

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE INSIDE PRISONS

Rates of Victimization

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This study estimates prevalence rates of inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate physical victimization. Inmate participants were drawn from 13 adult male prisons and 1 female prison operated by a single mid-Atlantic state. A total of 7,221 men and 564 women participated. Rates of physical victimization varied significantly by gender, perpetrator, question wording, and facility. Prevalence rates of inmate-on-inmate physical violence in the previous 6 months were equal for males and females. Men had significantly higher rates of physical violence perpetrated by staff than by other inmates. By facility, inmate-on-inmate prevalence rates ranged from 129 to 346 per 1,000, whereas the range for staff-on-inmate was 83 to 321 per 1,000 (but the difference was not statistically significant).

Keywords: prison violence; physical victimization; prevalence rates

Violence is a pervasive feature of prison life (Bowker, 1980; Irwin, 1980; Johnson, 1987). 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 (Bowker, 1980; Toch, 1985; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1976). Even without assuming a Hobbesian-like character, one would reasonably predict that environments such as these would bring out the worst in human nature. Survival instincts are notoriously primitive and the behavior code of prison life (Clemmer, 1958; Gilligan, 1997; Sykes, 1958), much like the code of the streets in impoverished communities (Anderson, 1999), reflects such instincts.

Recent research on prison violence has focused on explaining variation in prison environments regarding safety, misconduct, and physical assaults by using models of deprivation, importation, and institutional management (Keller & Wang, 2005; Wooldredge, Griffin, & Pratt, 2001), but research that examines the epidemiology and context of physical violence inside prisons is almost nonexistent. Indeed, more attention, although limited, has been focused on measuring and documenting sexual violence (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004) than physical violence in prisons. The limited attention given prison violence is testimony to the

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societal norms regarding acceptable conditions and behavior inside prisons. Johnson (1987) observed that "the reality of violence [is a fact] of everyday life" (p. 75) in prison and, because violent acts are common occurrences, do not apparently warrant much notice.

Extant research, although limited, supports the notion that violence is an integral part of prison life. At the extreme, violence culminates in homicide. In 2000, 51 deaths (less than 0.1 per 1,000) resulting from inmate assaults were reported among all inmates held in federal or state prisons, down from 82 in 1995 (Stephan & Karberg, 2003). Whereas homicide is a rare event inside prisons, inmate-on-inmate physical assault is more common. According to official statistics, for every 1,000 inmates in federal and state prisons in 2000, 28 were reportedly physically assaulted by another inmate (Stephan & Karberg, 2003).

Official estimates of physical violence inside prison, however, grossly underrepresent the level and type of victimization inside prison. Bowker (1980), in reporting estimates of prisoner victimization rates from Fuller, Orsagh, and Raber (1977), noted that "the assault problem as viewed by prisoners is 11 times as great as the assault problem that is officially recognized by prison administrators" (p. 26). It is well known that victimization in general and violence in particular is underreported inside prison (Bowker, 1980; McCorkle, 1993), as it is outside prison (Myers, 1982), but for different reasons. The threat of retaliation inside prison for "snitching," a preeminent norm within the code of prison, suppresses the official reporting of assaults, as well as other types of misconduct between inmates. In prison parlance, "snitches get stitches." This peer-enforced norm creates a strong disincentive to report victimization to officials, thereby reducing the official appearance of inmate-on-inmate victimization behind the walls. A similar disincentive exists for reporting violence perpetrated by custody staff on inmates. Again, the opportunity and motivation for retaliation by staff quiet the voice of inmates (Gilligan, 1997).

No nationally representative surveys have been undertaken to improve on these official estimates of physical victimization inside prisons. Consequently, what is known is based on surveys drawn from small, localized studies (See Bowker, 1980). Based on a survey of 231 inmates (48% sample) at a single prison, 14% of responding inmates reported being a victim of a personal crime over a 3-month period, whereas 20% reported being victims of property crimes (Wooldredge, 1994). In a more recent survey utilizing a sample of 581 inmates (sampling rates varying from 20% to 38% of the prison populations) drawn from three Ohio prisons, Wooldredge (1998) found that approximately 1 of every 10 inmates reported being physically assaulted in the previous 6 months, whereas 1 of every 5 inmates reported being a victim of theft during that same time frame. More inclusively, when all crimes were aggregated together, including physical assault, theft, robbery, and property damage, 1 of every 2 inmates surveyed reported being a victim of crime in the previous 6 months. Using a sample of British inmates ($N = 594$, 90% response rate), O'Donnell and Edgar (1998) found that roughly 1 in 5 adult inmates had been physically assaulted in the previous month. These self-report estimates, although focusing on nonrandom samples from different states and countries, indicate very high levels of victimization inside prisons.

