

## The Effect of Conjugal Visitation on Sexual Violence in Prison

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**Abstract** Using yearly state-level data drawn from a variety of different sources and a pooled cross-sectional time-series research design, we examine whether conjugal visitation attenuates sexual violence in prison. The determination of whether sexual violence in prison is less apt to transpire in states that allow conjugal visitation is theoretically relevant. Feminist theory argues that conjugal visitation has little if any influence on the occurrence of rape and other sexual offenses in prison, notwithstanding the gender of the offender and victim, because such offenses are crimes of power that are employed by the offender as an instrument to dominate and humiliate the victim. On the other hand, sexual gratification theory postulates that conjugal visitation provides inmates with a means of sexual release. Therefore, conjugal visitation should reduce sexual offending in prison. Results support sexual gratification theory by showing that states permitting conjugal visitation have significantly fewer instances of reported rape and other sexual offenses in their prisons. The policy implications of these findings are discussed.

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## Introduction

Sexual violence remains a persistent problem in our society. Although undercounted, there were 248,280 incidents of rape and sexual assault reported in the U.S. during 2007 (Department of Justice, 2010). The analysis of victimization data further highlights the pervasive nature of the sexual violence problem in America. In a recent analysis of national victimization data, Basile, Chen, Black and Saltzman (2007) report that one in 59 adults were victims of forced sex and unwanted sexual activity within the 12 months prior to their being interviewed. One in 15 adults surveyed also indicated at least one past sexual victimization that occurred during their lifetime. The majority of these victims experienced their first victimization during childhood or adolescence when they were most vulnerable. These early victimizations are troubling in that they amplify the risk of future sexual victimizations (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006).

The physical and psychological harm experienced by victims of sexual violence are well documented in the literature. Victims of sexual violence often require some form of medical and or psychological treatment following the occurrence of the crime, and this treatment frequently continues for many years beyond the original assault (Draucker & Martsolf, 2010). Substance abuse, depression and psychological symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder are just a few of the problems likely to manifest themselves following a sexual assault (Marx, 2005). Rape victims also have a substantially higher susceptibility to lifelong physical ailments such as fibromyalgia and chronic pain among other disorders (Paras et al., 2009).

Beyond the physical and psychological trauma endured by the victim, there is additional harm incurred in the form of economic, familial, social and community strain. The victim of sexual violence often faces financial hardship because of the monetary cost associated with immediate and long-term treatment (Golding, Stein, Siegel, Burnam & Sorenson, 1988). Victims of sexual violence commonly miss work, which in turn affects them financially, and has adverse consequences for their families, employers and the community. Family, friends and other caregivers can also be described as secondary victims in that they frequently experience significant stress in their efforts to cope with the harm engendered by the sexual violence (Campbell & Wasco, 2005).

## Theory

While theory pertaining to the causes of sexual violence is broad and diverse, two divergent perspectives can be distinguished. This classification inevitably simplifies some substantive theoretical issues, but it identifies the essential differences between the two positions. One prominent view asserts that sexual violence results primarily from an offender's desire to exert power and control over another individual (Brownmiller, 1975). The appeal of the feminist perspective in explaining sexual

violence is illustrated by its prominence in the literature. It has been used to explain rape generally (Hockett, Saucier, Hoffman, Smith & Craig, 2009; Martin, Vieraitis & Britto, 2006) and also various forms of sexual violence including college campus assaults (Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeney, 2006), premarital rape (Christopher, Madura & Weaver, 1998), marital rape (Bennice & Resick, 2003), acquaintance rape (Chiroro, Bohner, Viki & Jarvis, 2004), sexual victimizations in the military (Hillman, 2009), and male-on-male rape (Man & Cronan, 2001)

According to this perspective, the sexual aspect of a rape or other sexual offense is not motivationally relevant because a sexual offense is viewed as “sexual behavior in the primary service of non-sexual needs” (Groth, 1979:13). A major supposition within this theoretical perspective is that some type of “animus” directed at the victim is a precipitating causal factor in the occurrence of sexual violence (Gaffney, 1997:264). Hence, studies using a feminist orientation as their theoretical foundation view the problem of sexual violence as rooted in the larger social structure whereby those with power victimize a lesser positioned, more vulnerable target.

