

**The Bill Blackwood
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Managing County Jail Inmates in a Gang Member Climate

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ABSTRACT

Managing county jail inmates in a gang member climate is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because gang members create many behavioral disruptions on a day-to-day basis by their attempts to recruit the younger, less experienced criminal, undermine the intelligence of staff, and their desire to take over the facility. It must be stressed that in order to maintain control in a facility, modern equipment should be used in order to monitor inmate behavior, correctional employees should be informed of the events inside the prison relating to gang activity on a daily basis, and jail rules should be enforced, making inmates responsible for their actions.

The purpose of this research is to promote the security of jail and prison facilities, train staff, and expose employees to various types of gang related behaviors so that employees are better able to identify possible gang members within a facility. The method of inquiry used by this researcher included: books, internet sites, training workshops, periodicals, journals, a survey distributed to 17 agencies, and a personal interview with the Gang Division of the Texas Department of Corrections.

The researcher discovered that most correctional facilities, or the majority of correctional facilities, would perform better at their jobs if they had the resources with which to conduct all that they need to keep order, safety, and security. It will be beneficial for law enforcement officers, whether in a correctional facility or not, to have a working plan put in place. This plan needs to have a classification department manned by highly trained correction officers with ample administrative segregation to properly house the sophisticated gang member. This will ensure safety for officers and inmates.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem or issue to be examined considers whether or not gang members can be managed in a county jail. Correction officers, on a daily basis, are faced with important issues that will not only affect their day-to-day lives, but also the lives of others. Many decisions that are made by corrections officers could mean great risks for fellow officers as well as for the inmates. Many decisions that a corrections officer may be required to carry out are under scrutiny by the State of Texas, the inmate, the inmate's loved one, others incarcerated, facility administrators, and, of course, the inmate's legal advisors.

The relevance of managing county jail inmates has some very important aspects to consider when placing them in confinement, regardless of whether they are familiar with this type of environment or not. Officer's decisions, well versed or not, could impact the welfare of everyone. For example, first time offenders who appear to be scared or upset upon intake need to be taken very seriously. Since the offender does not have a criminal past to evaluate, corrections officers are left to predict the individuals' behavior. A correctional officer is an offender's caretaker until their release; special attention is necessary to observe how the offender is adjusting to their confinement. Because of the unknown, individuals may or may not be classified as high risk; this may depend on the reason for the incarceration. Inmates that have previously been through the judicial system know the procedures and routine, but they could be dealing with some serious issues in their lives that may affect their well-being. These individuals could possibly be looking at more prison time, could have family problems, or could be involved in organized crime. Repeat offenders are classified as 'Medium Risk' and are usually already involved with individuals belonging to organized crime or are very vulnerable to pressures of the more sophisticated criminal.

The purpose of this research is to propose a plan to control the sophisticated gang member in order to be able to maintain the safety and security of the correctional facility. With this, corrections officers will be in control of the lives of the incarcerated, not the incarcerated in control of the facility and its officers. The basis for this research is to examine what the best possible solution is to house gang members in a county jail.

The intended method of inquiry includes a review of publications of prior researchers, books, journals, periodicals, surveys of other law enforcement agency administrators, and a telephone interview with a state agency. The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research are to provide others in law enforcement, that do not deal with gang activity directly, a better understanding of how gangs work the system, how gangs take control and what criminal activities to look for. This topic was selected because of the growing problems that gang members create within correctional facilities. It is intended to educate administrators of what potential dangers corrections officers face each day.

This researcher wishes to influence seasoned correction officers as well as unseasoned correction officers with a different working tool to show them the potential dangers faced on a day-to-day basis when dealing with a gang climate in a confined area. It is important that correction officers continue their education and training not only to get updated on new gangs being created, but also to get the latest information about the way particular gangs are generating, where they are meeting, and who is in charge.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the 1960s and 1970s, prisoners formed gangs to protect themselves and to monopolize illegal activities such as drug trafficking, gambling, collection of contraband, and the ordering of murders. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, research was conducted by the Texas Department of Corrections, which examined the difference between prison gangs and security threat groups. At that particular time, research indicated that prison gangs were segregated, and security threat groups were in general population because they did not have a well-developed structure to be classified as a prison gang (Mays, 1997).

Prison gangs such as Texas Syndicate, Mexican Mafia, and Aryan Brotherhood are very structured by organized hierarchies and regulations that govern their every move, somewhat like a paramilitary style (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997). Most of these gangs recruit by ethnicity or on a racial basis. They are normally recruited for life, which is known as the *blood in* and *blood out* membership. Governed by strict rules of discipline, if those rules are broken, they will pay the consequences.

