

Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Types and Sources of Victimization Inside Prison

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Interracial patterns in sexual violence between inmate groups are well documented. Considerably less is known about the interracial pattern of sexual violence as well as physical violence between staff and inmates. This article provides rates of victimization for a single prison system by racial and ethnic groupings and by type of perpetrator. Racial and ethnic patterns were found in prevalence rates by types of victimization and type of perpetrator, but they do not appear to be principally explained by racism. Preventing violence inside prison should include reducing opportunities for victimization as well as “pulling up” the environment by training officers and other staff in supervisory styles that affirm and preserve a “harm-free” environment.

Keywords: *prison victimization; racial/ethnic disparities; sexual assault; physical assault*

Prison populations are overly representative of people of color (Blumstein & Beck, 1999). This fact is partially, but not fully, explained by a set of correlations that are well established in the literature: Crime and violence are highly correlated with poverty (Jargowsky, 1997; Rennison & Rand, 2003; Wilson, 1987), and poverty is highly correlated with race and ethnicity (Hartman, 1996; Wilson, 1987). Incarcerating a relatively high proportion of African American males has adverse consequences on their communities (Clear, Rose, & Ryder, 2001; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999) and families (Council on Crime and Justice, 2006; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999;

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Hairston, 2002). It also has consequences on the dynamics inside prison, where people of color have become the majority racial and ethnic groups. How this demographic shift inside prison affects the welfare of the incarcerated population has been hinted at in the prison victimization literature but not in sufficient detail to indicate to what extent prison environments are relatively more or less dangerous for particular racial and ethnic groups. This article explores the relationship between race/ethnicity and victimization. Victimization includes, separately and in combination, physical and sexual violence experienced by adult male inmates that is perpetrated by other inmates and by staff. Victimization disparities, as measured by prevalence rates, that are systematic by race and ethnicity, once known, can be used to inform correctional policies in ways that prevent racially motivated hostility within prison environments that is manifested through interpersonal violence and victimization.

A "color line," according to Ross and Richards (2002), divides the prison population into three nonoverlapping groups: Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. Collective violence occurs among these groupings, pitting color against color, in the form of riots and gang warfare (Bowker, 1980). Interpersonal violence also has been found to have distinct racial patterning. In the book *Hacks, Blacks, and Cons*, Carroll (1974) described distinct racial patterns between the victims and perpetrators of rape. Based on a population of 21 informants, it was estimated that 75% or more of the 40 to 50 rapes that occurred each year inside the prison setting were between a White victim and a Black perpetrator. Similar findings were reported by Davis (1968), Bartollas, Miller, and Dinitz (1976), Toch (1977), Lockwood (1980), Wooden and Parker (1982), and Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2000). Black-on-White and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic-on-White violence between inmates was further documented in the Human Rights Watch (2001) report on male rape in U.S. prisons.

Although interracial patterns in sexual violence between inmate groups have been well documented, considerably less is known about the patterns of sexual violence between staff and inmates and even less is known about the interracial patterning within staff-on-inmate sexual violence (Bowker, 1980). It has been suggested that staff turn a "blind eye" to inmate-on-inmate sexual assault for reasons ranging from racial prejudice (Carroll, 1974) to indifference (Scacco, 1975). Yet there is no evidence, to our knowledge, focusing on correctional staff as sexual aggressors. Implicit in the prison sexual victimization research are the assumptions that sexual aggressors are only other inmates, and, to the extent that staff members are involved, they play a passive role by failing to act, which is tantamount to commission as an accessory.

Physical victimization of inmates inside prison has been studied less extensively relative to sexual victimization. What is known about rates of physical victimization is drawn from small, localized studies. 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 this study, Hispanics were significantly more likely than Whites to report being a victim of personal crime. 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. Given that income and education were controlled for in the logit analyses, race was not found to significantly predict physical victimization in this study. Lacking is any evidence (aside from anecdotal) on staff-on-inmate physical victimization. Most of the evidence on racial bias with respect to officers is based on number and types of infractions. The evidence is mixed and predates the 1990s. Most of the evidence here indicates that Blacks were overrepresented for disciplinary infractions but were less harshly disciplined, compared to their White counterparts, by the disciplinary board (Carroll, 1974; Flanagan, 1980, 1983; Held, Levine, & Swartz, 1979; Poole & Regoli, 1980).

