

# 31

## PRISON HOMICIDE

*Joshua Long*

### **Introduction**

October 22nd 1983 is a date that will live in infamy in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. On this day, two correctional officers were killed at the federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois. The first homicide occurred when a leader of the Aryan Brotherhood named Thomas Silverstein was being escorted out of his cell by three correctional officers. He was shackled hand-and-foot but was allowed to lean against another prisoner's cell door for a moment. An accomplice quickly unlocked Silverstein's handcuffs and handed him a weapon. Silverstein lunged toward Officer Merle Clutts and brutally stabbed him to death. The motive was revenge. Clutts had insulted Silverstein by removing some of his belongings from his cell. A few hours later, another member of the Aryan Brotherhood named Clayton Fountain murdered a correctional officer named Robert Hoffman. The alleged motive for this crime was that Fountain did not want Silverstein to beat his killing "score."

Both Silverstein and Fountain had each killed multiple victims in other prisons before these incidents, but they had never attacked correctional officers. They had limited their violence to their fellow inmates. After killing Officer Clutts and Officer Hoffman, Silverstein and Fountain would spend the rest of their lives in conditions of extreme confinement that few people have ever been subjected to (Earley, 1992; Jones, 2011; Ward & Werlich, 2003).

These homicides at USP Marion are notable, not because they happened on the same day under conditions of high security, but because they had a major impact on how prison officials try to prevent violence. After these killings USP Marion went on a total “lockdown,” where most prisoners spent nearly 24 hours in their cells each day for the next two decades. USP Marion became the first true super-maximum-security (or “supermax”) facility. This innovation inspired the construction of new supermax prisons across the United States, a process that is now referred to as the “Marionization” of America’s prison system (Pizarro & Narag, 2008). This trend toward extreme conditions of confinement has been disparaged as expensive, unnecessary, inhumane, and ineffective by various critics over the years, but many correctional authorities consider supermax confinement to be a necessary safety protocol to deal with the “worst of the worst” prisoners in their custody (Mears, 2006). Silverstein and Fountain’s extraordinary acts of violence provoked an extraordinary response, for better or worse.

Homicide is one of the most extreme crimes that can occur inside a correctional facility, and it is important to understand the nature of these events in order for us to prevent their occurrence in the future. We should desire safe prison environments to preserve the lives of correctional officers and prison staff, and we should also ensure the safety of incarcerated individuals, no matter what the reason for their incarceration may be (Liebling, 2017). Prison administrators are legally required to protect the lives of prisoners under their care whenever they have credible knowledge that one of them is in danger, and failure to do so may be considered a dereliction of duty (Belbot & del Carmen, 1993). Safe prisons also confer benefits to the community. Prisons can only provide opportunities for rehabilitation when prisoners feel safe enough to leave their cells and participate in treatment programs (Mohr, 2012). Unsafe prisons produce a climate of fear where prisoners may join a gang or engage in violent acts in order to protect themselves (Skarbek, 2014). In a worst-case scenario (fortunately rare in American prisons), a disorderly prison environment may become a gladiator pit where the most violent prisoners thrive (Colvin, 1992).

How many people are killed in prison? Who is most likely to kill or be killed in prison? Why are they killed? What are the most effective methods of preventing these acts of violence? This chapter will seek to answer these questions by summarizing the existing research evidence to help us understand this most extreme form of prison violence. Brief case studies will be presented to demonstrate how complex and distinct each type of homicide can be.

### **The Scope of the Problem**

People who receive their information exclusively from television and film may assume that American prisons are plagued with extraordinary acts of

## *Prison Homicide*

violence every day. Certainly, violent crimes do occur in American prisons, and the truth of these events can seem stranger than fiction, but prison violence tends to be exaggerated for entertainment purposes in Hollywood films. Few people would watch a film that depicts the boredom of a routine day in prison. But these media depictions cast a shadow over the mind of any incarcerated person who has seen *Oz* or *Brawl in Cell Block-99*. As they enter the prison gates for the first time they will wonder if they can survive their first week.

## *Homicide Trends*

The most recent report on deaths in state and federal prisons was published in December of 2021 by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and it includes data on deaths that occurred between 2001 and 2019. State prisoners were found to have a mortality rate of 330 per 100,000 in 2018, which was lower than the 435 per 100,000 mortality rate of non-incarcerated adult residents of the United States. However, these rates differed depending on the cause of death. Prisoners were more likely to die of cancer, liver disease, suicide, and homicide than non-incarcerated citizens (Carson, 2021). While other datasets such as NIBRS and the National Corrections Reporting Program contain some homicide information, these datasets have many reporting flaws that make the BJS Mortality in Correctional Institutions data preferable.

The homicide rate among state and federal prisoners was found to be 12 per 100,000 in 2019, which was more than double the homicide rate among adult U.S. residents (5 per 100,000). This comparison may not be entirely warranted, as many people in prison came from communities and demographic groups that experience higher-than-average homicide rates, and therefore prison may be relatively “safer” than their own homes in regard to the risk of being killed. It should also be noted that homicide is rare in prison. Only 3.7% of deaths are attributed to homicide in state and federal prisons. Most deaths were explained by illnesses, and among “unnatural” deaths prisoners were more likely to die by suicide and overdoses than they were to be murdered (Carson, 2022).

While death is not certain in the U.S. prisons, the number of homicide deaths has increased substantially over the past two decades. In total, 1,598 prisoners were killed between 2001 and 2019. In 2001, only 39 prisoners were reported as dying by homicide in state and federal prisons, but this number had increased to 143 deaths in 2019. When these raw numbers are converted into a homicide rate we find there were three homicides for every 100,000 state prisoners in 2001, and there were 12 homicides for every 100,000 state prisoners in 2018 (Carson, 2022) (Figure 31.1).

This is a worrisome upward trend, but it should be considered within context. In 1980 (the time period before Marionization), the homicide rate

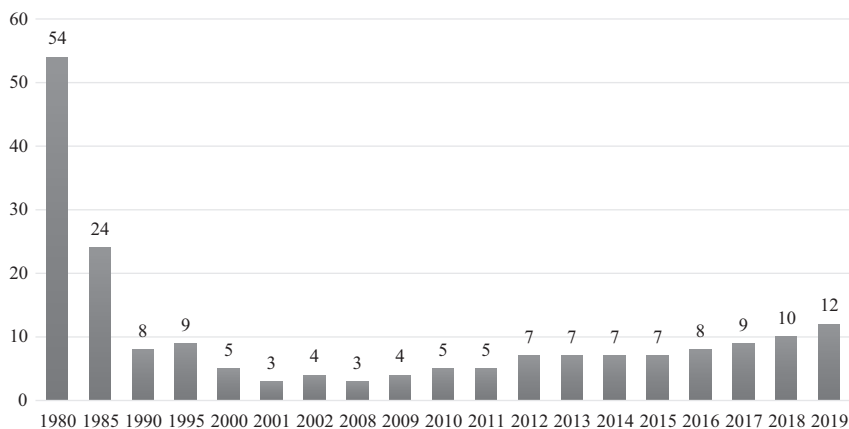


Figure 31.1 Homicide rate in state prisons (per 100,000).

Sources: National Prisoner Statistics program (1980–2000), Death in Custody Reporting Program (2000–2002), and Mortality in Correctional Institutions (2001–2018), Bureau of Justice Statistics.

in state prisons was 54 per 100,000 (Mumola, 2005). That means that while the homicide rate in 2019 is four times greater than in 2001, it is four and a half times lower than in 1980. Concerned citizens should emphasize the recent upward trend, but they should not fail to account for the overall decrease in homicide rates. This emphasis on recent trends may be understandable because it keeps pressure on prison agencies to address a growing threat of violence, it does not acknowledge the progress that was made during the 80s and 90s to achieve the historically low mortality rates seen in 2001 (Wang & Sawyer, 2021). Any examination of the causes of prison homicide should consider the downward as well as the upward trends.

### Risk Factors

Just as homicide rates have fluctuated over time, we must also consider that some individuals may be at a higher risk of being killed than others. These deaths are not equally spread out across the reporting states. Between 2001 and 2019, California (304), the Federal BOP (193), Florida (158), Georgia (89), and Texas (83) claim the greatest number of homicides in the most recent BJS report, but when this is adjusted for the number of people in the prison population, smaller states take the lead: South Carolina (15 per 100k), Oklahoma (14 per 100k), Alabama (13 per 100k), Maine (13 per 100k), and Maryland (12 per 100k). Only four state prison systems reported zero homicides between 2001 and 2019 (Carson, 2022).

California publishes their death in custody data on their Open Justice website. This data allows researchers to dig deeper into the characteristics of homicide victims who were under the supervision of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDC-R), which is one of the largest prison systems in the United States and reports the greatest number of homicides in state facilities. As of December 2022, the dataset includes 6,626 deaths that occurred between 2005 and 2021. Most (78.6%) of deaths were recorded as being caused by “natural” medical issues. Homicide of an inmate by another inmate was reported in 267 cases, with one of these being labeled a “justified” homicide. The most frequent age at which an inmate was killed by another inmate was 44, with the youngest victim being 19, and the oldest being 73. Another 267 cases were listed as “pending investigation” (all of these unresolved cases occurred in the year 2015 or later), and there were 49 cases where the cause of death could not be determined (State of California, DOJ, December 2022).

Few women were killed in the CDC-R during this time. Only three were listed as being the victims of willful homicide by another inmate. One of these victims was Black, one was Hispanic, and one was White. Among men, 41 Black prisoners were killed by another inmate, 97 Hispanic prisoners were killed by another inmate (one of these was considered to be a “justified” homicide), and 113 White prisoners were listed as being killed by another inmate. There were also three American Indian, one Asian Indian, one Filipino, one Korean, one Pacific Islander, and seven “other” men listed as being killed by another inmate. The dataset does not include demographic information on the individuals who killed the victim (State of California, DOJ, December 2022).

Few studies have examined prison homicide with a focused analysis, perhaps because it is such a rare occurrence. The studies that do examine prison homicides tend to report the either the characteristics the victim or the perpetrator, but they rarely describe both. Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen, and Woods (2010) examined official records in prisons operated by the Texas Criminal Justice System. There were 35 total homicides between January 2000 and June 2008 (a remarkably low number considering that the average annual population of prisoners during this time period was around 150,000 prisoners). I will summarize some of their key findings here, but I encourage readers to closely examine the related publications from the authors’ wider body of work in the field of prison homicide studies.

According to the TCJS records of these 35 homicides, the greatest number of homicides occurred during the afternoon (43%), the most common location for a homicide was in a prisoner’s cell (54.3%), most involved one victim and one perpetrator (79%), and most deaths were caused by beating with fists or feet (48.6%). The most commonly reported contributing factor for the homicide was judged to be “altercations and arguments” (54.3%).