Evidence suggests that those enjoying a traditionally dominant status in society or engaged in a culture promoting “rape myths” are more likely to hold beliefs that justify sexually violent behavior (Hockett et al., 2009). Rape myths are a body of false beliefs and stereotypes that are employed by the offender to shift the blame for an attack to the victim (Burt, 1980; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). In this way, the perceived harm to the victim can be excused or not even acknowledged (Littleton, Bretkopf & Berenson, 2008). Adherence to such beliefs also serves to sustain the pervasiveness of sexual violence by rationalizing the actions of the powerful. Of note, research examining the role that these sexual stereotypes play in sexual offending behavior finds that rationalizing thoughts are transmitted culturally to both men and women (Glick et al., 2000) via what has been termed a “rape promoting culture” (Sanday, 1981).

In support of the feminist perspective, a positive correlation is reported between sexual hostility and rape myth acceptance (Chapleau, Oswald & Russell, 2007). Males are not only more likely than females to accept and internalize rape myths, but they are also more apt to report enhanced feelings of sexual hostility and to include dominance themes in their sexual fantasies (Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004). These characteristics that males exhibit are likely a reflection of their historical dominance (Glick et al., 2000). Research also illustrates a connection between sexually aggressive behavior and the endorsement of rape myths among men who conform to masculine values, i.e., having power over women, being dominant and being violent (Locke & Mahalik, 2005). When considered in its totality, this body of research suggests that there is a linkage between cultural messages of dominance and the incidence and promotion of sexual violence in society.

A second widely adduced perspective, which is drawn from the literature on evolutionary psychology, is commonly referred to as sexual gratification theory. This theory proffers that the ultimate motivation for rape and sexual violence generally is not to control and dominate the victim but rather to achieve sexual gratification. Proponents of sexual gratification theory conceive of sexual violence as an alternative mating strategy employed by individuals when opportunities for consensual sex are lacking (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000) or when the sexual offense

provides the offender with a relatively expedient and low cost means to achieve sexual gratification (Medea & Thompson, 1974).

There is a sizable amount of empirical evidence to support the proposition that rape and sexual assault are sexually motivated crimes rather than crimes of power. First, because it circumvents the mating choice of a woman, rape it is viewed as a reproductive strategy to perpetuate a rapist's genes. Validating this assertion is the finding that female rape victims are younger on average and are more likely to be in their childbearing ages than are women victims of other violent crimes such as robbery (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). The probability of pregnancy following a rape is also similar to the probability of pregnancy following unprotected consensual sex (Fessler, 2003). This similarity in the likelihood of pregnancy is speculated to result from the victim being less apt to use contraception immediately prior to the rape because the victim did not anticipate being raped, from rapists being less likely to use contraception during a rape than during consensual sex, and from visual cues like appearance and smell that may suggest to the rapist that the victim is ovulating and can be impregnated (Miller, Tybur & Jordan, 2007).

Second, in contrast to crimes such as robbery and assault, the crime of rape rarely culminates in serious injury to the victim (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). In the few instances where death occurs, the rape victim is much more likely to be of pre-childbearing age than of childbearing age. And this relationship exists despite the fact that very young rape victims are generally less reliable than older rape victims in identifying the offender.

Third, some studies find that rapists, especially when the victim and offender are acquainted with each other, often form a long-term relationship following the rape (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). These long-term relationships are more likely to occur if the rape act was completed rather than just attempted (Ellis, 1989). It is also argued that if rape is used as a means to dominate & control the victim, then why does a man usually attempt to be charming and courteous immediately prior to an acquaintance rape? One possible answer to this question is that the man only used coercion and force after his initial attempt to copulate with the female failed. Men also often apologize after a date rape for having to use force (Ellis, 1989).

