this study could also provide an interesting area for comparison. For example, I have posited that the family rhetoric has overtones of Indian workplace culture and that problems with the generation gap are exacerbated by the different managerial training that seafarers are given. Researching the extent to which this is true in other nationalities and other types of companies will elicit a deeper understanding of how structural characteristics of the shipboard environment can affect ill-treatment onboard.

Finally, there have been interesting studies conducted on the positive effect that pressure from the supply chain can have if the shipowners and charterers insist upon maintaining high standards of health and safety and adherence to regulation (Walters and James 2011; Sampson *et al.* 2014). The extent to which this approach can be extended to apply to ill-treatment onboard could provide some answers for gauging how HR fair treatment policies and grievance procedures can be implemented more effectively.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

I am a student working towards a PhD in Sociology at the Seafarers' International Research Centre in Cardiff University. I am looking at Indian seafarers' relations with their colleagues and management onboard ships. The focus of this will be to explore their experiences of dignity at work by asking them about their expectations and experiences of negative behaviour. This will help us to better understand their working situation and welfare needs.

Participation in this study means answering some questions about your relations with colleagues and management onboard, and your experience of negative behaviour with both these groups. It will mean having an interview with me (the researcher) that should last between 30 to 90 minutes, and will take place in a room that has been booked specifically for this purpose and where we will not be overheard. Participation is voluntary, so you may withdraw at any time without consequence. There are no risks associated with participating in this research.

I will not ask for any personal details beyond your name and position for the research. I will require your signature on the informed consent form below before we can proceed and would like to assure you that your responses will remain completely confidential and any personal details that you give me about you or anyone else will be made anonymous. I will record the interview on a digital recorder and write down your responses to use for my thesis. All the information will be stored securely in a password-encrypted file on my computer or in a locked cabinet. Your information will not be seen by anyone other than me (the researcher), and my supervisors, Dr. Ralph Fevre and Dr. Lijun Tang, at Cardiff University. My contact details and those of my supervisors are included below, in case you have any questions about the research. If you would like to see the result, you may get in touch with me and I will be able to forward you a copy of the final dissertation.

Thank you very much for your time.

Best regards,

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Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

The Impact of Organisational Hierarchy on the Expectations and Experiences of Dignity at Work for Indian Seafarers

Research conducted by: Manasi Dutt, Seafarers' International Research Centre, Cardiff University.

Research supervised by: Prof. Ralph Fevre, Social Sciences School, Cardiff University; and Dr. Lijun Tang, Seafarers' International Research Centre, Cardiff University.

Participant Informed Consent Form:

As an informed participant in this research, I understand and acknowledge that:

- I have been informed that my responses will be kept anonymous and my personal details and those of any other people or organisations I name will be kept confidential.
- I have been informed that the details I provide will be used for the completion of a PhD thesis and will be published as a PhD thesis that will be available in university libraries, and may also be used as material for books or journal articles.
- I have been informed that I may choose to end my participation at any time without consequence.
- Any questions that I had about this research have been satisfactorily answered.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

Signature of Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Structure

1.

- What is your name?
- What is your current rank?
- How long have you been sailing?
- How long have you been with the company?
- What does negative behaviour mean to you?
- Have you ever experienced negative behaviour in your job?

2.

- How often do you contact management onshore during a voyage?
- How do you contact management onshore? By calling them? Via email?
- What does the word 'management' mean to you?
- Do you feel that management treats you well?

3.

- Who are your superiors onboard and who are your juniors?
- What is the nature of your work (i.e. what do you do onboard)?
- Do you eat with ratings/officers?
- Do you socialise with the other crew?
- How do you spend your leisure time onboard?

4.

- You mentioned that [insert example of ill-treatment]. Can you explain to me who was involved and what happened?
- It is important to get the following details regarding each incident that is discussed:
 - When did it take place? How long was the voyage? At what point in the voyage did the incident occur?
 - What was your rank onboard the ship at the time?
 - Who else was involved in the incident? What was their rank?
 - Where did the incident occur? (Was it in front of other people in a public space onboard the ship? Was the ship in port or at sea?)
 - What type of ship was it?
 - Is it typical of behaviour you have experienced before/since then? What is the frequency of such behaviour?

5.

- How did you feel about what happened? Were you annoyed, angry, upset?
- Did you feel as if you were being treated unfairly? Did you personally feel that what happened was acceptable behaviour? Why or why not?
- Do you feel it is seen as acceptable behaviour within the shipping industry (i.e. do you hear similar stories from other crew)?
- Do you think you should be treated differently? If yes, how?

