


# The relationships between seafarers and shore-side personnel: An outline report based on research undertaken in the period 2012-2016

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

In large part the effective operation of a modern vessel is determined by the quality of the relationships between shore side personnel and sea staff. This report considers the interactions between sea staff and port-based personnel and shipboard staff and shore side management for the vessel.

The report is based upon unparalleled original empirical research undertaken in the period 2012-2016. It aims to identify suboptimal interaction and the causes of poor relationships between sea staff and shore side personnel and to recommend how such relationships might be improved in the future.

## Methods

The research is based upon ethnographic voyages undertaken on eight vessels. It draws upon the findings from 87 semi-structured interviews with conducted with seafarers, on board their respective ships. These were followed by vignette-based interviews designed for use with active seafarers ashore and 303 such interviews were completed prior to the administration of a questionnaire with a further 2,500 active seafarers. One further validation voyage was undertaken prior to the completion of the data collection process.

Interviews and voyage observation records were analysed with the benefit of NVivo and questionnaire findings were analysed using SPSS. Throughout the report we make use of pseudonyms for the vessels to preserve confidentiality and anonymity, and we do not refer to any company or individual by name.

## Findings

### Ship-staff and port-personnel

In the course of the research the vulnerability of both vessels and seafarers whilst in port became starkly apparent. Vessels are vulnerable to local officials who might cause delays and have the power

to fine, detain, and tarnish the reputation of a vessel. On the other hand seafarers are vulnerable to reprimand from their companies and to the possibility of criminalisation and imprisonment at the hands of port officials.

In some areas of the world (e.g. Europe, Japan, USA) the vulnerability of vessels and seafarers is not generally exploited by port-based personnel. However, in many parts of the world such exploitation is routine and takes the form of demanding 'gifts' of produce and cash. In this research port-personnel were also found to steal from seafarers and from ships and to abuse their power in order to extort cash from individuals. The report findings in relation to interactions between sea-staff and port based staff included the following:

- Facilitation gifts of cigarettes, canned drinks, and alcohol are routinely used to appease port-based personnel and secure fair treatment for vessels.
- Refusal to distribute relatively trivial facilitation gifts (in financial terms) could lead to disproportionately large penalties for ships including 'detention' and 'blacklisting'.
- Facilitation gifts were not limited to cigarettes, and drinks but could also extend to ship provisions (such as meat, ice-cream, and dried goods) and bond items (razors, soap etc).
- Negotiations over facilitation gifts were experienced by seafarers as stressful in many cases.
- Seafarers found raids on provisions and bonded store items particularly disturbing as they resulted in shortages of certain items on board depriving seafarers of food and sundry supplies.
- Most seafarers considered that company-based unilateral bans on gift giving made life more difficult for seafarers on board.
- Financial extortion was less common than demands for facilitation gifts but had nevertheless been experienced by the majority of seafarers in the study.
- Demands for cash caused seafarers considerable stress.
- Demands for cash were usually passed on to shore-based company personnel or P&I clubs.
- Port-personnel exploited minor errors made by seafarers in order to attempt to extort cash from them or their companies.
- Vessel agents were regarded as being largely complicit with the demands for gifts and cash made by port-personnel.
- Personal demands for cash were sometimes addressed to individual seafarers
- A considerable amount of fraud characterised bunker supply and this caused a great deal of stress for chief engineers.

- Bunker suppliers employ a variety of techniques to allow them to charge vessels for more bunkers than they actually deliver.
- Chief engineers are placed under considerable pressure by bunker suppliers to accept their fraudulent figures in the context of the high cost of vessel delays.
- In general seafarers found the assistance of bunker surveyors helpful in mediating between bunker barge personnel and themselves.
- Where bunker surveyors are employed from local firms they are not always regarded as impartial.
- Seafarers felt constrained in reporting short-supply of bunkers to company personnel as a result of their overzealous and time-consuming, questioning and reporting following such reported incidents.
- Short supply was often obscured on board by chief engineers routinely adjusting fuel consumption figures fractionally upwards to compensate for any deficits
- Chief engineers were constrained in the amount of fuel shortage they could 'cover up' in this manner, particularly when the next leg of their voyage was due to be relatively short.
- Port-personnel stole a variety of items from ships.
- Hiding expensive parts (such as brass fittings) from lifesaving appliances when entering ports, where theft was known to be rife, potentially endangered seafarers' lives and also rendered vessels that were subsequently inspected by port state control vulnerable to detention/fine.
- Despite these stressful encounters with port personnel and the impact they had on the quality of relationships, interactions were generally characterised by professionalism on the part of seafarers.
- The stress associated with these practices may result in ill-health amongst seafarers and a lack of desire for promotion.
- The report highlighted a certain amount of unprofessional conduct from port-based personnel including attending a vessel whilst inebriated.
- Vessel staff were frequently placed under pressure by port personnel to act unprofessionally/unsafely in relation to the speed of operations and in relation to other matters such as the agreed drop off point for pilots.
- Language and communication problems could usually be overcome by seafarers in terms of their interaction with port-based personnel.
- Seafarers expressed concern about the impact of communication problems on safe operations in port.
- There were some reported instances where language and communication difficulties had led to undesirable events.

## Ship staff and shore-based vessel operator personnel

Sea-staff have limited opportunities for face to face interaction with employees based in the shore-based offices of their companies. Superintendents were the most usual point of contact between companies and their sea-staff and they therefore occupied an important place. Much interaction between sea-staff and office based personnel including charterers took place by email and telephone. The main findings relating to ship staff and operator personnel can be summarised as follows:

- Superintendents generally adopted a managerial and hierarchical approach when visiting ships and were consequently felt to be on the other side of what emerged as a considerable gulf between ship and shore staff working for the same companies.
- Poor relationships between company personnel and ship personnel resulted in the majority of seafarers feeling unable to report the full truth about a situation on board to company personnel ashore.
- Seafarers perceived a lack of understanding amongst many shore staff in relation to the work and environment on board.
- Shore staff were identified as taking insufficient account of differences in times zones when contacting staff.
- To facilitate operational efficiency it was left to sea-staff to adjust their working hours to compensate for time zone differences which could produce additional fatigue on board.
- Shore-staff sometimes demanded priority in circumstances where shipboard personnel were engaged in important tasks.
- The lack of shipboard experience amongst many office based personnel was felt to limit shore staff understanding of the ship's needs.
- Experienced sea-staff were regarded as 'forgetting' the real situation on board ship once they entered shore-side management positions in order to meet their own targets and performance indicators.
- Seafarers considered that they were not trusted by office personnel to make operational decisions which only they were fully competent to arrive at (e.g. in relation to course deviations relating to weather).
- Seafarers felt that they were pressurised by both office staff and charterers to take actions which were unwise or even in contravention of regulations.
- Even senior personnel on temporary contracts felt vulnerable in the face of pressures from shore-side staff to deviate from practice which they considered to be in the best interests of the vessel and/or crew.

- While email could lead to misunderstandings, seafarers generally felt that email was effective in providing them with time to consider issues discussed, ‘proof’ of shore-side instructions, and a paper trail that they could subsequently refer to.
- Seafarers considered that telephone calls held some advantages allowing for discussion, the interpretation of non-verbal cues (such as intonation) and the possibility of immediate elaboration/clarification. However, in general seafarers preferred to receive instructions in writing and would often seek to confirm the content of a telephone conversation in writing by email.
- Email was perceived as associated with other useful functions such as the ability to attach documents and photographs to messages.
- Demands for documentation were regarded as increasing on board.
- Documentation increases and reductions in personnel were regarded as combining to increase seafarer workloads and fatigue.
- Some documentation was regarded as beneficial to safe vessel operations.
- Where documentation was excessive seafarers recognised that its original purpose could be undermined. For example too many checklists or checklists that were too detailed or not vessel specific could result in them simply being completed without making the associated investigations.
- Some requirements for documentation from shore-side personnel were experienced by seafarers as a form of surveillance representing a lack of trust in them and their professional skills.

## Recommendations

These preliminary recommendations are closely linked to the research findings and are intended to provide a starting point for discussion relating to the future improvement of ship-shore relations across the maritime industry.

- 1) A code of practice relating to a permanent ban on facilitation gifts should be developed and adopted by companies, trade associations, P&I clubs and professional associations across the world.
- 2) International agreements should be considered in relation to the conduct of port-based officials. These could be supported by a body which could be established to receive and publicise the numbers of complaints of extortion from seafarers by port, country or region.
- 3) Companies should implement a ‘no blame’ policy on board in the event of minor deficiencies identified (or manufactured) by port-based personnel seeking to extort money or gifts from seafarers.



- 4) Within reason, such 'no blame' policies (recommendation 3) should be supported by the adoption of a non-interrogative approach to senior sea-staff by company personnel.
- 5) Agents and bunker surveyors should routinely be employed in support of vessel operations.
- 6) Companies should consider collaborating in operating a public 'gold standard list' with regard to agents, bunker suppliers, and bunker surveyors<sup>1</sup>.
- 7) Companies should require agents to sign up to a code of practice relating to the deterrence of corrupt behaviour when representing their vessels.
- 8) Misconduct by agents and bunker surveyors should be reportable to a central point in relation to the operation of such 'gold-standard' lists of approved companies (see recommendation 6). Following consideration of any complaints from vessels a panel should consider removal of particular agents/bunker surveying companies from this 'gold standard' list.
- 9) Companies should issue clear instructions to Captains that they should never facilitate the premature departure of pilots from their vessels regardless of pilot priorities or needs.
- 10) Companies should make representations to ports when pressure is applied to their vessels with regard to vessel arrival or departure and they should encourage seafarers to report such practices at all times.
- 11) Companies should reconsider the use of temporary contracts in the employment of senior officers. In order to reduce seafarer vulnerability to inappropriate pressures exerted by port staff, senior officers should be employed in permanent positions.
- 12) Companies should take steps to address the gulf between ship and shore personnel. Such steps could/should include better training of shore based personnel, consideration of the likelihood of undesirable consequences that could be produced by the introduction of particular key performance indicators (KPIs) for shore based staff, a reconsideration of the basis for ship-shore communications (which could include the design of protocols for email and phone contact), the provision of 24-hour office working to support vessels operating in different time zones, a drive to reduce overall demands on ship staff, the reconfiguration of activities to allow for the prioritisation of the protection of seafarers on board in terms of workloads, fatigue, and stress.
- 13) Company demands for documentation should be minimised.
- 14) Checklists should be vessel specific.
- 15) Checklists should be limited to essential coverage and should not be unduly detailed.
- 16) Companies should recruit and train seafarers in a manner which allows them to place greater faith in their judgement and skill.
- 17) Companies should take steps to minimise the degree to which shore staff seek to remove decision making from on board staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Although not a focus for our research ship chandlers could also be added.

- 18) Companies should pursue practices which are likely to improve the mutual understandings of seafarers and shore staff in relation to their respective jobs and working environments (eg shipboard placements for management staff without sea-experience, rotations of seafarers between shore and shipboard jobs, company seminars and training events etc).
- 19) Companies should seek to provide a working environment which better promotes honest exchanges of information about shipboard operations, constraints, and activities.
- 20) Companies should only recruit personnel (on board and ashore) with a high degree of fluency in a single shared language.

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## Introduction

In the early days of sailing ships, whilst their vessels were at sea, seafarers were totally cut off from shore-side personnel. Even in port, vessels were normally out of contact with ship and cargo owners such that captains were in charge of all matters relating to trade, human resources, and finance. By contrast, in the modern context, ships are much more connected to the world whilst at sea (by email, telephone and fax) and while seafarers have less access to everyday life ashore, once in port, they are visited by a huge range of port and harbour officials once alongside. These interactions with office personnel and officials are vital to the smooth, and safe, operation of contemporary cargo vessels and yet they are far from straightforward given that they take place either 'remotely' or in environments where communications may be challenging as a consequence of language, time pressures, noise levels, stress and bureaucracy (see also Turgo et al 2013).

This report provides an account of the main findings from a unique and systematic investigation of seafarers' experiences of interaction with a range of shore-based personnel in the course of their shipboard employment. The global study (see Appendix 1) was extensive and was conducted in the period 2012-2016. It aimed to identify the foundations of poor ship-shore relationships, where these exist, and ways of improving them. In describing the findings, the report provides a contribution to improvements in safety at sea by shedding light on where poor relationships exist, what may contribute to these, and how such relationships might be improved in the future.

## Methods

The study was organised into four phases.

