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On the Development, Origins and Manifestations of Prison Violence – Evidence from a Longitudinal Study on Young Males and Females in Germany

In prison, individuals who are familiar with violence meet in a setting that is charged with conflict and shaped by subcultural norms. Violent behaviour among prisoners can range from insults, intimidation and oppression to manifest forms of serious violence. This paper is the first to present the full results of a research project on prison violence conducted between 2010 and 2017 by the Institute for Criminology at the University of Cologne. The project began with 882 male juvenile offenders and was later expanded to also include 269 detained young females, all of them aged 14 to 24. The results show that prisoners must constantly expect attacks from other inmates. Most prisoners become both a victim and a perpetrator of violence, with a previous experience of victimisation significantly increasing the risk of committing an act of violence themselves. They are particularly involved in violent events at the beginning of their sentence; later, most of them are able to ensure that they are left alone by other inmates. Those who feel they are treated fairly and respectfully by prison staff commit considerably fewer acts of violence. Instead of relying on disciplinary measures which remain largely ineffective, given the substantial number of acts that go unnoticed (for every act of violence recorded by prison officials there are at least six acts that are not recorded), prisons should do more to encourage pro-social behaviour and to prevent violence. A gender comparison indicated almost no difference regarding verbal violence. Assault, however, occurs considerably less often among young women.

Keywords: prison violence, youth prisons, prevalence, victim-offender overlap, self-affirmation, subculture, importation, deprivation, procedural justice, prison climate, dark figure

Entwicklung, Gründe und Formen von Gefängnisgewalt - Erkenntnisse aus einer Längsschnittstudie mit jungen Männern und Frauen in Deutschland

Im Gefängnis treffen gewalterfahrene Menschen in einer konfliktgeladenen und von subkulturellen Normen geprägten Umgebung aufeinander. Gewalt reicht hier von Beleidigungen und Einschüchterungen bis hin zu schweren Formen von Gewalt. Der Artikel trägt erstmals alle Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojekts zusammen, welches das Institut für Kriminologie der Universität zu Köln von 2010 bis 2017 durchführte und an dem 882 männliche und 269 weibliche Jugendstrafgefangene teilnahmen. Demnach müssen Häftlinge ständig mit Angriffen anderer Gefangener rechnen, auch wenn sie nicht täglich

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Gewalt am eigenen Leib erleben. Die meisten sind sowohl Täter als auch Opfer, wobei eine Viktimisierung das Risiko, später selbst Gewalt auszuüben, signifikant erhöht. Gefangene sind besonders zu Beginn der Haft involviert; später gelingt es den meisten, von anderen Gefangenen in Ruhe gelassen zu werden. Wer sich von den Bediensteten fair behandelt fühlt, übt beträchtlich weniger Gewalt aus. Anstatt sich auf Disziplinarmaßnahmen zu verlassen, die angesichts des großen Dunkelfelds (auf eine registrierte Gewalttat kommen wenigstens sechs, die unerkannt bleiben) weitgehend unwirksam sind, sollten die Anstalten prosoziales Verhalten fördern und Anti-Gewalt-Konzepte entwickeln. Im Geschlechtervergleich zeigten sich kaum Unterschiede bei verbaler Gewalt; körperliche Angriffe traten unter jungen Frauen jedoch seltener auf.

Schlagwörter: Gefängnisgewalt; Jugendstrafvollzug; Prävalenz; Täter-Opfer-Überschneidung; Selbstbehauptung; Subkultur; Importation; Deprivation; Verfahrensgerechtigkeit; Anstaltsklima; Dunkelfeld

1. Introduction

Violence is a problem typical to the prison setting. Evidently, prohibiting violence in prisons is just as challenging as preventing the entry of contraband (e. g. drugs, mobile phones, weapons), resulting in risks to the safety of both inmates and prison staff. Yet above all else, the situation jeopardises the very objective of imprisonment which is to help prisoners lead a law-abiding life once they have served their sentence. According to the law, prisons have the legal duty to foster a non-violent environment and protect prisoners from attacks by fellow inmates (see, for example, section 7 (5) of the *Jugendstrafvollzugsgesetz NRW* [Juvenile Justice Law of North Rhine-Westphalia]). Indeed, young detainees are particularly vulnerable. They are confronted with social isolation, disruption to their education, worries about their future and material loss, all at a crucial moment in their lives, i. e. before reaching the age of 24 (Enzmann, 2002).¹ Everyday life in prison is dominated by adversarial encounters with fellow inmates. For this reason, time in incarceration is characterised by feelings of insecurity and helplessness – and often also by tangible experiences of fear, intimidation and violence in all its forms (Neubacher, 2008). Adolescents and young adults not only differ from adult prisoners in relation to developmental and adaptation challenges but also in their search for recognition. Prison officials usually describe the situation in young offender institutions as more dynamic and volatile compared to the one in adult prisons. Despite that, there is little research on violence among young prisoners. Existing studies suggest that young offender institutions in particular are a hotspot for prison violence (Bieneck & Pfeiffer, 2012; Ireland, 2002; Wirth, 2007). In Germany, however, they have either no focus on young detainees (Bieneck & Pfeiffer, 2012) or are based on official records only (Wirth, 2007). The Cologne research project was designed to overcome these limitations. It includes a sample of both young imprisoned males and females, longitudinal data collected from four waves over a one-year period, quantitative and qualitative data, a comparison group of young men being on probation, and data from different sources (self-reports and official records).

¹ In Germany young offender institutions are responsible for prisoners aged between 14 and 24 years.

2. Background and Current State of Research

Divergent theories exist seeking to explain how issues typical to incarceration enter the ‘total institution’ of the prison (Goffman, 1961; Dollinger & Schmidt, 2015). The importation model (Irwin & Cressey, 1962) argues that problematic individual dispositions acquired prior to incarceration contribute to intra-prison violence. Indeed, there is evidence that young prisoners are subject to marginalisation processes. Prior to incarceration, for example, a disproportionately high number will have been housed (usually involuntarily) in different facilities that are part of the network of youth welfare services. In their biological families, they are just as likely to have experienced excessive drug use (alcohol, illegal drugs) as well as physical and psychological violence used as a form of punishment (cf. Stelly, Thomas, Vester & Schaffer, 2014). According to the importation model, the dispositional features and vulnerabilities shaped by crises at home and in other aspects of life are ‘imported’ into the prison environment, where these elements shape inmates’ experiences of stress and their ability to cope with imprisonment. In such cases, their resorting to violence thus appears to be a continuation of behavioural patterns for dealing with conflicts and problems adopted before incarceration (see Boxberg, Fehrman, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016 for more on this and on the reactive approaches discussed below).

