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Prison Experiences, Social Ties, and Inmate Behavior: Examining Visitation and Its Effects on Incarceration and Reentry Outcomes

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

PRISON EXPERIENCES, SOCIAL TIES, AND INMATE BEHAVIOR: EXAMINING
VISITATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON INCARCERATION AND REENTRY OUTCOMES

By

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ABSTRACT

A large body of scholarship has focused on the factors that lead to improved prison social order and prisoner reentry outcomes. Research suggests that one such factor, social ties, are especially salient for helping individuals manage the myriad of challenges they face during incarceration and during the transition back into society. For example, social ties can help inmates cope with strain (Sykes 1958; Adams 1992), they can exert informal social control (Sampson and Laub 1993), they can help offset negative social stigma (Pager 2003; Uggen et al. 2004), and they can assist inmates with the practical challenges associated with reintegration back into society after release from prison (Petersilia 2003; Visser and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Berg and Huebner 2011).

This diverse body of research has spurred scholars to examine how the maintenance of social ties during prison contributes to in-prison and reentry outcomes (Wolff and Draine 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Cobbina et al. 2012). To this end, scholars have focused on inmate visitation because it provides access to social ties during incarceration (e.g., Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1988; Bales and Mears 2008; Siennick et al. 2013). Indeed, with few exceptions, visitation provides the only opportunity for inmates to have direct contact with family, friends, and community members. In so doing, it affords inmates some ability to preserve, develop, or sustain ties to social networks outside of prison, and to have sources of social capital on which to draw during and after incarceration.

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on prison visitation, prison experiences, and social ties in several ways. First, it examines systematically the heterogeneity of prison visitation and advances a conceptual framework for theorizing, evaluating, and guiding visitation research. Second, it explores who is visited in prison by testing the relationship between a range of individual- and community-level factors and the frequency of visitation. Third, it explores the longitudinal patterns of visitation that inmates experience and assesses the extent to which these patterns are associated with in-prison misconduct. Fourth, and finally, it tests the effects of different visitation patterns on the likelihood of recidivism.

Data for this dissertation were provided by the Florida Department of Corrections and include detailed information for all convicted felony offenders released from Florida prisons between 2000 and 2002. The data have several attributes that make them ideal for this study: they include inmates from multiple facilities across a single state, males and females, and large

proportions of inmates from different racial and ethnic groups. Most importantly, and unusual in prison studies, the data contain comprehensive records of visitation events, which allow for analyses that can examine visitation experiences longitudinally.

Analyses of the data point to several key findings. They highlight the heterogeneity inherent in inmate visitation, they identify several factors that are associated with visitation, and they underscore the salience of visitation for improving in-prison and post-release outcomes. More broadly, the findings underscore the need for more systematic analysis of prison experiences and their effects on prison social order and reentry. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of additional implications of the findings for theory, research, and policy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*The Visit Room constituted a sort of breach in the wall between the hermetic world of the prison and the universe outside. In it, an inmate could try to reconnect to the real world and prior life, could try to salve the wound of imprisonment. A visitor could contemplate, with more perspective than any prison employee, the effects of incarceration and the prospects of life after it. The Visit Room was about catching up, reconnecting, and looking ahead. — Ted Conover in *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing* (p. 151)*

Scholarship suggests that social ties help offenders manage the strains of incarceration (Sykes 1958; Adams 1992) and are an integral part of the desistance process (Visher et al. 2004; Maruna and Toch 2005; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Berg and Huebner 2011). Research aimed at understanding prisoner behavior has advanced a range of theoretical arguments that emphasize these ideas and help explain variation in prisoners' behavior. These include accounts focused on the salience of social ties for providing informal control (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993), for reducing strain during and after incarceration (e.g., Hairston 1988; Adams 1992), and for helping individuals cope with the stigma of criminal convictions and imprisonment (Pager 2003; Uggen et al. 2004). Qualitative accounts, too, highlight similar ideas and have suggested that social ties help prisoners cope with social isolation in prison and negotiate the myriad of challenges they face during reentry (e.g., Fishman 1990; Carlson and Cervera 1992; Comfort 2008; see also, Petersilia 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immerigeon 2004).

This diverse body of scholarship has spurred researchers to examine how the maintenance of social ties during prison, and the extent to which prisoners can reconnect socially after release, contribute to in-prison and reentry outcomes (Wolff and Draine 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Cobbina et al. 2012). A limited but growing body of research has built on early prison studies (e.g., Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Holt and Miller 1972) and examined how prisoners' experiences with visitation affect outcomes during imprisonment and after release

(see, e.g., Jiang and Winfree 2006; Bales and Mears 2008). Scholars have focused on visitation because it provides perhaps the only opportunity for inmates to have direct contact with family, friends, and community members, and thus affords inmates some ability to preserve, develop, or strengthen ties to social networks and to have sources of social capital on which to draw.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this dissertation is to advance visitation scholarship, and research on prison experiences more generally, by systematically assessing inmate visitation and its impact on offenders in prison and after release. The data for the dissertation were provided by the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) and include detailed information for all convicted felony offenders released from Florida prisons between 2000 and 2002. The FDOC data have several attributes that make them ideal for the proposed analyses. These data include inmates from multiple facilities across a single state, they include both males and females, and they include large proportions of inmates from different race and ethnic groups. Most importantly, and unusual in prison studies, the data contain comprehensive records of visitation events (La Vigne et al. 2005), which allow for analyses that can examine visitation experiences longitudinally. In addition, the data include detailed information about demographic, prior record, and offense characteristics that are important control measures for studies of offending (e.g., Kurlychek et al. 2006; Nagin et al. 2009).

The dissertation advances significantly the growing body of research on visitation and prisoner social support, and addresses several research gaps. Specifically, the dissertation seeks to answer four questions. First, how can and should inmate visitation be conceptualized, and in turn, what are the potential implications of different conceptualizations? One chapter in the dissertation explores this question by describing the heterogeneity of visitation experiences and discussing how this variation may exert different effects on behavior. Second, who gets visited in prison? Different groups of prisoners may be more disadvantaged by incarceration because of severed ties to their outside social networks. A second chapter in the dissertation explores the characteristics of prisoners and of the community contexts from which they come that influence prisoner access to visitation. Third, what is the impact of visitation on prisoner misbehavior? A third chapter examines two co-occurring experiences, visitation and prisoner misconduct, and the extent to which visitation may help improve prison social order. Fourth, what is the impact of visitation patterns on recidivism? A fourth substantive chapter expands on prior work by

examining the implications of visitation timing and consistency on the behavior of prisoners after release. These chapters are described in more detail immediately below.

1.1 Description of Substantive Chapters

The dissertation consists of four interrelated chapters exploring visitation and inmate behavior. Together these chapters advance visitation research, and more broadly, scholarship on prison experiences, prison order, prisoner reentry, and the causes of desistance.

1.1.1 Conceptualizing Inmate Visitation

This chapter is devoted to systematically exploring the implications of variation in prison visitation for theory and research. Many prisoners are not visited at all, while others experience at least some visitation. Among those in the latter group, diverse patterns may exist, such as prisoners who are visited regularly, sporadically, and at different times during imprisonment. This variation, along with variation across other dimensions, including the timing, the type of visitor, and events that occur during a visit, likely contribute to the effects of visitation on an individual. These differences are important, too, because they provide an opportunity to investigate theoretical arguments about the nature and implications of prisoner social contact (e.g., Adams 1992; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Ross and Richards 2009). This chapter advances scholarship by systematically exploring the benefits of a more nuanced approach to the study of visitation.

1.1.2 Who Gets Visited in Prison?

Given the potential salience of visitation for prisoners, this chapter is focused on the factors that predict visitation. Visits often require substantial effort and resources on the part of family and community members who might travel to the prison (see, e.g., Arditti 2003; Bernstein 2005; Christian 2005; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005). Thus, it is likely that a range of factors, including characteristics of prisoners and of the community context from which they come, contribute to the likelihood that visitation occurs. Research has been limited in this area, but existing scholarship has suggested several potentially important factors (e.g., Jackson et al. 1997). For example, prisoners who are male, are minority, have more prior convictions or incarcerations, have committed more severe offenses, and come from disadvantaged communities may experience less visitation. This chapter provides a series of multilevel

analyses (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002) that account for individual and contextual characteristics and that are aimed at exploring the factors that influence visitation. The analyses help to advance research and theory by providing a systematic description of factors that may be associated with visitation, and by shedding light on potential disparities in prisoner visitation that may exist.

1.1.3 The Impact of Visitation on In-Prison Behavior

Scholarship suggests that prisoners' social ties play a critical role in helping offenders cope with imprisonment (e.g., Adams 1992; Liebling 1999; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Comfort 2008; George 2010). The goal of this chapter is to explore the effects of visitation—the only method for prisoners to directly access their social ties—on in-prison behavior. This examination presents a unique challenge, however, because visitation and misconduct are longitudinal experiences that occur over the course of a prison term. To address this challenge, the analyses explore longitudinal patterns of both visitation and misconduct, and test the extent to which these patterns are related to one another. The analyses use nonparametric, dual, group-based trajectory modeling techniques (Nagin 2005) to identify these patterns and to assess the interrelatedness of these two types of experiences over time. Findings from these analyses can be used to provide insight into the heterogeneity of these two experiences and the potential effects of visitation on in-prison behavior.

1.1.4 The Impact of Visitation on Recidivism

The final chapter draws on prior scholarship that implicates social ties as a salient factor in the life course of offenders, and examines the effects of visitation patterns on recidivism (Adams 1992; Petersilia 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Berg and Huebner 2011). Prior accounts suggest that different dimensions of visitation, including its timing and consistency, may have implications for prisoners after release (e.g., Adams 1992; Ross and Richards 2009; Duwe and Clark 2012). Empirical research has not systematically investigated this idea. This chapter addresses this research gap by, first, exploring the kinds of visitation patterns that exist among prisoners serving varying lengths of time in prison, and second, testing the effects of these different patterns on recidivism. The analyses use nonparametric, group-based trajectory models to identify visitation groups across different cohorts, and then employ multivariate regression analyses to test the effects of visitation group membership on recidivism.

1.2 Implications of the Dissertation

This dissertation contributes to theory and research in several ways. First, it responds to calls by scholars for more nuanced approaches to research on prison experiences and their effects (Hairston 1991; Schafer 1994; Nagin et al. 2009; Berg and Huebner 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012; Mears 2012; Reidy et al. 2012). Second, the analyses contribute to scholarship aimed at understanding the nature of prisoners' social contact and the implications of social ties for short- and long-term behavior. Third, the dissertation helps draw attention to the need for future research to incorporate more nuanced approaches to studying prison experiences and to continue to explore the implications of visitation.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 describes the goals and objectives of the dissertation and outlines gaps in prison and visitation research, along with specific questions and analytic strategies that are used in the dissertation to address them.

Chapter 2 systematically explores the dynamic nature of inmate visitation and the implication of heterogeneity in visitation patterns to advance theory and research on inmate visitation and prison experiences more broadly.

Chapter 3 systematically explores the factors that predict visitation to identify the characteristics of offenders and of the contexts offenders come from that make visitation more or less likely to occur.

Chapter 4 assesses the impact of inmate visitation on prison social order. Specifically, the analyses explore the relationship between inmate visitation and officially recorded inmate misconduct. A version of this chapter was accepted for publication in the September-October 2012 issue of the *Journal of Criminal Justice*. (Cochran, Joshua C. 2012. The Ties that Bind or the Ties that Break: Examining the Relationship between Visitation and Prisoner Misconduct. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40:433-440.)

Chapter 5 assesses the impact of visitation timing and consistency on inmates' likelihood to reoffend after release.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the previous chapters, and provides a discussion of the dissertation's implications for future research, theory, and policy.

Each substantive chapter has a different theoretical or research focus, and, for the three empirical chapters, each uses a different sample of offenders, measures, and analytical techniques. Accordingly, each chapter contains self-contained discussions of theory, prior research, data and methods, findings, and conclusions that are specific to a given chapter. In the conclusion, the dissertation highlights several cross-cutting theoretical and research questions and issues that emerge from the different chapters.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZING INMATE VISITATION

2.1 Introduction

The United States has experienced dramatic growth in its prison population over the past three decades. As a result, policymakers, practitioners, and scholars have expressed a growing interest in understanding the social and fiscal consequences of incarceration and prisoner reentry (Gendreau et al. 1996; Lynch and Sabol 2001; Clear 2007; Rosenfeld and Messner 2010; Weisberg and Petersilia 2010; Gottschalk 2011). Although a large body of scholarship has emerged that examines those consequences, surprisingly little is known about the experiences individuals have during incarceration, and the implications of these experiences on in-prison and reentry outcomes (Maruna 2001; Visher and Travis 2003; Nagin et al. 2009; Cobbina et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013).

Scholarship suggests that one experience, visitation, is especially salient for prisoners and can have a beneficial impact on behavior during incarceration and over the life course (e.g., Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1988; Bales and Mears 2008; Siennick et al. 2013). Drawing on theory and research that emphasize the importance of social ties on offending and desistance, scholars have highlighted several theoretical pathways through which visitation could be beneficial for inmates including reducing strain, maintaining social bonds, and providing access to social resources during and after incarceration (e.g., Hairston 1991; Wolff and Draine 2004; Blevins et al. 2010). Separately, qualitative studies involving interviews with inmates have highlighted the importance of social ties for helping individuals manage incarceration and the transition back into society (e.g., Adams 1992; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Christian and Thomas 2006).

Empirical research has tended to find that visitation improves individuals' adjustment and behavior in prison and after release (see, e.g., Bales and Mears 2008; Monahan et al. 2011; Duwe and Clark 2013). However, prior studies have largely overlooked the considerable heterogeneity of visitation experiences and how it may affect inmate behavior and reentry outcomes. The bulk of studies, for example, examine visitation as an event that occurs or not—that is, the inmate was

visited or was not visited—rather than as one that may vary in quality and quantity and that may be patterned in different ways over the course of a prison term.

This situation is unfortunate for several reasons. Visitation provides many opportunities for developing and testing theories about inmate experiences and, in particular, for identifying how social ties may affect prisoner behavior. Visitation constitutes, for example, the sole conduit through which inmates can maintain ties to their previous social networks. This fact is of particular relevance given a large body of studies on inmate adjustment that show that separation from family and friends “is one of the most difficult features of prison life to endure” (Adams 1992:286; see also Hairston 1991; Bales and Mears 2008; Blevins et al. 2010). There also are opportunities for understanding better what types of visitation experiences contribute to improved behavioral outcomes and when visitation may have little beneficial effect or may even adversely affect inmate behavior (see, e.g., Siennick et al. 2013). For example, a recent study found that visitation that occurs early in a prison term but then does not continue is associated with a higher rate of misconduct than arises among inmates who are not visited (Cochran 2012). And there are, not least, opportunities to inform policymaker and practitioner efforts to improve outcomes for inmates during and after incarceration.

Against this backdrop, the goal of this chapter is to present a conceptual framework for theorizing inmate visitation, evaluating prior research on visitation, and guiding future work aimed at understanding how social ties to families, friends, and community may affect inmates. To this end, the chapter first describes why visitation has garnered considerable attention from practitioners and researchers and the potential benefits that arise from a greater understanding of it. The chapter then presents the conceptual framework, which consists of five related dimensions that collectively provide a foundation for describing the heterogeneity of visitation and, in turn, the potential for visitation to exert a range of different effects. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the implications of this framework for theory, research, and policy.

2.2 Prison Visitation

The historically unprecedented growth in prison populations in recent decades has led to considerable research aimed at identifying whether incarceration reduces recidivism. It also has led, as recent reviews have highlighted, to the observation that relatively little is known about the

effects of prison experiences on inmate behavior and reentry outcomes (Petersilia 2003; Travis 2005; Nagin et al. 2009; Cullen et al. 2011). That situation in turn has led to calls to understand better the range of inmate experiences and their effects (Visser et al. 2004; Windzio 2006; Cobbina et al. 2012; Mears 2012; Morris et al. 2012; Reidy et al. 2012; Wolff et al. 2012; Cochran et al. 2013). Implicit in such calls is the recognition that these experiences may be heterogeneous and, for example, may include variation in programming, services, inmate culture, officer and warden professionalism, and inmate ties to family, friends, and community.

Although all of these dimensions bear investigation, inmate social ties arguably warrant special attention. Incarceration, by definition, involves separation from family, friends, and the broader network of social relationships that inmates had prior to imprisonment. It is a central part of what makes incarceration a punishment and is a central concern that inmates consistently identify (Adams 1992:286; Sykes 1958; Liebling 1999; Windzio 2006). Even so, few studies have explored the effects of visitation on inmate behavior either during incarceration or after release. Although studies typically have found that visitation has a beneficial effect on individuals' behavior (e.g., Casey-Acevedo and Bakken 2002; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013), this work has largely ignored the considerable heterogeneity in visitation experiences. As this chapter argues, this limitation has important consequences for understanding visitation and its effects on inmates. Before developing this argument, however, the importance of visitation is discussed further. Five considerations, in particular, underscore the need for development of a more nuanced account of visitation and its effects.

2.2.1 Prisoners Have a Legal Right to Be Visited

The study of visitation is of scholarly and policy relevance in part because inmates have, with rare exception, a legal right to be visited (*Overton v. Bazzetta* 2003). Implicit in this legal right is the moral argument that deprivation of liberty, via incarceration, does not include complete isolation from family, friends, and communities. Notwithstanding this right, a substantial proportion of inmates, ranging from 45-70%, are never visited (e.g., Monahan et al. 2011; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013). Recent scholarship suggests that low visitation rates may be due to a range of challenges that inmates' family and community members face when trying to visit a prison (see, e.g., Comfort 2003; Christian 2005; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005). Regardless, the fact that few inmates are visited raises the possibility that a fundamental legal right is impeded, perhaps for some groups more so than others. By extension,

limitation of this right may be viewed not only as harm itself but also as condition that may result in other adverse outcomes, such as increased inmate misconduct and increased recidivism.

2.2.2 Visitation May Reduce the Adverse Effects of Social Isolation

Scholars have argued that visitation is a salient experience for inmates because of the social isolation inherent in incarceration. Separation from social networks is a critical challenge for prisoners and, as emphasized by Adams (1992) and others, it is one reason for prisoner maladjustment in the short and long term (see, generally, Sykes 1958; Bottoms 1999; Liebling 1999; Wooldredge 1999; Tasca et al. 2010; Trulson et al. 2011). Prisoner accounts support this idea and indicate specifically that visitation is perceived to be important by inmates, that it is useful for providing relief from isolation, and that it helps inmates cope with the overall prison experience (e.g., Fishman 1990; Bernstein 2005; Comfort 2008; Ross and Richards 2009; George 2010). Accounts from friends and family members who visit prisoners underscore the notion that visitation is salient for maintaining and strengthening social ties during incarceration (e.g., Christian 2005; Christian et al. 2006; Comfort 2008). These accounts also lend support to theoretical arguments that suggest contact with social ties helps to offset internalization of criminal roles and to develop more conventional, socially approved roles on the outside (Uggen et al. 2004; Wolff and Draine 2004; Christian 2005; LeBel 2012).

2.2.3 Visitation Can Reduce or Increase Misconduct and Recidivism

Many theoretical accounts suggest that visitation can improve inmate behavior and reentry outcomes. Visitation provides, by and large, the only opportunity for prisoners to access social ties, a dimension implicated by several mainstream criminological theories as an important factor for controlling behavior and causing desistance. For example, visitation may help individuals manage the strains related to incarceration (e.g., Sykes 1958; Hairston 1991; Agnew 2005; Blevins et al. 2010). It may help inmates to maintain or strengthen social bonds that in turn exert informal social control on behavior (e.g., Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993; Solomon et al. 2002). Visitation may contribute as well to inmate perceptions that prison system authority is legitimate (see, generally, Bottoms 1999). Not least, access to social networks, via prison visits, can provide individuals access to social capital and resources that can increase their chances of successful reintegration (e.g., Ekland-Olson et al. 1983; Bayse et al. 1991; La Vigne et al. 2004; Wolff and Draine 2004; Berg and Huebner 2011).

Juxtaposed against such arguments are those that suggest that visitation can have an adverse effect. Early penal theorists believed, for example, that social isolation was “central to penitentiary practices” and that contact with family and friends was disruptive to the prison experience because it decreased the potency of social isolation for imposing discipline (Rothman 1971:142). More recent scholarship suggests the possibility that the separation from intimate social ties following a visit can have adverse effects on an individual, which could result in increased misconduct (e.g., Liebling 1999; Siennick et al. 2013). It is also possible that visitation helps offenders access social ties that are criminogenic, which could, in turn, increase the likelihood of criminal involvement in prison and after release (e.g., Gordon and McConnell 1999; Simons et al. 2002; Mears and Bales 2008).

2.2.4 The Need for Cost-Effective Prison Interventions

States increasingly have faced fiscal constraints that have led to reduced funding for prison programs (Jacobson 2005; Gottschalk 2006; Phelps 2011). Inmates also serve longer sentences (Pew Center on the States 2012) and experience more social isolation today than in previous decades. To the extent that social ties improve inmate behavior during and after release, the result of reduced programming, including efforts to promote visitation, would result in a more criminogenic environment. Indeed, over a decade ago, Riveland (1999), who interviewed prison administrators, found that a lack of sufficient funding for prison programs made it difficult for administrators to address concerns about social isolation, prisoner adjustment, safety, and improving reentry outcomes. Visitation, as a programming option, constitutes one potentially cost-effective method, relative to other approaches (e.g., building more prisons), for improving prison order and for increasing the likelihood that inmates are better prepared for reentry (Mears et al. 2012). Most prison facilities allow visitation and thus already have in place the necessary physical and administrative infrastructure to provide prisoners access to visitors.

There may also be straightforward, cost-effective methods to improve the likelihood and frequency of visitation. Administrators may, for instance, be able to remove barriers to visitation that some visitors face. More studies are needed that can systematically identify the types of barriers that exist, but extant research provides some insight into those barriers. Examples include limited or inconsistent visitation hours, inadequate parking facilities, costly fees, and traveling long distances to get to prison facilities (see, generally, Casey-Acevedo and Bakken

2002; Christian 2005; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005). Thus, incremental changes, such as expanding and posting visiting hours, easier access to parking and public transportation, reducing fees, and placement of prisoners in facilities closer to home may increase visitation for relatively less effort and expense than what is typically required to implement many other programs.

2.2.5 The Limited State of Research on Visitation

Despite the potentially central role that visitation may play in the lives of inmates, research on visitation is significantly limited. Early studies, including seminal work by Ohlin (1951), Glaser (1954), Holt and Miller (1972), and others (e.g., Wolfgang 1961; Hopper 1965; Ellis et al. 1974; Adams and Fischer 1976; LeClair 1978), provided valuable insight about the potential effects of visitation. However, many of these studies employed statistical analyses that did not control for potential selection effects. Many of them relied on indirect measures of visitation, such as letter writing or phone calls, rather than directly investigating visitation. Only a handful of studies exist that have examined directly, using multivariate analysis, the link between visitation and prisoner adjustment or misconduct (Jiang and Winfree 2006; Lahm 2009; Monahan et al. 2011; Siennick et al. 2013); and only a handful of studies exist that have examined visitation effects on recidivism (Bales and Mears 2008; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013). These studies tend to find that visitation is associated with modest improvements in inmate behavior and reduced recidivism. Siennick et al. (2013) found, however, that visitation appears to temporarily worsen behavior in the weeks immediately following visitation.

