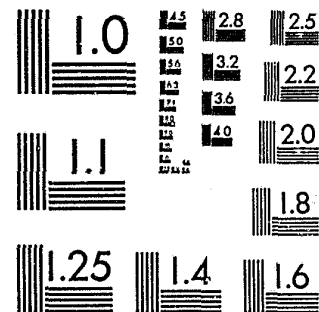


National Criminal Justice Reference Service

**ncjrs**

This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

9/29/83

89616

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by  
Public Domain/Federal Prison  
System/US dept. of Justice  
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

FPS PRISON VIOLENCE: HIGH RISK GROUPS

Thomas R. Kane and Michael G. Janus

NCJRS  
DEC  
ACQUISITIONS

A research report (Kane, Janus and Vanyur) concerning FPS inmate violence was included in the Executive Staff notebook for the November, 1981 meeting. That report was a descriptive summary of data on "actuarial predictors" (i.e., criminal and social history, demographic variables) of FPS inmate violence. To reiterate a proposition made in the November report, the variables listed in Table 1 (attached) are significant predictors of violence because they are informational indicators of the complex subcultural experiences which have taught the inmates to employ violence in a wide variety of situations.

High Risk Groups. In addition to the demographic predictors in Table 1, race and age, another categorical predictor of violence, specific to the FPS, is whether an inmate is a state-boarder. In an earlier Executive Staff paper (Kane and Saylor--May, 1980) inmates boarded in FPS facilities by state correctional systems were profiled. Compared to federal offenders, state-boarders consistently were found to be greater custody risks in terms of the variables studied--institution misconduct including violence, and security designation and salient factor subcomponents. That is, the state-boarders faction, like the subgroups of black or young inmates, show evidence of an inflated potential for violence. But descriptive classifications such as "state-boarder," "black," and "young" do not explain why the likelihood of violence is increased; therefore, they offer no indication of what the FPS can do to neutralize inmates' aggressive tendencies. Hence, the analyses for the present report were designed to use social and criminal history information about these high risk groups to indicate the types of early personal experience which were important contributors to violent tendencies.

Violence Model: Explanation is One Better than Description. Research on violence, in or out of prison, typically describes the actuarial variables related to the violent behavior of interest. But the statistical analyses done usually are not complex or powerful enough to illuminate why certain groups of individuals show greater tendencies toward aggression. For the present paper statistical analyses of the available archival data were sufficiently powerful to reveal the extent to which elements of social and criminal history can help to explain why blacks, youth, or state-boarders have become violence-prone groups.

Findings<sup>1</sup>

Figures 1 and 2 are attached to portray the logic behind the statistical analyses and to represent the results. Figure 1 illustrates the simple predictive logic--inmates who are black, young, or state-boarders are more likely to engage in prison violence. Figure 2 reveals that more conclusive and informative patterns exist in the data: each of the high risk groups was found to have been influenced by prior problems with drugs, unemployment, or inferior education; also, each group had a more extensive or severe criminal history

<sup>1</sup> All statistical results presented were significant,  $p < .05$ ; the complex model represented by Figure 2 was tested with path analyses performed with logistic, multiple regression statistics.

than most FPS prisoners. All of the elements of criminal and social history that are represented in Figure 2 and listed in Table 1 were found to be significant statistical "predictors" of prison violence. Table 2 lists, separately for the high-risk groups--state-boarders, black, and youth--the elements of social and criminal history which predicted their violent prison behavior.

Interpretation of Results

Interpretations are made keeping in mind that the statistical analyses were based on the logic of Figure 2.

Criminal History. The best predictive elements were: severity of current offense, for blacks and state-boarders; and a prior history of serious violence, for black and young prisoners.

One reason that these two criminal history variables are predictive of prison violence seems clear: they directly reflect the violent behavioral tendencies the inmates had developed prior to their current FPS incarceration.

Social History. The best predictors included: unemployment for all three groups; additionally, for young or black inmates, both drug problems and inferior education were predictive of prison violence.

