

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL FINDINGS FROM THE 2020 NGCRC ADULT STATE PRISON SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

Reported here are the preliminary findings from a statistical analysis of the 2020 NGCRC National Prison Gang/STG Survey. The survey data collection time period was for the first three months of 2020. This pilot study resulted in a useable sample size of N = 29 adult state correctional facilities from N = 20 states. It focuses on the adult portion of American corrections and includes only state correctional institutions (minimum, medium, and maximum security levels) as the unit of analysis.

Adult corrections reflects the more serious side of gang/STG problems in America today. While it is true that almost all juvenile correctional facilities have gang/STG problems, the deadlier version of gang conflict is found in the adult system. The adult portion of the American gang/STG problem therefore reflects a higher level of threat.

PRIOR RESEARCH

Some of the best research on prison gangs has been published in the *Journal of Gang Research*, the official publication of the National Gang Crime Research Center (NGCRC) now in its 27th year as a professional quarterly. Still other valuable research arises from the prison system itself, particularly the federal Bureau of Prisons. Gaes, et al (2001) reported empirical research based on federal inmates which was able to confirm some of the findings earlier reported by Stone (2000), particularly chapter 9 about a gang classification system in the Stone reader. In the Stone (2000) reader, the authors from the National Gang Crime Research Center had collected data on over 4,000 incarcerated gang members nationwide. Among other things, it demonstrated that gang members were a more significant disciplinary problem and threat generally than non-gang members behind bars. This covered fights, disciplinary reports, etc, at the individual unit of analysis and technically represented probably the single largest sample size of gang members ever developed in the previously reported literature.

Most empirical research on gangs does not use inmates as the unit of analysis as in the style of directly interviewing confined prisoners such as the large sample used by Stone (2000), rather most studies of what is going on in

terms of the scope and extent of the prison gang/STG problem nationwide is research carried out where the unit of analysis is not the individual prison inmate, but rather the facility or correctional institution itself, as an organizational unit. The convention used by the NGCRC has been to not report the names of responding entities, so it is basically a survey respondent is anonymous with regard to geographical analysis.

Some authors recommend a multi-method approach to prison gang research (Tapia, Sparks, and Miller, 2014). So the level of analysis to aspire towards would be methodological triangulation. The problem is that neither the federal government or nor any private foundations have been able to provide much in the way of funding for prison gang research.

The body of research, also called a line of research, we are adding to in the present study are the prior studies of adult state correctional institutions reported by the National Gang Crime Research Center (NGCRC) through the *Journal of Gang Research*. A number of such previous national prison gang surveys were completed and reported over the years: 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2004, and 2012. Survey items have been replicated from the beginning through this line of research dating back to 1991 which allows for comparisons over time for some variables. As new problems have emerged over the years (e.g., use of drones, email access, etc) new refinements have been added to the line of research on adult state corrections, meaning that new survey items get developed and include in the survey series.

For a thorough and comprehensive review of prison gangs and security threat groups from a criminal justice perspective that includes a focus on organized crime see the chapter on prison gangs by Knox, Etter and Smith (2019).

DEFINITIONS

A security threat group (STG) is any group of three (3) or more persons with recurring threatening or disruptive behavior (i.e., violations of the disciplinary rules where said violations were openly known or conferred benefit upon the group would suffice for a prison environment), including but not limited to gang crime or gang violence (i.e., crime of any sort would automatically make the group a gang, and as a gang in custody it would logically be an STG). In some jurisdictions the Security Threat Group is also called a “Disruptive Group”. STG’s or disruptive groups would include any group of three or more inmates who were members of the same street gang, or prison gang, or the same extremist political or ideological group where such extremist ideology is potentially a security problem in the correctional setting (i.e., could inflame attitudes, exacerbate racial tensions, spread hatred, etc).

Definitions of STG’s do exist which are more liberal and allow for any group of “two or more persons” to define an STG and this apparently became the ACA (American Correctional Association) definition over a decade ago (“two or more inmates, acting together, who pose a threat to the security or safety of staff/inmates, and/or are disruptive to programs and/or to the orderly management of the facility/system”, see ACA quote in Allen, Simonsen, Latessa, 2004: p. 196). The problem with two is that this is only a social dyad at best. The social dyad is not capable of the primordial act of any organization: delegation, as can occur in a true social group (which must have 3 or more persons in it). The definition ad-

vanced here is more consistent with the larger literature, and American law, on the definition of “gang”.

The definition of an STG in the Arizona Department of Corrections is typical of those definitions which emphasize certain issues and ignore others, let us examine it here:

“What is a Security Threat Group? Any organization, club, association or group of individuals, formal or informal (including traditional prison gangs), that may have a common name, identifying sign or symbol, and whose members engage in activities that would include, but are not limited to planning, organizing, threatening, financing, soliciting, committing, or attempting to commit unlawful acts or an act that would violate the departments written instructions, which would detract from the safe orderly operations of prisons” (Arizona Dept. Of Corrections, 2004).

Note that size of the group is not important, but that the STG “may have” a common name or symbol; the list of “may have’s” could be very extensive. Just as the list of behavior’s could be prohibitively long: it may be sufficient to say “any crime, deviance, or rule breaking”.

A prison gang, correctly defined, is any gang (where a gang is a group of three or more persons who recurrently commit crime) that operates in prison. However, a tradition has developed “in practice” within the context of applied ideas about prison gangs, where the correctional practitioner defines a prison gang exclusively as “a gang that originated in the prison”. Thus, gangs like the Aryan Brotherhood and the Black Guerilla Family and the Melanics would be “pure prison gangs” in this respect, because these were not street gangs imported into the prison system, these are gangs that originated within the prison system itself. The Lyman (1989) definition of prison gang centers around the commission of crime, without the crime a prison group could violate rules and regulations and still be a security threat group.

There are gangs that have originated in a correctional institution and developed and proliferated over the years to operate in many different geographical jurisdictions in the United States outside of the wall of any facility. The Vice Lords started in a state juvenile correctional institution in Illinois. The Vice Lords went on to develop several branches (Four Corner Hustlers, Traveling Vice Lords, Insane Vice Lords, Conservative Vice Lords, etc) and spread throughout American society (Knox and Papachristos, 2002).

Can there be a disruptive group that is not necessarily a gang? Yes, of course, if the collective identity of the group is such that it seeks to challenge the legitimacy of the correctional system itself. In Texas, for example, the pre-service and in-service “gang/STG training” includes information about a group called the “Self Defense Family (SDF)”. The SDF is mostly Black with one white inmate, but objectively it is a group that just likes to file law suits against the prison system, the members of the SDF are “prison lawyers”: not real lawyers, self-taught inmates who have become very adept at frivolous law suits. The SDF may not qualify as a “gang”, because after all what they are doing is “lawful”, but they are a “threat” to the Institutional Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

“Stigged” to “STG’d” means to the process by which any group of inmates is determined to be and becomes officially labeled as a Security Threat Group. This often goes according to official policy and procedure for declaring an

inmate group a STG, there are written guidelines and there usually exists a burden of proof requirement — such as the need to show a pattern of abuses or documenting offenses (disciplinary rules, assaults, violence, etc) over time in a time series approach. Typically this process begins at the institutional level where the group is a problem, and the central administration reviews the recommendation, and then if the evidence is sufficient, the inmate group becomes classified as a Security Threat Group statewide, i.e., throughout the entire prison system.

“Validated” refers to the “validation process”, a process by which an inmate is determined, usually after continuing to be a gang banger in prison, to be a “security threat group member” by the prison officials. In California, most gang members behind bars are not “validated”, the stigma of “validated” means the inmate would have had a continued career of conspicuous gang banging violence behind bars. Thus, officially for decades, California’s prison system has reported to researchers that it has a “low gang density”, because these estimates of gang density (the percentage of inmates who are gang/STG members) are based upon “validated gang/STG members”. So the way “validated” has worked in some jurisdictions like California is that it refers to a process where after posting many warnings and cautioning inmates against engaging in crime or violence on behalf of their gang, after of course being put in prison for the same thing, the inmate continues to be caught for gang violence behind bars, and the correctional system has no other recourse than to say “we’ve had enough, now you are a validated gang member”. Validated gang members can be given special security levels and more restricted housing environments.

Gang denial is a social policy whereby the entity involved — the city, the facility, the company, the school, or the entire state corrections agency — denies there is a gang problem or reports a significantly lower gang problem than actually exists. Sometimes called the “Ostrich phenomenon”, it means ignoring the problem, hoping it will go away on its own. In some jurisdictions, it is politically imposed because awareness could have implications for the local tourism trade. Or more typically, there is an assumption that if the entity reports a gang problem, it attracts further “bad news”. It is hard to attract new employees to low paying high turnover jobs in corrections when the newspapers are reporting gang fights behind bars. It usually takes a serious crisis or a local news media investigation to reverse a “gang denial policy”.

The term “validation process” as used in California was their innovative way of dealing with a high gang density rate: it is reasonable to believe that California’s prison system, as a producer of gangs, that is as a major national epicenter of gangs, is probably comparable to Illinois with regard to gang density. In Illinois, approximately 80 to 90 percent of the inmates coming into the prison system were gang members on the streets. Gang inmates are told to behave, and if they do not, they face the risk of being a “validated gang member”.

Thus, when California reports to a prison researcher that three percent or six percent “of our inmates are STG/prison gang members” they are couching this unbelievably low statistic in the magical language of “validated gang members”: those who within the inmate population continued to be gang bangers and we caught them doing it in very serious offenses after being incarcerated. One might ask, of course, is this policy of obscuring the gang problem the way it is reported to the public — a variation on the “gang denial” theme — a policy that could also encourage a greater personal safety threat to the correctional officers who work

there?

Gang density means the percentage of inmates who are members of a street or prison gang. Gang members rarely give up their gang upon being incarcerated, they continue their gang involvement in most cases. Gangs are the dominant subculture in the entire American correctional system today (jails, juvenile and adult correctional facilities, public and private).

Some practitioners in their writing like to make a distinction between traditional prison gangs and untraditional prison gangs, where what they really mean is that the traditional prison gangs were those first on the scene (Aryan Brotherhood, Black Guerilla Family, etc) and that untraditional or non-traditional would therefore be “anything else”. This is not a particularly useful distinction when it is known that some gangs considered “traditional prison gangs” have long ago made the transition to the street. A better, more analytically sound, distinction would be to classify these prison gangs in terms of the level of their organizational threat: are they in a national gang alliance system, do they have a national impact, and a large number of empirical measurements that can be taken on gang groups and gang organizations in terms of the features of their social organization (Knox, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

This research was timed so that data collection would begin in early 2020 and conclude in early spring, 2020. A significant world event — the onset of the Corona - Covid 19 flu pandemic — occurred after starting this national prison survey. It clearly impacted the “return rate” in a negative way. However, it is our view that the small national sample size still shows great geographical diversity (some 29 respondent state correctional facilities from 20 different states) and has value in terms of being a pilot study or prototype for a larger scale research. It also examines data from a time when American prisons were undergoing a major new adjustment — releasing large numbers of prison inmates due to the pandemic. The research reported here is valuable also because it builds upon much larger sized state prison samples studied by the NGCRC in prison surveys reported at the NGCRC website (www.ngcrc.com) where we have been able to replicate survey items over time.

THE FORMAT FOR THE PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The format for the presentation of the descriptive research findings for this report will involve organizing the findings into eight different and distinct areas of focus. The first section focuses on general characteristics and background features of the facilities used for this analysis and the features that help describe the sample. Section 2 looks at the health and social service issues facing state correctional institutions. Section 3 explores some of the unique problems and issues that arise in relationship to inmates and religious worship. Section 4 begins the main presentation of important research findings about gangs and STG’s by looking at the scope and extent of the problem today. Section 5 examines specific gang/STG management and policy issues. Section 6 examines findings relating to riots, disturbances, and hostage taking. Section 7 looks at what can be done about the prison gang/STG problem in America. Section 8 examines the prospects for the future, and section 9 provides a final summary and conclusion for this report.

1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDING CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Here we examine some of the characteristics of this sample of American correctional facilities. First, as noted by the very definition of “state correctional institution” or “state correctional facility”, all are at the state level of government. There are no federal agencies and no county level government entities represented in this sample. Here we can, though, describe some of the most important aspects of the nature and type of correctional facilities used in this 2020 analysis. Specifically, it includes inmate population size, and security levels represented in the sample. And, of course, a variety of problem conditions such as prison overcrowding.

VAST MAJORITY FEEL THEIR FACILITIES RECEIVE ADEQUATE FUNDING

The survey asked “Do you feel your agency receives adequate funding?”. The vast majority, nearly 9 out of 10, or some 89.7% felt that their agency is in fact adequately funded. A small minority of the responding state prisons indicated that their agency does not receive adequate funding.

INMATE ACCESS TO COMPUTERS

The survey asked the question “Do inmates have access to computers or the internet to access their email?”. This is one of the many new questions added to the NGCRC adult corrections survey series recently. The results show that over a third of U.S. prisons (37.9%) provide inmates with computer access or internet access for email correspondence. This is uncharted territory in some regards, because 62.1 percent of American prisons do not provide this kind of computer access for inmates.

VAST MAJORITY AGREE: INMATE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET CREATES A NEW TYPE OF DANGER AND SECURITY PROBLEM

The survey asked “Do you feel that inmate access to the internet creates a new type of danger and security problem for your facility?”. Some 96.6 percent of the respondents felt that “yes”, inmate access to the internet creates a new type of danger and security problem for their prison facility. The way it works, though, also increases the intelligence analysis potential of the institutional investigators because like phone systems that are monitored, the physical devices and digital email records are always subject to inspection.

