PRISON GUARDS AND THE USE OF PHYSICAL COERCION AS A MECHANISM OF PRISONER CONTROL*

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This paper examines the dynamics of the use of unofficial force by prison guards in a Texas penitentiary. The findings suggest that rather than being idiosyncratic or sporadic, guard use of physical coercion was highly structured and deeply entrenched in the guard subculture. Upper-ranking guards served as mentors and socialized younger nonranking guards into the process of using physical coercion. These nonranking guards actually served as apprentices. Most importantly, guards who used physical force were rewarded for their behavior with improved duty posts or even promotions.

In the past 40 years, the study of social control in prisons has generated a considerable body of research. Most of these studies have primarily focused on the formal prisoner control structure wherein internal order is achieved through such mechanisms as official rules and regulations (Clemmer, 1940; McCleery, 1960; Goffman, 1961; Cressey, 1968); formal disciplinary procedures involving "write-ups" and adjudication before disciplinary courts (Carroll, 1974; Gobert and Cohen, 1981); and the prison staff's use of such punishments as loss of privileges or solitary confinement (Cloward, 1960; Wright, 1973; Hawkins, 1976; Berkman, 1979). In addition, other researchers have examined the staff's official use of inmate elites as convict guards to maintain order (Mouledous, 1962; Marquart and Crouch, 1984).

Although most prisoner control research centers on formal measures, several studies have been conducted on the informal system. This line of inquiry typically shows that order is based on "trade-offs"; illegitimate rewards; guard accommodations with inmate elites (Cloward 1960; Carroll, 1974; Davidson, 1974; Jacobs, 1977); or concessions in which the staff overlook minor inmate rule violations (Sykes, 1958; Thomas, 1984). No research, to date, however, has examined the internal institutional order that is based on the guards' use of physical coercion.

In theory, the threat of force by guards is always present, but the literature

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lacks any systematic analysis of violence as a mechanism of social control in this setting. This neglect leaves an unbalanced picture of the structure and process of prisoner control. The present research documents with participant observation data how and why guards in one Texas penitentiary utilized unofficial physical force as a routine mechanism of informal social control.[1] The research shows that the guards' use of coercion does not result from personality defects or the brutalizing nature of the institutional environment (Zimbardo, 1972). Neither did their use of coercive power precipitate any mass disorder or widespread retaliation from the prisoners (Sykes, 1958; Hepburn, 1985). Instead, this paper demonstrates that the guards' use of force was a socially structured tactic of prisoner control that was well entrenched in the guard culture.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Data for this paper were collected at the Johnson Unit (a pseudonym), a large maximum security facility within the Texas Department of Corrections. The author entered the penitentiary, with the warden's permission, as a guard to collect data on social control and order for 19 months (June 1981 through January 1983), worked throughout the institution (for example, cell blocks, shops, dormitories), and observed how the guards meted out official and unofficial punishments, coopted inmate elites to act as "convict guards," cultivated snitches, and other guard work activities. Formal and informal interviews, documents and records, and direct observations were used (Lofland, 1971; Wax, 1971). In addition, over 20 key informants were cultivated among the guards and inmate elites or leaders who assisted in analyzing control and order as daily phenomena. Close relationships were developed with these informants, and their "expert" knowledge about prison life and prisoner control was essential throughout the fieldwork (Jacobs, 1974; Marquart, 1986). Most importantly, the daily routine of prison events (work, school, counts, cell and body searches, the administration of punishment) as well as various unexpected events (fights, stabbings, suicide attempts, escapes) were observed and noted.

After a time, the author became privy to guard violence and observed and simply noted 30 incidents wherein the guards physically punished inmates for various rule violations. Key guard informants also described an additional 20 force situations. These 50 cases occurred between December 1981 and November 1982. At this point, a general description of the incidents was written up and the altercations were discussed at great length with 7 guard and 15 inmate key informants. The guard informants consisted of 3 supervisors (sergeant, lieutenant, captain) and 4 hall officers—a highly regarded slot

1. Unofficial force is defined as force not related to the protection of life and property.

for nonranking guards. All 15 convict informants were called building tenders. These inmates were used by the guards to maintain control in the living areas. Most had violent records and many years of prison experience. These 22 informants were extremely reliable because of their positions, sympathy with the research effort, and consistency in providing accurate information. Essentially, these 50 cases served as a base to further develop a systematic method of data collection and analysis. Then, after reviewing the literature on social control in prison and social control theory in general (as well as the police use of force), the author developed a systematic strategy to catalogue and code four functions of the guards' use of unofficial force. This analytic strategy was then applied to 30 cases of observed and informant-reported guard violence that occurred between December 4, 1982, and January 28, 1983. These latter 30 cases serve as the data base and will be examined at length throughout this paper.