### Phase one

Phase one involved a literature review relating to grey and academic literatures connected to the research. This literature was utilised to identify the issues that had already been discussed by members of the maritime community (professional associations, media commentators etc.) as problematic in relation to ship-shore interaction so that these could be included as areas of further investigation within the study. The literature search also allowed us to consider issues which had been identified in land-based contexts as pertinent to communication and interaction such as the benefits and drawbacks of email and the impact of shared characteristics such as age (see Turgo et al 2013). Awareness of these issues informed the research design but did not constrain it. In phase two of the study the methodological approach was of a grounded nature (Glaser and Strauss 1967) allowing for the emergence of issues as identified by participants rather than the imposition of a series of ideas on the early stages of the research with attendant questions. Once we had established the issues as understood from the perspective of seafarers we were able to ascertain how widespread such concerns were by using a more structured approach, in the design of vignette-based interviews and questionnaires.

### Phase two

Phase two was the first of three phases of data collection. It involved researchers joining vessels for prolonged periods of time to enable them to develop a detailed understanding of the ways in which ship and shore personnel interact. In this phase a total of eight ethnographic voyages were undertaken on different kinds of cargo ships operated by different companies (see Table 1 for details).

Table 1: Details of ethnographic voyages<sup>2</sup>

Ship Pseudonym	Type of vessel	Number of crew	Nationality of crew	Days on board
<b>Florida Beach</b>	Bulk Carrier	16	Chinese	22
<b>Gemstone</b>	Car Carrier	25	Filipino, Indian, Bangladeshi, Ethiopian, Ukrainian	26
<b>Aguacon</b>	Container	19	Filipino, Ukrainian, Danish, Swedish, Russian, Romanian	33
<b>China Exchange</b>	Bulk Carrier	21	Chinese	35
<b>Spiritual Protector</b>	Bulk Carrier	20	Chinese	31
<b>Bananarama</b>	Reefer/Container	23	British, Panamanian, Filipino	35
<b>Braveheart</b>	Chemical Tanker	21	Romanian, Croatian, Indian, Montenegro, Hungarian, Latvian, Filipino	37
<b>Pantank</b>	Oil Tanker	23	Indian, Filipino	25

In total we spent 244 days at sea observing and listening to interactions between ship and shore personnel, interviewing seafarers, and informally chatting with ship visitors and serving seafarers. On return to Cardiff we transcribed the 87 formal semi-structured interviews that had been conducted and we analysed these alongside the eight sets of coded fieldnotes compiled by researchers in the course of their shipboard fieldwork. This allowed us to identify the main themes which had emerged in the course of interviews and observations and we used these to construct the instruments for phase three of the research which was based on a far greater number of vignette-based interviews.

### Phase three

In phase three of the study we conducted a second sweep of data collection. In order to broaden the range of accounts offered to us by seafarers we needed to base this phase of data collection ashore where more seafarers could be accessed and on a more ‘time-efficient’ basis. We were mindful however of the extent to which approaches to ‘strangers’ in seafarer centres and other venues might yield rather superficial and hasty responses to semi-structured interview questions as in these circumstances it is difficult to fully engage interview participants – they are busy, distracted, and caught unawares. We therefore elected to construct an interview schedule based upon real events and accounts offered to us by seafarers on board vessels. In adopting this ‘vignette-based’ approach we sought verification, refutation, and/or elaboration from participants and we used the ‘stories’

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<sup>2</sup> NB researchers were required to combine interviews and observations for two parallel projects whilst on board – this study of ship-shore interaction and a study of mandatory equipment which was also supported by the same funders (Lloyd’s Register Foundation, The TK Foundation and Cardiff University) and which ran over the same time period.

provided by the vignettes (all of which derived from the real examples found in phase two) to stimulate seafarers to offer their own perspectives and experiences of ship-shore interaction. In total we completed 303 vignette-based interviews in the UK, India, Philippines, China and on board one further vessel. This 'further' vessel (Beluga) provided the opportunity to conduct a five-week 'validation voyage' towards the end of the data collection process. The ship was a container vessel with Polish, Ukrainian, South African, British, Filipino, Myanmar and Chinese nationals on board.

## Phase four

Phase three of the research allowed us to collect a relatively high number of accounts by seafarers of their experiences of various kinds of ship-shore interaction. This was very useful in terms of adding to the wealth of qualitative data collected in the course of the project and our understanding of the range of issues impacting effective interaction between ship and shore personnel. However, we felt that in relation to some very specific issues that had emerged it would be valuable to gain a better understanding of how widespread these were. Specifically we were concerned to see how commonly seafarers experienced:

- Facilitation payments
- Financial extortion
- Theft in various guises
- Drunk personnel from ashore
- Poor interaction (in various forms) with company personnel based ashore
- Problematic interaction with personnel from charterers
- Poor communication due to multinational operations

Whilst in relation to seafarers we are unable to draw a random sample from the global workforce (we cannot identify the members of this global population and their contact details effectively and therefore cannot generate a sample), we are able to gather responses from seafarers in different parts of the world and to attempt to minimise sample bias via careful attention to the means of identifying active seafarers. We therefore collected a total of 2,500 interviewer administered questionnaires in five countries (India, Philippines, UK, China, Singapore). In undertaking this exercise we made use of sites where seafarers from a variety of companies and ship types might gather such as training centres and seafarer welfare centres and we avoided sites where seafarers might share critical characteristics such as the same employer.

## Phase four summary of sample characteristics

Questionnaires were collected in five countries: Philippines (46%); India (18%); China (21%); UK (14%); Singapore (1%). This produced a sample incorporating seafarers of 35 different nationalities. The four main groups were Filipino (45%), Indian (26%), Chinese (21%), British (4%). The remaining nationalities were grouped into an 'other' category for the purposes of analysis. The sample was almost equally split between junior and senior officers. Almost half of the sample (48%) were senior officers which we defined as: captain, chief engineer, chief officer, and second engineer. The remainder were junior officers. Only 11 seafarers (0.4% of the sample) were female. The average age of respondents was 37 and the average length of time for which seafarers had been at sea was 14 and a half years.

## Summary of methods

In total, in relation to this research project, the team conducted eight ethnographic voyages, one ethnographic validation voyage, 87 semi-structured interviews with seafarers on board, 303 vignette-based interviews with active seafarers ashore/on board, and 2,500 'interviewer administered' questionnaires with seafarers ashore (1,497 with deck officers and 1,003 with engine officers). All interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using NVivo software and questionnaires were input and analysed using SPSS.

In reporting our findings we make use of pseudonyms and do not identify any personnel or companies.

## Main Findings

We can broadly divide the personnel with whom seafarers interact into those who are encountered in ports (usually face to face) and those who run shore-side operations pertaining to the vessels upon which seafarers work. Although there are some exceptions, most seafarers do not enjoy sustained relationships with the personnel they directly encounter in ports (pilots, bunker barge personnel, inspectors, customs officials etc). Seafarers are more likely to enjoy longer-term relationships with 'operations' personnel associated with their company although many of these relationships will be conducted in the absence of any direct face to face contact. In discussing our research findings we will begin with a consideration of the relationships between ship staff and port personnel and we will move on to a discussion of the interaction between seafarers and shore based operational staff such as superintendents, Human Resources (HR) managers, charterers, and fleet managers.

### The relationships between ship staff and port personnel

One of the findings that emerged strongly in the course of our shipboard ethnographic research relates to the vulnerability of both seafarers and vessels whilst in port. Berthed vessels represent a cost to owners, and operators, and many companies regard their ships as only making money whilst on the move (Sampson and Wu 2003). This means that seafarers and operators are acutely aware of the high cost of delays to departure. The costs relate, in part, to berthing fees and port dues but they may also be associated with penalty clauses in agreements with charterers (incurring costs) and the potential for more widespread reputational damage. Seafarers are therefore keen to avoid delays in port where possible however they are also vulnerable to 'longer lasting damage'. This occurs when port officials find fault with a vessel. Such deficiencies may be publicised via the internet incurring long-term reputational damage and threatening future demand for a ship's services. It can also lead to the detention of a vessel with attendant costs and/or the arrest of senior vessel personnel. As a result there is a great deal at stake for seafarers every time their ship calls into port<sup>3</sup>. This relates not only to the navigational dangers associated with ports and the proximity of the shore but also the interactional dangers which come with every meeting between seafarers and port-based personnel. In some senses, what was once the welcome sight of land, celebrated with the call by seafarers of 'land ho', has become an indicator of forthcoming stress, lack of sleep, and tension.

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<sup>3</sup> Ports are also the sites for 'surprise' drug and alcohol tests and on one of the vessels involved in the research seafarers had very recently been sacked after testing positive and/or being found in possession of alcohol/drugs.



## Facilitation 'gifts'

One of the consequences of the uneven balance of power between ship personnel and port-based personnel has been the development of a series of routine practices which, whilst frequently petty, can be accurately described under the umbrella term of 'corruption'. In this study, researchers on board witnessed the distribution of 'facilitation gifts' by seafarers to an array of port officials in many parts of the world. Recipients ranged from health inspectors, to customs and immigration officers, and from agents and pilots, to terminal staff. Negotiations between parties were often mediated by vessel agents however it was not apparent that their primary concern was to protect the vessel. As port-based workers they appeared to have a vested interest in maintaining good relationships with their port-based colleagues notwithstanding the fact that they were engaged by ship operators to assist the vessel in relation to local matters.

The findings from our questionnaires demonstrated how pervasive the practice of 'facilitation gift giving' is. The overwhelming majority of seafarers had been on ships where such gifts had been distributed with 95% of deck officers saying that this was the case (91% of all respondents had experienced this practice). However, there were some parts of the world where such practices were much less common than others. Only 13% of respondents said that they had experienced gift giving in European Union countries, compared with 59% in the Suez Canal. Other hotspots included South East Asia (55%), China (54%), Indian subcontinent (51%), West Africa (49%). Disturbingly the majority of respondents (57%) believed the practice of demanding/giving facilitation gifts was increasing, 24% felt the practice was becoming less common and 19% were not sure. Amongst deck officers, who are often more aware of such activities as they are usually directly involved in them, the impression that the problem was increasing was stronger with 60% suggesting that demands for gifts were becoming more common.

Seafarers shared a very strong understanding of the benefits of providing facilitation gifts and similarly the negative consequences that were likely to be experienced if they resisted doing so. One seafarer explained it thus:

Gifts have become an integral part of ensuring good interaction on-board. It guarantees, in some ports, early approval of documents. It makes life easier for people on the ship because if gifts are not provided to these people delays could happen. For example, according to a friend of mine who was a chief mate on this ship, the quarantine inspectors came and inspected the galley and the food storage. After that, they went to the captain and asked for some cigarettes and wine. The captain refused to give them anything. He said that he did not give anything to anyone. As a result of that, the ship was arrested for some supposed serious deficiencies. They were fined more than 100,000 USD because they supposedly found expired products. The company paid the amount, they had no choice, and the ship was blacklisted while everything

was being rectified. So sometimes it is much better to give gifts; they are not very expensive. But it depends and it's up to the captain to decide for himself. (SS SS Braveheart 10)

The threat of what might happen to a vessel if the personnel on board did not give in to requests for 'gifts' was ever present. Demands could be made for cigarettes, alcohol, soft drinks and provisions from the ship's freezers and store rooms. Sometimes other provisions were also requested and it was difficult for seafarers to negotiate what they considered to be a reasonable 'deal' given their awareness of the threat that officials potentially posed to their vessel. One Captain described how their agent claimed he had done his best to mediate on behalf of the vessel but that it was a fine balance that had to be struck. He told the researcher on board his ship that:

He [the agent] said that he did his best...he would do that to minimise whatever we pay, huh. But then if they say...then you have to satisfy all, huh? Then in a way, that is a difficult thing to be fined - how much to pay, how much to give out and to do? Yeah, but if they detain us and everything then we cannot go anywhere. We have to stay and it is a problem for the [company]...because it will cost money. The guys who own the pier, they will say 'now you are occupying this [place] and you are finished to go but you are detained' and so on. 'We need to have money for every hour you are staying at the pier'. Then there's ...if you are detained then there's issue with the authorities. Maybe you will be fined, maybe you will be fined...I don't know. That is why we are trying to do the things...but it is difficult. (SS SS Aguacon CP2)

These experiences led companies and/or charterers to sanction the purchase of items to service interactions and in response to our questionnaire 81% of respondents working on the deck side stated that companies or charterers usually paid the cost of cigarettes and drinks given out to shore officials.

