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Discussion

Skarbek had a detailed argument on the rise of prison gangs in which he argued against the previous explanations made about prison gangs. Prison gangs are known to control everything that happened within the prison. There are major gangs that control what activities will be done for the day and who are going to perform those activities. Mainly, inmates want to feel safe; hence, the formation of prison gangs.

According to Skarbek, the government does not provide governance that is necessary for prisoners. Another reason why prison gangs are formed, according to Skarbek, is due to the lack of resources and time for the CO's to monitor the inmate's activities. That is why many illegal things that should not be in prison are passed or why fights take place more often (Skarbek, 2014). Thus, this gives prison gangs the power to manage the underground economy, which promotes the market for illegal products, giving them power outside and inside the system of the prison. Skarbek argued that prison gangs have their rules and politics, tarnishing the members' reputation if they do not abide by them. Therefore, prison gangs have more governance than a decentralized governance system of the prison, which lacks the resources and time to keep track of the inmate's activities or behaviors.

The solution of the organization of prison gangs, according to Skarbek, was to meet the demands of the inmates. For instance, reducing prison calls' cost would lower the rate at which cell phones are smuggled into prisons (Skarbek, 2015). He also stated the suppression approach, which failed because if they chose to take a leader of one gang and put them in isolation, the group members would choose another leader since they want to be safe. Hence, I believe that prison gangs are necessary for inmates to feel safe and somewhat important while in prison.

References

Skarbek, D. (2014) *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Skarbek, D. (2015). *Prison Gangs and the Social Order of the Underworld*.

Response 1

I agree with the first discussion written about Skarbek's argument about the rise and development of prison gangs. Many prisoners survive life in prison due to the gangs they join. Prison gangs were purposely meant for protection, but they have evolved, and sometimes they are used to settle scores for people outside the prison. However, prison gangs have more governance than the state because the state does not provide for the inmates' needs or wants due to lack of resources and time. They do not monitor the activities of the inmate's activities or behaviors like they should. According to Skarbek, ¹ "In short, Mafias form when the state cannot or will not provide governance and a long-term demand for governance exists" (Skarbek, 2014).

Also, prison gangs have a strong force of power since they are recognized both outside and inside the prison system. It has been said that some prison officers are part of some prison gangs due to their connections. Prison gangs also operate in the underground economy, where they create a market for illegal products. Unlike the States, prison gangs can monitor and manage their members because of the gang's enforced rules and politics. If any member disobeys the gang's rules or culture, their reputation is ruined, or they might be kicked out of the gang.

The solution to reducing prison gangs, according to Skarbek, is to address the demand side to reduce the gang's influence. If this is done, then the formation of gangs would slightly reduce; for instance, the smuggling of cellphones in the prisons can reduce if the cost of making phone calls in the prison can be reduced. Also, using the suppression approach would work, but

it would only create fear among the inmates who would choose another leader since they want to feel protected (Skarbek, 2015) agree with this discussion because I feel prison gangs are a good thing so long as the rules and culture of the gang are adhered with.

References

Skarbek, D. (2014) *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Skarbek, D. (2015). *Prison Gangs and the Social Order of the Underworld*.

Response 2

Skarbek's research states that prison gangs were formed as a means of protection and a means of self-government. These gangs, in essence, created an extra-legal system of governance in which prisoners learned to adapt. When prisoners join a gang, they know that there are specific rules and cultures they should abide in or face a specific punishment (D'Amico, 2015). Skarbek relates prison gangs to mafias. This is because they step in to take charge and perform the duties that the government fails to perform. For instance, each gang takes care of its members. They monitor and manage their members, giving them freedom so long as they obey the gang's rules and culture, just like how mafias operate. Hence, prison gangs are meant for protection and survival. However, even after an individual is released from prison they are still tied to the gang since their membership is considered long-term.

Skarbek has come up with current practices to control gang formation needs to change. He argued that the current concept is to restrict comforts for prisoners and separation of the most active gang members from others, which will exacerbate the problem. Hence, he believed that gangs do not exist because of the violence and other harmful things within the prison but for provision of order and security in gangs. The first strategy that Skarbek suggested was the

supply-side strategy, which means attempting to restrict access to items (Skarbek, 2014).

However, if the state government does not supply the prisoners' demands, they will form gangs to ensure that their demands are supplied in one way or the other. For instance, if the governance system of the prison would change the rules regarding cell phones and tobacco, it would lead to changing the demand side of the equation. I believe, just like the discussion's author, to add or to increase some of the prisoners' wants, which will decrease the demands of prisoner gangs.

References

- D'Amico, D. (2015). The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System. *Independent Review*, 4, 622.
- Skarbek, D. (2014) The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System

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