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A Comparison of Sexual Coercion Experiences Reported by Men and Women in Prison

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Comparisons were made between self-reports from 382 men and 51 women who had experienced sexual coercion while incarcerated. Victim data were obtained from a sample of 1,788 male inmates and 263 female inmates who responded to an anonymous written survey distributed in 10 midwestern prisons. Men reported that their perpetrators in worst-case incidents were inmates (72%), staff (8%), or inmates and staff collaborating (12%). Women reported that their perpetrators were inmates (47%) and staff (41%). Greater percentages of men (70%) than women (29%) reported that their incident resulted in oral, vaginal, or anal sex. More men (54%) than women (28%) reported an incident that was classified as rape. Men and women were similar in feeling depression; however, more men (37%) than women (11%) reported suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (19% for men, 4% for women). Implications of results for prevention of sexual coercion in prison are discussed.

Keywords: *prison rape; prisoner rape; inmate rape; prison sexual abuse; prison sexual assault; prison sexual violence*

Sexual coercion of prisoners has long been a hidden form of interpersonal violence. Dumond (1995) described men and women who have been sexually coerced in prison as “ignominious victims”—persons deemed unworthy trapped behind walls with their sexual assailants. In past decades, it was often assumed that prison rape was an unavoidable and perhaps an appropriate part of prison life. There was no societal outcry for its victims. According to a public opinion poll published in the *Boston Globe* (Sennott, 1994), one half of the respondents believed that most people were not concerned about victims of prison rape. French (1979) and Baro (1997) noted

that men and women in prison were typically perceived as bad people who were deserving of what ever happened to them in prison—including being sexually coerced.

Several factors have shifted public opinion on this topic. Foremost, the antirape movement initiated by women's groups in the 1970s and 1980s has created a degree of public sympathy for all victims of sexual assault, including those in prison. Another influence has been lawsuits by prisoners who have been sexually coerced (Bell et al., 1999; Man & Cronan, 2001/2002; Springfield, 2000). Human rights groups have also sparked public reaction by publishing reports of prisoner sexual abuse (e.g., Amnesty International, 1999; Donaldson, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 1996, 2001). In 2003, a coalition of religious, human rights, and political groups passed a congressional act calling for an end to rape in American prisons and jails (Stop Prisoner Rape, 2004).

Social scientists have played an important role in changing these public attitudes. From the 1960s to 1980s, fewer than a dozen researchers had studied sexual coercion in prison (Dumond, 1992). Increasing access to prison records and populations and a declining stigma against studying so-called homosexual behavior led to a surge of research in the 1990s (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, Rucker, Bumby, & Donaldson, 1996). There now exist more than 50 journal articles, books, and chapters that address some aspect of sexual coercion in prison settings (see Dumond, 2000; Kunselman, Tewksbury, Dumond, & Dumond, 2002). These works provide important knowledge for a society poised to seek remedies for prison sexual coercion. Some major findings of this literature are reviewed below.

Prevalence of Sexual Coercion in Prisons

Most studies on incidence of sexual coercion in prison have focused on male victims (Hensley, Struckman-Johnson, & Eigenberg, 2000). In the late 1960s, Davis (1982) estimated that about 2,000 of 60,000 (3%) men were sexually assaulted while jailed during the 26-month period of the study. In the mid-1970s, Lockwood (1980) documented that 28% of 89 inmates interviewed in New York state prisons had been the target of "sexual aggression." However, only one inmate (1.3%) reported a completed rape. Similarly, Nacci and Kane (1983) found a sexual aggression rate of 11% and a rape rate of less than 1% among 330 men in federal facilities. Hensley, Tewksbury, and Castle (2003) documented a 14% rate of sexual threats and a 1% completed rape rate among 173 men in Oklahoma prisons.

Other researchers have reported higher rates of sexual coercion. Wooden and Parker (1982) found that 14% of 200 inmates in a California state prison

reported being pressured into having sex against their will. Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996) estimated that 22% of 486 men in Nebraska prisons had experienced at least one incident of pressured or forced sexual contact. Approximately 12% of these incidents were classified as rape in that they involved forced oral or anal sex. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2000) found that 21% of 1,788 men in seven midwestern prisons had experienced pressured or forced sexual contact. Ten percent of these incidents were classified as rape.

These contradictory prevalence rates may be due to survey techniques. Lower rates were generally found in studies that used interviews (e.g., Lockwood, 1980; Nacci & Kane, 1983), whereas higher rates were found in studies that used anonymous surveys (e.g., Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996; Wooden & Parker, 1982). In addition, studies have used variable definitions of *sexual coercion* and have been conducted in different time periods (Kunselman et al., 2002). Most experts agree that more research needs to be done.

