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Correctional officers' definitions of rape in male prisons

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Abstract

Research on rape in the community demonstrates that definitions of rape are highly situational and that the behavior of the victim is frequently used to redefine rape as consensual sexual behavior. Research on male rape in prison also suggests that the line between consensual homosexuality and rape is often blurred and that certain types of men are viewed as legitimate victims who precipitate their victimization. This study examines correctional officers' definitions of male rape in prison and explores whether a number of factors, including victim blaming, affect officers' definitions of rape. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Male rape in prison, the act of male inmates raping other male inmates, is a problem that has received little attention in the correctional literature.¹ Historically, the subject was most often discussed in the literature on homosexuality (Fishman, 1951; Clemmer, 1958; Sykes, 1958; Kirkham, 1971; Buffum, 1972; Sagarin, 1976) because both rape victims and rapists were defined as situational homosexuals (see Eigenberg, 1992). More recent research has tended to shift the attention from homosexuality to violent sexual aggression and focuses on establishing empirical estimates of inmate victimization (Davis, 1968; Weiss & Friar, 1974; Lockwood, 1980; Wooden & Parker, 1982; Nacci & Kane, 1983, 1984a,b; Saum et al., 1995; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996; Maitland & Sluder, 1998). These studies indicate that male rape in prison occurs infrequently; estimates suggest that as few as 1 percent of the prison population have experienced a rape (Nacci & Kane, 1984a,b; Tewksbury, 1989; Saum

et al., 1995; Maitland & Sluder, 1998), although other studies report higher rates such as 14 percent (Wooden & Parker, 1982) and 22 percent (Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996). One study (Wooden and Parker) reports a victimization rate of 41 percent for identified homosexuals, most of whom were residing in a protective custody unit, although this figure is not generalizable to the general inmate population.

Victimization studies provide valuable information and facilitate understanding in an area where research is sparse; however, they have limitations that require that any estimates of male rape be evaluated with caution. First, many of them rely upon small, convenience samples. Second, researchers often fail to clearly distinguish between consensual homosexuality, prostitution, and rape in their conceptual schemes (Eigenberg, 1989, 1992, 1994). Third, researchers and administrators have been reluctant to acknowledge that inmates may fail to report rape. As a result, current data probably underestimate the extent of the problem (Eigenberg, 1989, 1994; Saum et al., 1995; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996). Unfortunately, these relatively low estimates may lead administrators to concentrate on other more "serious" problems where official estimates of violence are higher.

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The literature suggests that a wide variety of programs and administrative tactics might be used to combat rape in prison. These solutions include: implementing conjugal visits and furlough programs (Karpman, 1948; Lee, 1965; Nice, 1966; Vedder & King, 1967; Ibrahim, 1974; Scacco, 1975); placing victims in separate housing units (Ibrahim, 1974; Bowker, 1980, 1982); providing vocational, educational, psychological, and athletic programs (Davis, 1968; Ibrahim, 1974; Lockwood, 1980; Wooden & Parker, 1982); and normalizing the prison environment by increasing the number of female officers (Ibrahim, 1974; Scacco, 1975). None of these strategies are based on empirical data, and many of them are based on questionable theoretical assumptions (i.e., that rape in prison occurs in response to sexual deprivation) or lack any conceptual basis what so ever (e.g., educational and vocational programs). An interesting exception, however, is the research conducted by Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996). They report that both inmates and correctional officers suggest that rape would be reduced if better screening and classification procedures were used to segregate potential targets and victims, supervision was better and there was more of it, there was faster punishment of perpetrators, single cells were used more often, and there was better training for inmates and staff.

Surprisingly, very little research has examined how correctional officers view rape in prison or whether their attitudes influence rule enforcement or order maintenance activities. Thus, perhaps officers are pro-active law enforcement officials who help to deter and prevent rape or perhaps they indirectly or directly facilitate victimization in a variety of ways. It is odd that research on male rape in prisons basically has ignored the role of correctional officers given their critical role in the institutional hierarchy. The traditional correctional literature asserts that officers have some influence over inmates because of the amount of contact between the two groups (Guenther & Guenther, 1974; Peretti & Hooker, 1976; Philliber, 1987).² This influence can occur as a result of both formal and informal means of social control.

It is clear that correctional officers are the police of the prison (Crouch & Marquart, 1980; Poole & Regoli, 1980; Lombardo, 1981) and that formal rule enforcement is one of their primary functions. Thus, officers affect formal sanctions because they are the individuals who largely are responsible for introducing a case into the prison disciplinary system. In prisons, both consensual (homosexual) acts and coercive acts (rapes) are prohibited behaviors that can result in disciplinary sanctions. Thus, correctional officers are responsible for charging

violators when this type of behavior is encountered; however, it is not clear whether officers regularly report these infractions or whether they use their discretionary power to ignore some violations.

At the extreme end of a continuum, some officers may use rape or the threat of sexual violence to control inmates. Some officers may manipulate housing assignments to intimidate inmates by threatening to assign more vulnerable inmates to bunk with known sexual predators. Or, perhaps officers merely tolerate coercive acts because they facilitate division among inmates making them, as a group, more manageable. It also is possible that officers fail to enforce regulations if they define some acts as consensual homosexuality rather than coercive acts of violence. Some officers may believe that consensual acts involving two grown adults are not hurting anyone, which also allows officers to ignore disciplinary violations in order to avoid embarrassing confrontations with inmates. It may not be so easy, however, to distinguish rapes from consensual sexual activity since rape in prison often relies upon extortion techniques where coercion is more important than outright force. Thus, some officers may fail to define certain acts of rape simply because a knife is not at a man's throat during the sexual act.

While inmate populations report that correctional officers are not responsive and that they contribute to rape in prisons (Davis, 1968; Lockwood, 1980; Wooden & Parker, 1982), officers themselves say they should or would respond to acts of homosexuality and rape (Nacci & Kane, 1983, 1984a,b; Eigenberg, 1994). There are several possible explanations that may account for this apparent contradiction.

