

An Overview of the Challenge of Prison Gangs

Mark S. Fleisher and Scott H. Decker

A persistently disruptive force in correctional facilities is prison gangs. Prison gangs disrupt correctional programming, threaten the safety of inmates and staff, and erode institutional quality of life. The authors review the history of, and correctional mechanisms to cope with prison gangs. A suppression strategy (segregation, lockdowns, transfers) has been the most common response to prison gangs. The authors argue, however, that given the complexity of prison gangs, effective prison gang intervention must include improved strategies for community re-entry and more collaboration between correctional agencies and university gang researchers on prison gang management policies and practices.

Key words: *collaboration, prison gangs, violence*

America now imprisons men and women with ease and in very large numbers. At the end of the year 2000, an estimated two million men and women were serving prison terms. The mission of improving the quality of life inside our prisons should be a responsibility shared by correctional administrators and community citizens. Prisons are, after all, public institutions supported by tens of millions of tax dollars and what happens inside of these costly institutions will determine to some degree the success inmates will have after their release. Oddly though, citizens often believe that anyone can offer an intelligent opinion about prison management and inmate programming. In recent years, elected officials have called for tougher punishment in prisons, stripping color televisions, removing weightlifting equipment, and weakening education programs as if doing these rather trivial things will punish inmates further and force them to straighten out their lives and will scare others away from crime. If criminals choose to commit crime, "let them suffer" seems to be the prevailing battle cry of elected officials and citizens alike, who have little formal knowledge of criminogenesis, punishment, and imprisonment.

A parallel argument would let smokers suffer the ravages of cancer because their behavior, above all others, caused their health problem. Similarly, we should allow students who do not choose to study to remain ignorant because their behavior led them to marginal illiteracy. As we sanction cigarette compa-

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nies for selling a carcinogenic product, as we strive to improve public education, we also should continuously improve prison management and the quality of life inside these costly, tax-supported institutions. We do not advocate coddling inmates but we surely do not advocate allowing millions of imprisoned inmates to live with drug addictions, emotional difficulties, and educational and employment skills so poor that only minimum-wage employment awaits them. These are the disabilities that, to some degree, define the American inmate population, and these same disabilities will damage the quality of life in our communities when these untreated, uneducated, and marginal inmates return home.

Criminologists have argued for decades that persistent criminals often do not have the power to control the destructive forces in their environment, which created their disabilities. Many criminals are, in a real sense, victims of family abuse and neglect, school disciplinary practices that expelled them before they had sufficient education to get a good job, and impoverished neighborhoods well outside the opportunity networks in the dominant community.

Western civilization has used prisons as an experimental site where socially destructive human behavior supposedly is transformed into socially productive behavior. This experiment has yielded consistently poor results. As we begin the next century, we might want to rethink the mission of the prison, shifting the prevailing approach from punishing convicted offenders to using these public institutions as society's last chance to reform men and women who, for whatever reason, have not been able to conform to mainstream community norms.

American history shows prison inmates have, for the most part, been marginal to the dominant economy of the time and were the society's most poorly educated and least well-prepared citizens to hold gainful employment. But now the gap between the social and economic margin and mainstream grows wider and faster than it ever has grown. In the 1950s, a general equivalency diploma (GED) was sufficient to enable employment in America's expanding factory economy, but now the GED affords only minimum-wage employment in the fast-food industry and/or service work in hotels, malls, and restaurants. America's high-tech twenty-first century has decreasing career opportunities for the nearly two

million poorly educated American prisoners whose economic future grows more distant from the mainstream economy as the nanoseconds pass. Prisons are our last best chance to help lawbreakers find a lawful, economically stable place in mainstream communities.

