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# Helping Professionals' Perceptions of Male Victimization in Correctional Facilities

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HELPING PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF MALE VICTIMIZATION IN  
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
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Title: Helping Professionals' Perceptions of Male Victimization in Correctional Facilities

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Correctional facilities are hyper-masculine settings where men are expected to behave in traditionally gendered ways (i.e. tough, aggressive) and their performance of masculinity is more strongly policed than when they occupy more gender neutral spaces. When men suffer from physical abuse or sexual assault in prisons, they may be unlikely to report their victimization due to these gendered expectations and the stigma associated with being a victim (i.e. wimp, weak). This study examines helping professionals', who provide victim support service, perceptions and interactions with male inmates. I draw on Symbolic Interactionism as the theoretical framework for my study. I conducted mixed gendered interviews among ten helping professionals in the state of Pennsylvania. This study will inform helping professionals to better assist incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There are several past studies that have been conducted to examine males who have been sexually assaulted while incarcerated. For example, Saum, Surratt, Inciardi, and Bennett (1995) found among their sample of a randomly selected population of incarcerated inmates from a prison in California, “14% acknowledged having been victimized including 41% of inmates identifying as homosexual, 9% of those identifying as heterosexual, and 2% of those identifying as bisexual”. Furthermore, the researchers found, “53% of inmates felt pressured to have sex during their incarceration and more than 40% in this group have been forced to have sex during this incarceration” (Saum, Surratt, Inciardi & Bennett, 1995, p. 416). Similarly, in an Ohio prison, the researchers found an estimated 14% of the prison’s inmates had been raped while in prison. These two studies illustrate the high rates of sexual victimization among incarcerated males.

Helping professionals are some of the initial responders to male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities. Helping professionals experience many barriers in terms of culture, structure and policy. However, helping professionals work through these barriers to better serve their clients. Helping professionals have been socialized to have particular attitudes and perceptions of victims of sexual assault for example, some stereotypes include respecting or disrespecting attitudes based on the victims’ gender (Payne, Button, & Rapp, 2008). Research has analyzed different helping professions including “police officers, SANES [Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners], lawyers, judges, and jurors” (Payne & et al., 2008) and crisis workers. Research studies imply the understood relationship between helping professionals and male

victims by suggesting relationship and perceptions are affected by helper's occupation (police officer, correctional officer, advocate, SANE, counselor).

### **Statement of Purpose**

The current study seeks to fill a small gap to the current literature by exploring how helping professionals perceive male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities. Understanding perceptions of helping professionals is crucial because they are more likely to work directly with the victims. In this study, I examine how helping professionals perceive the victimization of incarcerated males. Specifically, I ask, how do helping professionals perceive sexual violence against incarcerated males? In doing so, I explore how helping professionals from various educational and training backgrounds differ in their perceptions of male victimization.

### **Significance of the Problem**

In 2003, Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act. The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) sought out to create a zero-tolerance toward prison rape. Even though this act was implemented over 10 years ago, prison rape is still prevalent today. One of the first questions that comes to mind is who will be and who is working directly with these victims? Looking at how helping professionals perceive male victims in correctional facilities may increase the likelihood that victims may report abuse as well as making correctional facilities a safer place. Describing helping professionals' perceptions toward male victimization in correctional facilities could lead to more diverse trainings that the professionals receive. Professionals may become more aware of the labels and stigmas around helping professionals and may search for a change in language and attitudes.

There are many obstacles that helping professionals encounter when working with male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities. Obstacles include attitudes from correctional officers and sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs), the lack of knowledge around traumas the victim may have faced prior to the assault, and not being provided with a safe and secure setting to conduct counseling sessions in the correctional facility.

### **Following Chapters**

The purpose of the study is to understand how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. In chapter 2, I discuss the history of men being victimized in prisons, victim blaming, rape myths, consent, masculinity, general perceptions of inmates, how helping professionals perceive victims of sexual assault, and a conceptual framework of the study. Discussing the historical background is building the argument for the discussion for the current study and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 ends by providing the conceptual framework for which the current study is embedded in.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological procedures I used to conduct this study. This chapter begins by discussing qualitative research and its importance. I discuss the importance of conducting interviews and how that will lead to more rich and complex data. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and the analysis process. I go into detail as to how I obtained my sample for the current study and the steps I took once I gathered and transcribed my data from the ten interviews that were conducted.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings. I begin by reiterating the research question and different sections that I have broken the findings into. I address finding pertaining to masculinity, victim blaming, rape myths, correctional officers, SANEs, consent, perceptions of victims, and overall feeling of the helping professionals.

The final chapter, chapter 5, analyzes and synthesizes the overall findings. I begin by briefly providing the reader with a brief summary of my findings. From here, I choose significant themes and relate them to the conceptual framework in which the study is embedded. The chapter will conclude by discussing implications, limitations, and future direction of research.

In the next section, I review literature on masculinity, inmate victimization, consent, rape myths, victim blaming, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and professionals' perceptions of victims. Then, I outline the study design and the data collection and analyze strategies for the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines how helping professionals perceive the sexual victimization of incarcerated males. Specifically, I ask, how do helping professionals perceive sexual violence against incarcerated males? In doing so, I explore how helping professionals from various educational and training backgrounds differ in their perceptions of male victimization. The literature review will synthesize studies of masculinity, inmate victimization, consent, rape myths, victim blaming, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and professionals' perceptions of victims. I draw on symbolic interactionism to frame the study.

#### **Rape Myths**

According to Stahl, Eek, & Kazemi (2010), rape myths are defined as, "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (p. 240). Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell (2010), address six beliefs about male rape. First, "being raped by a male attacker is synonymous with the loss of masculinity" (p. 4). Second, "men who are sexually assaulted by men must be gay" (p. 4). Next, "men are incapable of functioning sexually unless they are sexually aroused" (p. 4). Fourth, "men cannot be forced to have sex against their will" (p. 4). Fifth, "men are less affected by sexual assault than women" (p. 4). And lastly, "men are in a constant state of readiness to accept any sexual opportunity" (p. 4). Generally, both female and male rape victims receive the same stereotypes and labels.

Overall, rape is an underreported crime. Both men and women may struggle with reporting being a victim of rape. Research indicates "men are 1.5 times less likely to report a rape by a male perpetrator to the police than are women. This rate may even lower when

accounting sexual assaults committed by women, although little is known about the effects of perpetrator gender on the likelihood that male victims will report sexual assault to the police” (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008, p. 2). Just like females, men may feel some of the same feelings that women may feel who have been victimized. Men may suffer feelings of “vulnerability, depression, suicidal thoughts, sleep disturbances, social isolation, sexual dysfunction, and confusion about their sexual orientation” (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008, p. 2). The feelings that men may experience contradict society’s construction of what it means to be masculine.

### **Victim Blaming**

Gerwinde Vynckier (2012) defines victim blaming as, “the victim is (at least partially) blamed for having contributed to the victimization” (p. 38). Research shows that individuals may have a tendency to put blame on the victim. Victim blaming is strongly linked to victim precipitation. Victim precipitation is defined as (2012), “the fact that the victim contributed to the victimization by his/her own behavior” (Vynckier, p. 39). Through the study Vynckier conducted, it was noted there are different forms of victim blaming. Each different form can have a different effect on the victim. Vynckier (2012) utilizes Janoff-Bulman’s (1979) distinction of victim blaming: characterological and behavioural self-blame (p. 42). Characterological self-blame allows the victim to put blame on themselves based on who he/she is as a person. Behavioural self-blame gives the victim the opportunity to regain control of the situation and it may decrease future victimizations (Vynckier, 2012). Victim blaming occurs in both major and minor instances of victimizations.

Some individuals may have a tendency to explain and rationalize instances in society due to the social construction. System Justification Theory (2010) states, “people are motivated to

justify and rationalize the way things are, so that existing social, economic, and political arrangements tend to be perceived as fair and legitimate” (Stahl, Eek, & Kazemi, p. 241). Individual’s tendency to rationalize depends on the individual and the situation. Gender, rape, and sexual assault are instances where individuals may form different myths and rationalizations.

### **Helping Professional’s Perceptions of Victims**

Different helping professions have been constructed to have particular attitudes and perceptions of victims of sexual assault for example, some stereotypes include respecting or disrespecting based on the victim’s gender (Payne, Button, Rapp, 2008). Research has analyzed different helping professions including “police officers, SANEs [Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner], lawyers, judges, and jurors” (Payne, Button, & Rapp, 2008) and crisis workers. Research studies imply the understood relationship between helping professionals and male victims by suggesting relationships and perceptions are affected by helping professions.

### **Perceptions of Noninstitutionalized Male Victims**

Donnelly and Kenyon conducted a study in which they explored how “law enforcement, medical professionals, rape crisis centers, and mental health professionals” respond to male victimization (1996, p. 442). Participants voiced their opinions during the interview and it was found that a majority of the participants fall to rape myths and victim blaming. Two of the common myths that were heard by the participants were that men could not be raped and if they were raped, it was because that is something that they wanted (Donnelly & Kenyon, 1996, p. 444). Also, Donnelly and Kenyon found, “one law enforcement representative bluntly stated, “Honey we don’t do men.” She laughingly asked, “What would you want to study something like that for? Men can’t be raped.”” (Donnelly & Kenyon, 1996, p. 444). Other participants

stated that didn't treat men because either they didn't see a need for it or because men don't get raped (Donnelly & Kenyon, 1996, p. 444).

Overall, agencies that provided services to men, generally did not fall to rape myths and victim blaming. However, the agencies that did not offer services to men, did fall to rape myths and did not see male rape as an issue. "Gender role stereotypes influence providers' perceptions of male sexual assault victims and the actual services that are offered" (Donnelly & Kenyon, 1996, p. 446). Professionals who recognize men can be victims often respond to them in a positive light and provide the necessary services to them.

### **Criminal Justice Personnel**

Research suggests the relationship between helping professions and victims are affected by career path. Payne and colleagues (2008) state, "police officers, SANEs, lawyers, judges, and jurors can further traumatize a sexual assault victim" (p.376). Research studies link the type of helping profession and perceptions of victims. Payne, Button, & Rapp (2008) found individuals who belong to a criminal justice profession are more likely to traumatize victims of sexual assault. Police officers are trained to search for credibility and intoxication in criminal cases, they are not trained on how to interact with victims (Rich & Seffrin, 2012). Police officers may often accept rape myths due to their focus being credibility and intoxication. Accepting rape myths can create a negative relationship with the victim often leaving them with feeling blame and embarrassment.

### **Nurses**

Preliminary research has indicated that SANEs have either a respectable or disrespectful attitude toward victims (Payne, et al., 2008). Research explains experiencing negative feelings still occurs today (2008), "a large number of victims experiencing negative treatment from

various service personnel may end up victimizing survivors” (Payne, et al, p. 376). Nurses accept rape myths that society has been constructed to believe. The acceptance of these myths create a negative relationship with the victim and leaves them with the feeling of blame and shame.

Victims who disclose instances of sexual assault to a criminal justice personnel or nurse (criminal justice), may likely experience “stress, depression, anxiety, and increased signs of posttraumatic stress disorder than victims who do not report” (Payne, Button, & Rapp, 2008, p. 376). Working with professionals who have a negative outlook on victims may lead to a negative experience when looking for recovery.

### **Crisis Workers**

Research also suggests crisis workers are needed when working with victims of sexual assault. Payne and colleagues suggest (2008) “sexual assault crisis workers attempt to offset the overwhelming loss of control and other negative repercussions that victims encounter upon entering the justice system” (p. 377). Additionally, crisis workers provide emergency assistance, counseling, and intervention programs. With having the services provided, research indicates (2008), victims who had an advocate are more likely to report their case to the police and not have a negative experience (Payne, Button, & Rapp). Victims indicate they received better medical and legal services when they have an advocate.