Although the reasons for the predictive sensitivity of social history variables, at first glance, seem less straightforward than for the criminal history predictors, common sense does offer an explanation. Individuals who abuse drugs (heroin), are undereducated, or unemployed live in a state of social dislocation which contributes to the use of coercion or violence. These "disenfranchised" individuals are separated from the normal, mainstream of culture and social morals, which include strong prescriptions for the use of nonviolent methods to resolve interpersonal conflict or to satisfy basic needs. Hence, as was the case with the criminal history predictors, the significant social history variables indicate that the problem individuals have been engulfed in subcultures of violence--peer or family relationships, and institutional experiences which reinforce patterns of violence.

The inmate interview schedule for the current study of FPS prison violence has been constructed to tap the more subtle and complex influences upon violent inmate behavior. For example, both early and current experiences in peer groups, family relationships, and institutional settings are measured; as is the inmate's personal orientation toward the use of violence. Interview data will eventually be combined with the same type of social and criminal history data as presented in this report. Then the common sense explanations offered above for the development of violent habits can be tested more comprehensively.

FPS Implications

Programs. The data clearly indicate that inmates' previous social problems have contributed to the development of violent tendencies. Then, can the FPS programs which have been designed to counteract the social deficiencies--unemployment, inferior education, drug abuse--also serve to modify or inhibit the violent dispositions of inmates?

Program involvement in education, drug abuse, vocational training, or FPI could affect inmate violence in several ways. Participation in programs reduces

the opportunity for violent interaction--in other words by keeping inmates "off the street." Furthermore, programs may change inmates' personal orientation toward violence. Inmates who participate conscientiously in programs are offered social, academic, and vocational skills that would enable them, after release, to function as employed, integrated members of society. Consequently, the newly skilled releasees can avoid the subcultures of violence which enveloped them prior to incarceration. Overall, then, the utility of and social pressure for violent behavior is reduced.

Clinical Prediction. Various social scientists (e.g., Monahan, 1981; Megargee, 1976) have encouraged the use of actuarial data to enhance accuracy in the clinical prediction of violent behavior. The criminal and social history data presented in this and the November, 1981 report were found to have strong statistical reliability as predictors of prison violence. Therefore, institution psychologists could use this background data as an aid in "clinical prediction" when reviewing an inmate's history. Information of this sort will not allow for prediction with certainty. However, a pattern indicating potential risk--e.g., a young inmate with a prior history of violence, unemployment and drug-abuse--should alert the psychologist to probe further about the inmate's orientation toward coercion and violence.

#### Rigorous Application

A foreseeable product from the study of inmate violence is an evaluative instrument that can be used by FPS staff to gauge the risk of violence that an inmate poses to a facility. The instrument would include social and criminal history information in addition to items from the violence interview schedule currently in use. After validation of the scale, it could be used in conjunction with normative guidelines by case managers to arrive at a violence-risk quotient for an inmate. If an inmate's score were sufficiently high, the case manager would simply notify the staff psychologist who, in turn, would interview the prisoner more thoroughly to arrive at a comprehensive, clinical judgment.

Again, even a rigorously validated instrument could not be used to make absolute predictions or classifications, since any statistically based prediction method contains an inherent margin of error. However, a valid scale of this sort would afford more confident and standardized screening for inmates with a high potential for violence.

The utility of this screening tool would be greater at upper security level facilities (e.g., levels 4 and above), where base rates of violence are higher than the overall FPS average.

March 17, 1982

TABLE 1

#### SIGNIFICANT "ACTUARIAL" FACTORS: RELATED TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF INVOLVEMENT IN PRISON VIOLENCE<sup>1,2</sup>

##### A. Criminal History

1. Age at First Commitment<sup>3</sup>
2. Severity of Current Offense<sup>4</sup>
3. Expected Length of Incarceration<sup>4</sup>
4. Seriousness of Prior Commitments<sup>4</sup>
5. History of Violence (pre-incarceration)<sup>4</sup>

##### B. Social History

- \* 6. History of Heroin or Opiate Dependence<sup>3</sup>
7. (Lack of) Employment Prior to Incarceration<sup>3</sup>
8. Education: inmates with less education more likely...