According to Federal Judicial Center Bulletin in October 1997, prison gangs account for a high percentage of violence and increasingly create severe management problems. Prison gangs have distinct cultures, patterns of behaviors, and beliefs customized for that organization. Security threat groups, like the KKK, Aryan Circle, Aryan Nation, Crips, Banditos, and Nuestra Familia, did not have any rules established (Mays, 1997). Traditionally, prison gang members are in their mid 20s and early 30s, and when not in prison, they use juveniles for criminal activities. The reason for this is that in most cases, juveniles they would only receive probated sentences for felony convictions or even receive lighter misdemeanor sentences. While the prison gang members are incarcerated in prison, they are known to use

street gang members (security threat groups) to conduct gang activities such as assaults, money laundering, murders, prostitution, robbery, and intimidation. In county jails, so called “tank bosses,” a suspected gang member already given a rank by that gang, will monopolize the younger, less sophisticated inmate.

The number one way of getting the younger inmates interested in joining a gang, are job assignments or beat-ins. Job assignments are issued out by active gang members to see how they handle them. Gambling is a popular assigned task among potential recruits. Bets are taken over sports games on television or everyday card games. Usually inmates will give up or trade their commissary or meals when the bet is lost. If the individual completes their assigned task, the assignments continue until the tank boss is satisfied. The tank bosses set up tank rules, and if the rules are not adhered to, then the inmate that is being recruited is given the task of taking care of that particular inmate by beatings. This will also show the gang member if the inductee is mentally and physically strong enough to be worthy of membership. If the inductee does not fulfill this assignment, they will be taken care of by the individuals willing to do the job or the individual will be made to find a reason to get reassigned to another cell. In most cases, the failed inductee will make a request to a corrections officer to be moved. When not incarcerated, inductee’s normally endure the beating for a number of minutes that was predetermined. Walkers (1999) stated during the “act of love,” inductees are kicked, stomped, hit with fists, and even hit with clubs.

Gangs today are forming at alarming rates (Walkers, 1999). They are being identified all through the United States by gang intelligence investigators. Gang memberships consist of all races and are in all cities and communities large and small, urban and rural. Gang members may be seen in many places, and, therefore, these individuals represent a visible

empire. They want recognition and will do all that they can to make their presence known or even felt. Walker (1999) stated that law enforcement, educators, and parents have failed America's youth because in most cases, signs of gang involvement or activities go unnoticed. According to Smithey (1990), it was discovered that most gangs were developed for protection from a potentially hostile environment. Inmates would group together so they would have strength in numbers; this gave them power so they would not become a target for rival gangs. This grouping in numbers continues to be a part of gang member's daily life. Yet the leaders of the gangs require payment for protection. If they keep that tank boss or leader happy and abide by the rules provided then all runs smoothly and protections is available.

Social and cultural dimensions of prison gangs are adaptive systems that organize legal and illegal developmental resources, with intimidating circumstances, and thrive on adverse relations with rival gangs and other authoritarian control agents, such as officers and wardens. The sophisticated gang member is normally the leader of any living quarters and has rules on the table making all others in that area follow through on their demands. This means that if one inmate, not associated with gang members, wishes to live peacefully, they have to support the leader. The sophisticated gang member will be paid for their protection.

Relations between prison gangs and prison administration significantly influence the nature of social organization inside prison. In the 1980s, sociologist James Q. Wilson helped to develop the "broken windows" theory that smaller crimes must be punished to deter more serious ones. The Illinois Department of Corrections adopted the "broken window" theory for application in their facilities as a means to control gang activity and enhance social organization. This entailed altering the physical environment to produce a change in human behavior.

The gang members reduced their offending behavior, which made the non-gang member inmate feel more secure. This, in turn, also improved the morale of the prison guards (Scott, 2001).

Studies of security threat groups, prison gangs members, and general population inmates have been conducted studying the demographic characteristics of their prior criminal record so that a custody level can be determined. These variables included race, offense category, prior arrests, prison terms, prior county jail time, escape history, and prior jail behavior. All of these variables are taken in consideration by officials to determine where that inmate will be housed. All studies showed that the three groups showed significant differences in the high, medium and low custody levels. Only the security threat group inmates and general population prisoners were comparable in relationship to custody level. Prison gang members were automatically placed in administrative segregation and did not compare to the other two groups (Mays, 1997). Linda Manning, a representative of the Gang Division with Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) indicated that the information that is received from the delivering county is very vital to TDC. All institutional behavior, suspected gang activity, and incidents that involved that inmate need to follow him or her in writing so that the officials have concrete information. The information is used to house that inmate correctly as well as to try and get that inmate confirmed if they are involved with a gang or if they require special attention. Being a confirmed gang member means that they belong to a specific gang and they live by their standards; therefore, correctional officials have some type of idea as to where that inmate stands as far as security level.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considered whether or not having a classification department within a correctional facility and a means of training employees on gang related issues would reduce the amount of violence and security flaws within a correctional facility. Adhering to all rules and regulations required by the state licensing agency and keeping understandable records will keep the facility in check as well as inform the inspectors of how well the facility deals with the inmates and how they are being treated and protected. Policies and procedures have to be instituted for each facility so that it fits in the scheme of how that facility is constructed. Not all jails are constructed the same; therefore, facilities have to implement new equipment to make the job more efficient for corrections officers. Training is another issue to be addressed, and proper policies and procedures should be instituted if not already in place.