However the stress of such interactions for ship personnel was considerable. They found themselves in a position of weakness with regard to these interactions and yet they felt obliged to attempt to protect the interests of their principals and/or charterers and, on many occasions, the interests of the crew. It seemed that port-based personnel had no shame in raiding provisions from the store rooms and no regard for the fact that this could leave the seafarers without goods which the port personnel could readily purchase ashore yet which once removed from the vessel were out of reach of the seafarers. One captain described such an example when he told us that:

Finally he [an inspector] said Captain, 'give me 20 cartons of cigarettes' [...] It is too many, it is not a gift, it is robbery. And I said, 'that is too much', I had some cigarettes, I said, 'see my crew will be in trouble, because a lot of smokers on the ship'. [...] he said 'ok, make it 12 cartons'. I didn't want to get any more argument, I said ok fine. Then the same port customs came, immigration took 10 cartons, so that [was] 20 cartons, I think finally it was about 40 cartons, but the customs said give us some souvenirs, I don't have any souvenirs on this ship, this

company don't give, not give, I don't have any souvenirs, what does actually souvenirs means, I don't have anything like that, not even the company calendars, if I think that is a souvenir. Some companies they have the plaque, when I work for [name of other company] they have the company plaques. We give them sometimes, a good t-shirt from the company, that is a souvenir. [...] Then they said 'can we visit your bond?', and they took shampoo, razors, shaving foam, peanuts, beer! (SS SS Gemstone CP1)

While another officer described how:

In Ukraine, one person said to be quarantine officer came to check food stores. When he was in stores, he stuffed his bag with even cucumbers and aubergines! (SS SS Spiritual Protector 20)

As outsiders with an appreciation of the very limited choices that seafarers have whilst away from home, the raiding of such 'provisions' seemed particularly unacceptable to the researchers who witnessed such practices. 'Gifts' that were anticipated and funded might be treated as routine by seafarers who were used to such behaviour but raiding food stores and the bond for items which might be needed by seafarers seemed to be a more personal attack. In our questionnaire 73% of respondents had direct experience of provisions being taken by shore-side officials from their ship. In our interviews we found that, like some members of the research team, some seafarers were affronted by such actions. One seafarer objected that:

It is not theirs! Even if they asked for it, it is still the ship's property. That is for the crew members, they are not part of the budget. In my first visit to Ukraine I saw how they do it like they are 'shopping.' They just get what it is that they want and if they are in the gangway, they could not even carry it with them. They get the expensive cheeses, drinks and other alcoholic drinks. This can also include fruits that are not commonly found in their country. (Vig SS IA 39)

And another pointed out that:

They can buy all these things but we can't buy you know. Once like suppose we are going to Africa everything has finished then what we are going to do. We can't do anything now we have to wait for the next port to buy. (Vig SS NT 12)

Some seafarers pointed out that port-based personnel were usually willing to be 'reasonable' with regard to not leaving the crew short of provisions but a significant number had experienced some officials who seemed oblivious to the crew needs. Occasionally ships were reported to have been left short of provisions particularly if subject to changes in planned schedules. In one case there were reports of seafarers being on 'short rations' after leaving a port (where the provisions had been 'raided') and then being ordered to drift for 21 days. Other examples illustrated how the nicest

provisions – meats and ice creams – were taken, leaving seafarers short of these items even though they were not left hungry. In a similar way such practices could result in a vessel having to take on provisions in ports where the quality was known to be poor, meaning that high quality produce was replaced by poor quality foods.

In many cases the demands by port officials involved captains in having to ‘haggle’ and many such negotiations were stressful. Captains were aware that officials are generally able to fault any ship for some detail or other and that in such cases their companies may not be sympathetic when genuine mistakes had been made asking, for example, why an error occurred on a crew list etc. One captain explained:

If we have a deficiency then the inspector can be very strict. Actually, the moment they get on board a ship they already know what to do in order for the ship to have a deficiency. But really, there are no inspectors who will have no comments. (Vig SS IA 18)

While another officer explained that seafarers comply with demands from port officials because:

It is making your life easy. It is making your life easy. If you want to go straight away and don’t give gifts or something then you will make your life miserable. Like questions will be asked, ‘why this?’, ‘why that?’, ‘why this?’ and company pressure. (Vig SS NT 16)

Seafarers also described how they were threatened by some port officials either with actions that would damage their vessel (one pilot was reported to ask the master if he wanted his vessel to be grounded in the Suez Canal) or with deliberate acts of damage to the ship or the interests of the crew. In such cases they felt that they would ultimately be held to blame by their companies. A chief mate confirmed this when he described how:

The problem is with management companies, I’m not talking about my company, what happens is the master in the first place if he refuses [to give gifts], ‘okay I’m not doing this’, [...] and then if you have a damage like somebody cutting off your line [in retaliation], then you’re questioned by the company ‘why didn’t you just give it to them and finish it off’. So all this thing, it ultimately comes [back] to the master. (Vig SS NE 23)

Notwithstanding these stresses many seafarers felt that where companies took unilateral action to ban the practice of distributing facilitation gifts this made life more difficult for seafarers on board. Thirty percent of questionnaire respondents stated that they had direct experience of working for a company which had banned the provision of facilitation gifts such as cigarettes and drinks and 61% of all respondents believed that unilateral bans on the practice by individual companies made life on board more difficult for seafarers who were left at the sharp end of interactions with unhappy port-based personnel.

## Financial extortion

The most stressful problems in relation to 'gift giving' arose when port officials demanded cash from captains. Whilst many companies allowed captains to distribute gifts (sometimes up to a particular value without accounting for them) they tended to have a very different approach when it came to attempts to extort cash from vessels. The fear of being subjected to cash extortion resulted in seafarers feeling worried and stressed. In our questionnaire, 69% of seafarers stated that they had experienced being on a ship when shore officials asked for cash (see also Wilkins 2013). The most common regions where this kind of extortion occurred were West Africa (32%), South East Asia (30%), Indian subcontinent (28%), Suez Canal and China (22% in each case). In contrast, extortion relating to cash demands had hardly ever been experienced by seafarers calling at EU ports (3%) and had only been experienced in Turkey by seven percent of respondents. More than two thirds of respondents (68%) stated that they got worried about demands for cash being made on their ships and 80% recognised that cash demands from shore officials caused seafarers stress. In most cases where demands for cash were made by officials, captains referred the matter to their company or to the P&I club. However, it remained the responsibility of captains to 'do the deal' on the ground placing them in a difficult position. The following account was provided by one captain in relation to a port stay in Nigeria:

I went to Port Harcourt which is also part of Nigeria. They told me the same thing about having cadets on board; it is not allowed. So they took again the seaman's book and passport and told me they will repatriate the crew. So I told them that I have already advised the owner. The owner just told me, 'okay if they want to repatriate, let them arrange it.' But the immigration officers we met did not bring it to the immigration head. They were just holding the documents in their hand. They were just trying to ask for money. So they said, 'it is true that we have got to be penalised for about \$2,000 each'. So I have four cadets which means \$8,000.00 in total. I called the P&I who negotiated for us. [...] At that time, they are willing to reduce it to \$800 per cadet. So I have to pay, for the four crew, a total of \$3200. So the owner said, take first the document before giving the money. That time that I gave the money, I received the document of my crew without any hassle. (Vig SS IA 15)

In the course of our interviews we found quite a few examples where a genuine error on board had resulted in a demand for cash. Examples included incorrect declarations relating to the volume of alcohol in the bonded store (errors being caused by incorrect calculations vis a vis bottle sizes), seafarers failing to hand in prescription medication that was subsequently found in a spot search and similar matters. Where cash was paid to authorities (legitimately or otherwise) we found that the company was not always informed and that seafarers [fearful of company criticism or worse] found ways of raising the required funds. The following example is illustrative:

I did experience that the ship got alcohol on board and we were in a Muslim country. They questioned this. About \$9,000.00 were demanded. Customs did a random inspection and he entered Chief Mate's cabin and discovered the alcohol. Their regulation was that this alcohol should be in the bonded store and not anywhere (cabin, table etc.) [...] It was about \$9,000.00 as a fine. The captain told us that. But what I heard was that this was not disclosed to the company. (Vig SS IA 40)

Disturbingly we were given accounts of situations where agents were seen as part of the overall extortion from the ship. In the following example the agent berated a captain for seeking assistance from his office in the face of unreasonable demands for cash. A claim had been made that a laminated seaman's book as issued by a national authority did not have a proper signature but instead had a signature which had been tampered with. The captain explained that:

They were asking for the seaman's book. I told them 'no, they can't have it'. They said that they are the authority so therefore they can do that. But I told them 'then I also have to make my own report'. Then the agent told me that I should not dwell on this. I told the agent that if he cannot fix it then I will call the office and ask them to fix this. So the agent left and then just called me afterwards. He said the authorities now were alright with a certain amount. I replied, 'I will not give chemicals nor cash. Will not give anything but cigarettes and whisky for that is just what I am allowed to give. If I give more then I will lose my job.' He said, 'you really need to give.' I asked him if he really cannot solve it. So I said, 'I will call the office then.' The office told me, 'tell them I will call the embassy if they don't return the seaman's book.' So I said that to the agent. In the end, they maybe got scared because the office called someone from the embassy. They probably called the agent and they were like surprised. At noon the following day, I received many calls from the agent asking why I did that. [I told him] 'I need assistance to solve the problem as you are asking way too much. If I have something to give then of course I will do that'. (Vig SS IA 41)

In another example an officer recounted how an agent connived with customs officials to extort money from him and several crew members who were leaving the vessel. He explained that:

I'll tell you one instance which happened in India. I'm an Indian citizen, still happened with me in India. The customs in India. I signed off from the ship in Gujarat and then when I was clearing my customs, so I had a flight something 9:00 in the morning from Gujarat to Bombay, because I stay in Bombay. So the immigration offices opens at 10:00. So the agent took me to the immigration officer's house. Not the office but the house. And [...] the agent told me that, 'You have to pay something - fifty dollars'. There were five crew members and two officers, me and one more officer. So he said that 'give fifty dollar each of them'. So I asked him, 'I'm an Indian citizen. You're taking money from some foreigner, it's not accepted but let's say it is accepted. I am an Indian citizen, still you're taking money from me? For clearing the customs. I have an Indian passport'. So then 'No no, this is a formality, otherwise you will not be able to board the flight, you'll, they'll delay your flight', this thing, that thing, and all bullshit he started giving me. So I said, 'Okay fine, do one thing. Tell me your name', I told the agent, 'Tell me your

name, I'll speak to the company, that the agent is saying like this'. So he said 'No no no, no names, no names. I'm just helping you'. So I told him that 'Agent is not helping me, he's helping the custom'. But still then the custom officer said that 'okay fine, the crew don't give the money, but officer give ten dollars'. For what, I don't know. It's for them only. (Vig SS NT 06)

In another example a seafarer explained:

But normally, there is connivance between authorities. Most of the time the agent is part of this. The agent is paid to give us information. [...] Imagine how much [...] the company [pay] of the agent, it is about \$10,000.00 to assist us and then they show that kind of service? So most of the time, yeah the agency has something to do with this. This is the ugly truth. (Vig SS IA 37)

Thus seafarers found that port-based authorities could penalise them in a variety of ways (see also Sequeira and Djankov 2009). They might extort money from individual seafarers claiming they were holding too much personal cash and removing it from them, or personally targeting them once they had left the ship as in the example of immigration officers given above. They might attempt to extort unreasonable amounts of money for trivial mistakes feeling confident that in order to stay out of trouble with their companies seafarers would pay up (after negotiation) and they might threaten to detain a vessel on spurious grounds attempting to frighten a captain and/or his connections into paying a sum of money. Sometimes seafarers were able to deflect efforts at extortion but they were constantly wary of their vulnerabilities and they suggested that even if they managed to resist claims on one visit then if the vessel returned to the same port they would experience a huge backlash as resentful personnel sought retribution. Given these kinds of experiences seafarers felt that port stays were generally periods of anxiety and tension and were usually pleased to be underway again having called at (the many) ports where corruption of this kind was known to exist.

