

“Sex, Violence and Research”

presented by

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SEX, VIOLENCE AND RESEARCH

The word REsearch, or as my esteemed friend Professor Emeritus Howard Coker from the Department of Chemistry would say "reSEARCH", connotes the image of a scientist pouring over notes and calculations in a tiny cluttered office somewhere in academe. In my experience, research in the College of Arts and Sciences is more than the tedious accumulation of facts and figures. My premise tonight is that doing research is an adventure that takes on a life of its own. It confronts you with questions that you never thought you would be asking. It brings you to people who are extraordinary in skill, character, and goodness. It may make you famous for a brief time and it may make you famously unpopular among certain groups. And, perhaps, it may bring you to some truths that have yet to be discovered or acknowledged by the society in which we live.

SEXUAL COERCION ON CAMPUS

Research Background

I never planned to do research on sex and violence, but the topic confronted me in such a way that I had to pursue it. In 1985, I was planning to do a campus survey on student sexuality. Most of the survey was about students' sexual activity and their use of contraception, my research interest at the time. However, the media that year were filled with reports of the epidemic of date rape on college campuses. I was curious to find out if date rape was a problem at the University of South Dakota. So, I added an extra question to my survey that read "In the course of your life, how many times have you been forced to engage in sexual intercourse while on a date?"

I gave the survey to over 600 students from classes, residence halls, and Greek houses on the University campus. My expectations about the date rape question were confirmed: 22% of the women indicated that they had had this experience. Much to my surprise, 16% of the men in the survey also reported the experience. I ran to the office of Professor Vern Ellingstad, the Chair of Psychology that year, to show him the questionnaires. We asked ourselves the questions that brought me here tonight. How can a woman force a man into sexual intercourse? Were the men who took my survey

joking, exaggerating, or not telling the truth? Or was it possible that they had actually encountered sexually aggressive women?

I decided to solve the mystery of the date rape question. I returned to about half of my sample and asked people to explain how the forced sex happened and how it affected them. I received data back from 32 women and 23 men who were victims of forced sexual intercourse on a date. The men's responses seemed as real as the women's. Most of the men had sex because of psychological pressure. For example, some said they had to have sex in order to prove their masculinity or their desire for the woman. Some men said their girlfriends threatened to break up with them if sex was not given. Two men were blackmailed by female acquaintances who demanded sex in return for not giving damaging information to parents or employers.

Some of the men said that they were taken advantage of by a woman when they were drunk. Several of the incidents involved a woman's persistent, physical attempts to sexually arouse the man. One man's description follows:

I was invited over for a party, unaware that it was a date. As the evening wore on, I got the message that the girl was my date. I didn't have to make a move on her because she was all over me. She wouldn't take no for an answer. Usually, I like to get to know the person. I felt I was forced into sex. After, I felt terrible and used." (Struckman-Johnson, 1988, p. 238).

I was struck by this description because it sounded as if it could easily have been written by a woman about a man's unwanted advances.

Several men said that women tried to contain or restrain them in some way. For example, one man wrote that a woman acquaintance drove him out into the country, parked, and locked the car door when he attempted to leave. He wrote that he gave in because he did not want to walk back to town. Another man said that he was thrown on a bed and basically attacked. One said that a woman grabbed his penis and would not let go. At the time, this scenario seemed ludicrous to me. However, in the years that followed I received many similar reports. I eventually concluded that "penis grabbing" is a common female tactic for subduing or attempting to change the mind of a reluctant male.

The question before me now was how serious were the experiences of these men? Certainly, they could not compare with the severity of the events reported by women. Over half of the 32 female victims in my follow-up survey had been forced to have sex through sheer physical force. Eighty percent of the female victims said they were upset by the encounter. In contrast, only 10% of the male victims were subjected to outright physical force. When male victims were asked how they felt about the incident, one fourth of the men said that they were upset, one fourth were neutral, and one fourth said they felt good about the event. Even though the men's experiences were not as severe as women's, I thought that they should not be ignored.

I also believed that it was important to challenge the prevailing view in the literature that only male college students were perpetrators or sexual coercion. My data suggested that at least some college women were sexual predators. Could it be said that women were date raping men? I thought not. Most of the acts reported by my male victims would not have met the legal definition of rape. However, women had clearly engaged in acts of sexual misconduct. I summarized my first paper by proposing that both men and women were capable of sexual coercion - a term that encompasses a range of exploitative acts ranging from emotional pressure to physical force.

I presented my paper at a conference in Chicago in 1986 and gained media attention for being one of the few researchers to document male victims of female sexual aggression. Some of the coverage was not complimentary. Playboy magazine illustrated the story with a crazed woman chasing a man with a big net (Date Rape, 1987). Newspaper columnists wrote amusing headlines about female predators in South Dakota. The University administration was not generally happy about the University of South Dakota being labeled the "female date rape capital of the world", but at least one University official was pleased. A football coach approached me in a video store and shook my hand and thanked me for the study. He said, with a laugh, that he was using it to recruit players who looked forward to meeting some of these sexually aggressive coeds at the University.

