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Receiving visits in Dutch prisons: a study on the determinants and consequences of prison visitation

Berghuis, M.L.

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RECEIVING VISITS IN DUTCH PRISONS

A study on the determinants
and consequences of prison visitation

M.L. Berghuis

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Receiving visits in Dutch prisons

A study on the determinants and consequences of prison visitation

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Maria Lynn Berghuis
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Promotor: prof. dr. P. Nieuwbeerta

Co-promotor: dr. J.M.H. Palmen

Promotiecommissie: prof. mr. dr. M.M. Boone

prof. dr. A.A. Blokland (NSCR en Leiden University)

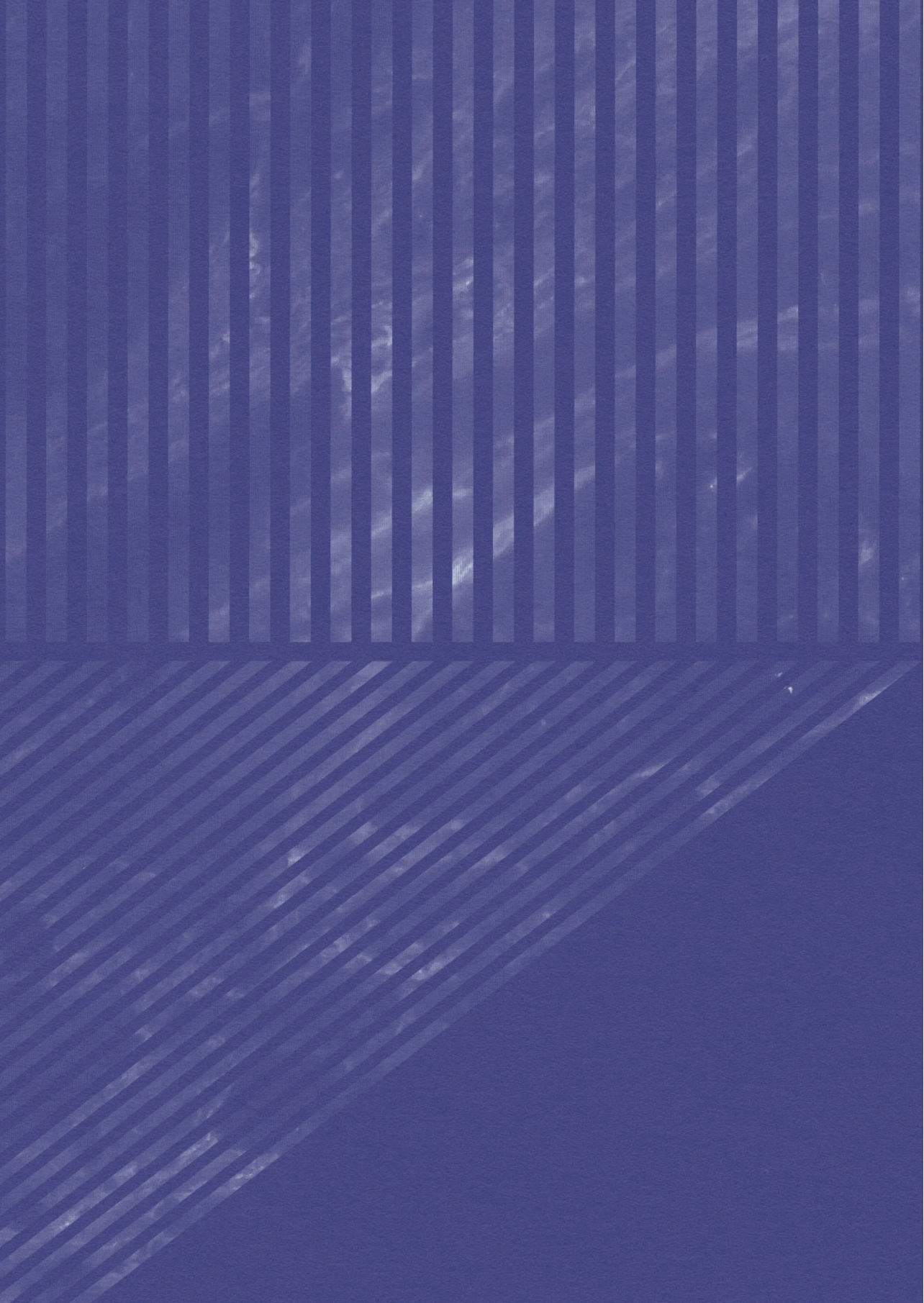
prof. dr. F.M. Weerman (NSCR en Erasmus University Rotterdam)

dr. J.C. Cochran (University of Cincinnati, USA)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	General Introduction	7
PART I: THE CONTEXT OF PRISON VISITATION IN THE NETHERLANDS		
2	Prison visits in the Netherlands: The current state of affairs	41
PART II: THE DETERMINANTS OF PRISON VISITATION		
3	The prevalence and determinants of visits from partner, child(ren), family and friends in Dutch prisons: The role of social networks and criminal history	71
4	Visitation enablers and barriers: Evaluating the influences of practical, relational, and experiential factors on visitation in Dutch prisons	95
PART III: THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRISON VISITATION		
5	Receiving visits in prison and aggressive and contraband misconduct among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands	127
6	Effects of the timing of prison visits on disciplinary infractions: a replication and expansion	153
7	Visitation patterns and post-release offending: Exploring variations in the timing, rate, and consistency of prison visits	181
8	General discussion	207
	Nederlandse Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)	229
	References	241
	Acknowledgements	251
	Curriculum Vitae	255



1

General introduction

1.1 Background

Approximately 30,000 adults are incarcerated in a correctional institution in the Netherlands every year (De Looft et al., 2018). Since recidivism rates are high and correctional budgets increasingly constrained, questions surrounding the social and economic consequences of imprisonment and reintegration have risen. Considering this, scholars suggest that aspects of the prison experience which affect prison order and reentry outcomes need to be more greatly investigated. Moreover, since prisons have the moral and legal task to provide decent and humane treatment, it is important to understand how aspects of the prison experience impact incarcerated individuals.

Prison Visitation

One experience, prison visitation, is especially salient for incarcerated individuals as it is one of the few opportunities presented to them to facilitate meaningful social interaction and stay connected to the community while incarcerated. By law, adults incarcerated in the Netherlands have the right to at least one hour of visits per week (Article 38, Section 1 of the Penitentiary Principles Act [*Penitentiare beginselenwet*]). This legal right – also adopted in several countries throughout the world – arises from the moral argument that individuals should not become socially isolated while incarcerated. Prison systems have also been encouraged to implement visits based on the belief that visits will improve reintegration. In addition, enabling prison visits can safeguard against unintended or collateral consequences of imprisonment. For example, for some groups of individuals, a lack of access to social ties could be experienced as an additional punishment and may perpetuate social disadvantage. Moreover, allowing visits is also important for those affected by incarceration beyond the prison walls. It provides family and friends an opportunity to see their loved one and check how they are doing. Finally, visits are a key mechanism for upholding individuals' right to private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). Given this, it is not surprising that prisons worldwide have the physical and administrative infrastructure to allow prison visits. Although correctional systems cannot control individuals' social networks outside the prison walls, they can adopt visit friendly policies that help enable family and friends – and social ties more broadly – to visit and create environments that promote supportive relationships.

Bearing in mind that visits are embedded in the structure of prisons worldwide, scholars propose that visitation has the potential to be a cost-effective practice for

mitigating harmful effects of imprisonment and improving behavior, familial, and reentry outcomes. Several criminological theories suggest that meaningful contact through visits can help minimize the pains of imprisonment by providing individuals with emotional support and coping resources, which may improve adjustment to prison life (Adams, 1992; Liebling, 1999). Visits also provide incarcerated individuals the chance to maintain or strengthen relationships with family, friends, and the community as well as an opportunity to plan for release. These relationships not only practically help individuals find housing or employment but can also help individuals manage the many challenges associated with the reentry process. Thus, the expectation is that visited individuals, compared to non-visited individuals, are more likely to adjust to prison life and have a more successful reentry.

The Determinants of Prison Visitation: Who Gets Visited in Prison?

Despite the potential benefits of receiving visits, existing studies shows that a substantial number of incarcerated individuals do not receive visits in prison and that certain groups of individuals are less likely to receive visits (Cochran et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2016; Rubenstein et al., 2021; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). Scholars have emphasized that a broad range of factors influence the receipt and frequency of prison visits, ranging from practical factors (such as the amount of distance family and friends must travel to visit, see Christian, 2005; Clark & Duwe, 2017, Rubenstein et al., 2021), relational factors (such as the strength of relationships prior to incarceration, see Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Hickert et al., 2019), and experiential factors (such as how visits are experienced, see Turanovic & Tasca, 2019; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018). What remains unclear is how these factors – which are interrelated, and concern incarcerated individuals, visitor(s), and prison practices and policies – *simultaneously* affect the likelihood and frequency of prison visits, and more specifically, how these factors impact the ties available to incarcerated individuals. The latter is necessary as the nature of relationships between individuals and visitors are different and, as visitors are a heterogeneous group, there are likely to be diverse reasons to (not) visit. To better understand who gets access to external social support during incarceration systematic investigations of the factors that enable, or hinder, visits from various perspectives are needed.

The Consequences of Receiving Visits in Prison

Having access to external social ties through prison visitation seems important as existing scholarship typically suggests that individuals who receive visits in prison experience benefits stemming from these visits, including improved well-being

during incarceration (Houck & Loper, 2002; Lindquist, 2000; Monahan et al., 2011), better adjustment to prison life (Cihan & Sorensen, 2019; Cochran, 2012; Reidy & Sorensen, 2020), and reduced recidivism (Bales & Mears, 2008; De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2016). While these results are encouraging, not all studies show positive effects. Several studies have identified null effects (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Clark, 2001; Goetting & Howsen, 1986) and a small number even identify harmful effects (Benning & Lahm, 2016; Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Jiang et al., 2005; Lindsey et al., 2017; Siennick et al., 2013). These contrasting results are likely a consequence of the heterogeneous nature of visits. Individuals differ namely not only in *whether* they receive visits, but also *from whom* and *how often* they receive visits. Also, visitation experiences are not uniformly positive: while some individuals report positive experiences (e.g., feeling refreshed and having lifted spirits after visits), other experience great feelings of loss and separation (Moran & Disney, 2019; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018) or visits comprised of conflict, arguments, and confrontation (Meyers et al., 2017). Moreover, individuals do not consistently receive visits throughout their prison term. While some may receive visits at the start of their prison term, visits may knife off over time. Others may only see family and friends just before being released. These variations in visitation experiences are likely to have diverse implications for certain types of behavior in prison and have consequences for life after release.

Early work on visits' effects typically utilized limited measurement and conceptualization of visits (e.g., measuring visits as an event that occurred or not). Although more recent work has improved on this by using more articulate measures of visits and employing rigorous study designs, still little is known about these heterogeneous features of visitation and limitations remain. For example, the influence of unobserved confounders on visits' effects, such as an individuals' pre-prison social network, remains a critical problem as researchers tend to rely on large prison administrative datasets. In doing so, existing research focuses mostly on incarcerated individuals, even though other actors play a critical role in visitation (including visitors and prisons). Consequently, most prior research has been conducted at a single level of analysis (i.e., individual level), thus ignoring the influence of prison context on individual behavior. Not only that, overlooking differences in context is problematic as prison facilities adopt varying policies and practices which could undermine the receipt of visits and their potential benefits.

Lastly, it is unclear how generalizable our prevailing conclusions about the determinants and consequences of prison visits are since almost all prior research stems from the United States (U.S.). It is possible that some results are unique to

the features of the U.S. penal system (such as its punitive character and excessive incarceration lengths). Research across contexts is critical, then, for advancing theory and policy conversations about visitation, its impacts, and its likelihood across people.

This Dissertation and Research Questions

Against this backdrop, this dissertation seeks to advance our current knowledge on the determinants and consequences of prison visitation by expanding our knowledge about prison visits to the Netherlands, combining information about visits from multiple data sources (including surveys, prison records across the entire prison term, and documents about the set-up and administrative infrastructure of visits), broadening the focus from incarcerated individuals to include more contextual influences (such as prison policies and shared experiences), and using rigorous tests to specify which types of behavior visits are likely to affect. The aim of this dissertation is threefold. First, this dissertation aims to describe how visitation works in law, policy, and practice in the Netherlands. Second, it aims to describe and evaluate the factors that contribute to receiving visits in Dutch prisons. Third, it aims to test to what extent receiving visits affects offending behavior in prison (i.e., misconduct) and after release (i.e., recidivism).

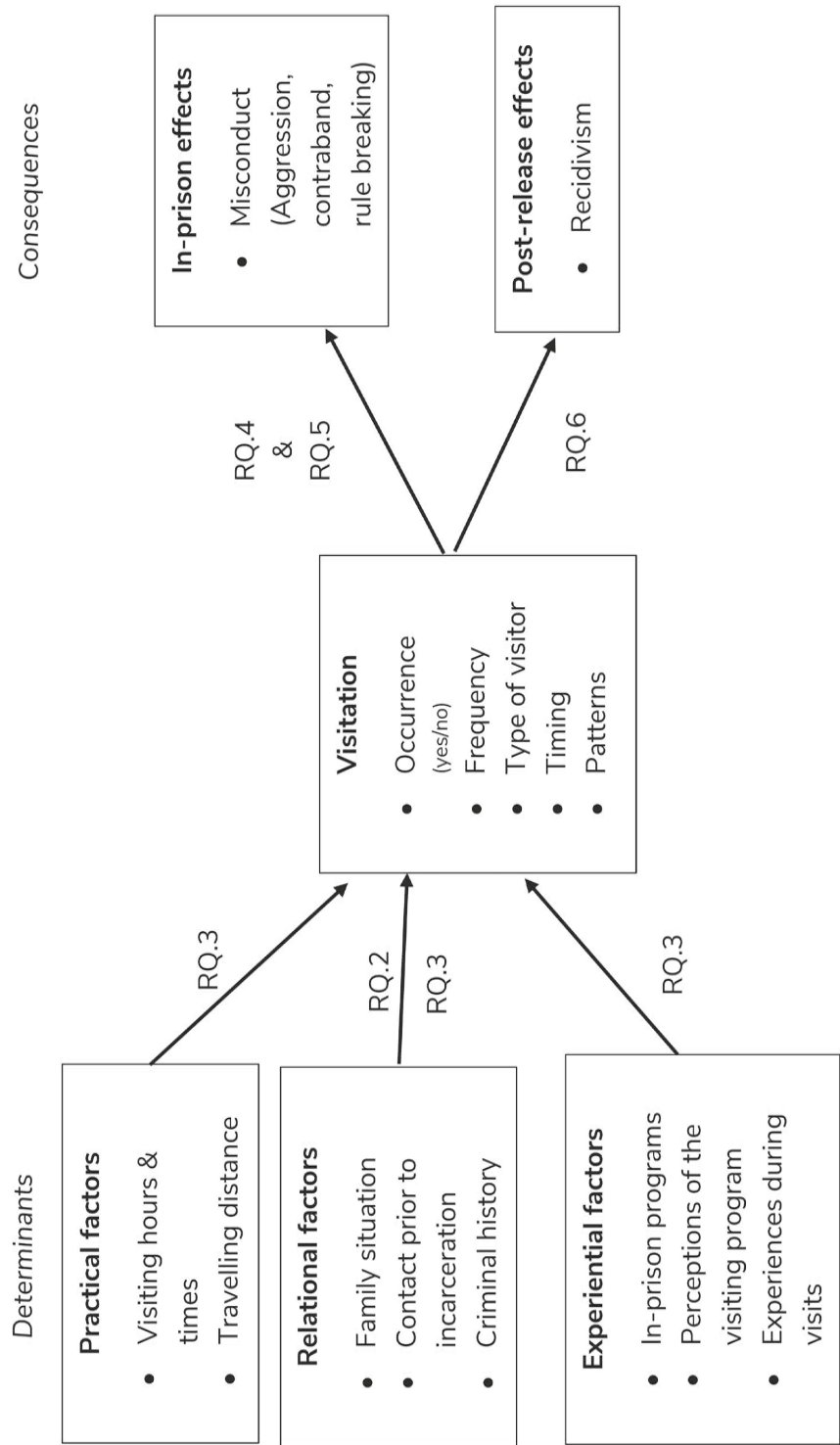
More specifically, six research questions are investigated. Figure 1.1 presents a schematic overview of these research questions. As a starting point, this dissertation presents a detailed description of the context of prison visitation in the Netherlands. The first research question is therefore:

1. How is contact via prison visits regulated in Dutch law, policy, and practice?

Then, to understand which factors contribute to receiving visits in Dutch prisons, this dissertation provides the first large-scale study into the prevalence of visitation in the Netherlands. Moreover, this dissertation evaluates how both individual and contextual factors may explain who gets visited in prison. This led to two research questions:

2. To what extent are social network characteristics and criminal history related to receiving visits in prison?
3. To what extent are practical, relational, and experiential factors related to whether, how often, and from whom incarcerated individuals receive visits in prison?

Figure 1.1 Schematic Overview of Research Questions



Subsequently, this dissertation examines the effect of receiving visits on in-prison behavior. Specifically, two questions are investigated:

4. To what extent does receiving visits in prison relate to aggressive and contraband misconduct?
5. To what extent does the probability of misconduct change in the weeks surrounding a visit?

Finally, the focus shifts to studying whether receiving visits protects individuals from offending after release. The final research question is:

6. To what extent do visitation patterns relate to individuals' post-release offending?

As evidenced by the research questions (and as will be discussed in more depth later), prison visitation is conceptualized in a multifaceted way, including whether a person is visited, how often they are visited, and from whom they received visits. For the consequences of visits, the timing and patterning of visits is further specified to understand how visits over time affect in-prison and post-release behavior.

1.2 Theoretical Background

Throughout the empirical chapters of this dissertation many theories are used to derive expectations concerning the determinants and consequences of prison visitation. This introductory chapter shortly discusses the main theoretical arguments which are covered more extensively in the empirical chapters. The research questions related to the determinants of visitation are grounded in a social ecological framework that emphasizes that multiple actors are important for developing and maintaining social support during incarceration (i.e., the prison, the visitor(s), and the incarcerated individual) and in doing so considers the practical barriers to visitation, but also the social and incarceration contexts in which people reside. Expectations about the consequences of receiving visits in prison are rooted in several mainstream criminological theories, including Hirschi's social bond theory (1969), strain and deprivation theory (Agnew, 1992; Sykes, 1958), and life course criminology (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Determinants of Prison Visits

Social support can be critical in times of stress and trauma. Vaux (1988) argued that in such times of stress, the process of maintaining social support is complex

and transactional. An interplay occurs between individual, social network, and contextual factors; factors at one of these levels influences factors at another level. Starting with the individual, differences in personality and social skills likely influence whether an individual can develop, maintain, or utilize a supportive network. For example, individuals who are more socially competent (e.g., make conversation, listen, express empathy) likely develop supportive networks easier in times of stress than those who are less socially skilled. Beyond the individual, the social network can also respond and help in times of stress. The reaction of the social network is contingent on their resources and the intensity and persistence of the stressor. In addition, network characteristics such as size, density, composition, and quality, can impact the sustainability of social support. For instance, if a stressful situation is chronic and the network is small and comprises of, for instance, only family members, support may deplete over time. Finally, Vaux (1988) notes that this transactional process takes place in a social context. Contexts of space, time, history, and broader social roles shape the development of social support. These contexts create a backdrop for the transactional process between the individual and their social network.

This social ecological framework is applicable to prison visitation. Imprisonment is a stressful event, physically disrupting the connection between an individual and the outside world. Visitation is a key form of social support, being that it is the only way individuals can maintain physical contact with loved ones beyond the prison wall. To maintain this form of contact, both incarcerated individuals and their visitor(s) must decide whether and how often they (receive) visits within the bounds of their specific social and incarceration contexts (see Figure 1.2). Individuals in prison can be assumed to make decisions on whether and how often they receive visits depending on their individual characteristics (e.g., their age and criminal history, whether they have a spouse or children) and their emotional situation (e.g., reactions to incarceration and visitation experiences).

Beyond the incarcerated individual, visitors must also decide whether they take the effort to travel to prisons and spend time and money on these trips. These decisions can be assumed to be impacted by practical factors, including travelling distance to the prison, their ability to travel to the prison, and being able to afford the costs of visits. These are all barriers which could hinder family and friends, particularly those with low incomes, from visiting. Despite such barriers, some visitors overcome these hardships. Those who are close to the incarcerated individual are more likely to be responsive to their troubles and to engage in supportive behavior even if it is costly or requires effort (Vaux, 1988). Furthermore,

some visitors, such as partners or parents, may have made prior investments in their relationship with the incarcerated individual. These visitors are less likely to break off a relationship in which they have already invested because otherwise, time and energy for their investment would be lost (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001).

Figure 1.2 Social Ecological Model of Visitation



These decisions concerning whether and how often to (receive) visit(s) are made within a specific ecological context, namely the prison. Since prison officials are granted substantial discretion to determine whether and when visits take place, it can also be assumed that visitation policies impact the receipt of visits. While some policies may extend visiting hours, therefore making visits more accessible, others may create challenges to visiting (for example, if visiting hours are only during the week). This could also explain variation in visitation rates.

Consequences of Prison Visits

The consequences of social ties on offending behavior are central to many criminological theories, including Hirschi's social bonds theory (1969), informal

social control, and life course approaches (Laub & Sampson, 2003). By extension, scholars have developed several theoretical arguments explaining how receiving visits in prison might influence offending behavior both within and beyond prison walls. Many of these theories expect that maintaining social ties through prison visits can prevent or reduce offending behavior, but as evident below, the ways in which these ties contribute to it differ.

Receiving Visits Reduces Offending Behavior

Imprisonment severs social connections to family and friends, as well as the larger community. According to Hirschi's (1969) social bonds theory maintaining strong bonds to family, friends, and the community can help restrain a person from committing crime. Visits may be crucial for maintaining, or even restoring, these social bonds while incarcerated as it is the only opportunity individuals are given to see these relationships face-to-face. Thus, those individuals who receive visits likely have stronger bonds than those who do not receive visits and are therefore more likely to restrain from crime. These bonds may be especially important during confinement as they may help restrain individuals from pressures to conform to deviant prison subcultures. Also, by staying connected with the broader community individuals may be less likely to identify with the prison culture.

In addition, visits can help individuals manage the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958), especially with social isolation inherent to confinement (Adams, 1992). Visits can provide a legitimate coping mechanism for individuals which can help reduce stress and decrease their likelihood of engaging in misconduct. This argument is rooted in strain and deprivation theories which emphasize that a lack of coping mechanisms in times of stress can contribute to misconduct or other antisocial behavior (Agnew, 1992, 2001; Broidy, 2001).

Visits may also function as a key source of informal social control. Visitors can check in on incarcerated individuals and see how they are doing. In this way visitors can indirectly monitor individuals' behavior, which may encourage prosocial behavior (Liu et al., 2016). Even in anticipation of visits, individuals may be careful to avoid any behavior that may upset or disappoint potential visitors or that may cause a visit to be delayed. Thus, individuals who (wish to) receive visits may be more likely to conform to prison rules.

In a similar vein, informal social control is emphasized in life course approaches as an integral factor for desisting from crime (Lilly et al., 2018). Sampson and Laub's (2003) age-graded theory of informal social control underscores the importance of social supports in negotiating life transitions. Release from prison constitutes

an important life event, whereby individuals transition into freedom while also being confronted by the challenges and stresses of having a criminal background (Visser et al., 2004). The expectation is that social ties are critical for managing negative events while incarcerated and after release (Maruna & Toch, 2005). Moreover, and perhaps more critically for the desistance process, visitation may help provide individuals with a more positive sense of personal identity (Maruna, 2001). Visitation can counter negative labels (i.e., criminal, offender) and processes (i.e., discrimination in jobs) as it cements relations that provide access to supportive social networks after release.

Implicit in these theories – and perhaps at the core of why scholars argue that receiving visits in prison is so critical – is the assumption that social networks benefit individuals through social capital. Social capital can be defined in two ways: 1) the resources it provides, including expressive (i.e., emotional support) and instrumental support (i.e., provision of goods and providing information or guidance) (Bourdieu, 2011; Cullen, 1994; Lin, 1986), 2) the norms and values produced through communities (Putnam, 1993). Both conceptualizations show that social ties (both with family and friends [informal] and the community [institutional]) are important as they provide resources and helping behavior. Visits can remind individuals of the social capital available to them and help activate, preserve, or perhaps even strengthen, their connections to these sources of support. The provision of emotional and instrumental support can help them navigate the stresses and pains of imprisonment, and perhaps more crucially, provide access to housing and employment after release, thus increasing chances of reentry success.

In short, these theories collectively assume that visits are beneficial. These possibilities notwithstanding, some scholarship lead to the opposite prediction, namely that visits could increase offending behavior. As described next, visits' effects are likely contingent on how visits are experienced, the frequency of visits, and who is visiting.

Visits' Effects: Which visits, When, and From Whom?

Efforts to reduce offending behavior through prison visits assume that 1) visits are a positive event, 2) that visits occur regularly, and 3) that visitors are prosocial and supportive. However, visits are not uniformly positive. Some visits may be upsetting, which could increase levels of stress. Also, visits may vary across time both in terms of frequency and consistency. However, many of the aforementioned theories implicitly require frequent visitation for positive outcomes. For example, if visits operate via informal social control, then visits must occur regularly if visitors wish to

monitor individuals' behavior in prison. Finally, not all visitors hold prosocial norms nor are supportive. Individuals receive visits from a wide range of relationships, ranging from current or previous romantic partners, child(ren), siblings, grandparents to community workers. As visitors are not screened nor denied access to visiting due to criminal records in the Netherlands, it is also possible that some visitors are criminal peers, extending and perhaps supporting criminal norms, values, and identity which could result in adverse behaviors both within prison (for example, continuing criminal behaviors by smuggling in prohibited items) and after release.

1.3 Prior Research

Research on prison visitation has expounded in recent years, evidenced by systematic reviews and meta-analyses (De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2016), conceptual frameworks to guide researchers in this field (Cochran & Mears, 2013), and descriptions of how to advance visitation research (Tasca et al., 2016). As prior work focuses either on the determinants or the consequences of prison visits, studies on each topic will be discussed separately below. The discussion below focuses largely on international research as Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of prior Dutch research on both the determinants and consequences of visitation. Also, since more extensive overviews of the literature will be provided in the empirical chapters (chapter 2-7), the studies discussed below provide mainly a background and show how the current study progresses on previous work.