Fourth, recent research finds that the ratio of men to women in the population is correlated strongly with male-on-female intimate violence. Drawing from evolutionary psychology, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg (2010) proffered that a high sex ratio (i.e., more men than women in the population) increased male sexual competition for female mates. This escalation in competition among men for women resulted in sexual jealousy, which in turn engendered more male-on-female intimate partner violence. Male-on-female intimate partner violence is viewed within this framework as a mechanism of control that men employ to help ensure the sexual fidelity of their female mates. Analyzing data drawn from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the Census, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg found that a high sex ratio increased male-on-female intimate partner violence. They also found that male-on-female intimate partner violence occurred more frequently in cities with greater female labor force participation. They speculated that participation in the workforce enhanced a woman's ability to meet and associate with men other than her spouse or boyfriend.

Lastly, gang rapes are relatively rare (Reiss, 1988). Gang rapes are theorized to be relatively rare because a bond is less likely to form between any of the male offenders and the female victim, because sperm competition increases with multiple offenders,

and because confidence of paternity decreases when multiple offenders are involved. Male rapists are also more likely to urinate on their victims in a gang rape than in a solo-rape (Holmstrom & Burgess, 1980). Again, this is ancillary evidence that multiple male rapists are in competition with each other to impregnate the female and are using urine to mark the female victim. Lastly, the few chemical castration studies conducted in the U.S. and abroad report that sex offenders on the drug Depo Provera, which acts to reduce the offender's sex drive, are significantly less likely to recidivate (Grubin, 2008; Maletzky, Tolan & McFarland, 2006).

### **Conjugal Visitation and Sexual Offending in Violence**

Because of the protracted debate in the literature, additional research is necessary before a defensible position can be reached on the validity of feminist and sexual gratification theory. However, it is important to recognize that the analysis of male-on-female sexual offending is not the only way to gain fresh insight into the veracity of these two perspectives. Another way is to probe the relationship between conjugal visitation and the amount of sexual violence that transpires behind prison walls.

Prison sexual violence remains an underdeveloped research area and has led some to lament that it is "America's most ignored crime problem" (Dumond, 2003; Miller, 2010). Although the sexual violence occurring in prison is likely to be underreported to authorities because of concerns of safety, stigma and humiliation (Miller, 2010), victimization studies indicate that it is a pervasive problem. It is estimated that in 2007 approximately 60,500 inmates or about 4.5% of all the inmates housed in state and federal correctional facilities experienced one or more incidents of sexual victimization (Beck & Harrison, 2007a, b). Other victimization studies also suggest that rape and sexual assault transpire with relative frequency in prison. Hensley, Tewksbury and Castle (2003) found that about 14% of 174 male inmates surveyed in Oklahoma's correctional facilities claimed that they had been targets of sexual abuse. In one Southern maximum-security prison, Hensley, Koscheski and Tewksbury (2005) observed that 18% of the inmates in their sample experienced sexual threats, while another 8.5% reported a sexual assault to prison authorities. In another study, Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, Rucker, Bumby and Donaldson (1996) estimated that about 22% of male prison inmates in a Midwestern state were the victims of some form of forced sexual activity.

A number of different strategies have been recommended to attenuate prison sexual violence. One potentially fruitful strategy to reduce sexual violence in prison, which has surprisingly received scant attention, is to allow inmates conjugal visitation. Proponents of conjugal visitation argue that such a policy will reduce violence generally and sexual aggression specifically among inmates while promoting other positive outcomes (Wyatt, 2006). Conjugal visitation is reported to promote family bonding (Carlson & Cervera, 1991), better disciplinary records and post release adjustment and socialization (Howser, Grossman & MacDonald, 1983). Research also finds that conjugal visitation influences consensual sexual activity of prison inmates. In a comparison of U.S. and Mexican prisons, Olivero, Clark, Morgado and Mounce (1992) found that conjugal visitation, which is typically used in Mexican prisons, lowered the frequency of prison homosexual activity. However, while a few

studies have examined the influence of conjugal visitation on violence generally (Hensley, Koscheski, & Tewksbury, 2002) or questioned inmates (Carlson & Cervera, 1991; Hensley, Rutland & Gray-Ray, 2000), spouses (Carlson & Cervera, 1991) and prison wardens (Hensley, Tewksbury, & Chiang, 2002) about their perceptions of conjugal visitation programs, there has yet to be an empirical study focusing specifically on the impact of conjugal visitation on sexual violence.