The deprivation model, on the other hand, argues that it is primarily the stresses of incarceration that result in inmates feeling under pressure to adapt and so favour the emergence of intra-prison violence. The main deprivations brought about as a result of incarceration, also referred to as the ‘pains of imprisonment’ (Sykes, 1958), are not only the deprivation of liberty, but the deprivation of autonomy, deprivation of goods and services, deprivation of heterosexual relationships, as well as the deprivation of security. Experiences of deprivation can be compounded by the architectural characteristics of the institution or the behaviour of prison staff. The manner in which prison staff enforce rules, for instance, can influence prisoners’ sense of safety (cf. Liebling & Tait, 2006). Furthermore, the relationship between prison staff and prisoners affects not only how acutely the latter perceive their loss of autonomy (van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013), it also has an impact on their well-being and general behaviour (Liebling, 2011). Prisoners who state that staff treat them with respect are less likely to violate the rules (Reisig & Mesko, 2009). Against this backdrop, prisoner violence seems to primarily be a means to compensate for the deprivations of incarceration, to assert one’s individuality and to obtain – by resorting to unpermitted behaviours, if necessary – what prison has taken away. The reactive dimension of inmates’ behaviour is also highlighted by research focusing on the issue of inmate-on-inmate violence, which puts forward the idea that within this setting, prisoners must adapt and jostle for position as a matter of necessity. This process of adaptation, researchers suggest, could entail changing one’s behaviour to suit the informal, violence-affirming rules of the prisoner subculture. Researchers go on to suggest that violence represents an important, albeit not exclusive, strategy (see, for example, Bottoms, 1999; Crewe, 2009; Edgar, O’Donnell & Martin, 2003). In response to being victimised, prisoners might withdraw, form groups with others and/or resort to violence themselves (McCorkle, 1992; Reid & Listwan, 2018; Ricciardelli, 2014). Research shows that victimised prisoners feel a strong urge to isolate themselves (Ireland, 2011; Windzio, 2007). However, in addition to such more or less passive precautionary responses aimed at seeking self-protection, victimised prisoners also actively commit acts of violence themselves (Ireland, 2011; McCorkle, 1992). Subsequently, the Applied Fear Response Model (Ireland, 2005; 2011) and the Multifactor Model of Bullying in

Secure Settings (Ireland, 2012) proceed from the assumption that young inmates, in particular, out of fear of being victimised, employ different forms of physical and psychological violence to protect themselves from further victimisation. Violence thus seems to be an adaptive strategy to cope with the reality of prison.

The aforementioned models are not mutually exclusive. Empirical studies show that both importation and deprivation have an influence on the scale of violence in the prison environment, as do the institutions themselves (size, staff turnover, discipline, prison climate) (Klatt, Suhling, Bergmann & Baier, 2017; McCorkle, Miethe & Drass, 1995). Furthermore, there have been clear indications that inmates who experienced incarceration as particularly distressing due to the deprivations they had faced, showed a higher risk of recidivism following release (Listwan et al., 2013; see also Boxer, Middlemass & Delorenzo, 2009; South & Wood, 2006). In a survey of 281 young males incarcerated in five Californian juvenile facilities, 62 % of inmates stated that violence occurred 'either most days or every day in the facility' (Reid & Listwan, 2018, p. 1315). Violence committed at the hands of other prisoners also seems to be a daily occurrence in Germany, at least where youth imprisonment is concerned (Bieneck & Pfeiffer, 2012; Boxberg, Wolter & Neubacher, 2013; Häufle, Schmidt & Neubacher, 2013; Wirth, 2007). It is therefore surprising that prison violence surveys conducted in Germany tend to focus either exclusively (Ernst, 2008) or primarily (Bieneck & Pfeiffer, 2012) on adult prisons.

Kury & Brandenstein (2002) carried out the first survey of male German prisoners at the Hamelin Juvenile Prison (*Jugendanstalt Hameln*). In this facility, 42 % of prisoners had been victims of theft at least once, 8 % had suffered physical intimidation, 7 % had been the target of blackmail or physical mistreatment and 1 % had been victims of sexual assault. In 2011 and 2012, the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony conducted a quantitative study in five youth prisons in Brandenburg, Lower Saxony, Saxony and Thuringia. Of the 865 exclusively male participants, 33 % stated that they had physically victimised another prisoner in the four weeks preceding the survey. Sexual violence, on the other hand, rarely occurred (3.6 %). There was a strong correlation between the committing of acts of physical violence and prisoners' drug use: 30 % of those questioned stated that they had taken drugs at least once in the four previous weeks (Klatt, Hagl, Bergmann & Baier, 2016). Qualitative research seeking to 'decode' the subjective meaning of violence showed that prisoners felt violence was a means of regaining the agency they had been stripped of in the prison setting. Furthermore, it helps constituting a hierarchical order which serves as a remedy for the deprivations experienced (Schumann 2018). Young males, in particular, look for ways to conceal their vulnerability as they transition from a child/adolescent to adulthood. For members of this group, violence thus primarily serves to demonstrate masculinity and is a means for them to become 'real' men who are conscious of their reputation (Gooch, 2019; Jewkes, 2005; Neuber, 2009).

The Institute for Criminology at the University of Cologne began the research project at the heart of this paper in 2010. Based on a sound mixed methods approach, it was supposed to shed light on the extent of different forms of prison violence and on the role of prison subculture while not least providing insight into the development of violent behaviour and corresponding attitudes over the course of one year of imprisonment. Other research questions referred to the effects of deprivation and procedural justice, to drug use, suicide and to the ratio of officially recorded to self-reported violence. Since the project with the young males was successfully implemented a second project phase followed using the same methodology for de-

tained young females. The results of the project will be comprehensively examined in the following. As the objective is to provide a review of this research, the findings will be the main focus of this paper. For further details on the methodological approach, please refer to the project publications listed in the relevant sections.

3. Study Design, Methodology, Sampling

Participating institutions: This longitudinal research project focused on youth prisons and combined quantitative and qualitative methods (for detailed information on the design of the study, see Neubacher, Oelsner, Boxberg & Schmidt, 2011; Neubacher, Oelsner & Schmidt, 2013). During the first project phase (2010-2013), 882 male young offenders from three facilities in North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia took part. At the time, there were four closed youth prisons in North Rhine-Westphalia (Heinsberg, Herford, Iserlohn and Siegburg). As Iserlohn had already been the subject of investigation as part of another project and there were plans to transfer all youth prisoners held in Siegburg to a newly built facility in Wuppertal, both institutions were deemed to be unsuitable for the main investigation (a pre-test of the questionnaire was, however, conducted in Siegburg). The remaining institutions, Heinsberg and Herford, did not differ markedly from Iserlohn and Siegburg in terms of size and responsibilities. The study also incorporated the only youth prison in the state of Thuringia, Ichttershausen, which also ran a secondary facility in the city of Weimar. North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia were selected for this study because the only known cases of prisoner-on-prisoner homicide had occurred in these states (October 2001 in Ichttershausen and November 2006 in Siegburg). Moreover, from a pragmatic perspective, these two states offered the best prospects for the project to be realised as our researchers had existing contacts in the regions.