Surveys of the prevalence of sexual coercion among female inmates are rare (Kunselman et al., 2002). In one early qualitative work, Kassebaum (1972) noted that female inmates were sexually exploited by prison staff and other female inmates. One case of violent gang rape by other inmates was described. More recently, Butler (1997) reported that 2% of 132 women in a New South Wales prison had engaged in nonconsensual sex. Hensley, Castle, and Tewksbury (2003) found that 4% of 245 women in a southern prison had been sexually coerced by another female inmate. Qualitative data by Alarid (2000) suggested that sexual pressure and an occasional sexual assault were part of prison life for women.

Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996) documented that 7% of 42 women in a Nebraska facility reported an incident of sexual coercion. No incident qualified as a completed rape. In a study of midwestern prisons, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2002) found that 27% of 148 women in a maximum-security facility reported being sexually coerced, with 5% being raped. In facilities with less violent populations, 9% of 79 women and 8% of 36 women reported being sexually coerced. Completed rape rates were 0%. The Struckman-Johnson research suggests that rates of sexual coercion in facilities for women are variable and may depend on facility security level. Completed rate rates reported by female inmates appear to be lower (0%-5%) than rates reported by male inmates (10%-12%).

Effects of Sexual Coercion in Prison

Although there is debate over the prevalence of sexual coercion in prisons, most researchers agree about its profound negative effects on men and

women. Lockwood (1980) was one of the first to document the severe effects of sexual aggression on male inmates, including fear, anxiety, psychological disturbance, and suicidal ideation. Donaldson (1993), a prison rape survivor and activist, wrote numerous nonempirical articles about men's reactions to rape. Drawing on the work of Burgess and Holmstrom (1974), Donaldson described how incarcerated victims develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Male victims may succumb to myths including that they have lost their manhood and that they are to blame for not fighting off their assailant(s).

In a literature review, Dumond and Dumond (2002) described a cycle of victimization that includes a primary phase of physical injury, pain and suffering, and emotional responses of fear, anxiety, terror, and hopelessness. Secondary victimization includes the loss of status among the inmate hierarchy, loss of self-esteem, and alienation from staff. Failure to disclose the incident can lead to depression and suicide. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and AIDS may result. All responses are intensified if the man is sexually assaulted again—a likely occurrence in the prison setting. The victim may develop an inner rage that may manifest itself in aggression and violence toward others in the prison system and in the community on release.

Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996) reported that a majority of 104 male victims felt distrust, nervousness around people, depression, and other symptoms of post-traumatic distress PTSD. A Human Rights Watch report (2001) based on qualitative interviews with 220 prisoners in 37 states unveiled consequences of prison rape that included bodily damage and sexual enslavement. Victims reported intense feelings of fear, shame, anxiety, despair, anger, and a desire for revenge. Some inmates reported attempts at suicide. The relationship between prison rape and suicide has been documented by several other studies (e.g., Wiggs, 1989; Wooden & Parker, 1982).

The effects of sexual coercion on small samples of imprisoned women were reported by Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996) and Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2002). They found that most female victims experienced nervousness around people, distrust of people, and dislike of people getting physically close. Symptoms related to PTSD such as flashbacks, bad dreams, and depression, were commonly reported. A Human Rights Watch qualitative report (1996) documented similar reactions of women sexually exploited by staff in prisons in six states. This report details other consequences such as unwanted pregnancies, persistent sexual harassment, and denial of privileges. In another qualitative work, Baro (1977) described the emotional vulnerabilities of female inmates exploited by staff in Hawaiian prisons.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to compare incarcerated men's and women's sexual coercion experiences. To our knowledge, there are no published data that offer this perspective. The data were collected in a single study of 10 prison facilities in 1998.¹ The current study yielded a large sample of 1,788 male respondents from seven prisons in five mid-western states. The women's sample of 263 was drawn from three prisons in three midwestern states. These data provided a rare look at gender differences in the circumstances surrounding sexual coercion, the nature of the sexual acts that took place, and the emotional and physical consequences of the event.

Method

Selection of Facilities and Sample Sizes

Because of the difficulty of gaining access to prison populations, we used a blanket approach and sent out sexual coercion research proposals to the Departments of Corrections in 14 states. The Departments in five Midwestern states agreed to give access to seven facilities for men and three facilities for women. Permission was contingent on the researchers keeping the names of the state and the facilities confidential.

The population for men was 7,032 inmates—the total number of men incarcerated in seven prison facilities. Four of the seven facilities for men were medium–maximum security state penitentiaries. The populations from these units were 1,770 men in Facility A, 1,650 men in Facility B, 1,150 men in Facility C, and 890 men for Facility D. A population of 952 men was obtained from Facility E, a maximum-security, long-term segregation facility for violent offenders. A population of 500 men was available from a Facility F, a relatively small state penitentiary, and 120 male inmates were accessed from Facility G, a small minimum-security facility.

The total population for women was 468 inmates incarcerated in three prison facilities. A sample of 295 women was obtained from Facility H—a medium–maximum security unit with a relatively high assignment of violent offenders. Samples of 113 inmates and 60 inmates were obtained from Facilities I and J, respectively. Both facilities were small medium–maximum security units with a relatively low assignment of violent offenders.

