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VOLUME: No. 1, #1; 1982

SEX AND SEXUAL AGGRESSION
IN FEDERAL PRISONS

by

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NCJRS

JUL 28 1982

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PROGRESS REPORTS presents papers describing studies and empirical investigations conducted within the facilities of the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

The intent of these REPORTS is to quickly and more widely disseminate information developed within the Federal Prison System. Publication of an investigation in PROGRESS REPORTS does not preclude subsequent submission of the study to a professional journal.

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F O R E W O R D

Beginning with this volume, the Federal Bureau of Prisons inaugurates a monograph series. The papers presented in these monographs represent work accomplished in the facilities of the Federal Prison System. These efforts will help realize one of the Bureau's missions; namely, the dissemination of useful information to the field of corrections.

Other publications in the corrections field tend to be more strongly oriented towards the exploration of theoretical issues. In this series the emphasis will be on the practical --on what works! Additionally, what does not work will also be presented so that others can avoid seemingly promising paths which turn out to be blind alleys.

Basically, then, the hope is that this series will provide access to heretofore difficult to obtain information. This, combined with the experience of the reader, should result in benefits to the field of corrections:

"Information coupled with experience
becomes wisdom."

-- G. Kanin

Norman A. Carlson, Director
Federal Bureau of Prisons
June 1982

SEX AND SEXUAL AGGRESSION IN FEDERAL PRISONS

Peter L. Nacci and Thomas R. Kane^{1/}

INTRODUCTION

Concern about an outbreak of violence at the United States Penitentiary, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania prompted a national investigation, by Federal Prison System researchers, of inmate sexual aggression and homosexual activity. Normally a calm institution, Lewisburg experienced eight inmate murders in a 26-month period; simultaneously, there were numerous inmate-on-inmate assaults referred to the FBI for investigation. These included vicious stabbings and attempted homicides that fell just short of murder.

In response to this outbreak of violence, Mr. Norman A. Carlson, Director of the Federal Prison System convened a special task force to investigate problems at Lewisburg. The task force determined that among other things, Lewisburg accepted far more "management-problem" prisoners than were transferred to other penitentiaries. Furthermore, there appeared to be an inordinate amount of violence linked to homosexual activity among inmates; five of the eight homicides had sexual motivation, including sex pressuring, unrequited love, and jealousy. A quarter of the major assaults were linked to inmate homosexual activity.

Although the heightened level of violence at Lewisburg was unusual, the general association of homosexual activity and prison violence is a well established malignancy in American prisons. In one calendar year 25% of inmate aggressions in the California State System had homosexual underpinnings according to one authority (Toch, 1965). Another investigation revealed that homosexual activity was the leading motive for inmate homicides in American prisons (Sylvester, *et al.*, 1977).

^{1/} Opinions expressed in this manuscript are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect Bureau of Prison policy.

I. The Problem

Questions needing quick resolution were focused through a survey of the literature and discussion of associated management issues with key administrators, correctional officers, and inmates. Clearly, homosexual activity and violence are interrelated. Homosexual activity produced violence at Lewisburg both as an incidental force (one partner in an intense love affair acts out violently when spurned) and, as a direct motive (of sexual assault--rape--or sex pressuring that becomes a violent exchange). Equally, homosexual activity can be a by-product of violence. Davis' (1968) account of sexual assaults occurring in the Philadelphia prison system established that many so called "consenting" homosexuals entered prison as heterosexuals but were "turned-out" homosexuals, who participated in sex to avoid economic exploitation, rape, or murder. Because the potential for mutual causality exists--from sexual aggression to homosexual activity and vice versa--the researchers elected to focus on both.

The primary dependent measures used were inmates' self-reported status as: 1) target of sexual aggression; 2) rape victim; or, 3) willing participant in prison homosexual activity. The rationale for using self-disclosure survey techniques centers on the belief that when circumstances are right, people discuss sensitive issues freely and honestly. Reliance on this general approach dictated the form and substance of the entire project.

An articulate, black ex-offender--who had served 10 years in state correctional institutions, was released in 1960, and had already been a Federal consultant for three years--conducted individual interviews with a randomly selected group of inmates, in a representative sample of Federal prisons. Procedures were employed which guaranteed anonymity. A lengthy pilot phase, a private interview room, and a pilot-tested survey instrument, specially created to contain only neutral, inoffensive language were also used.

Familiar principles from social psychology guided the project: 1) the causes of the dependent measures are knowable and can be tested through applied, scientific techniques; and 2) social forces (like peer group pressure for conformity, and early indoctrination into subcultures within the prison environment) can explain why people fall into one of the three categories: target, victim, or participant.

Not only is there a sufficiently large group of randomly selected inmates in the study, there is also information provided by hundreds of correctional officers who work in the same prisons as the inmate subjects. As the primary "agents of influence" on prisoner behavior, the correctional officers are a necessary component in any comprehensive study.

The broadest statement of goals for the project--obtain information that would make prisons safer places for inmates and staff by applying humane techniques--established the nature of questions asked of correctional officers. The officers estimated the level of inmate sexual and aggressive activities, and indicated the level of satisfaction with their jobs and how willing they are to deter homosexual activity and protect inmates from sexual assault. The deterrence and protection questions are "motivational" and help gauge the best way to meet the generic goal of making prisons safer; since line staff establish safety limits, correct information (regarding inmates' activities and surveillance/protection techniques) is meaningless unless staff are motivated to do something positive.