That is a lofty mission, indeed, especially with tens of thousands of inmates entering prison annually. To accomplish the difficult job of retraining, educating, and treating inmates, prisons must be well-managed public institutions. Every prison cell house that burns in a disturbance burns millions of tax dollars. Managing prisons is difficult and that task should be delegated exclusively to the correctional experts rather than to elected officials pandering to voters. The highest security prisons hold the most violent and disruptive inmates who are most likely to be as disruptive inside as they were outside. In such places and others of lower security, a social force is operating today that will thwart even our best efforts to create and sustain high-quality prison management. That disruptive social force is prison gangs.

A Brief History of Prison Gangs

Lyman (1989) defines a prison gang as an organization which operates within the prison system as a self-perpetuating criminally oriented entity, consisting of a select group of inmates who have established an organized chain of command and are governed by an established code of conduct. The prison gang will usually operate in secrecy and has as its goal to conduct gang activities by controlling their prison environment through intimidation and violence directed toward non-members (p. 48).

We have only a rudimentary knowledge of prison gangs as social groups operating inside prisons and of the interplay between street gangs and prison gangs. Thus the scope, understanding, and study of prison gangs are broader and somewhat different from street gangs. One thing we do know: prison gangs are gang researchers' final frontier and prison managers' biggest nightmare.

While we debate prison gang demographics and their distribution in American prisons, we know such groups have been in prisons a long time. The first known American prison gang was the Gypsy Jokers formed in the 1950s in Washington state prisons (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997; Stastny & Tyrnauer, 1983).

The first prison gang with nationwide ties was the Mexican Mafia, which emerged in 1957 in the California Department of Corrections.

Camp and Camp (1985) identified approximately 114 gangs with a membership of approximately 13,000 inmates. Of the 49 agencies surveyed, 33 indicated that they had gangs in their system: Pennsylvania reported 15 gangs, Illinois reported 14. Illinois had 5,300 gang members, Pennsylvania had 2,400, and California had 2,050. In Texas, there were nine prison gangs with more than 50 members each, totaling 2,407 (Ralph & Marquart, 1991). Fong (1990) reported eight Texas gangs with 1,174 members. Illinois reported that 34.3 percent of inmates belonged to a prison gang, which was then the highest percent of prison gang-affiliated inmates in the nation (Camp & Camp, 1985).

Lane (1989) reported that the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) estimated the inmate gang population to be nearly 90 percent of the entire population, attributing that number to the importation of gangs from Chicago's streets, which is supported by research (Jacobs, 1974). Rees (1996) shows that Chicago police estimated more than 19,000 gang members in that city and a high percent of IDOC inmates were arrested in Cook County. Other correctional agencies, however, report their gang troubles started inside rather than outside prison walls. Camp and Camp (1985) cite that of the 33 agencies surveyed, 26 reported street counterparts to prison gangs.

Knox and Tromanhauser (1991) suggest there are approximately 100,000 or more prison gang members across the nation. Subsequent to Camp and Camp (1985), the American Correctional Association found that prison gang membership doubled between 1985 and 1992 from 12,624 to 46,190 (Baugh, 1993), with relatively few gang members in minimum security units. Later, Montgomery and Crews (1998) argued that Knox and Tromanhauser overestimated the prison gang population and cited the American Correctional Association's 1993 study that reported some 50,000 prison gang members.

Obtaining data on the number of prison gangs and gang membership has been difficult. Most estimates are now 10 to 20 years old. Fong and Buentello (1991) suggest three major reasons for the lack of prison gang research. First, official documentation on

prison gangs is weak. What documentation exists is generally only for departmental use. Second, prison managers are reluctant to allow outside researchers into facilities to conduct prison gang research. Fears over security and concern that research might hamper the welfare of the prison are the oft-cited reasons for excluding prison researchers. Third, prison gang members themselves are secretive and likely would not disclose sensitive information about their prison gang group to outside researchers.

Prison Gangs: Structure and Organization

Prison gangs share organizational similarities. Prison gangs have a structure usually with one person designated as the leader who oversees a council of members who make the group's final decisions. The rank and file form a hierarchy, making these groups look more similar to organized crime than their counterparts on the outside (Decker, Bynum, & Weisel, 1998). The United States Department of Justice (1992) suggests that leaders and hard-core members are some 15–20 percent of a gang's membership and that the majority of members do not have a vested interest in the organization leadership.