This lack of research is a critical oversight not only because conjugal visitation might attenuate sexual violence in prison, but also because a negative relationship between conjugal visitation and sexual violence, controlling for other relevant factors, would buttress the logic associated with sexual gratification theory. Sexual gratification theory maintains that rape and other sexual offending in male prisons occurs because women are not readily available. Along these lines studies not only find that homosexual activity increases when men go to prison (Hensley, Tewksbury & Wright, 2001), but that most men who participate in homosexual activity in prison stop their homosexual activity once they leave prison and return to society where women are available to them.

Conversely, the lack of a substantive relationship between conjugal visitation and sexual offending would be consistent with the rationale espoused by feminist theory. The feminist position regarding the factors responsible for the occurrence of male-on-male rape in confinement facilities is similar to that of male-on-female rape because in both instances the offender views his victim as weak and subordinate (Carroll, 1974; Lees, 1997). As Man and Cronan (2001:149) readily note, "... the exertion of physical power over men resembles rape of females in that it reinforces the attacker's sense of masculinity by making him feel powerful." Rape thus enhances the masculinity of the offender, notwithstanding the sex of the victim, by affording him the opportunity to control, dominate and humiliate his victim (Lees, 1997).

The desire to demonstrate masculinity forcefully is especially poignant in ethnic power struggles among inmates. These ethnic power struggles often precede sexual violence in prison (Hensley et al., 2005). Moreover, despite the fact that blacks outnumber whites in prison, black-on-white rape is far more prevalent than white-on-black rape (Human Rights Watch, 2001). These interracial sexual assaults typically involve multiple black offenders and a white victim. This pattern of black-on-white gang rape might be the manifestation of deep-seated resentment and hostility among blacks toward whites. The thesis that racial animosity engenders interracial gang rape is noteworthy because collective violence is a mechanism for addressing grievances between ethnic groups (Senechal de la Roche, 2001). In sum then, if feminist theory has any validity, conjugal visitation should have little if any effect on sexual offending in prison.

## Data

This study analyzes longitudinal data for the 50 U.S. states, which are drawn from a variety of sources. These sources include the *Directory of Adult and Juvenile Correctional Departments* (American Correctional, 2005, 2006, 2007), *Sexual Violence Reported by Correctional Authorities* (Beck & Harrison, 2005, 2006;

2007a, b), and an article published in *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* (Wyatt, 2006). The data reflect the years 2004, 2005, and 2006.

The dependent variable is the number of yearly reported inmate-on-inmate sexual offenses. During the three-year study period, there were 5,330 inmate-on-inmate sexual offenses reported to prison correctional authorities in the 50 states. These sexual offenses include nonconsensual sexual acts and abusive sexual contacts. Nonconsensual sexual acts are defined as “contact of any person without his or her consent, or of a person who is unable to consent or refuse; and contact between the penis and the vagina or the penis and the anus including penetration, however slight; or contact between the mouth and the penis, vagina, or anus; or penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person by a hand, finger, or other object” (Beck & Harrison, 2005:3). Abusive sexual contacts are defined as “contact of any person without his or her consent, or of a person who is unable to consent or refuse; and intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of any person” (Beck & Harrison, 2005:3).