Instrument

The questionnaire was a modified form of an instrument used by Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996). The survey began with demographic questions followed by a section on rating the prison environment. Inmates were then asked: "Since the time you have been in a (name of state) prison, has anyone ever pressured or forced you to have sexual contact (touching of genitals, oral, anal, or vaginal sex) against your will?" Inmates who responded *yes* were asked to name the state facilities where incidents happened, frequency, and what year incidents took place.

Inmates with sexual coercion experience were then asked about the worst-case incident—either the only one that happened or the time that was the "most serious or harmful to you." Questions covered characteristics of the perpetrator(s), tactics used, and what sexual acts resulted.

Inmates rated their reaction at the time the incident happened on a scale from 1 (*it was not upsetting*) to 7 (*it was very upsetting*). They also rated the lasting bad effects of the incident on a scale from 1 (*it has had no bad effect on me*) to 7 (*it has had a severe bad effect on me*). Inmates checked what emotional and physical consequences, if any, had resulted from the incident. Final questions were about the location and reporting of the incident.

Procedures

Approval for the study was obtained from the University's Internal Review Board and the prisons' research committees. All inmates in each facility received a packet through prison mail that contained a questionnaire, a postage-paid envelope return-addressed to the researchers, and a no-return consent form that explained that the survey was anonymous and voluntary. Inmates who participated returned the survey through U.S. mail.

Results

Return Rates

The total number of usable surveys returned by male inmates was 1,788, or 25% of the original sample. The number of returns was 461 (26%) for Facility A, 430 (26%) for Facility B, 270 (24%) for Facility C, 232 (26%) for Facility D, 196 (21%) for Facility E, 174 (35%) for Facility F, and 25 (21%) for Facility G. The total number of usable surveys from female inmates was 263, or 56% of the sample. The number of returns was 148 (50%) for Facility H, 79 (70%) for Facility I, and 36 (60%) for Facility J.

Table 1
Characteristics of Male and Female Inmate Victims

Characteristic	Male <i>n</i> = 382		Female <i>n</i> = 51		Total <i>N</i> = 433		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Age							4.673	<i>ns</i>
17 years and younger	4	1	0	0	4	1		
18 – 25 years	92	25	8	16	100	24		
26 – 36 years	139	38	20	41	159	38		
37 – 47 years	98	27	18	37	116	28		
48 – 58 years	31	8	2	4	33	8		
59 years or older	6	2	1	2	7	2		
Education level							3.803	<i>ns</i>
Grade school	15	4	0	0	15	4		
Some high school	38	10	5	10	43	10		
High school degree or General Equivalency Diploma	119	32	15	29	134	31		
Trade school	52	14	5	10	57	13		
Some college	107	28	18	35	125	29		
College degree	46	12	8	16	54	13		
Race							38.090	.001
White	249	67	22	44	271	64		
Black	69	18	8	16	77	18		
Native American	28	8	6	12	34	8		
Hispanic	9	2	10	20	19	4		
Asian	5	1	0	0	5	1		
Other	13	4	4	8	17	4		
Sexual orientation							9.255	.026
Heterosexual	268	74	30	61	298	72		
Bisexual	75	21	11	22	86	21		
Homosexual	19	5	8	16	27	7		
Transsexual	1	.3	0	0	1	.2		
Crime type								
Against persons	265	70	27	53	292	68	5.805	.016
Drug related	91	24	14	28	105	24	.300	<i>ns</i>
Against property	110	29	18	35	128	30	.868	<i>ns</i>
Against public order	54	14	7	14	61	14	.009	<i>ns</i>
Most severe crime								
Murder	77	20	9	18	86	20	.185	<i>ns</i>
Assault	86	23	10	20	96	22	.229	<i>ns</i>

Note: *Ns* vary for each category due to missing data.

Selection of Victim Sample

Of the 1,788 male respondents, 382 (21%) answered *yes* to the question asking if they had ever experienced an incident of pressured or forced sexual contact against their will while incarcerated in their state. Of the 263 female respondents, 51 (19%) answered *yes* to this question.

For men's facilities, 111 victims were obtained from Facility A, 94 from Facility B, 70 from Facility C, 38 from Facility D, 35 from Facility E, 30 from Facility F, and 4 from Facility G. For women's facilities, 41 victims were obtained from Facility H, 7 from Facility I, and 3 from Facility J.²

Characteristics of Male and Female Victims

Table 1 shows distributions of male and female victims for demographic and crime-related characteristics. Differences between the distributions for male and female victims were tested with the chi-square statistic. Male and female victims were similar for age groupings. The average age was 33 years for men and 34 years for women. The male and female samples were similar for years of education. More than 85% of respondents had at least a high school education, and 40% had some college credits or a college degree.