ESTIMATES FOR RECIDIVISM RATES

The survey asked “in your best estimate, what percentage of the inmates confined in your institution have served time before? _____%”. The results for this estimate ranged from a low of 5 percent to a high of 100 percent. The mean, or arithmetic average, was that 62.8 percent of the inmates are recidivists.

MOST STATES DO NOT HAVE A SEPARATE FACILITY FOR INFORMANTS

The survey asked “Does your state have a separate correctional facility for confidential informants?”. Larger states do have this kind of capability and it

developed from the practice of gang and STG management, there needed to be a safe single place where informants could go after “debriefing” and in the case of assaults against staff ensuring the effective testimony of gang informants. In one state the officers that work there call it the “Smurf” unit, it is a fenced building with its own yard, located in the very rear of a larger fenced prison facility. If you needed to visit someone there, you would always use a “code” for visiting them: for example, if you were there to visit “Henry Gallardo”, you would have been instructed in advance that you cannot actually use that full name at the entrance to the main facility — you need to say instead you are there to visit “H G” in the Special Management Unit. The data here show that only 10.7% of the respondents indicate their state has a separate facility where they can house their confidential informants. So nine out of ten states (89.3%) do not have a separate facility where they can provide secure housing for confidential informers.

The need for special security for confidential informants is vital and a recent lawsuit shows how this is true. A sergeant working at the Redgranite Correctional Institution in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections outed the identity of five confidential informants by placing pictures of “rats” next to their names on a list — and other inmates were able to look at the list that was left on a cellhouse desk. By placing “rat emojis” next to the names of the five informants and allowing inmates to see the list, this immediately placed all five of the inmates in jeopardy. Not surprisingly, they had to be moved out, and told what happened when it was discovered that some inmates had copied the list and tried to mail it out of the institution. One of the inmates quickly sued the Wisconsin DOC and was awarded \$110,000 in an out of court settlement (Thomsen, 2019).

RARE TO NON-EXISTENT: INMATE PROGRAMS SEEKING TO IMPROVE RACE RELATIONS

The survey asked “Does your facility have any programs for inmates which seek to improve race relations among inmates?”. The vast majority of American prisons report no such programs for inmates designed to improve race relations (89.7%). It is not sure what these programmatic efforts may entail, because we are aware of no formalized programs designed to accomplish this kind of goal, but any initiative even if it was a passive programmatic effort limited to the distribution of literature that would discourage “hate” of any kind would in theory be good from a corrections rehabilitation point of view. Sadly, we cannot point to one single program of any kind operating in American prisons today that has tried to improve race relations among inmates.

We are aware of absolutely no contributions to the professional criminological or penology literature about the effectiveness in achieving this kind of outcome. But we want to go on record as saying it is a worthwhile endeavor and one worth investigating with pilot programs. We are aware that racial bias and racial enmity can be a factor that provides ongoing unlimited fuel to the social-psychological engine of gang life — so on this basis, the NGCRC would welcome any inquiries from anyone seeking to address this issue.

RARE FOR PRISONERS TO BE ALLOWED TO EXCHANGE FUNDS WITH EACH OTHER

The survey asked “Do you allow prisoners to exchange funds with each other?”. This cuts into the core problem with controlling the inmate underground

economy. The survey results show that only a small fraction (3.6%) of respondents allow inmates to exchange funds with each other. The overwhelming vast majority (96.4%) do not allow this kind of economic behavior.

HALF ALLOW PRISONER TO PRISONER MAIL

The survey asked “Is prisoner to prisoner mail allowed in your facility?”. This would include any inmate who had a cell mate who transferred to another prison facility and they just wanted to exchange Christmas cards or well wishes on a periodic basis. And there are always situations where an inmate has a family member locked up that they want to correspond with. The survey results showed that about half of the prisons (51.7%) allow prisoner to prisoner mail. Thus, about half (48.3%) do not allow prisoner to prisoner mail.

SMALL PERCENTAGE ALLOW PRISONER TO PRISONER EMAIL

The survey asked “Is prison to prisoner email allowed in your facility?”. The survey showed that only 13.8 percent of the prison respondents allow prisoner to prisoner email. The vast majority of prisons (86.2%) do not allow prisoner to prisoner email.

MOST SEE PRISONER TO PRISONER MAIL AS A POTENTIAL SECURITY PROBLEM

The survey asked “In your opinion is prisoner to prisoner mail a major potential security problem in the field of corrections?”. Most respondents (85.2%) report that prisoner to prisoner mail is a major potential security problem in the field of corrections. Still, some 14.8 percent of the respondents did not accept this doctrine.

MASSIVE SUPPORT FOR CELL PHONE JAMMING LEGISLATION

The survey asked “Should Congress pass federal legislation that would allow correctional institutions to use cell phone signal jamming technology as a counter-measure for inmates who use smuggled cell phones?”. Very few (6.9%) disagreed with the idea that federal legislation is needed to get a better handle on cell phone abuse in the prison environment. The overwhelming majority of state correctional institution respondents (93.1%) indicated that they do believe congress should pass a law that would authorize correctional institutions to use cell phone signal jamming technology.

NUMBER OF INMATES WORKING AT A JOB WHERE THEY CAN MAKE SOME AMOUNT OF MONEY

The survey asked “on the average day, can you estimate how many of the inmates in your facility work at some job where they can make some amount of money?”. The results showed a range from a low of zero to a high of 802 inmates who are making some amount of money for the work they do as prison inmates. The arithmetic average, or mean score, was that a typical prison has N = 135 inmates working in some capacity where the same inmates are receiving some amount of money. The amount of money obviously is not union scale civilian levels, these are after all jobs for prisoners.

IS THERE AN AVERAGE SALARY FOR INMATES WHO WORK IN PRISON?

The survey asked “is there an average salary for the inmates who work at a job in your facility?”. The results show that 63 percent of the prisons report that there is such an average salary for the inmates who work at a job in their prison facility.

A follow-up question asked the same respondent to report the average hourly amount of pay for prison inmates. The survey results showed a range in values from a low of no pay or zero cents to a high of \$3.00 per hour. The mean inmate salary in this sample was 64.7 cents per hour.

HALF U.S. PRISONS USE OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS FOR INMATE LABOR

The survey included the question “do any outside companies use the inmate labor under a contracting arrangement”? Here the results showed that just over half of all prisons (59.3%) report that there are in fact outside companies that use the inmate labor under a contracting arrangement. Some 40.7 percent of the prisons report that they do not allow any outside companies to use inmate labor under a contracting arrangement.

INMATE POPULATION COUNTS

The survey asked “what is the total inmate population (count) for your institution as of today? ___total inmates”. The results ranged from a low of 70 inmates to a high of 2,123 inmates. A total population of N = 68,487 was represented in the sample.

LEVEL OF SECURITY OF THE RESPONDING STATE INSTITUTIONS

The survey included the question “what level of security is your institution? (Check one only) ___Minimum security ___Medium security ___Maximum security”. The results show that 42.9 percent of the respondents were minimum security facilities, and 47.6 percent were medium security facilities, and 9.5 percent were maximum security facilities. Gangs and STG members tend to be filtered into the maximum security facilities, and not into the minimum level security facilities. In this regard, we would argue that if there is any preference for data to use in a survey like this that we would prefer to have it from the maximum security facilities.

MOST EVERYONE IS TRAINED IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The survey asked “Have most of your staff and employees received training in cultural diversity?”. The results showed that 96.4 percent reported that their most of their staff and employees have been trained in cultural diversity. Only 3.6 percent reported this was not true of the staff in their facility.

ABOUT HALF AGREE NOTHING CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE RACIAL CONFLICTS AMONG PRISON INMATES

The survey included the question “do you think anything can be done to reduce racial conflicts among inmates?”. It may be a surrogate measurement of correctional pessimism. The results show that about half (53.6%) of the respon-

dents agree that yes, something can be done to reduce racial conflicts among inmates. Thus, the other half (46.4%) express a more pessimistic doctrine which assumes nothing can be done to reduce racial conflicts among prison inmates.

CONTRABAND CELL PHONES RECOVERED IN THE LAST YEAR

The survey asked “in the last one year period, how many contraband cell phones were recovered in your facility?”. The results ranged from a low of zero to a high of 200. Some 84 percent reported one or more phones recovered in the last year. Half of the sample (48%) reported seizing five or more phones from inmates during the last year. One respondent indicated that at a statewide level, their combined correctional facilities seized over 5,000 cell phones during the last year. It is obviously an ongoing security problem in American prisons. In Oklahoma it was reported that statewide some 7,500 cell phones were seized in 2017 and 5,200 in 2018 (Murphy, 2019). Because it is such a “massive” problem cell phone signal jamming equipment would help a prison system like that in Oklahoma, but federal law prohibits the use of such equipment by state prisons. Cell phone carrier services generally oppose any efforts to give state prisons the authority to use jamming equipment.

ABOUT A THIRD OF THE PRISONS ARE OVER-CROWDED

The survey asked “generally, is overcrowding a problem in your facility?”. The results show that 32.1 percent of the prison respondent report that overcrowding is a problem in their facility. Thus, some 67.9 percent report no such overcrowding.

THE USE OF DRONES IN SMUGGLING CONTRABAND INTO PRISONS

The survey asked “have drones been used at your facility to smuggle contraband (e.g., cell phones and drugs) into the facility?”. As shown here, one of the newest challenges to correctional security is dealing with drones in the modern age of crime. The only other research in the world about the use of drones for smuggling contraband into correctional facilities was the 2019 NGCRC survey of American jails. Prisons are a lot different than county jails in terms of the nature of their physical plants, most prisons have an open yard of some kind, and areas inside a fenced or walled perimeter where inmates have access for work or recreation. Most jails do not have open air exercise yards.

The results of the survey show that over a third of all prison respondents (37.0%) now report that drones have been used at their facility to smuggle in contraband such as cell phones and drugs. About two-thirds (63%) of the respondents did not report such drone use.

2. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND HEALTH SERVICE ISSUES FACING ADULT PRISONS IN AMERICA

Here we review a number of different general conditions facing prisons in America including issues of mental health, the two-way street of PTSD in corrections, and the double edged sword of prison suicide — it affects both correctional officers and inmates alike.

LARGE SUPPORT EXISTS TO HAVE A NATIONAL PROGRAM AIMED AT HELPING CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS DEAL WITH EXPOSURE TO TRAUMA AND STRESS ON THE JOB

The survey asked “Do you feel it would be useful to have a national program aimed at helping correctional officers deal with exposure to trauma and stress on the job?”. The vast majority (93.1%) agreed that it would be useful to have a national program aimed at helping correctional officers deal with exposure to trauma and stress on the job. A small minority (6.9%) did not feel it would be useful to have a national program aimed at helping correctional officers deal with exposure to trauma and stress on the job. Correctional officers face enormous work stress and it manifests itself in ways that harm the correctional organization (Steiner and Woolredge, 2015).

It is important to remember that most correctional agencies do psychological screening of the applicants for correctional officer positions. For example, it was shown that 22 percent of the job applicants in the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision wash out by failing their psychological tests (Darmanjian, 2020). If a state agency is concerned about psychological well being before entering the correctional system, then the state agency needs to have ongoing concern especially after ongoing routine exposure to trauma and stress.

This matter of routine exposure to trauma, stress and the constant fear of violence erupting has been identified as the VID factor for correctional officers. When a correctional officer is involved in or exposed to violence, injury, and death (VID) while at work — this VID experience has a cumulative effect over time and increases PTSD and depression (Denhof and Spinaris, 2013). How bad is it among correctional officers in the field? The latest estimate is that 34 percent of correctional officers will have PTSD and 31 will be diagnosed with severe depression (Dawe, 2018).

ABOUT A FOURTH REPORT THAT SUICIDE ATTEMPTS BY INMATES ARE A PROBLEM

The survey asked “Are suicide attempts by inmates a problem in your facility?”. About a fourth of the respondents, some 28.6 percent, reported that “yes” suicide attempts by inmates is a problem in their state prison.

ABOUT A FOURTH REPORT THAT SUICIDE ATTEMPTS BY CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ARE A PROBLEM

The survey asked “Are suicide attempts by correctional officers a problem in your facility?”. There has been no previous research on this issue. The issue arose from recent survey findings about correctional officers who work in county jails in America — the research showed (Knox, et al, 2019) showed that there was a large “hidden problem” in American corrections: the problem of correctional officers with PTSD and related mental health needs. Sadly, the present research shows that this problem is obviously true also of state and federal correctional institutions.

About a fourth of the respondents indicated that suicide attempts by correctional officers is a problem in their facility. This amounted to 24.1 percent. In three-fourths of America’s state prisons, the issue of suicide attempts by correctional officers is not a problem. The troubling issue here, and one that begs for

further research and intervention, is the fact that correctional officers would have the same level of suicide problems that the inmates have.

ESTIMATES OF THE PERCENTAGE OF INMATES WHO ARE MENTALLY ILL

The survey included the question “Please estimate what percentage of the inmates in your facility are mentally ill”. The results ranged from a low of one percent to a high of 60 percent. The mean score was 23.7 percent of the inmates would be regarded as being mentally ill.

ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE PRISONS HAVE PRIVATIZED MEDICAL OR DENTAL SERVICES FOR INMATES

The survey asked “are any of the medical or dental services for inmates in your facility privatized (performed by independent contractors)?”. The results show that 67.9 percent of the prison respondents report that they have privatized medical or dental services for inmates in their facility. About a third (32.1%) of the responding prisons report no such privatization of medical or dental services for their inmates.