II. Method and Procedures

A. **The Subjects** - Three hundred and thirty male inmates were randomly selected from the entire Federal population. This number permits generalization to the system with reasonable confidence. Five hundred correctional officers who worked in the same institutions where the inmates lived, completed officer surveys.

B. **The Prisons** - A proportional sampling procedure was used to select 17 Federal institutions; a cross-section of the entire system. The number of prisoners interviewed in each institution was proportional to the number of inmates incarcerated in prisons at that security level. For example, if one third of all inmates are maintained in the most secure facilities (levels V and VI) then a third of the 330 inmates would be drawn from the levels V and VI institutions in the sample.^{2/} All correctional officers in sample institutions were eligible to complete surveys.

^{2/} The 110 interviews (1/3 X 330) were proportionally distributed across the level V institutions according to population size of the facility.

C. **The Surveys** - Two surveys (for officers and prisoners) were designed for this study. The prisoner survey had questions that tap concepts germane to understanding the causes of sexual aggression and homosexual activity. The more than 300 items on the surveys are referenced in a shorthand manner by the two summary causal models (see Models I and II, next page).

D. **Conducting Interviews with Inmates** - Prisoners were called-out to a small meeting room by the interviewer. He explained that the survey was anonymous, voluntary, and that inmates would not be paid to participate. If they agreed, they were scheduled for one-hour one-on-one interviews the following day. "No-shows" were contacted to determine whether they knew about the call-out--or if those who earlier agreed had changed their mind. Only two individuals did not show up for the call-out because they were being segregated--neither for sex-related reasons. Inmates who changed their mind are included in a group of "non-cooperators" compared later with cooperators on select dependent measures. All prisoners in the institution were eligible once they had been there more than three weeks.

RESULTS

I. Measure of Sample Quality

A. **Sampling Representativeness** - Sixty-four percent of inmates contacted took the survey. Aggregate data were used to compare the average Federal inmate with the sample. There were very few differences except that the sample was slightly more criminally sophisticated--i.e., more arrests, convictions, and incarcerations. (This probably occurred because half-way houses were not included in the study, but are in population statistics). The argument that "hardened" inmates would not agree to be interviewed does not hold.

Another analysis showed that interviewees were similar to prisoners who were selected but declined to be interviewed (non-cooperators). The exception was that there were slightly more blacks and slightly fewer whites in the research sample.

MODEL I WHY INMATES PARTICIPATE IN HOMOSEXUAL ACTS

Stimuli in the Social Psychological Environment

Participant's Sexual Role

I. The Environment as a Benign Facilitator:

Stimuli

Isolation, deprivation, abundance of male cues, problems with important social others--especially family.

Willing Participant--a "homosexual" if attitude valences change toward endorsing homosexual activity. Change in behavior or attitude relatively volitional.

II. The Environment as a Malignant Force:

A. General External Features of Environment:

Stimuli

Crowding, idle time, limited ways to demonstrate masculinity, hostile prison guards.

Compliant "heterosexual" or situational homosexual: may suffer self recrimination when released for not having resisted environmental pressures.

B. Actors in the Inmates' Environment:

1. Passive Assaults:

Stimuli

Other inmate(s) uses trickery, manipulation, conning or persuasion ("con," "jockey," "pimp").

Target may be called a "trick" or "punk." Not injured physically but perhaps suffer psychological damage.

2. Active Assaults:

Stimuli

Other inmate(s) uses force of numbers or weapons to compel undesired participation ("wolf" or "old man" if alone; but often participant in gang).

Target becomes a "kid" or "punk." Often repudiated as "homosexual" - depreciated by inmates if unable or unwilling to retaliate - may incur great physical or psychological damage. May be killed.

MODEL II SEXUAL ASSAULTS AND PRISON AGGRESSION

Level of Analysis

Some Immediate Causes

Effects

Social
(Interpersonal)

Systemic:
Poor supervision; inhumane living conditions; poor programming; poorly trained or uncaring staff; racial, geographic cultural or ethnic disproportion of staff or inmates or ratio of the two groups.

General

Group:
Homosexual activity; gang membership; drug trafficking; gambling; prostitution; retaliation; racial tensions.

(Non Sexual)

Individuals:
Social personal "needs" like: impress peers; defend honor or build or defend reputation; avoid exploitation; retaliation for insults; promiscuity.

Aggression

or

Personal

Aggressors:
Sexual gratification; inability to control impulses; use of force as influence style; mental instability; psychological disfunction.

Acts of

Sexual

Aggression

Target/Victim:
Excessive passivity; inability to use threats or counterforce or to be assertive; naivety; other cues of physical or psychological "appropriateness" as target for aggression (i.e., feminine, young, homosexual, cultured, different).

B. **Survey Reliability** - Statistical analyses of the reliability of the inmate survey were performed to determine consistency of response. The results demonstrated convincingly that the survey is reliable. Other specialized analyses of validity (e.g., factor and cluster analysis) assessed how well each designated subset of items worked as a group to measure significant aspects of inmates' beliefs. The statistics demonstrate the validity of the instrument, and the confirmation of the features of Models I and II strongly support the research techniques.

II. The Inmate Sample

A. **Demographics** - A profile of the respondents revealed the average inmate is just under 34 years old; forty-six percent are Black (11% of the total U.S. population are Black) and 6.5% are Hispanic; these two groupings are highly over-represented in the Federal Prison System. The sample's religious affiliation is predominantly Protestant (42%) followed by Catholic (24%) and Muslim (9%). Their average height is 5' 10" and weight 174 lbs. The interviewer rated 51% of the inmates "muscular", 38% "stocky", and 12% "thin".