The survey: Most of the data were collected using a 40-page questionnaire, which prisoners required between 45 and 90 minutes to complete. Prisoners were surveyed in groups of 10-15 people. This took place either in a classroom within the facility or in another appropriate room. Prison staff were not present; however, two members of the research team were on hand to answer any questions and to ensure the survey was conducted in a consistent manner. The survey was conducted a total of four times at intervals of three months (May 2011, August 2011, November 2011, February 2012). At this point, a distinction needs to be drawn between survey waves and the initial survey participation. From the perspective of the research team, there were several survey waves that took place successively (four for male detainees, six for female detainees). Initial survey participation should, however, be interpreted as the moment at which an individual prisoner first took part in the survey, i. e. at the beginning of their incarceration. This could have taken place, for example, during the third wave. In this respect, the terms 'wave' and 'initial survey participation' should be understood differently. New study participants were added during each wave of the survey. In total, each of the 882 prisoners has completed at least one questionnaire: 521 were surveyed twice, 267 three times and 100 four times. There was a control group comprising 212 probationers who were each presented with the same questionnaire on multiple occasions; however, this was done by post instead of in person. The myriad forms of violence (e. g. psychological, physical and sexual violence, coercion/blackmail) were incorporated as 24 items chosen in line with the DIPC-SCALED (Direct and Indirect Prisoner behaviour Checklist – Scaled version) (Ireland & Ireland, 2008; Boxberg, Wolter &

Neubacher, 2013). The entire questionnaire was subjected to a pre-test in October 2010 involving juvenile inmates held at the Siegburg prison.

Participation: Participation in the survey was voluntary and *all* inmates in the participating institutions were invited to take part. Roughly one week before each survey, the prisoners were contacted in their facilities, and in detailed briefings information was shared with them concerning the survey background and procedure, data protection and confidentiality regarding the information given. These briefings were repeated before each new survey to ensure the relevant information was shared with new inmates. In addition to the surveys, single problem-centred interviews were conducted with 36 participants. Interview subjects were chosen at random based on various criteria (including first/subsequent incarceration and whether they had committed a violent offence). Providing the prisoners had given their written consent, their individual prisoner files were also analysed. In the participating facilities, there were 386 prisoners in the first wave, 430 in the second wave, 453 in the third wave and 500 in the fourth wave who submitted a completed questionnaire. As a result, participation increased from 62 % at the outset to 67 %, 70 % and then finally 74 %. Moreover, 62 % of all prisoners agreed to take part in an interview and 91 % agreed to an analysis of their prisoner file; however, due to time constraints, only 223 files could be analysed, which were selected at random. There were no indications that structural differences existed between non-participants and those participating in the study. Checks showed that the majority of those participants who did not continue their involvement in the study despite taking part at an earlier stage were in fact released or were unable to participate due to other organisational reasons within the prison (e. g. important appointments inside or outside of the facility).

Detained young females: During the second phase of the project (2013-2017), the survey was conducted following the same methodology (with the exception of the control group of probationers) with young females, initially involving inmates held in juvenile detention in Baden-Württemberg (Schwäbisch Gmünd), Bavaria (Aichach), North-Rhine Westphalia (Cologne) and Saxony² (Chemnitz). These federal states were chosen because they contained larger prison facilities for women. Conducting research in these states would thus allow the survey to cover the majority of all females currently housed in German institutions for juvenile offenders. This stage of the project was extended to cover six survey waves and supplemented with a single cross-sectional survey conducted across the whole of Germany, as the number of females in juvenile detention continued to drop across the survey period. The first wave involved 78 females, the second 85, the third 82 and the fourth 72. The fifth wave saw 63 participants, and 58 took part in the sixth wave. As with the male detainees, the number of female participants increased throughout the course of the study (from 69 % at the beginning to 80 %). Overall, 269 women participated in the survey, 38 of whom were involved in the single survey conducted additionally in Berlin, Luckau-Duben (Brandenburg), Frankfurt/Main (Hesse), Vechta (Lower Saxony) and Zweibrücken (Rhineland-Palatinate).³ In addition, 16 female inmates were interviewed and 187 prisoner files were analysed.

² An agreement between the two federal states means that the facility in Saxony (JVA Chemnitz) also houses female young offenders from Thuringia. Similarly, the young offender institution in Zweibrücken is used to accommodate young women from Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland.

³ Despite having female juvenile offenders in its care, the facility in Neustrelitz (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) was the only institution excluded from the study. This was because only two young females were housed there at the time the survey was conducted. The team was thus able to effectively survey the entire population of female juvenile offenders in Germany, despite this exclusion.

Study Sample: As stated above, the sample consisted of 882 males and 269 females. At the time the survey was conducted, the male juvenile offenders were on average 20 years of age and 69 % had been convicted for a violent offence (Boxberg, Fehrmann, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016). The proportion of non-German participants stood at 18 %; 30 % were German nationals with a migrant background. The average age of the female juveniles was 19.5 and 51 % had been convicted for a violent offence. Of the female survey participants, 18 % were non-German nationals and 34 % had a migrant background (Neubacher, 2014a; Beecken, 2020). The main factors incarcerated young women shared with their male counterparts were experiences of violence and failure in education. Around half of the women had not completed secondary education, and almost 90 % had not completed any formal training. As was the case with the young men, almost all of the women had a previous conviction (98 %; the figure stood at 99 % for the male prisoners, Beecken, 2020).

4. Results

4.1. Prevalence of Violence

Prisoners were asked whether they had committed or personally experienced one of 24 forms of violence in the previous three months (combined perpetrator/victim survey). These forms of behaviour were grouped into six categories of violence. For example, the term ‘psychological violence’ comprises behaviours such as ‘I deliberately ignored or excluded someone’ or ‘I set fellow prisoners against one another’, whereas ‘physical violence’ is understood as the use (‘I punched or kicked another inmate’) or threat (‘I threatened fellow prisoners with violence’) of physical violence. To be able to distinguish as clearly as possible between the various levels of violence, a category was created that encompassed acts considered to constitute assault, including within the scope of criminal law. This category only encompassed the following two items: ‘I hit or punched a fellow inmate’ and ‘I intentionally injured another inmate’.

