

Would They Officially Report an In-Prison Sexual Assault? An Examination of Inmate Perceptions


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Abstract

This exploratory study examined inmates' intentions to report their own sexual victimization and recommend others to officially report their assaults. More than 900 male and female inmates in a Southern prison system responded to the self-report questionnaire. Victims of prison sexual assault and homosexual/bisexual inmates, at risk for victimization, had decreased chances of reporting their own victimization. As inmates' time served increased their chances of intending to report their victimization decreased. Women were more likely to recommend others to report as were those who knew a recently victimized inmate. Recommendations focus on training and education alongside prison cultural change.

Keywords

official reporting, sexual assault, prison

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The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) mandates that states implement a zero-tolerance atmosphere in correctional facilities for sexual assault and aim to punish assailants of prison rape. Official record checks show the majority of prison sexual assault cases known to correctional authorities come to their attention by way of victim report (Austin, Fabelo, Gunter, & McGinnis, 2006; Beck, Harrison, & Adams, 2007). A major issue is that sexual assault has been found to be a highly underreported crime inside and outside the correctional context, with 22% of men and 34% of women inmates reporting their assaults (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2006, p. 1606). Most victimized inmates tell someone, for example, a friend, family member, or another inmate (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2006; Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, Rucker, Bumby, & Donaldson, 1996) mirroring disclosure patterns in the free community (Frieze, 2005). If official authorities are unaware of victimizations, victims may go unassisted and perpetrators go unpunished, leaving the assailant the opportunity to victimize again.

Prison cultural proscriptions against cooperating with prison authorities (Sykes & Messinger, 1960) combined with other traditional barriers to reporting sexual victimizations seem likely to result in failure to report to corrections officials, while correctional officers' views about inmates' ulterior motives in filing reports can also impede the integrity of the reporting process (Owen & Wells, 2006). Departments of Corrections (DOCs) have implemented two basic strategies to increase the chances that victimizations will be reported (Zweig, Naser, Blackmore, & Schaffer, 2006). First, states have created opportunities to report other than with an officer on duty, such as toll-free hotlines or anonymously written complaints. A second overall strategy focuses on inmate educational efforts such as defining sexual violence, prevention, victim rights, services available to victims, and encouraging inmates to report sexual victimizations. According to the Urban Institute report (Zweig et al., 2006), 28 states educate inmates on how to make a report; 20 states provide information on reporting incidents that have happened to others. Some states educate inmates about the consequences of making false reports.

Also a concern is the immediacy of reporting the victimization. Assaults reported on the same day have higher chances of being sustained compared with those that are reported later (Austin et al., 2006). Part of the reason for this relationship can be linked to forensic evidence, as Austin and colleagues found that more than half of sustained cases in Texas prisons included forensic evidence from an exam or rape kit. If the victims wait too long to report, forensic evidence may be unable to be collected reliably. Time can also affect the kind of victim services administered. In Kansas, victims who report within 24 hours have access to community-based crisis services. If inmates wait

beyond that time to report, they may only have access to DOC-based resources (Zweig et al., 2006).

Little research has been conducted on reporting prison sexual violence. The present study seeks to better understand the issue of official reporting of sexual victimization among correctional populations by examining inmates' perceptions of reporting. Using a sample of both men and women inmates in a large Southern prison system, this study explored not only the occurrence of self-reported sexual victimization but also whether or not inmates would officially report a sexual assault if they were so victimized, and whether they would recommend a fellow inmate to report her or his sexual victimization. By examining inmates' perceptions about self-reporting or recommending a fellow inmate to report, findings can be used to tailor correctional policy and programming related to sexual victimization and its reporting.

Review of the Literature

According to the 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) results (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2006, table 91), only 38% of rape/sexual assault victims reported the crime to the police compared with 41% for all crimes and 47% for all violent crimes. Since the 1970s, research examining the official reporting of different types of crime found that sexual assaults were substantially less likely than other types of violent crime to be reported to law enforcement (Hawkins, 1973; Hindelang & Gottfredson, 1976). This same discrepancy occurs when comparing official reports of in-prison sexual violence to victimization survey results. During 2006, there were 6,528 official allegations of sexual violence nationwide indicating with 0.36% of inmates reporting an alleged sexual victimization (Beck et al., 2007). Victimization studies of inmates reveal that up to 21% of inmate respondents indicate they had been sexually victimized at some point while incarcerated (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004), and as high as 4.5% within the past 12 months (Beck & Harrison, 2007).

