



Patterns of Inmate Subculture: A Qualitative Study of Thai Inmates

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Abstract

This qualitative research is to explain the characteristics of the inmate subculture, the structures of inmate group and the sub-structural model of inmates afflicting the Thai prison administration. In-depth interviews are conducted with the inmate group chiefs (called “leader”) and with the authorities of five Central Prisons in Thailand empowered to control inmates sentenced to terms of more than 30 years. Results reveal that most inmates were intentionally grouped by the areas where they lived before being convicted. The “Prison Group” was thus called “Home” to show the geographic inmate origin, such as the Bangkok Home, the Chonburi Home and the Bangkwang Home and so on. Such grouping was intended to provide familiarity and sharing among member and to prevent maltreatment from other inmates. This grouping plan in general, caused no cultural clashes with prison regulations, but three resulting subcultures plagued the prison administration. They were 1) the young adult inmate grouping with offense records as juveniles, 2) the body and facial tattoo grouping, and 3) the trafficker grouping. The traffickers developed financial influence and cooperation between Home groups, and exploited opportunities in mobile phone smuggling, contraband trafficking, gambling and blackmail, and other prohibited activities. They sought to earn income in order to supervise members and to create negotiation power with other Homes and the authorities in order to ease their prison lives.

Keywords: Subculture, Inmates, Group Rules, Structure of Prison Group.

Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that there is a culture among citizens in the free world; a separate culture also exists behind prison walls. Several ideas regarding inmates and institution life have been studied since systematic theoretical and empirical work on prisons began in the mid twentieth century (Lutze & Murphy, 1999; Irwin, 1980; Sykes, 1958; Clemmer, 1940). However, a very well-known theme has been present since the

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beginning of this continually growing body of works in which inmates show some degree of adherence to an inmate code (Wooldredge, 1997; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). An inmate code is a normative order that expresses their more or less collective opposition to prison authorities. The various attitudinal and behavioral manifestations of adherence to the inmate code constitute a distinct inmate subculture. An inmate subculture is the culture of prison society and think by some to arise from the pains of imprisonment, while others believe it is imported to prison from the outside (Sykes, 1958; Clemmer, 1940).

Clemmer (1940) originally describes the term 'inmate subculture' as a direct outgrowth of the organizational and structural features of the prison. According to Clemmer (1940), deprivation of autonomy, lack of privacy and so forth are various features which represent a set of pressures that are unique to prisons. As a result, the inmate subculture is a distinctive adaptation to the pressures. Also, Sykes and Messinger (1960) labels inmate subculture, also known as inmate code, as that which controls both behaviors among inmate and inmate-staff relationship by emphasizing the general protection of inmate interests, the restriction of conflict between inmates, as well as respect for inmate strength and dignity, especially in the face of authority.

Essentially most of the English-language research on the inmate subculture study has been conducted in several countries such as United States, United Kingdom, Mexico, and New Zealand (Winfrey et al, 2002; Hensley, 2000; Akers et al, 1977; Morris & Morris, 1962). Unfortunately, international inmate subculture literatures in non-U.S., non-U.K., or even non-commonwealth prisons do exist (Reisig & Lee, 2000; Cline & Wheeler, 1968) but are relatively rare, especially in Thailand. There is no existing standard research regarding inmate subculture in Thai correctional institutions. As a general assumption, different unique culture patterns generate based on differences in societies, people, attitudes and many particular correlated factors. Inmate subculture also corresponds to such assumption. Besides of how the inmate subcultures seem to be expanding worldwide; and many consequences from such a subculture system has been a cause for concern among persons involved in the management of prisons and the rehabilitation of prisoners. To the extent that the inmate subculture implies some sort of normative solidarity among inmates in conflict with the prison staffs. An understanding of the subculture is relevant to policy issues such as how prisons should be run, how treatment programs should be implemented within institutions as well as reintegrating offenders into the community after release. Therefore, it is very important to study inmate subcultures, different inmate groups as well as to continue to develop the understanding of inmate subculture concepts.

This study explores the pattern of inmate subculture among Thai inmates. Specifically, this paper seeks to address the issues of inmate subculture in Thailand by exploring inmates' perceptions and prison authorities' perceptions through a qualitative approach to the following questions: (a) what are the patterns of inmate subculture? (b) Why has such subculture system emerged within many prisons? (c) Why do inmates become so thoroughly integrated into this culture system? (d) How do inmate subculture systems differ from general inmate subculture in other countries? (f) What are the consequences of subculture movement into the correctional system appear to be? The next section provides the literature regarding the inmate cultures, prisoner values, sub-cultural theories as well as the insights it holds for this study.