The information was not well received by many researchers on date rape. Some feminist researchers contended that male sexual victimization was trivial compared to the rape of women. Others said that it detracted from the importance of rape of women. One person who did take the findings seriously was Betsy Allgeier, then the editor of the Journal of Sex Research. Betsy, a gifted and prolific researcher from the University of Ohio at Bowling Green, held much power over who and what could be published in the field of sexology. She responded with interest to my paper and declared that I raised some valid concerns. After several fierce rounds of editing made in her signature green ink, Betsy published my article as a research note (Struckman-Johnson, 1988). I remain thankful that a long-time feminist gave light to this controversial topic.

By now, research on sexual coercion had become part of my academic life. I asked my partner Dave Struckman-Johnson to help me in my research. Dave has been a co-investigator in all of the research that I have undertaken since 1988. He has offered extraordinary statistical expertise and objective interpretation of our data. We began a series of studies to document how college men responded to female sexual aggression. In one line of work, we conducted experiments in which men and women responded to hypothetical stories about men being sexually coerced by a woman. We examined the level of force used, the attractiveness of the woman, her relationship to the man, the sexual outcome, and the sexual standards of the male respondents. We also continued to survey and interview men who had the real-life experience of sexual coercion.

We presented the results of our studies at meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, an international group of about 400 sex researchers. Here I met Peter B. Anderson, who is now a professor at the University of New Orleans. Peter is a very kind man who abhors violence of any kind. Holding onto his ideals and a thinning ponytail from the 1970's, Peter still signs every communication with "peace". Like me, Peter became interested in sexual coercion because of an unexpected finding. As a therapist, he once had a female client who told him that when she was 23

years old, she caught a 16 year-old neighbor boy peeking in her window. As punishment, and as part of a deal not to tell his parents, the woman made the boy give her oral sex for several months. The client saw nothing wrong with her behavior, a stance that sent Pete researching the characteristics of sexually aggressive women for his dissertation.

Peter and I eventually joined forces and co-edited a book entitled Sexually Aggressive Women: Current Perspectives and Controversies, published by Guilford, 1998. Completing the book was an accomplishment as we met much resistance along the way. Peter had been told early on by a female journal editor that his work on sexually aggressive women was anti-feminist and would never be published by her or her associates. We had a similar reaction from some of the reviewers of the book. We were forced to exclude a chapter on female aggression in domestic violence situations because a reviewer said that women hit men only in self defense. We had to leave out a discussion of the relationship between female sex drive and sexual aggression because a reviewer insisted that hormones do not influence female behavior.

The book was ultimately accepted because of the status of some of our contributors. Foremost was a chapter by Betsy Allgeier on the politics of research (Allgeier & Lamping, 1998). As an editor of a major journal, Betsy wrote that she was aware of an inherent bias against men in sexual coercion research. She was particularly concerned that researchers were conducting surveys in which men were asked only if they had committed sexual coercion and women were asked only if they had received it. The results of such surveys, of course, showed that only men were the perpetrators and that only women were victims. Betsy said that the time had come for social scientists to revise theories about gender, to ask questions fairly, and to interpret results with care. In essence, Betsy gave legitimacy to the topic of female sexual aggression.

Summary of Findings

By this year of 2001, Dave, Peter, and I have accumulated a substantial amount of information about sexual aggression as experienced by college students. One of our most consistent findings is that women are significantly more likely to be the target of

sexual aggression than men. Rates of pressured and forced intercourse for women are usually in the 20% to 40% range, while men's rates are typically between 15% and 30% (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2000). Most researchers in this area have reported similar differences in male and female experiences (see Lottes & Weinberg, 1996; O'Sullivan, Byers, & Finkelman, 1998). Therefore, we are always careful to say that sexual aggression is not an equal opportunity event - men are more likely to *do* it than are women.

Tactics of Sexual Coercion. We have learned what tactics are most likely to be used by sexually aggressive men and women. In a recent paper (Struckman-Johnson et al., 2000), I proposed that acts of sexual coercion can be divided into four categories of increasing levels of exploitation. The stage is set when young people gather for a party and a man and woman go to an isolated place. In half the cases, the two are acquaintances. In about a third, they are serious dating partners. Encounters between strangers are less common. Level 1 is "persistent arousal" when one person continues to touch, kiss, and remove the clothing of a target who has said no to a sexual advance. The perpetrator usually makes repeated requests as he/she tries to arouse the target, sometimes to the point of begging. Our data suggest that these are the most common tactics engaged in by both male and female aggressors.

The second level is "lies and emotional manipulation". Our data indicate deception is used twice as much by men (40% of male-initiated incidents) than by women (20% of female-initiated incidents.) True to the stereotypes, the lies told by men are usually false claims of love and affection. Men still promise women that they will respect them in the morning. Men lie about their age to appear younger to women, complain about blue balls, and say that they are unable to get a woman pregnant. Women tell lies about being in love with or caring about the target. Men and women are equally likely to use emotional manipulation to get sex. Men tell reluctant women that they are not normal, that sex is the best way to get over another man, and that being a good friend means having sex. Women manipulate men through flattery, accusing them of being gay, and demanding proof that they are pretty or good enough for the man.

Level three is taking advantage of an intoxicated target. We consider this to be a higher level of exploitation because the targets are too inebriated to give consent, detect deception, or physically escape from the situation. We have found that as many as 40% to 60% of our sexual coercion incidents involve an intoxicated target. In most cases, the target has consumed alcohol on his/her own volition. In about 10% to 20% of the cases, the perpetrator has encouraged or tricked the target into drinking too much. Men are more likely than women to engage in both intoxication strategies. However, the intoxication tactic is especially effective for women because it allows them easy access to big, strong men who temporarily cannot protect themselves.

