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The Prison Journal 2011 91: 279 originally published online 8 June 2011

DOI: 10.1177/0032885511409869

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The Prison Journal
91(3) 279-304
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DOI: 10.1177/0032885511409869
<http://tpj.sagepub.com>



Angela Pardue¹, Bruce A. Arrigo²,
and Daniel S. Murphy¹

Abstract

The literature on sexuality in women's correctional facilities has identified a variety of sexual behaviors in which female convicts and prison staff participate. However, no single taxonomy has been developed that adequately describes the range of sexual behaviors found within the confines of women's prisons. The ensuing analysis rectifies this deficiency by delineating a typology of the same. First, the classification system specifies the scope of sexual activities operating within female correctional environs. Next, the heuristic foundation of the typology is tentatively explored, especially in relation to advancing proactive sexual exploitation/victimization prevention initiatives that help to equip correctional officers, wardens, and administrators for work in women's prisons. Finally, several future research directions are speculatively outlined regarding convict sexuality and the treatment of sexual abuse (for victims/perpetrators) in female correctional institutions. These include programming and policy strategies that arguably attend to the health, mental health, and social welfare needs of incarcerated women.

¹Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, USA

²University of North Carolina at Charlotte, NC, USA

Corresponding Author:

Bruce A. Arrigo, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, 9201 University City Blvd., Charlotte, NC 282203, USA
Email: barrigo@uncc.edu

Keywords

sex and sexuality, women's prisons, typological model, violence and victims, correctional programming and policy

Introduction

Prison sexuality is shaped by multiple levels of social life that are determined by mainstream culture and amplified by the idiosyncratic subculture of correctional confinement. Moreover, various environmental, biological, psychological, and sociological factors influence sexuality in society, and these factors are further complicated by the experience of incarceration (Hensley, Tewksbury, & Koscheski, 2001; Tewksbury & West, 2000). Interestingly, the mutual interdependence of sex in society and sexuality in prison has mostly alluded investigators. To illustrate, masturbation and homosexuality have historically been stigmatized, have erroneously been explained, and have prohibitively been concealed as taboo (Kunzel, 2008; McGaughey & Tewksbury, 2002; Mondimore, 1996; Patton, 1986). It follows, then, that sexuality in prison is influenced by the *importation* of one's previous sexual identities and experiences (Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Conversely, incarcerates who return to free society may exhibit sexual behaviors that are largely shaped by their prior incarceration experiences. The *exportation* of these prison identities and practices to the general public may influence societal norms about sexuality (e.g., including masturbation and homosexuality; Lacombe, 2008; Smith, 2006).

In partial support of this importation-exportation association, some investigators maintain that prison sex research "should be concerned with issues related to sexual behaviors that are encouraged and consecrated within society at large" (Tewksbury & West, 2000, p. 377). Having said this, the study of sexuality in prison is somewhat distinct from its investigation in society in that incarceration involves the loss of liberty, including the deprivation of heterosexual activity (e.g., Sykes, 1958). Thus, as Hensley (2002) commented, "This deprivation forces prisoners to turn to alternative methods of achieving sexual gratification [such as] masturbation, consensual same-sex activity, and coerced same-sex activity" (p. 2).

As the preceding observations suggest, to date, the study of sexuality in prison has been mostly dismissed, inadequately investigated, and/or negatively portrayed (Tewksbury & West, 2000). Consequently, the extant literature on convict sexuality is incomplete. However, when investigating the issue of sexuality in prison, the entire range of human behaviors that it encompasses arguably warrants consideration. First, sexual activity in prison

may be suppressed, consensual, or nonconsensual. Second, sexual activity may be predicated on one's heterosexual or homosexual orientation. Finally, it may exist both in the convict population as well as among incarcerates and staff.¹ Clearly, then, examining this spectrum of behaviors lays a necessary and useful foundation for more fully explaining sexual practices behind the razor wire of female correctional institutions.

Analysis of sexuality within the confines of women's prisons reveals a variety of sexual acts including, among others, masturbation, consensual sex, and coerced sex. However, no single classification system has thus far been developed that categorizes the range of sexual conduct found in female correctional settings. The absence of this taxonomy limits the abilities of policy makers, prison employees, and research scientists to identify the specific types of sexual behaviors that are violent, or potentially harmful, within these penal settings. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to better stipulate, describe, and clarify the full range of sexual behaviors that exist within women's prisons.

The proposed classification system intends to cover the complete spectrum of sexual behaviors that take place within women's prisons and to identify specific types of behaviors that are potentially violent or otherwise threatening to the safety and well-being of female incarcerates. Moreover, the typological continuum seeks to assist in the development of sexual exploitation/victimization prevention, education, and training for correctional personnel; to advance efforts in evidence-based sex in prison society future research; and to expand victim/perpetrator treatment, policy and programming. Several exploratory and provisional comments along these lines are enumerated consistent with the classification schema's "sexual violence" category. As the authors explain, this type of sexual behavior (indicated by its manipulative, compliant, and coercive forms) fosters the most obvious and extreme injury to female incarcerates, transforms convict-staff interactions into power and control dynamics, and jeopardizes overall prison management. As such, additional commentary is warranted here.

A Typological Model of Sexual Behaviors in Women's Prisons: Classification and Characteristics

Research indicates that sexual behaviors practiced in women's prisons are diverse. That stated, what is absent from the literature is a unified, comprehensive classification typology that describes the various categories of sexuality in which incarcerates, as well as prison staff, engage. In an effort to

better organize and more completely differentiate among the various types of sexuality found in women's prisons, a model is delineated (see Table 1). The classification schema (or continuum) consists of five categories: *suppressed sexuality*, *autoeroticism*, *true homosexuality*, *situational homosexuality*, and *sexual violence*. Each category is characterized by level and type of sexual involvement as well as corresponding degree of potential violence.