According to previous research, there are six main perceptions of sexual assault workers. In the initial relationship between the sexual assault victim and the crisis worker, assess the response system. From a sociopsychological standpoint, sexual assault crisis workers have an insider’s perspective which gives them the tendency to navigate through the assault system. Research is continuing to give sexual assault victims the encouragement to use their voice. Next, crisis workers have several clients on a daily basis that have gone through traumatizing sexual

assaults. From this, crisis workers are able to develop a thorough understanding of the response system. Through having a foundation of knowledge working with sexual assault victims, crisis workers will be able to identify patterns in behaviors to assist victims in their recovery process. Research indicates the criminal justice system presents negative attitudes toward victims. Fifth, through adjusting the claims that researchers have devised, further research can be implemented to create “new strategies to overcome the problems” (Payne, Button, & Rapp, 2008). Lastly, the field of criminal justice has a tendency to explain victimization and tends to generalize victimization (Payne, Button, & Rapp, 2008).

### **Correctional Officers’ Perceptions of Male Rape**

In prisons, correctional officers work directly with the inmates to ensure they are following all rules and procedures. Correctional officers are “proactive law enforcement officials who help to deter and prevent rape, or perhaps they directly or indirectly facilitate victimization in a variety of ways” (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416). In comparison to other correctional facility positions, correctional officers are more likely to develop new cases involving the prison disciplinary system. “However, it is not clear whether officers regularly report these infractions or whether they use their discretionary power and ignore some violations” (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416).

According to previous research, the behaviors and experience of correctional officers falls on a continuum. At one of the of the continuum, there are correctional officers who are “sympathetic and/or well trained might recognize the symptoms of inmates who have been raped” (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416). Generally, these correctional officers have gone through extensive trainings and have developed strong observational skills. Correctional officers who

exhibit these behaviors are more likely to provide inmates with the necessary resources including “medical and psychological referrals” (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416).

On the other end of the spectrum, there are correctional officers who may “contribute to a rape-prone culture” (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416). Correctional officers who fall on this side of the spectrum are more likely to abuse their position for power and control over the inmates.

“Officers may use housing assignments to intimidate the inmates. They may threaten to assign inmates to cells with known sexual predators as a way to gain compliance from those inmates who are less confident in their ability to protect themselves” (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416).

Correctional officers who fall on this side of the continuum also indirectly enforce their power and control by calling inmates including “punks, bitches, queens” or any other “female pronoun” that may offend a male victim of rape (Eigenberg, 2000, p. 416). Limited research has been done exploring where correctional officers fall on the continuum. However, Eigenberg explains the existence of the spectrum, however; there is still limited research.

### **Mental Health Professionals and Victims**

Many professionals work with victims of sexual assault. Victims seek services from these professions for legal advice, emotional support, medical treatment, etc. As research shows, victims are often revictimized while receiving services (Campbell & Raja, 1999). Campbell and Raja (1999) explain, “survivors of violence are violated not only by the original perpetrators but also by the community systems that intend to provide help” (p. 270). Victims are retraumatized by how they are treated in medial settings, harassment in their place of work, and type of crime in the court room (Campbell & Raja, 1999).

Depending on the type of profession and training that has been received may all for an understanding of the victim’s victimization. “Therapists who had participated in a formal

training on sexual assault, had more experience treating rape survivors, and endorsed a feminist orientation were more likely to believe that community professionals engage in harmful behaviors, which have a detrimental impact on survivor's well-being" (Campbell & Raja, 1999, p. 270).

In summary, previous research on perceptions of victims suggests different job fields affect helping professionals' perceptions of male inmates. For my study, I analyze how helping professionals' perceive male victimization in correctional facilities.

### **Masculinity**

Through years of research on masculinity, there are several ways masculinity may be performed successfully. The antifeminine norm is the powerful norm in the sense that it "stigmatizes all stereotyped feminine characteristics and the qualities associated with them, including openness in expressing emotions related to masculinity" (Lindsey, 2011, p. 246). Men are socialized by institutions (politics, religion, family, education, and economics) to reject all characteristics that are considered feminine. At a young age, boys are taught to refrain from discussing and sharing emotions, especially among boy peers. Men are socialized to refrain from having intimate relationships with other men and to not engage in many relationships with women. To fill in the need of intimate relationships, men join "male-only secret clubs, fraternal organizations, the military, sports teams, or the neighborhood bar" (Lindsey, 2011, p. 246-7). Being a part of these separate groups "allow men to act out this human need in safety and according to masculinity's antifeminine norm, otherwise people would be suspicious of such close male interaction" (Lindsey, 2011, p. 247). Men are expected to be driven, prestigious, and be wealthy. In competition with other men, men may feel it more important to be successful in the paid labor world in comparison to inside the home. Men are expected to be more intelligent

than women in a sense that men are expected to make high wages and receive a higher income than their wife. From a young age, men are expected to display behaviors of toughness and aggressiveness. Some of these behaviors may include “strong, confident, self-reliant, brave, and independent” (Lindsey, 2011, p. 248). Men are socialized to perform masculinity based on the norms that society has constructed.

### **Masculinity and Prison Politics**

Prisons are considered hyper-masculine settings. What is considered to be masculine is often distorted and destructed during the incarceration (O’Donnell, 2004). There are a number of sexual assault cases that occur in the prisons. According to O’Donnell (2004), “the threat of sexual violence actually dominates the prison environment and structures much of the everyday interaction that goes on among inmates. In fact, the threat of sexual victimization becomes the dominant metaphor in terms of which almost every other aspect of ‘prison reality’ is interpreted” (p. 241). Inmate-on-inmate rape is a way for men to present the power and dominance the prisoners hold within prison.

Just like other environments and cultures, there are politics within prisons that inmates are expected to follow. “A male prisoner who has sex with his cellmate without consent is considered ‘straight’ (and worthy of respect) but if he instead holds hands with him, he is considered ‘gay’ (and a legitimate target for disdain)” (O’Donnell, 2004, p. 243). In prison, men are expected to engage in sexual activity with his cell mate to achieve dominance and power over other inmates. Furthermore, research shows that victims of sexual assault undergo the loss of masculinity and their manhood. The victims go from being known as ‘men’ to ‘punks’ (O’Donnell, 2004). The social construction of masculinity shifts from what is expected in the

community to what is expected in the prison setting. The language that perpetrators use is often affiliated with power rather than sex.

### **Consent**

Theorists and researchers are consistently working and have offered several definitions for understanding consent. “Subtle changes in the meanings of terms used give rise to some of the most serious confusions in scientific thought” (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016, p. 462). This statement holds true when searching to define a term like consent. According to Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, and Peterson (2016), “there might not be a public consensus that sexual activity should not occur unless everyone involved consents, but there are numerous discrepant understandings of what it means to consent, this apparent consensus would be illusory” (p. 462). Consent is conceptualized through two different lenses.

First, consent is defined as “an internal state of willingness” (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016, p. 462). The question that is asked is “how indicative is this behavior of consent? (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016, p. 462). By asking this question, it implies that consent is not an observable behavior, instead, “it is an internal state about which observers can make inferences based on behavior” (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016, p. 462). Second, consent is defined as, “an act of explicitly agreeing to something” (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016, p. 462). Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, and Peterson (2016) define consent as being, “a behavior that someone else interprets as willingness” (p. 462).

### **General Perceptions of Inmates**

Inmates face many barriers while incarcerated and when released back into the community. Inmates are one of the most stigmatized groups (ex-offenders), however; research is

limited on indicating the existing relationship between inmates and stigmatization. According to Moore, Stuewig, and Tangney (2013), stigma is referred to as “a process that occurs when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination co-occur together in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold” (p. 527). There are three levels of stigma in society, structural, social, and self. Structural stigma is “the laws and policies that restrict people from participating in society in some way” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013, p. 528). Social stigma is “the public’s stigmatizing attitudes and discrimination toward a group of people is commonly referred to as public stigma” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013, p. 528). Lastly, the third type of stigma is referred to as self. Self is the “individual responses to stigma often fall under the broad category of self-stigma” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013, p. 528).

Along with the three levels of stigma in society, there are three different stigma constructs. These three constructs include public stigma, perceived stigma, and anticipated stigma. Public stigma is referred to as, “the public’s attitude toward a group of people” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013, p. 528). Perceived stigma is defined as, “individuals’ perceptions of public attitudes toward their group” and anticipated stigma is “individuals’ expectations of personally experiencing stigmatization from others” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013, p. 528). When put into context, inmates are one of the most stigmatized group. Inmates receive labels and stereotypes such as “low socioeconomic status and minority race” and “associate negative personality traits with the word ‘criminal’ through public stigmatization” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013, p. 528). Further research may explain why many societal groups place a negative label on inmates, except police officers (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2013). Moore, Stuewig, and Tangney (2013) discuss perceived stigma and their associations with

“unemployment and income loss, depression, poor social functioning, low self-esteem, and negative coping styles” (p. 528). Inmates often experience psychological and social issues from the stigmas that are received (Moore, Stuewig, and Tangney, 2013). Group stigmatization impacts inmate’s psychological and social health much more often than other forms of stigmatization. Not only does stigma play a role in how inmates are perceived in society, there are other influential factors that can play a role.

Inmate’s racial background is also a factor for how stigmas are interpreted. According to Moore, Stuewig, and Tangney (2013), people of color “indicated greater stigmatization on items about feeling stigmatized by others whereas Caucasians reported greater stigmatization on items regarding keeping their identity a secret and being afraid of interpersonal rejection” (p.529). Research from a criminologists perspective indicates people of color experience hardships due to racial stereotypes and prejudices. Research states (2013), “being labeled an offender may be ‘redundant’ for African Americans because they already manage racial stigma. Supporting this idea, researchers have found that Caucasian prisoners were more likely to endorse secrecy for coping with stigma when compared to African American prisoners” (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, p. 529).

Inmates receive labels and stereotypes by society. These specific stigmas have a very negative effect on the inmate, both psychologically and socially. Stigmatizing inmates created a negative dynamic while incarcerated and when released back into the community.

### **Inmate Victimization**

Historically, researchers have examined the level of victimization among male inmates. Reports of sexual assault are relatively low due to men underreporting, however, sexual assault among male inmates is an issue. The first study of sexual assault in prisons was conducted in

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1968. The significance of the issue became manifested when it was disclosed 3,000 Philadelphia male inmates reported they had been raped. It was found that over 3,000 men had been sexually assaulted during the 26 period that was being examined, which led to the conclusion that, “sexual assaults were epidemic in the Philadelphia system” (No Escape: Male Rape In U.S. Prisons - Anomaly Or Epidemic: The Incidence Of Prisoner-On-Prisoner Rape, 2001, p. 7). This 1968 study of Philadelphia penal facilities also concluded that every young man who entered into the system was sexually approached within a day or two.

In 1976, Megargee found from interviewing inmates from Federal Penitentiary at Tallahassee, that 30% of inmates had been approached for sexual activity during their incarceration (Tewksbury, 1989). A year later, Carroll found that 40 sexual assaults occurred every year in a maximum security institution (Tewksbury, 1989). There has been limited findings thus far contributing to the conversation of sexual assaults while incarcerated. Wooden and Parker interviewed inmates and institutional officers and found 14% of the total population of the institution had been sexually assaulted. Furthermore, it was found, 41% of inmates who were sexually assaulted had self-identified or given the label as homosexual (Tewksbury, 1989).