The most exploitative level four involves physical restraint, threats of harm and harm. We have found that about the same percentage of men and women (about 20%) set traps and try to block targets from leaving. Men, however, are twice as likely as women to use physically forceful acts such as holding or pinning down a target (23% for male-initiated incidents and 9% of female-initiated incidents). Sexually aggressive women are unlikely to use high levels of force with male targets. Instead, they try to hold onto men (including the penis grab), push them down on beds, sit or lay on them, pinch and hit them, and occasionally tie them up. We have noted that a woman will sometimes slap a man, even in public, if he directly turns her down for sex.

Reactions of Male Victims. Finally, we have learned that men have mixed reactions to sexually aggressive women. Summarizing several studies (Struckman-Johnson et al., 2000), we have concluded that about a third of the men will not be upset at all by the incident and some of them may actually enjoy the encounter. The positive reactions are easy to explain. According to gender role scripts, men are expected to initiate and to pursue ever-increasing levels of sexual intimacy with female partners. Therefore, men may welcome an advance from a sexually aggressive woman. What is violation of will for a woman may be an opportunity or even a sexual fantasy for a man. Men are also unlikely to fear a sexually aggressive woman because they anticipate sexual interaction, not harm. They assume if the situation does get out of hand, they can

always stop the woman and walk out the door. Therefore, what feels dangerous to a woman may be an enticing risk for a man.

However, about 40% of male victims are mildly to moderately upset by an incident, and 20% have a strong negative reaction with lasting effects. We have identified the circumstances that are most traumatic for men (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1998; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2001). Foremost, men are upset when a sexually aggressive woman uses physical force. Men can be frightened, surprised, confused and sometimes made helpless by a physically forceful woman. Even if men can easily escape from a woman, men still have lasting bad memories of the encounter. One man told me that a casual girlfriend came over and wanted to go out. He said that he had his own plans and went into the shower. Furious, she ripped off the shower curtain, threw cold water on him and grabbed at his genitals. Although he was able to push her out the door, he was scared and angered by the assault (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994).

The most frequently reported situation that upsets men is when a woman takes advantage of them when they are drunk. In a typical scenario, an intoxicated man will pass out in a bedroom at a party house and wake up to find that an uninvited woman has removed his clothes, is giving oral sex, and or has actually climbed on his erection. Most men stop the activity, but some men are too drunk to do much about it. A few will decide to join in. The morning after, men will have resentment and regrets that they were denied the choice of their sexual partner. They are especially upset if the female predator is someone whom they have refused to be with while sober. Men are also upset if the woman is unattractive, overweight, or not up to their standards. Because these encounters are unlikely to involve condom use, the men also have fears of catching an STD or causing pregnancy.

Another upsetting circumstance is when a young man, usually of high school age, loses his virginity to a sexually aggressive woman. The woman, who is typically a few years older, may assume that she is doing the young man a favor, but the man feels cheated out being able to be with the right woman for his first time. A student who came up after class one day told me that on his 16th birthday,

a platonic female friend arranged for him to get very drunk. He had previously told her that he was planning to remain a virgin until married. He woke up the next morning with the realization that he and woman had had sex. He immediately broke off the friendship and eventually stopped dating other girls. Five years later he was still unable to have a sexual relationship with a woman and sought counseling.

Men are upset when a sexually aggressive woman leads them to betray another woman in their life. We have had numerous reports of ex-girlfriends trying to win back or punish a man by demanding sex. If the ex-girlfriend succeeds, she may then tell the new girlfriend of the man's betrayal. Men have also reported that women who have a crush on them may stage a forceful seduction in order to cause a breakup with a current girlfriend. Finally, an upsetting but unusual circumstance is when female authority figures such as supervisors and co-workers use their position to blackmail men into sex. In one case, a man was working at a fast food restaurant when two female coworkers asked him for sex. When he turned them down several times, they told lies to the manager and had him fired (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994).

While this research on sexual aggression among college students has certainly been about sex, it has seldom been about violence. In our many surveys, we have had very few reports of physical injuries and almost no reports of weapons used. Instead, it appears that most incidents reported to us were misguided attempts to obtain sex, love, and intimacy from an inappropriate partner or at an inappropriate time. At least, this is what the students have told us when we asked them to explain the motives of sexually aggressive persons. We are convinced that with educational programs, improved communication, and controlled use of alcohol, college students can learn how to prevent sexual misconduct. However, we have studied another type of sexual coercion where violence and injury are essential elements - prison rape.

SEXUAL COERCION REPORTED BY PRISON INMATES

Research Background

My interest in sexual coercion in prisons began in 1992 when I was asked by the Journal of Sex Research to review a book on

male victims of sexual assault in the United Kingdom. I was surprised that only four of 157 pages in the book were devoted to sexual assault in prison settings. The newest reference to any research on the topic was 1982. Before I could comment on the authors' neglect of this important area, I needed to find newer material to cite. I made a call to New York to Stephen Donaldson, the author of a magazine article about prison rape. When I asked him if he could give me updated statistics on prison rape, Mr. Donaldson said no, that there had been no studies done since 1982. He suggested that if I wanted new data, why didn't I go out and get the data myself? "Don't they put any people in jail in South Dakota?" he asked? Taken aback, I said "Thanks for the suggestion but I don't do prisons."