### Fraudulent bunker supply

Whilst in many cases it is the Captain who takes the brunt of port-based corruption, in relation to bunker supply it is usually a problem for the chief engineer. In the course of our initial shipboard fieldwork researchers became aware of how serious the issue of fraud in relation to bunker delivery has become (see also Ott 2014) and how much stress and anxiety it produces amongst serving seafarers. One chief engineer explained to the researcher on his ship that he had experienced three consecutive bunker deliveries that were highly stressful. He was relieved that the ship was now near the USA where he was expecting far fewer problems. He described what had happened as follow:

Bunkering was really stressful in the summer [...] Singapore was one, Bulgaria was one and the other one I had was in Russia. In Russia it was really too stressful because initially although he has shown me that he has this flow meter, he shows me it says 00, and then at the end when bunkering is finished I [was] still short of 50 tonnes. The he comes and [says] 'you see my flow meter', so I went to witness again his flow meter, it looked correct, but where is the other one [the rest of the fuel] I show him my bunker tank, 'this is what I am and this is my bunker tank – empty'. I give him also what I have [the ship figures for what had been delivered], 'this is what I have, I have only received this'. It is showing something else and then he wanted me to sign the BDN [bunker delivery note], so I will not sign this one, I will deal with the charterer first because they are the ones supplying the bunker. And then this charterer deals with the agent [...] because they could not get directly [in touch with] with the supplier. So he go with the agent but then the agent looks like got connivance with the bunker barge, so he is not picking up his phone. Then the next port we added a laycan<sup>4</sup>, to cast that laycan to further delay, very difficult. So finally at the end the charterer just agreed, 'just sign the BDN and put on and give him a letter of protest' because he doesn't want also to put a remark on the BDN, delivery note. Doesn't want also because they will have problems with the custom. So we said 'ok we will only accept letter of protest', so then I sign. So after that I give it up and leave it to the charterer to deal with. [...] Maybe there is some magic pipe also now, you know where one small pipe may be going to the other tank you know. Just keeping for them and then they will sell this one, is what is happening. [...] In Singapore there is also this sometimes they will do this, 'cappuccino' you know? They will pump air in the bunker [...] So you are sounding, you are taking soundings very fast. Then you open the tank and you can see really it was the real one, the normal bunkering when they will not put any air, it is just like cappuccinos they have that one cappuccino [...] you can see the bubbles really. So once you see the bubbles they are doing some monkey business. [...] I say them stop, stop that one otherwise I will stop the bunkering. But that is all I do, so I have to be very careful. And also there in Singapore bunkering is so stressful because the quantity, it is always an issue. Sometimes you have to bill correctly you know, and although they have this surveyor on-board but some surveyors are not with the owner, they are with the bunker boys. So stressful. [...] Yeah, like I mostly notice there in Singapore. But some are with the owner really, but some are with the bunker barge. Then I don't know maybe this bunker boy is giving him some money underneath. [...] Same thing [in Fujairah], [...] He show me his tank, this is my tank, [...] this is what I will give you, he show me everything you know. And then at the end I am still short of 20 tonnes also. So I start catching him also, where is the 20 tonnes now. No, I already gave you everything. You see take something. And then after finish I witness his tank also all dried so where did that 20 tonnes go? [...] Lot of money really, a lot of money [estimated \$700 per tonne]. That is why it is quite stressful to get bunker there rather than on this side. On this side I am happy with it. Because in the states you know, in the states of US you know I said I love bunkering in the states of US. (SS SS Pantank 24)

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<sup>4</sup> The seafarer is referring to the addition of time to the agreed 'Laycan'. The 'Laycan' is the period between two dates during which the shipowner must have the vessel at the required port and ready for loading according to the charter agreement. Essentially here the seafarer is referring to the problems of further delay to the ship schedule



In our vignette-based interviews the practices of pumping air into bunkers, delivering less fuel than claimed by the bunker suppliers and delivering poor quality fuel were all confirmed. Similarly the questionnaire revealed that the overwhelming majority of engineers had experienced these kinds of problems. Eighty-seven percent of engineers had been on a ship where less fuel had been supplied than claimed by the supplier, and 85% had experienced being supplied with poor quality fuel. Respondents overwhelmingly recognised that these practices add to seafarer stress on board with 93% stating that this was the case. One seafarer described the stress as similar to a massive caffeine over-dose he explained that he was:

Very very stressed. It is like having 50 cups of coffee every day for you have thoughts about how you will explain it to the company. The company of course will not be happy about it, right? There was a Chief Engineer who was short of 50-80 metric tonnes. But how much is a ton? It is about \$500. So after three days, you have some explaining to do. So as a charterer of the ship, I will have a surveyor. Now, if it's short then we have to do a protest letter. Sometimes however, the surveyor is not behaving as an ally. Like in Singapore, the surveyor will pass the problem to me... I really put up a fight. Now, there is a letter of protest and the bunker barge will not sign in the BDN (bunker delivery note). So you don't know which way to go. [...] Then there is a flow meter where they convert it but still the figures are still wrong. So now, it is all up to the company. [...] It is not your fault. Is that your fault? That is why you have stress, right? You just have to receive the fuel but why do they not give it to you readily. Why do they have to cheat? Well, it is because the gain is millions. Imagine that those in the bunker barge [people] are wearing Rolex watches. [...] For the barge people, easy money. So stressful for us on board. (Vig SS IA 73)

Such stresses were amplified by the pressure of not delaying the vessel which is something which bunker barge masters seemed to be aware of and to play on. Thus barges would employ delaying tactics in supplying bunkers knowing that this would eventually add to the pressure on chief engineers to accept their figures and sign off on short supplies. In this context chief engineers felt that the relationship they had with their captain was critical in either reducing or amplifying stress.

There were ways in which chief engineers described dealing with the ubiquitous problem of being 'short-changed' with regard to the supply of bunkers. Whilst some did not seem to have a difficulty reporting shortfalls to their company many were deterred from doing so because of the lengthy process of questions and answers and reports that were entailed. In the course of the validation voyage it became apparent that there was a 'margin of error' that chief engineers could cope with in their subsequent recording of figures. Thus they could fractionally overstate the amount of fuel burnt each day to 'make up' a shortfall in supply. This could only be done within a certain range however and barge masters frequently tried to supply them with less fuel than they could 'wipe out' in this

manner (especially if the next leg of their sea-passage was relatively short). The following quote explains the process:

If it is 20-50 tonnes it is very huge amount and then there is a big problem for the Chief Engineer to cover it up, like if it is 5 tonnes, then he can adjust 0.5 tonnes every day, he can show an extra consumption if it is 5-10 tonnes, but when it is 50 tonnes, then you have only a week's [voyage] ... 50 tonnes to cover up 50 tonnes is very big. (Vig SS NT 57)

However, some seafarers described how as a result of both high fuel costs<sup>5</sup> and stricter MARPOL regulations, several companies had made it more difficult for chief engineers to deal with the problem in this way. One chief engineer told us that:

Sometimes, we know there is a shortage but the shortage is too significant to expect. According to our measurement, it is estimated about 10 tons in short, but after several day, wow, 30 tons in short! They have many tricks, and that will cause great pressure for C/E. As you know, the current depressed economy makes the owner and manager adopt very strict management strategy on oil. In my previous voyage operating between America and Europe, if one ton of oil is in short, there would many inquiry emails from the company. This caused huge pressure for C/E. Sometimes, the C/E measures the oil personally. The C/E could not rely on 2/E and would measure it himself in person. In addition, he must be very careful with the calculation and reported to the company extremely carefully. The oil cannot be more and cannot be less. Previously C/E could reserve some 'pocket oil' of extra 10-20 tons to balance the shortage in case. Now the extra oil reservation is not OK. [...]The working pressure of C/E before was not as significant as today. Now due to the strict pollution control, and the oil reading, the major pressure, [...] is originated from this issue. (Vig SS LT28)

However, recognising the extent of such problems, some companies assisted chief engineers by providing the services of an 'independent' surveyor for bunkering operations<sup>6</sup>. In our shipboard studies we witnessed such mediation and it did appear to reduce the stress placed on chief engineers. However, it did not necessarily eliminate cheating from the bunker suppliers and there were suggestions from seafarers that so-called independent surveyors often connived with the bunker suppliers to continue to cheat the vessel. As a result seafarers felt that it would be ideal if companies could provide surveyors who were not based in the ports concerned and who were adequately remunerated by the company. In such cases they felt that the surveyors concerned would be more likely to serve the interests of the vessel and the company. However, some seafarers also observed that the primary interest of their company was in saving money (seeking out cheap bunkers for example) so that they would be unlikely to consider such remedies.

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<sup>5</sup> Bunker fuel has been reported to comprise 50-70% of a shipping company's operational cost (McLoughlin 2013).

<sup>6</sup> This can also protect companies from collaboration in fraud by some rogue chief engineers.

## Theft of items from the ship

Shipboard observations revealed that theft of a variety of items from ships seemed a surprisingly routine occurrence. In the Panama Canal shore-personnel who had stayed briefly on board took towels and soap with them when they left and in many parts of the world petty pilfering of paint, tools, ropes and hoses, was reported to be relatively common<sup>7</sup>. In some respects such matters were accepted by seafarers as 'routine' however they were not without consequences as captains could face questions about their consumption when requesting re-supply and seafarers could also be blamed for the thefts themselves (either directly or because they had failed to prevent the thefts). In cases where re-supply is delayed or challenged then it can be the case that seafarers are left 'without' in a similar fashion to when galleys are raided of provisions by shore-personnel. It was also the case that thefts could be of a more serious nature as in some parts of the world the brass fittings relating to lifesaving appliances were regularly stolen (if not locked away), and there were even examples where equipment from lifeboats was stolen. A seafarer described some of the problems he had experienced as follows:

We have also had an issue of you know, pilferage. Whereas in the vessel, we are more careful when we come to certain ports, due to...shore personnel tending to you know, flick a few items, be it from within the accommodation or outside the accommodation. So yes, it's there. Especially brass items. [...] Areas... such as China. We lost a PlayStation. [...] We lost a PlayStation, and that also by immigration staff, because we were in a port called Tianjin, and there the immigration was stationed. On that particular port had a rule where immigration would be in the cabin allotted to them, or the common space, the lounge. And we had a PlayStation put up there and after departure, nobody checked then, but after departure we realised it was missing, so. That was one, there have been issues of brass items such as nozzles, high-value items tending to disappear, so it's like that. (Vig SS NT 04)

Responses to our questionnaire provided a sense of the scale of the problem. While 40% of respondents stated that they had not experienced port-personnel stealing from the ship or from seafarers the remainder had experienced theft from the ship (53%) and/or theft of seafarers' personal possessions (21%). The overwhelming majority (91%) regarded this as likely to impact on future relationships between seafarers and shore personnel. This seems particularly likely when items are stolen from the crew or when the theft causes extra work or trouble for the crew. In our vignette-

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<sup>7</sup> There have been suggestions that multiple security providers within ports renders close cooperation between all actors problematic increasing the opportunities for security breaches which may increase opportunities for thieves. (Sciascia 2013).

based interviews we found quite a few examples where this was the case. In one illustrative example we were told of entertainment items stolen:

It [theft] happens a lot when the vessel is in dry dock. Because in dry dock the actually, the entire vessel is open to everybody. And ... we had one of our projectors ... the one which is used for crew entertainment. So as per my company policy, on every, on board every one of our vessels we have two. One is in the officer's entertainment room and one is on the crew. So the crew one was robbed while the vessel was in dry dock, and the next day the officer's one was also robbed [...] yes, it does happen. (Vig SS NT 05)

In another case seafarers felt unable to lock away valuable items that were associated with emergency response because of a planned port state control inspection. They took the precaution of lashing some of the items down but thefts nevertheless occurred:

All our fire hose and nozzle were stolen, none left on ship. And ... this was when I was a third officer, I told Master that I have heard that in these ports we have you know, too many thefts and all, but we were [...] there was a planned PSC [port state control]. So we kept it in the place only, the respective places, and we took a small lashing. But at night, you know, anybody can you know, go for that. And we all lost almost all the hoses, nozzles and even the hydrants. Hydrants were removed and taken. So yes, we do have big problem with this. (Vig SS NT 07)

Whilst most seafarers talked of such incidents in a relatively relaxed manner it was apparent in some of our interviews that encounters with thieves could be quite frightening. Seafarers described how experiences of theft at night could leave them feeling that their vessel was very insecure. If they were unfortunate enough to directly encounter thieves they felt fearful in much the way that one might do when encountering burglars at home. One described how:

There had been a number of instances, small things like fire hoses or nozzles were sometimes missing from the ship. Even at anchorage, it happens. I was a guard on duty [...] and we were in a piracy zone area. During daytime I was the only guard while at night time, there were two persons. So I was ... you know, patrolling on the ship. And I found one hook on the stern. One hook came on the stern, I was watching from the top, then one person said 'Hello my friend, I want to come on board for scrap'. So I told 'this is not the way to come on board, you are putting some hook and then you want to come on-board?' I was freaking out! (Vig SS NT 13)

Not only did seafarers describe how theft from the vessel led to mistrust, and in some cases fear, they also pointed out that if the captain took steps to avoid the theft of items such as the brass fittings for fire hoses then seafarers' safety was effectively temporarily compromised. The tension experienced by seafarers between protecting the vessel's equipment (and budget) and remaining safe and open to inspection was described by several seafarers. As one chief officer put it:

But now there are pirates which use more violent strategy. Depends on the port. In poor countries, you can really expect stealing. I experienced before that even our mosquito repellent were taken by a riding crew. That was in Egypt. But keeping items is a hard decision for the captain cause what if a fire occurs? So it really is hard. [...] Safety always comes first so the nozzle should be put where it should be even if there is a chance that it will be stolen. At least you are safe. The concern on board is always budget. But then if port state control officers visit the ship they will ask why there are no safety equipment. Penalty is also a lot! (Vig SS IA 20)

In the context of thefts from the ship in various guises (including when supplying bunkers) and taking into account the demands from port personnel for gifts, and sometimes cash, it seems remarkable that interactions between seafarers and port personnel are not more fractious. Whilst tensions do occasionally run high our shipboard observations indicated that seafarers are acculturated to the behaviours they encounter and cope remarkably well with them, and the stresses they produce, However, in consistently dealing with high stress situations, in the context of what is a taxing working environment, it is quite likely that seafarers ultimately pay a price for such encounters in terms of their overall health and wellbeing. Such stress may also be resulting in attrition of experienced officers and a reluctance to seek promotion to the very top jobs on board. Whilst seafarers might be commended for their fortitude therefore these are nevertheless issues which companies might be legitimately be expected to address.