Prison gangs, like some street counterparts, have a creed or motto, unique symbols of membership, and a constitution prescribing group behavior. Absolute loyalty to one's gang is required (Marquart & Sorensen, 1997), as is secrecy (Fong & Buentello, 1991). Violent behavior is customary and can be used to move a member upward in the prison hierarchy. Prison gangs focus on the business of crime generally through drug trafficking. Such crime groups have an interest in protecting their membership (Montgomery & Crews, 1998).

Gang members are the essential capital in crime-oriented social groups; likewise, when members want to leave the group, such out-group movement jeopardizes group security, thus the so-called blood in, blood out credo, according to Fong, Vogel, and Buentello (1995). These researchers surveyed 48 former prison gang members who defected and found that the number of gang defectors was proportional to their prison gang's size. A number of reasons were cited for defecting. Most commonly, former members lost interest in gang activities; the next most common reason was a refusal to carry out a hit

on a non-gang member; and the least common reason for leaving was a disagreement with the direction of the gang's leadership. A small number of former members violated a gang rule and were fearful of a gang violation against them, outgrew a sense of belonging to the gang, turned informant, or refused to commit gang crimes. We do not know, however, how many defectors were killed inside and outside prisons as a percentage of the total number of defectors.

Research suggests there are at least five major prison gangs, each with its own structure and purpose. The Mexican Mafia (La Eme) started at the Deuel Vocational Center in Tracy, California, in the 1950s and was California's first prison gang (Hunt, Riegel, Morales, & Waldorf, 1993) composed primarily of Chicanos, or Mexican Americans. Entrance into La Eme requires a sponsoring member. Each recruit has to undergo a blood oath to prove his loyalty. The Mexican Mafia does not proscribe killing its members who do not follow instructions. Criminal activities include drug trafficking and conflict with other prison gangs, which is common with the Texas Syndicate, Mexikanemi, and the Aryan Brotherhood (AB) (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997).

The Aryan Brotherhood, a white supremacist group, was started in 1967 in California's San Quentin prison by white inmates who wanted to oppose the racial threat of black and Hispanic inmates and/or counter the organization and activities of black and Hispanic gangs (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997). Pelz, Marquart, and Pelz (1991) suggest that the AB held distorted perceptions of blacks and that many Aryans felt that black inmates were taking advantage of white inmates, especially sexually, thus promoting the need to form and/or join the Brotherhood. Joining the AB requires a 6-month probationary period (Marquart & Sorensen, 1997). Initiation, or "making one's bones," requires killing someone. The AB trafficks in drugs and has a blood in, blood out rule; natural death is the only nonviolent way out. The Aryan Brotherhood committed eight homicides in 1984, or 32 percent of inmate homicides in the Texas correctional system, and later became known as the "mad dog" of Texas corrections (Pelz, Marquart, & Pelz, 1991).

The Aryan Brotherhood structure within the federal prison system used a three-member council of high-ranking members. Until recently, the federal

branch of the Aryan Brotherhood was aligned with the California Aryan Brotherhood, but differences in opinion caused them to split into separate branches. The federal branch no longer cooperates with the Mexican Mafia in such areas as drugs and contract killing within prisons, but as of October 1997, the California branch still continued to associate with the Mexican Mafia. Rees (1996) suggested that the Aryan Brotherhood aligned with other supremacist organizations to strengthen its hold in prisons. The Aryan Brotherhood also has strong chapters on the streets (Valentine, 1995), which allows criminal conduct inside and outside prisons to support each other.