First, officers may report that they respond to rape because they believe they are supposed to say they take actions to ensure the safety of inmates. Second, perhaps officers are quite willing to respond to acts of rape, but like police officers in the community, they are unable to respond to most sexual assaults because of the hidden nature of the assault. Translated, correctional officers are not apt to catch many inmates in the act. As a result, officers may end up responding only to those assaults that are reported by victims, and many (most) inmates may fail to report their victimization. Finally, officers may consider themselves pro-active in their responses, but they may not respond to acts of rape because they fail to define many types of sexual assaults as rape.

This study examines correctional officers because some literature indicates that staff training might help combat the problem. Officers' definitions of rape would seem critical in developing these programs because officers cannot write disciplinary reports or

secure crisis intervention services for inmates if they fail to define them as victims in the first place. In other words, it will be difficult to understand how officers react—both formally and informally—unless we have a better understanding of their “definition of the situation.”

Literature review

Feminist theory asserts that sexual violence, in all its forms, is a (the) fundamental building block of patriarchy that ensures the continued subordination of women (Stanko, 1985; MacKinnon, 1987; Kelly, 1988; Scully, 1990). Legal, social, and religious definitions ensure that women are treated as inferior to men and as male property (Scully, 1990, p. 48). Thus, as long as femininity is defined as inferior to masculinity, it is possible to justify male violence against women in all its forms. Rape, then, is a by-product of a socialization process that equates masculinity with dominance, aggression, violence, and control. Rape is an expression of masculinity that serves to “put women in their place.”

These domain assumptions generate interesting hypotheses as they relate to male rape in prison. While researchers traditionally concentrated on the “homosexual” nature of the act, more recent research has focused on rape in prison as an expression of power and control (see Eigenberg, 1994). These studies generally ignore gender in a more complex theoretical manner. In other words, they disregard the ways in which rape is associated with traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity. As a result, these theories fail to fully comprehend why it is essential to portray male rape victims as weak, homosexuals—as effeminate men—*because in our culture the definition of masculinity does not allow for male rape victims*. Men are those individuals who possess and manipulate power and control, especially as it relates to the use of sexual aggression and women generally are at the receiving end of this violence.

The literature on the rape of women in the community also suggests that there is a tendency to blur the distinction between consensual sexuality and rape (Stanko, 1985; MacKinnon, 1987; Kelly, 1988; Scully, 1990). As such, victims are not really victimized and rape is just sex. A similar pattern occurs in the prison literature on homosexuality when rape is defined as situational homosexuality—heterosexual men engaging in sex with other men because of the situational nature of their sexual deprivation.³ Researchers explain how heterosexual inmates (victims) are *seduced* into situational homosexuality (Fishman, 1951; Vedder & King, 1967; Weiss & Friar, 1974;

Scacco, 1975). This process of seduction is described according to the following scenario. New inmates are offered protection, loans, gifts, or commissary; shortly thereafter, these inmates are approached sexually. Aggressive inmates then require the recipient of these “gifts” to participate in sexual acts unless he repays the loans; reimburses inmates for the commissary; or gives up the protection. Thus, more sophisticated inmates coerce or physically threaten other inmates into participating in sexual behavior; however, the literature fails to label this process rape and instead describes it as situational homosexuality. Any discussion of truly consensual situational homosexuality or bisexuality is rare (Eigenberg, 1992).

These participants in “situational homosexuality,” however, consist of two very different categories: victims and rapists. Victims are referred to as punks (Kirkham, 1971; Sykes, 1958), made homosexuals (Buffum, 1972), involuntary recruits (Sagarin, 1976), and jail house turnouts (Sagarin, 1976) and they are highly stigmatized as effeminate men and homosexuals (which for many people are one and the same). In contrast, rapists are referred to as in exaggerated masculine terms such as wolves (Sykes, 1958; Kirkham, 1971), jockers (Buffum, 1972), and voluntary aggressors (Sagarin, 1976). Thus, those men who act consistently with the masculine role—as sexual aggressors—are described as “real men” who “need sex” and “lose control” of their sexuality. These men escape stigmatization as the attitude that “boys will be boys” prevails.

This body of work also defines prostitutes, men who engage in homosexual behavior to gain certain goods, as situational homosexuals. These men also are stigmatized although less so than men who are raped. After all, at least prostitutes sell their bodies instead of being forced into sexual acts, although it is not clear whether all, or even most, prostitution is voluntary. Some prostitutes may be willing entrepreneurs, but the “seduction” process described previously also suggests that some of these men are unable to protect themselves from rape and sexual exploitation. Thus, perhaps some prostitutes are rape victims that simply choose to “make the best of a bad situation” by accepting gifts or commissary from their rapists (Eigenberg, 1992).

The literature on situational homosexuality blurs the distinction between rape and consensual homosexuality. It also redefines acts of rape so that perpetrators escape stigmatization while victims are severely stigmatized (as effeminate and homosexual). Furthermore, the blame is shifted from the rapist to the victim by emphasizing characteristics of the victim thereby creating legitimate victims (e.g., effeminate, weak, or homosexual men). Thus, just as the line between consensual sexuality and rape has

been blurred concerning the rape of women in the community, some literature indicates that rape has been defined as consensual homosexual behavior and the victims' behavior has been used to explain and legitimize their victimization.

There also is some anecdotal evidence that correctional officers have difficulty distinguishing between rape and consensual homosexuality. This is evident in the following excerpt from one interview with an officer: "Q: Do you feel that homosexual acts between consenting adults are wrong? A: No, as long as no force is used" (Wooden & Parker, 1982, p. 196). Davis (1968, p. 70) reports that many "homosexual liaisons" develop after inmates are gang raped or threatened with gang rape and argues that prison officials are "too quick to label such activities 'consensual'." A survey of federal correctional officers supports this contention. Nacci and Kane (1983, 1984a,b) found that while officers are slightly more willing to prevent rape than to deter homosexuality, they are more willing to protect heterosexual inmates from rape because officers appear to equate bi/homosexuality with voluntary participation. Another survey of state correctional officers suggests that officers are more apt to believe certain men if they report a rape. Eigenberg (1989) found that victims who fit the stereotypical definition of a rape victim (young, white, weak, homosexual, and effeminate men) have more credibility if they report rapes, although officers who condemned homosexuality also indicated that they were less apt to respond to acts of rape. Two interpretations are possible here. Perhaps officers who are homophobic are more apt to endorse strict enforcement of the rules because they abhor same sex (homosexual) behavior regardless of whether it is consensual or coerced. It also is possible that homophobic officers are more likely to blame victims because of their dislike of homosexuals. These officers may be more comfortable asserting that victims are latent homosexuals who like to be raped, ask for it, or enjoy it. Otherwise, as "true men" they would fight to the death rather than be raped.