The Nature of Reporting Free World Sexual Assault

A sizable amount of literature exists as to why sexual victimization goes unreported to law enforcement and a number of persistent explanations have been established. Reasons given by respondents for why such victimization goes unreported include the following (BJS, 2006; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Lievore, 2003; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006): (a) feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment; (b) personal matter

or the victim did not want their family or others to know; (c) reported to another official; (d) the victim lacked evidence, feared that they would not be believed; (e) feared they would receive hostile treatment by law enforcement or others in the justice system; (f) police are ineffective, biased, or would not want to be bothered; (g) dislike or distrust the police or justice system; (h) the victim did not think it was serious enough or was not clear that what happened to them was intentional or a crime; (i) did not know how to report; (j) too inconvenient, time consuming; and, (k) the victim feared reprisal by the perpetrator.

Oftentimes, situational characteristics of the incident and the individual characteristics of the sexual assault victim influence whether or not a victim will report. As for gender, men have been found less likely to report a sexual victimization than women (Felson & Parè, 2005; Pino & Meier, 1999). Race and ethnicity have also been found to play a role in whether an incident will be defined as rape and reported to authorities. NCVS results (Hart & Rennison, 2003) demonstrate that White and Black respondents report sexual assaults at similar rates, and others have found that Asian women may be less likely to report a sexual assault due in part to cultural restraints (Dussich, 2001; & Maciejewski, 2002). The victim-offender relationship also affects whether a victim will report with sexual assaults committed by non-strangers less likely to be reported than those committed by strangers (Felson & Parè, 2005; Hindelang & Gottfredson, 1976; Lizotte, 1985). This could be because victims may be less willing to label a known perpetrator as such because they fear reprisal from someone they know more so than they do from a stranger, or fear their report may be discredited or not believed. Additionally, the severity of the sexual assault, whether the offender used a weapon or whether serious injuries were sustained by the victim, and whether the victim received medical treatment for the incident have been found to increase the probability that the victimization will be reported (Bachman, 1998; Ménard, 2005; Orcutt & Faison, 1988).

Attitudes about sexual assault, including the acceptance of rape myths, can indirectly impact whether a victim may report their assault. Rape myths are those “prejudicial, stereotyped and inaccurate perceptions of sexual violence” that oftentimes lead to victim-blaming and other attitudes that hinder the detection and prosecution of sexual assault perpetrators (Ward, 1995, p. 38). Research has shown that gender affects the acceptance of rape myths with men more likely to subscribe to them (Gerber, Cronin, & Steigman, 2004; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Ward, 1995). Even victims of sexual assault themselves have been found to subscribe to rape myths (Carmody & Washington, 2001; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987), and those who do accept

rape myths were less likely to define their own victimization as sexual assault, especially when they subscribe to those myths that conform to their own unrecognized sexual victimization (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Not defining an incident as a sexual assault is a significant reason for not reporting it (BJS, 2006; Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003). Each of the aforementioned reasons may contribute to a victim's choice to not report their sexual victimization to law enforcement officials. If such incidents go unreported, victims are less likely to receive assistance and the perpetrator may go on to further victimize.

The Occurrence and Nature of Reporting In-Prison Sexual Assault

There has been an increase in official reporting in both absolute numbers and rates of in-prison sexual victimization, nationally, each year between 2004 and 2006, with the most current allegation rate at 2.91 per 1,000 inmates (Beck et al., 2007, p. 3; Beck & Harrison, 2006; Beck & Hughes, 2005). Victimization surveys have yielded varying results about the estimates of sexual violence (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004), but the most current research reports 4.5% of inmates in the past 12 months (Beck & Harrison, 2007).

Using data collected through inmate correspondence, Alarid (2000) found that in-prison sexual assault is underreported and that sexual assaults and threats of sexual assault occur on a daily basis. Reporting incidents to staff when the perpetrators are officers presents a special problem to victims. Baro (1997) found that cases of custodial abuse resulted in forced sexual intercourse, unwanted pregnancies, and even forced prostitution in a small women's correctional facility in Hawaii. Surveys of incarcerated women across three Midwestern facilities revealed rates of sexual assault ranging from 1.27% to 8.0% across facilities, with 45.0% of the incidents involving staff as perpetrators (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2002). Staff sexual misconduct allegations are more represented than inmate-on-inmates sexual victimizations (Beck & Harrison, 2007); however, there seems to be no gender difference between male and female facilities in the rate of staff- or officer-perpetrated sexual violence against inmates (Wolff, Blitz, Shi, Bachman, & Siegel, 2006).