Groth’s novel (2002), *Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender*, provides advanced data on nonconsensual sex in both institutional and the non-institutional community of sexual assault against males. The sample included 20 offenders and 7 victims who were involved in rapes while in prison. It was found that all of the offenders forced the victim to engage in sexually activity both orally and anally. It was found 82% of prison sexual assaults were gang rapes in comparison to 12% of gang rapes that were committed in the non-institutional community (Groth, 2002). Gang rapes are more likely to occur in prisons rather than in the non-institutional community.

Years later, researchers continued to find that sexual assault among male inmates is an ongoing issue. Hensley, Tewksbury and Castle (2003) conducted a study in an Oklahoma correctional facility in the late 1990's. Among 174 randomly selected inmates who consented to participate in the study, 13.8% reported being sexual targets and 1.1% reported being sexually assaulted. (Hensley, Tewksbury & Castle, 2003, p. 601). It was found, 66% of male targets were single, 42% of males who had been targeted were heterosexual, 58% of the targets were white, and men were incarcerated up to 143 days before becoming a target (Hensley, Tewksbury & Castle, 2003). The study indicates the demographics of men who were victims of sexual assault while incarcerated. This study reports a relatively low rate of sexual assault; it could be argued this is due to underreporting.

Cindy Struckman-Johnson and David Struckman- Johnson studied sexual assault among male inmates. Their sample consisted of 1,788 inmates and 475 staff. They found “21% of inmates had experienced at least one episode of pressured or forced sexual contact since incarcerated in their state, and 16% reported that an incident had occurred in their current facility. At least 7% of the sample had been raped in their current facility” (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2000, p. 379). Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson illustrated 59 of 486 men responded to the survey that they “had been forced to engage in sexual intercourse at least one time” (p. 380). Not only did this study indicate that male abuse was common amongst inmates, but guards perpetuated abuse toward the inmates as well (Bell, Coven, Cronan, Garza, & Guggemos, 1999). This study reports that rates of sexual assault are relatively higher than the previous two studies.

In 2008, Lara Stemple analyzed the phenomena of male rape and human rights. Research from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute of Justice

reporting that annually 92,700 men are raped. Statistically, 3% of men or 2.78 million men have become a victim of attempted or completed rape at least once in their lifetime. The Bureau of Justice Statistics' *National Crime Victimization Survey* found that men comprise 11% of sexual assault victims (Stemple, 2008).

According to Wolff, Blitz, Shi, Siegel and Bachman (2007). "it is not surprising that violence is the leading by-product of prisons because hundreds or thousands of people with antisocial tendencies or behavior are aggregated and confined in close and frequently overcrowded quarters characterized by material and social deprivation" (p. 588). As research progresses, assaults that occur in prison are becoming known as a human rights issue. Men comprise at least 92% of the prison population, so it may be known that men are more likely to become victims of sexual assault while incarcerated.

Previously, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson found one-in- five men have reported being forced or pressured into sex. Approximately 7% of male inmates were raped (Stemple, 2007). Generally, male victims of sexual assault are the vulnerable population. These men are known to be "nonviolent, first-time offenders, who are small, weak, shy, effeminate, and inexperienced in the ways of prison life" (Stemple, 2007, p. 609). This population of men is generally viewed as a minority population.

Researchers have indicated different scenarios that may lead to sexual assault in prisons. Some male inmates engage in a protective pairing technique. According to Stemple (2007), protective pairing is when "the weaker inmate provides sex to a dominant inmate in exchange for protection from assault by others. Treated like the perpetrator's property, victims have been forced into servitude that includes prostitution arrangements with other prisoners" (p. 609). The

submissive inmate is willing to provide pleasure to the dominant inmate to allow for a safer environment during incarceration.

In summary, research on sexual assault among male inmates is relatively low, however, it may be due to underreporting. The findings are relevant to my research, they indicate sexual assault occurs among male inmates.

A number of studies show male inmates are likely to become victims of sexual assault perpetuated by another male inmate or prison guard. Past research indicates that gender, marital status, types of offenses, longevity of sentence, and race are common factors associated with being a victim of abuse (Hensley, Tewksbury, and Castle, 2003). The studies also reveal that abuse occurs more often than it is reported due to the unwillingness of some men to disclose the abuse. The topic is a sensitive topic, and it causes some men to feel embarrassed or shame. Therefore, some men may not disclose the abuse. Nevertheless, the several studies I discussed are pretty consistent in their findings. The methodology used in the studies consisted of mixed-methods in-person interviews. Conducting interviews may cause some men to not fully talk about the situation that they are in due to feelings of embarrassment or shame. The present study may provide new insights by interviewing helping professionals rather than inmates, and learning about their perceptions on sexual assault and victimization.

### **Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)**

The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA) is a federal law implemented by Congress to protect prisoners while they are in custody of the United States correctional facilities. Executing this act, federal, state, and local correctional facilities are required to have a zero-tolerance policy toward prison rape (National Institute of Justice, 2017). According to the National PREA Resource Center (2013), “in addition to providing federal funding for research,

programs, training, and technical assistance to address the issue, the legislation mandated the development of national standards” (p. 1). Effective in 2012, The National Prison Rape Elimination Committee finalized national standards that would be used to reduce prison rape (National PREA Resource Center, 2013). The standards that are addressed include: “Prevention Planning, Responsive Planning, Training and Education, Screening for Risk of Sexual Victimization and Abusiveness, Reporting, Official Response Following an Inmate Report, Investigations, Discipline, Medical and Mental Care, Data Collection and Review, Audits and State Compliance, Other Issues – LGBTI Gender-Nonconforming Inmates and Other Issues – Cultural Change” (National PREA Resource Center, 2013). Creating the act, the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (2009) wished to reduce prison rape in correctional facilities.

In 2006, the United Nations Committee Against Torture did an annual appraise on the Prison Rape Elimination Act. From recent estimates conducted by the federal government “nearly 200,000 people were sexually abused in American detention facilities in 2011, largely unchanged since the first survey in 2007” (Santo, 2014, p. 1). Santo found the implementation of PREA has not been effective due to “shortcomings of American criminal justice, widespread prevalence of sexual violence against American prisoners, and the failure of states to put the rape law into practice” (2014, p. 1). Due to the ineffectiveness of PREA, in 2014, it was put into effect for states that do not wish to comply with PREA will be “penalized with a loss of five percent of their federal funding for prison-related purposes” (Santo, 2014, p. 1).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The current study is grounded in symbolic interactionism. Symbolic Interactionism “is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society” (Lumen Learning, 2018, p. 1). George Herbert Mead is known to be the father of founding symbolic

interactionism even though his work was never published (Lumen Learning, 2018). In 1966, Herbert Blumer illustrates how human society is portrayed through the lens of George Herbert Mead. Blumer explains (1966), human group life has developed essential ideas around, “the mind, a world of objects, human beings as organisms possessing selves, and human conduct in the form of constructed acts” (p. 535). Blumer developed a framework surrounding Mead’s concepts of the self, the act, social interaction, objects, and joint action. Symbolic Interactionism is defined as involving “interpretation, or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person and definition, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act” (Blumer, 1966, p. 537). In other words, “human beings, in interpreting and defining one another’s acts, can and do meet each other in the full range of human relations” (p. 538).

Generally, “social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals” (Luman Learning, 2018, p.1). Symbolic interactionism can be used as a foundational framework to explain how helping professionals’ perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. The current study seeks to understand the interactions among helping professionals and male victims. Due to the construction of masculinity, men may mask their victimization. With men masking their victimization, helping professionals may create and experience the same feelings that male victims are experiencing: shaming and placing judgment. Helping professionals may define and interpret these behaviors and based on those interpretations create a meaning for it. Creating meanings for the behaviors, could allow the professionals to develop negative feelings for the victim.

In this study, I explore helping professionals’ perceptions of inmate sexual victimization. This study can inform disclosure of abuse and how sexually victimized male inmates are

currently served. This topic is significant because it examines helping professionals' perceptions which affect disclosure and services provided to victimized inmates.

In the next section, I outline the study design and the data collection and analyze strategies for the study. Then, I discuss my findings from interviewing 10 helping professionals in the state of Pennsylvania.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine helping professionals' perceptions of male sexual victimization in correctional facilities. This study can inform how sexually victimized male inmates are currently served. This topic is significant because it examines helping professionals' perceptions which affect disclosure and services provided to victimized inmates.

In this section, I will explain the qualitative research design of the study. I will discuss my sensitizing concepts, my data collection methods, and my sampling strategy. I will then discuss how I plan to analyze my data that I collect and how to ensure quality data. In this section, I will also implement my positionality as the researcher.

This section discusses the research methodology with a number of sub-sections. This includes discussions surrounding: sensitizing concepts, data collection methods, and sampling strategy. Concluding this section will consist of a discussion involving data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and limitations.

#### **Researcher Positionality**

Prior to beginning research, stating your positionality as a researcher presents the readers your perceptions and ideas as the author on the topic. Individuals in society are constructed to have opinions and viewpoints in most areas. As a society, we have been socially constructed to withhold particular values. The social constructivism paradigm studies "the multiple realities constructed by different groups of people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions of others" (Patton, 2015, p. 121). This paradigm allows individuals to create and interpret the world around them based on their own viewpoints. With having particular values, it may increase the chances of having biases on a particular topic. As a

researcher, it is crucial to state your standpoint and theoretical framework on the subject being analyzed. Patton explains (2015), “being reflexive involves self-questioning and self-understanding” (p. 70). “The term *reflexivity* has entered into the qualitative lexicon as a way of emphasizing the importance of deep introspections, political consciousness, cultural awareness, and ownership of one’s perspective” (Patton, 2015, p. 70).

As the researcher of this project, I must lay out any potential biases that I may have. I am a twenty-five-year-old female born and raised in a rural community. I grew up in a nuclear family, with very traditional and conservative views. To say the least, my family placed emphasis on how gender was constructed. I was taught women should be homemakers, take care of children, and maintain the household. My parents tended to place a greater emphasis on what it was to be a male. Men are supposed to be tough, hard workers, drive at the age of sixteen, protect the household, etc.

Initially, I wanted to look at domestic violence cases where men are the victims. In my first semester of graduate school, I wrote a blog on domestic violence where men are the victims. Entering my second semester, I took a Sociology theory course and my professor appeared to take an interest in my topic. We met and had several conversations on different directions I could take my research. We discussed looking at males in different hyper-masculine settings such as: prisons, the military, and fraternities. I thought looking at sexual assault that occurs in the military would be a very interesting topic to look at in-depth, however; the issue became accessing a sample.

Still brainstorming, I began looking at literature on the perceptions that correction officers have on male victimization in prisons. I noticed there was a gap in the literature, and there was not much data where this was examined. I began to find a pattern that sexual assaults

in prisons are more common than what society is led to believe. My professor, for my Quantitative Research Methods course, read my proposal and mentioned he had some contacts in the Criminology department at my university to whom I should reach out. I reached out to a professor in the Criminology department, we had a meeting and she discussed having access to correction officers. She spoke with the correction officers that she has access to and due to confidentiality issues, they were not interested in speaking with me.

Starting back at the beginning, I talked to my thesis chair and another committee member. We brainstormed different ideas and different populations that may be willing to participate in my study. As mentioned previously, I interned at Children and Youth Services in the summer of 2015. I traveled to several agencies and I developed professional relationships with some of the caseworkers. I reached out to those caseworkers and asked them if they would be willing to participate in the study to learn their views on male sexual assault. However, they declined due to confidentiality. Even though they declined, they reminded me of agencies that we had traveled to that worked with victims of sexual assault.