Other evidence of victimization inside prison comes from research focusing on inmates' fear and reactive behaviors to fear. Toch (1977) observed that inmates are constantly on guard. In reaction, inmates engage in risk-minimizing behavior. McCorkle (1992), based on a sample of 500 male inmates in Tennessee prisons, found that a quarter of the inmates reported carrying protection (e.g., a "shank"). Others engaged in more "passive" precautionary measures such as consciously avoiding areas where victimization is likely to occur

(e.g., the shower, the yard, or blind spots) or isolating themselves in their cells (Lockwood, 1980; McCorkle, 1992, 1993). More recent evidence suggests that there is inter-prison variation in terms of inmates' self-reported perceptions of safety. Camp (1999) found that male inmates, housed in medium-, low-, and minimum-security federal prisons, were less fearful of being "hit, punched, or assaulted by other inmates" than those housed in administrative and high-security federal prisons, who were more likely to feel vulnerable to these types of behaviors.

Although this literature has helped illuminate the problem of physical victimization inside U.S. prisons, there has been no attempt to reliably and validly estimate the magnitude and context (e.g., inmate-on-inmate or staff-on-inmate) of this violence with a random sample of prison inmates. This study, to our knowledge, is the first to explore the bid-time (i.e., time served in prison on the index offense) and 6-month prevalence of physical victimization within a state prison system, inclusive of both male and female facilities. It is also the first to use (a) a full population sampling design, inclusive of approximately 21,000 inmates at 14 prisons; (b) multiple general and specific questions to measure physical victimization; and (c) an audio-computer assisted survey instrument (CASI) to administer the survey. In addition, to ensure full participation and reliable reporting, the survey questionnaire included a broader set of questions probing the quality of life inside prison.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The study's population comprised all inmates housed at the 13 adult male prisons and 1 female prison operated by a single mid-Atlantic state ($N = 22,898$). Those ineligible for participation were inmates who were younger than 18 or in administrative (prehearing) custody, detention, death row, or otherwise too sick to participate on the day the survey was conducted. Inmates residing in halfway houses or off-site at the time of the survey were also ineligible. In total, 20,447 inmates representing 89% of the entire inmate population were eligible to participate in the study.

Participants were sampled in two ways. First, all inmates housed in the general population ($n = 19,615$) were invited to participate in the study. Response rates by facility ranged from 26% to 53%, with an average rate of 39% ($SD = 0.065$). At six facilities, nonrespondents were asked to identify their reasons for declining to participate in the survey. Three common reasons were reported by the 848 inmates: "I believe nothing will ever change here"; "I am leaving here soon"; and "This is prison. Our quality of life doesn't matter." Second, 10% of inmates held in administrative segregation were sampled. Four facilities have specialized administrative segregation units, which held a total of 832 inmates at the time of the survey. These individuals had limited movement privileges and could only be interviewed face-to-face in a secure but confidential setting. Overall, 10% of the 832 inmates in these units participated in the survey through a face-to-face interview.

A total of 7,221 men (M age = 34.2) and 564 women (M age = 35.5) aged 18 or older participated in the study. More than two thirds (68.4%) of the female inmates were non-White, whereas 81.4% of the males were non-White. These statistics are equivalent to the general prison population (67.3% of women are non-White with a mean age of 35.4, and

78.9% of the males are non-White with a mean age of 34.6). The survey sample had a greater representation of Hispanic inmates (14.5% women; 19.5% men) than in the population as a whole (10.1% women; 14.9% men).