Forms of psychological violence (e. g. ignoring someone, inciting hatred, making derisive comments) were widespread. The responses given by perpetrators of violent acts show that between 80 % and 90 % of male inmates (depending on the specific survey interval in question) admitted to having displayed such behaviour in the preceding three months. Between 62 % and 68 % of surveyed inmates, i. e. roughly two thirds, stated that they had resorted to forms of physical violence (including starting a fight, threatening the use of violence). Almost half of prisoners (between 42 % and 47 %) admitted to assaulting a fellow inmate. Ranging between 42 % and 44 %, the proportion of prisoners who confessed to acts of ‘coercion’ or ‘blackmail’ was also considerable. This category encompassed behaviours typical of a functioning prison subculture (e. g. ‘nicking’; making another prisoner hand over items they have bought; having a fellow inmate perform a certain task; forcing a fellow prisoner to lie for someone) (Boxberg, Wolter & Neubacher, 2013; Boxberg, Fehrmann, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016; Neubacher, 2014b). Sexual violence (including sexual harassment), however, was relatively rare, with between 1 % and 4 % admitting to carrying out such acts (Neubacher & Schmidt, 2018). These figures indicate a high prevalence of various forms of violence. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that violence is an everyday phenomenon in young offender institutions.

Predominantly, the prevalence rates among young females are slightly below the level of their male counterparts. Of those surveyed, 80 % admitted to using psychological violence against a

fellow inmate during the previous three months (lowest value: 72 %, highest value: 84 %). Between 41 % and 54 % conceded that they had used forms of physical violence, between 19 % and 39 % had employed coercion or blackmail. As was the case among male juveniles, sexual assault was a rare occurrence among young female prisoners (between 1 % and 4 %). However, a considerable difference could be noted for a specific form of physical violence, namely assault; a mere 17-27 % of female detainees admitted to committing this act (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019) compared to 42-47 % of the male detainees. The low number of female respondents explains why there is a broader range between the lowest and highest percentage values in comparison to the results for male inmates.

Responses concerning perpetrated acts and victimisation reveal divergences both among male and female respondents. The prevalence rates for victimisation were mostly lower than those for perpetrators, which could be caused by several factors. Firstly, some reports of victimisation in prison will include acts that involved several perpetrators (Boxberg, Wolter & Neubacher, 2013). Secondly, responses are given retrospectively and concern the preceding three months. When evaluating those incidents drawn from memory, the risk of a respondent mis-recalling an event thus needs to be factored in. Responses will differ depending on whether an inmate sees themselves as more of a victim or as a perpetrator during an altercation. While among male inmates there were fewer reports of victimisation than perpetrated acts of violence throughout, the picture was rather mixed for female prisoners. Here reports of victimisation were higher than reports of offending with regard to assault, sexual violence and material injury (e. g. theft, property damage). This suggests that young males, in particular, find it difficult to openly admit to being victimised as this would undermine their sense of identity as strong men capable of defending themselves. In terms of one's reputation, it appears more natural within a prison context to see oneself as someone who metes out violence rather than being on the receiving end of it.

4.2. Incidence, Locations of Violence, Control Group

The incidence of relevant events was collected by asking prisoners to choose from the following categories: 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes' and 'often'. Although, as can be seen, many inmates reported committing acts of violence themselves, this seldom occurred within the specified recall period. The young males and females overwhelmingly gave 'rarely' as an answer (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019; Neubacher, 2014b). It can thus be argued that when one speaks – justifiably – of violence being an everyday occurrence in youth prisons, it is necessary to add that although prisoners encounter violence within the prison setting on a daily basis and are, subsequently, affected by such experiences, they do not suffer acts of violence first-hand every day. This latent violence, which does not always take on a manifest form, but is overwhelmingly present in the background, influencing behaviour, can be aptly described as a figurative 'backdrop of violence'. As inmates made clear in their interviews, prisoners need to be 'on guard', demonstrate their strength and brace themselves against potential attacks. Interviewees stated that when an inmate is 'tested', it was necessary to respond to this provocation so that others would not think that the inmate in question was someone who would tolerate such actions. As the prisoners themselves put it, you need to 'prove yourself at least a couple of times so that they leave you alone'. These reports are supported by the fact that, especially among young males, prevalence rates for committed acts of violence differed only marginally (by merely a

few percentage points) across the different waves, even though the composition of the group surveyed differed each time due to inmates being released or the inclusion of new arrivals. It could therefore be argued that violence is linked to the prison as a setting (and its prevailing subculture) and remains largely unaffected by the constant arrival and departure of prisoners. The fact that violence can materialise at any given moment in a youth prison understandably provokes a sense of insecurity among a large number of the young inmates. During initial survey participation, 47 % of the male respondents (and 41 out of 78 female respondents) agreed with the statement 'I feel safe from attack in prison'. There was no evidence of a correlation between the length of incarceration and a perceived sense of safety. It is reasonable to suggest that around one in two young offenders does not feel safe. Roughly two thirds of prisoners believed that violence in prison tends to be spontaneous rather than planned, although they do report occasional incidents of organised fights (Baumeister, 2017). No distinct trends could be established for violence hotspots. When participants were asked, in an open question, to name the locations where they had experienced violence, the overwhelming response given by inmates was during their free time (often spent in the yard) and in their holding cell. The inclusion of the latter should, however, not be taken to mean that an attack was invariably committed by a fellow inmate housed within the same cell. Such cases will also occur when prisoners are 'unlocked' (when all cell doors along a certain corridor are unlocked) or when prisoners from different cells are occasionally locked in the same cell, e. g. to play a game together during their free time. After free time and cells, inmates also stated that attacks would occur during work, in the shower block, in the corridor (of their wing) and during sports activities. Only rarely did prisoners mention classrooms, the visitor room, the doctor's waiting room and prison transport. At the same time, this list clearly illustrates that violence can ultimately occur anywhere (Neubacher 2014b). Contrary to prisoners' responses, the individual files on inmates held by the institution showed that almost all incidents reported took place in prison cells. One explanation for this could be that incidents occurring during free time often go unnoticed by prison staff (Baumeister, 2017), especially when an inmate has been attacked verbally. The high prevalence rates need to be considered in respect of the low incidence and with reference to a control group comprising 212 male offenders who had been handed down a suspended sentence. The average age of this group was also 20; however, the control group diverged from the male inmates surveyed with regard to education, with the control group displaying a slightly more successful educational and training background. The control group also had a smaller proportion of respondents with previous convictions and convictions for violent offences (53 % compared to 69 %). The higher number of participants with previous convictions was to be expected and no coincidence, as judicial ruling procedures take such factors into consideration. In order to ensure comparability, a propensity score matching was used to match 185 probationers with 185 inmates (Boxberg, Wolter & Neubacher, 2013). This allowed for comparability to be constructed with regard to age, education, occupation prior to incarceration, conviction for a violent offence, pre-convictions and substance use. It was found that the control group of probationers was consistently more severely burdened by violence than the group of prisoners. Over a similar three-month period prior to the survey, 96 % had carried out an act of psychological violence and 82 % an act of physical violence. Almost two thirds admitted to having committed an assault (63 %). 44 % stated that they had coerced or blackmailed someone else, and even the proportion of those admitting to a sexual assault (5 %) was higher than the proportion among prisoners (Boxberg, Wolter & Neubacher, 2013; Boxberg,

