

Ship English

Sailors' speech in the early colonial Caribbean

Sally J. Delgado

Studies in Caribbean Languages



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, Sally, . 2018. *Ship English: Sailors' speech in the early colonial Caribbean* (Studies in Caribbean Languages). Berlin: Language Science Press.

This title can be downloaded at:

<http://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/000>

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ISBN: no digital ISBN

no print ISBNs!

no DOI

ID not assigned!

Cover and concept of design: Ulrike Harbort

Fonts: Linux Libertine, Libertinus Math, Arimo, DejaVu Sans Mono

Typesetting software: X_ET_EX

Language Science Press

Unter den Linden 6

10099 Berlin, Germany

langsci-press.org

Storage and cataloguing done by FU Berlin

no logo

For Mervyn Alleyne 1993-2016

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the archivists, collections specialists, and librarians at the many libraries and archives I have visited, including the wonderfully helpful and kind staff of the National Archives in Kew, England; the knowledgeable and generous staff of the Merseyside Maritime Museum Archive and Library in Liverpool, England; and all of the volunteers and specialists who gave their time to guide me through the collections at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. I also thank the many volunteers and specialists at the Barbados Department of Archives, the Whim Archive in St. Croix, the Josefinas del Toro Collection in Puerto Rico, and the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago who are working tirelessly and often in difficult conditions with little funding to maintain and promote the documents located in collections around the Caribbean. I thank all of these wonderful individuals for their time and patience as they communicated with me on site and at distance about material that was critical to my understanding of this subject, regardless or not as to whether this information made it into the book.

I would like to acknowledge the many many hours of work that Ann Albueyh, PhD, invested in her work as academic advisor to my doctoral dissertation that gave rise to this book. Her observations, suggestions, and guidance have been invaluable in helping me shape the final product. I am also hugely grateful for all the professional advice and insight she has given me throughout this process. I thank Nicholas Faraclas, PhD, another bedrock of my doctoral academic committee, whose work ethic, worldview and generosity have inspired so much more than my studies. I thank Mervyn Alleyne for guiding me in directions previously unknown to me and inspiring the confidence in myself to explore my hunches and find out where they led. I thank Michael Sharp, PhD, whose insightful comments and input as a reader were critical in enabling the completion of my doctoral degree after the devastating news of Mervyn Alleyne's passing in November of 2016. I thank the many professors and support staff at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus for their motivation throughout my graduate studies and their continued support of my research and professional development. I owe specific thanks to the English Department and the Deanship of Graduate Studies

Acknowledgments

and Research (DEGI by its Spanish acronym) for the financial support that their research assistant and teaching assistant positions, travel grants, and academic awards have given me throughout my time at the university.

I acknowledge the huge influence that Ian Hancock, PhD, has had on this book. His early work on creole genesis theory first suggested the idea and coined a phrase to describe “Ship English” a variety that was spoken by British sailors in the early colonial context (Hancock1976: 33.) Since I first contacted Ian Hancock with my ideas in 2011, he has given me valuable critical feedback, shared little-known resources, and offered valuable guidance in the development of my objectives and research plan. I have gained a great deal and continue to benefit from his mentorship and the many hours he has spent communicating with me about a subject that few people have an interest in beyond the acknowledgement of cultural stereotypes. I am very grateful to Ian for his time and particularly for his collaboration on a joint-presentation for the Society of Pidgin and Creole Linguistics that we gave in January of 2017 which also gave me the opportunity to explore his expansive personal library. I hope that this book might assume a humble place among that esteemed collection.

I thank the all the artists, scholars, educators, and professionals who have created and permitted me to access, adapt and reproduce images for this book. Specifically, thank you to Gustavo D. Constantino for a clear representation of the mixed methodology research model used in the introductory chapter. Thank you, Mandy Barrow, for all the work you are doing on ProjectBritian.com that helped contextualize discussion in chapter 3. Thank you to all the professionals at Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. for your dedication and work on summarizing the patterns of Atlantic trading winds that helped me simplify trading patterns in chapter 4. Thank you to the curators of the image collections at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London for access to George Cruikshank’s artwork. And thank you to the, still unconfirmed, author of *A general history of robberies and murders of the most notorious pyrates* (published 1724, London) for your representation of a mock trial used in chapter 4. I also thank historian Marcus Rediker for bringing this image to my attention and for his inspirational work on maritime communities.

Last, but perhaps most important of all, I would like to thank my husband and rock, Jose Delgado, for the millions of ways, large and small, that he has supported my research and my writing. Without his emotional support and his tireless optimism that I could complete what I set out to do, none of this would have been possible. I also thank my mum, Kathleen Dobson, who instilled in me a work ethic and sense of dogged determinism that has been invaluable in

the most challenging of weary dust-filled days during my time at the archives. Thanks to my brother, Nicholas Ruxton-Boyle for his encouragement and rent-free accommodation in London for some of my long-haul archive trips. I also thank my many friends, doctoral students, and faculty at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus, and the University of Puerto Rico, Cayey Campus who have supported me with their feedback and encouragement. Finally, many thanks to my two wonderful boys, Luis Daniel and Patrick, who fill my life with love and meaning and have shared their mummy with this research for as long as they can remember.

Abbreviations

ADM	Admiralty Records
ASSI	Records of Justices of Assize
BL	British Library
CO	Colonial Office
HCA	High Court of Admiralty
SC	State Papers
TNA	The National Archives. Kew, England

1 Sailors

This is the first of two chapters with a focus on socio-historical data that respond to research questions about the sailors and their speech communities. This chapter on the sailors specifically attempts to characterize the English-speaking sailors of the early colonial Caribbean in terms of their population demographics. It presents statistical (wherever possible) and qualitative evidence attesting to demographic characteristics of sailors and speaks to the capacity of this population to develop and sustain a distinct language variety. The chapter opens with a discussion of how sailors were recruited into their communities and subsequently presents sections that roughly correspond to census demographics: gender, age, health and mortality, family and marital status, social status, financial standing, place of origin, language abilities, literacy, and number of people residing in the ship community.

1.1 General considerations

Two problems characterize our misunderstanding about the people who worked and lived aboard sea-going vessels in the age of sail. The first is that we are not at all sure about who we are talking about, and the second comes from a perpetuation of stereotype in both popular culture and historical scholarship. The word ‘sailor’ carries with it a presumption of lower-class manual labor, and this most probably derives from the original association of the word ‘sailor’ with a seaman whose job it was to manage the sails (AdkinsAdkins2008: xxix.) However, this definition is no longer what we mean when we use the word “sailor.” In modern usage this term refers to a generic employed seaman and more specifically an experienced lower-class worker who is also explicitly an adult male, more appropriately correlating with the maritime rank “able seaman.” This new definition, although more inclusive in scope than the original meaning, still does not include all the men, women, and children of different specializations, ranks, and experience who lived and worked aboard sea-going vessels. For example, the group denoted by the word does not typically include the maritime slave, the child apprentice, the captain’s servant, the marine, the ship’s doctor, the washerwoman,

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the carpenter, the landsman, and the admiral. Yet these people also lived at sea for significant periods if not the majority of their working lives. In contrast, the restricted group of lower-class experienced adult male workers who were free to enlist (i.e., the able seaman) that we think about when we invoke the word “sailor” represents only one section of the population in a large vessel of the seventeenth century. Thus, this chapter necessarily opens with a re-definition of the word to include all of the people, both male and female, young and old, experienced and novice, in all of the professions needed and preferred to navigate, defend, maintain, service, and populate the floating communities of large and small vessels in the early age of Atlantic colonial expansion.

The perpetuation the sailor stereotype in both popular culture and historical scholarship is embodied by the term “Jack Tar,” notably, a term used by officers to describe enlisted men since the 1600s deriving from the ubiquitous application of tar as a waterproofing agent in wooden ships coupled with the epithet “Jack” referring to the common man (for more extensive discussion see Adkins & Adkins book *Jack Tar AdkinsAdkins2008*, specifically pages xxviii-xxix.) Perhaps, in part, because of this stereotype motivated by our restricted interpretation of the word “sailor” we have typically failed to recognize the importance of real sea-going individuals in the shaping of our local and global histories. However, modern scholars such as Michael Jarvis are trying to recover the agency of individual sailors with the recognition that “[t]he decisions, innovations, adaptations, and self-organized enterprises of largely anonymous individuals shaped colonial expansion and Atlantic history as much as imperial bureaucracies, state navies, chartered trading companies and metropolitan merchants” (Jarvis2010: 459.) That chapter aims to promote the recognition of these “largely anonymous individuals” by recovering some of the demographic data that might help us understand who they were.

Demographic data is in part recoverable, but the record-keeping of the community itself does not make this an easy task. Difficulties are compounded by the fact that these communities were transient, with high levels of illiteracy, and many individuals were often not considered relevant enough to remark upon in official records. Other individuals may have purposely concealed their identity, for example, the witness who explains that he changed his name because “he thought himselfe in ill companie” [ASSI 45/4/1/135] and the deponent George Trivattin, who “After the pirating was committed... Changed his name to Edward Thomas” [HCA 1/14/154.] Others took false identities to evade or complicate the efforts of impressment officers and for this reason, many physical descriptions accompany the given name for newly enlisted men, for example, “Peter Fox abt

25 years old, of midle stature, slender body short fingers Reddish hair & short, wearing at present a flaxen perriwig, smooth faite, a blark quick nimble eye” [HCA 1/101/411.] Transient sailors were also a difficult entity to determine, often navigating the undocumented frontiers between the mercantile and naval worlds (Fusaro2015) or the logging, turtling, and salt-raking labor of the Atlantic commons (Jarvis2010.) In short, in an effort to provide a comprehensive overview, the following sections on demography present data on sailors (redefined as all sea-going workers) that recognizes them as “highly complex *individuals* with recoverable life stories, shoreside ties, ambitions, and more self-determination than is usually allotted them” (Jarvis2010: 465–466, author’s italics) yet also acknowledges the limitations and complexities of the data from which my conclusions derive.

1.2 Recruitment

Sailors were typically recruited rather than born into their communities and the various methods of recruitment for manning sea-going vessels affected the resulting demographics of the community. While most commanding and many commissioned and warrant officers were professionals who sought placement and promotion at sea, many of the petty officers, militia, and operational crew would have been enlisted via methods involving some degree of coercion, manipulation, or outright force. Recruitment methods included voluntary enrollment; conscription; and the assignment of impressed, enslaved, or detained populations. Each of these methods is briefly discussed in the paragraphs that follow as a means to try and understand the common characteristics of the men they targeted.

The ideal method to cover the manning requirements of a vessel was by voluntary recruits, and this method was most successful for enlisting commissioned officers during the Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century. Privileged second and third sons among the landed gentry not eligible to inherit titles often sought commissions and favor from family members to help them advance in the navy whilst at the same time fulfilling their desires to travel and build reputation (Brown2011: 53.) In contrast, efforts to encourage volunteers for lower-ranked positions in the fleet was often less productive. The men needed for these positions would not enjoy the financial rewards and status associated with the ranks reserved for “gentlemen,”¹ and their work was often hard and considered menial.

¹“Gentleman” in this context refers to landed gentry and the adult males of wealthy families of the period without the intention of suggesting any personal respectability or strength of character.

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Yet, popular broadsheet ballads commonly pandered to the working classes in order to motivate voluntary recruitment. Some songs glorified voyages, such as “The honour of Bristol,” (cited in Palmer1986: 24–26) that highlights the achievements of the ship *Angel Gabriel*, a Bristol Privateer that allegedly fought with three Spanish ships in the late 1620s, killing 500 men and gaining glory and riches for the crew. Other songs were much less factual, such as “Sailors for my Money” a self-conscious ditty that proposes to its readers, “Let’s sail into the Indies where the golden grass doth grow” (cited in Palmer1986: 29.) Recruitment to the civilian fleets, including merchant and pirate vessels, offered more tangible incentives such as increased wages in times of high demand and shares in cargoes and captured goods; consequently, these fleets often enlisted more working-class volunteers than the navy.

Many working class sailors enlisted to escape poverty rather than to earn money. One volunteer states his reason, “not having any thing to Eat ...I consented to goo” [HCA 1/98/44.] Another volunteer, hearing drums beat to announce recruitment, joined a group of would-be recruits that “desired the master to give them some victualls” [HCA 1/53/67.] Hugh Bicheno explains such motivation, in his Bicheno2012 study of *Elizabeth's Sea Dogs*:

Only abject misery can explain how anyone would volunteer to crew the Queen’s ships. Although in theory sailors serving in the Royal Navy in 1588 were paid 7s.6d. per month, in practice they were paid late or not at all and had little prospect of spoil. The only certain payment was in kind: accommodation on board was better than sleeping in the streets or in dosshouses, and while the food and drink was usually rank and sometimes poisonous, the alternative might be starvation. (182.)

The need for bed and board may explain why some volunteers came directly from other ships without staying in port, as attested to in one logbook entry, “I brought along with me about 40 men out of the York who Voluntary offer’d their services” [ADM 51/4322/4] and a passenger account of how “The English [sailors] divided themselves, some aboard our ship, and some aboard the *Turk*” [445f.1/513.] Likewise, acute financial need characterises the testimony of another volunteer who “[w]as forced to hide himselfe and goe to sea for Debt” [HCA 1/11/110.] Indeed, poverty was likely the motivating factor for the majority of lower-ranked men on ships in addition to those workers whose voices are not recognized in official documentation such as female servants, child workers and indentured peoples.

Impressing sailors to man naval fleets in times of war was a common strategy that goes back to medieval times in Britain. The impress service (colloquially known as the press gang) predominantly targeted experienced sailors with offers of advanced pay and was conceived as a heavy-handed push to motivate volunteer recruits. Logbook entries attest to the extensive nature of such practices, for example, sailing in March 1691, “the *Mary* has presst all her men” [ADM 52/1/8] and The *Albemarle* receives “a Pressing having In 60 men” [ADM 52/2/5] on December 29 1691. Even on a smaller scale, the practice was routine, as attested to in the logbook of the *Antelope*, in a footnote that reads “to Day received 5 Prest men on board” [ADM 52/2/9] and an unnamed vessel that records how they “Came Downe here from London with 6 Prest men which ware putt on-bord” [ADM 52/1/6.] Although the figure would have fluctuated in times of war and national need, the National Maritime Museum in London estimates that by 1790, some 16% of sailors were forced by press gangs. This routine procedure was also used to recruit some of the higher-ranking warrant officers, for example, in his study of sickness and health at sea, Kevin Brown observes that “the majority of sea-surgeons and surgeons’ mates were pressed into service” (Brown2011: 25) and the instructions for impressment in a letter from James City in Virginia, dated April 16 1700 specifies “Warrants for the impressing pylots, carpenters, or any other Workmen, as shall be necessary” [CO 5/1411/660.]

The press was problematic however, and various documents attest to its inconsistent practices that coerced and exploited the poor. Although the press-gang was only meant to encourage seafaring volunteers, in practice they coerced landsmen, boys, vagrants, and convicts in addition to the forced conscription of seamen and port workers to complete crews of large naval warships in times of need. One letter dated March 1700 and signed by four representatives of the navy’s supply services describes how port trade is affected because “by the impressing of some of their men others are frighted from their duty” [SP 42/6.] Yet, local governments recognized that the dregs of their societies could be put to work in this way and invariably supported impressment officers if complaints made it to trial. This situation created serious problems of corruption, extortion and abuse in the impressment service and led to practices such as seizing men indiscriminately before extorting money to let them go with the threat of forcing them into conscription if the sum was not paid. Adkins and Adkins explain that poor men who were unable to pay the press gangs off were forcibly removed from their families, often without any recourse to bid farewell or explain the situation (see AdkinsAdkins2008: 43–58.) In a contemporary diatribe of the practice, Lieutenant Haversham explains to Governor Vernon that the system is rife with

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corruption. He explains, “he that is prest may be represented by the press officer as coming voluntarily, especially when the press officer can find his own accts [rewards] in it, which I dont doubt but they may too often contrive to do” [SP 42/6.] As testimony to such coercion, the court records of a trial in 1722 describe a recruit who “had a trick put upon him there and was forced to make a sort of sale of himself to [an] officer for cleaning the Debt” [HCA 1/99/124.] As a result of such corrupt practices, the press-gangs were fiercely opposed and feared in equal measure and their appearance in port towns often led to rioting, murders and assaults committed on both sides

Repeated testimony in court records between 1620 and 1750 refers to the profusion and violence of impressment. One deponent recalls how he was taken by press gangs at various times, and describes one of those experiences on land that occurred in 1660:

I met four press-Masters, and I might have shunned them, but durst not; and when we met, they ask'd me, Whether I was a Master, or a Man; I denying to be a Master, they replied, you must go with us; not so, said I; then they took hold of me, two under my Arms, and another two under my Hams, and lifted me upon their Shoulders, and carry'd me about three hundred Yards...they heav'd me from their Shoulders, over the Wharf, cross the Boat-thaughts, which was about five Yards high; and had not Providence preserved me, they had killed, or else crippled me [445f.1/26.]

The same deponent relates a different experience with another press gang in 1662:

No sooner we came to an Anchor, but a Press-Boat came on Board us ... they ty'd a Rope about my Waste, and with a Tackle hoisted me; making a Noise, as if I had been some Monster; and lower'd me down upon the Main-Hatches [445f.1/26-27.]

Other deponents talk about being beaten with sticks, tied with ropes, grabbed in the night, and duped into going aboard (see series HCA 1/99/11.) Yet most poor sailors had no choice but to accept the situation as normal. It was just another hard fact of life that some crewmates, like sailor David Creagh, were “kept in the Service by force and violence” [HCA 1/13/108.]

Although press gangs focused their efforts on the port towns of the British Isles, colonial ports were not exempt from impressment. The records of the Colonial Office include various letters from administrators complaining about im-

pressment activity around the Caribbean and on the coastal plantations of colonial North America. For example, one letter complains “against pressing seamen in the [Virginia] plantatons” [CO 5/1411/558] and another demands that “Captains shall not for the future be permitted to press” and urges that impressment officers to make sure that pressed men “be good sailors...and not to carry off any Inhabitants from the sd [said] plantaton” [CO 5/1411/624.] Hence, the press was likely to enlist a cross-section of lower-class workers in and around Britain’s colonial holdings, regardless of profession, nationality, or native language who would disproportionately represent lower-class men of working age. These men were enlisted and kept in service by force, potentially subjected to confinement in the putrid darkness of a ship’s hold, guarded by soldiers, and denied shore-leave for fear of desertion. Yet, these were the “volunteers” of the Royal Navy in Britain during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and our recognition of their recruitment and experiences is an essential part of their demographic profile.

Men could also be pressed into service directly from another vessel. This type of ship-to-ship impressment was abhorred by merchant sailors with hopes of returning to their homes after an extended voyage yet was common practice in naval recruitment and commonly known as “turning over” the crew. Documentary evidence regularly refers to this practice, e.g., one sailor writes “Yesterday My Self with the Rest of the *Foresights* Company were turned over” [ADM 51/4170/2] and various logbook entries attest to large numbers of sailors coming from other vessels: “This morn Turned 20 men over Into the *Essex Prize*” [ADM 52/2/5]; “we have... this morn Sent 30 men on board the Dunkirk” [ADM 52/1/5]; “turned 50 men on board the Barwick” [ADM 52/2/3]; and more extensively, “Received on board out of the *Arendall* men that she brought out of the Downes from severall shippes Viz the *Colchester* 27 the *Sohampton* 12 the *English Begar* 11 the *Woolwitch* 43 & out of the *Brittainia* ketch 50 & out of the *St. Michael Smaek* 29. In all 172” [ADM 52/2/5.] Even individual court testimonies reflect the movement of sailors in this manner, e.g., the description of one deponent as “a Jersy Man forced out of the *Success* Sloop in the West Indies” [HCA 1/99/89.] Colonial administrators were complicit in this practice, issuing warrants like the one dated January 1699 from Francis Nicholson, governor of Virginia and Maryland, who granted captain John Aldred permission “to impress one able seaman out of any ship or vessel who hath fifteen seaman or upwards” [CO 5/1411/665.] Indeed, turning over a crew was such a successful practice for manning a vessel with experienced sailors that pirate crews adopted the custom. George Bougee’s trial for piracy in October 1684 describes “30 and 40 men on board” captured from a

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taken vessel whose captain was on shore trading [HCA 1/12/1.] Yet, even in these non-negotiable transfers, captains attempted to coerce sailors to make declarations of compliance, e.g., in the September 9th trial records of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation 1725, one pirate captain is accused of forcing potential recruits to eat candles and to run a gauntlet of sticks wielded by the crew if they would not “volunteer” [HCA 1/99/5.] In the same trial, a witness testifies that the same “Capt Hunt... used him Barbarously threatening to cut of [off] one of his fingers for a ring he had on and Low beat out one of his Teeth & threatened to Pistol him if he would not sign their articles” [HCA 1/99/7.] Contemporary courts acknowledged this type of coercion, as evidenced by some surviving documents attesting to coerced impressment, to be used as certificates in case of capture, e.g., “Evan Jones Acknowledging of his forcing the Freeland to goe his surgeon” [HCA 1/98/181] dated October 29 1699. Also, in the trial of March 28 1722, court officials decided to try every one of the 88 accused pirates individually under the recognition that “many of the Prisoners found on Board were new entred men and forced thro fear to act the Part they did” [HCA 1/99/3/16.] Thus, not only naval fleets, but also pirate vessels were likely to have kept men for lengthy periods against their will and refused them any type of shore leave for fear of desertion.

Sailors who were turned over were not the only non-consenting crew members; indenture and slavery were also common routes to sea service. Piracy trials often concluded with a term of service for men found guilty, e.g., the men tried on 28 March 1722 were punished each with a seven-year term of indenture in the Royal African Company [HCA 1/99/174.] Boys and young men were also liable to be sold into indenture, e.g., one young man’s description that “he was in a Storme at Sea in a Shipp belonging to Captain Thomas Shaft who was his Master, and with whom he hath lived 5 yeares, having bin bound to him for 7 yeares” [HCA 1/12/79.] Slaves were also used to complete crews, particularly in the privateer and pirate fleets that were not subject to the same compliance with Britain’s 1651 Navigation Acts that required a crew to be at least three quarters British². The use of slaves in addition to indentured workers including vagrants, prisoners, and the destitute meant that non-consenting sailors were a core component of crews in the early colonial period in addition to volunteers, conscripted men, and detained workers.

²The 1651 Navigation Acts specifically applied to the returning voyages of East India Company Ships and restricted the employment of non-English sailors to a quarter of the crew. However, their general aim to minimize foreign (and specifically Dutch) involvement in the colonial trade was legitimized by this legislation which was more widely applied than its originally specified scope.

- – Gender

As previously acknowledged in the discussion of the Jack Tar stereotype, we tend to presume that all sailors were male and women's presence on board was limited to the fleeting visits of prostitutes when stationed in port. Whilst it is no doubt true that the majority of sailors (i.e., all sea-going workers) were male, there was, nonetheless, a minority of women aboard. The presence of some of these women emerges in fleeting descriptions, such as the deposition of Anne Hoy in 1695, rather ambiguously described as "Liveing in Ship" [HCA 1/13/101.] It may have been that Anne Hoy was a personal servant, indeed, the most common role of these women who lived in the ships was in the guise of officers' servants performing the work of food preparation, cleaning, and general maid's duties, and potentially, even carrying gunpowder in times of conflict when enlisted men were operating the guns (as suggested in Brown2011: 95.) As these workers were employed independently, they do not appear on the ship's payroll and their work has consequently gone largely unrecognized. Yet, there is recoverable evidence of these women's presence and agency aboard sea-going communities, e.g., Anne Foster, described as a maid servant suffering abuse from her employer [HCA 1/101/426,] "Marramitta (my Negore) Cook" serving on board the *Margarit* [HCA 1/98/100,] and Rose Baldwin, Jane Alcocke, and Elizabeth Cammothe who are described as servants aboard the *Elizabeth and Mary*. Interestingly, in this case, the deponent testifies that the three women "lay together in A Cabbin Standing neere the main mast between decks" [HCA 1/9/51] suggesting that there were allocated women's quarters onboard. Yet, this piece of information only comes to light because two of the women are deposed to give evidence in the murder trial of a man who was chained to the main mast near their cabin. In the same trial, William Dunston testifies that the light he saw "might be any of the men Servants, Mayd Servants or any of the Seamen" [HCA 1/9/51,] suggesting the notable presence of both male and female servants aboard the naval vessel. Similarly attesting to a notable female presence on board a 250-man vessel, one journal writer describes how "the cries of the women terrify'd those that were most inured to those tempests" [445f.1/516.] Such fragmentary evidence recognizes women's work among sea-going communities despite the fact that they were unlikely to appear in any official ship's muster or payroll.

Women worked as maids and servants yet they also worked as enlisted crewmen in the navy. Adkins and Adkins explain the long, if somewhat covert, tradition of women serving at sea as evidenced by "documented instances of young women passing themselves off as boys on both merchant and naval ships" (AdkinsAdkins2008: 182.) For example, Hannah Snell's publication of her experiences as a marine

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(published 1750) and Mary Lacy's experiences as a carpenter's servant and shipwright under the pseudonym William Chandler in the naval fleet, published in the compilation *The Lady Tars* (SnellEtAl2008: iv.) Popular ballads, stories and songs also testify to the tradition of female crew, exemplified by titles such as "Susan's Adventures in a Man-of-War," "The "Female Tar," and "The Female Cabin Boy" (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 181–182.) In short, in spite of their own efforts to conceal their presence, recoverable evidence of their agency attests to their service in the navy.

Women were also active in pirate communities as evidenced in court records of trials. Aside from the more famous examples of pirates like Anne Bonny and Mary Read whose agency was recognized during their lifetimes (see Rediker2004: 103–126,) there were potentially a whole group of women who collaborated in piratical activity and served aboard pirate vessels, yet for whom we have either no record, or only fragmentary and circumstantial evidence. For instance, the witness testimony of a prisoner on a pirate ship explains how he and his men were "put down into the Cabbin and the Scuttle or hatch shut, and Mary Critchett sat down on it to keep the Deponent from opening it" [HCA 1/99 Williamsburg, Aug 14 1729.] Another document dated September 28 1638 includes witness testimony of Jane Handall and Margarett Pope, both charged with piracy. In her testimony, Pope accuses "Jane Handall being Damamed if she Did not Helpp her Husband about the tyme aforesaid" [HCA 1/101/252] suggesting that the husband and wife team worked in collaboration. Yet, despite these few documented references to the agency of women on board pirate ships, admiralty officials of the era rarely noted the presence or contributions of women on board any English pirate, naval, or merchant vessel. However, as Murphy explains in his Murphy2015 conference paper on women in the navy, the English civil war in the seventeenth century forced many women to seek refuge on ships and these women likely worked in whatever capacity would gain them a berth on the ship. In short, we must accept that the demography of sailors' communities during this time necessarily included a minority of female crew and service providers beyond the caricature of the port prostitute.

1.3 Age

Determining the average ages of a population for whom documentary evidence is fragmentary and incomplete poses significant difficulties, yet, generally, we can assert that sailors were young. Peter Earle, a scholar who has done extensive work on age demographics of English sailors of the period under study, deter-

mines that the majority of sailors went to sea between the ages of 12 and 16 (see Figure 1.1 below adapted from Earle1993: 85.) Additionally, the likelihood of children serving on vessels was increased by the practice of sending vagrant children to populate the English settlements in Virginia (shipments sent in 1619 1620, and 1622) and also the custom of spiriting (i.e., kidnapping) children for work in the Americas, resulting in large numbers of children in the working Atlantic [Merseyside Maritime Museum, Information sheet 10: Child Emigration.] Testimony of teenage sailors abounds in court documentation, for example Stephen Bakes who went to sea as carpenter's mate at age 17 [HCA 1/13/97] and Thomas Francois de Fouret who served as a clerk in a man of war at age 16 [HCA 1/13/96.] Yet, even in their teen years, some sailors were considered too young for certain types of work; one sailors testified at the age of 17 that, despite his rank as yeoman of the stores, "being underAge he was never allowed to go on Board of Prizes" [HCA 1/99/148.] Other types of work were specifically designed for younger workers. Among officers, entry level was at 11 years for a volunteer first class or 13 years if not the son of a naval officer (AdkinsAdkins2008: 64,) yet rules were broken to permit younger recruits to acquire the 6 years' sea-service expected before making midshipmen level in the army. Among the lower-ranking sailors, the position of "Boy, Third Class" was created specifically for under 15s, many of whom appear in the court records, for example, William Muller, servant to an officer at age 12 [HCA 1/52/176] and Peter Killing, a boatswain's boy at age 13 [HCA 1/48/102.] Among the list of 98 pirates captured in one court record, three are described as "boys" and one specifically listed as "10 ys old" [CO 5/1411/826-27] suggesting that very young sailors were potentially on board. The youngest recruit I found evidence of in the records was Francis Longley of Jamaica deposed at "about 12 years of age" who explains that he set out on a trading voyage about four and a half years ago, making him eight years old at most when he joined the crew [HCA 1/52/104.] Although Earle notes that such very young boys were by no means typical (Earle1998: 20) there are repeated references to schoolteachers aboard naval vessels, for whom instructions were provided that indicate the young ages of their pupils: "When the hatchways are open, the youngsters should always be cautioned against playing inadvertently near them; and care should be taken at the same time to tighten a rope around them, to prevent accidents, if possible" (in a manual published 1801, cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 21.) It is a sad fact that some of these boys may have been recruited for purposes of sexual exploitation, as discussed in Burg2007's (*Burg2007*) *Boys at Sea* and in Fury2015's (*Fury2015*) discussion of the abuses that happened on the voyages of the East India Company. In sum, although the great majority of sailors were likely to have gone

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to sea between 12 and 16 (comparable to occupations on land,) younger recruits were also employed, provided for, and used to service the needs of the crew.

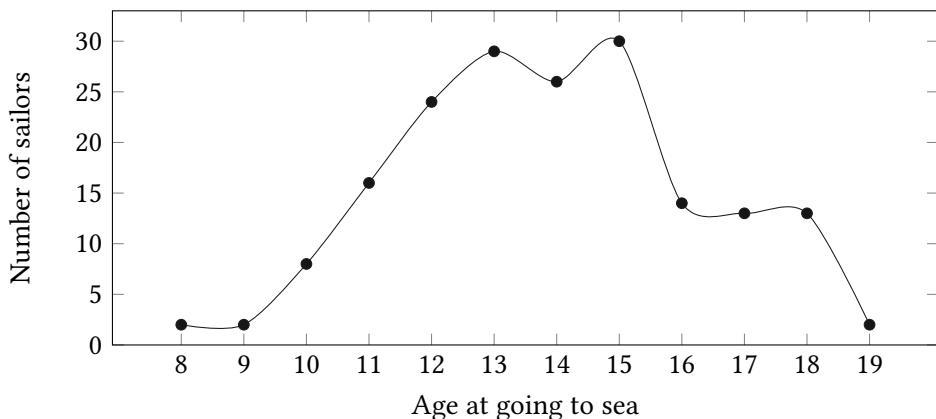


Figure 1.1: Age at which deposed sailors said they went to sea, adapted from the data presented in Earle1998: 85 Table 6, source: PRO, HCA 13/75-86

The upper age of sailors, as suggested by the few academics who have worked on this subject and corroborated by depositions in court documentation of the 1620–1750 period, is around fifty years old. At the age of fifty, and particularly if he had been at sea most of his working life, a sailor would be considered old. In his journal, physician Gilbert Blane notes:

[seamen] are generally short lived, and have their constitutions worn out ten years before the rest of the laborious part of mankind [manual workers.] A seaman at the age of forty-five... would be taken by his looks to be fifty-five, or even at the borders of sixty. (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 88.)

Archival records contain evidence of such professional seamen serving into their forties, e.g., the witness John Morphey, deposed at 46 years of age, who testifies that since the age of ten “was bred up to the sea and hath ever since lived as a seaman” [HCA 1/53/9.] Yet, if sailors could avoid the natural hazards of a life at sea, then it was entirely possible for them to serve until a more advanced age. For example, the HCA 1/53 batch of depositions dated 1694–1710 include one mariner “George Burgis of Boston in New England mariner aged about 67 years” [HCA 1/53/66] and another aged seventy [HCA 1/53/22.] The oldest deponent in the HCA 1/52 batch of court records dated 1683–1694 was seventy years of

age, and the oldest deponent in the HCA 1/51 batch of court records dated 1674–1683 was a Waterman named Thomas Lowell, aged eighty-six [HCA 1/52/104.] Thus, although the average upper age of working sailors might be around forty-five, some survived to serve into more advanced years. It is also worth noting that there was an increase in the recruitment of very old and very young men on the merchant fleets in the wartime periods of heavy impressment (mostly between 1689–1713) because these individuals were excluded from the press and thus protected from being poached by naval vessels seeking men to turn over. For example, sixteen-year-old Edward Lindsfeild deposed in a court case of 1692 that they sailed “with two, three or four boyes, feareing to carry men last they should be imprest” and Edward Round, age 76, gave evidence in the same case (cited in Earle1998: 200.)

The average age of ships’ crews is just over thirty-one, based on the ages of sailors for whom ages are recorded in 1,101 depositions collected by the High Court of the Admiralty between 1601 and 1710 (see Table 1.1) Yet this number may be inflated by the fact that men called to give evidence in court were often deposed due to their long experience at sea³. Furthermore, many of the court records derive from trials of piracy, in which we might anticipate that many crew members were recruited directly from another vessel and hence spent time at sea already. If such a bias affects the data, then an adjusted average might be slightly lower, potentially in the late twenties.

The age composition of the crew would naturally reflect the age demographics of different ranks. For example, the average age of captains and officers was between thirty-five and forty-four (Earle1998); the average age of shipmasters was between twenty-five and thirty (Walsh1994); and the average age of common sailors was between twenty-five to twenty-nine (Earle1998) although this last category of “sailor” defined by Earle as “mariners, foremastmen, cooks, stewards, boys, apprentices, etc.” (Earle1998: 86) was likely to have the most variation as it included the youngest apprentice to the oldest cook, a role often given to a disabled or aging seaman and equitable to semi-retirement on the ship. In short, evidence suggests that the lowest ranks were in their late twenties, middle ranking officers might be in their early thirties and commanding officers might be around forty years old, however, it is important to remember that all of these data only reflect enlisted and documented sailors, typically of the navy, and fail to acknowledge the servants and slaves that were also likely to have composed

³This explanation accompanies Earle’s data on median ages of sailors, officers and captains based on depositions in the collection HCA 13/75-86, a collection also included in my data (Earle1993: 86–87.)

the crews of naval, merchant, and independent vessels.