In this article, rates of victimization for a single prison system (male facilities only) are presented by racial and ethnic groupings and by type of perpetrator (inmate, staff, or both combined). Victimization is categorized as sexual victimization (i.e., nonconsensual sexual acts or abusive sexual contacts), physical victimization (i.e., bodily harm that is threatened, attempted, or implemented with and without a weapon), and property crime victimization (i.e., theft). Explored are racial and ethnic patterns in prevalence rates by types of victimization and type of perpetrator. We also explore whether victimization, from the perspective of the victim and the inmates, is motivated by race and ethnicity as well as other factors.

Method

Sampling

We drew a purposive sample of 6,964 people from the population of inmates housed at 12 adult male prisons operated by a single state ($N = 21,148$). Excluded from the sample were male inmates younger than 18 or

in administrative (prehearing) custody, detention, death row, a sex offender treatment facility, or otherwise too sick to participate in the survey. Also excluded were inmates residing in halfway houses or off site at the time of the survey. In all, 18,726 adult male inmates (88.5% of the entire population) were eligible for inclusion. Participants were recruited and data were collected from June 1, 2005, through August 31, 2005.

Inmates housed in the general population ($n = 17,894$) were invited by researchers to participate in a survey about the quality of life inside the prison. Enough time inside the facility was requested to collect a 40% sample from the general population, typically requiring between 2 to 5 days. Response rates across facilities ranged from 26% to 45%, with a mean response rate of 37% ($SD = 0.054$). Four facilities had specialized administrative segregation units that separate inmates with behavioral infractions from the general population. These units housed 832 inmates, of which a 10% random sample was invited to participate, and 100% agreed to complete the survey through a face-to-face interview.

Procedures

The recruitment protocol, consent procedures, and consent form were approved by the appropriate university and correctional agency research review boards and committees. Participants were informed about the survey through their inmate liaison representatives and an informational video about the survey (played on the inmate television channel). All interested inmates, by unit, were brought to the survey area to hear a 10-min presentation about the survey. As part of the consent process, the consent form was reviewed by section, which covered issues of confidentiality and privacy; the right to refuse to participate and the right to refuse answering any question; the duty to inform correctional staff if participants told researchers that they intended to harm themselves or others, intended to escape, or were involved in drug dealing inside prison; and that participation would not affect parole decisions or their treatment inside prison. Participants were not compensated for their participation to reduce any overt coercion. Also, participants were offered an option to request a follow-up mental health visit if distressed by questions elicited by the survey. At the end of the presentation, individuals chose to participate or not. Approximately 12,000 inmates attended the introductory sessions (not all consented participants were able to complete the survey in the time period the researchers had inside the facility).

The survey was administered using an audio computer-administrated survey instrument (CASI) available in English and Spanish. Respondents sat at a

laptop computer in a private location and were read the questions via headset and responded via mouse. Thirty computer stations were available, and researchers were there to assist participants as needed. Completing the English version of the instrument by audio CASI took approximately 60 minutes, whereas the Spanish version took approximately 90 minutes. Participants were provided the option of a Spanish version (68 respondents [1.0%] completed the Spanish version). Of those participating in the survey, 112 men (1.6%) were directly interviewed. The majority of these respondents (73.0%) were housed in administrative segregation. The other face-to-face interviews (27.0%) were conducted because participants were intimidated by the computer or were in the infirmary or specialized mental health unit. Five interviewers conducted the interviews, with the majority (61.0%) conducted by two interviewers. All interviewers were trained and followed a scripted protocol. Face-to-face interviews, conducted only in English, were completed in roughly 45 minutes.

Participants

Of the 18,726 eligible to participate, approximately 12,000 were briefed on the study. A total of 6,964 men (age $M = 34.0$, $SD = 7.9$) aged 18 or older were recruited and completed the survey. The prison system's management information system does not distinguish between race and ethnicity. Consequently, we tested for sample bias using the race/ethnicity classification of the prison system. According to the prison system's race/ethnicity classification, 80.5% of the male participants were classified as non-White (age $M = 33.3$), which is roughly equivalent to the general prison population (80.1% of the males are non-White, age $M = 33.4$). The percentage Hispanic (inclusive of White and non-White) in the survey sample (15.7% male, age $M = 32.0$) was similar to the prison population as a whole (14.9% male, age $M = 32.5$).

Weights were constructed to adjust the characteristics of the sampled population to the full population of inmates at each facility ($n = 12$). A two-step weighting strategy was used (Lee & Forthofer, 2006). 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 stratum is the relative weight multiplied by the poststratification weight.