The second most common reason was gang involvement (42.9%), followed by mental health issues (40%), and racial animosity (12%) (note: these motives do not add up to 100% because multiple factors may be present in any given case) (Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen, & Woods, 2010).

The offense status of the victim was only considered to be a contributing factor to the homicide in four cases (12.5% of the total number of homicides). These murder victims had been convicted of child molestation crimes (Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen, & Woods, 2010). While “killing Cho-Mos” is a commonly reported motivation for homicide (Long, 2022; Trammell & Chenault, 2009), it is still a rare event, and the desire to kill a child sex abuser was reported as being only one factor among others in each of the cases reviewed by Cunningham and his colleagues. For example:

An inmate advised corrections staff that his cellmate’s hygiene was unacceptable. This cellmate, a convicted sex offender, was incontinent and wore a diaper. After repeated complaints and warnings to the staff and cellmate, the perpetrator attacked his cellmate- strangling him with a bed sheet and shoelace.

(Cunningham et al., 2010, p. 352)

In terms of institutional factors, homicide perpetrators and victims were less likely to be in a minimum-security setting than general population prisoners, and they were more likely to be housed in medium and close custody prisons (Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen, & Woods, 2010). While many people might consider a close custody environment to be more secure, it is also the place where we would expect to find the most violent prisoners (Wooldredge & Steiner, 2015).

One of the most consistent factors associated with homicide perpetration and victimization is gang membership. In the Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen, and Woods (2010) study, of the 52 perpetrators of these 35 homicides, 51.9% were known to be affiliated with gangs, and 31.4% of the victims were members of gangs. When this is compared to the 14.7% of prisoners in the general population with gang affiliation, this is a clear risk factor for homicide involvement. While some people may join a gang for protection, gang membership puts a target (and sometimes a swastika) on the initiate’s back. Almost one third of the murder victims in Texas were gang members (one was killed by a rival gang while walking to the shower) and more than half of perpetrators were gang members.

Another major predictor of homicide perpetration was the prisoner’s disciplinary record. Many of the killers were prolific rule violators. Almost all (95.9%) had at least one rule violation on their record, and between the 52 individuals implicated in those crimes they had accumulated 1,903 separate rule violations. These were not all petty offenses as 63.3% of this cohort of

murderers had committed an assaultive violation, 26.5% had assaulted an officer, and 22.4% had seriously assaulted another prisoner. They also participated in fights (41.8%) and riotous behavior (8.2%). One single “outlier individual” had 251 rule violations prior to his homicide crime including over 100 assaults against officers! Many of these homicide perpetrators demonstrated they were unable to follow the rules inside the prison and their persistent record of misbehavior culminated in lethal violence.

When parsing through this study and others like it, there is a tendency to look for patterns as if we will discover a hidden code that will demystify prison homicides and lead to clear policy implications. In reality, we are dealing with a small number of cases with much variation. Any study of prison violence must consider the very low base rate of these crimes (Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen, & Woods, 2010; Reidy & Sorensen, 2017). Despite this warning, these in-depth studies of prison homicides are useful for testing theories of why prison homicides occur.

### **Theories and Existing Evidence**

There are several theories of prison violence that have been developed over the years, and many of them are compatible with one another. The theories I will be reviewing here are importation theory, deprivation theory, integrated and lifestyle theories, the “nothing to lose” hypothesis, theories based on inmate value systems and “codes,” and administrative control theories. I will examine studies that have tested these theories, but we must consider that homicide is merely the worst-case outcome of a violent encounter, and therefore the research on non-lethal violence should be considered, but I will place a priority on studies that explicitly examined homicide outcomes.

#### *Importation*

DeLisi, Drury, and Elbert (2020) published a case study of a man named Mr. Z who had a long history of violent crimes inside state and federal prisons. The authors used archival records, psychological reports, and personal interviews to help understand why this individual engaged in multiple homicide offenses during his incarceration. Mr. Z was arrested when he was eight years old for burglary, and began a life-long criminal career. He was sentenced to multiple terms of incarceration in juvenile reformatories, county jails, and adult prisons (from which he made two successful escapes), and he eventually served 38 years in prison.

Mr. Z was a founding member of a white prison gang, and he told researchers that he was personally responsible for killing more than ten people during his incarceration. This may be a low estimate, as state prison records indicate that he might have been responsible for 13 murders that occurred

in the years 1984 and 1985 alone. Mr. Z was assessed as having a very high score of 35 out of 40 on the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, and was diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder. He callously justified killing other inmates because he was just “taking care of business.”

The authors of this study concluded that Mr. Z’s was “a veritable crime wave unto himself” and argued that his prison sentence saved the community from an unknown (but certainly large) number of crimes, and when his violence could not be controlled through normal means inside of a correctional facility he was incapacitated with 23 years in administrative segregation. He was unable to kill anyone else under these extremely restrictive conditions, and so he earned a good enough record that he was given the opportunity to leave prison under community supervision in 2012. If he had remained in the prison community with opportunities to continue his murder spree he might never have had the self-control to earn his release. He might also have been killed by the other inmates who feared and hated him. Sometimes people lash out because they live in violent environments, sometimes they kill to defend their own life, and sometimes they are “the worst asshole you’ve ever seen” as Mr. Z referred to himself.

Importation theory argues that people import their violent tendencies with them into the prison environment. If it is an accurate theory, we would expect to see people convicted of violent crimes committing more violent acts against their fellow inmates and correctional officers. The evidence shows that these individuals are often at a higher risk for violent misconduct (like Mr. Z), but this is not a universal principle. Most prisoners avoid getting written up for violent crimes inside prison, and this is true for the majority of prisoners originally convicted of violent crimes (Logan, Long, & DeLisi, 2023). It even appears to be true of people convicted of murder and people serving life sentences (Reidy, Sorensen, & Cunningham, 2012).

Sorensen and Cunningham (2007) examined the institutional records of 1,659 convicted murderers in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice sampled between 2001 and 2004. They found that the base rates for serious violent misconduct were quite low by anyone’s standards. The most common type of violent behavior was “fighting” with 14.35% of the sample receiving a disciplinary report for this infraction. While any fight can result in serious injuries, a victim and a perpetrator could both be written up for “fighting” if their roles could not be immediately determined by the staff. Only 2.77% were recorded as receiving a disciplinary report for possessing a weapon, 3.25% “assaulted” another prisoner, and 5.91% “assaulted” an officer. Few of these assault crimes resulted in serious injuries, and few of the assaults against officers involved weapons. However, a study by DeLisi and Butler in 2020 examined records of 1,005 prisoners using rare events logistic regression models. They found that people sentenced to prison for first-degree murder (n=110) or any homicide offense (n=152) were more likely to kill

someone in prison. However, rare events modeling was used because only three individuals in this study had killed anyone in prison. The vast majority of people convicted of first-degree murder and homicide offenses did not kill again. Based on the totality of the existing evidence, we can only say that a violent past can be a risk factor for violence in prison, but most people with violent pasts do not violate prison rules.

### *Deprivation*

In 1916, a convicted murderer with a violent prison record killed a prison guard, ostensibly because he had been deprived of his visiting privileges. This individual was named Robert Stroud and would become famous under the name “The Birdman of Alcatraz” because of his academic interest in the diseases of canaries. He became a cause célèbre and was epitomized in Hollywood films as an example of how prison deprives individuals of their basic human rights, thereby pressuring them into violent behavior (Babyak, 1994).

Prison is a painful experience by design and by necessity. Depriving people of their liberty is the first pain inflicted upon them, but bureaucratic needs, limited resources, and deliberate administrative policies can impose more hardships. Gresham Sykes (1958) described the “pains of imprisonment” felt by inmates in a maximum-security prison including the loss of liberty, loss of goods and services, inability to lawfully experience heterosexual relationships, loss of autonomy, and the loss of security. Inmates tried to cope with these circumstances by fulfilling certain “argot roles” to help alleviate the deprivations of living in prison, but often found themselves exploited or harmed by other inmates when roles conflicted with one another. “Gorillas” and “Wolves” preyed on the other prisoners for their own selfish gain, while new arrivals called “Fish” would not yet know how to navigate within the inmate subculture. Those who failed to adapt to the prison’s code of conduct might not survive. A “Rat” who was an informant could earn favors from the staff, but he might be attacked by prisoners as a result.

In their book *Prison Homicide*, Sylvester, Reed, and Nelson explained how a snitch was murdered in 1973:

This homicide took place early on a Saturday afternoon in May. The victim was killed after only five days in the prison because he was deemed to be a police informer. Five assailants attacked the victim in the maximum-security cell block during a time when the population could wander about freely. He was stabbed with a pick-type instrument which was found at the scene, strangled with a cord, stuffed in a barrel with sheets and set on fire. The victim was pronounced dead approximately two and a half hours later.

(Sylvester, Reed & Nelson, 1977, p. 44)

A man can earn respect in prison in several ways. They can adhere to the informal social code of prisoners (Clemmer, 1940; Irwin, 2005; Sykes & Messinger, 1960), they can demonstrate “upright” behavior like religious participation (Irwin, 2009), they can inspire fear through violent acts (Mears, Stewart, Warren, & Simons, 2017), and they can join a gang that will avenge any threats against their members (Skarbek, 2014). Prisoners have a desperate need to earn respect because they believe it is the only way to ward off threats to their survival. Therefore, as they are deprived of guaranteed safety, they resort to drastic actions to preserve their lives (Toch, 1977). By joining a gang or making themselves useful in “the social order of the underworld” these individuals hope to stay safe. If the environment is loosely controlled by correctional officers who cannot offer protection, then the prisoners develop their own internal social structure (Skarbek, 2014), and sometimes they create a “dark and evil world” with rules and customs that shock the sensibilities of the free world (Fulkerson, Dison, & Keena, 2021).

It is difficult to test deprivation theory. If everyone in prison is subjected to the same privations, then why doesn't everyone engage in violent acts? Perhaps there are conditioning factors at each stage of the incarcerated person's life that render them more or less susceptible to the pains of imprisonment (Mears, Cochran, & Cullen, 2015; Visher & Travis, 2003). Studies have found reductions in post-release recidivism for individuals who received more frequent family visits during incarceration (Bales & Mears, 2008; Duwe & Clark, 2013; Mears, Cochran, Siennick, & Bales, 2012; Mohr, 2012). Family visits may also reduce the number of rule violations in the prison (see Lee, 2020), but researchers have not given proper attention to the relationship between visits and serious violence like homicide. Long (2022) interviewed 8 murderers who killed child sex abusers in prison and none of them reported having strong family ties. In the four most extreme cases they reported having “no one on the outside at all.”