#### Professional conduct amongst shore-personnel

In the course of our shipboard observations we were surprised to encounter a case where the pilot who boarded the vessel had been drinking so heavily that he had to spend a considerable portion of the pilotage in the toilet being sick. In this incident the captain regularly called at the port concerned and was not unduly worried about berthing his vessel without the level of pilot assistance that he had originally anticipated. In exploring this issue in the course of vignette-based interviews we did not uncover further examples of this kind of behaviour but we nevertheless thought that the issue was sufficiently serious to include a question about drunk port personnel in our questionnaire. To our further surprise we found that just over a fifth of respondents (21%) stated that they had experienced dealing with drunk port officials in the time they were at sea. Whilst this does not demonstrate how regularly such problems arise<sup>8</sup> it is indicative of a relatively pervasive problem which is less rare than might reasonably be expected.

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<sup>8</sup> The question did not gauge frequency.

More commonly we identified a different practice amongst pilots and port personnel that could also lead to accidents. In her time on board one tanker, loading at a single buoy mooring (SBM), a researcher witnessed the vessel coming under considerable pressure to hastily disconnect and to go to anchor rather than proceeding to sea-passage as originally planned. This situation arose in response to a discrepancy found between the terminal loading figures and those of the ship. Whilst, as with bunkering, there is some tolerance in such figures the discrepancy was greater than that permitted by the company/charterer. In a high-stress situation, terminal staff used threats of charges for overstaying on the SBM to attempt to force the hand of the chief officer into accepting the terminal figures. The captain did not wish to go to anchor as the shore-personnel suggested he should, because the eventual vessel departure would then be subject to some significant delay. Tensions ran high for a while and the pilot entered the argument also placing pressure on the captain and threatening to leave the ship. Ultimately letters of protest were exchanged and the vessel departed as planned although there were some formalities which had to be undertaken in retrospect and electronically to allow for departure. However, the pressure was maintained on the ship and the captain once the vessel was underway because the pilot was in a rush to get home given that it was the end of his working day. Our vignette-based interviews provided further evidence of this kind of situation where vessel personnel felt pressure by port-based personnel to execute tasks more quickly than they felt comfortable with from a safety perspective. Amongst the examples we found, the following are illustrative:

In China... Yong Sheng, which is part of port of Shanghai [a pilot tried to rush things]. He just wanted to do everything with a full ahead stopping, and the ship was much bigger than this one. [...] Just he wanted to stop – full ahead, stop, full ahead, stop, you know. And finally I bypassed his orders. Much slower, and it made him angry. What was really behind, I don't know. [...] If it's of mutual – if his commands are same as yours and you assess them safe, you say nothing. But if you see that... if it can develop to something serious, that you still have to remember that you in charge if something happens, it is your fault. So I have no... no any hesitation to overcome him [...] I prefer to have an angry pilot than a disaster area. (Vig SS HS CP)

In moorings? Yes, of course. It is normal that you do everything in haste. Of course, you are time-pressured. The pilot always has the next vessel. So he just pass the pressure to the Captain who pass pressure to the crew. But as a practice, for us, for example we don't pressure the crew. 'Just do everything at ease.' Do it fast but you don't go beyond that. Safety first. [...] No, it is with the officers. For sure the company will not jeopardise safety in writing. So they will put that everything will be safe. But in practice, it depends on the master and the officers. Some officers will give in to the pressure of the pilot. Well, for me, he can wait there and just complain later on. This is my crew. I have to protect them. If anything, they complain something the only thing that I can say is safety which is above everything else. (Vig SS IA 01)

Seafarers identified a range of reasons for pilot pressure which they agreed had to be resisted by captains who almost always retain responsibility for the ship and navigational decisions. They recognised that pilots were often tired at the end of a shift and wanted to get home, that they might be under pressure from the port and from tides, and that there might be issues of understaffing. However, in the vignette-based interviews we found a number of examples of incidents which seafarers attributed to pilot haste (and the failure of captains to resist this) from dragging anchors, to accidents disembarking and even collisions as in the following example:

In Singapore Strait, we [...] finished our bunkering and all and we picked up anchor, pilot boarded on anchorage itself and he was getting down at bravo anchorage, that is pilot boarding [station] and we were supposed to join the Westbound lane, and pilot, he increased the speed so that easily ship can enter into Westbound lane, and he was hurrying actually because he... our ship was coming and was getting out and another ship was coming inside, pilot wants to you know, get down and you know...Yeah, join the next ship. And there he made a mistake, he did not convey his message to Master properly. And he said 'Everything is clear Master, you can join the Westbound lane'. And I went along with the pilot to see him off and when I came on bridge, I saw that we were just, not even a cable away from the other ship. We had a collision. (Vig SS NT 07)

Sometimes the simple tendency for humans to wish to oblige one and other could lead captains into trouble. Social interaction is always less straightforward than it seems in training scenarios leading people to take actions which are not 'by the book' when finding themselves under pressure from others to do so. This may be particularly the case when captains feel that they should trust pilots and that pilots can be expected to behave responsibly. In an illustrative example we were told of a 'near miss' when a seafarer explained:

When the Pilot gets the ship off the berth, which is like, that's his job and he gets the ship lined up to come up to the breakwater, he knows sometimes when he gets outside the breakwater the force of the current is too much for his small boat together. He prefers to get off before [...]. There was only one time when it was dangerous because the Captain felt, like, yeah I'm fine. I can take it round this. He [the pilot] left and all that. Once we left the breakwater [there] was a big swing. It could have been dangerous. We were almost in a big swing. The vessel shouldn't hit the breakwater! You know in that case, well, they will blame the Captain. Why did he let the Pilot go? He was being nice to him. (Vig SS NE 18)

As in this case many of the participants in vignette-based interviews pointed to the tendency for pilots to ask to disembark early when a vessel is leaving port and in many cases captains seemed to be made to feel that this was local custom and practice. It is possible that they would feel that they were being unreasonable or admitting to their own incompetence in not responding positively to such demands and requests. In most cases where pilots did disembark early it was with the

agreement of the captain. However in some cases it was not with full agreement and captains felt that their hands were forced. In bad weather this situation had arisen for one master who reflected on the case. He told us:

I had a situation like that in Taiwan, which was in very bad weather, rough weather, wind force 7 or 8, so leaving berth in the middle of the night, and he was just saying 'it is a small boat so if I go out, if you drop me in the pilot station, it will be difficult for the vessel to come back', so he just wanted to get off just before the breakwater, and it was like a short pilotage, and he left. [...] It was difficult but I said 'you must come with me'. But he said 'captain I can't, I'm going because there is too much swell, I cannot come back'. I said 'no, it is part of your duty, you should take me out, you see the situation, it is a big car carrier, and the wind, it will be a difficult pilotage for me'. [...] He refused to do it. So it was out of my control, but luckily [...] I was a little shaky but ok. (Vig SS NE 68)

Individual captains were described by seafarers as dealing with such situations in their own different ways. Generally their strategies ranged from accommodation where possible to deception (for example claiming they were making the best speed possible when they were not) to patient 'absorption' of pilot irritability. However, inevitably this once again places a certain amount of strain on captains in what are often high-tension, safety critical, situations. A final quote on this subject illustrates such a situation:

I give an example. Last time we berthed in a grain terminal. When we got in, we dropped outside anchor to berth in. When we left, we heaved up that anchor to get out of the berth. Therefore, when we were unmooring, we had four forward mooring lines and one anchor outside. Two forward mooring lines and the anchor chain were in the same direction. The pilot was a bit late, and he was in a hurry to take us out when it was still the high tide. When he boarded our ship, he asked immediately to heave in fore mooring lines and anchor. But as you know, it would take time to heave the anchor up and in. Also it would take more time to heave in mooring lines that were not on the winch than those on. Because the anchor chain and mooring lines were close, one mooring line almost got entangled in the anchor chain. So I asked captain if I could do the anchor first and then the mooring line. The pilot should know that it would be problematic to do the two at the same time if he had sailing experience. But the pilot was infuriated and shouted at the captain. He hastened captain to do both together. I heard from the third officer who was on bridge later. The pilot was in a bad mood and impatient. Fortunately, captain dealt it well as he was experienced. He said yes to the pilot, but at the same time allowed me to do it the way I wanted. I quickly took in mooring lines first, and then heaved the anchor in quickly. I heard that the pilot became very impatient and restless on the bridge. This may be related to pilot's personality. In general, we would give pilots enough face and we do not want to confront them. If the anchor chain brought the mooring line in from the hawser, it would break the line which may injure somebody. (Vig SS LT 53 54)



In our questionnaire we asked deck officer respondents whether they had experienced being on a ship when the pilot pressurised seafarers to finish manoeuvring more quickly than they really wanted to. The majority said that they had with 57% stating that this was the case. Given our evidence from vignette-based interviews, where seafarers spoke of such pressures as commonplace, it is quite likely that many of those who replied 'no' to this question (41%) had experience of vessels where such pressures had been successfully resisted.

### Language, culture, and communication

In the course of our shipboard observational work we witnessed several situations where language and communication were a problem in the interactions between port personnel and seafarers (see also Goodfellow 2014). Usually such problems could be overcome with a combination of sign language or by rooting out an individual who was able to, at least, partially translate. However some seafarers described situations where they believed poor communication compromised safety both directly and indirectly. Direct examples included cases which had resulted in oil spills, damage to cargo, and more rarely injuries. Illustrative examples included the following:

Similarly there was an issue in the berth, whereas the instruction was told in English [...] to stop the cargo, whereas it was misread as start the cargo. And the manifolds of the vessel were shut and pumps were pressurised and there was a hose burst, because of language problems. So it is an issue. (Vig SS NT 04)

Yeah. In Iraq we were discharging rice. The rice inspector said we have to open something which we could not understand and we were shouting don't do this but he went on and the sling was cut and hit the bosun and if there is a common language it would not happen since we could understand each other well. (Vig SS NT 69)

Examples of indirect threats to safety included a situation where a crew member who had been on duty for an excessive period was nevertheless called away from his rest period to assist with translation for shore-personnel. He described how:

We come, [...] two or three o'clock in the morning, when they come they coming with dogs, [...] And er ... after another come, they want to inspect lifeboat, funnel, engine room, bosun store. But this is just, you know... not deep inspection. Just to see. Three o'clock in the morning I am after manoeuvring all day, like normal day, I was on duty. I only come to cabin like this, telephone call, ok... I was the only one Russian speaking on-board. All other was... nobody speak. Hah. Two or three o'clock in the morning telephone call. Ah, Second. They required somebody who can speak Russian. They want to go to the lifeboat, like this, like this. Also, huh! International vessel's coming with foreign flag. Then employ people for this job who speak English!! Why 2nd engineer, if I speak Russian, I must go after manoeuvring three o'clock in the

night to show lifeboat, to paint store only. And eight o'clock next morning, again I must come because I distribute job for everybody. This also no good in my opinion. For me just interesting if coming vessel who nobody will speak Russian, what they will do. Yes, this just real example. In Novorossiysk! (Vig SS HS 2E)

In responding to our questionnaire only 12% of seafarers stated that they had **never** experienced a problem in communicating with shore-side personnel. In contrast almost one in five respondents (19%) suggested that they had 'often experienced communication problems'. The evidence from our vignette-based interviews suggested that these could be experienced in a variety of countries but China, Russia, Japan, and Brazil were mentioned relatively frequently and it seems that there are some regions where communication is more challenging than in others. In the main, our shipboard observations and our vignette-based interviews suggested that both seafarers and shore-based personnel had learned how to get around many communication difficulties. However, there did seem to be widespread concern amongst seafarers that poor communication generally compromised safety and we collected several examples of incidents which were directly attributed to communication problems.