Studies on the Determinants of Visitation

A general observation from national and international studies is that a substantial number of individuals do not receive visits in prison (Cochran et al., 2017; Janssen, 2000; Moerings, 1978; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). International (American) studies based largely on prison administrative data have focused on differences between incarcerated individuals based on demographic and criminal characteristics or travelling distance to explain why some individuals are more or less likely to receive visits. These studies show that young, incarcerated individuals with less extensive criminal histories and who have committed less severe crimes were most likely to be visited (e.g., Clark & Duwe, 2017; Cochran et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 1997; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). Also, when visitors lived further away from the prison and came from disadvantaged areas, they were not only less likely to visit, but also visited less frequently (e.g., Clark & Duwe, 2017; Cochran et al., 2016; Mikytuck & Woolard, 2019; Poehlmann et al., 2008; Young & Hay, 2020). While the latter studies highlight

practical factors that may affect visits, these data sources lack measures pertaining to the policies adopted by prisons (i.e., visiting hours, days, time slots, etc.), which may promote or restrict the receipt of visits. Although some scholarship, including qualitative studies in the Netherlands, have offered evidence for the expectation that the adoption of restrictive policies may make it more difficult for loved ones to visit (Clark & Duwe, 2017; Hickert et al., 2018), no prior studies have actually tested whether or how these policies affect the receipt of visits in prison.

Only in recent years have scholars studied how social support prior to incarceration may explain disparities in receiving prison visits. Data from longitudinal surveys show that having good quality relationships prior to incarceration increases the likelihood of receiving visits in prison (e.g., Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Hickert et al., 2019; Young et al., 2019). These findings were based on specific samples, such as pretrial detainees in the Netherlands (Hickert et al., 2019) and incarcerated youth in Florida (Young et al., 2019). No such studies were conducted using large, representative groups of incarcerated individuals.

Finally, a separate, but related body of literature has emerged on visitation experiences. This literature, generally qualitative in nature, has described visitors' journey to the prison as well as their experiences during visits (Arditti, 2003; Christian, 2005; Fuller, 1993). As a whole, these studies paint a grim picture: visits not only cost family and friends a lot of time and money, but visitors describe their visit experiences as restrictive, unpleasant, and unwelcoming (Arditti, 2003; Comfort, 2016; Sturges, 2002). Interview accounts with incarcerated individuals also show that some individuals opt out of receiving visits due to the perceived strains on family and friends (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018). Moreover, incarcerated individuals' experiences with visits appear to be diverse, dynamic, and not universally positive (Moran & Disney, 2019; Moran et al., 2016; Turanovic & Tasca, 2019). Yet, it remains unclear how these experiences impact whether and how often individuals receive visits.

Collectively, studies on the determinants of prison visitation identify a range of factors that seem important for understanding who gets visited in prison. Yet, surprisingly little is known in the literature about how these factors simultaneously relate to visitation, as most studies have focused on one or a few of these factors without taking the possible interaction between these factors into consideration. Also, limited knowledge is available about whether consequential factors, such as visitation policies or visitation experiences, actually impact access to external social ties, especially in contexts beyond the U.S.

Studies on the Consequences of Visitation

The bulk of prior research on visitation effects focuses on misconduct and recidivism. Below, prior work on the consequences for in-prison behavior (i.e., misconduct) will firstly be reviewed, followed by behavior after release (i.e., recidivism).

Consequences of Visitation on In-prison Behavior

Studies in which visited and non-visited individuals are compared in terms of misconduct represent a popular strand of research within the visit-misconduct literature. Notably, no Dutch studies have been conducted on this topic. Existing international studies show mixed findings: some find that individuals who receive visits in prison engage in less misconduct (Ellis et al., 1974; Gonçalves et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2016), while others report that they engage in more misconduct (Benning & Lahm, 2016; Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Jiang et al., 2005; Lindsey et al., 2017), and even others find no significant relationship between the two (Clark, 2001; Goetting & Howsen, 1986). These varying results may be due to study quality, as visited and non-visited individuals differ in many important ways and most studies do not have measures for all these confounds. Moreover, many studies are cross-sectional meaning time order cannot be determined. This is important as misconduct likely also affects visits. For example, if an individual misbehaves in prison, this may discourage visits from family and friends. The opposite is also possible, if individuals seem to have trouble adjusting to prison life, then family and friends may visit more often to support them. These threats to internal validity make it difficult to disentangle visits' effects on misconduct.

One American study employed an instrumental variable analysis (Tahamont, 2013), which is better suited to isolate these effects. Results showed that receiving visits reduces *certain types* of misconduct, such as possession of a weapon or stolen property, verbal and physical aggression towards another incarcerated individual and being out of place, but visits did not affect drug and alcohol violations nor verbal or physical assaults against staff. While this study addressed possible differences between individuals in *whether* they receive visits, individuals also differ in *how often*, *when*, and *from whom* they receive visits which can have consequences for misconduct.

Empirical studies on these aspects of visitation in relation to misconduct are the exception. Studies on who is visiting are rare; a few studies suggest that partners may help reduce misconduct (Siennick et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2015) whereas child visits have been linked to increases in drug and rule violations (Benning & Lahm, 2016; Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Jiang et al., 2005). A small number of studies have investigated how visitation patterns (i.e., how often and when individuals

receive visits) impact misconduct (Cihan et al., 2020; Cochran, 2012; Siennick et al., 2013). Using group-based trajectory models Cochran (2012) and Cihan et al. (2020) found that individuals who were visited often, already from the start of their prison term, were less likely to engage in misconduct. However, individuals who received infrequent visits or who only received visits early in the prison term had the highest probabilities of misconduct, even in comparison to non-visited individuals. A third study, by Siennick et al. (2013), took a different approach and explored the short-term effects of visits by examining week-to-week associations between disciplinary infractions and the weeks surrounding a visit. They found that the probability of disciplinary infractions decreased in the weeks leading up to visits, indicating that individuals moderate their behavior in anticipation of visits. After a visit, the probability of disciplinary infractions sharply increased; this suggests that individuals may have a hard time separating from family and friends at the end of each visit. Taken together these studies lend support to the idea that who is visiting, the frequency, and the timing of visits matter for understanding visits' effects on misconduct.

Consequences of Visitation on Behavior After Release

Several studies have examined visitation effects on recidivism. Mitchell et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 16 studies on this topic. The meta-analysis showed that receiving visits in prison reduced recidivism by 26%. While this result seems encouraging, the effect of visits on recidivism substantially decreased when multivariate studies were considered (then the estimates were around 4%). This review highlighted the importance of controlling for confounders and rigorous testing when investigating how receiving visits in prison relates to recidivism.

In response to this, studies published in recent years have been more critical – both substantively and methodologically – of visits' effects on recidivism. To begin, a few recent studies suggest that purely receiving visits does not reduce recidivism, but rather *relationship quality* matters for recidivism. In a British study among incarcerated males, Brunton-Smith and McCarthy (2017) found that the *strengthening* of family relationships reduced reoffending risks, not visits. While some visits may help strengthen these relationships, not all visits improved relationships.

Scholars have also argued that visitation effects may merely reflect social capital that already existed prior to incarceration, as those individuals who have strong social ties are more likely to succeed post-release. Most prior studies typically did not include measures of pre-prison social capital as they relied upon prison administrative data. Using survey data, Atkin-Plunk and Armstrong

(2018) found that the quality of an individuals' relationships prior to incarceration were more important for reducing recidivism than visitation. However, two other studies found differing results. Using data from the longitudinal (Dutch) Prison Project, Hickert et al. (2019) observed that visits remained significantly related to post-confinement expressive support even when controlling for social support prior to incarceration. Thus, visits seem important for having emotional support after release, but may be less influential in the actual provision of goods. A similar result was found among a large sample of incarcerated individuals in the U.S., although the focus was on feelings of isolation while incarcerated (Anderson et al., 2020). Nevertheless, this study reinforces the idea that visits are necessary for maintaining the connection to avenues of social support – even for those who had social capital prior to incarceration.

While the previous examples use more substantive measures to try and isolate visits' effects two recent studies used instrumental variable analysis to statistically isolate the effects of visits on recidivism. Lee (2019) found that visited individuals were significantly less likely to recidivate, although estimates differed depending on sample restrictions and control variables. For example, when travelling distance between the county where an individual was convicted and the prison was controlled for, the benefits of visitation were largely eliminated. Cochran et al. (2020) also examined the distance of the prison from the incarcerated individuals' home community as an instrumental variable. Although the results of this analysis showed that visits reduced recidivism, the effect was not significant in the instrument variable analysis. In sum, it remains unclear to what extent and how visits affect life after release. Work on this topic is complicated by several potential confounds, which raises questions about whether visits have causal effects on recidivism.

Limitations of Prior Research

Although the extant literature offers considerable insight into the determinants and consequences of visitation, limitations remain. To start, most earlier studies examined visitation as an event that has occurred or not, or as a count variable (i.e., total number of visits). Such aggregate measures mask the variability inherent in prison visitation. Researchers have increasingly stressed how complex and multifaceted prison visits are. Several nuances seem to matter for prison visits, including who is visiting (e.g., partner, parents, children, family, friends, volunteers, lawyers, social workers), the frequency (i.e., consistent vs. sporadic), timing and patterning of the visit (e.g., beginning, middle, end of prison term) (Cochran & Mears, 2013). Although recent studies have increasingly examined these aspects,

still more research is needed that uses articulate measures of visitation to capture who receives visits in prisons (and how often and from whom) and to understand when visits improve behavioral outcomes and when they may have little or even adverse effects on behavior.

Existing research has also almost exclusively relied on prison administrative data. Although this data is needed to establish visitation patterns over time, the use of prison administrative data alone cannot explain many of the dynamic processes inherent to visitation (including the impact of prison policies, visitation experiences, and preexisting social support). There is a need to pair these data with rich, self-report data (such as survey data) to broaden our understanding of the determinants and consequences of prison visitation. This pairing is important as an overreliance on a single source of data (as studies which do not use prison administrative data rely solely on self-report data) may inflate the correlations between constructs, resulting in shared method bias. Moreover, a consequence of relying on prison administrative data sets means that the extant literature focuses heavily on incarcerated individuals, even though visitors and prisons play an integral role in visitation. It seems therefore useful to consider other actors and contexts at play. This requires multilevel analyses and a greater examination of the contexts under which visits take place.

An overall limitation is that conclusions are almost solely based on data pertaining to individuals incarcerated in the U.S. For the determinants of visitation this is problematic as some factors may be particular to the context (for instance, results on travelling distance may be so profound because of the size of U.S. states; some entire countries, including the Netherlands, are smaller than some U.S. states). For the consequences of visitation, this is also important as visits are considered a privilege in most U.S. states. This could result in a selection bias as individuals who are granted access to visits already behave well, which could impact estimates on offending behavior. Findings from other contexts are thus needed to help validate conclusions. While some prior Dutch research does exist, it is limited to specific populations (such as individuals serving short sentences or incarcerated mothers) or prisons (with most studies done in one specific prison) and most data is outdated reducing its generalizability.

Besides these limitations, there are several unexplored areas in this research field. With regards to the determinants of visitation, most studies have focused on differences between incarcerated individuals based on demographic and criminal characteristics or travelling distance to the prison. To increase our understanding of the factors that contribute to (frequent) visits in prison, research that takes a

more holistic approach and includes practical factors (e.g., visiting times), relational factors (e.g., size of social network and relationship quality), and experiential factors (e.g., experiences with visits) *simultaneously* seems warranted. In addition, little is known about how visitation experiences and prison policies impact visits. With regards to the consequences of visitation, even though the body of literature on visits' effects is growing, it remains unclear for whom and under which circumstances visits have a positive, negative, or no effect on incarcerated individuals. Scholars often limit their examination to offending likelihood (e.g., whether an individual committed misconduct), but correctional practitioners and individuals could benefit from a deepened understanding of when, how, and which types of behaviors are affected by visits. Even within the small number of studies that have explored the aforementioned topics, methodological rigorous and large-scale studies remain an exception.

1.4 Data

This dissertation was designed to overcome some of the limitations of previous studies and to provide insight into the determinants and consequences of prison visitation in the Netherlands. To provide empirical answers to the research questions, this dissertation used detailed data on prison visits and behavioral outcomes from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS). The DPVS is part of a large-scale research project into prison climate and the quality of life in Dutch prisons (the Life in Custody study, Palmen et al., 2019; Van Ginneken et al., 2018). The DPVS specifically focuses on prison visitation, which is one of the six dimensions of prison climate: 'contact with the outside world' (Boone et al., 2016). The DPVS aims to examine prison visitation from different perspectives and in all its variety. It comprises of two data collections conducted in 2017 and 2019. This dissertation uses data from the 2017 data collection which focused on the determinants and consequences of prison visitation and combined rich survey data (Prison Climate Questionnaire, PCQ) on visits and important background characteristics (including information about individuals' pre-prison and current social network), data on the set-up and organization of visits within prisons, and prison administrative data on visits across the entire prison term. In addition to data on visits, data for this study are extended with administrative data on individual and prison unit characteristics, misconduct, and recidivism.

By combining different data sources, the current dissertation offers a thorough and detailed exploration into prison visitation in the Netherlands. Since prison

administrative data on visitation is not available (or reliable) in all prisons (described below), this dissertation uses two study samples. Below both study samples are described and then the different data sources are described (see Table 1.1 for an overview).

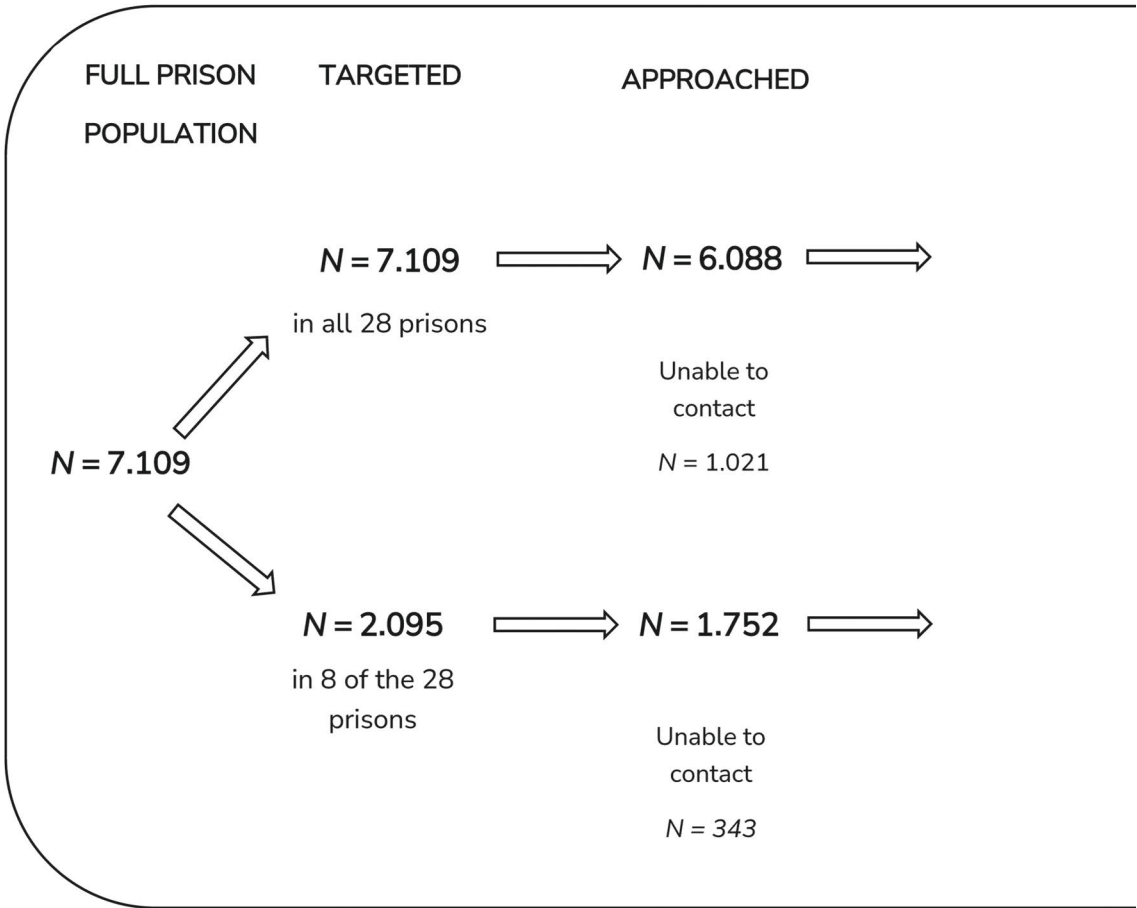
Samples

An overview of the two samples can be found in Figure 1.3. For the first study sample, information about visits is self-reported and comes from the PCQ (described below). The full population of male and female persons, in all regimes, who were incarcerated between January and April 2017 in one of the 28 operating Dutch prisons were targeted ($N = 7,109$; see Figure 1.4 for the geographical locations of the prisons). From this group, 473 (7%) could not be invited to participate due to language barriers, severe psychological problems or being placed in isolation during the data collection. Additionally, 548 (8%) could not be invited due to practical conflicts, including being released in the week of the data collection or not being present in the unit (due to obligations elsewhere, including in transit to court or work).

Individuals who could be invited ($N = 6,088$) were individually approached by research assistants to participate in the study. They were approached at the door of their cell and both participants and non-participants were offered a small incentive (e.g., a snack or can of soda). Of those invited to participate, 4,983 (81%) agreed to participate and completed the PCQ. The most common reasons for not wanting to participate was “lack of interest” ($N = 662$), “distrustful of research” ($N = 163$), and that they were “almost being released” ($N = 40$).

Those who wished to participate were also asked for permission to match their survey with official prison records (such as disciplinary reports); 400 participants did not give permission and participated anonymously (due to this these individuals were not included in this dissertation). Surveys were collected one to two days after handing them out. In case of literacy or concentration problems, researchers would assist in filling out the survey. For the purposes of this dissertation, participants in open regimes were excluded from the study sample as individuals in this regime have furlough every weekend and therefore do not receive visits in prison. Therefore, the total DPVS sample for which self-report data on various aspects of visitation is available includes 4,376 individuals from 236 prison units.

Figure 1.3 Sample Selection: Dutch Prison Visitation Study (Jan – April 2017)

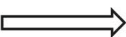


PARTICIPATED

MATCHED

FINAL SAMPLE

$N = 4.938$



$N = 4.538$

Refused to
participate

 $N = 1.150$

No permission for
matching

 $N = 400$

**4.376 individuals
in 236 prison units**

Individuals in open
regime excluded
 $N = 162$

$N = 1.397$



$N = 1.348$

Refused to
participate

 $N = 355$

No permission for
matching

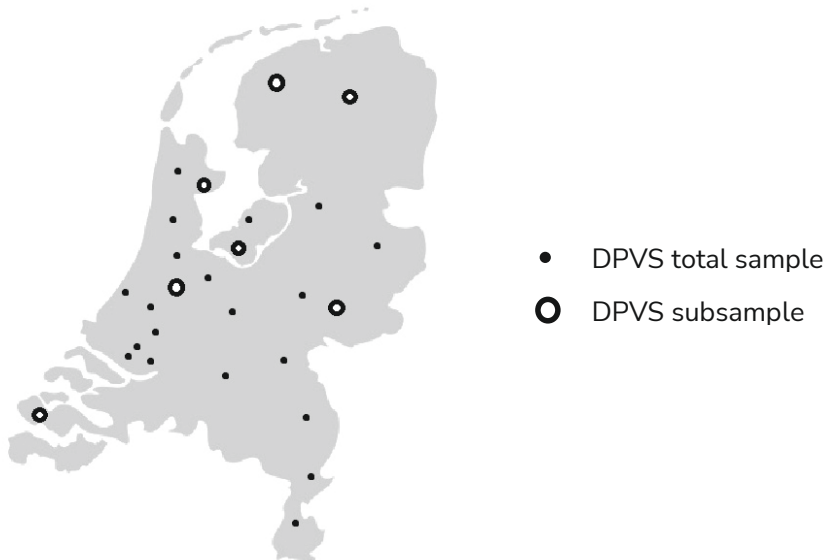
 $N = 49$

**1.235 males
in 53 prison units**

Individuals in open
and persistent
offender regime
excluded
 $N = 113$

The second sample consists of a subsample of DPVS participants, for whom additional prison administrative data on visits were combined with self-report data on visits in the PCQ. This was carried out in eight prisons. While many prisons in the Netherlands have administrative data on visits, not all prisons use the nationwide system (*TULP Bezoek*). Even when prisons do use *TULP Bezoek* to record information about visits, the quality of the information recorded varies enormously. After site visits and inspection of the data, eight prisons were shown to have the most complete visitation data. These eight prisons are spread geographically throughout the Netherlands (see Figure 1.4), located in both urban as well as more rural areas. These prisons house individuals from all regimes, but only house adult males. In terms of cell capacity and staff-incarcerated individual ratio these prisons do not significantly differ from other prisons in the Netherlands.

Figure 1.4 Geographical Location of Prisons from the Two Study Samples



Note. One location included in the subsample has two separate prisons, thus totaling eight prisons.

All individuals in the eight selected prisons between January and April 2017 ($N = 2,095$) were targeted. The procedures for this data collection were the same as described above. Of those eligible, 1,397 agreed to participate and completed the PCQ (common reasons for refusal to participate are the same as above).

Individuals were specifically asked to give permission to use administrative data, such as visitation records, for research purposes; as can be seen in Figure 1.3, most individuals gave permission for matching. Individuals in open regimes were excluded from this subsample for the same reason described above. Additionally, individuals in persistent offender regimes were excluded as they can also see family and friends on furlough. While some individuals in this regime do receive visits in prison, it is not uniformly recorded in administrative records. Therefore, this subsample includes 1,235 males in 53 prison units. For this sample information about visits is available from the PCQ and administrative data. Moreover, specific information is available about the set-up and organization of visits for each of the 53 prison units.

Visitation Data

A unique strength of this dissertation is the use of multiple conceptualizations and measures of visitation to improve our understanding of these heterogeneous events. In total, this dissertation used four data sources to measure visitation. Below, a description is given of each data source.

Legal, Judicial, and Policy Data

To understand how prison visits are regulated in law, policy, and practice (RQ.1), information was collected from several legal, judicial, and organizational sources. The Penitentiary Principles Act provided data about the legal basis of prison visitation. More specifically, Articles 36-40 pertain to incarcerated individuals' contact with the outside world. Policy directives (i.e., more detailed rules about prison visits) were also collected via the Dutch Prison Service (*Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen*) and the websites of each prison. Jurisprudence was collected from the website of the supervisory committee (*Commissie van Toezicht*). All cases that concerned prison visits were investigated (in total there were 51 court cases from 2010-2017). Finally, to fully understand how these regulations were implemented in practice prison staff were interviewed and observations were done in all 28 operating prisons (between November 2016 and April 2017). These data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the broader legal and organizational context of prison visitation in the Netherlands (see Chapter 2).

The Set-up and Organization of Prison Visits

To capture the variety in the practical implementation of visits in Dutch prisons, extra information was collected during site visits leading up to the data collection.

This included visitation forms, “house rules”¹, daily programs, and pamphlets for visitors. These documents provided insight into how visits are arranged in practice for each prison unit. From this information an overview was created per unit on which days individuals could receive visits and at what time. Additionally, it was recorded whether individuals could choose from different time slots. If so, then it was recorded how many options they could choose from. Finally, it was noted whether visits were available in the weekend or evening hours. These data provided an opportunity to explore how visits operate in practice (described in Chapter 2) and to examine how visitation policies relate to whether and how often individuals receive visits in prison (see Chapter 4).

Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ)

The PCQ is a new instrument developed specifically for the Dutch prison climate (Bosma et al., 2020a). This survey includes questions about several dimensions of prison climate, including ‘contact with the outside world’ (Boone et al., 2016). In this dimension several questions were asked about visitation, including whether and how often individuals saw their partner, child, family, and friends in the past three months (or if imprisoned shorter than three months, since entry), how satisfied they were with visits, and their experiences with these visits. A more extensive discussion of these visit measures can be found in the separate empirical chapters of this dissertation (chapter 3 and 5).

Administrative Data (TULP Bezoek)

For a subsample of DPVS participants, visitation was also measured using administrative data on prison visits from *TULP Bezoek*. These data included the following information: date of the visit, the type of visit (standard, conjugal, special family visits, parent-child days, official), the length of the visit, how many visitors came, the relationship between each visitor and the incarcerated individual, and the place of residence of the visitor(s). These data allowed for examinations of how travelling distance contributes to receiving frequent visits in prison (Chapter 4), and how the timing (Chapter 6) and patterning of visits (Chapter 7) affects behavior.

1 These are rules that are given to individuals upon entering the prison which explains, among many things, how visitation works.

Data on Misconduct (CDD)

To understand the effects of prison visits on misconduct (RQ. 4 & RQ.5) data from the Central Digital Depot (CDD) were examined. This system archives all documents concerning incarcerated individuals (including reports on institutional decisions, participation in activities, reports on reintegration activities, and disciplinary infractions). The author of this dissertation and five research assistants analyzed reports on disciplinary infractions. For everyone in the study samples, it was documented whether an individual received a disciplinary report in the six months prior to the data collection (July 2016) to one year after the data collection (February 2018). Subsequently, the type of infraction was recorded. The following categories were used: verbal aggression (includes yelling or threatening) against another incarcerated person or staff member, physical aggression (includes punching, kicking, pushing or fight) against another incarcerated person or staff member, possession or use of contraband (e.g., mobile telephones, drugs, illegal medication, drugs), and general rule breaking (e.g., violating house rules, work refusal, unauthorized absence). These specifications provided an opportunity to investigate how prison visits relate to specific forms of misconduct (see Chapter 5 and 6).

Data on Recidivism

The effect of receiving visits on recidivism (RQ.6) was investigated using data from the Scientific Research and Documentation Center of the Ministry of Justice and Security. These data contained detailed information on registered crimes and convictions and was made available for all DPVS participants who were released in 2017 and gave permission for obtaining administrative data. Recidivism was measured based on whether an individual was reconvicted within six months and up to two years after release. In addition, measures of the seriousness of the offense for which an individual was reconvicted were included. All participants had an equal time at risk using these recidivism measures. These data allowed for an examination of how visitation patterns relate to individuals' post-release offending (Chapter 7).

Data on Individual and Prison Unit Characteristics

As part of the DPVS, data were collected on individual and prison unit characteristics. The PCQ provided information about social relationships *prior* to incarceration. Participants were asked about how much contact they had with partner, child(ren), parents, family, and friends in the three months *prior* to incarceration. These data provided an opportunity to examine how preexisting social ties impact the receipt

of visits and to control for the influence of pre-prison social networks on recidivism (see Chapter 3, 4, and 7).