Review of Literature

Inmate Subculture

The inmate subculture includes the norms, traditions, habits, languages, customs, values, belief, social roles as well as superstitions of inmates incarcerated in a prison facility (Irwin & Cressy, 1962). Prisoners are integrated into the inmate subculture through a process known as prisonization (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes & Messinger, 1960; Clemmer, 1940) in which new inmates learn the ways of prison society and what is expected of them (Clemmer, 1940). Research studies show that prisonization has larger impact the longer an individual remains incarcerated (Wooldredge, 1997). When an inmate initially enters a prison, his conventional values still play a role in his life (Lutze & Murphy, 1999). As time passes, the individual adopts the prison lifestyle (Wheeler, 1961).

Inmate Subculture Model

Most prior researchers expressed three models to explain the development of inmate subculture: the deprivation model, the importation model, and the integration model (Irwin, 1980; Wheeler, 1961; Sykes, 1958; Clemmer, 1940). These famous models are significant foundation for this current study.

Deprivation Model

Deprivation model states that existing inmate subcultures originated within the walls of the institution (Irwin, 1980). Precisely, an inmate subculture develops as a result of the deprivations of prison life (Irwin, 1980; Clemmer, 1940). Inmates are first reduced in status from civilians to anonymous figures with common prison clothing and are subjected to prison rules and its rigid hierarchy. Consequently, inmates begin to accept an inferior role by taking and imitating new behaviors of eating, sleeping and working. Moreover, inmates learn quickly that they do not owe anything to anyone for their existence (Clemmer, 1940). The deprivation system also explains that the inmate subculture develops because the inmate is deprived of liberty and cut off from family and friends (Irwin, 1980; Sykes, 1958; Clemmer, 1940). Additionally, inmates are deprived of regular goods and services, heterosexual relations, personal independence and security (Sykes, 1958). Losses of emotional relationships, boredom, as well as loneliness, are various consequences. All of these deprivations can lead to self-doubts and reduced self-esteem.

Importation Model

Apart from the deprivation model, the importation model asserts that the prison culture is essentially the same value system found on the streets from which the inmate comes (Schrage, 1961; Clemmer, 1940). In other words, the inmate culture is a conglomeration of characteristics in which prisoners bring into their institution at intake. It is thought that prison is composed of multiples subcultures that rival each other with respect to values and norms. Thus, most cultures inside prison are derived from subcultures developed on the outside that are imported to the prison as well as social-demographic characteristics and criminal career variable, such as time served in institutions and offense record (Clemmer, 1940). A majority of incarcerated individuals, for example, have other members of their families who have been incarcerated. Some inmates come from high crime neighborhoods and have learned a life of crime within those neighborhoods. Therefore, instead of viewing the inmate subculture as independently

influenced by common processes, the importation model claims that the inmate culture is comprised of conflict groups with origins that exist outside institution walls.

Integrated Model

While primary studies of the inmate subculture (Irwin, 1980; Sykes, 1958; Clemmer, 1940) tend to consider the deprivation and importation models as opposed ends of a spectrum, a new concept of the integration model is introduced as a hybrid system. Integrated model combines the ideas of both the deprivation model and the importation model (Archambeault & Fenwick, 1988). On the one side, the integration model explains that the deprivation model usually applies to inmates who have been incarcerated, but grew up in a stable family environment in good neighborhoods and only committed the crimes for which they are incarcerated. The importation focuses on those who grew up in a dysfunctional family, lived in disorganized neighborhoods and mostly recommitted crimes as part of a lifestyle. In addition to combining the concepts of the deprivation and importation models, the integration model may consider additional factors such as family visits, the institutional environment as well as inmate coping behaviors (Archambeault & Fenwick, 1988; Schrage, 1961). It is though that integrated model might be the best explanation for the creation of the inmate subculture because this model can help to clarify why different inmates respond differentially to the inmate culture and to the overall prison experience.

These three models play a significant role in explaining patterns of inmate subculture development over time. The models remain a foundation theory in this current study, clarifying how such unique cultures have been originated behind bars as well as addressing why inmates become engaged and integrated into this culture system.