I reached out to one agency in Western PA, and asked if they would be interested in participating. This agency assured me that they have been involved in a few studies and that they would be willing to participate in mine. The director indicated she has three branches and she would give me access to all three branches. With having a partial sample, I continued to do some research on different agencies that worked with incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault. I reached out to an agency in Eastern Pennsylvania; I explained my study, and they were interested in participating as well. Due to scheduling conflicts and time restraints, the agency in Western Pennsylvania (with three branches) dropped out of the study. The director believed that my study would take up too much time. With this being said, I began to research agencies in

Pennsylvania that worked with male victims of sexual assault. I found one agency in Eastern Pennsylvania. I explained my study and the agency was eager to be a participant in this study.

Understanding the reality of the subject I am studying, and background information I have collected, became the starting point for my research. There are differences between the participants I interviewed and myself. Some differences include gender, education level, and job status. Through the interview process, I kept my personal beliefs and experiences in check. However, when needed, I reassessed my positionality as the researcher during the interview to ensure that I did not let my personal beliefs affect the analysis of my data.

### **Research Design**

This project utilizes a qualitative approach, in that, I can analyze real-world situations and construct common themes about a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). To construct these themes, this study applies a realism approach. According to Patton (2015) realism “emphasizes that truth is context dependent” (p. 111). Realism asks the core question, “what are the causal mechanisms that explain how and why reality unfolds as it does in a particular context?” (Patton, 2015, p.111). Having this study grounded in a realism approach, I will be able to “place and interpret those constructions and construals [individuals interpret the world] within both a specific theoretical and a particular real-world context” (Patton, 2015, p. 114). This approach will allow me to analyze and interpret social constructions that individuals make in a real-world context. For instance, a semi-structured interview questionnaire list was used. This allowed me to offer “maximum flexibility to pursue information in whichever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerged from observing a particular setting or from talking to one or more individuals’ in the setting” (Patton, 2015, p. 437). Using this approach provided a diversified array of themes and new information to build a theoretical framework.

## Sampling

For this study, I utilized purposeful sampling. According to Patton (2015), “the purpose of purposeful sampling is to focus case selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry’s purpose, primary questions, and data being collected” (p. 264). More specifically, the sampling strategy I used was a modified snowball sampling. With traditional snowball sampling the researcher starts with “one or a few relevant and informational-rich interviewees and then ask them for additional relevant contacts, others who can provide different and/or confirming perspectives” (Patton, 2015, p. 270). I am calling my approach *modified snowball sampling* because after meeting with this agency and conducting my first interview, the participant shared my research topic to several colleagues via email and the sample to my study went from two agencies in Eastern Pennsylvania to a total of seven agencies throughout the entire state of Pennsylvania. Interested individuals emailed me directly wanting to be a part of my study. After having one interview, my study snowballed from two agencies to seven.

For my study, I conducted one-on-one interviews with advocates, counselors, and staff affiliated with PREA to gather data from the person’s perspective that cannot be observed (Patton, 2015). Patton describes the purpose of interviewing as (2015):

To allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumptions that the perspective others is meaningful and knowable and can be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind to gather their stories. (p. 426).

With conducting interviews, I was able to gain insight on the unobservable: perceptions. For the purpose of my study, interviewing was used to understand helping professionals’ perceptions of male victimization in correctional facilities.

## **Sampling Characteristics**

Initially, I planned to interview 10-15 helping professionals; however, I was only able to interview 10 helping professionals in Pennsylvania. Some characters of the sample are:

- all participants were Caucasian;
- prior to working with victims eight participants went through an extensive 40-hour training on domestic violence and sexual assault; one participant went through a 60-80-hour training on crisis counseling and rape crisis; and one participant went through a 45-hour training on sexual assault;
- four participants had received a Bachelor's degree and six participants received a Master's degree;
- seven participants have been in their current position between one to five years; three participants have been in their current position between seven to nineteen years;
- eight participants have experience working with both male and female victims;
- nine participants have experience working with male victims in prison;
- seven participants currently serve as a counselor or a victim's advocate.

## **Data Collection**

I conducted eight face-to-face semi-structured qualitative interviews and two telephone semi-structured qualitative interviews. I contacted individuals via email to arrange a convenient time and place to conduct the interviews. Prior to beginning the interviews, I provided the participants with a set of my interview questions (if asked) and (See appendix A) an informed consent form (See Appendix B). I reviewed the informed consent form with each participant and received their signed copy and provided them with a copy. For the two participants who completed the phone interview, I went over the form and asked for their permission. Their

permission has been voice recorded and saved and stored in a safe place. The two participants had the option of receiving an informed consent form via email. This study utilized semi-structured interviews and recorded each interview. All interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

To conduct the interviews, I utilized an interview guide (Appendix A). Utilizing my interview guide allowed for questions to be consistently asked for all participants, however; with keeping the interviews semi-structured other themes were able to emerge. Interviewees were asked a series of questions pertaining their education and training, their experiences with victim blaming, rape myths, masculinity, inmates, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). Prior to each interview, I reviewed my interview guide and prior interviews to recall any key themes that began to emerge. After the interviews, I made note of how long the interviews were and where I traveled to. All participants completed the entire interview and most individuals commented that they would love to see my final report and learn of my results. All participants were grateful and excited that I am looking at the scope of helping professionals' perceptions of male victimization in correctional facilities. While conducting the interviews and once all interviews were finished, I transcribed the ten interviews. Transcripts and the voice recordings were kept confidential and all participants' names and locations are replaced with pseudonyms. The code list of participants' names, location, and pseudonyms are kept in a confidential file and saved in two different places. The video recorder is stored away in a safe and locked confidential place.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is a process. Patton explained (2015), "ideas for making sense of that data that emerge while still in the field constitute the beginning of analysis, they are part of

the record of field notes” (p. 522). My data analysis process began during my first interview. I was asking questions, receiving answers, and probing for more information. Doing this, allowed for themes to emerge and ideas to spark. Patton notes that qualitative analysis is similar to “golden thread in a royal garment” (2015, p. 521). “They decorate the garment and enhance its quality, but they may also distract attention from the basic cloth that gives the garment its strength – and shape – the skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, diligence, and work of the garment maker” (p. Patton, 2015, 521). Beginning data analysis during the first interview allowed for themes to emerge early and provided me with different areas that needed to be addressed in future interviews.

Prior to the interviews, there were several sensitizing concepts that I wished to address. These sensitizing concepts include education and training experience, victim blaming, rape myths, masculinity, perceptions of inmates, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). Having the sensitizing concepts implemented guided my fieldwork (Patton, 2015). It allowed for me to guide the interview and gather data that I needed to answer my research question; however, it also allowed for other areas of interest to be brought up. During the analysis stage, I utilized a computer software, MAXQDA, to help “facilitate data storage, coding, retrieval, comparing, and linking” (Patton, 2015, p. 529). This allowed me to sort the data into categories, color code the codes, and made the data easier to retrieve. Once my codes and descriptions were sorted, I began the interpretation stage. “Interpretation involves explaining the findings, answering “why” questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework” (Patton, 2015, p. 534).

For this study, the analytical process is inductive. Patton (2015) describes qualitative data analysis as being an inquiry that is being “oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive

logic. Inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds toward general patterns. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated” (p. 64). Using an inductive approach “allows for meaningful dimensions to emerge from the patterns found in the cases under study, without presupposing in advance what those important dimensions will be” (Patton, 2015, p. 64).

To begin the analysis process, I listened and transcribed all 10 interviews. After, I read through all 10 interviews again, I became familiar where certain parts of the data were located. I utilized a computer software, MAXQDA, to help sort and color code themes and sensitizing concepts. My data were sorted into concepts based on the sensitizing concepts, from here, they were sorted further into more relative and specific codes. The coding process is a long and ongoing process. I sorted data into codes, resorted, and started over again. I revisited interviews several times to retrieve more data or reread the raw data. With consistently rereading the transcripts and reorganizing and regrouping themes and concepts lead to an understanding of how helping professionals view male victims in correctional facilities.

### **Data Quality**

There have been discussions regarding how it is difficult to ensure credibility in qualitative research. However, in order to ensure credibility of qualitative inquiry there are four elements: “systematic, in-depth fieldwork, systematic and conscientious analysis of data, credibility of the inquirer, and readers’ and users’ philosophical belief in the values of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2015, p. 652).

To ensure I was providing credible qualitative research, I began by laying out my position on the topic as the researcher. Providing the research positionality provides my

standpoint on the topic and how I came to study this topic. “Being able to report that you engaged in a systematic and conscientious search for alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations enhances credibility, not to mention that is simply good analytical practice and the very essence of being rigorous in analysis” (Patton, 2015, p. 652). As the researcher, I understood any potential biases or judgments that I may have. Having my biases in check, I was able to code, categorize and look at emerging themes in several ways; ways that would best answer the research question for the current study. Also, another way that the quality of the data is ensured is “by deepening the analysis, reexamining initial findings, and continuously working back and forth between findings and the data to validate findings against data” (Patton, 2015, p. 658). By doing this, themes were organized into different categories and through the analysis process, I was able to reorganize the themes several times.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For the purpose of this study, all participants were provided with an informed consent form to explain the study, interview process, and that participation is voluntary. Participants’ identities are kept confidential to protect them and their privacy. For this study, I used pseudonyms to keep their identities confidential. The researcher (myself) and thesis chair were the only individuals who had access to the raw data. Raw data was then kept in an office that is secured. The interviews were conducted in a private room where the conversation was kept between myself and the participant. The sites, where I conducted my interviews, were kept confidential as well.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

To begin, I would like to share a short story that was shared with me. This story supports findings of the current study. The story demonstrates the commonality of attitudes and perceptions that advocates may have when working with a male victim who was once a perpetrator. Also, the portrayal and social construction of masculinity is presented, and the story also presents how the correctional facility handled the presented situation.

Beth works for an agency that has consistently received letters from two inmates. They will be referred to as Inmate 1 and Inmate 2. Inmate 1 sent handwritten letters to this agency on a regular basis. In these letters, Inmate 1 was describing how he was doing and what he was going through but also requesting research articles. Research article pertaining to rape in the prison. Inmate 1 had disclosed in the letters that he had been raped and he was put in solitary confinement. Inmate 1 was searching for articles that could pertain and build an argument to argue his placement in solitary confinement. Inmate 1 disclosed that while in solitary confinement, he was still being raped by prison guards. The correspondence between this agency and Inmate 1 went on for years. However, in the final correspondences, Inmate 1 disclosed he was homosexual. Through all of the years, Inmate 1 remained in solitary confinement. Last July, the letters stopped. Several employees at the agency were rooting and cheering for Inmate 1. Once the letters stopped, Beth searched for an answers as to why the letters stopped, but they never found out why.

Inmate 2 was sending hand-written letters from a prison in New York. Inmate 2 did not provide the agency any background information, he just asked for research articles. Inmate 2 wanted research articles pertaining to child abuse and other very heavy material. Beth found it

very difficult to express what Inmate 2 was hoping to receive from the agency. Inmate 2 was played in the prison in New York from a sexual assault charge. Beth was obligated to send whatever articles that was requested. However, Beth felt they were encouraging Inmate 2's behavior. Overtime, requests became more consistent and Inmate 2 asked for more research articles pertaining to very hard topics such as child abuse. From the abundance of request that Inmate 2 was requesting, Beth asked the supervisor to put a number on requests allowed. It was found that Inmate 2 was taking advantage of this agency due to the policies and requirements of individuals working in this agency. Beth had asked her supervisor to contact the prison in New York to try to limit the amount of letters that were being written, but staff at the prison did not see it as an issue. Furthermore, they did not see any issue with the material that Inmate 2 was continuously requesting.

When letters were received from Inmate 2, colleagues of Beth had made comments such as, "Oh god, not another letter from him." or "Oh god, what does he want now?" Beth had indicated that the staff may have had a difficult time with his correspondence not only because he was a prisoner, but because he was a perpetrator as well.

