

SEX AT SEA: SEXUAL CRIMES ABOARD CRUISE SHIPS

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Incidents of sexual assault and sexual victimization are significantly more common on cruise ships than on land. Analysis of data from three major cruise lines, comprising more than 50% of the North American-based cruise industry, reveals that perpetrators are most often male crewmembers, victims are most often female passengers (over 17.5% younger than age 18), and that the assaults occur almost anywhere, though most frequently in passenger cabins. This article examines factors that may be related to the incidence of sexual assaults on cruise ships and concludes with a discussion of the steps cruise lines can take to address the problem.

Key words: Cruise ship; Cruise industry; Sexual assault; Sexual harassment; Rape

Introduction

In a survey reputedly conducted by some years ago (exact details are elusive), 95% of respondents rated cruises as “extremely or very romantic.” Nearly half said they had sex up to six times during a cruise compared to their usual once or twice a week at home, 80% said they felt more amorous at sea, and 58% said they had sex within 10 hours of embarking (“Sex Is Good at Sea,” 2007). Unfortunately, these amorous feelings, supported by the images of romance and adventure portrayed by cruise lines, may be among the major causes of the unusually high incidence of sexual assaults and unwanted sexual contact on cruise ships—a problem that is considerably greater on cruise ships than on land (Klein, 2009). Data for the two largest cruise lines, and

indicate the rate of sex-related incidents on cruise ships is almost 50% higher than the rate of sexual assault on land in Canada. This article reviews statistics about sexual assaults on cruise ships collected from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), , and analyses these in a search for the underlying reasons for the problem and to offer possible solutions.

Background

Cruise Ships

Cruise ships have become increasingly large over the past two decades, and now resemble small towns, except of course they have no elected governance. In 1985, unveiled the 46,000-ton , proclaiming it the largest cruise ship ever built, carrying 1,450 passengers and 660

crewmembers (Smart Cruiser, 2010). Just 15 years later, introduced the , a 225,282-ton ship accommodating more than 6,000 passengers and more than 2,000 crew (, 2009). This ship has amphitheaters the size of football fields, parks, sandy beaches, ice-skating rinks, and all the usual entertainment and shopping facilities. At full capacity it will have the same population as Banff (Canada) during the off season, but unlike Banff, it is controlled by an appointed manager (i.e., the ship's captain) rather than by an elected council. The management of this artificial community is a shipping company registered in the Republic of Liberia (Investor, 2010), that controls the daily lives of the hundreds of thousands of people who work and holiday on its cruise liners. The company has also paid out millions of dollars to settle claims of sexual assaults by crew on passengers (although this can be substantiated by one of the authors from extensive work with lawyers and victims, individual amounts and details cannot be published because of confidentiality clauses in the settlements).

Cruising Holidays

Cruising is an increasingly popular style of vacation enjoyed by millions of people. The cruise industry is currently experiencing 3.4% annual passenger growth, with an estimated 13,445 million passengers in 2009 (Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association, 2010). A market report produced to assist shipping companies with their occupancy projections (Cruise Lines International Association, 2008) states that 94.8% of cruisers report satisfaction with their cruising experience. In 2007, global passengers reached 12.56 million people (Business Research & Economic Advisors, 2008), which means there were an estimated 653,120 dissatisfied passengers. Although the number of dissatisfied passengers is relatively small, apart from the obvious causes such as bad weather and seasickness, an unsettling question remains, of what went wrong.

Google searches reveal a plethora of sites devoted to cruising: sites detailing the sizes and shapes of the liners, the onboard pleasures, and an array of romantic and interesting destinations to

visit. An interesting phenomenon quickly emerges, in that most sites are either strongly for or against cruising, and the criticisms are many. Entire sites are devoted to problems around cruising, such as rape (e.g., Cruiserape.com, 2011; International cruisevictims.org, 2011), environmental issues (e.g., Friends of the Earth, 2011; Klein, 2010), and holiday annoyances such as food poisoning, bed-bug infestations, deaths, and abuse (Cruisebruisse.com, 2011), to name a few.

This article focuses on one of many problems with the cruise industry: the frequency of rapes and sexual assaults on cruise ships. While cruise vacations are often sold as voyages of romance and adventure, a significant number of passengers have very different and very unpleasant experiences.

Sexual Assault

Although at first glance the apparent risk of crime on a cruise ship is remarkably low, this is also remarkably deceiving (Panko, George, & Henthorne, 2009). In fact, the risk of sexual assault on a cruise ship is almost twice that of forcible rape in the US, and calculated as 48.065 per 100,000 (Klein, 2007). The debate over the calculations used to determine the rate of assaults is explained in the testimony provided to the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security (see Klein, 2008a), and is not further explored here. However, it is worth noting the challenges of comparing cruise ship statistics on assault with those from land. The rate of sexual abuse in the 2007 testimony before Congress was compared to land-based rape data, as the US Criminal Code does not specify sexual assault as a specific category of data. Throughout this article, therefore, Canadian data are used for comparison as Canada has a clear definition of sexual assault in law (see Department of Justice, 2009) and there is a rate of sexual assault for the country and each of the provinces.