Fehrmann, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016). What appears at first glance to be a surprising finding can be explained by the various opportunities to commit crime and the degree of social control. Although the prison setting can hardly prevent encounters between inmates with an affinity for violence, and indeed such encounters are inevitable and frequent, the prison staff are clearly able to reduce the number of apparently favourable opportunities for violence through a relatively high degree of surveillance and control. This is certainly not the case among the offenders on probation, who are free and largely able to go about their lives unhindered (see also Boxberg, 2016). These findings should not be cause for self-celebration among penal institutions: they take full responsibility for those prisoners in their custody and thus have a fundamental duty to prevent any unlawful act. Nonetheless, these findings do highlight that prison violence needs to be put into context, namely by acknowledging that violence also exists outside of the prison setting and that this violence can be imported into a prison at any point. This mainly refers to violence encountered by minors within the family as a form of punishment, an experience many inmates reported (Häufle, Schmidt & Neubacher, 2013; Schmidt 2013; Boxberg, Fehrmann, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016).

4.3. Dynamics of Violence: Victim-Offender Overlap and Longitudinal Development

The terms ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’, as they are used in this paper, could create or reinforce the impression that within the prison setting these roles are distinct and clearly identifiable, when in fact the opposite is true. While there are individual cases of inmates who can be considered typical ‘victims’ who are picked on by others, the data collected showed that the proportion of those inmates who had been victimised in the three preceding months (at least once) but had not committed any acts of violence themselves was rather low (5-8 % depending on the survey wave). Those who were apparently able to keep out of prison violence altogether and reported being neither victim nor perpetrator made up a similarly small proportion (5-6 %). The overwhelming majority of inmates (73 % or 68 %) reported being both perpetrator and victim (Häufle, Schmidt & Neubacher, 2013). Generally, there are thus no fixed roles but a considerable overlap between several different groups (‘perpetrator’, ‘victim’, ‘victim/perpetrator’, ‘not involved’). These roles are, in effect, subject to constant ‘renegotiation’. This subsequently results in very dynamic interactions, with prisoners usually shifting between the individual groups. A comparison showed that those in the two ‘perpetrator’ groups were more likely to display favourable attitudes towards violence than those in the ‘victim’ and the ‘not involved’ resp. ‘marginally involved’ groups. These values specifically comprised the acceptance of violence, notions of masculinity as well as a positive attitude towards subcultural values and patterns of behaviour. One male prisoner stated during an interview: ‘But, like I said, I met up with old friends. And they looked out for me. Otherwise I would have just been a “pussy” in here too, as they say. I was left alone, nobody tried to blackmail me and stuff like that’ (Häufle, Schmidt & Neubacher, 2013, p. 31). The results clearly show that belonging to a group of prisoners that promotes the use of violence can be explained by prisoners’ position within, and attitude towards, the prisoner subculture. Inmates with the same subcultural attitudes display violent behaviours more often than inmates who do not share these convictions (Boxberg & Bögelein, 2015). As expected, acceptance of and willingness to engage in violence

are shown to be strong predictors for committing acts of intra-prison violence (Boxberg, Fehrman, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016; see also Weiss, Link & Stemmler, 2015). Prisoners employ violence to sanction violations of subcultural rules, to defend their honour or to dispel accusations that they are not 'man enough' (Häufle, Schmidt & Neubacher, 2013).

Looking at these data alone, it becomes apparent that inmates' movements between groups correlate with the use of violence, which in turn increases the longer a person is incarcerated. This trend continues until an inmate manages to ensure they are left alone. Incidentally, this dual dynamic (movement between groups, tendency towards the perpetrator group) was also present among incarcerated females (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019). Furthermore, with the assistance of structural equation modelling (for two reference survey participation dates, see Häufle & Wolter, 2015) and using growth curve models (for four reference survey participation dates, see Boxberg, Fehrman, Häufle, Neubacher and Schmidt, 2016), it was possible to demonstrate that an increased use of violence over time by a prisoner resulted from a victimisation experience recorded during an earlier survey. In addition to experiences of victimisation, frequent previous convictions and a long period of incarceration proved to be significant predictors. In other words, if a detainee is victimised, they are thus more likely to become a perpetrator at a later point. However, inmates will not inevitably turn to physical violence, but use it only as a last resort if they are unable to maintain their position using verbal violence or intimidating behaviour. The rise of violence was apparent particularly in the first three quarters of the 12-month survey period. The data suggest that, over time, prisoners acquire a certain social status within the prison and this status is challenged less and less, effectively reducing the need to employ violence. This echoes consistent reports by many prisoners that they only want to be 'left alone' and that 'you' first have to 'prove yourself' a few times in order to be left in peace.

The number of those who resorted to severe forms of violence also increased in line with the length of incarceration. Of the 100 male young offenders who took part in all four survey waves, three quarters reported having committed at least one assault over the twelve-month period. 28 prisoners admitted physically injuring another inmate in the preceding three months each of the four times they were surveyed; a further 13 gave the same statement during three of the four surveys. A multivariate correspondence analysis showed that these 'perpetrators of assault' were unevenly distributed across the institutions and that there was a clear link between the use of violence and approval of the prisoner subculture (Ernst & Neubacher, 2014).