Instruments

The questions regarding sexual victimization were adapted from the National Violence Against Women and Men Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Sexual violence was measured using one general question for each type of perpetrator (inmate or staff member). The questions was, "Have you been sexually assaulted by (an inmate or staff member) within the past 6 months?" Ten additional questions about specific types of sexual victimization were used [e.g., "During the past 6 months, has (another inmate or staff member) ever . . . touched you, felt you, or grabbed you in a way that you felt was sexually threatening or made you have sex by using force or threatening to harm you or someone close to you?"].

The specific sexual assault questions were clustered to reflect definitions of sexual violence developed by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Sexual violence was defined as *nonconsensual sexual acts*, which consisted of forced sex acts, including oral and anal sex, and *abusive sexual contacts*, which included intentional touching of specified areas of the body (Basile & Saltzman, 2002). Seven of the specific questions involving penetration or sexual acts were included in the category for nonconsensual sexual acts [e.g., "Has (another inmate or staff member) ever . . . made you have oral sex by using force . . . ?"]. Three questions were used to construct abusive sexual contacts [e.g., "Has (another inmate or staff member) ever touched you, felt you, or grabbed you in a way that felt sexually threatening?"]. Inmates who responded affirmatively to any one of the 10 questions were considered sexual victims.

Physical violence was measured using one general question for two types of perpetrator: inmates or staff members. This question was, "Have you been physically assaulted by an inmate (or staff member) within the past 6 months?" 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?"; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000]. 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) had hit the respondent with some object with the intent to harm or threatened or harmed the respondent 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) had slapped, hit, kicked, or bit the respondent,

choked or attempted to drown the respondent, or beat the respondent up. In terms of property crime victimization, respondents were asked, "In the past six months, has another inmate (or staff member) ever taken or stolen something that was yours?"

Statistical Analysis

The sample is analyzed by three racial/ethnic groups: non-Hispanic White, African American, and Hispanic. All sampled participants but 383 were classified by these groups. Those who fell outside these racial/ethnic groups either did not specify their race explicitly ($n = 269$) or belonged to a racial group too small to form a valid group (American Indian $n = 78$, Asian $n = 35$).

For each of these groups, prevalence rates were calculated. Prevalence of a specific type of victimization (e.g., physical or sexual) measures the number of people in the population experiencing a type of victimization within a 6-month period and was calculated using responses from the general and specific questions.

Both weighted and unweighted analyses by race and ethnicity were conducted. As results were similar, only weighted results are presented. Unless otherwise indicated, the significance level used to assess the validity of the null hypotheses is $p < .05$. The 95% confidence intervals presented in each table are equivalent to two-sided t tests for means or proportions based on Taylor expansion. The overlap of the confidence intervals between comparison groups suggests that the null hypothesis that the means or proportions are the same between comparison groups at a significance level of .05 cannot be rejected. To adjust for multiple comparisons and reducing the likelihood of false significance, Tukey-Kramer tests are also performed for multiple bivariate comparisons. The Tukey-Kramer tests are reported only when they generate findings different from the confidence interval approach with respect to statistical significance.

Results

As shown in Table 1, of the male respondents ($n = 6,582$), 61.9% were African American, 17.1% were non-Hispanic White, and 21.0% were Hispanic. Non-Hispanic White respondents, compared to their African American counterparts, were older, had served less time in prison since turning 18, and were more likely to report mental health, substance or alcohol abuse, physical health, and

Table 1
Characteristics of Survey Respondents, Male Inmates in Statewide Correctional System, by Race, 2005

	Male (N = 6,582)				All (N = 6,582)
	Non-Hispanic White (n = 1,129)	African American (n = 4,074)	Hispanic (n = 1,379)		
Age, year (M)	37.0	33.6	32.0	31.5-32.5	34.0
Incarceration characteristics					
Time at facility (M)	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0-2.6	2.5
Life sentence	9.3	7.5	7.0	5.3-8.6	7.8
Time left on sentence (M) ^a	3.8	4.1	4.0	3.6-4.5	4.0
Time incarcerated 18 or older (M)	7.5	8.6	7.1	6.7-7.5	8.1
Clinical characteristics					
Mental health diagnosis	45.4	15.3	23.2	20.6-25.8	22.4
Substance or alcohol abuse	46.1	22.3	24.0	21.6-26.5	27.2
Head trauma	13.0	5.9	5.8	4.5-7.1	7.3
Chronic physical condition	41.3	28.0	29.2	26.6-31.9	30.8
Prior victimization characteristics					
Prior physical, 17 or older	38.2	37.1	31.7	28.9-34.5	36.4
Prior physical, younger than 18	60.1	55.6	55.5	52.5-58.5	56.4
Prior sexual, 17 or older	2.8	2.5	2.9	1.8-4.0	2.6
Prior sexual, younger than 18	13.3	8.1	11.7	9.7-13.7	9.7