Stephen "Donnie" Donaldson

After our conversation, I reread some of Donaldson's work. Based on conservative estimates of prison rape from 1970's research, Donaldson speculated that over 100,000 men were sexually assaulted a year in American prisons and jails (Donaldson, 1993). Knowing men's reactions to female sexual aggression, I could not fathom the trauma of a man forcefully raped by another man. I was haunted by questions about prison rape. Why was there no new research? Why did the older studies report rape rates as low as 1% and as high as 14%? What were the emotional consequences for victims? I decided to take Mr. Donaldson's advice and find out what was happening in South Dakota prisons. I contacted Professor Lila Rucker in Criminal Justice here at the University and asked if she could help me get into a South Dakota prison the legal way. Being a generous and altruistic person, Lila agreed. We combined proposals and submitted them to the South Dakota Department of Corrections (SDDOC).

After waiting many months, Lila and I learned that our study had been put on an indefinite hold by the SDDOC. I called Mr. Donaldson and told him of my failed attempt. By this time, I had discovered more about the background of Donnie, as he preferred

to be called. In 1972, he was among a small group of Quakers who protested the Vietnam War in front of the White House. He was arrested and jailed in downtown Washington, D.C., where he refused to pay a \$10 bail on principle. An irritated guard punished him by placing him in a crowded cell block. Over the next 48 hours, he was raped by over fifty inmates. Hence began the downward spiral of events in Donnie's life. He eventually went to prison where he was again experienced sexual assault. By the late 1980's, Donnie regained control of his life and became a well-known writer and advocate for victims of rape behind bars. When he heard of the SDDOC decision, he asked "Don't they put people in jail in Nebraska?"

The Nebraska Study. I asked Dave, Lila, and a contact in Nebraska to help me make a proposal to the Nebraska Department of Corrections (NDOC). The NDOC was receptive to doing the study. Within a few months, we and our student helpers prepared surveys to be sent to over 1,800 inmates, the entire population of adult prisoners in Nebraska. Our most important question to inmates was "Since the time you have been in a Nebraska prison, has anyone every pressured or forced you to have sexual contact (touching of genitals, oral, anal or vaginal sex) against your will?" If they answered yes, we asked them to check categories for who did it, how was it done, what sex acts resulted, and how it affected them. We also asked if they would write in their own words what happened. Their anonymous and voluntary responses were mailed directly back to us.

We received surveys back from over 500 inmates or 30% of the sample. The students who helped me send out the survey coded the data as fast as it arrived. The process was a roller coast ride of exhilaration over receiving such rare information and depression from reading inmates' descriptions of prison rape. Our numbers showed that 22% of male inmates reported at least one instance of sexual coercion. Twelve percent of inmates reported an incident that met a legal definition of rape. Here was our encounter with unabridged sex and violence. Inmates told us of incidents that filled them with terror, shame, humiliation, hatred of perpetrators, and hatred of the system that let it happen. These are some of the

descriptions (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, Rucker, Bumby & Donaldson, 1995, pp.1345):

I was put in K-unit in D & E, a black inmate wanted to talk to me by his room. As I approached his room, I was pushed in the back by someone. I tried to fight but there was 3 or 4 of them. Some one stuck his dick in my butt and I got out of there and thought about killing myself for allowing something like that to happen to me.

Was attacked from behind & the side by 3 people. Got the hell beat out of me. Busted my head, 3 ribs, nose & a foot. Swollen eyes & busted up mouth. Then was held and sodomized twice, and left to lay there.

The time that was most disturbing was in the gym bathroom. I was hit in the mouth and had a shank (homemade knife) put on me. I was orally and anally assaulted by 3 blacks, while 4 of their buddies kept a look out.

I was in my room. 6 guys rushed me. They stabbed me in the back and raped me. They left. I told the guard. He laughed and walked away.

Some inmates were able to avoid being raped, but they still paid a price. One man wrote:

Several inmates came up to me in gym and told me they were going to fuck me in the ass, we all got into a fight, that happened twice, until they found out I would fight every time and they finally gave up, and went to someone that was weaker, but I still got written up for fighting even though I was defending myself from assault. Pretty fuck up huh?

According to their descriptions, several inmates were essentially serving as sex slaves to groups of other inmates. Some men were victimized by lone predators who stalked them throughout the prison. Others reported that prison staff used their authority to coerce sexual encounters. The emotional consequences of these events were extreme. A majority of victims reported distrust and nervousness around people, depression, and fear that it would happen again. Flashbacks and bad dreams were common. Over a third had thoughts of suicide and 16% had lasting physical injuries. Less than a third of the victims reported their incident to prison

authorities. They feared revenge from other inmates, losing their good time, and poor treatment from staff.