3. RELIGIOUS ISSUES FACING ADULT STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE USA

There are a variety of issues faced by Adult state correctional institutions and the practice of religion and religious beliefs by prison inmates. As well be seen, some of these issues merge into the gang/STG area as well when it comes to the challenges of ensuring effective security when trying to satisfy the rights of prisoners to practice their religious beliefs.

ABOUT FOUR-FIFTHS AGREE THAT PRISONERS CAN MEET THEIR RELIGIOUS NEEDS WITHOUT GROUP WORSHIP

The survey asked “Do you believe prisoners can meet their religious needs individually without group worship?”. Most respondents (79.3%) agree with the idea that prisoners can meet their religious needs individually without the need for group worship. The issue here is that sometimes prison inmates have been known to exploit the group meeting component of the right to worship.

MOST HAVE DEVELOPED WRITTEN STANDARDS FOR RELIGIOUS STAFF AND VISITING CHAPLAINS

The survey asked “has your facility developed written standards and guidelines for religious staff and visiting chaplains regarding what is appropriate behavior and language for a secure correctional environment?”. Most of the respondents (81.5%) did in fact report that their facility has written standards and guidelines for religious staff and visiting chaplains regarding what is appropriate behavior and language for a secure correctional environment. Still, there is plenty of room for mistakes when we consider the fact that 18.5 percent of the U.S. adult correctional facilities have not developed such written standards and guidelines.

THREE FOURTHS OF PRISONS REPORT AN INCREASE IN THE RADICALIZATION OF INMATES

The survey asked “Have you seen an increase or decrease in the radicalization of the inmates in your facility during the last year?”. Some 77.8 percent reported an increase in the radicalization of inmates during the last year. The radicalization of inmates refers to any extreme ideology or belief system that challenges the existing social order, calls for a revolution, or promotes conflict along racial, religious, or any lines as a basis for social differentiation. Some 22.2 percent of the prisons report, conversely, a decrease in the radicalization of inmates.

One national survey of prison chaplains did indicate that religious extremism is an issue in American corrections today (Boddie and Funk, 2012).

SOME POPULAR READING CHOICES AMONG INMATES

A series of three questions focused on some controversial choices for reading material by prison inmates.

The survey asked “Have any of the inmates in your facility requested or have actually ordered and possessed as their property in your facility *The White Man’s Bible* by Ben Klassen?”. Some 14.8 percent of the prison respondents indicated they had inmates who had requested, ordered, or possessed this white racist extremist book.

The survey asked “Have any of the inmates in your facility requested or have actually ordered and possessed as their property in your facility *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Le Vey”? Some 39.3 percent of the prisons responding indicated they had inmates who had requested, ordered, or possessed this book.

The survey asked “Have any of the inmates in your facility requested or have actually ordered and possessed as their property in your facility *Temple of Woton: The Holy Book of the Aryan Tribes* by the 14 Word Press?”. Some 26.9 percent of the prison respondents indicated they had inmates who had requested, ordered, or possessed this kind of white racist book.

A follow-up question asked “are there any materials not listed above that should be? Please list:_____”. Two suggestions from the respondents included: Floodgates Publishing and Thor Hammer Nickles. Anything “Thor Hammer” is going to profile as a white racist extremist topic generally.

LOW PERCENTAGE OF INMATES REQUESTING THE *BLOD RITE*

The survey asked “Have any inmates in your facility requested to conduct the *Blod Rite* in your facility”? Only 7.4 percent of the prison respondents indicated any inmates had requested this. The vast majority (92.6%) of prisons report no such inmates requesting this kind of ceremony.

PRISON MINISTRY LITERATURE FROM SELECT GROUPS

The survey asked “Has your facility received any “prison ministry literature” from Kingdom Identity Ministries (Christian Identity)?”.Some 29.6 percent of the respondents reported contact with this group.

The survey asked “Has your facility received any “prison ministry literature” from Church of Jesus Christ Christian (Christian Identity)?”. Some 30.8 percent of the respondents reported contact with this group.

The survey asked “Has your facility received any “prison ministry literature” from World Church of the Creator or Creativity (WCOTC)?”. Some 20 percent of the respondents reported contact with this group.

VERY COMMON FOR INMATES TO USE RELIGIOUS SERVICES AS A FRONT FOR AN STG/GANG

The survey asked “Have inmates attempted to use religious services as a front for a Security Threat Group or gang?”. The results show that 82.8 percent of the prison respondents do in fact report this kind of abuse of religious rights of prisoners. Only 17.2 percent indicated they have not encountered situations where inmates attempted to use religious services as a front for an STG or gang.

ABOUT HALF THE TIME A STAFF PERSON IS PHYSICALLY IN THE ROOM DURING INMATE RELIGIOUS SERVICES

The survey asked “Do you have a staff person physically in the room during all religious services?”. Clergy from the outside who may be present and leading the service can often be civilian volunteers. Volunteer civilians may or may not be able to spot the kind of nefarious activities that gangs and STG’s are capable of. The survey results, though, show that about half the time prisons do have a staff person present, and about half time there is no staff person present for inmate religious services. Some 46.4 percent of the prisons indicated they generally had staff person present during inmate religious services. Thus, 53.6 percent of the prisons are reporting that they do not have a staff person present.

JUST OVER HALF DO AUDIO VISUAL SUPERVISION OF ALL RELIGIOUS SERVICES

The survey asked “Do you have auditory/visual supervision of all religious services?”. Some 57.1 percent of the responding prisons reported that they do in fact have auditory/visual supervision of all religious services. It is reasonable to assume this includes staff members being present and inside the room or the use of AV equipment in the room. Some 42.9 percent of the prison respondents indicated that they do not have auditory/visual supervision of all religious services for their inmates.

MILITARISTIC BEHAVIOR IS PROHIBITED IN MOST PRISONS

The survey asked “Is militaristic behavior allowed by “religious groups” in your facility (e.g., saluting, marching, cadence, etc)?”. The reason for this inquiry is that in facilities where gangs really run the prison, they often show their gang solidarity in manifestations that can be construed as militaristic behavior. This would include walking or moving in formation, wearing identical head gear or a conspicuous religious medallion adapted to the specific use of the gang for “representing”. Nearly 9 out of 10 prisons are reporting (89.3%) that they do not allow such militaristic behavior by inmates. Still it is interesting to see that 10.7 percent have not yet forbidden this kind of gang/STG behavior.

TWO-THIRDS ALLOW PRISONERS TO LEAD RELIGIOUS SERVICES

The survey asked “Do you allow prisoners to lead services when volunteers/chaplains are not qualified/available for services?”. The results show that 64.3 percent of the prison respondents do in fact allow prisoners to lead the religious service when volunteers or chaplains employed by the facility as staff are not available to lead the services. Just over a third (35.7%) of the facilities do not allow prisoners to lead religious services. One of the problems with this of course

is that sometimes the inmates leading the services may take on special titles of power or authority, and technically it would be violation of United Nations rules for the treatment of prisoners to allow some inmates to have positions of power and control over other inmates.

RARE FOR PRISONERS TO BE ALLOWED TO USE RELIGIOUS TITLES

The survey asked “Do you allow prisoners to refer to themselves with religious titles of power or authority (Caliph, Imam, Supreme Pontificate, etc)?”. Only 10.7 percent of the responding prisons indicated that they allow prisoners to refer to themselves with religious titles of power or authority. The vast majority of prisons (89.3%) do not allow prisoners to use such religious titles.

NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

The survey asked “How many different religious groups are being provided time and space for group worship meetings in your facility?”. The results showed a range from a low of zero to a high of 21. The mean, or arithmetic average, score for this factor was 6.8 religious groups.

ABUSES OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AS A RESULT OF RLUIPA

The survey asked “Has your facility experienced any abuses of religious freedoms as a result of the RLUIPA?”. About one-fifth (22.2%) of the responding prisons did in fact report that their facility has experienced abuses of religious freedom as a result of RLUIPA. Most of the responding prisons (77.8%) report no such abuses of religious freedoms as a result of RLUIPA.

LARGEST WHITE RACIST FRONT GROUPS FOR PRISON GANGS

The survey asked “what are the top three largest white racist extremist “religious” front groups that attempt to recruit inmates in your facility?”. Table 1 shows the results of this listing. Most of these names also appear in a subsequent analysis in Table 3.

Table 1: Largest White Racist Gangs

- Aryan Brotherhood (5)
- Aryan Family
- Aryan Skin
- Asatru (3)
- Dirty White Boys
- Kaken Kreuz
- Kingdom Identity
- Luciferian
- Odinism (4)
- Pagan
- Peckerwoods (2)
- Satanic Church
- Saxon Knights (2)
- Southern Brotherhood (2)
- Supreme Alliance
- Wicca

Wotanism

NAMES OF TOP ISLAMIC FRONT GROUPS THAT RECRUIT INMATES

The survey asked “What are the top three Islamic extremist “religious” front groups that attempt to recruit inmates in your facility?”. Table 2 provides the names of such groups identified from the prison respondents.

Table 2: Names of Top Islamic Front Groups That Recruit Inmates

Blood
 Crips-Rolling 60
 Gangster Disciples (2)
 Hebrew Roots
 Islamic Five-Percent
 Jumma
 Moorish Science Temple of America (6)
 Muslim
 Nation of Islam
 Normal
 Vice Lords

MOST BELIEVE PRISONERS CAN PRACTICE RELIGION IN THE PRIVACY OF THEIR CELL

The survey asked “Do you feel that prisoners could practice their religious beliefs in the privacy of their cell/room (or by means of closed-circuit televised broadcast), without the need for group participation?”. The survey results showed that 86.2 percent believe that prisoners can practice their religious beliefs in the privacy of their own cell or room by means of closed circuit television or broadcast without the need for group participation. If there is a health issue such as that brought on by the spread of flu, we certainly understand a special reason or justification for limiting social contacts. Still, some 13.8 percent of the respondents did not agree with this notion.

JUST OVER HALF REPORT THAT GANG MEMBERS HAVE TRIED TO CONTROL RELIGIOUS PROGRAM CHOICES

The survey asked “have gang members tried to control any religious program choices at your facility?”. The results show that 57.1 percent of the prison respondents report that gang members have in fact tried to control religious program choices at their state correctional facilities. Some 42.9 percent report that gangs have not tried to exert this kind of control over inmate religious programs.

4. SCOPE AND EXTENT OF THE GANG/STG PROBLEM IN AMERICAN STATE ADULT CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Here we examine a variety of aspects which provide quantitative estimates of the scope and extent of the gang/STG problem in American corrections today. From a systems point of view, gang members are mostly imported into the correctional system when they are prosecuted and convicted. It is possible to join the

gang inside prison, just as it is possible to quit the gang inside prison, although not very easily. When we are talking about the gang or security threat group (STG) problem behind bars, in a jail or prison, we need to use the concept of “gang density”: it is the percentage of inmates who are gang or STG members.

Generally, the gang density in American correctional institutions has been steadily increasing for the last three decades.

GANG DENSITY ESTIMATES: THE IMPORTATION PARAMETER

The survey asked the correctional facilities to “Please estimate what percentage of inmates were gang members before they came to your institution? ___% of the males in this institution were probably gang members on the streets ___% of the females in this institution were probably gang members on the streets”. This captures the prison gang importation parameter. From the very beginning of the scholarship on prison gangs, the research by Jacobs (1974, 1977) showed that the prison gang problem is mostly a problem of importing inmates into the system where the same inmates were gang members prior to having to serve a prison sentence. The prison is an open system, as new inmates enter the system who are gang affiliated, the gang density for inmates increases.

Gang density rates are the most important statistics for gauging the scope and extent of the prison gang problem. Gang density refers to the percentage of prison inmates who are members of a gang or security threat group (STG). People may not normally conceive of a group like the Ku Klux Klan as a “street gang”, but anyone who works in a correctional facility knows that a KKK group is a security threat group — a disruptive group. Gangs and STG’s are best understood by knowing that the vast majority of persons who are in a gang or STG status in a prison were also gang members on the streets before they went to prison.

The statistical results for the gang density of male inmates ranged from a low of one percent to a high of 100 percent, with a mean score of 39.8 percent nationwide. The mean score for female prison inmates was only 2.62 percent.

What this means is that about two-fifths of American state prison inmates were gang members before they arrived to serve their prison sentences. Is this the true measure of gang density? No. There is also the issue of inmates who join the gang for the first time inside the prison, and there is also the issue of inmates who because of very effective inmate programming and intervention programs operated in state prisons, that some inmates also “quit” gang life: they renounce it, or denounce it, or want out of that “spinning their wheels” lifestyle.

GANG RECRUITMENT IS “OPEN SEASON” IN OVER A FOURTH OF AMERICAN PRISONS

The survey asked “Does your facility have specific disciplinary rules that prohibit gang recruitment?”. The survey results showed that 69 percent of the correctional institutions report that they do in fact have specific rule that prohibit gang recruitment. Thus, 31 percent of the state prisons in America do not have any specific disciplinary rules that would prohibit gang recruitment behind bars. If it is not expressly forbidden, then we have to assume prisoners are going to be the first to learn about this freedom to carry out gang recruitment, and actively use their freedom to proselytize on behalf of expanding the membership of their gang or STG.

COMPLAINTS FROM INMATES ABOUT GANG RECRUITING BEHIND BARS

The survey asked “do you get complaints from non-gang inmates that gangs or STG’s are trying to recruit them while incarcerated?”. Two thirds of the respondents (67.9%) reported that their state adult correctional facilities do in fact get complaints from non-gang inmates that gangs or STG’s are trying to recruit them. A third (32.1%) of the respondents indicated no such complaints from inmates about gang recruiting behind bars.