B. **Incarceration** - The average inmate had 11 arrests, two felony convictions, has been in 4.6 different jails and three different correctional institutions. Five percent of the sample had been in two or more training schools before their 16th birthday. The average inmate had been confined six years, and was in the current institution just under 1.5 years. Five percent had been convicted of sex-related offenses. Finally, the average sentence length of inmates sampled was 125 months.

C. **Childhood** - Family background of the sample typically involved frequent arrests and incarcerations of parents (or absence of father altogether); however, many inmates reported having a warm personal relationship with a significant parent figure. A third of the sample were raised by women alone; both parents were present in the home for 57% of the sample. Seventy-one percent said that the mother (or surrogate mother) was primarily responsible for child rearing.

D. **Attitudes toward Sex** - Generally, inmates responded conservatively on 13 of 15 sex-attitude items. The items were borrowed from other national surveys (Kinsey, *et al.*, 1948; Reiss, 1967; Hunt, 1974). A comparison with national samples shows that, compared with free males, the prison sample is more conservative (less accepting) regarding issues like mate swapping and homosexuality--but less conservative about heterosexual sex practices like sex before marriage, virginity; group, anal, and oral sex.

E. **Homosexual Activity** - Survey data have been used to estimate the incidence of homosexual activity. Population and procedural differences make comparisons difficult but some conclusions can be extrapolated. According to Hunt's (1974) national sample of American males, collected during the early 1970s about 20-25% of adult males had a homosexual experience at some time in their lives; only 3% indicate a firm commitment to homosexuality as a lifestyle. Little is known about the incidence of homosexuality among prison groups, but Buffum (1972) aggregated results from 12 studies and concluded that about 35-40% have homosexual experience while incarcerated.

Among Federal inmates, 28% stated that they had a homosexual experience some time during their lives; 25% reported such experiences as adults. Rates of adult experience were disproportionately high relative to childhood experience. This finding is interesting because in free society a great deal of homosexual activity occurs during adolescence (ages 11 to 15). Hunt (1974) reported about 10% of American males had adult experience. Therefore, in comparison with free males, prisoners have slightly more homosexual experience overall and substantially more adult experience. In comparison with other (non-federal) prisoners, the incidence of homosexual activity is low. About 3% of the sample are homosexual or bisexual.

1. Federal penitentiaries - Inmates were asked if they participated in homosexual activity while in their current institution--this would be adult experience since the system does not incarcerate juveniles. Overall, 12% of the sample responded affirmatively. This represents relatively current, adult activity since the average time served at the time of the survey was about 20 months. In penitentiaries, where more dangerous offenders are incarcerated for greater lengths of time, the rate was higher. Twenty percent of penitentiary inmates stated they had a homosexual experience in their current Federal institution. However, answering a question that asked, "Have you had a homosexual experience in a prison as an adult?"--30% of the penitentiary inmates stated they had. Assuming pressures to under-report (Fear of detection, appearing unmasculine) outweigh a desire to over-report (denigrate the Federal system, encourage liberalizing furlough practices, or pressure for conjugal visit program), the more general statement--that the inmate had participated while in a prison (location unspecified)--suggests probable behavior in current institution, since what has been done before under other circumstances seems likely to be repeated at least occasionally.^{3/}

2. Sex acts and sexual identity - If a prisoner had had homosexual experience, a separate set of items asked if the inmate had performed fellatio or anal intercourse, and whether the prisoner was insertee or inserter. Many more prisoners have been insertees; probably because inmates believe that environmental pressures (lack of women) force abnormal sexual acts. Performing the masculine act (inserter) and sexual identity as heterosexual were associated. Similarly, performing the female insertee role and homosexual or bisexual orientation were correlated.

3. Problem behaviors associated with homosexual activity - Overall, 29% of Federal inmates had been propositioned in their institution; only 7% were "seduced" by inmates bearing gifts or offering favors. Rate of prostitution was rather low--2% of the sample had taken money for performing sex. From a managerial perspective, the long-standing lover relationship is especially dangerous; this occurs among 1.8% of the sample. Only one prisoner (.3%) stated that he had to protect himself from other inmates by performing sex.

^{3/} The survey suggests that pressures to suppress reporting are greater; inmates are often "complimentary" concerning the Federal Prison System which already operates a furlough program.

F. Sexual Aggression - Being a target meant an individual responded affirmatively when asked if anyone had forced or attempted to force the inmate to perform sex against his will (involving battery). Incidence characteristics are tabulated below:

TABLE 1
VICTIM - REPORTED DATA

- 9.0% of Federal inmates were targets in a prison.
- 2.0% of Federal inmates were targets in a Federal institution.
- 0.6% of Federal inmates (2/330) were victims (had to perform an undesired sex act) in a Federal prison.
- 0.3% of Federal inmates (1/330) were raped (sodomized) in a Federal institution.

Once a target or victim was identified by the interviewer, a separate set of items were asked. Not all 30 targets agreed to respond and not all items were completed. Hence, findings are informative but not conclusive. Table 2 (next page) shows response patterns.

III. Profiles: Participants and Targets

It may seem puzzling that homosexual liaisons and sex pressure situations frequently produce violence given the common stereotype of male homosexuals as passive and effeminate. The study data show participants to be different physically and attitudinally from other prisoners and may help to explain the connection between prison sex and violence.

TABLE 2
CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVED IN BEING A 'TARGET'

Targets usually located either in very secure or very low security institutions.