We questioned how all of this could be happening in small, well-managed prisons in Nebraska. Were the prisoners telling us the truth? As many people reminded us, these were criminals filling out our surveys. Perhaps they were just trying to make the prison look bad. We came to believe in the honesty of the inmates. We could tell from their answers that it was risky for them to report sexual assault in our survey lest they be considered snitches. Their answers were consistent and often brutally realistic. Unexpectedly, we received confirming evidence from another source. We asked prison staff to estimate the percentage of inmates who had been sexually assaulted in their facilities. Staff estimates were within a few percentage points of the number of incidents reported by the inmates.

I presented these statistics at a research conference in Chicago in 1995 (Struckman-Johnson et al., 1995). It was an unforgettable day of profound and funny experiences. Donnie was so excited about the official release of the data that he flew in to meet me. He appeared at my hotel door, a leprechaun of a man wearing a rumpled Good Will suit, punk rock boots, and a white railroad cap that said Stop Prison Rape. He set up camp in my room and gave a lengthy interview to a reporter for a local news story. Using his celebrity, Donnie had arranged meetings with the editorial staff of the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun Times. When we walked into the boardrooms, the editors could not hide their amusement at Donnie's appearance. However, they became serious listeners when Donnie turned on the force of his 170 IQ points and argued eloquently for more media coverage of prison rape. My new numbers, he said, suggested that the scope of the problem was much more extensive than previously believed.

Our day ended with a meeting with Illinois congressman Cal Skinner, a man almost as eccentric as Donnie. Cal is a charismatic, highly intelligent, fundamentally religious, conservative republican who at the time was very much concerned with fighting crime and preserving traditional family values. Watching him meet Donnie, the bisexual, punk rocker, Buddhist ex-con was quite entertaining. The two of them, however, were bound by a common desire to

treat people humanely. Both agreed that no one who goes to prison should have to experience forceful rape. Representative Skinner appraised of us his efforts to make the Illinois DOC keep records of reported rapes. He asked if I would help by submitting a proposal to his committee to survey the level of rape in Illinois prisons.

The paper I presented in Chicago was published in the Journal of Sex Research in 1996 (Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996). The study had an enormous impact, as there had been no new survey data on prison rape for over a decade. By now I understood that this is not a popular research area. Researchers are not drawn to ask men about forced sex with other men; many prison administrations are loath to admit that there is a problem to be investigated. Therefore, my data filled a large void in a scarce literature. I received hundreds of requests for information from reporters, writers, academics, criminal justice experts, and lawyers in the USA and from around the world. The study was given awards. Donnie used the study to increase public awareness of prison rape. His dream of being interviewed by Mike Wallace on the 60 Minutes television show was achieved in March of 1997.

Some disappointments and heartbreak followed these exciting times. The Nebraska DOC received so much negative attention from the press that they regretted their decision to reveal their identity in the study. The Illinois DOC turned down a series of proposals for a prison sexual assault study that I submitted and resubmitted for two years. I worked for a year to get approval to survey North Carolina prisons, only to have the approval revoked a few days later. Then in June of 1997, I made one of my regular phone calls to Donnie on the Stop Prison Rape line and no one answered. I learned a few days later that he was in a coma in the hospital, dying of AIDS-related meningitis. I attended his funeral and met his wide circle of friends and admirers, including people from Human Rights Watch. We commiserated that no one else could ever care so much and work so hard for the lonely cause of prison rape.

The Ten Prison Study. I felt that I had to do at least one more study on prison rape. There were new questions urging me on. Were the rates we found in Nebraska accurate? Were they too high

or too low? How would they compare to other prison facilities? Can a prison be managed so that prison rape is low? I took sabbatical leave in the spring of 1998 with the intention of finding three prison facilities for a new study. I contacted the DOCs in fifteen states. After the fallout in Nebraska, I guaranteed them that the name of their prison would not be published. Many of the DOCs were interested, perhaps due to increasing lawsuits and disease transmission associated with prison rape. The DOCs in five states agreed to do the survey, giving me access to seven facilities for men and three facilities for women.

The labor involved in surveying ten prisons was almost unmanageable. I recruited dozens of students and friends to help me send out surveys to over 7,000 inmates and 1,900 security staff. Our psychology secretary Lois Norling helped prepare thousands of envelopes in spare moments. When I ran out of my own money, Professor Royce Engstrom from the Office of Research and Dean John Carlson of Arts and Sciences gave me nearly a \$1,000 to buy more supplies. Dave and I hauled scores of boxes to UPS and I drove a truckload of surveys several hundred miles to one destination. We coded responses from over 1,700 inmates and 475 staff. We hired graduate student Anne Holtz to look for falsified surveys. I had to write over a hundred letters to inmates who wanted information about the study or a pen pal or money for their court cases. It was my most productive time of my life as I was also able to get pregnant with my daughter Kate that year.

The results for the seven men's facilities, published a few months ago in The Prison journal (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2000), are shown in Table 1. Summing across all men's facilities, 375 men (21%) of the inmates had experienced at least one episode of pressured or forced sexual contact since being incarcerated in a state (row 3). We estimate that about half of these cases (about 10% to 11%) qualified as rape. These rates are nearly identical to those found for Nebraska. On the average, 16% of inmates reported that an incident had occurred in their present facility (row 4). The facility rates were much lower than the statewide rates because some inmates had been sexually assaulted before they arrived at their current facility. At least 7% of the men

had been raped in their current facility (row 7).