Note: Values are percentages and 95% confidence intervals, unless otherwise noted. All estimates are weighted. There were 382 inmates who either did not specify their race (n = 269) or belonged to a racial group too small to make valid inference (American Indian n = 78, Asian n = 35).

a. Time left on current sentence excludes those with a life sentence.

head trauma problems as well as prior physical victimization before 18 (Tukey-Kramer test, $p < .05$) and prior sexual victimization before 18. Compared to Hispanic respondents, African American participants were slightly older, had served more time in prison since turning 18, were less likely to report mental health problems and sexual victimization prior to 18, and were more likely to report physical victimization after 17.

Racial and ethnic patterns of sexual victimization are shown in Table 2. Relative to the prevalence rates for the full sample ("all"), the African American group was the only racial/ethnic group below the sample average in its rate of reported inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization overall, abusive sexual contact, and nonconsensual sex acts. Rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization are below 5% for all race/ethnic groups. Rates of victimization and their patterns reverse for staff-on-inmate sexual victimization. Here, people of color, compared to their non-Hispanic White counterparts, are significantly more likely to report being victims of sexual violence when staff members are the aggressors. Rates of sexual victimization between staff and inmates, defined either as any abusive sexual contact or as nonconsensual sex acts, for non-Hispanic Whites are significantly below the average rate for the sample as a whole as well as for each of the other race/ethnic classifications. When inmates reporting sexual victimization by types of perpetrators are combined (without duplication), the differences between the rates of sexual victimization among the racial/ethnic groups disappear (ranging from 8.3% to 10.8% for any sexual victimization and from 2.5% to 3.0% for nonconsensual sex acts).

Similar racial and ethnic patterns are observed for physical victimization, although the rates of exposure to physical violence are higher relative to sexual violence (see Table 3). A significantly larger percentage of non-Hispanic Whites (27.6%) reported being victimized by other inmates than did their African American (17.9%) and Hispanic (22.0%) counterparts. Relatively speaking, physical victimization when experienced by people of color is more likely to involve the use of weapon. Yet, overall, rates of physical victimization approach equivalence among the identified racial and ethnic groups when victimization perpetrated by inmates and staff is combined together. Any physical victimization during a 6-month period ranges from 34.1% (African American) to 38.8% (Hispanics), as a result of the higher than average rates of physical victimization by staff aggressors reported by African American and Hispanic groups.

Adding together sexual and physical victimization (without duplication), as shown in Table 4, raises the overall rate of victimization within the prison system but does not change the overall patterns by perpetrator type. Within a 6-month period, approximately 37% to 41% of the racial and ethnic groups

(text continues on p. 463)

Table 2
Six-Month Prevalence of Sexual Victimization in Statewide Correctional System for Male Inmates by Race and 95% Confidence Intervals

	Male (N = 6,582)				All (N = 6,582)
	Non-Hispanic White (n = 1,129)	African American (n = 4,074)	Hispanic (n = 1,379)		
Inmate on inmate					
Any sexual victimization	49	38	48	36-59	42
Abusive sexual contact	38	31	37	26-48	34
Nonconsensual sex acts	20	13	15	9-22	15
Staff on inmate					
Any sexual victimization	46	81	76	61-91	74
Abusive sexual contact	37	70	70	55-84	64
Nonconsensual sex acts	8	19	23	16-31	18
Inmate or staff on inmate					
Any sexual victimization	83	102	108	90-125	99
Abusive sexual contact	66	91	96	79-113	87
Nonconsensual sex acts	25	26	30	21-39	27

Note: The estimates of “rate per 1,000 inmates” are based on weighted valid numbers. There were 382 inmates who either did not specify their race (n = 269) or belonged to a racial group too small to make valid inference (American Indian n = 78, Asian n = 35).

Table 3
Six-Month Prevalence of Physical Victimization in Statewide Correctional System for
Male Inmates by Race and 95% Confidence Intervals

	Male (N = 6,582)			
	Non-Hispanic White (n = 1,129)	African American (n = 4,074)	Hispanic (n = 1,379)	All (N = 6,582)
Inmate on inmate				
Any physical victimization	276	179	220	205
With weapon	168	130	163	143
Without weapon	189	90	122	114
Staff on inmate				
Any physical victimization	194	255	295	250
With weapon	99	165	169	153
Without weapon	107	143	166	140
Inmate or staff on inmate				
Any physical victimization	352	341	388	351
With weapon	223	245	276	246
Without weapon	241	190	235	207

Note: The estimates of “rate per 1,000 inmates” are based on weighted valid numbers. There were 382 inmates who either did not specify their race (n = 269) or belonged to a racial group too small to make valid inference (American Indian n = 78, Asian n = 35).