Suppressed Sexuality

Existing studies on female prison sexuality do not examine the absence of sexual behaviors or suppressed forms of sexuality. Instead, the extant research emphasizes sexual acts such as masturbation, homosexual relationships, and custodial sexual abuse. Suppressed sexuality among female offenders should not be confused with sexual desire or arousal disorders, such as *hypoactive sexual desire disorder* or *sexual aversion disorder*, as specified by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text revision [DSM-IV-TR]; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Although it is possible for a convict to meet the diagnostic criteria for such disorders, suppressed sexuality is viewed as an adaptive response to the prison environment rather than as a product of sexual dysfunction. Suppressed sexuality is identified as the first category in the continuum of sex and sexuality in that it is the least aggressive in nature.

Although studies specifically recognizing suppressed sexuality within the confines of women's prisons are nonexistent, it cannot be assumed that such adaptations do not occur among female incarcerates. Certainly, not *all* female convicts engage in masturbation or participate in sexual interactions with others. Although investigations that exclusively focus on suppressed sexuality among female prisoners are lacking, there is relevant research identifying nonsexual relationships that develop among some women. For example, Hensley et al. (2001) found that some female offenders may choose to stay faithful to a partner outside of prison, or they may choose an alternative sexual lifestyle, such as celibacy.

Furthermore, Jones (1993) delineated four adaptive responses that female incarcerates employ to cope with separation from family. These included the formation of quasifamilies, couples, rap partners, and coping with incarceration alone. Of the four adaptive strategies identified by Jones, couple relationships were sometimes sexual in nature. Jones (1993) suggested that the primary function of the remaining adaptive strategies was to meet the emotional needs of those imprisoned. Moreover, Propper (1978) concluded that most make-believe family relationships (pseudofamilies) were asexual and that participation in them was not associated with homosexuality (see also

Table 1. A Continuum of Sexual Behavior in Female Prisons

Type of behavior	Description	Range of sexual behaviors	Extent of aggression
1. Suppressed sexuality	No sexual activity at all; does not engage in sexual acts with self or others	Forming pseudofamilies and kinships that are <i>not</i> sexual but instead provide a support network for female inmates	Not threatening to convict's well-being
2. Autoerotic	Sexual intimacy with self	Self-pleasure seeking; masturbation	Not threatening to convict's well-being
3. Consensual: True homosexuality	The individual identified as homosexual prior to incarceration, homosexuality continues during and beyond incarceration	Consensual sexual acts, forming dyads/kinships	Poses some harm only when relationships become characterized by exploitation (i.e., participating in sexual acts for protection, economic gain, pressuring/threatening, using status, offering protection, in exchange for sex, labor, or commissary)
4. Consensual: Situational homosexuality	The individual engages in homosexual behavior, in part, as a result of incarceration. (Argot: "turned out," "butches," "tricks," and "cherries.")	Consensual sexual acts, forming dyads/kinships; participating in homosexual relationships to compensate/adapt to unisex environment	Poses some harm only when relationships become characterized by exploitation (i.e., participating in sexual acts for protection, economic gain, pressuring/threatening, using status, offering protection, in exchange for sex, labor, or commissary)
5. Sexual violence	Three forms of sexual violence: (a) manipulation, (b) compliance, and (c) coercion	Manipulation (sexual bartering), Compliance (acquiescence for safety/protection), and Coercion (pressure for sexual contact, sexual assault, rape, murder)	Increasingly threatening, violent, and harmful; characterized by prisoner-on-staff, convict-on-convict, and staff member-on-incarcerate sexual relationships

Bosworth, 1999; Hensley, 2002). Popper asserted that such relationships provided members with security, companionship, affection, and status.

In contrast, Greer (2000) found that (intimate) relationships in women's prisons were characterized by an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion. Greer conducted in-depth interviews with 35 women who offered detailed commentary about the various types of associations they experienced while incarcerated. These associations included friendships among female offenders, relationships among female offenders, and a lack of kinship networks. Suspicion surrounding the motivations and intentions of other confined women led the study's participants to avoid developing friendships, much less kinship networks. With respect to sexual relationships, most respondents indicated that they were extremely common. However, only 10 of the participants claimed to have participated in sexual relationships with other convicts while incarcerated. In addition, familial roles typical of kinship networks were not a significant aspect of daily life for the participants.

Tewksbury and West (2000) reported that sexual behaviors readily identified as urgent and consequential from the standpoint of prison safety and security, such as sexual coercion, have been studied more often than other types of behaviors. When compared with the remaining categories of the proposed typology, the perceived inconsequential or nonproblematic nature of suppressed sexuality in prisons arguably has resulted in its failure to receive sustained research attention. This point notwithstanding, when investigating the full range of sexual behaviors found within female correctional facilities, suppressed sexuality is an essential form of activity. As such, it must be considered a part of the classification continuum.

Autoeroticism

Masturbation follows asexuality in the typology of sexuality in women's prison. Masturbation has a long, interesting, and turbulent history. "Masturbation has been the one form of sexual behavior most harshly treated through the centuries by society, religion, and medicine" (Patton, 1986, p. 291). Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) described masturbation as any self-stimulation that was intended to produce erotic arousal. Although the behavior itself is not necessarily aggressive, masturbation is obviously more sexual in nature as compared with lack of, or suppressed, sexuality.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, masturbation was regarded as taboo and unhealthy (Barton, 2005). These attitudes were present among physicians and academics alike (Bullough, 1998). Masturbation was believed to be harmful and thought to be related to various physical health problems, psychological issues, insanity, and criminality (Bullough, 1998; Kunzel,

2008; McGaughey & Tewksbury, 2002; Patton, 1986). For women, self-stimulation was thought to cause problems in conceiving and nurturing children. Some even alleged that masturbation would deter women from marriage (McGaughey & Tewksbury, 2002).