4.4. Prison Climate, Deprivation and Procedural Justice

The findings concerning the importance of the prisoner subculture and how its influence differs from facility to facility once again emphasise that prison violence cannot solely be put down to the individual characteristics of prisoners, as suggested by the importation model. Circumstances specific to an institution or a local 'prison climate' play a more important role (see also Liebling, 2004). This is suggested by the findings on the role played by 'procedural justice', which was recorded through items such as 'the prisoners are treated with respect by prison staff' or 'prison staff explain their decisions to prisoners'. While the prisoners' perceived deprivation of autonomy generally intensified the use of psychological and physical violence, the negative influence of a lack of autonomy was reduced when the 'procedural justice' variable was incorporated into the structural equation model (Wolter & Boxberg, 2016). In other words,

inmates who perceive that they are being treated respectfully and fairly feel less deprived than others. Although respectful treatment by prison staff has no influence on how much inmates miss friends and family, it does lessen the ‘pains of imprisonment’, in particular the loss of autonomy, sexual deprivation and the lack of security (Boxberg, Fehrmann, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016). Those who feel they are listened to and treated fairly clearly have the impression that they have at least some influence over the decisions affecting them. By contrast, prisoners experience deprivations more acutely if they have the impression that they must obey prison staff irrespective of their own beliefs or opinions. As a result, experienced procedural justice reduces the negative effects of the loss of autonomy and, alongside this indirect effect, also produces a direct negative (i. e. reducing) effect on physical violence. Even though interdependencies cannot be ruled out, this finding is consistent with previous research (van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013) showing that prisoners who feel they are treated fairly are less violent, even in spite of otherwise adverse circumstances (Boxberg, Fehrmann, Häufle, Neubacher & Schmidt, 2016). These insights indicate the untapped potential readily available to institutions if they were to adopt new approaches to interacting with inmates. Such approaches would undoubtedly be met with considerable interest by prisoners who have experienced many forms of injustice throughout their lives and nonetheless – or perhaps for that very reason – cling on so firmly to their notions of justice (Schmidt, 2019).

As pointed out above, a comparison across genders shows that the prevalence rates among young women were lower than among their male counterparts, and this applied for all forms of violence, with the figure for assault even considerably lower. These variations are due to the unique circumstances in which young women are incarcerated (Neubacher & Boxberg, 2018; Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019). As their numbers are low, female young offenders⁴ are predominantly housed in small, more manageable institutions or wings, which benefits their relationship with prison staff (both male and female) and makes measures aimed at countering subcultural phenomena clearly more effective. Indeed, incarcerated young females made fewer mentions of encounters with prison subculture and more frequently reported prison staff behaving fairly and respectfully (procedural justice) than the incarcerated young males. The differences between the two groups of prisoners with regard to the degree of violence exercised could even be fully attributed to the experience of procedural justice and to the less pronounced subcultural attitudes among female inmates (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019). Once again, these findings emphasise the considerable role played by ‘soft’ factors, such as experiences of respect and procedural justice as well as – in an even broader sense – the prison climate.

4.5. Impressions Collected During Interviews: Assertiveness and Experiences of Neglect

The interviews confirmed the detainees’ subjective need to ‘prove’ themselves within prison (as well as elsewhere) using the necessary means. The demonstration of physical strength is the most frequently reported assertiveness strategy, and the method used to uphold one’s existing status. By contrast, the alternative – requesting to be moved to a ‘protection wing’ – is viewed as carrying a certain stigma and as being damaging to one’s reputation (Häufle,

⁴ On 31 March 2019, the official prison statistics state that a total of 3,679 prisoners were incarcerated in German youth prisons; 156 were female, 3,523 were male.

Schmidt & Neubacher, 2013). In terms of the impact of past events from a prisoner's life, experiences of powerlessness and neglect within the family context are the most influential. Statements given during interviews suggest that frustrated needs for recognition unmet by one's family can be a motivator in using violence as a means of achieving acknowledgement, and that the prison setting once again triggers acquired behavioural patterns: the young men demand respect, they defend their 'honour' when insulted and in this way boost their reputation. Hierarchically organised prisoner subculture is adopted as a means to forge identity and recognition, especially by those prisoners who have suffered severe and repeated intra-family victimisations (Schmidt, 2013; Schmidt 2015). Prisoners describe violence behind bars as normal, predictable and governed by a set of rules. According to their statements, everyone knows 'how prison works'. This stands in striking contrast to the violence suffered during childhood and adolescence, which is often depicted as sudden and, at first, inexplicable.

The young females surveyed had also undergone similar experiences of biographical discontinuity prior to incarceration (stints in different youth housing facilities, disrupted education/professional training, unstable relationships with caregivers) as the male interviewees. In their interviews,⁵ they repeatedly referred to family constellations where they were controlled and (violently) 'disciplined' by older brothers. In general, almost all the young women had experienced violence at the hands of relatives, who were, most of the time, male. In many cases, the surveyed inmates were responsible for performing parental tasks, in particular for supervising and caring for younger siblings. Traditional gender roles appear to have been imposed on them as a matter of course. While the women frequently refer to themselves retrospectively as being a 'sensible', 'civilised', 'proper Muslim' or 'little' girl who conformed to gender stereotypes, some of the female inmates deliberately break with these norms. Their framing of the acts of violence they have carried out reveals the same desire for recognition, assertiveness and agency as shown by the young men. However, in contrast to their male counterparts, the women's statements seem to suggest that violence is not a dominant part of their everyday lives behind bars. But when violence does occur, the depictions of such events are not that dissimilar from those given by the men. For example, 'snitching' is viewed just as negatively by both women and men. When such behaviour occurs, some inmates associate it with immaturity and being a 'sissy'. The response is similar with regard to psychological violence (e. g. bad-mouthing, bullying), which the young women refer to as 'catfighting'. The issues of sexuality or sexual violence appear to be less taboo than among incarcerated young males (cf. Neubacher & Schmidt, 2018). A small number of female inmates stated that some incarcerated women were openly in same-sex relationships. Some denied the occurrence of sexual or sexualised violence and suggested it was more likely to take place in male prisons due to what the female prisoners referred to as their 'male' sexual urges.

4.6. Drugs, Suicide

On the whole, the problem of drug use in prison should be considered pressing, and that applies as much for the young female as for the young male detainees. Of all the inmates surveyed, 81 % stated that they had used illegal drugs prior to being incarcerated; the majority even admitted taking several illicit drugs. The most frequently used drug was cannabis (consumed by

⁵ The material collected during interviews has not (yet) been systematically analysed.

79 % of surveyed inmates), with it predominantly being consumed 'most days'. The female respondents were slightly less familiar with this drug: 27 % had never taken cannabis (compared with 20 % of the young males). By contrast, amphetamine, cocaine and opioids were more frequently taken by the women than by the men (Bäumler, 2020).