PROCEDURE

The surveys were conducted from June through August of 2005. Audio-CASI was used to administer the survey, which was available in English and Spanish. Respondents interacted with a computer-administered questionnaire by using a mouse and following audio instructions delivered via headphones. This method of survey administration is considered most reliable when probing sensitive or potentially stigmatizing information (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004). At each facility, 30 computer stations were set up and five members of the research team were available to answer questions and assist with the technology. Completing the English version of the computer-assisted survey took approximately 60 minutes, whereas the Spanish version took approximately 90 minutes. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in cases where participants had restricted movement or when they were apprehensive about the computer. In total, 112 men (1.6%) and 18 (3.2%) women were interviewed face to face. Roughly two thirds ($n = 85$) of these respondents were housed in administrative segregation. The remaining third ($n = 45$) of the face-to-face interviews were conducted because participants were either intimidated by the computer, in the infirmary, or in a specialized mental health unit. The face-to-face interviews were conducted by five interviewers, with two of the interviewers conducting the majority ($n = 79$) of the interviews. Interviewers received 6 hr of training and followed a scripted interview protocol. On average, face-to-face interviews, only conducted in English, were completed in 45 minutes.

Survey instrument. The questions regarding physical violence were modified from the National Violence Against Women and Men surveys (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and appear in the appendix. Physical violence was measured in the survey through the use of two general questions for two categories of perpetrator: inmates or staff members. Specifically, the questions were "Have you been physically assaulted by an inmate (or staff member) within the past 6 months?" and "Have you ever been physically assaulted by an inmate (or staff member) on this bid?" Behavior-specific questions about physical victimization were asked as well (e.g., "During the past 6 months, has another inmate or staff member slapped, hit, kicked, or bit you?"). The five specific questions relating to physical victimization were collapsed into two categories differentiated by whether a weapon was involved (i.e., with or without weapon). The questions categorized under physical victimization with a weapon asked whether "in the past 6 months another inmate (or staff member) hit you with some object with the intent to harm or threatened or harmed you with a knife or shank." The specific questions collapsed into the physical victimization without a weapon category asked whether "during the past 6 months another inmate (or staff member) slapped, hit, kicked or bit you, choked or attempted to drown you, or beat you up."

Weights. Weights were constructed to adjust the characteristics of the sample to the full population of inmates at each facility. A two-step weighting strategy was used (Lee, Forthofer, & Lorimer, 1989). The first step (relative weight) adjusted for the sampling design (i.e., the exclusion of some units within a facility, the variation in the probability of selection, and proportional representation by facility). The second step (poststratification weight) adjusted the data on the basis of time at facility, race/ethnicity, and age. The final weight for

each strata is the relative weight multiplied by the poststratification weight. All reported estimates are weighted.

ANALYSES

Both weighted and unweighted analyses were conducted. As there were no significant differences between the results generated across methods, we include the weighted analysis only in this article. Unless otherwise indicated, the significance level is less than .05.

RESULTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

On average, female inmates participating in this study ($n = 564$) were in their mid-30s and were mostly African American (56.5%). Male inmates ($n = 7,221$) were also most likely to be in their mid-30s and the majority of them were non-White (62.3% were African American and 15.8% Hispanic). Compared with women, men were more likely to be serving life sentences (7.6% vs. 4%) and, on average, had more years left to serve on their current sentence (4 years compared with 2.8 years). On average, male inmates had spent roughly twice as much time as female inmates in prison since turning 18 years old (8.1 years compared with 4.2 years). Female inmates were significantly more likely than male inmates to report having mental health problems (65.6% vs. 30.8%), a substance abuse disorder (43.3% vs. 26.8%), and a chronic physical condition (58.1% vs. 31.5%).

BID-TIME PREVALENCE RATES

Prevalence estimates are based on the reporting of a physical assault while serving time on the current sentence at any facility within the statewide system. Bid-time prevalence rates were calculated using responses from the general assault question and were delineated by perpetrator (inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate). Approximately 20% of female inmates and 25% of male inmates reported being physically assaulted by another inmate while in prison serving their current sentence. The prevalence rate for inmate-on-inmate physical assault was significantly larger for the male facilities than the female facility (252 per 1,000 vs. 204 per 1,000). In contrast, the comparable staff-on-inmate rate was significantly and substantially larger for males compared with women (292 per 1,000 vs. 82 per 1,000). Younger inmates (25 years old or younger) were significantly more likely than older inmates to report a physical assault during incarceration either by another inmate (310 per 1,000 vs. 227 per 1,000) or a staff member (358 per 1,000 vs. 250 per 1,000).