The PCQ also included questions about several background characteristics, including whether participants had a partner or child(ren), level of education, country of birth, and nationality. Moreover, administrative data from the Judicial Institutions Department (*Tenuitvoerlegging persoonsgebonden straffen*, TULP) were also collected on age, the amount of time served in the prison (both in the prison where the survey was collected, as well as in total), index offense, and incarceration history. TULP also provides information about prison unit characteristics, including the regime, cell capacity, and staff-prisoner ratio. As these individual and prison unit characteristics form important control variables, these data were used throughout all empirical chapters.

1.5 Societal Relevance

As described above, this dissertation aims to improve upon and further our knowledge of the determinants and consequences of prison visitation. This is not just relevant for the scientific community, but is pertinent for correctional policy, practice, and those in the community affected by incarceration for several reasons. First, empirical knowledge on the determinants of prison visitation creates understanding of the factors that contribute to prison visitation. This understanding should lead to an identification of groups of individuals least likely to be visited. These groups can be more intensively connected to other sources of social capital. Moreover, by understanding how these factors simultaneously work more specific policy guidelines can be provided to stimulate and encourage visits from supportive relationships. The measures needed to improve the prevalence and frequency of visits are likely straightforward and cost-effective. Simple remedies such as expanding visiting hours, providing easier access to public transport, and improving visit spaces are relatively easy and less expensive than what is required for other types of prison programming. Such remedies could not only increase visitation, but also relieve partners, children, family, and friends of incarcerated individuals of the costs and unpleasant, intrusive experiences of prison visitation.

Second, empirical research can provide awareness of how prison officials use their discretionary power to organize visitation. This is important for the Dutch Prison Service because various implementations of visitation in prisons may lead to disparity in the receipt of prison visits as some individuals may be more likely to be visited purely based on in which prison they are housed.

Third, beyond the determinants of prison visitation, this dissertation creates knowledge on the effects of receiving visits in prison for life in prison and after release. It gives insight into when prison visits may have adverse or beneficial effects. For life in prison, this should make correctional staff better prepared to react to events that occur during or after visits. In addition, this dissertation provides insight into which types of behavior are affected by visits, both from personal as well as official visitors. All of this helps to identify in which conditions and for whom visitation may result in reductions in offending behavior.

Fourth, empirical research on specific types of misconduct (such as contraband) can also help inform debates about security measures implemented before, during, and after visits. Also, risk-focused policies, such as recent decisions to place security officers in visiting rooms instead of correctional officers who work in the prison unit, can be more critically considered. Moreover, understanding more specifically which visits increase security risks can help in deliberations about how to best implement security measures.

Finally, this dissertation should inform the Dutch Prison Service's recent administrative act 'Providing Opportunities for Reentry' (*Kansen bieden voor re-integratie*) which posited that having a supportive social network is necessary for a successful reintegration. Outcomes of this dissertation should provide more guidance in how to connect more incarcerated individuals to their social network and detail what is needed for these social networks to stimulate prosocial behavior beyond prison walls.

1.6 Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation aims to (1) describe how visitation works in law, policy, and practice in the Netherlands, (2) describe and evaluate the factors that contribute to receiving visits in prison, (3) to test to what extent receiving visits affects offending behavior in prison and after release. Each of these aims is addressed in one part of the dissertation. An outline of the empirical chapters described below is displayed in Table 1.1.

Part I. The Context of Prison Visitation in the Netherlands

To address the first aim, legal documents, jurisprudence, and relevant websites were studied to determine the legal and policy regulations concerning visitation. To understand how these regulations are implemented in practice, site visits and structured observations were done in all 28 operating Dutch prisons. Researchers

also talked to prison staff who were involved with prison visits. Using this information from diverse sources, Chapter 2 details how prison visits are organized in law, policy, and practice in the Netherlands. This chapter also describes and evaluates prior Dutch research done on the determinants and consequences of visitation. Finally, Chapter 2 provides current figures on the prevalence of visits in Dutch prisons and uses bivariate analyses to explore how differences between incarcerated individuals and prisons relate to receiving visits (information about these analyses are displayed in Table 1.1).

Part II. The Determinants of Prison Visitation

The second aim is addressed in Chapter 3 and 4. Chapter 3 explores how social network characteristics and criminal history relate to receiving visits from partner, children, family, and friends. Using survey data this chapter investigates to what extent visits are determined by these individual differences. This is assessed using multilevel logistic regression models. Chapter 4 extends the focus of determinants to not only factors concerning incarcerated individuals, but also visitors and prisons. In this chapter a social ecological framework is used to test to what extent practical, relational, and experiential factors relate to whether individuals receive visits. Moreover, the analyses test how these factors relate to how often individuals are visited and who visits (partner, parents, family, and friends). This is assessed using multilevel logistic and linear regression models.

Part III. The Consequences of Prison Visitation

To address the third aim, Chapter 5 and 6 examine in-prison effects of visits and Chapter 7 examines post-release effects of visits. Chapter 5 focuses on the relationship between the receipt of visits and aggressive and contraband misconduct. Using multilevel logistic regression models, this chapter examines whether receiving visits is related to these two types of misconduct. More specifically, the analyses test whether the visit-misconduct relationship differs across visits from partner, children, family, and friends and the frequency of their visits. Chapter 5 thus investigates differences between individuals who receive visits and those who do not. Chapter 6 zooms in on how visits affect an individuals' behavior. Using a within persons design, this chapter tests whether an individuals' risk of misconduct differs in weeks leading up to visits, when a visit occurs, and in the weeks following visits in comparison to their usual risk in weeks when they do not receive visits. This is assessed using two-level random effects logistic models.

Turning to post-release effects, Chapter 7 investigates how receiving visits in prison relates to post-release offending. Specifically, Chapter 7 uses group-based trajectory models on longitudinal visitation data to identify distinct visitation patterns. Then, this chapter tests how these visitation patterns relate to various measures of recidivism while also controlling for important individual confounders (including demographic characteristics, criminal history, and pre-incarceration social networks) using logistic regression models.

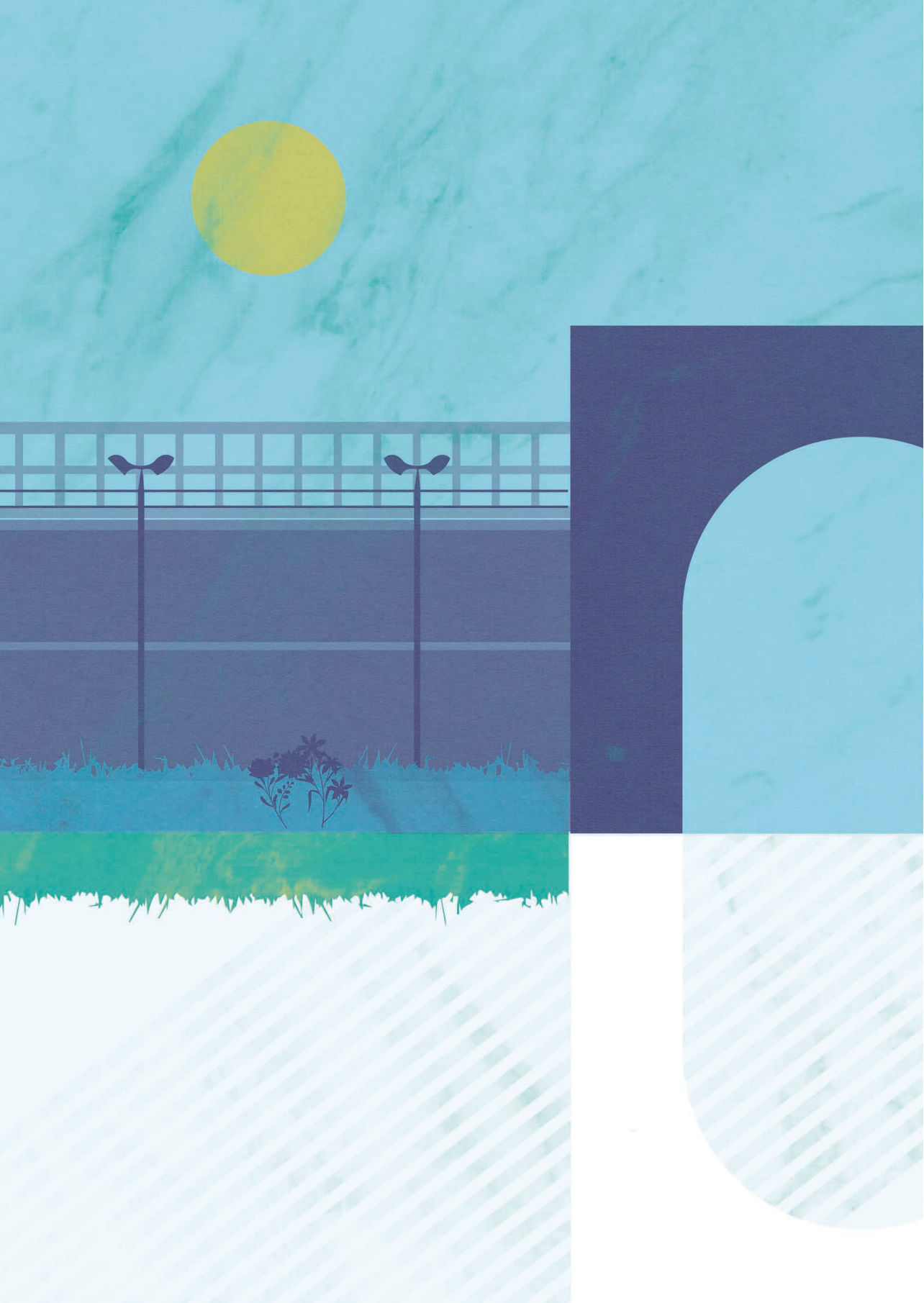
In closing, Chapter 8 presents the general discussion. It summarizes the main findings of this dissertation and discusses them in the context of theory and prior research. Furthermore, the strengths and limitations of the present study will be discussed as well as implications for future research, policy, and practice.

Table 1.1 Overview of Empirical Chapters in this Dissertation

	Chapter	Research question	Study sample DPVS	N individuals	N prison units	Data
Part I. The Visitation Context	2	How is contact via prison visits regulated in Dutch law, policy, and practice?	Total	4,376	236	Legal, judicial, and policy data, and PCQ
	3	To what extent are social network characteristics and criminal history related to receiving visits in prison?	Total	4,376	236	PCQ
Part II. Determinants	4	To what extent are practical, relational, and experiential factors related to whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits in prison?	Sub-sample	773	53	TULP Bezoek, set-up and organization data, and PCQ
	5	To what extent does receiving visits in prison relate to aggressive and contraband misconduct?	Total	3,885	230	PCQ and CDD
Part III. Consequences	6	To what extent does the probability of misconduct change in the weeks surrounding a visit?	Sub-sample	823	-	TULP Bezoek and CDD
	7	To what extent do visitation patterns relate to individuals' post-release offending?	Sub-sample	541	-	TULP Bezoek and recidivism

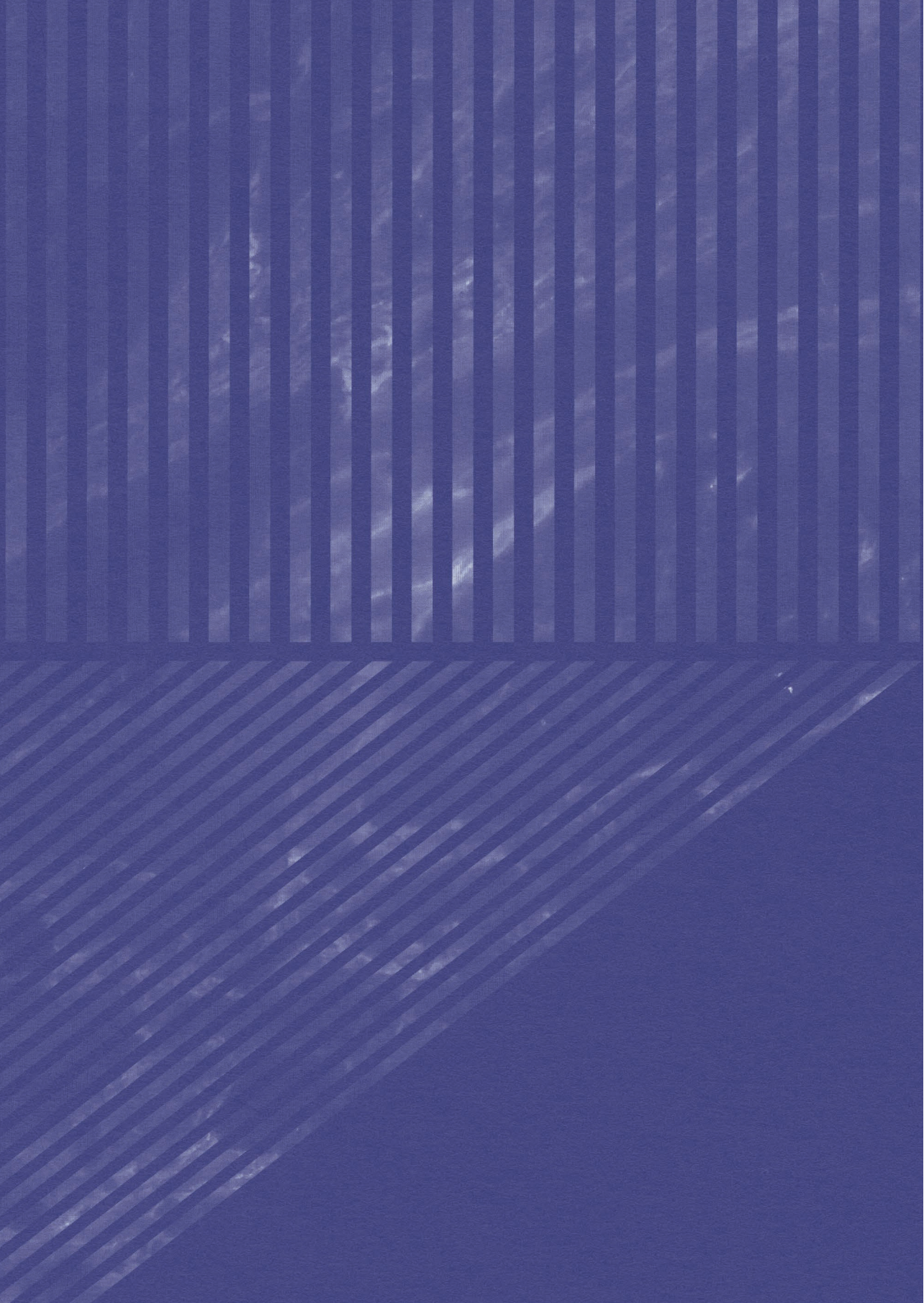
Note. GBTM = group-based trajectory modeling. The sample sizes differ between chapters. Reasons for this are the differences in the source of visitation data (PCQ or administrative data [TULP Bezoek]). In Chapters 2, 3 & 5 PCQ data is used to measure visits and therefore uses the total DPVS sample (see Figure 1.3). Some participants did not have complete data on visit measures; these individuals were excluded in Chapter 5. In Chapters 4, 6 & 7 administrative data is used to measure visits and therefore focuses on the subsample of DPVS participants (see Figure 1.3). Chapter 4 includes individuals in this subsample who were incarcerated for at least one month. Chapter 6 includes individuals in this subsample who were visited more than once in the period August 2016 – September 2017. Chapter 7 includes individuals in this subsample who were incarcerated for at least two months and up to four years and were released from prison in 2017.

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Analytic Strategy
Received a visit from partner, child, family, or friend in the past three months Monthly average of visits	Individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, time served) Prison characteristics (e.g., weekend visits)	Document analysis & bivariate analyses
Received a visit from partner, child, family, or friend in the past three months	Social network characteristics (e.g., pre-incarceration contact) Criminal history (e.g., incarceration history, index offense)	Multilevel logistic regression
Received a visit from partner, parents, family, or friend in the past three months Monthly average of visits	Practical factors (e.g., travelling distance) Relational factors (e.g. family situation) Experiential factors (e.g., emotional experiences during visits)	Multilevel linear and logistic regression
Aggressive and contraband misconduct	Received a visit in the past three months Weekly visits from partner, child, family, or friend	Multilevel logistic regression
Received a disciplinary report (aggression, contraband, and rule breaking)	Weeks leading up a visit, visit week, and weeks after a visit Being visited by partner, family, friend, child, or official visitor	Multilevel logistic regression (within persons)
Reconviction within six months and two years for all and serious offending	Visitation patterns: never, sporadically visited, decreasingly visited, increasingly visited, often visited	GBTM and logistic regression



PART I

THE CONTEXT OF PRISON VISITATION IN THE NETHERLANDS



2

Prison visits in the Netherlands: the current state of affairs

This chapter was published in Dutch as: Berghuis M.L., Palmen H., & Nieuwbeerta P. (2020), Bezoek in Nederlandse gevangenissen: De stand van zaken, *Proces, Tijdschrift voor Strafrechtspleging* 99(2): 110-132.
<https://doi.org/10.5553/PROCES/016500762020099002004>

Abstract

Prison visitation is important for protecting against social isolation during imprisonment. It is also essential for maintaining contacts that are important for life in prison and after release. It is therefore not surprising that both nationally and internationally important policy measures and scientific research have been undertaken on the topic. National research, however, has largely been conducted at a small-scale, leaving essential information regarding the prevalence and frequency of visitation unclear. Meanwhile, in the past ten years great changes have been made to visitation in Dutch prison policy and practice. Given these recent developments prior research is largely outdated and the results that are available have failed to reach practitioners, thus creating a knowledge gap between research, policy, and practice. This article aims to bridge this gap by summarizing findings from the Life in Custody study. This study includes a) a description of how visitation is organized legally, at the policy level and in practice, b) a thorough review of prior research on visitation and, c) an analysis of the most recent national data on the prevalence and frequency of visitation, while considering important individual and contextual differences.

Keywords: visitation, imprisonment, prison climate, prison experiences

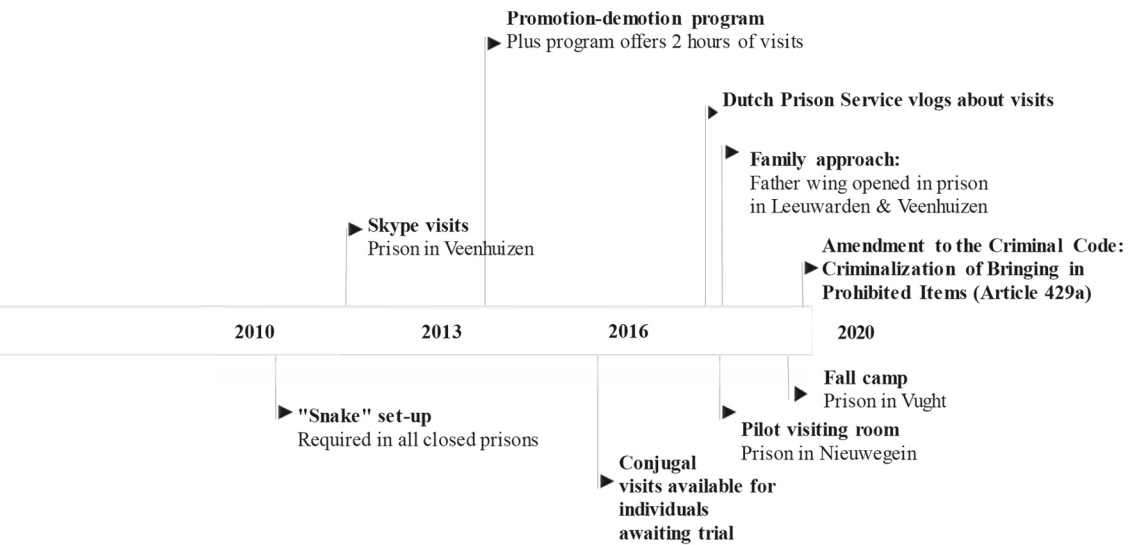
2.1 Introduction

Receiving visits in prison is important to ensure that individuals do not become socially isolated while incarcerated. Moreover, through receiving visits individuals in prisons can maintain and even restore important social relationships necessary for help after release. Currently, both scholars and practitioners recognize the importance of social ties for an individual's well-being during imprisonment and for a successful reentry into society. It is therefore not surprising that countries worldwide, including the Netherlands, have developed policies, practices, and conducted scientific research about prison visitation. Scientific knowledge about prison visits stems mainly from the United States (U.S.). A diverse number of articles have been published about visitation including overviews of visiting practices and policies in the U.S. (Boudin et al., 2014), conceptual frameworks for informing scholars how to best research prison visitation (Cochran & Mears, 2013), and a few systematic reviews about the effects of receiving visits in prison (De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2016). These studies generally show that visits are important for prison life and that visits can have positive effects on life after prison, although not all visits have a positive influence on individuals (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Siennick et al., 2013). Nonetheless, it remains unclear as to whether these results are generalizable to the Dutch prison context.

In the Netherlands, we have limited knowledge about how many, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits throughout their incarceration, how these visits are experienced, and whether receiving visits has a positive effect on the well-being and behavior of incarcerated individuals and their visitors. Prior Dutch studies on visitation have only partially answered these questions (e.g., Janssen, 2000; Moerings, 1978; Slotboom & Bijleveld, 2007). Considering the increased attention prison visits have received in both policy and practice in the past ten years (see Figure 2.1, which uses the Penitentiary Principles Act from 1998 as a starting point), the research that exists is largely outdated. Recent initiatives and pilots concerning visitation could have important implications on the receipt and experience of prison visits, but due to the lack of recent research the possible consequences of these changes in policy and practice remains unclear.

Figure 2.1 Developments in Prison Visitation





The goal of this chapter is therefore to provide an overview of the current state of affairs of prison visitation in the Netherlands. This overview is necessary to develop and implement efficient correctional policy concerning visits and to identify and support vulnerable groups who are less able to maintain connections to their social network. In this chapter, three central questions will be addressed:

- How is contact with family and friends via prison visits organized in law, policy, and practice?
- How many, how often, and from whom do individuals receive visits in prison? Are there differences between individuals and prisons?
- How do individuals experience visits and what are the consequences of receiving visits on their well-being and behavior?

In this chapter we specifically focus on standard visits (in Dutch: *het reguliere bezoek*), meaning visits from partner, parents, child(ren), family, and friends (and thus not those from other organizations, stakeholders, or legal professionals).

The current study is a part of the Life in Custody (LIC) study, a nationwide study on prison climate in the Netherlands. Since one of the factors contributing to prison climate is ‘contact with the outside world’ (Boone et al., 2016), a great deal of attention was paid to prison visits in this study. To provide an answer to the research questions, several methods were employed. To understand how prison visits are organized in law, policy, and practice explorative qualitative research was done. Legal documents, jurisprudence, websites of the Dutch Prison Service (*Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen*), including webpages for each prison, were studied. Moreover, prison staff were interviewed, and structured observations¹ were done in all 28 operating prisons (between November 2016 and April 2017). Then, an extensive literature search was conducted to find all Dutch research on the topic. To ensure a comprehensive search, multiple databases were searched including: 1) electronic databases (such as WorldCat), 2) important Dutch scientific journals (such as *het Tijdschrift voor Criminologie*, *het Tijdschrift voor Veiligheid*, *Justiele Verkenning*, *PROCES en Sancties*), and 3) the Law Library at Leiden University. In addition, reference lists of relevant publications were screened and three Dutch researchers working on the topic were consulted. These efforts resulted in fourteen studies on prison visitation in the Netherlands (for an overview of these studies see Table 2.3). These studies are generally focused on the prevalence and determinants of visits,

1 During the observations in each prison a visit checklist was systematically completed. The checklist included the following topics: requesting visits, systems and forms available about visits, visiting schedules for each unit, set-up of the visiting room, and availability and frequency of special types of visits (e.g., conjugal visits and special parent-child visit days).

experiences with visits, and the consequences of receiving visits. Finally, survey and administrative data from 4,376 incarcerated individuals in the Netherlands were used. These individuals participated in the LIC study and filled in the Prison Climate Questionnaire (2017). This large group consists of males and females, individuals with short and long prison sentences in various regimes and prisons. These data are used to present up-to-date national figures on prison visits.

2.2 Visitation in Law, Policy, and Practice

Incarcerated individuals can see their family and friends during standard visiting hours, conjugal visits, and special family visits. Since the legal basis, administrative procedures, and practices differ for each type, we describe them separately below.

Standard Visits in Law and Policy

According to Article 38 section 1 of the Penitentiary Principles Act (PPA, in Dutch: *Penitentiaire beginselenwet*), individuals have the right to a minimum of one hour of visits per week from family or other persons (this refers to standard visits). This legal minimum applies to all prison regimes, including pretrial detainees. Since visits are a right, they cannot be revoked. However, visits can be limited in particular situations. For instance, the magistrate or the prosecutor can impose restrictions on contact with those outside prison walls. Prison governors can temporarily limit or postpone visits when individuals are placed in isolation due to a disciplinary infraction (Art. 24, section 2 PPA). Prison governors can also temporarily restrict access for certain visitors for a certain period (with a maximum of twelve months) for instance if they were caught smuggling in prohibited items (Art. 28, section 2 PPA). Moreover, for safety reasons prison governors can limit the form of contact, for example that visits must take place behind glass². It is also possible to deviate from this one hour and gain an extra hour of visits. In 2014 the promotion-demotion program was introduced through which individuals in the ‘plus program’ can earn an extra hour of visits each week (Van Gent, 2013). Although all incarcerated individuals have the right to one hour of visits each week, the practical implementation of these visits is determined by prison governors. Thus, how visitation operates differs across prisons, including the way visits are planned, when visits are possible, and how often visits can take place.

2 In maximum security prisons (in Dutch: *extra beveiligde inrichtingen*) visits normally take place behind glass (Van de Bunt et al., 2013).

Standard Visits in Practice

Next, we describe how visits operate in practice based on our observations and interviews with prison staff. The way visits operate in each prison is described in the so-called “house rules” (for which there is a national model). This is a booklet for (incoming) persons which describes all the rules and general regulations concerning visits. Firstly, the house rules describe how individuals can request a visit. In most Dutch prisons, the incarcerated individual is responsible for requesting their visits each week (except for four prisons which allow family and friends to make appointments). Upon arrival in prison, individuals must fill in a form (‘visitor form’) with the names and personal information of 10 – 25 potential visitors. Then, each week individuals fill in a separate form (‘visit request form’) to state which of these visitors is coming and when they are coming. In the four prisons where visitors can plan their visit, incarcerated persons are only required to fill in the visitor form and then the visitors call to make an appointment. For visitors, information is available about visiting hours on the prison website. However, the information is often unclear or outdated. For instance, the general visiting hours are listed (e.g., visits are available Monday through Friday from 9.00 – 16.00), but that can be misleading since individuals have a specific time slot for their specific prison unit. Some recent changes have been made in order to improve the quality of this information. In 2017 and 2018 new information was added to the Dutch Prison Services’ website, with special vlogs showing what visitors can expect when they come to visit. Special videos were also made for children.