Finally, the literature on rape of women in the community also suggests that definitions of rape are highly situational and dependent upon a variety of factors including the relationship between the offender and the victim and the behavior of the victim (see Scully, 1990). Furthermore, this literature also finds that police officers' responses to rape are affected by these situational variables. Officers are often skeptical of victims who fail to report the crime immediately following the rape (Amir, 1971; Weis & Borges, 1973; Burgess & Holmstrom, 1975; Gager & Schurr, 1976; Bienen & Field, 1980; LeDoux & Hazelwood,

1985). Victims are also supposed to appear victimized. They are to be upset and show "signs of violence and resistance: dirty and torn clothes, bruises, and other evidence of forceful intercourse" (Weis & Borges, 1973, p. 102). Victims are less likely to be believed by officials if they have had prior social contact with their rapists, if they consume alcohol or drugs at the time of the rape, or if they refuse a medical examination (Weis & Borges, 1973; Feldman-Summers & Palmer, 1981; Russell, 1984; White & Mosher, 1986). Unfortunately, victims who fail to conform to the expectations of police officers may have less credibility; hence, police officers may fail to define these assaults as rape and refuse to act accordingly. In other words, police officers do not respond to some acts of rape because they fail to define certain kinds of rapes as sexual assaults (Amir, 1971; Weis & Borges, 1973; Burgess & Holmstrom, 1975; Gager & Schurr, 1976; Bienen & Field, 1980; Feldman-Summers & Palmer, 1981; Russell, 1984; White & Mosher, 1986; Campbell & Johnson, 1997). Thus, like police officers, correctional officers' definitions of rape may be highly situational and they may be affected by more general social attitudes about victim precipitation.

In summary then, the broader literature on rape in the community suggests that traditional definitions about gender role socialization and homosexuality may facilitate victim blaming. Furthermore, officers definitions of rape may be impacted by victim blaming because the very concept of victim precipitation shifts the focus from the coercive nature of the act and emphasizes the ways in which the victim has participated in a consensual act of sex. These patterns are evident in the research on rape in the community and there is reason to believe that correctional officers employ these larger cultural beliefs when they confront male rape in prison.

Method

Sample

Surveys were administered to all correctional officers employed by the Department of Corrections (DOC) in a mid-western, rural state during the Summer and Fall of 1991. The survey was designed to ascertain how officers define rape in prison and to evaluate variables that might affect their definitions. Surveys and a cover letter were administered through inter-departmental mail. A second round of surveys was distributed to non-respondents.⁴ A total of 391 surveys were distributed; 209 were returned, thus the response rate is 53 percent.⁵

Data on gender, age, and race were used to evaluate the representativeness of the sample. The DOC data indicate that 85.4 percent of officers were male compared to 85.6 percent of the sample. The mean age of the DOC officers was 37.5 compared to 38.6 for the sample. The majority of the officers employed for DOC were white (89.4 percent), followed by African Americans (7.2 percent), Hispanics (2.7 percent), and Native Americans (0.6 percent). In this study, 89.5 percent of the respondents were white, 8.2 percent were African American and 1.3 percent were Hispanic (1 percent listed other). Thus, the sample appears representative with respect to age, race and gender.

Theoretical model

The theoretical model used in this analysis is presented in Fig. 1. The path model used in this study involves several steps. Individual and background characteristics enter the model first and function as control variables.⁶ Path analysis also is used to determine the indirect and direct relationships between the various independent variables—attitudes toward women, attitudes toward homosexuality, and victim blaming—and the dependent variable: officers' definitions of rape. Attitudes toward women were included in the study because it appears reasonable to believe that correctional officers' attitudes about gender role socialization will impact upon their definitions of rape in prison. In other words, officers may be less apt to define certain acts of rape if they believe that "real men" cannot be raped. Attitudes toward homosexuality were included because of the tendency to blur the distinctions between consensual and coercive sexuality. Therefore, it seems highly likely that officers' attitudes toward homosexuality will affect their definitions of rape. Attitudes toward victim blaming were included because victim precipitation is one

powerful way to redefine victimization as blame is shifted from the perpetrator to the victim. Thus, it seems likely that officers who blame victims will be reluctant to define assaultive sexual acts as rape. Prior research also suggests that attitudes toward inmates should be included as control variables (Eigenberg, 1994). It seems likely that officers' definitions of rape may be affected by officers more general job orientation (i.e., correctional orientation). For example, officers who endorse a counseling perspective might be more apt to define certain behaviors as rape because they are more empathetic toward inmates.

Operationalization and measurement

Individual background characteristics (age, sex, race, education, and religiosity) were included as control variables. They were measured using single items and measurement is rather straightforward (see Table 1). Some organizational characteristics also were measured using single items (shift, stress, and job satisfaction; see Table 1), while other organizational characteristics involved slightly more sophisticated measures.⁷ Experience was calculated using years of experience for DOC and adding any prior years of experience gained in another correctional facility. Role conflict was determined by using a five-item scale (originally created by Poole and Regoli (1980) and modified by Cullen et al. (1989)).