We used the information shown in Table 1 to create a sexual assault profile for each of the facilities. We attempted to identify what features of a prison facility contributed to the sexual coercion rate. I will review the environment of the worst and the best prisons. The prison with the highest rate was Facility 2, a state penitentiary with medium-maximum security level. The facility had multiple problems. It was large (over 1,500 inmates) and understaffed. By all reports, many of the staff were underpaid, uneducated, and unmotivated. Thus, security was lax. They failed to supervise barracks areas where over half of all reported rapes took place. Significant racial tensions were exacerbated by rape incidents: 74% of the predators were Blacks and 60% of the victims were White.

Fear of sexual assault was high. As you can see in row 9, inmates estimated that 41% of the inmate population had been sexually assaulted, whereas the actual reported rate in the facility was only 19%. The prison system was unresponsive to victims. Here is part of a comment sent to us by a correctional officer at Facility 2:

I see young, good looking, but weak white men coming into the prison. They are being placed in a room with 70 tough, hard black men. They stand no chance of making it 24 hours without being assaulted sexually. At my unit, our classification officer deliberately places people in the worse spots so they can be raped. He feels this is part of their punishment and enjoys hearing it happened to them. ...Officers need to do everything possible to stop it. They don't. At my unit they don't check rooms or showers. They need more training. They need to open their eyes. I seen a young boy come to the infirmary one night. He was crying. He had been raped. The infirmary personal treated him like dirt. They made him feel like he had asked for it. Like it was his fault 6 Black men wanted to be his "friend." He was bleeding. He had been hurt inside badly. They did for him what they legally had to. They never showed any compassion or emotion. They even laughed at him. The boy was patched up and sent back to the barrack he was assigned to. It probably happened again during the

night. About 2 weeks later he cut his wrists. He survived. They had no place to send him so he went back to the barrack. 2 months later he is a punk hanging out with tough black men. This is everybody's fault. It doesn't have to be like this.

Facility 5 had the lowest rape rate of zero. This facility was a modern, maximum security prison where inmates were kept mostly in single cells and given 24 hour supervision. Staff morale was good and security was moderately high. With these stringent conditions, inmates were successfully kept from sexually assaulting each other. The only reported incidents were perpetrated by prison staff. This outcome was one of the most important of our study. We have been told over and over by inmates and prison staff, that if an inmate wants to rape someone, it will happen no matter what. The outcome for Facility 5 demonstrates that prison rape can be stopped if the system is committed to tight security. The finding also supported the credibility of our data. Over 900 men had the opportunity to send in a false report of rape if they were motivated to make the prison look bad. None did.

The results for the three women's prisons have been presented in papers (e.g., Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1999) but have not yet been published. The largest women's facility we studied had a statewide sexual coercion rate of 27% and a facility rape rate of about 8%, therefore matching some of the men's facilities. Two other smaller women's facilities had zero rape rates. In one of these facilities, the female inmates praised their administration for establishing a safe environment for them. Curiously, a high level administrator of this same facility told me that there had been several recent rapes at this prison, resulting in the prosecution of a staff person. These rapes were not reported to us, leading us to believe that our survey results may be underestimates of the problem.

The Prison Rape Reform Bill

Last summer I felt worn out by my research on prison rape. I tried to shut my mind to new questions. I began to fantasize about studying a cheerful topic that could be brought up at dinner

parties. However, the research experience tends to have a life of its own and it may not let you quit. In August, I received a call from a Mr. Michael Horowitz from the Hudson Institute, a public policy research organization in Washington, D.C. He asked if I could recommend anyone who could help draft a bill to prevent prison rape. I suggested that he call Bob Dumond in New Hampshire, who, in my opinion, is the leading expert on the topic. Bob worked in the Massachusetts prison system to implement one of the first rape prevention programs in the nation. Although his work has been curtailed by a disabling car accident, Bob uses e-mail and the Web to stay up to date.

After a few more phone calls, the very bossy, charmingly arrogant Mr. Horowitz declared that both Bob Dumond and I were on the steering committee for a prison rape reform bill. A little skeptical, Bob investigated Mr. Horowitz on the Web and discovered that he is an influential lawyer devoted to Jewish and Christian religious causes. One of Mr. Horowitz's advocates for the prison rape bill was none other than Charles "Chuck" Colson, who, for those of you who are old enough to remember, was a Watergate participant who was sent to prison where he became a born-again Christian. Not surprisingly, Mr. Horowitz's steering committee became an unusual alliance of individuals from the ministry, corrections, juvenile justice, law, and academia. I was delighted when my friend Representative Cal Skinner was eventually added to the committee.

By January 2001, Mr. Horowitz's committee produced a reform bill that calls for the following:

- Classification of incoming inmates so that they are not roomed with sexual predators

- Prosecution and management of inmate sexual predators

- Prohibitions against putting juvenile offenders in with adult populations

- Treatment and counseling for prison rape victims

- Federal money for research to track the rates of prison rape

This spring, Mr. Horowitz is searching for supporters for the bill

among conservative republicans on the hill. Two weeks ago, I was asked to do a telephone briefing with Mr. John Kaneb, an oil company executive who was sent to discuss the bill with Attorney General John Ashcroft. I told Mr. Kaneb that I believed that prison rape could be reduced just by making it a priority issue in a prison facility and that many prevention tactics could be implemented without great expense. Mr. Kaneb said he was relieved to hear that solutions were possible in this grim business. I do not know yet how the meeting went, but I am amazed that a topic so sexual, so seemingly homosexual, so secular, and so sympathetic to inmates could be brought to the forefront by conservative political and religious groups. If only Donnie were here to witness this historic effort.