Within the prison milieu, autoeroticism was viewed with an even greater degree of disdain than when practiced in free society. According to one New Jersey penitentiary physician, masturbation was linked to the death of at least one inmate in 1838 (Kunzel, 2008). Many prison officials condemned this “solitary vice” (p. 23), warning [convicts] of the harmful consequences of such “self abusing” behavior (p. 22). To this day, masturbation is considered a prison administrative issue, especially as it relates to the social control and health promotion of the incarcerated (McGaughey & Tewksbury, 2002).

Although myths surrounding masturbation permeate society, it has become “accepted” as a natural aspect of human sexuality (Patton, 1986). McGaughey and Tewksbury (2002) indicated that “. . . masturbation is extraordinarily common, yet highly stigmatized” (p. 138). Although the topic of autoeroticism has been investigated in the broader sexuality literature (Das, 2007), few studies analyze the issue of masturbation behind the walls of prison. Indeed, for purposes of the present article, only one scientific study was identified on autoeroticism in female prisons (see Hensley et al., 2001). As these investigators pointed out, much of the research pertaining to female sexuality in correctional settings focuses on same-sex behavior and pseudofamilies (Hensley et al., 2001; see also Law, 2009; Owen, 1999).

In a study conducted by Hensley et al. (2001), a total of 245 female inmates were surveyed. The investigators found that 65.5% had masturbated at some point during incarceration. Of the sample, 18.6% reported masturbating as frequently as two to three times a week. Seven percent reported they had not masturbated in the past year, and 7% reported masturbating as frequently as every other month. Interestingly, convicts placed in higher security levels masturbated more frequently than those placed in lower security levels. In addition, those prisoners who were sexually active in homosexual relationships were found to engage in self-pleasuring seeking behaviors most frequently.²

Homosexuality

Historically (and presently), homosexuality has been (and is) an extremely controversial topic. Homosexuality has been described as natural, unnatural, sinful, criminal, and as a type of mental illness (Kunzel, 2008; Mondimore, 1996). The term homosexuality was coined in 1869 while criminalization of same-sex behavior was being debated in the North German Federation

(Mondimore, 1996). It was not until 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the *DSM-II* classification of mental disorders (Spitzer, 1981). Today, homosexuality remains an ardently debated issue in both free societies as well as in prisons.

Several studies document sexual activities by and relationships between female incarcerates (see Giallombardo, 1966; Koscheski & Hensley, 2001; Propper, 1978; Ward & Kassebaum, 1964). Kunzel (2008) described homosexuality as having a unique history within prison. In fact, concerns about sex between convicts influenced the very architecture of the first American prisons (Kahn, 2006; see also Melossi & Pavarini, 1981). However, research on homosexuality among female prisoners received little attention until the 1960s-1970s. Compared with homosexuality in the larger male correctional population, lesbianism was believed to be trivial and harmless. It was thought that homosexuality among female prisoners was virtually impossible to detect, and lesbians were believed to be more subtle in their sexuality than their male same-sex counterparts (Kunzel, 2008). Recent definitions of homosexuality go beyond simple same-sex attraction, recognizing that sexual identities are separate from an individual's actual sexual behavior (Reiter, 1989). Importantly, homosexuality among convicts may be described as either "true" or "situational."

True and situational homosexuality fall respectively into the third and fourth categories of the classification schema in that the potential for aggressive behavior escalates. Specifically, there is an increased likelihood of volatile conduct because homosexuality may lead to the economic or sexual exploitation of those confined. Moreover, as a dimension of the prison sex trade industry, these oppressive circumstances help fuel and sustain the underground pariah economy to which many female incarcerates have been subjected (Kahn, 2006, p. 123; see also Bosworth, 1999; Owen, 1999). Traditionally, true homosexuality has been explained by the importation model, whereas situational homosexuality has been explained by the deprivation model. However, Hensley, Tewksbury, and Koscheski (2002) found limited support for these existing paradigms and emphasized that new schemas for prison sexuality should be proposed to gain an enhanced understanding of convict sexual behavior.

Consensual True Homosexuality

Ward and Kassebaum (1964) found that female incarcerates distinguish between homosexual prisoners as "true" homosexuals or as "jailhouse turn-outs" (p. 167). True homosexuals were identified as women whose sexual orientation prior to incarceration was lesbianism. However, the investigators

found that preprison homosexual orientation was not necessarily positively correlated with homosexual behavior while incarcerated, in that one group of true homosexuals remained faithful to their nonincarcerated partners. A second group of true homosexuals identified (i.e., those who participated in prison relationships) did so in anticipation of the positive rewards they attached to such encounters. These women engaged in homosexual relationships with other offenders based on their past experiences. Interestingly, true homosexuals were better equipped to adjust to labels, such as "prisoner," in that they had already experienced similar stigmatization, given their preprison homosexual identities.

Giallombardo (1966) found that convicts from the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderson, West Virginia, also distinguished between "lesbians" and "penitentiary turnouts" (p. 123). Lesbians were defined as those who preferred homosexual relationships. Other incarcerates often viewed this behavior as "sick" or as a "perversion" (p. 124). However, a primary goal of establishing such bonds by these women was to experience sincere, stable intimacy predicated on love, a condition often missing in their troubled or deteriorating lives. Therefore, convicts who drifted in and out of relationships, or who allowed themselves to be sexually exploited, were less respected by other female incarcerates.