Targets and aggressors usually lived in the same unit or dormitory.

Assaults occurred most often in living quarters.

Prisons were not locked-down at time assault occurred.

70% of homosexual or bisexual inmates were targets.

66% of targets were heterosexuals.

Whites were likely to be targets.

Blacks tended to group together for assaults, therefore, there are more Black assaulters.

Assaults committed equally by Whites and Blacks.

57% of targets in institution less than a month before the assault*.

36% of assaults were multiple with single victims.

Targets 20.5 years old when assault occurred.

Being a target did not affect sexual orientation.

Staff unaware of assault in 63% of cases.

68% of targets did nothing "official" to remedy problem.

* Correctional officers incorrectly think that newness to institution is a relatively unimportant cue as used by aggressors.

A. **The Participant** - The participant is physically thin and less muscular; he is tall but weighs about the same as the average inmate. He appears more effeminate to the interviewer. His attitudes about homosexuality are positive while the typical inmate opposes homosexuality. Race does not relate to participation. There is a tendency (non-significant; $p > .09$) for participants to have been arrested for sex offenses; 9.2% of participants (but only 3.4% of non-participants) had been arrested for those crimes.

The participant frequently has been involved as a youth with the criminal justice system. An inmate who commits a crime as a youth and is diverted rather than sent to a training or reform school, has a greater chance of abstaining from prison sex as an adult. This suggests that some participants learn maladaptive sexual habits when confined in youth institutions. The participant has also been in more foster homes, more training schools, more mental institutions and scores higher on a criminal history scale (comprised of items like number of arrests, number of incarcerations, and total years confined).

Participants cluster in friendship groups which share information about others' sexual habits. They believe there is more homosexual activity in prisons than non-participants do. Along with membership in this "clique" of sex-oriented prisoners they have an increased awareness that prisons are dangerous; the chance of inmates being sexually assaulted is perceived to be greater.

B. **The Target** - According to reports by Davis (1968) and Lockwood (1980), at least two out of ten prison inmates are sexual assault targets. The sexual assault rate is low in the Federal system--about two of every 100 inmate must defend against assault and less than one out of 100 is actually victimized. What common threads link targets of sexual aggression and what cues do these individuals send to aggressors?

One very important factor is whether the prisoner is a passive participant in prison sex. Sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual/bisexual), target status (target or non-target), and participation in prison sex (participant or non-participant) are interrelated; see Table 3 below.

TABLE 3
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND HOMOSEXUAL PARTICIPATION

	Participant		Non-Participant	
	Target	Non-Target	Target	Non-Target
<u>Homosexual/ Bisexual</u>	7	3	0	0
<u>Orientation</u>				
<u>Heterosexual</u>	7	48	16	249

Self-definition as a homosexual/bisexual and target status are associated. Seventy percent of self-acknowledged homosexual/bisexual inmates were assaulted.^{4/} However, more targets are non-participants than participants (16 versus 14) and most targets are heterosexuals (7 + 16 versus 7)!

Participation *per se* does not indicate likelihood of assault because many participants are considered (by themselves and other inmates) heterosexual; in prison, participation may not "count" toward sexual identity. Apparently, inmates can participate without drastically increasing the chance of being assaulted. But identification as homosexual/bisexual is associated with targeting. Since homosexual/bisexual identification and insertee role are associated, the target must be perceived as one who is (or may be) willing to play passive female roles.

^{4/}

Only one inmate changed sexual orientation while in confinement, so current sexual orientation equals sexual orientation at time of prison sexual assault.

The assailant attacks tall, slender inmates who wear their hair long, were less happy as children, have more broken marriages, have parents with heavy drinking problems, are more criminally sophisticated, and appear effeminate. Targets have attitudes favorable toward homosexuality, evaluate prison participants in homosexual acts positively, and more importantly, they discuss sex often with other inmates. Any public act of endorsement may, more than anything else, contribute to being selected as a target. In prison, secrets are difficult to keep and choice gossip is valuable. A loose statement endorsing homosexuality may be quickly picked up by the grapevine. Supplementary data from other research indicate that target inmates come from small, rural areas; they are lighter in weight than average; have been committed for non-violent offenses, and show no unusual tendency toward prison violence; some attend special education classes; they have been institutionalized in mental health facilities, and evidence a tendency toward self-destructiveness.

C. The Assaulter- Assaulters are average in weight but are larger than their target; they are younger than the average inmate, but older than their victim; they have a history of violence, are likely to have been committed for a violent crime, and are likely to be among the small group of inmates who frequently break prison rules. Typically, assaulters come from large urban areas, have had many juvenile commitments, but have received an average amount of education before incarceration; they are normal in mental stability and show no unusual tendencies toward self-destruction. Finally, assaults are equally likely to involve white as black assailants; however, overall, blacks predominate in numbers because they tend to assault in large groups.

Although personnel might think assaulters are crazy, inmates do not--and this is a critically important finding. The sample stated that the primary reason for sexual assaults by males on females in free society is mental instability of the rapist. However, the reason for sexual assault in prison is because targets are weak and attractive (i.e., a stand-in for a woman) and because rapists want to impress other prisoners. Prison rape make sense to inmates because the act sends a valuable message: "Don't mess around with me!"

1. Motives - In some assaults, the target must appear to be like a woman to the rapist. Other times, rapists may not intend a sex act but conclude that rape is an appropriate act of degradation after a tough battle or insult--they also must think that the act will gain them additional status among other inmates. By his act, the rapist communicates that he is powerful.