More relevant here is the limited measurement and conceptualization of visitation. Few extant studies go beyond measuring visitation as a binary event—that is, an event that happened or did not. Accordingly, they do not consider such possibilities as visitation events unfolding in patterned ways over the course of incarceration (Cochran 2012) or different types of visitors exerting different effects on inmate behavior (Bales and Mears 2008). There are, to be sure, exceptions. For example, some studies have explored the effects of non-traditional types of visitation, such as conjugal visits, home visits, and furloughs (LeClair 1978; Hensley et al. 2002; Baumer et al. 2009), or have examined the effects of contact between specific groups, such as incarcerated mothers being visited by their children (see, e.g., Casey-Acevedo et al. 2004; Poehlmann 2005; Tuerk and Loper 2006; Loper et al. 2009). Such work has highlighted different dimensions that characterize “the” visitation experience and, in turn, that may influence how visitation affects inmate behavior during and after release from incarceration. At the same

time, it has led to the insight that visitation is not a uniform event. As argued below, research is needed that systematically takes account of this insight to inform theory and research on visitation and how visitation may influence misconduct, recidivism, and other outcomes.

2.3 A Conceptual Framework for Theorizing, Evaluating, and Guiding Research

The discussion above highlights the potential salience of visitation for inmates and describes extant theory and research on visitation and its effects. It underscores the potential for research on visitation to advance theory and policy aimed at improving prison social order and reentry outcomes. And, not least, it identifies the limited empirical research on visitation and its effects. A central limitation of work to date is the limited conceptualization of visitation itself. Indeed, extant research has not been guided by a coherent framework for describing and understanding either visitation or its effects. To address this gap, this chapter presents a conceptual framework for theorizing visitation and evaluating and guiding research on it. The framework consists of five dimensions, described in table 2.1 and in detail below, including: (1) visitation timing, (2) visitation patterns, (3) visitor types, (4) the experience of visitation, and (5) characteristics of inmates that might condition the effects of visitation.

2.3.1 Dimension #1: Timing of Visitation

Visitation research has largely failed to investigate the potential effects of when exactly—what point during a term of incarceration—visitation occurs (see, however, Bales and Mears 2008; Siennick et al. 2013). During the course of incarceration, there may be times when inmates are more at-risk for misbehavior or more vulnerable to strain; in such instances, visits may yield stronger effects on in-prison behavior. In a related vein, there may be certain times when visits have stronger effects on reducing recidivism. For example, prior accounts and empirical analyses suggest that the early stage of a prison sentence constitutes an especially challenging adjustment period for offenders (e.g., Adams 1992; Monahan et al. 2011). Newly incarcerated individuals often experience an initial shock that includes feelings of loss, uncertainty, and isolation (e.g., Sykes 1958; Adams 1992; Liebling 1999). If individuals are indeed more vulnerable and under more strain in the initial period of incarceration, visitation in the first months may be more effective than in later months at helping inmates cope with newly severed ties and the sudden pains of incarceration. Thus, early visitation might have stronger

effects than later visits on individuals' in-prison adjustment, which could, in turn, have implications for both in-prison and post-release behavior.

Table 2.1 A Conceptual Framework for Theorizing, Evaluating, and Guiding Research on the Occurrence and Effects of Inmate Visitation

<p>1. Timing of visitation Early visitation Middle visitation Late visitation</p> <p>2. Patterns of visitation Weekly visitation Monthly visitation Early- or late-only visitation Escalating or de-escalating visitation Sporadic visitation</p> <p>3. Types of visitors Family <i>Spouse/significant other</i> <i>Parent</i> <i>Child</i> <i>Other family (e.g., sibling, grandparent)</i> Non-family <i>Friend</i> <i>Clergy/legal/community volunteer</i> Authority or non-authority figure Criminal or non-criminal</p>	<p>4. Experience of visitation Positive event/experience Negative event/experience</p> <p>5. Characteristics of inmates Age Gender Race Ethnicity Prisoner demeanor Prior prison commitments Sentence length Prior in-prison misconduct Mental illness</p>
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By contrast, late visitation, in the final months of an incarceration period, may be more effective at improving individuals' behavior after release than early visits. They would, of course, be unlikely to affect inmate behavior while incarcerated. However, later visits might, for instance, improve an offender's optimism about reentry, which in turn could increase the likelihood of a successful transition back into society (Visher and O'Connell 2012). Visitation prior to release also may be useful for helping soon-to-be-released inmates reconnect with family members and gain access to resources (Wolff and Draine 2004). More specifically, later visits might provide a time for inmates to plan reentry with family or community members by organizing transportation and providing access to housing, healthcare, and employment (Breese

et al. 2000; Wolff and Schumann 2012). Not least, later visits may help, more so than earlier visits, to offset negative social stigmas that released offenders experience by providing a more proximate reminder to the individual of their pro-social roles (e.g., Maruna 2001; Uggen et al. 2004), such as that of a “parent,” “spouse,” or “sibling.”

A third possibility is that visits that occur in the middle of an incarceration term hold the greatest potential for improving individuals’ in-prison and post-release behavior. Early visits might do little to improve prisoners’ conduct in the initial stage of incarceration; the transition may be so acutely traumatic as to render visitation effects inconsequential. At the same time, if an inmate is not visited until just before release, it could be “too little too late” because the prisoner’s ties to family and friends may be severed by the sustained lack of social contact. Accordingly, it may be that visitation during the middle of a term of incarceration is the most effective time for visits to occur. Such visits may act to bolster an inmate’s efforts to adjust to incarceration following the initial admission period and they may occur sufficiently early to help an inmate maintain social ties that endure through incarceration and after release.

Despite logical arguments to suggest that visitation timing substantially alters visitation’s effects, timing effects have not been systematically examined in the literature (see, however, Siennick et al. 2013). The typical approach adopted in research is to measure visitation as a dichotomous measure (e.g., visited vs. not visited). This approach groups together all inmates who were visited regardless of whether visitation occurred in the early, middle, or late period of an incarceration term. A dichotomous measure is also problematic because it makes only a single comparison—the effect of visitation versus non-visitation—and thus obscures the possibility that variation in the timing of visitation may differentially affect inmate outcomes. Only two studies to date have assessed the possibility of timing effects, and both focused on a delimited aspect of such timing. Specifically, the studies investigated the possibility that visits that occur later in an incarceration period might have stronger recidivism-reducing effects than those that occur earlier in a term of incarceration (Bales and Mears; 2008; Duwe and Clark 2013). In both studies, weighting schemes were used to assess whether visits that were more proximate to release had stronger recidivism-reducing effects. They each found evidence to support this idea and thus underscored the need for future research that systematically explores timing effects.

Notably, the limitation in prior research does not stem from methodological constraints. For example, researchers can test timing effects by utilizing data sources that provide information about when during a term of imprisonment visitation events occurred (see, e.g., Cochran 2012; Siennick et al. 2013). Using such data, researchers can explore how early, middle, and late visitation affects both in-prison misconduct and post-release offending. Studies can assess a range of comparisons and counterfactual scenarios, including the relative effects of, say, being visited late to being visited at other time periods and also, to not being visited at all. Scholars also can explore whether the frequency of visitation during different time periods is important. For example, early visitation might only act as an effective coping mechanism if an individual is visited several times, whereas one or two “doses” of visitation (e.g., Mears et al. 2012) may be all that is needed near the end of a prison term to help an inmate strengthen social bonds or capital and improve the chances of desistance.

2.3.2 Dimension #2: Patterns of Visitation

Visitation may be patterned during the course of visitation. Longitudinal patterning of visitation can be defined by reference to the timing, rate, and consistency of visits over the course of incarceration. Qualitative accounts highlight the possibility that prisoners can experience a range of visitation patterns over the life course of a prison term (e.g., Fishman 1990; Arditti 2003; Comfort 2008; Dixey and Woodall 2012). For example, visitation can occur regularly or consistently throughout incarceration, or it can occur sporadically and unpredictably. Visitation can be frequent during one time period and infrequent, or non-existent, at other time periods. Some prisoners can have a slowly escalating trajectory of visitation, if they are visited rarely early on but become more frequently visited over time. In contrast, other inmates can experience a de-escalating trajectory if they are visited frequently upon admission but experience a slow decline or a sudden knifing off of visitation later on. Not least, within these broad categories, more nuanced patterns can exist. There can be, as just one example, variation among those who are “regularly” visited, such as inmates who are visited weekly, monthly, or yearly.

What effects can we expect from different visitation patterns? This question is complicated because visitation patterns are heterogeneous and because we know little about which patterns are most common. There are, however, grounds for anticipating different types of visitation and, in turn, differences in the effects of some types of visitation. To illustrate, prisoner accounts suggest that some inmates have sustained visits over the course of

incarceration (e.g., Christian 2005; Comfort 2008) and that the sustained nature of the visitation provides a greater effect, one that may be more pronounced than would be captured by simply focusing on the frequency of visitation on inmate strain and behavior. A similar logic holds for social bonds—sustained visits may provide a stronger foundation on which to maintain or strengthen social bonds between an inmate and a family or community member, which in turn might improve reentry outcomes. A distinct contrast to such possibilities is the situation in which visitation is suddenly stopped. For example, an inmate who is visited frequently but then experiences a sudden knifing-off of visitation may experience a sudden and dramatic increase in strain that in turn leads to adverse effects on inmate behavior (see, e.g., Liebling 1999; Ross and Richards 2009).

Prior studies of visitation have not explored these possibilities and, here, again, have been limited to dichotomous or, sometimes, count measures of visitation. Such measures aggregate visitation experiences and fail to account for longitudinal patterns of visitation. Consider an example involving two inmates who each receive ten visits while incarcerated. The first inmate receives all ten visits in the first three months and the second inmate receives one visit every month. It is possible that the pattern of early visitation with an abrupt cutoff has a harmful effect on an inmate and increases the chances of misconduct and recidivism; by contrast, the sustained, uninterrupted pattern may be beneficial and reduce misconduct and recidivism. A count measure, however, treats these two individuals as if they had the same experience.

Two studies to date have attempted to account for longitudinal patterns of visitation. Siennick et al. (2013) assessed the short-term effects of visitation on misconduct over the course of inmates' prison terms by examining misconduct in the days and weeks leading up to and directly following a visitation event. A second study, by Cochran (2012), took a different approach and explored the bivariate association between longitudinal patterns of visitation and misconduct for a group of inmates who served twelve months in prison. Such studies lend support to the idea that visitation indeed may be patterned in diverse ways and that the patterning of visitation may have consequences for inmate behavior.

As with the focus on timing, data and methodological constraints do not preclude investigation of visitation patterns. To the contrary, prison administrative records typically provide information about admission, release, misconduct, recidivism, and visitation dates. These kinds of data provide opportunities for different descriptive and predictive analyses. For

instance, scholars can employ event history modeling (e.g., Siennick et al. 2013), trajectory modeling (e.g., Nagin 2005; Cochran 2012), or latent class analyses to empirically identify groups of inmates who experienced similar visitation patterns, and in turn, estimate effects of visitation group-membership on behavior.

2.3.3 Dimension #3: Types of Visitors

Visitation effects can also vary by the type of person who makes the visit, which in turn may affect inmate behavior. A prisoner's ties to their spouse or child, for example, are likely to be stronger than his or her ties to a community volunteer. Visitation by volunteers or distant relatives may be less likely to be effective, especially if those visits hold little potential for fostering a long term bond or providing access to social resources. Even so, it may be that any visit, regardless of the intimacy of the connection, can plausibly provide relief from the day-to-day rigors of imprisonment and thus work to improve behavior (Mears and Bales 2008).

In a related vein, a distinction between family and non-family visitation is warranted, based on prior scholarship that has underscored the importance of family for offenders during imprisonment and afterwards (see, generally, Sampson and Laub 1993; Maruna 2001; Maruna and Toch 2005). To the extent that family ties provide greater support to prisoners in facing the practical challenges of reentry (e.g., finding housing, employment, healthcare, transportation), family visitation will be more beneficial for offenders (e.g., Wolff and Draine 2004). An offender's family members can also provide opportunities for that individual to reconnect with social and familial roles and to reduce the occurrence or effects of being stigmatized (Uggen et al. 2004). Not least, family members, perhaps more so than non-family members, can act as authority figures by providing guidance and exerting informal control (e.g., Hirschi 1969).

It also may be important to distinguish between criminal and non-criminal visitors. Any visitation, regardless of the criminality of a visitor, can be an enjoyable, positive experience. Yet, there is a strong possibility that visitation by a criminal peer or family member can exert a criminogenic effect (Bales and Mears 2008). Visits by criminal associates may increase misconduct if the visitor smuggles contraband into the prison and passes it on to the inmate. Criminal visitors can also affect inmate behavior indirectly if visitation contributes to the transmission or reinforcement of norms that support in-prison crime or deviance (Gordon and McConnell 1999). Similarly, maintaining connections to criminals during imprisonment can be harmful if it increases the likelihood that an offender reconnects with a deviant lifestyle or sub-

culture upon release. Criminal visitation could also have both effects—it may help the inmate by reducing strain and misconduct in prison, but it also may harm the inmate if he or she is more likely to join back into a deviant network upon release.

All of these possibilities, and more, suggest that visitor characteristics may contribute to visitation effects. To date, however, research has focused primarily on the fact of visitation and not investigated the effects of who visits. Indeed, only a handful of exceptions exist (see, e.g., Casey-Acevedo et al. 2004; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013; Siennick et al. 2013). Findings from these studies suggest that visitor types that are indicative of stronger social bonds, such as spouses or children, are more strongly associated with decreased rates of recidivism but also that visits from them may increase misconduct (Casey-Acevedo et al. 2004; Siennick et al. 2013). These studies underscore the potential for visitor types to be consequential for understanding “the” effects of visitation and, at the same time, highlight the need for studies that systematically examine a range of visitor types and their influence on both in-prison and post-release outcomes.

2.3.4 Dimension #4: Experience of Visitation

There is reason to believe that the effect of visits depends upon the context under which a visit occurs and the events that transpire during it. For example, visits can be positive because visitation provides an opportunity for family and community members to express support for inmates and to provide encouragement. Visitors can bring gifts, food, or other items from home. During visitation, inmates have opportunities to catch-up with recent events, to interact with their children, and to maintain a sense of connection to their roles as a family or community member and, more broadly, a connection to the free world. Even if a visit is from a volunteer or a distant relative, the interaction during a visit may offset some of the day-to-day strain, including the tedium, of prison life.

Other types of visitation experiences, however, may be more unpleasant. For instance, relationships between inmates and their spouses or intimate partners are often tenuous during incarceration (Ross and Richards 2009; Massoglia et al. 2012). For example, visitors may travel to prison for the purpose of breaking off a relationship with an inmate. Visits can lead to arguments and fights, which may be more likely in settings, such as prison, where power differences exist. Inmates cannot, for example, control what happens outside of the prison, and may feel acutely the strain of not being able to influence what a visitor has done or will do after

the visit. At the same time, visitors typically characterize prison visitation as challenging and intimidating, which can contribute to tension during visits (e.g., Fishman 1990; Arditti 2003; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005; Comfort 2008; Dixey and Woodall 2012).

Here, again, prior research provides little insight into these possibilities. To date, qualitative accounts provide the grounds for anticipating that the nature of the visitation event may influence inmate behavior. Systematic empirical assessment remains lacking. Data limitations do present a challenge. Information about how inmates and visitors interact is not readily collected or included in administrative datasets. Inmate surveys about visitation are, however, possible. Surveys can ask questions about a range of dimensions, including the demeanor of the inmate before, during, and after a visit, the perceived demeanor of the visitor, whether the inmate received gifts from the visitor, whether there was fighting or arguing, and whether the inmate perceived visitation to be an overall beneficial or harmful experience. Measures of these characteristics can provide opportunities to test the effects of specific circumstances related to a visit, and to test whether positive or negative experiences are associated with different effects.

2.3.5 Dimension #5: Characteristics of Inmates

Finally, there are theoretical reasons to believe that inmate characteristics condition the effects of visitation. Adams (1992:285) implies, for instance, that prisoners' race and ethnicity might alter visitation effects because "the saliency of concern for being separated from family members varies across racial groups." He suggests, too, that Latinos represent a unique group because of "the importance that Latino cultures place on family relationships." Similarly, visitation may hold more value for females than males if the diminished familial or parental roles that result from incarceration are more salient for females. Scholarship suggests the possibility that age is an important conditioning factor, especially if young offenders have more to gain from maintained connections to social networks than older offenders, who perhaps are more entrenched in criminal careers (e.g., Monahan et al. 2011). The effect of visitation may also vary among inmates with differing levels of misconduct. Visitation might be most effective for inmates who have higher rates of prior misconduct than for relatively well-behaved inmates. Other factors, including sentence length, prior experiences with formal sanctions (including incarceration), and psychological characteristics (e.g., mental illness) also may condition

visitation's impact. As with the other dimensions, such possibilities can be investigated using administrative records or with inmate surveys.

2.4 Conclusion

The potential implications of prison experiences, like visitation, to improve prison order and reentry outcomes has led scholars to call for investigation of the different experiences individuals have while incarcerated and the effects of such experiences (Adams 1992; Camp and Gaes 2005; Nagin et al. 2009; Trulson et al. 2011). With over 700,000 individuals released from prison annually in the United States, there is a considerable need to understand better the types of prison experiences inmates have and what their effects may be on prison adjustment and misconduct as well as recidivism and successful reentry. Inmate visitation merits special attention for several reasons. Inmates have legal rights to visitation; visitation may mitigate the potential harmful effects of social isolation and improve inmate behavior and reentry outcomes; and visitation might provide one way to cost-effectively achieve these benefits. Juxtaposed against such considerations is the paucity of research that systematically examines the heterogeneity of visitation experiences and how such heterogeneity may affect whether visitation improves or worsens the behavior of individuals during and after incarceration.

Accordingly, to contribute to efforts to advance scholarship on prison order and prisoner reentry, this chapter advanced a conceptual framework for theorizing, evaluating, and guiding research on prisoner visitation and its effects. Briefly, the framework consisted of five dimensions—visitation timing, visitation patterns, visitor type, visitation experiences, and individual characteristics that may moderate visitation effects—that individually and collectively characterize, or define, “the” visitation experience and, in turn, that affect inmate adjustment and reentry outcomes. Several implications flow from the use of this framework to examine extant research on prisoner visitation and to guide theoretical and empirical research aimed at understanding the effects of social ties on inmate adjustment and reentry.

First, use of the framework helps to identify and describe the heterogeneity of visitation and, in turn, the possibility of different effects of different visitation patterns and experiences on behavior. Visitation can be characterized by a range of factors that might lead to different effects. Inmates can, for instance, be visited at different times, such as the early, middle or late stages of incarceration. They can be visited only once or twice, or with varying levels of

frequency and consistency (e.g., weekly, monthly, yearly). And for each visitation event, there are different types of visitors and different types of circumstances that can lead to varying benefits and detriments.

The heterogeneity in visitation experiences is paralleled by heterogeneity in theoretical expectations about visitation's effects. One such expectation is that later visits will provide inmates contact with social ties prior to release that can exert informal control and provide access to social capital. These can, in turn, improve post-release behavior (e.g., Wolff and Draine 2004; Bales and Mears 2008). Early visitation, on the other hand, can affect in-prison behavior, if by participating in visitation, prisoners are better able to adjust to incarceration and also, if their views of the legitimacy of the prison system are improved (e.g., Adams 1992; Bottoms 1999). Future research can and should investigate these and related possibilities.

Second, the conceptual framework outlined here provides a basis for evaluating prior scholarship that has employed limited theorizations of visitation effects. Extant research has provided valuable insight into the potential for visitation, and social ties more broadly, to improve prison outcomes. However, studies have overlooked the considerable heterogeneity inherent in visitation experiences. In some instances, they have made strong claims about visitation effects in a context where only one delimited type or measurement of visitation has been employed. Indeed, one conclusion flowing from the conceptual framework is that relatively little is known about the nature or effects of visitation for either inmate behavior or reentry outcomes.

Third, and finally, the framework provides guidance for future research that can systematically assess visitation and that advances theory and policy focused on understanding and improving prison outcomes. Future studies that are attentive to the heterogeneity in inmate visitation experiences will be able to provide more accurate estimates of visitation effects. Here, the need for and benefits of such work are parallel to each of the five dimensions articulated in the framework. For example, studies that account for and test the effects of visitation timing can help to answer critical theoretical and policy questions. If, for instance, early visits are found to decrease misconduct, this would provide partial support for theoretical arguments that suggest it is the early period of incarceration that is more strainful and that visitation can help to ameliorate such strain (Hairston 1991; Adams 1992; Bales and Mears 2008; Blevins et al. 2010; Morris et al. 2012). Such a finding, in turn, might be useful to corrections officials. For example, it would

suggest that efforts should be expended in attempting to increase visitation, especially during the transition period after inmates are admitted into prison.

Studies of visitation patterns can provide further insight into these questions. To the extent sustained visitation more strongly reduces recidivism than other patterns, for instance, it would lend support to the idea that visitation can help maintain social connections and that the strength of these ties are important for coping with strain and improving reintegration (Wolff and Draine 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Listwan et al. 2013). It is possible, though, that other patterns enhance strain or can be criminogenic. One-time visits, for example, may increase strain and, in turn, misconduct. Here, again, such possibilities would have the potential to provide useful guidance to prison officials. If sustained visitation provides the greatest effect on inmate behavior, then efforts to support such visitation would be indicated. However, if even one or two visits provide substantial improvements, then such efforts could be more circumscribed and yet potentially yield large increases in prison order and safety (see, however, Siennick et al. 2013).

Research on the effects of different visitor types can help shed light on theoretical questions about the effects on behavior of strong versus weak ties, of authority versus non-authority figures, and of criminal versus non-criminal associates (e.g., Granovetter 1983; Simons et al. 2002; Wolff and Draine 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Cobbina et al. 2012). In addition, research can help to advance policies focused on promoting more effective visitation. Studies that differentiate between the effects of family visits versus visits from volunteers, for instance, can help determine if motivating local community members to visit the prison is an effective method for improving behavioral outcomes, or if stronger efforts should be made to promote visits from family members. Similarly, if studies find that heightened criminality among visitors increases deviance and recidivism, it would suggest a need for enhanced policies that restrict visitation by individuals with criminal backgrounds.

Studies that can address variation across visitation experiences, such as whether a visit was a positive or negative event, can help answer theoretical questions about the benefits and detriments of visitation, and more broadly, social ties. For instance, is visitation always beneficial or are certain types of visits, such as those that involve arguing and fighting, detrimental to inmate behavior? In addition, studies can test whether different experiences and patterns, collectively, result in differences in behavior. What is the effect, for instance, of

consistent visitation, but when the visitation experiences are consistently adverse? Answering these questions can have similar benefits for policy if research can identify varying effects of differential visitation experiences. Officials would be able to better anticipate when visitation is helpful and when inmates, as a result of visitation, may be more at-risk to lash out or misbehave.