Many of the same reasons given to explain the underreporting of sexual assault in the free community apply to in-prison assaults: (a) feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996); (b) lack of proof, fear of not being credible (Fleisher & Krienert, 2006; Owen & Wells, 2006); (c) officials are ineffective, biased, wouldn't

want to be bothered (Lockwood, 1980; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996); (d) fear of reprisal (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996); (e) don't want to be put into protective custody (Jennes, Maxson, Matsuda, & Sumner, 2007; Toch, 1977); and (f) didn't want to be labeled a "snitch" (Human Rights Watch, 2001). These last two reasons differentiate reasons for not reporting prison sexual assault and free-community sexual assault, suggesting that the prison environment or culture may have a special influence on reporting in prison. In discussing the prison culture, the deprivation hypothesis proposed by Sykes (1958) states that inmates suffer deprivations when entering prison, including liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security. In response to deprivations, inmates form a subculture with its own argot, inmate code, roles, and values (Sykes & Messinger, 1960). The importation hypothesis maintains that rather than these elements of prison resulting from deprivation, they are brought into the prison by inmates as they enter from outside (Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Therefore, the subcultural aspects of prison mirror those in the community. Researchers have used characteristics of inmates before entering prison such as marital status, offense committed, age at admission, and gang membership to represent support for importation, while variables such as sentence length, time served, time remaining, and custody level have been used to measure the effect of deprivation. Thomas (1977) suggests viewing the two perspectives as complementary rather than as competing, and empirical evidence has been found for both hypotheses (Jiang & Fisher-Giorlando, 2002; Paterline & Peterson, 1999; Sorenson, Wrinkle, & Gutierrez, 1998).

Studies of female institutions have revealed that many of the same subcultural elements exist in varying degrees. For example, a somewhat altered male inmate code has been found to persist over time (Giallombardo, 1966; Owen, 1998) in that women were hesitant to trust others but rejected the notion of doing your own time. Although females do tend to be more social, developing relationships with their fellow inmates as well as confiding in staff (Girshick, 1999; Pollock, 2002), elements of the code do suggest that it is better to mind your own business and not trust staff members (Owen, 1998).

Hassine (1999) contends that the social reality of prisons has been altered because of the changing nature of inmates. Male and female offenders seem to be younger and more violent today than they were in years past. Therefore, there tends to be less cohesion and more isolation in today's institutions, including female prisons, than in the past (Greer, 2000; Owen, 1998). Critics of the inmate code find that though still present in inmates' vernacular, snitching is more tolerated today (Faulkner & Faulkner, 1997). Hassine maintains that today's male inmate code includes recommendations such as "don't

gamble, don't mess with drugs, don't mess with homosexuals, don't steal, [and] don't borrow or lend" (p. 42). This contemporary code offers advice for avoiding extortion, which is important in the context of physical victimization in the inmate culture. Sexual interactions for inmates are reported to begin in exploitive, coercive interactions—game playing and economic manipulation for women (Greer, 2000) and promises of protection among the fearful and canteen goods for men (Fleisher & Krienert, 2006).

The most relevant aspect of the inmate code to the present study is the proscription against "snitches." The snitch has been documented in both male and female prisons, and because of the value on group loyalty, official reporting of incidents is viewed unfavorably. Although Owen (1998) found that proscriptions against snitching do exist in female institutions, there are exceptions, and the informal penalties for reporting today are much less than they were in the past, such as social isolation or being made the subject of intense gossip. The common perception among male inmates is that snitching will be met with violence, possibly sexual violence (Fleisher & Krienert, 2006; Toch, 1977). The proscription against snitching among women's and men's inmate subcultures and stigma associated with it can act as a barrier to the official reporting of in-prison sexual victimization. The goal of the present research was to investigate inmate perceptions related to officially reporting in-prison sexual assault. We specifically addressed two questions. Can the likelihood of reporting prison sexual assault victimization be predicted from inmate characteristics, past victimization, and/or rape myth acceptance? Can the likelihood of advising an incarcerated friend to report prison sexual assault be related to inmate characteristics, past victimization, and/or rape myth acceptance? By answering these questions, this study fills a gap in the literature related to inmates' perceptions of official reporting of in-prison sexual victimization.