Table 4
Six-Month Prevalence of Combined Victimization in Statewide Correctional System for
Male Inmates by Race and 95% Confidence Intervals

	Male (N = 6,582)				All (n = 6,582)
	Non-Hispanic White (n = 1,129)	African American (n = 4,074)	Hispanic (n = 1,379)		
Inmate on inmate					
Any victimization	292	195	237	212-262	221 209-232
Property theft	301	218	227	203-252	236 225-247
Staff on inmate					
Any victimization	212	286	319	291-346	277 265-289
Property theft	269	289	301	274-328	287 275-299
Inmate or staff on inmate					
Any victimization	378	373	415	386-444	381 368-394
Property theft	466	410	433	404-463	425 412-438

Note: The estimates of “rate per 1,000 inmates” are based on weighted valid numbers. There were 382 inmates who either did not specify their race (n = 269) or belonged to a racial group too small to make valid inference (American Indian n = 78, Asian n = 35).

reported being victimized, sexually, physically, or both sexually or physically by other inmates, staff, or both. If property theft was included in the measure of victimization, the estimated prevalence rates increased. Property theft is the most common form of victimization compared to sexual and physical victimization for all racial and ethnic groups.

The racial and ethnic victimization disparities described above are consistent with expectations but do not indicate to what extent victimization is motivated by racial or ethnic discrimination. Victims of sexual and physical victimization, separately, were asked to identify the victimization event that bothered them the most and then to respond to a set of questions about that event. One question was, "Do you think you were attacked because of your race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, or mental illness?" Multiple responses were possible. As shown in Table 5, a plurality of victims of sexual violence indicated that their attack was *not* motivated by any form of discrimination (indicated by "none"), except for the victims in the non-Hispanic White group. For the non-Hispanic White group, approximately 6 of every 10 victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization reported that their attack was motivated by race, whereas 4 of every 10 victims of staff-on-inmate sexual victimization attributed their attack to race. African American victims were more likely to attribute sexual attacks by staff, compared to other inmates, as racially motivated. Similar patterns were found for physical victimization, except here a larger percentage of Hispanic victims attributed physical attacks, compared to sexual attacks, by staff aggressors as motivated by race (45.7% vs. 30.4%).

To further explore the connection between race/ethnicity and victimization, all respondents were asked, "What about an inmate makes him a target for being physically (sexually) assaulted?" Of the 23 options, being White, Black, or Latino could be selected, individually. After selecting among the options, respondents were asked to select from those characteristics selected among the 23 options the "three characteristics that would most make an inmate a target of physical (sexual) assault." The top characteristics appear in Table 6. Note, with one notable exception, that race and ethnicity characteristics did not make the list of characteristics that most make an inmate a target for physical or sexual assault. The one exception was that nearly 20% of non-Hispanic Whites indicated that "being White" was a characteristic that most made an inmate a target for physical assault. The same pattern of responses to this question was found for victims of sexual or physical assault. Victims of sexual or physical assault identified "being White" as a target characteristic only if they were White. More specifically, 25.8% of non-Hispanic Whites who were victims of sexual

Table 5
Motivation for Victimization by Type of Victimization, Perpetrator, and Race or Ethnicity for Those Reporting Victimization During the Past 6 Months