### **Introduction**

Working with male victims in correctional facilities can be challenging. Many participants indicate that there are many similarities in comparison to male and female victims of sexual assault, but there are differences as well. The purpose of this study is to understand helping professionals' perceptions of male victimization in correctional facilities.

The findings are broken up into sections, which are organized by themes that emerged from the data. Statements that participants made will be utilized to support the themes. I begin by addressing the education and training that the participants have received and how they influence

the helping professionals' work with male victims of sexual assault, followed by understanding and perceptions of victim blaming. I then discuss rape myths and common rape myths that are stated in the prison setting and to whom these myths are stated by. I address the definition of masculinity and whether or not that definition changes once incarcerated. Next, I address the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

### **Education and Training Background**

Working with male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities requires having a degree and extensive hours of training. Four participants reported having a Bachelor's degree and six participants reported having a Master's degree. Bachelor's degrees consist of a wide range of fields such as: Political Science, History, Biology, English, Religious Studies, Pastoral Studies, and Psychology. Counseling, Women's Studies, and Fine Arts are areas that were focused on for the individuals who received a Master's degree. Participants, who received a minor while in school, focused on areas of Sociology, PreLaw, Women and Gender studies, and Criminal Justice.

Participants bring a different set of backgrounds, toolkits, and understandings to the field. Some participants indicated having prior work experience in the field in positions such as helping victims post sentencing, helping victims with stalking and safety issues, working in direct services, teaching high school, and working in trauma. All previous experiences shape how each helping professional perceives male victimization in correctional facilities.

In order to better serve male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities, all participants indicated they had to go through extensive hours of training. Trainings focused on domestic violence and sexual assault, auditor preparedness, response to trauma, sexual assault advocacy, crisis counseling, diversity, rape culture, sexual harassment in the workplace, Trauma

Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT), and sexual assault counseling. Seven participants have gone through a national certification training to become a Sexual Assault Counselor (SACT). This training focuses on issues related to victim blaming, establishing trust and rapport with victims, and psycho-education.

The helping professionals in this study felt that continuing education, ongoing trainings, and working with victims has enabled them to be successful in working with a vulnerable population: “I worked directly with victims whose perpetrators are incarcerated. I feel like that has probably been the best because I can see the other side [so] when I’m doing a training with advocates and supporting them through, being able to see both sides has been pretty rewarding for them” (Mary).

Many helping professionals received training on working with men or working with men who are incarcerated. Being involved in the trainings, “helped me navigate certain situations and how to best help those individuals” (Sally). Not only has receiving certain training created a solid foundation for working with men who are incarcerated, being a survivor has created that foundation as well. Lisa shares a piece of her own personal journey:

I have to go into every situation and think how I can handle this situation well because I am a survivor. I look at a person as a person, not as an inmate. I don’t look at them as a troubled child or teen, I look at them as a person.

Being a survivor and receiving trainings has shaped an understanding for how to interact with inmates and understanding different reactions. Lisa continues:

It helped me understand that it is not a “me” issue. Sometimes I just need to be patient. And I think my training has actually helped me do that because I’ve learned all the different reactions to trauma, especially those initial PREA intakes where somebody who

has just been assaulted and they are off the wall because they are going through several different feelings.

The education, training, and first-hand experience shape helping professionals' attitudes and perceptions while working with male victims of sexual assault. They shape and construct any previous misinterpretations of masculinity and men as victims and gives a new understanding of men as victims. Being involved in trainings provides the helping professionals with a toolkit for how to work with male victims in general or male victims who are assaulted while incarcerated.

### **Masculinity and Victimization**

Of my sample, eight helping professionals have experience working with both male and female victims, one helping professional has experiencing working exclusively with men, and one works in the office, where all of her colleagues work with male and female victims (only experience with inmates is receiving letters and sending requested materials). There are several commonalities between male and female victims as well as some differences. These similarities and differences may result from society's understanding of femininity and masculinity. Defining masculinity was very troublesome for Bob, Mike, and Lori. Bob doesn't believe that "there is such a thing outside of social understandings of femininity and masculinity." The culture we live in places great emphasis on defining what is masculine and what is feminine. In doing so, stereotypical attitudes and behaviors are created for both. Mike adds "I wish the stereotypes for masculinity and femininity didn't really exist." Lori feels the same way. Lori doesn't believe one should have to define what is feminine and what is masculine. Lori would not want anyone to define what it is for her to be female, so she doesn't think it is her place to define what it means to be a male in our culture.

But when pushing further, the definitions that were shared often aligned with society's social construction of masculinity. Susan shares how she defines masculinity.

Masculinity is one of those things, it's like that quote about pornography. "You know when you see it", it's like that with masculinity. To me, it is showing off the positive and negative attributes of what a man should be like and amplifying it.

There is a consensus between Mike, Lisa, Jill, and Megan. Masculinity is often viewed as being strong, athletic, muscular, and large tough guy. Megan elaborates further:

I think masculinity is a performance, and I don't think all masculinity is bad but I think there are certain aspects of that performance that are detrimental to not only women, but certainly men. That definitely contributes to rape culture at large. But I don't think it really has a lot to do with what's between your legs.

Even though there is a split consensus for how helping professionals define masculinity and femininity, these definitions may cause men and women to respond to their victimization similarly and differently. Some similarities include confusion around the situation, confusion about their sexuality, and experiencing shame and guilt. Mary explains that men may have trouble understanding how they were put in a situation to be a victim of sexual assault or how it happened.

They didn't look at the relationship as someone who could manipulate them or like they got in debt a lot of times by trading goods or commissary [store in correctional facilities for inmates to purchase needed items]. For instance, I don't have money for commissary. I don't have support on the outside. So you use other inmates for cigarettes and then it becomes now you have to do this and it becomes kind of an issue.

Male and female victims of sexual assault often struggle with their sexuality. Males have a tendency to wonder “how it impacts their masculinity.” Bob explains,

Males will wonder if they are gay, gay men will wonder if that’s why they’re gay, guys will often sort of wonder how does it impact their masculinity and they’ve admitted that they were targeted and they were a victim [and] women and girls tend to struggle with those things around the definition of what it means to be a woman, a successful woman.

Mike elaborates on masculinity and how it is viewed based on appearance,

Before working in the prisons, I had the assumption if you were really tough looking, had the right tattoos, the right haircut, and looked like someone you shouldn’t mess with, it may be more likely to keep you safe in prison.

Having a more masculine appearance does not guarantee safety in correctional facilities. If victimized experiencing feelings of shame, guilt, blame, and sense of loss are all feelings that male and female victims may experience. Helping professionals have heard victims say, “I didn’t fight back” [or] “I didn’t scream” [or] “I just froze.” It has been indicated that victims have a tendency to place blame on themselves once they have been victimized. Regardless if the victim is a female, male, boy or girl, all victims may experience the same post-trauma symptoms including: “flashbacks or nightmares, fits of rage, irritability, hyper vigilance, an exaggerated startle response, or issues concentrating.” When thinking about male and female victims of sexual assault, Lori thinks about it in terms of trauma.

I really think about it in terms of trauma, a trauma response. We educate our clients along the neurobiology of trauma and how experiencing trauma affects a person’s brain, and that affects their brain whether they are male or female regardless of their age or gender identity.

However, from working with both male and female victims, helping professionals recognize that there are differences. In terms of shame, Mike explains, “I think men handle the shame and struggle with shame in a little different context.” Experiencing shame as a male or a boy is different due to the social construction of masculinity. As male victims, professionals have heard, “I should have fought off my attacker, my perpetrator.”

Culturally, men and women have been socially constructed to express certain feelings. Women have been taught to not express their feelings of anger and aggression because it is not culturally acceptable; however, men find it much easier to express the pain they have experienced through anger. Bob expresses, “males are much more comfortable with anger as an emotion and not wanting to face or admit to the fear or the pain. Whereas female clients, a lot of them are angry as well, but they are more in touch with the fear and the pain that they’ve experienced.” The culture we live in places emphasis on what feelings are acceptable to express as a man or woman. From the cultural expectations, it becomes difficult for men and women to express their pain and anger in the way in which they choose.

According to helping professionals, our culture has general perceptions our culture has of individuals who are incarcerated. The general perceptions shift in regards to being male or female. Security of the correctional facilities and mannerisms of correctional officers are different depending on if you have entered a male or female facility. When seeking to provide program and support to either female or male victims, it is often different. Females are often receiving more traditional and thoughtful programming in comparison to male victims.

According to my sample of 10 helping professionals, some general perceptions of individuals who are incarcerated are inmates deserve what’s coming to them, inmates have drug offenses or substance abuse issues, you are in prison so you are a part of a gang, you need to be

taught a lesson, delinquent, bad ass, mysterious, and scumbags. When a man is sexually assaulted while incarcerated how they are viewed by our culture is generally the same to how they are viewed as an inmate.

All of these perceptions are influenced by cultural views. These views are created and guided by society and how they view criminals and crimes. Misinterpretations of men, who are sexually assaulted in correctional facilities, results from how our culture views inmates and the victim being a previous perpetrator. Becoming an inmate automatically gives you a label or stigma from our culture. However, when you add what type of crime was committed, it amplifies those stigmas and labels.

### **Rape Myths**

Working with male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities, helping professionals encounter rape myths through colleagues, the media, and the inmates they are serving. There are several common rape myths that have emerged from the study that support previous research (Stahl, Eek, & Kazemi, 2010). The most common is “men can’t be raped”. Lori states, “It’s difficult for men and women to acknowledge that number one men can be raped and number two that they can be sexually assaulted in a lot of ways that don’t involve a penis.” Lisa adds,

Men don’t understand that if they had an erection in or if their body responded to their assault, they don’t understand that it doesn’t mean that they consented. So a lot of it is kind of educating them on that, like your body responds to sexual stimulus.

Additional rape myths are “it’s the victims’ fault because they didn’t fight back”. “I should have been able to defend myself, I should have been able to keep this from happening,” “you are weak and you need help,” “if you are sexually assaulted by a man then you’re gay,” and “my sexual

orientation has been impacted.” Other common rape myths that helping professionals have heard from colleagues, the media, and inmates are in regards to making jokes about “dropping the soap” in the shower and that “rape in prison is part of the consequence, [prisoners] have it coming to them.”

What is causing colleagues, the media, and inmates to have these rape myths? It is indicated the misinterpretations of rape myths is from the social construction of gender, power and control within prison, the idea of sexual assault is not taken seriously, and the way our culture is shaped. Megan explains one of the struggles our culture faces in terms of the “Pipeline to Prison”:<sup>1</sup>

Essentially what it is if you are a victim, they usually talk about it in terms of like girls injured and the juvenile system, but it’s applicable to everyone including men. So as a child, let’s say you’re sexually abused by someone then you have a really negative reactive behavior because of that you either you know, you don’t tell anyone or you tell and get a negative reaction, and so you don’t get what you need. Then you have all this negative acting out as a result. So sometimes that’s drug and alcohol. Sometimes that’s truancy, it doesn’t have to be anything big. But then from there you end up going to the juvenile center, I mean it’s still punitive. You’re not getting the resources or help that you need. So you’re still having these negative reactive behaviors. And it just sort of continues that cycle until people are adults and incarcerated.

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<sup>1</sup> According to ACLU (2018), the “school-to-prison pipeline” is a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and counseling services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out” (p. 1).

Megan believes the misinterpretations of rape myths stems from the Pipeline-to-Prison, a cultural problem. The Pipeline-to-Prison is generally used to explain prison and education, but it can be used to explain prison and the cycle individuals face. Another cultural problem that is associated with the misinterpretations of rape myths is the social construction of masculinity. Our culture struggles with how men and boys should behave.