In a sample of 496 female youths from four female and three coeducational correctional institutions, Propper's (1978) research revealed that previous homosexuality was a significant predictor of sexual behavior. Results indicated that homosexuality was no less prevalent in mixed-use institutions than it was in facilities populated by only women. In addition, prior homosexual behavior was a strong indicator of same-sex conduct while incarcerated. Those offenders who reported previous homosexual behavior outside of prison documented at least one such encounter while criminally confined. Conversely, most offenders who indicated no homosexual experiences prior to incarceration also reported none while imprisoned.

Koscheski and Hensley (2001) surveyed 245 female inmates and found the strongest forecaster of same-sex behavior in prison was previous homosexuality. In addition, age, amount of time served, and security level were all significantly correlated with past homosexual conduct. Specifically, those who were younger, had served more time, and were placed in higher security institutions were found most likely to have prior homosexual experiences.

Consensual Situational Homosexuality

As situational homosexual activity among female incarcerates has traditionally been viewed as a product of the correctional environment, it is the fourth

category in the classification model. Although homosexual orientation, sexual identity, and previous behavior influence a portion of homosexuality as found in female penal facilities, these factors are not adequate to account for *all* same-sex relationships in women's prisons. In contrast to "true" homosexuality, situational homosexuality occurs when a convict is introduced to same-sex encounters while incarcerated, given the lack of heterosexual opportunities. Severance (2004) noted that categorizing individuals as "straights" or "gays" ignores the very real fact that sexual orientation can change over a period of time. As a result of sustained confinement within a population of all female incarcerates, the deprivation of heterosexual activity is most commonly cited as the explanation for the presence of prison homosexuality (Kunzel, 2008).

Ward and Kassebaum (1964) emphasized that convicts described the "jailhouse turnout" (p. 167) as someone who was introduced to homosexuality following incarceration. The researchers estimated that 90% of female offenders experienced their first same-sex encounter in prison. The majority of interviewed incarcerates and staff agreed that situational homosexuals returned to heterosexual relationships post incarceration. Moreover, Giallombardo (1966) found that "penitentiary turnouts" engaged in homosexuality while incarcerated to compensate for the lack of heterosexual opportunities. The turnout's behavior was understood to be a way of adjusting to prison life.

In their survey of 245 female inmates, Koscheski and Hensley (2001) noted that prior to incarceration, only 8% of the respondents reported being lesbian, 28% indicated that they were bisexual, and 64% identified themselves as exclusively heterosexual. However, while in prison, 13% of these women reported being homosexual, 31% indicated that they were bisexual, and 55% identified themselves as exclusively heterosexual. Younger convicts, those serving more time, and those placed in higher security levels were more likely to have had homosexual experiences prior to incarceration. The researchers also found that past homosexual behavior was the most significant predictor of same-sex conduct during imprisonment. Although previous homosexual behavior has been identified as a significant forecaster of homosexual activity while incarcerated, those who reported homosexual behavior prior to incarceration were not predetermined to be involved in same-sex relationships while criminally confined. Therefore, we cannot assume that all convicts who engage in homosexual behavior before entering prison will participate in homosexual relationships once they are incarcerated.

Severance (2004) interviewed 40 female offenders and found that some of them participated in homosexual relationships stemming from loneliness and

curiosity. Severance suggested that sexual identity was confusing for many situational homosexuals in that they struggled with concerns over their own sexual relationships, “coming out” to others, and the impact that their homosexuality might have on their personal lives, as well as with family members, on release. The investigator noted that these circumstances underscored the need for programs and services that more effectively prepared women to deal with such correctional life stressors.

Sexual Violence

Prior to 1996, sexual violence in female correctional institutions had not been studied (Hensley, Castle, and Tewksbury, 2003). Recently, however, sexual violence has received more attention, in part due to the enactment of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (Smith, 2006). French (1978) described two types of sexual coercion found within the prison subculture: coercion between convicts and coercion between convicts and staff members. Indeed, the subculture of prison has a major impact on the interactions that occur among and between incarcerated and correctional workers (e.g., French, 1978; Ross & Richards, 2002). The criminally confined suffer from a variety of deprivations (see Sykes, 1958), including loss of goods and services which may facilitate sexual bartering and exploitation. Sexual bartering is a common aspect of the prison’s underground pariah economy and it may be reflected in sexual encounters among convicts and between convicts and correctional personnel.

Incarcerated women are susceptible to a number of different sexually harmful behaviors broadly consisting of harassment, assault (including strip searches), and rape. Moreover, both male and female correctional authorities may be subjected to similar forms of sexual violence as perpetrated by incarcerated women. Unsurprisingly, sexual violence in women’s prisons also manifests itself specifically among convicts. Noting that there is a significant increase in the level of harmful behavior that attaches to the sexual violence category, it therefore represents the final and most extreme type in the proposed classification continuum.