When prisoners were first surveyed, 42 % of the inmates questioned reported consuming at least one illegal drug during their incarceration (women: 34 %, men: 44 %). Most of the time, cannabis was the drug in question, as it had been prior to imprisonment; although, here too, the male inmates reported being more frequent users. In contrast to habits outside of prison, opioids appear to play only a very minor role within the prison setting, especially for women. In the first months of incarceration, use practically ceases. For over 70 % of prisoners, cannabis consumption drops, generally falling so low as to constitute (forced) abstinence. Almost all the other inmates' consumption levels stayed constant as the prisoners in question were non-users (Bäumler, 2020). At least for Germany, the survey is thus the first to show, with unprecedented clarity, that prison cuts inmates off from their supply of drugs. Just as important is the finding that only three months on, the inmates' second survey participation revealed that twice as many prisoners had returned to drug use as compared to the previous survey (Bäumler, 2020). Inmates thus adapt to their new environment soon enough and find ways and means to access drugs. The strongest predictors of intra-prison drug use have been shown to be drug use prior to imprisonment, the use of violence against fellow inmates as well as the perceived loss of autonomy. The situation is thus connected to the problem of violence in two ways: on the one hand, there is a link between violence and drug use (see also Klatt, Hagl, Bergmann & Baier, 2016), on the other, loss of autonomy and forced abstinence compound the deprivations of imprisonment. It is no coincidence that both episodes of violence and drug use are particularly dynamic during the first six months of incarceration. During this period inmates of both sexes must deal with the challenge of adjusting and reactively adapting to the new environment. Prisoners, especially incarcerated young people, are considered at high risk of suicide (Fehrmann & Bulla, 2017; Liebling, 1994). This behaviour can be understood as a response – albeit one that is adverse – to a critical event (in this case, incarceration) and the deprivations that imprisonment entails. As a result of this, and due to the lack of data on unreported cases, relevant questions on the subject were included in the questionnaire, paying particular attention to ethical research implications (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019; Neubacher, Oelsner & Schmidt, 2013). In the results, 16 % (138 out of 882 prisoners) of the male inmates reported having had suicidal thoughts at least once in their life; just under half reported having such thoughts during their sentence at the time they were surveyed. 7 % (n = 58) had already attempted suicide once in their lives, and over a third of these attempts (n = 21) had taken place during imprisonment. Ten prisoners stated that they were currently having suicidal thoughts.⁶ Among the incarcerated young women, a significantly higher degree of suicidality was consistently measured. Of those surveyed, 38 % (n = 103) reported already having had suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives. 23 % (n = 62) had attempted suicide once; in 15 cases, the attempt had taken place during their current sentence. At the time they were surveyed, 13 women confessed

⁶ In all these cases, a policy was followed that had been agreed to in advance with the institutions and made known to the inmates beforehand: the prison psychologist was notified and asked to investigate the matter in a separate meeting as the protection of life was considered paramount. Statements made in the questionnaire, on the other hand, were not shared. In all ten cases, the prisoners had previously received intra-prison psychological counselling. During the entire research project, no suicide took place in any of the participating institutions.

to having suicidal thoughts. For both women and men, suicidal thoughts predominantly occurred at the start of their sentence; the trigger for such thoughts was a perceived sense of hopelessness (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019).

As those inmates who stated that they were having suicidal thoughts at the time they were surveyed were all already known to the institutions, it seemed imperative to investigate whether there were further inmates who did not want to be identified as being suicidal. To answer this question, the data collected from the young females in the longitudinal survey, in which the inmates were given a pseudonym, were compared with data from the single cross-sectional study, which was fully anonymous. The result showed that women who were surveyed anonymously did indeed state more often that they were having suicidal thoughts (27 %, n = 4) than those inmates who were questioned pseudonymously (10 %, n = 9). It thus seems reasonable to conclude that the levels of suicidality among young inmates are most likely higher than suggested by this set of data. Statements made by inmates indicated that the reason prisoners were so reluctant to answer this question was that they feared being moved to a so-called 'safe' cell if prison staff identified them as being suicidal (Boxberg & Neubacher, 2019). The cell in question is an unfurnished room that is permanently monitored with cameras where prisoners are taken, dressed only in the bare minimum, should they pose a risk to themselves or others. There is reason to doubt, however, that this security measure is a suitable method for suicide prevention beyond the immediate short term.

4.7. Reported Incidents, the 'Dark Figure' of Unreported Incidents, and Disciplinary Measures

To more precisely determine the relationship between the number of cases recorded by staff in prisoner files and those incidents of violence that go unnoticed by the institution (i. e. the 'dark figure' of unreported incidents), 223 individual files kept for male prisoners (reported cases) were compared with the survey responses given by *the exact same* prisoners (dark figure) for the relevant three-month period. During this comparison, only serious cases of violence were considered: this was done by restricting analysis to three items from the questionnaire ('deliberately injuring another inmate', 'hitting or punching another inmate', 'deliberately starting a fight'). Such behaviours are punishable under criminal law, therefore making it feasible to assume that such incidents, whether observed by or reported to prison staff, would be documented in the files of the prisoners in question as they would be relevant to disciplinary or criminal proceedings. As a result, our researchers were able to use the questionnaire to identify 84 male inmates who had committed one of the aforementioned acts of violence against another inmate. Of these 84 *individuals*, there were only 16 for whom violent conduct had been noted in prison files.⁷ This corresponds to a ratio of 1:5.3, which means that for every recorded perpetrator of violence in prison, five remain officially undetected. The frequency of *incidents* for which such individuals bear responsibility could not be exactly determined based on questionnaire data, because frequency was only vaguely specified in the questions ('never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often'). As a result, if an inmate responded with 'rarely', this was counted as one incident, whereas 'sometimes' or 'often' were taken to mean two acts of violence. Thus, the

⁷ A further nine individuals had been flagged up in the prison records for having committed violent acts against prison staff. These prisoners were not considered here because the questionnaire did not ask about violence that takes place between prisoners and prison staff.

resulting estimate of the ratio between reported and unreported cases was extremely conservative. Here calculations resulted in an even larger dark figure of unreported incidents. For the 23 cases documented in prisoner files, there were at least 149 incidents reported by prisoners in their questionnaires despite a very reserved counting method being employed. These figures result in a ratio of 1:6.5 (Neubacher 2014b; Wolter & Häufle, 2014). This is the first time that research has been able to deliver results that go beyond purely blind estimates and prove that violence among inmates often and to a substantial degree remains hidden. These figures also reinforce reservations among scholars concerning the reliability of prison records (Leuschner & Hüneke, 2016; Wolter & Häufle, 2014).

In prisons for young women, researchers were able to analyse 187 prisoner files. For female inmates, the ratio between violent *perpetrators* known to the institution and *individuals* who self-report as being violent was also 1:5.3 (recorded on file: 7; self-reporting via questionnaire: 37). As a result, the dark figure of unrecorded violent perpetrators was just as large as among young incarcerated males. However, the number of violent acts (*incidents*) committed by the young females were considerably more likely to go unreported compared to the young men: here the ratio stood at 1:13 (recorded on file: 7, self-reporting via questionnaire: 92). The most probable explanation (although not apparent from the incomplete data recorded on file) is that the injuries caused by violence among female inmates are less severe and thus less visible (Beecken & Neubacher, 2020).