6.

- What options do you have to respond to this treatment (e.g. complain to union representatives; complain to the ITF; file a grievance with your employer)? Are all your options available to you onboard the ship?
- Were you aware that you had these options available to you? If yes, how did you become aware of them?
- Have you ever used any of these options? If yes, when, and what was the outcome? If not, why not?

7.

Have you ever experienced any of the following while sailing onboard a ship?

- 1) Someone withholding information which affects your performance (e.g. not specifying the timescale in which a certain task needs to be completed).
- 2) Pressure from someone else to do work below your level of competence.
- 3) Having your opinions and views ignored.
- 4) Someone continually checking up on you or your work *where it is not necessary* (i.e. giving the impression that they do not trust in their level of competence).
- 5) Pressure from someone else *not* to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. being discouraged from using support structures in place for people to attain dignity at work; more serious breach of contract such as withholding pay or delaying repatriation because replacement crew could not be/were not found).
- 6) Being given an unmanageable workload or impossible deadlines (this may particularly come up in the context of smaller crews increasing the amount of work to be done in port and/or at sea).
- 7) Your employer not following proper procedures (e.g. sailing on a substandard vessel; prioritising the transport of the cargo over the health and safety of the crew).
- 8) Being treated unfairly compared to others in your workplace (e.g. respect and deference being given to others by breaking the hierarchy, according to their nationality or nepotism; credit for a task being given unfairly to someone else).
- 9) Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.
- 10) Gossip and rumours being spread about you or having allegations made against you.
- 11) Being insulted or having offensive remarks made about you.
- 12) Being treated in a disrespectful or rude way (e.g. respect not being accorded to their rank; age; number of years at sea/in the industry; intrinsic knowledge).
- 13) People excluding you from their group.
- 14) Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.
- 15) Persistent criticism of your work or performance which is unfair.
- 16) Teasing, mocking, sarcasm or jokes which go too far.
- 17) Being shouted at or someone losing their temper with you.
- 18) Intimidating behaviour from people at work (e.g. threatening your job if something is not carried out to their satisfaction; threatening to withhold pay, leisure time, etc.).

Appendix D: Data Coding Structure

- I. Perceptions of what constitutes ill-treatment
 - a. Insubordination
 - b. Withholding information that affects own job performance
 - c. Breach of contract (delay in payment; delay in sign off)
 - d. Rudeness or unreasonable demands from shore staff

- II. Types of ill-treatment experienced
 - a. Verbal abuse
 - b. Humiliation in front of peers
 - c. Delays in signing off
 - d. Extra work during rest hours
 - e. Insults
 - f. Threats
 - g. "Bad reports" to the company/misuse of appraisals
 - h. Gossiping behind the seafarer's back; spreading rumours
 - i. Opinions and views about work disregarded
 - j. Work continually being checked on (when unnecessary)

- III. Responses to ill-treatment
 - a. Exercise voice and remain in situation
 - b. Exercise voice and exit situation voluntarily
 - c. Exercise voice and exit situation involuntarily
 - d. Remain silent and remain in situation
 - e. Remain silent and exit situation

- IV. Factors affecting experiences of and responses to ill-treatment
 - a. Socialisation
 - 1. Management training
 - 2. Family rhetoric
 - 3. Peer regulation
 - 4. Commercial pressure
 - b. Management Decisions
 - 1. Appraisal reports
 - 2. Generation gap
 - 3. Involuntary isolation (due to large workload and small crew)
 - c. Hierarchy
 - 1. Politicking
 - 2. Management style of Captain
 - 3. Access to ship-shore communication
 - d. Perceived accessibility/viability of support structures
 - 1. Union membership
 - 2. Company grievance procedures
 - 3. Access to communication with family

- e. Indian context
 - 1. Divisions based on region/language
 - 2. Perceived greater tendency to engage in politicking
- f. Personal considerations
 - 1. Personal financial situation (number of dependents)
 - 2. Prospects for career shift/alternative employment
 - 3. Current rank (salary)
- g. Level of trust in employment relationship
 - 1. Tenure with company (loyalty)
 - 2. Regard for company brand
 - 3. Job insecurity
 - 4. Awareness of own perceived value to the company/industry
 - 5. Career progression (promotion)

- V. Prevention Measures
 - a. Voluntary isolation
 - b. Politicking

- VI. Coping mechanisms
 - a. Minimising import of experience
 - b. Asserting strength of self (in withstanding ill-treatment)
 - c. Rationalising actions of perpetrator
 - d. Relying on end of contract as eventual/imminent exit strategy