THE RESEARCH SETTING

The Johnson Unit is a large maximum security institution housing, in 1981, nearly 3,000 inmates (47% black, 36% white, 17% Hispanic) and is located on 14,000 acres of farmland. Inmates assigned to this prison were classified by Texas Department of Corrections as recidivists over the age of 25, all of whom had been in prison (excluding juvenile institutions) three or more times. Johnson had a system-wide reputation for tight disciplinary control and housed a large number of inmate troublemakers from the Texas prisons. Structurally, the prison had 18 inside cell blocks (or tanks) and 12 dormitories which branched out from a single central hall—a telephone pole design. The hall was the main thoroughfare of the prison and was almost one quarter of a mile long, measuring 16 feet wide by 12 feet high.

The staff at the prison numbered around 235 officers (85% white, 10% black, 5% Hispanic). This all-male security force was divided into two forces—building and field. The interest in this investigation lies with the building force that numbered nearly 145 officers. They were distributed between the three shifts.[2] The apex of the organizational structure was the warden, and beneath him were two assistant wardens. Although the wardens were the prison's chief security officers, they served primarily as administrators. The actual management and supervision of the daily security measures and convict "business" was the responsibility of the Building Major. The Major supervised two Captains who in turn supervised four lieutenants. Last, there were eight sergeants who helped the lieutenants manage the shifts.

Between the ranking staff and the line prison guards was a group of nearly

2. The morning shift was from 5:45 am to 1:45 pm, the evening shift 1:45 to 9:45 pm, and the night shift 9:45 pm to 5:45 am. The researcher was fortunate enough to work on all three shifts.

25 guards called hall officers. At Johnson, all officers began their careers working in the cell blocks or tanks. Officers who demonstrated they could "work a tank" were defined as "good officers" and were selected by their supervisors (lieutenants and sergeants) to become hall officers. Properly "working a tank" involved keeping correct inmate counts, breaking up fights, the maintenance of discipline in a "cool manner" without yelling and arguing with inmates or constantly writing disciplinary reports. Although counting ability and "common sense" (the ability to manage inmates in ordinary situations) were musts, the willingness and initiative to break up fights with inmates, not backing down in confrontations with inmates, and the inclination to actually fight inmates were the critical factors leading to selection for a hall "boss" slot. As one supervisor stated, "I don't want him (as a hall officer) if he doesn't have nuts." These officers were regarded as the best of the line prison officers, and selection for this position was regarded as a promotion, a status symbol, and a sign of a promising future within this prison system. The remaining officers staffed the cell blocks, dormitories, gun towers, dining halls, and other security-related jobs and were rarely promoted. This latter group supplied the rapid turnover cadre that characterizes all prisons.

INTIMIDATION AND PHYSICAL COERCION

To control the inmates at Johnson, the guard staff employed both rewards and punishments. In the official control structure, the guards used a privilege system (for example, good time, furloughs, improved job and living quarters) that provided the majority of prisoners with enough incentive to follow the rules most of the time. Failure to comply typically resulted in the loss of privileges and usually solitary confinement. Because Johnson was so highly regimented, the fear of getting caught and losing privileges deterred most inmates from serious rule infractions. However, those who frequently broke the rules or engaged in serious violations (for example, assaulted staff, fomented rebellion, or stabbed other inmates) were unofficially controlled by the guards through verbal intimidation and various degrees of physical punitive force.

VERBAL INTIMIDATION

Inmates who challenged an officer's authority (for example, by insubordination, cursing at him, or "giving him a hard time") usually received verbal assaults from ranking officers or supervisors (sergeants, lieutenants, and captains). Verbal assaults, though physically harmless, induced humiliation and were used to cripple or demean the erring inmate's self concept. In addition, this control tactic intimidated, ridiculed, or destroyed the "face" of the offending inmate and often involved racial epithets, name calling, derogation,

threats, and scare tactics. The following verbal assault by one ranking officer upon an inmate illustrates a typical humiliation ceremony. "You stupid nigger, if you ever lie to me or any other officer about what you're doing, I'll knock your teeth in." On another occasion the researcher observed a supervisor make this frequently heard threat: "Say, big boy, you're some kind of motherfucker aren't you? I ought just go ahead and whip your ass here and now. If you think you're man enough let's do it."

Verbal assaults such as these were daily occurrences. In some cases, inmates were threatened with extreme physical injury ("you'll leave here [the prison] in an ambulance") or even death ("nobody cares if a convict dies in here, we'll beat you to death"). Essentially, verbal assaults alluding to physical force were scare tactics meant to deter inmates from future transgressions. Those who failed to "internalize" the message and repeatedly violated the rules were roughed up as a matter of course.