This researcher hypothesizes that those facilities that have classification departments and offer training to its employees will see a decrease of violence within a correctional facility, thus protecting the less sophisticated inmate from fear. Having a classification department will give correction officers the tools and the knowledge needed to make a viable decision that is legal and workable with all walks of life. Additional funding should be requested to obtain training for correctional officers about current gang issues. Supervisors will need to utilize those trained officers effectively to maintain the safety and security of the correctional facility.

The method of inquiry included a review of books, Internet, periodicals, prior research papers, journals, experiences of corrections officers, a survey and a telephone interview. The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of managing county jail inmates in a gang member climate will include a survey sent to counties

with different inmate population levels. All of the agencies will be from the State of Texas. All agencies will be geographically comparable.

The size of the survey will consist of 10 questions, distributed to 17 survey participants from the northern, southern, eastern, and western sections of Texas. The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in only 25% of the agencies participating. The low response rate may be attributed to the fact that most agencies may still be in denial that they have a problem with gang activity. The questions that were asked of the other agencies indicated that depending on the location of Texas, some sort of gang activity was recorded in all facilities whether or not an active classification department existed or not. Less gang activity was recorded in the northern area, and more gang activity was recorded in the southern area of Texas.

This author will study the information obtained from the survey to show the importance of training and prevention of gang activity. Awareness of the ongoing problems begins with county jails. Prevention of gang activity begins as correctional staff gains more knowledge of the ongoing problems. A telephone interview with Linda Manning with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in Huntsville, Texas will be conducted on gang activity. Much information can be carried over to staff when communication is open with other entities when gathering information on a particular inmate.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the need for every county jail facility to have a special classification division to study all incoming inmates when arrested. Of the four agencies that returned surveys, the facilities that have the special classification divisions to classify the inmates incarcerated had better control of gang members. Having

a classification division enabled agencies to have a procedure in place to follow, which enabled better understanding by the corrections officers.

Tattoos are a very important part of identifying gang members and should be highlighted if observed. When gang members are discovered, they should fill out paperwork as to their involvement in a particular gang. Their intentions should be questioned and whether they have any enemies already incarcerated.

All material that was researched pointed to the same issues: gang members are disruptive, manipulative, and overall trouble for the safety and security of any facility. After speaking with Linda Manning of the Texas Department of Corrections, it seemed that there were limits as to getting the gang members identified. Tattoos were one very limited source of identification that they had to work with. This researcher was surprised to hear that, in most cases, the suspected gang member self admits. Questioning of inmates begins when they receive information from other agencies, which gives corrections officers reason to believe that this inmate could be involved in gang activities. Officers of county jails reported their suspicious behaviors by monitoring their mail, whether the inmates had any major complaints made against them, fights, and behaviors. When gang members were identified, they were placed in administrative segregation immediately so correctional personnel could control their behavior. It is the job of correctional officers to monitor the actions of suspected gang members and record it. The table below shows there were only five different gang groups identified in 1990 with the Department of Corrections and is apparently very low in number (Benekos, 1992).

Table I. Number of gang members identified in 1990.

Texas Syndicate	289 members
Texas Mafia	80 members
Aryan Brotherhood of Texas	170 members
Mexican Mafia	417 members
Hermanos De Pistolero	75 members

In 2007, when conducting the telephone interview with Linda Manning of Texas Department of Corrections, she indicated the numbers are continually growing and more gangs are forming. According to TDC, prison gangs are now identified as security threat groups and are broken down into 12 different confirmed groups. The groups have increased in number, and more have been created and have become strong in power in order to manipulate the correctional system.

Table II. 2007 Confirmed gang members in Texas Department of Corrections: April reporting period.

ABT-Aryan Brotherhood of Texas (White)---973
AC-Aryan Circle (White)---731
BA-Barrio Azteca (Hispanic)---592
BL-Bloods (Black)---913
CRPS-Crips (Black)---1869
HPL-Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos (Hispanic)---363
MM-Mexican Mafia (Hispanic)---1499
PRM-Partido Revolucionario Mexicanos (Hispanic)---442
RU-Raza Unida (Hispanic)---518
TCB-Texas Chicano Brotherhood (Hispanic)---142
TM-Texas Mafia (White)---105
TS-Texas Syndicate (Hispanic)---1260
Combined Total Confirmed Gangs Members incarcerated in TDC---9407

Table III. Percentage of confirmed gang members to the total population of Texas Department of Corrections.