Black Panther George Jackson united black groups such as the Black Liberation Army, Symbionese Liberation Army, and the Weatherman Underground Organization to form one large organization, the Black Guerilla Family, which emerged in San Quentin in 1966. Leaning on a Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the Black Guerilla Family was considered to be one of the more politically charged revolutionary gangs, which scared prison management and the public (Hunt et al., 1993). Recently, offshoots within the Black Guerilla Family have appeared. California reported the appearance of a related group known as the Black Mafia (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997).

La Nuestra Familia ("our family") was established in the 1960s in California's Soledad prison, although some argue it began in the Deuel Vocational Center (Landre, Miller, & Porter, 1997). The original members were Hispanic inmates from Northern California's agricultural Central Valley who aligned to protect themselves from the Los Angeles-based Mexican Mafia. *La Nuestra Familia* has a formal structure and rules as well as a governing body known as *La Mesa*, or a board of directors. Today, *La Nuestra Familia* still wars against the Mexican Mafia over drug trafficking but the war seems to be easing in California (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997).

The Texas Syndicate emerged in 1958 at Deuel Vocational Institute in California. It appeared at California's Folsom Prison in the early 1970s and at San Quentin in 1976 because other gangs were harassing native Texans. Inmate members are generally Texas Mexican Americans, but now the Texas Syndicate offers membership to Latin Americans and perhaps Guamese as well. The Texas Syndicate opposes other Mexican American gangs, especially those

from Los Angeles (Hunt et al., 1993). Dominating the crime agenda is drug trafficking inside and outside prison and selling protection to inmates (Landre et al., 1997).

Like other prison gangs, the Texas Syndicate has a hierarchical structure with a president and vice president and an appointed chairman in each local area, either in a prison or in the community (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997). The chairman watches over that area's vice chairman, captain, lieutenant, sergeant at arms, and soldiers. Lower-ranking members perform the gang's criminal activity. The gang's officials, except for the president and vice president, become soldiers again if they are moved to a different prison, thus avoiding local-level group conflict. Proposals within the gang are voted on, with each member having one vote; the majority decision determines group behavior.

The *Mexikanemi* (known also as the Texas Mexican Mafia) was established in 1984. Its name and symbols cause confusion with the Mexican Mafia. As the largest gang in the Texas prison system, it is emerging in the federal system as well and has been known to kill outside as well as inside prison. The *Mexikanemi* spars with the Mexican Mafia and the Texas Syndicate, although it has been said that the *Mexikanemi* and the Texas Syndicate are aligning themselves against the Mexican Mafia (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997). The *Mexikanemi* has a president, vice president, regional generals, lieutenants, sergeants, and soldiers. The ranking positions are elected by the group based on leadership skills. Members keep their positions unless they are reassigned to a new prison. The *Mexikanemi* has a 12-part constitution. For example, part five says that the sponsoring member is responsible for the person he sponsors; if necessary, a new person may be eliminated by his sponsor (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997).

Hunt et al. (1993) suggest that the *Nortenos* and the *Surenos* are new Chicano gangs in California, along with the New Structure and the Border Brothers. The origins and alliances of these groups are unclear; however, the Border Brothers are comprised of Spanish-speaking Mexican American inmates and tend to remain solitary. Prison officials report that the Border Brothers seem to be gaining membership and control as more Mexican American inmates are convicted and imprisoned.

The Crips and Bloods, traditional Los Angeles

street gangs, are gaining strength in the prisons as well as are the 415s, a group from the San Francisco area (415 is a San Francisco area code). The Federal Bureau of Prisons cites 14 other disruptive groups within the federal system, which have been documented as of 1995, including the Texas Mafia, the Bull Dogs, and the Dirty White Boys (Landre et al., 1997).

Prison Gangs and Violence

Prison gangs dominate the drug business and many researchers argue that prison gangs also are responsible for most prison violence (Ingraham & Wellford, 1987). Motivated by a desire to make money and be at the top of an institution's inmate power structure, prison gangs exploit the inherent weaknesses resulting from overcrowded, understaffed mega-prisons such as correctional staffers' inability to watch the activities of say, 3,000–5,000 inmates every moment of each day, month after month.