In addition to explaining how visits can be requested, the house rules also dictate the times that standard visits are allowed. Since visits are a part of the daily programming, visiting hours are linked to the prison unit as opposed to the prison as a whole. In practice this means that each unit is assigned to specific visiting hour(s) on the same time and day every week. In a 2013 report by the Dutch Inspection Service of Justice & Security, it was concluded that incarcerated individuals were able to receive standard visits in a satisfactory manner (Bos, 2013). That said, some visiting hours were found to be impractical for visitors (for example because visiting hours were planned early in the morning during the week or visiting hours were during school hours). In 2014 the Council for Criminal Justice and Youth Protection decided that the right to receive visits must be effective, in other words, “those who wish to visit incarcerated individuals, should be able to do so” (translated from Dutch). According to the supervisory committee, it is reasonable to have visiting hours between 9:00 and 17:00. Based on our observations, we found that visiting hours varied between prisons, ranging generally from 8:00 until 17:00. Strikingly, most

prisons did not have visiting hours in the weekend, and only a few prisons allowed visits in the evening hours. We also noted that prisons differed in how flexible they were with visiting hours. Some prison governors choose, in light of budget cuts, to only allow visits for instance on Tuesdays and Thursdays to make more 'efficient' use of staff. In other prisons, however, there was more flexibility; individuals could choose from several different days or time slots to receive visits (still the maximum is set at two hours of visits per week, but visits can take place on different days each week). Around half of the prisons (15) allowed individuals to choose between different time slots during the week. This allows for more flexibility to plan in visits.

For individuals who are not from the Netherlands, or do not have family in the Netherlands, it can be difficult to receive visits. To address this, a prison in Veenhuizen began offering Skype visits in 2012 to allow for digital contact with family and friends. In exceptional circumstances (for instance when a partner was pregnant and close to their due date), Dutch nationals could also use Skype visits. In 2017, the prison in Veenhuizen was the only one that offered Skype visits as a regular part of their programming. While digital visits are also possible in other prisons³, it is up to the prison to decide if they want to make these available. The general policy is that Skype is an extra provision that should be used for a specific (group of) individuals and should be linked to a specific (reintegration) goal.

Standard visits take place in the visiting room where eight to 20 individuals can receive visitors. Individuals are allowed up to three visitors per visit, with young children (for example under two years old) often not counting towards this maximum. In most cases, prison staff decide where each incarcerated individual sits during the visit. Some staff members decide to place individuals quite close to each other, to keep a better eye on what is happening, even when the visiting room is not full. Other staff members allow individuals to sit further apart from each other, giving them a bit more privacy during the visit. Due to safety and security issues, all (closed) prisons have a visiting room with the so-called snake set-up (also referred to as the 'British hose', see Parliamentary Documents II, 2008/09, 31110, 8). The snake splits the visiting room in two using one consecutive table. The tables are closed at the bottom and have a low separating wall on the top. Visitors sit on the one side and incarcerated individuals on the other side (normally the inside of the snake). In this way there is a clear distinction between the incarcerated individual and the visitor(s). The snake was introduced for two main reasons: 1) to prevent

3 During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital visits were widely available since standard (in-person) visits were not possible. Prison officials seemed willing to keep these intact even after the pandemic, as an extra provision.

any risks of mistaken identity and 2) to prevent prohibited items (i.e., contraband) from getting into prison. While the snake may help lower these safety risks, it can be experienced as a hindrance by forming a physical barrier between individuals and their visitor(s). In light of this, a research pilot was conducted in the Nieuwegein prison to examine whether a different set-up may improve the visit experience. In contrast to the snake, one visiting room was furnished with a mix of high and low tables with different seating options (e.g., couches and bar stools). A play corner for children was also added and individuals and their visitors were offered coffee and tea during the visit. All these changes were made to try and create more natural contact between individuals and their visitors.

In the standard visiting rooms physical contact is limited to brief contact (i.e., a hug or kiss) at arrival and when saying goodbye. In some prisons young children are allowed to be passed over and held by the incarcerated person. The length of this contact depends on the staff member and the situation. Since visiting hours can be long for young children, most prisons offer some toys or coloring books. There are also restrooms available for visitors, although they are generally not allowed to be used during or after visiting hours. In the past, vending machines were often available in the visiting room so that individuals and their visitors could eat or drink something together, but during our observation period most vending machines had been taken away due to security issues.

In our conversations with prison staff, the prevention of contraband and other security risks (such as mistaken identity) appeared to be one of their greatest concerns. Many measures are taken before, during, and after visits to lower such security risks. For example:

- Entry controls: personal identification is checked and registered; visitors must go through a metal detector and bags are checked
- Clothing restrictions in the visiting room: both for visitors (for example, no jackets, bags, or hats) and incarcerated individuals (for example, no sweatpants, hats, jackets, scarves, shorts, watches, or jewelry)
- Drug dogs: these are randomly used in visitor waiting areas
- Surveillance: through security staff and cameras during visits
- Physical checks: after visits, incarcerated individuals can be patted down or (randomly) strip searched

Until recently, visitors who were caught smuggling in contrabands could be suspended from visiting for up to twelve months. In 2019, bringing prohibited items into prison, including seemingly benign items such as cell phones, became a criminal

act in the Netherlands (Amendment to the Criminal Code: Criminalization of bringing in prohibited items, Article 429a). Incarcerated individuals can also get punished for possession or use of contrabands (a common punishment is several days in own cell without television and programming).

Conjugal Visits

Next to standard visits, adults in Dutch prisons can also receive conjugal visits if they meet the following criteria, as described in Article 3.8.1. in the national model for penitentiary house rules: a) individuals must have a consecutive stay of at least six months in one or more normal security prison, b) the visit makes a reasonable contribution to maintaining or strengthening the relationship between the individual and visitor, c) the relationship is durable and strong, according to the prison governor and, d) the visit does not endanger the investigation or prosecution of the offenses for which the individual is suspected or convicted. These criteria went into effect as of December 1st, 2015, meaning that individuals in pretrial detention can also receive conjugal visits. Conjugal visits are not only meant for romantic relationships, but also for strengthening the relationship between parents and their child(ren). In such cases these visits are called ‘relationship promoting visits’ or ‘visits with limited supervision’.

Similar to standard visits, conjugal visits must also be requested. There is a separate form for conjugal visits that must be filled in by the incarcerated individuals and, in some cases, the visitor. The prison governor then decides based on the aforementioned criteria if the individual may receive conjugal visits and for how long. An examination of the jurisprudence concerning prison visits shows that most cases concern conjugal visits. Of the 51 cases listed on the website of the supervisory committee (*Commissie van Toezicht*) about prison visits, 27 concerned conjugal visits. Most of the cases are about denied requests due to not meeting all criteria (such as not having stayed long enough in a normal security prison or unable to provide enough proof that the relationship is durable). The fact that so many cases concern conjugal visits is likely because conjugal visits are not a right but a decision of the prison governor, for which they are given substantial discretionary power.

When approved, individuals can receive conjugal visits once a month. These visits are one hour long and substitute the standard visit in that week. Conjugal visits take place in a simple room with a couch, bed, shower, toilet, and table with two chairs. Most rooms have an austere appearance and no window(s). Some individuals have stated that they would rather not have conjugal visits due to the austerity of the rooms. These rooms are often close to, or even next to, consultation

rooms for lawyers and other professionals. While these rooms do offer more privacy than the standard visiting room, they are often small and noisy. So-called relationship promoting visits or visits with limited supervision take place either in the consultation rooms or in a special family room. In this way individuals and their families can talk to each other in a quiet space and are given more privacy. Some prisons (for example in Leeuwarden, Veenhuizen, and Zaanstad) even offer special family rooms which are meant to make people feel at home. These spaces provide a more natural setting so that imprisoned parents can easily play and interact with their child(ren).

Special Family Visits

Beyond national legislation concerning visits, European legislation has also led to more special types of visits for incarcerated parents and their children. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that every person has the right to respect for one's private and family life. This is further emphasized in the European prison rules. In particular, rule 24.4 states the importance of being able to maintain family relationships while in prison. Additionally, the Council of Europe has given recommendations concerning parents in prison (Reef & Schuyt, 2018). To promote a healthy relationship between parent and child, special parent-child visit days were introduced in September 2008 in all Dutch prisons (van der Sande, 2008). Children between the age of six months to 12 years old can participate in parent-child visit days (although some prisons allow children up to 16 years old). These visits vary from being two hours long up to a half day. These visits typically take place on Wednesday afternoons or in the weekend so children who go to school can participate. The number of times these visits are offered differs across prisons, from four times a year to twelve times a year. Parent-child visit days take place in a child-friendly room; the prison gym is often used since there is enough space to be able to play games and do other activities. Most prisons organize these days with volunteers from two organizations: Exodus and Humanitas. These volunteers help during the visiting hour and arrange transport for children (and guardians) to get to the prison. Prison staff are responsible for surveillance and safety during the visits. In our interviews with prison staff, many staff members emphasized that these days are very popular among incarcerated parents and that many individuals use these opportunities to see their children.

Some recent initiatives have specifically targeted incarcerated fathers. Special father-child visits have been set up. During these visits children are brought by volunteers or another parent, but the visit is only for the father and child. In 2018 a

family-oriented project started in the prisons in Leeuwarden and Veenhuizen. This project aimed to help fathers fulfill their role as a parent and minimize the negative impact of parental incarceration for children, which may ultimately help them refrain from crime. Incarcerated fathers interested in this program can apply, and if they meet certain criteria, they can be placed on a ‘father’ unit. This unit runs a different daily program which provides fathers with more opportunities to be in contact with their child(ren). They can use the family-friendly visiting area where they can play with their child(ren) during visits. They also can Skype with their children from their cell to read to them or help them with homework. In 2019 another initiative started in Vught. Exodus (a volunteer organization) planned a four-day fall camp for 15 children and eight fathers in October.

2.3 How Many, How Often, and From Whom do Individuals Receive Visits in Prison?

The second part of this chapter provides figures on how many individuals receive visits during their incarceration, how often they receive visits, and from whom they receive visits. We begin by discussing prior research on these questions and then provide recent figures using data from the LIC study. Besides providing up-to-date information, this study seeks to extend and deepen our understanding of who gets visited in Dutch prisons.

Prior Dutch Research on the Prevalence of Prison Visits

Prior research on prison visits in the Netherlands has examined the prevalence of receiving visits for diverse groups of individuals. This body of work has found that 64% (Janssen, 2000) to 89% (Hickert et al., 2019) of adult males and females received visits in prison. The reported prevalence differed across visitor types. For example, Moerings (1978) reported that 78% of individuals received visits from their partners, while other studies reported lower prevalence (for example, 35% for adult males serving a short sentence, Janssen, 2000). Two studies among adult males showed that fewer, around 50%, individuals were visited by family. In terms of child visits, four studies reported that fewer incarcerated fathers received child visits in comparison to incarcerated mothers (Brouwers & Sampiemon, 1988; Janssen, 2000; Slotboom & Bijleveld, 2007; Wolleswinkel, 1997). These studies show that the reported prevalence differs greatly, depending on the research sample. Nevertheless, the results of these studies indicate that a substantial group of individuals do not receive visits in prison.

Researchers in the Netherlands have provided several arguments for why some individuals are visited and others are not. First, there may be practical barriers to visiting. Interview accounts revealed that visitors often had to travel far to get to the prison and had a hard time reaching prisons, especially with public transport (Braam et al., 2007; Janssen, 2000; Moerings, 1978; Slotboom et al, 2007). In a case study of ten prisons, it was found that visit days and times were hard for visitors to manage, for instance because visiting hours were very early in the morning or during school hours (Bos, 2013). Second, individual characteristics were also named as a reason for why some are visited, and others are not. Some individuals already had little or no contact with family and friends prior to incarceration (Hickert et al, 2019). A persons' criminal background (e.g., type of offense committed and incarceration history) and circumstances in prison (e.g., how long someone was incarcerated) also explained differences between individuals (Moorings, 1978; Janssen, 2000).

Although prior studies have laid an important foundation for our knowledge on the prevalence of visitation in Dutch prisons, still important questions remain unanswered. Since the available Dutch research is largely based on small groups of incarcerated individuals and/or specific populations (such as individuals with short prison sentences or incarcerated mothers), the question remains whether the reported prevalence is representative for the entire Dutch prison population. Moreover, through our examination of policy and practices, it became evident that visits are organized differently across prisons. Research across several prisons could help identify whether these differences impact the number of individuals receiving visits, yet most prior research has been conducted in one or a few prisons. Furthermore, we know little about the frequency of visits. While the prevalence gives an indication of whether individuals receive visits, it is also important to know how often individuals receive visits. This can have important implications for the impact of visits, as more frequent visits could be an indication of stronger social ties which is likely necessary for improved adjustment to imprisonment and a successful reentry. Lastly, it is important to examine whether the prevalence has changed using more recent numbers given the various initiatives in the last ten years.

Prevalence and Frequency of Visits per Visitor Type: Estimates from the LIC study

The LIC study aimed to extend our current knowledge about the prevalence of prison visits and deepen it by examining some of the aforementioned unanswered questions. To this end, data were collected about the prevalence and frequency of visitation from various visitor types (including partner, child(ren), family, and friends) in all operating prisons in the Netherlands (in 2017). Incarcerated individuals received

the Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ), in which questions were asked about visitation. Specifically, individuals were asked how often they saw their partner, child(ren), family, and friends in the past three months (or since the start of their incarceration if they were incarcerated for less than three months).

Descriptive statistics showed that 72% of incarcerated individuals received at least one visit in the past three months. The prevalence of each specific visitor type can be found in Table 2.1. From the individuals who reported having a partner, 71% received at least one visit from their partner. About 51% of incarcerated parents received visits from their child(ren). Just over half of incarcerated individuals received visits from their family (57%), and just under half (48%) received visits from friends.

Table 2.1 National Estimates of the Prevalence and Frequency of Visitation

Visits from	Prevalence of visits		Frequency of visits (number of visits per month)		
	N	%	N	M	SD
Partner	2,383	70.5	1,568	3.49	1.41
Child	2,455	51.4	1,106	2.81	1.69
Family	4,376	57.1	2,119	2.65	1.65
Friend	4,376	48.2	1,760	2.39	1.69

Note. Valid percentages are shown. Partner visits were only calculated for those individuals who reported having a partner. Likewise, child visits were only calculated for those individuals who reported having at least one child.

These national estimates demonstrate that a substantial number of individuals did not receive visits in prison ($N = 1,098$). Although these individuals did not receive visits, that does not necessarily mean that they are socially isolated since there are other ways to stay in contact with family and friends while incarcerated. From this group of individuals who did not receive visits, 80% did report having phone contact with family, friends, or partner, of which 34% said they had daily phone contact.

For individuals who did report receiving visits, the frequency of visits was calculated separately for each visitor type, defined as the average number of visits per month⁴. As shown in Table 2.1, incarcerated individuals were visited by partners most frequently (almost weekly, $M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.41$) and by friends least frequently (on average every other week, $M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.69$).

4 When individuals reported receiving weekly visits from family, this does not necessarily mean that only one person visited. It simply means that in the past three months a family member has visited on a weekly basis.

Next to standard visits, individuals can also receive conjugal and special family visits. To give an indication of the prevalence of these visits, administrative data on visits was used from eight Dutch prisons⁵ since these data are only adequately recorded in a few prisons. This data demonstrated that 24% of adult males who, based on their time spend in prison, were eligible for conjugal visits had at least one conjugal visit⁶. This percentage is higher among those individuals who reported having a partner (40%). The administrative data on special family days seems less reliable as these data show that only 2% of incarcerated fathers participated in these days. Perhaps the current system used for tracking visits is insufficiently used to record these special types of visits.

Differences Between Incarcerated Individuals and Prisons

Since the corrections system comprises of different groups of individuals, and the prevalence of visits varied substantially in prior research, we compared the prevalence and frequency of visits for individuals with different demographic (e.g., age and gender) and detention characteristics (e.g., amount of time served). In addition, we compared individuals in different regimes, programs, and prisons. To test whether these differences are statistically significant, chi-square tests were used for the likelihood of receiving a visit and independent t-tests were used for the frequency of visits.

Demographic Characteristics

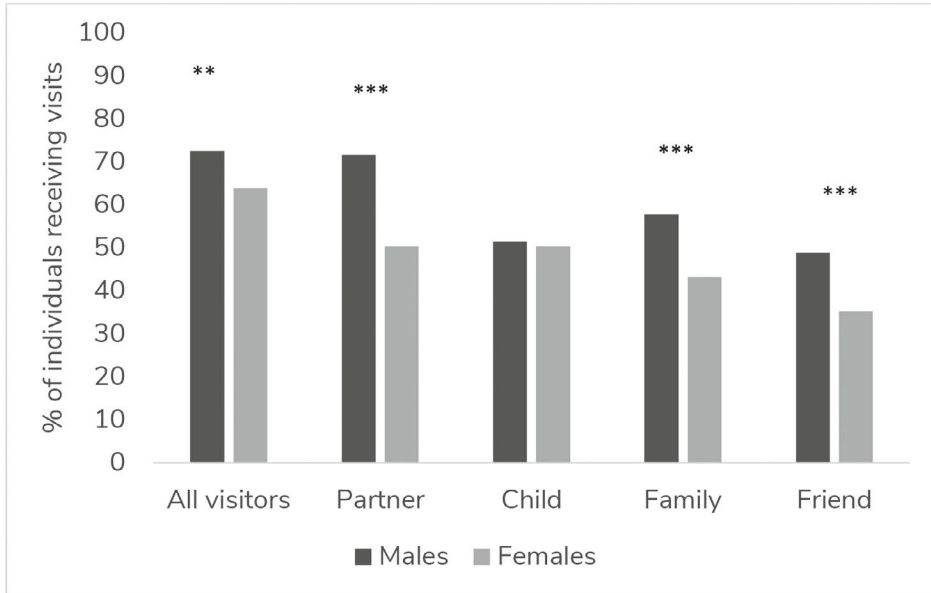
The data from the LIC study shows that the prevalence of visitation is relatively higher among younger individuals (defined as younger than 30) when compared to older individuals (i.e., older than 30). Younger individuals were also visited more often. Perhaps younger individuals are visited more often because they have a larger social network. The prevalence and frequency of visits was also higher among individuals who were born in the Netherlands. It is possible that foreign nationals have family and friends living abroad, which makes it more difficult to receive in-person visits. Finally, Figure 2.2 shows that the prevalence of visits is higher among adult males than their female counterparts (except for child visits). The largest difference between males and females can be seen by partner visits; 72% of incarcerated males who have a

5 These eight prisons are geographically spread across the Netherlands and house adult males in various regimes.

6 This estimate refers to the number of individuals who *could* have requested a conjugal visit and then actually received a conjugal visit. Thus, these estimates do not reflect the percentage of conjugal visits that are granted (I suspect that this number is much higher, but these data were not available).

partner received a partner visit, whereas only half of incarcerated females who have a partner received a visit. No significant differences were found between males and females concerning how often they received visits.

Figure 2.2 How Many Incarcerated Males and Females Receive Visits in Prison?



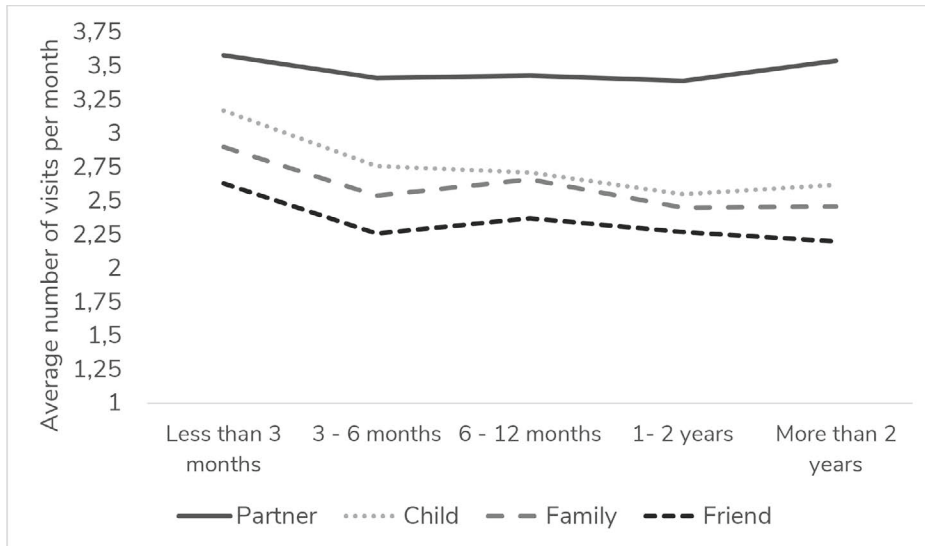
Note. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Detention Characteristics

The prevalence and frequency of visits could also differ depending on the amount of time spent in prison. Our results demonstrate that around 50% of individuals who were incarcerated for less than three months (referred to as short sentences) received visits, whereas nearly 80% of individuals who were incarcerated for six months or longer received visits. It is possible that individuals who serve short sentences choose to not receive any visits since they are only in prison for a short period of time. In terms of frequency, individuals who serve short sentences are visited more often than individuals who serve longer sentences. Perhaps it is more feasible for family and friends to visit often when someone is incarcerated for a short period of time. As shown in Figure 2.3, the average number of visits per month is slightly lower for individuals who are in prison for longer. Yet, for some visitor types the frequency does not seem to differ depending on time served in prison.

Individuals still receive frequent visits from a partner, for instance, even when they are incarcerated for a long time.

Figure 2.3 Frequency of Visits Based on Time Served



We also examined differences in visitation prevalence and frequency based on whether an individual was incarcerated for the first time or had already been incarcerated several times. Our findings demonstrate small differences based on incarceration history; 78% of individuals who were incarcerated for the first time were visited, whereas 75% of individuals who were incarcerated for the second time were visited. Only 61% of individuals who were incarcerated more than five times received visits in past three months. Individuals who experienced multiple incarcerations were not visited less often by partner, child, and family, but they did receive fewer visits from friends. Perhaps friendship ties are less strong or of a different quality than family ties, such that the relationship is more likely to dissolve when someone is physically absent due to imprisonment.

Regime & Programs

Based on our national data, the number of individuals who receive visits is higher in regular prison regimes (80%) than pretrial detention (71%), which held true for all visitor types (partner, child, family, and friends). One possible explanation is that individuals in regular prison regimes can have an extra hour of visits through the plus program. For other regimes (including extra care, police arrestees, and persistent

offender regimes), the prevalence of visits was 68% in extra care regimes and 67% in persistent offender regimes. Only 52% of police arrestees received visits, perhaps because they are typically incarcerated for very short periods of time (about half of police arrestees are in prison for less than 60 days, see de Looft et al., 2018). Minimal differences were found for the frequency of visits between the different regimes.

Through the promotion-demotion program, visits are used as a behavioral incentive. If individuals met certain requirements, they can receive an extra hour of visits. Using data from the LIC study we compared how many individuals in the basic program versus the plus program received visits and how often they were visited. As shown in Table 2.2, the prevalence of visitation in general, and across all visitor types is relatively higher among individuals in the plus program. Contrary to expectation, the reported frequency of visits does not differ between individuals in the basic and plus program. This may be because, even if individuals can receive a second hour of visits, it is not necessarily feasible for visitors to come twice a week. It is also possible that individuals have longer visits but not necessarily more visits (by having two consecutive hours of visits, rather than having two separate visits); although we were unable to make this distinction in our survey data. Taken together, the results show that granting individuals an extra hour of visits does relate to more individuals being visited, but not necessarily more frequent visits.

Table 2.2 Prevalence and Frequency of Visitation by Program

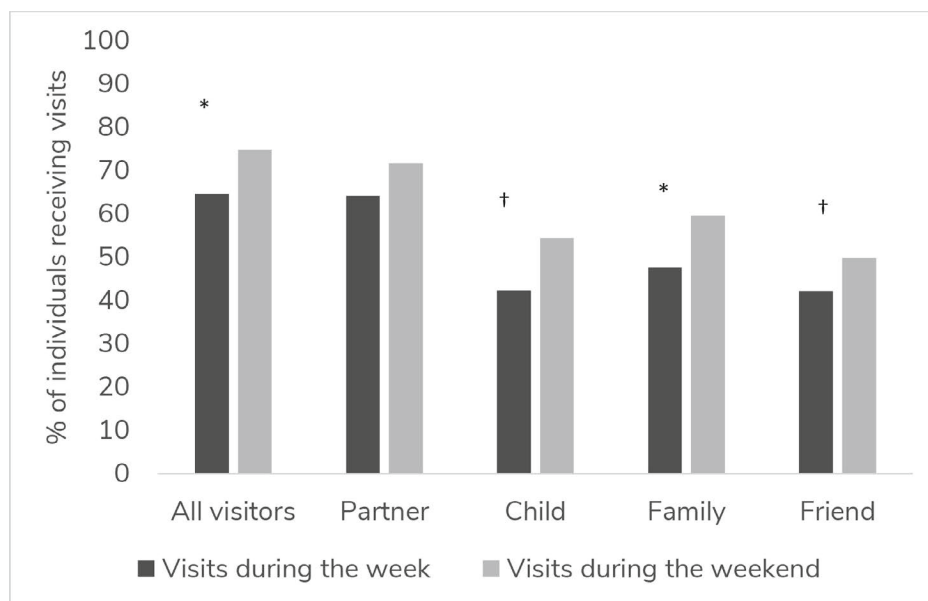
	Basic program N = 2,939	Plus program N = 1,381	
Prevalence	%	%	Sig.
Visits from			
Anyone	66.9	83.4	***
Partner	65.7	80.4	***
Child	44.5	63.9	***
Family	51.4	69.3	***
Friend	42.8	59.4	***
Frequency	N = 1,763 M (SD)	N = 1,079 M (SD)	
Partner	3.45 (1.16)	3.57 (1.73)	
Child	2.78 (1.48)	2.84 (1.91)	
Family	2.67 (1.49)	2.62 (1.86)	
Friend	2.40 (1.50)	2.38 (1.94)	

Note. *** $p < .001$

Prisons

When we compare the number of individuals who receive visits across prisons, we find that the prevalence of visitation per prison varies from 45% to 87%. This is also true for the different types of visitors, especially child visits. In a few prisons only 20-30% of incarcerated parents received a visit from their child(ren), while in other prisons this number was much higher (around 70%). Also, the number of individuals who receive visits is substantially higher in prisons that offer weekend visits when compared to prisons that only have visiting hours during the week (see Figure 2.4). As can be seen, these differences were significant for child, family, and friend visits. Only the prevalence of partner visits did not seem to be related to whether weekend visits were available.

Figure 2.4 Prevalence of Visitation for Prisons with Visiting Hours During the Week ($n = 8$) Versus in the Weekend ($n = 11$)



Note. This information was only available for 19 of the 28 prisons.