TYPES OF COERCION

The first type of unofficial physical coercion was called (by inmates and officers alike) a "tune up," "attitude adjustment," or "counselling." These force displays were used for minor officer-inmate offenses (for example, refusing to obey an order, swearing at or arguing with an officer, belligerence, and the expression of a flippant and negative attitude) and rarely involved serious physical injury. "Tune ups" consisted of verbal humiliation, shoves, kicks and head and body slaps.

This type of coercion functioned as an "attention getter" and was meant to scare and intimidate the inmate-victim. The following account, related to the researcher by an officer eyewitness, illustrates the circumstances that led to most "tune ups."

> I [hall officer] had a hard time in the North Dining Hall with an inmate who budged in line to eat with his friend. Man, we had a huge argument right there in the food line after I told him to "Get to the back of the line." I finally got him out [of the dining hall] and put him on the wall.[3] I told my supervisor about the guy right away. Then the inmate yelled "Yea, you can go ahead and lock me up [solitary] or beat me if that's how you get your kicks." Me and the supervisor brought the guy into the Major's office.[4] Once in the office, this idiot [inmate] threw his chewing gum in a garbage can and tried to look tough. One officer jumped up

3. The "wall" was the wall area near the Major's office. Practically every time a hall officer had a problem with an inmate, the inmate was instructed to "catch the wall." Once "on the wall," the inmate waited until the officer or his supervisor talked over the problem. It was not uncommon for inmates to "stand on the wall" for hours, or even days.

4. The Major's office was the place where all disciplinary measures against inmates were meted out.

> and slapped him across the face and I tackled him. A third officer joined us and we punched and kicked the shit out of him. I picked him up and pulled his head back by the hair while one officer pulled out his knife and said "You know, I ought to just go ahead and cut your lousy head off."

Besides being roughed up, this inmate was indeed scared. He had actually believed that the officers would not hit him. I saw this inmate, who had several lumps and bruises on his face, standing "on the wall" by the Major's office and asked him what happened. He said "Man, I didn't think you got fucked up for smarting off." Although this inmate had been at Johnson for six months, he stated to the author that he knew the guards would use force, but he also believed they would not hit him for such a "petty ass" violation.

Many "tune ups" also took place after disciplinary court. One reliable officer informant told the researcher about two "tune ups" following the court procedure.

> The first inmate was tried for refusing to work. The tape recorder was shut off[5] and a supervisor said, "You're going to work from now on, you understand?" After this, the supervisor slapped him on the head, kicked him in the ass, and literally threw him out the door. The next inmate came in and was tried and found guilty of self-mutilation. He injested numerous razor blades. One supervisor yelled at him, "It's hard enough for me to keep the rest of these inmates in razor blades to shave with around here, let alone having you eat them all the time." The inmate stuttered and a supervisor slapped him twice across the face.

Inmates "tuned up" after court were the victims of multiple punishments. That is, they received both official (loss of privileges or solitary confinement) and unofficial forms of punishment.

The second form of physical coercion was dubbed "ass whippings" and befell inmates who broke more serious rules such as challenging an officers's authority, threatening an officer, totally defying an officer's authority, or fighting back during a "tune up." Further, these were force situations where the officers employed various types of weapons, such as blackjacks,[6] riot batons, fist loads, or aluminum-cased flashlights. Although weapons were employed, the inmate-victims were not brutalized enough to require hospitalization or other extensive medical treatment. A noteworthy example occurred when a newly arrived inmate, who was in the Major's office for an initial interview retorted, "I can see I'm going to have trouble making it on this farm [prison]." Several officers immediately attacked the inmate and threw him to the floor. While one officer literally stood on the inmate's head, (called a "tap dance"), another hit him on the buttocks and thighs with a riot

5. Disciplinary court procedures deemed as major cases were tape recorded.

6. One old-time convict was the staff's blackjack "connection." This inmate routinely made and repaired blackjacks for the "right" staff members.

baton, and several others kicked him. During this event, a supervisor was heard yelling "Hurt him, hurt him" and even encouraged the other officers by saying "Go on, get you some of that ass."

The third type of force used at Johnson was the severe beating. Such beatings occurred infrequently and were reserved for inmates who violated certain "sacred" rules through such actions as attacking staff members, inciting work strikes or mob action, or escaping. The purpose of a beating was intentional physical injury and in some cases hospitalization. For example, while making a routine check of the inmates in a solitary confinement area, the author observed an inmate who had struck an officer earlier in the day; he was beaten so severely that he could not stand up. In this particular case, the inmate was forceably dragged from the hall into the Major's office and beaten, and then beaten again while being locked in a solitary cell.

Beatings, like the latter two types of coercion, were primarily backstage events and conducted in closed settings to avoid witnesses. However, "public" beatings were occasionally staged to set an example. A good illustration of a "front-stage" beating occurred in the hall near a spot adjacent to the Major's office and was reported by an officer eyewitness.