Attitudes toward inmates were measured using Klofas and Toch's (1982) correctional orientation scale. This scale was selected because it has been used several times and has proven to be reliable (Whitehead & Lindquist, 1989; Whitehead et al., 1987; Eigenberg, 1994). This scale asks respondents to indicate their level of agreement (ranging from 0 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree) with seven items that produce four sub-scales. The first factor measured counseling orientation that is the degree to

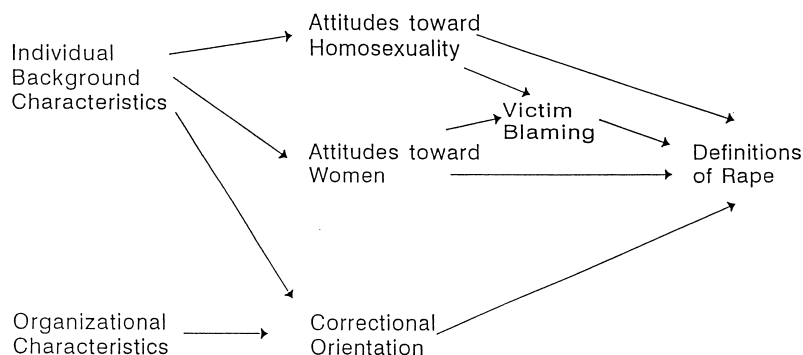


Fig. 1. Theoretical model—predicting officers' definitions of rape.

Table 1
Description of variables

Variable	Description
Age	age to nearest year: $M = 38.6$; $SD = 12.5$
Sex	male = 0; female = 1; 85.6% male, 14.4% female
Race	minority = 0; white = 1; 10.5% minority, 89.5% white
Education	less than high school = 0; high school graduate = 1; some college = 2; BA/BS degree = 3; advanced degree = 4; $M = 1.9$; $SD = 0.8$
Religiosity	High score = high religiosity; $M = 6.0$; $SD = 2.1$
Shift	other = 0; night (evenings or graveyard) = 1; 45.7% other, 54.3% night
Correctional experience	years of correctional employment: $M = 9.4$; $SD = 6.2$
Job satisfaction	very satisfied = 3; satisfied = 2; not too satisfied = 1; not at all satisfied = 0; $M = 1.6$; $SD = 0.8$
Rank	0 = line staff; 1 = supervisory; 84.7% line staff; 15.3% supervisory
Stress	high score = officers report feeling tense at work: range = 0 to 5; $M = 2.7$; $SD = 1.4$
Role conflict	high score = experiences more role conflict: range = 0 to 25; $M = 12.5$; $SD = 5.1$
Social distance	high score = preference for distance from inmates: range = 0 to 15; $M = 7.7$; $SD = 2.5$
Counseling orientation	high score = preference for counseling orientation: range = 0 to 9; $M = 5.0$; $SD = 2.2$
Punitive orientation	high score = preference for a punitive orientation toward inmates: range = 0 to 12; $M = 5.8$; $SD = 2.6$
Corruption of authority	high score = more concern with corruption of authority: range = 0 to 15; $M = 11.1$; $SD = 2.8$
Attitudes toward homosexuality	high score = condemnation of homosexuality: range = 0 to 55; $M = 35.7$; $SD = 12.6$
Attitudes toward women	high score = egalitarian attitudes toward women: range = 0 to 45; $M = 28.3$; $SD = 6.5$
Victim blaming	high score = endorses victim blaming: range = 0 to 25; $M = 6.9$; $SD = 5.4$
Definitions of rape	high score = more liberal definitions of rape; i.e., more willing to define coercive acts as rape: range = 0 to 30; $M = 20.8$; $SD = 5.9$

which officers believed that their job orientation should endorse rehabilitative goals. The second factor, concern for corruption of authority, assessed whether officers believe that inmates can be trusted. The third factor measured preference toward social distance; i.e., whether they were comfortable with direct contact with inmates. The final factor, punitive orientation, measured the extent to which officers believed that prison conditions should be harsh for inmates. Reliability coefficients for these measures (respectively) were 0.78, 0.80, 0.68, and 0.73.

Attitudes toward women were measured using a seven item scale developed by Burt (1980). This scale, and all subsequent scales, asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement (ranging from 0 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) with the statements. This unidimensional scale was designed

to evaluate attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in society measured on a continuum from traditional sex roles to egalitarian attitudes.⁸ The reliability coefficient was 0.73.

Attitudes toward homosexuality were measured using a modified version of Herek's (1984) scale. Eleven items were used to assess whether officers had liberal or conservative attitudes toward homosexuality. (See Appendix A for the exact wording of the scale items for those scales that are not taken from previous studies.) Factor analysis produced only one factor that confirmed the unidimensionality of the scale. It also appeared reliable (0.94).

Five items were used to measure whether officers blamed inmates who were victimized. Officers were asked whether they believed inmates "de-

Table 2
 Correlation matrix
 Legend: EDUC = education; RELIG = religiosity; SHIFT = shift officer works; EXPER = correctional experience; JOBSAT = job satisfaction; RANK = position in department; STRESS = experiences stress on the job; ROLE = role conflict; DIST = preference for social distance; COUN = counseling orientation; PUNIT = punitive orientation; AUTH = concern for corruption of authority; ATH = attitudes toward homosexuality; ATW = attitudes toward women; BLAME = attitudes toward women; BLAME = victim blaming; DEF = definition of rape.