Generally speaking, sexual violence refers to a variety of sexually aggressive behaviors, including coercion, child molestation/pedophilia, sexual assault, physically forced rape, and even sexual murder (Herberle & Grace, 2009; La Fond, 2005). However, in women’s prisons, sexual violence encompasses an even wider variety of behaviors that are specific to and typical of the particular correctional milieu in question. Ranging from least to most aggressive, three principal forms of sexual violence are discernible

in female correctional institutions: (a) manipulation, (b) compliance, and (c) coercion. Manipulation occurs when sex is used as a bartering tool. It is a quid pro quo relationship in which sexual favors are exchanged for goods (e.g., drugs, cigarettes) and/or services (e.g., special work detail or cell assignment) built on unequal or differential power among prisoners or between incarcerates and correctional employees. Compliance occurs when a female incarcerate reluctantly but obediently participates in a sexual relationship with another convict or correctional worker of some perceived or real standing and/or influence. This acquiescence may take place because of fear, a need for safety or protection, or to avoid victimization. Sexual coercion includes behaviors ranging from tacit or overt pressure to engage in sexual contact (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2002), to sexual assault, and even to forcible rape (Holmes & Holmes, 2002; La Fond, 2005). Similar to its manipulative and compliant sexual violence counterparts, coercion may entail a prisoner-on-prisoner relationship or a correctional officer–on–female incarcerate relationship.

Although sexual violence in women's prisons can be described in terms of its three forms (i.e., manipulation, compliance, and coercion) and the corresponding behaviors that emerge within the culture of female incarceration (e.g., bartering, acquiescence, assault), it can also be described in terms of various perpetrator–victim relationships. Specifically, sexual violence can be committed by (a) a prisoner against a staff member, (b) a convict against another incarcerate, and (c) a correctional worker against a prisoner. For the purpose of this article, the degree of violence that attaches in each of these associations will not be delineated as the amount of harm that occurs is more likely to be a function of situational exploitation/victimization factors (e.g., whether physical force, intimidation, threats, or pressure are used) rather than a function of the victim and offender's status in a given sexual violence relationship. However, we note that the three perpetrator–victim associations as specified ostensibly reflect the least to the most harmful relationships. Moreover, each association can manifest itself within each of the three forms that constitute the sexual violence category. In other words, manipulation, compliance, and coercion as forms or types of sexual violence can be expressed through a prisoner-on-staff member, a convict-on-convict, and a correctional worker-on-prisoner relationship. For example, compliant sexual violence can include (a) female prisoners engaged in sexual acts with other female prisoners and (b) female incarcerates engaged in sexual acts with male/female correctional officers or other correctional staff members. The following subsections principally and provisionally review each of these

sexual relationships within the confines of female prisons as an important, though underexamined, dimension of the sexual violence category.

Prisoner-on-Staff Member Sexual Relationships

Incarcerates can manipulate and even coerce prison staff to participate in sexual encounters. Indeed, they may be inclined to pursue sexual relationships with correctional authorities for a variety of reasons. Some explanations include pleasure, trade, transgression, procreation, safety, and love (Hensley et al., 2002; Smith, 2006). Obviously, sexual desires and emotional needs are not extinguished when an offender enters a prison. In addition, convicts may view sex as an expression of freedom, especially as sexual intimacy is one of the few aspects of their lives that they can still control. Extending this notion of control is the view that engaging in sex with correctional staff “. . . is the ultimate way to thwart the system . . .” (Smith, 2006, p. 192). Given these and other complex motivations, prisoner-perpetrated sexual violence is an important, though underexamined, form of behavior that warrants more systematic, theoretical, and empirical consideration.

Prisoner-on-Prisoner Sexual Relationships

Female incarcerates involved in consensual homosexual relationships benefit from these associations in numerous ways; however, some homosexual relationships are exploitative and/or coercive. With respect to the proposed classification continuum, this is the point at which the relationship transitions from true or situational homosexuality to one of sexual violence. Greer (2000) found that female prisoners believed that economic manipulation was the primary motivation for sexual relationships. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2007, an estimated total of 27,500 incidents of convict-on-convict sexual victimization occurred ($n = 146$) in state and federal prisons (Beck & Harrison, 2007). A dearth of research exists on sexual violence as perpetrated by female offenders against other female convicts. However, one such inquiry (a qualitative case study) was undertaken by Alarid (2000) who maintained contact with an incarcerated woman by mail for a period of 5 years. This study explored the topic of female prisoner-on-prisoner sexual violence. The research revealed four themes that relate to this form of sexual victimization: (a) female apathy toward sexual violence, (b) the *femme* (or mommy) as the sexual aggressor, (c) insight into one female rape situation, and (d) institutional factors contributing to sexual violence.

The analysis suggested that many women in prison are desensitized to sexual violence, given their personal histories of past sexual abuse. The most common forms of sexual coercion included harassment and sexual pressure. In addition, open-dormitory housing and the actions of correctional officers emerged as institutional factors that facilitated sexual coercion and assault in women's facilities.

Previous research suggests that exploitation characterizes some of the social roles or statuses that have emerged from the interaction networks of incarcerates. For example, Ward and Kassebaum (1964) found that "these roles are represented by a combination of appearance, behavior and personality characteristics, and are found among both true homosexuals and jailhouse turnouts" (p. 168). Among the roles or statuses that have evolved from the homosexual activity of female inmates are the following: the *butch*, *femme*, *trick*, *commissary hustler*, *square*, and *cherry*.

The *butch*, *stud broad*, *drag butch* (Ward & Kassebaum, 1964), or *daddy* (Giallombardo, 1966) displays a masculine appearance and is usually the dominant partner in same-sex interactions (Giallombardo, 1966; Ward & Kassebaum, 1964). In contrast, the *femme* (Ward & Kassebaum, 1964) or *mommy* (Giallombardo, 1966) persona maintains a female appearance, plays a passive role in the relationship, and behaves in a manner traditionally expected of women. The *trick* status is one of the most disrespected of roles among female offenders in that she allows herself to be exploited by others while failing to achieve the primary goal of developing meaningful relationships. In contrast, the *commissary hustler* maintains sincere relationships with some prisoners, although openly exploiting or manipulating others for personal gain. *Cherries* are incarcerates who have never been "turned out", whereas a *square* is someone who refuses to participate in any form of homosexual behavior (Giallombardo, 1966). We note that roles similar to those mentioned here may change over time and vary from one institution to the next.