100% OF RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT FIRST TIME GANG/STG JOINING DOES OCCUR IN THEIR PRISON

The survey asked “Do you believe that some inmates may have voluntarily joined (sought out) or may have been recruited into a gang while incarcerated?”. Every single respondent, or 100 percent of the sample, agreed that some inmates may have voluntarily joined (sought out) or may have been recruited into a gang while incarcerated. We need to point out, of course, that the addition to the problem of gang density in prisons occurs when an inmate is either recruited into a gang or STG or where the inmate voluntarily seeks out that status.

THE OTHER ASPECT OF GANG DENSITY: JOINING A GANG/STG FOR THE FIRST TIME INSIDE PRISON

The survey asked “Please estimate what percentage of inmates were not gang members on the streets, but who did in fact join a gang or an STG after entering your institution? ____% of the males in this institution first joined a gang or STG while incarcerated in your facility ____% of the females in this institution first joined a gang or STG while incarcerated in your facility. Thus, separate estimates are measured for male and female inmates.

The results showed a range of estimates for this factor from a low of zero to a high of 90 percent, with a mean score of 24.4 percent for male inmates. What this means is that about a fourth of the inmates in American prisons have first joined a gang or STG while incarcerated in prison.

The finding for this aspect of gang density for female inmates was substantially lower, only 3.5 percent.

The important thing to remember here is that this aspect of gang density is additive to the importation aspect of gang density. We must add “imported gang members” to “newly added gang members” to get an improved estimate of the scope and extent of the gang problem in American prisons.

At a minimum, the gang density for any correctional facility would include the percentage who were gang members on the streets before coming to prison and adding this to the percentage who joined for the first time after going to prison. In the present analysis, we would need add the 39.8% and the 24.4% to derive the combined estimate that 64.2 percent of American prison inmates may be members of gangs or STG’s. This is an alarming increase in gang density since previous research on the problem.

MOST AMERICAN PRISONS HAVE A SEPARATE GANG FOR WHITE INMATES

The survey asked “Do white inmates have a separate gang or gangs?”.

Nearly 9 out of 10 prisons (89.7%) report that white inmates have a separate gang. Only one in ten (10.3%) of American prisons report that white inmates do not have a separate gang.

A separate follow-up question asked the respondents to identify the names of these White gangs. Table 3 provides a list of these white gang names. In Table 3, N = 14 different prisons named the Aryan Brotherhood, the single largest gang nationally. Five facilities listed the Saxon Knights.

Table 3: List of White Gang Names

- 1% (2)
- 2-1 Fatal
- 215 Kensington
- ACB's
- Aryan Brotherhood (14)
- Aryan Brotherhood Kansas
- Aryan Brotherhood Texas
- Aryan Family
- Aryan Nation (3)
- Aryan Skin
- Bound for Glory
- Brotherhood of White Warriors (BOWW)
- County White Boys (CWB)
- Crazy White Boys
- Dead Men Inc.
- Dirty White Boys
- DMI
- Family Values (2)
- Ghost Face Gangsters
- Haken Kreuz
- Hellraisers
- Hog Pound
- Iron Beserker
- KKK
- Mexican Mafia
- Northwest Boot Boys
- Omerta
- OMG's (2)
- Paleface
- Peckerwoods (3)
- Pete Kings
- Rebel Cause (2)
- RR
- Saxon Knights (5)
- Southern Brotherhood (2)
- Southwest Honkeys
- Supreme Alliance
- WAR
- White Alliance

White Supremacist (6)

NAMES OF THE LARGEST GANGS IN PRISONS TODAY

The survey asked “What are the names of the top three largest gangs that are represented among inmates in your facility?”. Table 4 provides the results of this inquiry. Here we see the kind of typical configuration where the prison gangs are also gangs that existed by the same name on the street and were imported into the prison setting through prosecution. The largest five nationwide being Gangster Disciples, Bloods, Crips, Aryan Brotherhood, Vice Lords. These are gangs that have dominated prison life for decades.

Table 4: Names of the Top Gangs that are Represented Among Prison Inmates

99 Street Mod Crips
 Aryan Brotherhood (6)
 Black Gangster Disciples
 Bloods (10)
 Brotherhood of White Warriors
 Crips (9)
 Dead Man Inc.
 Dine Pride
 Family Values (2)
 Folk Nation (4)
 Gangster Disciples (11)
 Insane Gangster Disciples
 KPT
 Latin Kings (3)
 Mesa Varrío Locos
 MS-13 (2)
 New Mexican Mafia
 Nortenos
 Saxon Knights (3)
 Simon City Royals
 Skinheads
 Sons of Samoa
 Southwest Honkeys
 STG Branches of Odonist
 Supreme Alliance
 SUR 13
 Surenos (2)
 United Blood Nation
 Universal Aryan Brotherhood
 USO
 Vice Lords (4)
 White Supremacist (3)
 White Supremacists - AB

THE YEAR GANGS FIRST BECAME RECOGNIZED

The survey asked “in what year did gangs first become recognized as a problem in your facility? 19_____ or 20_____ or ____Never (not yet: no

gangs in this facility)”. The results showed a range in history from as long ago as 1970 to as recently as 2016. Half of the respondents indicated a date on or before 1999.

ABOUT HALF OF AMERICAN PRISONS REPORT HAVING INMATES WHO COULD BE CONSIDERED MILITARY-TRAINED GANG MEMBERS.

The survey asked “Does your facility have inmates who could be considered military-trained gang members?”. The results showed that 53.8 percent of the prisons reported having inmates who could be considered military-trained gang members. And, about half (46.2%) of the prisons reported no such military-trained gang members. These are inmates with special needs and if they have served in the military may have need some of the services that veterans generally may need.

NAMES OF LARGEST MOTORCYCLE GANGS IN PRISONS TODAY

The survey asked the question “what are the names of the top two motorcycle gangs represented among inmates in your facility?”. Table 5 provides the results of this inquiry. It shows the expected kind of representation in terms of known Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs. This includes the Hells Angels and Outlaws, both of which had six facilities reporting them, as well as a new group founded in 2005 called the Sons of Aesir — described as a “pro-white” motorcycle club.

Table 5: Names of the Top Motorcycle Gangs in American Prisons Today

Bandidos (2)
 Black Pistons
 Deuces out of Chicago
 Galloping Gooses
 Hells Angels (6)
 Iron Order
 Outlaws (6)
 Pagans (2)
 Sons of Aesir
 Sons of Silence (2)

BELIEF THAT GANGS/GANG LEADERS ARE ABLE TO INFLUENCE POLITICIANS

The survey asked “Do you feel that gangs or gang leaders are able to influence politicians in your state?”. The results show that 41.4 percent of the responding prisons said “yes”, that indeed they feel that gangs or gang leaders are able to influence politicians in their state. A simple majority of the respondents (58.6%) did not feel that gangs or gang leaders had this kind of social power.

This analytical focus on possible political corruption as a justified sociological topic can be traced back to the early “Chicago school of criminology” that included of course the pioneering work on gangs by Thrasher (1927). Thus, this particular survey item is one that has been replicated several times in previous research reports the results of which are provided in Table 6.

Table 6: Percentage of adult state prison respondents believing gangs/gang leaders can influence politicians for 1994, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2012, and this 2020 Study

	<u>Percentage Able to Influence Politicians</u>					
	1994	1995	1999	2004	2012	2020
YES	20.3%	23.6%	25.4%	29.3%	33.8%	41.4%
NO	79.7%	76.4%	74.6%	70.7%	66.2%	58.6%

COMPLETE AND UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT ON ONE THING

The survey asked “do you believe federal agencies should play a greater role in the investigation and prosecution of gang crimes?”. This was the only question where a full 100 percent of the respondents agreed with the idea, the idea that federal agencies should play a greater role in the investigation and prosecution of gang crimes.

ABSOLUTE AGREEMENT: THE INSIDE IS THE OUTSIDE

The survey included the question “Do the more dangerous security threat groups that exist in your facility also exist by the same name in communities outside of the correctional environment?”. A full 100 percent of the prison respondents reported “yes”, that in fact the “inside gangs” are basically the same as the gangs by the same name on the “outside”. There is a large amount of attention to this issue from some authors, but it seems to ignore the obvious when talking about prison gangs: the gangs that operate in prisons today are ipso facto prison gangs, but they also operate on the streets is what every single respondent to this survey is saying.

GANGS AND GANG MEMBERS CONSTITUTE THE CAUSAL FORCE OF A LARGE AMOUNT OF ALL INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

The survey asked “in your estimate, what percentage of all institutional management problems in your facility are caused by gangs or gang members?”. The results showed a range in scores from a low of zero percent to a high of 100 percent. The mean score, or arithmetic average, was that gangs and gang members cause 43.5 percent of all institutional management problems.

GANGS AND GANG MEMBERS CONSTITUTE THE CAUSAL FORCE OF A LARGE AMOUNT OF VIOLENCE AMONG INMATES

The survey included the question “in your estimate, what percentage of all violence among inmates in your facility is caused by gangs or gang members?”. The results showed a range in values from a low of zero percent to a high of 100 percent. The mean score, or arithmetic average, was that gangs or gang members cause 56.2 percent of all violence among inmates in the prison context.

NINE OUT OF TEN PRISONS REPORT THAT GANGS HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED THEIR CORRECTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The survey asked “do you believe that the gang members have significantly affected your correctional environment?”. Prison inmate culture started to change in the 1970’s due to the influx of gang members into the inmate popula-

tion. Today, as seen here, nine out of ten American prisons (89.3%) now report that gang members have significantly affected their correctional environment. Only 10.7 percent question whether gang members have significantly affected their correctional environment.

PERCENT OF ILLICIT DRUGS SMUGGLED IN BY PRISON GANG MEMBERS

The survey asked “in your opinion, what percentage of all illicit drugs are brought into your facility by prison gang members? ____%”. The results showed a range in scores from a low of zero percent to a high of 100 percent. The mean, or arithmetic average, was that 63.1 percent of all illicit drugs in prisons today are smuggled in by gang members.

PERCENT OF THE OVERALL DRUG ECONOMY IN PRISON CONTROLLED BY GANG MEMBERS

The survey asked “in your opinion, what percentage of the illicit drug trade in your facility is controlled by prison gang members? ____%”. The results showed a range in scores from a low of zero to a high of 100 percent. The mean, or arithmetic average, was that 70.7 percent of the overall drug trade in prison is controlled by gang members.

5. OTHER GANG AND STG PROBLEMS: MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ISSUES

In this section of the report we examine those sets of research findings that have import for the specific ways in which correctional staff can and have responded to the gang problem, because there is not a lack of choices of what to do, the issue is that some are likely to be more effective than others.

FINDINGS ON GANG MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The survey asked “Do you believe that housing all members of one gang together could make that gang stronger and more powerful?”. Some 88.9 percent of the respondents agreed that this kind of housing policy for managing gangs/STG’s in prison could actually result in an enhancement to the gang — making it stronger, more powerful. Only 11.1 percent of the prison respondents did not agree with this conclusion.

The survey asked “Do you believe that housing all members of one gang together could result in a reduction of violence in your facility?”. Here the results showed that only about a fourth of the respondents (27.6%) agreed with this notion. Most (72.4%) rejected this notion as a viable long-term strategy for managing gangs/STG’s behind bars.

Finally, the survey asked a third and related question “Do you believe that housing all members of one gang together could reduce the racial conflict among inmates in your facility?”. Here again, only 17.2 percent of the prison respondents are buying this idea. The vast majority (82.8%) reject the idea that housing all members of the same gang together could reduce racial conflict in the prison inmate population.

For a long time, a number of state prisons in the United States actually believed in the value of housing all gang members together in a homogeneous

fashion, that is putting them in a housing unit that represented only one specific type of gang affiliation — the main theory being this would reduce fighting “in the unit” where they were housed. Of course, such an analysis lacks an understanding of the dynamics of gang life, because some gangs spend an inordinate amount of their time “sanctioning” their own members — administering physical punishment to their own members for various “prison gang rule” infractions like not paying dues, etc.

GANGS AND THE CONTROL OF INMATE ECONOMIC RACKETS

Using a checklist, a series of nine questions asked the prison respondents whether any of these kind of economic “rackets” were operated or controlled by gangs in their prison facility. The results are provided in Table 6. Here we see that all of these are rackets where gangs routinely seek to dominate and exert control. For example, the vast majority of prisons (89.7%) report gangs try to control the drug sales inside prison. Only about half the prisons (55.2%) report that gangs try to control the recreational area usage (e.g., weight pits). We are not able to say definitively what exactly is being sold in the sex racket, but it is the least likely inmate racket for gangs to seek to control (44.8%).

Table 6: Types of Inmate Economic Racket Controlled by Gangs

Type of Inmate Economic Racket *****	% of Prisons Where Gangs Try to Control These Rackets *****
Drugs	89.7%
Sex	44.8%
Food	79.3%
Clothing	58.6%
Loan Sharking	69.0%
Gambling	82.8%
Extortion	86.2%
Protection	75.9%
Recreational area usage	55.2%

LARGEST AMOUNT OF CASH SEIZED FROM GANG MEMBER INMATES

The survey asked “What was the largest amount of cash seized from gang member inmates during the last one year period?”. Half of the respondents reported no such cash seizures were reported from gang inmates (e.g., during shakedowns, etc) during the last one year period. But half did report such seizures of United States currency in amounts from a low of \$5 to a high of \$3,000, so that the amounts can be substantial if a number of different correctional institutions exist in the state. It is not clear how this works, but perhaps there should be an incentive similar to that in law enforcement drug investigations where under the terms of cash and goods seized, a portion is returned to the local police department. The policy here needs to make sure that something in writing exists with regard to forfeiture of cash contraband in order to assure due process. A reasonable policy would be to just designate half of the seized cash contraband to be deposited to the state correctional system, with the other half going to the facility

itself for any designated funding purpose.