	AGE	SEX	RACE	EDUC	RELIG	SHIFT	EXPER	JOBSAT	RANK	STRESS	ROLE	DIST	COUN	PUNIT	AUTH	ATH	ATW	BLAME
AGE	0.14																	
SEX	-0.04	0.13*																
RACE	-0.17*	0.03	0.04															
EDUC	0.02	-0.05	0.00	0.11														
RELIG	-0.20*	0.02	-0.03	0.06	0.10													
SHIFT	0.13*	-0.07	0.01	-0.12*	-0.05	-0.07												
EXPER	-0.07	0.06	0.03	-0.13*	-0.09	0.05	-0.16*											
JOBSAT	-0.09	-0.10	0.02	-0.01	-0.08	0.05	-0.01	0.03										
RANK	-0.06	0.06	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	0.07	0.07	-0.35*	-0.10									
STRESS	0.04	0.13*	0.01	0.08	-0.01	0.04	0.04	-0.31*	-0.24*	0.50*								
ROLE	-0.11*	0.11*	0.16*	-0.07	-0.02	0.07	-0.09	-0.11	-0.14*	0.03	-0.02							
DIST	-0.02	0.13*	-0.04	0.06	-0.05	-0.11	-0.01	-0.03	0.15*	-0.01	-0.05	-0.07						
COUN	-0.07	0.02	0.04	-0.13*	-0.02	-0.01	0.03	-0.10	-0.06	0.27*	0.16*	0.22*	-0.10					
PUNIT	-0.10	0.15*	-0.02	-0.15*	0.01	0.13*	-0.10	0.01	-0.09	-0.01	-0.03	0.32*	-0.21*	0.19*				
AUTH	-0.08	-0.32*	-0.04	-0.11	0.20*	0.05	0.10	-0.10	-0.02	-0.03	-0.08	0.06	0.11	0.27*	0.09			
ATH	-0.21*	0.27*	0.01	0.03	-0.22*	0.06	-0.08	0.09	0.03	0.02	-0.05	-0.04	0.00	-0.24*	0.09	-0.49*		
ATW	0.10	-0.16*	0.04	-0.04	0.11*	0.00	0.15*	-0.19*	0.08	0.01	0.04	-0.16*	-0.09	0.25*	0.10	0.43	-48*	
BLAME	0.00	0.08	-0.08	-0.05	0.00	0.10	0.01	0.08	0.04	0.02	-0.01	-0.18*	-0.06	-0.10	0.12*	-0.19*	0.29*	-0.31*

* $p < 0.05$.

serve” to be raped if they: engaged in prior consensual sexual acts, acted in certain ways, took money or cigarettes in exchange for consensual sexual acts, or dressed or talked in feminine ways. Factor analysis produced one factor that confirmed the unidimensionality of the scale that also was reliable (0.89).

In order to evaluate the dependent variable—officers’ definitions of rape—six vignettes were included to determine what type of acts officers viewed as rape. The use of vignettes made it possible to examine the situational context of victimization by asking officers to apply their definitions of rape to concrete situations. These vignettes involved two inmates: Smith and Jones. In the first situation, inmate Jones physically overpowers inmate Smith and has sex with Jones. In the second statement, inmate Jones threatens to kill inmate Smith unless he engages in sexual acts. In the third statement, Jones threatens to tell other inmates that inmate Smith is a snitch (informant). In another statement, Smith is identified as a snitch and Jones offers to provide protection in exchange for sexual acts. The fifth statement is identical to the last (fourth) statement, except that Smith demands cigarettes when he “agrees” to participate in sexual acts in exchange for protection. Finally, in the last vignette, Smith borrows cigarettes and cannot pay off his debt. Jones tells Smith that he can get beat up or participate in sexual acts. Each of these scenarios ends with the statement, “Smith has been raped.” Thus, officers who evidenced high agreement with these statements embraced a more pro-active definition of rape and recognized that rape may occur in response to physical threats or force, but they also defined rape when more sophisticated means of coercion were used. Factor analysis of these six items produced only one factor that confirms the unidimensionality of the scale. It also appears reliable (0.84).

Findings

Descriptive data indicate that officers were relatively liberal in their definitions of rape. The overwhelming majority of officers believed that an inmate had been raped when he was physically overpowered or threatened with bodily harm (95 percent and 96 percent, respectively); however, officers were less sure when coercion was used to accomplish rape. About three-fourths (74 percent) of the officers believed it was rape when an inmate threatened to identify another inmate as a snitch in order to secure sexual acts. Likewise, most officers (73 percent) defined the situation as rape when an inmate was forced to choose between paying off a

debt with sexual acts or receiving a beating. Interestingly, officers appeared to be less willing to define acts as rape when the victims were identified as informants. About two-thirds (64 percent) of the officers defined the situation as rape when a snitch engaged in sexual acts in exchange for protection, and only slightly over half (56 percent) of the officers believed it was rape when the inmate informant demanded cigarettes after engaging in sex in exchange for protection. On the whole, though, both the frequency distributions of individual items and the mean value for the scale suggested that most officers endorsed liberal definitions of rape and recognized the coercive nature of rape in prison (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations for all variables).

Likewise, most officers appeared to be reluctant to blame the victim. Officers indicated a mean value of 6.9 on this scale that has a range of 0–25 (see Table 1). Nonetheless, some officers were willing to place responsibility for the rape on the victim; 12 percent of the officers believed that some inmates deserve to be raped because of the way they act. Likewise, 16 percent of officers indicated that homosexual inmates get what they deserve if they are raped and 17 percent of the officers also reported that inmates deserve rape if they dress or talk in feminine ways. Almost one-fourth of the officers believed that inmates deserve rape if they previously engaged in consensual sexual acts in prison or if they took money or cigarettes for consensual sexual acts prior to a rape (23 percent and 24 percent, respectively).

Mean values on the remaining scales indicated that officers generally possessed egalitarian attitudes toward women, but they endorsed somewhat conservative (condemning) attitudes toward homosexuality (see Table 1). Officers were about equally likely to endorse or condemn both a counseling or punitive orientation. Likewise, about half of the officers were concerned with maintaining social distance while the remaining half of the officers had little reservation about the level of social distance. Officers, however, were more likely to express a concern over the corruption of authority (see Table 1).

Path analysis

The causal structure in Fig. 1 was analyzed as a fully recursive model using standard multiple regression techniques. In other words, all variables except those representing individual characteristics (age, sex, race, education, and religiosity) and organizational characteristics (shift, correctional experience, job satisfaction, rank, stress, and role conflict) functioned as both dependent and indepen-

Table 3

Standardized regression coefficients for antecedents of officers' definitions of rape

Legend: EDUC = education; RELIG = religiosity; SHIFT = shift officer works; EXPER = correctional experience; JOBSAT = job satisfaction; RANK = rank of officer in department; STRESS = experiences stress on the job; ROLE = experiences role conflict; DIST = prefers social distance; COUN = endorses counseling orientation; PUNIT = endorses punitive orientation; AUTH = is concerned with the corruption of authority; ATH = attitudes toward homosexuality; ATW = attitudes toward women; BLAME = victim blaming; DEF = definition of rape.