The male and female samples differed in racial makeup. Although the largest racial category for male and female victims was White, the female sample had more Hispanic and Native American inmates. This difference reflected the racial diversity of the state in which Facility H was located. Most male and female victims identified as heterosexual; however, a higher percentage of women (16%) than men (5%) identified as homosexual. About one fifth of the male and female victims categorized themselves as bisexual.

More men (70%) than women (53%) had committed a crime against persons. There were no gender differences for other crime types. The proportions of men and women who had ever committed murder and assault did not differ. The average 28-year minimum sentence for men was significantly longer than the average 16-year minimum sentence for women, $t(1, 423) = 2.378, p < .02$.

Frequency of Sexual Coercion

The results in Table 2 show the number of times male and female inmates reported being sexually coerced in their current facility. This is a conservative estimate because we did not factor in the number of times inmates were coerced in other state facilities. There were no significant

Table 2
Number of Times Sexually Assaulted in the Present Facility
Reported by Male and Female Inmate Victims

Frequency of Sexual Assault	Male <i>n</i> = 298		Female <i>n</i> = 40		Total <i>N</i> = 338		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
1	81	27	17	43	98	29	6.997	<i>ns</i>
2 – 3	84	28	9	22	93	11		
4 – 5	38	13	5	12	43	13		
6 – 10	45	15	7	18	52	15		
11 – 25	35	12	2	5	37	11		
26 – 50	13	4	0	0	13	4		
51+	2	.7	0	0	2	.6		

Note: Rows are mutually exclusive. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

gender differences among the frequency categories. Nearly 75% of the men and 57% of the women were sexually coerced more than once. The average number of reported incidents was 8.6 for men and 3.9 for women, a difference that approached significance, $t(1, 343) = 1.847, p < .066$.

Year of Worst-Case Incident³

Worst-case incidents reported by male victims had taken place over a longer time period than those reported by women, $\chi^2(4, 275) = 14.320, p < .006$. Thirty-seven percent of the men and 46% of the women reported that their incident took place in the past year. About 20% of the men and one third of the women said that their incident happened 2 to 5 years ago. About the same percentages of men (17%) and women (14%) reported that their incident happened 6 to 10 years ago. One large disparity was that 27% of the men but only 7% of the women said that their incident happened more than 10 years ago.

Perpetrator Characteristics

As shown in Table 3, most men (91%) and one half of the women (51%) were victimized by male perpetrators in their worst-case incident. A small percentage of men were victimized by a woman or by a group that included at least one woman. Nearly one half of the women were exploited by another woman (49%). Note that perpetrators could potentially include male and female staff members, as well as same-sex inmates. In some prisons there

Table 3
Gender, Number, and Relationship of Perpetrators in Worst-Case Sexual Coercion Incidents Reported by Male and Female Inmate Victims

Gender of Perpetrator	Male <i>n</i> = 352		Female <i>n</i> = 45		Total <i>N</i> = 397		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Male	320	91	23	51	343	86	94.750	.001
Female	15	4	22	49	37	9		
Both	17	5	0	0	17	4		
	<i>n</i> = 339		<i>n</i> = 42		<i>N</i> = 381			
Number of Perpetrators							χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
1	150	44	20	48	178	45	12.312	.31
2	58	17	15	36	73	19		
3	51	15	2	5	53	14		
4-5	40	12	3	7	43	11		
6-10	32	9	2	5	34	9		
11+	8	2	0	0	8	2		
	<i>n</i> = 352		<i>n</i> = 44		<i>N</i> = 396			
Relationship of Perpetrator to Target							χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Inmate stranger only	112	32	2	4	114	29	63.421	.0001
Inmate known only	96	27	17	39	113	29		
Inmate known and stranger only	47	13	2	4	49	12		
Staff only	29	8	18	41	47	12		
Staff and inmate only	44	12	0	0	44	11		
Other staff involved combinations	8	2	1	2	9	2		
Visitor only	0	0	1	2	1	.3		
Other or other combination	16	5	3	7	19	5		

Note: Rows are mutually exclusive.

was occasional mixing of male and female inmates, visitors, and workers from the outside.

In worst case incidents, 44% of the men and 48% of the women were victimized by a sole perpetrator (Table 3). More than one half of the incidents for both genders involved multiple perpetrators, with most of these cases involving two to five perpetrators. There was no gender difference for this comparison. The difference between the average number of perpetrators reported by men (2.8) versus women (2.0) approached significance, $t(1, 379) = 1.748, p < .08$.

As shown in Table 3, more men (72%) than women (47%) were victimized by other inmates only (either acquaintance or stranger inmates). Within this comparison, more men (32%) than women (4%) were victimized by a stranger inmate. More women (41%) than men (8%) were victimized by prison staff only. However, more men (12%) than women (0%) were exploited by staff and inmates who collaborated as perpetrators.