Although most prisoners have "getting out" as a primary goal--a secondary motive for many inmates is "getting by". Rapists, like other prisoners, could get sexual gratification easily with willing partners. Instead, the rapist tries to gain credibility for future threats toward other inmates since he may not be a formidable exploiter alone. According to prisoners the rapist singles out weaker inmates. He may not be clever enough to run a good "game", and a crime of armed bank robbery, kidnapping, or even murder may not secure him a position of preeminence in this community of other robbers, kidnapers, and murderers.

2. Violence in pressure cases - Federal prison officials seek to avoid confining likely targets (young, white, slender, effeminate, emotionally imbalanced inmates) with hardened dangerous prisoners.

Rapists are found in more secure prison settings, while targets were designated there because their criminal backgrounds led officials to believe that the target could stand up to the pressure and/or the serious nature of their current offense warranted a high level of institution security. Targets and rapists alike are a product of the American criminal justice system; it would be incorrect to think of targets as especially naive.

Criminal history variables from the Federal Prison System's Security Designation procedure--determines the physical security features an inmate requires and the level of custody supervision assigned--have been validated as "predictive" of institutional violence (Kane, Janus, and Vanyur, 1981). Targets, compared to nontargets, have significantly more extensive criminal histories. Hence, the target remains in population because he has greater freedom there and probably is confident he will be able to handle sexual confrontations. He may even see himself as tough, and may not know that his physical and attitudinal differences from other inmates will single him out. One thing is especially clear: many targets believe that in prison, the best and expected response when pressured for sex is violence.

3. Conflict resolution - Vignettes--short stories that require inmates to select a solution to an interpersonal conflict situation--were specially designed for this study. Each contained either a sex-related or a non-sexual theme--alternative solutions were scaled according to the level of violence they contained. The hypothetical "actors" in the vignettes were other inmates from the institution.

Responses to the vignettes show striking differences between participants, targets, and other inmates. Participants expect violence and react violently, no matter what the type of conflict.

In other words, participants have a general predisposition to anticipate the use of violence in all types of interpersonal conflicts. The participant may expect more violence since he has more contact with prisons--it could also be an over-compensation rooted in personal insecurities about being thin, effeminate, and a participant. Because his willingness to use violence is frequently actualized, the participant is an irritant to administrators. His appearance and attitudes attract attention--he often is involved in interpersonal conflicts. He may believe that if he does not strike hard, and first, his physical shortcomings will culminate in being exploited.

Targets, by contrast, expect non-violent resolution to general (non sex-related) interpersonal conflicts. This may be another cue aggressors use. Sex accounts for about 25% of prison conflicts and the target, because of his effeminate appearance, is likely to be drawn into all types of exploitation situations.^{5/}

Many targets are criminally sophisticated--when pushed they will usually defend violently. Violent responses may make sense under the circumstances according to data reported by Lockwood (1980)--polite refusals terminated only 13% of all incidents Lockwood studied! Clearly, targets cannot avoid the threat by saying "no thank you" to a sex pressurer; a more assertive response is required.

IV. Correctional Officers

Five hundred correctional officers in the 17 institutions sampled completed a special survey with items measuring morale, knowledge about inmate sexual activities, and motivation to protect prisoners from sexual assaults and to deter consensual homosexual activity. The results are encouraging. Morale is consistently high. Officers indicate a willingness to protect inmates from sexual assault and to deter them from participating in consensual homosexual acts. However, the data also reveal that the strength of such motivation can be improved--on a 7 point scale with 4 as neutral, deterrence averaged 5.0 and protection averaged 5.5.

^{5/} Bartollas, Miller and Dinitz (1976) studied "exploitation hierarchies" in a training school. Inmates would be tested to see how far they would permit exploiters to go. At the bottom of the hierarchy were individuals who participate in sex as insertees.

According to Federal correctional officers, all inmates should be protected regardless of the individual's sexual preference. Nevertheless, a potential difficulty is that officers are more willing to protect heterosexual inmates, when, actually, homosexual/bisexual inmates are more likely to be targeted for assaults. This pattern is understandable. Officers equate homosexuality/bisexuality with participation and assume such inmates consensually participate. Correctional officers also validly recognize that participants make prisons more dangerous, violent places and thus make officers' jobs more difficult. They believe that "consensual homosexual activity in prison frequently leads to...violence".

There may be a way to improve officers' motivation to intervene since the data also reveal that on-the-job experience is associated with a diminished sense of responsibility for deterring homosexual acts. Apparently, something "switches off" many officers as they have more contact with inmates. Although officers believe that many prisoners are involved in homosexual activity, in truth the number of participants is small. It is plausible that some officers become frustrated with their jobs and displace these frustration onto inmates; they come to believe that: "they all mess around, and it's practically impossible to stop them."

Federal correctional officers, as they gain experience, inevitably develop personal theories about inmates' sexual habits. The data suggest it can be potentially dangerous to let them do this without valid information; some officers may give up trying to keep inmates away from violence-producing sexual liaisons.

A sophisticated path analysis was applied to the officers' survey responses to seek ways to correct their diminishing motivation to intervene. (The results of the analysis are offered here in summary fashion because their derivation is too complex and is beyond the scope of this document.)^{6/} These findings suggest that correctional officer motivation to deter and protect would be improved if they had more accurate information about homosexual activity and if they were more understanding about the processes that lead inmates to become involved in the first place.

^{6/} A more complete description is available upon request.