##### C. Demographic

9. Race: Non-whites more likely than Whites
10. Age: younger inmates more likely...

<sup>1</sup> These findings were described in a November, 1981 report to the Executive Staff.

<sup>2</sup> All relationships are statistically significant,  $p < .05$ .

<sup>3</sup> Salient Factor Score Subcomponent

<sup>4</sup> Security Designation Score Subcomponent

\* Also included in FPS Custody Classification Instrument

TABLE 2

SOCIAL AND CRIMINAL HISTORY PREDICTORS OF VIOLENCE:  
SPECIFIED FOR EACH HIGH RISK GROUP.

Blacks

A. Criminal History

1. Severity of Current Offense
2. History of Previous Violence

B. Social History

1. Unemployment
2. Drug (Heroin) Abuse
3. Education

Youth

A. Criminal History

1. History of Previous Violence

B. Social History

1. Unemployment
2. Drug (Heroin) Abuse
3. Education

State-Boarders

A. Criminal History

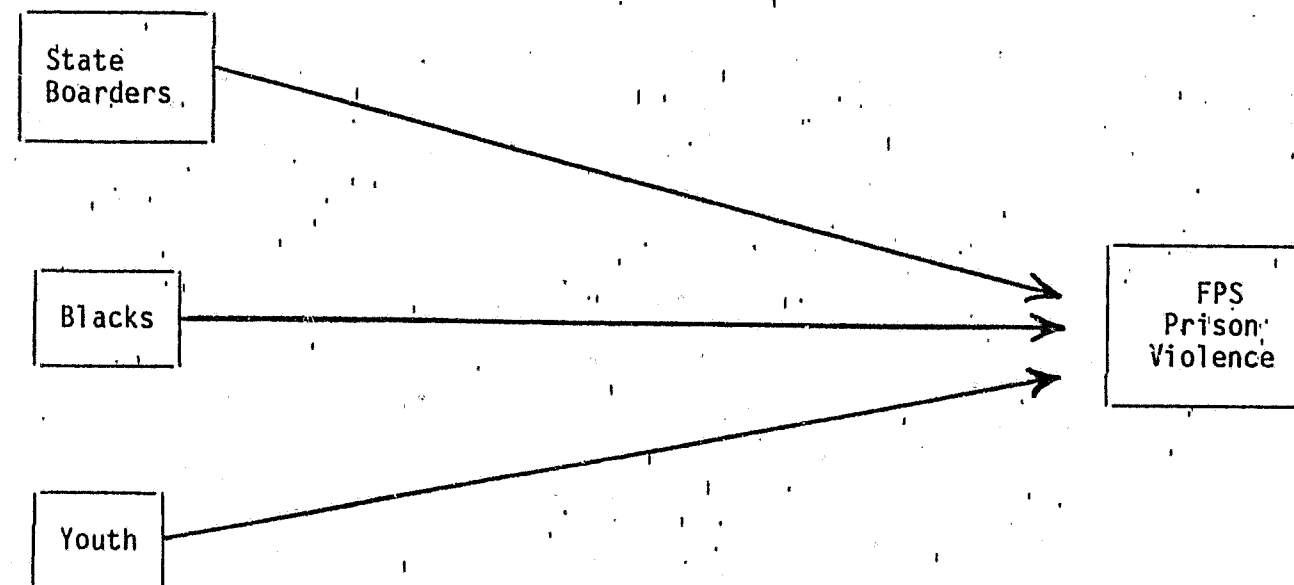
1. Severity of Current Offense

B. Social History

1. Unemployment

FIGURE 1

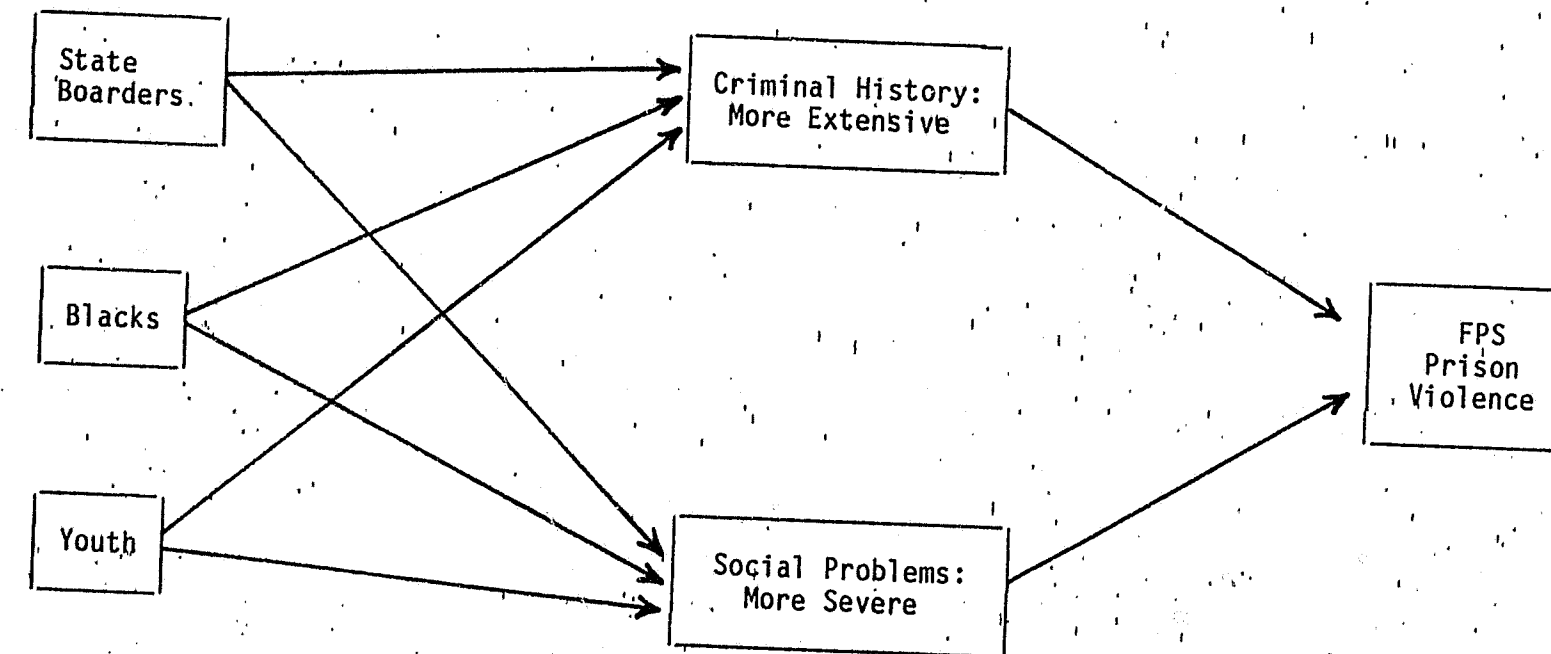
LOGIC OF SIMPLE STATISTICAL FINDINGS--THE VIOLENT TENDENCIES OF HIGH RISK GROUPS <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> The statistical analyses illustrated by the model above took into account the inmate's time-at-risk in the FPS.

FIGURE 2

LOGIC OF COMPLEX STATISTICAL FINDINGS--CRIMINAL AND SOCIAL HISTORIES "EXPLAIN"  
THE VIOLENT TENDENCIES OF HIGH RISK GROUPS 1,2



1 The "Criminal History" and "Social Problems" factors displayed here are based on the same criminal and social variables as are listed in Table 1.

2 The statistical analyses illustrated by the model above took into account the inmate's time-at-risk in the FPS.

**END**