Percentage Reporting Type of Motivation and 95% Confidence Interval												
Sexual Victimization	Non-Hispanic White (n = 72)			African American (n = 311)			Hispanic (n = 123)					
	Inmate (n = 42)	Staff (n = 38)		Inmate (n = 105)	Staff (n = 245)		Inmate (n = 52)	Staff (n = 86)				
Race	56.9	41.5-72.2	41.4	23.1-59.6	9.7	4.1-15.3	32.4	26.5-38.4	29.8	16.8-42.8	30.4	20.3-40.6
Ethnicity	12.3	2.0-22.7	— ^a		8.7	2.9-14.5	11.3	7.3-15.4	17.6	6.7-28.4	17.1	9.0-25.1
Religion	11.5	0.5-22.4	—		13.1	6.5-19.6	18.3	13.3-23.2	15.1	5.1-25.0	13.3	5.3-21.4
Sexual orientation	29.7	15.6-43.9	—		16.7	9.5-24.0	12.3	8.0-16.5	17.0	6.4-27.7	11.0	4.3-17.7
Disability	16.1	3.8-28.3	—		4.7	0.6-8.8	2.9	0.8-5.1	11.6	2.5-20.8	6.0	1.2-10.9
Mental illness	12.4	1.7-23.2	—		9.2	3.6-14.8	3.1	1.1-5.1	8.5	1.0-16.0	7.1	1.4-12.8
None	24.7	11.6-37.8	49.8	31.9-67.7	53.4	43.4-63.4	48.7	42.3-55.1	42.1	27.2-56.9	48.2	36.5-59.8
Non-Hispanic White (n = 563)												
Physical Victimization	Non-Hispanic White (n = 563)			African American (n = 1781)			Hispanic (n = 670)					
	Inmate (n = 415)	Staff (n = 322)		Inmate (n = 1,028)	Staff (n = 1,261)		Inmate (n = 410)	Staff (n = 482)				
Race	58.1	53.1-63.2	45.4	39.3-51.5	8.0	6.3-9.7	37.1	34.2-39.9	31.9	27.3-36.6	45.7	40.9-50.6
Ethnicity	9.6	6.7-12.5	8.3	5.0-11.6	3.7	2.6-4.9	10.3	8.6-12.0	8.5	5.8-11.2	14.3	11.1-17.5
Religion	10.4	7.3-13.5	8.1	5.0-11.2	13.8	11.5-16.0	17.4	15.1-19.6	8.5	5.7-11.2	13.3	10.1-16.6
Sexual orientation	3.7	1.9-5.5	2.6	0.9-4.3	2.4	1.5-3.3	1.5	0.8-2.2	3.6	1.7-5.5	1.3	0.2-2.3
Disability	7.1	4.2-10.0	4.5	2.2-6.8	3.9	2.6-5.1	2.3	1.5-3.1	4.0	1.9-6.1	3.3	1.7-5.0
Mental illness	4.9	2.7-7.0	7.1	4.1-10.1	2.5	1.6-3.5	1.9	1.2-2.6	3.8	2.0-5.7	3.1	1.5-4.8
None	33.8	29.0-38.7	45.0	38.8-51.2	73.3	70.4-76.1	49.1	46.1-52.1	57.4	52.4-62.4	42.7	37.8-47.5

a. Estimates have not been calculated on fewer than five positive answers.

Table 6
Characteristics That Most Make an Inmate a Target for Sexual or Physical Assault, by Race and Ethnicity

What Most Makes an Inmate a Target of:	All Male Respondents		
	Non-Hispanic White	African American	Hispanic
Sexual assault	(<i>n</i> = 659)	(<i>n</i> = 2,234)	(<i>n</i> = 782)
	Being homosexual (68.7%)	Being homosexual (66.2%)	Being homosexual (59.8%)
	Offense against a child (40.4%)	Offense against a child (37.9%)	Offense against a child (38.9%)
	Being weak or small (30.3%)	Offense of domestic abuse (25.1%)	Offense of domestic abuse (26.3%)
	Offense of domestic abuse (25.1%)	Being weak or small (19.9%)	Being weak or small (17.5%)
	Being a pretty boy (19.7%)	Being a pretty boy (13.9%)	Being a pretty boy (15.3%)
Physical assault	(<i>n</i> = 1,015)	(<i>n</i> = 3,400)	(<i>n</i> = 1,154)
	Being a snitch (54.3%)	Being a snitch (52.7%)	Being a snitch (54.7%)
	Offense against a child (39.2%)	Stealing (37.1%)	Offense against a child (43.0%)
	Stealing (36.9%)	Offense against a child (34.7%)	Stealing (31.4%)
	Not showing respect (31.0%)	Not showing respect (32.8%)	Not showing respect (27.8%)
	Not paying debts (28.5%)	Not paying debts (25.2%)	Offense of domestic abuse (23.7%)
	Being White (19.7%)	Not minding own business (20.6%)	Not paying debts (20.7%)

assault identified “being White” as a target characteristic for sexual assault, and 29.3% of non-Hispanic White victims of physical assault also indicated “being White” as a target characteristic for physical assault (statistics for the victim groups are not found in Table 6 but are available from the authors on request).