There was a significant gender difference in perpetrator race for worst case incidents (Table 4). Sixty percent of the men and 37% of the women reported that their assailant was African American or that their assailant group included African Americans. White assailants were involved in 45% of incidents reported by men and 53% of those reported by women.

Location

The most common location for worst-case incidents reported by men were the inmate's own cell (31%), shower (13%), kitchen (6%), another inmate's cell (6%), yard/exercise area/gym (4%), and work area (4%). About 2% to 3% of victims each reported for the locations of closet and/or stairwell, laundry room, church and/or library, infirmary and/or hospital, and staff office and/or area. The most common locations for women were inmate's own cell (29%), yard/exercise area/gym (10%), and laundry room (10%). The remaining locations of shower, kitchen, another inmate's cell, work area, church and/or library, infirmary and/or hospital, and staff area were each mentioned by 4% of women. This analysis was inexact as about one fourth of men and women mentioned locations that were "other." No statistical tests were conducted because of the large number of location categories.

Tactics

Inmates typically reported that perpetrators used more than one tactic to carry out the worst-case incident. As shown in Table 5, persuasion was the

Table 4
Race of Perpetrator in Worst-Case Sexual Coercion Incident Reported
by Male and Female Inmate Victims

Race	Male <i>n</i> = 341		Female <i>n</i> = 43		Total <i>N</i> = 384		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
White only	101	30	18	42	119	31	54.008	.001
African American only	157	46	9	28	166	43		
Native American only	7	2	0	0	7	2		
Hispanic American only	6	2	10	23	16	4		
White, African American group	37	11	3	7	40	10		
White, Native American group	3	1	1	2	4	1		
White, Hispanic group	11	3	1	2	12	3		
African American, Native American group	4	1	0	0	4	1		
African American, Hispanic group	5	2	1	2	6	2		
Native American, Hispanic group	1	.3	0	0	1	.3		
Asian or Other race only	9	3	0	0	9	2		

Note: Categories are mutually exclusive.

most common pressure tactic cited by male (35%) and female (43%) victims. This difference was not significant, nor were there gender differences in the use of threats to withdraw love, bribery, and blackmail. However, a higher percentage of men (18%) than women (2%) reported that perpetrators got them drunk or high.

For force tactics, similar percentages of men and women were scared by the size or strength of their perpetrator (44%) and were physically held down (38%). However, greater percentages of men than women received threats of harm, were harmed during the incident, and had a weapon used against them.

If inmates checked at least one force tactic, their worst-case incident was categorized as forced. If inmates checked only pressure tactics, their worst-case incident was categorized as pressured. Based on this analysis, 76% of men's incidents were forced, compared to 65% of women's incidents. This difference was not significant (Table 5).

Sexual Outcome

Many inmates reported that incidents resulted in multiple sexual acts. We categorized incidents according to the most serious sexual outcome reported. Categories ranged from nothing happened (for those who avoided, escaped, or fought off perpetrators) to anal plus vaginal intercourse. As shown in Table 6, more women (46%) than men (14%) experienced genital touching as their most serious outcome. Similar percentages of men and women (12%) reported oral sex as their most serious outcome. More women (15%) than men (4%) reported vaginal sex as their most serious outcome. (Note that male inmates victimized by female prison staff could report vaginal sex as an outcome.) The greatest difference was that one half of male victims but only a few female victims had to engage in anal sex.

We categorized incidents as *touch* if the victim reported that nothing happened or if genital touching had occurred. Incidents were categorized as *intercourse* if inmates reported that oral, vaginal, or anal sex occurred. This analysis revealed that significantly more male victims (70%) than female victims (29%) had intercourse with perpetrators (Table 6).

We categorized incidents as involving *rape* if victims reported that perpetrators used at least one force tactic to obtain oral, vaginal, or anal sex. This analysis revealed that more men (54%) than women (28%) reported a worst-case incident that involved rape (Table 6).

Table 5
Tactics Used in Worst-Case Sexual Coercion Incidents Reported
by Male and Female Inmate Victims

Tactics Used by Perpetrator ^a	Male <i>n</i> = 348		Female <i>n</i> = 43		Total <i>N</i> = 391		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Pressure tactics								
Persuasion – talked you into it	121	34	20	46	141	36	2.054	<i>ns</i>
Threatened to withdraw love	17	5	3	7	20	5	.312	<i>ns</i>
Got you drunk or high	62	18	1	2	63	16	6.938	.008
Bribe	52	15	9	20	61	16	.936	<i>ns</i>
Blackmail	53	15	4	9	57	14	1.157	<i>ns</i>
Force tactics								
Scared by size and/or strength of perpetrator	155	44	20	46	175	44	.032	<i>ns</i>
Threatened to harm or hurt you	205	58	16	36	221	56	7.472	.006
Physically held down and/or restrained	136	39	13	30	149	38	1.377	<i>ns</i>
Physically harmed	105	30	5	11	110	28	6.648	.010
Used a weapon	90	26	1	2	91	23	11.992	.001
	<i>n</i> = 348		<i>n</i> = 43		<i>N</i> = 391			
Use of Force ^b	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Force used	263	76	28	65	291	74	2.199	.099
Only pressure used	85	24	15	35	100	26		

a. Percentages of tactics add up to more than 100 because most targets reported multiple tactics.

b. Categories are mutually exclusive.