The key independent variable is conjugal visitation. This variable is coded one if the state permits inmates conjugal visitation, zero otherwise. The following five states allowed inmate conjugal visitation during the three-year study period: California, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, and Washington. Several contextual factors besides conjugal visitation may influence the number of inmate sex offenses, including the state prisoner population, average daily cost per inmate, number of inmates per correctional officer, percent of correctional officers who resigned or were terminated, number of assaults on correctional officers, percent of inmates who are black or African American, percent of inmates who are under 25 years old, and the percent of inmates housed in maximum security prisons. These variables were included into the analysis to avoid basing conclusions on spurious or suppressed relationships. The means, standard deviations and definitions for all the variables are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Means, standard deviations, and definitions for the variables used in the analysis

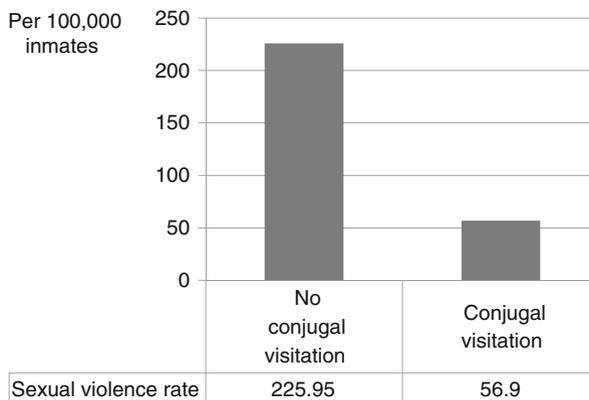
	Mean	Std. dev.	Definition
Inmate sex offenses	35.53	90.04	Number of yearly reported inmate-on-inmate sex offenses.
Conjugal visitation	.10	.30	Coded 1 if the state allows prisoners conjugal visitation, 0 otherwise.
Prison population	23,687.53	31,415.09	State prison population.
Daily cost	67.87	22.78	Average daily cost per inmate.
Inmate-officer ratio	6.75	6.05	Number of inmates per correctional officer.
Percent officer turnover	16.27	9.34	Percent of correctional officers who resigned or were terminated.
Officer assaults	194.59	228.59	Number of assaults on correctional officers.
Percent black	33.95	22.74	Percent of inmates who are black or African American.
Percent under 25	19.28	8.06	Percent of inmates who are under 25 years old.
Percent maximum	9.52	8.42	Percent of inmates housed in maximum security prisons.

## Findings

We begin our analysis by constructing a figure showing the sexual violence rate for states that allow and do not allow conjugal visitation. Looking at Fig. 1, we see rather clearly that there is a visually striking difference between the two groups of states. The figure shows that the sexual violence rate is substantially lower in states that allow conjugal visitation. The rate of sexual violence in states that allow conjugal visitation is 57 incidents per 100,000 inmates, whereas in states that do not allow conjugal visitation the rate is 226 per 100,000 inmates. Such a finding, although preliminary, tends to furnish some initial support for sexual gratification theory.

The effects of conjugal visitation and the other explanatory variables on inmate-on-inmate sexual offending for the 50 states observed over the three-year study period are reported in Table 2. The pooled cross-sectional time-series research design used here is ideally suited for studying both the temporal and spatial patterns of conjugal visitation, because it allows for the analysis of multiple units (50 states) across multiple time points (2004–2006). Thus, the analysis of panel data affords us the ability to consider prison-specific factors that may explain variation in the inmate sexual offending-conjugal visitation relationship that cannot be determined using a single time series. Another advantage is that an analysis using panel data necessitates a smaller number of temporal observations than typically needed in a time-series analysis. That said a serious shortcoming of using panel data to examine the conjugal visitation-sexual violence association is that only the short-term relationship between these two variables is captured in the parameter estimates (Phillips & Greenberg, 2008). However, one should note that the present analysis is not hindered by this limitation since our focus is on detecting a contemporaneous rather than a lagged effect.

We used the .05 significance level as the criterion for determining which relationships are consequential. Emphasis should also be placed on the direction of the coefficient when evaluating the effect of conjugal visitation on inmate sexual offending. A consequential negative effect is expected for the dummy coded conjugal visitation variable to validate the thesis that the use of conjugal visitation contributes to a reduction in inmate-on-inmate sexual offending.