Theoretical Framework Employed for Inmate Subculture Transmission

Besides above three inmate subculture models, classical theories of learning can be used to explain the transmission of the emerging culture to the individual inmate in coercive institutions. Albert Cohen's subculture theory (1955) and Edward Sutherland's differential association (Sutherland, 1974) have a special association at an institution culture where the definitions that are positive to crime outweigh those that are negative. Such theories claim that criminal subculture including inmate subculture, develops as a process of social learning. The consequences of the interaction process originates the unique subculture among prison groups (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Miller, 1958; Cohen, 1955; Sutherland, 1947)

Cohen's theory claims that a delinquent subculture exists in the pattern of non-utilitarian, malicious and negativistic experience (Cohen, 1955, p.8). According to Cohen, the subculture takes its norm from the wider culture and turns them around. Therefore, what one does is right according to the standards of the subculture because it is wrong according to the standards of wider society. To support the reason why individuals form or join subculture in the first place, Cohen's theory insists that some individuals cannot handle the strain of 'status deprivation' and will seek the collective delinquent subculture as the solution (Cohen, 1955).

Sutherland's differential association (1947) addresses preference of deviant behavior or crime as being learned through social interaction and "*a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violations of the law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law*" (p. 6). The major concept of differential association theory states that experiences and

association that occur earliest in life, those of longer duration, and those that take place most frequently as well as those that involve individuals with whom one is most closely attached are the most significant factors in the learning process (Sutherland, 1947). Sutherland's description contains not only a learning of attitudes and values, positive to crime as well as different crime techniques, but also considers the offender's self-image. As a result, the appearance of criminal group subcultures among prison inmates is an effect of the continuing process of association (Sutherland, 1947).

All in all, the functional theory of inmate subculture models may explain the emergence of the inmates' social system, whereas classical theories perhaps best explain the socialization process. Various influences in the inmate's association process are foundations for the development of unique and exclusive subcultures in prison environments and explain the unusual inmate codes, prison argot and social structure.

Inmate Code

To cope with the pains and deprivations of prison life and to survive in the coercive subculture inmates live by a set of rules known as '*the inmate code*' (Wooldredge, 1997; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes & Messinger, 1960; Clemmer, 1940). The inmate code reflects the principles of the prison society. The inmate code highlights the solidarity of all inmates against the prison staff. For example, one major rule of the inmate code is that inmates do not inform on another inmate to the correctional staff (Sykes, 1958). Violating this inmate code has led to offending inmates being labeled a "snitch" and being killed (Wooldredge, 1997).

The inmate code is not written down but is verbally transmitted from convicts who have been in prison for a long time to newer inmates (Wooldredge, 1998; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). There are inmate codes that are followed by both male and female inmates and there are also gender-specific inmate codes (Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Most male inmates follow the inmate code, do their own time and will never snitch or tell on another inmate (Wilson & Snodgrass, 1969). They also follow other unwritten inmate rules such as never showing emotion concerning your sadness or pain; be tough and masculine (Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Hostility and manipulation are acceptable behaviors towards certain inmates and most prison staff (Sykes, 1958). The codes also prohibit interfering with another inmate's business and stealing from other inmates (Sykes, 1958).

Prison Argot

Prison argot is the special language of the inmate subculture, derived from a French word for '*slang*' (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958). The prison language originated as a form of a secret communication between inmates, designed to keep prison officials out of the inmate communication loop regarding illegal activities the inmates were planning or doing within the prison facility. Prison argot is different in male and female correctional facilities (Einat & Einat, 2000; Wittenberg, 1996).

Social Structure of Male Prison

This current study focuses on the male inmates and male prisons. Prison subcultures in male correctional institutions are divided along racial, ethnic, and gang subgroups (Irwin, 1980). Most male inmates prefer to be confined in a cell with an inmate of their own race. Unlike some street gangs, most prison gangs are first and foremost based on race (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996). It is extremely uncommon to find a prison gang that includes a

mixture of races. On the prison recreation yard, inmates will congregate in groups based on race or prison gang affiliation. When male inmates eat in the prison dining facilities, they sit in sections and at tables that they have designated by race. Over time, many male inmates learn to adapt to the prison subculture and prison life (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996). Each inmate has his own method of coping; the inmate may stay alone or make friends with other inmates. The inmate may join one of the various social groups that are formed and approved by the prison administration or they may join a prison gang, which is not accepted by any prison administration. Inmates may take benefit of various educational programs, vocational programs, and counseling programs to better themselves or may continue their criminal activities behind the walls of the prison (Wittenberg, 1996).