A meta-analysis based on 86,578 respondents in 55 samples showed that 24% of women overall reported having been sexually harassed at work (Illies, Hausman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003).

The lowest levels of harassment (16%) occurred in universities, and the highest levels (36%) in the military, which were attributed to the explicit power relationships in the armed services. Environmental factors and the demographic characteristics of a population are therefore shown to have a considerable effect on sexual behavior.

Definitions

In its policy on harassment, the United Nations note that harassment includes incidents in which “improper and unwelcome conduct” occurs, “which might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation” (OSAGI, 2008). Sexual harassment is therefore construed as any “sexual advance, request for sexual favor, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature” that is not welcomed. In contrast, an assault is an actual and violent attack, defined in Canadian law as force applied intentionally to another person without their consent (Department of Justice, 2009), and in the US as an attack with intent to inflict bodily injury (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). Assault implies physical force, whereas sexual harassment implies unwanted sexual advances that may not necessarily be physical, but may be repeated. Rape and sodomy are forced acts of sexual intercourse. In this article, all are considered as aggressive sexual behaviors.

Possible Influences on Aggressive Sexual Behaviors

While cruise holidays may be perceived by families as safe forms of travel and adventure, they are perceived by some crew and passengers as opportunities to party, find love, or express themselves sexually. This is a dangerous combination that is not explicit in advertisements, nor even implied, and is very likely a major cause of the many assaults and rapes. Causes of sexual aggression by crew include the types of passengers in group bookings (swingers, bikers, etc.), the length of cruise (weekend cruises tend to attract those looking for a party), the onboard culture and management style set by management, and the cultural backgrounds of the crewmembers, which may differ from the types of behaviors ac-

cepted by passengers of Westernized cultures such as the US and Canada (Klein, 2008a).

The influence of uniforms and the manifestation of power relationships are also considered significant, as are the effects of the artificial lifestyle on board, where no one goes to the supermarket, drops their children off at school, or visits their mother on Sundays. An examination of these and other possible influences reveals a mix of ingredients that are destined to wreak havoc unless the component parts can be separated.

Characteristics of the Crew

Remarkably little is known about the lives of cruise ship employees (Dennett, Cameron, Jenkins, & Bamford, 2010). In Europe, the cruise industry supported 226,000 jobs in 2007, an increase of 20% from the previous year (Passenger Shipping Association, 2008), but it is difficult to determine the profiles of cruise ship workers. The social networking site Facebook, shows people of all ages from around the world have worked for

and

and joined crewmember networks. The number of vacancies on cruise line job sites suggests companies are constantly looking for new recruits, and a lack of education and relevant experience do not present barriers to employment in junior positions. Although agents act as intermediaries, it is also possible to apply directly to some cruise lines through on-line recruitment pages. Life as a crewmember seems similar to that of a hotel worker, of long hours, and hard work.

There are frequent rough seas, inconsiderate guests at times, very strict ship rules and regulations, sexual harassment incidents, long working hours, . . . inconsiderate bosses, crew food which may either be of poor quality or totally foreign to your taste. (Sison, 2009)

A story in the *New Miami Times* reveals the realities of crew life. The longer version of this article explains that the crew interviewed were working on cruise liners and sending money to their families.

For the 98 hours (Jacques) clocks weekly, he earns \$150. That translates to approximately

\$1.50 an hour, about one-fourth the average wage of a burger flipper at a fast-food joint. François's schedule is similar, except his fifteen-hour shift begins at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 10:30 p.m., with a half hour off for lunch. François, who will complete his fifth year with _____ in March, earns about \$150 for his 105-hour week, or \$1.45 an hour. That will amount to \$6500 over the course of his ten-month contract. Like Jacques he communicates with his family by spending a small fortune calling from pay phones while in port. (Nielsen, 2000)

Crewmembers on ships operating out of the US must hold an American seafarer's visa, which is issued only after a State Department background check (Cruise Lines International Association, 2010), which would presumably detect arrest, court history, or criminal convictions within the last 7 years. However, it is not known if a conviction would prevent an applicant from obtaining a seafarer's visa, and media reports of recidivist sexual offenders on board cruise ships suggest it is not difficult to evade restrictions.

Cruise ship employees have no home or family life, and nowhere to go when off duty; in effect they may as well be on duty as long as they are at sea. The restlessness or "cabin-fever" caused by these living conditions, along with the ages, cultural backgrounds, and general characteristics of the crew may provide clues to the numbers of assaults. Eriksen (2006) comments that most crewmembers are men, and because of their differing backgrounds, some may be "culturally inclined toward aggressive sexual behavior or have a low regard for the status of women" (p. 49; see also Greenwood, 1999, cited in Klein, 2008a). Comments on cruise ship forums suggest that the darker racial features of some crewmembers are attractive to some women, encouraging them to form onboard relationships with crewmembers. Crewmembers hopeful of sexual liaisons on board are unlikely to be disappointed, and various media reports and websites (e.g., Cruisebruisse.com, 2011; Cruiserape.com, 2011) indicate that some are prepared to take them forcibly. The problem is even more complex. According to Greenwood (1999, as cited in Klein, 2008a), some travel agents sell passengers the idea that crew are available for intimacy, even mentioning specific crew members by name.