SIX-MONTH PREVALENCE RATES

The 6-month prevalence rates for physical victimization in prison were calculated in three different ways (see Table 1). The most conservative estimate was based on inmates' responses to the general question about physical victimization (i.e., "Have you been physically assaulted by an inmate/staff member within the past 6 months?"). A more precise estimate was calculated by combining answers to the five specific questions about physical

TABLE 1: Six-Month Prevalence of Physical Victimization in Statewide Correctional System by Gender and Form of the Survey Question: 2005

<i>Incident</i>	<i>Female (n = 564)</i>	<i>Male (n = 7,221)</i>
	<i>Rate per 1,000 Inmates^a (95% CI)</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000 Inmates^a (95% CI)</i>
Inmate-on-inmate physical violence		
General question	92 (76-108)	75 (69-81)
Specific question	185 (16-208)	192 (184-201)
Combined question	206 (183-229)	205 (197-214)
Any incidents with weapon ^b	94 (76-110)	141 (134-149)
Any incidents without weapon ^b	149 (128-169)	117 (110-124)
Staff-on-inmate physical violence		
General question ^b	51 (39-64)	156 (148-163)
Specific question ^b	57 (44-71)	206 (198-215)
Combined question ^b	83 (67-99)	246 (237-255)
Any incidents with weapon ^b	23 (14-32)	149 (142-156)
Any incidents without weapon ^b	44 (33-57)	139 (132-147)

Note: CI = confidence interval.

a. The estimates of rate per 1,000 inmates are based on weighted valid numbers.

b. Statistically significant difference between men and women ($p < .05$).

victimization in the previous 6 months (see the appendix). As seen in Table 1, a comparison of these two prevalence measures revealed that for both inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate physical victimization, estimates based on the general question were lower than those based on answers to the questions focusing on specific types of victimization for both women and men. There were, however, unduplicated positive responses to the general and specific questions of physical victimization, which were combined for the third estimate of the prevalence rate. This rate was estimated by combining unduplicated positive responses to both questions, yielding slightly higher estimates of prevalence rates for inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate physical victimization for both women and men, which better approximates the reporting of physical victimization by inmates over the 6-month period. For this reason, and unless indicated otherwise, the 6-month prevalence rates of physical victimization reported in this section were derived using the third method of estimation.

Estimates in Table 1 were also disaggregated by type of incident (incident with a weapon or without a weapon). Inmate-on-inmate physical victimization prevalence rates were similar for female and male inmates, with approximately 21% reporting being physically victimized by another inmate in the past 6 months. However, women were more likely than men to have experienced an incident of inmate-on-inmate physical violence that did not involve a weapon (149 per 1,000 vs. 117 per 1,000), whereas men were more likely than females to report an incident of inmate-on-inmate physical violence involving a weapon (141 per 1,000 vs. 94 per 1,000). In addition, male inmates were 3 times as likely as female inmates to report any type of staff-on-inmate physical violence, with nearly 1 in 4 male inmates (24.6%) reporting they had been physically victimized by a staff member. This statistically significant between-gender difference held for both incidents involving the use of a weapon and those not involving a weapon.

Table 2 compares 6-month prevalence rates for inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate physical violence against male inmates, by facility size, measured by the size of the facility's inmate population (up to 1,100 inmates; 1,101-1,900 inmates, and more than 1,901 inmates). Prevalence rates varied by facility, ranging from 129 to 346 per 1,000 for inmate-on-inmate

TABLE 2: Six-month Prevalence of Physical Violence in Statewide Male Correctional System Grouped by Perpetrator and Facility Size: 2005

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Inmate-on-Inmate Rate per 1,000 Inmates^a (95% CI)</i>	<i>Staff-on-Inmate Rate per 1,000 Inmates^a (95% CI)</i>
Average, all male facilities	205 (197-214)	246 (237-255)
Facilities with populations 1,100 or less		
1	216 (182-248)	198 (166-230)
2	172 (129-211)	101 (66-133)
3	248 (201-296)	136 (98-175)
4	264 (206-322)	215 (168-263)
Facilities with populations from 1,101 to 1,900		
5	236 (197-272)	319 (277-361)
6	346 (294-401)	321 (278-361)
7	246 (210-281)	309 (271-347)
Facilities with populations over 1,901		
8	142 (114-172)	192 (160-224)
9	318 (283-352)	316 (280-352)
10	144 (125-164)	268 (244-291)
11	188 (172-204)	280 (262-297)
12	129 (103-155)	179 (149-209)
13	157 (137-178)	192 (170-215)

Note: CI = confidence interval.

a. The estimates of rate per 1,000 inmates are based on weighted valid numbers.