Much has been written about how the prison environment can shape an incarceration experience. Poor living conditions, crowding, and lack of access to healthcare, recreation, and educational programs are all factors that can make a bad situation worse. Prisons where there are purposeful activities and a basic degree of safety can help prisoners “do their time” with a decreased likelihood of lashing out. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore all of ways that life in prison can be improved, but I recommend McGuire (2018) for a review.

### *Integrated and Lifestyle Theories*

Both institutional and individual factors have been associated with offending behavior inside prisons, leading most scholars to agree that an integrated model of importation and deprivation theories are necessary to understand

the causes and correlates of prison misconduct (Chian & Sorensen, 2019; DeLisi, Trulson, Marquart, Drury, & Kosloski, 2011; Wooldredge, 2020). This integrated approach is logical, but difficult to utilize in practice. How can we reduce the number of violent acts in prison if the causes are intertwined?

Hochstetler and DeLisi (2005) analyzed how psychological characteristics of offenders interacted with the prison environment to produce violent outcomes. They gathered data from 208 former prisoners who were living in the community in a midwestern state and used structural equation modeling to make sense of the relationships between measures of importation and deprivation theories. This allowed them an opportunity to measure how the prisoner's behavior shaped their involvement in the prison environment, rather than assuming that the environment "sparked" violent behavior from an at-risk individual. An individual with low self-control and criminogenic attitudes may be more likely to put themselves in dangerous situations in prison that either facilitate their victimization or give them an opportunity to behave aggressively. They found that offending behavior in prison and even witnessing victimization were both directly associated with participation in the inmate economy (i.e., loaning goods for profit, getting drunk or high, and paying others to work for them). The structural equation modeling also allowed the researchers to simultaneously assess which factors were associated with participation in the inmate economy. The authors noted that subjective experiences in the prison environment can intervene between measures of importation and deprivation, and therefore a prison experience is potentially highly individualized. "Offenders with criminogenic attitudes and low self-control did their time differently than others, namely they were more likely to engage in forbidden transactions with other inmates" (Hochstetler & DeLisi, 2005, p. 265).

As Hochstetler and DeLisi (2005, p. 260) wrote, "Differential involvement in the illicit inmate economy might be a predictor of involvement in prison crime and a mechanism that translated individual characteristics into institutional life." This lends support to the idea that a "lifestyle" theory of offending could apply in a prison environment as well as in the community. In other words, people do not simply react to environmental pressures; they place themselves in circumstances where those pressures are most likely to influence their behavior.

A study by Wooldredge (1998) supported this integrated model by finding that prisoner's lifestyles influenced their likelihood of being victimized during incarceration. Those who participated in education programs were less likely to be victimized, while those who participated in recreation were more likely to be victimized. Another transaction that leads to an opportunity for victimization is participation in the illicit drug economy of the prison. This is a finding that is strongly supported by David Skarbek's work on prison economics and related gang activity (2014). As John Irwin (2009)

found in his study of lifers, people who want to get away from the “bullshit” of prison politics often engage themselves in pro-social activities and refrain from engaging the black market of the prison environment.

### *Nothing to Lose*

There is a commonly held belief that people serving life sentences have “nothing left to lose,” and therefore they will be more likely to kill someone in prison (Shere, 2005). This is considered to be one of the consequences of an increasingly punitive justice system that has an estimated 200,000 people serving de-facto life sentences (Nellis, 2021). Life sentences are intended to deter people from committing felonies, but once they receive a life sentence, there is no further punishment that can be used to deter them into better behavior in prison. This theory can be considered to overlap with importation theory because people sentenced to long terms have often committed serious violent crimes, but a life sentence can also impose a unique deprivation on an inmate: they are deprived of the hope that they will be released.

Some researchers have challenged the “nothing to lose” assumption. Notably, John Irwin’s (2009) qualitative interviews with lifers in California explained how they were model citizens of the prison environment. Lifers served as leaders among the inmate population and became a stabilizing force in the prison society. Their good behavior may be an attempt to demonstrate that they are not a threat to society, and they hope this may help them appeal their life sentences however unlikely this outcome may be, but whatever their motives the result was the same: lifers were “good citizens” of the prison environment. This is a far different depiction than their unearned reputation for undeterrable recklessness.

Multiple studies by Cunningham, Reidy, Sorensen, and Lyon have found that the relationship between “hopeless” sentences like death row and life without parole are not consistently associated with worse behavioral outcomes than “hopeful” sentences like life with parole, and the rates of violent misconduct were low for all groups (Cunningham, Reidy & Sorensen, 2008; Cunningham & Sorensen, 2006). They also found that when death-sentenced prisoners were intermingled with the general population (e.g., not restricted to “death row”) they did not pose a unique danger to others (Cunningham, Reidy & Sorensen, 2005). In a sample of 80 former death-sentenced inmates in Arizona they found that only one of them committed a subsequent homicide after being transferred to the general prison population (Sorensen & Cunningham, 2006), and in a study of 73 federal death-row inmates they found that none of them accomplished any serious assaults during an average of 4.4 years in prison (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2010). The overall conclusion of this research is that people convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison do not pose a uniquely dangerous threat to prison safety because

the base rate of violence is much lower than many people would expect, and any increased risks for violence are not consistently associated with the claims of the “nothing to lose” theory (see also Marquart, Ekland-Olson, & Sorensen, 1989; Marquart & Sorensen, 1989; Reidy, Cunningham, & Sorensen, 2001; Sorensen & Pilgrim, 2000; Sorensen & Wrinkle, 1996).

In assessing the “nothing to lose” theory we must also consider that every murderer who was not serving a life sentence had something to lose, but they killed anyway. What explains the behavior of prisoners who had a parole date, but they still chose to commit a homicide?

Scotty “Gypsie” Allen was incarcerated for murder at the age of 25. Even though he was eligible for parole when he turned 50 years old, he chose to commit another murder in prison. His cellmate was convicted of child sex abuse crimes, and Allen had been the victim of sexual abuse when he was a child. Allen decided to murder his cellmate so he could “save other children from harm.”

(Olmeda, 2021, Feb. 17)

While there may be rare situations where a prisoner commits murder because they are serving a life sentence and have “nothing to lose,” this case demonstrates the opposite. Scotty Allen had a lot to lose by killing his cellmate, and he did it anyway. He believed it was morally necessary to commit this crime.

### *Inmate Value Systems*

We can learn more about the complexity of prison lifestyles when we think about how the inmate subculture can influence behaviors in prison. Irwin (2005) explained how the Convict Code had changed over time from being a short list of rules requiring people to mind their own business to a complex code of social expectations. Prisoners might join a gang or a religious group and have totally different modes of prison socialization. Race-based gang violence might alter the ways that non-gang members interact with one another (Spiegel, 2007). And then there is the prison hierarchy: a totem pole where the people at the top were held in great respect, and those at the bottom were reviled. Irwin (2005) warned that “rapos” and snitches were at the very bottom of the pile, and that they had few friends because nobody wanted to associate with them (Akerstrom, 1986; Vaughn & Sapp, 1989; Winfree, Newbold, & Tubb, 2002).

Trammell and Chenault (2009) interviewed previously incarcerated men in California to ask them about social codes and violent crimes they witnessed in prison. Many of these men were vocal advocates for targeted violence against people convicted of sex crimes against children. Cho-Mos (child molesters) were considered to have “dirty” charges that justified

violent acts. In fact, prisoners who failed to “take out” (attack) Cho-Mos could be threatened with violence. Each race was expected to take care of Cho-Mos of their own race in order to prevent any interracial hostilities, but the general message was clear: prisoners felt morally justified when they attacked or killed people who had sexually abused children because they were doing “community service.” Long (2022) interviewed eight men who had been found guilty of murdering child sex abusers in prison and found that the motivations were somewhat more complex. Some prisoners had been the victims of sexual abuse when they were children, so they were seeking revenge against the types of people who had abused them. Child abuse is an inconsistent predictor of prison misconduct (see DeLisi, Trulson, Marquart, Drury, & Kosloski, 2011), but it may take on greater importance in targeted violence against specific individuals (Long, 2022). While few sex offenders are actually killed in correctional facilities (43 were killed in California between 2005 and 2021), the idea that prisoners are doing society a favor by “taking out” “dirty” offenders is a common verbal justification for inmate-on-inmate violence in correctional facilities (Trammell & Chenault, 2009). That is why correctional administrators offer protective custody placements for prisoners who are in danger of being assaulted. Perhaps total separation of all sex offenders from the general population would be more advisable.

In 2020, Jon Watson, aged 41, killed two other prisoners in the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility in Corcoran. He warned a counselor that if he was not transferred to another facility he would kill at least one person. He did not want to be housed near child molesters. He claims to have seen a “child sex trafficker” watching a children’s television program and allegedly masturbating, Watson took a wooden cane from another prisoner and beat the “pedophile” to death. As he was walking to the officer’s desk to turn himself in, Watson saw another person convicted of child sex trafficking talking on the telephones. Watson said “In for a penny, in for a pound” and killed him too. Watson peacefully surrendered to the authorities and was transferred to a secure housing unit. He began receiving donations from strangers to thank him for his heroism.

(Gartrell, 2020)

Trammell and Chenault (2009) discussed how prisoner’s justifications for violence could have been attempts to differentiate themselves from “dirty” offenders, not because they thought they were on the side of true justice, but because they wanted to feel better about themselves. In 1939, John Dollard and his colleagues theorized that a person could become emotionally frustrated and want to lash out at a member of a marginalized community because attacking them is less likely to result in social consequences than if

they attacked a sympathetic person or an authority figure. In prison, if an inmate is frustrated with their loss of liberty or the daily grind of the prison regime, they may find that “Cho-Mos” are easy targets.

Maruna described a theory of “Redemption Scripts” in his book *Making Good*. According to this theory, offenders follow a script in their lives as if they are living in a movie and they are the star. If they believe the narrative is doomed no matter what they do, they persist in their criminal behavior. If they believe they can change, they will desist from crime and “make good” (Maruna, 2001). Perhaps this theory can be expanded to include the possibility that some prisoners chose to write their own redemption scripts where they could “make good” by killing child molesters. It is a quicker path to redemption than pro-socially rehabilitating themselves, and it allows them to indulge in violent tendencies they already possess. However, this may simply be a post-hoc rationalization and the killers are taking advantage of the spotlight. Some prisoners who killed child molesters reported that they were rewarded by prison staff, other prisoners, and strangers in the community who considered them to be “heroes” (Long & Vukovich, 2023).

Not all “virtuous” motives for homicide involve killing child sex abusers. So-called “baby-killers” are also at risk. By comparing two kinds of inmate-on-inmate homicide we can see how an individual’s redemptive motivations contrast with a random killing.