Systematic assessments of visitation that consider potential conditioning effects of inmate characteristics on visitation outcomes will also help inform theoretical ideas about who stands to benefit most from visitation, and to develop policies that take better advantage of visitation. Such studies can provide information for administrators who seek to better predict when visits calm or relieve strain and when visits have null or aggravating effects. If research determines, for instance, that visitation is effective for prisoners who chronically engage in misconduct, this goes against typical administrative procedures that restrict privileges for inmates who have recently engaged in misconduct. It may be, as Monahan et al. (2011:150) suggest, that it is those individuals “who are prohibited from visits, who may benefit from visits the most.” Other scenarios like this may occur where current policies or structural conditions go against empirical results that highlight potential benefits of visitation as a programming option. Closer consideration of individual-level factors, along with the other characteristics described above, will help to illuminate these scenarios and to inform more nuanced policies by differentiating when certain types of individuals may be at-risk for harmful visitation effects and when they stand to benefit most from being visited.

CHAPTER 3

WHO GETS VISITED IN PRISON?

3.1 Introduction

A growing body of scholarship has underscored the importance of social ties for prisoners and has examined the implications of social support for improving in-prison and reentry outcomes (La Vigne et al. 2004; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Cobbina et al. 2012; Listwan et al. 2013). One avenue of research that has garnered increased attention is inmate visitation (Hairston 1991; Bales and Mears 2008; Monahan et al. 2011; Duwe and Clark 2013; Siennick et al. 2013). According to prior theory and research, visitation provides inmates with opportunities that include reuniting with family, maintaining conventional social roles, coping with strain and social isolation, and improving reintegration back into society (Lembo 1969; Ellis et al. 1974; Adams 1992; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Wolff and Draine 2004; Christian 2005; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Bales and Mears 2008; Lahm 2008; Blevins et al. 2010; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013; Siennick et al. 2013).

Despite this body of work, little is known about the factors that contribute to inmate visitation. This question is of importance for practitioners, scholars, and policymakers for several reasons. If visitation indeed benefits inmates, it is important to assess whether disparities exist in who is visited. Better understanding of who gets visited also can provide insight into which inmates may be more or less likely to experience strain or maintain social bonds and thus be more likely to desist from crime (e.g., Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993; Wolff and Draine 2004; Ross and Richards 2009). By extension, scholarship on predictors of visitation may assist policymakers and administrators in their efforts to develop cost-effective approaches to maintaining safe and orderly prison environments and in reducing recidivism (e.g., Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005; Christian et al. 2006).

Against this backdrop, the goal of this chapter is to explore individual- and community-level factors that may be associated with prison visitation. In so doing, the chapter aims to contribute to scholarship focused on the social support and social networks of offenders (Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1991; Rose and Clear 2003; Berg and Huebner 2011; Cobbina et al.

2012) and on understanding how in-prison experiences contribute to prison order and post-release reentry outcomes (e.g., Bales and Mears 2008; Nagin et al. 2009; Cochran 2012; Monahan et al. 2012; Reidy et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013; Siennick et al. 2013). The chapter begins by describing prior research on prison visitation and the potential implications of visitation for inmate and ex-prisoner behavior. The chapter then turns to a discussion of the characteristics of inmates, and of the community contexts from which they come, that may influence visitation. Using data from a population cohort of all inmates admitted and released to Florida prisons between 2000 and 2002, the chapter then presents multi-level negative binomial analyses estimating the effects of individual- and community-level factors on visitation. The implications of the chapter's findings for theory, research, and policy are discussed.

3.2 Background

The expansion of the correctional system in recent decades has led to growing concerns about the effects of incarceration and the implications of prison experiences for affecting in-prison and reentry outcomes (Adams 1992; Nagin et al. 2009; Cullen et al. 2011). Prison experiences are heterogeneous, varying along many dimensions. These can include educational and vocational programming and drug and mental health treatment. Experiences can include victimization or gang activities. They may include exposure to different inmate cultures or administrative approaches, and more (see, generally, Sykes 1958; Bonta and Gendreau 1990; Gendreau and Keyes 2001; Blevins et al. 2010; Tasca et al. 2010; Mears 2012; Listwan et al. 2013). Scholarship suggests that many of these dimensions may affect inmate and ex-prisoner behavior, yet empirical research documenting these effects is needed (Nagin et al. 2009; Jonson 2011; Mears 2012). Research is needed, too, on a more basic question—what factors contribute to the experiences that inmates have while incarcerated?

3.2.1 Prior Research on Visitation

Prior studies suggest that one salient experience for inmates is the extent to which they can access previously held social ties during incarceration (e.g., Adams and Fischer 1976; Hairston 1991; Liebling 1999; Monahan et al. 2011; Duwe and Clark 2013). Prison visitation represents, by and large, the only opportunity inmates have to have direct contact with outside social ties (Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1954; Hairston 1988). Qualitative and empirical accounts underscore the idea that inmates view maintenance of social ties as especially important (e.g.,

Fishman 1990; Comfort 2003, 2008; George 2010), and they also provide theoretical arguments for why visitation may affect behavior. Recent scholarship has proposed, for example, that visitation can help reduce strain and help inmates cope with social isolation in prosocial ways, thereby reducing prison disorder (e.g., Adams 1992; Bottoms 1999; Blevins et al. 2010; Morris et al. 2012). Visitation may also help inmates maintain social bonds, which in turn can result in informal controls that reduce the likelihood of in-prison misconduct and post-release recidivism (e.g., Hirschi 1969; Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1991; Gordon and McConnell 1999). Inmates who are visited, and who take part in other types of in-prison programs and privileges, may have improved perceptions of legitimacy of the prison system (e.g., Bottoms 1999). Not least, prisoners may be able to access social resources and social capital via visitation, that can provide practical benefits upon release (e.g., Ekland-Olson et al. 1983; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; La Vigne et al. 2005; Berg and Huebner 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012).

Although few empirical studies of visitation effects exist, they suggest that, consistent with theoretical accounts, visitation is associated with improved behavioral outcomes. For example, several studies have found that visitation is associated with lower rates of inmate misconduct; typically, the studies have not included measures of strain, social bonds, or other theoretical mechanisms, but the findings have been viewed as lending support to the idea that visitation effects arise through such mechanisms (e.g., Goetting and Howsen 1986; Clark 2001; Hensley et al. 2002; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Lahm 2008; Cochran 2012). In a related vein, some studies have found that visitation is associated with lower levels of recidivism (e.g., Bales and Mears 2008; Monahan et al. 2011; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013).

3.2.2 Who Gets Visited in Prison?

The potential salience of visitation for improving prison order and reentry outcomes leads naturally to the question of who gets visited in prison. For example, are younger inmates more likely to be visited than older inmates? Do White inmates experience more visitation than Black or Latino inmates? Do inmates who have more prior prison commitments or convictions experience fewer visitations than first time offenders? Perhaps community conditions where inmates come from influence visitation. Put differently, are there characteristics of communities from which inmates come that may affect their likelihood of visitation? To date, studies have not addressed these questions, nor have they explored the theoretical reasons for why we might expect different factors to result in different levels of visitation.

The lack of attention to the factors associated with visitation is anomalous for at least three reasons. First, to the extent different types of inmates are less likely to be visited, it raises a question of fairness. Visitation may have benefits and it is, with some exception, a right granted to offenders (*Overton v. Bazzetta* 2003). Lack of visitation thus potentially conflicts with this right and prevents some benefits from occurring. It also potentially imposes additional, “invisible” punishment—to the extent that lack of social contact to prior ties is experienced as punishment—on some inmates more than others (Garland 1990; Western and Pettit 2002; Western 2006; Beckett and Murakawa 2012). It is, accordingly, important to understand what variation exists in who is visited and why such variation arises.

Second, examining the factors associated with visitation is important because of the potential implications for investigating and testing theoretical accounts of how visitation effects arise. For example, a limitation of some prior studies is the limited ability to estimate the effect of visitation net of confounders. As scholars have emphasized (e.g., Jackson et al. 1997; Casey-Acevedo and Bakken 2002; Bales and Mears 2008), research that identifies the range of factors that give rise to visitation can provide the groundwork for better understanding the potential confounding that may result in biased estimates of visitation effects.

Third, and not least, understanding the factors that influence visitation may enable prison administrators to take steps to increase visitation. Such a possibility carries with it the attendant risk of worsening outcomes if, in fact, visitation produces harmful effects. Visitation from criminal associates, for example, is not on the face of it likely to improve outcomes and may worsen them (Bales and Mears 2008). At the same time, the bulk of research and theory to date suggests that visitation occurs rarely and yet may have beneficial effects (Monahan et al. 2011; Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2013). Accordingly, information about who gets visited provides a first step in highlighting how greater amounts of visitation among a larger swath of inmates might be achieved.

3.3 This Study

What factors then are associated with visitation? This chapter focuses on a range of characteristics of inmates and their communities that prior theory and research directly or indirectly implicate as potentially important determinants of inmate visitation. The discussion here begins first by examining individual characteristics, including inmate demographics, prior

record, and conviction offense. In addition, and building on a growing body of literature that has highlighted the importance of contextual factors on offender behavior (e.g., Travis and Visher 2003; Kubrin and Stewart 2006; Mears et al. 2008; Wang et al.; Hipp et al. 2010), this chapter also investigates the possibility that county-level factors, such as economic disadvantage, community members' contact with the prison system, and social altruism may be associated with prison visitation. These two sets of factors are discussed below.

3.3.1 Individual Factors

Gender. Prior theory and research argue that differences exist between males and females in the quality and strength of their social ties. Overall, females are likely to have stronger, more stable social networks (Moore 1990; Cobbina et al. 2012). Females are also more likely to take a more substantial role in the care-taking of children than are males and to put more effort into maintaining ties with family and friends (Uggen and Kruttschnitt 1998). Research suggests, too, that familial ties exert stronger effects on behavior than do friends or peers and that females have stronger attachments to the former than to the latter, when compared to males (Cobbina et al. 2012). In addition, the friendships that females do develop typically are more intimate and affectionate (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Pugh 1986; Steffensmeier and Allan 1996). This work thus suggests that females will experience more contact and be visited more often than males during incarceration (see also Visher and Courtney 2006).

Age. What about differences across age? Overall, prior research suggests that we should expect younger inmates to experience more visitation than older inmates. Although scholarship suggests that young adulthood is the period where offending peaks and social bonds can begin to weaken (see, generally Gibson and Krohn 2013), younger offenders are likely to still be well-integrated within their nuclear family—i.e., their parents, guardians, and siblings—than are older offenders. Over time, and over the course of different criminal punishments, older inmates are more likely to have drifted away from tight-knit family and peer groups (Rose and Clear 2003; Uggen and Wakefield 2005). Furthermore, youthful inmates, because of their age, might be perceived by family and friends as less culpable than their older counter parts, and are likely to experience less of a stigma as a result of formal sanctioning than older inmates (Massoglia and Uggen 2010). Thus, incarceration itself may sever social ties for older inmates more so than younger inmates, which would decrease visitation. Not least, family and friends of young inmates might perceive the conditions of imprisonment to be relatively harsher than they would

for an older inmate, and thus feel more urgency to visit and to try and help individuals cope with incarceration, than would potential visitors of older inmates.

Race and ethnicity. Prior research has outlined a range of collateral consequences of incarceration for minorities as compared to Whites (e.g., Western and Pettit 2002). Less access to social ties, via reduced visitation, may stand as an additional type of collateral punishment. Minority status may, for instance, act as a proxy measure for a range of characteristics, including contextual and socioeconomic backgrounds. Minority inmates typically have fewer years of formal education, experience greater socioeconomic disadvantage, and have had more frequent contact with the criminal justice system (Wacquant 2001; Western 2006; Pettit 2012). Minorities' pool of potential visitors—their family and community members—are likely to share many of these characteristics. Thus, minority groups may experience less visitation because their outside social ties have typically fewer social and economic resources that would make finding transportation, travelling to the prison, paying fees, passing backgrounds checks, and overcoming many of the other common barriers to visitation more difficult (see, generally, Casey-Acevedo and Bakken 2002; Christian 2005; Christian et al. 2006).

It is possible, too, that racial and ethnic status acts as a proxy measure of different cultural mechanisms that might affect visitation. Adams (1992) argues, for instance, that Latino inmates have greater levels of social support because of the tight-knit family structures inherent in Latino communities; this difference, in turn, could be expected to lead to more visitation among Latinos. In a related vein, minority inmates typically will be more likely than Whites to come from community contexts where incarceration is a more familiar phenomenon, and thus where a greater understanding exists about how to negotiate the prison experience (e.g., Wacquant 2001). As emphasized above, research suggests that visitation can be challenging for inmates' families; accordingly, familiarity with how to overcome these challenges may increase visitation. On the other hand, it is possible, too, that this familiarity with incarceration contributes to decreased visitation. Community members, family and friends included, may be more likely to view prison as a temporary, transient event, one that will result in reentry and that does not require visitation either to survive the prison experience or to successfully reenter society.

Prior record and offense seriousness. Scholarship suggests that we should also expect prior record and offense seriousness to reduce visitation. Specifically, inmates who have been

convicted and imprisoned more frequently, and who have committed more serious offenses, should on average be less likely to experience visitation. Research suggests that serious, chronic offenders typically have lower levels of social support and fewer social resources than first-time and less serious offenders (see, generally, Rose and Clear 2003; Gibson and Krohn 2013). As individuals engage in more offending, their social relationships become strained (Rose and Clear 2003; Roberts 2004). Visitors who may have previously been willing to visit may develop “visitation-fatigue” over time, as they grow weary of putting forth effort to visit as individuals accumulate more convictions and after multiple stints of incarceration (e.g., Christian 2005; Christian et al. 2006). In a related vein, the type of offense may be consequential. For example, violent and sex offenders may experience less visitation than inmates who commit property or drug offenses or who are incarcerated for violations of probation and parole. Family or friends may view such crimes as greater violations of an unstated social contract and thus be less forgiving and less willing to continue to invest social capital in such individuals.

3.3.2 Community Factors

Economic disadvantage. As described above, inmates who come from areas with heightened levels of economic disadvantage may experience less visitation. Family, friends, and community members from these areas—an inmate’s pool of potential visitors—are more likely to be unemployed or to have low-paying jobs, and, because of a range of practical constraints, will have diminished abilities to overcome challenges related to visitation. Although potential visitors from these areas might be similarly if not more willing to visit incarcerated offenders, these individuals will have fewer economic resources to allow them to take time off from work, to travel or pay for transportation to a prison, to find childcare, and to pay for fees (e.g., background check, parking) related to visitation (e.g., Jackson et al. 1997; Casey-Acevedo and Bakken 2002; Tewksbury and DeMichelle 2005).

Prison admission rates. Two theoretical arguments suggest that areas with higher rates of incarceration would give rise to more visitation. For example, similar to arguments about the potential effects of race, citizens in these areas might be more familiar with incarceration and have more experience with the complexities involved with managing imprisonment and navigating the administrative systems surrounding inmate visitation. The end result would be more visitation. It is possible, for example, that in these areas informal infrastructures exist that make it easier to visit; residents may be more likely to carpool together or provide transportation

or childcare to assist other community members in visiting family in prison (see, generally, Rose and Clear 2003; Cammett et al. 2006).

A different line of reasoning leads to a similar prediction about the effects of aggregate incarceration rates on visitation. Studies suggest that groups that perceive that they are unnecessarily targeted by the criminal justice system, such as when citizens live in areas where people are frequently incarcerated, exhibit increased skepticism regarding the behavior and legitimacy of criminal justice actors (Tyler 1990; Weitzer and Tuch 2006). Similarly, qualitative accounts suggest that, under some circumstances, visitors are skeptical of the treatment friends and loved ones receive while incarcerated (Christian 2005). Thus, family and community members who come from areas where criminal justice contact is more frequent may have a greater willingness to visit inmates from those areas if they feel that it helps to increase prison accountability or to monitor better the inmate's treatment.

Social altruism. Not least, inmates who come from areas where levels of social cohesion or social altruism are higher may also experience more visitation (see, generally, Chamlin and Cochran 1997; Putnam 2000; Rosenfeld et al. 2001). Recent scholarship has highlighted significant effects of group-level social capital, social welfare, and social support on released prisoners' ability to reintegrate to society upon release (Rose and Clear 2003; Holtfreter et al. 2004; Hipp et al. 2010; Orrick et al 2011). The bulk of these studies suggest that inmates who return to areas with higher levels of social capital are better off during prisoner reentry. What about during incarceration? It seems reasonable to expect that, drawing on this body of work, community social support or social cohesion can impact offenders, perhaps via visitation, prior to release (e.g., Wolff and Draine 2004). Communities with more social capital have increased social integration and larger amounts of collective outreach (e.g., Coleman 1990; Putnam 2000; Rosenfeld et al. 2001). Visiting offenders in prison requires a substantial amount of effort, but communities with heightened levels of social altruism may contain larger pools of family and community members motivated to help offenders in prison and to overcome challenges.

3.4 Data and Measures

This chapter uses data from an admissions cohort of felony inmates admitted into and released from Florida prisons between 2000 and 2002. The data are provided by the Florida Department of Corrections (FLDOC) and contain detailed individual-level measures including

demographic, offense, prior record, sentence length, and time served measures. Only inmates who served at least 2 months in prison are included in the analyses to provide sufficient opportunities for individuals to have been visited (n = 17,921). Ancillary analyses that included all inmates revealed substantively similar findings and are available upon request. To test the extent to which county-context measures predict visitation, individual-level data were linked to county-level information based on the county individuals committed their offense. The specific measures included in the analyses are described in more detail below.

For several counties, there were too few cases clustered within those counties to sustain the different types of primary and ancillary analyses discussed below. To address this issue, cases in counties where there were fewer than 15 inmates included in the cohort were excluded from the analyses. This resulted in dropping 11 of 67 counties and 104 inmates. (Ancillary analyses that used the full sample of counties and inmates revealed substantively similar results to those shown in the tables and are available upon request.)

The dependent variable used here is a count measure of inmate visitation. Visitation records for inmates are electronically recorded by prison officers into the FLDOC Offender Based Information System (OBIS). For the analyses, visitation counts were truncated at 35 visits. This was done to reduce the extreme skew in this measure (99 percent of the sample experienced 35 or fewer visits).

Demographic factors included in the OBIS system include inmates' age (continuous), race and ethnicity (Black non- Latino, White non- Latino, or Latino), and a dichotomous measure of sex (male = 1, female = 0). Each of these is included in the analyses as independent variables. The analyses also include two measures of prior criminal history: the prior number of felony convictions (count) and the prior number of prison commitments (count). Inmates are designated as having committed one of five different primary offense types. These are included as dichotomous measures and can be drug, violent, sex, property, or other. Continuous measures of inmates' sentence length (in months) and time served (in months) are also included as independent variables.

The analyses also include three county-level independent variables. First, the analyses include a measure of county-level economic disadvantage. This measure is consistent with disadvantage and deprivation indices used previously by researchers (e.g., Land et al. 1990) and in prior studies that have analyzed Florida county data specifically (e.g., Wang et al. 2010). The

index includes four measures based on 2000 U.S. Census data: percent female-headed households, percent under the poverty line, unemployment rate, and percent households on public assistance. Second, to test the effects of county-level contact with the prison system on visitation, the analyses include the rate of prison admissions per 1,000 for each county for the year 2000. This measure is based on data provided by the FLDOC that provides counts of all new admissions to prison from each Florida county. These counts were then divided by the population for each county based on the 2000 U.S. Census. Third, to test the effects of social outreach or social altruism on visitation, the analyses include a measure of county-level charitable revenue, measured in units of \$10,000 per household. This measure was obtained from the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics and are for the year 2000 (for more detail, see <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/>). Although charitable giving is an indirect measure of social capital, it is readily available and provides an avenue for exploring the idea that social capital at the community-level may influence visitation. In addition, charities and charitable donations have been highlighted previously by scholars as measures of altruism, social capital, and social support (e.g., Chamlin and Cochran 1997; Orrick et al. 2011; see also Sampson 2013). As noted in the conclusion, future research ideally will explore this idea using a range of additional measures.

3.5 Analytic Strategy

The goal of this chapter is to explore a range of theoretically relevant individual- and county-level characteristics and to test whether they are related to inmate visitation. The dependent variable in the analyses is a count measure of visitation, and thus linear models are not appropriate. In addition, a modeling strategy is required that can account for nesting of cases within counties. Initially, to account for the count-based nature of the outcome and the hierarchical structure of the data, multivariate Poisson models were analyzed using Stata's `xtmepoisson` procedure (see Rabe-Hesketh and Skondral 2008).

Similar to previous studies employing multilevel regression, the analyses followed a two-step process. Step one involved assessing the extent to which inmate visitation varied at the county level. If there is significant variation across level 2 units, this variation may be attributed to two factors: compositional characteristics of the inmates within those counties and county-level attributes. To assess variability at the county level in prison visitation, a fully

unconditional multilevel Poisson model was analyzed. The county-level random effects variance component (0.147) in this model was statistically significant at the .001 level, suggesting significant variance in counts of inmate visitation across counties.

One problem with using the Poisson distribution for these analyses, however, is that the number of zero counts in the dependent variable leads to overdispersion. For example, the variance in the outcome (33.53) is more than 10 times greater than the mean (2.13). This overdispersion was confirmed further by two goodness-of-fit tests: a deviance test and a Pearson test. In both instances, the tests were significant and suggested that the Poisson model was inappropriate. Therefore, the multivariate models described below are based on multilevel random effects negative binomial regression models, using Stata's `xtnbreg` command, which can account for both overdispersion in the count outcome and for the clustering of inmates within level 2 units. (Ancillary analyses showed that the results for both the negative binomial and Poisson models were substantively similar. Results are available upon request.)

3.6 Findings

3.6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.1 provides a description of the inmate cohort and includes the means, standard deviations, and ranges of the outcome and independent variables. Inspection of table 3.1 highlights that, on average, inmates received 2.13 visits over the course of their incarceration period. Inmates typically were male (90%) and were on average aged 32. Forty-two percent were White, 50% were Black, and 8% were Latino. A significant strength of the analyses is that, in contrast to prior work, a sufficiently large number of females and Latinos can be included to examine gender and racial/ethnic variation in visitation.

The analyses also consider the effects of prior record, sentencing, and offense information. On average, inmates in the cohort served about 1 prior prison commitment (0.87), averaged 6 prior convictions (5.90), and were sentenced to 23 months of incarceration (22.81). The most common offense type was a drug crime (34%), followed by property (32%), violent (19%), other (13%), and sex (3%) crimes. Inmates, on average, served 12 months in prison (12.27).

An additional strength of the study is the inclusion of information about the characteristics of the counties from which inmates come. The first county-level variable is a

standardized index of economic disadvantage. The second county measure is the prison admissions rate per 1,000 citizens in a county; the average prison admission rate is approximately 2 per 1,000 citizens (1.98), with a range of 0.48 to 4.30. Last, county-level charitable revenue averages about \$5,000 per household in charitable giving and values range from \$100 to \$27,000 per household.