Table 6
Most Serious Sexual Outcome in Worst-Case Sexual Coercion Incidents Reported by Male and Female Inmate Victims

Most Serious Sexual Outcome	Male <i>n</i> = 336		Female <i>n</i> = 41		Total <i>N</i> = 377		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Tried to touch – victim escaped	54	16	10	24	64	17	48.941	.0001
Touched genitals, sexual parts	48	14	19	46	67	18		
Oral sex – Given or received	42	12	5	12	47	12		
Vaginal sex	15	4	6	15	21	6		
Anal sex	172	51	1	2	173	46		
Anal and vaginal sex	5	2	0	0	5	1		
	<i>n</i> = 336		<i>n</i> = 41		<i>N</i> = 377			
Intercourse Outcome							χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Intercourse occurred (oral, anal, vaginal)	234	70	12	29	246	65	26.271	.0001
Only touch occurred	102	30	29	71	131	35		
	<i>n</i> = 326		<i>n</i> = 39		<i>N</i> = 365			
Rape Outcome							χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Rape occurred	175	54	11	28	186	51	9.046	.004
Rape did not occur	151	46	28	72	179	49		

Note: Rows are mutually exclusive.

Consequences

On average, men rated their level of upset at 6.12 on a scale where 7 indicated being very upset. Women's average rating was similarly high—6.20. Men and women also did not differ in ratings of the lasting bad effect of the incident (5.38 for men and 5.49 for women where 7 indicated a severe bad effect).

As shown in Table 7, similar percentages of male and female victims reported 8 of 15 possible effects resulting from the worst-case incident. The most commonly reported effects for all victims (60% to 75%) were feelings of distrust of people, nervousness around people, discomfort with being physically close to others, and worry that it would happen again. A majority of all victims reported depression, and 43% had flashbacks and bad dreams.

Other results indicated that men experienced more negative consequences than women. Higher percentages of men than women were worried about their sex-role reputation, had thoughts of suicide, and made suicidal attempts. More men than women reported fear of catching AIDS, feelings of hatred, and being physically injured. There was a trend effect for more men (36%) than women (22%) being violent as a result of the incident.

Reporting of the Incident

More women (67%) than men (51%) told someone about their worst-case incident, $\chi^2(1, 392) = 4.449, p < .035$. As shown in Table 8, more than one half of the women, but only one third of the men, told another inmate. More than one third of the women, but only about one fourth of the men, told family or friends outside the prison. We analyzed how many men and women told either nonadministrative staff or prison administration about the incident. Results showed that only 22% of the men and 34% of the women reported their incident to prison staff. This difference approached significance, $\chi^2(1, 413) = 3.316, p < .069$.

Summary and Discussion

The current study yielded information on the largest sample of male and female victims of prison sexual coercion available to date in the literature. Although we made comparisons of the demographic characteristics of

Table 7
Male and Female Inmate Victims by Consequences of Worst Case Sexual Coercion Incident

Consequence of Incident	Male <i>n</i> = 348		Female <i>n</i> = 46		Total <i>N</i> = 394		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Distrusts people	261	75	35	76	296	75	.026	ns
Nervousness around some people	245	71	35	76	280	71	.596	ns
Do not like people getting physically close	224	65	24	52	248	63	2.673	ns
Worried about it happening again	205	59	30	65	235	60	.672	ns
Worried about reputation as a man and/or women	170	49	15	33	185	47	4.303	.038
Flashbacks and/or bad dreams	150	43	20	44	170	43	.002	ns
Depression	204	59	23	50	227	58	1.236	ns
Thoughts of suicide	129	37	5	11	134	34	12.426	.001
Attempts at suicide	66	19	2	4	68	17	6.111	.013
Worried about catching AIDS	153	44	7	15	160	41	14.030	.001
Has caught a disease	14	4	0	0	14	4	1.930	ns
Physical injury	74	21	4	9	78	20	4.073	.044
Has made victim hate people	163	47	14	30	177	45	4.488	.034
Has caused victim to be violent	125	36	10	22	135	34	3.627	.057
There were no bad effects	20	6	1	2	21	5	1.042	ns

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because most targets reported multiple consequences.