Table 1.1: The average age of seventeenth century ships' crews based on ages of witnesses deposed in court cases, sourced the records of the High Court of the Admiralty at The National Archives, Kew

Average age of deponents	Youngest deponent	Oldest deponent	Number of deponents	Nat. Arch. Collection (date range)
37.4	15	60	68	HCA 1/49 (1622–1633)
34.8	13	58	161	HCA 1/48 (1614–1620)
33.1	12	72	168	HCA 1/47 (1609–1612)
31.3	12	55	187	HCA 1/46 (1601–1607)
31.1	12	70	177	HCA 1/53 (1694–1710)
30.7	13	64	86	HCA 1/50 (1634–1653)
29.6	19	40	22	HCA 1/9 (1666–1674)
29.0	10	58	171	HCA 1/52 (1683–1694)
27.6	12	59	40	HCA 1/14 (1696–1700)
26.2	18	50	21	HCA 1/13 (1692–1696)
Avg.: 31.0	Avg.: 13.6	Avg.: 58.6	Total: 1,101	Total: 10 collections (1601–1710)

1.4 Health and mortality

Although generally, standards of personal health and hygiene were lower in the seventeenth century than we might expect today, maintaining personal hygiene aboard ship was particularly challenging in cramped and overcrowded conditions with restricted access to clean water. Despite this, the common sailor's lack of personal hygiene was often considered part of their low character; a sentiment echoed in modern scholarship, for example in Bicheno's observation that Queen Elizabeth's "Royal Navy was largely manned by the dregs of the population, pressed into service along with their dirt, parasites and diseases" (Bicheno2012: 262.) In response to health concerns, the Admiralty put measures in place to help sailors stay healthy in a challenging environment, such as the procedure of issuing seaman's clothes that came into effect in 1623 in an attempt to prevent the spread of disease (Brown2011: 31.) However, measures taken to address the health of common seamen were often underfunded and unsustainable, such as

the commission appointed for the care of sick seamen, established in 1664 and discontinued in 1674, (Lincoln2015: 145.)

Personal hygiene might have been improved, but it was the limited access to a balanced and nutritious diet that caused more sickness and disease than any other factor at sea. Contemporary sea-songs such as “The Sailor’s Complaint” reflected the impact of a poor diet and Palmer’s collection of songs explains that “food was the subject of perennial complaint by seaman. Rotten meat, sour beer, smelly water, cheese hard as wood, biscuits full of weevils: the litany was long, and usually justified” (Palmer1986: 72.) Ships’ logs and personal letters corroborate this situation, ranging from the mild complaint of “some bread decay’d” [ADM 106/300/16] to the more commonly recorded practice of condemning stores of food because of their poor condition, e.g., the description of bread, butter and cheese, “all rotten and stinking not fitt for men to eat” [ADM 52/2/5] and “two buts of beer Stinking...[and] 3 bushell of pease and on gall ould musty and roton” [ADM 52/2/3.] The end result of such provisioning meant that sailors often became, at best, “very Weak for want of Sustenance” [HCA 1/99] or, at worst, suffered from food-related disease and death. This may, indeed, explain the profusion of references to long, unspecified illness in contemporary accounts, for example the sailor who “with the sickness... Confined so 3 or 4 Months” [HCA 1/99/159] and another who “had been sick Seven or eight Months” [HCA 1/99/127.] Other accounts make specific reference to scurvy which became a pandemic among maritime communities when vessels began to make longer voyages and increase time spent at sea without access to fresh food. In such contexts of food scarcity, it was not unusual for the crew to resort to extreme measures. The curate passenger of a voyage across the Atlantic in 1666 describes the piteous situation that the crew found themselves in after seven months at sea, “after consuming all their provisions, to eat the cats, dogs, and rats that were in the ship... only five remained of four hundred men” [445f.1/486.] Yet, during a time of widespread starvation in the colonies and poverty among rural poor in Britain, the poor state of sailors’ health in relation to food security was nothing exceptional.

Sailor’s mortality rates are perhaps best introduced with the observation of a passenger on a transatlantic voyage in the late seventeenth century who comments, “tis a sort of miracle we should live amidst so many hardships” [445f.1/486] or the observation of one anonymous sixteenth-century sailor:

mariners are but slaves to the rest, to moil and to toil day and night...and not suffered to sleep or harbour themselves under the decks. For in fair or foul weather, in storms, sun, or rain, they must pass void of cover or

succour (cited in Lavery2009: 28.)

Personal communications attest to the routine presence of death aboard ship, for example one letter observing that “we make nothing of burying 3 men in a day” [ADM 52/1/8] and another author’s stoic comment “One Plamber is dead and we want two more” [T 70/1/10.] Logbooks give similarly routine accounts of death, for example, “by Accident one of our men was Drowned” [ADM 51/3797/1] “faire weather and Little wind. dyed some of our Sailors. The wind varyable from the SS Et” [ADM 52/3/7] and “got to St. Marys; where the men did mostly die” [HCA 1/98/262.] Many records refer to the death of unnamed sailors for unnamed reasons and so we can only assume that such high mortality was common. Bicheno supports this assumption, explaining that sixteenth century military victories were “marred by the death of hundreds of sailors from disease and want” (Bicheno2012: 259.) Peter Earle provides a potential baseline for mortality statistics among maritime workers, claiming that due to accident, disease and violence, “around five percent of Bristol’s sailors were lost every year” (Earle1998: 87.) In comparison, Jarvis’ work on smaller colonial communities with maritime economies suggests that “between one-third and one-half of all Bermudian men who went to sea died [at sea]” (Jarvis2010: 261.) Hence, based on the contemporary accounts of routine death and the concurrent opinions of scholars working on different maritime populations, high mortality rates characterized maritime communities.

The high mortality rates among sailors may have a link with issues of food security and personal hygiene, but they also likely derive from military conflict, the hardships of the work, environmental factors, and personal violence. Heavy casualties and loss of life among lower classes characterizes the type of military conflict of the era, and this was no different in the maritime communities that formed the heart of Britain’s fighting forces. Rival nations clamoring to claim the New World perpetuated various human rights abuses on all sides, e.g., “the killing of an English ship captain in Havana, merely for having requested water” [deposition of Henry Wasey, CO 1/23 cited in Hatfield2016: 12.] The hardships of work on a wooden sailing vessel also potentially increased mortality rates, particularly when, as illustrated by this logbook entry, “the ship was very old and leaky” [HCA 1/52/76.] Examples of labour-related deaths include “a man putting the main sheates out...drowned” [ADM 52/2/1] and “six men died at their pumps with hard work” (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 117.) Yet the ship may have been the safest place to be considering the range of environmental hazards that sailors also had to contend with including storms, yellow fever, malaria, smallpox, heat stroke and biting insects. The weather was also a major factor affecting mortal-

ity, e.g., "There hapned a very great storme...Ships bound from Barbadoes for England were all lost none of the said ships nor any of the Marrinrs on board them being ever heare off since to come alive to any place" [HCA 1/14/16.] Also, Gage1648's (Gage1648) survey of the West Indies describes some of its environmental hazards: "the abundance of gnats is such, which maketh him to take no joy in his voyaige, and the heat in some places so intolerable, that many doe die" (186.) In other accounts, horrific pandemics are described dispassionately e.g., "the small pox still Amonst us" [T/70/1216/13.] Even attempts at leisure were replete with danger in the sailor's everyday life, for example one description of how "the Mariners fell to washing themselves and to swimming" until one was attacked by a shark which "made them suddenly leave off that sport" (Gage1648: 20.) Lastly, ubiquitous violence aboard sailing vessels, either in the guise of discipline, piratical activity, or personal grievance, increased the mortality rates of sailors as evidenced in "The Petition of a woman who prosecuted a master of a ship, for beating her son to Death" [HCA 1/101/225,] and the pirate attack in which "his throat was cut and belly burst so that his bowells came out" [HCA 1/52/137.] High mortality was therefore not only an occupational hazard, but also a characteristic of sailors' communities that was exacerbated by cultural and environmental dangers.

Seamen lived in situations that were physically very close and this promoted the spread of disease. The lowest ranking men in naval warships were assigned 14 inches width to hang a hammock, although the spaces were alternated by watch and so this effectively doubled to 28 inches if the adjacent space was free (AdkinsAdkins2008: 188–189.) In such confined spaces, illness often spread by contact, e.g., in the seventeenth century large-scale outbreaks and epidemics affected naval fleets, such as the typhus outbreaks of 1625 and 1627 (Brown2011: 31.) The idea of sick ships' crews was no new concept however, throughout the middle ages epidemics of the Black Death that were associated with ships and trading ports of the Mediterranean (Brown2011: 2.) In fact, the spread of infectious diseases could be interpreted as a somewhat pejorative metaphor of language contact and feature transmission among port communities as in both respects the physical proximity of mariners are key to the process of transmission. To explain further, the bubonic plague spread via the bite of the *Pullex irritans* flea which had been infected by the black rat *Yersinia pestis* (more widely known as "the ship rat") that infested merchant ships and often came ashore even when the mariners did not. Proximity was critical to the transmission in much the same way that language contact is crucial to feature transmission. The rat did not have to be in close or prolonged proximity to port workers in order for the flea to do

its work; and it is possible that language features could similarly have jumped ship even when mariners remained on-board. In another example, Yellow Fever, itself named for the yellow quarantine flag that would have been flown on an infected ship, after being first reported outside Africa in Barbados in the mid seventeenth century quickly spread around the trading ports of the Caribbean, to New York in 1668, Philadelphia and Charleston in 1690, and Boston in 1691 in addition to a southward spread to the trading ports of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru (Brown2011: 116.) Just as infectious diseases proliferated among ships crews and spread outward to coastal communities and inland waterways before affecting land-locked areas, it is entirely possible that language features were making the same journey.

1.5 Family and marital status

Sailors were not always the single and free young men that stereotype perpetuates; they had strong familial bonds and many worked hard to provide for their wives and children. Jarvis notes that, particularly in Bermuda, kinship defined the ownership and operation of the short-distance trade that made up the majority of the island's maritime activity (Jarvis2010: 121.) Evidence of strong family ties, mostly retrieved through personal letters, suggests the value and influence of kinship among sailors, e.g., a letter from Evan Jones to his father that states "I believe you shall not hear from me again this 5 years...but my Duty to you and Love to brothers and sisters and service to my Uncle" [HCA 1/98/183] and another that refers to the writer's "dutey to my father and mother and my Love to my sisters and brothers" [HCA 1/98/182.] The words "duty" and "service" in such personal letters suggests not only a respectful tone in comparison to the word "love" used when referring to siblings, but also potentially refers to the older generation's investment in the voyage. Such an interpretation is supported by Walsh's observation that sailors of the English colonies were often bred into service at sea and supported by a father or an uncle until they married in their mid-twenties (Walsh1994: 28–34.) He further explains that, as a result, contact with and duty to the parental generation was paramount for many sailors, so much so that it was sometimes explicitly stated in ships accounts that wages should be paid to the sailor's father or widowed mother (Walsh1994: 34.) In this context, perhaps it is not surprising that, among miscellaneous documents of the Admiralty between 1620 and 1750, various letters addressed to fathers express duty and service alongside more traditional loving sentiments intended for sisters, brothers, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Sailors served at sea alongside family members. Jarvis2010 gives various accounts of small Bermuda sloops that were manned by kinship groups, and this practice also extended to larger vessels. Evidence of what seems to be fathers and sons serving together shows up in ships' muster documents, for example "Robert Hartley (1st) and Robert Hartley (2nd)" [HCA 1/99/3/4-5] and in another vessel, "William Williamson" (1st) and "William Williamson" (2nd) [HCA 1/99/3/11-13.] Some court documentation also suggests the commonality of fathers and sons serving together, such as the decision of the court in one Williamsburg trial on 14 August 1729 when "they agreed to discharge the deponent and his servant, who had all along passed for his son" [HCA 1/99.] Brothers also served alongside each other, such as James and Henry Adams who testify in a piracy trial 23 October 1699 [HCA 1/14/166] and Valentine Roderigo who testifies in a court of Bahama Island 1722 that he was travelling to join his brother in Havana [HCA 1/99.] Not only immediate kin, but also the wives of mariners joined their husbands at sea. Brown explains, that many wives of common sailors were "smuggled aboard without the knowledge of the officers, [in addition to] ...the wives of warrant officers, such as the gunner, carpenter, and purser" (Brown2011: 95.) The fact that the East India company forbade their officers from taking their wives to sea in the early voyages of the seventeenth century attests to the commonality of the practice as well (Fury2015: 16.) Court documentation also records the presence of wives at sea, for example: Martha Farley who accompanied her husband aboard a pirate ship and stands trial alongside him [HCA 1/99/8]; Elizabeth Trengove, described as a passenger of the *Onflow* accompanying her husband, Captain Trengove [HCA 1/99/79]; and the unnamed woman mentioned in the description of how one sailor "went down in a canoa with his wife" [HCA 1/99/7.] Additionally, the repeated use of the title "sea wife" in court appears to refer to women who accompanied their husbands to sea, for example: Anne Seayford [HCA 1/47/76,] Alice Reeve and Anne Fladds [HCA 1/47/312,] Elizabeth Leech [HCA 1/48/26,] Ellen Rippingham [HCA 1/48/27,] Margaret Weedes [HCA 1/48/29,] and Dorothe Cooper [HCA 1/48/240] who are all referred to as "sea wife" in court records. In sum, sailors may have been accompanied to sea by a variety of family members, particularly in small sailing craft owned and operated by kinship groups, but even in large ships, sailors may have worked alongside fathers, uncles, brothers and wives.

Even when unaccompanied by their wives at sea, male sailors of age were likely to be married. Miscellaneous documentation of the Admiralty collection includes numerous letters that sailors wrote home to their wives expressing loving sentiments, such as this example sent in 1607 that not only elicits communication

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in return, but also expresses earnest desire to be reunited:

My dere Love this is to satisfie you that I am on bord in gottenberg and came safe over..I am in very good health...and am thies day going with a small vessel for kopon hagen and hoping to get thither with five days and as soon as I kan get thether schall I write to my der Loving wife that my dearest may know how to send Letters to mee...[I am] thinking pon by dearest Love how god shi as to mee, and is me so alloen amongst a Compani of bad pipoll and when I doe soe Consider of it then it Cutts mee to the very hart...I am not at rest ... for I can get a llatter from my dere Love [signed] your derest Loving husband [HCA 1/101/527.]

This type of letter is often accompanied in the archival records with a reply from the sailor's wife with similar sentiments, for example "Deare And Loving husband... with Dayly wishes for your Company" [HCA 1/98/116]; "Deare Jacob [to let you know] How it is with mee and your Children" [HCA 1/98/118]; and "[I] shall ever prey for your safe retorne & am your ever dutyfull & loving wife" [HCA 1/98/51-52.] Despite the stereotype of the profligate wanderer, it is clear that many sailors advocated for marriage, as expressed in the advice to a friend drafted on the back page of the *Pideaux*'s logbook "when you gett home that I would advise you to Mary with your old sweethart Elizabeth Raglis and not to lust after other women" [HCA 1/99/50.] Another married sailor describes a friend: "hi wants a vry god wife but hi is afraid...of thorty yers of age" [HCA 1/101/528] before he requests his own wife to find his friend a suitable match. Although the majority of letters that survive reflect the sentiments of literate midshipmen and commanding officers, there is no reason to assume that less literate sailors on board did not also marry and cherish women in their lives. Indeed, evidence of lower-ranking married sailors is recoverable from Admiralty records, e.g., depositions such as Lewis Innes who refers to his wife [HCA 1/99] another anonymous sailor who testifies that "he hath lived at Dunkirk abt one year & a halfe and hath a wife & family living there" [HCA 1/52/100] and the simple testimony of another that "he had a family" [HCA 1/99/85.] Other documentation also corroborates the marital status of common sailors, for example, the letter that John Morris dictated on his deathbed after being savagely beaten by the ship's mate to his "Ever Loufing wief" entrusting her with the information and witness testimony to challenge the chief mate after his death and signed with the shaky initials of the barely literate [HCA 1/52/51.] Wills and inventories in Bermuda also list items that sailors gave to their wives (*Jarvis2010*) perhaps explaining the presence of a "a pair of women's shoes" among the contents of a sailor's chest itemized in

court [HCA 1/99/8.] Additionally, Brown notes, it was common practice for a low-ranking sailor to have his clothes and other personal possessions returned to his wife in the event of death at sea (Brown2011: 26.) Hence, although fragmentary and incomplete, there is sufficient evidence to show that not only literate classes of sailors married but also that many lower-ranking workers on the ship were married men too.

The wives of these sailors may have formed a critical support network in port communities. Some wives managed a variety of caregiving responsibilities. For example, Admiralty records of a sailor's trial dated 17 December 1687 describe "a Woman coming into Court, and declaring that she had kept his Child and been at 20l. charge" [HCA 1/12/111.] Additionally, among the miscellaneous documents about the ship's business, Thomas Shaffer, master of the ship *Exchange*, kept a receipt from Anne Morrey, wife of (sailor) Richard Morrey for the tuition and care of his daughter [HCA 1/101/543.] This same wife also housed and cared for Thomas Shaffer and his companion Richard Isby for which they paid "at least twenty pounds for their maintenance" and she later petitions the Admiralty for money expended while Shaffer and Isby were both imprisoned [HCA 1/12/99-110.] In the same collection of court documents, money is claimed on behalf of the wife of (sailor) Mr Lowman for expenses incurred by one "Master Porter" during his imprisonment in the Marshalsea navy prison [HCA 1/12/110.] These petitions attest to the financial capacity of sailors' wives, many of whom managed their husbands' business and household affairs during their extended absences (Jarvis2010: 115–116.) And, in a time where women did not typically manage finances and estates, one letter of 1699 addressed to Mrs Whaley sends "youer husbondes will which so is left wholey to you and yr Child" [HCA 1/98/171.] Such references suggest that these women were not passive victims of their husbands' absence but that they potentially assumed important roles in the management of their husbands' affairs. In addition, sailors' wives were often well informed of their husbands' movements and so were routinely called to give evidence in court, e.g., the deposition of Elizabeth Shaw, wife of sailor Edward Shaw on 20 July 1699 [HCA 1/14/161.] Even when not called to testify, wives were enmeshed in the type of maritime activity that ended in court trials. Alexander Wyatt, accused of piracy, is arrested with four condemning letters in his possession written in his own handwriting, two of which are addressed to Mrs. Elizabeth Lesters and Mrs. Elizabeth Guott [HCA 1/99.] Thus, evidence shows many sailors were married to women whose contribution to the maritime world they lived in extended well beyond the imagined role of the passive and poverty-stricken wife.

Evidence that poor sailors not only married but also had children abounds in

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Admiralty records. Such records include the many petitions for wages made to the High Court of the Admiralty from widows of slain men. Examples of such cases include the 1683 petition of Mary Bush, a boatswain's widow, described as "a desolate and very poore Widow with five Small Children" whose husband was killed in a quarrel with a commanding officer [HCA 1/11/111] and the joint petition on behalf of eighteen widows and their children whose husbands died in the military action of the *Nightingale*, including Elizabeth Sydoy described as a "widow having two small children in a miserable poore condition for the loss of William Sydoy her husband" [ADM 106/300/88.] Other records instigated by the sailors themselves refer to their children, e.g., wounded sailor James Kell's request for payment on behalf of "my wife and three children," [ADM 106/300/62] and that having failed, his request to return home "that I maybe inabled to main-taine my wife and family" [ADM 106/300/64.] Sailors who may not have been able to write requests or recruit others to do it for them have alternatively left us evidence of their marital status and children in court depositions e.g., "the Prisoner said he has a Wife and Family" [HCA 1/99/32,] "talking pathetically of his Wife and Child" [HCA 1/99/61,] "had a Wife and five Children" [HCA 1/99/92,] "used to lament about a wife and children he had left at Bristol" [HCA 1/99/133,] and "the prisoner replyed he has a Wife and Child" [HCA 1/99/167.] Unfortunately, many of these depositions that provide evidence of sailors' children also suggest the dire poverty that they lived in.

Measures taken to mitigate the poverty and wants of destitute sailors' wives and children also attest to the fact that they existed. Thirty-eight alms houses at Deptford, established circa 1671 proposed "To house poor aged seamen, or their Widows" and naval regulations stipulated that "A percentage of prize money was to be appropriated for the relief of the sick and the aid of the dependents of the dead" (cited in Brown2011: 41.) Individual commanders also made pledges to the families of their enlisted men e.g., Admiral Henrick Fleming who promised that in the event that one of his sailors "received some incurable injury or has lost his life, I shall with the greatest energies (in so far as God spares me my life) help him, his wife and children" (cited in Brown2011: 35.) The number of orphaned children of sailors in Liverpool was so great that the city took measures to provide for the population (Litter1999) and, even when children were not recognized as sailors' progeny, the number of children with congenital (hereditary) syphilis appears to bear witness to the maritime professions of their fathers in places like Portsmouth and Plymouth (Brown2011: 186.) In short, recoverable evidence from court records, letters, petitions and miscellaneous documents debunks the popular stereotype of the single profligate sailor and corroborates the findings

of scholars of maritime communities that sailors of all ranks commonly married and had children.

1.6 Social status

The social status of sailors was principally determined by their rank aboard the vessel. Although the size of a vessel and its purpose determined the size of the crew and also dictated the roles and therefore ranks of its enlisted men, the three-tier social strata established by the navy served as the customary hierarchy aboard most sea-going vessels of the early colonial Atlantic and Caribbean. This three-tier hierarchy composed a small (2%) upper class, a moderate (34%) middle class, and a majority (64%) lower class, based on the National Maritime Museum's data on a typical English 100-gun ship of the line in the late seventeenth century.

The upper class generally mirrored class structure in British society at the time and included the highest-ranking commissioned officers, such as admiral, captain, lieutenants, and master who were eligible not by experience but by nepotism and the distinction of being "gentlemen." Adkins and Adkins note that "a career in the navy was particularly attractive to younger sons who were not in line to inherit landed estates and titles" (AdkinsAdkins2008: 63) and thus many entered the profession with little-to-no experience or interest in maritime affairs. The incompetency of some of these commanding officers was sometimes evident to their enlisted men, e.g., one deponent testifies that he "verily believeth that the capt after his late business at Legorne, was incapable of bearing Command, and was governed wholly by the Lieut" [HCA 1/9/155.] In recognition of the problems that incompetence perpetuated in the naval fleets, commissioned officers had to pass formal examinations stipulated in the Test Act of 1673. In addition to knowledge of maritime affairs and navigation, this act required an oath of allegiance with recognition of supremacy, and additionally specified that the applicant must receive sacrament by the Church of England (AdkinsAdkins2008: 32,) thus perpetuating a small commanding class with religious and political uniformity. Once among this officer class, advancement came not by achievement but in accordance with the mortality rate of more senior officers. The upper class also included a subordinate cohort of non-commissioned warrant-officers such as the boatswain, purser, surgeon, gunner and carpenter who were enlisted for a predetermined period according to their professional capacities.

The middle class formed an ideological and physical buffer between higher-ranking officers and common seamen. It typically included three distinct groups of workers: firstly, petty officers such as midshipmen, coxswain, quartermaster,

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and gunners' mates; secondly, tradesmen such as armorer, cook, gunsmith, and sailmaker; and lastly, combatants such as master-at-arms, soldiers and sentries, collectively restructured as the Royal Marines after 1802. The rank of Boy First Class (essentially an officer in training) also pertained to this middle-tier. The significant number of tradesmen aboard the ship reflected the period in which little was mechanized. One passenger on a transatlantic vessel in 1667 notes, "it was pleasant to see our ship, where every tradesman worked at his trade, as if he had been in his shop; there were gunsmiths, armorers, butchers, shoemakers, tailors, coopers, and cooks" [445f.1/510.] Combatant personnel were also a potentially large group, e.g., the logbook of the *St Andrew*, a ship of 96 guns with an estimated crew of between 500 and 600, records on May 4 1693, "last night two companys of soldiers came aboard from portsmouth containing 120 men" [ADM 52/2/3.] Significant numbers of tradesmen and military combatants in addition to the supervisory workers, meant that this middle tier was potentially a large group of professionals whose work on board was not primarily connected with sailing but rather the services that the ship, its cargo and crew required to function and a composite unit.

The lower class included workers such as able seamen, ordinary seamen, landsmen, servants, and second and third class boys (over and under 15 years of age, respectively.) This group performed the majority of manual labor on board the vessel with respect to rigging and managing the sails, loading and unloading cargo and ballast, cleaning and keeping the vessel operational and watertight, rowing small craft, and climbing the masts to act as lookouts. The workers in this social strata were collectively referred to as "the men" or known by synecdoche that dehumanized them, e.g., "hands," or by locative phrases that prioritized the ship, e.g., "before the mast," "of the lower deck." Even among this group, the formal hierarchy was highly stratified, determined by experience and wages corresponding to each rank. Upward mobility, although possible within this lower-class tier as a result of gained experience, was minimal to impossible into the middle-class tier.

Some contemporary commanders, such as Francis Drake, encouraged a certain amount of empathy across social strata, for example in his requirement "I must have the gentlemen haul and draw with the mariners, and the mariner with the gentleman" (Drake, cited in Bicheno2012: 141.) And among communities of pirates, the common practice of granting shares to enrolled crewmembers, signing articles of compliance, and voting on major navigational decisions meant that the formal three-tier hierarchy was less rigid. One pirate encounter dated July 27 1699 shows the Captain's consideration of the crew before giving command,

“one of the Quartermasters came and asked the Captain whether he would to sea, hi demanded what the Company were inclined to doe, who was answerd, they were willing” [CO 5/1411/639.] Even the notorious pirate Henry Every was voted into command, as illustrated in the testimony “they all chose Capt Every to be their Commandr” [HCA 1/53/10.] Yet, pirates often took crewmembers unwillingly and this likely created a sub-category in the social hierarchy that was equitable to indenture or slavery, for example, John Spake, aged 19 years and taken by a pirate ship describes in his testimony dated 10 September 1696 how he was “a kind of a slave to wash their cloathes ... and socks and light their pipes” [HCA 1/53/13.] This sub-category may have been equivalent to the group of unpaid workers (women, indentured laborers and slaves) aboard mercantile and navy ships who were largely occupied with individual food preparation, laundry, and menial chores. Earle explains that masters could recruit poor “apprentices” unpaid and bound for seven to nine years, and even when apprenticeships were sought and paid for by fathers keen to get their sons into the navy, “apprenticeship amounted to little more than several years of unpaid drudgery” (Earle1998: 22.) Thus, even in pirate ships, rank determined by type of recruitment and assigned wages established social status and ranged from the highest-ranking commissioned officer to the lowest unpaid workers in a rigid hierarchy that mirrored British society at the time.

1.7 Financial standing

In theory, enlisted sailors were either paid a monthly wage or assigned an amount per voyage corresponding to their rank (see Table 1.2) Higher ranking officers could also augment their wages by commissions and a share in freight. In addition, any sailor might augment his basic wages by selling personal items, a practice so common that a charter for the Royal African Company in 1675 includes a statement prohibiting it [CO/268-1/15.]

Common sailors might seek inflated wartime pay on merchant vessels, but were more likely to suffer deductions in the guise of fines and purchases of clothes and drink. Earle notes “these deductions occasionally left a sailor with no pay at all, as could disasters as shipwreck or capture” (Earle1998: 82.) Furthermore, many of the common sailors who were enlisted and owed wages, if they had not already lost all their pay to fines, charges or disaster, were often paid intermittently, given insufficient money, or had their wages indefinitely withheld. Other sailors were not even on the pay-scale, such as newly-recruited boys gaining experience, women, indentured laborers and slaves.

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Table 1.2: Wages of sailors in shillings per month according to rank in the 1680s, shilling data sourced from Earle1998: 84 and converted using The National Archives' Currency Converter tool
 Currency converter tool available at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>

Rank	sh/mth (1680)	£/mth (modern)	\$/mth (modern)
Master	120	501.24	662.64
Mate (Petty Officer)	55–100	229.74 - 417.70	303.72 - 552.20
Quartermaster, Gunner's mate, Bosun's mate, Gunner, Bosun	30–40	125.31 - 167.08	165.66 - 220.88
Common Seaman	25	104.43	138.06

Maritime trading operations often suffered from a lack of solvency. Perpetual lack of money was one of the reasons that it became customary to defer sailors' wages; the other reason was that this practice, in theory, also deterred individuals from jumping ship or turning pirate. Wages owed was, therefore, often used as a case for the defense of sailors accused of piracy, e.g., the accused man who claims "He says he has served 16 or 17 years in the King's Service and ...he has Money due from the Company" [HCA 1/99/129] and another who is acquitted based the fact that "he had 14 months Pay due...therefore unlikely to be a volunteer" [HCA 1/99/47.] Such testimony corroborates Fusaro's observation that "delays in payments were the norm" in the international naval and merchant fleets of the seventeenth century (Fusaro2015: 21) and also suggests that the claim, "seamen were paid... at least six months in arrears" (AdkinsAdkins2008: 169) might be a conservative estimate. Daniel Goodall explains that as late as 1801:

The custom at the time prevalent in the navy was, that no person got any pay until he had been over six months in the service [and]..the first six months' was always retained until the ship was paid off...when a vessel of war was first commissioned her crew received no pay whatsoever until they had been twelve months aboard of her (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 365.)

In effect, the Admiralty's strategy was financially astute, hedging its losses in anticipation of high mortality rates, sailors abandoning ship or otherwise leaving service. However, in human terms, it meant that those enlisted sailors (and

their dependents) who could not rely on family wealth or private commissions suffered abject poverty, and this was particularly felt upon demobilization when they could no longer depend on a hammock and ship's rations to sustain them. In such situations, captains often aided in petitioning the Admiralty on their behalf, e.g., Captain James Jenefer wrote a letter dated 3 June 1674 to higher-ranking naval officials on behalf of his crew to "beg your favor that their monneys may be payed them as soone as can be" [ADM 106/300/23.] In another example of the same year, Captain William Hennesy's letter to the Admiralty asks "about the pay of the ship [of which] I know not, having received none as yet from the clarke... although demanded of him before" [ADM 106/300/35.] A few days later, on 17 January, he writes another letter pleading on behalf of three specific men who are being withheld pay, one of whom apparently as a punishment for leaving the ship to seek provisions [ADM 106/300/37.] Other service-providers, such as ship's carpenter Moses Porter, seems to accept the futility of asking for pay and instead seeks redress in the form of goods; he testifies "they having not paid him some Freight that was due to him" [HCA 1/12/111.] Sailors knew that delays in the payment of wages and prize money could last years and even when higher-ranking officials sympathized, their efforts were insufficient. For instance, Samuel Pepys, who petitioned for a range of reforms in the Admiralty in his position as Secretary to the Navy Board and later Secretary of the Admiralty, thought that it could "never be well with the navy till poor seaman can be paid *once a year at furthest*" (cited in Palmer1986: 62, my italics) a conclusion he was forced to make presumably as a result of the petitions he encountered on a daily basis, such as the description of one "horrible Crowd and lamentable moan of the poor seaman that he starving in the streets for lack of money...a whole hundred of them fallowed us, some cursing, some swearing, and some praying to us" (cited in Lincoln2015: 145.) In short, although higher-ranking crew may have managed adequately, the financial status of the common sailor was likely to be either at poverty level or in destitution as a result of low wages that were perpetually in arrears if they were paid at all.

Incomplete and indefinitely deferred payments led to strike action, collective petitions, social unrest, and rioting both aboard ship and in port communities. Yet there was little to be done. The navy in the 1660s was in turmoil after rapid expansion as a result of the 1651 Navigation Acts and the 1652 Articles of War and, after years of neglect and amassing debt, the navy owed 1.25 million pounds and some ships in commission went unpaid for 4 years (Lincoln2015: 144.) In some situations pay was outright denied, such as detailed in a case regarding a pilot whose services were commissioned by the *Essex Prize* but, after the work, "major James

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Willson & Capt Samuel Bush will in no wise satisfy nor pay the petitioner for his services done” [CO 5/1411/650.] The financial fallout of the Admiralty’s actions would impact sailors for more than a century, culminating in the mass mutinies of South England in the late 1700s. Yet even in times of peaceful service, tensions were anticipated in letters to the Admiralty from commanding officers, such as this one dated 12 March 1700 that warns, “there hath been but a small sume assinged them, and the course of payments being seaventeen months in arrear” [SP 42/6] and another’s observation that “most men discourse for mony” [ADM 106/288/31.] Such discourse often led to threatened or actual strike action, evidence for which is based on data retrievable from court depositions, such as the cook who states, “if he did not pay his work before that he could not come at it” [HCA 1/52/46] and the crew who “would not suffer ought of the shippes Cargo to be unlardon to lighton her ere they had their wages” [E134/34Chas2/Mich36.] The aftermath of this strike action was often actual or perceived mutiny⁴ and could end in imprisonment or capital punishment for the unpaid workers. One example of such a situation is described in a letter dated 10 December 1700 when a group of sailors claimed not only the wages due to them but also additional pay for being so heavily overworked on the journey:

they all demanded their pay for the time being on board ships, as likewize short allowance money for the time they were six to four mens allowance...
they [the Admiralty] could not give them more...at which they all made Genll mutiny...after 4 or 5 hours debate part of them surrendered themselves...the major part of them are in prisons (some of them being escaped) to morrow my lord intends to try them...they may come under the penalty of every tenth man to be hanged [SP 42/6.]

Certainly for the Admiralty, imprisoning men for social unrest and potentially even hanging them for mutiny was a more viable alternative to paying them. Admiralty records abound with petitions from sailors who have been imprisoned for indefinite periods of time, many without formal charges, who plead for charges to be brought and a trial date set before sickness and starvation resolve the Admiralty’s problem by bringing about their early death, e.g., one petitioner is described as “in prison two months aboute, without any procedure made against him...[and] is reduced to such condition as he is ready to starve” [HCA 1/10/110.] Another petitioner asks “that you here would pledge either to put a speedy period to your poor petitioners confinemt by bringing on his tryall or to admitt

⁴“Mutiny” was defined loosely at the time as any collective action contrary to superior ranking officials.

him to Bayle or grant him to accustomed allowance” [HCA 1/14/164.] Such harsh reality perhaps renders more understandable the decisions of the multitude of sailors who turned to piracy towards the turn of the seventeenth century, such as the men who are described in one letter who “got away with the ship - for their wages” [HCA 1/53/12.] Indeed, if sailors wanted compensation for their work, the only guaranteed way to get it may have been to take it by force.