Like in other societies, male inmate societies have a hierarchy of positions. Incarcerated men assume, or are forced into, specific social roles with corresponding positions in the pecking order, reflecting status in the prison society. Some inmate roles have more status and power than others. A typology of male inmate roles is developed by criminologists (Sykes, 1958; Irwin, 1980; Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996). These typologies are based on actual social roles found among inmates in a male correctional facility. Prison argot is used to label and describe each type of social role. *'Real man'*, for instance, does his own time; he does not cause any problems for other inmates, and does not complain. Real men know the inmate code and follow it (Schmallegger & Smykla, 2009). *'The agitator'* constantly stirs things up in response to the boredom of prison life. This inmate will pit inmates against inmates, inmates against prison staff, and a staff member against another staff member when possible (Schmallegger & Smykla, 2009).

The Thai Correctional System

According to its declared policy, the Thai correctional system is rehabilitation oriented. After undergoing psychosocial evaluation and classification, incoming prisoners are assigned to a tentative incarceration and treatment plan (Jitsawang, 2013). In the final stages of prison life, inmates are evaluated again with a view to prepare them for discharge from prison and reentry into the community. Educational programs are provided at the elementary and high school level, however higher education is available through long distance programs in the Open University (Department of Corrections, 2012). Vocational training is carried out in a variety of settings, including courses in the prison under supervision and collaboration between the Thai Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. On the job training programs, individualized training programs and group training are provided by external agencies (Department of Corrections, 2012).

Thai inmates are expected to work while in a prison, and are employed in various maintenance-related jobs through the prison employment center. They receive wages for their work, which they divide equally for purchases at the prison canteen shop, for their family and for a deposit redeemable upon release. In addition, the Thai DOC offers various rehabilitation programs that operate in individual, group and family settings such as drug-user programs, sexual offending rehabilitation programs as well as re-offending prevention programs. In some correctional settings, for example, former drug-usage prisoners facilitate group processes to help and support those who want to quit drugs in the framework of the ongoing activities of Narcotics Anonymous (Department of Corrections, 2012).

However, despite its rehabilitation oriented aims and policies, in practices, the Thai prisons regime is first and foremost security and custody oriented. The major concern for this particular oriented of Thai DOC is clearly to maintain ‘institution silence’ (Jitsawang, 2013). Living conditions are harsh and crowded (on average, 2.25 square meters per inmate per cell) (Department of Corrections, 2013). Also, interaction and communication with the custodial staff is commonly formal and structured. Relations among the prisoners are “power centered” and predominantly aggressive. On the whole, it seems that the Thai prison regime policies and practices actually socialize the inmates to develop offensive or defensive lifestyles in prison, which is rarely conducive to positive change. In a way, Thai administrative practices encourage the creation of the unique subculture existence behind the walls.

Method

Population

The subjects in the study consisted of two sample groups that were purposively selected from five central (State level) prisons governed by Thai DOC; viz., *Khao Bin*, *Rayong*, *Bang Kwang*, *Klong Prem* as well as *Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya*. The first group included 20 prison guards, all of whom had at least 5 years experience supervising inmates. The second group included 10 inmates who were the most respected or powerful inmate; leaders of each inmate group regardless of offense, age or socio-demographic characteristics.

Procedure

The design of the study was intentionally flexible and convenient; designed to collect the data as the subjects emerged from routine activity, thereby enhancing both the quality and the authenticity of the results (Einat & Einat; 2000; Briggs, 1986). This approach was suitable for this current study because it allowed access to content that was not anticipated prior to the interview (Silvermann, 1993).

The in-depth interview method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989; Suchman & Jordan, 1990) was used to collect information from inmates and prison guards. This method was concerned with the subjective existence of information as a component in the personal experience of the interviewee rather than with its objective or statistical validity (Einat & Einat; 2000; Kidder & Judd, 1986; Kockelmans, 1987). The interview questions were based on general guidelines to ensure that all those being interviewed would be subject to similar and, therefore, allow for a common standard for data analysis. The quality of interview questions was checked by three experts of the Thai DOC for assurance on the construct and content validity.

Results

In term of the essentially qualitative nature, the data are subjected to content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Weber, 1990). The findings are presented into three parts: (a) ‘Home’ label as the prisoner group formulation, (b) the social structure of prison groups and (c) the extent of inmate subculture affected to prison administration.