Where profits are at stake, research on street gangs shows that violence is often the outcome. Inside prisons, the same pattern appears. Camp and Camp (1985) noted that prison gang members were on aggregate 3 percent of the prison population but caused 50 percent or more of the prison violence. In a small confined area with a finite number of drug customers as well as customers of other gang-related services, such as gambling and prostitution (Fleisher, 1989), the stage is set for inter-gang competition (Fong, Vogel, & Buentello, 1992), especially in overcrowded prisons. "Turf wars" occur on the street as well as in prison, where gang members and non-gang members are packed together, leaving few options for retreat to a safe and neutral spot (Gaston, 1996).

Correctional Responses to Prison Gangs

Prison gangs have had adverse effects on prison quality of life. Those adverse effects have motivated correctional responses to crime, disorder, and rule violations. Many correctional agencies have developed policies to control prison gang-affiliated inmates. Carlson outlines the approaches used by major correctional agencies to handle prison gangs (see article in this issue).

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The Prison Community, prison scholars have debated the effect that prison has on the formation of inmate groups and individual behavior. Do inmates form disruptive groups as a result of the actions of prison administrators? Will inmates form disruptive groups as a prison extension of their street behavior (Jacobs, 1977) in spite of the best efforts of prison managers to create a positive environment (Hunt et al., 1993)?

Fong and Buentello (1991) argue that inmates' need for social identity and belonging contribute to the formation of inmate prison groups; however, a need for identity and belonging does not explain the importation of outside gang structures, names, and symbols into a prison where security and continuous oversight are among the institution's principal organizational traits. That inmates form groups based on the need for identity, belonging, personal interests, and race/ethnicity conforms to well-known processes in all human groups, and such behavior inside a prison should not be a surprise. To try to suppress human tendencies to form social groups, as was tried in the early days of the Pennsylvania system, would be pointless as a general management strategy (Knox, 2000). In many respects, however, today's super-maximum security institutions attempt to do just that.

In institutions where prison management controls on inmate crime and violence are weak and where prisons routinely violate inmates' civil rights (Fong et al., 1995; DiIulio, 1987; Ralph and Marquart, 1991), it may be understandable that inmates form tips and cliques to ensure their own physical safety. Given this line of argument, if prisons want fewer inmate tips and cliques and by extension prison gangs, management must step forward proactively and offer inmates a meaningful alternative to prison gangs and gang crime and offer inmates treatment for personal issues such as addiction. Scott's article (this issue) focuses on altering the prison environment. He ar-

gues that prisons, like mainstream communities, must broaden their approach to dealing with prison gangs. Hardening the environment, Scott argues, may fail as a long-term prison control strategy as law enforcement suppression, to the exclusion of social intervention, has failed to quell the street gang problem.

Adjusting prison environments most often happens in court. Jacobs (1977) argues that the courts weakened the authority of correctional officers to control gangs taking control since the earliest cases on inmates' rights; prison administrators are confined within the limits of case law. In this issue, Federal Bureau of Prisons' lawyer Daniel Eckhart reviews recent federal legal cases on prison gangs. Eckhart's useful article informs correctional administrators who must develop gang control strategies that meet the limits of federal court precedents; such precedents are also useful information to correctional researchers who may evaluate prison control strategies.

Mainline prisons for the most part are expected to house inmates, independent of gang affiliation. Prison suppression and intervention strategies likely will affect gang-affiliated inmates differently from non-gang-affiliated inmates. Why? Shelden (1991) compared 60 gang members (45 black, 15 Hispanic) to 60 non-gang members. There were a number of similarities between the gang and non-gang groups: they shared similar socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, and marital status; both groups had substance abuse problems. Gang members, however, were more likely to have never been employed, more likely to have a juvenile crime record (30 percent of them had juvenile court records compared with 8 percent of non-gang inmates); 32 percent of the gang members had 15 or more arrests compared with 7 percent of non-members; and gang members also were more likely to have used a weapon than non-members. Krienert and Fleisher show in their article in this issue that new admissions into the Nebraska Department of Corrections who report a prior gang affiliation are significantly different from those who do not report a gang affiliation on many of the same factors Shelden used. Their research documents the growing nature of this problem.