TABLE 3: Month Prevalence of Physical Violence by Type of Incident in Statewide Male Correctional System Grouped by Perpetrator, Use of Weapon, and Facility Size: 2005

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Inmate-on-Inmate Rate per 1,000 Inmates^a (95% CI)</i>		<i>Staff-on-Inmate Rate per 1,000 Inmates^a (95% CI)</i>	
	<i>Violence With Weapon</i>	<i>Violence Without Weapon</i>	<i>Violence With Weapon</i>	<i>Violence Without Weapon</i>
Facilities with populations 1,100 or less				
1	145 (116-174)	124 (97-150)	127 (101-151)	126 (100-153)
2	70 (43-98)	125 (86-165)	55 (31-82)	51 (27-74)
3	150 (112-189)	150 (111-188)	64 (34-90)	60 (30-90)
4	174 (132-216)	190 (137-238)	121 (84-157)	142 (105-185)
Facilities with populations from 1,101 to 1,900				
5	138 (109-169)	166 (135-197)	180 (146-217)	197 (161-231)
6	229 (188-272)	210 (167-251)	165 (131-199)	198 (164-233)
7	181 (150-211)	139 (111-167)	176 (143-207)	190 (160-223)
Facilities with populations more than 1,901				
8	108 (84-134)	58 (40-76)	121 (97-148)	88 (66-110)
9	240 (211-268)	173 (143-204)	193 (164-220)	177 (144-209)
10	104 (86-120)	79 (65-95)	167 (147-187)	166 (146-186)
11	128 (115-142)	115 (102-128)	172 (158-187)	154 (140-169)
12	100 (76-124)	52 (36-68)	134 (108-160)	88 (64-112)
13	100 (82-119)	83 (67-99)	114 (95-131)	104 (87-122)

Note: CI = confidence interval.

a. The estimates of rate per 1,000 inmates are based on weighted valid numbers.

physical victimization and 101 to 321 per 1,000 for staff-on-inmate physical victimization. In general, compared to large facilities, small to medium-sized facilities had higher prevalence rates of inmate-on-inmate physical victimization, whereas medium-sized and large facilities had higher staff-on-inmate rates of physical victimization, compared to small facilities.

Prevalence rates for inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate physical victimization with and without use of a weapon organized by facility size are shown in Table 3. Rates varied considerably across facilities and by type of incidents, ranging across facilities from 70 to 240 per 1,000 for inmate-on-inmate physical victimization involving a weapon and 52 to 210 per 1,000 for inmate-on-inmate victimization not involving a weapon. A similar pattern was found for staff-on-inmate physical victimization. Here the rate of victimization not involving a weapon varied across facilities by a factor of 3.5 and victimization with a weapon by 3.9.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm the stereotype that prisons are violent places. The rates of physical assault for male inmates is over 18 times higher than assault victimization rates for males in the general population, and rates for female inmates are over 27 times higher than their nonincarcerated counterparts (Catalano, 2005). Rates of victimization within the general population are not representative of the population in prison. It is true that victimization rates are correlated with poverty (Rennison & Rand, 2003) and people inside prison are more likely to be drawn from poor communities. However, Teplin and colleagues, using the National Crime Victimization Survey, weighted victimization rates by race/ethnicity, sex, age, and income and estimated 12-month assault rates of 1.5% for people in poorer communities (Teplin, McClelland, Abram, & Weiner, 2005); these adjusted rates are still more than 10 times lower than the rates for people inside prison.