Customer Contact

Eriksen (2006) suggests that most crewmembers who commit sexual offenses against passengers work in front-of-house hospitality positions, where there is maximum passenger contact. On land, around 24% of British and New Zealand hospitality workers can expect to be sexually harassed, and customer contact is a significant predictor of sexual harassment (Hoel, 2002; Poulston, 2008b). Although the comparison with sexually aggressive behaviors on cruise liners suggests an inherent sexualization of the relationship between customers and service providers, an interesting role reversal occurs. On land, data show that harassment is primarily caused by customers (Poulston, 2008b) whereas problems with sexual behavior at sea are primarily caused by staff (Klein, 2009).

Crew and Passenger Attitudes

Not just the passengers are on board to have a good time. As many crewmembers are also on working holidays, the atmosphere and general environment on a cruise ship provides further clues to the high incidence of assaults and rapes. The mood of passengers on vacation, the types of people they are, and the sudden change from normal life to life aboard a floating pleasure cocoon are all likely to affect their behavior, increasing their vulnerability.

The demographic characteristics of cruise passengers are changing. The average age of British cruise passengers fell to 53 years old in 2007 compared to 55 years a decade ago (Passenger Shipping Association, 2009), and more recent data show the median age of cruisers as 46 (Cruise Lines International Association, 2008). Children (under 18) are now a growing market, representing 25% of total cruisers (Cruise Lines International Association, 2008).

Cruise liners as depicted on the movie *Titanic* were once the domain of the bored and wealthy, whereas now they are accessible to anyone who can afford a short holiday, with weekend cruises often priced to compete with hotel stays. The changing characteristics of passengers means cruise lines now attract not just retirees, but families, young couples, single pleasure seekers, and

adventurers, which may represent an increased risk of crime on board, as involvement in criminal activities decreases with increased age (Brame & Piquero, 2003; Tittle, Ward, & Grasmick, 2003).

Hayner (1928) observed that otherwise normally upright citizens often take a “moral holiday” when staying in a hotel, perhaps influenced by an enhanced sense of anonymity while away from home. This effect is exacerbated on cruise ships, as most passengers are on holiday, whereas business hotel guests are at work during the day. The effect, naturally enough, will be a heightened sense of freedom, with the prospects of being observed by family, business associates, and friends substantially reduced.

In their pursuit of enjoyment, some passengers may break with their normal behavior codes in order to ensure a good time. Those responsible for children can leave them in supervised activity programs, but many young people wander around a ship on their own. There is an overarching assumption of safety. However, in contrast to home where one knows most of those in their immediate environment, on a cruise ship there are hundreds of crewmembers with access to passenger areas and cabins.

Some cruise staff may be attracted to the holiday atmosphere on board ships. One cruise line job website promises a “self-contained floating community that provides pleasure and services to up to 3000 passengers” (Cruise Ship Job, 2010b) with no accommodation or food costs, and the excitement of travel and being paid for living a life of luxury. This same site promotes life aboard as “an adventures job and a great way to save money and meet people from many different cultures” and notes that as staff turnover is high, plenty of jobs are available. On land, hospitality staff turnover is significantly associated with poor training and poor working conditions (Poulston, 2008a), so similar problems are likely to exist at sea. However, a more likely cause of turnover may be the “working holiday” nature of cruise ship jobs. These are jobs that only a few want permanently, because they limit the ability to have a normal family and social life. Many websites promote life on board as full of adventure and romance, which is somewhat beyond what one might generally expect from a normal day’s work. The overall pic-

ture to emerge is of both crew and passengers attracted to an atmosphere of fun and pleasure.

The Sexualization of Romance

A further ingredient to enter the developing mix is the sexualization of romance. Cruises are often touted as romantic getaways, no doubt creating the expectation that not just the entertainment and scenery will be good: it will also be romantic. However, the lines between sex and romance are difficult to determine. “Romance” is defined as the “sense of wonder or mystery surrounding the mutual attraction in a love affair” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2003, p. 2605), and “romantic,” as having an “idealized, fantastic, and sentimental view of life” (p. 2606). Both definitions have resonances of sexual fantasy, which may be an implicit add-on to the romantic holidays touted by cruise liner companies and travel agents.

In a discussion about love and sex on cruise ships, Chin (2008) cites an informal poll posted on the Cruise Critic forum in which members were asked to respond about sexual encounters (described as “flings”) at sea. Of the 108 participants, 48% described encounters with crew, and 64% of all respondents said their relationships did not continue after the cruise.