Shelden's contribution also shows that while imprisoned, gang members were twice as likely to have more than five rule violations, were more likely to

violate drug use sanctions, were more likely to fight, and were less likely to be involved in treatment programs. Without in-prison treatment, education, and vocational training, the likelihood that gang-affiliated inmates would be prepared for a lawful lifestyle outside prison is low. The article by Davis and Flannery in this issue deals with special challenges that gang-affiliated inmates pose to therapists.

How have prison officials responded to prison gangs? Prisons have tried a variety of overt and covert strategies, including the use of inmate informants, the use of segregation units for prison gang members, the isolation of prison gang leaders, the lockdown of entire institutions, the vigorous prosecution of criminal acts committed by prison gang members, the interruption of prison gang members' internal and external communications, and the case-by-case examination of prison gang offenses. There are, however, no published research evaluations testing the efficacy of these suppression strategies on curbing prison gang violence and/or other criminal conduct inside correctional institutions. Below is a brief summary of some of these anti-prison-gang initiatives.

The Texas state legislature passed a bill in September 1985 that made it a "felony for any inmate to possess a weapon" (Ralph & Marquart, 1991, p. 45). The bill also limited the discretionary authority of sentencing judges: inmates convicted of weapons possession must serve that sentence subsequent to other sentences. Officials believe that laws like this might help to keep inmates, especially those in prison gangs, under control (Ralph & Marquart, 1991).

A popular control procedure is segregation. Inmates are isolated in a cell 23 hours a day, with one hour assigned to recreation and/or other activities. Texas used administrative segregation and put all known prison gang members into segregation in 1985 in the hope of limiting their influence on mainline inmate populations. Violence in the general population decreased, with nine prison gang-motivated homicides from 1985 to 1990; fewer armed assaults were reported as well. By 1991, segregation housed more than 1,500 gang members (Ralph & Marquart, 1991).

By contrast, Knox (2000) reports that more than half of the 133 prison officials interviewed in a national survey on prison gangs believe a segregation

policy is not effective because gang activity still occurs. When an order is issued by a prison gang to commit a violent act, it is carried out, even in a segregation unit. Then, too, segregation is expensive and does not solve the problem of developing better prison management to control prison gangs.

Isolating gang leaders has become a popular control strategy. With a prison gang leader locked down, vertical communication within the gang ideally would weaken and the prison gang group's solidarity eventually would deteriorate. One version of isolating prison gang leaders is to transfer them among institutions or keep them circulating between prisons (United States Department of Justice, 1992). There are no published evaluations of isolation and/or "bus therapy."

Another attempt to reduce gang membership is "jacketing." This involves putting an official note in an inmate's file if he is suspected of being involved with a gang. This note follows him in prison and allows authorities to transfer him to a high-security facility. Many find this process inappropriate because it may involve suspected but unconfirmed gang activity, often reported by a snitch, which leads to incorrectly labeling an inmate as a prison gang member or associate. When so labeled, an inmate can be controlled with threats of segregation and transfer. There are no published evaluations of this approach either.

Correctional agencies now use databases to track prison gang members and gang activities. This allows for effective communication between a correctional agency and a state police agency and improves data accuracy because data can be entered as soon as they are gathered (Gaston, 1996). The New York City Department of Correction uses a system that allows for digitized photos that document gang members' marks and/or tattoos. Database searches can be done by a tattoo, scar, or other identifying marks. The speed and capacity to update intelligence information make the use of a shared database an effective tool in prison gang management.