Over a 6-month period, 20% of inmates reported experiencing some form of physical violence, measured in terms of being hit, slapped, kicked, bit, choked, beat up, or hit with or threatened with a weapon. Overall, such outcomes were equally likely for female and male inmates. However, acts of physical violence against male inmates by other inmates were more likely to involve a weapon than were incidents involving female inmates. Male inmates were also more likely to report incidents of personal violence perpetrated by staff and more likely than not these incidents involved the threat of or use of a weapon.

Physical victimization was not uniform across facilities. Small facilities were associated with above average rates of inmate-on-inmate physical violence, but below average rates of staff-on-inmate physical violence. The opposite was found for large facilities, with lower than average rates of inmate-on-inmate physical violence but higher rates of staff-on-inmate violence. Moreover, in large facilities, incidents of physical violence, whether inmate-on-inmate or staff-on-inmate, were more likely to involve the threat of or use of a weapon. Medium-sized facilities had above average rates of inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate physical victimization, and these incidents were less likely to involve weapons when involving staff but were slightly more likely to involve the threat of or use of weapons when involving inmates only.

The rates of physical victimization estimated here are roughly 40%-100% larger than those estimated by Wooldredge (1994, 1998) for prisons in the Midwest in the 1990s (ranging from 10% to 14%) but are virtually identical to the 1-month estimates of physical assaults (20%) in British facilities reported by O'Donnell and Edgar (1998). Both studies

relied on self-report data. Overall, rates of physical victimization are higher when based on information provided through self-report than official reports (Bowker, 1980). Official reports of physical assault over a year in the United States were reported at 28 per 1,000 inmates in federal and state prisons (Stephan & Karberg, 2003), whereas rates based on self-report information for this study were 92 per 1,000 for women and 75 per 1,000 for men and, over an inmate's entire period of incarceration, were 204 per 1,000 and 252 per 1,000, respectively. Another limitation of official reports is that they do not capture information on physical violence against inmates by staff (Bowker, 1980), which often occurs at rates higher than inmate-on-inmate violence, particularly in male facilities.

The results of this research indicate that the risk of victimization varies significantly across institutional setting. This interfacility variation in physical violence is nontrivial and warrants careful attention. In some facilities, more than 25% of inmates reported experiencing an incident of physical violence over the past 6 months. Even higher rates of physical violence were reported for staff-on-inmate incidents, with rates over 30% reported for 4 facilities (31% of the 13 male facilities). Inmates held in the medium-size and in 3 of the large facilities, on average, reported being at greater risk of experiencing physical violence by staff than inmates at other facilities. Physical violence in male facilities more commonly involved weapons whether perpetrated by inmates or staff. Indeed, nearly 60% of inmates in all medium-size and 3 large facilities reported carrying a weapon for protection from often to all the time. Carrying weapons for protection inside the facility was a commonly reported occurrence, with more than 50% of male inmates and 22% of female inmates reporting that they carried a weapon for protection from often to all the time. Obviously, unchecked violence inside the facility contributes to inmates' perceptions that they need to arm themselves for self-preservation, which in turn helps perpetuate serious violent incidents inside prison. Future research should explore in what way populations inside prisons of different sizes might explain this variation. Variables of interest might include median age, offense distribution, length of incarceration, and racial composition.

This survey underscores the importance of using a variety of behaviorally specific questions to elicit reports of physical victimization. Limiting questions to ones that ask about "physical assaults" will understate the experience of violence inside prisons because respondents may erroneously believe that acts that constitute assaults, such as hitting or slapping, in fact would not be considered assaults. Our estimates of physical violence were more representative when survey questions were more explicit about the behaviors that should be included in estimates of physical victimization, such as being hit, slapped, kicked, or threatened with a weapon. More exact language that explicitly defines the behavior considered violent or threatening provides more valid and reliable estimates of violent behavior.