Chin (2008, p. 99) notes that posters to the forum cited locations for sexual encounters as crew quarters, passenger rooms, elevators, hot tubs, closets, dining room, pool, and discos after hours. One poster advised “if you go to cruise . . . do it . . . screw it . . . as much as you can and leave after a day . . . a week . . . that easy.” Chin also notes the popular genre of cruise advertisements with photographs of couples hugging each other as they gaze out to sea, suggesting that cruise ships are an ideal playground for “emotional and sexual intimacy among strangers” (p. 99). This overt sexualization is reinforced with advertising campaigns, such as that used by _____ as recently as 2003. This campaign used a postcard that displayed “a prostrate row of four tanned women, like so many sausages on a spit, with the line: ‘Seamen (sic) wanted’ . . . along with a photograph of the _____ advertisement featured the slogan: ‘More girls. More sun. More fun. There’s nothing else a guy needs to know’”

(Devine, 2006, p. 15). It would be difficult to be more explicit.

Uniforms, Power, and Harassment

Like hotels, hospitals, and prisons, cruise lines use uniforms to identify staff and reinforce their image. The word “uniform” means unity, standardized, or part of a group; a person in a uniform therefore creates the effect on others of believing that the uniformed person is part of a group, and will therefore exhibit similar behaviors to others in the group, and have similar levels of authority. While cruise ship and hotel uniforms enable easy differentiations to be made between staff and customers, the colors and styles may also influence customers’ perceptions of staff. Hotel staff on land who need to appear authoritative (such as duty managers and receptionists) often wear quasi-management blazers or jackets, and women are generally expected to look business-like and efficient if they work with bookings or money, and “cute” if they serve food or liquor. Photographs of cruise ship hotel staff show they wear similar uniforms to staff on land, but with more trim and shiny buttons, perhaps to mimic Navy and military uniforms. On some ships, non-hotel crewmembers are also uniformed in quasi-Navy uniforms replete with badges and epaulettes.

While research in this area is limited, color and style of uniforms appear to be significant influences on perceptions. Bickman (1974) found that a police-styled uniform produces obedient behaviors in pedestrians, and in a study of 737 citizens, Johnson (2005) found that black connotes unfriendly, aggressive, and corrupt behaviors, whereas light blue and navy connote warmth, honesty, and generally nice behaviors. A more recent study of 200 students (Nickels, 2008) found that black uniforms were perceived more positively than white ones, which the author considered to be in conflict with Johnson’s findings. However, Nickels noted that factors such as posture, race, and the characteristics of respondents may have skewed the data, and rating a uniform “positively” may just mean that respondents favored black uniforms, which may be an aesthetic rather than emotional reaction to the uniform.

Overall however, it seems likely that the white navy-style uniforms of crewmembers may impart a sense of security, trust, and safety to passengers, a distinct advantage to crewmembers seeking favors or perhaps obedience from passengers. While this is useful in an emergency, sexual predators can misuse the power implicit in their uniform.

Crewmembers also enjoy power accrued through their familiarity with their environment, having access to parts of the ship not normally accessible to passengers, and understanding the emergency procedures. Warhurst and Nickson (2007) describe service workers in luxury hotels and restaurants as being more comfortable in these environments than the customers they stoop to serve. For staff in potentially daunting environments, it is comparatively easy to manipulate guests, as they have the advantage of knowledge power and are in control of the guest experience. Similarly, it is relatively easy for crewmembers on board a ship to manipulate their passengers.

Harassment is more common where there are power inequalities (European Commission, 1998; Illies et al., 2003). Uggen and Blackstone (2004) explored the relationship between harassment and power, largely using MacKinnon’s (1979) theory of sexual harassment, but also Connell’s (1987) theory of gender relations. They concluded that sexual harassment is an expression of “power and masculinity” (p. 88), noting that men who were harassed at work generally had less powerful roles than others. An earlier study examining sexual harassment in organizations (De Coster, Estes, & Mueller, 1999) found that guardianship (i.e., a supervisory relationship) was a strong predictor of sexual harassment, but that vulnerability to harassment could be reduced by training the supervisors. Other predictors included male-dominated environments, larger work locations, and working in the public eye. Powerful women were also found to be targets of harassment, which the authors suggested might be caused by attempts to reduce the power of women who encroach on traditional male-dominated work roles. Sexual harassment, almost by definition, is an expression of a power. If there is no perceived expression of power, potentially harassing activities lack the ability to control the victim and, therefore, have little effect.

Alcohol

Around half of all sexual assaults are associated with alcohol consumption (e.g., Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan, 2001; Finn, 2010) of either the perpetrator or victim. Profit on alcohol sales is excellent. In a restaurant, a customer will pay around double the bottle store price for wine, and even more in a bar, yet the cost of labor is relatively low. Although most cruise ships prohibit the consumption of alcohol purchased elsewhere (Cruise Mates, 2010), alcohol is also a major factor in sexual crimes committed on cruise ships (Hernandez, 2001).

Summary of Possible Causes

The artificial community and holiday atmosphere on board a cruise liner create an environment in which pleasure-seeking thrives, and in which most crew and passengers get what they were looking for in their cruise experience. For some, however, alcohol and the sexualization of romance may shift their experience from a kind of acquiescent hedonism to a hunger for physical satisfaction and adventure that must somehow be satisfied. When this is added to the effect of the power base held by crewmembers, it is hardly surprising that so much sexual gratification is taken by force.