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
<i>Outcome</i>				
Visitation (count)	2.13	5.79	0	35
<i>Demographics</i>				
Male (1/0)	0.90	0.31	0	1
Age (1/0)	32.14	9.90	15	77
White (1/0)	0.42	0.49	0	1
Black (1/0)	0.50	0.50	0	1
Latino (1/0)	0.08	0.27	0	1
<i>Sentence length and prior record</i>				
Sentence length (months)	22.81	22.34	12	600
Prior prison commitments (count)	0.87	1.43	0	12
Prior convictions (count)	5.90	6.50	0	94
<i>Offense information and time served</i>				
Primary offense - drug (1/0)	0.34	0.47	0	1
Primary offense - violent (1/0)	0.19	0.39	0	1
Primary offense - sex (1/0)	0.03	0.16	0	1
Primary offense - property (1/0)	0.32	0.47	0	1
Primary offense - other (1/0)	0.13	0.33	0	1
Time served (months)	12.27	5.50	2	31
<i>County-level</i>				
Economic disadvantage (z)	0.00	1.00	-1.66	3.53
Prison admissions (per 1,000)	1.98	0.84	0.48	4.30
Charitable revenue (\$10k per household)	0.50	0.36	0.01	2.70

3.6.2 Multivariate Analyses

Turning now to the multivariate results in table 3.2, what then are the effects of the independent variables on visitation? Table 3.2 presents the results of random effects, multilevel

negative binomial regression models. Model 1 includes the individual-level variables only; model 2 then includes the county-level attributes.

Table 3.2 Multilevel Negative Binomial Regression of Prison Visitation Count on Individual- and County-Level Characteristics (n = 17,921, 56 counties)

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
<i>Demographics</i>				
Male (1/0)	-0.125**	0.047	-0.120**	0.047
Age (1/0)	-0.037***	0.002	-0.037***	0.002
Black (1/0)	-0.712***	0.033	-0.721***	0.034
Latino (1/0)	-0.120*	0.051	-0.118*	0.052
<i>Prior record</i>				
Prior prison commitments (count)	-0.183***	0.016	-0.184***	0.016
Prior convictions (count)	0.014***	0.002	0.014***	0.002
<i>Offense, sentence length, and time served</i>				
Primary offense - violent (1/0)	-0.209***	0.043	-0.208***	0.043
Primary offense - sex (1/0)	-0.323***	0.088	-0.321***	0.088
Primary offense - property (1/0)	-0.322***	0.038	-0.320***	0.038
Primary offense - other (1/0)	0.086	0.047	0.082	0.047
Sentence length (months)	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Time served (months)	0.077***	0.002	0.077***	0.002
<i>County-level</i>				
Economic disadvantage (z)	-	-	0.002	0.019
Prison admissions (per 1,000)	-	-	0.049**	0.018
Charitable revenue (\$10k per household)	-	-	0.143***	0.040
Intercept	-2.133***	0.029	-2.301***	0.053
Wald χ^2	2200***		2233***	

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Note: “White” and “primary offense - drug” are reference variables

Findings in model 1 show that several factors are significantly related to visitation. Starting with the demographic measures, we can see that males experience significantly less visitation than females (-0.125) and that older offenders experience significantly less visitation

than younger offenders (-0.037). In addition, minority inmates receive significantly fewer visits than do White inmates. Specifically, Blacks receive .712 fewer visits and Latinos receive .120 fewer visits, respectively, as compared to Whites.

Inmates with more prison commitments also were less likely to be visited (-0.183). Somewhat surprisingly, there is a positive significant effect of prior convictions on visitation. Although this effect is substantively negligible (0.014), it runs counter to arguments that would suggest that more chronic offenders will receive less visitation. However, as expected, inmates who committed more serious offenses (e.g., violent and sex offenses) experienced significantly less visitation. Compared to drug offenders, violent (-0.209), sex (-0.323), and property (-0.322) offenders were each less likely to be visited. “Other” offenders (0.086) experienced more visitation, but this effect did not reach statistical significance. Finally, sentence length had no statistically significant effect on visitation, but time served did. Specifically, each additional month of time served was associated with .077 more visits.

We turn now to the community-level factors. Model 2 includes the same individual-level variables as model 1, but incorporates county-level measures as well. Notably, the individual-level effects are nearly identical between model 1 and 2, even after the addition of county-characteristics. More relevant, two characteristics emerge as having statistically significant effects on county-level variation in visitation. Specifically, inmates from counties with higher rates of prison admissions and with higher levels of charitable giving were visited more frequently (0.049).

To present the effects identified in table 3.2 in a more intuitive manner, figure 3.1 depicts the predicted visitation counts for individuals with a range of set characteristics. This approach is helpful for another reason—the large sample size used for these analyses can make it easier to identify statistically significant effects. Predicted values provide a useful tool for demonstrating the level to which certain characteristics appear to be substantively significant. The predicted counts for each given factor (e.g., age) were generated using model 2 coefficients, holding all other covariates at their means.

Figure 1 highlights that age and race/ethnicity yield perhaps the most substantial effects on visitation. In this chapter, a 20-year old inmate on average received approximately 2.6 visits; the typical 50-year old inmate experienced less than one visit. White inmates were estimated to receive approximately .25 visits more than Latino inmates, and approximately 1.25 more visits

than Black inmates. We can see also see that substantively large differences exist across prior commitments and offense type. Specifically, an inmate incarcerated for the first time is estimated to receive nearly 2 visits compared to a little over 1 visit for someone who is being incarcerated a third time. Drug and other offenders are estimated to receive about .5 more visits as compared to violent, sex, and property offenders.

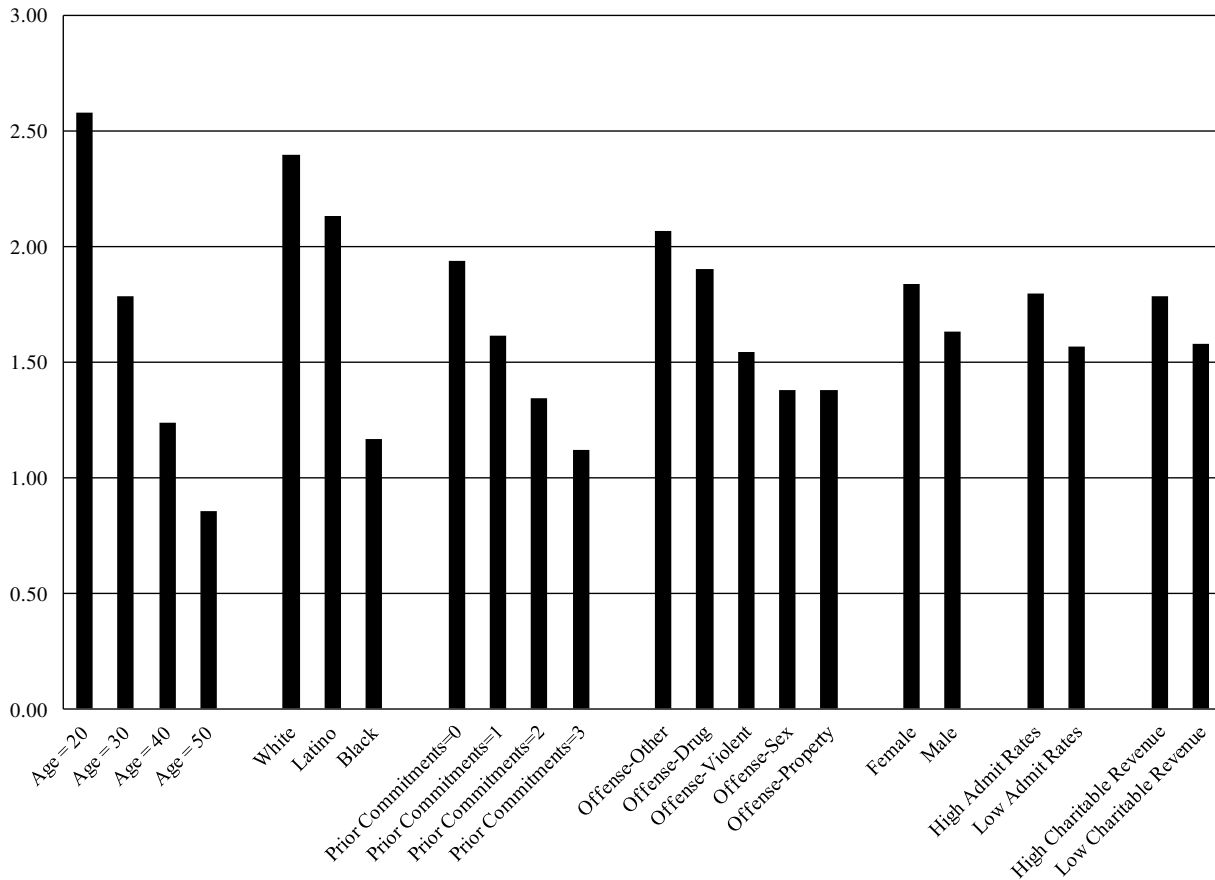


Figure 3.1 Predicted Counts of Visitation by Individual- and County-Level Factors

Although the gender differences appear to be relatively small, there are non-trivial differences with respect to county-level prison admission rates and county-level charitable giving. The high and low values for prison admission rates and charitable revenue are based on the predicted counts of visitation for inmates from counties in the top and bottom deciles for those two measures. Inmates from counties in the top decile of these two variables, respectively, receive about .20 to .25 more visits than inmates from the low decile of these two variables. The magnitude of this effect appears small. However, it bears emphasizing that this effect is

estimated to apply to all inmates who come from the top decile and bottom decile counties, respectively. Accordingly, their aggregated effects may be appreciable.¹

3.7 Discussion and Conclusion

The expansion of the correctional system over the past three decades has led to scholarship aimed at understanding the effects of incarceration and the experiences of prisoners that might condition those effects. As part of that scholarship, a burgeoning body of work has focused on exploring the implications of social support for offenders (e.g., Jiang and Winfree 2006; Hipp et al. 2010; Berg and Huebner 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012; Orrick et al. 2012), and specifically, has implicated visitation as an experience that may be important because of its salience and because it allows inmates to access social ties during incarceration (Bales and Mears 2008; Monahan et al. 2011; Duwe and Clark 2013). Despite the potential benefits of visitation to improve prison social order and prisoners' transitions back into society, prior studies have not systematically assessed the determinants of visitation or the factors, at the individual-level or community-level, that might increase or decrease prisoners' access to visitation.

The goal of this chapter was to address this research gap by examining the effects on visitation of factors suggested by prior theory and research that includes both characteristics of inmates and of the community from which they come. This chapter advances the literature on prisoner visitation and social ties in several ways. Apart from Jackson et al.'s (1997) study, which focused on inmate visitation at a single facility in Nevada, it is the only study to date to systematically and empirically examine factors associated with prison visitation for an entire state, and it is the only to include individual- and county-level measures, males and females, and Latinos.

Three broad findings emerged from the analyses. First, the analyses lend support to the idea that some individuals are more likely to be visited, and thus, to have greater access to outside social ties during incarceration. Specifically, inmates who are young, female, White, or Latino experience the greatest amounts of visitation. Alternatively, older, male, and Black

¹ The findings above were robust across a range of alternate specifications. For example, the multivariate analyses shown here used grand-mean centered level 1 variables. Grand-mean centering allows for more accurate effect estimates for level 2 (county) characteristics. The alternative is within-group centering, which provides more accurate estimation of coefficients at level 1 (for discussion, see Enders and Tofighi 2007). Ancillary analyses using within-group centering revealed substantively identical findings for level 1 estimates (available upon request).

inmates experience less visitation. These findings resonate with prior studies that have identified differences in the experiences and effects of incarceration for minority groups who not only are more likely to be incarcerated, but who also experience other kinds of “invisible punishments” as a result of incarceration (Wacquant 2001; Western 2006). Researchers have also explored the differential punishment experiences of males versus females and of younger versus older inmates. The findings here support the notion from prior work that males and older inmates may well have fewer social ties while incarcerated (Uggen and Kruttschnitt 1998; Massoglia and Uggen 2010; Cobbina et al. 2012).

Second, individuals with a more extensive prior record experience less visitation. Specifically, inmates who commit more serious offenses and who have been incarcerated more frequently receive the lowest amounts of visitation. This finding is important because it further demonstrates the idea suggested by scholars that serious, chronic offenders are likely to have weaker social networks (Sampson and Laub 1993; Rose and Clear 2003; Roberts 2004; Gibson and Krohn 2013). It also is useful for understanding the social consequences of entering into or stabilizing a cycle of offending. The findings here imply that frequent offending and the consequent punishments are directly detrimental to social ties. Family members and friends are likely to become less willing to maintain ties to an individual who continues to offend and who is repeatedly incarcerated (Christian 2005; Uggen and Wakefield 2005). To the extent that visitation, then, is a manifestation of offenders’ existing social ties and social capital, reduced visitation for repeat offenders is likely indicative of a shrinking pool of social connections who are willing to put time and effort into maintaining their bonds to the offender. Here, then, it bears emphasizing that any identified visitation effect on recidivism (see, e.g., Mears et al. 2012) might not stem from visitation per se but rather from what visitation signals about an individual—that is, a lower social bond or less social capital.

Third, the analyses here identified a modest positive association between county-level prison admission rates and charitable giving on visitation. Prior studies have examined the relationship between community context and post-release outcomes, and have identified significant effects on recidivism (e.g., Wang et al. 2010; Orrick et al. 2012). This chapter highlights the possibility that context is not only important for post-release outcomes but also may influence offenders’ experiences while they are incarcerated. The analyses here identified beneficial effects of higher rates of prison admissions and higher levels of charitable giving on

visitation, which lends support to prior speculation that citizens in these kinds of places may be better equipped and more willing to visit inmates than in other areas. Potential visitors in areas with higher incarceration rates may have more experience with visiting prison facilities and be better equipped to navigate the administrative obstacles related to visitation. There may also be cultural norms in these areas that work to encourage more outreach for inmates. Charitable giving is conceptualized here as measuring social support and thus as tapping into something different than community economic disadvantage. The idea is that, net of disadvantage, there is a willingness or ability of members of the community to support individuals from their community who are in prison. Here, the logic is similar to what Sampson et al.(1997) argue concerning the effects of collective efficacy, which is held to influence behaviors net of disadvantage. It is important, however, that future studies test different strategies for measuring and assessing the effects of social support, at the macro- and individual-level, on inmate visitation.

The findings from this chapter point to additional lines of inquiry that merit investigation. One question centers on the question of fairness. To the extent that prison systems operate in ways that reduce the likelihood of visitation more so for some groups than others, there is the risk of unwarranted disparity. From this study, we simply know that, for example, demographic differences in visitation exist. What produces them remains to be investigated. Of course, there are some factors that prison systems cannot control. For example, if inmates come from areas, such as those with more social altruism, that result in more visitation, there likely is little that prisons can do to create equity in visitation for inmates who come from other areas. At the same time, it may be that such information could be used to identify inmates for whom more targeted assistance with visitation may be indicated or helpful.

Another question that stems from these findings is whether visitation provides a useful signal for identifying the risk of recidivism (Bushway and Apel 2012). As noted above, visitation may not be causally associated with recidivism. That is, it may not itself reduce offending. Yet, the fact of being visited, or not being visited, may provide a useful proxy measure of the social support that inmates have and, in turn, their likelihood of misconduct and recidivism. Future studies ideally would investigate this possibility by including a range of measures that directly identify the extent of social support prior to, during, and after incarceration.

Studies also are needed that can test the mechanisms that make visitation more likely or less likely for some inmates. Although there are theoretically plausible reasons to expect different effects for certain groups, the data did not permit a direct test of why these effects arose. Many of the mechanisms center on the strength and nature of social networks. It will be important, therefore, for future studies to include measures of these networks.

Not least, future studies should investigate community-level influences on visitation. This study is the first to examine contextual effects on prison visitation, and there are important unanswered questions that need to be addressed. For example, are visitors likely to come from an offender's home county, a different county, or from the county where a prison facility is located? Are community-level influences best conceptualized and measured as occurring along racial and ethnic lines? Does community distance from where an inmate is located influence visitation?

A larger body of studies on visitation and its effects has the potential to inform not only scholarship on inmates, prison order, and reentry, but also may have important implications for policies and practices aimed at improving in-prison and reentry outcomes. Increasing visitation may not be beneficial, especially if it is undertaken in ways that lead inmates to feel unfairly treated or that places excessive demands on staff time or prison system resources. Scholarship suggests, however, that visitation can hold salient benefits. Thus, given the many barriers to inmate visitation (e.g., Casey-Acevedo and Bakken 2002; Cammett et al. 2006; Christian et al. 2006), and the potentially cost-effective benefits of increasing visitation (Mears et al. 2012), it is none too soon to begin investigation of these and related avenues of study.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF VISITATION ON IN-PRISON BEHAVIOR²

4.1 Introduction

Scholars have devoted considerable attention to experiences and behaviors in prison (e.g., Clemmer 1940; Sykes 1958; Poole and Regoli 1983; DiIulio 1987; Adams 1992; Gendreau et al. 1997; Bottoms 1999). The emergence of mass incarceration in recent decades has spurred renewed interest in the experiences of prisoners and has led to a growing body of scholarship on the effects of these experiences (e.g., Hochstetler and DeLisi 2005; Steiner and Wooldredge 2009; Tasca et al. 2010; Trulson et al. 2011). This work is informed by diverse theoretical traditions and is aimed at shedding light both on prison social order and the factors that contribute to successful reentry outcomes.

Some studies suggest that one experience, inmate visitation, may be especially effective at reducing instances of misconduct and, in turn, improving prison order and recidivism (Lembo 1969; Ellis et al. 1974; Goetting and Howsen 1986; Clark 2001; Hensley et al. 2002; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Lahm 2008; Mears et al. 2012). These studies have proposed several theoretical pathways linking visitation to reductions in misconduct. For example, visitation may alleviate strains, including acute feelings of isolation, associated with incarceration (e.g., Adams 1992; Agnew 2002; see also Blevins et al. 2010; Duwe and Clark 2011; Mears et al. 2012). Visitation may strengthen social bonds and enable inmates to maintain connections with members of their family and community (Carlson and Cervera 1991; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Wolff and Draine 2004). Prison visits may enable prisoners to be more optimistic about their future, which in turn may contribute to a lower likelihood of engaging in misconduct (e.g., Maruna 2001; Burnett and Maruna 2004; Hochstetler et al. 2010; Visher and O'Connell 2012). Not least, visitation may improve prisoners' perceptions of the prison system and staff, which also may

² A version of this chapter was accepted for publication in the September-October 2012 issue of the *Journal of Criminal Justice*. (Cochran, Joshua C. 2012. The Ties that Bind or the Ties that Break: Examining the Relationship between Visitation and Prisoner Misconduct. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40:433-440.)

reduce the likelihood to engage in violence and misbehavior (e.g., Bottoms 1999; Useem and Piehl 2008; Wolff et al. 2009; Dirkzwager and Kruttschnitt 2012).

The studies to date have found that inmates who receive visits are less likely than those who are not visited to engage in misconduct (Lembo 1969; Ellis et al. 1974; Goetting and Howsen 1986; Clark 2001; Hensley et al. 2002; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Lahm 2008). A central question that remains unaddressed, however, is whether the timing or consistency of visits affects misconduct. This question is important because heterogeneity in visitation can be anticipated to contribute to differential effects on inmate behavior. For example, some inmates may be visited once while others may be visited on a weekly basis. Some inmates will only be visited in the first months of incarceration while others may only be visited in the last months. Such patterns in turn may exert varying influences on inmate misconduct. These possibilities are obscured by the use in prior research of binary measures of visitation.

Against this backdrop, the goal of this chapter is to advance research on prison experiences, prison social order, and reentry by examining three interrelated questions. First, what types of visitation groups exist? Second, what types of in-prison misconduct trajectory groups exist? Third, what is the relationship between visitation and misconduct trajectory groups? This chapter uses data on a cohort of Florida prisoners and group-based trajectory modeling techniques to answer these questions. Before presenting the analyses, I discuss prior scholarship on inmate experiences, prison order, and visitation. I then discuss the data and methods, the findings, and their implications for theory, research, and policy.

4.2 Background

Inmate social order is a critical element of the prison environment. Histories of American corrections, for example, describe the provision of a disciplined and orderly environment for offenders as a key focus of the first prisons. Early practitioners proposed that removing offenders from their otherwise disordered lives and immersing them in a structured prison environment was a promising method for “fixing” criminals’ antisocial behavior (e.g., Rothman 1971; Blomberg and Lucken 2000). That goal—maintaining prison order by controlling inmates or by providing programs or experiences—remains central to prison systems today (Bottoms 1999; Useem and Piehl 2008).

The United States houses more than 2.2 million offenders in its jails and prisons (Glaze 2011). The growth of prison populations and prison overcrowding present considerable health and safety risks for inmates and prison staff (e.g., Ekland-Olson et al. 1983; Harer and Steffensmeier 1996; Riveland 1999; Camp et al. 2003; Huey and McNulty 2005; Franklin et al. 2006). At the same time, scholars have emphasized that prison expansion has been accompanied by a decline in correctional rehabilitative efforts over the past thirty years (e.g., Cullen et al. 2012), placing a further premium on understanding how best to maintain prison order.³

What in fact are the implications of prison misconduct? Considerable scholarship has explored the broader implications of inmate misbehavior for prison social order and prison system effectiveness (e.g., Clemmer 1940; Sykes 1958; DiIulio 1987; Bottoms 1999). These studies have described the adverse effects violence and misbehavior can have on the authority of prison staff and on inmates' perceptions that guards can maintain order and safety. At the same time, involvement in prison misconduct, especially serious misconduct, suggests that, despite being institutionalized, an offender never actually ceased offending, and this behavior might be likely to continue once an inmate is released (DeLisi 2003; Maruna and Toch 2005; Trulson et al. 2011). This idea has led to several recent studies that have explored linkages between misconduct and inmate recidivism during reentry (e.g., Lattimore et al. 2004; Trulson et al. 2005; Huebner et al. 2007; Trulson et al. 2011). Although results of these studies have been mixed, they highlight the potential for inmate misconduct to undermine the authority of prisons and the effectiveness of incarceration at reducing future crime.

4.2.1 Inmate Visitation and Prison Misconduct

With these concerns in mind, scholars have called for greater attention to understanding the factors that influence inmate misconduct. To this end, they have utilized multilevel methodologies to assess predictors of misconduct at the prison- or administrative-level, including the effects of prison overcrowding, racial composition, and administrative factors (e.g., Ruback and Carr 1993; Camp et al. 2003; Huebner 2003; Steiner 2008; Morris et al. 2012). Other studies have explored the individual-level factors that might be important, such as age, race, gender, offense type, and prior record (e.g., MacDonald 1999; Trulson 2007; Kuanliang et al. 2008;

³ Some scholarship suggests that rates of misconduct and prison violence may have remained stable during this period (see, e.g., Useem and Piehl 2008). Regardless, reducing misconduct and maintaining safety constitute ongoing challenges for prison administrators.

Jiang and Fisher-Giorlando 2002; Sorensen and Cunningham 2010; Tasca et al. 2010; Drury and DeLisi 2011). Not least, there is a growing body of scholarship focused on the implications of different prison experiences for inmate misconduct. These studies have examined a wide range of experiences including gang membership, differences in sentence length, time served, and custody level, and also participation in drug treatment, job training, religious services, and other types of programming (see, e.g., Gaes et al. 2002; Huebner 2003; Camp and Gaes 2005; Thompson and Loper 2005; Cunningham and Sorensen 2006; Griffin and Hepburn 2006; Welsh et al. 2007; Camp et al. 2008; Sundt et al. 2008; Levitt and Loper 2009).