Data and Method

The present study is based on questionnaire data about prison culture and sexual violence from male and female inmates in a large Southern prison system. Sampling was a two-stage process—first units were chosen, then inmates from those units. Only institutional prisons were sampled, excluding all state-run jails, medical and psychiatric prisons, and transfer facilities. Prisons were selected based on two criteria, convenience and number of cases of sexual assault reported between the years 2003 and 2004. Prisons were intentionally selected from the lowest, moderate, and highest strata of officially reported counts of sexual assault in the state. Once the units were selected, female inmates across minimum, medium, and maximum security

levels were sampled using simple random and systematic techniques. General population male inmates were randomly sampled by correctional administrators, excluding administrative segregation, protective custody, and those with trusty status. In all, 935 inmates participated in the survey with 499 men and 436 women. The survey achieved an overall response rate of 58.5%. A total of 23 cases were removed from the analysis because of the amount of missing data, leaving a sample size of 912. For the remaining cases, missing data were imputed using the expectation likelihood method available in SPSS 15.0.

Data Collection

Researchers administered paper-and-pencil questionnaires, available in both English and Spanish. For the women, each wave from the general population included approximately 30 women and surveys were administered in classrooms, libraries, and chapel day rooms. Women in closed-custody cell blocks, in waves of five or less, completed the survey in the cell block dayroom and respondents in administrative segregation were allowed to complete the survey in their cell. Correctional officers were only present outside of the survey administration area. For the men, survey administrations occurred in libraries, dining halls, and gymnasiums, depending on the size of the wave, which ranged from 30 to 101 inmates. Researchers remained in the room during the course of each administration to assist and respond to questions or concerns raised by the participants. Most respondents completed the survey in about 45 minutes. The entire data collection process took place between January and September 2006.

Measures

Dependent variables. Perceptions of official reporting were measured on two dimensions, self-report and recommended reporting. *Self-report* was measured by asking, "If you were the victim of a sexual assault while in prison, how likely would you be to report it to staff?" Respondents selected from the following response categories: (a) Depends, (b) Definitely not report it, (c) Probably not report it, (d) Probably report it, and (e) Definitely report it. The variable was recoded so that definitely report equaled 1 and all other attributes equaled 0. The instructions for *recommended reporting* were "The following questions ask you to imagine what advice you would give to a friend who is an inmate that was a victim of crime/violence in prison. Please mark the answer that best describes the advice you would give your friend."

The particular statement of interest to the present study was "Another inmate forcibly sexually assaults your friend" and response categories for this statement were (a) Deal with it privately, (b) Ask other friends to help you out, (c) Report it to staff at a later time, and (d) Report it to staff immediately. The variable was recoded so that report to staff immediately equaled 1 and all other attributes equaled 0.

Independent and control variables. Measures of sexual victimization in this study examined both lifetime sexual victimization and prison sexual victimization. The questions asked to obtain information on lifetime and prison sexual victimization, were respectively, "Have you ever been sexually abused or assaulted in your lifetime?" and "Has anyone ever attempted to sexually assault you or actually sexually assaulted you while you were in jail or prison?" In the survey, *sexual assault* was defined as "nonconsensual contact between the penis and vulva, penis and anus, the mouth and penis, mouth and vulva, or mouth and anus," and *abusive sexual contact* was defined as "intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of any person without his or her consent."

Inmates responded to questions asking whether they had been, in the past year, threatened with violence or been assaulted. If inmates answered that they had experienced either, their response was coded *yes* (=1) and all other responses were coded *no* (=0). Additionally, inmates responded to whether they knew a victim of in-prison sexual assault (*yes* = 1, all others = 0) and if they knew someone sexually victimized within the last year (*yes* = 1, all others = 0).

Rape myth acceptance was measured by individual scores on the Inmate Rape-Supportive Beliefs (IRSB) scale (Blackburn, 2006; Fowler, 2007). The IRSB scale was developed for this study and is a 28-item modified version of Burt's (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale and Deitz, Blackwell, Daley, and Bentley's (1982) Rape Empathy Scale tailored for the prison environment. The IRSB Scale was based on a 5-point Likert-type format with response anchors of "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree." Statements on the IRSB scale measured both empathy for victims as well as anti-victim sentiments. Example statements on the IRSB Scale include "Inmates falsely report a sexual assault to call attention to themselves;" "Under certain circumstances, I can understand why an inmate would use force to have sexual relations with another inmate;" "Inmates should never blame themselves for being sexually assaulted;" and "Forced sex between inmates is unjustifiable under any circumstances." Higher scores on the IRSB scale indicate an acceptance of rape myths and a general lack of

empathy for rape victims. A final 18-item scale resulted in a Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$ (min-max, 18-90).