Research Method

The authors draw on two sets of statistical data to examine the incidence and dynamics of sexual assaults on cruise ships. The first set of data was compiled from disclosures by [redacted] in the discovery phase of lawsuits filed against the carrier for sexual assault (see Klein, 2008a). These data cover two cruise lines, [redacted] and [redacted], and include incident reports. For [redacted] I, the data cover 1998 through to 2005. During this period, [redacted] I received 451 complaints of sexual assault and sexual harassment involving physical contact. The yearly average was 56 with the highest incidence rate per year being 2004 ($n = 113$), followed by 2003 ($n = 80$), and 2002 ($n = 76$). Data for [redacted] (which has nine ships, compared to [redacted] 18) cover 1998 through 2002 with an average of 16

incidents per annum. [redacted] ' bleakest years were 2001 ($n = 27$) and 2002 ($n = 19$). Where the source is unclear, data from this set are referenced as "Cruise Ship Safety."

The second set of data was extracted from a compilation of crimes reported by cruise ships to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008, and secured through a Freedom of Information request by Kendall Carver, president of the International Cruise Victims' Association. This dataset is referenced as "FBI report" where the source is unclear.

Data on the relationship between the victims and perpetrators (Table 1), work roles of the perpetrators (Table 2), location of incidents (Table 3), and victimization of minors and the role of alcohol were extracted from these data sets (Table 4), to reveal the nature and severity of crimes on board cruise ships, as well as to examine the influence of potential factors identified in the literature search. The reports to the FBI include statements by investigators, victims, perpetrators, and witnesses, if any. A selection of victims' statements is presented to illustrate the nature of the assaults.

Results

Profile of Cruise Lines

Of particular interest are the two largest cruise lines: [redacted] and [redacted]. During the 1-year period up to September 2008, [redacted] reported 92 sex-related incidents: 48 of sexual contact, 40 of sexual assault, and three of sexual harassment (FBI report). Over 22 ships, this represents an average of four incidents per ship, although the actual range was from a nil on [redacted] to 11 on [redacted] l

By comparison, [redacted] reported 36 sex-related incidents, representing an average of 1.8 incidents per ship (half the average number recorded in 2003–2005) with no incidents on six of its 22 ships, and a high of five on [redacted] (Cruise Ship Safety).

The rate of sexual assault on [redacted] ships is a considerable improvement over the period 2003–2005, down from 111.97 to 45 per 100,000 (see Klein, 2008b). For [redacted] in 2007–2008, the rate for all sex-related incidents was 115 per 100,000 (50 per 100,000 for sexual contact, 60 per 100,000

for sexual assault, and five per 100,000 for sexual harassment). The overall rate for is not significantly different than that of for 2003–2005. Both rates compare poorly against the land rate of sexual assault (including sexual contact and assault) in Canada of 72 per 100,000 population in 2005 (StatsCan, 2006) and 68 per 100,000 in 2007 (StatsCan, 2008). There are no comparable statistics for the US or for .

The Perpetrators

Consistent with findings in sexual harassment studies (e.g., Illies et al., 2003), perpetrators of sex-related incidents on cruise ships in these data sets were almost exclusively male. Data for and contained only one identifiable incident in which the perpetrator was female, and reports to the FBI indicated only one case in which a female initiated unwanted sexual contact. As presented in Table 1, crewmembers were perpetrators in 85.6% of the incidents on between 1998 and 2005, and 10% of the incidents on between 1998 and 2002. However, FBI data for 2007–2008 reveal that assaults perpetrated by crew decreased to 49.1%, indicating increasing problems among passengers. Passenger initiated assaults (most often against another passenger) more than doubled from 22.2% in the 2003–2005 period to nearly 51% between 2007 and 2008. While it is possible that cruise lines may have improved training and supervision of crewmembers, it is also possible that data are skewed by nondisclosure of incidents noted in other reports (e.g., Ehline, 2007; Panko et al., 2009). Although only incidents involving US citizens are required to be reported to the FBI, the

data set does include a significant number of incidents involving non-US citizens.

Although data are not available from all cruise lines (i.e., incident reports were available only from and), it is interesting to note the work role of perpetrators. As seen in Table 2, service workers accounted for about two thirds of sex-related incidents, including room stewards, waiters, and bar workers. Officers ranked fourth worst in both and data, accounting for 8.1% of incidents on and 18.2% of incidents on .

The Victims

Victims were overwhelming but not exclusively female; males were victims in about 13% of cases, most involving unwanted same-sex contact. Most alarming was the proportion of incidents in which the victim was a minor (i.e., younger than age 18). The age of victims is discernible in less than half of the reported incidents; nonetheless, 11.4% of all victims on were minors, 17.5% of all victims on were minors, and 17.7% of incidents reported to the FBI in 2007–2008 dataset were minors. The proportion of victims who are minors could be twice as high, and the nature of the incidents is alarming, as the following extracts show.