> I was sitting at the Searcher's desk and Rick [convict] and I were talking and here comes Joe [convict] from 8-block. Joe thinks he knows kung fu, hell he got his ass beat about four months ago. He comes down the hall and he had on a tank top, his pants were tied up with a shoe lace, gym shoes on, and he had all his property in a large sack. As he neared us, Rick said, "Well, Joe's fixing to go crazy again today." He came up to us and Rick asked him what was going on and Joe said they [staff] were fucking with him by not letting him have a recreation card. I told him, "Well, take your stuff and go over there to the Major's office" and there he went. Officer A went over and stood in front of Joe, so did Officer B who was beside Joe, Officer C was in back of Officer A, and two convicts stood next to Officer A. Inmate James, an inmate who we tuned up in the hospital several days before, stood about ten feet away. All of a sudden Joe took a swing at Officer A. Officers A and B tackled Joe. I ran over there and grabbed Joe's left leg while a convict had his right leg and we began kicking his legs and genitals. Hell, I tried to break his leg. At the same time Officer B was using his security keys, four large bronze keys, like a knife. The security keys have these points on their ends where they fit into the locks. Well, Officer B was jamming those keys into Joe's head. Joe was bleeding all over the place. Then all of a sudden another brawl broke out right next to us. Inmate James threw a punch at Officer D as he came out of the Major's office to see what was going on. James saw Joe getting beat and he decided to help Joe out. I left Joe to help Officer D. By the time I got there (about two seconds), Officer D and about six convicts were beating the shit out of James. Officer D was

beating James with a blackjack. Man, you could hear that crunch noise every time he hit him. At the same time a convict was hitting him in the stomach and chest and face. These other inmates were kicking him and stomping him at the same time. It was a wild melee, just like being in a war. I got in there and grabbed James by the hair and Officer D began hitting him on the head and face with a blackjack. I mean he was hitting him, no love taps. He was trying to beat his brains out and yelling, "You mother fucker, you think you're bad, you ain't bad, you mother fucker, son of a bitch, you hit me and I'll bust your fucking skull." I think we beat on him alone for ten minutes. I punched him in the face and head. Then Officer D yelled, "Take him [James] to the hospital." Officer C and me had to literally drag him all the way to the hospital. Plus we punched and stomped him at the same time. At the hospital, Officer D began punching James in the face. I held his head up so Officer D could hit him. Then Officer D worked James over again with a blackjack. We then stripped James and threw him on a bed. Officer D yelled at James, "I'm going to kill you by the time you get off this unit." Then Officer D began hitting him in the shins and genitals with a night stick. Finally, we stopped and let the medics take over. James had to leave via the ambulance. Joe required some stitches and was subsequently put in solitary."[7]

This gruesome event occurred in the full view of many inmates in the hall and hospital. In addition, the screams of the inmate-victims were heard throughout the building and for several days after this event, the entire prison operated smoothly with few officer-inmate confrontations. This beating was the talk of the prison and many officers used the incident as a scare tactic. In other words, "If you don't do what I say you'll get what Joe and James got and worse."

Beatings such as these were not restricted specifically to serious altercations between officers and inmates. In early August 1982, during breakfast in the South Dining Hall, three inmates fatally stabbed another inmate. Seven officers armed with riot batons and baseball bats led the aggressors, weapons in hand, out of the dining hall to a spot near the Major's office. A supervisor ordered the inmates to throw down their weapons, but they refused. The supervisor made his plea one more time and the inmates still refused. At this point, two hall officers attacked the inmates with aluminum baseball bats. The inmates immediately dropped their weapons and were stripped, and escorted to the Major's officer, and beaten severely. The staff was outraged at

7. The inmates who helped the staff in this fight were called building tenders and turnkeys. These inmates were violent criminals who were coopted by the staff with special privileges to help in controlling the ordinary inmates, especially in the cell blocks. For a more in-depth analysis of these inmates, see Marquart and Crouch (1984) and Marquart (1983).

this homicide and made examples of the culprits.[8]

THE LEGITIMATION OF VIOLENCE

These latter examples of guard violence were obviously illegal and violated written departmental policy as well as civil and criminal law. The informal norms of the guard staff justified violence that violated legal and administrative policy in certain instances. The use of unofficial force was so common in the institution under study that the guards viewed it as an everyday operating procedure and legitimized its use. Further, Johnson was not an anomaly with regard to punitive force. Although this researcher did not observe the use of force in other Texas prisons, the trial proceedings from a prison reform case documented numerous (and quite similar) incidences of guard coercion in seven other state prisons. The Court found that the guards' use of punitive force was not an isolated phenomonon but constituted a routine (and rampant) guard activity (Ninth Monitor's Report to the Special Master, 1983).