(a) ‘Home’ Label as the Prisoner Group

‘Home’ is used to refer the inmate group formation found in the prison communities which house large numbers of demographically dissimilar inmates. The findings show that each home usually involves members who have homogenous background. Home

formation is divided along the ex-street gang membership, the same home towns or neighborhoods and the ex-prison transmission subgroups helping each other within the groups. This corresponds to the study of Irwin (1980) which states that prison society is divided along racial, ethnic, and gang subgroups. The name of the 'Home' is thus determined by the unique name of neighborhood where inmate members come from. The inmate group, for example, whose members are from areas near Bangkok and vicinity, the name of each 'Home' is preceded by the name of local neighborhoods such as 'the Fung Thon Home', 'the Pathum Home' or 'the Bang Khen Home'. On the other hand, those who came from other regions (state) will associate with people from the same province (hometown). Some 'Homes' often consist of inmate members who were transferred from the same ex-prison, and the name of the 'Home' is called according to the name of the ex-prison such as 'Bangkwang Home', 'Klongprem Home' and so on.

".....communities inside here are not different from outside just only downscaling. When I was housed in Thonburi Remand Prison, we usually send agent to ask new inmates. If they came from Thonburi neighborhood, we accept them to join our group resulting hundreds of memberships (Case# 5)

From the study of five prisons, each prison has different number of 'Homes' depending on institution size and area, and the inmate population in each prison. However, each inmate should have their 'Home' like a gang membership.

The Figure 1 shows example of the different size of Thai inmates group in each prison zone. The 'H1' represents the biggest 'Home' which has the largest number of members. In general, each 'Home' is independent from each other however the biggest 'Home' (H1) has significant power over other 'Homes' (H2 to H5).

Figure 1: Classification of inmate groups in each prison zone



Size of Prisoner Group

The size of inmate group or the size of memberships varies from the small 'Home' – which consists of less than five members to the larger one – which consists of more than 100 members. However, the findings show that the variations of home size are dependent on (a) prison type, (b) institution size and (c) zoning size

(A) Prison Type

Generally, Thai prisons are divided in two different types: opened-prison and closed-prison. An opened-prison refers to the institution which confines the short-term inmates and remanded inmates (Department of Corrections, 2012). A closed-prison refers to the institution which houses the long-term inmates who have been transferred from the opened-prison. Sometimes 'closed-prison' refers to the maximum security prison where powerful troublesome inmates are confined (Department of Corrections, 2012).

The findings show that both types of prison impact the size of inmate groups. As a result, the size of inmate groups within the opened-prison is unstable and the members often come and go from groups as they are released on bail or transferred to other higher security prisons after their final sentencing. Compared to those groups from the opened-prison, the size of inmate groups within the closed-prison seems to be more stable, organized, structured and with longer lasting association.

(B) Institution Size

Inmate groups or 'Home' size in an old prison seems to be smaller than inmate groups in a new prison. Since most old prisons are small and have only single zones because of its inadequate physical capacity, there are fewer 'Homes' and many are quite small. Sometimes there is only one powerful inmate group which prevents other 'Homes' from developing. In case of multiple 'Homes', some may be very small size and contain only a few members from the same town. Some may have members from earlier associations and be less powerful. For a new prison or a huge prison, on the other hands, its 'Homes' are varied in both number and size. The 'Home' which has the most authoritative and the highest number of memberships would be the largest home and have coercive power over other groups as described above.

(C) Zoning size

The zone sizes and number of inmates also affect the inmate group creation. Usually inmates interact as a group for common activity purposes (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996). Thai male inmates usually form a group for meals, sports and leisure activities as well as sometimes for religious activities within their zone area (Jitsawang, 2013).

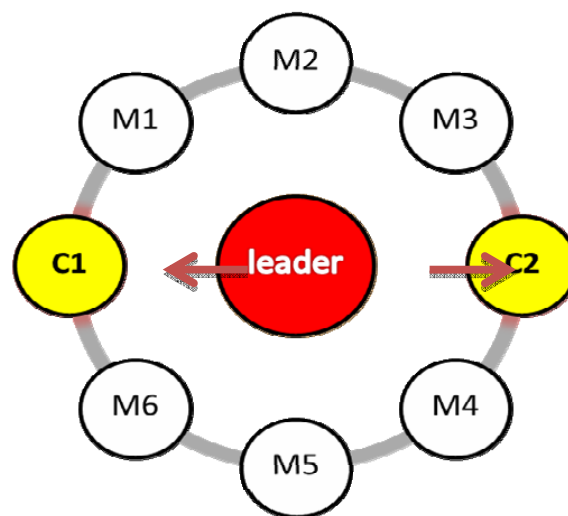
Therefore, the findings indicate that most large 'Homes' within a prison with limited room commonly divide into 3-4 subgroups for convenience and accessibility of regular activities. Conversely, the large 'Homes' within a vast zone area are difficult to form as large existing 'Home' dominate power and resources. With respect to the large size of a particular 'Home', inmate members will have more negotiation power over other 'Homes'.