"Reductionism" or simplification of this data incorrectly seems to diminish the significance of the findings. Table 4, below, is a summary of system applications--based upon significant relationships found among officers' attitudes--which affect staff's motivation and performance:

TABLE 4

MOTIVATION TO PROTECT INMATES

Have officers assume greater responsibility for acts of sexual aggression which do occur.

Strengthen officers' beliefs that consensual homosexual activity leads to prison violence.

Foster belief that prison environments are potentially dangerous for all inmates which means officers have a greater responsibility to deter consensual homosexual activity.

Explain to officers how correctional settings place pressures on inmates to become involved in homosexual activity.

Provide officers with accurate information about actual levels of homosexual activity in Federal prisons.

V. Stress and Danger

The staff survey yielded measures of correctional officers' satisfaction with their job, morale toward the prison system, baseline estimates about sexual assault frequency, and attitudes towards deterring homosexual activity and protecting inmates. In one set of analyses, inmates' perceptions of danger in the institution (from sexual assault) were related to measures of the physical environment. Officer's attitudes about these topics can also be thought of as a part of the inmates' prison environment.

Why would judgments of inmates (on their surveys) relate to officers' beliefs? The answer is that both groups have a great deal of first-hand institutional knowledge and experience in common:

A. Officer Job Satisfaction - When officers indicate greater job satisfaction, inmates were likely to say their environment was more free from the danger of sexual assault.

B. **Officer Morale** - When officers show higher morale toward the prison system, inmates indicated greater danger of assault. Plausibly, employees who espouse strong sentiments toward the system are perceived by inmates as stereotypic company men--the Frank Burns type ("MASH") --who spout rules and regulations verbatim, but show little actual concern about prisoners and their problems. From the inmates' view, officers who are organization men are less likely to be sensitive to the real dangers in the prison.

C. **Misperceptions About Sexual Aggression** - Officers estimated the likelihood that the inmates in their institution would be pressured for sexual favors or sexually assaulted. Inmates made similar judgments on their surveys; difference scores were computed for each institution. The scores reflect discrepancy between inmate and staff perceptions. When staff estimates were very high relative to inmates', prisoners sensed greater danger in the environment. This perception probably reflects inmate belief that officers do not have true knowledge of the environment, and therefore, staff will be unable to anticipate and control prisoner violence.

D. **Attribution of Fault** - From the inmates' perspective, sexual aggression in prison is primarily socially motivated sexual behavior. Furthermore, the officer's inaccurate knowledge about the causes of sexual assault would be taken by prisoners as indicative of a limited ability to predict and control violence in general. Officers were asked to indicate to what extent victims of sexual assault in prisons are at fault for the incident. Staff who believe the victim is at fault --presumably because of sexually stimulating behavior, appearance, or negligence in self-defense--would be viewed by inmates as naive and incompetent. As prisoners view sexual assault, the assailant to degrade the victim and enhance his own status. When officers attribute fault to the victim, inmates in the same institution sense greater danger in their environment. Thus, staff must be trained to understand that sexual assaults usually are not precipitated by victims alone. Environmental pressures and social motives of the aggressor, which contribute to assaultive behavior, are factors to consider in prevention.

E. **Crowding, Population Fluctuation, and Racial Distribution** - It was expected that macro-level population parameters--social density (crowding), population flux, or racial distribution--would be related to inmates' judgments about danger because these lead to micro-level changes in relationships among prisoners or between staff and inmates. No effect of social density (crowding) was found, but both population flux and racial distribution were important to inmates.

1. **Crowding** - It was hypothesized that increased crowding would raise the level of perceived danger. Under such conditions it becomes more difficult to supervise inmates; there may be more fighting over limited (due to higher numbers) resources (like pool tables, gym equipment, etc.). This did not happen; possibly during this period crowding did not reach intolerable limits as far as inmates were concerned.

2. **Population fluctuation** - Movement of inmates into or out of the institution did influence perceptions of danger among inmates. Possibly, staff are more occupied with processing prisoner arrivals or departures and cannot attend as well to the normal supervision of inmates. This, plus the fact of continual jockeying among inmates to establish the "pecking order" (caused by population movements) explains why fluctuation makes prisoners feel more environmental stress.

3. **Racial distribution** - Prisoners and staff both believe the likelihood of sexual assault is greater when the population contains a greater proportion of blacks, relative to whites. This probably represents a general belief that black inmates are more aggressive. The data reveal relatively more black assailants and a strong tendency for whites to be assault targets.

VI. Reducing Homosexual Activity

A. Inmates

1. **Homosexual activity** - Conventional wisdom suggests that a prisoner who remains married or receives frequent visits from a spouse will be less likely to be involved in prison sex. Common sense is wrong! Participants and non-participants do NOT differ on the following variables: a) perceived likelihood of furlough receipt; b) furlough eligibility; c) frequency of furloughs; d) visit frequency; e) marital status; f) romantic ties to a person in the community; g) plans to live with a woman after release.

Type of housing was another variable that should (but actually did not) relate to participation. Participants are likely to be housed in any kind of living unit arrangement--e.g., cells, dorms, etc.

A path analytic model was used to test variables that could produce lower levels of participation.