Minor female, 14, was reported missing by her father at approximately 4:00 AM. Upon returning to her cabin she advised her parents that she had been with the 2nd officer; they had kissed and participated in inappropriate touching on an open deck area. Her friend, also 14, claims she also met the same 2nd officer during the cruise, and that she had also kissed and inappropriately tou-

Table 1
Sex-Related Incidents by Perpetrator and Victim

Source (n)	Period	Crew on Crew	Crew on Passenger	Passenger on Crew	Passenger on Passenger	Total
(79)	1998–2002	37.3%	62.7%	0	0	100%
(451)	1998–2005	8.4%	77.2%	1.4%	13.0%	100%
(249) ^a	2003–2005	10.7%	67.1%	0	22.2%	100%
FBI (154)	2007–2008	22.5%	26.6%	7.3%	43.5%	99.90%

Note: Totals do not add to 100 due to rounding. Sources: Cruise Ship Safety and FBI report.
^a2003–2005 data correspond to testimony given in the U.S. House of Representatives (Klein, 2007) and U.S. Senate (Klein 2008a).

SEXUAL ASSAULTS ON CRUISE SHIPS

Table 2
Work Role of Perpetrator

Work Role	1998–2005 (n = 136) ^a	1998–2002 (n = 33) ^a
Room steward ^b	34.8%	18.2%
Waiter ^b	25.0%	21.2%
Bar worker ^b	13.2%	24.2%
Officer	8.1%	18.2%
Musician/entertainer	5.1%	6.1%
Cleaner	2.9%	3.0%
Youth staff	2.9%	—
Security officer	2.2%	3.0%
Casino worker ^b	2.2%	—
Galley worker	1.5%	—
Other	2.9%	6.1%
	100.8%	100.0%

Note: Totals do not add to 100 due to rounding. Source: Cruise Ship Safety.

^aAs the identity of the perpetrator is not known in all cases, the count is less than that of the total dataset.

^bRoles with particularly high customer contact.

ched while on the bridge couch behind some curtains. (Source: FBI Report, Risk Management Department Incident Report)

While in the bathroom [my minor daughter] hears a knock on the door and assumes it is a family member coming back so she opens the door partially and sees it is the room steward. He forces his way into the cabin and holds on to her and asks her to kiss him. She responds ‘NO’ and tells him her parents are coming and he better get out of there now! He continues to try to kiss her using his tongue and begins to open her blouse. . . . (Source: FBI Report, Father’s letter to cruise line about attempted rape)

A minor female passenger was out on the open decks on Deck 8 where she met one of our cabin attendants. They were having an innocent conversation when they both went inside. . . . The crewmember followed the girl down the corridor where he led her into a crew stairs area away from the passenger areas. When they were in the crew area he had her up against the wall with his arms on either side of the wall to hold her there. He proceeded to kiss her and pull down her tank top to kiss her right breast. Another crewmember was coming up the crew stairs . . . [The girl] was able to get away and run to her cabin. (Source: FBI Report, Security Officer Incident Report)

Not only minors are victimized. Data indicate the age of victims ranges from 6 months to 80

years. This account comes from a 28-year-old female teacher:

I was walking down the sixth floor hallway at about 8:00 PM, in a hurry as I wanted to make an appointment in the salon, which closed at 8:00 PM. A crewmember was standing in the hallway and greeted me by saying hello, as he did all week. He then told me to come here, he had to tell me something. He went down a side corridor and I followed. . . . He then [assault description]. I could taste alcohol in his mouth. As I tried to get away he grabbed my hand. . . . I woke up early the next morning to avoid him and showered at the spa. When I came back to my cabin at 10:45 AM he was in the hall and told me he was waiting for me all morning. When I opened my door he followed me in. . . . (Source: FBI Report)

And the account of a 37-year-old woman traveling with her husband:

I went down the long corridor passing the library and was looking for my cabin. Two employees were at the end of the hallway. I asked where my cabin was located; one man said, “I will walk you there.” I said, “thank you” and proceeded with him. I handed him my room key, he opened the door, and said “let me help you.” He came in my room. I sat at the edge of my bed; he then sat on the bed. I told him to leave. He then said, “let me help you change into your nightgown”—it was on the couch and he grabbed it. I said, “no thanks, please leave” [assault description]. I started yelling at him and pushing him away from me. I told him to get out of my room—I was very scared. . . . (Source: FBI Report)

The Locations

As presented in Table 3, more than one third of sex-related incidents occurred in passenger cabins, but the reality is that they can occur almost anywhere, as the following extracts from reports to the FBI show.

On the very first day of the cruise, shortly after boarding the ship, [my fourteen year old male client] was victimized by an unidentified employee in the sauna. The employee sexually assaulted, molested, accosted, and abused him.

And the following account contained in a memo from the Hotel Manager to the Captain:

Table 3
Location of Incident (Where Known)

Location of Incident	1998–2005 (n = 316)	1998–2002 (n = 37)
Passenger cabin	36.4%	40.5%
Crew cabin/crew area	7.3%	27.0%
Bar	7.3%	5.4%
Dining room	6.6%	13.5%
Spa	5.7%	2.7%
Corridor	5.7%	2.7%
Deck	5.4%	2.7%
Public area	5.4%	—
Disco	5.1%	—
Public bathroom	4.4%	2.7%
Ashore	4.1%	2.7%
Youth program	3.2%	—
Elevator	1.9%	—
Pool	1.6%	—
Total	100.1%	100.1%

Note: Totals do not add to a 100 due to rounding. Source: Cruise Ship Safety.