In their study of 243 incarcerates in a southern female correctional institution, Hensley et al. (2003) analyzed common characteristics of convict victims as positively correlated with characteristics of sexual violence perpetrators. Eleven (4.5%) of the women sampled reported that they had been sexually victimized by another female prisoner while criminally confined. Five of these women admitted to sexually victimizing other female prisoners. When analyzed in relation to prior research, the authors observed that their findings did not indicate high rates of sexual coercion within the population investigated. This result was attributed to the fact that the study only

examined convict-on-convict assaults absent consideration of correctional staff-on-incarcerate assaults.

Staff Member-on-Prisoner Sexual Relationships

Incidents of sexual violence in female facilities are often caused by prison employees (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2007, an estimated 22,600 instances of unwilling sexual activity occurred that involved federal and state prison staff (Beck & Harrison, 2007). In three female facilities, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2002) surveyed a total of 263 female prisoners and 100 staff members and quantified their attitudes and experiences as they related to sexual coercion. In one of the facilities, the investigators found that 27% of female inmates ($N = 148$) reported experiencing sexual coercion at some point during their incarceration. One half of the assaults were perpetrated by women and one half perpetrated by men (correctional officers). The most frequently reported tactics of sexual coercion were threat and intimidation. One third of the victims had been restrained and 11% were physically harmed. One fourth of those who reported sexual coercion survived either oral, anal, or vaginal rapes. These findings were quite different from the other two facilities studied as those convicts reported that experiences of sexual coercion occurred less frequently. Given these data, the researchers recommended that sexual coercion be evaluated “. . . on a facility-by-facility basis because [the] rate may be highly variable” (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2002, p. 227).

In a more recent study, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2006) investigated sexual coercion among criminally confined men and women by surveying a total of 1,788 incarcerated male offenders and 263 incarcerated females. The researchers found that approximately 75% of men and 57% of women had experienced sexual coercion more than once on at least one occasion. The investigators noted that the most common locales for sexual victimization included the victim's own cell, prison showers, or the facility's kitchen.

Blackburn, Mullings, and Marquart (2008) found sexual victimization rates to be higher in the female prison population than for women in general. Specifically, in their study of 436 female incarcerates, the researchers examined lifetime sexual victimization, lifetime victim characteristics, and imprisoned victim characteristics. Findings from the sample indicated that 68.4% experienced sexual violence at some point during their lifetime, and 17.3%

had been victimized while criminally confined. Those who reported instances of lifetime victimization were most likely to be young, White, homosexual, or bisexual. In contrast, however, no significant predictors were identified for those who experienced sexual victimization in prison. As Dumond (2000) pointed out, *all* convicts are susceptible to sexual violence. As sexual victimization may lead to risky behaviors, substance abuse, and crime, Blackburn et al. (2008), concluded that females entering or being released from prison need to be treated for symptoms related to sexual violence.

Proactive Approaches to Sexual Exploitation and Victimization in Women's Prisons: Some Preliminary Considerations

Previous research has established that sexual exploitation does occur both within the prison population and between incarcerates and correctional staff. Various argot roles such as the *butch*, *femme*, *mommy*, *daddy*, *trick*, *commissary hustler*, *square*, and *cherry* have emerged from the homosexual interactions among convicts (Giallombardo, 1966; Ward & Kassebaum, 1964). Addressing the issue of sexual exploitation may be especially difficult in that these interactions are specific to the underground institutional subculture. The harm caused by sexually exploitive behaviors may be addressed through sexual awareness, education, prevention, and treatment programs designed specifically to assist women who survive the unique circumstances of sexual victimization within the prison milieu.

The sexual exploitation of female offenders by male correctional officers is of special concern (Whitehead, 2007). For example, a 1999 study conducted by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that 41 states passed legislation that criminalizes sexual misconduct of prison staff. The study underscores the notion that prison staff members *do* engage in sexual misconduct. However, in addressing this concern, Dumond (2000) emphasized the fact that only a small minority of personnel are suspected to be involved with instances of prison sexual violence. Clearly, not *all* correctional officers participate in these exploitive and violent activities. However, despite the infrequency with which sexual misconduct and abuse may occur, the issue needs to be effectively addressed and preventative measures need to be thoughtfully undertaken. Indeed, as the GAO (1999) concluded, "given the near total control and power imbalance inherent in a prison environment, there is widespread consensus among correctional officers, advocacy groups, and others that sexual misconduct by correctional staff should not be tolerated" (p. 2).

Correctional officers play an important role in addressing the problem of sexual coercion. Eigenberg (2000a) found that these personnel may be categorized as proactive when helping to eliminate the presence of sexual coercion; conversely, they may directly or indirectly contribute to sustaining the harm. To illustrate, correctional officers can assist in rape prevention in a variety of ways, such as responding to the medical and psychological needs of victims and connecting them to available services. Unfortunately, some correctional workers may facilitate sexual coercion and may even use it to control incarcerated inmates. Indeed, sexual violence is often accepted as a means of control in female prisons (Zaitzow, 2003). For example, prison officers may use housing assignments as reward for sexual favors, or they may be the perpetrators of sexual violence and/or exploitation for those confined (Dumond, 2000; French, 1978; Smith, 2006; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2002).