### The relationships between ship staff and 'operator' personnel

Given the mobile nature of the vessel and the distances usually found between ships and shore-based offices it is unsurprising that interaction, between seafarers on board and company employees ashore, is very limited. Generally speaking, face to face interactions are limited to superintendents (when they undertake ship visits) and HR personnel ashore.

In the course of our shipboard fieldwork we had the opportunity to witness a limited amount of interaction between a superintendent and vessel personnel. This suggested that when a superintendent boards a vessel, interaction takes a very hierarchical form - that of manager and subordinates. Superintendents normally locate themselves in the owner's cabin and liaise with captains to organise a series of meetings, inspections and/or training as they see fit. Most interaction is with officers and almost all informal interaction is with senior officers.

On board one vessel a situation arose which highlighted some of the main characteristics of interaction between superintendents and junior staff. On this ship, the ratings had some concerns about recent changes to their terms and conditions. These meant that they were no longer flown directly to their home airport on completion of a nine-month contract. Instead they were flown to the capital city and from there they had to make their own way home at their own cost. While the company travel agent was willing to organise the onward travel for them this was normally too

expensive for them to afford and they were upset that as they could not book their onward travel in advance (because of constant changes to vessel schedules) the process added several days to the total time before they got home (as they hung around in the capital city additionally paying for accommodation). The visiting superintendent held a meeting with the ratings and the researcher was invited to be present. She witnessed the seafarers tentatively raising the issue with the superintendent who deflected their complaints telling them that they were very fortunate to work for a company that paid their salaries on time, or even at all, and that the repatriation issues were not the company responsibility but were all down to the trade unions. This seemed to typify the kind of interaction that was witnessed on the whole which seemed very managerial, rather lacking in empathy, and somewhat 'top down'. It was not the kind of interaction which would seem to be likely to encourage seafarers to be open about issues on board. On temporary contracts and reminded that they should be grateful for getting paid for their work (at all) such interactions emphasised their vulnerability and in these circumstances it is unlikely that open and honest relationships would thrive. Rather you would expect to find deferential ones where subordinates attempt to hide any perceived weaknesses in systems or performance. This impression was borne out by some of the comments made by seafarers in the course of interviews. Once chief engineer described how:

As a rule, you cannot say 'no' to superintendent. It's one who is let us say... one group in the ship.... They [superintendents] are in the office side, there are six or seven superintendents. So our superintendent is former chief engineer, so technically he knows very well what is the life, but in the moment when the superintendent moves from the ship to the shore, he 'forget' a lot of things, what is happen there, on board of the ship. (SS SS IA 1)

In completing a questionnaire, of the 36%<sup>9</sup> of respondents who stated that they had experienced a member of their company's shore side personnel shouting at them, 68% stated that this had taken place face to face on board. It is likely that most such incidents occur between superintendents and seafarers and this situation may also helpfully contextualise our finding that only 34% of all questionnaire respondents always told their company's shore staff 'the full truth about the situation on board' (46% felt occasionally unable to tell the full truth and 20% stated that they often felt unable to tell the full truth about situations on board).

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<sup>9</sup> In the British Workplace Behaviour Survey 24% of respondents had experienced being shouted at and in many cases this was by members of the public and other colleagues rather than by managers (Fevre et al 2011).

## Telephone calls and emails

In the absence of a great deal of face to face interaction, emails and telephones calls took on particular significance in terms of ship-shore relationships. It seemed that whilst many such interactions took place without anything untoward occurring email and telephone interactions were far from optimal for a variety of reasons.

The shipboard voyages revealed that seafarers were frequently disturbed by office staff at inappropriate times due to time differences between their locations. Office staff tended to work regular hours and whilst in emergency situations a vessel could contact the office out of hours, this was not 'normal' in relation to regular matters. As a result, in order to facilitate 'conversations' by email or telephone vessel staff frequently worked late into the night. This was often the only way to make sure that the ship was able to maintain its operational schedule. As one chief engineer explained:

And its other problem because if the ship stay there and the office is in Manila or Mumbai, there is difference of 6 hours or 7 hours. So if I send in one message, urgent. I send in time of midnight and [...] his answer come on Monday, so you lose time. So if the point in Europe particular for my ship, it is easy. If no, I must wait until midnight to call him on the telephone and give proper answer, quickly answer...what must to do in this situation. If it is one complex technical problem, usual the superintendent ask for advice to provide to makers. So you lose more one day, so this is one day second day, third day. So the ship cannot stay. The ship must to run. In effect we lose if some...lose time in this chain. It is too long. It is too long the difference of hours and in this moment we lose. (SS SS IA 1)

However, even in this limited sense, it was not always the 'choice' of senior officers to communicate with office staff late at night and/or early in the morning and there were several occasions whilst researchers were on board where it became apparent that office staff had called senior officers in the middle of the night. In our semi structured interviews some seafarers described situations where office personnel displayed a grave lack of understanding of the shipboard context and disturbed seafarers at very inappropriate times. One seafarer described how:

I had someone who called me systematically 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning for 2-3 consecutive days to talk about some nonsense program. Finally, I had to raise my voice and she calmed down. And she stopped. Some of them they don't have an idea that the vessel is completely on a different time zone. They don't understand me or maybe they just don't know that there are different time zones. I don't know what's on their minds but I tell you the quality of the shore people has gone down. Is it very difficult to look for people who understand the job? (SS SS IA 16)

Another explained how he felt that the attitude of staff from the office demonstrated a poor understanding of priorities. He suggested that they gave the impression that whatever was happening on the ship, that when they called, they felt that captains should prioritise them and their needs. He told us:

This time difference they know, they can calculate, and they should be more careful when to call. Yeah I have also experience sometimes even when the marine superintendent is calling, and I have said, 'excuse me sir I am manoeuvring can I call back'? And it still sounds as if they are not happy, [their attitude is] 'but whatever the hell is going on, I am an important person, you talk to me'. [...] they always think that, 'you should talk to me'. (SS SS Gemstone CP)

Our vignette-based interviews confirmed the picture of office staff failing to pay attention to shipboard context including issues of time zones. As one interviewee put it:

There are lots of shore personnel who have no clue on the life and daily operation of the vessel. That is why for them, if they decide to call you early dawn, they expect you to be up and about, forgetting that 'oh it is only 2 in the morning there! Here is just 6pm'. (Vig SS IA 02)

Another suggested that calling at inappropriate times was:

...very common. See, people talk about rest hours, okay. But while doing this, they don't see the rest hours. I have seen the, we are getting the call 2:00 in the morning. If the same call is made by the Master to the shore people during night time, it's wrong OK? Which is not accepted. But just because we are working on the ship, that doesn't mean that we are slaves. Simple answer. You know, we are also working. So, if on one paper this thing is happening, on one paper they are saying that 'Adjust your rest hours' okay. Rest hours violation is also there, then also they'll start putting the blame that 'Why didn't the Captain see about the rest hours?' But 2:00 in the morning if you're waking the person, the rest hours are violated, no? If the urgency is there, accepted. But for small things also they will call. So this is true, this is true. (Vig SS NT 06)

In our questionnaire we asked respondents to state whether they had experience of being called at inappropriate times. When we considered all of the respondents (deck and engine junior and senior officers) we found that 32% had experienced difficulties with company personnel calling at inappropriate times. However, when we considered the responses of captains alone, this rose to 38%.

The tendency to call at inappropriate times gave seafarers a strong impression of a lack of understanding on the part of shore-staff. This was frustrating for them and it was something that they found hard to resist. One seafarer suggested that office staff always tended to see their own

perspective and never the vessel's and that this could lead to the exacerbation of fatigue on board and issues of related stress. As he put it:

You know they'll call up saying that 'urgent query'. And anything that comes from shore is always 'urgent'. But anything that goes from ship is never 'urgent'. And I don't understand why, but it's that you know, 'Charterers are requesting, how much cargo can you take? Reply immediately'. And you know, it's basically if something like that comes up, then the Master, the Chief Mate and the Second Mate, the top three ranks are awake the entire night. Because the Second Mate then has to give the distance, from how much time it's gonna take for me to go from here and there. Then he has to give the distance to the Chief Engineer, who then has to calculate bunkers. Meanwhile he has to also help the Chief Officer calculate the cargo, how much he can load. And at shore, the guy is like, 'Oh, you're still not giving me a reply! Why does it take so much time?' (Vig SS NT 05)

Another described how, in relation to email, office staff could be annoyed if captains did not reply quickly. Once again this confirmed for seafarers that shore-based staff really had no understanding of what the situation was like on a ship:

There are times [...] the ship is doing an operation, so everyone is busy. Then the company will send email asking for some information. But the captain is busy and can't find time to check the email. Then the company will get angry. That kind of thing. This is very prevalent. How can you answer their email when you are very busy, say, you are in a port and all operations need your attention? They don't consider that. They have no idea. (Vig SS IA 330)

One of the questions included in the questionnaire that we administered with seafarers ashore asked if they felt that company staff understood day to day operations on board. While the majority of respondents (61%) believed that company staff usually (41%) or always (20%) understood the environment of the ship a very large minority (32%) felt that the company did not understand the situation on board very often and 7% stated that they did not think that company personnel ever understood the situation on board.

In the course of our vignette-based interviews, the lack of understanding which seafarers perceived as existing between office staff and sea-staff was emphasised by many interviewees who provided a variety of examples of the ways in which their situation was often misunderstood resulting in additional work, blame, extra reporting, and or stress. In the following example we also see how these kinds of experiences lead seafarers to start to hold back in their communications with office staff:

For example of this vessel - we dismantle two exhaust valves. Two exhaust valves cracked, cracks on the thread, exactly, because the pressure very high, 2200 bar - it is too much. It is cracked on both. So of course, everybody of us understands that this is just poor quality of material. Because it's cracked exactly on the thread. Ok? And we, when we inform company to superintendent, he already start, you know, 'Oh, maybe you not properly tighten it, or maybe you applied too much pressure.' But this valves, they were installed in shipyard during vessel building. We do not touch. We at first now only take out from the - even it was not applied [correct] tightening pressure, it was applied by maker. By maker of the engine! Chief also was very angry. He tell, 'Why he tell to us we not tighten. It was installed in the shipyard. Its maker even make mistake.' Of course, me and Chief understand they [the shipyard] make everything ok. Why? Because when we untighten [it], it was pressure exactly 2200. It was not 3000. It was everything ok. Only explanation this is material, bad material, material not so strong, not so solid, cannot hold. It was coming crack. But superintendent already, 'Oh, maybe you make ... not correct tightening in the core.' But we not tighten it. It was, you know, like this. And what I hear Chief say, especially you know... some chief – one time he said to superintendent he start to, you know, press for you two times, he said – and Chief recognise better to this superintendent, do not tell some details. Better hide. It was: we found this, we repair, finish. But how we repair, what was better not tell. It depends also the superintendent, depends on the experience. Because for example, previous company, it was superintendent, 3rd engineer. And people who were long time in company they said, we know this. He was one time cadet and two times 3rd engineer. Three times on the vessel, finish. Now he is superintendent in company. And when chief engineer face some problem with main engine, when he sent [for advice], it is no any assistance from him, because - I understand - he not work with, like second engineer, with main engine. He do not know just practically. In this company also, have 3rd engineer superintendent. Yeah! (Vig SS HS 2E)

### All in the same boat? Communication, trust, and blame between ship and shore

The lack of understanding of the working environment on board vessels could lead to a range of behaviours that have the potential to hinder safe and efficient operations on board (see also similar findings with managers in land-based industries e.g. McDonough et al 2008, Greene et al 2001). In the course of vignette-based interviews we uncovered an array of examples provided by seafarers of the ways in which poor understandings, lack of trust, and lines of responsibility combined to produce problems. One example was provided by an officer who recounted a situation where the captain had been prevented by ill-informed office staff from changing course in bad weather. Once the member of staff had checked up on the captain's report by consulting another vessel they informed him that it was now alright for him to change course as he had requested. However, by this time the vessel had already encountered the related severe weather. The experience had clearly led to resentment and frustration. The officer described how:

We were facing a typhoon in the Pacific Ocean and the [...] Master informed the owners or charterers that I will deviate from this route, it's much safer. [...] In that time, in that situation the Master was not free to take the decision because of the company commercial pressure, because if he would have taken other alternative, maybe he could have taken more time [...] But the company [...] they want to make their port schedule, they don't want it.