On July 26, 2010, a California prisoner named Frank Souza plotted to kill another prisoner named Edward Schaefer. Souza was angry that Schaefer had killed a nine-year-old girl during a drunk driving incident. Although the 44-year-old Schaefer was serving a 24-year prison sentence, Souza did not think that was a severe enough punishment for his crimes. Souza waited until Schaefer had finished a strenuous workout, and while his heart rate was still high, he stabbed Schaefer in the chest and neck. Souza did not want his victim to survive the stabbing, so he deliberately chose to attack him when his heart was pumping fast enough to drain his blood quickly. Schaefer died, and Souza was proud of his premeditated vigilante violence. When asked why he did it, Souza replied “All I got to say is, nine-year-old girl.”

(Lee, 2012; Personal Correspondence Oct. 15, 2022)

Another prison murder occurred in California on March 9, 2019, but the circumstances were markedly different than the slaying of Edward Schaefer. In this case, a convicted murderer named Jamie Osuna was locked in his cell. He was given a “single cell status” which should have precluded him from sharing his living space with another inmate. However, correctional officers at the Corcoran facility transferred a prisoner named Luis Romero into Osuna’s cell. Osuna covered the

window on the door with a sheet and began murdering Romero. After killing the man, Osuna decapitated his victim, mutilated his face, and made a necklace from his body parts. He wrote the words “Ha Ha Ha” on the wall with blood. An investigation revealed that Osuna had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. He was not taking his prescribed medications at the time of the murder. The family members of the murder victim were distraught to learn that Osuna was on a single cell status. They wondered why Romero was locked in a cell with a man who was documented as being “dangerous.” During his preliminary hearing, Osuna asked to be provided with copies of all of the crime scene photos, but his request was denied on the grounds that it would not help him prepare a defense, but it might allow him to memorialize his “thrill kill.”

These two homicide cases are markedly different from one another, although both resulted in the death of a prisoner. Souza justified his homicide on the grounds that he was avenging a child victim. Osuna reportedly enjoys killing people because it excites him. However, in a dataset, both homicides would appear nearly identical. Both victims and both killers were originally convicted of homicides. The ages of both male victims and both male killers were similar. Both were killed with homemade knives. It is only when you read the circumstances of each case that you realize that both situations were quite different. Souza’s crime was premediated and justified on retributivist grounds, and if he did not kill a drunk driver he might have found another target he deemed worthy of the death penalty, such as a child molester or a snitch. Osuna was a dangerous and seriously mentally ill person whose homicide was a crime of opportunity that could have been prevented if the officers had followed their own housing protocols and maintained his single cell status.

### *Administrative Control*

Palermo, Palermo, and Simpson (1996) described a double murder committed by Christopher Scarver (one of the victims was the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer). Scarver had a long criminal history, was convicted of murder, was diagnosed with a psychotic mental illness, and exhibited many psychopathic traits. After reviewing the case, these authors could not determine the true cause of his double-homicide in prison. He claimed to have a psychotic mental illness, but he might have been malingering. Without a clear cause they could not recommend any intervention other than for prison administrators to closely supervise inmates in a modern Panopticon so they could identify any potential warning signs in the future. This case study indicates that it

does not matter if this individual imported his violent tendencies into prison or if the deprivations of the prison environment provoked his anger. From a correctional officer's point of view, Scarver was a potentially motivated offender indistinguishable from other potentially motivated offenders. They cannot read minds. They do not know who is going to commit a double homicide on any given day. Therefore, all they can do is supervise their wards the best they can using available resources.

In his book, *Governing Prisons* (1987), John DiIulio scoffed at the abstract sociological explanations for prison violence. While academics debated over the "complex and deep-rooted forces that caused a prison to explode in violence" the reality was much more mundane (p. 33).

### *Sgt. Smith Failed to Lock the Cell of Violent Inmate Jones*

The administrative control theory of prison violence argues that a well-managed prison will have less trouble than a poorly managed prison, and it also argues that the responsibility for governance should come from the legal authorities, not the inmates themselves. "Where higher custody prisons are concerned, those govern best who govern most and most formally" (DiIulio, 1987, p. 237). It is sometimes the prisoners themselves who plead for more formal governance. DiIulio quoted a prisoner who said "I live under constant threat of murder – my murder ... permissiveness has led to the abandonment of rules, regulations, and discipline necessary to protect the lives and secure the safety of those of us in prison" (p. 332). In essence, the administrative control model is the correctional equivalent to Routine Activities Theory. Crime is the likely result when a motivated offender comes into contact with a suitable target in the absence of a capable guardian. We no longer call correctional officers "guards," but it is implied that they are supposed to be capable guardians who can prevent crimes within the prison.

If we want to preserve order in our prisons, correctional departments should be adequately staffed at all times. This is difficult to achieve during the current staffing crisis (Russo, Woods, Shaffer, & Jackson, 2020), but even if prisons are not fully staffed they can still train officers to identify situations they can de-escalate, to use effective forms of lawful power to resolve situations, and they can regain control if a fight breaks out (McGuire, 2018; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2018). Situational awareness, weapon inspections, proper safety protocols, and early access to emergency medical care can help reduce the number of completed homicides.

Safety and security are a priority to keep inmates from harming the community, staff, and other inmates, but also because a safe and orderly environment is a prerequisite for offering rehabilitation and job programs. In his book *The Puzzle of Prison Order*, David Skarbek (2020) has noted the stark difference between California's large prisons and the relatively small

prisons of England, Wales, and Scandinavian countries. The average daily prison population for an English prison is a mere 754 prisoners. Almost low enough that the warden can learn everyone's name. Skarbek notes that prisoners housed in smaller facilities report feeling safer and they are more willing to sign up for treatment programs. There are fewer acts of violence and fewer violent gang activities in smaller prisons. In California the *average* facility population is 3,500 prisoners. They routinely put *hundreds* of prisoners in the recreation yard at the same time. The Substance Abuse Treatment Facility in Corcoran, California holds nearly 4,500 prisoners on any given day (130% of its rated capacity). And this is *after* the Realignment process that has diverted over 80,000 inmates away from state prisons. How can administrators successfully manage the behavior of such large groups of people?

### *Classification and Security*

On the front end, prison administrators try to reduce incidents of misconduct by classifying inmates according to their likelihood of violating prison rules (Austin, 1993; Bonta & Wormith, 2018). Prison administrators are required to justify security level placement decisions on rational and reasonable grounds; otherwise, they may be vulnerable to lawsuits related to the various consequences of misclassification (Belbot & Del Carmen, 1993). If a dangerous inmate is placed in a security level that is less restrictive than necessary, they may commit violence that was otherwise preventable. If a low-risk inmate is overclassified into a higher security level they may be victimized or cut off from vocational or rehabilitative programming available at lower security facilities. If deprivation in prison is criminogenic then higher security settings might cause low risk prisoners to violate more rules than low risk prisoners in minimum-security prisons (Chen & Shapiro, 2007). The same custodial environment that restricts privileges to reduce misconduct may also increase the "pains of imprisonment" (Johnson & Toch, 1982; Liebling & Arnold, 2004). An excess of security has been described as "custodial overkill" with negative consequences for the overclassified individual (Toch, 2001, p. 376), although classification officials may prefer to overclassify rather than under-classify in the name of caution (Austin, 1993; Brennan, 1985, 1993). A security placement is considered "appropriate" when safety and institutional order are preserved while maintaining the least restrictive environment for the prisoners (Solomon & Camp, 1993).

State departments of corrections have made many efforts to improve their prediction methods during classification, but there is always the risk of false positives and false negatives. The individual prisoner is usually able to earn a transfer to a lower security setting based on their good behavior, but may

be exposed to a more dangerous population during that time (Irwin, 2005; Steiner & Meade, 2014; Wooldredge & Steiner, 2015).

In 2003, convicted child sex abuser John Geoghan was killed by another prisoner at the Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center in Shirley, Massachusetts. Geoghan was sent to this maximum-security prison for his own protection, because he was being harassed in lower custody settings. Before his death, Geoghan had written to his attorney saying “It’s worth trading liberty for security.”

(Farragher, 2003)

The winnowing process of re-classification tends to congregate low-risk inmates in less secure prisons, while the high-risk are increasingly congregated in higher security prisons (Wooldredge & Steiner, 2015). This could alter the inmate culture of the prison as more “dangerous” inmates develop shared values and norms that differ from the less dangerous prisoners in other facilities. For example, if medium security prisons receive more active gang members than minimum-security prisons, then inmates may react in ways that comply with the gang values and norms, and can even encourage more misconduct among “low risk” inmates who struggle to “survive” in these settings (Toch, 1977). The shared culture of the inmates who live together at the same security level can influence behavior (Bayer, Hjalmarsson, & Pozen, 2009; Chen & Shapiro, 2007), and the “facility-level contamination” of prisoners can pollute our comparisons if we do not control for risk levels (Shermer, Bierie & Stock, 2012).

The idea that higher security settings will reduce inmate misconduct is not consistently supported in the research literature (Byrne & Hummer, 2008). Camp and Gaes (2005) compared 561 “low risk” inmates that were housed in different security levels only to find that they were equally likely to commit misconduct. This is the closest we have to a truly randomized experiment in classification policies because the study was conducted during a change in classification policies that labeled someone who was formerly a Level I inmate as a Level III. It is worth noting that they compared low risk inmates housed in the lowest security setting to those in the second-to-highest security setting. This study can also be interpreted as a challenge to deprivation theories that would assume a Level I inmate housed in a Level III prison would be more likely to violate rules due to the additional loss of liberty and autonomy. That was not seen in this study. Perhaps the extreme restrictions in a maximum-security facility can suppress overall rates of misconduct even if there were criminogenic factors at work in higher security settings, and the net result was that inmates are detected for rule violations at rates similar to those of low-risk inmates in a minimum-security setting.

Wooldredge and Steiner (2015) examined misconduct rates in 246 state correctional facilities in 40 different states (using data from the *Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities*) to determine if the population characteristics of the inmates were better predictors of misconduct levels than the administrative controls associated with security levels (such as the proportion of inmates in maximum-security settings, the number of inmates housed in single cells, and the ratio of officers to inmates). They found that many of the effects of security level administrative controls were either nonsignificant or weakened when the composition of the inmates' risk levels were included in the analysis. Counter-intuitively, coercive controls in prisons were associated with *higher* assault levels. In other words, many of the administrative controls meant to reduce misconduct were not having their intended effects on overall misconduct rates. Wooldredge and Steiner summarize the results of these analyses by writing

Considering the direct effects ... of environmental and administrative controls, none is consistent with the idea that more punitive practices at the state level and greater control over inmates at the facility level generate *lower* levels of inmate assaults once the composition of inmate populations are controlled.