Lori explains,

I think society likes to believe that men are always in charge and competent, and that they can't be hurt. This underlying assumption still exists that men have to be strong and men cannot be hurt in some way and of course for everyone that sexual assault makes a person weak.

In some cases, being masculine is considered being powerful. Mary explains that

In confinement people are vying for power because there's limited resources. A lot of times that traditional masculinity is seen as power and so when you are anything else you are much more likely to be victimized. That's a rigid idea of masculinity and that happens quite rapidly in corrections and that's really used to kind of maintain power.

Rape myths are confirmed through individuals in society and cultural biases and understandings of the world. When the rape myths are mentioned by colleagues, media, or the inmate, it places blame on the victim. They are blaming the victim for becoming a victim during incarceration.

### **Victim Blaming**

When working with male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities, victim blaming occurs. Victim blaming occurs around ethical dilemmas, advocates, culture, media, inmates, and correctional staff. In general, advocates understand that serving male victims is

their job. They are there to support the client and help them cope through their victimization.

Megan explains how she works through victim blaming with a client:

I think it's really important to first establish who you are and to create a safe space especially with incarcerated survivors. I mean the systems have failed them time and time again, and they are not super eager to open up about all of these terrible things that have happened to them. So establishing some kind of trust and making sure that they are understanding that you see them as a whole person with a past, present, and future. Not just as a victim or an inmate.

Bob explains, "When I'm working with inmate clients, I absolutely try to at least have them hear me say that I don't believe it is part of their sentence [being sexually assaulted]." Advocates and counselors are aware that their obligation as a helping professional is to provide services to victims; however, there are instances when advocates struggle with ethical dilemmas. Advocates and counselors often find it troublesome to assist a male victim of sexual assault who was previously a perpetrator. Susan finds it very difficult to provide services to males who have been perpetrator in a sexual assault crime.

I just recently had somebody tell me that they murdered their three month old or something like that. It's like, ooh, like this is going to be tough to provide you the best services that I can provide especially to somebody who has murdered their three-month old child. But sometimes depending on what it is especially, sexual assault crimes, it's sometimes difficult to provide services to those males.

Even though advocates and counselors are trained and understand their role as a helper, they still may find themselves falling to victim blaming. As a helping professional, Lori explains, "I think that our natural desire to feel control of the situation makes us often blame victims

instinctively.” However, due to the training they receive, the helping professionals are able to escape that thought process and “recognize that nothing that anyone has done could mean that they should be a victim of sexual assault (Lori).” The understanding of victim blaming is there, however; due to the training and education they receive, helping professionals are able to avoid blaming the victim in their work.

Our culture often struggles with accepting victimization which leads to a tendency to victim blame. In doing so, families often have a tendency to blame their son or male relative for their victimization. Mike elaborates “there’s a higher degree of unwillingness to believe that the boy or man was sexually assaulted.” This disbelief is often a result of the emphasis that our culture places on masculinity and victimization.

In the current media, there is a large amount of victim blaming that occurs. Bob explains, “if you turn on the television today, tonight, or right now, you will hear a joke about prison rape.” On at least one television program today, somebody somewhere is making a joke about not dropping the soap in prison. Bob continues, “it’s just assumed that dropping the soap in prison is a part of the consequence of being raped in prison, they have what’s coming to them.”

It is very common for victim blaming to occur around the inmates. Inmates experience victim blaming when they are with their counselor and/or advocate, when they are with other inmates, and or when they are in group counseling. In many cases, male victims of sexual assault will state, “It’s my fault because I didn’t fight back.” or “it’s my fault I didn’t force my offender to leave me alone.” In most instances, all victims struggle with blaming themselves for the victimization, however; in prisons, it becomes more difficult. Incarcerated male survivors often find themselves internalizing the blame.

Past research has indicated that criminal justice personnel are more likely to traumatize victims of sexual assault. Police officers and other criminal justice personnel are trained to search for credibility, and they lack the training on how to interact with a victim (Payne, Button & Rapp, 2008). The current study has found that helping professionals experience the most victim blaming from their colleagues, more specifically correctional officers. Mary told me that she probably provides more “training and technical assistance to corrections than to rape crisis centers in order to understand sexual abuse in confinement.” One of the big issues that has come up in the correctional facility is when an inmate makes an allegation of sexual assault, the correctional staff see it as the inmate trying “to manipulate the system and trying to get the staff person in trouble.” Mary also states that “some of the correctional officers who have been doing their work for 20 years often struggle with embracing PREA and the zero tolerance policy.”

Mary and Sally have engaged in conversations with correctional officers and/or they have overheard correctional officers speak to inmates or with a colleague. Correctional officers have a tendency to use language that is very dehumanizing and places blame on the victim. Correctional officers often roll their eyes, and assume the counselor or advocate is there just to get them in trouble. But also, when correctional officers speak to inmates, they have often been overheard by helping professionals using language such as: “don’t come to prison and this won’t happen” or “why did you let yourself become a victim” or “if you weren’t in prison, none of this would’ve ever happened, so don’t break the law and you won’t have to live this way.” Conversing with inmates in a negative and derogatory way may increase the chances that the inmate will internalize and blame themselves for the victimization.

Helping professionals shared with me that correctional officers often produce and share most of the victim blaming that male inmates experience.

Megan shares a past story.

I had a correctional officer say to me in a training, and let me note, they have said some scary things. It was a woman correctional officer who was friendly and seemed competent, and she had worked there for about 25 years, I think. And she said to me, “well, how do you know if they’re lying or not?” This is a question I get right off the bat and I responded, “well what do you mean? Like can you give me an example of a time you thought someone was lying to you?” The female correctional officer told me a story. She said, during rounds, she went past a cell and a man was raping another man. The man being raped looked up and said “he’s raping me, help me” and the female correctional officer just kept moving. She kept going because she knew the victim and knew that he wanted to do that.

As a helping professional, such as a counselor or advocate, how do you respond to a situation like that? Different professionals take different approaches depending on the situation in which the victim blaming occurs. There is not one right way to address victim blaming, depending on the personality of the helping professional and job title may shape how these situations are addressed. In trainings, when victim blaming occurs, Mary often finds herself meeting the people who are victim blaming “where they are.” She hears and meets the people where they are to understand where they are coming from. Jill often handles victim blaming in the same light. Jill hears the victim blaming, and if she is working with a colleague that is a SANE (sexual assault nurse examiner), she will subtly remind the SANE that their job is “simply to collect evidence and provide care.” However, Jill also explains to the SANEs, who is victim blaming, why someone might respond to their victimization as they do.

Jill explains,

We don't know the full picture and we also know that a large number I know I've said this, a large number of people who are incarcerated have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives. The rate is extremely high and we know that people who have vulnerabilities are often revictimized, and we can't you know, we never know what someone has experience.

Lisa shares her approach.

It has also been a lot of educating and sharing success stories [stories shared by the victims who have overcome their trauma] with the correctional officers. I think we need to speak up a little more because we kind of just brushed them off and don't really respond. We just kind of keep going about our own ways but I think within the agency, I have been able to kind of show like no we have to share some success stories.

Even though there are a number of helping professionals that take an educational approach or success sharing approach to addressing victim blaming, Susan and Sally often have a tendency to walk away from the conversation. Due to confidentiality, counselors or advocates cannot hold conversations about an inmate with correctional officers, so Susan often finds herself ignoring the comments that are being made. Sally often finds herself walking away from a conversation with a correctional officer without saying anything, but she finds it very difficult.

Helping professionals shared with me that working through victim blaming is difficult. Helping professionals find themselves ignoring the conversation due to confidentiality, but they often feel unsettled about their decision. Helping professionals feel unsettled because they know what they want to say in a given situation, but in most cases, it is not professional.

## **Working in the Prison**

Working with inmates involves holding counseling sessions in the prison settings. It is very difficult to hold a counseling session in a prison. It has been shared with me by many helping professionals, that prisons lack a confidential and private setting to hold the sessions and there are constant interruptions. However, while the helping professionals are in the prison conducting the sessions, they take different approaches in trying to create success stories for their clients. Helping professionals do the best they can, with the lack of resources they are allowed to utilize. Generally, counselors and/or advocates are only given 20 to 40 minutes to conduct counseling before their session is ended or they are interrupted. Lori shares:

There is not a lot of privacy in the prisons. There is a big glass window where people are walking past. We usually have the victim sit with their back toward the window, so people walking by can't see their face. It is still distracting. People knock on the window and people will yell inappropriate things.

In order to conduct a therapeutic session, helping professionals need to be provided with a safe and confidential room to build the rapport and trust with their clients. Professionals try to be as discrete as they can when entering the prison. "I enter through the employee entrance and I go on days where the men are already scheduled to visit the hospital unit" and "I provide my client with a manila folder so nobody sees the paperwork that they are carrying back to their cell". Given the circumstances, inmates respond to the sessions fairly well. Helping professionals shared with me they felt as if they were making progress, however; they did not feel that they were making progress on the level of working through trauma. Often times, inmates were given the opportunity to engage in one-on-one sessions or be a part of a group counseling session.

Groups appear to be more beneficial for clients. Lisa and Sally share their experience with utilizing and conducting groups for male inmates.

I feel that groups are more beneficial because it's the psycho-education group and inmates are not very trusting. We encourage them to share in group, but they are not required too. We make the inmates sign a confidentiality statement and we have very strict rules. I think the group dynamic is very helpful for them to be able to get the education first and then share if they want too. I think the groups are helping for them to look at the situation and have the big picture. Instead of this just happened to me, so how do I deal with it?

The group was open discussion. It was less like the psycho-education approach, however; we did pull some materials from that. It was typically a conversation between three or four people who consistently were coming and they formed relationships off of each other in terms of experiencing similar things. It gave them an opportunity to see that they were not alone and similar things were happening to other men and boys.

Conducting male groups were approached in two different directions, however they had the same results. They provided men the opportunity to share their stories and build connections with others who were experiencing the same thing.

### **Attitudes of Correctional Officers, SANEs, and Advocates**

The current study did not interview correctional officers; however, helping professionals told me that a majority of the negative attitudes and perceptions come from the correctional officers. When incarcerated, correctional officers work first-hand with the inmates. Seven of the ten participants that I interviewed stated that correctional officers account for most of the negative attitudes toward inmates.

## **Correctional Officers**

Correctional officers verbally and non-verbally treat inmates in a very crude way. As stated previously, a majority of the victim blaming that occurs is from the correctional officers. Correctional officers have a tendency to make references to the advocates or counselors that are there to see the inmates. Common phrases include “your sex doctor is here to see you” or “your crazy doctor is here to see you.” Correctional officers have a tendency to say very derogatory things. Sally shares “correctional officers don’t understand why you are there talking to the inmate. They don’t understand what you can be discussing for an hour.” When counselors or advocates walk in the prison and make their way to the counseling room, they often overhear correctional officers speaking to other officers, but also inmates. Correctional officers have a tendency “to be very crude with how they talk to each other and how they talk to inmates.” Specifically, talking to an inmate, Mike overheard a correctional officer saying,

Some kind of comment toward the inmate’s sexual orientation. They are using their power over the inmate. I had one client in prison who accused a guard of sexual harassment and the client reported quite a bit of harassment by other guards as well. The other guards harassed the client to try and get the inmate to drop the charges toward the guard. Comments were made you wanted him to do it to you, you are looking for that; not just from him, you are looking for it from anyone who will give it to you.