Demographics measured include age (in years), gender, race, whether they were single (never married), whether they were heterosexual prior to imprisonment, and whether they graduated high school. Also included were several measures consistent with prisonization: time served (in years), sentence length (in months), sentence remaining (in months), and whether the respondent was previously incarcerated. Also, custody level and whether the inmate resided in a dorm, sometimes used as a proxy for custody, were measured. Respondents were asked to evaluate their level of *power* compared with other inmates. Respondents answers were anchored by *very weak* (1) and *very strong* (5). Sample characteristics, variables, and their descriptive statistics are given in Table 1.

Results

Self-Report

A backward elimination logistic regression examined the factors that affect inmates' attitudes toward self-reporting her or his own sexual victimization and recommending immediately reporting to a friend. As suggested, the alpha level should be relaxed when performing stepwise procedures to avoid Type II errors (Menard, 2002); variables with $p > .10$ were eliminated from the regression model. The results of the backward elimination regression on the perception of self-report are in Table 2. Eight variables were found to significantly influence inmates' attitude toward self-reporting: age, being single, being heterosexual prior to incarceration, time served (in years), being a victim of prison sexual violence, being Black, completing high school/GED, and recommending reporting to a friend.

Being a victim of prison sexual assault—apart from being a victim of violent threats or assaults within the past year in prison or being a victim of sexual violence at any other point in their lives—decreased an inmate's stated likelihood of "definitely" reporting her or his sexual victimization by 52.7%. Despite the fact that most inmates support the idea of reporting her or his victimization (Table 1), actual victims indicate they are less inclined to do so. This finding tends to support the bulk of work dedicated to prison culture and sexual assault, where inmate reports to staff could add additional consequences, like retaliation or additional labels of being "weak," which could lead to increased harassment by other inmates.

Inmates who stated they were heterosexual prior to incarceration increased the perceived likelihood that she or he would self-report; on the other hand,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample (N = 912)

General Characteristic	Male		Female		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Age**	42.8	10.7	37.8	10.0	40.51	10.7
Sentence length**	319.8	161.6	185.1	142.4	257.9	167.1
Time served**	10.2	7.3	5.4	5.0	8.0	6.8
Time remaining**	216.7	160.4	105.4	107.9	165.6	149.4
Power	3.6	0.9	3.7	0.9	3.7	0.9
IRSB**	43.5	11.3	40.1	11.7	41.9	11.6
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Gender						
Male					493	54.1
Female					419	45.9
Race						
Caucasian	178	36.1	155	37.0	333	36.5
African American	198	40.2	165	39.4	363	39.8
Hispanic	83	16.8	68	16.2	151	16.6
Other	34	6.9	31	7.4	65	7.1
Marital status						
Never married	199	40.4	168	40.1	367	40.2
Married, divorced, or widowed	294	59.6	251	59.9	545	59.8
Education						
High school graduate	183	37.1	135	32.2	318	34.9
Non-high school graduate	310	62.9	284	67.8	594	65.1
Sexual orientation**						
Heterosexual	434	88.0	293	69.9	727	79.7
Homosexual or bisexual	59	12.0	126	30.1	185	20.3
Lifetime victim**						
Yes	106	21.5	295	70.4	401	44.0
No	387	78.5	124	29.6	511	56.0
In-prison victim						
Yes	64	13.0	74	17.7	138	15.1
No	429	87.0	345	82.3	774	84.9
Previous incarceration**						
Yes	256	52.1	137	33.0	393	43.4
No	35	47.9	278	67.0	513	56.6
Custody status**						
G1	19	4.1	26	6.7	45	5.3
G2	324	69.8	224	57.6	548	64.2
G3	102	22.0	72	18.5	174	20.4

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
G4	18	3.9	45	11.6	63	7.4
G5	1	0.2	17	4.4	18	2.1
Administrative segregation	0	0.0	5	1.3	5	0.6
Housing type**						
Dormitory	231	47.9	324	80.4	555	62.7
Cell block	249	51.7	61	15.1	310	35.0
Other	2	0.4	18	4.5	20	2.3
Know a victim of sexual abuse in prison*						
Yes	211	42.8	144	34.4	355	38.9
No	282	57.2	275	65.6	557	61.1
Know a victim of sexual abuse in prison in the past year*						
Yes	65	13.2	88	21.0	153	16.8
No	428	86.8	331	79.0	759	83.2
Victim of violence in the past year**						
Yes	154	31.2	197	47.1	351	38.6
No	338	68.6	221	52.9	559	61.4
Self-report sexual assault						
Definitely	307	62.3	247	58.9	554	60.7
Other	186	37.7	172	41.1	358	39.3
Recommend reporting sexual assault**						
Report it immediately	290	58.8	358	85.4	648	71.1
Other	203	41.2	61	14.6	264	28.9