Prior research suggests that another experience, inmate visitation, may also have important implications for in-prison behavior. To date, studies have shown that inmates who are visited in prison may have lower likelihoods of engaging in misconduct (Lembo 1969; Ellis et al. 1974; Goetting and Howsen 1986; Clark 2001; Hensley et al. 2002; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Lahm 2008). Drawing on this work, scholars have developed several theoretical arguments explaining how visitation might influence individuals' behavior. One argument is that visitation can help inmates cope with the strains associated with imprisonment (e.g., Sykes 1958), particularly the social isolation attendant to incarceration (Adam 1992; Gordon and McConnell 1999). For example, it constitutes or provides a coping mechanism for inmates that can help them reduce stress and decrease their likelihood of engaging in misbehavior (Toch 1977; Hairston 1988; Wooldredge 1999; Tuerk and Loper 2006; Tasca et al. 2010). This argument accords with strain and deprivation theories (see, e.g., Ellis et al. 1974; Flanagan 1980; Jiang and Fisher-Giorlando 2002; Huebner 2003), which argue that strain and a lack of effective coping mechanisms contribute to misconduct or other antisocial behavior (e.g., Agnew 1992; Blevins et al. 2010; Listwan et al. 2011; Morris et al. 2012).

Alternatively, visitation might lead to reductions in inmate misbehavior by helping offenders maintain social bonds and increase social capital. Just as social bonds are expected to decrease the likelihood of offending outside of prison (Hirschi 1969), the informal social control provided by bonds with family, friends, and community members can help inmates maintain prosocial behavior during incarceration (Howser et al. 1984; Jiang and Winfree 2006). These bonds may be important in a context where inmates face considerable pressure to conform to deviant prison subcultures (Clemmer 1940; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Wolff and Draine 2004). As Wolff and Draine (2004:461) have emphasized, as "community connections weaken,

the prisoner may begin to identify more with the prison culture.” Thus, inmate visitation, and also other forms of inmate social support, can provide a key source of informal control (e.g., Bayse et al. 1991).

It is also plausible that visitation improves prisoner behavior by improving prisoners’ perceptions of and attitudes towards the prison system and its staff (Tyler 1990; Bottoms 1999; Tyler 2003; see also Carrabine 2005; Reisig and Mesko 2009). For example, Bottoms (1999) has identified how inmate perceptions of procedural legitimacy, or alternatively, perceptions of injustice by prison staff—and, more broadly, “the perceived fairness of various regime features” (p. 257)—impact the overall social order of a prison facility. Inmates who participate in prison programs and who gain access to different privileges, like visitation, may be more likely to perceive that the prison system acts in a way that is fair and justifiable. In turn, they may be more likely to conform to prison rules.

4.2.2 Visitation and Policy

Although a focus on visitation holds the potential to illuminate the conditions that give rise to or sustain order in prisons, it also is of interest because of its implications for policy. As a programming tool, visitation can more easily be implemented than other programs because most prisons already possess the necessary infrastructure (e.g., facilities, training, administrative policies) needed to facilitate inmate visitation (e.g., Bales and Mears 2008; Duwe and Clark 2011). Second, enhancing visitation in prisons is relatively inexpensive compared to other programming options that have been linked to reductions in disciplinary infractions, like drug treatment and specialized units (see, e.g., Chamberlain 2012). Third, it is conceivable that the promotion and implementation of visitation programs would be viewed by the public as less controversial than other programs (Applegate 2001). For example, citizens may find it difficult to support certain kinds of programs and amenities, especially in instances when prisoners are provided resources that large proportions of the general public cannot access. Visitation, however, may be viewed somewhat differently because it is more politically neutral—the emphasis is on family ties, an issue central to both conservative and liberal platforms—and so garner greater support from policymakers, practitioners, and the public (Bales and Mears 2008).

4.2.3 Patterns and Timing of Visitation and Effects on Misconduct

Few studies have tested the visitation-misconduct relationship empirically. Extant scholarship suggests that visitation improves prisoner behavior. Several critical questions, however, remain unaddressed. First, inmate visitation and misconduct experiences may be heterogeneous across an inmate population. For example, visitation experiences can develop over time in a range of patterns and these patterns may be differentially related to misconduct. Consider an inmate who is visited once and an inmate who is visited monthly. Inmates who are visited more consistently may be better equipped to cope with strain (Blevins et al. 2010) than inmates who only receive one or two visits. Similarly, regular visitation throughout incarceration might provide continued maintenance of inmates' bonds to outside community members or better stabilize an individual's role as a mother, father, spouse, sibling, or as a valued community member, and in turn, reduce the likelihood of misconduct during prison. A single visit or the occasional, sporadic visit may be less effective in reducing misconduct.

Second, the timing of visits might also be important if there are certain periods during incarceration where visits can be more or less beneficial. If, say, the beginning of an incarceration term is particularly challenging or introduces inmates to greater strain, visits in the early months of imprisonment might affect the amount or timing of misconduct, more than visits in the later months of imprisonment. Prior research has, however, typically examined only whether visits occurred (i.e., dichotomous measure) and not these other possibilities. Accordingly, studies are needed that employ data and methods that enable such possibilities to be investigated. It is this research gap that the present study aims to address.

4.3 Data and Methods

4.3.1 Data

The goal of this chapter is to advance research on prison experiences, prison order, and reentry by examining whether visitation and misconduct trajectories exist and the extent to which they overlap with one another. The data for this chapter were provided by the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) and come from the FDOC Offender-Based Information System. These data include visitation and misconduct event information collected by the FDOC for 2,070 convicted felony offenders who served 12 months in Florida prisons between 2000 and

2002.⁴ For these prisoners, I had complete information on the visitation and misconduct events during the course of their incarceration.⁵

4.3.2 Analytic Strategy

Semi-parametric dual, group-based trajectory modeling techniques (Nagin 2005; Jones and Nagin 2007) are used to test whether distinct developmental trajectories of visitation and misconduct can be identified. This modeling technique works under the assumption that inmate populations will be comprised of “distinct clusters of developmental trajectories” (Brame et al. 2001:505), with “developmental” referring here to the development of different patterns of visitation and misconduct over the course of an incarceration sentence. Trajectory model analyses use mixture models to identify a finite set of patterns or groups that inmates can be assigned to, and because model parameters can vary across trajectories, each specified group can take on either a linear, quadratic, or cubic functional form, or be included only as an intercept. In each instance, the number of groups and the functional form of these groups is specified manually; therefore, a systematic assessment of various group and functional form specifications is required to determine the model that best fits the data. As suggested by Nagin (2005), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) statistic is used as the primary indicator of “best fit.” Lower values of the BIC statistic suggest a more parsimonious model estimation.

Second, if trajectories can be identified among the inmates, the dual, or joint, trajectory modeling technique can be used to “analyze connections between the developmental trajectories of two outcomes that are evolving contemporaneously” (Jones and Nagin 2007:548). Thus, the dual trajectory model is useful for exploring how inmates’ developmental patterns of visitation and misconduct relate to one another during incarceration. Here, the focus is on the potential

⁴ Months here are defined as 28-day periods instead of 30 or 31 days. This allows for the same amount of weekend days to be included for each inmate-month, and accounts for the possibility that visitation is more likely to occur during weekend visiting hours. Ancillary analyses using inmate cohorts serving different sentence lengths, including a 9-month and 15-month period, revealed findings similar to those shown here and are available upon request.

⁵ The relatively short period of time served by the prisoners in my analyses does mean that the findings are more generalizable to inmates who serve shorter sentence lengths than longer ones. A large proportion of inmates, however, typically serve short lengths of stay. For example, in 2003-04, 19% of prisoners in Florida served 12 months or less, and 53% served 24 months or less (see Table 4c, Time Served in DC Custody, Florida Department of Corrections Inmate Release reports—<http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/index.html>).

effect of visitation on misconduct and I therefore examine probabilities of misconduct trajectory group membership conditional on visitation trajectory group membership.⁶

4.3.3 Measures

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Male	0.88	0.32	0	1
Black (non-Latino)	0.51	0.50	0	1
Latino	0.08	0.27	0	1
White (non-Latino)	0.41	0.49	0	1
Age	32.00	9.96	15	74
Prison sentence length (months)	21.32	24.81	12	600
Offense - violent	0.19	0.39	0	1
Offense - sexual	0.02	0.14	0	1
Offense - property	0.29	0.46	0	1
Offense - drug	0.36	0.48	0	1
Offense - other	0.14	0.35	0	1
Prior convictions - general (#)	5.98	6.41	0	54
Prior convictions - violent (#)	0.83	1.56	0	17
Prior convictions - sex (#)	0.07	0.50	0	10
Prior convictions - property (#)	2.59	4.79	0	43
Prior convictions - drug (#)	1.83	3.36	0	37
Prior convictions - other (#)	0.66	1.43	0	16
Prior prison commitments (#)	0.87	1.43	0	9
Misconduct reports (#)	1.38	2.73	0	27
Visits (#)	2.08	6.06	0	70

Inmate visitation and misconduct records are the primary focus of the analyses. For illustrative purposes, descriptive information of the subsample of inmates who served 12 months in prison is provided in table 4.1 and includes general demographic, offense, sentence, and prior record information. The data include specific dates of visits and of misconduct reports. These

⁶ The converse of this relationship can also be examined—that is, the probability of assignment to a specific visitation trajectory, conditional on one’s assignment to a misconduct group. Prior literature has focused primarily on the effects of visitation on misconduct, thus the focus here is on the conditional misconduct assignment.

dates, along with inmates' prison admission dates, were used to create monthly counts of visits and misconduct disciplinary reports of an incarceration term.⁷ This means that, for each inmate, there are counts of visits in month 1 and misconduct in month 1, visits in month 2 and misconduct in month 2, and so on. To address skew in these measures, monthly visitation and misconduct records were then dichotomized. For the trajectory modeling analyses, then, the binary logit specification in the SAS module PROC TRAJ (Jones et al. 2001; see also Nagin 1999) was used to identify groups based on predicted likelihoods of any visitation or any misconduct, respectively, in a given month during the cohort's 12 months of incarceration.

4.4 Findings

The modeling procedure used here involved estimation of a progression of models using various group and functional form specifications, with the goal of determining the model that best fit the data in regards to trajectories of visitation, and separately, trajectories of misconduct. First, models were estimated using a quadratic functional form for each group, beginning with a 1-group model and proceeding up to a 5-group model. In each instance, the inclusion of an additional group improved model fit, as indicated by a decrease in the BIC statistic, until a fifth group was added for the visitation trajectories, and until a fourth group was added for the misconduct trajectories. Beyond a fourth group for visitation, and beyond a third group for misconduct, model fit was worsened. Thus, the 4-group visitation trajectories and the 3-group misconduct trajectories provided the best fitting models.⁸

Second, after determining the ideal number of groups, model fit in some instances can be improved by specifying alternate functional forms. A series of additional models then were estimated using different functional form specifications. For the 4-group visitation model, two quadratic specifications, one linear specification, and one zero-order trajectory—fit to a constant to account for non-visited individuals—provided the best fitting model. For the 3-group misconduct model, two quadratic specifications and one zero-order trajectory—fit to a constant to represent the non-offending group—provided the best fitting model.⁹

⁷ The disciplinary reports are based on official records of disciplinary incidents, based on records provided by FDOC.

⁸ The average posterior probability of trajectory group assignment was .951 for the visitation trajectories and .830 for the misconduct trajectories.

⁹ This procedure is outlined by Nagin (2005) and described by others in more recent uses of

The trajectories of visitation are displayed in figure 4.1. Here, four distinct patterns of visitation experiences surface. One trajectory, depicted as an intercept at the bottom of the figure, represents the large proportion of inmates who, for the most part, never received a visitor during their 12-month incarceration period. This group has a 0 probability of being visited throughout the duration of incarceration, and is also the largest cohort of inmates, comprising about 75% of the sample. A second group comprises about 11% of the sample, and is characterized by a substantially higher probability of visitation early on in the prison sentence, peaking at a probability of .45 in months 5 and 6, and tapering off fairly abruptly beginning around month 6. After month 7, the probability of visitation for these early visited inmates falls below .10, and following month 8 is nearly identical to the non-visited inmates. A third group comprises about 9% of the sample, and is characterized by a substantially higher probability of visitation late on in the prison sentence, peaking at a probability of .48 in months 8 and 9, and tapering off fairly abruptly beginning around month 9. After month 10, the probability of visitation for these late visited inmates falls below .10, and following month 11 is nearly identical to the non-visited inmates. A fourth group comprises about 6% of the sample, and is characterized by a substantially higher probability of visitation throughout the duration of incarceration, peaking at a probability of .9 in months 6 and 7, and tapering off fairly abruptly beginning around month 7. After month 8, the probability of visitation for these consistently visited inmates falls below .10, and following month 9 is nearly identical to the non-visited inmates.

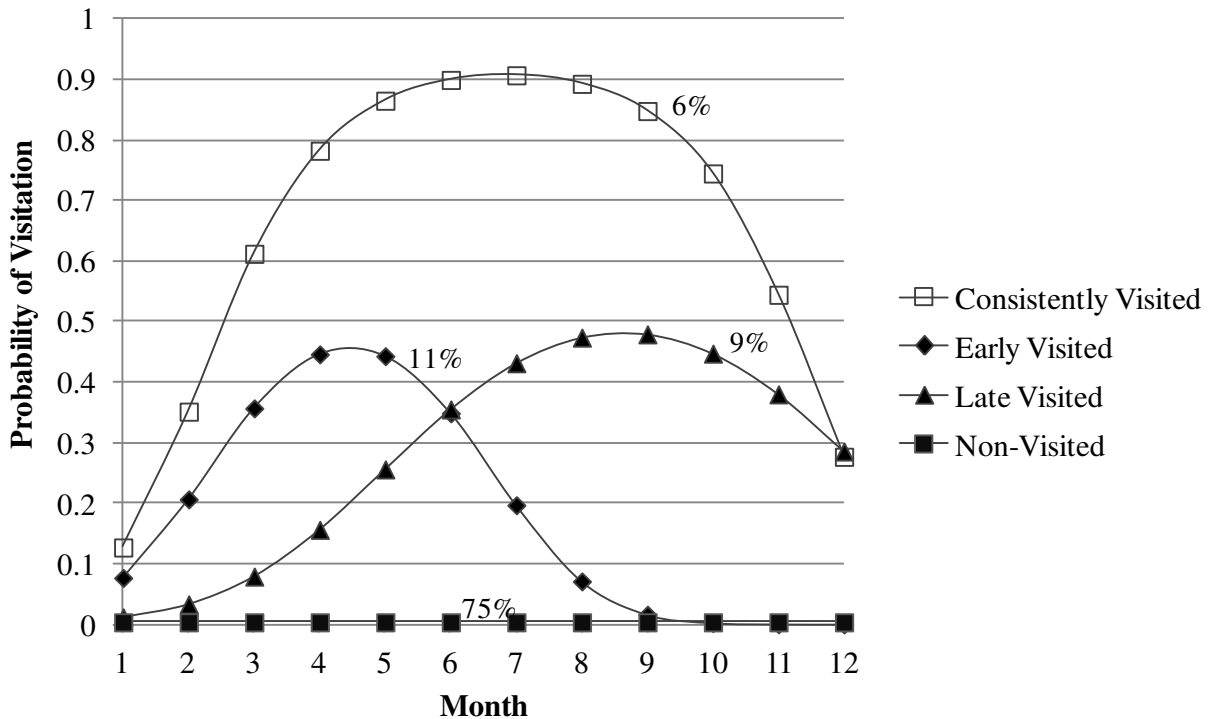


Figure 4.1 Trajectories of Inmate Visitation, 12-Month Cohort, n = 2,070

A third trajectory is characterized by an almost opposite pattern. Inmates in this group have a probability less than .10 of being visited in the first three months of incarceration. The

trajectory analyses (see, e.g., Stults 2010).

probability of visitation in this late-visited group, however, rises steadily in each subsequent month after month 2, peaking at about .45 around months 8 and 9. This late-visited group comprises about 9% of the sample.

The last trajectory comprises the smallest percentage of the sample, about 6%, and represents the most consistently visited individuals. These inmates have a relatively high probability of being visited for the duration of incarceration, peaking in months 6 and 7 with nearly a .90 probability of being visited. The shape of the trajectory for the consistently visited group does indicate a decline in visitation after month 8, but during that time, the probability of visitation remains higher than any of the other trajectories.

In short, the trajectories identified for this cohort of inmates suggest a range of different experiences with visitation. It is clear that a substantial proportion of prisoners are never visited, which accords with prior research (e.g., Glaser 1954; Ohlin 1951; Bales and Mears 2008). Of those who are visited, patterns ranged between what appears to be short bursts of visitation in the early months of incarceration or in the later months of incarceration, or alternatively, consistent visitation throughout the duration of the prison sentence.

Before proceeding further, I examine briefly the different characteristics of the prisoners that compose each visitation group. The focus here is on whether the groups differ with respect to demographic or other descriptive characteristics. Table 4.2 presents descriptive statistics for prisoners in each of the four visitation trajectory groups. Several patterns can be identified. For instance, although no gender differences emerge, visitation groups vary significantly with respect to race and age. Compared to non-visited prisoners, all three visitation groups tend to be White and tend to be younger. This pattern is especially apparent for the consistently visited inmates. In addition, visited inmates have, on average, fewer prior prison commitments and engage in less in-prison misconduct than non-visited inmates, and these patterns are most evident for the consistently visited and the late visited inmates.

Trajectories of inmate misconduct are presented in figure 4.2. Three distinct patterns of prison misconduct emerge. The bottom trajectory is comprised of the largest proportion of individuals, about 69%, and is characterized as an intercept with a probability of misconduct, in any given month, that is just above 0. For the purposes of discussion, this group is referred to as the “no misconduct” group. The remaining two trajectories represent patterns of misconduct. These two trajectories are parabolic in shape and both peak around months 5 – 7. The primary

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics by Visitation Trajectory Group

	Non-Visited (n=1573)		Early Visited (n=230)		Late Visited (n=150)		Consistently Visited (n=117)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Male	0.89	0.31	0.87	0.33	0.89	0.31	0.82	0.39
Black (non-Latino)*	0.56	0.50	0.38	0.49	0.39	0.49	0.30	0.46
Latino	0.08	0.28	0.07	0.26	0.05	0.21	0.10	0.30
White (non-Latino)*	0.36	0.48	0.54	0.50	0.56	0.50	0.60	0.49
Age*	32.88	10.20	29.17	8.60	29.67	9.11	28.74	8.01
Prison sentence length (months)	21.54	23.83	19.87	11.01	22.61	48.08	19.61	8.09
Offense - violent	0.18	0.39	0.20	0.40	0.19	0.39	0.20	0.40
Offense - sexual	0.02	0.15	0.02	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.16
Offense - property	0.30	0.46	0.28	0.45	0.29	0.45	0.23	0.42
Offense - drug	0.36	0.48	0.35	0.48	0.35	0.48	0.34	0.48
Offense - other	0.13	0.34	0.16	0.36	0.17	0.38	0.21	0.41
Prior prison commitments (#)*	0.99	1.51	0.66	1.19	0.29	0.69	0.43	0.95
Prior convictions - general (#)*	6.12	6.38	6.21	7.51	4.09	4.00	6.02	6.71
Prior convictions - violent (#)	0.83	1.55	0.81	1.61	0.68	1.32	1.08	1.84
Prior convictions - sex (#)	0.07	0.50	0.12	0.66	0.03	0.34	0.03	0.21
Prior convictions - property (#)*	2.64	4.74	3.09	6.14	1.33	2.24	2.47	4.75
Prior convictions - drug (#)*	1.94	3.50	1.52	2.72	1.30	2.48	1.58	3.48
Prior convictions - other (#)	0.64	1.37	0.67	1.53	0.75	1.76	0.86	1.51
Misconduct reports (#)*	1.46	2.86	1.36	2.52	0.93	2.11	0.93	1.72
Visits (#)*	0.04	0.25	3.91	4.21	6.61	5.12	20.18	12.89

*p < .05 (statistically significant differences between groups)

difference between the two groups is the probability of misconduct. One group, referred to here as the low misconduct group, has a probability of engaging in misconduct in any given month that ranges between .08 and .20. The second group, referred to here as the high misconduct group, has a substantially higher probability of engaging in misconduct, with probabilities ranging from .28 to .55. The low misconduct group comprises about 26% of the sample, and the high misconduct group comprises about 5% of the sample.

These trajectories illustrate how visitation and misconduct develop, separately, over the course of incarceration. To gain further insight into the relationship between these patterns, dual trajectory analysis can be used to analyze the co-development of these patterns over time (Jones and Nagin 2007). Table 4.3 presents the results of the dual trajectory analyses, and includes the probabilities of being in a specific misconduct group conditional on one's assigned visitation trajectory. Inspection of the table reveals several patterns.

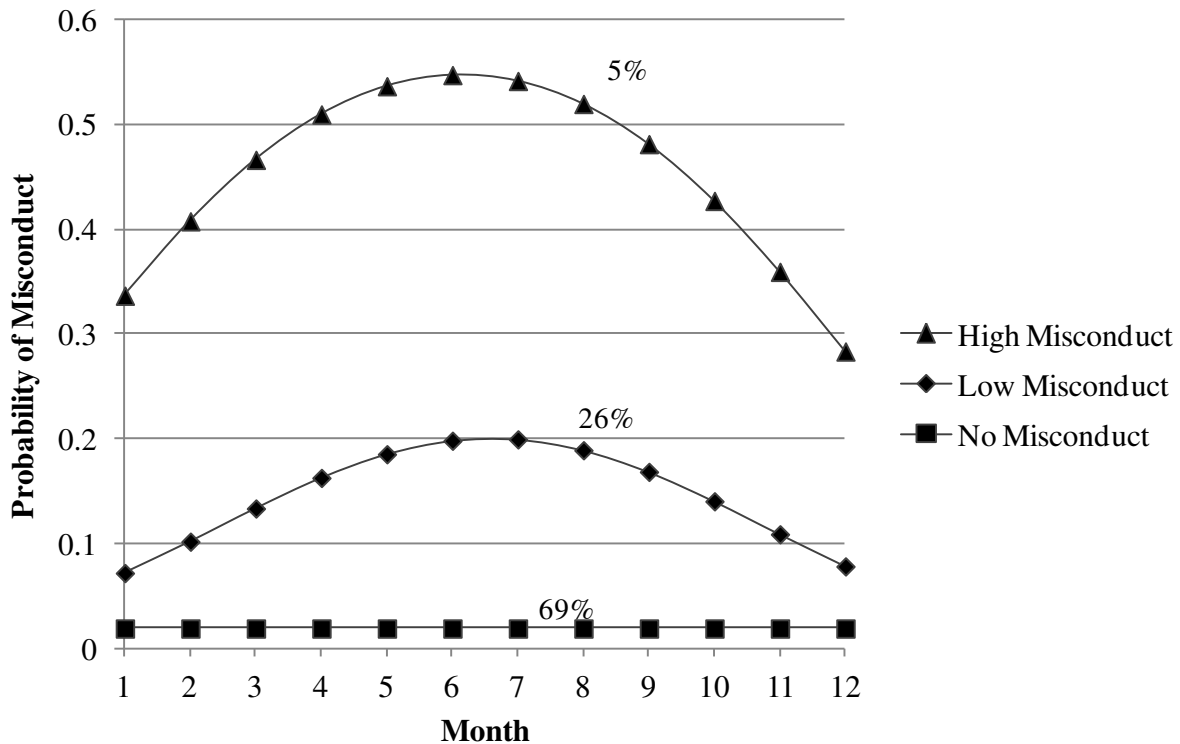


Figure 4.2 Trajectories of Inmate Misconduct, 12-Month Cohort, n = 2,070

First, a substantial proportion of inmates never record an official misconduct. Across all four trajectories of visitation (non-visited, early visited, late visited, consistently visited), the majority of inmates engage in no misconduct. The non-visited inmates, however, have a lower probability of no misconduct (66.8%) than the other three trajectories.