In almost every situation where a staff member struck an inmate at Johnson, post facto explanations were manufactured (Van Maanen, 1978). Due to the intervention in recent years of the Federal courts into prisoner discipline, inmates frequently sued officers for various types of civil rights violations, particularly for brutality. In light of this fact, the staff involved in such force situations got together after the fact and wrote statements to the effect that the inmate-victim assaulted a staff member and force was needed to subdue the inmate (similar to "throw downs"). The more force used against an inmate, the more the inmate was said to have "fought back." The officers involved generally used a "covering charge" of striking an officer to justify physical coercion (Manning, 1977). For most "tune ups," statements were not made. However, "ass whippings" and beatings were quickly followed up with statement and disciplinary report writing sessions. Many times inmates filed civil suits concerning excessive force and brutality against the officers. These civil suits were routinely investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation but were quashed due to the weight of the staffs' evidence. In short, no medical reports were made to verify physical damage and, in the end, it was the word of one inmate against two, three, or more officers and sometimes several prostaff inmate witnesses as well.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The use of punitive force by the guards was not a random activity or directed against any particular prisoner for any particular reason. Instead,

8. Killing of any sort at the prison was a rare phenomenon. This was the second inmate murder by other inmates since 1972. However, one officer, a major, died in 1979 of a heart attack during a fight with an inmate.

coercion was a socially structured and highly organized form of guard behavior. To understand why the guards relied on force, it is necessary to first describe the setting for this behavior. Then four reasons for the use of coercion are analyzed. These are: (1) coercion maintains control and order; (2) coercion maintains status and deference; (3) coercion facilitates promotions; and (4) coercion builds guard solidarity.

THE SETTING FOR COERCION

Twenty-eight of the force situations occurred in the Major's Office and two in a solitary confinement area. These areas were private settings free from the eyes of other inmates. Physically coercing or "adjusting an inmate's attitude" in private reduced the chances of the inmate-victim securing witnesses for a civil action. In this way, the victim's ability to win a brutality case was virtually impossible. The "hidden" force situation was difficult for the FBI or Department of Justice to investigate. If a suit was filed and investigated (and several were), the guards implicated simply denied knowledge of the event or else read a manufactured report that claimed self-defense, which in turn led to a dismissal of the inmate's claim of brutality.

The application of force was always done in the presence of more than one officer. Hall officers and ranking guards always carried out the physical punishment of inmates. In all 30 incidents, between 2 and 6 of these guards were present. Further, it was an unwritten rule that at least 2 staff members must be present, for safety and evidentiary reasons, whenever an inmate was physically punished. Most coercive situations were initiated by a ranking guard and then the other officers moved in and finished the episode. It was not uncommon for 4, 5, or even 6 officers to be involved in a "tune up" or other force situations.

COERCION MAINTAINS CONTROL AND ORDER

The guards regarded force as an important means to achieve tight disciplinary control and punish recalcitrant inmates. Of the observed force situations, the majority ($n = 21$) involved inmates who challenged the guards' authority or disrupted the well-defined prison order (for example, refusing to obey an order, swearing at or threatening officers). On one occasion, for example, a guard ordered an inmate to quit talking while standing in line to receive some medicine. The inmate then stated, "I can talk to anybody I please and I sure as hell can talk as loud as I want." This inmate was immediately escorted to the Major's office where the officer made his report about the incident. The inmate was allowed to make a statement and then was slapped across the face and kicked in the buttocks by several ranking officers. Although these episodes were not serious, they were defined by the guards as mutinous and not to be tolerated.

The guards argued that these latter offenses undermined prison discipline and control and inmate violators had to be retaliated against. As guards, they also maintained that the prison was their domain and internal order was their paramount goal. These beliefs therefore justified their use of force, at least to themselves. They firmly believed that coercion was a legitimate mechanism of social control. Further, new officers at Johnson were constantly reminded, as well as placated, by ranking guards with the maxim, "We don't tolerate officers getting jumped on or talked crazy to around here, they'll [inmates] ride the ambulance if they try it."

Punitive force was not always directed against inmates who openly challenged the guards' authority. In some cases, inmates were "tuned up" for inmate-on-inmate offenses. For the most part, the guards did not consider minor inmate-on-inmate incidents (such as gambling, tatooing, stealing) as malicious or as undermining their authority or as serious breaches of prison order. However, for serious inmate-inmate rule infractions such as fighting with weapons, sexual attacks, or threatening other inmates, the guards generally took action. Nine of the 30 cases of force involved these latter offenses. Of these 9 cases, 3 were for homosexual threats, 4 for physical threats, and 2 for continuous fighting (these 2 inmates had several fights at work and in their cell). For example, a small black inmate told the staff that a larger, "stronger" black inmate was "talking sex stuff" to him and making other threatening advances. The aggressive inmate was called to the Major's office and confronted with the complainant's accusation. Although the aggressor denied the threats, he was slapped across the face several times and pushed around by one guard. During this episode, 6 other staff members repeatedly derogated and threatened the aggressor with severe bodily harm if he continued to make homosexual or any other kind of threats against other inmates.