Note: IRSB = Inmate Rape-Supportive Beliefs scale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$ (for gender comparisons).

inmates who reported being gay or bisexual prior to incarceration were less likely to report their victimization than heterosexual inmates. Wooden and Parker (1982) describe a prison social context where gay and bisexual men are pressured to assume a “feminine” social role that can involve sexual submission to other inmates. Others have found that being gay or bisexual is a risk factor for being targeted for acts of sexual violence in prison (Hensley, Koscheski, & Tewksbury, 2005; Nacci & Kane, 1984), so inmates who are more likely to be pressured or forced into sexual violence because of their sexual orientation are less willing to report it when it does occur.

Table 2. Backward Elimination Logistic Regression Model of Self-Report

Variables	B	SE	Significance	Odds Ratio
Age	0.017	0.009	.069	1.017
Heterosexual	0.958	0.238	<.001	2.607
Single	-0.485	0.176	.006	0.616
Time served	-0.028	0.012	.026	0.973
Prison sexual victim	-0.749	0.228	.001	0.473
Race (White is reference)				
Black	0.509	0.194	.009	1.137
Hispanic	-0.047	0.232	.838	0.954
Other	0.246	0.317	.439	1.278
High school	-0.347	0.180	.054	0.707
Recommended reporting	1.467	0.162	<.001	4.337
Constant	-1.258	0.462	.006	0.284
-2 log likelihood	979.493			
χ^2	151.063	$p < .001$		
Nagelkerke R^2	.221			

Note: Weighted for gender representativeness. All variables significant at the $p < .10$ level.

Increases in time served also decreased respondents' perception they would self-report. For every year served, there is a 2.7% decrease in the likelihood that an inmate would self-report her or his own victimization. Time served is commonly used as a measure of prisonization, with the belief that longer amounts of time in prison lead to greater exposure to prison culture and deprivations. In turn, greater exposure to prison culture could lead to greater discouragement of reporting because of the inmate code that directs inmates to avoid snitching and cooperating with staff.

Demographic variables significantly predicted whether an inmate would self-report. Single (never married) inmates were 38.4% less likely to say they would self-report than all other inmates. Additionally, Black inmates were 13.7% more likely to indicate they would self-report their sexual assault compared with Whites. Findings from the NCVS (Hart & Rennison, 2003) indicate that White respondents and Black respondents report sexual assaults to the police at similar rates. The results here are significant but modest. White inmates were no more or less likely to indicate they would self-report than other inmates of other races or ethnicities. Inmates who had received a high school diploma or its equivalency were less likely to state they would

Table 3. Backward Elimination Logistic Regression Model of Recommended Reporting

Variables	B	SE	Significance	Odds Ratio
Age	0.040	0.008	<.001	1.041
Heterosexual	-0.732	0.264	.006	0.481
Power	-0.146	0.088	.099	0.865
Male	-1.659	0.444	<.001	0.190
Previous incarceration	0.515	0.165	.002	1.674
Know a victim	-0.432	0.176	.014	0.649
Know victim within 1 year	0.746	0.267	.005	2.108
IRSB	-0.029	0.007	<.001	0.971
Self-report	1.492	0.165	<.001	4.445
Constant	1.776	0.691	.010	5.909
-2 log likelihood	944.956			
χ^2	194.242	$p < .001$		
Nagelkerke R^2	.276			

Note: Weighted for gender representativeness. All variables significant at the $p < .10$ level.

self-report their victimization by 29.3% compared with inmates who had not achieved a diploma or GED. Older inmates were more likely to say they would self-report their attack. For every 1 year increase in age, there was a 1.7% increase in the chance that a respondent would self-report. This runs counter to the time served finding as age and time served correlate positively. As inmates age, they may perceive themselves as more physically vulnerable, despite the fact that they have acquired prison cultural knowledge that should allow them to more easily navigate the prison social world and/or finish out their sentences. Finally, inmates who stated they would recommend other inmates to report immediately were more likely to say they would self-report than those that stated they would not recommend others to report, demonstrating some consistency between self-report and recommended reporting.