(2015, p. 244, emphasis in the original)

During "Marionization" there was a widespread adoption of supermax-style prisons in state departments of correction. As with many criminal justice initiatives, the "supermax movement" was scaled-up without rigorous evidence to demonstrate that it was an effective policy (Mears, 2006; Mears & Castro, 2006; Pizarro & Narag, 2008). Expensive, windowless facilities were built in many states, such as the infamous Pelican Bay in California (Lawrence & Mears, 2004; Reiter, 2016). Despite vocal criticism from activists and researchers, inmates with serious mental illnesses were held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time, potentially leading to a variety of inhumane outcomes (see Kupers, 2017; Lobel & Scharff Smith, 2019 for a review).

Mears and Reisig (2005) explained how supermax prisons are *supposed* to reduce violence. We use supermax transfers as a threat to deter misconduct among the inmate population, to incapacitate them through movement restrictions and increased supervision, and we hope to disrupt corrupting influences. Few studies attempt to assess supermax prisons on more than one of these factors at a time, but piecemeal evaluations do not show promising outcomes. The introduction of a supermax prison in a state is not associated with state-wide reductions in violence rates, which argues against a general deterrence effect (Briggs et al., 2003; Mears, 2008). A study by Labrecque and Smith (2019) involving over 9,000 male inmates in a state prison system found that

more days in restrictive housing had no significant or substantial effects on future misconduct. This does not support a specific deterrent effect on behavior.

While we cannot say that supermax prisons deter violence, we can argue that a selective incapacitation effect is occurring. It is obvious that conditions of extreme confinement make some types of misconduct nearly impossible to commit, even if these environments are theoretically more criminogenic than lower security settings (Blevins, Listwan, Cullen, & Jonson, 2010; Chen & Shapiro, 2007). And as the introductory case study in this chapter explained, it was a lapse in security that allowed Tom Silverstein to murder a correctional officer. After Silverstein was placed in long-term solitary confinement his prolific career of reckless homicide was extinguished. The case of Mr. Z (who admitted to killing more than ten people in prison) also demonstrates that the “worst of the worst” do exist, and extreme levels of security may be needed to prevent them from killing other incarcerated people (DeLisi, Drury, & Elbert, 2020). Administrative segregation may be overused, expensive, and counter-productive in many cases (Mears, 2006), but few people would argue that *everyone* should be returned to the general population. Some people are too dangerous to live in society, and some people are too dangerous to live in the society of captives. It would be an act of deliberate indifference to allow habitually violent people to share a cell with potential future victims.

### *Security Threat Group Management*

Prison classification specialists understand that one of the most important factors that predict future prison violence is gang affiliation (Drury & DeLisi, 2011). Security Threat Group (STG) assessments typically include a full investigation by specialized investigators. Points are assigned if the individual has affiliations with known gang members, has written correspondence with known gang members, or if they have tattoos that hold special meaning for gangs. Many gangs “police” the inmate population to enforce strict rules on who is allowed to have specific tattoos (e.g., the Aryan Brotherhood “sham-rock”). This gives STG investigators more confidence that a tattoo is a self-identification of gang membership (NIC, 2013).

A motto of many prison gangs is “Blood in, blood out.” Meaning that a person who wants to be fully vested in the organization must violently attack another individual that the leader of the gang chooses as a suitable target. The individual spills blood to get in the gang. This proves that the recruit can “put in work” for the group. The gang then offers protection to this individual so any attack on him will result in retaliation by the entire organization. Large scale gang wars have been described in California, such as the Shoe War where a stolen pair of shoes resulted in a single murder, which was followed by retaliatory slayings by rival gangs (Blatchford, 2008; Rafael, 2007). When there are no active wars, these gangs may use their

power against non-affiliated prisoners. They also extort prisoners for protection money or kill people who do not pay their debts. According to some estimates, members of the Aryan Brotherhood make up less than 0.1% of the federal prison population, but they may be responsible for 18% of all prison murders (Holthouse, 2013).

Gangs are occasionally responsible for killing their own members. Those who join a prison gang be threatened with death if they try to leave (Bovenkerk, 2011). Apostates are killed in order to fulfill the “blood out” part of the gang motto. This threat is exaggerated by the gangs themselves. The most comprehensive and detailed study of gang members occurred during the LoneStar Project in Texas. Pyrooz and Decker (2019) interviewed 802 inmates including 346 gang members. While some of them were afraid of leaving the gang because of retaliatory violence, many of them were able to disengage from the gang by simply asking politely.

In terms of homicide perpetration, we can expect to see that prison gangs conspire to commit murder for different reasons: (1) a recruit is completing an initiation, (2) they are engaging in gang warfare or protecting their affiliates, (3) they are “doing work” as an active gang member, or (4) they are killing apostates. Most studies of prison violence fail to differentiate between the motivations for gang-related homicide, and therefore we cannot know the true number of initiation, warfare, and apostate killings that occur, nor can we trust that our information is reliable as the gang members themselves do not want to being called “informants.”

Despite the tendency for gang violence to be exaggerated, it is undeniable that STGs are responsible for some of the most serious violent crimes in state and federal prisons, and they are even able to orchestrate homicides outside of the prison walls. Two examples may be sufficient to describe the extreme nature of these organized crimes:

In 1992, the Mexican Mafia (or “La Eme”) prison gang retaliated against individuals who worked on the film *American Me* because they believed that the script was disrespectful. Several people were shot and killed in Los Angeles, and while few their deaths could be directly linked to the Mexican Mafia, a federal indictment accused the gang of ordering the assassination of a gang-intervention worker named Ana Lizarraga who was consulted on the movie script. The director of the film was threatened and extorted over the telephone by incarcerated gang members.

(Blatchford, 2008)

In 2013, Even Ebel, a member of the white prison gang called the 211 Crew, killed a pizza delivery man to steal his uniform as a disguise.

## *Prison Homicide*

Then he went to the home of Colorado prison chief Tom Clements and shot him to death. Ebel later died in a confrontation with the police. While some people have claimed that Ebel was driven to homicide by the insanity-inducing experience of solitary confinement (Greene, 2013), an investigative report on the case found substantial evidence that Ebel chose to embark on a suicide mission for the 211 Crew. In the weeks before he assassinated the prison chief, Ebel called another 211 Crew member in prison and said he was “taking care of things on the street for other inmates.” Ironically, Tom Clements was regarded as a reformer who wanted to reduce the use of solitary confinement in Colorado prisons.

(Terry, 2013)

The research on gang violence in prisons can fit into any of the various theories of prison violence discussed in this chapter. People who adhere to a “code of the street” philosophy on the streets may import those values into prison and join a gang of people who share their violent worldview (Mears, Stewart, Siennick, & Simmons, 2013). At the same time, the deprivation of physical safety in the prison may cause some prisoners to join a gang for protection (Liebling & Arnold, 2012). But one major reason that gangs thrive is because prisoners cannot trust the formal authority structure to maintain lawful order (Skarbek, 2014, 2020).

## *Revolt*

Any prison administration must be responsive to grievances that can undermine the balance of power. Unfortunately, there have been times in America’s history where a correctional facility was so poorly governed that it fell into complete chaos (McCorkle, Miethe, & Drass, 1995). The most famous prison riot is certainly the one that occurred in Attica, New York in 1971, where three prisoners were killed by other inmates and another 30 were killed by state police and National Guardsmen who retook the prison. In addition to these deaths, one officer was killed when a gate fell on him during the initial chaos of the riot and nine officers were killed during the retaking of the prison. State officials alleged that the nine hostages had been stabbed or clubbed to death by the prisoners, but medical examinations showed they had all been shot by bullets fired by state troopers (Thompson, 2016).

Homicides that occur during a prison riot can be difficult to assess, especially because officer and staff deaths are not listed as “deaths in custody.” We rely on officer memorial websites to track how many correctional officers are killed each year. Should we separate the inmate deaths according to those

killed during the struggle for control and those who were callously killed by other inmates? Surely there is a qualitative difference between the two.

In 1946, several inmates attempted to escape from the United States Penitentiary Alcatraz by overpowering the guards and taking their rifles. The hostages were locked in a cell. When the inmates could not escape the cellhouse, they shot the hostages. One died. Correctional officers were joined by two platoons of U.S. Marines stationed nearby to restore order. The “Battle for Alcatraz” began. The Marines threw grenades into the cellblock and forced the inmates into a corner, then officers repeatedly shot in their direction. Four rioting inmates were killed, and two were later executed. One hostage was killed by friendly fire.

(Lageson, 1999)

In 1980, inmates in the Penitentiary of New Mexico in Sante Fe overran the prison and took twelve officers hostage. While some officers were physically and sexually abused, none were killed. Authorities negotiated with the leaders of the riot to secure a “peaceful” surrender within 36 hours, but during that time prisoners conducted a reign of terror among their fellow captives. They went to the protective custody wing to get revenge against snitches. They retrieved a blowtorch from a construction site within the prison. They used this torch to slowly cut the doors open. Prisoners were then dragged from their cells and were brutalized. Some were tortured with the acetylene torch, and others were dismembered. Their bodies were hanged from the grillwork like macabre scarecrows.

(Colvin, 1992)

The extreme brutality that can occur during a prison riot should serve as a reminder of how important formal governance is in prison. A society of captives is one thing, a society of vengeful captives without oversight is something primeval. A reminder of how nasty, brutish, and short our lives can be without the civilizing influence of legal authority (Pyrooz & Decker, 2019).

It is clear is that a riot provides an opportunity for prisoners to commit many more acts of homicide than they normally would, but fortunately there have been fewer riots even as the number of people incarcerated increased since the days of Attica and Santa Fe (Useem & Piehl, 2006). The exact number of prison “riots” is difficult to measure because any act of collective violence or uprising may be called a riot by news sources. Prevention is the best medicine. It is advisable for prison administrators to be wary of external and internal pressures that provoke inmate grievances, as well as being aware of

ideological movements within the prison that encourage rebellion. Perhaps the most important factor that prison administrators can address is to reduce the number of unjust actions performed by prison staff against prisoners. Nothing provokes a riot like a legitimate grievance (Carrabine, 2005; Useem & Goldstone, 2002).

### **Correctional Officers as Perpetrators of Homicide and as Victims**

Some correctional officers have been accused of causing the death of an inmate. Sometimes the officer's actions are considered justified, sometimes unjustified, while other deaths occurred because of the deliberate indifference of the staff who ignored or facilitated an inmate-on-inmate homicide. The following cases may illustrate how each case may differ in terms of circumstances and legal liability.