The estimates presented here focused on physical violence, which is only one form of victimization. These rates of victimization do not include property theft, emotional or psychological victimization, intimidation, or sexual victimization. To accurately and fully characterize the crime environment inside prison, surveys need to probe victimization in all of its forms that is perpetrated by inmates-on-inmates and staff-on-inmates and across multiple facilities within a state system. Bowker (1980) noted the following:

All of the forms of prison victimization are related so that each becomes a causal factor in the other, forming an insane feedback system through which prison victimization rates are under constant pressure to increase. A similar feedback phenomenon occurs when prisoners feel constrained to take revenge for past victimization and to defend themselves in current

victimizations. The interaction takes on the form of a macabre version of the game of musical chairs in which today's aggressor may become tomorrow's victim. (p. 31)

The estimates reported herein should be interpreted cautiously. It is important to note the potential for sample bias. Our samples ranged from 26% to 53% of the general population among 13 facilities. In absolute terms, a significant proportion of the inmate population is represented but this sample may not generalize to the full population. Nonrepresentativeness was tested in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and length of incarceration and adjusted for in the weighting strategy. Yet these characteristics may not fully predict variation in physical victimization. Other uncontrolled attributes may predict likelihood of victimization. To the extent that inmates who have characteristics that make them victims of physical assault were systematically over- or underrepresented in our samples, the rates reported herein would either, respectively, over- or underestimate physical victimization. We account for such uncertainty by estimating confidence intervals, which provide a reasonable (95%) approximation of the range of variation in rates of physical victimization by facility.

Another reason for caution concerns the potential of biased reporting. Audio-CASI is the most reliable method for collecting information about activities or events that are shaming or stigmatizing. It does not, however, correct for bias motivated by the intent to make the facility and its staff members look bad. Inmates and custody staff have complex relations; relations often fraught with tension and hostility. Rarely are inmates given an opportunity to report anonymously on conditions inside prison, including how they are treated by custody staff. This opportunity could be manipulated by false reporting. To guard against this, the consent process stressed the importance of accurate reporting and its impact on the legitimacy of the data and survey. Many of those who chose not to participate in the survey were antagonistic to the "system" or demoralized to the point of disinterest. Participants, by and large, deliberated over questions. They frequently asked the research staff for guidance on how to answer questions about the custody staff because although most were reasonable and fair, some were abusive and cruel. Questions during the survey and the distribution of responses were not suggestive of false reporting. Also, given that the survey instruments were read and completed in real time, involved hundreds of questions, and were completed by hundreds of inmates per day by unit and rapidly over a 2- to 4-day period, systematic strategies for manipulating the survey through false reporting were minimized. In general, systematic false reporting of events or behaviors by custody staff would have resulted in much higher and clustered rates than those reported here.

Crime, violence, and injustice are ubiquitous in prisons (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, 2006). Our research sheds light on this issue in ways that elucidate the level and types of physical violence, as well as their variation among facilities. Surviving prison often depends on the ability to fight, defend oneself with weapons, steal for personal advantage, and manipulate others with threats of violence (Gilligan, 1997; Johnson, 1987). The task of "correcting" inmates in a correctional setting is almost impossible to achieve when inmates are confined in environments where violence is pervasive. Increasing attention is being focused on safety inside prison and its relevance to corrections and community reintegration. The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons (2006) recommended improving safety conditions inside prison as well as carefully monitoring these conditions to ensure that people are kept safe while they serve their time. Both inmates and staff must believe that they can interact with each other without fear of physical harm. Only then can a civilizing environment begin inside the walls.

APPENDIX

Survey Questions Regarding Physical Violence.

General physical assault questions, INMATE:

- Have you been physically assaulted by an inmate within the past 6 months here?
- Have you ever been physically assaulted by an inmate on this bid?

Specific physical violence questions,^a INMATE:

During the past 6 months, has another inmate ever . . .

1. Slapped, hit, kicked, or bit you?
2. Choked or attempted to drown you?
3. Hit you with some object with the intent to harm?
4. Beat you up?
5. Threatened or harmed you with a knife or shank?

General physical assault questions, STAFF MEMBER:

- Have you been physically assaulted by a staff member within the past 6 months here?
- Have you ever been physically assaulted by a staff member on this bid?

Specific physical violence questions,^a STAFF MEMBER:

During the past 6 months, has a staff member ever . . .

1. Slapped, hit, kicked, or bit you?
2. Choked or attempted to drown you?
3. Hit you with some object with the intent to harm?
4. Beat you up?
5. Threatened or harmed you with a knife or shank?

a. Questions 1, 2, and 4 were combined to create a variable indicating an incident of physical victimization that did not include the use of a weapon. Questions 3 and 5 were combined to create a variable indicating that the incident of physical victimization involved a weapon.

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