COERCION MAINTAINS STATUS AND DEFERENCE

The data indicate that inmate deportment and race were critical elements in the guards' decision to use or not use force. After being confronted with a rule violation, those inmates who responded in an antagonistic or nondeferential attitude towards the staff typically provoked a physical response from the guards. Of the 30 force situations, 23 were directed against inmates who offered increased resistance, lied to, antagonized, or exhibited disrespect toward an officer either at the time of apprehension for a violation or at a later stage during interrogation. For example, on December 4, 1982, inmate Sims lied to an officer about the loss of his work boots. Sims concocted a story to obtain a new pair of boots by saying his old pair were stolen while he was bathing. The officer issued Sims a permit to procure new boots. One hour later, an inmate informer told the officer that Sims merely threw his old boots away in the cell block's trash can. The shoes were retrieved and Sims was "tuned up" for lying to the officer. On another occasion, an officer

instructed several prisoners in a cell block dayroom (television room) to "Hold the noise down" whereupon inmate Warren retorted, "Shut up yourself and stay the hell out of the dayroom." Warren was ordered out of the dayroom, escorted to the Major's office where he was punched, kicked, and blackjacked by several officers.

These inmate-victims were physically coerced solely for not showing the officers proper deference and demeanor—passivity, civility, and politeness (Goffman, 1956; Manning, 1977). This finding parallels Reiss's (1971), Sykes and Clark's (1975), and Friedrich's (1983) research on police use of force against "disrespective" citizens. The finding is also similar to the research by Piliavin and Briar (1964), who argued that a juvenile's demeanor was an important determinant in the disposition of the case. Essentially, prisoners who failed to embrace their role or identity as subordinates were more likely to be coerced than "properly" behaved inmates. In sum, the guards used coercion to protect their superior status and the lack of deference or respect for an officer greatly affected the outcome of guard-inmate encounters.

Racial Factors. The inmate's race also played an important role in the guards' willingness to use coercion to maintain social status. The inmates at Johnson were mostly urban blacks while the guards were primarily rural whites who viewed the black inmates as basically antiauthority, inferior, disrespectful, aggressive, and, most of all, nondeferential. Twenty-four of the force situations involved black prisoners. Only one Hispanic and five white inmates were physically punished. For the white guards, black prisoners represented troublesome, hostile, and rebellious prisoners who occasionally "needed" physical coercion to "keep them in their place." Racial prejudice was common, and this factor helped facilitate the belief on the part of the guards that black inmates were impolite and troublesome.

COERCION AS A ROUTE OF UPWARD MOBILITY

All new officers began their careers in the cell blocks, which familarized them with the prison routine and served as a type of character test. Cell block duty was often mentally taxing due to the constant interaction with the inmates, counting, and relaying messages. Those officers who "ran a good tank" and had "snap" were sometimes selected as hall officers. Working in the hall was regarded as a reward because it freed the officer from cell block duty and it also put him in greater proximity to the ranking guards. Contact with supervisors was a plus and often paved the way for promotions. In fact, it was quite common for shift supervisors to personally groom three or four promising hall officers.

This process was actually a form of tutelage wherein the supervisor played the role of mentor and taught the "pupil" about, among other things, writing disciplinary reports, developing inmate snitches, and searching cells for contraband. More importantly, these "teachers" taught their officers about

when, where, and how to use physical force. If an officer used "inappropriate" force (for example, "tuning up" an inmate in the hall, using too much force, beating up older inmates), then the supervisor warned the officer about unwanted investigations. On one occasion, a hall officer slapped an inmate in the inmate dining hall. He lost his hall officer position and was reassigned to an inmate housing unit. In another instance, a hall officer "tuned up" an inmate with a history of heart trouble as well as without other guard witnesses. He was reprimanded for his behavior and forbidden from using coercion. In short, coercion was subject to rules and those who used it in deviant ways were sanctioned.

It was at the level of hall officer that the guards began to learn about the use of force. For example, a new hall officer may be called upon to take part in a Disciplinary Court hearing and might observe a "tune up" or a new hall officer might see a "tune up" while helping to escort an inmate to a solitary confinement cell. In these situations the hall officer was expected to participate in the force display. If the neophyte participated, he also learned how to construct covering charges and post-facto explanations of the event. Fifteen guards were involved in the 30 incidents and 7 were hall officers, 4 were sergeants, 3 were lieutenants, and 1 was a captain. Line prison officers, or those working in cell blocks and other security areas, were not involved in a single case of unofficial coercion.