1.8 Place of origin

1.8.1 Difficulties in determining place of origin

Determining sailors’ places of origin is seemingly critical to any study that attempts to determine the language forms they were most likely to use in their composite communities. However, the difficulty of obtaining this information is pronounced as there were no standard measures in place during the period in question to collect this data and there is a dearth of scholarship on the subject. Earle, one scholar who has attempted to investigate these communities, summarizes, “very little is known about the lives of these men. English historians have tended to neglect sailors...[and] little has been done on where the sailors came from” (Earle1993: 75.) Yet we do know that workers came to the ship through a variety of methods (discussed above in §1.2) and although some of these may have included data on collection points, many did not. Furthermore, data collection was often inconsistent or lacking the type of uniformity that enables critical comparison. To illustrate, documented with the court records of a 1693 piracy trial, some of the deponents are described by nationality, e.g. “Thomas Jones, An Irishman,” some by profession, e.g., Thomas Briant, “Gunner of the Charity of London,” some by port of origin, e.g., “Tho. Howlis late come of the Deptford,” and for others there is no data provided at all [HCA 1/13/11.] And even for the sailors who provided information on their origins, the data may not have been sufficient to determine what type of language forms they used, e.g., one sailor deposes that “his Father was a French man and his mother an Irish woman” yet gives no information about where he was raised [HCA 1/13/97] and another group of sailors are described whose origins and language use can only be guessed at based on the description of their recruitment that “they had been ship’d on board a portuguese vessel by an Irish Master at Lisbon who affirmed the sd vessel to be English” [HCA 1/99.] Yet sailors were a significant population group, estimated by Jarvis to have been at least 75,000 men for the British Atlantic alone by the end of the period under study (Jarvis2010); and this statistic does not include any women

at sea nor is it likely to include a whole subordinate group of servants, slaves, indentured workers, and non-enlisted children whose work is not reflected in official ship's records. Although deriving the origins and thus asserting the type of language spoken when dealing with such a disparate and large-ranging group of workers will always be problematic, the following two sections present the archival evidence and scholarship that speak to their potential places of origin within and outside the British Isles.

1.8.2 Sailors born in the British Isles

Large numbers of sailors on British vessels were likely to have been born in the British Isles and considered “British” for the purposes of naval records. I accept that “British” is problematic word as it refers not only to a geographical space but also a political entity and an individual ideology that has changed over time. However, I use the term “British” in its geographical sense to refer to the British Isles, including the geographical islands of Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales,) Ireland, and all of the more than 1,000 smaller islands of the archipelago. Litter explains, “the British have a long tradition as a seafaring nation and it would be unusual for a family not to include at least one member who went to sea among its ranks” (Litter1999: 125.) To get an idea of the demographic profile of British-born sailors, we can look to census data for some idea of regional distribution. The census of 1582 recorded the numbers of sailors in every parish in England (Bicheno2012) and another in 1792 recorded the same data. Notable trends are that the Northeast (Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire) and the Southwest (Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, and Gloucester) had consistently supplied large numbers of sailors; the Northwest (Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumberland) and London saw a significant increase in the number of sailors in 1792, potentially owing to the activity around the Thames and Liverpool; and East Anglia (shown as East of England on the map, including Suffolk, Norfolk, and Cambridgeshire) and the Southeast (Essex and Kent) saw a significant drop in the number of sailors between the two dates, see Table 1.3 and accompanying map in Figure 1.2 Thus, although this data is highly generalized, it does suggest that in the early colonial period under study, there would have been a large number of sailors from the Northea(left)st and Southwest of England who may have come from generations of seafarers involved in the coal trade and colonial trade with Ireland, respectively, and a significant and increasing number of new recruits from regions around the busy port cities of Liverpool and London. This assertion is corroborated by the data from over 1,500 depositions of individuals for whom place of origin is recorded and who gave testimony be-

tween the dates of 1620 and 1750 in the High Courts of the Admiralty. Over 70% of these depositions name port and river-trade towns of the Northeast e.g., York, Newcastle upon Tyne and Whitby; the Southwest, e.g., Dartmouth, Plymouth, and Bristol; and parishes of London, e.g., Deptford, Aldgate, Wapping, Shadwell, Greenwich, Whitechapel, East Smithfield and St. James' (based on Earle1998's (Earle1998) data using collections HCA 1/9-14, HCA 1/46-53.] Moreover, Earle claims that based on data in the court records collection HCA 13/75-86, three quarters of sailors were born within sight of the sea (Earle1993: 82) thus narrowing down the scope of probable places of origin to large coastal and river-trade towns of the regions indicated in the census data.

Table 1.3: Regional distribution of British-born sailors based on census data, adapted from Earle1998

Region	1582 sailor	1582 percent	1792 sailors	1792 percent
Northeast	2,180	14	18,197	21
East Anglia	2,952	18	4,820	6
Southeast	1,888	12	4,347	5
London	1,325	8	30,200	34
South	983	6	2,414	3
Southwest	5,461	34	11,658	13
Wales	790	5	3,296	4
Northwest	536	3	12,637	14
Total	16,115	100	87,568	100

Although maritime laborers came from ports all over the British Isles, London was the capital of the expanding Royal Navy, with Liverpool and Bristol serving as second-tier ports and Greenock, Hull, Plymouth, Southampton, and Portsmouth playing vital roles in shipbuilding, merchant shipping and slave trading supported by an emerging inter-colonial trade with bases in Leith, Dublin, Waterford, Cork, and Ballyhack (Jarvis2010: 259.) As a result of London's central role in an expanding maritime nation, the Thames and the Medway became prime spots for recruitment and impressment during the Second and Third Dutch Wars of 1665–1667 and 1672–1674 respectively (Earle1998) and this geographical imbalance is reflected in verse “Poor Londoners when coming home they / Surely will be pressed all / We've no such fear when home we steer, with / prizes under convoy, / We'll frolic round all Bristol town, sweet liberty / We enjoy” (cited in

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Figure 1.2: Regions of Britain corresponding to the regional distribution data in Table 1.3. CC-BY-SA <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:TUBS>

Earle1998: 202.) Hence, even in popular song, the heavy representation of London among the navy was recognized at the time, and thus we can surmise that sailors from other ports were represented in greater numbers in the merchant service and private enterprise. This may explain why the Southwest has become popularly associated with piracy. Individuals' depositions attest to the agency of Welsh men in pirate vessels, e.g., one letter dated 27 July 1699 from a navy commander describes how the pirate captain he encountered "was a Welshman on Glamorgan shire, his name John James" [CO 5/1411/638.] We know that Henry Morgan, Howell Davis and Bart Roberts were Welsh; Ben Avery was from Devon and Edward Teach from Bristol (Bicheno2012) and this trend of West Country pirates was driven into the popular imagination through the Devonshire setting of the fictional *Admiral Benbow* Inn of Black Hill Cove and the presumed Devonshire accents of characters in Robert Louis Stevenson1883's (Stevenson1883) *Treasure Island*. An association perpetuated by the subsequent Hollywood tradition of West Country accents among pirates in the age of sail, represented as an elongated and rhotic back vowel for comedic purposes. In sum, and acknowledging the potentially erroneous and simplistic influence of popular fiction, certain

regions may have been more heavily represented in different types of vessel; Londoners in the Royal Navy, southerners and westerners in privateering and piracy, and northerners in the merchant service.

The National Maritime Museum's "Nelson Navy Nation" exhibition proclaims that an average of 51% of sailors in the British Royal Navy were English over the period of 1688 to 1815. Recruits from the other countries around the British Isles included crew from Ireland (19%) Scotland (10%) and Wales (3%). Qualitative evidence from individual letters and depositions corroborates the presence of sailors from these regions in naval, merchant and privateer fleets. Captain Sharlands informs the Admiralty in a letter dated 13 April 1673, "for yet my dwelling is in Dublin in Ireland" [ADM 106/288/25,] the defendant in one trial of 16 August 1727 declares in his defence that "he came of a good family his father being a Merchant in Dublin" [HCA 1/99/8,] and among the court documents of another trial 17 of the 23 men accused of turning pirate are described as "Irishmen" [HCA 1/13/11.] Both Cork (Ireland) and Sandwich in Orkney (Scotland) are listed as places of origin for two of the names among a crew of 16 men on trial [HCA 1/99/177,] and Claire McLoughlin²⁰¹³ stresses the importance of how Irish and Scots neutrality may have facilitated trade between warring kingdoms as well as highlighting the ingenuity of Scottish merchants who took advantage of the situation in the early seventeenth century, thus potentially equipping English-owned vessels with Scottish crews for commercial advantage. However, depositions of British sailors between the period of 1665 and 1720 suggest that although Scots sailors were the largest minority of those deposed (92 depositions,) they were still significantly outnumbered by English sailors (1,241 depositions,) based on HCA 13/75-86 tabulated in Earle^{1993: 81}. This suggests that overall the National Maritime Museum's assertion that a majority of sailors were English still holds true.

1.8.3 Sailors not born in the British Isles

The English merchant service of the early colonial period employed significant numbers of sailors born outside of the British Isles, a trend that motivated one of the clauses in the Navigation Acts of 1651 requiring at least three quarters of the crew in specified inter-colonial trading vessels to be British. However, the meaning of "British" was reinterpreted under the scope of the Commonwealth to include any person born in any territory of the British Empire, typically of European descent but also including peoples of African and Indigenous descent. This might explain how Bermudian vessels could still be in compliance with the Navigation Acts when, in 1740 "black seaman occupied more than a quarter of the berths on most sloops [and by 1743]...at least half of the crew aboard all four

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Bermudian vessels in port were black” (Jarvis2010: 148.) The reality was that many of these African-descended workers, if born in Bermuda, were considered “British” under the terms of the commonwealth. This extended interpretation of what it meant to be British permitted merchant vessels to continue sourcing crew from various colonial locations around the expanding empire, most specifically the colonies of North America and the Caribbean. The navy also benefitted from the cheap labor derived from impressment in these regions; Adkins and Adkins explain, “anyone born before the [United States] Declaration of independence in 1776 was formerly a British subject” (AdkinsAdkins2008: 51) and therefore not only acceptable for employment as a British crewmember aboard merchant vessels, but also eligible for naval impressment. The presence of these American-born British subjects is evident in archival documentation. Various depositions refer to American places of origin, e.g., one deponent who is described as coming from Boston, New England [HCA 1/99/177] another who is described as “going from Virginia to North Carolina the place where he Lives” [HCA 1/99/6,] and a third who describes “his house in Carolina” [HCA 1/99/5.] These colonial recruitment grounds were rich pickings. Although colonial towns were small by comparison to trading towns like London, Liverpool and Bristol, they were necessarily more oriented to the sea. Jarvis estimates that sailors made up 20 to 25% of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia’s residents compared to only between 2 to 4% of London or Bristol’s population, and places like Nantucket depended so heavily on the whaling industry that the majority of residents were likely to have been able seafarers (Jarvis2010: 259.) Similarly, Walsh’s work on the composition of the merchant fleets of Salem, Massachusetts indicates that appreciable numbers of mariners listed in the Corwin account books from 1667–1678 lived in Salem or neighboring coastal towns in Essex County (Walsh1994: 32–33.) Such data indicate the significant contribution of sailors born in the colonies to British naval and merchant ships in the early colonial period and also serve as a reminder that we cannot assume that a “British” subject of the early colonial period was born in one of the countries of the political UK as we might assume today.

In addition to the wider scope of the term “British” that permitted recruitment from the colonies, both merchant and naval vessels routinely enlisted foreign crewmembers, and took on foreign servants, passengers and non-paid workers. Indeed, this context may have provided the background to one witness testimony about a British vessel that “there was no Englishman on board besides the captain” [HCA 1/52/100.] Qualitative data from court depositions attests to the commonplace nature of mixed crews in the British service, e.g., George Bougee de-

scribes how his crew acquired a doctor of unnamed nationality, “a greek and French boy... a negro man...[and] one Dutch negro man with his owne consent” in addition to “16 or 18 negroes” found among the cargo and a “negro man” that came on board to trade and was forced to remain [HCA 1/12/2.] Michel Angelo’s 1666 travel journal notes, “the people aboard were of several nations, as *Indians, Portuguese, English, Dutch, Spaniards, and Indian* slaves who followed their masters” [445f.1/509,] and Captain Thomas Cavendish “took with him *Santa Ana*’s pilots, the Portuguese Nicolas Rodrigo and the Spanish Tomas de Ersola, as well as three Filipino boys - and two Japanese brothers” (cited in Bicheno2012: 209.) Letters and depositions refer to sailors from Copenhagen, Denmark [HCA 1/14/201,] Ostend, Belgium [HCA 1/99/177,] and sailors from Germany who “hath been from Hamburge Eighteen years Constantly in the English Service both of Kings & Merchants” [HCA 1/98/262.] The nationalities, names and ports of origin of the many undocumented workers will never be known but we can also assume that they had a similar international representation.

Multinational crews may have resulted from what Fusaro describes as the common maritime practice of outsourcing crew recruitment, vessel hire, and sometimes entire enterprises dating back to the Eastern Mediterranean trade of the late fifteenth century (Fusaro2015: 8, 17.) Particularly in the merchant service, foreigners were very useful because many were exempt from navy impressment, thus potentially leading to a situation in which British merchant fleets were manned by a majority of non-British sailors during periods of conflict. Earle explains how crew shortages in merchant vessels were solved by enlisting men commonly exempt from impressment, specifically “a combination of old and young Englishmen, Swedes and Danes, Germans and Dutchmen, Italians, Greeks and Portuguese, Hungarians and Poles, Cypriots and Maltese” (Earle1998: 203.) Indeed, the very fact that the 1651 Navigation Acts needed to legislate for inter-colonial merchant vessels to maintain a majority of British crew indicates that it was common for such vessels to have a composite foreign majority. Yet even after the Navigation Acts restricted foreign sailors, there are indicators that records may have been falsified to reflect compliance, e.g., “virtually all East Indiamen...sailed with a *suspiciously standard* crew of 75 British subjects and 24 foreigners.” (Earle1998: 202–203, emphasis added.)

Political divisions may have been less important than the needs of the ship when it came to enlisting crew, and thus, despite intermittent conflicts with the Turkish, Dutch, Spanish and French throughout the early colonial period, sailors of these nationalities were commonplace in British owned and operated vessels. Deponent Edward Wye perhaps sums up the situation well in his testimony, “he

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did not love to undertake an Enemyie, and though they were Turks they were as good Men as they [the English]" to manage the ship [HCA 1/52/133.] Petty officers were also recruited from the opposition, e.g., one witness testimony referring to "a Dutch surgeon who being sometime among them advised them" [CO 5/1411/97.] Similarly, despite racist slurs directed at the French, such as the threat of one deponent that "he would throw all the French men he could meet withall into the sea" [HCA 1/52/133.] repeated testimony and documentary evidence attests to the commonality of French crewmen on British vessels, e.g., among the records of one 1722 trial for piracy, although the sailors' names are not accompanied by their nationality, the list of the 168 accused includes French names such as "Piere Ravon, Ethier Gilliot, Renee Marraud, Reney Froger Gabie, Renel Throby, Mathurm Roulape, and Pierre Shillet" [HCA 1/99/3/3.] In a separate list of 56 men acquitted of piracy, nearly a third (18 men) are listed under the heading "names of the french men" [HCA 1/99/3/180] and a ratio of just under a half of one small vessel's crew are French, described by one deponent, "a pinek about 100 tuns 14 men in her 6 or 7 of them french" [HCA 1/12/1.]

Pirate crews of the early colonial period, often recruited by force, coercion and opportunism, may have included significantly more international representation than in naval and merchant vessels in that they were not subject to the same restrictions dictated by the Navigation Acts of 1651. Court records show that sailors under suspicion of piracy were a mixed group, e.g., one crew had a majority of Frenchmen, but with three Dutch, two Martinicans, and one English, Norwegian, Swedish, and Afro-Caribbean sailor [CO 5/1411/826-7,] other crews include Greeks [HCA 1/99/94,] Dutch [CO 5/1411/98] and Scots [HCA 1/99/120] and many had significant numbers of free workers of African descent, e.g., the testimony of one accused pirate explains "the total of the men on Board were 152 of which 52 were negroes" [HCA 1/99/14.] Moreover, worthy of note are the number of depositions that refer to groups of French sailors in pirate crews, e.g., the prisoner who escaped with five French men [HCA 1/99/99,] another group who "went in the Boat 1 Eng and 5 or 6 French men" [HCA 1/99/167,] and the testimony of one recruit who expresses his intention, "being in earnest with Roberts to carry Some French Men with them" [HCA 1/99/157.] The fact that all of the above depositions referring to French crew derive from the 1722 colonial records may correlate with the increased collaboration among communities of English and French sailors, hunters, and woodsmen (remembered better as buccaneers) after Spanish authorities began to eject them from their possessions in the Caribbean around the 1660s.

By way of contrast, other pirate crews actively sought English recruits and dis-

criminated against other nationalities, e.g., one deponent testifies that “he was brought from this Dutch Galley according to the law amongst them of taking all English out off [of] foreign Ships” [HCA 1/99/124.] Another witness testifies that “twas against their Rules to take a foreigner” [HCA 1/99/88] and a captive of pirates who thanks providence when pirates took his vessel, “he had expressed himself extremely glad, because he had heard the Pyrates would accept of no Foreigners he being a Dutch man” [HCA 1/99/20.] It seems, however, based on witness testimony that it was specifically Irish recruits that were not desired by some pirate crews. One Irishman claims, “they refused because of this Country” [HCA 1/99/124] and another potential but unwilling recruit explains “he had advised him to pass for an Irish man, as he best Pretene to be rejected of them” [HCA 1/99/142.] However, it may be that—far from a general trend—these depositions all refer to one community of pirates operating around North America’s 13 colonies with a specific grudge against Irish recruits, as suggested by the testimony, “it was against the Pyrates Rules to accept of [Irish men,] because they had been formerly cheated by one Kenedy an Irish Man who run away with their money” [HCA 1/99/86.] In short, although some pirate crews may have been international and actively sought foreign recruits, others were potentially selective and thus the individual nature of the crew demographics in this community becomes extremely difficult to generalize.

1.9 Language abilities

1.9.1 Monolingualism

Evidence suggests that English was the default language aboard British ships and in wider inter-colonial trade situations. This is understandable in situations such as that of Edward Whittaker, when asked about the number and nationality of men on the ship his crew had encountered, replied “About forty or fifty *most of them English*” [CO 5/1411/27, emphasis added.] Indeed, despite the prior discussion about the potential international composition of early colonial crews, archival data on sailors’ nationality between 1665 and 1720 based on depositions in Admiralty court records [HCA 13/75-86] indicates that over 80% were English and therefore can be assumed to have been native English speakers (Earle 1993: 81, Table 4.) With such a majority of English speakers on board, it is a logical deduction that English was the shipboard language of instruction, discipline and social communication aboard British owned and operated vessels, and any foreign-born sailors would have had to learn English. This deduction is supported by

the many depositions of foreign nationals in the British court system without the use of translators and also Earle's statement that "language was not a major problem, most foreigners being able to understand sufficient English to do their jobs" (Earle1998: 202.) Also many commanders were monolingual in English, such as the captain of the *Swallow* who spoke a West Devonshire dialect and relied on interpreters for international communication (Earle1998: 21.) The widespread use of English among British crews also explains the Admiralty's suspicion in one court case where it was reported that "the prisoner pretended he could not speak English" [HCA 1/99/88.] and another Judge's dismissal of a court interpreter with the command "let him make his owne relation [in English] himself" [CO 5/1411/96.] Clearly, it was assumed that if a sailor was capable of serving in a British vessel, he was also capable of speaking English. In such a context, it becomes clear why popular stereotypes of sailors support the idea of them being monolingual English speakers, as illustrated in the following description of a sailor who "regards the customs and languages of foreign countries with a fine scorn, not unmixed with suspicion. He does not understand them; he refuses to learn their speech" (FoxSmith1924: 8.) Such monolingualism was also potentially perpetuated by the use of English as a lingua franca among Dutch-operated Caribbean entrepôts such as St Eustatius, Curaçao, and St. Thomas. (Jarvis2010: 355.) Individual deponents testify as to how English was widely known among Dutch sailors, e.g., "wee mett wth a Dutch ship...whoe hailed us wel having Inglish" [HCA 1/12/2] and "her master was Cornelius Jacobs who was a Dutchman & her Company were all English and Dutch and spoke English" [HCA 1/14/140.] Thus, English-born sailors could effectively command or serve on either naval or trading vessels in the Atlantic and Caribbean using only their native English.

Yet this shipboard English that monolingual sailors spoke and learned was not necessarily equivalent to any variety spoken on land. The variety spoken at sea was likely to have significant dialectal influence from not only London, but also the northeast and the southwest, potentially also including transfer from Cornish and Scots that were spoken in these regions. The number of Scottish, Welsh and Irish recruits serving on the ships would have also created a situation of wider language contact that potentially led to linguistic leveling (see Trudgill1986: 90–103.) Adkins and Adkins recognize that in addition to foreign accents from learners of English, "the variety of speech of men from different parts of the British Isles were extra obstacles to the attempts by petty officers to impose order" (AdkinsAdkins2008: 12.) Indeed, despite the fact that two specific Scotsmen served in the British naval service, the court officials who attempted to question them were unable to communicate; the court record reads, "Charles

Mackalerleyn & Daniell Maccay are two High Landers and Spoke such Gibberish that they could not be understood either in English Dutch or French so that they could not be examined” [HCA 1/13/97.] Yet the variety of English that these two men spoke was clearly enough for them to manage communication on board their vessel and they potentially represent a whole group of sailors whose English was unintelligible to those not familiar with the leveled dialect and variation among the ships’ communities.

1.9.2 Plurilingualism

Language acquisition would have been a natural consequence of the nomadic nature of those who served aboard sailing vessels in addition to the hazards of capture and forced service in foreign vessels. However, much evidence of the plurilingualism resulting from such situations is circumstantial, e.g., although there is no record of Patrick Murphy’s linguistic abilities in his court record of 1696, given his experiences of impressment to the Royal Navy from his native Ireland, serving aboard British ships for five years, and subsequent capture and imprisonment among French privateers four years [HCA 1/14/37,] it might be assumed that he was probably a native Irish speaker who also acquired English and French. It is also fair to assume that the “severall English Interlopers” captured and taken to serve a French vessel [HCA 1/12/4] acquired at least a functional knowledge of French, as did all the “vast numbers of English...that have been taken prisoners at Sea, and are forced to Serve in the Sea Service in France” [HCA 1/13/106.] Likewise, although there is no record of their language abilities, it may be assumed that some British sailors belonging to Dutch ships spoke some Dutch, e.g., John Harvey, described as “English man belonging to the Dutch shipp called the St. Peter” [HCA 1/9/16] and four British sailors who enlisted from Holland [SP 89/25/229.] Similarly, one may surmise that the four Englishmen who served a Portuguese master alongside his Portuguese crew and forty Portuguese passengers spoke at least basic Portuguese [HCA 1/99: The American: Weekly Mercury No.617, Oct 21-Oct 28 1731.] Such men who acquired foreign languages, either willingly or not, then became a useful commodity in international waters. David Creagh deposes how he was “kept and Detained by force and Violence and compelld to serve as interpreter on board a french Privateer... the captain whereof had taken him in a Poroquez [Portuguese] ship” [HCA 1/13/104] and Cornelius Franc claims that he was taken by pirates who “would not part with him because he could speak severall languages” [CO 5/1411/60.] Thus, language acquisition may have actually been an occupational hazard of life at sea for the common sailor.

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Sailors' foreign language abilities were also an advantage to international collaboration. The Caribbean (Figure 1.3) and particularly the Caribbean colonial context at the turn of the eighteenth century (Figure 1.4) was not a dominantly Anglophone region, and most ports shared trading routes with other colonial territories including those of Spain, the Netherlands, France, and Denmark. As a result, fluency in French, Dutch and Spanish would have been useful in bargaining with foreign merchants in free ports.



Figure 1.3: Contemporary map of the Caribbean. CC-BY-SA <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Nzeemin>, adapted

Plurilingualism benefitted not only commanding officers who might be interested in illicit trading not sanctioned by colonial embargoes, but also individual sailors who often carried items to barter or sell on the journey, a practice encouraged to mitigate the impact of wage arrears and promote a more incentive-based system (Jarvis2010: 148.) Furthermore, Jarvis describes the Atlantic commons⁵ as incubators of “polyglot seasonal communities, made up of English,

⁵The “Atlantic commons” refers to the public resources of the whole Atlantic region that were not explicitly owned, settled or regulated by any one nation at the time, e.g., salt deposits, shipwrecks, coastal forests, maritime trade routes, and sea-life such as whales, turtles, fish, and reefs (see Jarvis2010: 185–256.)

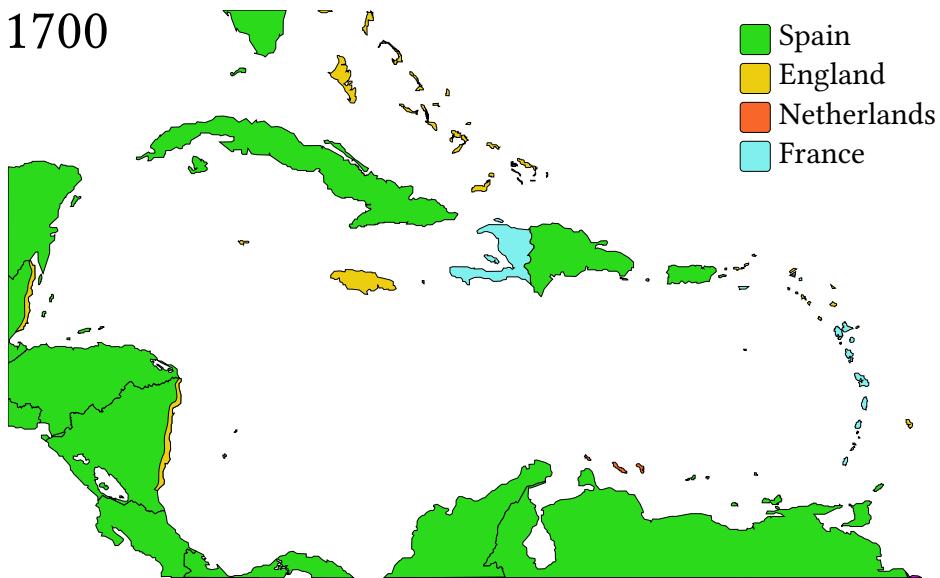


Figure 1.4: Political Map of Central America and the Caribbean in 1700.

Scottish, and Anglo-American men, Indian women, and Hispanic African runaways and slaves" (Jarvis2010: 220); Fusaro explains how difficult it is to determine the nationality of commercial shipping in the seventeenth century given the range of national interests and crew on board (Fusaro2015: 5); and Bicheno shows how navigational technology, shipbuilding practices, and trade routes were transferred among Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch and French fleets (Bicheno2012: 113.) Such collaboration would have necessarily required communication and therefore some level of plurilingualism in maritime communities such as evidenced in the fact that St. Croix's *Royal Danish American Gazette* printed stories in five languages (Jarvis2010: 138.) Evidence, albeit circumstantial, of such international collaboration abounds in the archival records, e.g., the logbook of the *St. Andrew* that refers to "the signal being made foure saile of Hollanders Came into our fleet" [ADM 52/2/2]; a witness deposition that describes "a french pinck 10 or 11 English men & 3 french boyes on board and theire they joined forces" [HCA 1/12/4]; another testimony from a commander who explains how "two Spaniards came... he not only gave them leave so to doe but also invited them on board his sloop & treated them very kindly" but when they robbed him, "he saw two Dutch Sails and made up to them and told them what had happened" [HCA 1/99 Jamaica, Aug 23 1738]; and William Wilkinson's 1690 communication with Royal African Company that pirate crews "passed by both French, Dutch,

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Brandenburgers, Interlopers, either *making merry with them as their Allies*, or not daring to take notice of them as Enemies” [BL/74/816/m/11/36/2, emphasis added.] In addition to documentary circumstantial evidence, we know that certain groups were embedded in international commerce, such as the Sephardic Jews, who “traded within and across national boundaries” (Jarvis2010) and likely added their linguistic contribution to the plurilingual context of international commerce in the early colonial Atlantic.

Pirate ships were more likely than others to generate plurilingual environments and also enabled sailors with ample time to converse to acquire new languages. Indeed, plurilingualism became, at the time, a marker of guilt and complicity in piratical activity, as illustrated by J. Moreland’s testimony, “must I be hanged that I can speake all languages” [CO 5/1411/56] and the accusation that one prisoner heard his captors “profanely Singing at suppertime Spanish and French Songs out of a Dutch Prayer Book” [HCA 1/99/139.] Atlantic historians Linebaugh and Rediker describe the pirate ship as “motley - multinational, multicultural, and multiracial” (LinebaughRediker2000: 164) and colonial historian McDonald, explains how “pirates served as important cross-cultural brokers in the early modern world” facilitating collaborative efforts among logwood cutters and local indigenous populations in colonial America (McDonald2016: 1.) Pirate crews also notoriously rejected national allegiance, described by one administrator, “they are governed by no laws of nation” [CO 5/1411/44,] an attitude corroborated by the logbook of the *Essex Prize* in the 29 August entry for 1698 which describes how “they [the crew of the *Essex Prize*] could not liarn by any means which way he was bound or from whence he [the pirate ship] came for they all told you they were bound to sea” [CO 5/1411/691.] This rejection of national allegiance, demonstrated visibly with the black ensign, was also likely demonstrated linguistically with the rejection of European standard forms of speech (Delgado2013: 157–158.) This rejection potentially took the form of new dialect genesis, code-switching, and the rejection of a single lingua franca, characteristics that pirates potentially transferred to their freebooting havens in places like Port Royal, Jamaica; Ile Sainte-Marie, Madagascar; Tortuga, Haiti; and the Isle of Wight, England, described as “a hub for corsairs of all nations” (Bicheno2012: 41.)

Among the profusion of circumstantial evidence that sailors were plurilingual, occasional direct evidence also attests to sailors’ language abilities. In a rare statement about linguistic abilities in court documents, a description of Charles Macarly states, “the examinant speaks English Irish and a Little Flemmish” [HCA 1/13/96.] Also, Earle’s extensive work on the demographics of English Sailors

1570-1775 cites evidence of Nicholas Lawrence who, despite being illiterate, “has been so much abroad as to be able to speak French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese” and his shipmate Peter Breton could “speake French and English and a little of the Lingua Franca” (Earle1998: 21.) Earle also cites information on the Bicknell brothers, who served on the privateer *Swallow* and both spoke Latin, French, Dutch, and “a little broken Spanish and Portuguez” (Earle1998: 21.) One sailor working at the end of the eighteenth century describes the plurilingual tradition of the seas in his astonished reaction to naval recruitment aboard British naval vessels, “to the ear was addressed a hubbub little short of that which occurred at Babel. Irish, Welsh, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Swedish, Italian and all the provincial dialects between Landsend and John O’Groats” (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 11.) Thus, contemporary accounts indicate that not only English dialects from around the British Isles were likely to have been present aboard ships, but also a range of languages, most notably from seafaring European powers yet also potentially from regions of the littoral Atlantic.

Evidence of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, and also unspecified African languages are attested to in depositions, letters and logbooks, in addition to Latin that most upper-class people would have been exposed to through formal education. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the geographical proximity of France and Spain and also the importance of these countries in the definition of the religious and political ideology of Britain at the time, French is the language most frequently named in accounts of on-board bilingualism, followed by Spanish. Indeed, speaking French had been a maritime tradition reinforced in the sixteenth century as French corsairs inspired the first waves of Elizabeth I’s privateering ventures led by Drake, who “became the heir of the French corsair tradition [and..]must have spoken French fluently” (Bicheno2012: 113.) Moreover, as Adkins and Adkins note, up until the eighteenth century, “French was not only the language of England’s principal enemy, but the language of trade and politics in many parts of the world” (AdkinsAdkins2008: 22.) Certain accounts indicate that it was the commanding officers who spoke French, e.g., one passenger account dated 1666 describes the captain’s language abilities, “he spoke to them in French, because they had put up white colours” [445f.1/511] and Captain Vaughan engages one man who “can speak nothing but French” and another who “speaks Walloon & French and no other language” [HCA 1/13/95.] The officers’ language abilities, most probably a result of formal schooling, was then potentially extended by contact with other languages in the rich environment of the plurilingual seas. For instance, one ship’s clerk is described in court documents thus, “he speaks French and Latin and some few words in Dutch but cannot speak

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yet any other language” [HCA 1/13/96.] The clerk most likely learned French and Latin through formal schooling, but the fact that he spoke basic Dutch seems to imply a more recent acquisition. Also, the use of the words “cannot speak yet any other language” (emphasis added) implies that the court officials anticipate further language acquisition as a result of his presence on the ship. Most able seamen, unlikely to have gone through formal education, may have also acquired languages by contact, e.g. the 1696 witness testimony of 46-year-old John Morphey who “hath sailed to and from severall places by the West Indies... and the reason why he can now speak a little French is because he sailed for the most part amongst other sailors ...onboard a french privateer” [HCA 1/53/9.] Such language acquisition may have been a natural process for many sailors who were in frequent contact with foreigners, as illustrated (albeit on a much smaller scale) by a journal of one passenger who notes how African natives of the coast “were to carry us to one of their towns, which in their language they call *libattes*, as we shall always call them in this relation” [445f.1/492.] So, even in this much more restricted context of linguistic borrowing, there is nonetheless an indicator that wider language transfer was happening that was potentially ubiquitous among multinational crews.