Confirmed Security Threat Group Population	9407
Percent of Total Texas Dept. Corrections Population (152,466)	6.15%
Confirmed Security Threat Group Administrative Segregation Population	6504
Percent of Total Texas Dept. Corrections Population (152,466)	4.25%

In this author's survey, emphasis was based on the size of their facility, how many segregation cells are available to them, variations of gang members they deal with, how housing is determined, layout of the facility, and whether or not they have a special department classifying their inmates. The geographical area was also divided up so that a comparison could be made. Only 25% responded to the survey that was sent out.

Table IV. Size of Jail, Gang Percent, Classification Department, Staff Training

Population	Percentages	Classification	Training
120	20	Yes	Yes
240	30	Yes	No
450	05	No	No
914	05-10	Yes	Limited

The largest jail population, located in the northern part of Texas, had the least amount of gang members and had a classification department; however, they received little training identifying gang members. The second largest facility, in the eastern part

of Texas, had the lowest number of gang members and had no classification department and no training in that area. The southern section of Texas has the highest number of gang members and does have a classification department but no training. South Central Texas has the second highest number of gang members, has a classification department and does require training. The western part of Texas did not answer the survey. After putting the survey out, it shows that gang awareness is not taken seriously, and it should be.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

With these findings, the author concurs that a facility needs to have a structured classification department with training in gang intelligence. By doing this, they will get the upper hand on the gang problems that exist in correctional facilities. All the training in the world will not help the officer or the facility if there is no application. The classification plan needs to include ample segregation cells, forms that can be administered to properly identify the gang members, training of officers to know what to look for in tattoos, monitoring of all incoming and outgoing non-privileged mail, and observation of their behaviors.

Any facility can work with the general population with the above stated classification plan; without it, the control of the facility could be lost. All jail administrators need to look at their facilities and assess the potential security risks that the sophisticated gang members pose to officers and inmates. Jail facilities need to take back the control, and the only way this can occur is to outsmart the gang members, keep their communication limited, take their control away, and counsel them to the straight life.

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not good ways of keeping control of the population and gang members for the safety and security of all incarcerated could be found. This can be done if classification departments within correctional facilities and training on current gang issues were put in force. Every jail administrator should approach the commissioners and sell his or her ideas to get the facilities they need to properly house the sophisticated gang member.

The purpose of this research was to develop a classification department and offer training to safely house gang members in county jails. Being incarcerated in a county jail is the beginning of a gang member's career. By steering the gang member away from the criminal way of life and showing them that there is a better way of living, drastic changes in the way that they continue their journey through life could be seen.

The research question that was examined focused on the best possible solution to housing gang members. The researcher hypothesized that a plan can be developed to make sound decisions when housing gang members by studying their behaviors and by possibly having a gang task force in place to monitor each suspected gang member. It is believed that more training and an efficient classification department, ample administrative segregation cells, good communication with officers and other facilities that already have a good plan in place keeps corrections officers and inmates safer.

It is conclusive from the findings that a classification department needs to be in place in order for correctional facilities to combat the sophisticated gang member and stop them in their tracks. The findings of the research did support the hypothesis because correctional facilities that have an active classification department and provide training to employees saw less gang activity than those facilities that lacked a classification

department and provided no training. All findings lead to the need for more training, better means of monitoring behaviors, monitoring incoming and outgoing non-privileged mail, and an active classification department available to interview each incoming inmate.

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because so few agencies answered the survey. This researcher concludes that many small counties do not take the time to study how the gang member operates because it does require much time. Dealing with the actions of suspected gang members when it happens is easier. The study of managing county jail inmates in a gang member climate is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because it affects everyone when a gang member is left unmanaged and control of the facility is lost. Corrections officers and administrators should benefit from the results of this research if a classification department is placed in force and employees are trained on current gang issues.

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APPENDIX 1

SURVEY

1. What is the population of your County Jail _____?
2. Approximately what percentages of inmates in your facility are suspected gang members? _____
3. What variations of gang members are house in your facility?
For example: AB ____ MM ____ Tango ____ HPL ____ MTO Please
indicate any others not mentioned
_____.
4. Percentage of different races in your facility?

White _____ **Hispanic** _____ **Black** _____
Other _____

5. How do you determine where to house gang affiliated inmates?
_____.
6. Do you have a classification department that screens each inmate upon incarceration? _____ If not how do you accomplished classification? _____.
7. What behavioral problems do you encounter when gang members are housed in general population? _____
_____.
8. Is your facility able to confirm a suspected gang member? _____
If so, how do you verify this, _____
_____.
9. Is your facility constructed, dormitory, linear? Please indicate
_____.
10. Does your corrections officers have any special training that deal with gang member activities? _____, if yes what training do they have _____.