Discussion

Disparities by race and ethnicity were found in prison victimization rates for adult males in a single prison system. Our findings indicate that African Americans were less likely to report being a victim of other inmates’ sexually or physically aggressive behavior but were more likely to report being victims of such behavior when staff members were identified as the aggressors. The opposite pattern was found for non-Hispanic Whites; they identified inmates more than staff as perpetrating sexually and physically aggressive acts against them. Hispanic inmates, like their African American counterparts, had above average rates of staff-on-inmate victimization and, like their non-Hispanic White counterparts, also had above average rates of inmate-on-inmate victimization. Overall, however, rates of sexual and physical victimization within a 6-month period, when combined by type of victimization and perpetrator, were roughly equal for non-Hispanic White (37.8%), African American (37.3%), and Hispanic (41.5%) groups.

Although racial and ethnic disparities were evident across victimization rates by type of perpetrator, interracial victimization as described in the earlier writings by Davis (1968), Carroll (1974), Scacco (1975), Lockwood (1980), and Bowker (1980) cannot be discerned from our data. Earlier research on sexual victimization focused on the race of the victim and perpetrator and identified the following interracial patterns, in order of greatest frequency: White victim and Black perpetrator, Black victim and perpetrator, and White victim and perpetrator (Carroll, 1974; Davis, 1968; Lockwood, 1980; Moss, Hosford, and Anderson, 1979; Toch, 1977). It was rare to find cases where the victim was Black and the perpetrator was White.

Our survey did not ask respondents to identify the race or ethnicity of their aggressors in part because inmates may have experienced multiple victimizations with aggressors of different race/ethnicity. Instead, we focused more on the impressions among victims, specifically, and inmates, more generally, regarding whether they thought violence against inmates was motivated by racism. Generally speaking, victims of sexual and physical assault did not identify race or ethnicity as a factor in their attack. Yet

when divided into race/ethnicity groups, only the non-Hispanic White group of victims consistently identified race as a leading factor motivating sexual assault by another inmate or staff member. Here, more than half of the non-Hispanic White group and approximately 30% of the Hispanic group who were victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual or physical violence identified race as a motivating factor, whereas less than 10% of the African American group attributed their victimization to race. Racism, as an explanatory factor, increased in frequency across all race/ethnic victim groups when victimization involved physical violence and staff as the aggressors, except for the non-Hispanic White group. At least 37% of victims of staff physical aggression, independent of racial/ethnic grouping, attributed their attack to race; non-Hispanic White and Hispanic groups were more likely to attribute the motivation of staff aggression to race than was the African American group.

To further elucidate the role of race on victimization, all respondents (independent of victimization status) were asked to identify characteristics that made an inmate a target of physical or sexual assault. Here, it is interesting to note first that respondents were less able to identify characteristics that made an inmate a target of sexual attack than of a physical attack, which is consistent with the relative prevalence of the two types of victimization. More than 40% of each racial/ethnic group indicated "don't know" to the question pertaining to target of sexual attack, compared to 17% or less to the target of physical attack question. Race and ethnicity were not characteristics that were commonly indicated by respondents across the groups as marking the person as a target for victimization. "Being White," for example, was identified as one of the top three characteristics making an inmate a target of sexual victimization by 9.2%, 2.9%, and 5.6% of respondents in the non-Hispanic White, African American, and Hispanic groups, respectively. By contrast, "being Black" and "being Hispanic" characteristics were identified by 1% or less of respondents in each of the race/ethnic groups. Race and ethnicity characteristics were identified with greater frequency as target characteristics for physical victimization. Here, approximately one fifth (19.7%) of the non-Hispanic White group (compared to 1.1% of African American and 2.9% of Hispanic groups) identified "being White," 2.6% of the African American group identified "being Black," and 3.9% of the Hispanic group identified "being Latino" as a target characteristic for physical assault.

Although race and ethnic disparities in victimization among inmates are evident, it does not appear that racial and/or ethnic tensions are directly motivating or targeting people for victimization. As found by Lockwood

(1980), "Neither aggressors nor their peers emphasized racial antagonism" in explaining acts of sexual violence. Factors, such as behaviors and physical characteristics, appear more salient. This finding is consistent with the framework of risk factors for victimization developed by Sparks (1982), in which he delineated six explanatory factors for victimization. They are facilitation, precipitation, vulnerability, impunity, attractiveness, and opportunity. Only three of these factors directly address the characteristics or behaviors of the inmate that were identified in our study: facilitation, inclusive of routine or lifestyle activities that bring the inmate into contact with other inmates; vulnerability, referring to the characteristics of the inmate that make the inmate "suitable" for attack; and attractiveness, referring to the attributes of the inmate that make him desirable to the aggressor.