The extent of foreign colonies in the New World and the consequent emergence of a plurilingual transatlantic trade meant that language abilities were pivotal skills for many mariners of the age, as shown by the crew of the English *St. Peter*, who are described as “speaking Spanish & after that Dutch to them in the Canoa” [HCA 1/9/14.] And on a wider scale, the merchant fleets of an entire nation were served by the language abilities of their enlisted crew. Fusaro’s research into seventeenth-century Venetian court records “provides a powerful impression of the international composition the crews of the ships involved” (Fusaro2015: 16.) She concludes that foreign seafarers in Venetian fleets, many of whom were English, had considerable linguistic knowledge based on the fact that only in rare cases did any of them need interpreters in Italian courts (Fusaro2015: 17.) Contemporary allusions to interpreters also attest to the value of language abilities in contexts of trade, e.g., John Everett, deposed in court 1700, is described as “having been then shipped [from Curaçao]..to go with him as Pilot and Linguister in the sloop... to trade amongst the Spanish” [SP 42/6/53]; Diego Hossa, a native of Bahama Island, described as a “negro belonging to capt Higgingbotham” is later referred to as “a linguist or Spanish interpreter” [HCA 1/99 Bahama Islands 1722] and, in a Letter dated 11 January 1697 addressed to Capt Cornelis Jacobs or Capt Samuele Burges, “a mollatto,” presumed to have travelled with privateer crews, is described as a person who “Speacks verry good English

& Dutch” [HCA 1/98/75.] Moreover, in the absence of an interpreter, some crews sought to train one, such as the crew of one Portuguese vessel described in Arents’ journal, who:

finding it impossible for them to discover any thing more, because they understood not one another, resolv’d to set sail with the first wind...they thought good to bring two of them along in the Vessel; in hopes that they might learn the Portuguese language, or that there might some child be found out that might understand what they said [Arents/361 *The Six Voyages* 1678: 84.]

On the other hand, for English crews, trade with foreign nations was either heavily regulated or entirely banned and so knowledge that a sailor could speak foreign languages could potentially be used as evidence for their prosecution, e.g., in one court hearing, testimony is given against the five British men accused of contraband trade, “this said vessel commanded by Solomon Middleton who hailing you in Spanish and some of you making answer Espaniols” [HCA 1/99 Bahama Islands 1722.] African language skills were also viewed with suspicion, e.g., in the case of William Child accused of inciting a negro revolt on board because he “had been talking to the Negroes in Angolan Language all Night” [HCA 1/99/82, 28 March 1722.] A map of Africa by Aaron Arrowsmith submitted as part of a manuscript sent to the “British Association” in 1802 (Figure 1.5) although it dramatically illustrates the lack of knowledge of any territory beyond the coastal and river-basin areas of the African Continent, might provide some evidence of areas that experienced greater language contact with Atlantic maritime communities.

The two areas on the Atlantic coast for which more details are provided (both expanded) correspond roughly to the far west coastal areas of modern-day Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone and the more southerly Angola. This may suggest that the Niger-Congo language family was more heavily represented in Atlantic maritime communities during the period under study, specifically Fula and Mande languages on the far west coastal regions and Bantu languages of modern-day Angola, and potentially also Kru, Kwa/Igbo and other Volta-Niger languages of the West African coast that connected the two regions. The details provided for South Africa and Pacific regions (modern-day Mozambique and Madagascar) may suggest that Khoisan was present but certainly implies that pacific varieties of languages of the Bantu family entered the maritime language contact situation (Figure 1.6) In sum, English-speaking sailors often had foreign language abilities that would have been considered unusual for those in professions on land, whether that meant extensive single-word borrowing, a basic competency for trade, or near-native fluency.

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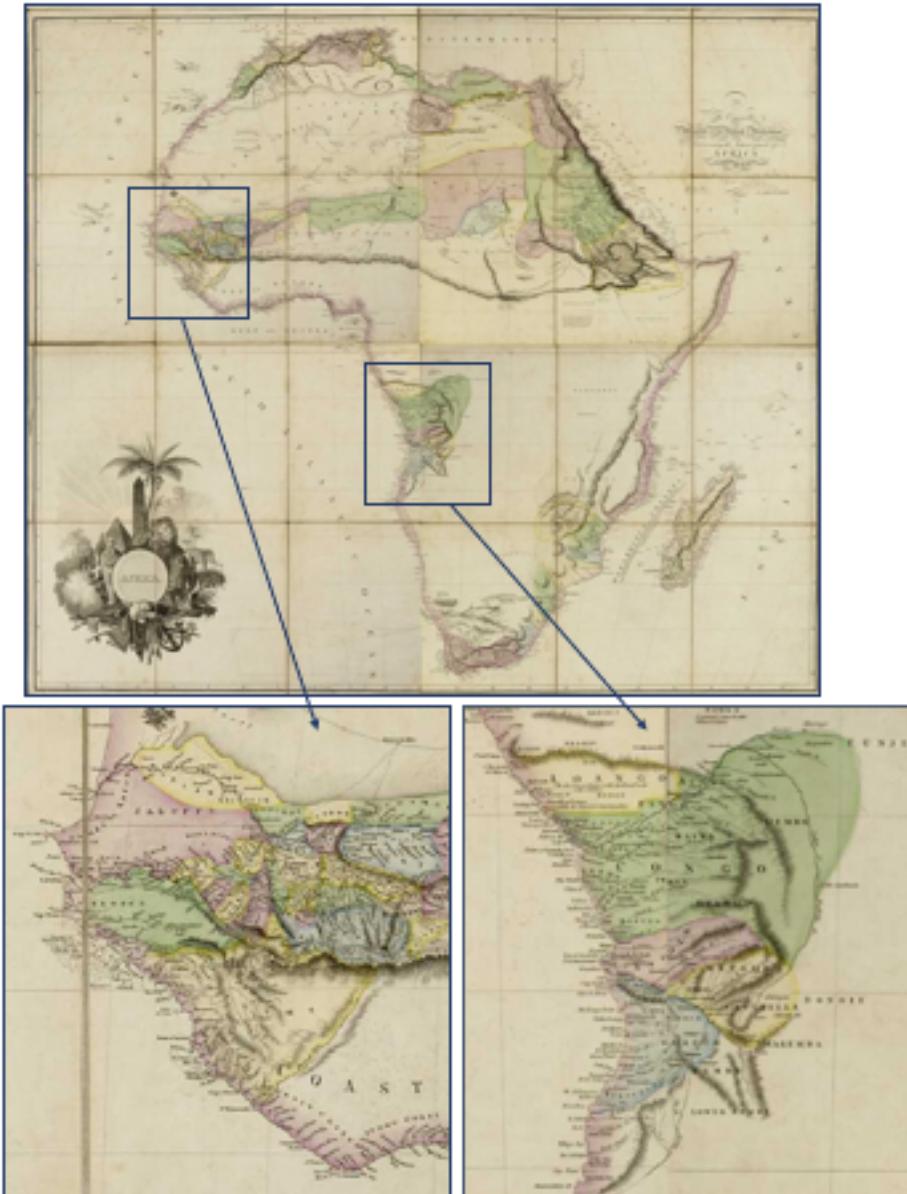


Figure 1.5: Historical Map of Africa from a manuscript sent in 1802 written by Aaron Arrowsmith (with added regional inserts). Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Creative Commons license CC-BY-NC-SA-3.0

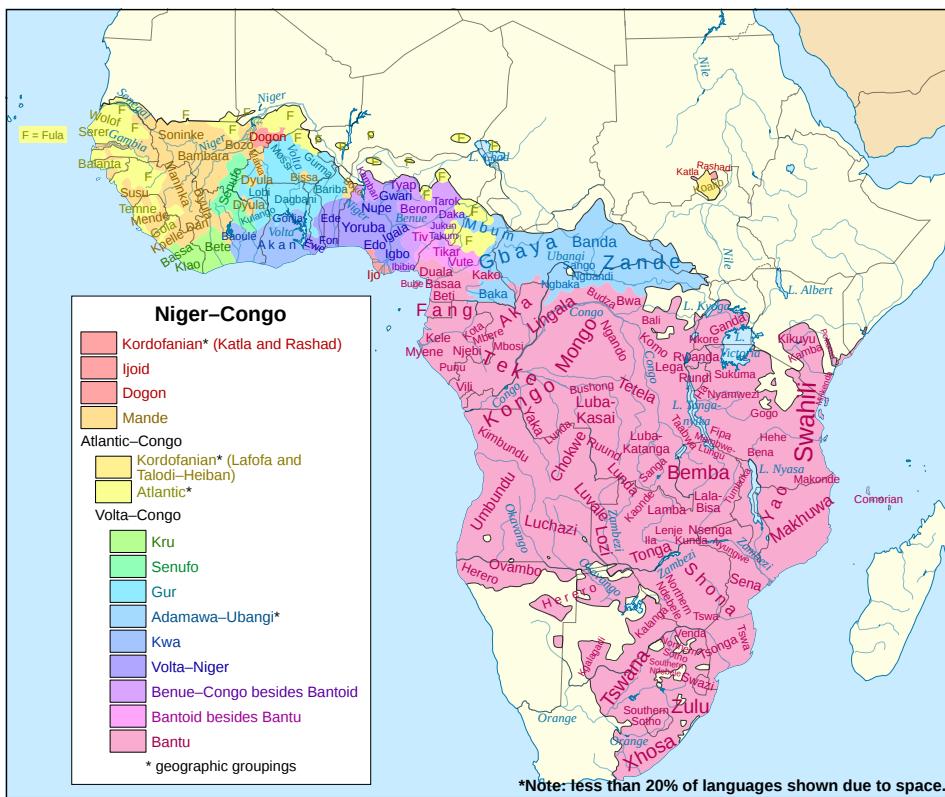


Figure 1.6: Map of the Atlantic-Congo languages within the Niger-Congo language family. © Eric Gaba CC BY-SA 4.0

1.10 Literacy

Despite their spoken competency, most sailors were not proficient in reading or writing in any language. Linguistic skill but poor literacy is illustrated in one deposition of a sailor, “sent to sea at a very tender age as cabin-boy and had no education...he could never read a word in a book...[but] he has been so much abroad as to be able to speak French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese” (cited in Earle1998: 21.) Indeed, most working class people in Britain were illiterate before the Elementary Education Act of 1870 made schooling compulsory, and common seamen were no exception to this general trend (Adkins2008: 345.) One rare court record of the testimony of John Morphey in 1696 includes an explanation “that he was examined at Plymoth and that he cannot write” [HCA 1/53/9,] and in a context when the illiteracy of sailors would have been assumed, this

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may only be provided to explain why the deponent did not put his mark on the document. Some type of personal mark would have been a routine procedure for enlistment and was also expected in court documentation to corroborate a testimony written by a court clerk. Pervasive examples of such personal marks in the court documentation include the shaky crosses penned by anonymous seamen unaccustomed to holding pens, legible initials, and also full names signed with a flourish (see Figure 1.7) Yet, even in consideration of Earle's claims that "some two-thirds of ordinary foremastmen and over 90 percent of men who held any type of office in a ship could sign their names" (Earle1998) the large quantity of testimonies marked with the letter <x> or initials compared to those signed with a legible name support the previous claim that the majority of sailors were functionally illiterate.

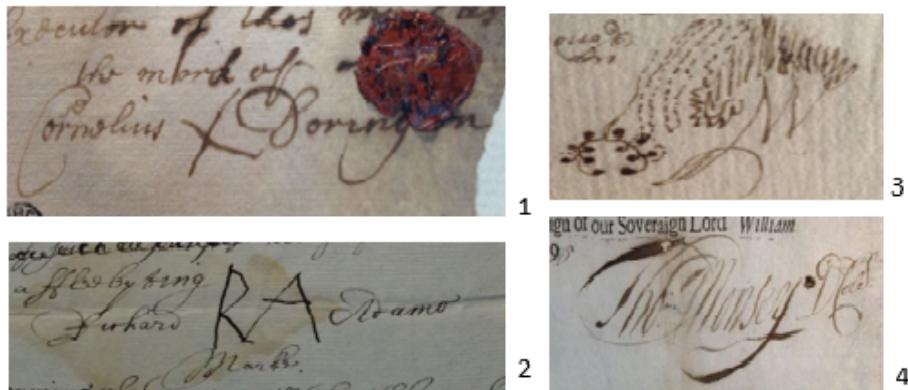


Figure 1.7: Examples of personal marks corroborating testimony in seventeenth century depositions and documents prepared by or on behalf of sailors, sources: 1. HCA 1/98/85; 2. HCA 1/101/220; 3. HCA 1/98/173; 4. HCA 1/98/62

Certain sailors who would have been expected to have some degree of literacy are, for instance, all commanding officers, the master, boatswain, purser, carpenter, shipwright, and boys first class. The duties of such positions would have required functional literacy, e.g., the shipwright's assistant who needed to prepare a certificate relating to the condition of the timber for Commander Beach [ADM 106/288/35.] Earle further explains, "a boatswain... had to be able to check manifests, read bills of lading and give receipts for merchants' goods delivered aboard" (Earle1998: 21) and sailors could be disciplined or lose their position if unable to complete the tasks of their rank, e.g., the Boatswain of the *Elizabeth* who was dismissed because he "write very indifferently, very slow, could not

spell" (cited in Earle 1998: 21.) Carpenters were required to be literate, but more importantly to perform extensive calculations, as were ships' officers in charge of determining nautical speed, distance covered and latitude. Thus, numeracy determined competency for many sailors more so than literacy and this is reflected in the educational provisions for wealthy families' children during the seventeenth century. Young boys on the threshold of service at sea were commonly removed from grammar school and placed in specialized occupational schools that were often run by accountants or retired seamen, bypassing the more traditional curriculum in Latin, rhetoric and grammar. Instead these boys were trained in the more practical skills of record keeping, mathematics and navigation (Earle 1998: 22.)

Indeed, such skills were paramount if the recruit had ambitions for a naval career and, as a result, numeracy and literacy rates were high among officers. Nonetheless, even literate officers were less exposed to texts and had fewer demands on them to read or write in comparison with standards of today⁶. To illustrate, in the 1700 trial of a Newfoundland chief officer of forces [SP 42/6] various ship masters were alleged to have read and signed a fraudulent certificate, yet, in their defense, Captain Fairbourne explains that "most of them declared that mr. B. handed the certificate to them, and that they were ignorant of the full contents thereof" seeming to suggest that their literacy was not equal to the comprehension of the full document. In another case, a literate sailor who witnessed the crime being tried in a court case in 1731 sent a letter to the court to serve as his testimony, yet this same letter is described as being "conceived in Terms not very intelligible" and therefore the author is sent for "to explain the meaning" [HCA 1/99/9.] Miscomprehension may have been perpetuated by idiomatic language usage, local dialect and non-standardized spelling⁷, but both these examples suggest that sailors considered literate by virtue of their abilities to read and write may not have been able to read or write across a wide range of dialects, registers or styles as we might determine full literacy today.

In lieu of formal schooling, common seaman may have learned basic literacy the same way that they learned languages, i.e., among crewmates in leisure hours. Jarvis supports this supposition by observing that "seafaring both facilitated and

⁶A comparison with the compulsory education of a wealthy nation in the twenty-first century is intended, with full acknowledgement of varying global standards of literacy and compulsory schooling.

⁷Variation in spelling would have been the norm during the early colonial period in question (1620–1750) before standardization of prestigious dialects were codified in prescriptive grammars of the eighteenth century and disseminated in the compulsory education of the nineteenth century.

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promoted reading: circumatlantic passages provided sailors with ample reading time, and their visits to major seaports helped them procure books” (Jarvis2010) a claim which supports Earle’s observation that “schooling was important, but a sailor’s real education began at sea” (Earle1998: 22.) Certainly, a small number of functionally literate lower-ranking sailors were likely to have been in great demand when it came to reading and responding to letters from home, and some sailors no doubt pressed these scribes to learn how to communicate with loved ones in their own hand. Some personal letters, or copies of such letters, written by common sailors survive in the Admiralty’s court papers, e.g., one letter produced as evidence against John Seaman and described “with the hand writing of the defendant...beginning with those words Deare father and ending with those words your obedient sone ... Seaman” [C 22/710/50] and four letters brought as evidence against Alexander Wyatt “who owned them to be in his own Hand Writing” [HCA 1/99 Bahama Islands 1722.] Other evidence survives in miscellaneous documentation, e.g., a series of short letters regarding the will of John Read in relation to his wife [HCA 1/98/92-96] and a personal letter dated April 13 1699 from “Abraham...[surname unintelligible].. serving aboard Captain Kidd’s vessel to his wife Margaret expressing “my Love to you and to our Child” [HCA 1/98/172.] The fact that some letters from literate wives also survive in the records speaks to the anticipated literacy of crewmen, e.g. one wife who writes simply to her “Deare And Loving husband” [HCA 1/98/116] and another who gives evidence of a continued communication in her comment “I have sent you two letters before this and have Received One” [HCA 1/98/118.] Some surviving seamen’s journals also contain samples of writing, e.g., the images and notes in Basil Ringrose’s journal, dated 1682 [The National Maritime Museum, exhibit P/32] and the comments on Charles II’s return from exile in 1660 in Edward Barlow’s journal, in which the surprisingly literate seaman describes how people saluted the returning king “as though they were all glad to bear him up and have the happiness to welcome home the true sovereign...for whom the land had so long grieved” [The National Maritime Museum, exhibit JOD/4f.24.] In conclusion, although numerous indicators suggest that the majority of common seamen were illiterate, rates of literacy among officer ranks were high and there is also evidence that some common sailors were literate, potentially for the purposes of their jobs, and these likely served as readers, writers, and teachers to illiterate crewmates.

1.11 Number of sailors on the ships

Determining the likely number of sailors on ships during the early colonial period in the Atlantic and Caribbean is feasible, but only through analysis of incomplete and fragmentary data. Muster rolls detailing crew lists for British naval vessels did not appear until the mid-eighteenth century (Litter1999) and the Lloyd's registers of vessels that may have also detailed crew numbers was not established until about the same time (Litter1999: 191.) However, individual ships kept records on their crews, some of which survive in Admiralty archives, and from such miscellaneous records it is possible to make valid assertions about population demographics aboard individual vessels. Based on 22 vessels for which I found first-hand accounts (in the same document) of both the ship size and the size of the crew for Atlantic or Caribbean voyages, there was an average of 115 men in a 21-gun 239-ton vessel, or to express the data in terms more suited to the contemporary manning requirements, the equivalent of 6.39 guns per man or 2.35 tons per man (see Table 1.4) These figures are comparable to the late-sixteenth century optimum of one man per two tons of ship's weight for long voyages (Hawkins, cited in Bicheno2012: 127,) the only changes being that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, larger ships were built with more guns and therefore larger crews were needed to equip them, culminating in the 100-gun warship of Nelson's navy enlisting an average of 837 men (The National Maritime Museum, "Nelson Navy Nation" exhibition.)

Large crews were a feature of ships which had a high crew turnover due to death, injury, disciplinary measures and desertion, and because of this, "over-crowding generated the diseases that were the greatest danger on long voyages" (Bicheno2012: 78.) Additionally, in periods of heightened conflict, overmanning ships became a necessary procedure in the anticipation of seizing vessels and equipping them with a functional crew. This tendency to recruit large crews was consequently exaggerated in pirate crews, as suggested by one witness testimony of 28 March 1722, in which one deponent describes "a Boat which they Supposed by the number of Men in her were Pirates" [HCA 1/99/24, emphasis added.] Furthermore, warships operating in the transatlantic waters had significantly increased crew for the requirements of navigation and defense. Such large ships weighing between 220 and 760 tons operated with an average crew of 278 (including troops) based on 28 late sixteenth-century English warships for which we have this data (Bicheno2012: 355.) However, extensive variation among vessels would have been determined by the size of the vessel, the type of voyage, the preferences of the captain, recruitment procedures, availability of workers,

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Table 1.4: Number of crew in transatlantic and Caribbean vessels based on first-hand accounts in the National Archives and Merseyside Maritime Museum holdings

Guns	Tons ^a	Men	Guns/Man	Tons/Man	Source document
44	499	84	1.9	5.9	HCA 1/53/13
40	454	80	2.0	5.7	HCA 1/53/12
18	204	65	3.6	3.1	HCA 1/98/9
18	204	65	3.6	3.1	HCA 1/98/258
40	454	150	3.7	3.0	HCA 1/98/265
22	249	90	4.0	2.8	HCA 1/98/3
22	249	90	4.0	2.8	HCA 1/98/263
12	136	50	4.1	2.7	1045.f.3/1/15
26	295	130	5.0	2.3	CO 5/1411/631
26	295	130	5.0	2.3	CO 5/1411/690
16	181	80	5.0	2.3	CO 5/1411/99
12	136	70	5.8	1.9	CO 5/1411/636
18	204	110	6.1	1.8	HCA 1/98/11
18	200 ^b	110	6.1	1.8	HCA 1/98/262
8	90	50	6.2	1.8	CO 5/1411/691
14	158	88	6.2	1.8	HCA 1/99/9
4	45	30	7.5	1.5	CO 5/1411/636
70	794	650	9.2	1.2	HCA 1/53/18
10	150 ^b	110	11	1.4	HCA 1/52/94
10	113	120	12	0.9	HCA 1/98/7
10	113	120	12	0.9	HCA 1/98/256
4	45	66	16.5	0.7	HCA 1/52/176
Average	21	239	115	6.39	2.35

^aConversions based on an estimated 11.35tons/gun derived from 58 warships for which we have tonnage and gun capacity (Bicheno2012: 353, 358–361.)

^bTonnage given in archival record (not estimated)

the anticipated crew depreciation, cargo requirements, and the age, defense system and navigational rigging of the vessel. Small crews served the short-range trading vessels of the wider Caribbean, for instance, “four to eight men were generally sufficient to man a [Bermuda] sloop” (Jarvis2010) and only ten men were needed to man the 20-ton 3-gun Pinnace *Black Dog* listed for Royal hire and registered in London (Bicheno2012: 352.) Comparatively, the largest crews of the warships could exceed 500 enlisted men, e.g., the 340 crew and 160 troops (500 total) aboard the 760-ton 42-gun Royal Carrack *Triumph* (Bicheno2012) the evidence of one testimony of a ship of “70 gunns and abt 600 or 700 men” [HCA 1/53/18,] and the note in the Boatswain’s log of the *St Andrew* to have “ham-

mocks delivered to the men... five hundred" [ADM 52/2/3.] However, even given these large crew numbers, the estimated numbers of people aboard any vessel are likely to be extremely conservative in light of the assumption that slaves, servants, women, and non-enlisted children were not counted as they entered the ships through means other than official enlistment and did not appear on wage registers or crew manifests.

1.12 Summary

This chapter re-defines the word "sailor" to refer to all sea-going workers of the early colonial period under study and presents sections on demographics with full acknowledgement of the limitations and complexities of data collection and analysis. Recruitment of sailors included voluntary enrollment; conscription; and the assignment of impressed, indentured, enslaved, and detained populations. Most sailors in lower ranks would have been enlisted via methods involving some degree of coercion, manipulation, or outright force and were routinely kept at sea for long periods without shore leave for fear of desertion. Although popular stereotype assumes that all sailors were male, a minority of women worked on ships as crew, collaborators, and service providers. Most sailors were young, going to sea in their early teens and serving typically until the age of around fifty with an average crew age of around thirty. Poor hygiene, putrid food, overcrowding, and lack of clean water, as well as hard labor, exposure to environmental risks, and wounds caused by disciplinary action or military conflict, resulted in high sickness and mortality rates. Sailors had strong family ties and many served alongside fathers, uncles and sons at sea. Furthermore, and contrary to popular stereotype, sailors commonly married and had children, and their wives were active in maritime communities, sometimes accompanying their husbands to sea. Ranks determined social status at sea and composed a rigid hierarchy: the privileged upper class, the trade and military middle class, and the seamen of the largest lower class, potentially supplemented by a sub-category of undocumented, unpaid, or forced workers. Theoretically, wages were paid and could be supplemented by various means, but in reality, sailors' wages were perpetually in arrears and paid intermittently and insufficiently if at all, a situation that commonly led to conflict, mutiny, and thus potential imprisonment and death. Most sailors born in the geographical British Isles were English, followed by the Irish, Scots and Welsh. London-born sailors were most heavily represented in naval vessels, coastal northerners in the merchant service and coastal southerners and westerners in privateering and piracy. The Commonwealth's extended interpre-

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tation of what it meant to be British meant that sailors were often recruited from British territories, including the Caribbean and the 13 colonies of North America but were also heavily recruited from the sea-going nations of Europe. English was the default language aboard British ships and so some sailors may have been monolingual. However, more commonly, English-speaking sailors had foreign language abilities that were acquired directly from language contact in their maritime communities and were essential in the context of the transatlantic trade. On the other hand, plurilingualism may have been an occupational hazard as it exposed common sailors to capture for the purposes of interpreting and also suggested they were guilty of piracy considering that language contact and therefore language acquisition was perceived as more profuse aboard such vessels. The majority of sailors were illiterate; yet certain positions would have required some degree of functional literacy. Moreover, officers were likely to have had comparatively high levels of literacy and numeracy, and some common seamen may have learned basic literacy among crewmates in leisure hours for purposes of personal communication. Relating to numbers of men on the ships, there was a conservative average of 115 men in a 21-gun 239-ton vessel comparable to the sixteenth century optimum of one man per two tons of ship's weight for long voyages. However, crew sizes were increasing throughout the period under study due to the use of larger ships and piracy.

2 Speech communities

This is the second of two chapters with a focus on socio-historical data that respond to research questions about the sailors and their speech communities. This chapter on the speech communities specifically attempts to characterize the immediate and extended contexts in which sailors were likely to work and socialize. The data presented support the claim that the speech communities of English-speaking sailors were extensive and robust enough to develop distinct features of speech likely to have been recognized by those outside the community as a distinct sailors' variety. The data also speak to how language transfer and change may have been affected by the social networks that bound these communities and maintained their distinct language variety. The chapter is presented in two sections. Firstly, the section on Insular Ship Communities presents data on sailors' duration at sea, autonomy and violence, social order and disorder, subgroups and social cohesion, the role of alcohol, and shared ideologies and leisure activities. The second section dealing with Wider Maritime Communities presents data on profuse maritime activity, convoys and communication, the maritime economy, corruption and theft, sailors on land, and contact with port communities.

2.1 General considerations

The fact that most linguists have neglected to address the nature or importance of maritime speech communities is perhaps not surprising. Not only do these speech communities fail to fit into a traditionally defined geographical region or single social stratum, but their composition has also been obscured by centuries of non-existent, falsified, and fragmentary record-keeping. Even in the context of managing the records of a single nation's trade activity and using only one language, records are often woefully inadequate to reflect the real nature of trade and communication, e.g., Cook2005's investigation into seventeenth century litigation against a captain in the English coastal shipping trade indicates, "*almost one third* of the working runs escaped the official records in the normal pattern of trading" (2005: 15, emphasis added). Even in consideration of specific ports, record-keeping was typically unofficial and subject to private publication. For

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example, London shipping was unofficially reported in local pamphlets like the *Lloyd's List* (first published c. 1764) circulated among clients of the Lloyd's coffee house that served as a center of maritime information and insurance. These lists contained selected commercial information and details of vessels arriving at ports in England and Ireland, and it was not until 1760 that the underwriters who frequented Lloyd's of London combined to form an association with the aim of producing a more complete Register Book of Shipping, circulated since 1734¹. Likewise, although Liverpool's shipping was subject to a series of Acts of Parliament requiring that details of vessels be registered, such record-keeping was haphazard up until the Registry Act of 1786². Thus, the sources of information on shipping movements and crew composition that might inform research on maritime speech communities, if they existed at all before 1750, were localized, selective, privately published, and almost invariably lost to the archival record.

The problem of insufficient data is magnified exponentially in the context of inconsistent record-keeping in transatlantic commerce that was conducted in various languages and ranged across multiple ports operated by different European nations on four continents. Jarvis' detailed study of Bermudan maritime activity concludes "London missed much of what happened in the colony" (Jarvis2010: 461). And this could be said of most of the colonies of the time, given that imperial record keeping primarily targeted large bulk shipments of goods and is silent on the abundant maritime activity in local trade and the logging, salvage, turtling, and salt-raking trades of the Atlantic commons that sailors actively concealed from the Board of Trade's custom officials. As a result, Jarvis claims that "much of the North American coast and virtually the entire Caribbean had permeable and blurry maritime borders" (Jarvis2010: 462). In addition to these blurry areas of imperial oversight, even when records were kept, there was often little verification of their accuracy, for example, one letter from a Virginia court trial details how easy it was to evade port charges with falsification of docking registers, "they give her [the ship] the name of the *Alexander*... at other times they will change her name, and call her the *providente-galley*" [CO 5/1411/631]. In short, I acknowledge that empirical data is limited on this subject. Therefore, the following sections on the common characteristics of maritime communities are based largely on qualitative data, in an attempt to characterize the real communities that were often absent from the quantifiable data of the official records.

¹Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives & Library. (2010). *Lloyds Marine Insurance Records* (Information Sheet: 52). Retrieved from <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/archive/sheet/52>

²Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives & Library. (2010). *Liverpool Ship Registers* (Information Sheet: 50). Retrieved from <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/archive/sheet/50>

2.2 Insular ship communities

Working aboard an early colonial vessel was no day job; sailors lived at sea and the vessels they lived on were comparable to small towns. One passenger on a voyage from Europe to Africa in 1666 notes in his journal:

The ship was like *Noah's ark*, for there were aboard it so many several sorts of beasts, that what with the noise, and the talk of so many people as were aboard, we could not hear one another speak... [the ship] looked like a castle on the sea [445f.1/509.]

It was common for men to “run away to sea” (Jarvis2010) the very expression suggesting that the vessel was primarily a destination rather than a means of transportation. Similarly, in a letter dated 30 July 1699, “they would not liarn [learn] from whense they came, nor whither they were bound, for they all told him yet his way *bound to sea*” [CO 5/1411/631, emphasis added]. Indeed, the wooden sea-going vessels of the early colonial period were communities in every sense of the word which could be just as large and complex as on land, e.g., one ship’s captain complained that “I was informed there was a surgeon belonging to the ship but never saw him till I returned from Newcastle” (cited in Brown2011: 48) stressing the large nature of the ship and its sizable population. These floating communities, just like those on land, had their own rituals of social identity and order in addition to language practices that were unique to their context.

2.2.1 Duration at sea

The time that workers were expected to remain in a vessel was a key determining factor in the formation of a sea-going community identity. When sailors could no longer return home after a day at sea or a week’s short trading journey around local coasts, the notion of what their “home” was may have radically shifted from a port-based traditional notion of house and family to the assigned quarters or hammock and mess mates of their vessels. As trade and naval operations extended across the Atlantic, and particularly after the English involvement in the slave trade increased after the Royal Charter of 1562, more sailors found themselves serving on transatlantic journeys, described as “an ocean voyage that could last from five weeks to three months” (Brown2011: 107). So, even if a ship sailed directly to a single port across the Atlantic, then spent minimal time managing cargo and sailed directly back to the same home port, the journey would still take an average of two to six months. However, the reality of shipping practice meant that sailors were likely to be away from land much longer than this.

Even small sloops that might be expected to return to home port more frequently than larger vessels did not necessarily do so, but instead, as Jarvis2010 explains, “made several round trips between North America and the Caribbean during the summer and fall seasons before returning home” (2010: 111). He goes on to say that although small vessels did not typically make one transatlantic voyage per year as the larger ships did, they nonetheless were at sea for long durations as they made multiple short voyages “at least two or three and in some cases as many as fourteen round-trips in a single year” (Jarvis2010: 125). The common practice of stopping in multiple ports on circum-Atlantic journeys rather than travelling to a single destination and back again increased time at sea, and this was not only for reasons of legitimate trade but was also necessary for collecting food provisions, wood and water and enabling enterprising captains to take advantage of international entrepôts of trade which evaded harsh duties on export and import goods. In addition, the circum-Atlantic pattern of trade winds favored sailing vessels that set circular navigational courses (see Figure 2.1)



Figure 2.1: The Atlantic Trade Winds in January and July. Adapted from Encyclopaedia Britannica. Such circular navigation developed the trade system of taking manufactured goods out of Europe; collecting spices, gold and slaves in African ports, bartering for flour, meat and lumber in the Americas and Caribbean, and bringing cotton, fur, lumber and tobacco back to Europe on the return leg. Such circum-Atlantic trade routes are evidenced in seventeenth century records, for example, one sailor's account of his international movements:

[the deponent] sailed from England being bound for Jamaica, and arrived at Jamaica in may following... and stayed in Jamaica about a month...[then]..

he made a tripp over to new Yorke, where he staied two months or thereabouts...he sailed again with the said shipp to Jamaica ...he sett saile from Jamaica being full laden with sugar cottons and other wares... but in his passage to London he mett with foule weather and lost his foremast and threby was forced to putt into Boston in new England where he arrived on or aboutAugust last past and staid there until he had fitted the said ship, which being done he sailed from Boston ...for London, but in his passage he lost his rudder was forced into...the West of England [HCA 1/52/20.]

Journeys such as the one described above that navigated around extended trade networks were invariably prolonged by inconstant weather and storms as well as by the time required for checking, loading and unloading cargo and provisioning and maintaining the ship, and thus required crews to spend significantly more than a few months aboard the vessel.

It is possible to calculate a rough average of the average sailor's duration at sea, although doing so necessarily obscures the differences between the types of vessels, types of voyages, and ranks of the crew that likely created very different profiles for different groups of people. Yet, with this caveat in mind, 53 first-hand records in which sailors refer to their individual duration at sea, based on witness testimony in court records and comments in private letters and journals, the average time at sea was 15.73 months, or one year, three months and 23 days (see Figure 2.2) This average duration that individuals reported at sea is corroborated by the data in 84 logbooks that generate an average voyage duration of 14.46 months, or one year, four months and 14 days (see Figure 2.3) Furthermore, these two sets of data also align with data cited in secondary sources, such as the comment describing the duration at sea for the crew of the late sixteenth century ship *Harve*, "They had been gone for over fourteen months" (Bicheno2012: 124). Hence, the triangulated data suggests that a typical sailor in the transatlantic trade could expect to spend at least one year and a quarter continuously serving at sea at any one time.

However, we should not suppose that after a voyage of over a year, sailors returned to their homes on land. Compelling evidence suggests that many sailors signed on for (or were forced into) consecutive voyages that might have taken them away from life on land indefinitely. For example, many of the data composing Figure 2.2 about individual durations at sea come from court trials of sailors accused of piracy who merely state how long they had been serving on the vessel from which they were arrested, e.g., "has been about 18 mos with the Rogues" [HCA 1/99/135] and another sailor who was "taken...19 months ago [and..] had not had any Opportunity Since of Escaping" [HCA 1/99/105.]