Bob shares what prisoners are sharing with him:

Sexual assaults are happening by the correctional officers while the inmates are being frisked or while they are passing through the checkpoints. There are occasions where a correctional officer is spending more time with an inmate, cameras are there, but the cameras can’t see that. The cameras are going to show the standard examination or the

standard frisk. I'm having prisoners tell me that correctional officers will cut the lights and sexual assault will occur. If there is no light, the cameras will not pick up on that.

When an inmate is brought their meal tray, there's a plate cover on top of it and then just underneath is a piece of bread. The inmates are not being given their meals. However, on camera, it will show a piece of bread. So there will be seen as nothing wrong there.

Correctional officers create many barriers for advocates and counselors who are working with male victims of sexual assault. Professions, such as correctional officers, have a tendency to re-traumatize the victim. Sally shares her understanding as to why correctional officers treat inmates in this manner.

Correctional officers do not come from a trauma informed background. A lot of the people who come into the prisons have previous traumas, previous victimizations, or whatever the case may be. I think correctional officers view them as deserving it. They see them, particularly the men, they see them as not masculine or not man enough. If they did get sexually assaulted, they view them as needing to be stronger or if it does happen you should be able to pick yourself up and move on.

Not only do correctional officers need to participate and be involved in trauma processing training, there is a cultural change that needs to occur as well.

### **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)**

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) work with inmates directly who are seeking to have a rape kit done. According to previous research (Payne, Button, & Rapp, 2008), SANEs often have a respected or disrespected attitude toward victims seeking assistance. Jill states, "I do know there are some SANE nurses who will refuse to do a rape kit on inmates. There are some SANEs who do a wonderful job, however; there are some that need to leave the profession."

Jill explains:

This one nurse in particular, I think probably needed a change. It's a good thing that she left. I know that when you lose a SANE that it can be a big loss for the program but how good is it when you have a SANE who is re-traumatizing certain victims? It wasn't all victims, just inmates.

SANEs are trained to collect evidence. Their purpose is to conduct the rape kit in order to collect relevant evidence. According to helping professionals, SANEs are not trained to provide emotional support to clients. They lack that training and education.

### **Advocates**

In comparison to correctional officers and SANEs, advocates and counselors are there to provide the emotional support, advocates and counselors provide the victim with services that they may need. Advocates and counselors are there "to provide that emotional role to the victim." They are there to assist them with whatever they need. In most occasions, advocates recognize that this is their line of work and they understand how they are supposed to behave and what steps to take in the process. However, helping professionals shared with me that there is a struggle when their victim was previously a perpetrator. They often struggle with the idea of working with a previous perpetrator. But they work through those attitude and biases, and make sure they are serving that victim as best as they can.

### **Prison Rape Elimination Act**

In 2003, Congress passed and implemented the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). This act has placed a zero-tolerance policy, hoping to end all rape in prisons. PREA has been around for 15 years. Individuals understand that the act has been implemented in order to reduce

sexual assault in prisons. It is also understood that with the implementation of PREA, it requires agencies to provide services to the inmates.

However, from the nine participants who shared their understanding of the Prison Rape Elimination Act, there is a very limited understanding. Participants are able to state the name of the act, the overall understanding (reduce sexual assault in prison and agencies provide services), and small pieces of it. PREA is very broad and contains many components, so individuals lack the understanding of what each component entails. Specifically, participants were told what the act is *meant to do*, but not all facilities are following the proper protocol. For example, Megan adds, “each pod in the prison has a 24-hour PREA phone installed now where the inmate is supposed to be allowed to pick up the phone and it will go straight to the hotline 24-hours a day.”

With the act not being fully implemented, there is no clear protocol that will display if actual rates of sexual assault in prisons have decreased. With the implementation of PREA, rates at which sexual assault has been reported have increased. Even though rates of reporting have increased, due to the sensitivity of the crime, it is still underreported by inmates. Having implemented the Prison Rape Elimination Act, helping professionals told me that rates of sexual assault have remained constant. However, there has been an increase in the number of reports that the helping professionals are receiving. With this being a federal law, it would be assumed that all federal, state, and local facilities would be required to implement the Prison Rape Elimination Act. However, that is not the case. Helping professionals have indicated that correctional facilities are only required to comply with the Act, if they wish to receive the five percent increase of funding for their facility.

At this point, all federal facilities are forced to comply with PREA, however; does that mean they are following the protocols? No, it does not. In different states, Mary states, “I think

different states are refusing to take the five percent reduction and then they are not forced to comply with PREA.” With facilities refusing to take the five percent increase and failing to comply to all components of PREA, helping professionals are often faced with several issues.

In some cases, as counselors and advocates, it is difficult to get the appropriate trainings and resources into the prisons. It has been very difficult for counselors and/or advocates to get into the prison to provide services, now they are facing the challenge of cooperation of correctional staff once in the facilities and SANEs in the hospitals.

PREA has many components, and it has given inmates the opportunity to disclose and receive services if they have been victimized. However, counselors and/or advocates often notice that correctional staff have a very low response rate when disclosure of sexual assault has occurred. Which means, all aspects of PREA are not being followed.

Participants told me that they have several issues with PREA. The Act has been around and implemented for 15 years, and individuals feel there is still a large amount of progress that needs to be made. Megan states:

I would change the language around housing transgender inmates, and I would make it more specific and have criteria around understanding how to safely house the vulnerable populations and then general populations as well.

Helping professionals would like to see a change in facilities being more open to receiving services for the inmates. But more importantly, unanimously the biggest change that the helping professionals states that needs to occur is a change in our culture. Attitudes and language portrayed and utilized by our culture need to change in order for PREA to work successfully.

## Challenges and Rewards

Working in the prisons and working with a vulnerable population brings its challenges as well as rewards. Helping professionals were all in agreement that the rewards outweigh the challenges. “I love when we get to do our groups and the kind of the light bulb goes off and they’re like oh, I get it now. Or if they are a victim, they themselves kind of understand what they may have put someone else through.” Sally and Mike add:

I think resilience is personally one of my favorite things to see. I know it is not the right language, but I like seeing men being able to break down those walls and break down those barriers and really get down to like processing what they are feeling. And that resiliency piece of coming to the realization that you can still be masculine and you can be strong.

What is so rewarding is seeing somebody’s life kind of transformed because so often when we start with a client, they are in a dark place and to be able to help them to begin to see okay there is hope. This doesn’t have to define me or control me. It doesn’t have to have power over me anymore.

Helping professionals share with me that it is very rewarding to see the transformation that their client is making. Witnessing their client escape the dark place they are in and working through their issues, seeing the transformation of their client is the most rewarding piece of working with this population in the correctional facility. Even though there are plenty of rewards to working with this population, there are still some challenges. Some challenges shared by helping professionals are that it is more difficult to work through issues based on the helping professionals’ own biases and judgments.

Lisa adds:

I think the most difficult thing I encounter is working with people who are perpetrators of sexual assault in prison who are not victims. I would never say this on a professional level, but sometimes in the back of my head I think things like, well somebody called you a derogatory name of sexual nature and you're upset by that? But look at what you did and how is your victim doing?

Helping professionals face challenges based on their own personal biases and judgments and the settings in which they are trying to conduct trauma processing. However, being aware of the personal biases and understanding the difficult surrounding trauma counseling gives helping professionals the ability to create and work through any given situation.

In the next section, I analyze and discuss these findings and the implications for helping professionals working with male victims in correctional facilities.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

There has been limited research exploring how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. Research was conducted in 2008 by Payne, Button, and Rapp exploring how different professions view victims of sexual assault. It was found “police officers, SANEs, lawyers, judges, and jurors can further traumatize a sexual assault victim” (p. 376) while crisis workers provide “emergency assistance, counseling and intervention programs” (p. 377). Yet, in the current study, I have added a small piece to the gap in the current literature in how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. In the current study, perceptions and attitudes of counselors and advocates were examined. Even though there is no theoretical model to fully support the findings, symbolic interactionism will be used as the framework for the study.

The previous chapter highlighted the overall findings of the study. It included findings pertaining to education and training, rape myths, victim blaming, masculinity, perceptions of inmates, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act.

In the following section I analyze two themes. First, I examine how there needs to be a cultural change to adjust perceptions and attitudes of male victimization in correctional facilities. Second, I move on to discuss the importance and continuous need of education training in order to better serve male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities.

#### **Introduction**

Helping professionals, counselors, advocates, correctional officers, and sexual assault nurse examiners, are more likely to work with male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities. Since the implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act in 2003, counselors and

advocates have been allowed to go into correctional facilities and provide men who have been sexually assaulted services. However, the advocates and counselors face many barriers on the cultural, structural, and policy level. Even though they are operating under these various constraints, helping professionals explain to me that they do the best they can under the given circumstances. To better serve male victims in correctional facilities, helping professionals share with me the biggest changes that need to occur is in our culture and to continue the ongoing training and education for professionals.

### **Change in Culture**

According to helping professionals, the biggest change that needs to occur is in our culture. We are in a moment that this change can occur. Currently our culture is going through the “#metoo” movement. The “#metoo” movement is looking to end violence against women (particularly women of color), so the current study can add to that. We can add to the “#metoo” movement and work on changing how the culture views men who are sexually assaulted in prison. As a culture, there is an ongoing tendency to support rape myths, victim blame, place emphasis on what is masculine, view inmates as criminals, and utilize language that is derogatory in all instances. “We live in a victim blaming culture; we live in a culture that believes rape myths”. We live in a culture that holds onto the traditional stereotypes about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman, and how that affects an individual’s sexuality. We live in a culture where an inmate is seen as weak or part of a gang. The language and attitudes in our culture are portrayed in colleagues, victims, and the media.

The helping professionals discussed that our culture has given a number of stigmas and labels to individuals who are incarcerated for instance: “you are part of a gang, you need to be taught a lesson, delinquent, bad ass, mysterious, and scumbags”. Furthermore, an inmate who

has been sexually assaulted receive additional stigmas and labels from our culture: “being weak, the victim wanted to be sexually assaulted, the crime has been committed so now you deserve to be sexually assaulted, and an inmate is not fulfilling the culture expectations of masculinity”. Changing the way inmates and inmates, who are sexually assaulted, are referred to will change the culture. It will change how our culture views inmates and it will change how we view inmates who are sexually assaulted. More importantly, it will continue to change how helping professionals will view their male clients who are sexually assaulted in correctional facilities.

When the Prison Rape Elimination Act was implemented, it gave the helping professionals the opportunity to enter the prison and provide inmates with the necessary services and programs. Being able to do this, it changed how helping professionals worked with male victims of sexual assault. But this brought on new challenges.

In order to do successful trauma processing, helping professionals need to have a safe place for themselves and the inmates to work through issues. Generally, when a helping professional goes to the prison to work with a victim, they are placed in a small room with a large glass window. In some cases, the correctional officer is in the room during the session and others wait outside the door. When conducting the sessions, inmates and/or correctional officers walk by or bang on the window. Sometimes they just bang on the window while other times they yell using derogatory language. Counselors and/or advocates are generally given 20 to 40 minutes, one day a week, to go into the prison and work with their client. With this being said, prisons are not the ideal place to conduct trauma processing.

With correctional facilities lacking the necessary means to conduct a safe and thorough trauma processing session, it is not giving the inmates the opportunity to grow and work toward rehabilitating. Even though PREA is implemented, not all facilities are complying. Facilities are

deferring the five percent of funding or facilities are just checking off boxes on paper and failing to follow the proper protocol. Even though counselors and/or advocates have been given the opportunity to go in the facilities and conduct counseling sessions, the focus in correctional facilities and our society is punishment. The change in our culture needs to begin with language, excluding the stigmas and labels associated with inmates and inmates who are a victims of sexual assault and that may lead to the necessary change to follow PREA and eliminate rape in prison.