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$

Differences between prisons were minimal when it comes to how often individuals were visited by partner or child(ren). However, in a few prisons incarcerated individuals were visited more often by family and friends. For example, in one prison, individuals received on average 2.13 family visits per month, whereas in another prison individuals received on average 3.19 family visits per month. These

differences may be due to the flexibility in visitation regulations concerning visiting hours. For example, individuals can choose from different time slots. That said, bivariate analyses indicate that visitation regulations are mainly related to a higher prevalence of visits, but not necessarily to higher frequencies. Perhaps more consequential for frequency is the location of the prison. The prisons with the lowest levels of frequency were outside of the ‘Randstad’, a conurbation in the Netherlands, consisting of the four largest cities (Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht) and their surrounding areas. Prisons within or close to the Randstad had much higher average frequencies across all visitor types. While robust research is needed to understand whether and how travelling distance and accessibility impact the receipt of visits, these findings at least suggest that practical barriers may be important for how often individuals receive visits (see also Clark & Duwe, 2017; Cochran et al., 2016).

2.4 How do Individuals Experience Prison Visits and What Consequences do Visits Have on Individuals’ Well-being and Behavior?

As illustrated in the previous section, receiving visits in prison is not self-evident. Even when individuals receive visits, their experiences can be very diverse which may have implications for visits’ effects. Several criminological theories suggest that visitation experiences are important for understanding how and why visits affect behavior in prison (such as well-being and misconduct) and after release (such as recidivism and social support during the reentry process). Few studies exist that have explored visitation experiences in Dutch prisons and investigated the possible consequences of these visits (see Table 2.3 for an overview). The results of these studies will be described below.

Visitation Experiences

Research based on interview accounts with incarcerated individuals indicate that, while incarcerated individuals enjoy receiving visits (Beyens et al., 2013; Janssen, 2000), practical challenges hinder these visits. In a case study of ten prisons, it was found that visiting days and times did not match up with visitors’ schedules. For example, some visiting hours were inconvenient for visitors as they were very early or during school hours (Bos, 2013). Other studies report that visitors often have to travel far to get to the prison, and that the prisons are difficult to reach with public transport (Braam et al., 2007; Janssen, 2000; Moerings, 1978; Slotboom & Bijleveld,

2007). Incarcerated individuals also indicated that visiting hours were limited and often cut short as they were commonly called too late to go to the visiting room (Moerings et al., 2008).

Table 2.3 Overview of Prior Dutch Research on Prison Visitation

Author, year	N	Sample	Data
Moerings, 1978	200	Incarcerated males	Interviews during and after incarceration
Brouwers & Sampiemon, 1988	107	Incarcerated females	Interviews
Wolleswinkel, 1997	-	Incarcerated mothers	Legal and literature study
Holwerda, 1997	9	Incarcerated fathers	Interviews & survey
Janssen, 2000	100	Males with short prison sentences	Interviews during and after incarceration
Braam et al., 2007	24	Incarcerated mothers	Case study, interviews & expert meeting
Slotboom & Bijleveld, 2007	109	Incarcerated females in Ter Peel & Nieuwersluis prisons	Survey & interviews
Moerings et al., 2008	297	Incarcerated males and females	Content analysis of letters
Slotboom et al., 2008; 2009	251	Incarcerated females	Survey
Beyens & Boone, 2013	36	Belgian adults incarcerated in Tilburg prison	Survey, observations & interviews
Bos, 2013	10	Prisons	Case study, interviews & observations
Schuhmann et al., 2018	21	Incarcerated males and females	Interviews
Hickert et al., 2019	497	Adult males in pretrial detention	Interviews during and after incarceration

Note. The N for Slotboom & Bijleveld's (2007) study is reported for the survey. From the 109 women who participated in the survey, 28 were interviewed.

Next to these practical barriers, incarcerated individuals also experience barriers concerning physical contact and privacy during visits. One study detailed how women struggled with having little to no physical contact with their visitors (Slotboom et al., 2009). They would therefore prefer to have more opportunities for private visits. Incarcerated males also reported that there was little privacy during visits. Consequently, they avoided discussing certain topics with their visitors (Moerings, 1978; Janssen, 2000). In one study it was even found that prison officers listened in on conversations and sometimes even intervened during visits (Braam et al., 2007).

A few studies examined how visits from specific types of visitors were experienced. A recent article described experiences with volunteer visits in six Dutch

prisons (Schuhmann et al., 2018). This study showed that incarcerated individuals value these visits as they could have intimate conversations from which they drew hope, strength, and self-respect. Two other studies investigated experiences with child visits. Incarcerated mothers in four prisons described the visiting rooms as not child-friendly (Braam et al., 2007). One project which created a child-friendly visiting area for incarcerated males seemed to improve this experience as both fathers and children were positive about the visits (Holwerda, 1997).

In sum, prior studies on prison visitation in the Netherlands show that both incarcerated individuals and visitors find that practical barriers and lack of privacy damper the visitation experience. Similar themes can be found in the international literature about visitation experiences (e.g., Mikytuck & Woolard, 2019; Turanovic & Tasca, 2019). Based on prior studies, however, it is difficult to conclude how generalizable these findings are to the entire Dutch prison population, and whether they are still relevant after several recent initiatives and projects have attempted to improve visitation experiences.

Consequences of Prison Visits

Next to the prevalence, frequency, and experiences of visitation Dutch research has also investigated whether receiving visits has positive or negative consequences on individuals' behavior and well-being. One study found that incarcerated females reported fewer depressive symptoms when family members visited frequently (Slotboom et al., 2009). Moreover, incarcerated mothers showed improvements in psychological well-being when they had more contact with their children (Slotboom et al., 2008). An evaluation of a visitation pilot that aimed to improve the father-child relationship showed that participating fathers had better relationships with their children than fathers who did not participate in the pilot (Holwerda, 1997).

Two prior studies tested the effects of receiving visits on life after release by using longitudinal interview data. Moerings (1978) found that incarcerated males who did not receive visits in prison were more likely to have lost relationships, live alone, and have less contact with family after release. A more recent study by Hickert et al. (2019) found that males in pretrial detention who had received visits from partner, parents, family, or friends during incarceration experienced higher levels of emotional support after release. Receiving visits from partners was also related to living with a partner after release. These results held even after controlling for measures of social support prior to incarceration. This suggests that social contact during prison via visits, and not purely the maintenance of already existing ties, has an impact on social support after release.

2.5 Conclusions and Implications for Policy and Research

In this chapter, we gathered information from legislation, policy initiatives, practice, and scientific research to create a current overview of the state of affairs of prison visitation in the Netherlands. In the past ten years an increasing number of developments and initiatives concerning prison visits have altered Dutch law, policy, and correctional practice. Correctional administrators increasingly seek to find a balance between ensuring safety of incarcerated individuals and staff in prison, while also trying to encourage contact with the outside world. Since 2008, visitation possibilities have been extended (even though the possibilities remain limited). Incarcerated parents have more opportunities to see their children, individuals in the plus program can receive an extra hour of visits, and conjugal visits are also possible for individuals in pretrial detention. Also, more attention has been given to visitors, especially children, as well as incarcerated individuals' experiences during visits. At the same time, several steps have been taken to increase security measures, including the introduction of the 'snake' and the criminalization of bringing prohibited items into prison.

Considering these steps, it is surprising that this important theme of finding a balance between ensuring safety while also encouraging contact with the outside world has received little attention in the scientific literature. Future research should therefore consider whether forms of visits and specific policies increase or decrease contraband infractions and general feelings of safety.

Also, in light of the Dutch Prison Service's goal to help build and strengthen social relationships for a successful reentry, the emphasis on parent-child relationship in policy directives is noteworthy. Although the importance of these relationships is evident, and may indirectly contribute to reintegration, it is also important to encourage other relationships. For a successful reintegration, it seems important to encourage visits from those relationships that help provide emotional support, but also instrumental support (such as finding housing and employment). Currently, we do not know enough about the role of partners and family members in the reintegration process.

Our second research question focused on the prevalence and frequency of visits for various groups of individuals. Dutch research consistently demonstrates that there is a group of individuals that does not receive any visits during their incarceration, although estimates of the size of the group varies. The most recent numbers suggest that around 30% of the prison population does not receive visits.

Several vulnerable groups can be identified: 1) individuals who do not receive visits and do not have contact with the outside world in other ways, 2) older individuals, 3) foreign-born individuals, 4) incarcerated females, and 5) individuals with an extensive incarceration history. In correctional practice, some activities are done to stimulate contact with the outside world (for instance through the Detention & Reintegration plan, volunteer visits, and conversations with the mentor). These activities should be actively targeted to the aforementioned vulnerable groups.

This study also found that the number of individuals receiving visits differed across prisons. We found that offering weekend visits seemed to increase the prevalence of visits, likely because they allow visits to be flexible. When it comes to how often individuals are visited, this study showed that individuals in prisons outside the Randstad were visited less often than individuals in prisons within the Randstad. For prisons outside the Randstad, it may be beneficial to consider how to increase accessibility for visitors. That said, this study found that different policies (such as weekend visits and offering an extra hour of visits), did not necessarily increase how often individuals received visits. These policies were mainly related to higher visit prevalence (i.e., that more individuals were visited). Future research should, therefore, investigate whether and how access to prisons impacts individuals' access to social ties. Such studies could provide important insight into policies concerning placing individuals in prisons in their respective regions.

The third research question focused on visitation experiences and visits' effects. Prior research among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands showed that most individuals like to receive visits, but the lack of privacy and physical contact during visits adversely impacts their visitation experience. Receiving visits does seem to be related to improvements in well-being during imprisonment and has positive effects after release, but this has received little attention in the literature. More research is needed to establish how visits relate to incarcerated individuals' well-being and behavior both during and after imprisonment. International research emphasizes that visitation is a heterogeneous experience and can have both beneficial and adverse effects on incarcerated individuals and their reintegration process.

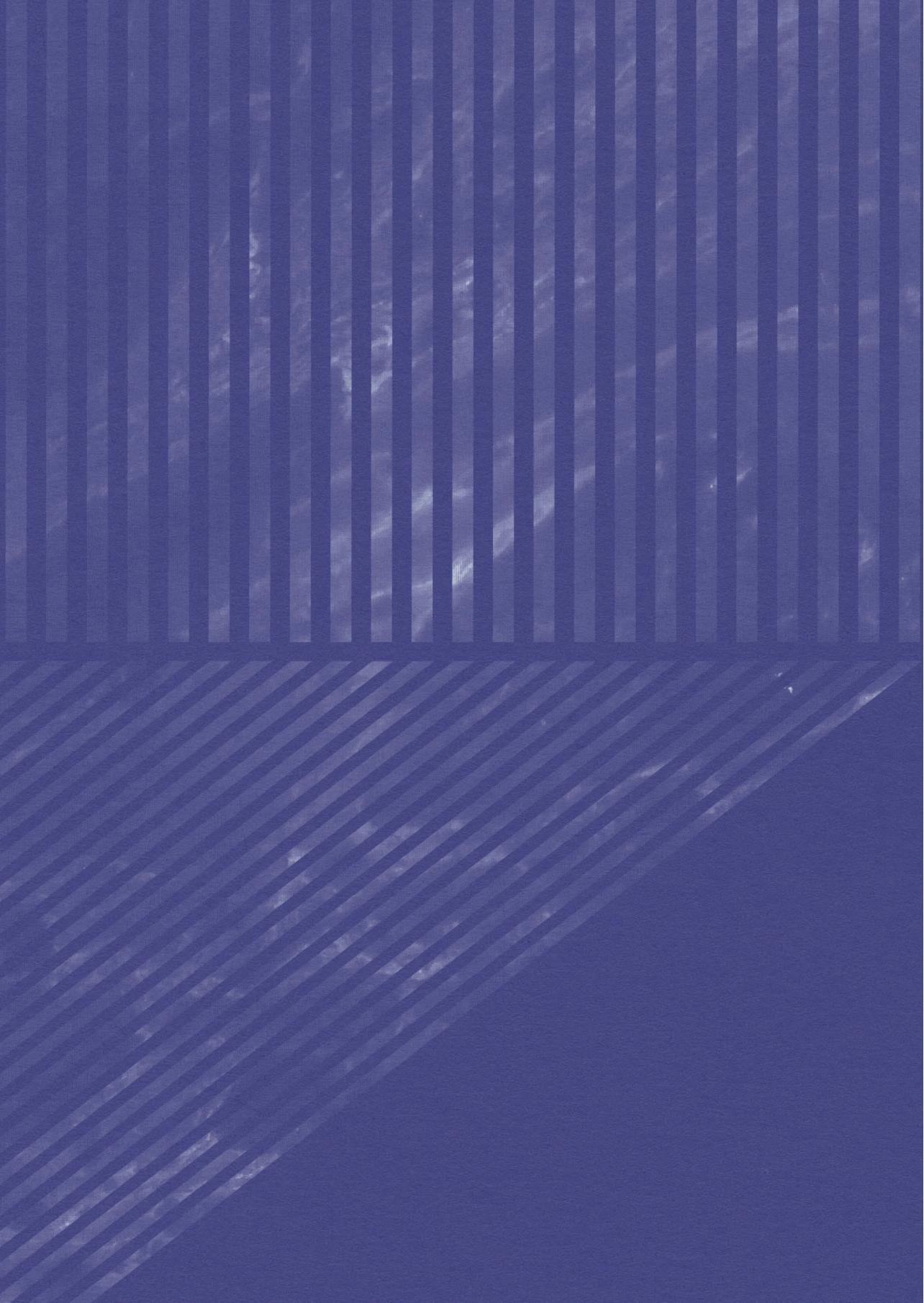
Several important questions thus remain unanswered in both national and international literature on visitation. As part of the LIC study, a recent project has begun to examine prison visitation from different perspectives and in all its variety. The Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS) focuses on several aspects of visits, including the determinants and consequences of visitation, as well as the heterogeneity of visitation experiences in relation to preparing for release and behavior during and after imprisonment. For the latter, the PCQ was distributed to

all incarcerated adults in 2019. Also, surveys were given to visitors and professionals. By including more actors we can gain even more insight into the importance of visits for the lives of incarcerated individuals during imprisonment and in preparation for release (for example, concerning access to healthcare, having a valid ID, tackling financial problems, acquiring housing and employment, and establishing and maintaining supportive relationships). Through the unique collaboration between the Dutch Prison Service and prisons, the DPVS intends to bridge the gap between visitation research and practice.



PART II

THE DETERMINANTS OF PRISON VISITATION



3

The prevalence and determinants of visits from partner, child(ren), family, and friends in Dutch prisons: the role of social networks and criminal history

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Abstract

Scholarship has shown that visitation is an especially important experience for incarcerated individuals and can have a beneficial impact on life after release. Receiving visits in prison, however, is not self-evident. This study uses data from a nationally representative sample of adults incarcerated in the Netherlands ($N = 4,376$) to estimate the prevalence of, and identify determinants for, visits from partner, child(ren), family, and friends. Consistent with expectations from social support theory, results indicate that having a strong social network is associated with visitation. Individuals who are older, have a non-Western background, and have short prison stays are less likely to be visited. Unexpectedly, the type of offense and incarceration history were less predictive of prison visits, although results differed across visitor types. Implications of these findings for prison administrators and research are discussed.

Keywords: visitation, prison experiences, social ties

3.1 Introduction

Individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands have the right to receive one-hour visits per week. This right is important as visits are one of the only ways individuals can have contact with family and friends while incarcerated and maintain, restore, or even improve their relationships. These relationships are important for individuals' well-being in prison and for life after release. Scholarship has shown that individuals who receive visits in prison are more likely to find employment or housing after release (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017), experience emotional support in the turbulent times after release (Hickert et al., 2019), and are less likely to return to prison (Mitchell et al., 2016) in comparison to individuals who do not receive visits while incarcerated. Moreover, individuals who receive visits are also less likely to be socially isolated after release (Cochran & Mears, 2013; Moerings, 1978). In sum, maintaining existing relationships through visits during incarceration seems important for a successful reintegration.

Despite these potential benefits, receiving visits in prison is not self-evident. Prior research in Dutch prisons show that a substantial number of incarcerated individuals – around 36% (Janssen, 2000) – do not receive visits. Similar numbers have been found in other countries (Cochran et al., 2017; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012), however there are differences from whom individuals were likely to receive visits. For example, scholars have found that half of adult males in pretrial detention in the Netherlands do not receive visits from their family (Hickert et al., 2019; Janssen, 2000) and 35% of individuals serving short sentences do not receive visits from their partner in prison (Janssen, 2000). Also, more than half of incarcerated parents do not receive visits from their children while incarcerated (Brouwers & Sampiemon, 1988; Janssen, 2000). Thus, not every individual in prison receives visits and the prevalence of visits differs across relationships.

Given the importance of receiving visits in prison for life during incarceration and after release, it is critical to identify who receives visits in prison and to understand which factors contribute to receiving visits. Knowledge about these factors can help correctional officials facilitate visits, which could ultimately increase the prevalence of visits in prisons. At the same time research examining who gets visited can establish differences between individuals and identify vulnerable groups. The goal of this study therefore is to understand the determinants of visitation in Dutch prisons.

Prior empirical studies have provided important insights into which factors are associated with prison visits. Well-known studies in the Netherlands on this topic

were conducted in the 1970s and generally examined how criminal history (such as index offense and incarceration history) can explain variations in visits. International research, which heavily relies on prison administrative data, generally has focused on practical barriers to visits (such as how travelling distance impacts receiving visits, see Clark & Duwe, 2017, Sturges & Al-Khattar, 2009) and how individual (demographic) characteristics can explain why some individuals do not receive visits (Cochran et al., 2017; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012).

Recently, scholars have focused on improving our understanding of who gets visited in prison. For example, individual differences in pre-incarceration social capital likely influences who gets visited (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018 Hickert et al., 2019). Studies suggest that individuals with a smaller social network are less likely to receive visits than those who have a larger social network (Cochran 2017, Stacer, 2012, Tewksbury 2012). Also, individuals with a weak social network (for instance those who did not have frequent contact with family or friends prior to incarceration) probably are less likely to receive visits than individuals who have strong relationships. These important differences in social support prior to incarceration have yet to be explored in large-scale studies concerning the receipt of visits (see Chapter 2).

In recent years there has been a considerable number of developments in Dutch prison policies and practice concerning visitation. The importance of prison visits, and by extension the maintenance of social networks, has been increasingly recognized as evidenced by the increase in initiatives to stimulate and encourage prison visits (for example the family approach project). Existing research on prison visitation in the Netherlands dates from well before these developments. Moreover, these studies have generally been done on a small scale, are mainly descriptive, and have focused on specific populations, such as males serving short-term sentences (Janssen, 2000), incarcerated mothers (Wolleswinkel, 1997) or males in pretrial detention (Hickert et al., 2019). Against this backdrop, the goal of this study is twofold: 1) to provide up-to-date figures on how many individuals receive visits in Dutch prisons and from whom they receive visits, 2) to examine how social network characteristics and criminal history are associated with receiving visits in prison.

Who Gets Visited in Prison: Theory & Prior Research

The theoretical basis for this study can be found in social support (Lin, 1986 & Cullen, 1994) and labeling theory (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963). According to social support theory, some individuals are more likely to receive visits since they have a stronger social network. Developing and maintaining relationships in prison is

difficult. Practically it can be quite challenging for visitors to come to visit as they often have to travel far to get to the prison, take time off work, and endure financial costs. Despite these challenges, some family and friends do visit. It can be assumed that those who are close to the incarcerated individual (i.e., had a lot of contact prior to incarceration) are most likely to respond to their requests for help and support them, even if it is costly or requires effort (Vaux, 1998).

Recent research indeed shows that individuals who had strong relationships prior to incarceration were also more likely to receive visits in prison (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Hickert et al., 2019). American research, however, does suggest that this mainly applies to familial relationships, especially partners (Arditti, 2003; La Vigne et al., 2016). These are important relationships, as individuals often rely on spouses or family members after release (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017). It is therefore important to consider an individuals' social network, especially their family situation, when studying the receipt of visits. In sum, existing social relationships – and then primarily the strength of relationships prior to incarceration – are important predictors of whether individuals receive visits in prison.

Research on prison visits in the Netherlands has generally relied on notions from the labeling theory to explain differences in visitation likelihoods. Arguments stemming from this theory suggest that some individuals may not receive visits due to the stigmatizing effect of their criminal history. While all incarcerated individuals can experience stigmatization, some individuals face additional discrimination or stigmatization from their social contacts due to the criminal offense(s) they have committed (Goffman, 1963), and consequently, may receive fewer visits in prison. Incarceration history (i.e., how often someone has been imprisoned) and the current situation (i.e., how long someone must serve time in prison and for what kind of offense) are also expected to play a role in receiving visits in prison.

For example, prior work has demonstrated that sex offenders are visited less often than other offenders (Cochran et al., 2015). Scholars have indicated that perpetrators of certain crimes, such as sex offenses, are often seen as monstrous or dangerous (Tewksbury, 2014) and that the stigma surrounding these offenses are stronger in comparison to other offenses. Moerings (1978) proposed in his doctoral research that some social ties can even be entirely severed as a result of the committed crime. His research also shows that people react differently when someone is incarcerated for the first time versus having been incarcerated multiple times. People are more likely to show empathy or offer support when someone is incarcerated for the first time (Moorings, 1978). Moreover, the length of the imprisonment can also impact the maintenance of social ties. Since long sentences

are often imposed for serious offenses, people may find a long prison sentence to be more stigmatizing (Moerings, 1978). Therefore, individuals who serve long prison sentences may be less likely to receive visits, but empirical evidence is limited. While some studies find that a long prison sentence is associated with less visits (e.g., Cochran et al., 2015), other studies find that longer prison spells are related to more visits (e.g., Cochran et al., 2017).

International research generally shows that individuals who have committed serious crimes and have an extensive criminal history are less likely to receive visits in prison (see Cochran et al., 2017; Stacer, 2012; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). However, prior research has underscored the importance of considering who is coming to visit. For example, Connor and Tewksbury (2015) found that, as anticipated, sex offenders received fewer visits from friends, but they received the same number of visits from family members compared to other offenders. It can be assumed that shallow or superficial relationships, characterized by sporadic contact (for example friends), are more likely to be affected by stigma than those who are close to the incarcerated individual (such as a partner or mother) (Moerings, 1978). This implies that stigmatizing characteristics may work differently across relationships.

In sum, social support theory proposes that characteristics of the social network (e.g., the amount of contact and family situation) are important determinants of prison visitation, while labeling theory suggests that criminal history (e.g., offense type, incarceration history, and time served) is most important for prison visitation.

The Current Study

The current study aims to extend prior research on prison visitation in the Netherlands by providing an updated account of the prevalence and determinants of prison visits. This study uses national survey data from the Life in Custody (LIC) study (Palmen et al., 2019; Van Ginneken et al., 2018) to provide prevalence numbers for the entire Dutch prison population, including males and females, individuals incarcerated in different regimes, and serving various amounts of time in prison. Following recent international research, we also differentiated between different types of visitors. Using multilevel logistic regression analyses, this study answers the following research questions:

1. How many individuals receive visits in the Netherlands and from whom?
2. To what extent are social network characteristics and criminal history associated with the likelihood of receiving visits in prison?
3. To what extent do these factors differentially relate to visits from partner, child(ren), family and friends?

Since these questions will be answered using data from the Netherlands, we first provide a short description of the Dutch incarceration and visitation context before preceding to the methods and results.

The Dutch Incarceration and Visitation Context

Every year, 33,000 adults enter a Dutch prison (De Looft et al., 2018). In comparison to other countries, individuals are incarcerated for a relatively short time: approximately 60% of individuals are incarcerated for less than three months, and 70% is released within six months. Dutch prisons run different regimes on separate prison units. Regimes include pretrial detention, police arrestees, and regular prison regimes for convicted males and females housed in separate facilities. There are also separate regimes for individuals who are deemed vulnerable due to their suspected crime or psychological health (so-called 'extra care' units) and persistent offenders. Finally, Dutch prisons also have open regimes, which offer more freedom by allowing individuals to work outside of the prison during the day (and hence are only incarcerated at night). The most important difference between regimes is the daily programming that is offered.

According to Article 38, section 1 from the Principles Penitentiary Act incarcerated adults have the right to at least one hour of standard visits per week (meaning visits from family members or friends). With the exception of open regimes, this legal minimum requirement applies to all regimes and prisons. Individuals in open regimes can see their family and friends during their weekend furlough, and consequently, visits are not a part of the programming. Although individuals in other regimes can have furlough, the possibilities are very limited (for example, in closed facilities this is only allowed up to six times a year and in half open regimes once a month). Thus, in all other regimes standard visits are the only way to physically see family and friends more than once a month, and thus, constitute an important part of prison programming. Since the introduction of the promotion-demotion program in 2014, incarcerated individuals can earn an extra hour of standard visits per week (maximally two hours, Van Gent, 2013). This privilege is only available for convicted individuals in regular prison regimes (including extra care units). Individuals in pretrial detention, police arrestees, and persistent offenders are not included in this program, and therefore, cannot earn an extra hour of visits. The Inspectorate of the Ministry of Justice and Security concluded in 2013 that incarcerated adults in the Netherlands were provided satisfactory opportunities to receive visits in prison (Bos, 2013).

Besides standard visits, individuals can also receive conjugal visits in Dutch prisons. Individuals must meet several requirements and, if approved, they can

receive conjugal visits once per month. There are also extra visit opportunities for family relationships. Special parent-child visits are planned from four to twelve times a year. For individuals who are not from the Netherlands, it can be hard to receive visits when their families live abroad. For these individuals, Skype visits are available for specific individuals and only for a specific reintegration goal¹. Beyond visits, incarcerated individuals can also call with family and friends. Individuals must pay for these phone calls themselves, which can be relatively expensive. Individuals can also write and receive letters though these can be checked by prison staff. Prior Dutch research shows that many individuals choose to receive visits to stay in contact with family and friends, even when they are incarcerated for short periods of time (Janssen, 2000).

Since visits are a part of the daily programming, visiting times are arranged per prison unit. In practice, this means that each prison unit has specific time slots to allow for visits. Individuals receive standard visits in the visiting room. Rooms typically hold eight to 20 individuals and their visitors. Individuals are allowed up to three visitors per visit (young children under the age of two are generally not counted towards this maximum). Visitors are not required to go through background screening, but visitors must be registered² and successfully go through entry controls. In standard visiting rooms, individuals may only have physical contact with visitors at the start and end of each visit.

3.2 Method

Participants

This study used data from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS), which is a part of the Life in Custody (LIC) study; a large-scale study on prison climate in Dutch prisons (Palmen et al., 2019; Van Ginneken et. al, 2018). The Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ, Bosma et al., 2020) was used to measure how individuals in various regimes experience their incarceration; these survey data were matched (with permission) to administrative data on individual-level demographic and criminal characteristics.