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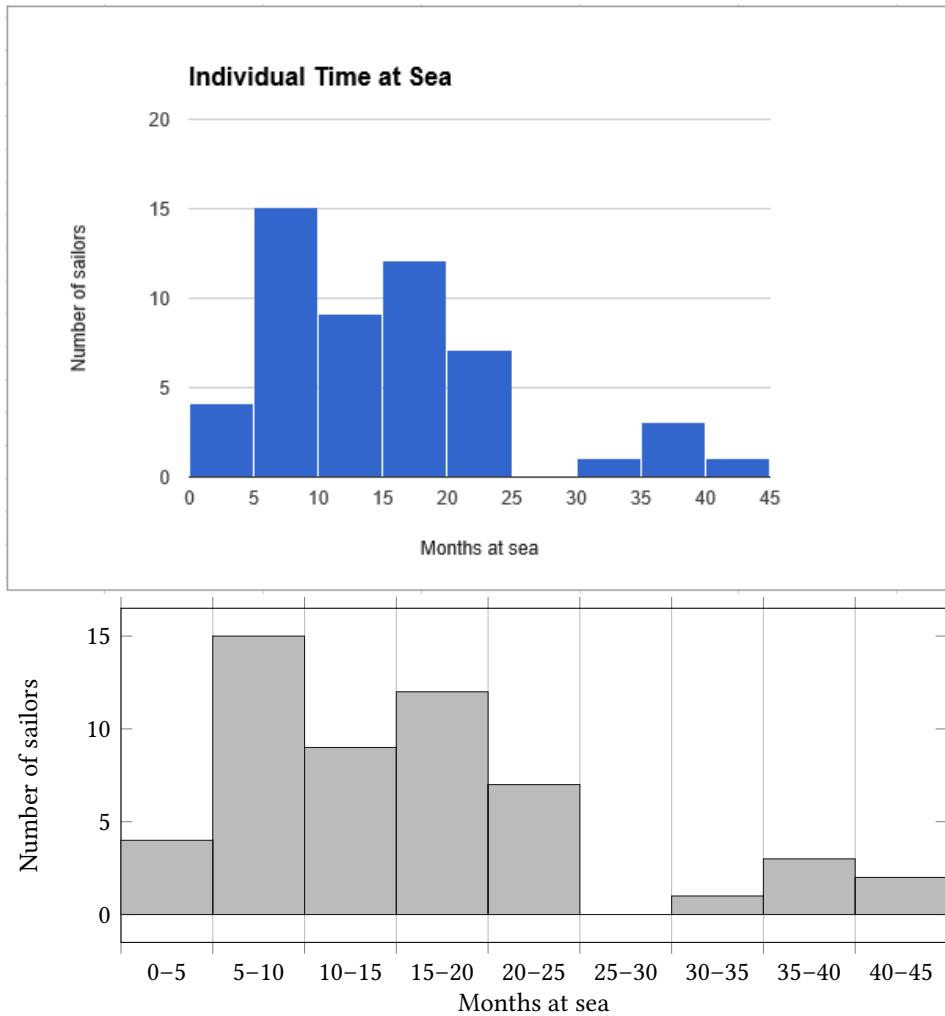


Figure 2.2: Individual time at sea based on witness depositions, letters and journal

Sources: 445f.1/485,486; DDB6 8/4; HCA 1/101/124; HCA 1/13/96; HCA 1/14/17,19; HCA 1/52/20; HCA 1/52/48; HCA 1/9/63; HCA 1/98/252,259,56,57,9; HCA 1/99/102; HCA 1/99/104,105,109,114,116,117,120,121,125,127,128,130,131,132,133,135,140,146,150,155,157,159,162,165,167,170,72,73,80,86,88,89,90,93,94

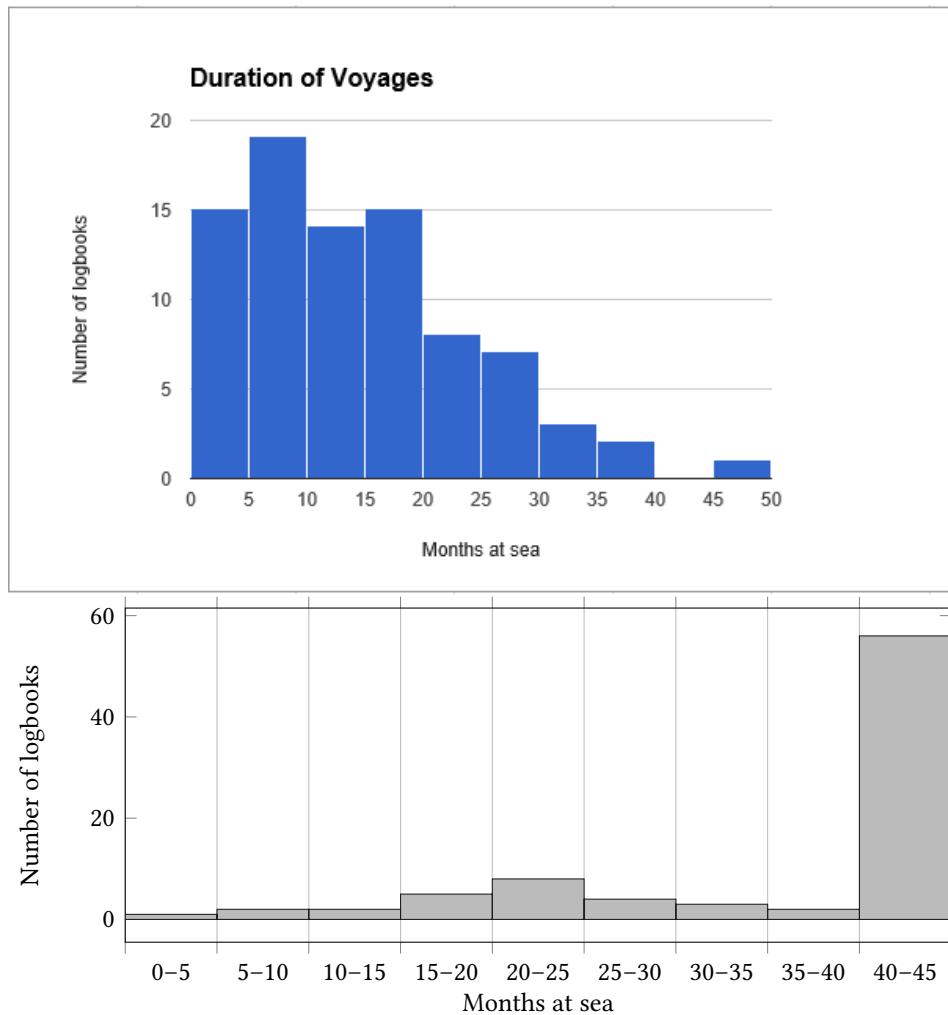


Figure 2.3: Duration of voyages based on ships' logbooks

Sources: ADM 52/1/11; ADM 52/2/1-9; ADM 52/3/1-13; ADM 51/4322/1-6; ADM 51/3983/1-4; ADM 51/3954; ADM 51/3946/1-6; ADM 51/3946/1-13; ADM 51/4170/1-10; ADM 51/3797/1-8; T/70/1215

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Thus, it is likely that these individuals had served at sea for longer than their stated duration because this only reflects the time spent with the crew of the most recent vessel they were on. Additionally, and as previously discussed in §1.2 low-ranking sailors were routinely “turned over” from one vessel to another before reaching home ports. This practice kept men at sea for much longer periods of time than the actual sailing routes or military postings lasted (AdkinsAdkins2008: 365). For example, John Stretton describes consecutive voyages starting with his employment at New York for a voyage to Virginia, and then after to England, Holland, New York again and Philadelphia Bay before terminating his term of service in Hamburg [HCA 1/14/140]. Likewise, another sailor is appointed in New York and sails to Jamaica, Lisbon and back again to New York before heading off to Antigua and then again to North America, including ports on the St. Lawrence river [HCA 1/98/15].

Furthermore, many of the lowest-ranking sailors were denied shore leave for fear of desertion. Sailor testimonies describing the strict enforcement of this rule range from statements attesting to how one ship’s master “would not suffer me to go on Shore” [HCA 1/99/5] to the consequences of breaking such mandates, as when the “Master went to the mate and gave him a blow on the face with his fist asking him what he did ashore” [HCA 1/52/45]. So, it appears not to have been uncommon for sailors to be at sea for years without enjoying shore leave, let alone returning to the home port they had disembarked from. Indeed, the situation was often so repressive that some sailors chose to risk death in the water or upon unknown shores rather than stay aboard any longer, e.g. in the 1700 trial of John Houghling, Cornelius Franc and Francois Delaune, one witness testifies “I saw three or four jump into the water expecting they would make towd the shore I wan to meet them but only one came [ashore]” [CO 5/1411/39]. Additionally, the fact that sailors were so rarely on land caused problems for the courts, e.g. the petition of David Creagh in 1675 claims that he knows many men who might be able to testify to his innocence, “but being seafareing men he cannot hope to find them always on shore, nor to have the benefitt of their Testimony...they being bound for sea” [HCA 1/13/104] and also the complaint of a plaintiff who was awarded restitution from one sailor, but laments “he believed he shou’d never come to England to pay it” [HCA 1/99/97]. In short, although transatlantic trips could be theoretically made in a few months, it was more likely that voyages took more than a year and additionally likely that sailors served on consecutive voyages, potentially without shore leave, thus creating alternative and relatively stable societies at sea that may have been periodically re-populated, but were invariably composed of workers who spent the greater part of their lives off shore.

2.2.2 Autonomy and violence

Many of the floating communities operating in the murky waters of early colonial trade were largely autonomous as a result of the inability of imperial Britain to effectively regulate them and the existence of international networks of contraband trade and communications that enabled them to operate on the captain's authority. Indeed, a captain might appeal to the men to recognize his own authority regardless of British law, as if the insular communities of the sea were somehow self-regulating and therefore subject only to internal justice and authority. For example, in the late sixteenth century, Francis Drake appealed to the crew "My masters, you must judge for yourselves whether or not this fellow has tried to undermine my authority... let they who think this man deserves to die hold up their hands" (cited in Bicheno 2012: 140). The type of power that captains like Drake asserted created a pseudo-democratic microcosm of the contemporary British nation-state aboard ship³ and this system of government was what enabled insular communities of pirates, freebooters and buccaneers to manage and regulate social order in societies that were marginalized even within the maritime world. The benefits of such insular autonomy were twofold: firstly, it enabled captains to do as they pleased without concern for home legislation, and secondly, it offered the British government a degree of plausible deniability when such captains were engaged in international raiding against supposed trading allies or in nefarious activities that were in the government's interest but which it could not openly support. For example, William Wilkinson, mariner of London, explains how English Captains working for the African Company were allegedly sent to seize merchant ships and cargos regardless of nationality:

other Commanders have had a share of the Ships and Cargo's that have been so illegally seized... and their business has been to destroy and devour the Ships and Estates of English Subjects, and share them as their own... who ought to protect their Merchants Ships in trade [BL/74/816/m/11/36/3].

Fusaro 2015 explains how some captains abused the concept of an onboard democracy owing to the fact that many co-owned the vessels they governed (2015: 23). This emboldened many commanding officers to assert feudal authority over what they considered to be their property (including the workers) with

³Drake is described as "pseudo-democratic" because even in his seemingly democratic appeal to his crew, the men he addressed knew their expected complicity in the execution of Thomas Doughty and how unwise it would have been to speak against the wishes of the aggressive and assertive young officer poised to take command.

a type of coercion that Ogborn describes as “state-sanctioned violence exported from England” (cited in Fury2015: 4–5). Furthermore, such appropriation of absolute power often went unchecked by courts in Britain whose judges were politicians rather than defenders of the law. Fusaro2015 explains that the priority of the courts at the time was to protect trade, and therefore “sentencing was not necessarily in line with strictly operational, or literal, interpretation of existing laws and customs” (2015: 23). Free traders, whether they operated strictly within the existing British laws or not, were often given the freedom of the seas and their superficial acknowledgement of legal processes, custom and duties is well represented in the contemporary description of how such private trading vessels would operate “looking one way and rowing another” [BL/J/8223/e/4/27/3]. Captains’ disdain of trading regulations frequently prompted response from colonial territories, e.g., a joint petition to British administrators written in August 1709 by proprietors of Barbados bemoans “the Liberty given to Separate Traders; which, unless remedied in time, is like to prove fatal, not only to us, but to the *British Trade upon the aforesaid Coast*” [BL/J/8223/e/4/27]. In such a context, captains’ abuses of power over their poorest workers was a minor concern, particularly as such people were perceived as worthless and idle by their home government anyway.

Tyrannical captains and superior officers, although of little concern to home authorities, were the target of regular complaint by sailors. Abuses of power were so common that even some in authority recognized the dangers of power imbalances, e.g., Captain Samuel Burgess writes “I was never known to be Shart or Severe with any Mann tho I had the advantage soe to bee” [HCA 1/98/57], and Samuel Pepys, in his diary of 1666, comments that pilots “dare not do nor go but as the Captains will have them; and, if they offer to do otherwize, the Captains swear they will run them through” (cited in Lavery2009: 75). However, based on the profusion of depositions detailing abuses of power by those in command, we can assume that the concerns of those such as Burgess and Pepys were outweighed by the desires for power that persuaded others to perpetuate the status quo. Some of the recoverable grievances brought to court included mild complaints of “ill usage” [SP 89/25/229], “garrulous language” [ADM 52/1/8], and “being continually abused by an Idle master who was drunk every day” [E134/34Chas2/Mich36], yet more commonly, sailors presented complaints of physical threats from superior officers, e.g., threats to cut a sailor’s ears off for lack of compliance with orders [HCA 1/99/24; HCA 1/99/98], one Quarter-master’s threat to throw a sailor overboard for waking him when he should have been on duty [HCA 1/52/124], and another sailor’s concern that because of “the ill

Usage of Capt. Williams... [he] was in continual Fear of his Life” [HCA 1/99.618]. Furthermore, evidence indicates that these were not idle threats. Table 2.1 below provides excerpts from ten testimonies evidencing physical violence and Table 2.2 below provides excerpts from eleven testimonies evidencing physical violence that resulted in the death of the victim.

Table 2.1: Samples of court testimony detailing physical abuse from superior officers

Complaint	Details of physical abuse	Source
Torture, Imprisonment	“clapt upon his leggs abt 8 or 9 pound weight...put into the stocks, where he lay 37 hours and after he had indured imprisonment for 46 days”	HCA 1/52/47
Violence	“their Captain...beat them Severely when they Disobeyed”	HCA 1/99/10
Violence	“The Quarter Master of the Pyrates beat him and forced him in again”	HCA 1/99/18
Violence	“it was out of his power to deny without hazard of beating”	HCA 1/99/31
Violence	“he was beat very much ... denying their Order”	HCA 1/99/32
Violence	The Boatswain “beat the Crew, for not being brisk enough”	HCA 1/99/41
Severe beating	“gave him more blowes and kicked him...blowes around the head, till the blood ran down from his nose and face”	HCA 1/52/22
Severe beating	“Comander fell on him and beat him very violently with his Cane”	HCA 1/52/127
Severe beating	“his head broke, and a hearty drubbing... Several Months unable for Duty”	HCA 1/99/72
Severe beating	“very sick with severall wounds the captain had given him on the back”	HCA 1/14/201

Furthermore, when complaints were made, sailors’ concerns were dismissed outright, as one seaman found out when he took his complaint of being beaten by the ship’s carpenter to the captain, who “called him a Drunken Rogue and bid him be gone to his Hamock” [HCA 1/52/22]. Others who tried to voice their concerns in court were similarly silenced, such as the sailor who complained by letter that there was too little value placed on common sailors’ lives and was hauled before high court to explain himself, publicly retract his complaint, and

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Table 2.2: Samples of court testimony detailing physical abuse from superior officers that resulted in death

Complaint	Details of physical abuse resulting in death	Source
Cruelty leading to suicide	"the said George Rowe did soe Barbarously & Cruelly use [him].. throwing himself...into the Sea to avoyde his Masters Cruelty"	HCA 1/11/110
Beaten to death	" beat him..., and with his foote or knees or both stampt upon him and bruised his stomach with such violence... soon after dyed"	HCA 1/11/111
Beaten to death	Lieutenant George Bing, stands trial for beating a sailor under his care to death with "a Cane" [Acquitted]	HCA 1/12/111
Beaten to death	"beate him and threw him downe headlong on the Quarter Deck upon which the said Robert Day fell sick and dyed about three weekes after"	HCA 1/52/127
Beaten to death	John Rogers received blows from his Captain, allegedly causing death	HCA 1/52/41
Beaten to death	John nightingall, a great many blows on the Head, very black & blew	HCA 1/52/148
Beaten to death	"[the captain] took a cane of moderate size...and gave the Deceased two or three Blows about the Head and Shoulders"	HCA 1/99/8
Beaten to death	[Acquitted]	
Beaten to death	John Morris beaten "severall times very violently... he struck all of his teeth out of his head... laid for about 5 weeks and then died" [Guilty]	HCA 1/52/48
Beaten to death	"many bruises...his being beaten might be the occasion of his death"	HCA 1/52/176
Executed	"the Prisoner with two more [men] were sentenced to Death for attempting an Escape from them, and that the other two were really Shot for it"	HCA 1/99/50
Executed	"Were for deserting sentenced to Death over a Bowl of Punch"	HCA 1/99/125

apologize [HCA 1/99 Philadelphia, Oct 15 1731, 9–10]. Another sailor finds so little justice that his last act of life after receiving a mortal beating from the ship's chief mate is to write a letter of testimony to the only person likely to care:

Ever Loufing wief these lines is to arkquint you that I Lying more like to die than to lief desiring you to remember my kind love to my three Cussons: and so Lying in this condission throw the means of the Cheaf mat of the Ship Bengdall marchant: Rodger Nubery be knowd: so I Laying my Death to the Sadd Rodger Nubery: hear I seal my John Morris [HCA 1/52/51].

It is worth noting that all the testimony presented so far relates to the treatment that sailors received from their own superiors. In addition to such ship-board violence was the ever-present threat of capture by foreign or pirate vessels and a continuation of cruel and unusual punishments such as being burned with lighted matches [HCA 1/9/3], blindfolded and hung by a rope [HCA 1/9/15], cut around the anus [HCA 1/99 Jamaica 1738–1739], and even having sexual organs twisted [HCA 1/99 New Providence 1722], or cut off and stuffed into the mouth [HCA 1/99 Agostinho, July 8, c.1721, 4]. Suffice to say, living aboard autonomous sailing vessels of the early colonial period in which superior officers regularly used violence to subordinate lower-ranking sailors, required great mental and physical strength.

2.2.3 Social order and disorder

In addition to the cruel and unusual violence that sailors suffered at the hands of captors and their own tyrannous officers, they were also subject to corporal and capital punishment under the British naval law. Rules aboard ship were harsh and punishable by a range of inventive sanctions up to and including death⁴, e.g., Edward Collins was forced to wear a basket of shot around his neck for an hour to make him confess to the stealing of personal items [HCA 1/9/83], Edward Abbot was lashed 40 times “furiously & violently....about the face, back, head & shoulders” for asking for bread, a punishment for which he died three weeks later [HCA 1/9/137-8] and an unnamed sailor accused of attempting to jump ship “was put on Shore on Some uninhabited Cape or Island [with] a Gun Some Shot a Bottle of Powder, and a bottle of Water to Subsist or Starve” [HCA 1/99/109]. Indeed, the scope of potential offenses and the energy with which punishments were

⁴It is worth noting that some scholars believe that although the legal code in England was harsh, they claim that it was more flexible in practice than in theory. See Fury2015: 17 and her discussion of “Tides in the Affairs of Men,” 71–74; Herrup: Section on Law & Morality, 102–123.

administered led to a 1749 revision of the Naval Articles of War that described acceptable punishments for different types of infractions. As part of this revision process, captains were reminded that punishments should never be assigned “without sufficient cause, nor ever with the greater severity that the offence shall really deserve” (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 209) which, in itself, highlights how much of a cultural phenomenon excessive and undeserved punishment had become by that time. Further testimony to this phenomenon is recoverable from the popular songs of the day, such as the 1691 ditty entitled “The Sea Martyrs or The Seamen’s Sad Lamentation for Their Faithful Service, Bad Pay and Cruel Usage” which set to verse a well-known trial in which a group of common sailors organized themselves to petition for improved conditions and pay only to be accused of mutiny and put to death (cited in Palmer1986: 58). Such cases are also evidenced in witness accounts, e.g. one case c. 1667 in which “Eleven Englishmen came together to complain to the captain that they were not allowed water enough to drink” [445f.1/510] to which the captain’s response was to punish the seeming ringleader by placing him in shackles with two sentinels over him until they reached port, at which time he was presumably taken to stand court martial for mutiny just like the accused man described in the court proceedings of March 28 1722, who was “set on Shore here by the said Capt Chaloner Ogle for his Tryal” [HCA 1/99/170]. And courts martial were not an unusual occurrence in the naval fleets of the period, e.g., the logbook of the *Albemarle* refers to four separate trials in as many months between January and April 1697 [ADM 52/1/5]. Thus, sailors were subject to ad hoc disciplinary measures determined by the captain as well as the consequences of formal legal proceedings, making harsh disciplinary measures a regular hazard of life for sailors of the early colonial period.

The time that sailors spent waiting for a trial was a punishment in itself in addition to the potential horrors of a guilty verdict. Petitioners were often detained upon a whim for long periods and in poor conditions without formal charges, e.g., Timothy Branoth had already served three years in a naval prison at Marshalsea upon what he could only assume was “a False and Malitious Suggestion...of which your petitionr is altogether Ignorant and Innocent off” when he humbly requested that he “may be Tryed or Discharged that he may be att Liberty to provide for his Starving Family” [HCA 1/14/28]; also a petition sent to the court on behalf of John Murphy who admits that he is wholly ignorant of the law, yet “Yor Petitionr doth not know what his Indiction is nor what is Charged against him... he doth not know what to doe” [HCA 1/14/27]. And when sailors finally stood trial, the consequences of a guilty verdict could be severe, e.g., the court records for 28 March 1722 saw 91 sailors stand trial, of whom 52

were executed 20 were sentenced to seven-years servitude in Africa 17 were sent to Marshalsea prison, and two were granted a respite. None were acquitted [HCA 1/99/181]. In fact, although juries were formed and regulated to offer the common man a fair trial, there is still evidence to suggest that their decisions were foregone, e.g. in one trial the judge makes his intentions clear by urging jurors to “reflect upon the ...ill consequences of acquitting the guilty” [CO 5/1411/80]. A guilty verdict and a sentence of death was a public spectacle intended to deter others and this deterrent started with the rhetoric of the court:

Ye and each of you are adjudged and Sentenced to be carried back to the place from whence you came from thence to the Place of Execution, and there within the Flood Marks be hanged by the neck till ye are Dead, Dead, Dead.... After this you... are to be taken down and your Bodys hung in Chains [HCA 1/99/169].

British naval law was not unique in its harsh treatment of sailors either; Gage¹⁶⁴⁸ explains how contemporary Spanish ships endowed their officers “with full Commission and Authority to imprison, banish, hang and execute all delinquents” (1648: 15). In short, the international waters were replete with floating, autonomous yet repressive communities in which common sailors were the typical victims of excessive disciplinary measures intended to ensure their compliance and subordination.

In such a context of brutality and injustice, it is perhaps not surprising that collective resistance offered the common sailor some form of protection. Captains of the period routinely complained of “mutinous disobedient men” [HCA 1/101/147], and owners cautioned the commanders appointed to care for their private trading vessels to “be always on your guard against insurrections” [D/Earle/1/1]. Bicheno²⁰¹²’s work on Elizabethan trading and politics at sea offers the simile “naval command during the Renaissance was akin to herding cats” (2012: 112), citing the observations of contemporaries such as Drake, who bemoaned the recurrent problem of managing subordinates, “I know sailors to be the people most resentful of authority in the world” (cited in Bicheno²⁰¹²: 142). Indeed, LinebaughRediker²⁰⁰⁰ claim that sailors composed one of the dangerous heads of the hydra that capitalism engaged to destroy⁵. The description in one court record of 1669 that attests to the binary opposition of peaceful masters and rebellious crew seemingly mirrors the sentiments echoing through the philosophy behind British legislation at the turn of the 1700s:

⁵See chapter 5 “Hydrarchy: Sailors, Pirates, and the Maritime State” LinebaughRediker²⁰⁰⁰

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the Rioters aforesaid with drawn sword, & other weapons, assaulting - beating, wounding, & Bruising, and at last throwing quite overbord Henry Tomishire, Edw. Hearle and others who then were, and for severall weeks before had been in the peaceable and quiett possession of the sd [said] ship [HCA 1/101/319].

The testimony of common sailors additionally speaks to the perpetual threat of revolt that might be equitable to peasant revolution in the microcosm of ship-board polity, e.g., a case in 1679 was brought before the Admiralty for a sailor charged with killing his superior officer “after the officer had highly provokd & challengd him” [HCA 1/101/329] and another in 1687 “for suspicion of the murder of our Capt Piro by dunking him in the sea” [HCA 1/13/11]. Given the circumstances, it is unlikely that either of these two men acted alone, and in other depositions, sailors’ intentions to formalize an uprising are even more obvious, e.g., two sailors were overheard asking “whether twas not better to endeavour the rizing a new Comp[any] than to go to Cape Coast, and be hanged like a Dog” [HCA 1/99/83 28th March 1722], and “he heard the said Williams say that if he could get three or four good hands and an artist [a tradesman] he would not be afraid to turn pyrate” [HCA 1/99 Williamsburg, Aug 14 1729]. Given the abuses and lack of possibility of redress that sailors faced on a daily basis in the early colonial ships of the transatlantic, it is perhaps no surprise that there was a concurrent period of rebellion and resistance that is remembered with simplified idealism as the “golden age of piracy.”

Responses from ships officers to combat the agency of collective rebellion, in addition to silencing potential dissenters, took the form of permitting localized squabbles and also mandating participation in public rituals of punishment. The difficulty of punishing collective agency is illustrated by the court records of one trial in the Bahama Islands 1722, in which various witness statements are taken and the case concludes with all but one of the defendants convicted and sentenced to death, followed by a memorandum explaining that everyone was acquitted because they needed workers to prepare for an imminent Spanish invasion [HCA 1/99]. In contrast, isolating and silencing individual dissenters was the most effective means to divide and conquer collective agency and also helped courts to convict sailors in an age before prisoners might be assumed innocent until proven otherwise. For instance, many mariners who refused to recognize the authority of their commanding officers, and by extension, the courts of the Admiralty, did the only thing they could in defiance; they remained silent. One court record of a trial in 1687 describes three men who refused to enter a plea “whereupon the court told them the danger of standing mute, and that if they would not

plead, the Law took it for granted they were guilty” [HCA 1/12/111]. Other testimonies describe sailors who refused to participate in trials, e.g., Joseph Benedict, who “hath nothing to say for himself or against himself” [HCA 1/14/201], and Robert Mason, whose supposed deposition “he refused to sign” [HCA 1/14/201]. Perhaps it was this culture of silent complicity that motivated a legal clause in piracy accusations that a person could be guilty by knowledge or association in lieu of testimony or confession [SP 42/6]. Other, more immediate means of subduing sailors involved prompting a cathartic relief of tension. This was done by turning a blind eye to petty complaints and squabbles, e.g., quarrels over private property ownership [HCA 1/99/81], verbal complaints when ordered to duty [HCA 1/99/26], physical fights over the pecking order [HCA 1/99/25] and conflict over assigned sleeping quarters [HCA 1/53/48]. Yet a more effective method of prompting catharsis and relieving the tension in the shipboard community was achieved through mandating participation in public rituals of punishment such as administering lashes. In this context, Fury2015 describes the interactive justice system of the early seventeenth century merchant fleets of the East India Company; she explains that communal justice was necessary because “those in positions of authority had to shore up the fissures in the community and thus the need for rituals, religion, and reconciliation” (Fury2015: 17). Such public rituals included a punishment known as being “lashed through the company” in which men were sentenced to one or more lashes from everyone aboard the vessel, or the fleet in extreme cases. As a punishment for attempting to run from the ship in Sierra Leone, one sailor “received two Lashes from every Man in the Company as a Punishment” [HCA 1/99/45], another offender similarly suffered “2 Lashes thro the Company” [HCA 1/99/109] and “William Williams was lashed by Every Man in the Company” [HCA 1/99/114], both for attempted desertion. Yet the punishment was also administered for lesser offenses such as one sailor’s presumed intoxication, e.g. “the Company whipped him because of his Liquor” [HCA 1/99/159]. Another punishment called “running the gauntlet” involved tying the offender’s arms and forcing him at knife-point to run the length of the ship lined with his crewmates armed with knotted rope that they used to beat him repeatedly and violently as he passed, a practice abolished in 1806 (AdkinsAdkins2008: 215–216). So, by selectively permitting minor conflicts among the crew and promoting cathartic release of anger in a controlled manner that also served as a deterrent, those in authority were able to patch up potential fissures in social order that might give rise to more collective dissent.

2.2.4 Subgroups and social cohesion

Undoubtedly, many transatlantic vessels of the early colonial period were engaged in the massive forced migration of human beings via the slave trade, yet there was also a brisk business in passenger transit around the British colonial holdings. Subgroups of maritime travelers were potentially large, e.g. missionary Thomas Gage describes passengers that included “30 Jesuits, a Dominican mission of 27 Friars, and 24 Mercenarian Friars” (Gage1648) and among a fleet the numbers could be even higher, e.g., one convoy of three ships “carried passengers to the number of one hundred” (Hawkins, cited in Bicheno2012: 96–97). Even when passenger numbers were small, they could still potentially outnumber the crew, e.g., “The ships Company being about 15 in number and all the Passengers in her being 21 in number” [HCA 1/52/100] and in larger vessels, passengers could be such a large group that they disrupted maritime work, e.g., one witness describes “the noise of the passengers, which oblig’d the captain to draw his sword to drive all those under deck who could not help, but only served the hinder the sailors” [445f.1/516]. These passengers of the early colonial period are extremely difficult to trace however, as the Passenger Acts that would record their movements did not start until 1842.

Despite the scarcity of recoverable data that attests to large-scale passenger movements, passenger transit was an important part of the maritime economy. Passengers treated as cargo were sold and paying passengers bolstered the ships’ coffers, e.g., the “7 french men on board the said ketch they paying their passage to Capt Prout on board” [HCA 1/12/2] and the “rich Portuguese merchant... who was returning to *Lisbon* with all his family, that is, wife and four children; gave a thousand crowns for his passage” [445f.1/509]. Regular passenger transit around colonial holdings was not only beneficial for the captains receiving their fare but also motivated stronger local economies by maintaining reciprocal trade and barter systems that lessened islanders’ dependence on exports from Britain. For example, Jarvis explains how Bermudian mariners operating small vessels “so regularly shuttled between St. Eustatius, St. Martin, St. Christopher, Anguilla, Antigua and other British sites that they essentially operated an inter-island taxi service” (Jarvis2010: 168). Furthermore, in addition to slave populations, passengers who may have travelled without paying, such as religious missionaries, indentured servants, and economic migrants, were often critical to the development of local workforces and community identity in their colonial destinations. Litter explains, “Passengers, some of whom were emigrants or indentured servants, were carried regularly to North America and the West Indies from about 1660 onwards” (1999: 45). These passenger groups, described collectively as “the

poor, the ambitious or the persecuted” (Litter1999) composed an essential part of the labor force around Britain’s colonies, for instance, after the siege of Limerick in 1691, the military articles of surrender coerced the persecuted Irish poor “to leave the Kingdom of Ireland... to go beyond the Seas” and work the land in British territories [HCA 1/13/122]. Ships also provided free transit for military personnel, e.g., “we took in Soldiers to Carry to Languard Fort... in the morning received other Soldiers on board to carry back” [ADM 52/2/6], and a description of “47 soldiers on bord... 31 Dutch officers (now at Howth) [in transit] for Holland” [ADM 52/2/6]. Also, in an age of routine prisoner exchanges, there were often recently liberated soldiers to return home, e.g., Captain Vaughan testifies that he took on board “English Men & Prisoners of Warr in France...to be sett on shore in England” [HCA 1/13/98]. Depending on the different languages and varieties of English that such passenger groups spoke, in addition to their inclination to identify with and accommodate to the maritime speech community, they would have affected the composition of shipboard speech communities and potentially adapted modes of communication for their own purposes.

In addition to working on board ships⁶, women also frequently travelled and lived at sea as guests or passengers. Some of these women were the wives and partners of working sailors, yet others may have travelled with family groups or as part of an indentured or slave cohort. Enslaved and indentured women in transit aboard the ships are rarely noted in official documentation of the era beyond a number tally in a cargo column, but reference to the presence of more privileged officers’ wives is recoverable from contemporary records such as court testimony and private accounts. Sometimes these women are mentioned with accompanying details, e.g., “Elizabeth Tengrove that was a Passenger in the On-flow” [HCA 1/99/80], but most often the passing references to their presence on board do not provide any details e.g., “a woman which was a passenger abroad the said English shipp”[HCA 1/101/372], “an English woman, that was aboard” [HCA 1/99 in The Tryals of Agostinho, no. 4] and in one rare logbook reference, “much wind putt...mens wifes on shore” [ADM 52/3/12]. Some women attest to their own presence at sea by giving testimony in court, such as Sybill Nicholls, wife of Captain Edward Nicholls, who was deposed on July 17 1661, “she toulde the said waterman that she was fearfull of going through bridge by reason it [the sea] was something rough” [HCA 1/9/22]. And Palisnce Bibar, wife of seaman Gibs Bibar, who was deposed on January 15 1696 and whose testimony about the captain’s behaviour and hearing the Spanish enemy also confirms her presence at sea [HCA 1/14/56]. In addition to these English wives, indigenous Indian

⁶See §Gender in Chapter 3 for a discussion of female crew and non-paid workers

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and African partners were also potentially smuggled on board. Diana Souhami's award-winning biography of Alexander Selkirk's abandonment in 1704 envisions how William Dampier's crew bartered and forced such women into becoming sex workers:

They had their Delilahs or Black Misses, hired for a trinket or a silver wrist band. More often it was rape, unwanted offspring and abandonment. Tawny coloured children of uncertain English paternity were born on board ship to black slaves (Souhami2013: 19).