**Fig. 1** A comparison of mean sexual violence rates for states with and without conjugal visitation

**Table 2** Two-way random-effects models estimating the impact of conjugal visitation on inmate-on-inmate sex offenses

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Controls only		With conjugal visitation	
	Coefficient	Std. error	Coefficient	Std. error
Conjugal visitation	–	–	–83.171**	29.793
Prison population	.002***	.000	.002***	.000
Daily cost	–.138	.174	–.101	.173
Inmate-officer ratio	–.392	.235	–.401	.236
Percent officer turnover	.066	.251	.090	.252
Officer assaults	–.002	.007	–.003	.007
Percent black	–.339	.194	–.372	.192
Percent under 25	.122	.164	.129	.165
Percent maximum	.323	.244	.322	.245
Constant	4.209	20.599	5.597	20.247
R <sup>2</sup>	.414		.490	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

Model 1 of Table 2 shows the effects of only the control variables on inmate sexual offending. The two-way random-effects equations depicted in Table 2 were estimated using LIMDEP (Greene, 2007). Random-effects rather than fixed-effects equations were estimated because each state's use of conjugal visitation did not vary during the three-year study period. A random-effects model is recommended when time-invariant variables are included in the equation (Greene, 2007). The results displayed in Model 1 reveal that only the prison population variable reaches statistical significance. As prison population increases, prison sexual violence increase appreciably. This finding is to be expected since the more inmates confined in prison the more likely there is to be sexual offending. The  $R^2$  for this model is .414.

We now turn to the effect of conjugal visitation on inmate sexual offending. Model 2 in Table 2 reveals that the coefficient for the conjugal visitation variable is negative and sizable, which indicates that inmate-on-inmate sexual offending is much less pronounced in states that allow conjugal visitation. The effects of the control variables are compatible with those reported in Model 1. Except for prison population, all the control variables fail to reach statistical significance. Comparing the fit between Model 2 and the baseline model (Model 1), the newly added conjugal visitation variable increases our ability to explain variation in inmate sexual offending. The  $R^2$  for this model is .490.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A supplemental analysis was conducted to assess the impact of conjugal visitation on nonconsensual sexual acts and abusive sexual contacts separately. The conjugal visitation variable was statistically significant in the nonconsensual sexual acts equation ( $b = -59.47$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and in the abusive sexual contacts equation ( $b = -23.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Conclusion

Despite an appreciable amount of research, firm conclusions regarding the underlying causal factors responsible for the occurrence of rape and other sexual offenses in our society remain elusive. Two general theories have been proffered to explain sexual offending: feminist theory and sexual gratification theory. Feminist theory suggests that sexual violence results primarily from an offender's desire to exert power and control over another individual, whereas sexual gratification theory argues that sexual gratification rather than control and domination is the primary goal of an offender in initiating sexual violence. Previous research has been unable to adjudicate between these two alternative hypotheses. Some studies find support for feminist theory, while others reinforce the claims proffered by sexual gratification theory.

The objective of the this research study was to briefly delineate the two competing perspectives that guide the majority of research pertaining to sexual offending and to adduce empirical evidence in support of either perspective using longitudinal data on sexual violence occurring in prison for the 50 U.S. states. By examining the influence of conjugal visitation on same sex sexual violence, this study took a different path than that taken in previous research. We believe that an alternative path is imperative to help shed additional light on the conflicting findings reported in the literature. Feminist theory maintains that conjugal visitation will have little if any substantive effect on sexual offending in prison. On the other hand, sexual gratification theory suggests that conjugal visitation should reduce sexual offending in prison. This discrepancy afforded us the ability to test the validity of each perspective.

The results generated in the pooled time-series analysis show that states with conjugal visitation have a lower level of sexual offending in prison than states that do not allow conjugal visitation. Such a finding, which casts doubt on the feminist theory and furnishes support for sexual gratification theory, is given added credence by the fact that the effect of conjugal visitation was substantive despite the inclusion of several control variables in the equation. In addition to a strong negative relationship between conjugal visitation and sexual offending, our results show that only one control variable, prison population, is important in explaining sexual violence in prison.