Providing alternative programming could become part of prison gang management strategy; however, prison gang members have not embraced such programming. The Hampden County Correctional Center in Ludlow, Massachusetts, developed a graduated program for prison gang members wanting to leave segregation. The program uses movies, discussion

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sessions, and homework. At the program's end, participants must write a statement certifying they will no longer participate in gang activities. Two years into the program, 190 inmates were enrolled and 17 were returned to segregation for gang activities (Toller & Tsagaris, 1996). Details of the program's evaluation are not available.

Another control strategy is the use of out-of-state transfers, which send key prison gang members out of state in the hope of stopping or slowing a prison gang's activities. If a gang already has been established, it is hoped that such a transfer would disrupt a gang to the point of its demise; however, there are no data showing the effectiveness of this type of control strategy. In fact, transferring a high-ranking prison gang member could be the impetus to transfer his prison gang to yet another institution (United States Department of Justice, 1992).

Correctional agencies have tried to weaken prison gangs by assigning members of different prison gangs to the same work assignment and living quarters in anticipation of limiting the power of one prison gang over another at a specific place. The Texas Department of Corrections, for instance, assigned prison gang members to two or three high-security lockdown institutions. Illinois tried this approach to no avail because the inmate prison gang population was too large to control effectively within a few locations (United States Department of Justice, 1992). Illinois developed a "gang-free" institution near Springfield, but as yet there are no published evaluations of its effectiveness on reducing gang-related/motivated crime within the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Camp and Camp (1985) surveyed facilities and asked officials which strategies they were most likely to employ against prison gangs. Transfer was cited by 27 of the 33 agencies (such an approach is analogous to schools expelling disruptive students to alternative

schools); the use of informers was cited 21 times; prison gang member segregation was cited 20 times; prison gang leader segregation was cited 20 times; facility lockdown was cited 18 times; and vigorous prosecution and interception of prison gang members' communications were cited 16 times.

Knox and Tromanhauser (1991) surveyed prison wardens asking about prison gang control: 70.9 percent advocated bus therapy. Some prison officials tried to quell prison gang disruptions by discussing those disruptions with gang leaders. And another 5.5 percent of the wardens said they ignored prison gangs. These researchers show that fewer than half of the prisons surveyed provided any type of prison gang training; but recently, Knox (2000) shows that correctional officers training has improved, with a finding that more than two-thirds of the 133 facilities surveyed provided some gang training in 1999.

A Need for More Collaboration

We have little hard data on the demographics of today's prison gangs and the nature and levels of prison gang-related disorder in American prisons. This lack of data is a serious impediment to making progress against a serious and growing problem. The Camp and Camp (1985) inventory of prison gangs describes an earlier era in American corrections. Collaborative research between correctional officials and experienced gang and prison researchers can yield the data needed to develop effective prison gang intervention and suppression strategies as well as the data needed to test the efficacy of current strategies. Collaboration between correctional agencies and university researchers is a key to creating strong solutions to the difficult, persistent problem posed by prison gangs. Such collaboration should create the programs that will increase the likelihood that prison gang members, leaving institutions after decades of doing time, will remain crime free. Imagine how strange today's job market looks to the inmates who were imprisoned in 1980 or even 1990. To be sure, the challenge of beginning a career, even for a college graduate, is daunting. For a former inmate and a prison gang member, searching to find a lawful path will be difficult and alien.

Efforts to control prison gangs must be matched by thoughtful community initiatives. Such initiatives may include carefully designed community reinte-

gration programs offering specialized education and training to meet the expectations of entry-level high-tech employment. Research shows that prison gangs' criminal influence extends into the community (Fong & Buentello, 1991). The important implication of this observation is that prison gangs will gain a stronger hold in communities if communities do not structure intervention to include more than law enforcement suppression. If that happens, street gangs may become better structured and drug gangs may become more powerful forces in the community. The article by Fleisher, Decker, and Curry in this issue urges correctional agencies to unite with communities to provide careful, post-imprisonment programming for gang-affiliated inmates. In this way, the response to gangs both on the street and in prison can be comprehensive and integrated.

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