The practice of women giving birth at sea, albeit unusual, is not unheard of in maritime history. Adkins and Adkins' work on the maritime communities of the late eighteenth century claims, "It was not unusual for women to give birth during a battle, as the noise and stress of the situation tended to induce labour. Nor was it unusual for women to have their children with them" (AdkinsAdkins2008: 176). Hence, although it was unlikely to be a large subgroup of the maritime community, a company composed of women (and potentially also their children) may have also contributed to speech practices at sea.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the largest group in most maritime communities was undoubtedly the lower-class working sailor. The necessary proximity in which enlisted men worked and lived meant that mutual dependency was commonly accompanied by emotional and physical intimacy. Indeed, the kinship or brotherhood of the seas is a common theme and the stereotypical representations of homosexual sailors abounds in maritime fiction and popular iconography⁷. Despite the harsh punishments in place for any proven acts of sodomy brought before the authorities, those managing social order among predominantly male ships' communities often accepted that repeated sexual abuse of child, subordinate, and female workers was to be expected—a sentiment acknowledged in modern scholarship, e.g., Bicheno2012's discussion of a court martial in the late sixteenth century in which the steward of the *Talbot* was hanged for sodomizing two cabin boys "which is odd, because that's what cabin boys were for" (2012: 188). Yet, it was likely that some familiar and intimate shipboard relationships became sexual in nature leading to consensual yet covert homosexual acts although these are extremely difficult to quantify given the taboo that prompted

⁷See the novels of Julien Viaud (a.k.a. Pierre Loti); the scholarship of Burg2007's (Burg2007) *Boys at Sea* and (1995) *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition* and Turley2001's (Turley2001) *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash*; Klara2013's (Klara2013) article on gay iconography in marketing, entitled "Perspective: Hey Sailor"

contemporaries to either sensationalize, or conversely ignore and under-report, the phenomena.

Regardless of whether such intimacy was manifest in physical means, sailors undoubtedly shared a kinship bond as a result of working and living in close proximity for the lengthy durations of their service at sea. The working men of a vessel were commonly referred to collectively by the name of the ship, (AdkinsAdkins2008: Xxiv; Palmer1986: 44) but sailors referred to one another as “brother” e.g., in one letter from a commander to a peer in another vessel, dated 1698 [HCA 1/98/47], and used the terms “brotherhood” or “band of brothers” more extensively to encompass the entire crew, particularly among pirates, e.g., the description of one man “used by the Brotherhood for a Rogue” [HCA 1/99/157]. Walsh explains how, in smaller vessels, familial closeness was a requisite of the physical work, “such craft did not permit much physical separation ...moreover, because much work was shared, there could be little social distance” (1994: 35) he goes on to say that in the smaller craft like ketches, sloops and schooners, crews might only number five to six men: a master, mate, boy, and two or three seamen (35); a number that was optimal for synergy and additionally reflected a type of family unit. Whaling vessels, described as the “nursery of seamen,”⁸ similarly contained family-like units of six to seven men, often required to work in silent unison to get the harpooner within a few meters of his prey.⁹ Larger vessels created similarly small units of men by mandating “mess” groups with the fundamental purpose of managing meals and food rations, yet these groups which ranged from around eight to twelve members also facilitated the formation of familial bonds as the men in each mess took turns as cook for the group and were also responsible for each other’s daily wellbeing and conduct (AdkinsAdkins2008: 75). The groups were composed with the additional intention to distribute sailors with a range of different ages, skills and years’ experience among the crew as a means to disseminate knowledge throughout the company and also promote networks of loyalty that might discourage homogeneous rebellions. The messes served to disseminate orders and were envisioned as a series of self-governed units, each with its elder that served as a represen-

⁸Cited from a display in the British National Maritime Museum located in the “Atlantic Worlds” exhibition and visited on Nov 22 2015

⁹There were distinguishing crew requirements between larger and smaller vessels however. Large whaling vessels often had to leave their European and American ports under-crewed with the intention to complete the requisite crew number on-route. Africans (Kru-men) and Pacific Islanders are also particularly noted for this practice. The recruits picked up on-route would form an important component of the shipboard community in addition to those workers who shipped out with the vessel from a home port.

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tative of the group. Fury explains that when officers were managing shipboard accusations and assigning punishments, “leaving the judgement in the hands of the respected men on the ship [i.e., the mess elders] was key to legitimizing it as a broad-based verdict which could be “sold” to the shipboard community in the short-term” (2015: 4). Officer Samuel Leech describes how these messes functioned aboard a large ship, “the crew of a man of war is divided into little communities...[that] eat and drink together, and are, as it were, so many families.”¹⁰ Leech also attests to the value of these groups for discouraging desertion, as “many... were kept from running away by the strength of their attachment to their shipmates” (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 68). This observation is borne out by one testimony of how a captain granted shore leave but only “trusted on shore at Annabone *only one of a mess*” [HCA 1/99/114 emphasis added] suggesting that desertion was drastically minimized if only one man per mess was permitted off the vessel at any one time. Hence, mess groups were not only functional for practical reasons like distribution of rations and information but also actively promoted familial bonding and so increased social cohesion and crew retention.

The intimacy and kinship that characterized crews was most pronounced in times of difficulty when survival may have depended on it. Pirate crews that depended on plunder for many of their basic necessities grew accustomed to self-management and especially allocating shares in community goods, e.g., one witness testimony describes how “they Plundered and took all the cloaths they could, and shared the same” [HCA 1/99, Jamaica Aug 11 1740] another crew, facing starvation, and “being ardently desirous that at least some one of them might survive to carry home the news of their misfortune... cast lots which of them should be killed to serve for food to the other” [445f.1/486]¹¹. In combat, a unified crew was also a more effective fighting unit, and many witness testimonies reflect sentiments of unity in the face of violent conflict, e.g., Witness Joseph Wood describes an invading pirate crew “I heard them say they would live & dye together” [CO 5/1411/37], and upon capture one sailor explains “it were as good for them to be blown up & dye altogether in the shipp” [CO 5/1411/102]. Indeed, such social cohesion enabled men to face horrifying violence and retribution with almost joyous unity, e.g., new recruits who are welcomed by the crew “Saying cheerfully and unanimously that they would live & dye with them” [HCA 1/9/155]. Yet, such collective agency was not always instinctive; successful pirate crews

¹⁰Cited from a display in the British National Maritime Museum located in the “Atlantic Worlds” exhibition and visited on Nov 22 2015

¹¹This plan was abandoned however when the captain, who insisted upon casting his lot with the men, was selected to become the next meal.

forced gang-unity through intimidation and initiation rites, e.g., the description of how one mariner joined the crew when a group surrounded his hammock with swords in their hands and threatened to slice him if he did not stand by them [HCA 1/53/43]. Yet once these gangs were formed, they maintained fierce insular unity and in the event of capture, gang members often depended on each other for their lives, whether that meant pleading to the officers of another vessel or making representation in courts, e.g. one sailor's dangerous position, "he was a dead man if this examinant should presente or give Information against him" [HCA 1/53/9], and another's relative safety, "he was confident of him being intimate acquaintance... he would not see him wronged in anything and all of the rest said the like" [HCA 1/101/408]. Indeed, it was in pirate vessels that consent and unity in action may have been most critical to social order and this may explain why instead of functioning in small and inflexible mess units, pirates were encouraged to consider the whole crew as one mess—their extended family, e.g., the testimony of one accused sailor claims, "he messed with the captain, but withall no Body look'd on it, as a Mark of Favour, or Distinction, for every one came and eat and drank with him at their Humour" [HCA 1/99/59]. Moreover, such equitable practices were mirrored in the signing of ships' articles voting customs that also took place among pirate crews¹² in which even a captain was considered no more than an elected representative, e.g., "As to the title of Captain it was nothing for every man was alike which was plain" [HCA 1/99/72]. In such contexts, the petition of a captain is no weightier than any other man's vote, e.g., one Commander describes how he tried to save his ship, "I begged for her but it was put to the vote and carried for the burning of her and burnt she was" [CO 5/1411/34]. At other times, officers are described as "accomplice with the rest of that Pyratical Crew" [HCA 1/99/170], e.g., "the Commander and the major part of the Company Voted to Sail about the Cape of good hope" [HCA 1/98/263]. Yet the casting of the vote is still an important act, and one without which decisions could be challenged and commanders deposed. Hence, pirate crews (although notoriously difficult to research) might have provided the best models of social cohesion at sea.

In the merchant fleets, there was a degree of individual protection in group agency that emboldened some sailors to act against repressive regimes at sea, e.g., the enlisted men of the East India Company, knowing the value of their

¹²See Rediker 2004's scholarship on Atlantic pirates in the golden age, specifically chapter 4 "The New Government of the Ship" (2004: 60–82) and Jarvis's discussion of the traditions of "maritime republics" that go back to the medieval Rules of Oléron (*Rôles d'Oléron*) named for the island of Oléron (off the coast of France), the site of the maritime court associated with the most powerful seamen's guild of the Atlantic (Jarvis 2010: 121).

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labor, lobbied as a collective (sometimes successfully) with the threats of work stoppages and strikes to save shipmates and adjust the trajectory or the time-frame of a voyage (Fury2015: 15). In a more severe example among the same company, when the men were discovered to have murdered the Master John Lufkin after an on-board dispute and were demanded to reveal who killed him, the crew answered “One and all of them” (cited in Fury2015: 11). In lieu of killing their commanding officer, crews might also band together to accuse a superior officer of some crime and thus remove him, as Captain Thomas Oxinden claimed in a letter to the Admiralty dated Aug 28 1667 [HCA 1/101/317]. Collective action provided some degree of safety in numbers, a sentiment reflected by the wording of official statements, e.g., “Ye have all of you been wickedly united...[acting] in a wicked combination” [HCA 1/99/3/2-3], and one court testimony describing “Several of the mariners who were in a confederacy together” [HCA 1/53/42], the words “united,” “combination” and “confederacy” implying civic alliance. In light of such examples, the brotherhood of a crew appears, at best, as a workers’ union and, at worst, a group of political activists and rebels; and perhaps, given this continuum, it is clear why sometimes collective agency was tolerated as a form of early modern bargaining in the workforce, but at other times was condemned as outright mutiny.

Collective agency provided a kind of pseudo-legal support group for the common sailor who was not likely to receive any such help within the High Court of the Admiralty. Personal letters and witness depositions attest to the tenderness and care with which sailors composed their last will and testament before crewmates or wrote another’s will for him as he lay dying, often binding the pseudo-legal documents with their own personal mark and the initials or signatures of shipmates, e.g., the last will of Cornelius Dorington, which begins “I give and bequeath to my loving friend Capt Sammuell Burgess a Gold ring” [HCA 1/98/87], the last will of Joseph Jones, who leaves his worldly goods to his shipmates [HCA 1/98/108], and the unusual joint will of Francis Reed and John Beavis, signed by both men, that declares, in the event of an accident to either, “what gold, silver or other thing whatsoever” shall lawfully become the legal property of the other, explained by the preamble “Be it knownen to all men [that these two are] in Consort ship togeather” [HCA 1/98/193]. In a modern context, such a document sounds distinctly like the mutual testimony of a monogamous couple and prompts the comparison of a consensual and loving relationship between the two men that they have attempted to legitimize among the crew despite the outlawed nature of their affections in wider society. In short, familial mess bonds among crews facilitated shipboard management and discouraged desertion but may have also

gone some way towards legitimizing alternative sexuality and certainly enabling larger networks of collective agency among crews that not only increased the chances of survival and successful negotiation of better conditions at sea, but also provided a much-needed pseudo-legal support network in a context when the common sailor was considered lazy, rebellious, and ultimately expendable.

2.2.5 The role of alcohol

Drinking alcohol with crew mates was the most popularly recognized social event among crews of the early colonial period. Such practices were recognized in wider society as comparable with drinking a toast to success, e.g., the imagery of celebration represented in the popular song “Lustily, Lustily,” as mariners celebrate a successful voyage, “We will return merrily.../And hold all together as friends linked in love, / The cans shall be filled with wine, ale and beer” (cited in Palmer1986: 3). Yet the real reasons for consuming alcohol in maritime communities were far more complex. One of the reasons for the excessive consumption of alcohol was the unusually malignant supplies of water that were the only other liquid available to drink.¹³ Gage recommended drinking fermented beer, rum or wine as preferable to water as he cautions his crew against “drinking after them too greedily of the [local] water (which causeth dangerous Fluxes, and hasteneth death to those newly come...) wee should fall sick, and die there as hundreds did” (Gage1648: 24). Bicheno2012 explains, “All levels of society knew that water, unless from a pristine source, was bad for your health...it’s safe to say that while the ale remained drinkable everyone aboard was at least mildly inebriated at all times” (2012: 11). Indeed, because alcohol was a safer option to water and hard manual labor in exposed and oftentimes tropical conditions generated thirst, there are frequent references to alcohol consumption in official records. Examples of references in logbooks include: the cargo details of the *St. Andrew*, in 1693 that notes “touke in 30 tunns of Beere this day” [ADM 52/2/2], and “we have been clearing our hould this morning in order to take in 60 tons of beere” [ADM 52/2/3]; the evidence of using alcohol in barter exchanges with the *Albemarle* in 1692, in which the author describes how the crew performed a service “for the *Royall fauvor* but they had no rum for us!” [ADM 52/2/3], and the surprisingly short and direct entry for the *Pideaux* in 1732 that reflects on a day of leisure,

¹³The tradition of drinking ale or some form of fermented liquid instead of water for reasons of local pollution is commonplace throughout history (see Salzman2013’s *Drinking Water: A History* 2013). It is not surprising that this tradition passed from general European populations to transient populations and European colonies in the New World in the context of unsecure water supplies.

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“fair pleasant we excuse; all Drunk” [HCA 1/99/39]. Jarvis explains that a naval sailor of the early colonial period was entitled to 16 gallons of rum per year (2010: 178) perhaps because commanders knew that in spite of extensive hardships at sea, if sailors could maintain their alcohol rations, they would probably continue working.

The drinking culture on ships, unsurprisingly, created some problems as men could legitimately drink at work and oftentimes did so excessively. References to the intoxication of individuals feature in court cases, e.g. one unnamed sailor who the witness claims “he never see him Sober Scarce, or fit for any Duty” [HCA 1/99/44], another who “had made himself drunk with two bottles of brandy, and was not sober again in three days” [445f.1/510], “Stephen Thomas- Deposeth that he was allways Drunk” [HCA 1/99/26], and “Henry Glasby, that he was as brisk and as often Drunk as the Rest of the Company” [HCA 1/99/108]. More shockingly, there are similarly frequent references to the intoxication of the whole crew, e.g., “the men were drunk when they went on board” [CO 5/1411/101], “they were very Careless in that point, often being all Hands Drunk, and no Body fit for Duty” [HCA 1/99/91], and the description of one severe mistake, in which:

they were all drunk with Rum and Palm Wine, that words arose and they went to fighting... then being very drunk they fell asleep, and she [the ship] drove out to Sea: that after making the Land again, they mistook the Danish fort for the [fort] of the English [HCA 1/99 Cape Coast of Africa, Feb 4 1734, 5.]

In such a context, it is clear why the navy tried to punish excessive drinking with imprisonment in iron shackles, flogging, and, if a serious crime were involved, court martial (see Figure 2.4) Yet, interestingly, even if a court martial was called, men might be shown leniency for inebriation, e.g., one court verdict that acknowledges diminished capacity, “yet in regard to their being Drunk, and consequently then not altogether capable of judging Right and Wrong, the Court was inclinable to shew mercy” [HCA 1/99 Cape Coast of Africa, Feb 4 1734, 6]. Therefore, it is no surprise to read testimony from other men hoping for similar mercy to excuse their intoxicated actions e.g., “he was drunk and that when he came to his senses he was sorry” [HCA 1/99/23], “any Irregularities he might commit, was the Drink” [HCA 1/99/40], “it was Drink and over Perswasion of the others that engaged him to it” [HCA 1/99/165], “he was drunk when he did consent” [HCA 1/99 Bahama Islands 1722], and “do’s not deny his firing a Gun, but excuses it for being Drunk” [HCA 1/99/135]. However, despite a few cases,

men were held accountable for their actions while drunk on duty; the ability to hold your drink was considered a part of the job.

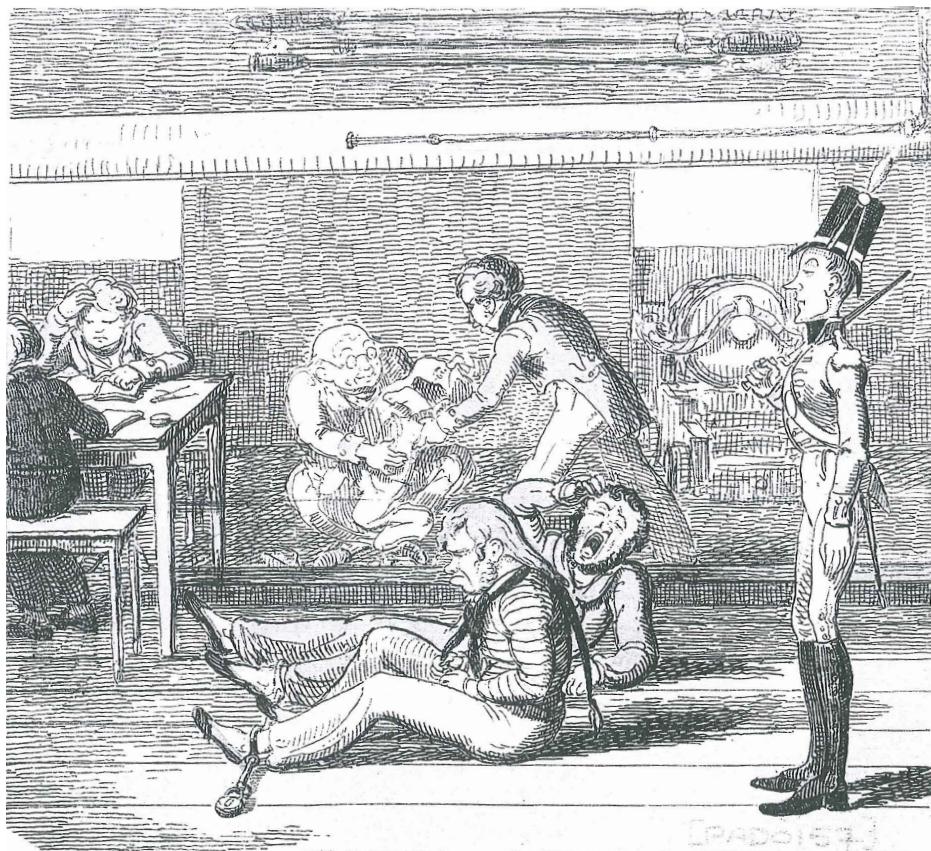


Figure 2.4: “In irons for getting drunk” Colored etching by George Cruikshank

Drunkenness was a cultural phenomenon that manifested itself in all ranks aboard ship, not just with the common sailor. Because drinking alcohol served a social function, and reinforced group identity (Fury2015) the commanders, captains and officers of maritime communities also regularly consumed alcohol, and also often to excess. Examples of drunken officers in court testimony include, “After they had drunke togeather a while Capt Rigby & George Freebound went on board their vessels againe” [HCA 1/9/3], and “the said captain was so very much in drink that he never was afterwards (according to this Deponent’s best

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observation) big help” [HCA 1/14/56]; passenger journals describe “the Captain was a very Furious man, and frequently in Drink; so that I could not have opportunity to speak with him” [445f.1/27]; and logbooks corroborate, “Our captn being drunk did quarrel wth me” [HCA 1/99/62] “master drunk at noon” [HCA 1/99/65]. Drunken commanders could pose a serious problem to the social fabric of a shipboard community, for example, in an extended court case against Nicholas Reymer, commander of the ship *Lucy*, in a trial dated June 20th 1682, a witness explains:

Reyner was verry Idle & most commonly in drink & he does believe that his seamens disorder were chiefly occasioned by his sole debaucherys & ill carriage... the dissasters & damage hapened to the shipp Lucy ...were chiefly occasioned by the carelessness & disorder of said Reymer & his company... before & after the shipp was aground said Raymer was ashore drinking to excesse [E134/34Chas2/Mich36]

Qualitative data referencing intoxication among the commanding ranks prompts supposition that the harsh treatment sailors experienced at their hands, detailed in §2.2.2 and tabulated in Table 2.1 and table 4.2, may have been directly related to their lowered inhibitions as a result of being drunk. However, aside from a few specific cases, we are unlikely to know the true extent of and damage caused by the drinking culture amongst commanders and officers of the period as these privileged few controlled the records and were unlikely to acknowledge blame nor leave evidence that would prompt investigations into their own accountability.

Pirate commanders, and indeed the entire crew of pirate vessels, are commonly characterized by excessive consumption of alcohol. Although, in extreme circumstances, a sailor might lose his allocation of seized goods if he was physically incapable of participating in its capture, e.g., one sailor described as “so Drunk they cut him often out of his Share” [HCA 1/99/171], more commonly, alcohol served a vital role in social order and cohesion. Notorious pirate captain Edward “Blackbeard” Teach recorded in his personal log the dangers of sobriety among his crew:

Such a day, rum all out - our company somewhat sober - a damn'd confusion among us! - rogues aplotting - great talk of separation. So I look'd sharp for a prize - such a day took one, with a great deal of liquor on board, so kept the Company hot, damn'd hot, then all things went well again. (cited in Bicheno2012: 121).

Court depositions explicitly associated an inclination for drinking with piracy and accusations were often accompanied by a comment on how much the accused commonly drank, e.g., “for he was a drunken Fellow” [HCA 1/99/103], “he fell to Drinking and became one of the Company” [HCA 1/99/104], “[he] was allways Drunk” [HCA 1/99/116], “he was...very much given to Liquor and was as forward as others at going on Board of Prizes” [HCA 1/99/171], “he knew no more of him than that he loved Drinking” [HCA 1/99/63], and “Deposeth him to be a very Drunken Fellow” [HCA 1/99/158]. Conversely, the case for the defense often pleaded, at best, sobriety, e.g., “Swear him to have been a very Sober, civil Fellow no way mischievous” [HCA 1/99/121], and “never heard him Swear, never given to Drink, and calld Presbyterian for his Sobriety” [HCA 1/99/151], and at worst, coerced inebriation “the pyrates whom he presently Saw were forcing Drink upon him as afterwards they wou’d Some Cloths” [HCA 1/99/147]. The true nature of the situation might be best seen through the eyes of one sailor who made his defense against being accused of drinking with a pirate crew, “As to Drinking he Says t’was a Common Fault among ‘em, and he knew of no other Company he cou’d keep in that Place” [HCA 1/99/120]. In reality, it may have been that drinking to excess was simply a part of maritime culture and if sailors were to adapt and accommodate to their peers and enjoy the benefits of collective agency and representation, then there was really no alternative than to accept social drinking as part of the lifestyle.

Maritime communities used alcohol ritualistically to affirm social unity and mark complicity in agreements such as recruitment deals and trade negotiations, few of which were certified by written contacts. Fury2015 provides evidence of two extreme circumstances in which alcohol was used as a social bonding agent aboard the voyages of the East India Company. The first occurred during the voyage of the *Ascension* 1608–9 when Coxswain Nicholas White was convicted of sodomizing the Purser’s Boy, William Acton, and was sentenced to hang; the crew passed among them “a cup of wine shared for his farewell” at his execution (Fury2015: 10). The second example occurred on the ship *Good Hope* in 1609 after an uprising led to the murder of Master John Lufkin and, as a result, the men “helped themselves to his provisions, carousing and drinking, toasting each other” (Fury2015: 13). Although superficially there is little connection between these events, the use of alcohol in both serves the role of uniting the crew in a gesture of solidarity against what was considered a severe punishment in the first example and as in a gesture of celebration and complicity in the mutinous act in the second. The act of drinking itself served to demonstrate solidarity, as one commander demonstrates in his pledge, “he would not see him wronged in any-

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thing and all of the rest said the like Whereupon he called for a bottle of brandy & Drank wth them and tould them he would make them all men and officers” [HCA 1/101/408-409]. The drinking of the brandy in this example acts to validate the pledge similar to taking an oath or signing a document might if the contract were written. Likewise, the following description of post-trade inebriation seems to be an important part of validating the exchange of goods and strengthens the ties between trading partners for the possibility of future agreements:

One day, a small French sloop came to trade with the English owner of the plantation. The French smugglers (about fourteen or fifteen men) loaded three barrels of brown (pardo) sugar, eleven sacks of cotton, and one barrel of indigo dye onto their ship, and then left the loaded ship moored while they and the Englishmen they had traded with all got Drunk. (Hatfield2016)

Alcohol served to validate trade agreements and so the taverns and private drinking houses that supplied the alcohol used to validate these deals were not just places to socialize, but offices of maritime business. In the court records relating to one piracy trial in Rhode Island and Providence Plantation in 1725, the entire courtroom seems to have moved into a local tavern; the court clerk notes “Whereupon the Court adjourned to the *Three Mariners* Tavern... and Opened by proclamation” [HCA 1/99/5]. Yet more commonly, local taverns were not the domain of the administration but rather grassroots maritime communication hubs, e.g. one commander’s proposition to enter into negotiations with another, “the said Brock would be glad to Drinke a Bottell of wine with the said Le Fort that he might have his company” [HCA 1/52/137], and one letter from a sailor’s wife that instructs him “your letter for george herring to be left Mr. Richard merrys here the sine of the *green dragon* nere Shadwell doce [dock] in London” [HCA 1/12/87]. In addition to their role as places of information exchange, taverns were also centers for negotiation on contraband trade that was not subject to the monopolies of the Navigation Acts or the restrictions of other European trading regulations. As such, they proliferated in islands that were centers of news networks and trading routes, e.g., “proportionally, at least one in fourteen Bermudian households operated as a part-time tavern” (Jarvis2010: 294). Hatfield’s work on illegal slave trading by English pirates in the late seventeenth century as described in Spanish Sanctuary Records suggests the cross-cultural nature of drinking rituals accompanying trade. She notes that “the French smugglers and English planters caroused together in addition to trading” (Hatfield2016: 17). The international and therefore outlawed nature of such trade may explain why colonial government records abound with regulations against and prosecutions for unlicensed

taverns e.g., Barbadian legislation in 1652 “to prevent frequenting of taverns and ale-houses by seamen,” and two years later, the act “prohibiting persons from keeping a common ale-house, or tippling-house, selling any liquors or this country-spirits, to be drank in their houses or plantations without a license¹⁴.” Such legislation may have been an attempt to restrict the flow of information and operations in illegal trade much more than an effort to increase island-wide sobriety, and suggests that local authorities also knew the important role of alcohol in maritime trade negotiations.

The most extreme and spiritual use of alcohol in maritime ritual relates to preparations among the crew before anticipated combat. One witness testimony reports ”..after they had been Drinking all Day togeather towards the evening...to get all together and seize upon the goods” [HCA 1/9/8] and Fury’s research includes a footnote relating to how the crew of the *Golden Dragon* drank to each other in a gesture of forgiveness for any wrongdoings and as an act of solidarity before battle (HCA 13/30/108v, cited in Fury2015: 10). The act of drinking before conflict is also referred to in the witness testimony of how one captain and his company prepared for imminent battle “Drinking Rum and Gunpowder” [HCA 1/99 *The American: Weekly Mercury* No.618, Oct 28-Nov 4 1731]. Interestingly, this ritual has historical parallels in Obeah war rituals. Boukman Barima, Professor of Atlantic History and the African Diaspora at Jackson State University, explains:

Obeah’s war rituals survived the erosion of time and were passed like heirlooms between successive generations of freedom fighters as in the practice of consuming rum mixed with gunpowder. Rebels throughout enslavement when they took oaths to pledge their loyalty to each other and their revolt drank this liquid admixture to seal their pact. Binding oaths with liquid concoctions occurs in several West and Central African societies, for instance, in Fanti swearing ceremonies for Omanhene, Asafohene and other leaders this was an essential rite that summoned “the gods to witness” the proceedings and if the person dishonored their pledge “the drink would cause injury or death.” (BoukmanBarima2016: 20 with in-text citations of Shumay’s [2011] *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*).

The use of alcohol in Obeah war rituals to seal a pledge mirrors the role of alcohol in preparations for combat in maritime, and specifically pirate communities, and therefore might also attest to the African cultural influence on such

¹⁴First legislation dated Jan 10 1652 and the second in the Acts of 1654, both retrieved from the Catalogue of Acts 1642-1699, The Barbados Department of Archives, St. James.

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crews. The potential African spiritual influence is even more pronounced when we consider that “common protocol for preparing and hosting rum and gunpowder rituals always demands an adept Obeah man as master of ceremony” (BoukmanBarima2016: 8) suggesting that multicultural crews not only maintained, but also looked towards such spiritual leaders in times of crisis. Hence, regular consumption of alcohol in maritime communities was not just an act of celebration and a necessary replacement for repugnant water supplies, but also served an important role in promoting social order by promoting complicity and unity, regulating trade agreements, and expressing spiritual connectivity in times of distress or anticipated conflict.

2.2.6 Shared ideologies and leisure activities

Sailors were not known for being particularly pious, but the communities they lived in were bound by strong shared ideologies—oftentimes categorized as superstitions, folklore or myths—that manifested themselves in ritual and storytelling. Fantastical beliefs relating to the inherent risks of sailing and the desire for fortuitous sailing conditions date back to antiquity and sailors of the early colonial period would have tried to derive meaning from omens and portents in the same way as generations of those that went before them. Bassett1885 explains in his book on *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors*:

monsters abode in the waters, gods of monstrous shapes ruled them, enchanting sirens, horrid giants, and terrible dragons inhabited the islets and rocks, and on the dry land beyond, there dwelt strange enchantresses, fire-breathing hulls, dwarfish pygmies, and man-eaters....Thus sailors as well as landsmen, in all ages, have been prone to indulge in fancies of all kinds concerning the winds and waves. Such notions are naturally directed to the weather, the object of so much care and solicitude to the mariner. (Bassett1885)

Eyers asserts that “sailors remain a notoriously superstitious lot” (2011: 5) and his book on nautical myths and superstitions covers material on well-known lore of the sea such as mermaids, the flying Dutchman, evil spirits and ghosts of those departed. Yet, evidence of explicit folklore is rare in archival documentation owing to the nature of the beliefs that were typically transmitted in oral traditions and considered inappropriate to or unworthy of official records; more commonly, official records include references to orthodox religious observations such as the entry “this day being sabath day our Capt was not willing to saile”

in the logbook of the *Carlyle* [T/70/1216/9] and the warning by court officials against “being moved & seduced by the instigation of the Devil” [HCA 1/99 Jamaica 1738-1739 & Bahama Islands 1722]. However, there are some references to the darker side of sailors’ spirituality in observations such as how one Spanish crew:

began againe to curse and rage against the English which inhabited that Island [Bermuda], saying, that they had incchated that and the rest of those Islands about and did still with the devill raile stormes in those seas when the Spanish Fleet passed that way (Gage1648: 201).

This journal entry demonstrates the sailors’ belief that individuals could enchant the winds and purposefully cause storms, a sentiment famously reflected in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, believed to have been written around 1611. Another series of official records which attest to community beliefs in individuals with supernatural powers derive from a series of witness depositions taken in Virginia 1661, in the case of Robert Clarke [HCA 1/9/51]. Although testimonies do not always align, the majority of witnesses in the case corroborate the beating and ultimate death of Robert Clarke in direct retribution for his necromancy. Testimony describes how Clarke was chained, beaten, had pins thrust into his flesh and was kept from sleeping before being ultimately bound and strangled with a rope around the neck. Deponents explain that his treatment was designed to “beate the Devill out of him...that the devils came often to him and would Speake Softly to him” and “some of the passengers would often call the Said Clarke thiefe & witch & the like” and as a result, “Capt Hobbs Did say that they Should never have faire weather till the said Clarke was hanged” [all citations from HCA 1/9/51 batch]. Interestingly, three deponents testify that Clarke was beaten at his own request, had made a confession that he was a witch, could speak Latin, and was often heard reciting the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments. This suggests that Clarke was an educated man, possibly involved with the church, but who potentially suffered from schizophrenia or some other mental disorder that provoked mass hysteria aboard the ship and tapped into deep-rooted beliefs in supernatural agency on the ships. Certainly, little was known about mental disorder at the time and attacks of epilepsy, aphasia, bipolar disorder, in addition to the effects of degenerative muscle, skin, or mental conditions might very well have been interpreted as something sinister.

Dramatic rites of passage such as initiation of new sailors when they first crossed the line of the equator commonly bound maritime communities of the early colonial period, and the shared ideology of such rituals are manifest even

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today (Bronner2006). Customs like these expressed solidarities among the crew and part of the initiation of new men involved “learning the ropes” when it came to the rites of passage, and so mariners did not customarily make any reference to these events in letters back home or in the official record-keeping. However, owing to the intrigue of one passenger who was privileged to see the custom aboard a late seventeenth century Portuguese vessel reports that he witnessed an “ancient custom” which served to initiate any sailor crossing the line of the equator for the first time. He describes how the novice sailor was required to give food, drink or some physical gift or money equivalent to the mariners, and if any man did not pay:

the sailors clothed like officers carry him bound to a tribunal, on which a seaman is seated in a long robe, who acting the part of a judge, examines him, hears what he has to say, and gives judgement against him to be thrice ducked in the sea after this manner: the person condemned is tied fast with rope, and the other end of it run through a pully at the yard-arm, by which he is hoisted up, and then let run amain three times under water; and there seldom sails to be one or other that gies the rest this diversion. The same is practised in passing the straits of Gibraltar, and the cape of Good Hope. [445f.1/486].

The dramatic ritual described when crossing the line¹⁵ includes elements of role play, and specifically the use of costume to reflect the role of the judge, a phenomenon also described and illustrated in Charles Johnson1724’s (Johnson1724) description of a mock trial among pirates, see Figure 2.5(a) This practice may have roots in the ancient practices of African and European nations that crowned a king-for-the-day, a role that is still celebrated in carnival cultures across the Americas and Caribbean islands, and is echoed in the witness testimony of how “the Indian would have command of the vessell and would be called capt: and dailly getting Drunk” [HCA 1/99 Barbados 1733]. Thus, dramatic role play may have been a salient part of maritime ritual, particularly with regards to using costume to invert social order and play out alternative models of authority.

Sailors did not always work; they also enjoyed leisure time at sea. The sizeable crews necessitated by navigational, defense, and loading requirements of the large warships and transatlantic trading vessels nonetheless became superfluous during favorable sailing conditions and in times of absence of conflict at sea.

¹⁵Such rituals are not anticipated to be monolithic but varying among crews and vessels, as such the description serves as an example of one manifestation of the ritual and is not presented as a model.

This was even more notable in pirate vessels that maintained a typically larger crew and whose speech community Burg2001 compares to the “total institutions” of prisons and mental institutions, characterized by significant leisure time and greater opportunities for extensive social interaction. During such leisure time, sailors told stories, played games, enjoyed music and even staged dramatic performances at sea (Rediker2004) and such speech acts would have provided an ideal situation for the mixing, leveling and simplification processes of new dialect formation, outlined by Trudgill1986 and also would have provided opportunities for new recruits to listen to, practice, and acquire features of Ship English.