In 1994, a Michigan Correctional officer heard an alarm that indicated someone was climbing a fence in a prohibited area. Upon investigating, he saw an inmate scaling two razor-wire fences. The officer yelled three verbal warnings before shooting the escapee. This was consistent with Michigan state law, under the "fleeing felon" statute that authorizes deadly force in situations that may prevent harm to others. Escaped inmates are usually considered to be desperate, and therefore potentially dangerous to the public.

(UPI, 1994)

In 2012, Florida correctional officers locked 50-year-old Darren Rainey inside a shower room and turned the water temperature to 180 degrees. Rainey pleaded: "Please take me out!" and the officers allegedly laughed and asked "Is it hot enough?" After two hours they opened the door and found that Rainey was dead. Over 90 percent of his body was covered in burns. He had been incarcerated for two years for possession of cocaine and suffered from schizophrenia. The officers were never charged with a crime.

(Lipscomb, 2020)

In 2018, a California correctional officer was escorting a 65-year-old inmate when he became angry and deliberately tripped the inmate, causing fatal injuries. This officer had a history of abusive behavior toward inmates and sent text messages claiming that if his "partners" had his back he had a "green light" to abuse prisoners. There have been many allegations that a code of silence exists among correctional

officers who cover up abuses of power, but in this case the officer was sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for his crime.

(Small, 2022)

To date, no academic research on officer perpetrated homicides has been conducted in the United States. Activists have called for more scrutiny on the causes of deaths in police custody, but we also need research that examines the number and characteristics of justifiable homicides, unjustifiable homicides, and prosecution outcomes of homicides perpetrated by correctional officers. It will be difficult to acquire reliable data.

We also need more information on non-inmate deaths in prison environments. Some research has described correctional officer injuries and homicides (Chenpanas & Bir, 2016; Konda, Reichard, & Tiesman, 2012; Konda, Tiesman, Reichard, & Hartley, 2013), these are mostly descriptive analyses. No academic studies have been published on cases where noncustodial staff were murdered inside prisons. Their deaths should not be ignored.

During a failed escape attempt, inmate Thomas Woodard bludgeoned Correctional Officer Robert McFarland and registered nurse Lorena Schulte to death inside the Anamosa State Penitentiary in Iowa. He repeatedly bashed them over the head with a hammer. During his trial in 2021, the assailant listened to his victims' family members express their grief. "[Woodard] appeared to have little to no reaction to the emotional family statements..."

(Mehaffey, 2021)

### Limitations and Future Directions

In 1977, Sylvester, Reed, and Nelson published *Prison Homicide* which included a detailed description of 128 homicides that occurred in the year 1973. They believed that the primary safety concerns were the size of the prison, prisoners who earned a poor behavior record, and prisoners in maximum-security settings. They argued that little can be done to prevent emotional motives for homicide (e.g., jealous romantic relationships between prisoners), but said that informants could be better protected, drugs and alcohol supplies could be disrupted, and gangs could be monitored. They published this book before the Attica riot, before the mass incarceration boom, and before Marionization, but they offered sound advice that applies today.

While we haven't resolved all of the controversies in this field, we have made advancements in the scientific evaluation of prison homicide in recent decades. We have a better understanding of the evolving structure of gang activity (Drury & DeLisi, 2011; Pyrooz & Decker, 2019; Skarbek, 2014),

we have seen advancements in our knowledge of how psychopathic traits and self-control influence prison violence (DeLisi et al., 2011), and we have a more enlightened view of lifers as potentially pro-social influences rather than seeing them as ticking time bombs with nothing to lose (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2006; Irwin, 2009). We have also begun to think about prison violence in comprehensive terms. We apply rigorous statistical techniques to large datasets to ensure that we are not oversimplifying the relationships between variables and prison misconduct, and from this we have learned that the characteristics of inmates, staff, and the prisons themselves interact to influence the rates of violence in our facilities (Pyrooz & Decker, 2019; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2019). But the most important thing to keep in mind is that the extremely low base rate of prison homicides makes it difficult to analyze trends (Cunningham et al., 2010). When we are accustomed to seeing 143 homicides per year, one bad day in Attica could change everything.

We do not know everything about the genesis of homicide in American prisons. The research summarized in this chapter has limitations. Prison conditions differ from state to state, from facility to facility, and they change over time (for better or worse). Continual evaluation of safety in our prisons will always be necessary, and so will the continual improvement of our policies and practices. A major limitation to any improvement proposal will be the lack of high-quality policy evaluations. To date, very few studies on reducing violence in prison has employed the gold standard of randomized experimentation (with the exception of Camp & Gaes, 2005). We are forced to rely on quasi-experimental studies, surveys, and anecdotal evidence to inform our policy recommendations (Byrne & Hummer, 2008).

The quality and availability of prison violence records are also a major limitation of the current research. Even though a homicide in prison receives more scrutiny than other forms of misconduct we cannot assume that every death labeled a homicide was a willful murder, that killer was not acting in self-defense, or that every death labeled an “accident” was not an undetected murder. It is in the best interest of correctional administrators to be as transparent as possible in these situations of life and death, but there may also be an incentive for them to “cover up” some homicide situations that might reflect poorly on correctional staff. We must improve the reliability of our data on prison homicides if we want to design policies that reduce their occurrence. While the Mortality in Correctional Institutions data is currently the best national effort at data collection, it is not perfect. Given the rarity of homicides it might be feasible to require all correctional institutions to report specific details to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Currently, NIBRS data only includes homicides that occur in a “jail/prison” if an outside, NIBRS-reporting law enforcement agency was called to investigate.

This chapter summarizes the current research on homicides in state and federal prisons, but it omits the unique characteristics of county and municipal jails. Jails differ from prisons in many ways, most notably because of the “churn,” or flow, of detainees in and out of custody. This may pose special problems for reducing homicide incidents. Some states are unable to house convicted individuals in their state prisons due to overcrowding, so they remain in local jails. According to the BJS “Between 2001 and 2019, Louisiana held between 44.5% and 57.9% of its prison population in local jails” (Carson, 2021). And due to prison reform efforts, such as California’s *Brown v. Plata* decision by the Supreme Court, local jails have been holding convicted individuals for much longer periods of time instead of sending them to state prisons. The nature and circumstances of jail homicides change as a result, and this adds another layer of complexity to this field of inquiry. A NIBRS-style death in custody database should seek to include reports from all correctional agencies to facilitate more accurate research.

Another obvious oversight is the complete lack of qualitative research examining homicides in women’s prisons. These events are *extremely* rare but they are worthy of detailed investigation, and yet this has been completely ignored by everyone. The homicide of a woman occasionally shows up in different databases, but the numbers are inconsistent. The BJS reports that only nine women were killed in the entire nation between 2001 and 2019, and California reports three women were killed in their jurisdiction during this time. One of these cases stands out as an important example of the flaws in our homicide reporting practices:

In 2016, Shaylene Graves was murdered by her cellmate after their “brief intimate relationship” ended. Graves had asked officers three times to transfer her to a different cell because her cellmate was threatening her, but officer refused to protect her. The murder was originally labeled a suicide by the CDC-R, despite evidence that she had been brutally beaten. When Grave’s mother attempted to get more information about the death of her daughter she was told that the coroner’s office would mail the family a report in 6–8 months. After suing the CDC-R, Grave’s mother was awarded a \$3.5 million settlement and she was given permission to send a video to CDC-R leaders to instruct them on how to handle cases like this in the future, but according to the agreement this video was not allowed to exceed more than 15 minutes of their time.

(Walker, 2022)

Why did they fail in their duties to such an extent that taxpayers had to compensate the family with millions of dollars? If this was an inmate-on-inmate homicide, why did the CDC-R fail to report it as such? What other violent

crimes are slipping through the cracks? Without trustworthy information we cannot have confidence in *any* research on prison homicides. The most sophisticated analysis is useless if the data are unreliable.

### Conclusion

The fear of being killed in America's prisons may serve a social purpose: deterrence. In 1984, the popular television cartoon *Fat Albert* aired an episode where a group of children visit a local prison in order to be scared straight. They visit the meager cells, endure the catcalls from prisoners, and they listen to stories about how dangerous prison is. In one scene a prisoner reaches through the bars and yells "What are you staring at you rotten little bastard? You think you're in the zoo huh? Come here, I'll tear you apart with my bare hands!" The children decide they never want to end up in prison.

Dangerous prisoners are a type of boogeyman in American folklore (Byrne & Hummer, 2007; Fleischer & Krienert, 2009), and news stories like the previously mentioned case of Jamie Osuna, who decapitated his cellmate, remind us that they are not all myths (Kotowski, 2022).

The risk of violence and death in America's prisons may be exaggerated, but the fear is real, and it can have broad implications for society beyond the goals of general deterrence. Gary Mohr, the former director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction once said:

In January 2011 we had 1,300 inmates in Ohio's prisons locked up in their cells, not because they did anything wrong, but because they were afraid to come out of their cells. They were afraid of being beaten up and assaulted or a piece of metal being plunged into their body. These are the same people that were getting ready to be released that should have taken advantage of programs.

(Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, 2023)

The message is clear. If prisoners are so scared that they will be murdered if they leave their cells they will not participate in rehabilitative programming that is designed to prepare them for reintegration to their communities. This may lead to more crime and victimization outside the prison walls. The stories I have related in this chapter are memorable and terrifying: immolations, decapitations, and bludgeoning. The stuff of nightmares. I doubt that you can convince a prisoner that he is safe by informing him that, statistically speaking, only 12 out of every 100,000 prisoners are killed each year. That is one risk they don't want to take.

Homicides in prison have a variety of motivations, methods, and opportunities. Necessarily then, we must also prepare for a variety of potential solutions. We cannot prevent all homicides, in all prisons, all the time, but

we should not allow that practical statement justify inaction. We can try to reduce the number of homicides to a level that allows the majority of prisoners to feel safe enough to leave their cells, attend rehabilitative programming, and prepare for their return to the community. Some violent acts can be prevented with adequate classification, security protocols, training, and treatment. When violence occurs, we can intervene swiftly to stop the incident from resulting in death.

However, we can certainly *increase* the number of homicides in our prisons if we fail to provide a basic degree of safety for prisoners. Violence begets violence. When there is an “authority vacuum” people living in the prison environment may take matters into their own hands (Bottoms, 1999). Some may take up the “code of the street” and attempt to deter personal injury through displays of violence (Drury & DeLisi, 2011; Mears, Stewart, Siennick, & Simmons, 2013). Some may join a gang to enjoy the benefits of safety in numbers (Pyrooz & Decker, 2019). A lawless, chaotic, and brutal prison system is undesirable by anyone’s standards, but it is an outcome that has periodically been demonstrated in the history of American prisons (Colvin, 1992).