The DPVS targeted the full population of male and female persons, in all regimes, who were incarcerated between January and April 2017 in one of the 28 operating Dutch

1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, video visits became available in all Dutch prisons. At the time of this research (2017), that was not the case.

2 Incarcerated individuals fill in a list of personal information for all potential visitors (the so-called 'visitors form' for 10-15 persons).

prisons ($N = 7,109$). In total, 6,088 individuals could be reached³ to take part in the study. Of those approached, 4,938 individuals participated in the study. In total, 4,538 also gave permission to match their survey data to administrative data. Individuals in open regimes were excluded ($N = 162$) since they do not receive visits in prison as they can see family and friends while on furlough. The final sample therefore consisted of 4,376 incarcerated males and females, in various regimes (pretrial detention, regular prison, extra care, persistent offenders, police arrestees and half open regimes). Prior research within the LIC study has shown that this group is representative for the total Dutch prison population (for more details see Van Ginneken et al., 2018).

Measures

This study uses survey and administrative data for 4,376 participants of the LIC study. The PCQ provides information about how often and from whom individuals received visits in the three months prior to the data collection, in addition to information about the social network of individuals and how much contact they had with diverse relationships prior to incarceration. The administrative data comes from a national system that tracks individual-level information (TULP) and includes information on criminal and incarceration history, such as time served, index offense, as well as demographic characteristics (such as age).

Receiving Visits in Prison

Through the PCQ, participants were asked how often they received visits from partner, child(ren), family, and friends in the three months prior to the data collection. A period of three months was chosen since individuals are typically incarcerated for a short period of time in the Netherlands (De Looft et al., 2018). Thus, this time period is relevant for the Dutch incarceration context and also helps reduce recall bias.

For individuals who were incarcerated for less than three months, these questions concerned the time since admission. Answers were dichotomized to indicate whether an individual had received at least one visit (0 = no, 1 = yes). Next to this global measure, we also created indicators of whether individuals received visits from partner, child(ren), family, and friends.

3 Some individuals could not be reached for practical reasons ($N = 548$), for example because they were released during the data collection week. Other individuals ($N = 473$) could not be approached because of language problems, severe psychological problems, or being placed in isolation during the data collection week.

Social Network Characteristics

To gain insight into an individuals' social network, participants were asked whether they had a partner, meaning a relationship that has lasted at least three months (0 = no, 1 = yes). Participants were also asked whether they had child(ren), including biological children, stepchildren, and foster or adopted children (0 = no, 1 = yes). Table 3.1 provides descriptive statistics for all the variables, indicating that slightly more than half of the sample reported having a partner and at least one child.

Participants were also asked on a scale from never to daily about how often they had contact with partner, child(ren), parents, family, and friends three months prior to incarceration. Considering the skewed distribution (most participants reported having at least weekly contact), we decided to construct a dichotomous indicator of contact prior to incarceration (0 = less than weekly contact, 1 = at least weekly contact). Participants had the most contact with partner prior to incarceration, followed by friends, family, and parents (see Table 3.1).

Criminal History

Three measures of criminal history were investigated. First, 'index offense' concerns the offense for which an individual was suspected or convicted for, which included: violent, property, sex, drugs and other. The largest group was incarcerated for a property offense (42%), followed by violent offense (31%), drug offense (17%), sex offense (5%) and other offense (6%). For a small group of participants the index offense was unknown ($N = 585$). Second, 'first imprisonment' indicates whether it is the first time a person has been incarcerated (0 = no, 1 = yes). This was the case for 42% of the sample (see Table 3.1). Third, 'time served' indicates the amount of time between entry into this prison and the data collection. This variable distinguishes between individuals who were in prison relatively short (0 = 0 – 3 months) versus relatively long (1 = more than three months). Table 3.1 shows that 52% of the sample was in this prison for longer than three months, which means for nearly half of our sample the recall period of three months encompasses their entire prison stay.

Control Variables

Several demographic characteristics known in the literature to be important for visitation were included in the analyses, namely: age, gender, and ethnicity. Moreover, we also controlled for whether individuals participated in the basic (0) or plus program (1). This is important to control for since individuals in the plus program can earn extra visits as a reward for good behavior (Van Gent, 2013). Most of our sample is older than 30 (66%), mainly male (95%), and have a western ethnic

background (72%). Around 35% of our sample was in the plus program at the time of the data collection (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics (N = 4,376)

	Prop.	Min.	Max.
Visited by			
Anyone	0.72	0	1
Partner	0.71	0	1
Child	0.51	0	1
Family	0.57	0	1
Friend	0.48	0	1
Social network characteristics			
Has a partner	0.58	0	1
Has a child	0.59	0	1
Weekly contact with			
Partner	0.91	0	1
Child(ren)	0.74	0	1
Parents	0.56	0	1
Family	0.58	0	1
Friends	0.68	0	1
Criminal history			
Index offense			
Property	0.42	0	1
Violent	0.31	0	1
Sex	0.05	0	1
Drugs	0.17	0	1
Other	0.06	0	1
First imprisonment	0.42	0	1
Time served (longer than 3 months)	0.52	0	1
Control variables			
Age (older than 30)	0.66	0	1
Gender (male)	0.95	0	1
Western ethnic background	0.72	0	1
Plus program	0.35	0	1

Note. Indications of whether an individual was visited by partner or child was only calculated for individuals who have a partner (N = 2,383) or at least one child (N = 2,455). A similar calculation was done for weekly contact with partner and child.

Analytic Strategy

To answer the first research question concerning how many individuals receive visits and from whom they receive visits in prison, descriptive statistics were examined (Table 3.1). To answer the second and third research question multilevel logistic regression analyses were utilized. Table 3.2 shows the relationship between the independent and control variables and our global indication of whether individuals received visits (RQ 2). Table 3.3 shows the results of the models for the different visitor types (RQ 3).

Multilevel analyses were completed due to the nested nature of the data (individuals [$N = 4,376$] housed in prison units [$n = 236$]). It is important to control for this nesting as the practical implementation of visits differs across prison units (for example, which times and days individuals can receive visits). Consequently, it is likely that part of the variation of receiving visits can be attributed to (unmeasured) differences between prison units. To control for this clustering and correct for standard errors due to this clustering, we utilized multilevel methods. We use multilevel *logistic* regression analyses because the outcome variables are dichotomous (visited yes / no). The analyses were conducted using full maximum likelihood in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017).

The interclass correlation (ICC) from the empty model (not shown) shows that most of the variance in receiving visits is found at the individual-level (88.8%). The rest of the variance (11.2%) can be explained by unit-level factors. The ICC in the empty models ranged from 7.1% for friend visits to 10.7% for child visits. This suggests that next to individual characteristics, prison unit characteristics play a role in the receipt of visits (albeit small).

3.3 Results

How Many Individuals Receive Visits and From Whom?

Table 3.1 shows that in total, 72% of the participants reported receiving at least one visit in prison. The remaining 28% of the sample did not receive visits in the three months prior to the data collection. Around 71% of participants who reported having a partner ($N = 2,383$) received at least one visit from their partner. Just over half of imprisoned parents ($N = 2,455$) received a visit from their child(ren). Around 57% of the sample received at least one visit from a family member and just under half of the sample (48%) received at least one visit from a friend.

Determinants of Prison Visits

To provide an answer to the second research question, the determinants of receiving visits are examined for our global measure of visitation. Table 3.2 shows that many social network characteristics are associated with higher likelihoods of receiving prison visits. Having a partner or child increases the likelihood of receiving visits. Moreover, individuals who had weekly contact with a partner, child(ren), parents, and friends prior to incarceration were more likely to receive visits than individuals with less contact. This association was strongest for contact with partner. These results are in line with the social support theory which assumes that individuals who have more social ties and strong relationships (measured here in terms of amount of contact) are most likely to be visited in prison. It is striking that this argument does not seem to apply to contact with family. Specifically, the likelihood of receiving a visit was not significantly higher for individuals who had weekly contact with their family prior to incarceration when compared to those who had less contact with their family prior to incarceration.

Next to characteristics of the social network, criminal history was also associated with receiving visits. Individuals who were incarcerated for a violent offense ($OR = 1.14, p < .01$) or drug offense ($OR = 1.64, p < .01$) were more likely to be visited than individuals who were incarcerated for a property offense. In contrast to prior research, sex offenders were no less likely to receive visits than individuals incarcerated for a property offense. The results also demonstrate that individuals who were incarcerated for the first time were more likely to be visited than individuals who had experienced multiple incarcerations ($OR = 1.29, p < .01$). The amount of time served in this prison also had a strong association with receiving visits: individuals who served longer than three months were more likely to be visited than individuals who were in prison for shorter than three months ($OR = 2.02, p < .001$).

In terms of control variables, being young, male and having a western ethnic background significantly increased the likelihood of receiving a visit. Moreover, individuals in the plus program had 57% higher odds of receiving visits than individuals in the basic program. This suggest that having more opportunities to receive visits is associated with a higher likelihood of receiving visits.

Table 3.2 Multilevel Model on the Receipt of a Visit

	Visited		
	B	SE	Exp(B)
Social network characteristics			
Has a partner	0.70***	0.09	2.01
Has a child	0.42***	0.10	1.52
Weekly contact with			
Partner	0.93***	0.15	2.52
Child(ren)	0.49**	0.14	1.63
Parents	0.41***	0.11	1.51
Family	0.10	0.11	1.11
Friends	0.34**	0.11	1.41
Criminal history			
Index offense			
Property	Ref	Ref	Ref
Violent	0.35**	0.12	1.14
Sex	0.25	0.23	1.29
Drugs	0.50**	0.16	1.64
Other	0.19	0.19	1.21
First imprisonment	0.25**	0.09	1.29
Time served (longer than 3 months)	0.70***	0.11	2.02
Control variables			
Age (older than 30)	-0.63***	0.11	0.53
Gender (male)	0.65***	0.19	1.92
Western ethnic background	0.33**	0.10	1.38
Plus program	0.45***	0.12	1.57
Constant	2.45***	0.27	
N	4,376		

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Determinants of Specific Visitors

For the third research question, we investigated whether these determinants differ across visitor types. The results are discussed below for each visitor type and can be found in Table 3.3.

Partner Visit

As shown in Table 3.3, weekly contact with a partner prior to incarceration had, by far, the strongest positive association with receiving a partner visit (OR = 7.15, $p < .001$). Having a child also increased the likelihood of receiving a visit from partner (OR = 1.7, $p < .001$), perhaps because partners accompany child(ren) to visit.

Strikingly, none of the measures of criminal history were associated with partner visits, except for time served. This suggests that stigma may play a smaller role in intimate relationships (which could also be because the partner was already aware of the individuals' criminal involvement before their imprisonment). Individuals who were in prison for longer than three months were more likely to be visited by a partner than individuals who served less than three months. The results also indicate that the likelihood of receiving a partner visit was higher for younger individuals (OR = 0.54, $p < .001$), males (OR = 2.67, $p < .01$), and individuals in the plus program (OR = 1.61, $p < .01$).

Child Visit

The results for receiving a child visit also supports notions from social support theory. Individuals who had weekly contact with their child(ren) prior to incarceration were most likely to receive a visit from them while incarcerated (OR = 7.30, $p < .001$). Perhaps more frequent contact prior to incarceration reflects that a parent had an active role in raising the child(ren). This could also explain why individuals who had a partner were more likely to be visited by children than singles (OR = 2.18, $p < .001$),

Regarding criminal history, the results demonstrate that individuals incarcerated for a sex offense were significantly less likely to receive a child visit (OR = 0.51, $p < .05$) in comparison to individuals incarcerated for a property offense. No associations were found for the other index offenses. In line with expectations from labelling theory, individuals who were incarcerated for the first time were more likely to receive a visit from their child(ren) than individuals with a more extensive incarceration history (OR = 1.48, $p < .001$). Also, individuals serving longer than three months in prison were 77% more likely to receive a child visit than those serving less than three months in prison. It is possible that individuals serving shorter periods in prison decide to spare their children from potential negative experiences of coming to visit. In terms of control variables, individuals in the plus program were more likely to receive a child visit than individuals in the basic program. All other control variables were not associated with receiving child visits.

Table 3.3 Multilevel Models on the Likelihood of Receiving Partner, Child, Family, and Friend Visits

	Partner visit			Child visit		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Social network characteristics						
Has a partner	-	-	-	0.78***	0.11	2.18
Has a child	0.53***	0.11	1.70	-	-	-
Weekly contact with						
Partner	1.97***	0.18	7.15	-	-	-
Child(ren)	-	-	-	1.99***	0.13	7.30
Parents	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family	-	-	-	-	-	-
Friends	-	-	-	-	-	-
Criminal history						
Index offense						
Property	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Violent	0.22	0.14	1.25	0.29	0.15	1.33
Sex	-0.02	0.28	0.98	-0.67*	0.28	0.51
Drugs	0.17	0.18	1.18	0.34	0.19	1.40
Other	0.29	0.22	1.34	-0.11	0.25	0.89
First imprisonment	-0.09	0.11	0.92	0.39***	0.11	1.48
Time served (longer than 3 months)	0.54***	0.13	1.72	0.57***	0.13	1.77
Control variables						
Age (older than 30)	-0.61***	0.13	0.54	-0.10	0.13	0.91
Gender (male)	0.98**	0.29	2.67	0.18	0.18	1.20
Western ethnic background	0.09	0.13	1.09	0.15	0.13	1.16
Plus program	0.47**	0.14	1.61	0.38**	0.13	1.47
Constant	2.31***	0.36		2.99***	0.28	
N	2,383			2,455		

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Family visit			Friend visit		
B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
0.24**	0.09	1.27	0.23**	0.08	1.26
0.17	0.09	1.18	0.01	0.09	1.01
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
0.94***	0.09	2.55	-	-	-
0.88***	0.09	2.42	-	-	-
-	-	-	1.48***	0.08	4.38
Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
0.31**	0.11	1.36	0.14	0.11	1.15
0.63**	0.21	1.87	-0.51**	0.19	0.60
0.26	0.14	1.29	0.37**	0.12	1.44
0.00	0.18	1.00	0.10	0.16	1.11
0.22**	0.08	1.25	0.16	0.09	1.17
0.64***	0.09	1.89	0.45***	0.1	1.56
-0.68***	0.09	0.51	-0.59***	0.09	0.56
0.80***	0.19	2.22	0.75***	0.21	2.12
0.35***	0.09	1.43	0.21**	0.09	1.23
0.46***	0.10	1.59	0.47***	0.10	1.60
2.31***	0.26		2.34***	0.25	
4,376			4,376		

Family Visit

In agreement with expectations from social support theory, weekly contact with parents and family prior to incarceration significantly was associated with a higher likelihood of receiving a visit from a family member. In addition, individuals who had a partner ($OR = 1.27, p < .01$) were more likely to receive a family visit than singles.

For criminal history, the results in Table 3.3 show that individuals incarcerated for a violent offense were more likely to be visited by a family member in comparison to individuals who were incarcerated for a property offense ($OR = 1.35, p < .01$). Also, individuals incarcerated for sex offenses were nearly twice as likely to receive a family visit in comparison to property offenders. No significant associations were found for other offense types. Additionally, the analyses demonstrate that individuals who were incarcerated for the first time were 25% more likely to receive a visit from family than individuals who had been incarcerated more often. Moreover, individuals who were in prison longer than three months were more likely to receive visits from family members ($OR = 1.89, p < .001$).

In terms of control variables, family visits were more likely when individuals were younger than 30 ($OR = 0.51, p < .001$), male ($OR = 2.22, p < .001$), had a western ethnic background ($OR = 1.43, p < .001$), or participated in the plus program ($OR = 1.59, p < .001$).

Friend Visit

The results of the multilevel analyses show that weekly contact prior to incarceration with friends was also strongly associated with whether individuals received a visit from a friend during incarceration ($OR = 4.38, p < .001$). Additionally, individuals who reported having a partner ($OR = 1.26, p < .01$) were also more likely to receive a friends visit than singles.

The results further show that sex offenders were less likely to receive a friends visit ($OR = 0.60, p < .01$), while individuals incarcerated for a drug offense were more likely to receive a friends visit ($OR = 1.44, p < .01$), when compared to individuals incarcerated for a property offense. Moreover, individuals who served longer than three months had 56% higher odds of receiving a friends visit than individuals who served shorter periods. No significant differences were found concerning incarceration history. Finally, being younger than 30 ($OR = 0.56, p < .001$), male ($OR = 2.12, p < .001$), having a western ethnic background ($OR = 1.23, p < .01$), and participating in the plus program ($OR = 1.60, p < .001$) was related to higher likelihoods of receiving a friends visit.

3.4 Discussion

After recent efforts both in policy and practice to improve visitation in Dutch prisons, this study presented current information about the prevalence of prison visits, including prevalence numbers of who comes to visit. Based on theoretical expectations from social support theory and labeling theory, this study tested to what extent social network characteristics and criminal history are related to receiving visits in prison generally, and from different types of relationships. To answer this question, rich survey data from 4,376 males and females incarcerated in the Netherlands were used. This study is therefore the first large-scale, multilevel study on the determinants of visits in Dutch prisons.

Interpreting the Results

The results of this large-scale study show that most individuals incarcerated in a Dutch prison received at least one visit in the past three months (72%). This rate is higher than what U.S. based studies have reported (although visitation rates can also greatly vary across U.S. states) but supports previous research on adults incarcerated in the Netherlands (Moerings, 1978; Janssen, 2000). In addition, the prevalence of visits from partner, children, family, and friends is also similar to prior Dutch studies. This is quite surprising considering the recent initiatives taken to encourage visits, especially from children. The results of this study show that only half of incarcerated parents saw their children in the three months prior to the survey collection.

Three key findings emerged from our analysis. First, having a strong and large social network *prior* to incarceration is associated with whether individuals receive visits. The multilevel analyses demonstrated that indicators of strong relationships, such as having strong social ties, were associated with a higher likelihood of receiving visits (this was true for all relationships). Similarly, having a partner also increased the odds of being visited. This finding is in line with prior research demonstrating that individuals who have a partner generally have larger social networks and more access to social capital (Clark & Duwe, 2017). Our results further support this research by demonstrating that having a partner also increased the odds of receiving a visit from children, family, and friends. Partners therefore seem to be an important link in a social network. Taken together, these results support notions from social support theory which underscore that visits are more likely for incarcerated individuals with stronger social networks. Evidence of this finding was already found among pretrial

detainees in the Netherlands (Hickert et al., 2019) but now these results can be generalized to the entire prison population since the sample used in this study is representative for the Dutch prison population.

Second, individuals who were incarcerated for longer than three months were more likely to be visited than those with short terms of confinement. This result was consistent across all visitor types. While this may be because individuals who have been in prison for a shorter period of time have had less time to receive visits, results indicate that 61% of individuals incarcerated for less than three months did receive visits. Therefore, this argument does not seem to fully explain our results, which is still surprising in light of the labeling theory. In particular, the labeling theory assumes that individuals who have a shorter stay in prison would be more likely to be visited (since having a longer stay in prison would put off a more negative signal than a shorter stay, Moerings, 1978). Both national and international research suggest some possibilities to explain these result (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018). It is possible that when prison terms are short some individuals opt out of visits to save their family practical and emotional hardship. Thus, some individuals may actively choose to not receive visits.

Third, index offense and incarceration history appeared less related to whether individuals receive visits than as suggested by labeling theory. Additionally, prior research also suggests that individuals with more extensive criminal histories and who have committed a more serious offense are least likely to receive visits. The results of this study, however, show that this is only true for certain types of visitors. For example, individuals committed for a sex offense were less likely to receive visits from children and friends but were more likely to be visited by parents (in comparison to individuals committed for a property offense). Also, a more extensive incarceration history was only related to lower prevalence of child- and family visits. Based on prior research these groups were deemed 'vulnerable', but our results demonstrate that these individuals do keep in contact with some of their relationships. Another striking result was that criminal history was not related to partner visits. This suggests that partners visit despite stigma. This may be because partners, perhaps more so than other relationships, were already aware of criminal activity. These results emphasize the importance of examining different types of visitors when studying the determinants of visitation.

Study Limitations

The findings of this study need to be considered in light of a few methodological limitations. This study used a cross-sectional design, which means it is not possible

to make statements about causality. Also, since visits were measured at one moment, it is not possible to examine how visitation patterns change across an incarceration period. Prior research suggest that visits are patterned, differing in timing and consistency (Cochran & Mears, 2013). For example, some individuals are visited a lot at the start of their imprisonment, but as time passes visits may become less frequent. Therefore, future research should be done longitudinally to capture these variations across time, including variations in who comes to visit. This is important as visits in Dutch prisons are limited to one (maximally two) hours of visits, which could mean that individuals must make a trade-off with who comes to visit each time.

Implications for Policy & Research

Despite these limitations, this study demonstrates that a strong social network is important for receiving visits while incarcerated. However, it is not necessarily the case that individuals who do not receive visits have no contact with family and friends. Nearly 80% of individuals who did not receive visits in our sample had contact with their social network via phone. Another 30% also had contact via letters. In other words, the third of our sample who did not receive visits did in many cases have contact with their network outside the prison walls. Nonetheless, international research increasingly supports that prison visits, in and of themselves, are especially important for reentry success (Hickert et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2016). It is therefore important to increase our understanding of why some individuals are not visited in prison. Interviews with these individuals would help improve our understanding of the problems they may face and their deliberations concerning visits. Future research could also focus on underlying sociological or psychological characteristics, such as personality traits, to understand why some individuals are not visited. In addition, more specific information about criminal history, including the circumstances that lead to the imprisonment, could also be interesting avenues for future research. It is possible that offenses committed in domestic settings could have a larger impact on family and consequently, the contact with them in prison. Finally, developments and changes in offending behavior could also improve understanding. In light of the labeling theory, it is possible that individuals do not receive visits because their offenses have gotten more serious. Future research thus should include more detailed information about personal and social context from individuals and their criminal history.

In current correctional practice a strong social network is seen as an important condition for a successful reentry. Therefore, more attention is paid to screening

for problems in this area (such as case managers now ask about the social network in their standard intake screening). Given the results of this study, screening for these problems is an essential first step. Our findings suggest that it may be useful to screen for how recent an individual had contact with family and friends in the months prior to incarceration and the family situation (such as whether they have partner or child), since these individuals are less likely to be visited in prison. Recent initiatives concerning social network could also be intensified for groups identified to be vulnerable in this study, which includes older individuals and individuals with a non-Western ethnic background.

Another striking result of this study was that individual in the plus program (who have an extra hour of visits per week and are given preference for weekend and evening visits) was associated with higher visit prevalence (also for partner and friend visits). This suggests that practical challenges, such as the limited visiting hours, may impede some individuals from receiving visits. More research is needed to know what aspects may create barriers to visits. For example, a report from the Inspection of Ministry of Justice and Security detailed those visiting hours and days did not match well with visitors' schedules (Bos, 2013). Comprehensive research could provide insight into these practical barriers.

Another way to examine how prison policies influence how many individuals receive visits is to do comparative research. An interesting case study could be a comparison of visit rates between the Netherlands and Belgium, since Belgian penitentiary laws allow more visits than Dutch laws. Individuals in pretrial detention in Belgium can receive visits every day and convicted individuals have the right to three visits per week (of which at least one must be available in the weekend or on a Wednesday afternoon so that children who go to school are able to visit, Belgian Penitentiary Principles Act, Article 58). Even though not all Belgian prisons are able to implement these rules in practice (Eechaudt, 2017), it would be interesting to compare visitation rates in these two countries to see whether there is further evidence for increased visit possibilities being related to higher prevalence. Quantitative research on prison visitation in Belgium is rare due to difficulties in obtaining prison administrative data (Beyens et al., 2014), which makes it challenging to compare.

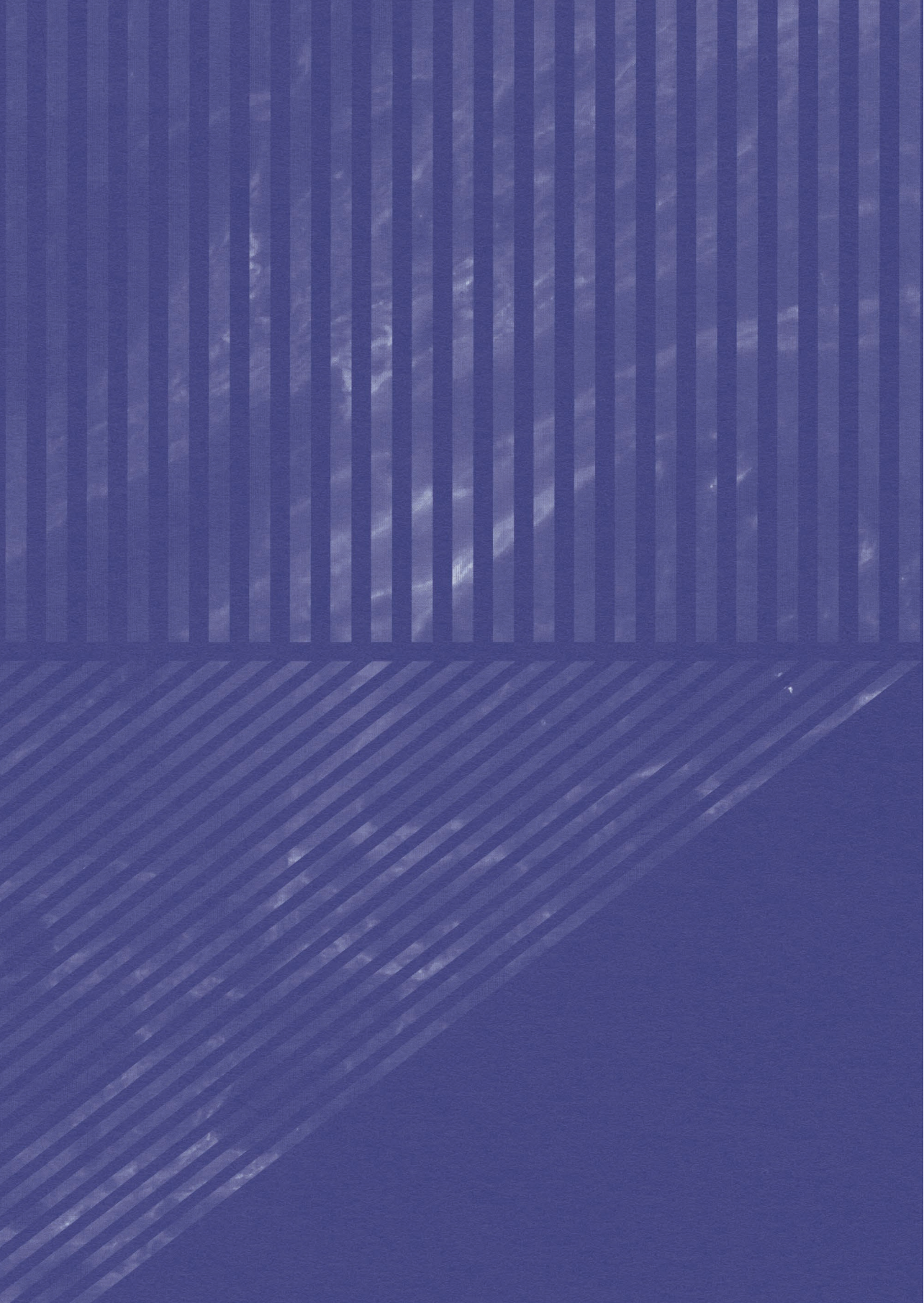
Lastly, to provide a more comprehensive view of the factors impacting visitation, scholars should include visitors' perspectives in their research. Visitors must also decide whether they are willing to take the effort to travel to the prison for visits and pay (in terms of time and money) for visits. These considerations likely depend on their financial situation, how far they have to travel, and the strength

of their relationship with the incarcerated individual (Christian, 2005). Moreover, their experiences during visits could also impact whether they continue to visit an incarcerated individual. Qualitative accounts have detailed how visitors sometimes choose to stop visiting due to negative experiences (Comfort, 2016). A comparative study between the Netherlands and Belgium showed that visitors' experiences depend on how visits are arranged, which again points to the potential impact of visitation policies on whether and how visits are experienced (Beyens et al., 2013). Notably, recent pilots have been undertaken to improve visitors' experiences which could help minimize barriers to visiting. More research is needed to know whether these changes actually increase the number of individuals receiving visits in prison. The 2019 data collection from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (a part of the LIC study), included questions about these practical barriers and visitation experiences among incarcerated individuals and their visitors.