Cash is king behind bars and gangs control a great deal of money in this respect. It is not at all clear how large this financial picture could be nationwide, but it could be very substantial considering the organized crime aspects of gang life today.

VAST MAJORITY BELIEVE GANG MEMBERS HAVE A STRONGER AFFILIATION AFTER SERVING TIME

The survey asked “Do you believe that gang members generally have a stronger affiliation with their gang after serving time?”. The results show that 89.7 percent of the prisons responding to the survey expressed the belief that gang members generally have a stronger affiliation with their gang after serving time. This increase in gang cohesiveness is undoubtedly an unintended consequence of the use of the penal sanction for gang members. But the fact remains that the vast majority believe this aspect of gang life provides a kind of enhancement to the gang organization itself — more highly committed members. As if they have “paid their dues”, they have “rank” they maybe earned in prison, or might be able to monetize their status after release from prison for having more “street creds”. Only a small portion of the sample (10.3%) did not agree that gang members have a strong affiliation after serving time. The evidence here strongly suggests that the post-release experience of gang/STG members will likely involve greater risks of relapse or recidivism.

GANGS/STG’s RESULTING IN MORE SMUGGLED CELL PHONES

The survey asked “In your opinion, have gangs/STG’s tended to result in more cell phones being smuggled in for use by inmates in your facility?”. Some 85.2 percent of the respondents reported that “yes”, in their opinion gangs/STG’s have tended to result in more cell phones being smuggled into their facility for use by inmates in their facility. Only 14.8 percent of the respondents did not report this as a problem related to gangs/STG’s.

PRESSURE FROM STATE OFFICIALS TO “PLAY DOWN” GANG ACTIVITY

The survey included the question “Do you receive any pressure from state officials to “play down” gang activity?”. The results show that about one out of five (21.4%) prison respondents do in fact report that they feel some pressure from above to down play the gang/STG problem in their facility. Most of the respondents (78.6%) report no such pressure.

THREE FOURTHS BELIEVE GANGS/STG’s HAVE RESULTED IN MORE IMPROVISED WEAPONS PRODUCTION

The survey asked “In your opinion, have gangs/STGs tended to result in more improvised weapons production (e.g., shanks, etc) among inmates in your facility?”. The results show that 75% reported that “yes”, that gangs/STG’s have tended to result in more improvised weapons production among prison inmates. Only a fourth (25%) of the prisons report no such enhancement effect from gangs/STG’s in terms of improvised weapons production among inmates.

TWO THIRDS OF THE PRISONS PROVIDE STAFF WITH FORMALIZED STG TRAINING

The survey asked “Do your staff receive formalized training in dealing with the gang/STG problem?”. The results show that two-thirds of the respondents (66.7%) report that their staff receive formalized training in dealing with the gang/STG problem. The big problem here is that asking someone to work in a prison environment with no gang/STG training is like throwing a staff member into a lion’s pit — or like sending a soldier to war with no weapon. Correctional officers in America quickly learn that their mind is their primary weapon, and if a full one third of American prisons are not providing such basic training, it becomes a defacto management problem called “insufficient training for the job”.

A follow-up question asked “If YES, how many hours is the gang training session?”. The survey results showed a range of scores from a low of zero to a high of 40 hours long. Some 95 percent of the respondents reported eight hours or less of such gang training, so only one respondent was able to stand out with a report of 40 hours as a length for gang training. The mean, or arithmetic average, was 5.02 hours of gang training for this variable.

Of related concern, and obviously something far beyond the scope of the present study, is to evaluate the quality of the training that is offered to staff and employees on gang/STG and disruptive group issues. From reviewing some of the “learning objectives” in the Texas adult corrections system it would seem an issue worth examining. Consider this possible error that could confuse Texas corrections staff: “*Street gangs are loosely knit as a whole with no written rules or constitution. Prison gangs are highly structured with by-laws and/or a constitution that is strictly enforced*” (www.tcleose.state.tx, 2004: p. 2). Actually, almost all of the street gangs from the Chicago gang epicenter have written by-laws and constitutions. Thus, while it is fair to say that in a lot of the cases these street gang constitutions and by-laws were originally written by their imprisoned members, it might be problematic with regard to facts to claim street gangs as a whole have no written rules or constitution.

A lot of correctional officers in America are members of AFSCME which is why over a decade ago, AFSCME passed the “Gangs in Prisons and Jails” resolution calling for specific minimum standards on training for correctional officers:

“It is the policy of this International Union that formal instruction about understanding and evaluating prison gangs should be integrated into the preservice training for all correctional employees and that such instruction be continually updated through the in-service training that correctional employees receive”, and further

“That the training model on the subject of prison gangs include how and why gangs develop; the different types of gangs; including those identified with a particular region or area of the country; gang structures; their body markings and any warning signs indicating their presence; how gangs communicate with each other; and the different strategies for dealing with prison gangs” (Lonzo, 1994).

Still the trend has been towards increases over the years in providing formal training on gangs, as evident in the trend documented by the following NGCRC survey results. We can provide a longitudinal analysis by examining the

same parameter in previous studies reported in 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2004, and 2020. Table 7 provides the summary of these findings comparing the present study with past findings on the same replicated item.

Table 7: Percentage Getting Formal Training 1991 to 2020

	Percentage Getting Formal Training 1991 to 2020							
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1999	2004	2020
YES	40.8%	45.4%	46.8%	49.5%	58%	67.4%	72.5%	66.7%
NO	59.2%	54.6%	53.2%	50.5%	42%	32.6%	27.5%	33.3

Source: NGCRC Prison Surveys (www.ngcrc.com)

TWO-FIFTHS REPORT GANG MEMBERS ARE A PROBLEM IN TERMS OF ASSAULTS ON STAFF

The survey asked “have gang members been a problem in terms of assaults on your staff?”. The results showed that 42.9 percent of the prison respondents do in fact report that gang members have been a problem in terms of assaults on their staff. Some 57.1 percent are reporting that gang members have not been a problem in terms of assaults on their staff.

This is obviously a growing problem in American prisons today. The percentage of adult state correctional institutions reporting that gang members have been a problem in terms of assaults on staff changed over the years: 12% in 1991, 9.5% in 1992, 18% in 1993, 21.3% in 1994, 18.7% in 1995, 33.6% in 1999, and 20.4% in 2004.

When a pattern of assaults on staff exists the prison administration needs to act and have plans of action to do something about it. It could mean contingency plans for rolling out new programs and services, or establish a Task Force to increase prosecution for such offenses. Anything is better than nothing when a pattern of assaults against staff exists. Recall what happened in 2015 in New York — their correctional officers union the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) became so frustrated with the inaction of statewide prison administrators that they took out a large highway billboard ad that said “We support our state. When will they support us?”. In the year 2014, “747 correctional officers in New York State were assaulted by inmates” (correctionsone.com, 2015).

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS REPORT GANG MEMBERS ARE A PROBLEM IN TERMS OF THREATS AGAINST STAFF

The survey included the question “have gang members been a problem in terms of threats on staff?”. The results showed that 64.3 percent do in fact report that gang members have been a problem in terms of threats on staff members in the prisons. Some 35.7 percent report that gang members have not been a problem in this regard.

LARGE SUPPORT EXISTS FOR TELEPHONE MONITORING

The survey included the question “in your opinion is telephone monitoring an effective technique to prevent gang leaders from maintaining their ties to outside gang members?”. We should clarify the syntax here that telephone moni-

toring alone will not in and of itself prevent gang leaders from maintaining their ties to outside gang members, it just prevents them from doing with impunity and without detection. Telephone monitoring simply increases the probability of detecting gang crimes and conspiracies in progress and in that regard remains a tried and true “tool of the trade” for STG investigators. The results of the survey indicated that 89.3 percent of the respondents agreed with the implied value of telephone monitoring. Only 10.7 percent of the respondents did not see telephone monitoring as a way to prevent gang leaders from maintaining their ties to outside gang members. And among this 10.7 percent it could very well be some of them knew that gangs today do not have to use the prison phones, they can use their own illegal contraband cell phones, which are not as easily subject to intercept.

LARGE SUPPORT EXISTS FOR MAIL MONITORING

The survey included the question “in your opinion is mail monitoring an effective technique to prevent gang leaders from maintaining their ties to outside gang members?”. Gang leaders would use their attorneys or family members for this purpose, and would be smart enough to know that their correspondence that goes through prison censors will be copied and filed away and could be used against them at any time. The results from the survey show that 85.7 percent of the respondents do agree that mail monitoring is an effective technique. Only 14.3 percent did not view mail monitoring as an effective technique. Mail monitoring is not an easy job and often the STG investigators at the institutional level will encounter lengthy prose that looks benign, but is actually written in code. Over the years a number of prison facilities in the USA have contacted the NGCRC for the purpose of breaking such codes, and we have been able to do so. STG investigators need to know that they can get help from federal agencies that are geared up for this kind of technical endeavor.

MOST BELIEVE GANG MEMBERS HAVE A HIGHER RECIDIVISM RATE

The survey asked “in your opinion, do gang members tend to have a higher recidivism rate?”. The results show that 85.7 percent of the respondents believe that gang members tend to have higher recidivism rates. Only 14.3 percent did not agree with the idea that gang members had a higher likelihood of recidivism.

ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS TAKE GANG MEMBERSHIP INTO ACCOUNT

The survey asked “does your institutional classification system take gang membership into account?”. It could be construed as a kind of neglect to not take gang/STG membership into consideration in the institutional classification system. Every correctional facility must use a classification system to assign risk ratings and to more effectively manage the inmate. Ignoring something as important as gang/STG membership is ill-advised. Some 67.9 percent of the responding prisons reported that their institutional classification system does in fact take gang/STG membership into account. Thus, about a third of our Nation’s prisons (32.1%) may be operating in a kind of denial syndrome where the policy logic is similar to the proverbial Ostrich — put your head in the sand and ignore everything.

NO REAL CONSENSUS ON WHETHER NO HUMAN CONTACT STATUS IS EFFECTIVE FOR CONTROLLING GANG MEMBERS

The survey asked “do you believe “no human contact status” is effective for the control of gang members?”. The idea of no human contact status was born in the California Department of Corrections as the ultimate book to throw at bad-acting inmates. The practical matter of this policy means that the inmate will have little if any human contact and will be isolated in a cell 23 hours a day 7 days a week. The survey results show that 39.3 percent of the prison respondents agree that no human contact status is effective in controlling gang members. But a simple majority of the prison respondents (60.7%) do not agree with this assumption. Federal research (Beck, 2015; Frost and Monteiro, 2016; Sundt, 2016) is showing that the use of restrictive housing (also called administrative segregation) for inmates will come with the price of inducing serious psychological distress and the need for mental health services for inmates placed in such forms of confinement. The research by Mears, et al (2013) on supermax prisons notes that another problem is the perception that the correctional facility may be violating human rights in a context where public image is everything.

The study by Pyrooz (2016) is an example of some recent federally funded scholarship where its NCJRS abstract claimed that “restrictive housing may reduce inmate rule violations”. It is not that a review of the literature supports this conclusion that “restrictive housing may reduce inmate rule violations”, rather the literature shows it is because of rule violation that gang members and others end up in restrictive or other forms of punitive housing. If anyone says restrictive housing reduces inmate rule violations they are tending to advocate it unless they are making this conclusion as a result of a thorough empirical statistical evaluation — which Pyrooz (2016) was not.

Pyrooz (2016, 2018) reviewed three studies on gangs and restrictive housing (Ralph and Marquart, 1991; Fischer, 2002; and Labrecque, 2015). This was the evidence used on the issue of whether restrictive housing reduces inmate rule violations. Ralph and Marquart (1991) showed that after all gang members in Texas were placed in restrictive housing there was a reduction in gang violence from an ongoing gang war – but it was not able to analyze any other rule violation reduction other than homicide and assault. Fischer (2002) claimed a 30 percent reduction in overall inmate violations in Arizona, but it was from a wider effect of new policies that included among other things restrictive housing, and it had mixed results — some rule violations decreased (assault, drugs, threats, fighting, rioting) and some increased (possessing weapons, destruction of government property, tampering with equipment, and other violence). The study by Labrecque (2015) examined the experience in Ohio where it was shown that restrictive housing caused more problems — once released from restrictive housing the gang members basically went wild — their rule violations skyrocketed. These are “mixed results” at best and do not provide a consistent body of evidence that restrictive housing will reduce inmate misconduct. Labrecque (2015) showed it exacerbates inmate misconduct.

Examining some of the analysis used by Pyrooz (2016: p. 132, Table 1) we see that the paper uses the estimate of 3% for the gang density of the State of California’s prison system — this was one of the biggest pieces of misinformation ever generated. The 3% estimate comes from a Camp and Camp (1985) study

where the researchers were listing the state by state gang density rates, and California invented a clever way to make itself look good in this context by reporting that 3% of its inmates were “validated gang members”. The keyword here is “validated”, that meant by way of translation — the hard core 3% the state put a label on as an STG. California has always played fancy with its gang statistics, this matter is widely known in the literature. The “3%” gang density rate reported years ago for California has persisted over time like a make-believe Disney character.

In fact, a closer reading of the Pyrooz (2016, p. 128) “white paper” as it describes itself only talks about the reduction in rules violations as something that might theoretically happen — and it talks briefly, one paragraph of speculation each, on how deterrence theory and incapacitation theory would hypothesize “greater systemwide compliance with prison rules”. So while the author was speculating about this, there was no real direct evidence that actually surfaced in that paper to the effect, from any research, that would justify use of anything like no human contact status or any of the other terms (administrative segregation, restrictive housing, etc) as a way to solve the gang problem behind bars. The Pyrooz paper concludes specifically that restrictive housing is an “imperfect solution to a complex problem” (2016, p. 153).