DISCOVERIES OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

At the beginning of my lecture, I said that research might lead to truths that have yet to be discovered or acknowledged by society. I do not know if I have found any truths in my research odyssey, but I have made some provocative discoveries. I am willing to conclude that about 15% to 20% of young men who attend college have been pressured or forced to have intercourse with a woman since the age of 16. The percentage of men raped by a woman using physical force is low, perhaps 1% or less. However, if it is considered rape when a woman has nonconsensual sex with a drunken man, the rate would climb to somewhere between 5% and 10%. I am also willing to conclude that over 20% of the male inmates in a typical Midwestern state penitentiary have been pressured or forced to have sex. I would estimate that about 10% to 12% of these men have been raped. I feel confident that these numbers will be accepted by society because other researchers are replicating our results.

However, I have made other discoveries that I do not believe will be acknowledged by society at this time. These findings are not about numbers from my surveys, but have to do with the reactions, attitudes, and biases surrounding research on sexual coercion of men. For one, I have discovered that there is not much public sympathy for male victims of sexual coercion. The lack of concern for prison inmates is easiest to explain. Foremost, people do not

read or hear much about prison rape, so it does not wear on their consciences. Some people think that prison rape happens only to homosexuals, a group that is already highly stigmatized in our society. Most damaging of all, some people think that inmates are deserving of rape, because that is what happens to people who commit crimes and go to prison. As Bob Dumond writes, there will be little hope for reform until more people begin to care about these ignominious victims (Dumond, King, & Brouhard, 1995). It will be interesting to see what happens to Mr. Horowitz's bill this year.

There are no easy explanations for why people do not feel too sorry for college men who have encountered sexually aggressive women. We documented many years ago that a small percentage of men are traumatized by their sexual encounters with women. Why, then, is there no public call for services and treatment options for these victimized men? When will college campuses give prevention programs that encourage men to watch out for sexually exploitative women and to report such incidences if they occur? I doubt that there will ever be a "take back the night" march for boys and men because our stereotypes about masculinity blind us to this problem. As a society, we are made uneasy by men who are sexually vulnerable, men who are weaker than a woman, men who cannot take care of themselves, and men who admit to having a problem or complain much about it.

This theme is the basis of the work of Dr. William Pollack, a psychologist who recently wrote a book entitled Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood (1998). Pollack writes that young boys are pushed off to school with the expectation that they will become toughened and self-reliant. We expect them not to complain or express their feelings or their troubles. Boys are given little sympathy as they work their way through the emotional ups and downs of adolescence. As a consequence, boys who are depressed and sad will not be heard, but their emotions may be reflected in fighting, vandalism, dropping out of school, and suicide. Dr. Pollack encourages society to listen to boys and to encourage them to speak of their feelings. I think that he would agree that we should listen to what men are saying about their encounters with sexually aggressive women.

I have also discovered that society is somewhat unwilling to acknowledge negative aspects of female behavior. This idea was raised by Kate Fillion in her book Lip Service, the Truth About Women's Darker Side in Love, Sex and Friendship (1996). We seem to be bound by stereotypes that women are too nice, too passive, too uninterested in sex, or too gentle to engage in harmful conduct of any kind. These beliefs have been created in part by the feminist movement's well-intended efforts to raise awareness of the difficulties experienced by women in the past. Feminist researchers invested much of the 1970's and 1980's assessing the serious problems of child sexual abuse, date rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. However, in documenting the victimization of women, these researchers failed to acknowledge that woman, in turn, can also be victimizers.

As a result, we have come to believe in the myth that women can do no wrong because they are so long-suffering and pure of character. I believe that the myth is so strong that many researchers, journal editors, and even news editors are reluctant to publish information that presents women in a negative light. Perhaps to do so is viewed as an attempt to diminish the gains that women have fought so hard to achieve. This may explain why five years ago most of my psychology and sexuality textbooks did not include sections on female sexual coercion of men, even though studies had been out since the 1980's. In just the last few years, textbooks are finally reporting the surveys showing that both women and men are sexually exploited by acquaintances. However, I have yet to find a paragraph in a textbook that discusses the existence, the tactics, or the motives of sexually aggressive women.

Another example comes from my research on prison rape. People tend to presume that male inmates are preyed upon by other men, either inmates or staff, but not women. However, our ten prison study revealed that between 4% to 9% of reported incidents in men's facilities involved women working at the prison. These were not consensual love affairs being reported. According to inmates, the women used blackmail and force to get their cooperation for individual sexual contact or for sex parties for a group of staff. It is also presumed that female inmates are preyed upon by men, not women. For example, in a 1996 Human Rights Watch report,

the authors contended that women in prison are exploited by male guards and only rarely by another female inmates. In contrast, our data show that more than half of the incidents in one women's prison were perpetrated by female inmates, including cases involving gang rape.