(a) The mock trial performed by the crew of the Thomas Anstis, from Captain Charles Johnson's *A general history of robberies and murders of the most notorious pyrates* (London 1724) reproduced in



(b) “Saturday Night at Sea” by George Cruikshank

Spontaneous conversation was the most common type of social contact that individual sailors were likely to engage in on a regular basis, and, in the absence of news, gossip and storytelling were favorite group pastimes—as British illustrator George Cruikshank in his “Saturday Night at Sea” (see illustration in Figure 2.5(b)) Participation in storytelling served to strengthen social bonds and maritime traditions, particularly as the repetition of stories also demanded accommodation to the original speaker’s performance style. It is also possible that ships’ cooks, typically older and/or disabled seamen, may have been a focal point of the storytelling tradition, retelling their experiences at sea and teaching new recruits in much the same way as a village elder might. Officer Robert Wilson de-

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scribes the role of the cook “when their work is finished for the day they’ll take their pipes, seat themselves in Copper Alley, and spin you a long yard [yarn] ... about what they have seen and done” (cited in AdkinsAdkins2008: 76). And perhaps it was this very role as the acting village elder that makes the fictional Long John Silver (a disabled cook) so cruel in his attempted corruption of the novice Jim Hawkins in Stevenson1883’s (Stevenson1883) *Treasure Island*. Sailors knew, as perhaps did Stevenson, that cooks were the focal point of social life aboard ship and their potential role in transmitting language features through narratives in a predominantly oral culture was sacred.

As mentioned above, music and games were also integral parts of shipboard leisure time, although these often required equipment and some level of experience or ability. Numerous sea shanties of the era survive, not only because regular rhythms facilitated collaborative work efforts, but also because, as Palmer explains, “sailors would assemble there [the mainmast] in good weather during dog-watches and other free times to talk and exchange songs” (1986: xxvii). Repeated references to instruments in witness testimony shows that music featured in the daily lives of sailors beyond vocalizations, e.g., drummers are referred to in various documents [e.g., HCA 1/99/124; HCA 1/14/201; and SP 42/6]. The drum may have served a military purpose, but testimony in cases relating to the forced recruitment of musicians on pirate vessels not only shows that other instruments were on board but also that those who could play them were in high demand, e.g., the accused “took from aubord the Shallop a man belonging to the deponent who Could play on the Violin” [HCA 1/99/5], a captured sailor “begged hard for his release, insisting on his being a decreped little Fellow unfit for their Purpose, but he was a Trumpeter, and therefore they would not hear him” [HCA 1/99/33], and another sailor, “a fidler taken with himself was forced...to sign their articles” [HCA 1/99/49].

Similarly, witness testimony shows evidence of equipment used for gaming on board ships, e.g., two sailors arguing over ownership of “Baggamon [backgammon] Tables” [HCA 1/99/81], “Peter Fox abt 25 yeares old... quick and ready of speech, very plausable in Company, a great gamer, and Seldom wthout a ball of dyce in his porkett” [HCA 1/101/411]. Diarists also corroborate the presence of games on board, e.g., Edward Hayes’s late sixteenth century journal notes, “we were provided of music in good variety not omitting the least toys, as morris dancers, hobby horse, and May-like conceits” on board the 10-ton frigate *Squirrel* in the late sixteenth century (cited in Bicheno2012: 173), and Dr. John Covel’s late seventeenth century journal notes:

we seldome fail of some merry fellows in every ship’s crew who will entertain

us with several diversions, as divers sorts of odde sports and Gambols; sometimes with their homely drolls and Farses, which in thier corrupt language they nickname Interludes; sometimes they dance about the mainmast instead of a maypole, and they have variety of forecastle songs, ridiculous enough (cited in Palmer 1986: 104).

Although captains and officers preached the benefits of discipline and self-restraint, they knew that such games were beneficial to occupy idle hands and discouraged more dangerous leisure activities such as talking politics, the conversation about the relative merits of Oliver Cromwell and Charles II that John Barefoot was overheard debating by one witness [HCA 1/9/68]; firing weapons, as happened when pirates got bored and started firing at the *Whydah* for sport [HCA 1/99/99]; and excessive alcohol consumption, discussed in §2.2.5 corroborated by testimonies such as the deposition that describes the crew of the *Elizabeth*, “Carouzing and Drinking with the Rest of the Pyrates” [HCA 1/99/46]. Officers therefore permitted games and music as controlled social acts that helped relieve tedium during uneventful hours at sea.

Occasionally, ships’ captains would permit (and potentially encourage) more structured leisure activities on board such as theatrical performances. There is evidence that even the lower ranking officers were involved in amateur dramatics, writing, rehearsing and performing plays for visiting officials (Adkins 2008: 339). Fury refers to “the men included performances of two of Shakespeare’s plays afloat and ashore” on the third voyage of the East India Company 1604-6 (2015: 19). And Gage describes how “for the afternoones sport they had prepared a Copmedy out of famous Lope de Vega, to be acted by some Soldiers, Passengers and some of the younger soft of Fryers” (1648: 16). However, these were likely to have been rare events compared to the more common social activities of telling stories, playing and listening to music, singing songs, dancing, and gambling that fortified the social fabric of the insular ship’s community.

2.3 Wider maritime communities

In addition to the insular ship communities that each sailor belonged to, a wider maritime community encompassed and connected all of the vessels at sea, in port and in river-trade, and also extended to the port and littoral communities in contact with sea-going vessels through local trade, employment opportunities or the service industry. These communities had characteristic features that potentially affected the acquisition and transfer of Ship English and the nature of its internal change, these features included the profusion of maritime contact and the nature

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of contact in ship-to-ship exchanges, the economic profile of the community that supported a culture of theft and the operation of clandestine networks, and the frequency and nature of contact with port communities.

2.3.1 Profuse maritime activity

Shipping for defense and trade purposes has always been important in Great Britain, surrounded on all sides by the sea. Even as far back as 98AD, a Roman trader described its major port town of London as “a busy emporium for trade and traders” (*Tacitus*1913), and in the fervor of early colonial manufacture, industry, discovery and international trade, London was defined by its connectivity by sea routes to colonial and foreign locations. *Bicheno*2012 explains that the population of London trebled during the sixteenth century and in the early seventeenth century, the docks of London became “one of the most crowded places on earth... [when] an estimated 75,000 lived in the square mile of the city - which would put it among the top ten most densely populated cities even today” (*Bicheno*2012: 13). In fact, the Thames was so busy that the lightermen, whose job it was to move cargo and thus make the boats lighter, and watermen, employed to move people and transit goods across the river, made frequent complaints about the congestion around the vast system of docks, wharfs, and warehouses, e.g., in one petition two London watermen complain that “by reason of shippes & other vessells continually Lying & incroaching upon the said staires [landing place] are not only greatly hindered in their dayly Imployments but also much ... in their boates which are often splitt & broken by such vessells” [HCA 1/11/109]. Such complaints led to the 1667 bill under penalty of fine “that no shipp or vessell shall ... obstruct or hinder the passage of any lighter or vessell passing to or from the said dock” [HCA 1/11/140] and speaks to the problems that London’s maritime service providers had to face on a daily basis in the bustling port.

The importance of the sea in terms of military defense is self-evident for an island-kingdom¹⁶ for whom the seas became, “a moat defensive” in the words of the dying fictional John of Gaunt in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, (c. 1595, 2.1). *Bicheno*2012 explains that “with hundreds of ports and no place more than 70 miles/112 kilometers from the sea, what we might call ‘maritime awareness’ was a constant in English history” (2012: 24). Even at sea, it was a numbers game, Adkins and Adkins explain, “the war at sea was one of attrition, with the navy of each side preying on merchant shipping to starve the enemy of supplies, reduce prosperity and thereby limit the capacity to wage war” (2008: 231) and so

¹⁶An island-nation after the British loss of Calais in 1558

a profusion of maritime activity was actively encouraged by competing European sea-going nations of the time, and this naturally led to frequent contact between foreign ships in the open waters, evidenced by first-hand testimony, e.g., “[we] Chased a french man of warr” [ADM 52/2/8], “there was 16 Saile of french” [DDB6/8/4], “a fleet of ships of 14 Saile Supposing them to be a french fleet” [ADM 52/1/8], and “severl Duch Mercht Shipps with a Man of war came in” [ADM 52/2/5]. Frequent contact between ships also happened in busy ports, e.g., a passenger describes the port at Cadiz in 1666:

full of an infinitive number of ships, galleys, barks, caravels. tartans, and other vessels, which I was assured at the time amounted to an hundred sail. Just at the entrance of the harbour we saw twenty-five ships of an extraordinary bulk. There is a continual resort of ships from all parts of the world, even from the *Indes*; and it is usual there to see thirty or forty sail come or go out in a day, as if they were but little boats [445f.1/511].

Such international traffic, in addition to the transatlantic slave trade that began on a large-scale in the mid-seventeenth century, caused crowding in trading zones and the shipping lanes of the open seas because prevailing ocean currents and winds determined ships’ navigation and created international sea-highways that all vessels were obliged to use (AdkinsAdkins2008: xxxiv and refer back to Figure 2.1) As such, and according to the British National Maritime Museum’s information on shipping lanes, “they also determined the nature of maritime trade and social interaction” (Atlantic Worlds exhibition, Nov 22 2015).

Shipping, critical to the home-based defensive and trading hubs of England, was perhaps more crucial to interconnected colonial settlements. Since the fifteenth century rise in the cod market, the annual fishing migration to Newfoundland saw the English and French fight over control of the port settlements. And with the sixteenth-century demand for oil to use in lamps and bone for manufactured goods such as corsets, umbrellas, shoe-horns, and fishing rods, whaling activities increased in international waters and prompted conflict over the ports that lay on whaling migration routes. The seventeenth-century land grab in the Americas and the Caribbean and the plunder of labor from Africa saw associated movements of officials, merchants, missionaries, military, workers, settlers and captives across the waters and around the colonies. The military presence needed to secure these new colonial holdings meant that the mid-seventeenth century was a time of exponential maritime growth for Britain. Linebaugh and Rediker explain, “the Navy had 50 ships and 9,500 sailors in 1633, and 173 ships and 42,000 sailors in 1688” (2000: 146). The number of ships continued to grow,

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reaching more than five times the size of the mid-seventeenth century fleet with 939 ships registered in 1815 (The National Maritime Museum, “Nelson Navy Nation.”)

This period also saw a growth in the range and connectivity among colonial ports, perhaps best illustrated by a summary of the shipping news in *The American: Weekly Mercury* [no. 617–618] covering the period of two weeks from October 21 to November 4 1731, in which 79 percent of the vessels in port were arriving from, or bound to colonial territories compared to twelve percent from/to foreign ports and only five percent heading from/to Great Britain (see Table 2.5). Ships such as the *Antelope* were kept in constant transit around the colonies, e.g., logbook entries from 10 June 1690 to August 3 1691 detail consecutive voyages around Montserrat, Nevis, St. Christopher, Santo Domingo, Antigua, Barbados, Martinique, Rhode Island, Guadalupe, and Carlisle Bay covering a period just over one year [ADM 52/1/7]. Such voyages were reflective of a phenomenon in which colonies became more autonomous and leveraged the trading commodities, workforce, and defensive capacities that local trading partners could offer before seeking to engage with the customs regulation and high duties that trade and transit with Britain incurred. However, the statistics recovered here are only a partial account of all the traffic that was operating among the colonies. The smaller craft that were critical for day-to-day operations and essential in the inter-colonial networks of trade and communication often bypassed British record-keeping efforts. Jarvis2010 explains that large ships were much less common compared to the ubiquitous smaller vessels of intercolonial traffic and presents a table of vessels clearing North American ports in 1772 showing only 2,149 large topsail vessels (just under 30% of the total traffic) compared to 5,047 smaller sloops and schooners (over 70% of the total traffic) (2010: 122–123, Table 4).

Figure 2.5: Summary of shipping information for New York and Philadelphia covering the period of two weeks (Oct 21–Nov 4) in 1731, based on data in HCA 1/99, *The American: Weekly Mercury* (no. 617–618)

He also comments that, even when vessels registered with British authorities, “harried customs officers had neither the time nor the resources to verify information in the registers that mariners presented” (Jarvis2010: 159). Hence, and accepting the difficulties of data collection in a context of covert trade and falsification of customs records, records suggest that colonial ports saw intense maritime activity, much of which was inter-colonial in nature rather than transatlantic.

Profuse activity around colonial ports attracted contraband trade and piracy which created additional traffic in the shipping lanes. Gage1648’s description

of a colonial port in the Spanish Americas in the mid-sixteenth century shows how a typical “sea towne” was populated, “some very rich Merchants dwell in it, who trade with Mexico, Peru, and Philippines, sending their small vessels out from Port to Port, which come home richly laden with the Commodities of all the Southerne or Easterne parts” (1648: 88). And in such a context, it is clear why British sailors seeking the easy pickings of the Spanish Empire in South America were attracted to the commodity-rich and defense-poor port towns of the colonial Atlantic. British colonies were also targets for foreign raids and the attempts of pirates who rejected any national alliance. In the late seventeenth century, Virginia Governor Francis Nicholson was so keen to secure safe shipping that he offered bounty money for the capture of specific pirates, and “if it was not allowed in the publick Accounts, his excellency was pleased to say, he would pay it him self” [CO 5/1411/644]. Similarly indicating preoccupation with the proliferation of piracy, although eight bills were discussed relating to the administration of the colony of Virginia on 22 May 1699, e.g. export duties on food, treatment of colonists, regulation of the judicial system, treatment of wildlife, and the regulation of the economy, the first bill to be discussed and approved was the “bill for restraining & Punishing pirats and Privateers,” suggesting that it was a more pressing topic of concern than the local food supply chain, well-being of settlers, or the economy. The issue of piracy was also discussed in full assembly only four days later on 26 May before the less-urgent matter of a bill against “unreasonable killing of poor” [CO 5/1411]; and it was not until the following month that the assembly met to discuss “a bill for building the capitol & the city of williamsburg” [CO 5/1411/77]. Without first safeguarding the shipping lanes, the administrators of Virginia knew, as did their contemporaries, that there was no point in developing a settlement.

2.3.2 Convoys and communication

Transatlantic vessels frequently travelled in convoy for protection against foreign and pirate attack, and communication among these convoys was a regular feature of language contact in maritime speech communities. Of the 27 recoverable references to a specific number of vessels sailing in convoy with a majority of British sailors, the average number is 22 ships per convoy. The highest number is 92 [DDB6 8/4] but this seems to be an exception to the trend of convoys numbering between 15 and 30 ships that were most common in international waters (see Figure 2.6)

Much larger groupings of ships were possible in port, e.g., “an hundred sail” and “five hundred...fishing boats” [445f.1/511] yet as such references do not nec-

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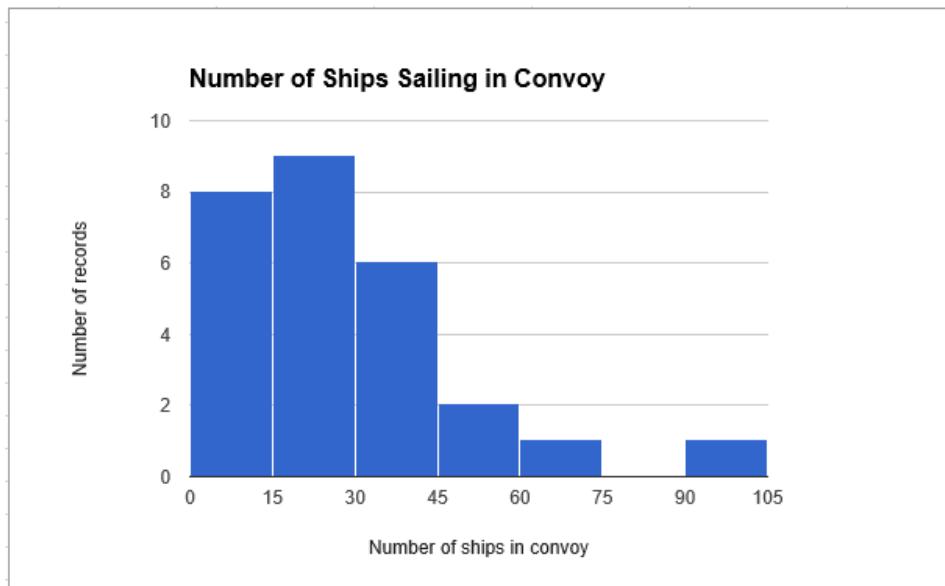


Figure 2.6: Number of ships sailing in convoy based on witness depositions, logbooks and journals

Sources: SP 42/6, DDB6 8/4, CO 5/1411/664, ADM 52/2/5-8, HCA 51/3983/1, ADM 52/3/7, 13, ADM 51/4322/4, ADM 51/3954, HCA 1/99/26, HCA 1/99/3/6, HCA 1/98/45,47, DDB6 8/4, MMM BL/Egerton 2395/0003, *Bicheno2012*: 183, *Gage1648*: 11, 15

essarily imply that any of the vessels sailed in convoy, they are not included in the data composing the graph in Figure 2.6. The vessels that evidence indicates did sail in convoy with others were potentially made up of mixed groups at sea, both in terms of vessel size and a range of merchant and naval vessels e.g., “above 22 sail with 3 merchant Ships & Sloopes” [ADM 52/1/7], “seven ships & one sloop going after & 10 long ships” [HCA 1/99/26], and “seven large and 22 small ships” (*Bicheno2012*: 183). The common maritime practice of sailing in convoys for safety and increased force in the event of attack was also evident among foreign nations, e.g., “16 Saile of french” [DDB6 8/4], and “the Dutch were being about 60 Sayle of men of war” [ADM 52/2/5]; and also in groups composed of international allies, e.g., “the Assurance with 12 English Merchant men 2 dutch men of warr & 30 saile of merchant men” [HCA 51/3983/1]. Just like the naval and merchant traditions they grew out of, pirate communities also collaborated in convoy (*Esquemelin1678*; *Rediker1987*: 268) making the feature of this type of collaboration something that characterized all types of transatlantic maritime communities during the early colonial period.

Some fleets may have sailed in perpetual and planned convoy, but many convoys formed at sea without prior organization. Bicheno2012 explains how throughout the sixteenth century, maritime activity evolved “from shoal to school” (2012: 51), and as part of this development, ships started sailing in convoys more. He gives examples of some of the planned convoys of the late sixteenth century in which “articles of consortship” established spacing between ships at about six miles / ten kilometers from each other on a south-north axis (Bicheno2012: 305). However, into the seventeenth century and the profuse maritime activity that came with multitudes of private traders now able to navigate the transatlantic passage, convoys were not always planned from the outset but formed as opportunities arose; or, as one contemporary succinctly puts it, “they met at sea” [HCA 1/14/203]. For this reason, willingness to sail in convoy was sometimes mandated in captain’s instructions, e.g., one letter from the Admiralty dated 5 December 1699 to Captain Aldred, Commander of the *Essex Enterprize*, instructs “give Convoy to any other ships or vessels of his Majestys subjects bound your way, which shall be ready to sail with you, or you shall meet with, as far as your way shall lie together” [CO 5/1411/657]. And instructions like these confirm that convoys formed impromptu at sea and likely lasted as the participants found mutual benefit in shared passage, as described in one witness testimony regarding a vessel from Newfoundland that “willing to Consirt wth us in our Design and soe Proceeded wth us” [HCA 1/12/1]. Journals and logbooks show evidence of how vessels left convoys after they ceased to be beneficial e.g., “the eight Galeons took their leave of us, and left our Merchant ships now to Shift for themselves” (Gage1648) “this morning mett three East India Shipp which we toke In our Convoye” [ADM 52/1/1], and “we lost Company of 10 ships & Supposed they Staied moord” [ADM 52/2/8]; note that in the last quotation the word “supposed” indicates that there was no prior agreement and that the ships composing the convoy sailed independently. It was therefore possible that multiple convoys were operating in the busy sea-lanes and that vessels could effectively tack from one to the other, as illustrated by one sailor’s observation, “wee have sayled & Loggd upon severall Covoyes 44 miles” [HCA 51/3983/1, emphasis added]. Such networks of convoys potentially gave rise to a kind of maritime underground railroad for rebels, escaped slaves and indentured workers, a suggestion that might explain the deposition of Alexander Wyat who testifies that two sailors promised to get him away from Havana to France [HCA 1/99 Bahama Islands 1722], another runaway who “got on Board a Dutch Ship” [HCA 1/99/171], and a letter regarding “a mollatto” that ran away and whose likely movements are described:

he gott to Road Island and perhaps is gon from thence with som of the

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pryvateers that fitted out there for the Gulph of Porlya... If hee bee, it's not unlikely but he is or has been att the marys or Maddagascar [HCA 1/98/75].

The proven existence of such maritime railroads undoubtedly requires further research, but the common maritime practice of sailing in convoy that was observed throughout the period under study certainly indicates that encounters at sea and consequent impromptu convoys between vessels formed a wider community of sailors on the open waters.

The practice of forming unplanned convoys necessitated communication between vessels, if nothing more, to establish an unknown vessel's purpose and destination in addition to the captain's disposition to sail in consort. As a result, records of the era are replete with notes relating to chance encounters with ships and efforts to communicate with them, e.g., "one day we discovered a ship, and it being our captain's duty to know what she was, he made all the sail he could" [445f.1/511], "we espied a ship...being within 3 leagues of it we tackt & speak with the ship" [ADM 52/1/7], "[a ship] bounde for Newfounde Lande: one of our fleet speak with them" [ADM 52/2/8], and "we had sight of a ship and about three she Bore to us... to speak with us" [T/70/1216/13]. In order to initiate communication, crews often used signals that would be transmitted over larger distances, such as flags, guns, and fanfare, e.g., "putting out English colours invited the *Maliver* to come and pate [talk]" [HCA 1/53/13], "to give notice to our fleet...wee fired 3 gunes Distance and ...a muskett" [HCA 51/3983/1], "hee Came upon us at a distance & spread his Dutch collors then wee fired a gun [of salutation] at him soe hee Came unboard us" [HCA 51/3983/1], and "the other vessels bore up to us, and gave us a consort of drums and trumpets, saluting us with three huzza's all the sailors gave, taking the signal from the boatswain's whistle" [445f.1/510]. If the vessels were broadside or near enough, then sailors might call to each other from deck to deck or across the gunports, e.g., "[a sailor] did what hee could to speak with mee, being within halfe a mile of mee" [ADM 51/3954], "they hailed him and they spoke with one another" [CO 5/1411/99], and "the whole morning was spent in friendly acclamations and salutations from ship to ship...Sea greetings" (Gage1648: 201). Yet sailors also frequently used small craft to visit each other's vessels, described as "visiting each other with their Cock-boates" (Gage1648: 15). Officers, in particular, were required to visit other ships as part of proper custom and in order to collaborate with other officers in the fleet, as illustrated by the references: Captains Snapes and Hawkes daily came on board and returned to their own ships [SP 42/6], "this morn a Councill of war on board the *Dutches*" [ADM 52/2/5], and "a Consultation of Flagg officers held on board the *Britania*" [ADM

52/2/5]. Yet the common sailors also had opportunities to pay their peers ship-visits, albeit without the ritual pomp, e.g., “one Mariner of the ship called *St. Francisco* being more [ad]venturous than the rest, and offering to swimme from his ship, to see some friends in another not farre off¹⁷” (Gage1648) and Abel Taylor’s testimony that “2 or 3 times every day that weather would permitt [them to get] on board [another ship]... and this he declared was practized as well at sea as at Malago & in other parts & that he hath known” [SP 42/6/29]. AdkinsAdkins2008 suggest that crew visits were a common form of leisure, “although the seamen were only occasionally given shore leave, they were generally permitted to visit other nearby ships on Sundays” (2008: 349). Ship to ship contact provided the networks by which many sailors kept in touch with their families, e.g., one wife’s expectation that “this [letter] will God Willing Come to your hands by the ship *Katheryn*” [HCA 1/98/58], and was also a means to seek and disseminate news of maritime movements, e.g., “in the evening speak with the *Katherine* Yatch who told us the Flemmings were gone to the Westward” [ADM 52/2/6], “a small pinke came up with us & said shee saw the *Assurance* tack in the night” [HCA 51/3983/1], and “Last night Arrived a Small bark & a sloop for the Antego that brings news of the *Garsey* being taken” [ADM 52/1/8]. In fact, getting news from other ships was so common that when it did not happen, it was more likely to be noteworthy, e.g., in the logbook of the *Antelope* 6 March 1691 “this morning arrived here a hag boat from London [that] brought little or noe news at all” [ADM 52/1/8]. And although we only have witness accounts of such contact between vessels for the majority period under study, later the *Lloyd’s List* would report on such “speakings” that were records of communication between ships that met at sea. In short, interpersonal and symbolic communication among the vessels in convoys served a vital function in maritime collaboration; it provided opportunities for sailors to socialize, organize, and collaborate in a way that strengthened the networks of maritime connectivity across open waters and potentially also aided language transfer around these extended communities in stark contrast to the literary trope of the lone boat at sea sailing for months without contact that Samuel Taylor Coleridge popularized in his (1798) *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

2.3.3 The colonial maritime economy

Fishing and cargo-shipping formed the basis of Britain’s trading economy with foreign neighbors since the first sailors crossed the channels to modern day Ireland and France, and with the advent of more reliable transatlantic passages in

¹⁷This attempt was not very successful however as the swimmer became “a most unfortunate prey to one of them [sharks] ...who had devoured a leg, and arme, and part of his shoulder” (Gage1648) perhaps explaining sailors’ characteristic reluctance to swim.

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the sixteenth century, sailors forged the intricate mercantile networks of international commerce on a much greater scale. In 1562, and with the backing of Elizabeth I, Hawkins challenged the Iberian monopoly on the slave trade when he shipped African captives to Hispaniola, and Charles II furthered Britain's involvement in this form of human trafficking with a charter to the Royal Adventurers of England Trading into Africa in 1662 (Brown2011: 105). Around the same time, Britain was fighting the Dutch for commercial supremacy off the south coast of England, culminating in the Navigation Acts of 1651 that were explicitly designed to maintain trade monopolies in the face of international free markets (Brown2011: 41). As the British stronghold on colonial commerce increased, so did its role in the transit and sale of human cargo around the Caribbean and Americas. For example, Liverpool's first known slave ship set sail in 1699 and carried 220 captives from West Africa to Barbados, and by 1750 slaving voyages from Liverpool dominated the trade, significantly outnumbering those from London and Bristol, controlling over 80% of the British trade and more than 40% of the European market by the turn of the century¹⁸. Various depositions of the seventeenth century refer to the infrastructure of this trade around the Atlantic, specifically "factories" and "agents" in West Africa that functioned not only in horrific sites of brutality and abuse, but also created points of commerce [HCA 1/12/2-4]. These points of commercial contact involved language contact, potentially giving rise to the development of what Hancock describes as a "Coastal English" (Hancock1986; DelgadoHancock2017).

In addition to trade in foodstuffs, manufactured goods, and human trafficking, sailors were also essential in maintaining the economies of war by moving large numbers of troops, equipment, and captives during regional wars. For example, Taylor's diary gives details of maritime involvement in the 1691 surrender of Limerick:

to facilitate the Transporting of the Troops, there General will furnish 50 Ships, and each Ship Burthen 200 Tuns... and also give Two men of War to imbark the Principal Officers , and serve for a Convoy to the Vessels of Burthen....And if there be any more Men to be Transported, than can be carried off in the said 50 Ships...where they shall remain until the other 20 Ships are ready, which are to be in a Months time; and may imbark in any French Ship, that may come in the mean time. [HCA 1/13/122.]

¹⁸Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives & Library. (2014) *Liverpool and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Information Sheet: 3). Retrieved from <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/archive/sheet/3>

In addition to legitimate maritime transit and commerce, sailors also supplied colonies and regions around Great Britain by keeping open channels of smuggling for contraband that was often hidden in vessels with false bulkheads, hollow spars, and adapted cavities between decks¹⁹. In this context, sailors made the most of opportunistic trading, as described by one witness, “wee sailed along the coast and fell in with the river Sesters and theire wooded and wattered and Traded wth the negroes for fresh provisions” [HCA 1/12/2]. It was precisely this type of ad hoc trading that potentially led to the development of English pidgins around the multilingual coastal regions of the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa. Illegal trading became so intense around pirate havens like Port Royal, Tortuga, Providence and Madagascar that the collusion of any unknown vessel was assumed, prompting one captain leading a trading voyage around Jamaica in 1698 to go to the trouble of getting a letter bearing a seal from the governor that assured all readers of “his just and lawfull affairs” and urging port officials to give his ship free access [HCA 1/98/53]. However, lawful affairs were not everybody’s intention and heavy-handed measures against piracy were taken in the early colonial period to limit damage to the local economy caused by proliferating networks of contraband. In fact, upon close attention to the wording of trials against pirates, it seems that the authorities were far more concerned about the hazard to the economy that these people presented rather than the protection of basic human rights, as illustrated in the wording of one statement used to open proceedings in a piracy trial in Barbados in 1733: “the crimes of piracy, felony, robbery, & murder committed on the sea are most odious and detestable, *being destructive of all trade and commerce*” [HCA 1/99 Barbados 1733, emphasis added]. Yet, all sailors of the early colonial period performed critical service roles in the British and regional economies not only when they operated under legal jurisdiction but also when they developed prohibited networks of debt, credit and communication that shaped both economic and linguistic developments in the decades and centuries to come.

Mariners operated largely on barter economies because coined money was limited and often useless in the context of unregulated international trade. British legal tender was so scarce that sometimes the payment of debts in cash appears to be a notable event, e.g., court cases that refer to “two hundred pounds lawfull money” [HCA 1/9/7], “five pounds payd him in money” [HCA 1/9/64], and “paid him in money” [HCA 1/9/67]. Some trials show evidence that Spanish currency was used, e.g., court proceedings, relating to the theft of “a certain kind, Or pieces

¹⁹Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives & Library. (2010) *History of Rummage* (Information Sheet: 73). Retrieved from <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/archive/sheet/73>

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or species of money comonly Called pieces of eight to the value of One hundred pounds of lawful money of great Britain” [HCA 1/99/7] and description of trade in Tunis using “some Spanish doubleloons...knowing how scarce money was” [SP 42/6]. Yet, more commonly witness statements attest to barter economies in lieu of monetary exchange, e.g., the voyage that took on slaves, flour, beef, and sugar in Antigua to trade for stickfish and wood in Curaçao [SP 42/6], the exchange of “one negroe man slave and five shift for anchorage and seventy pieces of eight in lieu of a barrell of serviceable powder” [HCA 1/98/77], and the invoice of dry goods consigned to Capt Samuel Burgess with the instruction “to sell for my more advantage [or].. to lay it out in Such goods or merchandise as you shall think will turn to the best advantage here” [HCA 1/98/143]. There is evidence that salt may have been the preferred currency in Atlantic barter economies when the access to and value of European currencies collapsed at various points in the early colonial period (Jarvis2010: 400). Dampier gives a first-hand testimony of how this might have worked in maritime trading, “I told him I had not Mony, but would exchange some of the Salt which I brought from Mayo for their Commodities. He reply’d, that Salt was indeed an acceptable Commodity” [1045.f.3/1/31: 30]. Furthermore, AdkinsAdkins2008 suggest that the use of food items and clothing as currency was also a common feature of trade both in port and among crew (2008: 97, 122), e.g., four sailors testify how their captain paid them in shoes and stockings with the explanation that they could trade with these items as if they were money [SP 42/6] and another testimony explains “if the said master would not give them five crownes he would take 1000 hundred fish for the said shott” [HCA 1/101/431]. Interestingly, the use of salt, clothes or foodstuffs as currency may have some connections with trading economies in Africa that bartered with cloth and shells [445f.1/491-2; HogendornJohnson2003]. It may very well be that sailors’ participation in barter economies and their use of dry goods and provisions as currency in trade was something reinforced by contact with West African societies, much like their use of language may have accommodated African forms of speech.

Systems of credit, debt and loan also served to enable trade and strengthen Atlantic networks of reciprocity. Often, credit was extended in partial payment alongside barter deals, e.g., one letter to the British ambassador to Spain explains how “money is not to be got at Havana for the Negroes” instead, they sold on credit and took crops as a percent of the debt (O’Malley2016: 20). At other times, one party would loan money to enable trade under conditions of return, e.g., merchant Robert Balle testified in 1682 that he lent commander Nicholas Reymer various sums of money for ship repairs, under the understanding that when the

ship put into port in London, the money would be repaid [E134/34Chas2/Mich36], and rope maker Samuel Sherman testified in 1636 that he lent the Boatswain of the *Andrew* some money that he repaid in rope and barrels of tar “as pawne for his debte untill the examinmat has recovered his wage to paie him” [HCA 1/101/221, 224]. Yet, in spite of sailors’ promises to be “punctuall & just in the payments” [HCA 1/101/546], many parties ended up in court when they failed to pay debts or when they attempted payment in unacceptable terms such as Captain Williams’ hand-written twenty pound note that was rejected because “Notes of Hand signed at Sea were not valid” [HCA 1/99* *The American: Weekly Mercury* No.618, Oct 28-Nov 4 1731]. Yet when merchants, captains, vessel owners and service providers complied with their debt obligations they constructed international webs of commerce based on trust and mutual benefit that perpetuated local economies and laid the foundations of emerging international economies.