Helping professionals face many barriers and constraints when working with male inmates who have been sexually assaulted in correctional facilities. These constraints and barriers exist culturally, structurally, and in the policies of the facilities. Our culture victim blames. Culturally, we place blame on the victim for the trauma and victimization that they have encountered. Our culture does this by name-calling and using derogatory language when speaking to colleagues and the victim. On a structural level, counselors and advocates experience barriers instantly walking into a correctional facility. Inmates and correctional officers may walk by and interrupt a counseling session, or they may experience getting called names by correctional officers in the facility. Regardless of the barriers and issues the professionals face, the helping professionals shared with me that they enjoy their job and they do the best they can under the given circumstance.

However, by receiving an education and ongoing trainings, they find ways to overcome these challenges. For instance, during a counseling session, when there are inmates and correctional officers pounding on the window and making derogatory comments, the counselor will have their male client sit with their back faced toward the window to better serve their client during the allotted time.

The current research is very contextualized and along with symbolic interactionism, it supports my chosen research design of realism. It is addressing how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. It is context specific to correctional facilities, which is very important. The findings pinpoint to how the culture and helping professionals need to adapt to fulfill the male inmates who are sexually assaulted while incarcerated. It can be said, that when combined, training and education are the two big factors in how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. Through the training and education, helping professionals have obtained a trauma-informed background and knowledge on how to respond and assist victims of sexual assault. Helping professionals create meanings and understandings by attending the trainings and they are able to take what they have learned and assign meaning to it. In other words, they take the training and educational background they have received, and treat male inmates as humans. Helping professionals do not dehumanize male victims of sexual assault in correctional facilities based on the cultural expectations of our whole society.

Over the years, not only have attitudes and perceptions began to change, but also centers are beginning to change how they approach working with male victims of sexual assault. More recently, centers have begun offering groups for men. Providing groups for men is a new opportunity that allows men to meet other men who may be experiencing the same trauma.

One agency received its first grant specifically for male victims. Beth shares “for the first time, since I’ve been here and I’ve been here 10 years, we received a grant from the federal government for male sexual assault.” With obtaining this grant, the agency has a few ideas as to what they would like to do with it.

Beth continues:

We do plan to eventually create documents for advocates like training for advocates so that they can get a handle on dealing with men and understand what they have to do to open their doors.

With just receiving the grant in 2017, there are no clear cut plans as to what will happen, however, it took ten years for this one agency to receive a grant to work with male victims of sexual assault. One participant indicated receiving a grant for this line of work, meaning nine other participants did not indicate receiving a grant to work with this population specifically.

### **Future Research**

For future research, there are several directions that this study can be taken in order to obtain more information and a new ideology. First, this study should expand by interviewing correctional officers and SANEs. The current study did not have the opportunity to interview correctional officers or SANEs. This study contained data based off of the experiences that counselors and advocates had. Interviewing correctional officers and SANEs could support or change the findings, either way, it may change the findings by providing different voices of individuals with different backgrounds.

In the current study, one of the common findings that constantly emerged was the difficulty that helping professionals had with working with a victim who was also a perpetrator. Future research could examine this further to examine the underlying factors of this. It could be related to the type of crime that was previously committed or it could be from the underlying beliefs and assumptions of the helping professional. With examining this, it could open doors for how helping professionals' counsel victims who were once perpetrators. It may also create trainings specifically oriented toward working with victims who were previously perpetrators.

This study indicates that helping professionals face a lot of struggles when counseling inmates who have been sexually assaulted. The underlying struggles are rooted from the culture in which we live in. But then that leaks over into how the prison systems are ran. When entering the prison to conduct services, helping professionals are called offensive names from the correctional staff. The prisons also lack the ability to give the counselors and advocates the appropriate time and space to conduct their sessions. Future research could examine these struggles and seek to look for new ideas to make helping professionals jobs easier.

In addition, another area that future research may consider understanding is consent. In our culture, consent is a term that provides serious confusion around its definition (Muehlenhard, Humphrey, Jozkowski & Peterson, 2016). There are several definitions around consent. What it means to consent and how consent is viewed are very different. Mary explains, “overall we don’t understand consent as a community” and Lori adds, “it exists almost nowhere”. So in correctional facilities consent, Mary adds, “looks more apparent in closed systems. You are trying to do an investigation and consent comes up”. Consent is a difficult concept to understand, and it is a myth that our culture has placed emphasis on. Consent cannot occur in correctional facilities. Consent does not exist in these settings.

Consent is clouded in the community and there are many ways to define and view consent. However, when entering a correctional facility, the idea of consent existing is a myth. Two inmates are not permitted to engage in sexual intercourse and a guard and an inmate are not permitted to engage in sexual intercourse. Consent cannot happen because it does not exist. Future research may examine the definition of consent, seek to understand if consent exists, and how correctional facilities may account for consent.

## **Thoughts and Reflection**

This research presents a new understanding for how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. While previous research has examined sexual assault in prisons and examined how different professions perceive victims, none has specifically examined how helping professionals perceive male victimization in correctional facilities. As individuals shared their stories and experiences, they came to realize their own viewpoints and the viewpoints of others. They see a changes in training and attitudes in some professions more than others.

Understanding helping professionals' perceptions of male victimization in correctional facilities was the goal of the study. The current study provided the helping professionals an opportunity to be vocal about their perceptions and they were able to recognize any biases or judgments that they may have had but did not recognize. Interviewing 10 helping professionals shed light on an area of research that has not been looked at, and it provides some ideas of where research needs to go next.

There are some limitations to my study. I was not able to obtain a large sample, I originally wished to interview 15 to 20 helping professionals, but due to accessibility and time restraints, I was only able to interview 10. Therefore, my sample consisted of mainly individuals in the roles of counselors and advocates, it lacked interviews with SANEs and correctional officers. However, I was still able to receive insight on those fields due to the advocates and counselors working with these individuals. This study is lacking the direct voices of correctional officers and SANEs.

In addition, my sample only consisted of Caucasian males and females from Pennsylvania. I lacked a sample with diversity. Perceptions may have been different if my

sample was more diverse, and my findings may have been different if my study was spread across the United States.

Finally, the current study lacked in my unfamiliarity of the prison system. I have not been given the opportunity to work directly with inmates or in a prison, so my knowledge is coming from books, articles, and what I have been taught. With not having as much knowledge on the field, I was able to learn a lot and be able to engage in conversations with individuals about areas that I may not have been familiar with.

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## Appendix A

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide

#### General Questions

1. What is your level of educational attainment?
2. What is your occupational title?
3. How long have you been working in your current position?
  - a. Can you describe the training you received for your current position?
  - b. How long have you been working with victims of sexual assault overall?
    - i. Have you worked with both male and female victims of sexual assault?
    - ii. Are there similarities between male and female victims of sexual assault? Differences?
4. On average, how many male victims of sexual assault does your agency service each year? (Of these, roughly how many are incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault?)
  - a. In your professional capacity, how often do you encounter male victims of sexual assault?
  - b. Do you work exclusively with male victims of sexual assault in your current position? (If yes, approximately how many of your clients are incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault?)

#### Victim Blaming and Rape Myths

5. Can you tell me about victim blaming in your work with incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault?
  - a. From whom do you encounter victim blaming (general public, media, colleagues, from clients themselves, etc.)?
  - b. How do you work through these situations?
    - i. Hypothetical situation: If a male victim begins to put blame on himself for the abuse that has occurred, can you describe for me, as a helping professional, how to work through this situation?
6. Do you encounter rape myths in your work with incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault?
  - a. As a helping professional, what do you believe causes the misinterpretations of men who are sexually assaulted?

#### Masculinity

7. Can you tell me how you define masculinity?
  - a. Can you explain what characteristics or traits define masculinity?
8. Past research has indicated that masculinity is often destructed and distorted while incarcerated. Can you discuss any differences in defining masculinity while incarcerated? Tell me about what you believe is causing masculinity to be destructed and distorted while incarcerated

#### Perceptions of Inmates (generally) and Inmate who are Victims Sexual Assault

9. Can you describe some general perceptions of men who are incarcerated?
  - a. Can you elaborate further on what stigmas or labels inmates are given?

10. What do you perceive are some general perceptions of men who are sexually assaulted in prison?
  - a. What factors do you believe influence these perceptions?
    - i. Type of offense (property crime versus violent crime)
11. Can you discuss how your training, education, and occupational title affect how you perceive working with male victimization in prisons?
  - a. What do you find most challenging about working with men who are victims of sexual assault in prison?
  - b. What do you find most rewarding about working with men who are victims of sexual assault in prison?

**Prison Rape Elimination Act**

12. What is your understanding of the Prison Rape Elimination Act?
  - a. Do you perceive the Act as being helpful to your professional work with incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault? OR Do you perceive the Act as impeding your professional work with incarcerated men who are victims of sexual assault?
  - b. What effect (if any) do you believe the Act has had on rates of sexual assault in prisons?
  - c. If given the power to do so, would you change anything about the Prison Rape Elimination Act?
13. Is there anything else that you think I should know about male sexual victimization in prisons about which I failed to ask?

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form

My name is Chelsea Clark, and I am a master's candidate and research at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you assist male victims who have been sexually assaulted while incarcerated.

The purpose of this study is to explore helping professionals' perceptions of male victimization in prison settings. The information gained from this study may help us to better understand the perceptions of helping professionals' who work with victimized males. Participation in this study will require approximately 90 minutes of your time.

Before we get started with the interview, I need to review some very important information pertaining to the interview.

1. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded using an audio recording device designed to record interviews. The tape-recording of the interview will be kept in a locked location, and only the IUP researcher/researchers will have access to them. The tapes will be kept throughout the duration of the research project and will be destroyed once verbatim transcriptions of the interviews have been typed and saved as secure computer files. Do I have your permission to record the interview?
  - Yes
  - No – Since I do not have your permission to tape record the interview, I will need to use an alternative recording method and will therefore be taking handwritten notes of your responses.
2. Once the interview is complete, the tape recording of your responses during the interview will be assigned a unique pseudonym. Only the pseudonym will be linked to your identifying information. The list of pseudonyms associated with each of the interviews conducted for this study will be kept in a separate and locked location, and only the IUP researcher/researchers will have access to it. ***Identifying information, including your name and agency affiliation, will never be used in this study.***
3. The tape recording of your responses during the interview will be sent to an off-campus transcription company. At no time will the transcriptionists employed by this company have access to your identifying information. That transcriptionists will only be provided with the pseudonyms.
4. Your comments from this interview will be used to write a report that may be published in the future.
5. There are no foreseeable risk to participating in this research that explore helping professionals' perceptions of male victimization in prison settings.
6. If you have questions at any time about the research project please contact the lead researcher, Chelsea Clark at (724) 840-7766 or mwzr@iup.edu or the thesis chair, Dana Hysock-Witham at (724) 357-6247 or dana.hysock@iup.edu.
7. Do you have any questions about the interview that you would like answered at this time?
  - Yes
  - No

By signing the informed consent form, you certify you are eighteen years old or older. You agree to the items that I have discussed with you. You agree to participate in this research project that explores helping professionals' perceptions of male victimization in prison settings. You understand what is required and have had all of your questions answered. Your participation is voluntary and you can decline to participate without penalty and/or withdraw your participation at any time.

*This project has been approved by Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects*

*Phone Number: (724) 357-7730*

## Participant Voluntary Consent Form

I understand the information on this form, and I agree to participate in the study. I understand that any identifying information that I disclose will be kept confidential. At any point during the interview, I understand that I am able to opt out of the study.

*I agree to participate in the study*

Participant's Name

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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*I do not wish to participate in the study*

Participants Name

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Participants Signature

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Date

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