“... My 'Home' often disputed with Pathum Home because their 'Home' is as large as our 'Home'. Both 'Homes' have conflict of interest and benefits with each other resulting violent fighting ...” (Inmate Case #9)

“... When I was in Zone 5, there was the largest ‘Home’ having the most negotiation power over other Homes. If any Homes sometimes became larger, more expandable and more increasing power, such groups would be intentionally downscaling by kicking the leader out. Consequently, only one largest ‘Home’ would be left for all controlling within its zone (Inmate Case #3).

(b) Social Structure of Prison Groups

Figure 2: Structure of the prison groups



This findings support the argument that the structure of male inmate societies involves a chain of command like other generally structured societies (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; Irwin, 1980; Sykes, 1958). Each inmate is assigned into a specific social position which indicates his status and power in each community. For male prison communities in Thailand, the structure of all prison groups or gangs consists of three position levels to indicate their members’ statuses and duties as an organizational structure with chain of command (Also see Figure 2).

Leader

The leader or ‘Mean dude’ (Schmallegger & Smykla, 2009) is an inmate positioned as the group commander to supervise the members and most members consider this person to be their chief. The leader plays a key role in controlling other inmates through force and power. The leader will utilize all power to make all decisions regarding their lifestyle, businesses, safety, and keeping peace among group members. However, when there is a conflict between groups, the leader will have authority to negotiate with other leaders to solve the difficulties. Also, the leader will usually be responsible for his members’ actions such as fighting with other group’s members or violating other members’ rights.

Consultant

Consultant, represented as C1 and C2 in Figure 2, is an inmate performing as the secretary of the group. Most consultants are decent and respectful person who is older than other members in the groups. Commonly, the consultant has the duty to help the leader to supervise members within the 'Home', to report all important problems to the commander, or to even make decision when the leader is away. Essentially, the consultant will become a new leader in case of the ex-leader is transferred to another zone or prison, thus preventing the group's dissolution.

Members

Members or 'Real Man' (Schmallegger & Smykla, 2009), represented as M1 to M6 in Figure 2, are those who belong to the group and live under the group or home regulations. Each member will be assigned his own role by the leader for common activities or businesses of the group such as a chef, a laundryman, a dishwasher man, a coffee maker, a delivery man, and so forth.

All members including the leader and consultant constantly observe and follow the group or 'Home's rules, known as 'inmate code' (Wilson & Snodgrass, 1969; Sykes, 1958) – a secret set of rules followed by inmates reflect the values of each prison group. Results of the study reveal that most inmate groups or 'Homes' usually have the following inmate codes which are corresponded to Sykes (1958) and Wilson and Snodgrass (1969)'s assumptions:

- (a) *Do not wash dirty linen in public (Do not interfere with other's inmate businesses).*
- (b) *Never take sides with prison staff members*
- (c) *Be nice and help other inmates as much as you can*
- (d) *Be honest and loyalty to a group and other members*
- (e) *Be sharing to others and pay all your debts.*

(c) *The Extent of Inmate Subculture affected to Prison Administration*

Although inmate subculture imitates the unique characteristics of norms, customs, values and belief behinds the coercive institution wall, some negative subculture may be problematic and may challenge to prison administration. Data collection from both prison staff and inmate samples shows that negative subcultures are utilized to seek benefits from illegal activities such as cell phone smuggling, drug trafficking, gambling, and illegal use of force. Such harmful subcultures are enabling inmate groups to earn illegal income, to acquire more control over other group, and to negotiate with prison guards for better living conditions. The findings contend that three major inmate groups usually hold these negative subcultures.