Conclusion

National and international research demonstrates that receiving visits during prison is important (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017; Hickert et al., 2019). Loss of social contact while incarcerated can deteriorate existing relationships, increase feelings of social isolation after release, and increase recidivism (Cochran & Mears, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016; Moerings, 1978). The results of this study suggest that having strong social bonds and a partner prior to incarceration are related to receiving visits in prison, as well as having more opportunities to receive visits. These factors were important for receiving visits across various relationship types. In addition, a few measures of criminal history were associated with receiving visits but appeared to be less impactful than social network characteristics and varied across visitors.

The findings provide an important base for future research to identify why one in four individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands does not receive visits. Making inventories of a person's social network at the beginning of the prison term seems valuable as individuals with little to no contact prior to incarceration are less likely to receive visits in prison. Therefore the increased attention in both the Netherlands and Belgium for a person's social network seems promising. But, in order to know what is necessary to build and strengthen supportive ties, more research is needed. Policy and programs can only be developed once we know more about why some individuals are not visited in order to diminish differences between individuals. Ultimately, this knowledge should help develop and improve our understanding of visitation, its impacts, and likelihood across people.



4

Visitation enablers and barriers: evaluating the influences of practical, relational, and experiential factors on visitation in Dutch prisons

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Abstract

This paper aims to advance theory and knowledge about prison visitation by organizing prior studies within a framework of visitation enablers and barriers and examining how practical, relational, and experiential factors explain variation in prison visiting among 773 adult males across eight Dutch prisons. Findings suggest that all three domains play out at once to influence visitation. Whether visitors come to visit seems to depend on their relationship with the incarcerated individual, whereas traveling distance is more predictive of how often they visit. Policies that introduce practical barriers can differentially affect visits from specific relationships. Finally, results indicate that incarcerated individuals make decisions about visits based on their in-prison experiences. Policy and research implications are discussed.

Keywords: incarceration, prison, social support, social bonds, prisoner reentry

4.1 Introduction

Prison visitation has the potential to be a cost-effective practice for mitigating potential harmful effects of imprisonment and improving behavior, familial, and reentry outcomes. For this reason, visitation warrants special attention. Scholars have noted, however, that receiving visits is not self-evident (e.g., Cochran et al., 2017). Even when individuals in prison receive visits, visitation experiences are heterogeneous and not uniformly positive. Nonetheless studies typically suggest a range of benefits stemming from visits (e.g., Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2016). Given these potential benefits for people and prison systems, more systematic investigations of the factors that enable or hinder visits are needed to inform theory and policy centered on understanding who gets access to external social support during an incarceration term.

Recent work has begun to take important steps in this direction by assessing determinants of visits from a variety of angles. For example, this growing body of research has explored how visitation experiences (Turanovic & Tasca, 2019; Young et al., 2019), pre-incarceration relationships (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Hickert et al., 2019), and diverse individual characteristics (Cochran et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2016) relate to receiving visits in prison. Beyond whether individuals are visited, recent scholarship has also examined predictors of visitation patterns (Hickert et al., 2018; Young & Hay, 2020) and who is visiting (Connor & Tewksbury, 2015). These papers identify that incarcerated individuals differ in their likelihood of receiving visits based on their demographic and criminal backgrounds (Cochran et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2016). Additionally, practical barriers, such as travelling distance, quality of the relationship pre-incarceration, and experiences during visits seem to be particularly influential in determining whether and how often an individual is visited (e.g. Hickert et al., 2018; Young et al., 2019). These key determinants appear to also be relevant for young people in prison (Mikytuck & Woolard, 2019; Young & Hay, 2020; Young et al., 2019).

The goal of this study is to build on these recent advancements by expanding our understanding of the determinants of prison visits in three ways. First, we add to the literature by applying a social ecological framework to visitation that is adapted from the broader social support literature (e.g., Vaux, 1988) and that, by extension, emphasizes the importance of considering the three interconnected domains of practical, relational, and experiential (that is, experiences with incarceration) factors simultaneously to better understand variation in visitation. Each of these factors

appear across prior studies of visitation. This framework helps to integrate the mix of prior theory about visitation as it assumes that multiple actors are important for visitation, including the prison, the visitor(s), and the incarcerated individual. While many scholars recognize the role of prisons, most prior research is focused on determinants concerning either visitors (e.g., travelling distance) or incarcerated individuals (e.g., criminal background). We go beyond past studies by organizing prior research within the domains of practical, relational, and experiential characteristics and incorporating information from prisons, visitors, and incarcerated individuals to understand how the confluence of these domains impact visiting. Moreover, by using this framework we respond to calls from scholars to better articulate theoretical mechanisms behind visitation as “theoretical attention to explaining variation in receiving visits is lacking” (Young & Hay, 2020, p.71). Beyond its scientific value, using a holistic approach can also help practitioners and policy makers make more specific guidelines to stimulate and encourage visitation.

Second, beyond *whether* individuals are visited, we also examine how these factors relate to *how often* individuals receive visits and from *whom* they receive visits. This is important as it can be assumed that some factors, such as offense seriousness, may strongly impact the likelihood of the first visit, but exert limited effects on having many visits. Also, examining who is visiting is critical as visitors are a heterogeneous group (with diverse reasons to (not) visit). Theoretically, considerations from social support literature propose differences between visitor types. For example, partners and parents are often highly invested in incarcerated individuals, thus they are less likely to break off a relationship in which they have already invested because otherwise, time and energy for the prior investment would be lost (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). These ties may then visit despite barriers or administrative challenges. Contrastingly, friendships appear to be more difficult to maintain due to the stigma of imprisonment and associated challenges of visiting (Volker et al., 2016). Thus, any policies that seek to widen access to visitation or otherwise improve the effectiveness of it requires developing a better understanding of how practical, relational, and experimental factors impact the ties that are available to incarcerated individuals.

Third, we advance scholarship by examining visitation in an international context, namely the Netherlands. This is important as current knowledge about visitation stems almost entirely from the United States (U.S.). It is possible that our prevailing conclusions about who gets visited in prison are not broadly generalizable due to unique features of the U.S. penal system (such as its punitive character and excessive incarceration lengths). For example, individuals incarcerated in U.S.

prisons have no federal right to visitation which means that prison officials can deny visits for various reasons, including misbehavior. If access to visits is based on behavior, then those who display good behavior have the best chance of being visited, which could confound results.¹ Research across contexts is critical, then, for advancing theory and policy conversations about visitation, its impacts, and its likelihood across people. Features of the Dutch prison context (described more in depth below), including its rehabilitative focus, the legal right to visits, and short lengths of stay, offer insight into which factors predict visitation in a setting more like other western European countries. More than that, a new context paired with the conceptual framework we introduce for anticipating enablers and barriers to visitation allows for testing of theories across contexts. For example, even if the nature of, say, practical barriers to visits varies across places, we can evaluate the relative impacts of practical barriers, broadly defined, across prisons and societies. We can do the same for relational and experiential factors. Over time, this would allow for a systematic body of evidence to emerge about the salience of these three domains in determining who gets visited during incarceration.

Against this backdrop, this study builds upon existing literature by addressing the following research question: to what extent are (a) practical factors, (b) relational factors, and (c) incarceration experiential factors related to receiving visits in prison? Through multilevel analyses we explore this question in terms of *whether* an individual is visited (i.e., the likelihood of receiving a visit) and in terms of *how often* an individual is visited (i.e., the frequency of visits). Additionally, we examine whether and how these factors differ depending on *who* is visiting. These considerations are explored as part of the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS), a unique study that aims to examine prison visitation from different perspectives and in all its variety. The rich data from this study contains a wide range of factors from multiple sources that can be used to predict whether, how often, and from whom incarcerated individuals receive visits.

Theoretical Framework & Prior Research

Social support can be critical in times of stress and trauma. Vaux (1988) argued that in such times of stress, the process of maintaining social support is complex and transactional, occurring between the person and his/her changing social network.

1 For this reason some previous studies did control for disciplinary infractions, but this is rare (see Clark & Duwe, 2017 and Tewksbury & Connor, 2012).

These transactions take place in a specific social context, which can shape the development of social support.

This social ecological framework is applicable to prison visitation. Imprisonment is a stressful event, physically disrupting the connection between an individual and the outside world. Visitation is a key form of social support, being that it is the only way individuals can maintain physical contact with loved ones beyond the prison wall. In order to maintain this form of contact, both incarcerated individuals and their visitor(s) weigh the costs and benefits of visiting. Individuals in prison can be assumed to make decisions on whether and how often they receive visits depending on their individual characteristics (e.g., their age and criminal history, whether they have a spouse or children) and their emotional situation (e.g., reactions to incarceration and visitation experiences). Visitors must also decide whether they take the effort to travel to prisons and spend time and money on these trips. These decisions concerning whether and how often to (receive) visit(s) are made within a specific ecological context, namely the prison. Since prison officials are granted substantial discretion to determine whether and when visits take place, it can also be assumed that visitation policies can impact the receipt of visits.

Prior research has identified a somewhat eclectic mix of enablers of and barriers to prison visitation. One way to organize these factors, and to facilitate more systematic empirical assessments of them, is within a framework informed by knowledge about the development of social support and that, by extension, considers the practical barriers to visitation, but also the social and incarceration contexts in which people reside. Specifically, prior theory and research on the predictors of visitation can be organized into these three domains: (1) practical factors, (2) relational factors, and (3) experiential factors. We elaborate on these three domains, the hypotheses that stem from them, and the prior literature that informs them, below² (see Table 4.1 for an overview of prior research on the determinants of visitation).

Practical Factors

Scholars have repeatedly noted the practical challenges to visiting an individual in prison: visitors often must travel far, which can be costly and time consuming (Christian et al., 2006). These barriers can be a hindrance to visit, especially for (potential) visitors with a low social-economic status (Cochran et al., 2016; Grinstead

2 In our review of prior literature we discuss studies that examined visitation as the outcome variable. Studies which described experiences with visits (including visitors experiences with coming to visit) were for this reason discussed in the text, but not included in Table 4.1.

et al., 2001). Indeed multiple studies have found that when visitors lived further away from the prison and had a lack of economic or social resources, they were not only less likely to visit, but also visited less frequently (e.g., Clark & Duwe, 2017; Cochran et al., 2016; Mikytuck & Woolard, 2019; Poehlmann et al., 2008; Young & Hay, 2020).

Prison visitation policies can also create practical barriers to visiting. Policies concerning when and how often visits occur can differ across institutions both within and between countries. A review of visitation policies in all fifty U.S. states showed that while some prisons allowed up to six hours of visits per week, others allowed no more than one visit per week of up to two hours (Boudin et al., 2014). In the Netherlands, visitation policies also differ across prisons. For example, some prisons allow weekend visits, while others only allow visits during the week. While it may be understandable that differing policies exist due to diverse prison populations or managerial styles, these policies can have far reaching consequences, as noted by Hutton (2017) in her study on English prisons: “the volume of family contact permitted can come down as much to chance based on where you are located” (211). Despite the great impact that visitation policies may have, we know surprisingly little about how these policies affect the receipt of visits in prison (although some studies have alluded to how visitation policies linked to security level may explain differing visitation rates, see Clark & Duwe, 2017; Hickert et al., 2018).

Relational Factors

Even when faced with practical challenges, some family and friends do visit. It can be assumed that the nature, intimacy, and quality of the relationship ties between an incarcerated individual and their (potential) visitors could impact whether and how often family and friends visit. The nature of these relationships is important to consider as individuals have diverse social ties ranging from spousal, parental, familial, to friendship ties. Spousal and parental ties are mentioned repeatedly in the literature as important ties for incarcerated individuals, especially since many are parents (e.g., Arditti, 2003; Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017). Spouses are particularly important for incarcerated males as they are reliant on them to maintain contact with their children during incarceration (Tasca, 2014). Moreover, scholars propose that incarcerated individuals with partners tend to have larger social networks, and thus, may have more access to social capital (Clark & Duwe, 2017).

Table 4.1 Prior Research on the Determinants of Prison Visits

Study	Sample ^a	DV ^b	Practical factors	
			Travel distance & costs	Visitation policies
Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018	205, US	EV	-	-
Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2001	222, US	EV, FRQ	-	-
Clark & Duwe, 2017	2,817 US (MN)	VC	X	-
Cochran et al., 2016	34,115, US (FL)	EV, VC	X	-
Cochran et al., 2017	17,921, US (FL)	VC	X	-
Connor & Tewksbury, 2015	615, US	VC	-	-
Hickert et al., 2018	22,975, US (NY)	EV	X	-
Hickert et al., 2019	476, NL	EV	-	-
Jackson et al., 1997	212, US (NV)	VC	X	-
Mikytuck & Woolard, 2019	7,073, US	EV, FRQ	X	-
Poehlmann et al., 2008	92, US	FRQ	X	-
Stacer, 2012	11,156, US	EV	X	-
Rubenstein et al., 2021	4,627, US	EV, FRQ	X	-
Tasca, 2014	600, US (AZ)	EV	X	-
Tewksbury & Connor, 2012	585, US	VC	-	-
Young & Hay, 2020	2,345, US (FL)	EV	X	-
Young et al., 2019	1,202, US (FL)	EV, FRQ	X	-

^a Sample: US: United States, MN: Minnesota, FL: Florida, NV: Nevada, AZ: Arizona, NL: the Netherlands;

^b DV: dependent variable, EV: ever visited, FRQ: monthly rate of visits, VC: visit count (number of visits);

	Relational factors			Experiential factors		
	Type of social ties ^c	Criminal & incarceration history	Pre-incarceration social support	Incentive programs	Perceptions of visiting program	Experiences during visits
	SP & PAR	X	X	-	-	-
	CH	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	SP, CH, PAR, FAM, FRI	X	-	-	-	-
	SP, PAR, FRI	X	-	-	-	-
	SP, PAR, FAM, FRI		X	-	-	-
	FAM, non-FAM	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	CH	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	CH	X	-	-	-	-
	CH	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	-	X	-	-	-	-
	PAR, FAM	X	-	-	X	X

^c Types of social ties: SP: spousal/partner, PAR: parental (mother or father), CH: child, FAM: familial (other than parents), FRI: friends

Beyond the types of relationships available to individuals, the intimacy of these relationships can be complicated by the criminal involvement and incarceration history of a person. Social relationships may become strained as individuals engage in more offending and visitors who previously came to visit may grow weary after several incarcerations (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018). Likewise, the seriousness of the offense can be consequential. Family or friends may be less forgiving and less willing to continue to invest time and resources on individuals who have committed serious crimes (Christian et al., 2006). Studies from diverse U.S. states indeed find that incarcerated individuals with less extensive criminal histories and who have committed less severe crimes are most likely to be visited (e.g., Clark & Duwe, 2017; Cochran et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 1997; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012).

Additionally, social support literature would suggest that the quality of the relationship between (potential) visitor and incarcerated individual is important: those close to the individual in prison are more likely to be responsive to their troubles and engage in supportive behavior even if it is costly or requires effort (Vaux, 1988). Recent research has highlighted that pre-incarceration social support (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Hickert et al., 2019) is a key contributor to who is visited. However, since prior studies do not include measures of (perceived) barriers to visiting and relationships pre-incarceration, it is not yet clear how these factors simultaneously affect whether and how often loved ones visit.

Experiential Factors

Not least, in-prison experiences might increase or reduce the willingness to receive (more) visits. Incentive programs can be found in prisons worldwide which use visits as a reward for good behavior (e.g., the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme in England and Wales, see Hutton, 2017). While incarcerated individuals do not necessarily actively choose to participate in such programs, it is possible these programs could increase interest in receiving (more) visits as individuals are rewarded with extra and improved visits (for instance, special family day visits) (Hutton, 2017). In 2014, a system of promotion and relegation was introduced in Dutch prisons (Van Gent, 2013). Individuals who display good behavior and meet specific criteria can be promoted to the 'plus program' where they can receive an extra hour of visits per week. Individuals in the plus program are also given preference for evening or weekend visiting hours over individuals in the basic program. Access to more visits at desirable times could increase the likelihood and frequency of visits, but to our knowledge, no prior studies have examined the impact of such programs on whether and how often individuals receive visits.

In addition, the perceptions of the visiting program could also impact whether individuals wish to continue to receive visits. Incarcerated individuals report frustrations due to the substantial restrictions on movement and physical contact (Dixey & Woodall, 2012; Hutton, 2016) and lack of privacy during visits, which makes it difficult to have meaningful conversations (Arditti, 2003). They may also be upset about the procedures family and friends must endure (e.g., being searched and subject to rules and strict security procedures) or about how their visitors are treated (Moran & Disney, 2019). These frustrations could result in individuals limiting, or even canceling, visits. While studies have described these frustrations, no prior studies have examined whether these perceptions impact visit frequency (see Table 4.1).

Finally, experiences during visits could impact visiting decisions. Visitation experiences are diverse: some individuals report positive experiences (e.g., feeling refreshed and having lifted spirits after visits), while others experience great feelings of loss and separation (Moran & Disney, 2019; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018). Some individuals experience visits comprised of conflict, arguments, and confrontations, and thus may choose to limit contact (Meyers et al., 2017). Visitation experiences can also differ depending on who is visiting (Young et al., 2019). Yet it remains unclear whether these experiences impact how often individuals receive visits.

The Current Study

In sum, while the extant literature has provided important insights on the practical, relational, and experiential factors associated with prison visits, gaps in the literature are evident (see Table 4.1). We know surprisingly little about how these factors simultaneously relate to visitation and whether seemingly consequential factors, such as visitation policies, visiting programs or visitation experiences, actually impact access to external social ties, especially in contexts beyond the U.S. To advance our knowledge on prison visitation, our analysis will use a nationally representative sample of adult males incarcerated in the Netherlands to estimate the confluence of these domains, while controlling for socio-demographic and incarceration variables (e.g., age, ethnicity, and time served) known to be related to visitation (e.g., Cochran et al., 2017). Since we will be using data from the Netherlands, we provide a short description of the Dutch prison context below.

Imprisonment in the Netherlands

In 2017, approximately 31,000 individuals entered one of the 28 penitentiaries in the Netherlands (De Looft et al., 2018). Most adults serve less than a year in a penitentiary, including time in pretrial detention (Van Ginneken et al., 2018). Adults

in pretrial detention, prison, extra care, and short-stay custody regimes³ have the right to one hour of visits per week. Individuals in the prison regime can, however, earn an extra hour of visits per week if they are well-behaved (as part of the plus program). A maximum of three unique visitors is allowed per visit (with children under 16 often not counted toward this maximum). Most visits are contact visits, meaning individuals and their visitors can sit together with limited physical contact (i.e. brief kiss and/or hug at beginning and end of visit).

Prison governors are given discretion in the practical implementation of visitation; therefore, in some Dutch prisons visits can only take place during the week, while in others weekend visits are possible. In light of budget cuts, some prison governors have decided to make the most 'efficient' use of staff and schedule visits on a limited number of days during the week. In other prisons, however, individuals can choose from different days or time slots to receive visits (still the maximum is two hours of visits per week, but visits can take place on different days each week). Visits are planned in blocks and organized per prison unit.

4.2 Method

Sample

The data for this study comes from the DPVS which is part of a nationwide survey study on prison climate in The Netherlands (the Life in Custody study; Van Ginneken et al., 2018). This paper specifically uses data from the 2017 data collection which uniquely combines survey data with administrative data on visitation. All individuals housed in eight prisons⁴ in the Netherlands between January and April 2017 were approached to complete the survey ($N = 2,095$). Persons were individually approached at the door of their cell and both participants and non-participants were offered a small incentive (e.g., a snack or can of soda). Of those eligible, 1,397

3 Dutch prisons run different regimes, most commonly pretrial detention (for those who have not (yet) been sentenced) and prison (for those who have been sentenced). Other regimes are available for individuals who need extra care, for individuals in short-stay custody, persistent offenders, and for those in minimum security. The main difference between regimes is the type of programming provided. Most Dutch prisons house several different regimes located on separate units.

4 While many prisons in the Netherlands have administrative data on visitation, not all prisons use the nationwide system (TULP). Even when prisons do use TULP to record information about visits, the quality of the information recorded varies enormously. After site visits and inspection of the data, eight prisons were shown to have the most complete visitation data. These eight prisons are spread geographically throughout the Netherlands, located in both urban as well as more rural areas. These prisons house individuals from all regimes, but only house adult males. In terms of cell capacity and ratio of staff to incarcerated persons these prisons did not significantly differ from other prisons in the Netherlands.

agreed to participate and completed the Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ, Bosma et al., 2020). The most common reasons they gave for not wanting to participate was “lack of interest” ($N = 228$), “distrustful of research” ($N = 35$), and that they were “almost being released” ($N = 10$). Individuals were specifically asked to give permission to use administrative data, such as visitation records, for research purposes. For the purposes of this paper, we used administrative data and thus, the 49 individuals who did not give permissions are not included in this study. It is also important to ensure that visitation was possible. We therefore decided to only include individuals who were in prison for at least one month ($N = 911$). Since very few individuals ($N = 25$) were incarcerated for longer than two years and they have very different characteristics, they were excluded. Moreover, individuals in open regime ($N = 32$) and persistent offender regime ($N = 81$) were also excluded because they do not have visits in prison⁵. The final sample consisted of 773 participants housed in 53 prison units in eight prisons.

Compared to the total Dutch prison population, the subsample used in this paper is similar in terms of age and time served in prison. Individuals in the subsample were significantly more likely to be born in the Netherlands (OR = 1.58, 95% CI [1.35, 1.86]), serving pretrial detention (OR = 1.78, 95% CI [1.54, 2.07]), and be incarcerated for a violent offense (OR = 1.24, 95% CI [1.06, 1.45]). Overall, given that the sample represents different regimes and groups, the sample allows for generalization to the Dutch adult, male prison population that can receive visits in prison.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Visitation, the key outcome variable of this study, was measured with administrative data. While administrative data can provide detailed information about visitors, the quality of the information recorded by prison staff pertaining to visits can vary. For example, individuals in prison are not required to be very specific about their relationships on visitation forms. Sometimes they wrote down a girlfriend, meaning a romantic relationship, and prison staff recorded this as a friend. We therefore decided to check information regarding visits recorded in the administrative data with the information provided in the PCQ. In the PCQ participants were asked how often they received visits from specific visitors in the three months prior to the

5 Individuals in open regime have furlough every weekend and therefore do not receive visits in prison. Persistent offenders are also able to see family and friends on furlough. While some persistent offenders do receive visits in prisons, it is not uniformly recorded in administrative records.

data collection. We compared these answers in the PCQ with administrative data from the same time period. Generally, we found minimal differences in the amount of visitation⁶. In terms of specific visitors, self-reports of visits were somewhat higher, particularly for partners, than the administrative data. In cases when visiting information did not match⁷, we used available information in the PCQ to supplement the administrative data⁸. In this way we were able to get the most accurate and reliable picture of who was being visited by whom⁹.

Using these data we constructed the outcome variables. For the likelihood of receiving a visit, we recorded whether an individual received a visit in the three months prior to the data collection (0 = no, 1 = yes). Separate dependent variables were created indicating whether an individual was visited by a specific type of visitor (partner, parent, family, or friend). For partner visits, we included only the subset of individuals who indicated that they had a partner ($N = 415$). We also calculated the frequency of visits for those individuals who received at least one visit ($N = 572$), defined as the average number of visits per month. The frequency was also calculated for each visitor type.

Independent Variables

Practical Factors. Visitation policies were coded at unit-level (level 2, $n = 53$). This was done because, although some policies are prison-wide, most policies are linked to the unit¹⁰. First, we recorded whether individuals in a prison unit could receive weekend visits (0 = no, 1 = yes). Second, we calculated how many days per week visits were available in each unit. Of the 53 units, 29 units had limited visiting options to one or two days a week. The maximum available of visits was five days a week, with very few units ($n = 5$) offering this. Due to this, we created a dichotomous variable

6 In only 8% of the cases individuals had reported being visited in the survey but were not visited according to the administrative data.

7 For partner visits there were 230 cases (55%), family visits 134 cases (17%) and friends visits 158 cases (20%).

8 For instance, if a visitor (of a particular individual) in the administrative data matched the frequency of a specific visitor in the survey and matched other relevant characteristics (e.g., for partners that it was a female visitor), we recorded the visitor as the relationship documented in the survey.

9 We conducted all the analyses separately using only the survey data. The results, which can be requested from the first author, yielded the same conclusions.

10 Since we are interested in visitation policies at the prison unit level, we checked whether individuals in our sample were in the same unit during the time visits were measured. Most individuals (93%) were on the same unit during this time. Fifty-six individuals were transferred between prisons and/or prison units. We therefore ran the analyses without these individuals. The results, which can be requested from the first author, yielded the same conclusions.

for whether visits were available for three or more days a week (0 = no, 1 = yes). Both measures tap into how flexible policies are, for instance by providing the possibility to adapt to the visitors' schedule (e.g., school, work).

For individuals who were visited ($N = 572$) we also had information concerning how far their visitors had to travel to the prison. In light of political and policy debates concerning the regionalization of prisons, we constructed a dichotomous indicator for each visitor type indicating whether the visitor type in question lived in the same province as the prison (1) or outside the province¹¹ (0). Since family and friends can consist of multiple visitors who may live in different provinces, this measure indicates where most family members and friends travelled from (e.g., if three family members visited and two lived in the same province and one outside the province, then it was recorded as 1).