Eigenberg (2000a) surveyed a total of 209 correctional workers in a Midwestern prison. Ninety-six percent thought that they should do everything possible to prevent rape and 85% felt they should take measures to prevent consensual sex. This indicates that the majority of correctional officers reported prosocial tendencies toward the prevention and intervention of sexual assault. However, 40% did not feel that they should discuss sexual violence with convicts, and they were less likely to write disciplinary reports regarding rape when compared with other forms of prohibited behaviors. In a similar study conducted by Eigenberg (2000b), results indicated that prison workers often thought victims were to blame for sexual assault and that they “deserved” it.

Prison wardens can also have a significant effect on the presence of sexual exploitation and victimization in correctional facilities. “Because of a warden’s status, his or her beliefs and attitudes toward rape and sexual assault can have a great impact on the rules and culture of the penal institution that he or she oversees” (Moster & Jeglic, 2009, p. 67). Educating wardens about sexual activity and sexual violence in penal facilities may help to address some of the problems that arise from lack of awareness or insight.

Hensley and Tewksbury (2005) surveyed 226 wardens as to their attitudes on sex in prison. They found that gender, race, sex of inmates, and the correctional officer–inmate ratio all had a significant bearing on the stance taken by wardens regarding consensual intercourse. In contrast, there were no significant predictors for wardens’ beliefs regarding sexual victimization. The authors of this study emphasized that the education and training of correctional administrators were crucial elements in effectively responding to the problems posed by sexual violence.

Indeed, there are several ways in which correctional officers and prison wardens can be proactive in reducing the injury and harm that stem from the exploitative and violent sexual behaviors found in female correctional facilities. Just as psychological testing may be used to prevent police corruption among law enforcement personnel (Claussen-Rogers & Arrigo, 2005), similar assessments could be administered to identify questionable correctional staff during the preemployment screening process (Arrigo & Claussen, 2003). Moreover, in their analysis of police perpetrators of sexual violence, Kraska and Kappeler (2006) emphasized how a hypermasculine institutional culture contributed to the problem of sexual assault. What these studies suggest is that the dynamics of institutional culture need to be investigated and understood, especially if hostile attitudes, negative stereotypes, and disruptive behaviors that facilitate sexual violence are to be replaced with novel strategies that eliminate the same.

Consistent with this rationale, correctional administrators are encouraged to avoid hiring staff members who are likely to engage in victim-blaming practices or who otherwise exhibit aggressive-like tendencies. In addition, the hiring of more female correctional officers within women's facilities (e.g., Britton, 1997; Griffin, Armstrong, & Hepburn, 2005) may help to neutralize the culture of hypermasculinity that engulfs these workplace environs (Bosworth, 1999; Law, 2009; Owen, 1999). Moreover, to the extent that praxis is valued, research can inform the policy agenda pertaining to female correctional facilities in which much needed prevention and intervention strategies warrant diligent pursuit. Several comments addressing these latter concerns are provisionally discussed below.

Implications: Future Research, Victim/Perpetrator Treatment, and Policy and Programming

Social scientists have a major impact on the public's awareness and attitudes surrounding sexual behavior (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2006). Sexual awareness among the public, policy makers, social research scientists, and practitioners is lacking in the area of women's prisons. Studies on sex in prison have typically been viewed with disbelief and have been the subject of controversy, cynicism, and disapproval (Hensley, 2002, p. 8; see also Lacombe, 2008; Owen, 1999). Consistent with this perspective, Tewksbury and West (2000, p. 368) stated that "those who conduct research on prison sex often are marginalized by professional colleagues and

viewed skeptically by both colleagues and the public.” In addition, the majority of these investigations have been conducted by men, and the findings themselves may communicate nothing more than a masculine orientation concerning a distinctively female criminological concern (Law, 2009; Owen, 1999).

Although no scientific inquiry is without methodological limitation, and although some may regard prison sex research as insignificant, innovative approaches and an emphasis on evidenced-based science could help shed some light on the subject of prison sex reform (Barton, 2005). Indeed, empirically derived data on institutionalized sexuality may have important implications for incarcerated, their families, prison staff, and, ultimately, society as a whole. Moreover, novel research protocols could help facilitate sexual assault prevention and intervention strategies in an effort to reduce victimization. As such, the typological model of female convict sexuality as previously delineated in this article necessitates future testing and analysis, especially in the context of implementing useful programming and policy around perpetrator/victim treatment.

Along these lines, future research on prison sexuality must focus on identifying both the positive and negative consequences of specific types of sexual behaviors for confined women. Once a more comprehensive, though discrete, understanding of prison-based sexuality has been developed, policy efforts can then be formulated to address problematic conduct that otherwise threatens female incarcerated and that fails to ensure a safe correctional environment. For example, as demonstrated by our proposed classification schema, homosexuality among incarcerated may be true or situational and consensual or exploitative. In addition, sexual coercion in female correctional facilities is all too frequently perpetrated by correctional staff. As was suggested, this fact underscores the need for reform in the hiring policies of correctional personnel.³ Both matters require sustained empirical investigation. A related undertaking would include a more exhaustive examination of the sexual violence category, the three victimizing forms by which it is expressed (i.e., manipulation, compliance, and coercion), and the sexual relationships that correspondingly attach to each of them.

As an elaboration of research, future policies and programs addressing sex in prisons and treatment for sexual exploitation and victimization should be designed rather than accidental. According to Robinson (2009), planned criminal justice policy consists of a step-by-step process, which includes analyzing the problem, setting clear goals and objectives, developing effective action strategies, monitoring interventions, and evaluating the program. Although researchers play a pivotal role in problem analysis and program

evaluation, policy makers decide how an initiative is to be constructed and implemented. Stated differently, where the social sciences aim to describe, explain, or predict various phenomenon, policy makers are more concerned with “specific policy prescription” (Moore, 2002, p. 33).