This female guest had booked an appointment for a foot, ankle, and shoulder massage. While she was having the treatment by the spa therapist she claims that the therapist intentionally touched her on the vagina area. . . .

Even public bathrooms are unsafe:

Around 12:00–1:30 AM I was approached by an employee in the restroom next to the bar . . . he offered me oral sex. . . . I pushed him away and left the restroom and sat down at the bar. . . . [When I left the bar], I arrived at my floor and was walking down the hallway; then the same guy came out of an employee door and tried to pull me in by my right arm saying, “come, come” and still offering me oral sex. He tried pulling me into another room but I got away. (Source: FBI Report, 23 year old female passenger)

A crewmember asked a 14-year-old female passenger to go to the ladies room to see if anyone was there. Once inside, she told him no one was there, and he came in, locked the door, and began to kiss and fondle her. (Source: FBI Report, Parent’s call to corporate office)

It is easy to assume a passenger shares responsibility for an assault given the frequency of incidents occurring in cabins. However, crewmembers

often gain access without permission, as the following testimonies show.

About 3:00 to 3:30 PM I went to my cabin to have a shower. I had taken off my swimming suit and was next to the door to the bathroom. Without knocking a . . . [crewmember] entered the room. He said, “Do you want me to fuck you.” . . . (Source: FBI Report, 44 year old female)

At about 6:00 PM, after her husband and son went for dinner, this female passenger remained behind in the cabin, was undressed and was going to take a shower. At that time she thought she heard her cabin steward in the passageway; she wanted some ice so she opened the cabin door slightly, she could see her cabin steward in the passageway, so she attracted his attention by going, “psst, psst.” The steward then asked if her husband had gone, she replied yes, and with that he entered the cabin . . . [rape description]. As soon as it was over he left. (Source: FBI Report, Memo from Security Officer to Captain about a rape)

My cabin steward, on the 5th night, opened the door to my room (without knocking) at around 12:30 AM. I sat from the light, and he looked at me and just left. . . . The next night he saw me entering my room at 1:30 AM and followed me part way in and said, “So, are you going to let me sleep with you tonight?” I thought he was joking and I said, “No, I am married.” He said, “But you are alone on this ship.” I then said, “Do you know you could be fired for talking to me like this?” After that comment he left. (Source: FBI Report, Letter from female passenger to cruise line)

The Influential Factors

Table 4 presents results on two issues discussed above: the sexual victimization of minors and the role of alcohol in crime. While minors are the victims in 18.2% of all sex-related incidents, there is variation by the category of crime and by cruise line. Minors are the victims in the majority of cases of sexual harassment, 18% of cases involving sexual contact, and 13.7% of cases involving sexual assault. More interesting, however, is the variation between the cruise lines. Although has a higher rate of sex-related crimes than the table reveals that victimization of minors is proportionately a bigger problem on ships. More than one third of sexual assaults on that

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Table 4
Incident Analysis Showing Involvement of Minors and Alcohol

Cruise Line	Minors			Alcohol		
	Sexual Contact <i>N (%)</i>	Sexual Assault ^a <i>N (%)</i>	Sexual Harassment <i>N (%)</i>	Assault With Serious Bodily Injury <i>N (%)</i>	Sexual Contact <i>N (%)</i>	Simple Assault <i>N (%)</i>
	6 (12.5%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (40%)	5 (100%)	47 (97.9%)	6 (66.7%)
			1 (100%)	1 (100%)		1 (20.0%)
	1 (100%)					
	1 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (100%)			1 (100%)
	2 (100%)					1 (100%)
	4 (21.1%)	6 (35.3%)		4 (50.0%)	7 (36.8%)	30 (31.3%)
						1 (100%)
Total	14 (18.0%)	10 (13.7%)	4 (57.1%)	10 (62.5%)	54 (69.2%)	40 (34.8%)

Percentage reflects the proportion of all crimes of that type for that cruise line. Source: FBI report.
^aIncludes rape and attempted rape.

cruise line victimize a minor. This proportion that is almost three times the average for the industry and almost five times the proportion on ships.

There are similar differences with regard to alcohol involvement. Intoxication is known to be present in more than two thirds of cases involving sexual contact, almost two thirds of the cases involving assault with serious bodily injury, and more than one third of incidents involving simple assault. There are again differences by cruise line. As seen, alcohol is present in a considerably larger proportion of incidents on ships than on . Alcohol is present twice as often for simple assault and assault with serious bodily injury, and almost three times more frequently for sexual contact. It is impossible to know whether this accurately reflects what happens on board, or whether it is an artifact of intoxication being more likely to be reported by than .