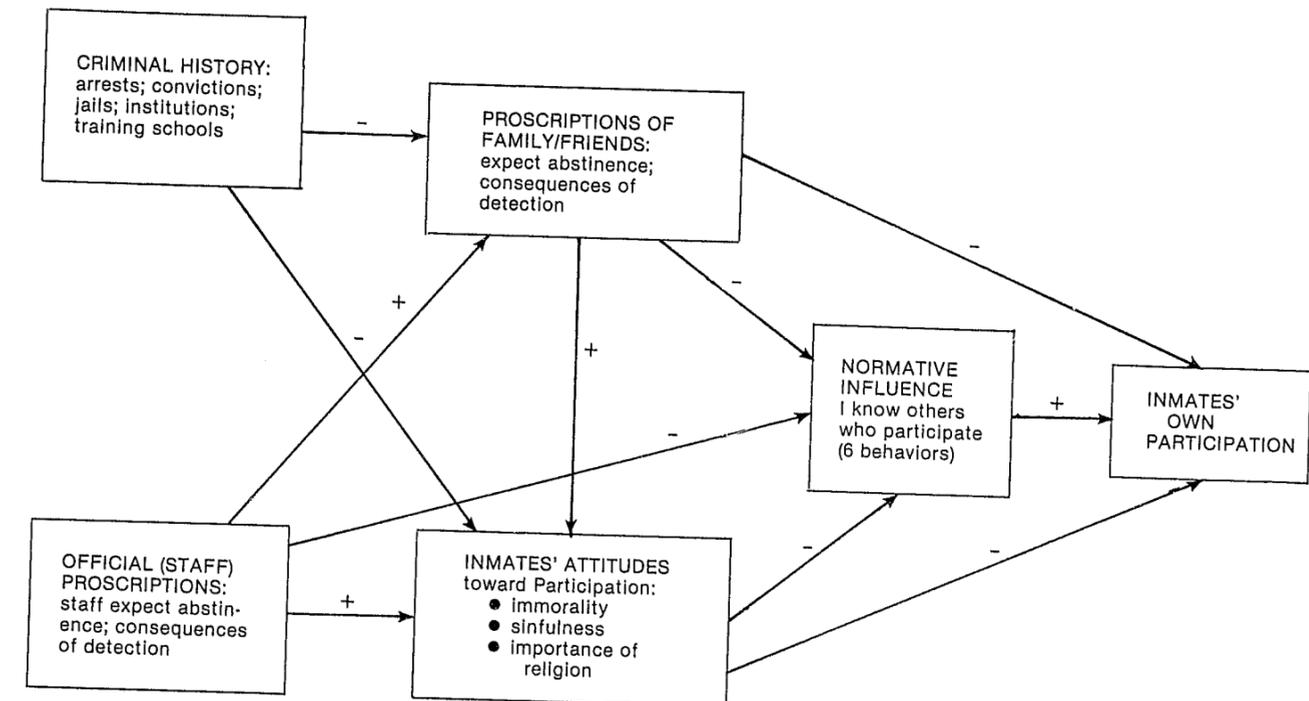
Figure 1 shows significant relationships only. A negative arrow between boxes means that low on one variable goes with high on the other and vice versa; a positive means that high goes with high and low goes with low. For example, the negative line between criminal history and inmates' attitudes about the morality of participating in prison sex indicates that inmates with a more extensive criminal history are less likely to think that participation is immoral. Prior criminal history is the only variable in the model that is fixed and managers are not able to control.

According to the model, homosexual activity among inmates would be lower when inmates' beliefs change toward: a) a sense of immorality and sinfulness regarding homosexuality; b) greater concern that friends and family expect them to abstain; c) greater concern about sanctions if caught, and d) greater concern that staff expect inmates to abstain.

Therefore, prisoners need to know the truth about homosexual activity; and, institutions must be normalized. "Normalization" means encouraging the same norms that curtail homosexual activity in free communities. An infusion of morality is required; specifically, knowledge that staff do not accept participation and increased contact with important social others who expect the inmate to abstain from prison sex.

Normalization also means correctional officers and inmates working in unison. No one should refer to a man by a female referent like "she" or "her" or with a female nickname. Although this may annoy a male inmate who is psychologically "female", the reference is confusing to other prisoners who are struggling with homosexual feelings and seek cues for "normal" behavior. Most inmates abstain although some prisoners undoubtedly profit by promulgating beliefs that the opposite is true. A male prisoner is not to be accepted by staff as a female surrogate in any sense since this invites problems associated with sexual aggression.

FIGURE 1
Normalization Model



2. Sexual aggression - Minimizing homosexual activity among inmates, will reduce sex-related and general aggression. Furthermore, inmates should be informed that targets are perceived by their would-be attackers as effeminate and potentially passive participants. Physical cues like long hair, or feminine gestures, articulations or clothing draw attention. Inmates should be advised to avoid disclosing to peers any pro-homosexual attitudes. Similarly, prisoners should forgo any trappings that suggest interest in a sexual liaison (e.g., magazines or publications that contain explicit depictions of homosexual acts or circulars or newsletters advocating homosexual activities). Inmates should avoid places that are difficult for staff to supervise and should learn to handle interpersonal conflicts by being assertive while remaining non-violent.

B. Correctional Officers

1. Officer awareness - The data indicate where staff interventions would be useful. Officers should be empathetic toward inmates; satisfied despite some of the routine aspects of their job; and, have accurate information about inmate sexual activities. How to should all this be accomplished? A captain or lieutenant can order the officers to be considerate and caring, but this would not produce a genuine change in attitudes. A prison system could retain "empathy trainers" but that is expensive, programs usually last only a few days, and the results, if they are positive, may be short lived.

A reasonable alternative is open discussion about, and dissemination of literature regarding, homosexual activity and sexual aggression. When officers construct erroneous theories about inmate sexuality, problems develop. Widespread distribution of information--annual correctional training which includes material on this subject--will help correct staff misperceptions.