2.3.4 Corruption and theft

Despite their massive contributions to European and colonial economies, sailors of the colonial Americas, Caribbean and Africa operated cultures of theft in which ideologies of personal gain were more commonplace than conscientious acts of nation-building. Indeed, such ideologies proliferated in the British colonies themselves among corrupt governors and officials operating public and clandestine networks dedicated to personal gain and often at the expense of others. Even though the mother country provided an abundance of models and examples in this nefarious domain, Fusaro2015 explains how these colonial spaces were ideal regions which favored autonomy and enabled self-interested parties to operate nefarious schemes at a distance from imperial oversight. Examples recovered from the archives include: Bermudian councilors debated British mandates and voted on whether or not to enforce clauses they disliked (Jarvis2010); governors of Martinique and Guadeloupe encouraged captains to ignore strict rules against trade with France and bring slaves into their labor force (O’Malley2016: 9–18); corrupt officials in Anguilla, Nevis, and other British islands gave vessels permission and protections to unload contraband cargoes openly (Jarvis2010); and officials in Newfoundland took bribes to reserve port spaces, operated complex scams to dupe sailors from their pay, took settlers and natives hostage for ransom, and forged “certificates of clandestinity”²⁰ among illiterate ship masters to cover

²⁰Although no surviving examples of “certificates of Clandestinity” survive in the archive, various references to them in the series SP 42/6 suggest that they were letters of agreement to unlawful practices that were passed around specific ships’ officers to mark their agreement and complicity in nefarious activities. In this same document series, certain illiterate officers

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for their own abuses of authority [SP 42/6]. The reference to a distinct “coast price” in one witness testimony describing “the goods...[that] amounted to the Value of Twenty Pounds at the Coast Price” [HCA 1/99 Cape Coast of Africa, Feb 4 1734, 4] also implies that coastal regions were subject to potentially inflated prices that included bribes and semi-official “taxes” on imported goods that no doubt went directly to government officials. Sir Robert Robinson, Bermuda’s governor from 1687–1691, was one local official who personally benefitted from such suspect practices. Robinson made “a small illicit fortune from bribes, fees, and embezzled duties and public funds” (Jarvis2010) and was one of the many unqualified and incompetent colonial administrators characterized by upholding unscrupulous, discriminatory, and self-interested practices. His background as an ex-navy captain, like many colonial governors, also illustrates the profound links to corruption among maritime communities and colonial administration.

The maritime culture of theft and self-interest negatively impacted the British government’s hold on colonial commerce, but ironically, it was fifteenth and sixteenth century British corruption that prompted many of these ideologies among maritime communities in the first place. Bicheno2012 explains how the House of Tudor, and specifically Elizabeth I’s state, was dependent on traditions of piracy that enabled the monarch to collect unofficial taxes on traffic in illicit goods to fill the national coffers. As a result, sixteenth century state-sponsored piracy in the form of corsair activity and privateering proliferated and private pirate-entrepreneurs such as Sir Walter Raleigh and George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, operated with the queen’s knowledge and approval (2012: 134–328). The very fact that Francis Drake was knighted in 1581 in England but remains known as a pirate in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean²¹ indicates the range of conflicting ideologies related to the service of sailors. Moreover, that the exploits of such men no longer feature on British schools’ curricula speaks to the fact that they were “the sharp-edged products of a far more abrasive age” (Bicheno2012: 327). As a result, in 1603 James I inherited a pirate nation whose allegiance to Britain was far weaker than its allegiance to profit, and consequently more cargoes and ships were lost to British pirates preying on their home state than to foreign attack during the Spanish wars (Bicheno2012: 328). The monarch’s efforts to regulate and reign in the renegade maritime communities consequently led to all-out

testify to signing the certificate without knowing what it was and others testify to not having seen or signed any such certificate.

²¹Born in England, I learned about “Sir Francis Drake” in school and through cultural transmission. I was shocked to hear him referred to as “The Pirate Drake” in an English-language commentary accompanying a video in San Juan’s *El Morro* when I first arrived in Puerto Rico in 2006.

war at sea in the seventeenth century which only began to settle after the state's complete rejection and suppression of piracy in the early eighteenth century.

Cultures of theft and abuses of power not only prevailed in the British and colonial governments but also much more specifically among the naval administration and regulating bodies of the merchant services. **Bicheno**2012 explains that “the self-financing power vested in the Admiralty Commission invited the extortion and other abuses that came to characterize the office” (2012: 158) and **Lincoln**2015 further explains that by the time of Pepys’ administration, reforms to stop fraudulence in the Admiralty, and specifically in shipboard accounting, were long overdue because of a culture in which “national duty and private gain were not mutually exclusive” (2015: 145). Naval spending was directed to preferred contractors and commonly involved deals susceptible to nepotism, bribery and fraud. In such a context, it is understandable that naval commanders, captains and senior officers often bypassed legal or moral protocols to make a profit, e.g., senior officers taking cargo such as cloth, raw hides, and sugar for private sale and stealing bags of money [SP 42/6], a superior officer instructing a subordinate to make holes in the bottom of a heavily good-laden ship to feign the sinking of the ship, scare away the crew, and allow him free-access to the cargo [HCA 1/12/84], a quartermaster helping himself to crew supplies [HCA 1/99/90], a lieutenant forging official documents [ADM 106/300/54], a captain bribing officers to keep quiet about what they had seen [HCA 1/99/130], a captain submitting unsigned and incomplete customs documents [CO 5/1411/653], and the common practice of pursers skimming off provisions (**Adkins****Adkins**2008: 32). For such reasons, attempts to combat corruption were necessary, e.g., instructions to one captain that explicitly forbade him from taking his pick of the cargo before any captured prize was officially processed [HCA 1/9/19], a letter thanking the naval board for money and assuring them that the officer in charge would “see to prevent any abuse” [ADM 106/300/91], an opening statement in court explaining “the duty of Masters of ships, and the great trust that is put into their hands, upon the account of their Merchants and Owners; and what damage and Frauds and Felonies at Sea do bring upon all Foreign Trade and Commerce” [HCA 1/12/111], and a letter sent to captains from one governor’s office promoting “a due observance of the several acts of Trade made for preventing frauds & regulating abuses” [CO 5/1411/618]. Corrupt officers, the self-described “Gentlemen of fortune” [HCA 1/99/6], abounded in a maritime culture of corruption, and as such, it is not difficult to see how armed piracy evolved in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in reaction to officious legislation that attempted to regulate and reap national profits from the accepted and individually gainful practices of

earlier times.

Sailors stole for personal gain but also for survival. Given the maritime culture of theft that permeated the administration and commanding ranks of the vessels, it is not surprising to see evidence of individual counts of theft among the common men, e.g., one letter describing a crewman who “was robbed on Saturday last at night of about six pounds seventeen shillings” by some of his peers [ADM 106/288/46, 48] a deposition about another sailor who is convicted of “the Embezzlement of sundry Goods out of the Longboat belonging to the Servant of Bristol” [HCA 1/99/6], and a logbook entry “this morning..Jacob Annis was whipped at the Maine Yارد for Breaking open a Chest and Takeing out moneys” [ADM 52/3/7]. The “chest” referred to in the previous citation was the only individual space permitted to the common sailor and the theft of personal items, referred to as the “hauling and Plundering of Chests” [HCA 1/99/105], occurred with enough frequency when ships were captured at sea that one captain comments “there was not an honest man in yarmouth,” a common recruitment site for seamen [HCA 1/101/431]. Yet sailors were not necessarily interested in money or items to sell, they also plundered chests for essential items such as clothes that were difficult to acquire and impossible to manufacture at sea, e.g., “the prisoner in Particular has Some of his cloths... of which he returnd only a shirt” [HCA 1/99/93], “he was shifted with a shirt he knew was not his own” [HCA 1/99/99], “Did make away as likewise your petitoners Sons clothes” [HCA 1/11/110], and “taking from the said John Wingfield his wearing apparel” [HCA 1/99/170].

Theft at sea happened on an individual and collective scale. Individuals stole what they could for personal reasons, e.g., “they saw him rummaging their Surgeon’s chest [HCA 1/99/81], and “they went into a cabbin and tooke a piece of cold beef and Cabbidge and some Bisketts” [HCA 1/53/68]. Crews also plundered captured vessels for the necessary materials to keep their vessels and their workers functional, e.g., records attest to crews targeting ships and plundering captured vessels for such things as: food and provisions [HCA 1/99 Bahama Islands 1722]; sails and canvas [HCA 1/99/50; HCA 1/99/125]; rigging, anchors and cables [CO 5/1411/631]; and masts, yards, ropes, cords and tackle [HCA 1/101/351]. Captains were also keen to recover any materials found afloat or washed ashore that might be gainfully used, as illustrated in the need for a man “eimployed to looke after stolen or drift goods” [ADM 106/288/33]. Thus, although many crews and individuals may have been motivated to plunder for personal gain, there is significant evidence that theft at sea was also motivated on a larger scale by necessity in harsh conditions.

Rather than envisioning a simplistic division between piracy and legitimate

trade, there seemed to have existed a continuum that ranged from violent theft, through forced trade and coercion, to free but non-legitimate commerce that formed an important part of local colonial economies. Indeed, the following letter dated 1690 seems to indicate that conflict and plunder was only a last resort for the pirates around New York who preferred sustainable farming or trading over armed conflict, “having his ship plundered by them But in a short time had a farm common and traded with them” [HCA 1/98/47]. Potential trading partners may have been initially presented with violence to motivate international trade in a context of imperial monopolies, e.g., the sailors who “burnt a towne called Meofe because the inhabitants would not come downe to traffick with them” [HCA 1/53/10], an incident when a crew encountered “the Negroes unwilling to Trade freely with him...the said Collins shot among them and killed one” [BL/74/816/m/11/36/2], and the captain on the same voyage who settled a trading difference by seizing the master of the town and dragging him to the shore before cutting his head off [BL/74/816/m/11/36/2]. Yet, shows of force like this may have been performative and economically strategic. Peter Leeson²⁰⁰⁷’s work on the economics of pirate organizations (Leeson²⁰⁰⁷; Leeson²⁰⁰⁸) indicate that pirates used violence as a form of intimidation to achieve their goals in negotiation rather than as an objective in its own right, and if they could instill enough fear in their potential trading partners to achieve the upper hand, then a suggestion of violence was all that would be necessary to achieve maximal profit with a minimum expenditure (in terms of effort and lives lost) in conflict. Indeed, pleading that trade was forced was a common excuse that local town officials could claim in the event that their complicity in contraband trade was identified, particularly if the “pirates” (i.e., trading partners) had made some public show of force. Bicheno²⁰¹² explains how such acts gave Portuguese towns an alibi in consensual negotiations with English traders in the early colonial period that explained “not only evading the Spanish royal tax but also saving the greater loss of time and wastage involved in sailing against wind and current to Saville” (2012: 78). Thus, if the majority of local officials and traders were willing accomplices, as Bicheno²⁰¹² suggests, then the shows of violence that seem to define a modern concept of piracy were no more than expected customs of trade negotiations in the context of the early regional economies.

2.3.5 Sailors on land

Sailors often had no choice but to stay ashore due to abandonment or punishment. Enlisted men were abandoned in port if it was not deemed strategically or economically viable to retain them in the ships. Certainly, a crew needed a full

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complement to operate and defend the vessel, but fewer men on board meant savings in provisions and wages and also reduced the number of men who could claim a share in prizes. Men were abandoned in port towns and remote islands indiscriminately, e.g., John Lewis' 1684 testimony that he shipped "to Carolina and was there Cast Away" [HCA 1/12/5], Alexander Selkirk's 1704 abandonment on the uninhabited Pacific island of Juan Fernandez²² (Souhami2013), and English sailors recruited in Lisbon in 1731 who "were to bee put on shore [at Tercera, a remote island in the North Atlantic Azores archipelago] without any prospect of getting back to Britain" [HCA 1/99 Philadelphia, Oct 15 1731]. Other sailors were forced to remain ashore as punishment. Imprisonment might be sentenced in a foreign jail, e.g., "George Ogle who dyed in Bombay prison" [HCA 1/52/100], and "English Men & Prisoners of Warr in France" [HCA 1/13/98]. However, convicted men were more gainfully used as unpaid workers under the system of indenture or slavery, e.g., the 19 men convicted to serve seven years [HCA 1/99/174], the group of men convicted to serve five years "at any of their Settlements [the Royal African Company] on the Coast without the benefit of wages" [HCA 1/99/175-6], the sailor Nicholas "by just & lawfull meanes becom a slav to mee my heirs & ... during his Naturalle Life" [HCA 1/98/72], and potentially the runaway servant who "has been a Sailor" [HCA 1/99 *The American: Weekly Mercury* No.617, Oct 21-Oct 28 1731]. Thus abandoned, imprisoned, enslaved and indentured sailors potentially composed at least a small number of coastal and island populations.

The most common reason for men to be left on shore related to their health. Logbook entries indicate this routine practice, e.g., "this morning Putt the Rest [of the men] a Shore in the Vanguards Smack Being in all so sick & wounded" [ADM 52/2/9], and "Sent our Longboat ashore with 15 sick men for Plymouth" [ADM 52/3/12]. Sometimes these recovering crewmembers returned to duty, e.g., "our tent and sick men came aboard from the shore" [ADM 52/2/3], "Went to Chatham for water & for men that had been sick ashore there" [ADM 52/3/12], and "fell sick and went ashore where he continued for a whole month and after he came on board again" [HCA 1/52/22]; yet others were left indefinitely. Kevin Brown2011's (Brown2011) research on sickness and health at sea explores the frequency and manner in which commanders left sick and injured men on shore and explains how major British ports were commonly provided with medical facilities and asylums for the care of such patients since before the seventeenth century (33-36). Yet, these institutions were not well funded and if the men could not pay for

²²Selkirk's abandonment and survival story was published by himself and his contemporaries giving rise to Defoe's seminal narrative *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, for which the island is now named.

their care then they often found themselves destitute and unemployable. Pepys' observations from the administration of the Admiralty notes,

having been on shore, the Captains won't receive them on board, and other ships we have not to put them on, nor money to pay them off or provide for them... [so] the sick men that are recovered, they lying before our office doors all night and all day, poor wretches (cited in Brown2011: 55).

The numbers of sick, wounded, disabled, aged or otherwise rejected seamen suffering from extreme poverty in British ports was such a problem by the end of the sixteenth century that Drake and Hawkins set up a universal medical aid scheme known as the Chatham Chest, yet this scheme suffered from corruption, underfunding and incompetent management and was ultimately discontinued (Brown2011: 43). Yet the multitudes of incapacitated sailors abandoned in British ports were in a preferable situation to the conditions that thousands of sick and injured sailors found when left in foreign ports. Circumstances permitting, these sailors might have been accommodated in private houses and been assigned some type of work in the local community after recovery in the event that they were not picked up by a passing vessel, or they may have ended up in local work-houses or indenture systems if they were unable to pay for care as a guest or function in the new location as a settler (Brown2011: 57–59, 113). This custom of abandoning sailors in ports became such a problem that by the eighteenth century legislation in Barbados “required shipmasters to deposit money as a security against them abandoning their sick in port” (Lambert, cited in Brown2011: 113). Apart from the humanitarian impact of such treatment, the linguistic result of such widespread abandonment of sailors meant that they could have potentially formed adstrate language communities in foreign ports that influenced internal change.

Many sailors willingly left the service of sailing vessels to escape harsh conditions at sea and brutal treatment, particularly if they had been forced into service in the first place. Deserters could be ranked officers, e.g., “Moses Dawson... Surgeon deserted” [HCA 1/98/15]; but were more likely to be lower-ranking seamen. Many of these lower-ranking seamen escaped in groups, e.g., “2 or 3 that had made their Escape” [HCA 1/99/105], and another sailor who “concerted measures with the three last named Persons for making their Escape” [HCA 1/99 *The American: Weekly Mercury* No.617, Oct 21-Oct 28 1731]. Although the loss of a few seaman was expected attrition, a larger number could seriously impede the ship’s operations, e.g., the logbook of the *Swallow* commenting that “last night 22 of our men ran away [and so..]. wee had not Enough to Saile our ship” [HCA 51/3983/1]. In response to such hazards to commerce, colonial governments

were urged to issue proclamations against assisting runaway sailors, e.g., in April 1643 there was a British proclamation forbidding ale-house keepers and innkeepers “to harbour or entertain any seamen, watermen, and co., prest into any of His Majesty’s or merchant ships employed in the service” (cited in Lavery2009: 50), and Francis Nicholson, governor of Virginia issued a proclamation in 1699 specifically in response to a complaint from one commander that several of his seamen were concealed by townspeople. The order was issued to “strictly forbid all his majestys loving subjects, that they doe not entertain, harbour, or conceal any of the seamen belonging to the sd ship *Essex Prize*, which allready have, or here after shall absent them selves from his majestys service” [CO 5/1411/667]. The fact that townspeople were doing this suggests that an extended network of maritime sympathizers (including family members, professional acquaintances, ex-sailors, and friends) might have formed an extended community around the ports of the colonial territories that potentially provided additional opportunities for language contact and feature transmission to take place.

Some sailors went to sea with the specific intention of migrating, or may have chosen to settle in a specific region as their circumstances changed. Depositions include examples of sailors leaving the profession in a state that appears to be a kind of retirement, e.g., “they are going aboute there lawfull nations and further saile not” [ASSI 45/4/1/135], “he was gone beyond Sea, and knew not when he would return” [HCA 1/14/150], and one sailor’s deposition that he “they mett with one Kidd, a pirate who there [in Puerto Rico] lay becalmed” [SP 42/6]. Other sailors may not have been able to retire but actively sought a different profession. As service-towns sprang up around the trade routes, sailors may have found that working in port settlements as a chandler’s assistant or apprentice in trade may have paid better, or at least more regularly, than their sailor’s wages. Moreover, coastal towns that evolved because they were strategic locations for provisioning or defense rather than points of exporting local commodities may have been almost entirely populated by sailors and military personnel before local markets were established, e.g., the operational base that Raleigh attempted to set up in Virginia from which to intercept the Spanish *Flotas* (Bicheno2012: 301). Similarly, the small seasonal towns that sprung up to service and house the workers of the fishing, turtling, logging and salt-raking trades in places like Newfoundland, Jamaica, Virginia, Belize, Honduras, Yucatan, and Turks were likely to have been populated if not entirely by sailors, then certainly by workers very familiar with maritime culture (Draper2016: 3–4; Jarvis2010: 185–256). Furthermore, the international port settlements that specialized in recruiting crews, fencing plunder, and buying and selling contraband also provided plenty of itinerant work

for enterprising individuals who were abreast of maritime movements and knew how to balance supply and demand. McDonald provides a wonderfully nautical metaphor for such settlements in his description of how English sailors, and more specifically pirates, “stubbornly clung to the Honduran littoral latter like barnacles on a whale” (McDonald 2016: 15). Dutch entrepôts with comparatively easy paths to naturalization also particularly attracted sailors, e.g., one sailor’s revelation that “the major part of men now on Board Did Designe to have setled here on the Cape Good Hope in hopes that the Dutch would have protected them” [HCA 1/98/25]. Settling in an emergent port town with international protections certainly seemed to be a preferable option to a life of hardship and near-starvation at sea, as illustrated in one journal writer’s reflection on the prospect of settling in India:

A League from the Fort is a fair Town, that grows bigger and bigger every day. When the *Holland* Company arrives there with their Ships, if any Soldier or Mariner will live there, they are very glad of it. They have as much ground as they can manage; where they have all sorts of Herbs, and Pilse, and as much Rice, as as many Grapes as they can desire. [Arents/361 The Six Voyages 1678: 206.]

As a result of such motivations, settler populations that had previously worked at sea may have formed distinct language communities in foreign ports and even influenced the direction of language change or founded new varieties, as happened in Palmerston Island after a small groups of sailors, with their female passengers and children, founded a settlement on the tiny pacific island in the 1860s.²³

2.3.6 Contact with port communities

Port communities thronged with service providers that had intermittent and selective contact with sailors via small craft. Industries such as ship brokerage, stevedoring, portage, and chandlery had multiple sub-industries that maintained, serviced, and supplied the vessels of the British naval and merchant fleets. Yet, there were also a host of service providers that serviced and supplied the needs of sailors that populated these vessels, such as inn-keepers, money lenders,

²³Rachel Hendery 2013’s (Hendery 2013) work on Palmerston Island English. *Journal of Pacific History*, 48 (3), 309–322 details how the first settlers came from maritime communities and their linguistic heritage gave rise to a variety of English that is unique in the Pacific.

religious leaders, prostitutes, washer women, small-goods traders, medical professionals, slop-dealers, and clothes-makers. In Britain, these service providers most likely spoke English but in the Caribbean and the Americas the majority of these maritime service providers were free or enslaved men and women of African heritage (Jarvis2010) and as such, this demographic composed a rich source of potential language contact. Additionally, although the majority of these workers would have been based in port or coastal communities, many visited the vessels using bum-boats, lighters, or the “severall Smacks [that] came aboard with provisions” [ADM 52/2/6] and thus service providers interacted directly with the men who lived aboard. Indeed, it was for transit to large vessels, in addition to the local needs of fishing and transport, that many indigenous populations maintained a fleet of canoes, described by Gage1648, “above two hundred thousand of these little boats...wrought like a kneading trough, some bigger than others according to the greatness of the body” (1648: 50). Undoubtedly, some of these service vessels brought free and coerced sex-workers to the sailors. For such reasons, large ships were equipped with a “whip,” a hoist attached to the main yard for lifting people on board who were not expected or able to scale the rigging. Sea shanties attest to the custom of permitting women on board when ships were in port, specifically to attend to the pressed men who were not permitted shore leave, e.g., “All in the Downs the Fleet lay moored, / When Black-eyed Susan came aboard” in a shanty attributed to John Gay 1685-1732 (cited in Hugill1969: 17). This shanty alludes to the naval custom of draping red cords on the port side of the vessel or hanging red petticoats (souvenirs from previous visits) to advertise that the ship was open to sex-workers:

At anchor see she safely rides,
And gay red ropes adorn her sides,
Her sails are furled, her sheets are belayed,
The crimson petticoats displayed.
Deserted are our useless shrouds,
And the wenches come aboard in crowds. (cited in Hugill1969: 18).

These visits may have lasted for as long as the ships were in port, as suggested by two lines of the shanty by John Gay voiced in the character of a visiting woman, “When I passed a whole fortnight atween decks with you, Did I ere give a kiss, lad, to one of your crew?” (cited in Hugill1969: 17). Despite the romanticized representation of monogamous and coy intimacy that this shanty presents, local women and girls who worked the sex-trade in port towns suffered much more caustic realities. Many may have been forced into their profession by necessity

after being seduced by sailors, bearing children to them and consequently being abandoned by their families, or choosing prostitution over starvation when a sailor-husband's pay never materialized (Adkins 2008: 164–167 173). Thus, it is entirely possible that these women raised children whose fathers were sailors and who were maintained by earnings from itinerant sailors, in a maritime environment that had regular exposure to sailors' speech, both directly through the mother's profession and the presence of sailors in port, and indirectly as a consequence of the service-industry. In such a context, it is not far-fetched to suggest generational language transmission of Ship English, although obviously more research would be required to substantiate claims that sailors transmitted features of speech to their (collective) offspring in port communities.

Pilots were perhaps the other most common visitor on large sailing vessels. Pilots worked to help vessels navigate the dangers of coastal areas such as rocks, collisions, wrecks, sandbanks, tides, currents, and fog; and the traditions of their service have been organized in Britain since Henry VIII granted a royal charter for Trinity House, the deep sea pilotage authority, in 1514. Pilots were a necessary and frequent part of maritime life because while the hazards of coastal waters around Great Britain were not well known,²⁴ the hazards of unknown coasts were even more dangerous. Shipwreck might have meant death through starvation, exposure, or tropical disease if sailors survived the hazards of the water. Bicheno 2012 notes that "even the skilled navigator Francis Drake continued to use foreign pilots until the day he died" (2012: 60). As such, contemporary accounts frequently mention pilots, e.g., "Having taken in pilots belonging to the port, as is the custom" [445f.1/511], "having no Pylote morred againe" [ADM 52/1/1], "they discharged their pilot" [SP 89/34/128], and "Polott Came in Board us to Carry us about into the Downes" [ADM 52/2/5]. Pilots and the information they represented were a valuable commodity at sea, illustrated by one court case in which pilot John Houghling explains "the pyrate kept me against my will" [CO 5/1411/42]. And, although they were usually not a permanent part of the crew, pilots certainly functioned as part of the speech community, potentially serving as conduits for language transfer and foreign borrowings as they interacted with a range of international crews and ports as part of their regular working practice.

Vessels spent periods of time docked in port, at which time sailors had exposure to the speech varieties of coastal communities and also exposed their own

²⁴Pilots were notoriously secretive, and did not share local sketches, observations, maps of landmarks, sea beds, depths, tides and river estuaries (Bicheno 2012); a coastal survey of Britain was not published until 1681 (The National Maritime Museum, Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire, Revolution, exhibit G218: 11/25).

language features to those they came into contact with. Time in dock was required for such activities as vessel maintenance [HCA 1/99/103], fitting out the ship with equipment and provisions [DDB6 8/4], and unloading cargo and military personnel [HCA 1/9/18], in addition to any unanticipated times that the vessel was taken out of action by events such as unfavorable weather conditions, lack of a crew complement, running against coastal hazards, or enemy attack. It is extremely difficult to retrieve quantitative data from archival records regarding the specific lengths of time that vessels spent in ports as even logbooks are sometimes not explicit about this information and references in letter and depositions are often rough estimates. However, the data available in 16 legible, complete and corroborated records attest to periods of as short as one week to as much as three months in ports and with an average of 31 days or one month (see Table 2.3) And although this average is calculated on a small number of citations, it compares favorably with Jarvis2010' estimated 34 days that a large vessel needed for a layover in port (2010: 134). However, it is worth remembering that smaller vessels such as sloops that were ubiquitous around the waters of the wider Caribbean and American colonies needed much less time to unload cargos and complete vessel maintenance and their average stays in port are estimated at 18 days (Jarvis2010: 134). In addition to these average lengths of stay in ports, vessels were often required to wait in port for anticipated funding to complete repairs or payment obligations, favorable winds, tardy cargos, expected convoys, and companion ships to complete preparations.

One deposition attests to such anticipated delays, “they think to saile in 10 days time but as we have always known fleets to be long in geting redy” [DDB6 8/4]. Acknowledging the likelihood of such delays, the average of 31 days’ duration in port may have commonly been extended under local circumstances.

Sailors who were granted shore leave and who expected, and were expected by their employer, to continue their service on the vessel used their time ashore to socialize, negotiate deals, and attend to personal matters. They frequently chose to spend this time ashore in the company of other sailors, e.g., the complaint addressed to Captain John Aldred that “thou be often on shore your self, as likewise your men...[who] commit disorders in the night time” [CO 5/1411/653], various depositions that describe groups of sailors drinking together in local taverns [HCA 1/99/6; HCA 1/99/7; HCA 1/99/5], and the witness testimony describing a higher-status groups of sailors socializing:

Master & Marryner... was With one Captaine Laman at his house in Rathiffe nerve New Church there with one Captaine Thomas Garnitt between six and seven of the Clarke in the morning where was then in company with

Table 2.3: Durations of vessels in port based on 16 sample documents

Citation indicating duration	Days ^a	Source
stayed 2 or 3 dayes	2.5	HCA 1/12/2
stayinge there 5 or 6 dayes	5.5	HCA 1/12/2
six or seven daies	6.5	HCA 1/9/18
9 dayes or thereabouts	9	HCA 1/12/84
about 14 or 15 days	14.5	HCA 1/14/205
from 14 to 28 days	21	HCA 1/98/267
Seven and twenty days	27	Arents/361 The Six Voyages 1678: 84
a whole month	30.5	DDB6 8/4
about a month	30.3	HCA 1/52/20
one month	30.5	HCA 1/98/259
a month	30.5	cited in Bicheno2012: 318
about 5 or 6 weeks	38.5	HCA 1/52/88
6 weeks	42	HCA 1/99/103
staied two months	61	HCA 1/52/20
about two months	61	HCA 1/52/104
3 months	91	HCA 1/98/259
Average days	31	

^aNumber of days is calculated based on a middle point if a date range is given

them one Bawlke & a young man called Thomas *all seamen* [HCA 1/9/67, emphasis added].

Sailors without their own houses in port towns commonly stayed together in lodgings, e.g., the captain who was seeking “convenient lodging for himselfe and his crew” (Gage1648) an accused sailor described as being “on Shore dwelling with another of the Crew” [HCA 1/99/45], and the sailors described as lodging together “at the signe of the *New Castle* at the *Armitage*...more of the said parties lodge in the farme house” [HCA 1/9/67]. And it was at such inns, taverns and drinking houses that sailors forged extended maritime networks by communicating news, proposing alliances and sharing stories with each other and with service providers, e.g., “the woman of the house Mrs Whitehouse told Vidal of the Design the Deponent had said to take the Schooner” [HCA 1/99/7], and “an inn-keeper, liveling at the sign of the *White-Hart* and three *Tobacco Pipes*... did

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inquire of him for one Joseph Passoff who... did use to lye at his house" [HCA 1/14/151]. Familiarity and friendship with service providers was facilitated by the common practice of using small groups of sailors to work the same routes as suggested by the repeated names on port records of Bridgetown, "implying that there was a small cohort of mariners whose primary income was transporting wood between St. Lucia and Barbados" (Draper2016: 13). Such "small cohorts of mariners" potentially lodged together in port as well as at sea and got to know the communities of the port towns well, indeed, their trade may have depended on it. The interconnectivity of a community that comprised sailors and service providers is evident in court cases such as the trial of Robert Ingo, 27 May 1636, in which a rope maker, a lighterman, a laborer, and two of the sailor's shipmates give witness testimony on his behalf [HCA 1/101/219-220]. Thus, in port, sailors socialized with each other, but depended on service providers for the months that they may have spent ashore, not only to provide bed and board for them, but also potentially to maintain the larger maritime networks that facilitated trade, shared maritime news, and forged trade alliances among divergent crews.

2.4 Summary

This chapter presents common characteristics of the immediate and wider communities in which sailors lived, from the most insular mess group, to the crews of their own vessels, the collective crews of the convoy, the wider brotherhood of the maritime professions both at sea and in port, and finally to all those service providers working and living in port communities. The divergent characteristics and constraints on all of these groupings affected language use and potential transfer both on board the sailing vessels and around the port communities they visited. Among insular ship communities, passengers including women (and potentially their children) travelled and lived at sea, forming subgroups of speech communities onboard sea-going vessels. Yet the largest group in most maritime communities was undoubtedly the lower-class working sailor. A typical sailor could expect to spend at least one year and a quarter continuously serving on a transatlantic voyage and was likely to serve on consecutive voyages, potentially without shore leave, thus leading to long periods at sea. Autonomous communities at sea were prone to tyrannical captains and violent superior officers who frequently inflicted physical harm and even caused the deaths of men working under their care. Common sailors were also frequently the victims of unreasonable imprisonment, excessive disciplinary measures, public rituals of punishment, and cruel and unusual violence intended to ensure their compliance and

subordination. In response, collective resistance offered the common sailor some form of protection. Collective agency enabled successful negotiation of better conditions at sea and provided a pseudo-legal support network. The social cohesion that prompted such collective identification among working sailors was facilitated by mess groups and consequent kinship bonding that manifested itself in sentiments of brotherhood and also potentially intimate and/or sexual relationships among the crew. Such sentiments of brotherhood were most pronounced in times of difficulty when survival may have depended on them, but were also prominent in examples of collective activism against repressive regimes that ran the risk of punishment for mutiny. Another method of marking collective agency and complicity is evident in the regular consumption of alcohol. This use of alcohol was not just an act of celebration and a necessary replacement for repugnant water supplies, but also served to regulate trade agreements and express spiritual connectivity in times of distress or anticipated conflict. Sailors also reinforced group identity through shared beliefs in ancient maritime folklore and participation in storytelling, music, gaming and dramatic play, potentially under the cultural leadership of the cook.

Wider maritime communities developed in response to the profuse maritime activity of commerce and conflict in the early period of Atlantic colonial expansion. Colonial ports depended on interconnected shipping and communication that might have maintained strong ties to Europe in the early period, but rapidly became inter-colonial in the context of strict British regulations and developing local economies. Planned and spontaneous convoys of vessels sailed in collaboration around the colonies for safety and maintained strong symbolic and oral communication networks among their crews. These networks provided a social outlet for vessel-bound sailors and also potentially fostered a maritime railroad system for runaways. The maritime economy that these networks maintained—based on a complex system of debt, credit, factorage and barter—was the foundation of emerging international economies. However, it was rife with corruption in an age where ideologies of personal gain in the monarchy, the government and at the local level were explicit. As these ideologies degenerated into all-out piracy in the early eighteenth century, the tightening noose of the British commercial and judicial system saw a rapid increase in theft at sea followed by its bloody suppression. However, violent theft was not only a cultural trait, it was also a necessity for many destitute sailors in vessels without the means to maintain their livelihood and was also potentially an expected custom of trade negotiations in the context of the early regional economies. Destitute and incapacitated individual sailors were often abandoned on land as a punishment or for health reasons

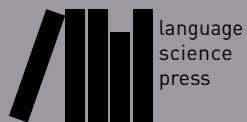
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but many also deserted or chose to migrate in order to escape harsh conditions at sea. Sailors also had occasional contact with service providers when they visited the vessels, specifically pilots and sex-workers who spent periods of time aboard the ship. Yet sailors came into contact with more service providers if they were granted shore-leave for the month or so that they were in port to service and provision the ship in addition to unloading and taking on cargo. During these times, sailors maintained close contact with each other in taverns and communal lodgings and also socialized with service providers to conduct business, share news, and forge alliances. The distinct speech communities created by these alliances and the common cultural traits described in this chapter likely impacted methods of language transfer and the development of internal language change in addition to reinforcing the distinct language varieties of the extended maritime language community.

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Ship English

In this thoroughly researched and brilliantly written volume, Sally Delgado opens up vitally important new avenues for the study of the role of marginalized peoples such as sailors and convicts in the emergence of creole languages and other contact varieties of the colonial era. Since the ground-breaking work of Ian Hancock some decades ago, we have been waiting for a coherent and comprehensive work such as this to establish a framework and data base for making the systematic investigation of Ship English a reality. (Nicholas Faraclas, University of Puerto Rico)

The historiography of creole languages has long included frequent references to maritime English with only sketchy indication of just what this kind of speech was like. Sally Delgado has at last provided a comprehensive survey of a dialect that emerged on shipboard among sailors, which became one element in the new Englishes that emerged worldwide amidst the transatlantic slave trade and beyond. Anyone interested in creole languages, as well as those who would like their acquaintance with sailors' speech in the past to get beyond the likes of "Aye, matey", should consult this new volume. (John H McWhorter, Columbia University)

While classes on "World English" are increasingly being included in university curricula, they provide little on how that language left the shores of Britain in the first place, and what it was like; until now, research in dialect studies on what was spoken on board ship during the early colonial period has been minimal. Dr. Delgado's book is the first full-length study to address this; in addition to examining the distinctive characteristics of Ship English as an occupational register, it proposes that as the earliest contact variety, it provided the input in the formation of the Atlantic English-lexifier creoles. A groundbreaking study, essential reading for dialectologist and creolist alike. (Ian Hancock, The University of Texas)