Table 8
Male and Female Inmate Victims by Whom Was Told of the Worst-Case Sexual Coercion Incident

Who Was Told	Male <i>n</i> = 339		Female <i>n</i> = 46		Total <i>N</i> = 385		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Another inmate	114	34	25	54	139	36	7.537	.006
Clergy	54	16	12	26	66	17	2.942	<i>ns</i>
A teacher	4	1	2	4	6	2	2.650	<i>ns</i>
Medical person	37	11	3	6	40	10	.839	<i>ns</i>
Nonadministrative staff	66	20	12	26	78	20	1.098	<i>ns</i>
Prison administration	57	17	10	22	67	17	.668	<i>ns</i>
Family or friends outside of prison	77	23	17	37	94	25	4.401	.036

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could check multiple categories.

the male and female samples, we are not certain if the results are related to sexual coercion. Some gender differences such as for race and crime background more likely reflected facility geographic location and custody level.

The results for sexual orientation, however, deserve mention. Compared to the male sample, the female sample had more inmates who self-identified as homosexual. This difference may reflect the nature of women who are incarcerated and may not be relevant to sexual coercion. However, we found some evidence that men and women who identified as homosexual were singled out as targets. While about 2% of the return sample for men identified as homosexual, 5% of the male victim sample identified as homosexual. For women, 11% of the return sample identified as homosexual compared to 16% of the victim sample. Bisexual men were also over-represented in the victim group (20%) as compared to the return sample (9%). The difference was less clear for women. About 20% of victims identified as bisexual compared to 17% of the return sample. Overall, these results fit with other studies that have shown greater victimization rates of gay and bisexual inmates (e.g., Hensley, Tewksbury, & Castle, 2003; Man & Cronan, 2001/2002; Wooden & Parker, 1982).

The men in the current sample, compared to women, had committed more crimes against persons and were serving longer sentences. However, the women were not incarcerated for only minor crimes. Similar proportions of men and women had committed murder and assault. Donaldson (1993) wrote that male victims of prison rape tend to be the nonviolent offenders. Here we have evidence that male and female inmates who have committed violent crimes are also targets for sexual assault. We speculate that violent offenders who have long sentences to serve sooner or later encounter predators who cannot be escaped.

The current study revealed an array of similarities and differences in men's and women's experience of sexual coercion in prison. Men and women were similar in that most had been victimized more than once. Men said they had been victimized an average of nearly 9 times in their present facility, while women reported an average of four incidents. This difference only approached statistical significance because of variability of responses.

Men and women differed in the recentness of their worst case incident. Women reported incidents that had happened relatively recently, with nearly one half occurring in the past year. Men's incident reports stretched out over many years, with at least one fourth happening more than a decade ago. One explanation is that men had been incarcerated longer than most women and thus had been at risk to victimization for more years.

Men and women were alike in that their worst-case incident typically involved two or more perpetrators. Men and women differed by gender of the perpetrator(s) in the worst-case incidents. Nine of 10 male inmates were victimized by another man or an all male group. In the remaining cases, the perpetrator was a woman, a group of women, or a woman who joined with other men. In contrast, female inmates were about equally as likely to be victimized by another woman (or groups of women) as by a man (or group of men).

An analysis of the relationship of the perpetrators helped explain this finding. Male inmates were most likely to be assaulted by other inmates who were nearly always male. However, about one fifth of the men were victimized by prison staff, who sometimes included female employees. Female inmates were about as likely to be victimized by other inmates (48%), who were nearly always female, as by staff (43%), who could be male or female. These results underscore that men and women in prison can be victimized by almost any person—male or female, inmate or staff—who can gain access to inmates.

Our findings suggest that this access can occur almost anywhere in the prison. Although most incidents happened in cells, showers, and exercise areas, many took place in unexpected places such as kitchens and laundry areas, libraries, and hospitals.

Men and women differed for race of perpetrators in worst-case incidents. Men were most likely to be assaulted by African American perpetrators (60%). This is a common finding in the literature (e.g., Hensley, Tewksbury, & Castle, 2003; Man & Cronan, 2001/2002) and supports the notion that Black and White race relations and gang dynamics fuel sexual coercion in male prisons. Women were most likely to be assaulted by White perpetrators (53%). Female victims in general reported a greater diversity of perpetrator race including Hispanic and Native American. The results for women, however, may reflect the racial diversity of women's facility H.

An important finding of the current study is that a similar majority of men and women had at least one force tactic used against them in their worst-case incident. However, men differed from women in that they had more serious or harmful force tactics used against them. Compared to women, men were more likely to be threatened with harm, to be physically harmed, and to have a weapon used against them. In addition, more men than women reported that they suffered physical injury as a consequence of the incident.

Another important finding was that men, compared to women, experienced more serious sexual outcomes in their worst-case incidents. A majority of women (71%) reported that the outcome involved nothing more serious

than an attempt at sexual touching or an actual touch. A majority of men (70%) reported that oral, vaginal (note that some male inmates reported being coerced by female staff in the prison), or anal intercourse occurred.

An analysis determined that just more than one half of all male victims who responded to the survey had been forced to engage in oral, vaginal, or anal intercourse. The male rape rate of 54% was significantly higher than the 28% rape rate for female victims.