Recommended Reporting

Another backward elimination logistic regression model was estimated to ascertain those factors that influence recommending some other inmate to report her or his victimization; the results are listed in Table 3. Nine variables affected an inmate’s decision to refer an inmate to report his or her attack:

age, being heterosexual, power, being male, previous incarceration, knowing a victim, knowing a victim who had been victimized within the past year, IRSB score, and whether they would self-report their own victimization. Only two of the variables that predicted whether an inmate would self-report overlap in predicting whether an inmate would recommend reporting to another victimized inmate. First, age affected recommended reporting in much the same fashion it did self-reporting; a 1-year increase in age led to a 4.1% increase in the chance to recommend immediate reporting. Second, self-reported heterosexual status affected recommended reporting, but in the opposite direction that it did self-reporting. Heterosexual inmates were 51.9% less likely to recommend reporting than homosexual and bisexual inmates, whereas heterosexual inmates were more likely than homosexual and bisexual inmates to state they would self-report their own victimization.

Inmates rating themselves more powerful relative to other inmates were less willing to recommend reporting. A one-unit increase in the power scale resulted in a 13.5% decrease in the likelihood of recommended reporting. Inmates who rated themselves weaker may view themselves as more vulnerable or dependent on staff for help, thus more likely to recommend staff intervention to victims.

Male inmates were 81% less likely to recommend reporting than female inmates. Past research suggests that women are less likely to follow the traditional elements of the inmate code than men (Giallombardo, 1966; Owen, 1998) and rely on staff more as counselors (Girshick, 1999), thus more likely to recommend others to report their victimization. Also, previously incarcerated respondents were 67% more likely to recommend reporting to other inmates.

Whether or not an inmate knew a victim had counteracting effects in the model. Almost 40% of the sample (Table 1) reported that they had ever known a victim of prison sexual violence; these inmates were also 35% less likely to recommend reporting. About 17% of respondents indicated they knew someone sexually victimized within the past year, and were twice as likely to recommend reporting as those who had not known a victim within the last year.

The IRSB affected recommended reporting in an expected direction. A one-unit increase in the IRSB scale score resulted in a 2.9% decrease of the likelihood of recommended reporting. The higher the score, the more accepting of stereotypical and untrue beliefs about sexual assault the respondent is, and presumably the less likely they would be to recommend reporting an incident. This mirrors Cochran's (2006) research that found a negative correlation between rape myths and referrals to mental health services among

sampled college students. Last, inmates who said they would self-report were well more than four times more likely to recommend reporting.

Discussion

This study examined predictors of officially reporting sexual assault, finding that eight variables were significantly related to self-reporting and nine variables significantly related to recommended reporting. Although the research was exploratory in identifying factors that relate intentions to officially report, it provides several starting points for future research. Most inmates answered that they would definitely report their sexual assault if they were so victimized, with men and women inmates at similar levels. Furthermore, those inmates who had never been sexually victimized while in prison were significantly more likely to respond that they would officially report if they were so victimized. As with self-reporting, the majority of inmates stated they would recommend to a friend that he or she report their sexual assault to correctional staff immediately, with women inmates more so than males. Additionally, those with lower scores on the IRSB scale, those who have not known a victim, and those who have known a victim in the past year were more likely to recommend reporting.

The year prior to data collection, the state began offering inmate education and training about sexual assault and reporting to inmates admitted to prison. These efforts may be proving effective since the less amount of time an inmate served led to increased chances in self-reporting. An alternate explanation makes use of the deprivation aspect; inmates who have served less time may be somewhat inoculated from prison cultural standards, like not cooperating or talking with staff. This could be because of some aspect of the socialization process, such as the shock of learning a new social world and physical challenges to newly admitted inmates leading to slower acceptance of the inmate code and increased reliance on staff for protection.

Older inmates were more likely to intend to self-report and recommend reporting whereas those who rate themselves as weaker were more likely to recommend reporting. Both power and age may be reflections of vulnerability, as older inmates are at risk for physical, sexual, and property victimization (Kerbs & Jolley, 2007). The prison culture literature is replete with examples of how an inmate's display of "weakness" indicates vulnerability to predatory inmates. As such, inmates who believe they are vulnerable to attack may be more likely to rely on staff or recommend others to do the same.