What visitation patterns though are most commonly related to low and high misconduct trajectories? Consistent with prior research, the conditional probabilities support the idea that non-visited inmates, compared to visited inmates, are more likely to misbehave in prison. In particular, approximately 28% of non-visited inmates fall in the low misconduct trajectory, compared to 21% of early visited inmates and late visited inmates and 23% of the consistently visited inmates. The non-visited inmate group has a similarly higher probability of assignment to the high misconduct group compared to the late visited and consistently visited inmates (5.6% compared to 0.7% and 0%, respectively). The early visited inmates, interestingly, are slightly *more* likely to fall into the high misconduct trajectory (8.1%).

Table 4.3 Probability of Misconduct Trajectories Conditional on Visitation Trajectory

	No misconduct (%)	Low misconduct (%)	High misconduct (%)	
Non-visited	66.8	27.6	5.6	100%
Early visited	70.7	21.2	8.1	100%
Late visited	78.0	21.2	0.7	100%
Consistently visited	77.3	22.7	0.0	100%

Among the inmates who were actually visited, there is notably little variation across the early, late, and consistently visited groups with respect to co-development with the low misconduct trajectory. For all three groups, the probability of belonging to the low misconduct group ranges between 21% or 23%.

There is substantially more variation, however, when conditional probabilities for the high misconduct group are compared. We can see that the non-visited prisoners are more likely to be in the high misconduct group (5.6%). The early visited prisoners are even more likely to be in this group (8.1%). By contrast, the late and consistently visited prisoners essentially are never in the high misconduct group.

4.5 Discussion and Conclusion

4.5.1 Summary

With the advent of mass incarceration, scholars have argued that inmate visitation might provide administrators a cost-effective programming tool useful for reducing inmate misbehavior and improving prison social order and reentry outcomes (e.g., Hairston 1988; Goetting and Howsen 1986; Adams 1992; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Huebner 2003; Wolff and Draine 2004; Hochstetler and DeLisi 2005; Blevins et al. 2010; Mears et al. 2012). However, few studies have empirically tested the relationship between visitation and misconduct, and studies that do exist have been limited primarily to cross-sectional analyses that do not permit investigation of how visitation unfolds over time and, in turn, how visitation patterns may be linked to misconduct.

The goal of this chapter was to advance research on inmate visitation, prison order, and reentry by describing more systematically the different kinds of visitation and misconduct experiences inmates have and assessing the association between the two over the course of an inmate's prison stay. The study is the first to identify distinct groups of inmates based on their developmental patterns of visitation and misconduct. Although recent work on visitation and offender behavior has incorporated more nuanced analyses of visitation (e.g., Bales and Mears 2008; Duwe and Clark 2011; Mears et al. 2012), the patterning of these experiences has been largely unaddressed in prior studies (see, however, Morris et al. 2012). The fact that distinct visitation and misconduct patterns could be identified underscores the complexity of visitation and, by extension, how it may affect the behavior of individuals during and after their release from prison.

This finding is important because it highlights the utility of applying a more nuanced approach to the study of prisoner experiences generally. The analysis here identified four trajectories of inmate visitation patterns—non-visited, early visited, late visited, and consistently visited—patterns that emerged by examining different characteristics of visitation experiences, including visitation timing and consistency.¹⁰ We might expect similar heterogeneity in other

¹⁰ The different patterns of visitation, or other experiences, might emerge using different samples of inmates from different facilities, states, countries, and time periods, and also for inmates who served different amounts of time in prison. These differences should be anticipated, and they underscore further the importance of addressing this heterogeneity and exploring the

kinds of prison experiences, such as participation in educational classes, job training, religious programs, drug or psychological counseling, and recreational activities. To the extent that such patterns exist and differentially influence in-prison and post-release outcomes, they bear investigation both to advance scholarship aimed at understanding prison social order and reentry and to inform policy efforts that seek to improve these outcomes.

Second, the findings here lend further support to the notion that visitation reduces the likelihood of inmate misconduct. This idea has been emphasized in many studies, but examined empirically in only a few; in these studies, the finding typically has been that inmates who are visited engage in overall lower levels of misconduct (e.g., Ellis et al. 1974; Goetting and Howsen 1986; Jiang and Winfree 2006). As importantly, the results of the study suggest that visitation effects vary depending on the timing and consistency with which they occur. This finding departs significantly from prior work because it suggests that inmates who are visited more consistently are less likely to engage in misconduct. In contrast, inmates who are not visited and inmates who are visited early on but not in the later stages of incarceration are more likely to fall into a more regular pattern of misconduct in prison.

Why? One reason is that regular contact with friends and relatives enables inmates to maintain their role as a family or community member (e.g., Wolff and Draine 2004). Steady visitation, more so than single or sporadic visits, might also enable inmates to remain more optimistic about successfully transitioning back into society upon release (e.g., Hochstetler et al. 2010; Visher and O'Connell 2012) or to view the legitimacy of the prison system authorities in a more favorable light (see, generally, Useem and Piehl 2008). In addition, the expectation of being visited, as a result of being visited consistently, might provide individuals with an incentive to behave (Bottoms 1999). This study did not have the measures that would allow for such possibilities to be tested and so at present simply constitute plausible explanations.

It bears emphasizing that visitation may be an adverse experience that potentially increases the likelihood of misconduct. Prior qualitative accounts are illustrative. For example, Liebling's work (1992, 1999) on prison suicides revealed that the time following a visit may be one where the "pains of imprisonment" are most concentrated (1999:342) and when prisoners can experience substantially heightened levels of anxiety (see also Liebling and Krarup 1993). At the same time, the lack of a visit, when one was hoped for or expected, might increase

implications of these differences for individuals and their behavior.

depression, frustration, or aggression. In the present study, prisoners in the “early visited” trajectory had a high probability of visitation in the early months followed by a sudden knifing off of visitation in the middle months. Notably, they had the highest likelihood of being in the high misconduct trajectory, even when compared to those who were never visited. Thus, this trajectory may, for example, be indicative of prisoners who were being visited but then experienced a break-up or a notice-of-divorce (Ross and Richards 2009:111). Alternatively, prisoners in this trajectory may be those who were previously visited but whose family can no longer endure visits because of the hardships they may face, which include traveling long distances, paying fees, taking time off from work, and finding childcare (Christian 2005; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005; Bales and Mears 2008). This knifing off may increase frustration and aggression that can lead to misconduct. Here, again, such possibilities constitute fruitful avenues of investigation for future research.

4.5.2 Implications for Theory and Research

As the above discussion highlights, there are important research questions that remain to be addressed. For example, visitation may not exert a causal effect. Rather, inmates who are visited simply may be those who are less likely to engage in misconduct. If visitation does not itself improve behavior, however, the consistency of the relationship found in research to date suggests that visitation still holds potential value as a signaling mechanism. That is, similar to the idea recently advanced by Bushway and Apel (2012) regarding prisoner employment programs, visitation, or a particular visitation trajectory, may provide a “signal” that a prisoner is at a higher or lower risk of engaging in misconduct.

Another possibility is that a visitation-misconduct relationship might emerge as an artifact of administrative procedures. If prison misconduct results in the revocation of visitation privileges, it would appear that it is misconduct that causes a lack of visitation. However, prison visitation is typically a right afforded to inmates, one that is typically reinstated immediately or within weeks or months of completing an administrative sanction.¹¹ In addition, visitation is a

¹¹ To the extent that disciplinary reports result in limited access to visitation, such periods ideally would be accounted for methodologically. However, because there is no fixed duration of non-visitiation after a disciplinary report, it remains unclear how exactly to do so. In Florida, for example, visitation privileges can be suspended up to 12 months for certain violations, but not all misconduct results in suspension. By and large, this issue is not problematic for most inmates because the vast bulk of individuals commit only a few misconducts while incarcerated. The

relatively rare event, thus affording inmates numerous opportunities to engage in misconduct whether visited or not.¹² Put differently, even if misconduct limits visitation opportunities some, it would not necessarily nor likely create the overlapping visitation and misconduct trajectories identified here. Even so, this line of research also bears investigation to establish more clearly the extent to which visitation and misconduct are causally related.

There also is a need for studies that identify and test the specific mechanisms that may account for the association between visitation and prisoner behavior, both in prison and after release. Several important questions remain unanswered. For example, does visitation lead to more social support and informal social control? Do visits help reduce strain? Can inmate perceptions of the prison system be improved through visitation and do changes in these perceptions lead to changes in behavior? Not least, do inmates who are visited, and who are visited more consistently, maintain a more positive demeanor than non-visited inmates?

Research is also needed that identifies the determinants of visitation. Despite a growing body of research focused on prisoners and prisoner reentry, little is known about the factors that lead to visitation or that make visitation difficult. The descriptive analyses here suggest that prisoners who are white, young, and who have fewer prior prison commitments are more likely to be visited consistently during imprisonment. Future research should examine how these demographic and prior record characteristics are related to visitation, and also the effects of other factors like community context, socioeconomic status, and distance from facility to home. It is possible too that other factors contribute to inmate visitation patterns. For examples, future studies might investigate how seasonal variation (e.g., holidays) affects visitation. Inmates typically will have more opportunities to be visited during holidays, but whether that results in more visits is another matter. A related question is whether visitation during a holiday, or the absence of visitation during a holiday in a context in which an inmate is regularly visited, has a greater effect in contributing to misconduct. Understanding these effects would be useful for

main concern, then, is instances involving inmates with short terms who chronically violate corrections policies and in turn consistently receive disciplinary reports. A detailed description of visitation suspension procedure in Florida can be found in the Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 33, section 601.731, and on-line (<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?ID=33-601.731>).

¹² Ancillary analyses were conducted that explored the breakdown of violent offenses across the visitation trajectories (available upon request). Visited inmates committed far fewer violent offenses and consistently visited inmates committed essentially no violent misconduct.

illuminating how relationships with family and friends are maintained or broken off as a result of incarceration.

At the same time, research should continue to examine the theoretical mechanisms that explain why misconduct occurs. As a theoretical issue, it is not clear whether we should expect the same theories of crime causation that are applied to behavior outside prisons to apply to behavior inside prisons, or if theories should be adapted (e.g., Blevins et al. 2010), or newly developed to try and explain offending in prisons.

4.5.3 Implications for Policy

Visitation provides a rare conduit between prison life and the outside world. It provides, for this reason, a critical avenue for individuals to receive social support as they serve out a prison sentence. Accordingly, the results of this chapter and of recent scholarship (e.g., Bales and Mears 2008; Berg and Huebner 2011) suggest that visitation is an experience that prison systems may want to emphasize. To this end, there are simple, cost-effective steps that can be taken, such as modifying visitation hours and creating more child-friendly visitation areas (see Austin and Hardyman 2004; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005; Mears et al. 2012).

As discussed above, visitation may serve as a signal for how inmates may behave in prison and upon release. Such information would provide prison officials with the ability to identify individuals who may require further services or programming and who may require more assistance upon release from prison. A lack of visitation, for example, may indicate that an individual lacks strong social bonds to family or friends and so may be more likely to recidivate. At the same time, among inmates who are visited, especially early in a prison stay, it may be helpful to devise ways to continue visitation throughout a prison sentence. Doing so may avoid the potentially harmful effects of being visited early on and then less so or not at all thereafter, and, conversely, it can build on the social capital that such visits may engender.

CHAPTER 5

THE IMPACT OF VISITATION ON RECIDIVISM

5.1 Introduction

Scholarship has shown that social ties are central to understanding offending over the life course. Some scholars, for example, have focused specifically on the experiences of prisoners, and argue that, especially for this population, bonds to family, friends, and community members are integral to the desistance process (Visher et al. 2004; Maruna and Toch 2005). Research aimed at understanding inmate behavior and offending has advanced a range of theoretical arguments to help explain variation in offenders' ability to transition successfully back into society and desist from crime. These include accounts that focused on the salience of social ties for providing informal control (Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993), for reducing strain during and after incarceration (Hairston 1988; Adams 1992; Agnew 2005), and for helping individuals cope with the stigma of criminal convictions and imprisonment (Pager 2003; Uggen et al. 2004; Maruna and Toch 2005). Reentry scholarship has highlighted, too, the practical importance of social and familial connections for helping released offenders manage the myriad of challenges they face during reentry, which include finding housing and employment, navigating social services, gaining access to healthcare, and avoiding criminal influences (Petersilia 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004).

This diverse body of scholarship has spurred researchers to examine how the maintenance of social ties during prison, and the extent to which prisoners can reconnect socially after release, contribute to transitions back into society (Wolff and Draine 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Berg and Huebner 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012). Although a substantial body of theory and research suggests that such ties are beneficial for prisoners, questions remain about the effects of access to social networks on future criminal behavior (Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1991; Adams 1992; Reisig et al. 2002). A limited but growing body of research has built on early prison studies by Ohlin (1951) and Glaser (1964) and examined how prisoners' experiences with visitation affect outcomes both during imprisonment and after release (see, e.g., Carlson and Cervera 1992; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Bales and

Mears 2008; Berg and Huebner 2012; Duwe and Clark 2012; Mears et al. 2012). Scholars have focused on visitation because it provides perhaps the only opportunity—a temporary “breach” in the prison’s walls—for inmates to have direct contact with family, friends, and community members (Conover 2001:151). Thus, visitation represents a rare nexus between prison life and the outside world, one that affords inmates some ability to preserve, develop, or sustain ties to social networks and to have sources of social capital on which to draw.

One important avenue of visitation research that has yet to be addressed is how different visitation experiences influence offending. This question bears investigation because it responds to calls by scholars for more nuanced approaches to research on the effects of prison experiences (Hairston 1991; Schafer 1994; Nagin et al. 2009; Berg and Huebner 2011; Reidy et al. 2012). At the same time, it provides an opportunity to investigate theoretical arguments about the nature and implications of prisoner social contact for future offending (Adams 1992; Ross and Richards 2009; Cobbina et al. 2012). For example, some prisoners may not be visited at all, while others experience at least some visitation. Among those in the latter group, diverse patterns may exist, such as prisoners who are visited regularly, sporadically, and at different times during imprisonment.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate these possibilities and, in particular, whether the consistency and timing of visits influence recidivism. Drawing on prior theory and research, this chapter develops and tests the idea that there are different patterns of visitation and that these patterns may differentially affect reentry. The analyses focus first on identifying types of visitation patterns and, second, on estimating the effects of these patterns on offending after release from prison. The chapter begins with a discussion of theory and prior research surrounding prisoner social ties, visitation, and offending, and then turns to a discussion about visitation patterns prisoners experience and the potential implications for recidivism.

5.2 Background

5.2.1 The Salience of Social Ties for Prisoners

Growing prison populations and the rising costs of prisons in an era of mass incarceration have resulted in a resurgence of interest in the experiences of prisoners (Petersilia 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immerigeon 2004; Visher et al. 2004). Recently, scholars have raised questions about the effectiveness of prison for reducing future offending and have

emphasized the importance of examining more closely the implications of inmate experiences for post-release outcomes (Nagin et al. 2009; Cullen et al. 2011). The focus on prisoner experiences is not, however, driven solely by an interest in the practical consequences of those experiences, such as reducing recidivism. Prisoner experiences are also of scholarly interest because of the opportunities they provide for applying and developing theories of offending.

These opportunities have led naturally to research on prisoner social ties and their effects on offenders in prison (e.g., Goetting and Howsen 1986; Casey-Acevedo et al. 2004; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Comfort 2008) and after release (e.g., Ekland-Olson et al. 1983; Hairston 1991; Visher and Travis 2003; Wolff and Draine 2004; Windzio 2006). Specifically, scholars have been interested in how social ties impact the reentry and reintegration experiences of prisoners (Maruna and Toch 2005; Uggen and Wakefield 2005), and if social support can help individuals returning from prison desist from crime (Dejong 1997; Laub and Sampson 2003; Petersilia 2003; Berg and Huebner 2011; Orrick et al. 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012). Social ties are a critical component of theoretical arguments about offending generally, and thus they have garnered particular attention in research focused on the life course of prisoners and the challenges prisoners face when reentering society.

Social ties have emerged as a salient factor in prisoner reentry research for at least two reasons. First, although offenders' social bonds may not have been sufficient to prevent the offending that led to incarceration (La Vigne et al. 2005), scholarship suggests that the loss of social and familial contact is one of the most serious deprivations prisoners experience (Ohlin 1951; Sykes 1958; Glaser 1964; Adams 1992). In his review of scholarship on social order and adjustment in prison, Adams (1992) concluded that the loss of social contact was the most frequently reported challenge by prisoners. Inmate qualitative accounts illustrate the same point. In a review of research on prisoner suicide, Liebling (1999) noted the "contribution of isolation" and the difficult adjustment prisoners have to make as a result of being separated from their social networks (326). As a female prisoner serving a life sentence, George (2010) articulated a similar point when she described the regular emotional pain she experiences when she thinks about all she is missing as her children grow up, her parents grow old, and her former social world moves on without her. Many similar reviews and accounts exist and, in fact, the body of scholarship that has developed in the two decades since Adams' review has suggested the same story—the detachment of an offender from their social networks and the "removal of sources of

support” (Liebling 1999:326) are among the most difficult challenges prisoners face (see, e.g., Maruna 2001; Bernstein 2005; Christian 2005; La Vigne et al. 2005; Windzio 2006; Comfort 2008; Hassine 2009; Ross and Richards 2009).

Second, and not surprising given the above observations, scholarship has suggested that connections with social ties constitute one of the critical factors that will help individuals negotiate prison experiences and navigate the transition back into society (Maruna 2001; Visher and Travis 2003; Uggen et al. 2004; Wolff and Draine 2004; Turner et al. 2007). Reconnecting with pro-social contacts is a challenge for prisoners, but it plays a pivotal role in helping offenders desist after reentry (see generally, Petersilia 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004). This implication, and the research that has drawn from it, underscores the potential influence of social ties on desistance.

These dual emphases in prior scholarship—that is, the deprivation resulting from severed ties and the salience of ties for helping offenders reintegrate—emerge not only from empirical research but also from theoretical traditions that implicate social ties as a salient factor in the life course of offenders. For example, social bonds and social capital are likely to help constrain behavior and to help “bridge” returning inmates’ transition from prison back into communities (Wolff and Draine 2004:461; see also, Hirschi 1969; Laub and Sampson 2003). Other perspectives, including strain and labeling theories, suggest, too, that social ties are central to reintegration. Prisoners face difficult circumstances returning to their communities. Some tasks that might seem straightforward to the general population, such as finding housing, employment, transportation, and gaining access to welfare or healthcare services can be especially troublesome for returning offenders; social ties provide resources that can help with such challenges (Ekland-Olson et al. 1983; Hairston 1991; Solomon et al. 2002; Visher and Travis 2003; La Vigne et al. 2004; La Vigne et al. 2005). In a related vein, the criminal labels ex-prisoners face can also increase recidivism (Pager 2003; Uggen et al. 2004; Uggen and Wakefield 2005; LeBel 2012). Prior work suggests, for example, that family and community ties are critical for helping offenders cope, by maintaining an image of one’s self that is defined not solely by a criminal record (Fishman 1990; Sampson and Laub 1993; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004; see also, Berg and Huebner 2011).

5.2.2 Prior Research on Visitation

In short, prior scholarship has suggested that, if indeed imprisonment is to be a turning point in the life course of an offender (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993; Maruna 2001), desistance may hinge upon the social and familial resources individuals have access to during imprisonment and upon release. This possibility raises questions, however, about how individuals access social ties in prison that might assist with reentry and reduce the chances of reoffending. Accordingly, scholars have turned to studies of visitation since visits are, for the most part, the only method for prisoners to have direct contact with friends and family during incarceration.

As emphasized above, a large body of empirical work has accumulated that identifies visitation as an experience that is viewed by inmates as important for surviving in prison (Adams 1992). These studies suggest that prison visitation can have a salient effect on behavior during incarceration (e.g., Goetting and Howsen 1986; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Lahm 2008). Qualitative accounts evoke this same idea (e.g., Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1988; Fishman 1990; Carlson and Cervera 1992; Conover 2001; Christian 2005). For example, George (2010:104), the prisoner discussed earlier, succinctly observed: “Thank God for visits. They are the greatest sustenance I have in here.” Another inmate, McCray, when interviewed by Bernstein (2005:84), replied: “Those visits we had were the most precious things I had to live for.” Accounts have portrayed, too, that visits can help maintain relationships and can help prisoners cope with incarceration. One prisoner interviewed by Datesman and Cales (1983:147) noted that, “The main advantage of the visits are tightening up the relationships.” And from the perspective of a visitor: “I mean these people put them through so much. And, if they don’t have nobody there, that’s the main reason they lose self-control, and they start to do things” (Christian 2005:42). These and other qualitative studies and reviews have highlighted that visits are meaningful and that they have important effects on the incarceration experience.

Alongside of such work are studies that suggest visitation can reduce recidivism (e.g., Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Holt and Miller 1972; Adams and Fischer 1976; LeClair 1978; Hairston 1988, 1991; Baumer et al. 2009). Recently, scholars have begun to study the relationship between visitation and recidivism more closely and have incorporated more nuanced approaches to examining it. For example, researchers have tested whether different kinds of visitors (e.g., friend, spouse, parent, child) yield different effects on prisoners’ behavior (Duwe and Clark 2012; Mears et al. 2012). Scholars have also assessed timing effects. Specifically,

studies by Bales and Mears (2008) and Duwe and Clark (2012) both found support for the idea that visits in the period closer to release may be more effective than earlier visits at reducing recidivism. These studies provide further insight about the salience of visitation experiences, but at the same time raise questions about other factors that might make visits more or less influential on criminal behavior.

5.2.3 Visitation and the Life Course of a Prison Term

One question that extends naturally from prior studies is how differences in the longitudinal patterns of visitation affect prisoners, and particularly, prisoner reentry outcomes. Scholarship has suggested visits are important because they provide access to social networks outside the prison, and these connections offer resources that can be useful for reintegration (e.g., Hairston 1988; Wolff and Draine 2004; Berg and Huebner 2011). This work leads to the expectation that differences in offenders' contact with family, friends, and community members during incarceration will hold important implications for their social connections and, in turn, future offending. Recent studies have begun to explore and account for the longitudinal nature of prison experiences (see, e.g., Morris et al. 2012; Siennick et al. 2012). A descriptive study by Cochran (2012) is particularly relevant because the author identified four patterns of visitation—non-visited, late visited, early visited, and consistently visited. The study, however, focused only on a small cohort of prisoners serving twelve months in prison, and, along with the studies by Siennick et al. and Morris et al., focused only on in-prison behavior. Thus, scholarship has not yet explored longitudinal patterns for populations of prisoners serving different amounts of time in prison, and, more importantly, the implications of visitation patterns for recidivism. This chapter thus focuses on two questions: (1) what are the types of visitation patterns we might expect, and (2), what are the expected implications of those patterns on recidivism?