Our results showed that men and women were equal in their strong negative reactions to sexual coercion in prison. They rated themselves as highly upset at the time the worst-case incident happened. They gave moderately high ratings to the lasting bad effect of the incident. Men and women were alike in that most felt distrust of other people, nervousness around others, and dislike of people getting close after the incident. Men and women were equally likely to report symptoms related to PTSD such as flashbacks and bad dreams and fears of repeat incidents.

Men differed from women in that they were more likely to be worried about their reputation—evidence for Donaldson's (1993) notion that male rape victims experience loss of manhood. Men were also more likely than women to report a fear of getting AIDS, a concern related to forced anal intercourse. Men also were more likely than women to report feeling hateful toward others and acting violently toward others. These differences may help explain why although equal percentages of men and women reported being depressed by their worst-case incidents (at least one half), substantially more men had thoughts of suicide and attempted suicide.

In summary, these findings suggest that sexual coercion in prison is a more violent situation for men than women. Men are more likely than women to have greater levels of force used against them, to endure more physical harm and injuries, and to experience more intimate acts of sexual activities. As a consequence, we speculate that men are more likely than women to respond with violence toward others and to turn the violence inwards against themselves. This is not to minimize the experience of sexual coercion for women in prison. Women were similar to men in that they had experienced multiple incidents of sexual coercion. More than one fourth of the female victims experienced an incident that qualified as rape, often carried out by multiple perpetrators. Women were more likely than men to be victimized by staff who wielded constant and complete authority over them. Women reported equally high levels of emotional upset and most of the same emotional symptoms as did men.

These findings have implications for prevention strategies. In men's facilities, prevention efforts should focus primarily on inmate-on-inmate

sexual coercion, with some consideration given to staff involvement. Administrators should recognize that it is possible for staff and inmates to collaborate as perpetrators in sexual assault. In women's facilities, efforts should be more equally focused on inmate-on-inmate assault and staff and inmate interactions.

Administrators in men's facilities should take into account racial dynamics of inmate-on-inmate assault. In particular, they should attend to situations that put White inmates at risk to Black perpetrators. However, it should be recognized that men from all racial groups are potential targets of sexual coercion.

In male and female facilities, administrators should design strategies to manage predators who work alone, as well as predators who organize with others to commit sexual coercion. All areas of a prison facility should be considered as a potential location for sexual coercion. Prevention training programs should be directed at female and male staff.

Treatment of the male victims should be directed toward physical injury, AIDS and disease prevention, and, most notably, suicide prevention. Male and female victims should be provided counseling and therapy to mitigate the onset of long-term emotional effects. Finally, administrations need to find ways to encourage male and female victims to report incidents of sexual coercion to prison personnel.

Limitations

The strength of the current study is the information on the large number of male victims (382) gathered from seven different prisons in five states. The male victim data may be representative of prison populations in the Midwest. The weakness of the current study is the comparatively small number of female victims ($n = 51$). We could only gain access to three women's prisons in the current study. The small populations in women's prisons, coupled with the relatively low rates of sexual coercion in some prisons, makes it difficult to obtain large victim samples. Although a sample size of women was adequate for comparisons in the current study, there are limitations to the generality of the results.

The current study is strengthened by the high return rate for female respondents (50% – 70%). The current study is weakened by the relatively low return rate from male respondents (25%). Hensley (personal communication, November 14, 2004) reported that rates of 20% and below are typical for male prison studies. Our return rates, then, may be above average. The question is do our return samples for men reflect the total prison population

at large. In a study of Nebraska prisons (Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996), we found that the return sample was similar to the total population for many demographic characteristics. We determined that our return samples from men's prisons in the Midwest underrepresented African American respondents and overrepresented inmates with higher education (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2000).

The current study is also limited in that the data are based on self reports from a population that is not always viewed as credible. We carefully reviewed and eliminated a small number of surveys that were inconsistent, atypical, and possibly contained fraudulent data. In general, we believe that the anonymous nature of the survey and mailing procedures encouraged honest and accurate responses. It has been demonstrated that reporting of sensitive behaviors that is anonymous is more accurate than reporting with guarantees of confidentiality (Ong & Weiss, 2000). Anonymous reporting in a prison setting allows inmates to disclose sexual victimization without fear of being stigmatized as a snitch or bait.

The validity of our data is best supported by the similarity of results for sexual coercion rates found in 10 men's prisons (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2000; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996). Future research will be required to determine the validity of results for women who report sexual victimization in prison.

Notes

1. Limited data on a subsample of male victims have been previously published (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2000). Data from a subsample of the female victims have been previously published (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2002).

2. The number of victims is slightly higher here than reported in prior publications (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2000, 2002) because victims sexually coerced in any in- or out-of-state facility were counted. In previous publications, only victims whose worst-case incident occurred in their current facility were described.

3. Approximately 35 to 40 inmates (mostly men) did not complete or only partially completed the section on worst-case incidents. The tables for these data generally show smaller *n* than reported in the demographic table.

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