1. Early adult inmates or inmates with delinquency offending history or those who experienced detaining in Juvenile Detention Center

Since these groups of inmate are not fully mature person, the association with friends still plays an important role in their lives. As a result, such individuals usually forms a union or gang inside prison by grouping all members among those who knew each other from outside prison, those who belonged to the same street gang as well as those who were detained at the same juvenile detention center. Such establishment corresponds to the importation model enlightenment (Clemmer, 1940). For instance, the 'OROS' gang, named for the famous Thai Thonburi street gangster, is the biggest gang in prison.

'OROS' have more than 100 members since most members have detained in Ban Ubekka, one of juvenile detention center. To symbolize their gang, 'OROS' gang's members have the name of gang tattooed on their hands or wrists. Another example is the Vong Vian Yai gang which shows membership with a tattooed alphabet "V" as their gang symbol on their hands or wrists. Such a subculture is transmitted from cohort to cohorts and it will also enable the 'Home' to seek to become the most powerful union by earning a lot of money to support their group members.

"... the inmate group rose because offenders were locked in the same place and be living together for a long time. They were controlled by others and lost their freedom, self-control and self-esteem resulting in their oppressed and stressful symptoms. Such bad effects encouraged them joining into a deviant groups and accepting the cultures and values as a new membership. The group was so influential over the members' behaviors because the inmates had learned and transferred attitudes, behaviors, norms, custom and values. There was behaviors transmission among inmates for acceptance and having a social status..." (The Prison Authority Case # 3)

"... I am a member of the second cohort of the 'OROS' gang. All affiliates should have tattoos of the word 'OROS 02' on their hands. We all met each other in Ban Ubekka and I have offered to be a leader since 2002. We committed a crime since we were at teenage because of low self-control. We could flight with other people only if we disliked them from first meet. We held that if we did not harm them, they would harm us. Everyone wants easy life and if we are rogues we will have easy life but if we fear them, we will have hard time. When we have arrived at a large prison, we have large number of members, often violate disciplines and have been transferred to every zone. Now, we have been admitted to the special zone..." (Inmates Case # 7)

The subculture within the group imitates the members' behavior favoring violence, risk, quarrelsomeness and illegal tattooing in prison. There are tattoos on the whole body, face, head and such tattooing are done after being confined in the Juvenile Detention Center. Some members continually tattoo themselves until there is no place left for tattoos. They have record of violating disciplines and are degraded to the worst class.

The early adult inmate groups are mostly leaders or big brother or respected persons and those able to supervise others, promote peace and order, and address problems. This kind of gang group usually included poor members with relatives who could not deposit money into the inmates' prison accounts. The gang existence earned from protection rackets, exhortation, or debt collection in prison resulted in their being called "Samurai".

2. Habitual offenders, Recidivists and Tattooed Inmates

Inmates with tattoo on the whole body or on the unexposed part of the body are mostly recidivists who re-offended more than five times; most often drug abuse offenders or street theft offenders with short-term sentence. They often enter and are release from prison. Upon dismissal, they are soon re-arrested and re-admitted into prison because they are unable to live normal lifestyles in society. They are labeled in free society with their tattoos, and because people feel fear and report to police for charging them all the time. Several ex-prisoners were ostracized by their family and lived alone. Because of their

prison tattoos, they could not apply successfully for jobs and were forced to enter permanent deviant behavior according to the labeling theory (Chen, 2002; Becker, 1974; David, 1972). They often become habitual criminals.

In prison, habitual offenders, recidivists and tattooed inmates usually stayed together because other groups rarely accepted such inmates into their groups. They often created problems or violated the prison regulations. Such inmates were usually classified into the worst class because of their recidivism history. Upon admission, they were reduced to the lower inmate classes and if they still violated regulations, they would re-grade to the worst class. These kinds of inmates felt they had nothing to lose. So, they were hired to commit illegal activities for earning their expenses in prison or being accepted into group as the group guards.

3. Inmates with influential power and good financial status or Significant Drug Traffickers

This group of inmates is mostly convicted for drug-trafficking offenses such as the key cocaine producers, distributors, importers as well as exporters. Such inmates usually have good financial and social status. The purpose of group formulation was to gain influence in prison and such inmates generally utilize money to buy everything. These groups could ask and collect members in large group to seek negotiation power with other prison group or the prison authorities. They commit various illegal activities for benefits inside prison, smuggling cell phones into prison, creating narcotics networks with outsiders, opening casino, and so on. With their illegal businesses, they could earn enormous amount of money which enables them to supervise and share among their members.