Becoming a hall officer did facilitate upward mobility, but the willingness of an officer to fight inmates was the primary variable affecting his acceptance by other hall officers and ranking guards. In the guard culture at Johnson, fighting an inmate ("getting on one" or "frapping his ass") was a measure of an officer's manhood or "nuts." Excessive or complusive masculinity more commonly referred to as machismo was a highly valued personality trait (Toby, 1966). A cult of male honor prevailed in which personal violence was obligatory to establish the officer's reputation and status within the guard subculture (Reider, 1984). As one ranking guard stated, "You have to make a convict fear you or respect you or you won't make it here." Another ranking guard said, "Hell, some of these officers are crazier and meaner than the convicts." Those who embraced these subcultural tenets were labeled as good officers and were confirmed as members in the ruling clique of officers—hall officers and all ranking guards. Fighting an inmate was the equivalent of a rite of passage because this event solidified the perception of an officer as a person who could be trusted.

Personal toughness and "acting like a man" were the critical factors ranking guards employed to evaluate all employees. Specifically, officers who exhibited the "proper" traits were usually rewarded in the form of better duty assignments or promotions. The ranking officers viewed force as a legitimate control tactic and tacitly approved of this behavior. Hall officers were expected to use force when the situation arose, and those who could not or

would not were quickly discovered, labeled weak or unloyal, and in some cases reassigned back to cell block duty. Earning a reputation as weak or cowardly was a personal disaster for the officer and parallels the spoiled identity concept commonly found in the deviance literature. In addition, exceptional hall officers were often promoted due to their past performances, thus enhancing their organizational careers. Excluding the 3 wardens, all 18 ranking officers of the building force were hall officers either at Johnson or at another of Texas's many correctional institutions. Promotion of hall officers ensured that this important subcultural value would be passed on to other officers.

Age Factors. It should also be noted that the officers who were most likely to use force were young and had relatively few years of guard experience. Six of the 15 guards involved were between the ages of 18 and 24, while 7 were between 25 and 29. The remainder were over the age of 33. In addition, 5 of the officers had less than 1 year of experience, 5 had between 1 and 3 years, 4 had between 4 and 9 years, and only 1 had more than 10 years of prison experience. These data underscore the point that those guards most likely to employ force were young hall officers with little experience. These young men were also quite eager to make guardwork a career. It was precisely this group of officers who were being tailored or groomed for promotion by ranking guards. The primary reason older ranking guards were less likely to be involved was that they had already established themselves and did not have to continuously reaffirm their reputation. It was the younger officers who were under pressure to "perform," and their close proximity to ranking officers provided the push to employ force (Milgram 1965). Indeed, upward mobility within the organization hinged on the acceptance and performance of physical coercion as a mechanism of control. This system or structure of unofficial prisoner control determined the content of guard socialization.

Racial Factors. The race of the officer was also an important factor in the use of force. White guards, like their police counterparts (Friedrich, 1983), were more likely to use force than black or Hispanic guards. Twelve of the guards involved were white, 2 were black, and 1 was Hispanic. Minority officers were not trusted by the predominantly white ruling (administrative) elite, and they were rarely promoted and frequently terminated for "collaborating with the enemy" (Jacobs and Grear, 1977). Minority officers were generally concentrated in cell block duty far away from the settings where inmates were unofficially disciplined.

Of the 15 officers involved, 12 were white and 10 of these were born and raised near the institution which was located in a rural area of the state. It is also important to note that almost half (47%) of the the inmates in the prison were black. In addition, 68% of the inmates in this particular department of corrections were from urban areas. These data underscore the conclusion that rural white guards were using physical coercion against urban black

inmates. The white guards at the prison under study openly expressed racial prejudice and tendencies toward discrimination. For example, one day the author of this paper entered the Major's office and found a hall officer punching a black inmate in the kidneys. As the inmate writhed and moaned on the floor, the officer stated nonchalantly, "I told the captain I was going to whip a nigger today."

COERCION BUILDS SOLIDARITY

The use of coercion by the hall officers and ranking guards induced solidarity among this group. Only this group of officers participated in physical punishment, and those officers who were accepted by this group were deemed "successful." That is, they internalized and justified the use of coercion. These officers formed the "hard core" of the guard culture. Indeed, they were members of a primary group and social circle that had daily face-to-face interaction. These officers also associated with each other off the job. In addition, there was low turnover and high morale among this group. Ironically, this system created high turnover and low morale among the other line guards who refused, could not, or did not accept force as a tactic of control. The ruling elite viewed the nonforce group as "bodies," people needed to open and close doors. These "unsuccessful" guards either quit or eventually transferred to other Texas correctional institutions.