The observed negative effect of conjugal visitation on sexual offending suggests that more states should consider allowing conjugal visitation as a means to attenuate sexual violence in prison. While the present research focused solely on the effect of conjugal visitation on a single outcome - sexual offending, it is important to note that conjugal visitation has other positive effects on inmates' well-being. Hoffmann, Dickinson and Dunn (2007) point out that conjugal visitation helps to improve the functioning of a marriage by maintaining an inmate's role as husband or wife, improve the inmate's behavior while incarcerated, counter the effects of prisonization, and improve post-release success by enhancing the inmate's ability to maintain ties with his or her family. Additionally, because conjugal visitation is reported to reduce homosexual activity and because AIDS is often spread by homosexual activity, conjugal visitation may help to attenuate the spread of AIDS in prison (Bates, 1989; Olivero et al., 1992). Future research might also wish to consider the effects of conjugal visitation on other aspects of an inmate's life.

Our findings also have other policy implications. First, treatment programs conducted in prison should be geared to view sexual offending as a sex crime instead of solely as a crime of power. Such programs may help to attenuate recidivism. Second, because our results suggest that rape and sexual offending are likely to be sexually motivated, the use of chemical castration may be an effective strategy in reducing rape and other types of sexual offending. Research suggests that anti-androgenic agents such as Depo Provera are effective in reducing recidivism among sex offenders (Grubin, 2008; Maletzky et al., 2006). These types of drugs act to lower testosterone levels by manipulating a person's body chemistry (Greenfield, 2006). The use of chemical castration to decrease sexual offending is not without critics. Opponents of chemical castration point to potential violations of human rights (Harrison & Rainey, 2009), problems ensuring the individual's compliance with taking the drug and the potential negative effects associated with the drug (Conroy, 2006). While possible human rights violations and the potential for adverse side effects resulting from the drug are issues that certainly need more research and discussion, compliance with taking the drug in a prison setting is likely to be enhanced because the drug, which is given by injection, cannot be surreptitiously hidden or altered in some way by an inmate.

The current study has a few limitations that should be addressed in future work. First, the study was based on instances of sexual offending reported to prison officials. There is little doubt that sexual offending generally and sexual offending that transpires in prison is underreported. Nevertheless, there is little tangible evidence available to indicate that the frequency of sexual offending varies depending on whether a state allows or does not allow conjugal visitation. It also seems likely that the use of official data, combined with detailed interviews of inmates that focus on their sexual offending in prison, will go a long way in strengthening our understanding of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence. The evidence presented here also can only be viewed as being suggestive. The aggregate nature of the data impedes our ability to determine whether sexual offenders did or did not have meaningful partners for conjugal visits. Future research might wish to consider using micro-level data to compare the sexual offending rates of offenders permitted conjugal visits with similarly situated inmates not afforded this opportunity. However, such data would be difficult to obtain.

It is also important to recognize that the crux of the distinction between feminist theory and sexual gratification theory is one of motivation. What is necessary to contribute to the literature is research that can provide insight into an offender's motivation. One way to get at motivation is by using in-depth interviews of inmates involved in sexual offending to elicit the psychological and interpersonal factors responsible for their behavior. These types of studies will undoubtedly enhance our understanding of the micro-level processes underlying the observed aggregate relationship between conjugal visitation and sexual offending.

In sum, our findings propel the idea that sexual violence can be attenuated given appropriate policy initiatives. While we are the first to acknowledge that the causes of sexual violence are not likely to be singular, our research suggests some potential solutions that should be considered. The harm caused by rape and other forms of sexual violence reverberate through lives, homes, and communities. Additional policy initiatives directed at extinguishing sexual violence, which appears to be undertaken by inmates to satisfy their sexual urges, need to be identified.

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