There are a variety of special types of housing for prison inmates that have developed out of necessity over the years which are very restrictive types of housing that we often do not hear about until they hit the news in a lawsuit. An inmate sued the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision because he was placed in what was called a “contraband watch room” in the Elmira Correctional Facility. There is no running water or bathroom in the room, or cell. It is designed to monitor the inmate’s bowel movement because the inmate may be suspected of hiding contraband in their body. Inmates call it a four-letter word that means defecation room. One inmate sued because he had been held in it for over two months (Glorioso and Stulberger, 2019). A state senator thought this might constitute torture and that it was inhumane.

An entire prison might be forced to “go on full lockdown” which the administrator of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections calls a “suspension of administrative rules”, at least that is the explanation for how by administrative fiat every prison — gang member or not — gets 24 hour lockdown. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections from the period Nov. 8 and lasting until Dec. 19, 2019, the entire prison facility at the Columbia Correctional Institution located in Portage, Wisconsin, was put on full lock down. That means all of the inmates get no hot meals, no recreation, no laundry, no showers, no family visits, etc. So all inmates were put in a very restrictive type of housing for a period of six weeks. The cover story was apparently that there were three assaults on staff members (Hamer, 2020).

Ad hoc lockdowns occur in places like Wisconsin for another reason — staff shortages. Also called “modified lockdown”, all inmates can go on a 23-hour lock down if the local administrators are short on staff or are facing labor issues. An example that was widely covered in the news media is the ad hoc lockdown at the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the summer of 2019. Basically, it is a failure by the state corrections agency itself to effectively recruit, train, and retain sufficient staff. Wisconsin correctional officers are said to face mandatory overtime — some CO’s work 95

hours a week (Turk, 2019).

THREE-FOURTH REPORT GANGS/STG's EXTORT MONEY MADE BY INMATE WORKERS

The survey asked “have there been problems with gang/STG members extorting money made by the inmates who work in the facility?”. The results show that three fourths (75%) of the prison respondents report that there have been problems with gang/STG members extorting money made by the inmates who work in their prison facility. A fourth (25%) report no such problem.

ABOUT A THIRD REPORT ISLAMIC INMATES HAVE A SEPARATE GANG

The survey asked this separate question “do Islamic inmates have a separate gang?”. The results show that 32.1 percent of the prison respondents report that Islamic inmates do in fact have a separate gang. About two-thirds (67.9%) of the respondents reported that Islamic inmates do not have a separate gang. The research by Phillips (2012) showed that Islamic inmates also have a separate gang in the prisons from England and Wales.

LOW LEVEL PROBLEM: GANG MEMBERS FILING LAW SUITS

The survey asked “do gang members generally tend to file more law suits against your institution than non-gang member inmates?”. The results show that only 16 percent of the prison respondents indicated this was true. The majority (84%) indicated that gang members generally do not tend to file more law suits against the facility than non-gang member inmates.

COMPARING STREET GANGS AND PRISON GANGS

The survey asked “in general, which type of gang group poses more danger to your facility: a street gang (has its origins outside of prison), or a prison gang (has its origins inside of prison) or are they about the same? ___Street gang ___Prison gang ___About the same”. We used the semantic definitions commonly found in current intellectual debates to distinguish between street gangs and prison gangs. The problem with that is that even though a gang may have started behind bars, it is highly probably that today we will find it operating outside of the prison somewhere in America. The results show that from the perspective of the prison respondents who have to deal with them on a daily basis, some 28.6 percent felt that the street gang poses more danger to their facility. Only 17.9 percent of the prison respondents felt that the prison gang had the higher danger level. The single largest response mode from the prison respondents was that these two types of gangs are “about the same” — some 53.6 percent felt street gangs and prison gangs were about the same in terms of posing a danger to their adult state correctional facility.

6. FINDINGS RELATED TO RIOTS, DISTURBANCES, HOSTAGE TAKING

The survey also addressed a number of aspects related to common situations in adult state correctional institutions — the new types of riots in particular. This section of the report is addressed to riots, disturbances, and hostage taking issues.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF PRISON RIOTS IN AMERICA

Prison culture has certainly changed with the increase in gang density correctional populations. Thus, the nature of prison riots has changed as well. There are basically three types of prison riots that occur in American jails and prisons today: (1) gang riots, (2) race riots, and (3) religious riots. Riots are also called disturbances or group disruptions.

In the 2002 Folsom prison gang riot, there apparently there was a unique factor. When the Mexican Mafia (Sureños) attacked their rival the Nuestra Familia (Nortenos), a claim that surfaced in the media coverage of the event was that the associate warden, Michael D. Bunnell, who allowed the two gangs together into the prison yard, was himself associated with the Mexican Mafia (Thompson, 2004a). There were over 20 inmates injured in the riot, but most importantly one correctional officer subsequently committed suicide — Capt. D.F. Pieper. He had been demoted after the riot, and his suicide note claimed corruption in corrections, such that his wife believes a criminal coverup continues. However, federal authorities found no abuses in the aftermath of this riot, as many of the gang member inmates had been in lockdown 23 hours a day for 21 months after the riot. The internal investigation by California state officials found no criminal wrongdoing by correctional administrators.

There are a lot of examples of prison gang riots that have also been prevented by a good STG intelligence system, having STG coordinators in every prison. Such was the case when Mickey Cobra gang leader William James, Sr., in the Wisconsin corrections system decided he wanted to start a gang riot. This shows useful factual and historical information from case law decisions, because after having been found guilty of violating severe disciplinary rules such as “do not start a riot”, this gang leader sued his state corrections system and it ended up in court. What James tried to do is work with other gangs to start a riot, the problem was there were two informants who relayed the information on how four different gangs were working together to ignite a riot, and the riot was prevented. In a 2002 decision by the Court of Appeals, the appeal by James to have his disciplinary code conviction overturned was rejected and the prison disciplinary decision was affirmed (*James v. McCaughtry*, Wisc.).

On April 11, 1993, Easter Sunday, a group of Islamic inmates started Ohio’s deadliest riot ever. As the riot unfolded, two other gangs got involved: the Aryan Brotherhood took charge of an area, and the Gangster Disciples took charge of another area of the same cell block. Eleven days later, nine inmates and one correctional officer were dead, most of the inmates were executed by a roving “death squad” intent on killing snitches (Pfeifer, 2002). The case of *State v. LaMar* (2002) provides fertile historical and factual information on the nature of this kind of prison riot. The sad message of this riot is that without legitimate authority around, in the case of this riot, complete mayhem and anarchy was the rule of the day at the prison. Keith LaMar was the inmate in charge of the death squad. LaMar was subsequently convicted and sentenced to the death penalty. LaMar was not even a part of any of the gangs involved in the riot, he was just willing to work for them once the riot was underway.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF PRISON GANGS IN THE WORLD TODAY

By comparison, the prison gang problem in the USA is not as bad as it is in countries to the south. The prison gang problem outside of the United States can be characterized as more severe such as in Caribbean, Central American, and South American countries. Mexico is an example of a country where the prison gang problem is going to exceed the level found in the United States. The members of Mexican drug gangs once arrested and incarcerated become through importation the members of Mexican prison gangs, or Mexican STG's.

By comparison, the prison gang problem in the United States is more severe than other developed countries such as Canada and most of Western Europe. Recent evidence on the prison gang problem in Canada suggested a 44 percent increase in the problem, but still reported only a gang density level of 12 percent (Harris, 2012). A 12 percent gang density level is not significant in comparison to the United States, where we are facing a much higher level in the adult prison system. So, where the basic gang problem is still in developmental stage and not yet rampant throughout the youth culture in a society, we can expect the prison gang problem to lag behind to the same extent. Most of the inmates who are members of prison gangs did not join inside prison. Most of the inmates who are members of prison gangs were members of gangs on the streets. They were previously street gang members is a common trait of the prison gang members today.

Elsewhere in the research reported here we can give context to the comparison of U.S. and Canadian prison gang problems. Respondents to the survey reported information on the "threshold" for when gang density represents a severe problem for correctional administrators, and the mean score for that threshold was 22.6 percent — so that if gang density rises above 22.6 percent, the respondents from our survey felt that a severe gang problem exists. In the case of Canada's reported gang density level of 12 percent, that is what American correctional officers would call a "cake walk", a far less serious problem than exists in the USA.

The threat level of the gang problem is simply higher in a country like Mexico than it is in the USA. How much worse is it in Mexico? If their best police do end up killing a gang leader in a shootout, the gang is able to steal the body back from them. This happened in the case when Heriberto Lazcano Lacano was killed by Mexican Marines on October 7, 2012 in a battle that took place about 120 miles south of Texas (Archibold, 2012). When the gang learned that Heriberto was dead, they swarmed the funeral home with guns and removed his corpse. In Mexico, the gang problem has risen to the level of a combination of organized crime and low intensity military conflict. This kind of hybrid gang is a form of domestic terrorism as well.

How bad is the gang problem in Mexico? In the Mexican town of Olinala, the gang problem spawned a large vigilante force of 700 towns people who took the law into their own hands, setting up roadblocks and armed check points to keep out gang members. In fact, 100 or more residents got involved in storming a house thought to be holding gang members suspected of kidnaping and killing a local taxi driver. Tired and frustrated by the lack of law enforcement protection from the Mexican gangs, the anti-gang vigilantes burned down the house, killing the four gang suspects (Washington Post, 2012).

Does it get much worse than Mexico? Yes, in Brazil for example, the prison gang called First Command of the Capital (PCC) is a prison gang that like

in the United States and Mexico can operate not just behind bars but also on the streets of its society. Some say the PCC prison gang or STG has morphed into a unique kind of organized crime which operates as a parallel government, having the ability to “shut down” the society temporarily when need be based on fear and intimidation. Nearly 100 police officers and correctional officers have been killed this year alone by the PCC in gun battles and assassinations (Kawaguti, 2012).

There are also examples from around the world of the STG problem, thus reviewing a few of these will help place the present findings in a larger international context. In the country of Turkey, a notorious gang from Istanbul known as the Karagumruk gang in November 2000 instigated a massive prison riot, taking 29 staff as hostages (including their equivalent of the warden and his four associate wardens). Two days later five were dead as troops stormed the prison. Gangs are still active in and out of prison in Turkey.

The gang-turf war has long ago spread from the streets to the prison system. Jails routinely experience this kind of gang riot, such as occurred in July 2004 at the Carrizalez-Rucker Detention Center in Cameron County, Texas. In this gang riot a fight occurred between members of the Vallucos and the Texas Syndicate, the latter being a well-known and established gang. Different cell blocks began fighting almost simultaneously. Over 100 inmates took part in the riot, about a dozen of whom were injured.

On August 18, 2004 a gang riot resulted in 31 inmates being killed in a San Salvador jail; typical of overcrowding which also contributes to disorder, this jail held over 3,000 inmates when it was designed to hold 800. The most problematic gang in this riot was the Mara Salvatrucha 18 (Mara 18). Most American gang experts know about MS 13, and some have noticed a MS 18 presence, but the MS 18 is much more well known in their country of origin (El Salvador). The Mara 18 gang was the first wave of immigrant children who turned to street gangs, primarily in the Los Angeles area, where there was a longstanding gang known as “18th Street”. Some of the new kids from El Salvador joined the 18th Street gang and in doing so created an allied but new gang called “Mara 18”, and when deported back to their country of origin, the Mara 18 culture came back home as well.

Guatemala’s prison system is similarly overcrowded, there a gang riot occurred because the inmates wanted to kill a gang leader named Cesar Beteta Raymundo, who was among 17 inmates hacked to death with machetes and improvised blade weapons; the victims were often decapitated, or burned. The gang leader’s head was put on a stick and it was paraded around the prison (see “17 Killed in Gory Guatemala Prison Riot”, *Daily Times*, Dec. 27, 2002).

The gang riot in the prison in El Dorado, Venezuela in August of 1997 where 29 prisoners were killed, set a new standard in brutality. The local gang tricked an STG consisting entirely of Guajiro Indians into dropping their homemade weapons. The local gang gave a standard inmate code alarm that the correctional officers were on the way to shake down the prison. The Guajiro Indians had killed a gang leader a few days earlier. The Guajiro Indians believed the gambit that there really was a massive “shake down” coming, and they dropped or discarded their weapons, at which point they were attacked from all sides. Two of the Guajiro Indians were decapitated, and their heads were used by local gang members to play soccer, who joyfully kicking the heads from one end of the prison cell block to the other end (See “29 Inmates Killed in Venezuela Prison Riot”, August

29, 1997, CNN World News).

Again in November, 2003 seven inmates were killed in a gang riot at the Vista Hermosa prison in Venezuela; the gangs were fighting over control of the rackets inside the prison; this was a troubled prison system, in the time frame of one year 2001-2002 some 240 convicts were killed (Coleman, 2003).

THE THREE TYPES OF RIOTS DURING THE LAST YEAR

The survey asked “During the last twelve month period, have there been any disturbances related to gang members in your facility?”. Three-fourths (75%) of the prisons report that they have experienced a gang or STG riot during the last year. Only a fourth (25%) report no such gang riots in the last one year period.

The survey asked “During the last twelve month period, have there been any disturbances related to racial conflict in your facility?”. About half of the prisons (57.1%) did in fact report that they had a race riot in the last one year time frame. And about half (42.9%) reported no such racial disturbance in the last year.