Secrecy was another factor enhancing solidarity. As a new hall officer became privy to force incidents, he also learned about the code of secrecy. A similar norm exists among police (Westley, 1970). There was an unwritten rule that hall and ranking officers refrain from talking about force displays with the lower-ranking guards. Being privy to this information as well as keeping "one's mouth shut" was an important norm that facilitated acceptance by the ruling clique of guards. It was not uncommon for low-ranking guards to ask hall officers about force situations. However, their queries were closed off with the standard answers, "I don't know what you're talking about" or "I wasn't here that day." These standard responses were also employed during FBI investigations into illegal use of force. In short, the ruling clique of guards represented a primary group that sustained a high degree of comaraderie (on and off the job) which in turn produced group loyalities and fostered group cohesion (Shils and Janowitz, 1948).

GUARD COERCION AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Any inquiry into the dynamics of force within an institutional setting must concern itself with organizational structure. Police departments, for example, are highly centralized with numerous formalized policies that govern

police-citizen encounters. Police organizations emphasize training and professionalism in which widespread abuse of citizens is not tolerated. Furthermore, these agencies frequently have an internal affairs division to investigate citizen claims about police misuse of force. This latter factor alone has without doubt severely curtailed the arbitrary use of force (and discretion) by police officers.

Although there appear to be no studies on the relationship between guard coercion and the prison's organizational structure, the research under discussion found that organizational structure affects guard aggression. The prison under study was part of a large bureaucracy. Rules, records, various departments, and accountability were present, but rarely did these bureaucratic elements affect the daily operation of Johnson. This prison, like the other Texas prisons, enjoyed a great deal of autonomy from the central administration. Moreover, there was a low level of interdependence between the various institutions. Specifically, the security staff at Johnson was permitted to carry out control activities with little or no interference from the main administration. Therefore, the guards possessed enormous discretion to control their charges as they saw fit. As a mechanism of social control, physical force became the cornerstone for inmate control. The use of coercion not only maintained order, but it also functioned as a means of cohesion and was an important element within the guard culture. This pattern emerged because of the lack of strong organizational controls unlike, for example, police departments.

On the one hand, it may be argued that in prison organizations characterized by decentralization and unit autonomy, the specter of coercion will always be present. Furthermore, the statuses and roles of the keepers and kept will be institutionalized, like a caste system, as superiors and inferiors. Inmates will be treated as social inferiors or as objects who enjoy few civil or due process rights. Physical coercion in these organizations will be employed as a control device (an instrumental need) as well as to maintain status, build cohesion, and facilitate upward mobility.

On the other hand, those prison organizations based on centralization and formalization (with little autonomy and discretion), such as the California system or the Federal Bureau of Prisons, will not support an inmate control system predicated on coercion and fear. Most of these latter systems have formalized inmate grievance procedures and some (such as the Virginia Department of Corrections) have a department of internal affairs to investigate inmate claims of guard brutality. Physical coercion in these latter organizations serves neither instrumental nor symbolic purposes but is the idiosyncratic and unstructured behavior of a "bad guard"—paralleling the "bad cop" in police organizations. In sum, guard violence is an open area of research, and future inquries should look at force and its relation to organizational structure in order to better understand prisoner control structures.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that guard violence was not idiosyncratic nor a form of "self-defense" and was relatively unprovoked. Instead, force was used against inmates as a means of physical punishment by a small but significant percentage of the guards. These officers were primarily hall officers and sergeants with relatively low-ranking positions in the guard hierarchy. It also demonstrated that force served not only as a control mechanism, but it also induced group cohesion, maintained status and deference, and facilitated promotions. Like Mischel (1968) and Milgram (1965), it was found that guard violence was not the sole result of sadistic or power-hungry motives, but was shaped by powerful social and situational forces. Officers learned violence from their peers and were rewarded by their superiors for their behavior. They also did not physically coerce inmates at random or for no reason. Punitive force was directed against inmates, particularly blacks, who refused (or appeared to refuse) the guards' definition of the situation. Indeed, any challenges to their authority were met with quick, calculated physical responses. The guards managed the penitentiary with an iron hand and inmates who upset the regimen were literally beaten into submission.

The correspondence of these findings with other state maximum security institutions is unknown. As a consequence, numerous research questions exist and future studies should address violence as a mechanism of social control in prison and extra-prison settings. One line of research might examine the effects of the organizational culture and its impact on guard socialization processes and outcomes, values, and resultant guard personality traits. Research, particularly comparative research between northern and southern prison systems, would provide data and make an important contribution to the areas of social control theory, the sociology of violence, and the study of prison organizations.

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