Changes that lead to job enrichment like alternating duty assignments and greater personal responsibility are additional approaches.

2. Advice giving - The Bureau's change to "functional units" (Levinson & Gerard, 1973) has produced more frequent contact between staff and inmates. Consequently, personnel are in an excellent position to influence prisoner behavior. Since, inmate sexual behavior is greatly affected by what they think staff expect them to do, officers should communicate with prisoners about these issues.

To maximize the value of communication, staff should be aware of participant, target, and aggressor profiles. They should also know the salient features in assaults. Officers' unawareness was highlighted earlier.

3. Training material - There is no good solution for managing sex pressure situations. Only when danger is imminent and information about the circumstances is accurate can the officer take firm action--confident that the situation will be managed correctly. Inmates who pressure should be separated, segregated, and an investigation initiated. Frequently, the available information is fuzzy. The officer may have reason to dispute the "target's" claim that someone is pressuring him. Perhaps the inmate has cried wolf before or, there is good reason to suspect he wants an individual cell for privacy or comfort, not safety. Prisoners often will not divulge who is pressuring them (if they will discuss the event with an officer at all). In every case, action taken must be discrete. If an inmate's move to another cell or change in job assignment seems appropriate, this must be done without drawing attention to the individual who otherwise may be labeled a "snitch". As a general rule, any movement should put distance between pressurers and targets and gain better supervision of both.

The target should be told what his options are, and what cues are producing the impression that he is "suitable". Under no circumstances should any Federal employee ever advise an inmate to arm for combat. This constitutes a callous, unprofessional rejection of staff's responsibility to manage their institution.

In the event that a "pressure" attempt is interrupted, the officer should know there is potential for the most dangerous conflict in prison. An analysis of recorded pressure and rape events among Federal inmates by Nacci, Saylor, Kane, McGrory, and Blackwell (1979) revealed that pressure cases often result in the use of weapons, damage to either or both inmates, and that they frequently are one-on-one attacks. Rapes, by contrast, tend to involve multiple assailants and single victims, frequently there is no physical damage outside of the rape itself, and weapons are not likely to be used.

C. Programs - The two most frequently discussed "programs" for reducing homosexual activity and sexual aggression are conjugal visits (a variation is the unescorted furlough or family visit), and segregation of known or suspected homosexual inmates from known or suspected aggressors. The Federal system operates an unescorted furlough program for inmates who qualify, but does not provide for conjugal visits.

1. Family visits and furloughs - Clear benefits derive from family visits and furloughs, but reduced sexual aggression and homosexual activity among inmates is not one of them. Participants did not differ from non-participants in their response to survey items that concerned romantic ties to someone in the community, marital status, or visits and furloughs. Programs that permit occasional sexual gratification with someone in (or from) the free community would be unlikely to keep inmates from participating in homosexual acts while in prison. These same kinds of programs would not affect sexual assault rates because the act serves power and not sexual motivations.

2. Institution segregation - Systematically separating known or suspected homosexual inmates from other prisoners does not reduce homosexual activity; anyone can be a participant. Furthermore, the state of the art for identifying these actors does not warrant great confidence. Removing the "homosexuals" may place greater pressure on other inmates (who might be marginally inclined to participate or who may have participated before) to become actively involved. Finally, sexual liaisons can occur anytime and anywhere. It would be unrealistic to ask staff, in effect, to operate several mini-prisons within an institution where inmates would be kept from escaping not only into the free world but also from escaping into the other "prisons" in the prison!

It would also be unwise to systematically separate the known or suspected aggressors from known or suspected targets. Many of the same problems mentioned above also apply here, but in addition there is the concern over misidentification (placing a lamb in with the wolves or vice versa). Misclassification could also bring about a "self-fulfilling prophecy" where inmates come to match the expected behavior of others--because they are in a particular unit. Furthermore, the data reveal no association between time of day and sexual assaults; unless there was total isolation assaults can still occur.

In some cases, because of a myriad of specific problems, there may be no other recourse except isolating the targets and attempting to protect them. Lockwood (1980) reports this was only a stop-gap measure when applied in New York State facilities like Coxsackie and Attica. Unfortunately, this is not a very good solution to problems of sexual assault. As Lockwood pointed out, 28% of inmates in a random sample were assaulted; the rate of assault among men in the protected "weak companies" was much higher. Although many of the assaults occurred before the separation, any safety for these men come from having their cells on one tier with restricted access by other inmates; however, these prisoners mixed with the population at school, work, or during recreation activities.

The inherent value of internal segregation for the Federal System, if a particular warden elects to separate inmates along some of these dimensions, is in the message that it undoubtedly communicates to staff and inmates; namely, that sexual aggression and/or homosexual activity will not be tolerated. Consequently, judicious application of the principle may be warranted.

3. The need to know - What will pay dividends is improvement in documenting presumed motives for sex assaults occurring in Federal prisons. All assaults should be reported to a central location, and following investigation at the institution, the information should be aggregated according to assailant's motives.

CONCLUSION

A post hoc analysis of archives revealed, that the rate of "known" sexual assaults in the Federal Prison system is about two per month. Assuming continuity in procedures for investigating and reporting assaults, the ratio of known to unknown sexual assaults should be constant. Hence, if the known rate begins to climb, it will be time to re-evaluate parts of the prison system with techniques and tools developed for this study. Managers now have a yardstick they can use to interpret their findings.

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