The survey also asked “During the last twelve month period, have there been any disturbances related to religious conflicts in your facility?”. The results show that only about 14.3 percent of the prisons reported any religious riots in the last year. Most prisons (85.7%) report no such religious riots.

DO STAFF SOMETIMES HAVE TO NEGOTIATE WITH GANG MEMBERS?

The survey asked “Do staff in your facility sometimes find it necessary to negotiate with gang members in order to keep the peace?”. It is the ultimate example of situational ethics for a correctional officer who comes across a situation where they can “write up” a gang/STG member, because in the situation where they can morally “look the other way” for once, they might be able to enhance an overall situation of “goodwill” with inmates. It is a “grey area” in some regards, but may also border on something akin to racketeering corruption. The survey results showed that 39.3 percent of the prison respondents do in fact report that staff in their facility sometimes find it necessary to negotiate with gang members in order to keep the peace. Some 60.7 percent of the respondents denied that staff in their facility would do this.

HOSTAGE SITUATIONS RARE

The survey asked “When was the last time your facility had a hostage situation involving inmates and staff?”. Some 31 percent reported incident data on this most severe type of prison crisis, with dates ranging from 1970 to 2016. Most (69%) reported no such incidents.

INCREASED RIOTING 2016 TO PRESENT

The survey asked “For your entire state correctional system, when was the last major inmate riot? 19____ or 200____ (Please indicate year) Or ____Never”. The results showed that a fourth of the respondents (25%) reported “never” or no such major inmate riots in their statewide system. The results also showed dates of last riot from 1991 to 2019, with an uptick being indicated during 2016, 2018, and 2019. Half of the sample (50%) reported one or more major riots during the time frame of 2016 to present.

THE ESTIMATE OF LATENT TERRORIST RECRUITS

The survey asked “what percentage of the inmates in your facility are so hostile towards their society that if they were approached by a foreign terrorist organization, what we call today’s inmates might be tomorrow’s terrorists. In my opinion ____% of the inmates in this facility would fit that profile”. The results for this kind of estimate of the percentage of latent terrorists ranged from a low of zero to a high of 65 percent. The mean or arithmetic average for this variable was 12.8 percent, a lot higher than previous estimates.

The study by Merola and Vovak (2013) first established the importance of having the STG coordinator or investigator make sure they are also keeping an eye on terrorist and extremist prisoners, as these persons may want to spread a destructive agenda.

7. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT THE PRISON GANG/STG PROBLEM IN AMERICA

Here we describe the survey findings that give direct guidance on what to specifically do to help respond to the gang/STG problem in American prisons today. This includes the need for new legislation, new programs, and new initiatives to tackle this universal problem. No state is immune from this problem.

VAST MAJORITY WANT TOUGHER LAWS TO CONTROL THE PRISON GANG PROBLEM

The survey asked “Do you feel we need tougher laws to control the gang problem in prison?”. The results showed that 96.6 percent of the respondents agreed with the idea that the U.S. needs tougher laws to control the prison gang problem. A very small percentage (3.4%) did not believe tougher laws are needed to control the prison gang problem.

MUCH SUPPORT EXISTS FOR A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO GANGS AND GANG MEMBERS

The survey included the question “a zero-tolerance policy is the best approach for dealing with gangs and gang members” where the response modes were “___Strongly agree ___Agree ___Neither agree or disagree ___Disagree ___Strongly Disagree”. No one indicated “strongly disagree”. Most of the prison respondents (82.1%) responded with “strongly agree”. Some 14.3 percent indicated “neither agree or disagree”. And 3.6 percent chose to simply “disagree” with this.

Language is everything when it comes to the convention of name association with any particular social policy, and maybe a better way of expressing this concept of “hyper vigilance” would be a phrase that focuses on the positive, not the negative. A more “positive” way to describe a policy that seeks to be fully aware and responsive to gang problems might be called something like a “full integrity” approach or a “full function” approach, where it is declared that all lawful avenues of recourse to the solution of the crisis will be used to promote the safety and security of staff, inmates, and visitors. We are impressed with the clarity of the language used by Watts (2016) in a report about federal prisons to Congress, it is important to clearly articulate the goal of promoting a culture of

safety and social development services that will reduce the risk of future recidivism. A prison is an open system, it cannot pick and choose who it takes in as inmates.

OVER TWO-THIRDS WOULD SUPPORT THE IDEA OF A GANG TATTOO REMOVAL PROGRAM FOR INMATES

The survey asked “Do you believe that a “gang tattoo removal program” for inmates who want to quit gang life would help with their reentry into society?”. This is, of course, like swimming against the tide or current. As most people know, prisons are places to get permanent tattoos, American prisons are not known as places where you get tattoos removed. This is a theoretical issue, very few American prisons have such a program for tattoo removal. So this research question does not measure how many programs exist nationwide in the USA, it measures only the scope and extent of support for the notion that if such a program did exist it would help — help inmates maybe quit gang life and help them with their reentry into society generally.

The results of this research show that over two-thirds of the prison respondents did believe that a “gang tattoo removal program” for inmates who want to quit gang life would help with their reentry into society. Thus, 72.4 percent of the respondents supported the idea that such a tattoo removal program for inmates would be helpful. So, from a national needs assessment point of view, the majority of American prisons are reporting that they could benefit from such a program. But the cold fact is that few such programs actually exist for inmates, they often need to wait until after they are released from prison, and even then the availability of these kind of programs in the general public is rare.

OVER A FOURTH OF AMERICAN PRISONS CLAIM TO HAVE SOME KIND OF PROGRAM TO HELP INMATES GET OUT OF GANG LIFE

The survey asked “Does your facility have a “gang renouncement” or gang renunciation program or any program designed to help inmates get out of gang life?”. The results showed that 31 percent of the respondents claimed to have such programs designed to help inmates get out of gang life. We suspect this may be somewhat inflated due to the extremely small estimates for the percentage of inmates who are also reported to have quit gang life behind bars, something addressed in subsequent questions on the survey. But, still, the direct meaning here is that the majority (69%) of American prisons do not have any kind of program of this nature by their own report here.

The survey did have an open-ended item that asked for the name of the program. Some of the names that exist include: ADC Step-Down, New Freedom, STGMU (Security Threat Group Management Unit), and just the process of “debriefing” where the renunciation process is done by state gang investigators. One respondent noted that they use a gang renouncement form such as that available at the NGCRC website (www.ngcrc.com) developed years ago. Another respondent indicated “we are working on implementing” such a program. Another indicated they do not actually have such a formalized program, it does not have a name, just policy paperwork that could be construed as generally encouraging better life choices than gang/STG membership.

STRONGER QUESTION, LOWER RESULTS ON GANG DEPROGRAMMING

The survey asked “Does your facility have a special program that is able to get gang inmates to quit their gang? “. The language here is specific, in asking if they have a special program that can accomplish getting inmates to “drop their flags” — the phrase inmates use to describe quitting gang life. Only 3.4 percent of the respondents indicated they had such capabilities. And this is consistent with the findings from a follow-up question where the survey asked “if yes, what percentage of the inmates who come in as gang members actually quit their gang? _____% of the inmates who come in as gang members quit their gang in this facility. The range of scores here was from zero to three percent, all very low, indicating little if any “gang membership attrition” is going on inside American prisons today. And remember, this aspect of gang density is vital because it might be significantly altered by the use of special programs or services for inmates, if such resources were made available.

Less than one percent (0.34% is the mean score for percentage of inmates who have quit their gang while in prison) of American prison inmates have quit their gang in prison according to the results of this analysis.

So, recall that from analyzing two other aspects of what constitutes “gang density” that this research has reported that 64.2 percent of American prison inmates may be members of gangs or STG’s, so that by incorporating the evidence from gang exits (0.34%) our overall estimate now must be adjusted downward to 63.8% of American prison inmates are gang members — considering the fact that some do quit gang life behind bars. The biggest problem here is that American prisons are doing almost nothing to help alleviate the problem. And not surprisingly, when we incorporate “gang deprogramming” efforts used nationwide, this does little to objectively and materially alter the underlying problem that gang density represents.

ABOUT HALF AGREE THAT PROVIDING TUITION SUPPORT FOR STAFF COULD HELP CONTROL THE PRISON GANG PROBLEM

The survey asked “do you believe that providing tuition support for staff could help control the prison gang problem?”. The results showed that 57.7 percent of the respondents agreed with the idea that providing tuition support for staff could help with the prison gang problem. Actually, any kind of college courses could in theory help improve the corrections work force. About half of the respondents (42.3%) did not agree with the idea that tuition support would have any such impact on the prison gang problem.

FULL-TIME STG INTELLIGENCE COORDINATORS

The survey asked “does your institution have any full-time staff person who serves as a STG intelligence coordinator?”. The issue here is that this may not be a job under conditions of high gang density where it is possible to be an effective STG intelligence coordinator on a “part-time” basis. The job needs to be a full-time position in most situations. The survey results show that 81.5 percent of the STG intelligence coordinators are in fact functioning in full-time mode. Only 18.5 percent of the respondents reported that their STG coordinators were not in full-time mode. The way to have an effective STG policy is to have a

full-time STG person assigned to accomplish it.

INVENTORY OF 20 STRATEGIES USED TO CONTROL GANGS/STGS

The survey asked “what strategies does your facility use to control gangs? (check all those that apply)” and the response modes included 20 different strategies commonly used to control gangs and STG’s in prison. The results of this inquiry are provided in Table 8. As seen in Table 8, the top five most popular strategies used to control gangs and STG’s in American prisons are: monitoring mail (82.8%), shakedown of inmate property (79.3%), constant vigilance and constant intelligence gathering (75.9%), use of informers (69%), interrupting communications (62.1%), and transferring members to different facilities (62.1%).

Table 8: Percentage of Prisons Using Various Strategies to Control Gangs/STGs

<u>Strategy Used on Gang/STGs:</u>	<u>Percentage in the 2020 Sample</u>
Use of informers	69.0%
Segregation	48.3%
Isolating leaders	31.0%
Prosecution	24.1%
Interrupting communications	62.1%
Case by case dealings	48.3%
Ignoring their existence	3.4%
Infiltration	13.8%
Transferring members to different facilities	62.1%
Meeting with gang leaders on “as needed” basis	37.9%
Joint meetings between various gang leaders	10.3%
Balance number of rival gang members living in the same unit	37.9%
Monitor mail	82.8%
Monitor phone calls	75.9%
Task Force to monitor /track gang members	55.2%
Locking up gang leaders in high security facilities	27.6%
Constant vigilance and constant intel gathering	75.9%
The “Perkins” Technique	6.9%
Gang Renunciation Program	6.9%
Shakedown of Inmate Property	79.3%

Transferring members to different facilities is similar to what is known as “bus therapy” or “diesel treatment”, it was one of the first strategies used in the last century to respond to the prison gang problem. The idea was to keep them moving, make them adjust to new locations so fast that their mail cannot catch up with them. They would smell the fumes from the prison bus as it moved them

from one location to the next. Unfortunately, over time it was realized that there was one large disadvantage or blow back from this policy — the increased spread of the gang itself. Gang leaders undergoing “diesel treatment” were able to proselytize other inmates and build their brand.

NEARLY HALF AGREE THAT IMPROVING RACE RELATIONS COULD REDUCE THE GANG VIOLENCE PROBLEM IN THEIR FACILITY

The survey asked the question “do you believe a program that sought to improve race relations among inmates could reduce the gang violence problem in your facility?”. The results show that 44.8 percent of the respondents agreed that a program with the goal of improving race relations among inmates could reduce the gang violence problem in their facility. From a “needs assessment” point of view, it would appear from this research that substantial empirical support exists for implementing some kind of initiative in this regards. Still, some 55.2 percent of the respondents did not agree with this premise about the value of improving race relations as a strategy to reduce gang violence behind bars.

VAST MAJORITY DON'T LIKE THE IDEA NEGOTIATING WITH INMATE GANG LEADER

The survey asked “In your opinion, would an official who tries to bargain with an inmate gang leader be similar to negotiating with terrorists?”. The results showed that 79.3 percent do in fact believe that an official who tries to bargain with an inmate gang leader is similar to negotiating with terrorists. About a fifth (20.7%) did not view it with this high level of disapproval, the reasoning probably being that in corrections work, having a reservoir of “goodwill” with inmates is invaluable from a management perspective.

HOW TO MAKE PRISONS SAFER IN RESPONDING TO THE GANG/STG PROBLEM

The survey included the open-ended question “Hypothetically, if you could do anything you wanted to make your facility SAFER, what would you do about the gang/STG problem?”. Table 9 provides an exact transcription of the responses to this survey item. Note in Table 9 that when a respondent is referring to an “SRG group” this means a “security risk group” basically the same as a “security threat group” or a “disruptive group”. Some excellent advice and suggestions were provided by the respondents.

Table 9: Advice from Prison Respondents on What To Do About the Gang/STG Problem

Allow the gang unit ample time to investigate, observe, validate gang members or potential gang members. Implement a program, such as a Renunciation Program that may give them a way out of a gang.

As soon as main gang leaders are identified, ship to different facilities and separate or if major concern, place in segregation.

Better fund and staff security threat group intelligence officers.

Table 9: Continued

Better management which is what we are working on now.

Completely restrict the movement of STG inmates.

Currently we are separating groups into different housing units.

For the STG coordinator to work full-time only on STG.

Full body scans of everyone. Drugs are out of control. Stop drugs from entering all state facilities.

Have a dedicated unit (Gang STG Unit) which Wisconsin does not have.

Have more staff in place just to work on STG issues.

Increase staff training and equipment.

Isolate gang leaders from population, keep numbers from growing.

Keep them from working jobs.

Limit communication and movement.