But later on when we were in bad weather, then the company, this lady called; okay, I received a message from my Department or something, from her own sources, they told me that it's up to you because basically you are the persons who are in the sea. [...] She was relying on the information which was coming from another ship and we were stuck in, and that was a dangerous situation. She would not trust us until she got an information from another ship!

If something happened, then people will ask why the Captain did not take the correct route, but it's just for the namesake, this concept of the captain being the authority on the ship, it's on the papers, nothing else. [...] You have people who are untrained personnel who have never been on board a ship and they're not experienced, no teaching of this thing, they've never experienced a typhoon or something like that and you do a job which is basically like administrator. You can be administrative, but you cannot administer things or operations which you have never felt, never experienced. The people have done their administrative and big impressive degrees, they have their MBA and everything they have, but they don't have knowledge about the ship, so it's impacting seafarers. (Vig SS NT 14)

Where captains stuck to their guns in relation to safety matters, and in the face of the exertion of considerable pressure from ashore, seafarers often felt that it was regarded as a 'black mark' against them by the office. The following example is illustrative:

I remember like last year we had gone to a port [...] in West Africa. So the weather was... the condition was like, there was a lot of surging over there so it was very difficult for us to keep the vessel alongside. So after passing many ropes and keeping a good watch of the tides and tending the ropes, at times frequently, and we had to keep many other precautions, it was very difficult for us to keep to safe alongside. But the charterers they didn't want to understand this situation. Actually even he was aware that it was the case but he just wanted to offload the cargo because he was getting more freight over there. So [...] the situation was very difficult, [...] it was an unsafe situation, we informed the company, we informed the charterers, we asked the company to talk to the charterers because it was an unsafe situation. They brought extra ropes [...] but then still working over there in the stations, the ropes get snapped and the seafarer's life is like... within a second it's gone. [...] So... yes, once we had gone at anchor to avoid that, but then the situation was like we were getting messages from the charterers and the company as if the captain was just fooling around to the company just because he wanted to... just because he was lazy or something. (Vig SS NT 15)

Seafarers who completed the questionnaire indicated that they had experienced being prevented by shore staff from taking an action which they felt was in the best interests of the crew (29% of



respondents stated this) and/or of the vessel (18% of respondents). In the face of such data, many senior personnel in companies would argue that captains should always prioritise safety and that it is incumbent upon them to argue their case with shore-side managers. They might suggest that the company safety management system would provide support in this. However, previous work (Sampson 2011, Sampson et al 2013) has indicated that even in companies where safety is prioritised at the highest levels of management, and where a concerted effort is made to communicate the importance of safety across the company, there is nevertheless a drive from middle management ashore to meet targets (often linked to managers' own performance indicators). This pressure is frequently passed on to seafarers who, as previously mentioned, frequently feel vulnerable in their positions. The following quote is illustrative of how even senior officers can be afraid for their jobs and as a consequence feel unable to resist demands from superintendents or other shore-based personnel.

We Chinese captains and chief engineers are in a weak position [...] [on one ship] one Chinese engineer took over from a Russian one. When at port, the Russian chief engineer did not allow the superintendent to touch anything in the engine room. [...] The superintendent was not happy and complained. The Russian chief engineer said that 'it was not that I begged you to work here; I was invited to join this ship; if you want to sack me, go ahead; I do not allow you to touch that because there are risks involved in that; there was nothing wrong with my request'. He made the superintendent speechless. But we Chinese dare not do that. There is a market. If you do not want me here or I am not happy working here, I can find another place to work. Due to the development of communication technology, Captains decision making power is almost deprived of. Even if you want to abandon the ship, you cannot if the company does not give you permission. So this is common. (Vig SS LT 24)

Such employment vulnerability makes it difficult for seafarers to effectively resist continuous shore-side pressures particularly in less clear cut situations where judgements about risk are problematic. Some of these feelings and perceptions can be identified in the following illustrative quote:

Yes, I think that, [...] if we put them on board, they must stay for ten years and then come back and sit in the office. [...] Even if they understand [the situation on board], they try not to understand so that it won't affect their work or affect their performance. Yes, I think yes. Floating staff on board ship, many times they don't get [...] support. I'm not saying from the company, but yes, from many shore staff. [...] They have no idea and they are not doing their work properly. And they don't want to, for them we are just a contract worker who has been on contract and this is the way you have to do your own thing. But I don't think they, because they also have enough work so I think they don't actually relate to us. (Vig SS NT 33)

In this context, therefore, regardless of what is written in safety management systems, on posters, or in safety briefings, it is likely that decisions that are made in relation to operational matters may not always place sufficient emphasis on safety. Seafarers understood the pressures that colleagues

ashore were under, and were frequently sympathetic, but this did not help them operationally. They understood that in such circumstances there was little protection that could be expected by the vessel. As one interviewee put it:

Usually in the office the people who send this [instructions] they are sometimes not the top most officials. [...] Now this person, person A, he's under the authority of person B, Person B is telling others I want this thing because I have to answer to the charterers, or maybe I have to answer to the owners, so he's been pressurised by all of the charterers, he is pressurising person A and person A who doesn't know head or tail of it who only knows how to communicate, doesn't understand what the situation on ship, doesn't know what the time on the ship is, because most of the time the people on the shore, they don't know where is the vessel. Seriously speaking! [...] I understand that they themselves are stressed. How can you expect something from one person who is already stressed? He wants his stress to be relieved, so he is not understanding the stress he is giving to the person on board, he's totally unaware where the ship is because he's handling a number of ships. So it's not just a power thing, sometimes I feel that they should also be told this ship is in so and so place, this is the time difference, if that is required, because everything is commercial, everything is about money, everybody wants money fast. So I don't say that if this is the shore person's fault those who are sending mail, because they themselves are pressurised and they don't know [...] (Vig SS NT 18)

Pressures also derived from charterers, who were often regarded as even less concerned with the shipboard context than vessel company personnel and more concerned with profit maximisation. More questionnaire respondents (37%) described charterers as calling vessels at inappropriate times than described office personnel (32%) as doing so. When the responses of captains were considered separately we found that 54% of captains had experienced charterers calling them at inappropriate times, which was more than had received inappropriately timed calls from company personnel (38%). Such pressures were also regarded as carrying the potential to compromise safety as the following quote suggests:

There are people, not only agents, there are people in the shipping firm or company, owners, they don't have shipping experience so that many incidents they don't understand what is happening and they force us to do whatever the charter party wants to have, um, whatever there is, illogical things against the safety of the officers. [...]. The charterer [...] expects us, er, expects it from us and then when we complain to the owner, the owner supports the charterer and then we have a long argument with the company that "this cannot happen, this is not possible" and they don't understand because they're not ... their background is not on the sea, line, shipping. Just because of that. (Vig SS NT 55)

The theme of a lack of shipboard experience amongst shore-side managers was one which emerged strongly in the course of both semi-structured and vignette-based interviews. However there were also other factors that created barriers to understanding between ship and shore personnel and these

included the need for email communication which shore based studies have demonstrated to be problematic at times (eg Sproull and Kiesler 1986, Soucek and Moser 2010, Vollmer and Gasner 2005, Markus 1994, Friedman 2003, Sumecki et al 2011) and communicating in a second language.

More than three quarters (76%) of seafarers had experienced some degree of misunderstandings when using email to communicate with shore staff. However in 30% of cases such misunderstandings did not happen very often. Forty percent of seafarers stated that they sometimes experienced misunderstandings in relation to email and 7% stated that they did so 'very often'. In the course of semi-structured interviews seafarers explained how email is sometimes more difficult than phone calls because email does not allow you to pick up on signals that come with vocal expression such as intonation. Email is also more cumbersome inasmuch as although you may read it several times it does not lend itself to seeking clarification. In a telephone call, although they had less time to consider a matter, seafarers felt that they could ask questions and receive answers until it had been fully explored and they were also able to quickly identify when they had been misunderstood. In some situations where seafarers felt that they needed to protect themselves in the face of an instruction [which they felt could lead to a negative outcome on board] they preferred email, however, as this formed a more permanent record of the interaction that had taken place. This emerged quite regularly as a perceived benefit of email communication and it appears, once again, to highlight the extent to which seafarers feel the need to protect themselves whilst at sea. The following quotes are illustrative:

If anything goes wrong, that can be captain's evidence, even if the captain receives a call he will end up with a message saying, 'as we have spoken on the telephone', because just to leave no doubt that we had spoken, something about it [...] because if anything goes wrong, nobody from shore can put completely blame on the master of the ship. (Vig SS NE 08)

When you go to this kind of pinpointing, that thing helps a lot, when you have messages. So messages is very good. Even charterers, they talk on the phone, like Captain and charterer will speak on the phone, but then if something is agreed, the Captain or the charterer will also say that 'Send a black and white copy'. They can send a mail, and then only we'll start doing it. So you have evidence, you know. So evidence, mails is very good. (Vig SS NT 06)

When it's through an email it's in black and white. So you know, it stands as a proof. You sent this, you send it. It came from your email ID means you sent it. And if it came from my email ID I sent it, and then, I meant what I sent. So it's good. It's better that way. (Vig SS NT 05)

If you by phone and somebody tells, 'I tell you to do this' and he did that and there's a misconsequence, he'll go 'I haven't told you'. So in today's date, everything has to be in writing only. You do or don't do but you have to show the proof what you did. (Vig SS NT 09)

Yeah I think e-mail is good communication because it is black and white. Everything is recorded. No one can claim that she or he did not say this and that when it is in the email. So in case something happens, like what I explained previously, about the ship which touched the bottom, in that case if e-mail had been sent and decision was reached not through verbal communication, the captain would have been off the hook and the blame would be on the company. (Vig SS NT 13)

Even where phone calls were necessary for clarification the awareness of the need to protect themselves led many seafarers to argue that all calls needed to be backed up by 'black and white' instructions. As the following interviewee reflected:

Phone for clarification? I don't know. Because there is written proof [in an email]. I have had a couple of captains say this, the superintendent says please do this operation, but on the phone, and the operation which can cause the master to be arrested and fined, this is in American waters, not a 50/50 strict operation but completely an operation which should not be done ever. And the master said, 'Ok, give me written orders', so it is better to have written orders, this is for the master, because now the masters have to protect themselves, [...] if they can blame the master, the master has to have everything written, so emails is the best way. For clarification maybe a phone call yes, but then again there has to be a record. (Vig SS NE 03)

In some cases seafarers had either direct, or indirect, experiences of the need to get things in writing having seen what could happen when captains gave in to pressure that ultimately led to a problem. One seafarer explained how he had recently witnessed such a situation reminding him of the need to get instructions in writing. He described how:

I would say black and white would be better because... I've seen people backing off. Very recently in my last company an incident happened where ... er.. the client, he was forcing the captain to drop anchor over a place where it was not allowed to anchor, because of the pipelines and all. So he did not anchor for a few days, but then he was pressurising. So finally the captain said fine, okay, this looks safe and... the pipeline is say about half a mile away. So let's drop the anchor. The anchor dragged and it got stuck in the pipeline. [...] No, that's what I'm saying – that he [should have had it in writing] – that was a horrible thing which happened, no? If he would've taken that written... then he could have – because after the incident happened, he said that 'the client asked me to do it, and under his pressure, I did it'. He backed off, the client, he said 'I never asked you to drop the anchor' (Vig SS NE 14)

The defensiveness which many of these responses display is indicative of a deeply established problem in the relationships between seafarers and shore-based staff. Seafarers responding to our questionnaire indicated widespread experience of being blamed for things which they did not perceive as their fault. Not only did the majority of seafarers believe that seafarers are 'sometimes' (50%) or 'often' (25%) blamed for things that are not their fault but almost half of respondents (45%)

stated that they had personally been blamed for an incident on board which was not their fault. Eighty-five percent of respondents considered that when a company blames seafarers for events on board this has a negative impact on future relationships.