Most leaders would not show off and demanded that others play their leader's roles, to avoid being identified as a gang leader and transferred to other zones or prisons. The real offenders could remain in place because they were scapegoats.

“... I was convicted with narcotics exporter offense and sentenced 30 year term. I have ten dependencies in my home. I needed money approximately three or four thousand Baht a month to support my team's members. In my point of view, I saw prison culture did not different from outside culture but just downsizing. Culture inside prison included benefits, power, money and so forth. However, most real leaders usually hide themselves because of the fear to being transferred and loss of interest...” (Inmates Case # 1)

“...Inside here, the influential drug traffickers earn large amount of money. They favored to play gambling with hundred thousand Baht at once. When one opened a casino, I would charge for protection racket for peace and order. If they do not pay, they will be in trouble. Most have money; they pay. Hiring of collecting debts for gamblers and they cannot clear, they will be injured by stabling with iron...” (Case # 5)

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings show that an inmate subculture clearly exists in Thai prisons. All in all, the inmate subculture has the similar norms, needs, habits and values among group members. Such subculture development is encouraged within the walls and is fashioned by the existing delinquent subculture from outside. The subcultures' creation under the pressure of the prison environment corresponds to the principles of the importation theory (Sykes,

1958; Clemmer, 1940) and the deprivation theory (Sykes, 1958; Clemmer, 1940) through the learning process within group. The groupings under the perspective of the importation theory are characterized by the young adult inmate group who previously served time in the Juvenile Detention Center. The findings also indicate that an individual needs interaction during their imprisonment based on the differential association theory (Sutherland, 1974). In addition, inmates who were members of the street gangs prior to confinement usually were at high risk for misbehavior against the prison regulations based on the subculture theory (Matt DeLisi et al., 2004). Most have belonged to the street gang since their teenage period and have prior imprisonment. The group of the drug traffickers is mostly influential and criminal networkers who sought gains by violating of social regulations. So, there is always a Thai subculture of the group favoring violation of social regulations, which is consistent to the study on the subculture of inmates in Holland conducted by Grapendal (1990) who supported the adoption of the importation model. Similarly, the subculture associates with oppression of the environment in prison conform to the deprivation theory, especially the inmate group that has tattooed the whole of their bodies and faces. Members of this inmate group are recidivists and habitual offenders and upon being labeled, are resisted by outside societies and not accepted.

Results of this qualitative research in the subculture of inmates in Thai prisons reveals that generally the nature of the inmate groups would be formed based on their personal backgrounds; to help each other and to meet the needs of the group under the restrictions of the prison. The nature of larger grouping to seek advantages and influence is the prison culture. The group structure consists of leaders, consultants and group members who play different roles especially in linking and having influence on the members' behaviors. The inmate subculture model acquiring benefits, interests, power and influence in prison develops because of prolong imprisonment or by the previous inmate subculture which had been associated before conviction. It is possible to adopt the importation theory and the deprivation theory (Clemmer, 1940) to explain the inmate subculture in Thai prisons, especially prisons empowered to supervise long-term inmates. The more prolong the inmate grouping, the more transmission of the inmate subculture and the more intense the perception and experience. As a result, negative behavior under specific subculture will occur which is always resisting the rules in prisons.

Recommendations from this study should address into two categories of change. First, the recommendations for policy implementation are as follows: (1) The prison must develop the inmate classification process based on their behavior evaluation which would be resulting in effective treatment approaches to meet each individual requirement. (2) Prison administrators should design specific rehabilitate program for inmate who often violate disciplinary rules and break prison rules. (3) It is necessary to utilize modern technology in prisons for the purpose of prevention illegal activities and following the inmates' behavior such as CCTV, metal detector, body scanner as well as sound record system which can be used to record the information for specific language communication.

Another recommendation applies to practitioners. The prison authorities should supervise inmates fairly, encourage them to follow the prison regulations, and motivate them to participate in the positive activities in order to provide more positive rather than negative effects. Importantly, inmates who have negative influential behaviors or often violate both social and prison regulations should be separated from other inmates to protect such negative subculture transmission.

However, this study has limitations for generalization of results. The study is conducted inmate subculture on only male inmates in five prisons for a particular time which may not generalize to other different units, settings and time. Therefore, further replicate studies on different group of inmate, different prisons or institutions, or different time are necessary. The further studies should be address on the comparative inmate subculture between male inmates and female inmates, the subculture of prison officers as well as the comparative inmate subculture between other countries and Thai inmates.

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