The same vulnerability explanation may not apply to other at-risk groups such as bisexual and homosexual inmates and those previously sexually

victimized in prison. These inmates were less likely to intend to self-report. It may be easier for inmates who are not as likely to be targeted for sexual assault (heterosexual and nonvictims) to indicate they would report their victimization as reporting is neither as likely a possible outcome for them, nor the social consequences of simultaneously being a victim and a snitch because of their nontarget status. Because they have been victimized or pressured for sex, these two groups could be willing to refuse to add to their current level of harassment by making a report on top of already experiencing pressure for sex or victimization.

One implication could be to identify on intake and offer tailored programming aimed at inmates who are identified as vulnerable to attack—for example, gay, bisexual, or transsexual inmates—which encourages reporting of violent victimizations and lessens the stigma of doing so. Other possible programming efforts could be aimed at decreasing inmates' reliance on the code and increasing the ease to approach staff. The finding that women were more likely to recommend reporting could result from the notably closer relationships they have with correctional officers (Girshick, 1999) and decreased adherence to the traditional inmate code (Giallombardo, 1966; Owen, 1998).

Other variables associated with the importation perspective affected self-reporting. Single inmates and younger inmates were less likely to indicate that they would self-report. Identifying these inmates and concentrating educational efforts and training on them may be beneficial. Black inmates were most likely to report, suggesting that efforts also be focused on White, Hispanic, and other inmates. Additionally, previously incarcerated inmates were more likely to recommend reporting to a friend. Their past experience in prison may lead to a perspective where recommending reporting to another seems more beneficial than dealing with the victimization on individual terms. This finding seems somewhat contrary to the positive relationship between self-report and time served found here. In a traditional notion of prisonization, these inmates have previously spent some time in prison. It could be expected that those who have previously been incarcerated would have already been socialized to the inmate code and less likely to recommend reporting.

Although rape-supportive beliefs played no role in self-reporting, it was a significant predictor in recommended reporting. It would seem stereotypical beliefs about rape affect how individuals evaluate situations relevant to others and not themselves. Higher scores on the IRSB scale may be less empathetic toward victims or less likely to consider a situation rape, thus less likely to make a referral. As previously mentioned, these findings parallel those regarding referrals of sexual assault victims to mental health treatment (Cochran, 2006).

Nearly 40% of the sample knew a victim of prison sexual assault but were less likely to recommend reporting. Those who knew a victim in the past year were more likely to recommend reporting, indicating that the recent occurrence of a known event may impact recommended reporting. Jones and Schmid (1989) state that hearing about a sexual assault that recently occurred can shock an inmate into changing his adaptation strategy and lead to a returned sense of helplessness that the inmate has gradually overcome with the passage of time. This sense of helplessness can heighten vulnerability, thus more likely to recommend reporting.

The efforts here are exploratory, seeking out possible starting points and explanations to intentions to self-report and recommend reporting. There are several limitations worth addressing. One issue deals with the accuracy of respondents' answers. Participants may telescope events, being untruthful in their answers, in the hopes of tarnishing the image of the correctional agency or failing to report their own victimization, or answering questions in a socially desirable manner. Finally, the sample from which these data were collected was not a true random sample. Because of this and the differences in prison culture across the nation, our findings can only be generalized back to the population from which the sample was drawn. Although these limitations exist, our findings give insight into prisoners' attitudes and experiences in a large Southern prison system regarding sexual victimization and official reporting.

Although these findings fill a gap in the available literature on the official reporting of in-prison sexual victimization, future researchers should examine theoretically relevant, contextual, and individual factors that may affect official reporting. Researchers could also examine differences between prisons based on official reporting and victimization rates. Additionally, the programs and policies initiated in response to PREA and sexual violence should be evaluated for effectiveness and overall impact, especially those programs aimed at encouraging inmates' victimization reports. Further, administrative practices could be evaluated at each institution to ensure policy compliance and programming integrity, otherwise reporting could be undermined.

Sexual victimizations go unreported for a number of reasons. Prison culture seems to hinder inmate victims' assistance and reporting. Because of past inmate abuses of the reporting system, correctional officers' cynicism about inmates' reports may undermine the integrity of the process. Changes to prison culture, administrative and inmate, are necessary so that victims have the opportunity to receive necessary assistance (Gibbons & Katzenbach, 2006). Prevention strategies may not be totally effective; thus, efforts to educate inmates on the importance of reporting and reporting procedures

should be continued with the aim of changing stigmatizing cultural beliefs against making such reports. If officials are unaware of victimizations assistance may be withheld and perpetrators free to victimize again.

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