In this context, and in the context of more and more instructions being issued by shore side managers to seafarers on board, many seafarers had developed a strong sense of self-preservation. In some cases this led them to make use of whatever strategies they could in protecting themselves, their colleagues, and their vessel. In this regard email could be particularly helpful in not only documenting instructions for reference in the event of any future incident but also, sometimes, in rescinding inappropriate verbal instructions from shore side personnel (e.g. those that might endanger the ship or breach regulations). Seafarers who were unhappy with instructions that were issued from shore had learned that sometimes requesting an instruction in writing was sufficient for it to be rescinded. One seafarer put it like this:

Of course. I've seen many masters in front of me, 'please send it to me by writing if you want me to do this and I'll go ahead and do it' but it never comes back in writing. (Vig SS NE 23)

There were other perceived advantages associated with email including the benefits of being able to follow a trail of correspondence accurately and check back on communicative events to jog the memory or to be certain that something had transpired in the way that had been remembered (see also Friedman 2003). Some seafarers also suggested that emails could hide an angry tone in a way that a telephone call could not. This was particularly relevant given that, as previously mentioned, a relatively high number of respondents to our questionnaire (36%) had experienced shore-side personnel shouting at them. In 42% of these cases the shouting had taken place on the telephone. There were also other advantages associated with email and some seafarers highlighted the benefits of email in allowing additional supporting information to be sent with a message (a document or a photograph for example). However, it was overwhelmingly the case that the benefits of email were seen as being able to defend oneself on board in the event of instructions resulting in unwanted outcomes.

In terms of the drawbacks of email we also found some strong themes emerging in the course of our interviews. Some of these related to the timing of emails, work overload, and an expectation that responses would be quickly sent (see also Sumecki et al 2011). As one chief officer explained:

The ship's arrival and departure chooses no time. It could be in the morning or in the evening depending on a host of factors. And sometimes, when everyone is busy working on the ship as it is about to leave or berth, you will find tons of email waiting for answer and because you are busy you can't find time to answer them immediately. Or, sometimes, you can't respond to

email because you are very tired. And you don't want to respond if your mind is not working well. Now, if there is an urgent matter to be discussed, we usually call the office. And we explain to them why we don't respond at once telling them that we don't want our being fatigued and stressed out to affect our response. In addition, we also set priorities, like email to answer and those which can wait. (Vig SS IA 30)

Where vessels had poor email connectivity some seafarers described shore-based personnel following up emails with telephone calls at inappropriate times (and sometimes in an inappropriate manner) because they had not received timely replies to their messages. They also described other irritations such as being asked for documentation time and again. There was a suggestion that it was almost too easy for the office to ask the ship for information (repeatedly) rather than retrieve it from files themselves. One seafarer suggested *'There are cases where you send them some documents two weeks back and the office guys will not look for those but will just instead ask for it again. So we get fed up sometimes.* (Vig SS IA 54). In a similar vein some suggested that the ease with which emails could be sent had resulted in a loss of autonomy on board such that officers could often feel held up waiting for authorisation from office staff for actions which in the past they would have been free to take themselves. One chief engineer explained:

In engine room if there is a technical problem, explanations will have to take about one week or more. There are so many things that require explanation say, when overhauling a generator and there was a problem that comes up. So you feel pressured and stressed. Whether or not it is not your mistake, it is still your mistake. (Vig SS IA 65)

The burden of email was said to increase dramatically as a ship approached port. This timing is particularly unfortunate given that vessels may be scheduled to call in port at any time of day and night and that demands made of the vessel once she is alongside also dramatically increase in port. Thus the port stay is already a period where fatigue can present a problem. One seafarer explained how:

Because of the nature of email which is very fast and can be sent anytime of the day and anywhere if there is internet connectivity, the office sends so many email. And the volume increases once we are nearing the port; it seems that all departments in the office become very active and our work increases also. [...] The Finance Department will ask about money and expenses...and also ask us about how much ... cash allowance the ship needs, etc. [...] When the ship is coming to port, everyone [in the office] wakes up. And you find after departure, one day, everyone seems to go to sleep again. And there is no single mail coming. (Vig SS NT 13)

It is not clear how much the burden of such email communications could be reduced for those on board however repeatedly asking for information is one area where attention might usefully be paid by office personnel. Similarly taking greater care over to whom the email is sent and to whom it is copied would also prevent some unnecessary overload on board.

## Demands for documentation on board

In addition to communicative demands from shore staff there are also demands for a considerable amount of documentation to be produced and stored on board. Seafarers responding to our questionnaire overwhelmingly stated that there was an increasing demand for documentation on board. The vast majority of respondents (91%) stated that documentation was increasing with just two percent holding the view that it was decreasing and six percent suggesting that the level was stable. Most seafarers (59%) regarded increased documentation as having a negative impact on them although the majority (63%) also acknowledged that some paperwork had improved the safety of the vessel (see also Danish Maritime Authority 2015). In terms of its negative impact on seafarers most seafarers agreed that the increased emphasis on documentation was time consuming and had changed the nature of their work tasks (see also Knudsen 2009). In some cases they suggested that some paperwork could *interfere* with safe vessel operations. They also suggested that increased 'paperwork' placed them under greater pressure. One seafarer put it as follows:

Yeah, it looks like er... we're having more pressure. Yeah. You can observe me when I'm in the bridge, supposed to be... focused the navigation but still in the computer, doing some jobs [...]  
Yeah. There is a pressure always. Unlike before, thirty years ago, duty officers on bridge only focus with the navigation. Not too many... at the time we don't have computer. (Vig SS HS CO)

This time pressure was described as leading to short cuts in relation to the completion of some paperwork such as checklists. Another chief officer voiced the views of many when he explained how checklists were often routinely disregarded by seafarers:

It [paperwork] is also time-consuming. Imagine, the time that the jobs needs to be done is not increasing. That is fixed, right? Then you are being pressured to finish at a shorter period but the job is not getting less. Plus, the checklist, the mere fact that you are reading the checklist, adds to the time consumed. So the checklist is just a formality that is what is happening. Some officers, even though they are not reading it, they just keep on ticking. The checklist was designed in a way that you will not forget anything. If you are just going to follow the checklist then everything will go smoothly. However, that is not happening because of too much paperwork. What the ship staff is doing is just making it as a formality. (Vig SS IA 01)

Although many seafarers recognised that some paperwork was beneficial there was a general feeling that it would be better if documentation could be reduced on board. As one concerned captain explained:

They really have to reduce paperwork. This is the reason why the ship was unsafe. The officers for instance rush to have it finished. So sometimes, their look out duty is ignored because the mentality is that they want to finish the paperworks. So in trying to beat the deadline for the

paperwork, the safety of the ship suffers. The attention becomes divided between safety of navigation and paperworks. This should be changed in shipping. Paperwork need to be reduced. So for me, I have a standing order in the bridge for those doing the look out: no paperwork during night watch. You have to do that cause it is at night, needs more focus and attention. (Vig SS IA 18)

This seemed to be particularly strongly felt by seafarers on board ships where crews were reducing in size. The general perception of some was that the workload had increased and that paperwork was just a part of a more general and intractable problem. One seafarer described how:

I think paperwork has tremendously increased over the years as a result of fewer crew on-board. There are some ships now which don't employ a third mate. They are doing this to save money. And say without a third mate, his work is added to other people's work. In terms of safety, the diminishing number of crew has a great impact on safety. Because you have to work longer, your rest hour becomes shorter. Now, what you lack, you make it up with interaction with people and maybe you take more vitamins, but the stress factor is always there. What I mean is when you go to sleep, you don't really go to sleep at once. Your eyes are closed but you're thinking of the work you will have to do the following day. Life on-board is very difficult compared to life onshore. Onshore once you are done with work, you go home and have a rest. On-board, once you are done with work, you go to your cabin but you have not left your place of work. Anytime of the day, you can be called to do some work, or come to the bridge to address some problems. The rest hour period is always violated. There are times when I only had four hours of sleep. (Vig SS IA 30)

Finally, as with the issue of emails, trust also emerged as a theme in relation to the discussion of paperwork by seafarers. They felt that documenting actions on board, often with photographic evidence, was a form of surveillance by shore-based management indicating a lack of faith and trust in seafarers. One chief officer explained:

So many check list not and the requirements have increased. Say the ISM, it requires a lot of paperwork. Or when you need to report like the conduct of monthly safety meeting, drills and other checklist regarding tasks. Apart from that, we also have to take pictures of the equipment during maintenance. You have to explain also what you did and how it looked like before you did something to it. Then send that as an evidence of your job. So it seems that they don't really trust you with what you do on board. That is why there are too many papers on board. For checklist, I think it has indeed increased. (Vig SS IA 35)



## Conclusions

The research identified a considerable range of factors which undermine the relationships between ship staff and shore-based personnel in ports and in company offices. In relation to port-based personnel the study identified the very many ways in which shore-side staff exploit, coerce and 'blackmail' sea-staff (see also UK Chamber of Shipping undated) who are personally vulnerable to detention/imprisonment, fines, and company reprimands (potentially including the loss of their jobs). In relation to such interaction vessel agents were not found to be sufficiently effective in protecting seafarers or their vessels and the same was found to be true of bunker surveyors. However in most cases agents and surveyors were of *some* assistance to seafarers and could usually play a part in the reduction of stress.

In terms of interactions between sea-staff and the shore based staff of their companies the research identified a considerable gulf in understanding and a damaging lack of trust. Vessel staff generally felt under a great deal of operational pressure from shore staff. At the same time, sea-staff felt that they required protection from shore-based colleagues who would be keen to place the blame for any undesirable events on their shoulders. Poor relationships were further undermined by a strong sense of the lack of understanding amongst shore based staff of the ship and/or its operational context. These features of the ship-shore relationships resulted in sea-staff keeping back some details of particular events or activities from their shore-based colleagues even where seafarers were not at any fault (e.g. when bunker barges cheated their vessels). They also resulted in a range of defensive practices such as insistence on the receipt of instructions in writing.

## Recommendations

These preliminary recommendations are linked closely to the research findings and are intended to provide a starting point for discussion relating to the future improvement of ship-shore relations across the maritime industry.

- 1) A code of practice relating to a permanent ban on facilitation gifts should be developed and adopted by companies, trade associations, P&I clubs and professional associations across the world.
- 2) International agreements should be considered in relation to the conduct of port-based officials. These could be supported by a body which could be established to receive and publicise the numbers of complaints of extortion from seafarers by port, country or region.
- 3) Companies should implement a 'no blame' policy on board in the event of minor deficiencies identified (or manufactured) by port-based personnel seeking to extort money or gifts from seafarers.
- 4) Within reason, such 'no blame' policies (recommendation 3) should be supported by the adoption of a non-interrogative approach to senior sea-staff by company personnel.
- 5) Agents and bunker surveyors should routinely be employed in support of vessel operations.
- 6) Companies should consider collaborating in operating a public 'gold standard list' with regard to agents, bunker suppliers, and bunker surveyors<sup>10</sup>.
- 7) Companies should require agents to sign up to a code of practice relating to the deterrence of corrupt behaviour when representing their vessels.
- 8) Misconduct by agents and bunker surveyors should be reportable to a central point in relation to the operation of such 'gold-standard' lists of approved companies (see recommendation 6). Following consideration of any complaints from vessels a panel should consider removal of particular agents/bunker surveying companies from this 'gold standard' list.
- 9) Companies should issue clear instructions to Captains that they should never facilitate the premature departure of pilots from their vessels regardless of pilot priorities or needs.
- 10) Companies should make representations to ports when pressure is applied to their vessels with regard to vessel arrival or departure and they should encourage seafarers to report such practices at all times.
- 11) Companies should reconsider the use of temporary contracts in the employment of senior officers. In order to reduce seafarer vulnerability to inappropriate pressures exerted by port staff, senior officers should be employed in permanent positions.
- 12) Companies should take steps to address the gulf between ship and shore personnel. Such steps could/should include better training of shore based personnel, consideration of the likelihood of undesirable consequences that could be produced by the introduction of particular key performance indicators (KPIs) for shore based staff, a reconsideration of the basis for ship-

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<sup>10</sup> Although not a focus for our research ship chandlers could also be added.

shore communications (which could include the design of protocols for email and phone contact), the provision of 24-hour office working to support vessels operating in different time zones, a drive to reduce overall demands on ship staff, the reconfiguration of activities to allow for the prioritisation of the protection of seafarers on board in terms of workloads, fatigue, and stress.

- 13) Company demands for documentation should be minimised.
- 14) Checklists should be vessel specific.
- 15) Checklists should be limited to essential coverage and should not be unduly detailed.
- 16) Companies should recruit and train seafarers in a manner which allows them to place greater faith in their judgement and skill.
- 17) Companies should take steps to minimise the degree to which shore staff seek to remove decision making from on board staff.
- 18) Companies should pursue practices which are likely to improve the mutual understandings of seafarers and shore staff in relation to their respective jobs and working environments (eg shipboard placements for management staff without sea-experience, rotations of seafarers between shore and shipboard jobs, company seminars and training events etc).
- 19) Companies should seek to provide a working environment which better promotes honest exchanges of information about shipboard operations, constraints, and activities.
- 20) Companies should only recruit personnel (on board and ashore) with a high degree of fluency in a single shared language.

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# Appendix 1