	ATW	ATH	BLAME	DIST	COUN	PUNIT	AUTH	DEF
AGE	-0.17*	-0.16*	0.06	-0.09	-0.05	-0.09	-0.08	0.05
SEX	0.24*	-0.33*	0.03	0.08	-0.12	-0.02	0.15*	0.00
RACE	-0.03	0.00	0.05	0.16*	-0.02	0.05	-0.03	-0.03
EDUC	0.01	-0.15*	0.01	-0.12	0.05	-0.16*	-0.18*	-0.02
RELIG	-0.20*	0.21*	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	0.01	0.02	0.06
ATW			-0.34*					0.16
ATH			0.29*					-0.02
SHIFT				0.00	-0.07	-0.06	0.07	0.11
EXPER				-0.12	-0.01	0.00	-0.10	0.07
JOBSAT				-0.18*	-0.02	-0.03	-0.07	0.02
RANK				-0.14	0.11	-0.04	-0.05	0.09
STRESS				0.01	0.01	0.23*	-0.03	0.03
ROLE				-0.11	-0.02	0.04	-0.04	0.02
DIST								-0.17*
COUN								-0.05
PUNIT								0.00
AUTH								0.18*
BLAME								-0.24*
R	0.38	0.42	0.54	0.33	0.22	0.32	0.29	0.45
R ²	0.14	0.17	0.29	0.11	0.05	0.10	0.08	0.20

* $p < 0.05$

dent variables in the various equations. Each variable in the path model (see Fig. 1) was regressed on all variables preceding it.

Table 2 displays the zero-order correlations among all variables in the model and Table 3 provides the standardized regression coefficients for all equations in the theoretical model. After inspecting the standardized regression coefficients, non-significant path coefficients were deleted from the model.

The resulting theoretical model and path coefficients are displayed in Fig. 2. When all variables are entered into the equation, the model accounted for 20 percent of the variance (see Table 3).⁹

As Table 3 and Fig. 2 demonstrate, the individual background characteristics and organizational characteristics had no direct effect upon officers' definitions of rape. Some of these variables were important, however, because of their indirect effect upon offi-

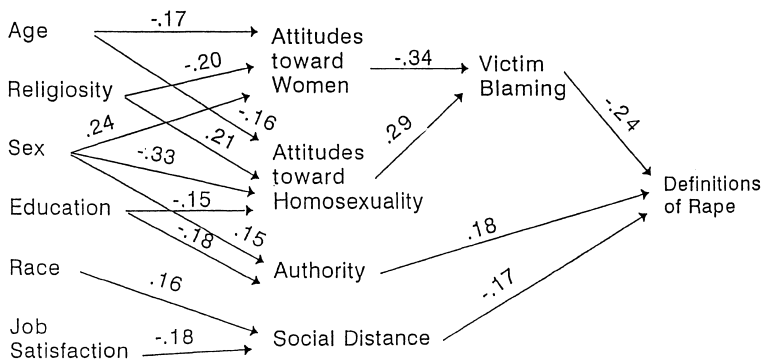


Fig. 2. Predictors of officers' definitions of rape. *Numbers represent path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients) that are significant.

cers' definitions of rape. Younger, male, religious, or less educated officers were more apt to endorse condemning attitudes toward homosexuality. In addition, officers who were younger, female, or less religious were more apt to endorse egalitarian attitudes toward women. Furthermore, both attitudes toward women and homosexuality had an indirect effect upon definitions of rape (and the direct effect of attitudes toward women approached significance, $p = 0.055$). Officers with less egalitarian attitudes toward women or officers who condemned homosexuality were more apt to blame victims and officers who rejected victim blaming attitudes were more apt to define assaultive situations as rape.

Demographic variables also produce an indirect effect upon definitions of rape, operating through correctional orientation. Officers who were less satisfied with their jobs or white officers preferred more social distance from inmates. In addition, female officers or officers with less education also were more concerned with the corruption of authority. Social distance and concern over the corruption of authority affected officers' definitions of rape; however, endorsing a counseling perspective or a punitive orientation failed to significantly predict officers' definitions of rape. Officers who required less social distance from inmates were more apt to endorse liberal definitions of rape. Officers who were concerned about the corruption of authority also embraced more liberal definitions of rape.

Discussion

For the most part, the findings in this study confirm the theoretical model presented. In sum, the data suggest some aspects of officers' more general correctional orientation affect their definitions of rape; however, officers' culturally derived attitudes about women and homosexuality also impact upon officers' willingness to engage in victim blaming, which in turn affects their definitions of rape.

The findings related to correctional orientation appear to be at odds with one another. Officers' views about rehabilitation/counseling or punitiveness had no relationship to their definitions of rape. These scales, upon further examination, however, appear to concentrate more on officers' views about the purpose of prison more than their own roles in the institution. Officers who required less social distance—those who believed that officers should be compassionate, like the inmates they work with, and take an interest in or advocate for inmates—were more apt to define rape liberally. This relationship seems to indicate that officers who are empathetic are more apt to define rape broadly. Officers

who are concerned about the corruption of authority—those who believe that officers cannot trust inmates and that officers' authority will be corrupted if they get "too close" to inmates—also were more likely to endorse liberal definitions of rape. These two findings are somewhat contradictory and may indicate that a strong sense of role orientation is more important than the definition of the role itself. Officers on both ends of a continuum—those who liked to get to know inmates and who felt close to them as well as officers who preferred a lot of social distance—were willing to define rape liberally and included definitions of acts that involved coercion but not force. Perhaps these two very different role orientations produce similar definitions of rape but that officers react in ways that result in dissimilar outcomes. For example, it is possible that officers who need less social distance and who are more concerned about inmates as people may be more apt to get victims help while officers who find that too much contact compromises their authority may be more apt to take disciplinary actions. Further investigation is needed to better understand the nature of these relationships.