Mindful of the need for planned programming and policy that abates the exploitation and victimization of female incarcerates, investigators have drawn attention to several noteworthy proposals. For example, Haney (2006) asserted that the sexual injury of the criminally confined is a human rights issue with severe psychological consequences. As such, victims and perpetrators of sexual violence in prisons should receive proper medical care and psychological treatment following said harm.

Consistent with this view, much of the research on rape in correctional settings ignores the correlation between sexual violence in society at large and sexual violence within prison; thus, the extant empirical literature limits the scope of victimization to the convict subculture. For example, “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” (Eigenberg, 2000b, p. 445). As with many cultures that have high rates of sexual victimization among women, sexual degradation in prison is often viewed as a form of social control in that it is embedded within the ethos of female correctional facilities (Zaitzow, 2003). However, unlike their exploited and victimized (though nonconfined) counterparts, individuals who are sexually injured in prison are not altogether “free” to report their assault(s), nor are they altogether “free” to seek medical attention, to pursue victim advocacy, and/or to secure legal assistance (e.g., Bloom, Owen, & Convington, 2003). Health services provided to both men and women in prison are extremely limited (Murphy, 2003; Zaitzow, 2003). Indeed, studies show that the medical treatment of women in prison is abusive and inadequate (Law, 2009; Zaitzow, 2003). Here, too, the need for effective institutional planning and policy is sorely needed. One possibility includes prison-based Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) programs.

Comprehensive and effective sexual assault services are scarcely available for the general public (Littel, 2001), let alone for women in prison. In fact, as of 2001, there were less than 300 SANE programs in the United States (Telsavaara & Arrigo, 2006). SANE programs provide comprehensive compassionate care while collecting forensic evidence and addressing the medical needs of sexual assault victims. SANE personnel are registered nurses who have advanced training in conducting rape kits. As such, “because

of their specialized training, SANE nurses are better able to serve rape victims than are non-SANE doctors or nurses” (Maier, 2008, p. 790). Survivors that do not have access to SANE programs may be severely disadvantaged and limited during the recovery process.

Moreover, a resource available to nonincarcerated sexually assaulted women is access to victim advocates. Victim advocates provide support to victims during medical and legal procedures. They are often the first means of emotional support for sexually abused survivors (Maier, 2008; Telsavaara & Arrigo, 2006). Victim advocates attempt to stop secondary victimization and victim-blaming treatment from medical staff and criminal justice professionals (Campbell, 2006; Maier, 2008).

To address these deficiencies in victim treatment for imprisoned women, medical units in correctional facilities are encouraged to establish SANE programs, and prison personnel are encouraged to secure training in sexual assault victim advocacy. Arguably, education, prevention, and treatment programs specifically designed for perpetrators of sexual victimization would reduce its likely prevalence. Moreover, male and female correctional staff that perpetrate sexually exploitive or coercive acts against female incarcerates, or otherwise participate in any consensual sexual exchanges, need to be disciplined and/or dismissed. In addition, consistent with planned criminal justice policy, any reforms or programs concerning sex in prison need to be monitored and evaluated by a neutral third party such as a nonpartisan ombudsman.

Finally, future policies and programs addressing sex in female correctional facilities should also include measures that prepare convicts for successful community reentry (e.g., Arrigo & Takahashi, 2007). Any physical or psychological harm women experience while incarcerated should be effectively treated by the correctional system, given its ultimate responsibility for facility safety. Indeed, a smooth transition here could help reduce the psychological trauma and scarring induced by prison-based sexual exploitation and victimization. Moreover, establishing this healing transition could very well help to abate the possibility of reoffending on release.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Moreover, as the subsequent analysis indicates, consensual and exploitative sexual interactions may occur between members of the female convict population as well as with prison staff (e.g., Law, 2009; Owen, 1999).
2. However, following Hensley (2002), we note that self-report studies (including the research conducted by Hensley, Tewksbury, & Koscheski, 2001) are often limited by a number of methodological concerns. Specifically, prison research designs may produce misleading results. Typically, surveys/self-report studies are self-administered and completed by inmates, correctional officers, staff, and administrators. Even though investigators may emphasize the confidentiality of survey data, many participants are reluctant to report the true incidences of sexual activity or victimization. Victims may withhold information due to personal shame and fear of retaliation. In addition, definitions of sexual activity vary from one individual to the next, and these fluctuations can obscure reporting on the true occurrence of sexual behavior and violence (Saum, Surratt, Inciardi, & Bennett, 1995).
3. It is important to note that the typology put forth is intended to classify the *behaviors* of incarcerated (not prisoners themselves). Moreover, the authors acknowledge that the typological model is limited in several ways and that a single offender may engage in none or all of the sexual behaviors described (and at different intervals) while confined.

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Bios

Angela Pardue, MS, is pursuing her doctoral degree. Her research interests include violence and victims as well as the intersections of criminal justice and mental health. Her previous research has appeared in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*.

Bruce A. Arrigo, PhD, is professor of criminology, law, and society at the University of North Carolina—Charlotte. He is an internationally acclaimed, highly prolific, and award-winning scholar. His most recent book is *The Ethics of Total Confinement: A Critique of Madness, Citizenship, and Social Justice* published by Oxford University Press.

Daniel S. Murphy, PhD, is associate professor of criminal justice in the Department of Government and Justice Studies at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina. His areas of expertise include the sociology of prisons, correctional health care, and criminological theory. Previous publications have appeared in *Justice Quarterly*, *Theoretical Criminology*, *Crime and Delinquency*, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, and *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*.