Many things happen behind the concrete walls and razor wire that encircle our correctional facilities. Just because they occur out of our line of sight, doesn’t mean they should be out of mind. Death by homicide is not a “legitimate penological purpose” of imprisonment (Liebling, 2017). We cannot simply exile people from our society under the assumption that we have “incapacitated” them from committing future crimes. Even if they are placed under conditions of extreme confinement, they can often find a way to commit violent acts against each other and prison staff. We should encourage correctional administrators to be transparent and encourage researchers to investigate this most extreme form of violence in a place where we send our fellow citizens, ostensibly for their rehabilitation, not their destruction.

## References

- Akerstrom, M. (1986). Outcasts in prison: The cases of the informers and sex offenders. *Deviant Behavior*, 7(1), 1–20.
- Austin, J. (1993). Objective prison classification systems. In *Classification: A tool for managing today’s offenders* (pp. 108–123). American Correctional Association.
- Babak, J. (1994). *Bird man: The many faces of Robert Stroud*. Ariel Vamp Press.
- Bales, W. D., & Mears, D. P. (2008). Inmate social ties and the transition to society: Does visitation reduce recidivism? *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 45, 287–321.
- Bayer, P., Hjalmarsson, R., & Pozen, D. E. (2009). Building criminal capital behind bars: Peer effects in juvenile corrections. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124, 105–147.
- Belbot, B., & Del Carmen, R. (1993). Legal issues in classification. In *Classification: A tool for managing today’s offenders* (pp. 17–31). American Correctional Association.

- Blatchford, C. (2008). *The black hand: The story of Rene "Boxer" Enriquez and his life in the Mexican Mafia*. Harper Collins.
- Blevins, K. R., Listwan Johnson, S., Cullen, F. T., & Lero Jonson, C. (2010). A general strain theory of prison violence and misconduct: An integrated model of inmate behavior. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 26, 148–166.
- Bovenkerk, F. (2011). On leaving criminal organizations. *Crime Law and Social Change*, 55, 261–276.
- Bonta, J., & Wormith, S. J. (2018). Adult offender assessment and classification in custodial settings. In John Wooldredge, & Paula Smith (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of prisons and imprisonment* (pp. 397–424). Oxford University Press.
- Bottoms, A. E. (1999). Interpersonal violence and social order in prison. *Crime and Justice*, 26, 205–282.
- Brennan, T. (1985). *Offender classification and its relation to jail overcrowding*. National Institute of Corrections.
- Brennan, T. (1993). Risk assessment: Statistical classification methods. In *Classification: A tool for managing today's offenders* (pp. 46–70). American Correctional Association.
- Briggs, C. S., Sundt, J. L., & Castellano, T. C. (2003). The effect of supermaximum security prisons on aggregate levels of institutional violence. *Criminology*, 41, 1341–1376.
- Byrne, J. M., & Hummer, D. (2007). In search of the "Tossed Salad Man" (and others involved in prison violence): New strategies for predicting and controlling violence in prison. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12(5), 531–541.
- Byrne, J. M., & Hummer, D. (2008). Examining the impact of institutional culture on prison violence and disorder: An evidence-based review. In J. M. Byrne, D. Hummer, & F. S. Taxman (Eds.), *The culture of prison violence* (pp. 40–90). Pearson.
- Camp, S., & Gaes, G. (2005). Criminogenic effects of the prison environment on inmate behavior: Some experimental evidence. *Crime & Delinquency*, 51, 425.
- Carrabine, E. (2005). Prison riots, social order, and the problem of legitimacy. *British Journal of Criminology*, 45, 896–913.
- Carson, E. A. (2021). *Mortality in state and federal prisons, 2001–2019- Statistical tables*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Clemmer, D. (1940). *The prison community*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Chen, M. K., & Shapiro, J. M. (2007). Do harsher prison conditions reduce recidivism? A discontinuity-based approach. *American Law and Economics Review*, 9, 1–29.
- Chenpanas, P., & Bir, C. (2016). Fatal injuries of law enforcement/correctional officers attacked with sharp-edged weapons. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 62(3), 700–704.
- Chian, A., & Sorensen, J. R. (2019). Examining developmental patterns of prison misconduct: An integrated model approach. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(14), 2406–2421.
- Colvin, M. (1992). *The penitentiary in crisis: From accommodation to riot in New Mexico*. State University of New York Press.
- Cunningham, M. D., Reidy, T. J., & Sorensen, J. R. (2005). Is death row obsolete? A decade of mainstreaming death-sentenced inmates in Missouri. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 23(3), 307–320.
- Cunningham, M. D., Reidy, T. J., & Sorensen, J. R. (2008). Assertions of "future dangerousness" at federal capital sentencing: Rates and correlates of subsequent prison misconduct and violence. *Law and Human Behavior*, 32, 46–63.

- Cunningham, M. D., & Sorensen, J. R. (2006). Nothing to lose? A comparative examination of prison misconduct rates among life-without-parole and other long-term high-security inmates. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 33(6), 683–705.
- Cunningham, M. D., & Sorensen, J. R. (2010). Improbably predictions at capital sentencing: Contrasting prison violent outcomes. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law*, 38(1), 61–72.
- Cunningham, M. D., Sorensen, J. R., Vigen, M. P., & Woods, S. O. (2010). Inmate homicides: Killers, victims, motives, and circumstances. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 348–358.
- DeLisi, M., & Butler, H. D. (2020). Murder as importation: An empirical study of the continuity of homicide offending from community to confinement. *Homicide Studies*, 24(4), 398–416.
- DeLisi, M., Drury, A. J., Elbert, M. J. (2020). Psychopathy and pathological violence in a criminal career: A forensic case report. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 60, 101521.
- DeLisi, M., Trulson, C., Marquart, J., Drury, A., & Kosloski, A. (2011). Inside the prison black box: Toward a life course importation model of inmate behavior. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 55, 1186–1207.
- DiIulio, J. (1987). *Governing prisons: A comparative study of correctional management*. The Free Press.
- Dollard, J., Miller, N. E., Doob, L. W., Mowrer, O. H., & Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and aggression*. Yale University Press.
- Drury, A. J., & DeLisi, M. (2011). Gangkill: An exploratory empirical assessment of gang membership, homicide offending, and prison misconduct. *Crime & Delinquency*, 57(1), 130–146.
- Duwe, G., & Clark, V. (2013). Blessed be the social tie that binds: The effects of prison visitation on offender recidivism. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 24, 271–277.
- Earley, P. (1992). *The hot house: Life inside Leavenworth prison*. Bantam Books.
- Farragher, T. (2003, November 30). John Geoghan: Abuser, inmate, victim. Boston Globe. [https://www.bishopaccountability.org/news2003\\_07\\_12/2003\\_11\\_30\\_Farragher\\_JohnGeoghan.htm](https://www.bishopaccountability.org/news2003_07_12/2003_11_30_Farragher_JohnGeoghan.htm)
- Fleischer, M. S., & Krienert, J. L. (2009). *The myth of prison rape: Sexual culture in American prisons*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Fulkerson, A., Dison, J., & Keena, L. (2021). *The dark and evil world of Arkansas prisons: Transformed through federal court intervention*. Cognella.
- Gartrell, N. (2020). Exclusive: Convicted killer confesses to murdering two child molesters in California prison, says his warnings to guards fell on deaf ears. *The Mercury News*. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/02/20/exclusive-convicted-killer-confesses-to-murdering-two-child-molesters-in-ca-prison-says-his-warnings-to-guards-fell-on-deaf-ears/>
- Greene, S. (2013, April 11). Ebel friend: suicide note shows parolee “ruined” by solitary, bent on revenge. *Colorado Independent*. <https://www.coloradoindependent.com/2013/04/11/ebel-friend-suicide-note-shows-parolee-ruined-by-solitary-bent-on-revenge/>
- Hochstetler, A., & DeLisi, M. (2005). Importation, deprivation, and varieties of serving time: An integrated-lifestyle-exposure model of prison offending. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 33, 257–266.
- Holthouse, D. (2013). Aryan prison gangs. *Intelligence report*. The Southern Poverty Law Center. Retrieved from: <https://www.splcenter.org/20140106/intelligence-report-special-edition-aryan-prison-gangs>

- Irwin, J. (2005). *The warehouse prison: Disposal of the new dangerous class*. Roxbury.
- Irwin, J. (2009). *Lifers: Seeking redemption in prison*. Routledge.
- Johnson, R., & Toch, H. (Eds.) (1982). *The pains of imprisonment*. Sage.
- Jones, W. P. (2011). *A different kind of cell: The story of a murderer who became a monk*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Konda, S., Reichard, A. A., & Tiesman, H. M. (2012). Occupational injuries among U.S. correctional officers, 1999–2008. *Journal of Safety Research*, 43, 181–186.
- Konda, S., Tiesman, H., Reichard, A., & Hartley, D. (2013). U.S. correctional officers killed or injured on the job. *Corrections Today*, November/December, 75, 122–123.
- Kotowski, J. (2022). The grisly crimes of “the man with a thousand faces.” *KGET News*. <https://www.kget.com/news/crime-watch/the-grisly-crimes-of-the-man-with-a-thousand-faces/>
- Kupers, T. A. (2017). *Solitary: The inside story of supermax isolation and how we can abolish it*. University of California Press.
- Labrecque, R. M., & Smith, P. (2019). Assessing the impact of time spent in restrictive housing confinement on subsequent measures of institutional adjustment among men in prison. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 46(10), 1445–1455.
- Lageson, E. B. (1999). *Battle at Alcatraz: A desperate attempt to escape the rock*. Addicus Books.
- Lawrence, S., & Mears, D. (2004). *Benefit-cost analysis of supermax prisons: Critical steps and considerations*. Urban Institute.
- Lee, H. K. (2012). San Quentin inmate admits killing fellow prisoner. *SFGate*. <https://www.sfgate.com/crime/article/San-Quentin-inmate-admits-killing-fellow-prisoner-2996852.php>
- Lee, L. M. (2020). Far from home and all alone: The impact of prison visitation on recidivism. *American Law and Economics Review*, 21(2), 431–481.
- Liebling, A. (2017). The meaning of ending life in prison. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 23(1), 20–31.
- Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2012). Social relationships between prisoners in a maximum security prison: Violence, faith, and the declining nature of trust. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(5), 413–424.
- Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2004). *Prisons and their moral performance: A study of values, quality, and prison life*. Oxford University Press.
- Lipscomb, J. (2020, August 1). Darren Rainey died in scalding prison shower eight years ago today, still no charges filed. *Prison Legal News*. <https://www.prison-legalnews.org/news/2020/aug/1/darren-rainey-died-scalding-prison-shower-eight-years-ago-today-still-no-charges-filed/>
- Lobel, J., & Scharff Smith, P. (2019). *Solitary confinement: Effects, practices, and pathways toward reform*. Oxford Academic Press.
- Logan, M. W., Long, J. S., & DeLisi, M. A. (2023). Serious, violent, and chronic prison misconduct: Are the predictors the same for women and men? *The Prison Journal*, 103(1), 23–44.
- Long, J. S. (2022). Targeted violence in correctional facilities: The complex motivations of prisoners who kill child sex abusers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 82, 101980.
- Long, J., & Vukovich, J. (2023). *Avenging child sex abuse: Vigilante violence in prison and the community*. Routledge.
- Marquart, J. W., Ekland-Olson, S., & Sorensen, J. R. (1989). Gazing into the crystal ball: can jurors accurately predict dangerousness in capital cases? *Law & Society Review*, 23, 449–468.

- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. American Psychological Association.
- McCorkle, R. C., Miethe, T. D., & Drass, K. A. (1995). The roots of prison violence: A test of the deprivation, management, and “not-so-total” institution models. *Crime & Delinquency*, 41(3), 317–331.
- McGuire, J. (2018). Understanding prison violence: A rapid evidence assessment. *HM Prison & Probation Service. Analytic Summary 2018*.
- Mears, D. P. (2006). A critical look at supermax prisons. *Corrections Compendium*, 30(5), 45–49.
- Mears, D. P. (2008). An assessment of supermax prisons using an evaluation research framework. *The Prison Journal*, 88, 43–68.
- Mears, D. P., & Castro, J. L. (2006). Warden’s views on the wisdom of supermax prisons. *Crime and Delinquency*, 52, 398–431.
- Mears, D. P., Cochran, J. C., Siennick, S. E., & Bales, W. D. (2012). Prison visitation and recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 29, 888–918.
- Mears, D. P., Cochran, J. C., & Cullen, F. T. (2015). Incarceration heterogeneity and its implications for assessing the effectiveness of imprisonment on recidivism. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 26, 691–712.
- Mears, D. P., & Reisig, M. D. (2006). The theory and practice of supermax prisons. *Punishment & Society*, 8(1), 33–57.
- Mears, D. P., Stewart, E. A., Siennick, S. E., & Simons, R. L. (2013). The code of the street and inmate violence: Investigating the salience of imported belief systems. *Criminology*, 51, 695–728.
- Mehaffey, T. (2021, August 26). “Evil” inmate gets two life terms for killing Anamosa prison officer and nurse. *The Gazette*. <https://www.thegazette.com/crime-courts/evil-inmate-gets-two-life-terms-for-killing-anamosa-prison-officer-and-nurse/>
- Mohr, G. (2012, October 24). *Systemic sense of hope* [Video]. TEDxMarionCorrectional. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODFLXTx9bmM>
- Mumola, C. J. (2005). *Suicide and homicide in state prisons and local jails*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report.
- National Institute of Corrections. (2013). *Prisoner classification and gang activity*. Jail & Prisoner Law Section - November 2013.
- Nellis, A. (2021, February 17). No end in sight: America’s enduring reliance on life imprisonment. *The Sentencing Project*. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/no-end-in-sight-americas-enduring-reliance-on-life-imprisonment/>
- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. (2023). *Reports*. Columbus, Ohio. Retrieved from <https://drc.ohio.gov/about/resource/reports/1-reports>
- Olmeda, R. (2021, June 3). Court upholds death sentence for broward convict who murdered child molester. *South Florida Sun Sentinel*. <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/florida/fl-ne-jailhouse-murder-death-penalty-20210603-qu4a475bdjcy-figjlifer3gum-story.html>
- Palermo, G. B., Palermo, M. T., & Simpson, D. J. (1996). Death by inmate: Multiple murder in a maximum security prison. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 40(3), 455–466.
- Pizarro, J. M., & Narag, R. E. (2008). Supermax prisons: What we know, what we do not know, and where we are going. *The Prison Journal*, 88(1), 23–42.
- Pyrooz, D. C., & Decker, S. H. (2019). *Competing for control: Gangs and the social order of prisons*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rafael, T. (2007). *The Mexican Mafia*. Encounter Books.

- Reidy, T. J., Cunningham, M. D., & Sorensen, J. (2001). From death to life: Prison behavior of former death row inmates in Indiana. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 28, 62–82.
- Reidy, T. J., Sorensen, J. R., & Cunningham, M. D. (2012). Community violence to prison assault: A test of the behavioral continuity hypothesis. *Law and Human Behavior*, 36(4), 356–363.
- Reidy, T. J., & Sorensen, J. R. (2017). Prison homicides: A multidimensional comparison of perpetrators and victims. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice*, 17(2), 99–116.
- Reiter, K. (2016). *23/7: Pelican Bay prison and the rise of long-term solitary confinement*. Yale University Press.
- Russo, J., Woods, D., Shaffer, J. S., & Jackson, B. A. (2020). *Countering threats to correctional institution security: Identifying innovation needs to address current and emerging concerns*. RAND Corporation.
- Shere, D. (2005). *Cain's redemptions: A story of hope and transformation in America's bloodiest prison*. Northfield Publishing.
- Shermer, L. O., Bierie, D. M., & Stock, A. (2012). Endogeneity in prison risk classification. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 57(10), 1248–1274.
- Skarbek, D. (2014). *The social order of the underworld: How prison gangs govern the American penal system*. Oxford University Press.
- Skarbek, D. (2020). *The puzzle of prison order: Why life behind bars varies around the world*. Oxford University Press.
- Small, J. (2022, October 18). Former California corrections officer sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for death of incarcerated man. *KQED*. <https://www.kqed.org/news/11929335/former-new-folsom-officer-sentenced-to-more-than-12-years-in-federal-prison-for-inmates-death>
- Solomon, L., & Camp, A. T. (1993). The revolution in correctional classification. In *Classification: A tool for managing today's offenders* (pp. 1–16). American Correctional Association.
- Sorensen, J. R., & Cunningham, M. D. (2007). Operationalizing risk: The influence of measurement choice on the prevalence and correlates of prison violence among incarcerated murderers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35, 546–555.
- Sorensen, J. R., & Cunningham, M. D. (2009). Once a killer, always a killer? Prison misconduct of former death-sentenced inmates in Arizona. *Journal of Psychiatry & Law*, 37(2–3), 237–263.
- Sorensen, J. R., & Pilgrim, R. L. (2000). An actuarial risk assessment of violence posed by capital murder defendants. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 90, 1251–70.
- Sorensen, J., & Wrinkle, R. D. (1996). No hope for parole: Disciplinary infractions among death-sentenced and life-without-parole inmates. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 23, 542–52.
- Spiegel, S. (2007). Prison “race riots”: An easy case for segregation? *California Law Review*, 95(6), 2261–2293.
- State of California, Department of Justice. (2022, December). *Death in custody data, 2005–2021*. Sacramento, California.
- Steiner, B., & Meade, B. (2014). The safe prison. In F. T. Cullen, C. L. Jonson, & M. K. Stohr (Eds.), *The American prison: Imagining a different future* (pp. 129–150). Sage.
- Steiner, B., & Wooldredge, J. (2018). Prison officer legitimacy, their exercise of power, and inmate rule breaking. *Criminology*, 56(4), 750–779.

- Steiner, B., & Wooldredge, J. (2019). *Understanding and reducing prison violence: An integrated social control-opportunity perspective*. Routledge.
- Sykes, G. (1958). *The society of captives*. Princeton University Press.
- Sykes, G. M., & Messinger, S. L. (1960). The Inmate Social System. In R. Cloward (Ed.), *Theoretical studies in social organization of the prison, social science research council* (pp. 5–19). Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Sylvester, S. F., Reed, J. H., & Nelson, D. O. (1977). *Prison homicide*. Spectrum Publications.
- Terry, D. (2013). Prison break: A member of a Colorado white supremacist prison gang is blamed for the murder of the state's corrections chief. *Intelligence Report*. The Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Thompson, H. A. (2016). *Blood in the water: The Attica prison uprising of 1971 and its legacy*. Pantheon.
- Toch, H. (1977). *Living in prison: The ecology of survival*. The Free Press.
- Toch, H. (2001). The future of supermax confinement. *The Prison Journal*, 81(3), 376–388.
- Trammell, R., & Chenault, S. (2009). “We have to take these guys out”: Motivations for assaulting incarcerated child molesters. *Symbolic Interaction*, 32(4), 334–350.
- UPI. (1994, December 26). Inmate shot dead trying to escape. *UPI Archives*. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1994/12/26/Inmate-shot-dead-trying-to-escape/1286788418000/>
- Useem, B., & Goldstone, J. A. (2002). Forging social order and its breakdown: Riot and reform in U.S. prisons. *American Sociological Review*, 67(4), 499–525.
- Useem, B., & Piehl, A. K. (2006). Prison buildup and disorder. *Punishment & Society*, 8(1), 87–115.
- Vaughn, M. S., & Sapp, A. D. (1989). Less than utopian: Sex offender treatment in a milieu of power struggles, status positioning, and inmate manipulation in state correctional institutions. *The Prison Journal*, 69, 73–89.
- Visher, C. A., & Travis, J. (2003). Transitions from prison to community: Understanding individual pathways. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 89–113.
- Wang, L., & Sawyer, W. (2021). *New data: State prisons are increasingly deadly places*. Prison Policy Initiative. [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/06/08/prison\\_mortality/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/06/08/prison_mortality/)
- Ward, D. A., & Werlich, T. G. (2003). Alcatraz and Marion: Evaluating super-maximum custody. *Punishment & Society*, 5(1), 53–75.
- Walker, T. (2022). In wrongful death settlement, family of Shaylene Graves will get \$3.5 million and a platform to urge CA's prison officials to implement policies that better protect women in custody. <https://witnessla.com/in-wrongful-death-settlement-family-of-shaylene-graves-will-get-3-5-million-and-a-platform-to-urge-cas-prison-officials-to-implement-policies-that-better-protect-women-in-custody/>
- Winfree, L. T., Newbold, G., & Tubb, S. H. (2002). Prisoner perspectives on inmate culture in New Mexico and New Zealand: A descriptive case study. *The Prison Journal*, 82(2), 213–233.
- Wooldredge, J. D. (1998). Inmate lifestyles and opportunities for victimization. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 35, 480–502.
- Wooldredge, J. (2020). Prison culture, management, and in-prison violence. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 3, 165–188.
- Wooldredge, J., & Steiner, B. (2015). A macro-level perspective on prison inmate deviance. *Punishment & Society*, 17(2), 230–257.