As discussed in the literature review, the relationship between attitudes toward women and victim blaming is consistent with research on the rape of women in the community that finds that individuals with less egalitarian attitudes toward women are more apt to blame female rape victims. The current study also suggests that attitudes toward women provide a cultural framework that affects officers' definitions of rape. These findings suggest that if we are to adequately understand male rape in prisons, we must also understand attitudes toward rape in the larger social structure. They also indicate that our understanding of rape in prison is affected by a more complex interpretation of the role of gender and gender roles in prison.

It also interesting that attitudes toward homosexuality operated indirectly upon the dependent variable. Prior research suggests that officers are less willing to protect homosexual inmates (Nacci & Kane, 1983, 1984a,b), although officers are more likely to define homosexual inmates as rape victims (Eigenberg, 1989). These prior findings appear to be contradictory. Perhaps, officers are more willing to define homosexual inmates as rape victims even if they are less willing to take actions to protect them, especially if they equate homosexuality with consensual (voluntary) sexual activity. It also is possible that officers are willing to define homosexuals as rape victims, but that officers blame victims who they perceive to be homosexuals. In other words, homosexual inmates may be viewed as legitimate

victims. Eigenberg (1994) reports that officers who condemn homosexuality reported that they were more willing to respond to male rape in prison, although it is possible that officers who condemn homosexuality are more apt to say that they would respond to rape because of their intolerance of homosexuality.

This study also suggests that attitudes toward women and homosexuality are important because they affect victim blaming that in turn impacts upon officers' definitions of rape. Officers who engaged in victim blaming were less apt to apply a liberal definition of rape. In other words, while officers were more apt to recognize acts of rape that were accomplished by physical force or threats of physical force, they were less likely to define more subtle, coercive acts as sexual assaults. This finding also parallels research on the rape of women in the community that suggests that individuals who believe that women ask for, like, or deserve rape are less apt to recognize rapes that involve acquaintances or that fail to include physical force (see Scully, 1990). In fact, it would be remarkable if officers' attitudes toward victim blaming did not affect their definitions of rape given the widespread acceptance of this hegemonic assumption in our culture.

It might be tempting to determine that there is little need for further research on correctional officers and their views on male rape in prison since this study indicates that most officers reject victim blaming attitudes and apply liberal definitions of rape, and in light of other research that indicates that officers report that they are responsive to rape victims (Nacci & Kane, 1983, 1984a,b; Eigenberg, 1994). There are several problems with such a conclusion.

For one thing, it would seem irresponsible to dismiss data gathered from inmate samples. These data suggest that: (a) the estimates of rape may underrepresent the amount of rape in prison (Eigenberg, 1989), (b) fear of rape is a central defining characteristic of the prison experience (Jones & Schmid, 1989; McCorkle, 1993; Maitland & Sluder, 1996) and (c) that at least some correctional officers are not responsive (Davis, 1968; Lockwood, 1980; Wooden & Parker, 1982; Tewksbury, 1989; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996). These concerns bear remarkable similarity to the concerns of female rape victims in the community. Research has demonstrated that women's experiences of rape have not been reflected in official estimates of rape (see Russell, 1984; Koss et al., 1987; Eigenberg, 1990). The literature also discusses the many ways in which the fear of rape (and other sexual victimization) defines women's reality and influences women's daily experiences (see Stanko, 1985, 1993) and it has examined the ways in which police responses

have inhibited the reporting of rape (Weis & Borges, 1973; Field, 1978; Feldman-Summers & Palmer, 1981; White & Mosher, 1986). Therefore, the literature on rape of women in the community suggests that there is a need for additional research before rejecting inmates' perceptions about the nature of rape in prison.

Finally, it is important to note that a considerable proportion of correctional officers in this study were not willing to define assaultive acts as rape when these acts were coercive in nature. Approximately one-fourth of the officers did not consider it rape when an inmate threatened to identify another inmate as a snitch unless he engaged in sexual acts. Likewise, about one-fourth of the officers failed to consider it rape if an inmate was forced to either pay off a debt by engaging in sexual acts. Thus, just as women's experiences of rape rarely have been defined according to women's reality (Stanko, 1985, 1993; Kelly, 1988), it appears that correctional officers' definitions of rape may not correspond to the reality experienced by inmates.

Future research on rape in prisons should draw more upon the vast research on rape in the community. The research on rape in prisons tends to ignore this larger body of literature and operates on the assumption that rape in prison is somehow drastically different from the rape of women in the community. The current study suggests that there are important conceptual links and these similarities should be explored in more depth. Research of this nature could assist correctional administrators in developing strategies to combat rape in prison.

It is disturbing that so little attention has been given to administrative responses to male rape in prison. Although the first protocol to deal with male rape was developed for the San Francisco County Jail in 1979 (Dumond, 1992), other prisons and jails have been slow to develop policy in this area. One notable exception is the Federal Bureau of Prisons; they had adopted a policy on sexual assault prevention and intervention by 1995 (US Department of Justice, 1995). Another organization also has been involved in efforts to change administrative responses. The Safer Society Press, an organization governed by the New York State Council of Churches developed a series of prisoner education tapes and a manual for administrators who wish to address rape in prisons. This project was completed by Stephen Donaldson (1993), a former inmate who was raped in prison and went on to form the Stop Prison Rape organization.¹⁰

Each of these sources places emphasis on prevention. They require or encourage training that would enable staff, especially correctional officers, to recognize the physical, behavioral, and emotional

symptoms of rape; to understand the referral process that is to be followed when victims are identified; and have a basic understanding of the dynamics of rape in prison. These materials also stress the importance of inmate education. They identify strategies inmates can use to protect themselves including making inmates aware of treatment options and informing them about reporting procedures. These policies and protocols also concentrate on intervention efforts including providing for the medical, psychological, and safety needs of victims. Administrators are advised to aggressively investigate rapes so that they can be addressed by both the prison disciplinary system and by the criminal justice system.