A review of prior scholarship suggests that the most common visitation pattern prisoners experience is no visitation. In fact, prior studies have shown that the vast bulk of inmates do not receive a single visit (Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Hairston 1988; Adams 1992; Jiang and Winfree 2006; Duwe and Clark 2012). There are several reasons why visitation is rare. Prisoners are likely to have fewer social connections generally, and thus, they are likely to have a limited number of potential visitors. In the instance there are willing visitors, other barriers to visitation exist. Visitors often have to travel long distances, pay fees for background checks and parking, take time off from work, and find childcare (Bernstein 2005; Christian 2005; Christian et al.

2006).¹³ The conditions related to visiting a prison may be intimidating to potential visitors, and a prison's facilities may be in poor condition, have limited space for children, and offer insufficient amenities (Fishman 1990; Arditti 2003; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005; Comfort 2008; Dixey and Woodall 2012). In the end, what is the result of not being visited? Scholarship would suggest that, for several reasons, by not being visited, prisoners will not gain access to contacts and social resources to assist with negotiating prisoner reentry, and thus will be more likely to recidivate.

At the other end of the spectrum from those who do not get visited at all are those who are visited regularly. Some visitors can travel to the prison on a consistent basis (e.g., Christian 2005; Comfort 2008). For all of the theoretical reasons described above, visits should help prisoners preserve their social connections, and sustained visitation, or consistent "doses" of visits (e.g., Mears et al. 2012), may be most effective at maintaining or improving the quality of those connections. Similarly, sustained visitation might help inhibit potentially harmful influences of deviant prison subcultures; that is, to the extent outside ties can help prisoners maintain some "familiarity or similarity" to pro-social norms over the course of imprisonment, it may protect prisoners from proscribing more towards newly introduced deviant norms (Wolff and Draine 2004:460; see also, Sykes 1958; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Liebling 1999; Conover 2001; Camp and Gaes 2005; Hassine 2009). Consequently, we should expect consistently visited prisoners to benefit the most from visitation, and in turn, to have the lowest rates of recidivism.

Between these two extremes lie at least three other distinct possibilities. One is early-onset visitation. Ross and Richards (2009) have provided an example of this when they described, from a prisoner's perspective, that many offenders anticipate being visited and maintaining relationships, but most are disheartened when they face a reality where preserving those relationships is difficult. This idea accords with other scholarship that has noted the fragility of prisoners' ties to family, friends, and community members (Hairston 1988; Carlson and Cervera 1992; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Maruna 2001; Rose and Clear 2003; see also, Western 2006; Massoglia et al. 2012). It can be inferred from these accounts that for some prisoners, an abrupt cutoff to visitation could have potentially harmful implications for

¹³ Bernstein (2005) has estimated that more than 60% of prison visitors are located more than 100 miles from the prison facility.

recidivism. Indeed, Liebling's (1999:325) observations support this point, when she noted the additional strain that may be induced by a lack of visits or by "a visit that does not materialize." Alternatively, non-sustained visitation could stem from other factors, including insufficient access to resources on the part of visitors that would allow them to continue to make trips to the prison (e.g., Carlson and Cervera 1992; Christian 2005). In this case, early-onset experiences might still hold benefits if early visits are enough to maintain social connections, or if those visits provide other benefits, such as strain reduction.

Prisoners may also experience the opposite pattern, late-onset visitation, where one or two visits occur near the end of a prison sentence. Recent scholarship has suggested that visits that occur closer to the conclusion of a prison term have stronger recidivism-reducing effects (e.g., Duwe and Clark 2012). What is less clear is how a pattern of visitation, where prisoners are only visited later, might affect reentry and recidivism. It is possible that this kind of visitation pattern occurs because friends or family are concerned about the reintegration of the offender, and prioritize this time period for visits to help improve offender preparedness for reentry (see, e.g., Breese et al. 2000; Visher and O'Connell 2012). Prisoners have reported that as they spend more time in prison, they begin to worry more about maintaining good relationships with prison staff, or other inmates, and about encountering problems navigating the administrative system of the prison (Adams 1992:285). To the extent family, friends, or community members are aware of these concerns, they might be more inclined to visit prisoners later on and in anticipation of the prisoner's release. Although a prisoner did not have contact with ties earlier, late-onset visitation could still be beneficial for prisoners if it is useful for helping reduce some of the strains of imprisonment that have built up over time, or if it indeed allows prisoners to be better prepared and have better access to their social capital upon release.

Prisoners will experience other patterns too. For example, a variant on early-onset visitation may be typical where visits are sustained longer (i.e., sustained-early) but still not for the duration of incarceration. Ross and Richards' (2009) description of visits provide some support for this idea, when they describe how prisoners try to make it work with their spouses on the outside, but it eventually becomes too difficult. They wrote: "The convict saw it coming. Her visits became less frequent, and with each meeting her demeanor was a little less engaging" (111). Another possibility is a pattern of sustained-late visitation, if visitation does not occur early, but eventually the prisoner receives visits that continue until release. Alternatively, visits

may be sporadic, or non-patterned, if visits occur fairly randomly or are dependent upon a range of factors including the availability of resources, the circumstances of potential visitors, and also the circumstances of the prisoner. In these instances, prior studies would suggest that visits, as opposed to no visits reduce recidivism.

5.3 Data and Methods

This chapter investigates the effects of different visitation patterns on offending. The analyses go beyond prior research on prison experiences by examining how visitation experiences unfold over the life course of a prison term for a large population of prisoners serving varying amounts of time in prison, and then testing the effects of different longitudinal visitation patterns on recidivism. This chapter contributes to scholarship on prison experiences and answers calls by scholars for research that examines more closely the implications of prison experiences for reentry (Nagin et al. 2009), and that disentangles how prisoners' social ties, or access to social ties, influence future behavior (Hairston 1991; DeJong 1997; Petersilia 2003; Visser and Travis 2003; Berg and Huebner 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012).

To this end, the chapter uses data provided by the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) that include inmate information for all convicted felony offenders imprisoned and released in Florida between 2000 and 2002. The FDOC data have several attributes that make them ideal for the current analysis. Most importantly, and unusual in prison studies, the data contain comprehensive records of visitation events (La Vigne et al. 2005), which allow for analyses that can examine visitation experiences longitudinally. In addition, the data include detailed information about demographic, prior record, and offense characteristics that are important control measures for studies of recidivism (see, e.g., Nagin et al. 2009).

Specifically, the multivariate analyses incorporate several demographic measures, including a continuous measure of age, a dichotomous measure of sex (1 = male), and three dummy variable measures of race and ethnicity: White non-Latino, Black non-Latino, Latino. Continuous measures of sentence length and time served (both in months) are also included, and the analyses control for prior offending (e.g., Kurlychek et al. 2006) using count measures of total prior convictions, total prior convictions by type (violent, property, drug, sex, other), and the total number of prior prison commitments. To account for the potential effect of in-prison misconduct on recidivism (e.g., Trulson et al. 2011) and visitation opportunities, the analyses

include a variety score measure of in-prison misconduct that ranges from 0 to 7, and counts the number of the following different misconduct types prisoners engaged in: violent, property, disorderly conduct, threats, defiance, and contraband-drugs. County dummy variables are included to account for context-level variation in visitation and recidivism patterns. Finally, the outcome measure in the multivariate analyses is a dummy variable that indicates whether a released prisoner was reconvicted of a felony offense within 3 years after release from prison (1 = reconvicted, 0 = not).

The analyses proceed in two stages. The first stage focuses on identifying the different longitudinal patterns of visitation. Prisoners are likely to experience a range of different patterns and researchers could employ different approaches, including manually designating groups that seem plausible or are theoretically interesting, to test different visitation effects. Alternatively, statistical techniques can be used to identify common patterns in a set of observations, to avoid the scenario of arbitrarily designating different groups. To this end, this chapter uses semiparametric group-based trajectory modeling (Nagin 2005) to describe patterns of visitation that emerge in different cohorts of prisoners serving different lengths of time in prison (see Cochran 2012). This method is ideal here because, in the context of minimal prior research exploring longitudinal patterns of visitation, trajectory analyses help to identify naturally occurring groups that exist in the data.

Group-based trajectory models use finite mixture models to identify clusters of individuals based on patterns of behavior or experiences that occur over time (Brame et al. 2001); i.e., groups of inmates who experience similar patterns of visitation during the course of incarceration. For the analyses here, months served in prison are used as observation points and the outcome for the trajectory models is a binary measure of whether a prisoner was visited in a given month. Visitation events were dichotomized by month to address skew in monthly visitation counts that otherwise made the convergence of trajectory models difficult. For example, typically only a small proportion of prisoners, 4% or less in a given month, recorded more than one visit. Based on the dichotomous coding of visitation by month, the trajectory analyses use the binary logit modeling specification (Jones et al. 2001). In addition, the original sample included 16,782 prisoners who served 6 to 31 months in prison. Variation in the number of months served between inmates, however, leads to variance in the number of observation periods each contributes. To address this, prisoners were separated into cohorts by the number

of months they served in prison (e.g., 6 month cohort, 7 month cohort), and each cohort's trajectories were analyzed separately.¹⁴

The second stage of the analysis uses the results from the trajectory models to assign prisoners to groups based on trajectories of visitation, and tests the effects of group membership on recidivism. The multivariate analyses estimate the effects of visitation group membership, compared to not being visited, on the likelihood of reconviction within 3 years of release. These models include controls for potential confounding factors in the relationship between visitation and recidivism, and provide insight about whether different visitation patterns exert different effects on recidivism.

5.4 Findings

Table 5.1 provides a descriptive overview of the population of prisoners included in the analyses. The descriptive statistics are provided here for 11,395 prisoners who served between 8 and 17 months in prison. As described in more detail below, the analyses use only prisoners who served time between 8 and 17 months because those are the cohorts for which the trajectory analyses could be undertaken. The ability to investigate 10 cohorts allows for systematically determining if visitation patterns exist and if they are robust across a range of sentence lengths. As shown in table 5.1, descriptive statistics for the prisoners in this sample are typical of prisoners analyzed in prior studies of recidivism (e.g., see Nagin et al. 2009). That is, the prisoners here are mostly male (88%), are disproportionately Black (50%), and have an average age of 32. Of the prisoners in this cohort, 45% were reconvicted within three years of release, and they were most commonly incarcerated for drug (35%), property (31%) and violent (18%) offenses; these recidivism rates are largely consistent with national averages (Langan and Levin 2002). Prisoners, on average, were visited slightly more than 2 times during the course of incarceration (2.31) and served, on average, about 12 months in prison (11.66).

The first stage of the analysis addresses two questions: (1) what patterns of visitation do prisoners experience, and (2), are these patterns consistent across different cohorts serving different amounts of time in prison? Semiparametric group-based trajectory analyses are used to address each question. Group-based trajectory models use parameters that are allowed to vary so

¹⁴ Months here are defined as 28-day periods so that, in the case that visits are more likely to occur on weekends, each cohort is exposed to an equal number of weekends.

that each trajectory can be specified as an intercept or with a linear, quadratic, or cubic functional form. These specifications, along with the total number of groups estimated, are made manually; thus, the modeling procedure requires a systematic examination of different group totals and functional form specifications. Per Nagin (2005), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) statistic is used as the primary indicator for determining best fit, while also considering the substantive value gained by including additional groups in the model (e.g., Blokland et al. 2005). Two-, three-, four-, five-, and six-group models were estimated for each prisoner cohort, and systematic alterations of the group functional form specifications were used, in each instance, to establish model fit.

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics, Inmates Serving 8 - 17 Months (n = 11,395)

	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Reconviction within 3 years (1/0)	0.45	0.50	0	1
Number of visits	2.31	6.70	0	94
Age at admission	32.07	9.85	15	74
Male (1/0)	0.88	0.32	0	1
White (1/0)	0.42	0.49	0	1
Black (1/0)	0.50	0.50	0	1
Latino (1/0)	0.08	0.27	0	1
Prison sentence length (months)	21.03	18.67	12	600
Time served (months)	11.66	2.75	8	17
Number of prior convictions (count)	5.94	6.58	0	92
Number of prior violent convictions (count)	0.76	1.52	0	21
Number of prior property convictions (count)	2.62	5.14	0	87
Number of prior drug convictions (count)	1.86	3.46	0	76
Number of prior sex convictions (count)	0.07	0.47	0	11
Number of prior other convictions (count)	0.63	1.37	0	28
Number of prior prison commitments (count)	0.86	1.42	0	12
Primary offense - violent (1/0)	0.18	0.38	0	1
Primary offense - property (1/0)	0.31	0.46	0	1
Primary offense - drugs (1/0)	0.35	0.48	0	1
Primary offense - sex (1/0)	0.02	0.15	0	1
Primary offense - other (1/0)	0.13	0.34	0	1
Misconduct variety score (count)	0.53	1.03	0	7
67 county dummy variables (1/0)	-	-	-	-

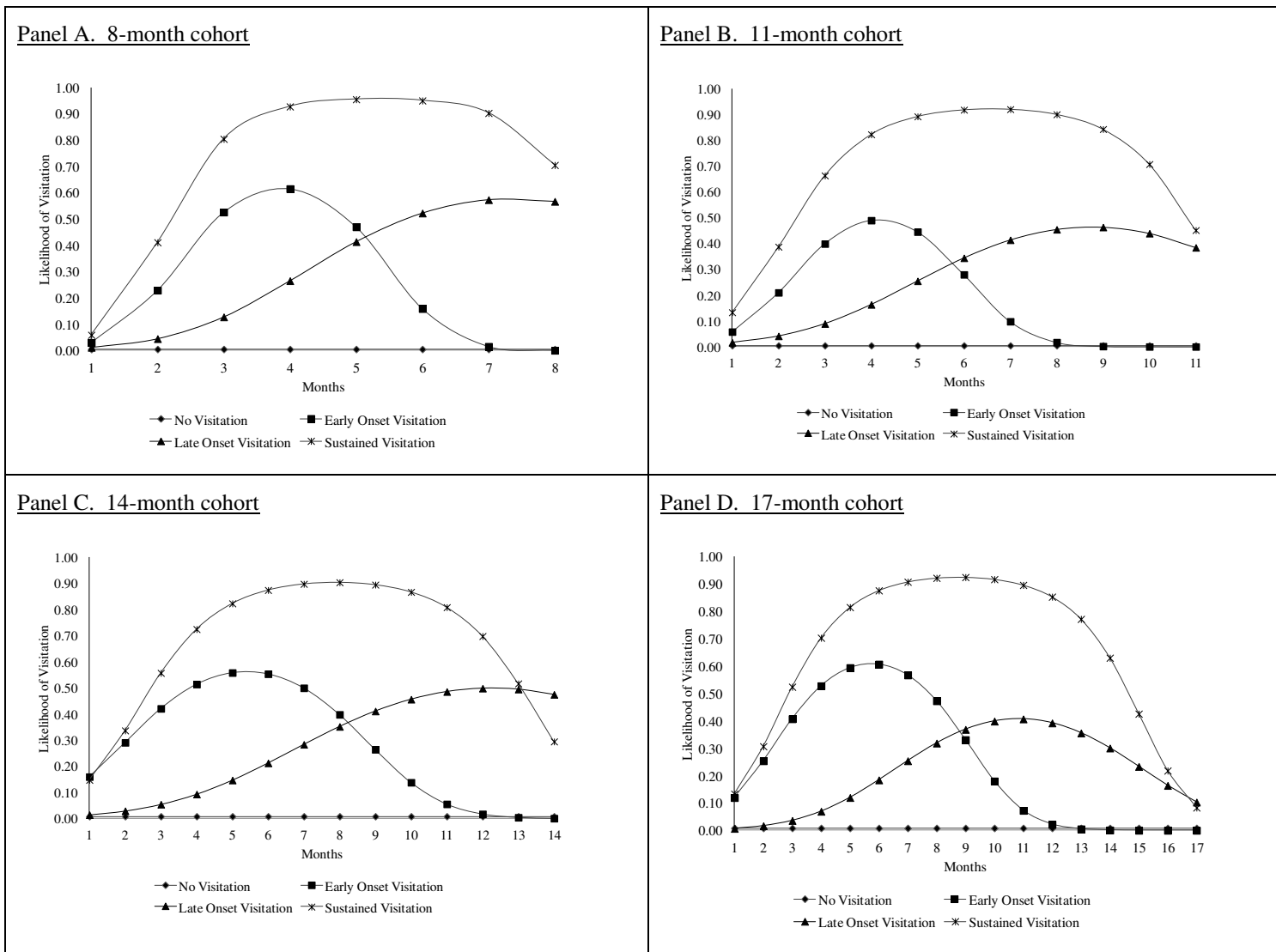


Figure 5.1 Trajectories of Inmate Visitation

This procedure led to several findings. For some cohorts, identifying trajectories proved difficult. Specifically, for prisoners who served less than 8 months or more than 17 months, the results from those analyses became substantially less consistent and attaining model convergence was substantially more difficult than for the cohorts in the 8 - 17 month range. The modeling challenges stemmed in part from minimal observation periods for cohorts serving fewer than 8 months and from substantially reduced sample sizes for cohorts who served beyond 17 months. For cohorts in the 8 – 17 month range, results of the trajectory analyses were relatively stable. Based solely on BIC score, for all but four cohorts in this range, the 4-group model provided the best fit and revealed trajectories of visitation that were similar across each cohort.

For the 9-, 13-, 14-, and 16-month cohorts, the BIC score suggested a minor improvement to model fit when moving from a 4-group to a 5-group specification. For these 4 cohorts, the fifth group introduced a slight variation on the early-onset trajectory (see figure 5.1), one that generally had a slightly lower probability of visitation (results available upon request). This fifth group closely resembled the early-onset group, which emerges in both the 4- and 5- group model specification.

Based on the facts that the inclusion of a fifth group provided only slight improvement to model fit, that it did so only in a small handful of cases, and that its substantive value was trivial in those instances, the 4-group model specification was selected for each cohort serving between 8 and 17 months. Figure 5.1 presents four panels that depict visitation trajectories for four different cohorts. Figures for the 8-month (panel A), 11-month (panel B), 14-month (panel C), and 17-month cohorts (panel D) are presented and are representative of the trajectories for the other 6 cohorts not shown here (available upon request). Each graph depicts the likelihood of visitation in a given month for different groups of prisoners.

As can be seen across each panel in figure 5.1, the four-group model produced substantively similar results for each cohort—that is, we can see a distinct group of prisoners who were never visited, represented by a straight line across the bottom, and then three different visitation groups. One group, labeled early-onset, shows a pattern of early visitation that is consistent with many prior qualitative accounts (e.g., Ross and Richards 2009). For this group, prisoners have a moderately high probability of being visited with the likelihood of visitation peaking from .5 to .6 across cohorts during the first half of a prison term, but this likelihood reduces rapidly during the second half of imprisonment, so that the trajectory closely resembles

the non-visited group during that period. A second visitation group, labeled here as late-onset, has almost the opposite pattern. Prisoners in this group receive almost no visits in the first half of incarceration, but have moderately high chances of visitation going into the end of the prison term. The third group is the sustained visitation group, and these prisoners have substantially high likelihoods of visitation for nearly their entire stay in prison, with likelihoods peaking above .9 for the bulk of their time served.

It seems reasonable to anticipate that as prisoners serve longer periods of time, the patterns of visitation would be more diverse, or that different types of patterns would surface. Notable then, is the fact that the analyses are remarkably consistent. For these cohorts, the 4-group typology is supported, regardless of time served. By 8 months, these groups can be identified, and they are consistent up until at least 17 months of time served.

Of course, these results are generalizable only to inmates who serve 8 - 17 months in prison, but, notably, a substantial proportion of the prison population falls within that range. Indeed, according to the Florida Department of Corrections, fewer than 1% of released inmates served less than 6 months in prison between 2005 and 2006 (the latest years statewide statistics were available), and 56% served less than 24 months.¹⁵ Nationally, the median number of months served among released state prison inmates in 2008 was 16 months (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2011), which falls within this coverage range. For inmates who serve longer sentences, although they may be less likely to be visited at all or to be visited regularly (see, e.g., Richard and Jones 2004), there is no clear reason to expect that, for those who are visited, visitation experiences will be substantially different.

Now we turn to table 5.2 to examine the proportion of prisoners from each cohort assigned to each visitation trajectory. Group assignment was determined by designating individuals to the trajectory group for which they had the highest posterior probability (Nagin 2005). Substantively, the results in table 5.2 provide insight into the prevalence of visitation generally, and of the different groups. Similar to the results of prior research on visitation, the majority of inmates are never visited in prison. In fact, depending on the cohort, 73 - 85% of prisoners fall in the non-visited trajectory. Of those who are visited, the most common pattern across cohorts is early-onset visitation. The percentage of prisoners in this group ranged

¹⁵ See Table 4c, Time Served in DC Custody, Florida Department of Corrections Inmate Release reports (<http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/release/0506/custody1.html>).

typically from 7 - 15%. This pattern could be indicative of the challenges visitors face trying to sustain visits to the prison (e.g., Fishman 1990; Christian 2005; Tewksbury and Demichele 2005; Comfort 2008), and how difficult it is to maintain relationships with relatives and community members while incarcerated (e.g., Hairston 1991; Visher and Travis 2003; La Vigne et al. 2005; Comfort 2008; Ross and Richards 2009). Notable too is the fact that as prisoners serve longer terms, the prevalence of early-onset group membership becomes higher, which may suggest that sustaining visits becomes more difficult when prisoners serve lengthier sentences. After early-onset visitation, late-onset is the second most likely group assignment, with percentages ranging from 4 - 9%, and sustained visitation is the least common pattern of all four, with percentages ranging from 3 - 7% across cohorts. Again, considering the resources needed to visit (e.g., transportation, fees, flexible work schedule, childcare), it is no surprise that monthly visitation is difficult to sustain and thus experienced by only a small proportion of prisoners.

Table 5.2 Group Assignment Percentages by Cohort

Cohort	Not visited	Early-onset	Late-onset	Sustained	N
8-month	82.8%	7.4%	5.3%	4.5%	1,485
9-month	85.2%	3.9%	5.2%	5.7%	1,724
10-month	82.9%	6.5%	5.1%	5.5%	1,591
11-month	77.8%	9.0%	7.6%	5.7%	1,251
12-month	79.2%	9.7%	6.6%	4.4%	1,129
13-month	79.1%	8.3%	6.2%	6.5%	1,017
14-month	77.7%	12.8%	3.8%	5.7%	936
15-month	73.7%	13.7%	7.2%	5.4%	875
16-month	73.8%	15.2%	7.6%	3.3%	748
17-month	74.5%	11.4%	8.6%	5.5%	639

Additional information about the trajectory analyses for each cohort is included in table 5.3. Average posterior probabilities (APP) and odds of correct classification statistics (OCC) can be used to evaluate the accuracy of trajectory models. Nagin (2005) suggested, for assessing APPs, a cutoff point of .7 to be confident that the trajectories are measuring distinct groups in the data, and that “the model is well fitting” (Blokland et al. 2005:932). Inspection of table 5.3 shows that this criterion is met. For each group in each cohort, the APPs for individuals in their

assigned group never go below .7 and are typically above .9. For evaluating OCCs, again, larger values are better and indicative of assignment accuracy. It is recommended that OCCs be above 5 to have confidence in the models, and the OCCs for each trajectory here have values greater than 5, and they are for the most part substantially above this threshold.