Discussion

While the demographic characteristics of perpetrators were not apparent in these data sets, several other influences identified as potential problems in the literature review were upheld. Customer contact, identified by Hoel (2002), Eriksen (2006), and Poulston (2008b) as a predictor of

sexual harassment, was also a major predictor of harassment and assault in this study (Table 2). The role of uniforms (see Bickman, 1974; Johnson, 2005) and power (see Illies et al., 2003; MacKinnon, 1979; Uggen & Blackstone, 2004; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007) were not specifically tested in this study, but as crewmembers were largely responsible for harassment and assaults (Table 1), these are considered as potential factors, along with influence of the holiday atmosphere for crewmembers, evidenced in various publicly available blogs, forums, and advertisements (see Cruise Ship Job, 2010a). Alcohol was also shown to be a major factor (Table 4), as suggested by studies on the relationship between alcohol and sexual assaults (Abbey et al., 2001; Hernandez, 2001). The most chilling discovery, however, was that the most dangerous place to be on a cruise ship is in one's cabin (Table 3), and the most likely person to assault a passenger there is a uniformed crewmember (Table 2), in whom the passenger has placed a degree of trust (see above, victims' evidence).

There is little question that sexual assaults and sexual harassment are a problem on cruise ships. Factors such as the uniforms worn by officers and crewmembers, issues of power and control, and the sexualization of romance associated with a cruise certainly play a role, but they do not fully

explain the victimization of minors, nor the wide variations between cruise lines and between ships belonging to the same cruise line.

One possibility is that passengers come on board a cruise ship believing industry claims that they are safe. Indeed, the industry consistently stated during hearings in the US Congress between 2005 and 2008 that a cruise ship is the safest mode of commercial transportation. Passengers relax their usual defenses and allow children to roam freely, falsely assuming that no harm will occur. This makes them more vulnerable to abuse, because they are not on guard against an unpleasant incident or event. For many, it is inconceivable to think a crewmember will use a passkey to enter their room uninvited, or that they will be accosted in the hallway leading to their room or in a public bathroom.

As discussed, had a rate of sex-related incidents in 2003–2005 equal to that of in 2007–2008. There is no way of knowing whether, like actually reduced their incident numbers during those couple of years, because data are unavailable for earlier periods. However we can report that came under considerable pressure after its record was brought into the limelight by high-profile incidents and congressional hearings that focused more attention on than on or other cruise lines. It was at the height of this pressure that the corporation hired Gary Bald—a high-ranking official with the FBI—to serve as its Vice President for Global Security. Even though the company (like the industry generally) had developed a zero tolerance policy for crime (including sexual assaults) since 1999, and regular training to address the problem, the rate of sexual assaults still increased. Whether the company increased its training efforts under Mr. Bald, or reduced its tolerance for abuses, the result was a reduction in the number of sex-related incidents. The rate of occurrence is still problematic, but has been reduced by about half, while rate in 2007–2008 is as high as was in 2003–2005.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are ways to directly address the problem. Better training and supervision of staff (including managers and officers) is one strategy, although most perpetrators already know such behavior is

not permitted and that it may lead to immediate dismissal. The worst that can happen is that they will lose their job and be sent home. In view of this, cruise lines need to adhere to the zero tolerance policy developed in 1999 (see Cruise Industry Facts, 2010) and rather than just dismissing employees accused of sexual misconduct, also ensure they are prosecuted. They must take victim accusations seriously, collect needed evidence, and cooperate with law enforcement agencies. However, these seemingly simple and logical recommendations are in contrast with what is often done, and with what seems fair. For example, one of the authors was an expert witness for a case about an 8-year-old girl who alleged she was molested by a cleaner. When the incident was reported to security, and in the deposition hearing before the trial, the child was accused of lying and of fabricating the whole story. Criminal prosecution was not pursued, although a six-figure out-of-court settlement resolved the civil suit.

Focusing on staff training and supervision alone is not enough, given that passengers also perpetrate sexual assaults. There is a need for greater presence of security (including increased real-time video surveillance) and for honest advice to prospective passengers about the risks of sea travel. Information could also be included in cabin guides about the need to take proper precautions for ensuring personal safety, for proper supervision of minors, and instructing what to do should a passenger be sexually harassed or assaulted. Cruise lines need not exaggerate the scale of the problem, but it is unrealistic to pretend there is no problem and continue marketing cruising as “the safest” mode of transportation, as some media reports suggest that they are not (e.g., Silverstein, 2006). Certainly choice of ship names (e.g.,

etc.) may be considered more suggestive of sexual expression than of safety.

Cruise lines are recommended to adopt policies of responsible alcohol service given that the FBI data indicate more than one third of all incidents involve a party that is intoxicated. This is a difficult step, given that the sale of alcohol is one of the largest contributors to onboard revenue, and many bar servers’ and waiters’ gratuities are based on their volume of sales, but it is an effective means to curb problems with unwanted sexual be-

haviors. Responsible alcohol service will also reduce other onboard crime such as altercations, theft, and domestic violence.

While the elimination of sex-related incidents on board cruise ships is unlikely to be achieved, it is a worthwhile goal to strive for. Passengers go on a cruise ship for a relaxing and enjoyable vacation, often as a family or with family members, and do not deserve or expect to be victimized. It is in the interest of cruise lines to take the problem of aggressive sexual behaviors seriously and take every possible measure to eradicate the problem, including a structured approach to implementing a zero tolerance program.

Biographical Notes

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