These policies and administrative protocols are definitely a step in the right direction; however, there is still much to be done. For example, the Safer Society Press (1993, p. 7) states that their project is “prisoner-oriented” because “in reality, prisoner rape is most effectively prevented and controlled by the prisoners themselves. In the absence of administrative attention, it is the prisoners who tolerate sexual assaults, fail to protect their peers, and fail to protect themselves.” The project goes on to advise inmates who are experiencing attempted rapes to try to negotiate with their perpetrators to perform oral sex instead of anal sex, which is more dangerous in terms of exposure to HIV/AIDS. They also recommend the distribution of condoms and instruct inmates how to fashion makeshift condoms out of plastic bags or gloves as a measure of last resort in order to try to protect themselves. These types of suggestions are offered in a sincere attempt to help inmates in desperate situations, but we, as a society, should be ashamed. We can and must do better. To do so, however, requires a better understanding of how correctional officials process information about rape in prisons. Learning how they define the situation seems to be a good place to start because they cannot react appropriately if they fail to define coercive sexuality as rape in the first place.

Appendix A. Survey items used for original or modified scales¹¹

Attitudes toward homosexuality

1. Male homosexuality is merely a different lifestyle that should NOT be condemned.
2. Male homosexuals just do not fit into our society.
3. The idea of marriages between male homosexuals seems ridiculous to me.
4. Male homosexuality in itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem.
5. Male homosexuality is a perversion.
6. If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them.
7. Laws regulating male homosexual behavior should be loosened.
8. The growing number of male homosexuals indicates a decline in American morals.
9. Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong.
10. Male homosexuality is a sin.
11. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.

Victim blaming

1. Inmates who have previously consented to participate in sexual acts get what they deserve if they are raped by other inmates.
2. Some inmates deserve to be raped because of the way they act.
3. Homosexual inmates get what they deserve if they are raped.
4. Inmates who take money or cigarettes in exchange for consensual sexual acts get what they deserve if they are raped by other inmates.
5. Inmates who dress or talk in feminine ways get what they deserve if they are raped.

Definitions of rape (vignettes)

1. Inmate Jones physically overpowers inmate Smith. Smith has sex with Jones. Smith has been raped.
2. Inmate Jones threatens to tell other inmates that inmate Smith is a snitch unless he engages sexual acts. Smith has sex with Jones. Smith has been raped.
3. Inmate Jones tells inmate Smith he will kill him unless Smith has sex with Jones. Smith has sex with Jones. Smith has been raped.
4. Inmate Smith is a snitch. Inmate Jones provides protection for Smith but demands that Smith participate in sexual acts. Smith has sex with Jones. Smith has been raped.
5. Inmate Jones loans inmate Smith a carton of cigarettes. Smith cannot pay Jones back. Jones tells Smith that he can participate in sexual acts to pay off his debt or he can take an “ass whipping.” Smith has sex with Jones. Smith has been raped.
6. Inmate Smith is a snitch. Inmate Jones provides protection for inmate Smith but he demands sex. Smith has sex with Jones, but he also demands cigarettes. Smith has been raped.

Notes

1. The literature on rape in prisons generally has concentrated on the rape of men in male facilities (with the exception of work by Propper (1981) and Struckman-Johnson et al. (1996)). Likewise, this study does not examine the rape of women in women's facilities. Traditionally and historically, violence against women has been committed by men not by other women. As a result, one would anticipate that the dynamics of rape in women's prisons would be very different from rape in men's prisons (see Propper, 1981). This paper is interested in exploring male rape in male prisons given the interesting contradictions which occur when men victimize other men in a way that is normally reserved for women. Research on rape in women's prisons is important but beyond the scope of this examination.

2. Unfortunately, the complexity of the relationship and the nature of any interactions between the two groups have yet to be adequately researched (Philliber, 1987). Nonetheless, assuming a relationship between the behavior of officers and the behavior of inmates is certainly consistent with other research on correctional officers (Philliber, 1987, p. 30).

3. Rapists are situational homosexuals only if rape is motivated by sexual deprivation. A full discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this article. The reader should consult Eigenberg (1992) for an in-depth discussion of the sexual deprivation model and its relationship to definitions of rape and homosexuality.

4. Survey packets included a post card that had a numerical code on it for tracking purposes. Respondents were instructed to mail the post card separately from the survey to ensure anonymity.

5. Sixty-three surveys were returned as un-deliverable (respondents had been terminated, resigned, or were deceased). As a result, of the original 454 surveys that were disseminated, 391 reached employees and 209 were completed and returned to the researcher.

6. Prior research suggests that individual characteristics (age, gender, race, education, and religiosity) may impact upon attitudes toward homosexuality (Nyberg & Alston, 1976; Millham & Weinberger, 1977; Morin & Garfinkle, 1978; Weis & Dain, 1979; Price, 1982), attitudes toward women (Helmreich, 1982; Galambos et al., 1985) and correctional orientation (Klofas & Toch, 1982; Jurik, 1985; Whitehead et al., 1987; Cullen et al., 1989); however, there is no reason to believe that organizational characteristics (shift, experience, job satisfaction, rank, stress, or role conflict) would influence attitudes toward homosexuality or attitudes toward women.

7. The use of single-item measures for more complex concepts is clearly a weakness of the current study, although the survey was quite lengthy due to the number of concepts examined and these items were used to be more parsimonious.

8. This scale is supposed to be a unidimensional scale. Principal factor analysis with varimax rotation produced a multidimensional factor structure; however, the decision was made to use the original scale because homogeneous populations may fail to factor properly. The overwhelming majority of respondents in this sample were male which probably affected the factor solution that is based on both male and female respondents.

9. A second regression analysis was conducted using only the theoretically relevant variables presented in Fig. 2. In this equation, the R^2 remains the same.

10. More information on this organization is available on their homepage at: <http://www.igc.apc.org/spr/>.

11. The remaining scales are not described here because they are replicated from published studies that are cited in the body of the article.

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