This failure to acknowledge women's negative actions extends to other issues. There is a reluctance to report that women are perpetrators of child sexual abuse, including incest with sons and daughters (Allen, 1991). It is argued that there has been a suppression of research that has shown that women initiate physical aggression in domestic violence situations (Fillion, 1996; Mould, 1990). Recently a meta-analysis of this literature was published in the prestigious Psychological Bulletin (Archer, 1996). The author concluded that women are more likely than men to initiate physical aggression in dating and marital disputes. One qualification was that women were more likely than men to be seriously injured. This article is now being hotly contested by many experts in the field. Yet, similar findings were reported in national surveys of domestic violence many years ago (Straus, 1993).

My final discovery is that there is a tendency in the published literature to exaggerate the crimes of men against women. The same body of research that created the myth of the innocent woman fostered the legend of the predatory male. I have come across a pattern of reporting that exaggerates the number of women that are sexually coerced by men. For example, rape rates are often combined with attempted rape rates for an attention-grabbing total number. Many of us have heard the declaration that one in four college women or 25% will be raped in their lifetime. According to Fillion (1996), this figure came from a Ms. Magazine study conducted by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987). The actual rape rate cited by Koss et al. was 15%. When Fillion revised the estimate to correct for a disputed questionnaire item, the estimate is lowered to 11%. Some studies find rape rates of 5% or less (e.g., George, Winfield, & Bazer, 1992). Although rape rates of even 5% are unacceptably high, the citing of frighteningly high rape rates of 25% lead women to stereotype and fear men as potential rapists.

CONCLUSION

Discovery of these biases has sent me on a crusade to detect and correct these erroneous numbers in the research literature and in my teaching materials. For example, when my text books tend to give the highest possible numbers for date rape of women, I present the students with both the low and the high numbers that have been found. If I find that my textbooks fail to mention a negative female behavior toward men, I will correct it in lecture. For example, in my Understanding the Sexes class this spring, our current text stated that "Men are rarely victimized by sexual harassment." (Renzetti & Curran, 1999, p. 205) and gave no other information. I told the class that according to another source, as many as 37% of men reported sexual harassment at work (Brannon, 1999, p. 339).

Constantly correcting textbooks can turn into an awkward procedure. Sometimes I worry that it causes the students to doubt all of the numbers that they read. But I firmly believe it is my obligation as a researcher and as a teacher in the College of Arts and Sciences to continue to present the most accurate information available. The purpose of research in psychology is to answer questions about behavior as objectively as possible. We must not be swayed by our politics, our ideologies, or by our preconceptions about the nature of men and women. Certainly, only some men are brutal and not all women are noble. Both men and women are fallible, and they both engage in hurtful exploitation of their own and the opposite sex. It is only by acknowledging this interplay of male and female actions that we will fully understand the true nature of sex and violence.

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TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT RATES AND ESTIMATES FOR MIDWESTERN PRISON FACILITIES

Characteristic	Facility						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sample Size - Inmates	461	430	270	232	196	174	25
2. Sample Size - Staff	109	59	143	46	61	57	—
3. Inmates Reporting a Pressured or Forced Sex Incident in Any Prison/Jail in the State	24%	21%	26%	16%	18%	16%	16%
4. Inmates Reporting a Pressured or Forced Sex Incident in This Facility	18%	19%	21%	14%	4%	14%	4%
5. Inmates Reporting a Worst Case Incident in This Facility	16%	17%	15%	14%	4%	14%	4%
6. Inmates Reporting a Worst Case Incident in This Facility Between 1996 and Early to Mid 1998	9%	8%	8%	7%	3%	5%	4%
7. Inmates Reporting a Worst Case Incident of Rape in This Facility	8%	11%	9%	6%	0%	7%	4%
8. Inmates Reporting a Worst Case Incident of Rape in This Facility Between 1996 and Early to Mid 1998	4%	6%	4%	3%	0%	2%	4%
9. Inmate Estimate of How Many Inmates are Pressured/Forced Into Sex in This Facility (0-100%)	27%	41%	24%	13%	17%	12%	7%
10. Staff Estimate of How Many Inmates are Pressured/Forced Into Sex in This Facility (0-100%)	18%	29%	12%	18%	11%	4%	—
11. Inmate Rating of Sexual Assault Protection Level in This Facility (1-7)	2.4 Low	2.1 Low	2.8 Low Med	3.0 Low- Med	3.9 Med- High	4.6 Med- High	4.6 Med- High
12. Staff Rating of Sexual Assault Protection Level in This Facility (1-7)	4.8 Med- High	4.2 Med	5.7 High	5.0 High	6.2 Very High	6.0 Very High	—
13. Percentage of Incidents That Involve Staff	20%	21%	22%	15%	—	28%	—
14. Percent of survey respondents incarcerated for a crime against persons	80%	56%	71%	59%	70%	60%	20%

Note. 1 = maximum-medium-minimum facility for males (survey focused on maximum unit); 2 = maximum-medium-minimum facility for males; 3 = maximum-medium-minimum facility for males (survey focused on maximum unit); 4 = maximum-medium-minimum facility for male felons; 5 = primarily maximum facility for males which holds long term segregation offenders; 6 = maximum-medium facility for male felons; 7 = facility for male felons, misdemeanants and first offenders.

Taken from Struckman-Johnson, C. & Struckman-Johnson, D. (2000), Sexual coercion rates in seven Midwestern prison facilities, *The Prison Journal* 80(4), p. 384