Looking first at sexual assault, vulnerability and attractiveness factors are particularly relevant here. An inmate was "suitable" for sexual assault if he was (thought to be) homosexual, small or weak in appearance, a known offender of women or children (vulnerability), or a pretty boy (attractiveness). These factors, not race, were seen by inmates as increasing an inmate's likelihood of sexual victimization across all race/ethnic groups. Facilitation and, to a lesser extent, vulnerability factors motivated physical violence. Lifestyle activities that violated prison-based social norms, such as snitching, stealing, not paying debts, getting into the business of others, or not showing respect, increased an inmate's target status for physical assault, as did personal characteristics related to offenses against women and children. Again, race was not seen as a major explanatory characteristic across race/ethnic groups.

Overall, racial and ethnic disparities in victimization, although present, do not appear to be principally explained by racism. Consistent with Toch (1977), perceptions of the inmate by (inmate and staff) aggressors, independent of race, centrally influence victimization. In some cases, victimization might be interpreted as a consequence for violating the norms inside prison, serving a punitive function that regulates behavior among inmates, whereas in other cases it is a way for the prison culture to reinforce its own social hierarchy by further dehumanizing inmates whose offenses involved women or children as victims (Bowker, 1980). Victimization, as a regulatory practice, maintains and reinforces the social norms inside prison. In other cases, victimization may simply be a venue for exerting one's will over another person in ways that affirm preference (e.g., effeminate appearance and sexual preference) while also asserting control (e.g., ability to dominate over the weak in size or number). This type of victimization is compatible with notions of racial vengeance or rage, where the heretofore

underclass (people of color) dominate the upper class (Whites) and exert this dominance through acts of victimization that are humiliating, shaming, and degrading (Carroll, 1974; Davis, 1968; Scacco, 1975).

Proving which comes first, preference/control or racism with respect to sexual or physical victimization falls with the realm of the proverbial chicken and egg problem. Disentangling first cause (chicken or egg) is challenging partially because racism can be internalized without awareness (part of internalized culture) or repressed or expressed because of its social salience (part of the externalized culture). At least provisionally, our findings shed some light on the issue of first cause with respect to inmate-on-inmate violence. Although all three race/ethnic groups experience roughly equal levels of victimization inside prison, Hispanic and non-Hispanic Whites victims were more likely to attribute assaults by other inmates as racially motivated, but only the non-Hispanic White victims identified being a particular racial/ethnic group as a target characteristic for assault. The salience of "being White" was reduced among non-Hispanic Whites if they were not victims in the past 6 months. Also "being White" was not identified by other race/ethnic groups as a risk factor for assault, either sexual or physical. Taken together, this suggests that race plays some role in the justification for an assault once victimized but not as a primary factor that precipitates an attack. Other characteristics and behaviors appear to motivate aggression other than skin color. This suggests, but does not prove, that it may be more socially and psychologically acceptable to attribute victimization to attributes over which the victim has no control (race) than to the behaviors or characteristics that are rooted in the victim, even though in the abstract it is generally known what behaviors and characteristics precipitate inmate-on-inmate aggression. Blaming the victim, although not socially acceptable, might be appropriate only to the extent the behaviors of the victim (e.g., committing a prior offense against a child, being a snitch, stealing, not paying debts) are triggering the regulatory function of prison violence. Other characteristics rooted in the individuality of the victim (e.g., being homosexual, being weak or small, being a pretty boy) that make him vulnerable to attack suggest ways to protect individuals with these characteristics from future victimization.

Victimization and violence, conjoined twins, regulate and characterize prison life and the environment there (O'Donnell & Edgar, 1998). These united forces create fear, anxiety, and the need to beget violence to beget safety. Whether these forces are coincident with or motivated by racism is relevant only to the extent that knowing its role in victimization and violence imparts knowledge that can be used to inform practices and policies

that minimize their opportunities. Changing the environment of prison begins with providing safety and security while simultaneously encouraging treatment that affirms the rights of people to be safe from harmful acts, words, and expressions. For the past 40 years, the research evidence has consistently shown that some people inside prison are at greater risk of harmful behaviors for reasons related to how they look, how they interact with others, or what they have done to harm others in the past. The contemporary issue, therefore, is not why violence exists inside prison but how to stop its use as a method for showing displeasure and for regulating lifestyle behavior. Prevention begins with reducing opportunities for victimization, separating those with characteristics that make them likely targets from other inmates with predatory characteristics and educating inmates about what gets them into trouble with other inmates (i.e., what violates the social norms of prison life), and includes “pulling up” the environment by training officers and other staff in supervisory behaviors and styles that affirm and preserve a “harm-free” environment. It has always been said that people learn by example, not by words (or rules) alone. That said, we need to get to “making good” examples before we can expect prisons to make good.

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