We next turn to the main focus of the chapter. Specifically, what are the effects of different visitation patterns on recidivism? Table 5.4 addresses this question using visitation group assignments as independent variables to predict the likelihood of recidivism. One option for conducting these analyses is to estimate visitation effects separately for each cohort. An added advantage, however, of the uniformity in the group specifications and the substantive similarities in the trajectories across each cohort is that it provides an opportunity to pool the cohorts together. Pooling the cases creates a larger sample that will provide more statistical power and produce more accurate coefficient estimates. Thus, the analyses in table 5.4 use prisoners from all 10 cohorts (11,395).

Model 1 in table 5.4 uses logistic regression to estimate a base model, without controls, of the effects of visitation group membership on the likelihood of a reconviction within 3 years of release from prison. The non-visited group is excluded as the reference category. Findings from model 1 suggest that all three visitation groups are associated with a reduction in the likelihood of recidivism, but sustained visitation and early visitation are the only two groups that reach statistical significance. As anticipated, sustained visitation is associated most strongly with reductions in recidivism (-0.246). Prisoners in this group have an estimated 22% lower chance of recidivating than non-visited prisoners (O.R. = 0.782).

Early-onset visitation also has a significant effect (-0.201) that is slightly smaller than the effect of sustained visitation, but prisoners in this group were still 18% less likely to recidivate than non-visited prisoners (O.R. = 0.818). As discussed previously, qualitative accounts have suggested that early onset visitation may be a typical experience for prisoners because of the challenges of maintaining relationships throughout a prison term (e.g., Ross and Richards 2009). Although it seems plausible that discontinued visitation could have detrimental effects on future behavior, the findings here suggest that generally, being visited early may be beneficial, even if visits are not sustained.

Table 5.3 Average Posterior Probabilities of Assignment and Odds of Correct Classification (OCC) by Assigned Group

	Group						Group				
	None	Early-onset	Late-onset	Sustain.	OCC		None	Early-onset	Late-onset	Sustain.	OCC
8-month						13-month					
None	0.977	0.008	0.014	0.000	8.95	None	0.991	0.004	0.005	0.000	30.32
Early-onset	0.190	0.708	0.081	0.021	30.28	Early-onset	0.018	0.929	0.029	0.024	146.39
Late-onset	0.005	0.031	0.924	0.040	219.01	Late-onset	0.030	0.035	0.896	0.039	130.29
Sustained	0.000	0.004	0.004	0.888	167.22	Sustained	0.000	0.007	0.059	0.934	203.81
9-month						14-month					
None	0.977	0.007	0.016	0.000	7.38	None	0.988	0.010	0.002	0.000	23.20
Early-onset	0.007	0.918	0.057	0.018	277.08	Early-onset	0.036	0.912	0.034	0.019	70.17
Late-onset	0.014	0.020	0.883	0.083	137.48	Late-onset	0.050	0.021	0.883	0.047	187.85
Sustained	0.000	0.006	0.054	0.940	260.37	Sustained	0.000	0.053	0.020	0.927	212.20
10-month						15-month					
None	0.983	0.013	0.005	0.000	11.89	None	0.983	0.012	0.005	0.000	20.99
Early-onset	0.020	0.916	0.043	0.020	157.65	Early-onset	0.015	0.938	0.032	0.014	95.83
Late-onset	0.026	0.022	0.840	0.112	98.20	Late-onset	0.046	0.037	0.891	0.027	105.14
Sustained	0.000	0.008	0.039	0.954	352.27	Sustained	0.000	0.020	0.036	0.944	297.20
11-month						16-month					
None	0.975	0.014	0.012	0.000	10.98	None	0.992	0.002	0.005	0.000	46.88
Early-onset	0.187	0.758	0.046	0.008	31.88	Early-onset	0.052	0.913	0.031	0.005	58.35
Late-onset	0.010	0.023	0.928	0.039	157.59	Late-onset	0.028	0.052	0.915	0.005	130.54
Sustained	0.000	0.003	0.047	0.950	312.79	Sustained	0.000	0.017	0.002	0.982	1539.3
12-month						17-month					
None	0.968	0.027	0.005	0.000	7.87	None	0.984	0.007	0.009	0.000	21.08
Early-onset	0.006	0.929	0.049	0.016	121.60	Early-onset	0.021	0.938	0.035	0.007	117.19
Late-onset	0.016	0.058	0.862	0.064	87.66	Late-onset	0.052	0.034	0.910	0.004	106.88
Sustained	0.000	0.013	0.042	0.945	371.47	Sustained	0.000	0.020	0.029	0.951	337.08

Perhaps surprisingly, especially given scholarship emphasizing the salience of pre-release ties, late-onset visitation did not emerge as having a significant relationship with recidivism. This finding is seemingly anomalous considering the potential implications of late visits for helping offenders reconnect with social ties and prepare for reentry (Bales and Mears 2008; Wolff et al. 2012). It may be, however, that for some prisoners in this group, visits occur too late to counteract the strains experienced during imprisonment (Sykes 1958; Adams 1992) or to be helpful for reconnecting with ties that have already been severed by lack of contact (Gordon and McConnell 1999).

Although model 1 finds significant effects of visitation patterns on recidivism, there are questions about whether these effects are spurious or attributable to other factors such as age, time served, or prior record. Model 2 addresses this question by including a range of measures, the omission of which might result in biased estimates of the visitation effect. Some of the important potential confounders controlled for are measures of a prisoner's prior offending (e.g., Kurlychek et al. 2006), including counts of different offense types, and in-prison offenses, measured as a variety score.

The results in model 2 suggest that, even after controlling for these covariates, visitation patterns remain significantly associated with recidivism. There are reductions in each of the visitation coefficients, but the same substantive findings emerge. That is, sustained visitation is statistically significant and emerges as having the strongest association with reduced recidivism (-0.182); early-onset visitation is significant and has an association in the same direction but slightly weaker (-0.148); and late-onset visitation is not statistically significant (-0.075). The control variables, for the most part, yield significant effects on the recidivism likelihood that are in the expected direction. For instance, older inmates and females are less likely to recidivate, and prisoners who have more prior convictions, more prior prison commitments, and who engage in misconduct in prison are more likely to recidivate.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ancillary analyses using re-imprisonment as the outcome variable revealed substantively similar findings. An additional series of analyses was also conducted using propensity score matching to estimate average treatment effects of visitation on recidivism using the covariates included here as matching variables, then matching prisoners in each of the visitation trajectories to prisoners in the non-visited pool. Results from the matching analyses were substantively the same as the ones presented here and are available upon request.

Table 5.4 Logistic Regression of Reconviction on Visitation Groups and Controls

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	S.E.	O.R.	b	S.E.	O.R.
Visitation trajectory groups						
Early-onset	-0.201**	0.07	0.818	-0.148*	0.07	0.862
Late-onset	-0.107	0.08	0.898	-0.075	0.08	0.928
Sustained	-0.246**	0.09	0.782	-0.182*	0.09	0.833
Control variables						
Age	-	-	-	-0.039***	0.00	0.961
Male (1/0)	-	-	-	0.228***	0.06	1.256
Black (1/0)	-	-	-	0.433***	0.05	1.542
Latino (1/0)	-	-	-	-0.248**	0.08	0.780
Sentence length (months)	-	-	-	-0.007***	0.00	0.993
Time served (months)	-	-	-	-0.016*	0.01	0.984
Prior convictions (count)	-	-	-	0.042***	0.01	1.043
Prior violent conv. (count)	-	-	-	-0.020	0.02	0.980
Prior property conv. (count)	-	-	-	-0.027***	0.01	0.973
Prior sex conv. (count)	-	-	-	0.051	0.05	1.052
Prior other conv. (count)	-	-	-	0.035*	0.02	1.036
Prior prison commit. (count)	-	-	-	0.214***	0.02	1.238
Primary offense - violent (1/0)	-	-	-	-0.330***	0.07	0.719
Primary offense – prop. (1/0)	-	-	-	0.150**	0.05	1.162
Primary offense - sex (1/0)	-	-	-	-0.665***	0.18	0.514
Primary offense - other (1/0)	-	-	-	0.148*	0.07	1.160
Miscond. variety score (count)	-	-	-	0.151***	0.02	1.163
67 county dummies (1/0)	-	-	-			
Constant	-0.180***	0.02		0.208	0.39	1.231
Log Likelihood	-7,823.10			-7,190.54		

*** p<.001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

Note: White, prior drug convictions (count), and primary offense – drug (1/0), serve as reference variables; 67 county dummy variables, not shown here are included in model 2.

5.5 Discussion and Conclusion

Recent scholarship has examined the United States' expanded use of imprisonment as a correctional sanction and the effectiveness of prison for reducing crime (e.g., Gendreau et al. 2000; Villettaz et al. 2006; Cullen et al. 2012). Accordingly, scholars have proposed that efforts to understand the effects of imprisonment can be strengthened by examining more closely the experiences prisoners have during incarceration (e.g., Nagin et al. 2009). Prison experiences vary substantially across multiple dimensions, and it is likely that the accumulation of different experiences result in different impacts of incarceration. Thus, research is needed that accounts for the heterogeneity of prison experiences and that more systematically examines their effects (e.g., Visher et al. 2004; Camp and Gaes 2005; Windzio 2006; Berg and Huebner 2011; Trulson et al. 2011; Cobbina et al. 2012; Morris et al. 2012; Reidy et al. 2012).

The goal of this chapter was to address this research gap by examining more systematically the experiences prisoners have with visitation and, in turn, the effects of visitation on recidivism. Visitation is a salient experience for many prisoners, and one that is of broad theoretical relevance for researchers because it provides an opportunity for prisoners to access a dimension—social ties—that is central to many prominent theories about offending. Investigations of visitation effects have become more common, but this study departed significantly from prior studies by focusing on the timing and continuity of visitation, and by focusing on released prisoners who served varying amounts of time in prison.

Several findings emerged that warrant mention. First, the trajectory modeling analyses found that, typically, prisoners tend to experience one of four patterns of visitation: (1) no visits, (2) early-onset visitation, (3) late-onset visitation, or (4) sustained visitation. This is not to suggest that prisoners do not experience other patterns, but that generally, prisoners may fall into one of these groups. Second, these patterns are robust across groups of prisoners serving varying lengths of time in prison. For the cohorts for which trajectory analyses could be supported, the results were consistent in identifying four substantively similar groups. Third, prisoners who were visited early in their prison term and who were visited consistently over the course of incarceration were significantly less likely to recidivate than prisoners who were never visited.

These findings contribute to scholarship on prisoner social ties and social capital because they provide further support for the idea that social networks are important for reentry (see, generally, Rose and Clear 2003; Visher and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004), and

that contact with social networks during prison may be particularly salient. Furthermore, by using longitudinal measures of visitation, this chapter provides unique insight into the patterns of prisoners' contact with their social networks. Measures of the patterns of contact individuals have with social networks would spur interesting theoretical questions about the effects of those patterns for any population of interest, but prisoners are a particularly interesting subpopulation for considering these effects. Isolation is inherent in the prison experience, and contact with outside social ties is rare but potentially critical for helping offenders successfully reintegrate back into society.

For visitation research specifically, the findings here advance knowledge about visitation effects by highlighting that different experiences with visitation might have different effects on recidivism. Although the visited inmates, generally, had lower rates of recidivism than non-visited, sustained contact appears to be most effective at reducing future offending. Separately, it appears that the timing of visits might also be important. Early visitation emerged as a significant predictor of reduced recidivism. This suggests that there may be something about the early period of incarceration that makes visits more beneficial. One plausible explanation is that visits early on are useful for helping prisoners acclimate to the prison environment. Qualitative accounts have highlighted the challenges prisoners face adjusting to prison (e.g., Adams 1992; Hassine 2009). It seems possible, then, that earlier visits can reduce strain or at least provide temporary relief from strain, and this effect could have long term implications.

Broadly, the findings here and from prior studies support the idea that visitation is beneficial for prisoners, and that specific characteristics of visitation might make it more or less effective for reducing recidivism (see also, Mears et al. 2012; Duwe and Clark 2012). More research on visitation is required, however, to increase confidence in the results, and to continue to advance research in this area. Ideally, future studies will emerge that can account for the longitudinal heterogeneity in these experiences for prison populations from different correctional systems. Furthermore, research is needed that systematically explores the different factors that might condition visitation effects. Scholars have highlighted, for instance, that younger inmates, females, and Latinos might benefit most from visitation (Adams 1992; Schafer 1994; Cobbina et al. 2012). These ideas have yet to be tested empirically.

In addition, future studies are needed that can better account for pre-existing conditions that might make inmates more or less likely to be visited or to experience different visitation

patterns. Visitation is intrinsically difficult to study because an association between visitation and behavioral outcomes, like recidivism, may result from causal effects of visitation as well as from factors for which visitation is a proxy measure. For example, young people may be more likely to have parents who are more actively involved in their lives and so are more likely to visit. Here, an association between visitation and, say, reduced recidivism may stem from social capital (i.e., invested parents) and not from a causal effect of visitation. At the same time, in such an instance, there may also be a causal effect. This issue could be investigated in part by using research designs in which measures of pre-prison social capital were collected. Such information could allow researchers to control for social capital and, in so doing, isolate a causal effect of visitation. It bears emphasizing too that even if visitation effects are not causal, an association between visitation and recidivism, or other outcomes, can be viewed as providing a “signal,” one that highlights that a given inmate may be less at risk of offending.

A direct extension of the current study would be research that can identify the specific mechanisms that contribute to these effects. Are relationships truly maintained or strengthened via sustained visitation? Can visitation be more effective at reducing strains at different times during imprisonment? How often is a pattern of early-onset visitation actually indicative of a struggling relationship with a spouse or significant other? Additional qualitative work that observes closely the interactions that occur during visits and the attitudes of inmates before and after visits (e.g., Dixey and Woodall 2012) would help further supplement the quantitative data that has slowly emerged (see e.g., Duwe and Clark 2012), and better disentangle the numerous theoretical ideas that have been proposed about visitation.

Not least, the findings here hold important implications for policy focused on prisoner experiences and prisoner reentry. Prior scholarship has highlighted the utility of visitation as a potential programming option (see, e.g., Hairston 1988, 1991; Gordon and McConnell 1999). Access to visitation is typically considered one of a prisoner’s basic rights and scholars have noted the ubiquity of visitation programs across many prison systems (Maruna and Toch 2005; see also, Bernstein 2005). Thus, since many facilities already have in place the necessary physical and administrative infrastructure, correctional systems may simply need to develop strategies for better leveraging visitation as a programming option. The findings of this chapter are largely exploratory and have limitations that suggest they be considered with caution. With that said, the results do highlight that policies that target visitation may want to consider

prioritizing more regular visitation for prisoners, and also, promoting visits during times when they may be most beneficial, which may include the early, transitional period of an incarceration term.

The patterns identified here underscore the importance of taking a more nuanced approach to studies of prison experiences and the potential benefits that might flow from examining the life course of a prison term. The approach in this study emphasized the diverse experiences individuals have in prison. This same idea could be used to study other experiences, including those that already receive substantial attention from scholars, such as drug counseling, psychological treatments, boot camps, and work or educational programs. Scholars might also explore the effects of heterogeneity in more typical experiences. For instance, what kinds of experiences do prisoners have with transfers between facilities or custody levels over time? Other experiences, like in-prison discipline (e.g., disciplinary citations, secure confinement), participation in fitness programs, and even healthcare treatments are likely to vary dramatically between individuals, over the life course of incarceration, and might play important roles in determining prison's effects. What are the implications of those experiences on offending in prison and post-release? In addition, what are the implications for other outcomes? For instance, an interesting area for future research would be to investigate how visitation, and other experiences, may improve mental health or help reduce the likelihood of the onset of mental illness. Systematic investigations of these and the other aspects of prisoners' lives will help to advance scholarship on imprisonment, and more broadly, on the implications of punishment over the life course.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

A large body of scholarship has focused on the factors that lead to improved prison social order and prisoner reentry outcomes. Research suggests that one such factor, social ties, are especially salient for helping individuals manage the myriad of challenges they face during incarceration and during the transition back into society. For example, social ties can help inmates cope with strain (Sykes 1958; Adams 1992), they can exert informal social control (Sampson and Laub 1993), they can help offset negative social stigma (Pager 2003; Uggen et al. 2004), and they can assist inmates with the practical challenges associated with reintegration back into society and after release from prison (Petersilia 2003; Visser and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immerglott 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Berg and Huebner 2011).

This diverse body of research has spurred scholars to examine how the maintenance of social ties during prison contributes to in-prison and reentry outcomes (Wolff and Draine 2004; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Cobbina et al. 2012). To this end, scholars have focused on inmate visitation because it provides access to social ties during incarceration (e.g., Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1988; Bales and Mears 2008; Siennick et al. 2013). Indeed, with few exceptions, visitation provides the only opportunity for inmates to have direct contact with family, friends, and community members. In so doing, it affords inmates some ability to preserve, develop, or sustain ties to social networks outside of prison, and to have sources of social capital on which to draw during and after incarceration.

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on prison visitation, prison experiences, and social ties in several ways. First, in chapter 2, it examined systematically the heterogeneity of prison visitation and advanced a conceptual framework for theorizing, evaluating, and guiding visitation research. The chapter highlighted the heterogeneity inherent in visitation experiences, and in theoretical ideas that may explain visitation effects. To this end, chapter 2 identified five dimensions—visitation timing, longitudinal patterns of visitation, visitor type, visitation

experiences, and inmate characteristics—for characterizing visitation and assessing its effects on in-prison and reentry outcomes.

Second, in chapter 3, this dissertation explored who is visited in prison by testing the relationship between a range of individual- and community-level factors and the frequency of visitation. The chapter explored several theoretical arguments about why different inmate and community characteristics may influence visitation. Subsequently, analyses in this chapter identified a range of factors, including inmate demographics, prior record, prior prison commitments, offense type, and community characteristics, that are associated with visitation.

Third, in chapter 4, this dissertation explored the longitudinal patterns of visitation that inmates experience and assessed the extent to which these patterns are associated with in-prison misconduct. Analyses from chapter 4 identified that different patterns of visitation may be associated with differential effects on misconduct. Specifically, analyses found that more consistent visitation is associated with less prison misconduct.

Fourth, and finally, chapter 5 tested the effects of different visitation patterns on the likelihood of recidivism. Analyses in this chapter found that prisoners who are visited early and who experience a sustained pattern of visitation over the course of incarceration are less likely to recidivate.

Data for this dissertation were provided by the Florida Department of Corrections and include detailed information for all convicted felony offenders released from Florida prisons between 2000 and 2002. The data have several attributes that made them ideal for this study: they include inmates from multiple facilities across a single state, males and females, and large proportions of inmates from different racial and ethnic groups. Most important, and unusual in prison studies, the data contain comprehensive records of visitation events, which allow for analyses that can examine visitation experiences longitudinally.

6.2 Implications

The theoretical and empirical analyses in this dissertation provide several implications for theory and research. In different ways, the dissertation responds to calls by scholars for more nuanced approaches to research on prison experiences and their effects (Hairston 1991; Nagin et al. 2009; Berg and Huebner 2011; Mears 2012; Reidy et al. 2012). Each chapter provides insight into the range of experiences inmates can have with visitation, and the potential for this

heterogeneity to have differential impacts on individuals while they are incarcerated and after they are released from prison.

The dissertation contributes to theory and scholarship aimed at understanding the nature of prisoners' social contact and the implications of social ties for short- and long-term behavior. Findings in the dissertation provide further support for the idea that social ties are important for prison order and prisoner reentry (Adams 1992; Liebling 1999; Rose and Clear 2003; Visser and Travis 2003; Maruna and Immarigeon 2004). And, consistent with prior theory and research on visitation, the dissertation further underscores the salience of contact with social networks during incarceration for improving in-prison and reentry outcomes (Ohlin 1951; Glaser 1964; Holt and Miller 1972; Hairston 1988; Bales and Mears 2008; Monahan et al. 2011).

Furthermore, the dissertation highlights the importance of examining visitation and using a range of visitation measures. These should include but not be limited to the following: visitation timing, visitation patterns, the type of visitor, and the experiences inmates have with visitation. Broadly, the dissertation lends support to the idea that visitation is beneficial for prisoners, but suggests that specific characteristics of visitation might make it more or less effective for reducing recidivism and might also lead to detrimental effects (e.g., Siennick et al. 2013). Thus, the dissertation reiterates the importance of future studies that can systematically explore prison experiences like visitation, and that can test the implications of different factors that might condition their effects.

The analyses here highlight the potential utility of group-based trajectory modeling (e.g., Nagin 2005) both for identifying different patterns of visitation but also for linking these to other in-prison experiences and potentially to post-release outcomes. Trajectory models provide an important tool for describing trends and groups that emerge from data. This type of description is especially helpful for the study of prison experiences because to date, we currently know little about how different experiences unfold over time. Trajectory analysis can be used, for example, to identify different kinds of longitudinal visitation patterns that prisoners experience, and to assess the relationships between those patterns and other in-prison and reentry outcomes.

The dissertation also has important implications for policy focused on prisoner experiences and prisoner reentry. Access to visitation is typically considered a basic right and prior scholarship has highlighted the potential importance of visitation as a programming option in prisons (e.g., Hairston 1988, 1991; Gordon and McConnell 1999; Bernstein 2005; Maruna and

Toch 2005). To the extent that visitation does indeed improve behavioral outcomes, findings and discussion here suggest that prisons should take steps to increase visitation, and to target different dimensions, including visitation timing and consistency, that might make visitation more effective. This study did not investigate barriers to or facilitators of visitation. However, a large literature points to a range of simple steps that can be taken to increase visitation (e.g., Christian 2005; Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005; Cammett et al. 2006). These include expanding visitation hours, better waiting room amenities, improved public transportation to the prison, easier access to parking, and housing inmates in facilities closer to home.

The expansion of the correctional system over the past thirty years raises important questions about the effects of formal sanctions, like prison, on individuals, families, and their communities. This dissertation sought to contribute to scholarship that emphasizes the salience of social support for understanding these effects. Given the large populations of individuals that enter into and leave prisons, it is critical that future studies extend efforts to investigate how visitation, social ties, and prison experiences more broadly, affect different in-prison and reentry experiences.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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Joshua Cochran received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Crime, Law and Justice, International Studies, and German from the Pennsylvania State University in 2008, and a Master of Science degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Florida State University in 2010. He will join the faculty in the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida in August of 2013. His research focuses on the effects of punishment, prison experiences, perceptions of justice, and the causes of offending. Recently, he completed work on a federally funded project sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention with Drs. Daniel P. Mears and Avinash Bhati examining juvenile justice sanctioning. Joshua recently received three awards, including the ASC Division on Corrections and Sentencing Dissertation Award, the ACJS Michael C. Braswell/Anderson Publishing Student Paper Award, and the Graduate Research and Creativity Award for the Social and Behavioral Sciences from Florida State University.