Consequently, it seems reasonable to understand the 'reality' represented by prison files as a reflection of the specific conditions governing the prison setting and the perceptions of prison staff. The files kept on male inmates (for more on this, see Baumeister, 2017) are generally dominated by entries referring to an accusation of minor bodily injury and incidents that take place inside cells. This most notably reflects the fact that such accusations exceed a certain materiality threshold, and that attacks taking place during prisoners' free time (outdoor exercise) are noticed less often. The fact that fewer incidents are recorded at the weekend could be linked to the reduced number of prison staff supervising inmates. The prison files predominantly show evidence of minor to moderate injuries (including cuts, lacerations and puncture wounds) because in normal circumstances inmates do not have access to weapons and therefore resort to using their fists or everyday objects (e. g. a pen, a tool, a lit cigarette). The fact that an episode of violence is generally made known and recorded by a member of prison staff, and sometimes by the victim, but rarely by a fellow prisoner (Baumeister, 2017) emphasises the relevance of subcultural rules, e. g. that one should never 'grass up' a fellow inmate to prison officers.

The study also investigated the frequency and impact of disciplinary measures for the male participants. An analysis of prisoner files (see Baumeister, 2017) showed that in response to 71 % of those incidents known to the prison staff and recorded on file, one or several disciplinary measures were taken by the prison management; in half of cases, a criminal charge was even brought against the perpetrator. Yet 55 % of those who were punished for violent behaviour had already been subjected to disciplinary measures in the past. Why then had previous discipline not served as adequate warning? Incorporating into the analysis the more comprehensive questionnaire data, which included the dark figure of unreported incidents, produced a simple explanation for this apparent contradiction. The majority of punishable acts committed by inmates went unpunished because they remained undetected. Under these circumstances, disciplinary measures that aim to foster more desirable behaviour (i. e. putting a stop

to all violent attacks) remain ineffective. As a result, of the 74 prisoners who had been disciplined for committing assault against a fellow inmate when first surveyed and were still incarcerated three months later (second survey participation), only seven reported that they had not carried out another assault, compared with 67 who had. The same pattern could be observed during the third and fourth survey participation: when they next participated in the survey, those who had been penalised reported acts of delinquency more frequently than the comparison group who had not been punished (Bachmann & Ernst, 2015). Prisoners who repeatedly see that they are able to reach their objectives through violence, and get away with it scot-free, will feel no need to change their behaviour, even if they are occasionally 'busted' and then sanctioned.

5. Conclusions

Some of the results of this research have confirmed previous findings, particularly with regard to high prevalence rates, the role of prison subculture and the influence of the respective prison climate. However, having access to a rather comprehensive set of data, which in certain areas provided greater detail than the data compiled by previous research (the longitudinal aspect, comparison of reported and unreported cases, gender comparison), we were also able to gain unprecedented insight into episodes of violence among young inmates. In spite of high prevalence rates, physical violence is not experienced by prisoners first-hand every day; rather, it is a permanent, ubiquitous threat that can materialise at any given moment and which prisoners must therefore be prepared for. If a prisoner is victimised, they themselves will then turn to violence – unless they are able to arrange protection through other means. This dynamic is triggered particularly in the initial months of incarceration, and persists until the individual has adequately secured their status and is 'left alone'. Almost every prisoner – irrespective of their mindset – is ultimately pulled into the maelstrom of violence, where their role shifts between victim and perpetrator.

Against this backdrop, it is true that young people who have experienced and learnt violence in their childhood or adolescence bring violence-related problems into the prison setting (importation). The experience of imprisonment, however, does have a major impact, and the study's longitudinal design allowed this aspect to be effectively recorded. Significant correlations could be established between the individual forms of violence and deprivation among prisoners. This applies not only for the loss of autonomy but also for sexual deprivation and fear of being physically attacked. These findings support the deprivation model and reactive approaches, which argue that the circumstances facing an inmate within the prison setting trigger the behavioural problems typical to incarceration as the result of a kind of compensatory reaction to previous experiences of deprivation. None of these findings constitute a good starting point from which to offer effective treatment of inmates, and this paper demonstrates that drug use and suicidality further intensify the predicaments of imprisonment. And yet prisons do indeed have the power to shift the climate within the institution by initiating change. Our research on young females in particular shows – and very clearly at that – just how strongly perceived procedural justice can reduce the use of violence. These findings indicate to prison authorities that they have powerful levers at their disposal to eliminate violence in its various forms: by employing fair procedures and providing adequate training to prison officers (see Butler & Drake, 2007; Fehrmann, 2013), they can turn the tide on violence.

Disciplinary measures should not be *the* default method to resolve the issue of violence. It is understandable that prisons believe in the effectiveness of these measures, as these institutions consistently take a firm line against violence and their logic is limited to the setting as reflected in prison reports and prisoner files. This research project, however, was able to prove that such approaches do not reduce the use of violence. In terms of criminal policy, this means that prisons must develop new prevention strategies if they wish to tackle the root cause of the problem. The powerful influence of prison subculture will only be countered effectively if prisoners come to have more faith in the institution's ability to solve problems than in that of the subculture. Success will depend on prisoners no longer seeing violence as a way to boost their status; the same gains must be possible by refraining from violent acts. Prisoners must be engaged and encouraged to contribute to intra-prison policies that ban violence. Not only are the majority already experts in this field, it can also be assumed that prisoners will feel greater commitment to rules that they have had a part in writing (Neubacher & Boxberg, 2018). Engaging in a dialogue on how to reform the prison environment gives inmates the possibility to address and discuss concerns that they themselves see as grievances, frustrations and injustices. During the interviews, prisoners made clear that they felt such an option was lacking (Schmidt, 2016). Furthermore, as a matter of urgent consideration, the question should be raised as to whether it is absolutely necessary and ethically justifiable to imprison young people who have not been sentenced for a violent offence (who make up no less than 30 % of the young men in juvenile offender institutions) and who thus seem to be particularly vulnerable behind bars. Needless to say, it is also essential to explore how imprisonment could be avoided for young women, 42 % of whom are serving short sentences of up to 12 months (Beecken, 2020). Surely support can be offered to them (and their children) more effectively outside of a prison setting without subjecting the public to appreciable risk. We must also urgently rethink the way prisons treat detainees at risk of suicide. Denying these individuals even more freedoms at a time when they are especially vulnerable by placing them in special, monitored cells is inhumane and should have no place in modern prison facilities. From an academic perspective, it is imperative to finally address an issue that in Germany has remained severely under-researched: that of violence between prison officers and prisoners.

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