Lockdown STGs/ Step down program/ have classes that encourage thought process change towards STG involvement.

Make staff more knowledgeable about gang/STG matters.

Modify housing for SRG groups with more officers too.

Hold gang members more accountable for their behavior.

More cameras.

Restrictive housing.

Segregation.

SOMEWHAT RARE FOR A PRISON TO HAVE A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR INMATES WHO WANT TO RENOUNCE GANG LIFE

The survey asked “does your facility have a special program for inmates who want to renounce gang life and live gang free?”. Only 17.2 percent of the prison respondents reported having such a special program. So for the vast majority of American prisons today, 82.8% as reported here, there is not even a passive “paper program” that would allow inmates who want to renounce gang

life and live gang free actually do so. The fact is, the more any agency like a prison can help induce defections from a gang membership base, this is the only known strategy for truly “weakening” a gang because it reduces the gang membership population. Those who want to defect from gang life more often than not are sometimes eager to cooperate with authorities. Thus, gang defections can sometimes result in a goldmine in terms of gang intelligence.

8. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

How do we summarize how adult state correctional respondents feel about the developments in society and what is and is not being done to address some of the problems behind bars that affects the health and safety of staff and inmates alike? We can start by looking at how these same correctional respondents see the future, and summarize the findings about their expectations for what the future holds in American corrections.

A “HIGH D” IS THE GRADE FOR FEDERAL LEADERSHIP IN RESPONDING TO THE GANG PROBLEM IN AMERICA DURING THE LAST YEAR

The survey asked “what grade would you give the federal government for leadership in responding to the gang problem in America during the last year? ___A ___B ___C ___D ___F”. No one gave an “A” grade in their response. N = 3 gave a “B”; N = 15 gave a “C”; N = 9 gave a “D”; and one gave an “F” grade for the federal government’s leadership in responding to the gang problem in America during the last year. The mean or arithmetic score for this translates into a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 1.71 (a high “D” grade, where 4.0 = “A”, and “F” = 0).

VAST MAJORITY EXPECT THE GANG PROBLEM TO INCREASE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS

The survey asked “in your opinion, do you expect the gang problem in corrections to increase or decrease in the next few years, or do you think the problem will remain at the same level it is now? ___Increase ___Decrease ___Remain at same level”. Some 89.7 percent of the prison respondents expressed the viewpoint that in the gang problem in corrections is going to increase in the next few years. Not one respondent indicated the viewpoint that the gang problem in corrections might “decrease”. But 10.3 percent felt it might remain at the same level.

FOUR FIFTHS EXPECT THE PROBLEM OF INMATE VIOLENCE FROM GANG MEMBERS TO INCREASE IN THE NEW FEW YEARS

The survey asked “in your opinion, do you expect the problem of inmate violence from gang members to increase or decrease in the next few years, or do you think the problem will remain at the same level it is now? ___Increase ___Decrease ___Remain at same level”. The results show that 79.3 percent of the prison respondents expected the problem of inmate violence from gang members to increase in the next few years. No one expected the problem of inmate violence from gang members to decrease in the next few years. And the rest (20.7%) expected that the problem of inmate violence from gang members would

remain at the same level.

THREE FOURTHS EXPECT THE PROBLEM OF GANG MEMBERS ABUSING RELIGIOUS RIGHTS TO INCREASE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS

The survey asked “in your opinion, do you expect the problem of gang members abusing their religious rights to increase or decrease in the next few years, or do you think the problem will remain at the same level it is now? ___ Increase ___ Decrease ___ Remain at same level”. The results show that 75.9 percent of the prison respondents expect the problem of gang members abusing their religious rights to increase in the new few years. About a fourth (24.1%) felt this problem would remain at the same level. No one expressed the view that this problem would decrease in the next few years.

MOST EXPECT THE PROBLEM OF GANG MEMBERS ASSAULTING CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS AND STAFF TO INCREASE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS

The survey included the question “in your opinion, do you expect the problem of gang members assaulting correctional officers and staff to increase or decrease in the next few years, or do you think the problem will remain at the same level it is now? ___ Increase ___ Decrease ___ Remain at same level”. The results show that 72.4 percent expect the problem of gang members assaulting correctional officers to increase in the next few years. Some 3.4 percent felt this problem will decrease in the next few years. And 24.1 percent felt the problem will “remain at same level”.

RADICAL MILITANCY AMONG INMATES: FEW EXPECT IT TO DECREASE

The survey asked “in your opinion, do you expect the problem of radical militancy among inmates to increase or decrease in the next few years, or do you think the problem will remain at the same level it is now? ___ Increase ___ Decrease ___ Remain at same level”. The results show that 44.8 percent of the prison respondents expect the problem of inmate militancy to increase in the new few years. Some 6.9 percent expect this problem to decrease. And 48.3 percent expect this problem to remain at the same level it is now.

ABOUT HALF HAVE READ NGCRC REPORTS ABOUT STG PROBLEMS

The survey asked “have you read any of the adult state prison gang research reports on-line at the www.ngcrc.com website or printed periodicals about gangs that were produced and published by the NGCRC”? The results show that about half, some 55.2 percent, report that they have in fact read some of the prison gang research reports available from the NGCRC. Some 44.8 percent reported they had not read any of these reports.

ABOUT HALF HAVE USED NIJ REPORTS ABOUT STG PROBLEMS

The survey asked “has your facility been able to make use of any of the research reports about gangs available from the National Institute of Justice”? The results show that about half, some 53.6 percent, in fact report that their facility has been able to make use of research reports about gangs from the NIJ.

And some 46.4 percent indicated “no”, they have not been able to make use of any of the research reports about gangs available from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

UNDER HALF REPORT HAVING RECEIVED THE PUBLICATION “*The Gang Specialist*”

The survey asked “has your facility ever received the free newspaper publication from the NGCRC called *The Gang Specialist*”. The results show that 46.4 percent of the U.S. prison respondents report having previously received the free newspaper called *The Gang Specialist*. Some 53.6 percent report that their facility has not received this publication.

VAST MAJORITY WANT A COPY OF THE FINAL REPORT

The survey asked “do you want to receive a free copy of the final report that will be available in about two months sent to you at no charge by the National Gang Crime Research Center”. The results showed that 89.7 percent of the prison respondents wanted to receive a free copy of the final report from this 2020 prison gang research. Only 10.3 percent did not want to receive a copy of the final report.

9. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Here we provide an overall summary of major findings, our conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary of General Findings

A troubling finding of this research comes from our investigation into the extent to which suicide attempts are a problem among inmates and among correctional officers. Some 28.6 percent of the prison respondents indicated that suicide attempts by inmates is a problem, and some 24.1 percent indicated that suicide attempts by correctional officers is a problem. For about a fourth of prisons in America, both inmates and correctional officers face a problem of attempted suicide.

The survey asked the question “Do inmates have access to computers or the internet to access their email?”. This is one of the many new questions added to the NGCRC adult corrections survey series recently. The results show that over a third of U.S. prisons (37.9%) provide inmates with computer access or internet access for email correspondence. This is uncharted territory in some regards, because 62.1 percent of American prisons do not provide this kind of computer access for inmates.

Another important finding, new to this line of research on adult state corrections, is the high level of facilities reporting that have drones been used at their facility to smuggle contraband (e.g., cell phones and drugs) into the facility. Over a third of all prison respondents (37.0%) report that drones have been used to try to smuggle in contraband. The prediction would be that eventually this smuggling technique will be used to smuggle in firearms that could be used in a mass escape or hostage taking event, or as in central and south American countries the smuggled guns are used to up the ante in ongoing gang conflicts behind the walls.

Summary of Findings About the Gang/STG Problem

How bad is the gang/STG problem in the adult state correctional institutions in the U.S. today? Here are some highlights from this research report.

*** 77.8% report an increase in the radicalization of inmates.

*** 82.8% report that inmates have attempted to use religious services as a front for gang activities.

*** 57.1% report gangs have tried to control religious program choices for inmates.

*** 31% report that they do not have specific disciplinary rules that prohibit gang recruitment.

*** 67.9% report complaints from inmates about gangs trying to recruit them behind bars.

*** 89.7% report white inmates have a separate gang.

*** 32.1% report that Islamic inmates have a separate gang.

*** 41.4% report gangs are able to influence politicians in their state.

*** 21.4% report pressure from state officials to “play down” gang activity.

*** 100% believe the federal government should play a greater role in responding to the gang/STG problem.

*** 100% believe the more dangerous gangs in the prison system exist by the same name on the streets.

*** 100% want tougher laws to control the gang problem in prisons.

*** 100% believe some inmates may have voluntarily joined or may have been recruited into a gang while incarcerated.

*** Gangs cause 56.2% of all violence among inmates.

*** Gangs smuggle 63.1% of all contraband drugs into U.S. prisons.

*** Gangs control 70.7% of the illicit drug trade behind bars.

*** Gangs have significantly affected the environment in 89.3% of all U.S. prisons.

*** The best estimate is that 63.8% of all U.S. prison inmates are members of a gang or STG.

*** 85.2% of prisons report that gangs result in more smuggled cell phones into prison facilities.

*** Gangs cause more improvised weapons production in 75% of the prisons.

*** 42.9% report gang members are a problem in terms of assaults on staff.

Summary of Findings About What to Expect in the Future

State agencies reporting as adult state correctional facilities in this research are currently giving only a “D-“ grade to the federal government for its help in dealing with the gang/STG problem. So, while 93.1% of the prisons think it would be useful to have a national program aimed at helping correctional officers deal with exposure to trauma and stress on the job, the likelihood of anything that logical actually happening anytime soon is probably remote as expectations are low in regard to solutions coming from a national level.

*** 89.7 percent expect the gang problem to increase in the next few years.

*** 79.3 percent expect the problem of inmate violence from gangs to increase in the next few years.

*** 72.4 percent expect the problem of inmate gang members assaulting correctional officers to increase in the next few years.

*** 44.8 percent expect the problem of inmate militancy to increase in the next few years.

What we can also expect in the future is that gang denial in various forms will always be a problem to some extent because administrators will always be tempted to put a spin on the problem. Mandatory reporting standards in state law would help here to ensure greater integrity and accountability. Statutory guidelines are needed to provide greater transparency in public reporting of crucial vital statistics, such as gang/STG issues.

What we should also expect in the future is that in American state correctional institutions there will continue to be a problem in race relations. The reason we would expect this problem to continue into the future is that nothing is being done about the problem of racial conflict and ethnic tensions behind bars. Correctional officers do report high levels of cultural diversity training. But inmates are another story. Recall from this research that half (46.4%) of the respondents express the pessimistic doctrine that nothing can be done to reduce racial conflicts among prison inmates.

What Can Be Done Without Federal Assistance or Enabling Legislation?

A number of things can be done right now without a lot of additional resources to address the gang/STG problem in adult state correctional systems. Here are three examples.

*** End the “open season” on gang recruitment behind bars.

Recall that 31% of the prisons report that they do not have specific disciplinary rules that prohibit gang recruitment. We highly recommend looking at how other prisons have constructed the careful language that needs to go into this kind of inmate rule.

For example, here would be a version we could modify and adapt from the Texas system:

“Gang/STG Recruitment is Forbidden. Recruiting membership in a gang or security threat group or any other group that engages in criminal or prohibited activity is prohibited and is considered a severe violation of the rules. Gang/STG recruiting includes coercing, inducing, or soliciting any person to become a member of, or actively participate in, activities of a gang or security threat group or any other group that engages in activity prohibited by statute or institutional rules.” The type of sanction for violation of this rule should also be specified for first, second, and third recurring offense violations.

*** When there is little if any gang/STG training provided in the pre-service training academy, prisons need to consider outsourcing formalized gang training for staff.

Recall that a full one-third (33.3%) of the prisons provide no such formal training to staff on how to deal with the problems posed by gangs/STG's. The NGCRC agrees to be a conduit and referral source for gang/STG training for correctional officers as the NGCRC has been providing this kind of training in its

annual training conference for over twenty years now.

***** Revise and Update Inmate Classification Systems to Include Gang/STG Membership.**

Recall that 32.1% of prisons report their inmate classification system does not take gang membership into account. Any prison or correctional facility that uses an inmate classification system that does not take gang/STG membership into account needs to be changed immediately to adjust to this reality. It is time to update the inmate classification system because as the evidence suggests gangs/STG's account for a large amount of all of the problems, especially the more violent and dangerous problems, behind bars.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is important to have the goal of improving methodological rigor in future research methods focusing on some of the complicated issues addressed in this report. Having information from secondary and tertiary sources is a good strategy. For example, knowing how many of the inmates who were involved in a riot received felony indictments for rioting would be a good survey item to add to this line of research. By checking with the prosecutors office in the jurisdiction of each prison it would be possible then to obtain this same information, thus adding one secondary source of information. It is reasonable to assume that there will often be a delay between the time of rioting and time of felony indictment. So one way to improve future research would be to include multiple measures on the same variable, one source from the standard survey, and another using public information from an agency other than the correctional institution as the unit of analysis.

It is also important to follow-up on the issue of gang renouncement programs in adult prisons. Some 31% of the responding prisons indicated that their facility had some kind of a gang renunciation or gang renouncement program designed to help inmates get out of the gang life. A separate question in the survey showed that some 17.2% claim they have a special program for inmates who want to renounce gang life and live gang free. There is an urgent need to identify these program efforts, identify best practices, and promote such efforts nationally.

We would recommend the same follow-up scholarship on to be focused on those one out of ten prisons in the U.S. that report having some kind of program for inmates which seeks to improve race relations. What is being done in these programs? How viable are they for replication nationally? What are the theoretical grounds for expecting positive results? A host of such research questions have yet to be addressed.

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