Relational Factors. Participants were asked whether they have a partner (defined as a relationship lasting for at least three months) and/or child(ren) (0 = no, 1 = yes). Since social ties could be impacted by criminal and incarceration history, administrative data was used to record whether an individual was incarcerated for a violent offense (0 = no, 1 = yes) and the number of prior imprisonments (in the past five years). In the PCQ participants were also asked how often they had contact with partner, parents, family, and friends three months prior to incarceration, ranging from never to daily. Since most individuals indicated having at least weekly contact prior to incarceration, we dichotomized answers (0 = never to monthly ['low contact'], 1 = weekly to daily ['high contact']).

Experiential Factors. First, we included whether an individual was in the plus program (0 = no, 1 = yes). Then to tap into visitation experiences, individuals who were visited were asked six questions in the PCQ about their perceptions of the visiting program (such as how satisfied they were with the visiting room, amount of physical contact, privacy during visit, and treatment of visitors by staff) using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Individuals' emotional experiences during visits was measured by two items (e.g., "After receiving a visit, I feel good"). Both scales had sufficient internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability scores were above .70). Results from an exploratory factor analysis of all eight items revealed that the two items concerning emotional experiences during visits distinctly leaned on different components, thus

11 Provinces are geographical regions in the Netherlands that function as the regional government. The prisons used in this study are spread across seven provinces (of the 12 in total). While provinces do vary in size, most visitors who lived within the same province as the prison travelled 0 – 50 kilometers, whereas most visitors who lived outside the province travelled more than 50 kilometers.

substantiating our use of these two scales as different constructs. Scores on these scales were highly skewed; most individuals scored low ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.89$) on the perceptions of visiting program scale, whereas most individuals scored high on the emotional experiences during visits scale ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.89$). We therefore dichotomized scores using the median split approach. For the perceptions of visiting program scale, scores were considered 'positive' when above 2.5 and for emotional experiences during visits when above 4.5.

Control Variables. We control for three variables known to be correlated with visitation and social capital: age (years), country of birth (0 = outside of the Netherlands, 1 = the Netherlands), and the amount of time served in this prison (months).

Analytic Strategy

We estimate two-level logistic and Poisson regressions models using MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Logistic regression models were used to estimate the likelihood of receiving visits since the dependent variable is dichotomous. Poisson models were used for the frequency models since the dependent variable is a count measure, and thus, linear models are not appropriate. For both types of models multilevel modeling procedures were used to account for the nested nature of the data, with individuals (level 1, $N = 773$) being housed in prison units (level 2, $n = 53$). Practical, relational, and experiential factors were recorded at the individual level, except for measures of visitation policies (weekend visits and visit availability). These measures were recorded at the unit level since visitation policies are organized per prison unit. All independent continuous variables at the individual level were centered on their grand mean before they were included in the multilevel models to allow for easier interpretation of effects. Analyses were carried out using full information maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR) estimation.

Our first model features visitation policies, all relational factors, participation in the 'plus' program, and the likelihood of receiving any prison visit, as well as partner, parental, familial, and friend visits. Notably, the sample for 'partner visit' includes only individuals who reported having a partner ($N = 415$). Our second model examined, in addition to the preceding predictors, how travelling distance, individuals' perceptions of the visiting program, and emotional experiences with visits predict the frequency of visits for those individuals who received at least one visit ($N = 572$). Note, travelling distance is included in the frequency analyses since information about travelling distance was only available for those visitors who came to visit. Also, our two measures of visitation experiences are included in the frequency analyses since accurate perceptions of the visiting program can

only be provided by individuals who have been visited. Frequency of visits from partner, parents, family, and friends were also examined; the samples in these models are limited to individuals who experienced at least one visit from the type of visitor in question.

4.3 Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics on each of the study variables are reported in Table 4.2. As shown, the likelihood of receiving a visit varied between 18% (parents visit) and 49% (partner visit). Seventy-four percent of our total research sample had received at least one visit in the past three months. For visitation frequency, individuals received on average 3.15 visits per month, which is slightly less than one visit per week. Family members visited most frequently.

Multilevel Analyses

Before proceeding with the hierarchical regression models, intercept-only models were estimated (not shown) to examine the amount of variation in the dependent variables across prison units. All interclass correlations were significant for the likelihood of receiving a visit, ranging from 0.09 (any visit) to 0.34 (family visits). For frequency of visits, the interclass correlations were much smaller and not significant (with exception of frequency of family visits where 15.2% of the variance pertained to unit level). Overall, this provides substantial evidence that the likelihood of receiving a visit varies across prison units.

Likelihood of Receiving a Visit

The multilevel model estimating the likelihood of receiving at least one visit (first column: 'any visit', Table 4.3) shows that neither practical nor experiential factors were predictive of receiving visits. The lack of significant associations within these domains is an important finding in and of itself. It suggests that having flexible policies and increased opportunities to receive visits (through the plus program) has little impact on whether individuals receive visits overall.

Contrastingly, several relational factors were associated with being visited. Having a partner increased the odds of receiving a visit in prison. Also, individuals who had fewer prior incarcerations were more likely to be visited than individuals with multiple incarcerations. The odds of being visited were two times higher for individuals who had high contact with their parents prior to incarceration than

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

	All incarcerated individuals <i>N</i> = 773 M(SD)	Incarcerated individuals who were visited <i>N</i> = 572 M(SD)
Dependent variables		
<i>Likelihood of receiving a visit from</i>		
Anyone	0.74	-
Partner	0.49	-
Parent	0.18	-
Family	0.49	-
Friend	0.43	-
<i>Frequency of visits (average # per month)</i>		
All	-	3.15 (2.20)
Partner	-	2.34 (2.45)
Parent	-	2.47 (2.19)
Family	-	3.35 (3.82)
Friend	-	3.20 (3.15)
Independent variables		
<i>Practical factors</i>		
Weekend visits	0.29	0.32
Visit availability: 3+ days a week	0.54	0.57
Partner lives in same province	-	0.38
Parents live in same province	-	0.39
Family lives in same province	-	0.55
Friends live in same province	-	0.38
<i>Relational factors</i>		
Has a partner	0.57	0.63
Has a child	0.57	0.59
Index offense: violent	0.42	0.45
Prior incarcerations (#)	3.01 (2.98)	2.62 (2.53)
<i>High contact with</i>		
Partner	0.92	0.94
Parents	0.56	0.63
Family	0.55	0.57
Friends	0.67	0.68
<i>Experiential factors</i>		
Plus program	0.36	0.40
Positive perceptions of visiting program	-	0.50
Positive emotional experiences during visits	-	0.57
<i>Control variables</i>		
Age (years)	36.32 (11.47)	35.81 (11.68)
Born in the Netherlands	0.65	0.68
Time served (months)	4.91 (4.93)	5.25 (5.13)

Note. Statistics on partner visits include only the subset of individuals who reported having a partner (*N* = 415). For frequency of visits from specific visitors, the statistics include only the subset of individuals that received at least one visit from the type of visitor in question.

individuals who had low contact. This is perhaps a reflection of the duration of the relationship with parents or that these individuals lived with their parents prior to incarceration. The other relationship types were not significant. Also, having a child or being incarcerated for a violent offense were not associated with receiving visits.

Next, we considered whether these factors related differently to specific types of visitors (partner, parents, family, and friends, also displayed in Table 4.3). Beginning first with the practical factors, we see that individuals on units with more visit availability (i.e., more than three days a week) were more likely to receive visits from parents and friends when compared to individuals on units where visits were only available on one or two days a week. The likelihood of visits from friends also increased when weekend visits were possible. Perhaps friends are less willing to take time off work during the week to visit and thus make more use of flexible visiting times. This may be less important for parents, since the results show that the likelihood of parent visits decreased when individuals were able to have weekend visits.

A consistent result across the models of specific visitor types is that pre-incarceration contact had relatively strong effects on the likelihood of receiving a visit. This result held in all models except for friends, suggesting that these bonds are weaker or that other factors, such as flexible visiting policies (as discussed above), are more important for predicting visits from friends. In terms of other relational factors, having a partner increased the odds of receiving visits from friends. Also, individuals who have children were 60% more likely to receive a visit from a family member than those who do not have children, which may be because family members accompany children to visits. Partner, family, and friend visits were more likely when individuals had fewer prior incarcerations. This was not true for parent visits; perhaps since these relationships may overlook, or be less influenced by, an individuals' criminal background.

Experiential factors had few effects across the models on the likelihood of visits from partner, parents, family, and friends. Individuals in the plus program were 63% less likely to receive visits from friends than individuals in the basic program. It is possible that individuals in the plus program have closer family ties that visit them, as we see that they are more likely to receive partner visits. Finally, individuals who are young and were born in the Netherlands had higher odds of receiving parent, family, and friend visits. Spending more time in this prison increased the odds of parental visits but was not associated with the other visitor types.

Table 4.3 Multilevel Results: Likelihood of Receiving a Visit

	Any visit N = 773			Partner visit N = 415		
	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
Constant	0.92*	0.47		2.99**	0.91	
Practical factors						
Weekend visits	-0.24	1.37		-0.57	0.52	
Visit availability	0.27	0.53		0.55	0.35	
Relational factors						
Has a partner	1.00***	0.19	2.71	-	-	-
Has a child	0.21	0.23	1.24	0.02	0.29	1.02
Index offense: violent	0.36	0.19	1.43	0.25	0.28	1.29
Prior incarcerations	-0.12***	0.03	0.89	-0.11*	0.05	0.90
High contact with						
Partner	0.71	0.40	2.03	2.54**	0.82	12.67
Parents	0.77***	0.22	2.16	-	-	-
Family	0.02	0.22	1.02	-	-	-
Friends	-0.44	0.29	0.64	-	-	-
Experiential factors						
Plus program	0.52	0.98	1.68	0.62*	0.29	1.86
Control variables						
Age	-0.02*	0.01	0.98	0.01	0.01	1.01
Born in Netherlands	0.59**	0.19	1.81	0.15	0.26	1.16
Time served	0.06	0.03	1.06	0.01	0.03	1.01

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; OR=odd ratio (Exp(B)). Odd ratios are not provided for level 2 variables in Mplus since these are considered continuous latent variables and therefore the coefficients provided are linear regression coefficients which cannot be converted into odd ratios.

Parent visit N = 773			Family visit N = 773			Friend visit N = 773		
B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
4.97***	0.50		1.65	7.11		2.47***	0.36	
-1.24**	0.45		-1.13	2.74		0.99*	0.49	
1.93***	0.45		0.49	9.52		1.53***	0.27	
0.11	0.19	1.11	0.07	0.18	1.07	0.87***	0.21	2.38
0.03	0.20	1.04	0.47*	0.24	1.60	0.09	0.17	1.10
0.21	0.17	1.23	-0.09	0.50	0.91	0.45*	0.21	1.56
-0.12	0.06	0.89	-0.16**	0.05	0.85	-0.12***	0.03	0.89
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.36***	0.22	3.88	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	0.64**	0.22	1.89	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	0.30	0.15	1.35
0.09	0.28	1.09	0.90	3.94	2.45	-1.01*	0.46	0.37
-0.05***	0.01	0.95	-0.03*	0.01	0.97	-0.02*	0.01	0.98
1.42***	0.29	4.13	0.77**	0.25	2.16	0.51*	0.21	1.67
0.07**	0.02	1.07	0.03	0.12	1.03	0.00	0.02	1.00

Frequency of Visits

Results show that practical factors that tap into how flexible visitation policies are not associated with overall visit frequency. Travelling distance, however, was significantly related to how often individuals received visits (see first column: 'all visits', Table 4.4). The frequency of visits per month increases when the partner or parents live close to the prison. Travelling distance was not predictive for family and friend visits.

Three relational factors were related to the frequency of visits. Two of these factors concern the partner: individuals who have a partner and who had high contact with their partner prior to incarceration received more visits on average per month. Perhaps persons with partners are more socially connected than single persons, which could result in more visits overall. Contrastingly, individuals with a more extensive incarceration history were visited less frequently per month.

Regarding experiential factors, we found that being in the plus program increased the number of visits received. Also, individuals who reported positive emotional experiences during visits received significantly more visits on average per month. This suggests that individuals who look forward to visits and have positive experiences during visits are visited more often. However, it is also possible, that those who have frequent visits attach more emotional value to their visits, and thus are more positive about them. No significant effects were found for the perception of the visiting program. Finally, we found that being born in the Netherlands increased the frequency of visits, whereas individuals who served longer periods of time in this prison received fewer visits on average per month; age was not associated with visit frequency.

A few key differences can be observed across the visitor types (see Table 4.4). Practical factors concerning visitation policies only affected family and friend visits. Family members visited more frequently when visits were available on one or two days a week. It is possible that incarcerated individuals prefer having family members visit, even when there are limited visiting options. Friends visited more frequently when weekend visits were possible. Also, friends who lived further away from the prison visited more frequently than those who lived in the same province as the prison. If friends that visit must travel far, this could explain why they make use of weekend visits. Contrastingly, partner, parents, and family who lived in the same province as the prison visited more often than those outside of the province.

Few associations were found between relational factors and the frequency of partner, parents, family, and friend visits. When individuals had high contact with parents and family members prior to incarceration then these visitors visited more

often. Notably, the larger coefficients for travelling distance suggest that – at least for family members – that this has a stronger effect on visitation frequency than the amount of contact prior to incarceration. Individuals who had already been incarcerated several times received on average less visits per month from parents and family.

Finally, having positive emotional experiences during visits was associated with more frequent partner and family visits, but was not associated with parents and friend visits. The social support literature suggests that partner and family are important relationships for incarcerated individuals, thus if they also have positive experiences during visits then they may want to receive more visits from them. Perceptions of the visiting program and participation in the plus program were not associated with visitation frequency. In terms of control variables, age and being born in the Netherlands were not associated with visit frequency across all visitor types. For time served, the results indicate that the longer an individual served time in this prison, the fewer visits they received on average per month from partner, family, and friends.

4.4 Discussion

Prison visitation allows individuals to maintain social ties which may be of vital importance upon release. Nonetheless, a meaningful number of incarcerated individuals are never visited and, among those who are visited, substantial variation exists in the frequency of visits (e.g., Cochran et al., 2017). Recent scholarship on the determinants of visitation has shed some light on how various practical, relational, and experiential factors can contribute to the likelihood and frequency of visits. This study adds to this literature by using a social ecological framework which assumes that multiple actors are important for visitation and considers the practical barriers to visitation together with the social and incarceration context to better understand who gets visited in prison. Beyond whether an individual is visited, we also test how these factors relate to how often and from whom individuals receive visits. We use data from the DPVS, which expands our knowledge about the determinants of visitation to a western European context.

Four key findings emerged from our analysis. First, travelling distance seems to be the most prominent practical factor for overall visit frequency, as well as visits from specific relationships. We found that when visitors lived in the same province as the prison, they visited more often (except for friends). Although prior U.S. studies have consistently found that travelling distance matters for visitation (e.g., Clark

Table 4.4 Multilevel Results: Frequency of Visits

	All visits N = 572		Partner visit N = 202	
	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	0.05	0.19	-0.32	0.60
Practical factors				
Weekend visits	0.08	0.10	0.08	0.19
Visit availability	-0.06	0.06	-0.16	0.17
Visitor lives in same province				
Partner	0.22*	0.10	0.25**	0.07
Parents	0.37*	0.15	-	-
Family	0.05	0.08	-	-
Friends	-0.03	0.11	-	-
Relational factors				
Has a partner	0.29***	0.05	-	-
Has a child	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.11
Index offense: violent	-0.02	0.05	0.09	0.12
Prior incarcerations	-0.03***	0.01	-0.01	0.02
High contact with				
Partner	0.29*	0.14	0.94	0.57
Parents	0.07	0.07	-	-
Family	-0.01	0.07	-	-
Friends	-0.02	0.06	-	-
Experiential factors				
Plus program	0.26**	0.10	0.32	0.19
Positive perceptions of visiting program	-0.03	0.06	0.11	0.09
Positive emotional experiences during visits	0.26***	0.05	0.30**	0.10
Control variables				
Age	-0.03	0.01	0.01	0.02
Born in the Netherlands	0.14**	-0.03	0.10	0.36
Time served	-0.03***	0.01	-0.05***	0.02

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Parent visit N = 135		Family visit N = 381		Friend visit N = 334	
B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
-0.14	0.38	0.28	0.27	0.66*	0.27
-0.06	0.20	0.39	0.22	0.34*	0.17
-0.14	0.27	-0.55**	0.19	-0.20	0.12
-	-	-	-	-	-
0.82***	0.14	-	-	-	-
-	-	0.71***	0.13	-	-
-	-	-	-	-0.59***	0.14
-0.16	0.10	0.13	0.11	0.47***	0.13
-0.13	0.16	-0.18	0.12	0.12	0.11
0.03	0.17	0.09	0.14	-0.01	0.13
-0.08*	0.04	-0.08***	0.02	-0.03	0.02
-	-	-	-	-	-
0.75**	0.22	-	-	-	-
-	-	0.27*	0.11	-	-
-	-	-	-	0.19	0.13
0.15	0.21	0.45	0.21	-0.11	0.18
0.17	0.13	-0.06	0.11	0.04	0.09
0.15	0.20	0.30**	0.09	0.10	0.08
-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01
0.07	0.24	0.08	0.14	0.08	0.11
-0.02	0.02	-0.06***	0.01	-0.06***	0.01

& Duwe, 2017; Cochran et al., 2016), this result is striking since the Netherlands is geographically much smaller than most U.S. states. Even so, Dutch infrastructure is very dense, and many individuals use public transport. Public transportation is quite expensive in the Netherlands, so even relatively short distances can be quite costly, which could also explain this result. Additionally, the effect of travelling distance on the average number of visits per month was stronger than the amount of pre-incarceration contact. This emphasizes that even when visitors may have a close relationship with the incarcerated individual (i.e., amount of contact), far travelling distances may still hinder them from visiting frequently. This result perhaps reflects the tradeoffs that visitors must make, as described in qualitative studies with visitors (e.g., Christian et al., 2006). Certain visitors may also be unable to visit due to these far distances, but we were unable to explore this in our data. Nevertheless, this result emphasizes the importance of placing offenders in prisons near their already existing social network.

Second, relational factors consistently emerged as predictors for both whether individuals received visits in prison and how often they received visits. Individuals who had more contact prior to incarceration were more likely to receive visits across several visitor types. This result aligns with theoretical notions that those close to you will provide support even when it is costly or takes effort (Vaux, 1988) and recent work on pre-incarceration social support (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Hickert et al., 2019). Moreover, our other findings – such as having a partner increased the odds of receiving visits – point to this notion that having a strong network prior or during incarceration is important for visits. Multiple incarcerations may put strain on the social network as we found that having prior incarcerations decreased the odds of receiving visits (and these individuals received fewer visits too). This result could also reflect loss of social capital after enduring several prison spells. Collectively, these results suggest that individuals with few social contacts and who have extensive incarceration histories may benefit most from social network trainings or volunteer visits, and subsequently, increase visitation rates.

Third, we also found that several experiential factors were related to receiving more frequent visits. Individuals in the plus program were visited more often on average per month than individuals in the basic program. This suggests that programs providing more opportunities to receive visits, especially at desirable times, is related to more frequent visits (although we recognize that it is also possible that other characteristics of these individuals, for instance that they are motivated to work on reintegration, may also explain why they receive more visits). We additionally found that individuals who had positive emotional experiences during visits were visited more frequently, specifically by partner and family. It is possible

that these experiences are reciprocal, if incarcerated individuals experienced their visits positively, then perhaps partner and family did too. We further found that individuals' perceptions of the visiting program were not related to the frequency of visits. Nevertheless our findings seem in line with qualitative accounts showing that incarcerated individuals make willful and active decisions about visits based, in part, on their experiences (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018; Turanovic & Tasca, 2019).

Fourth, the results of this study suggest that determinants can vary across visitor types. While relational factors were relatively consistent across the different visitors, practical and experiential factors did vary, especially for visitation policies. For example, we found that having visits available on more days during the week increased the odds of receiving visits from parents and friends. Such flexible policies seem especially important for friends, as having weekend visits also increased the likelihood of them visiting. Not only that, friends also visited more often when weekend visits were available. This suggests that flexible policies may be especially important for those relationships who are less willing, or able, to take time off work. By making visits more available, it may be possible for individuals to receive visits from a variety of visitors which can be beneficial for life after release (e.g., Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017). Moreover, we recognize that flexible policies may be most important for children who are often in school during the weekday visiting hours. We were, however, unable to explore child visits due to poor registration of these visits in the data¹². Ancillary analyses using self-report data on child visits from the PCQ did show that child visits were more likely when incarcerated parents had weekend visits. Future research should then examine how these policies impact child visits.

Taken together, these findings support the notion that practical, relational, and experiential factors play out at once to influence whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits in prison. A few limitations need to be acknowledged and considered when interpreting the findings. Since the study sample only included incarcerated males, the results may not be generalizable to incarcerated females. Prior empirical work suggests that incarcerated females are more inclined to reach out to family and be linked to the care and upbringing of children than their male counterparts (Jiang & Winfree, 2006; Mignon & Ransford, 2012). These qualitative differences may have implications for incarcerated females' visitation experiences. Also, our sample consisted of individuals incarcerated for at least one month and up to two years. Due to this, our findings are most applicable to settings with short terms

12 Children under the age of 14 do not have to provide identification when visiting, and thus are not always registered in the administrative data.

of confinement, such as jails. Consequently, our study may even underestimate the effects of practical, relational, and experiential factors for individuals serving longer prison terms. It is possible that certain factors, such as travelling distance, have an even greater effect for these individuals as the costs and difficulties of long travelling distances are more difficult to maintain over time. Thus, investigations among individuals serving different amounts of time in prison is warranted. Finally, the data used to tap into visitation experiences were reported about the same period in which individuals received visits. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this data, we cannot rule out the possibility that the frequency of visits could impact how individuals perceive the visiting program. It is possible that individuals who receive more visits recognize more problems with the visiting program. Moreover, individuals who receive many visits likely have more varied emotional experiences. Future work should examine this using longitudinal designs.

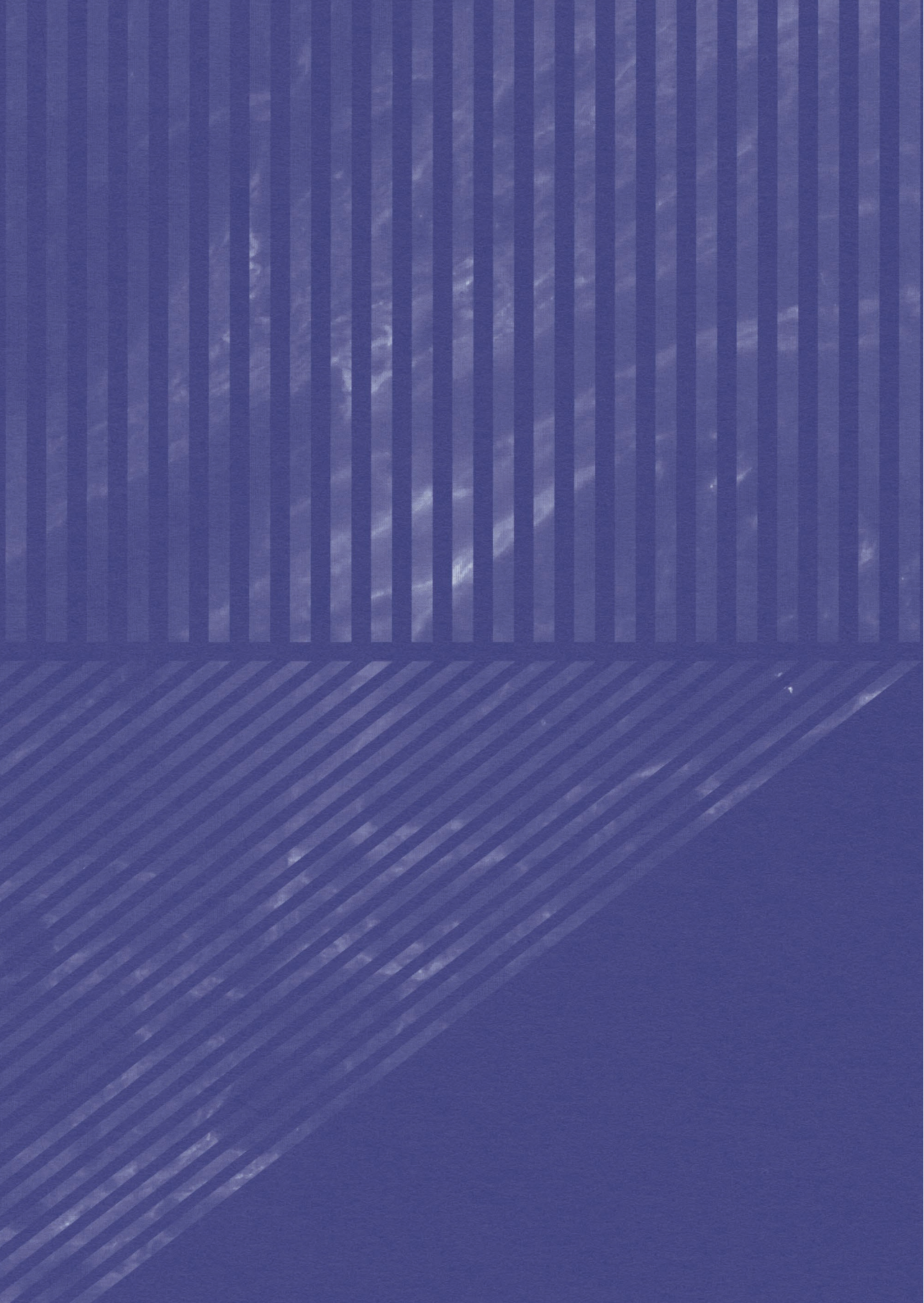
Limitations aside, the results of this study underscore the importance of using a social ecological framework in future research which recognizes that visits are the product of practical challenges, but also the social and incarceration contexts in which individuals reside. The latter is especially important as the role of prisons is often overlooked. Scholars should replicate and expand on our findings concerning visitation policies using different measures and populations across various visitor types. Moreover, scholars should examine different forms of contact (visit, phone calls, letters, video visits) as each form presents unique challenges and opportunities to stay connected to family and friends, which may influence visiting decisions (e.g., phone calls can often occur more frequently and can be less expensive, which may lead to less visits). Relatedly, future work should examine the financial costs of visiting since this may be consequential for (potential) visitors with a low social-economic status (Grinstead et al., 2001; Rubenstein et al., 2021). Also, visitors' experiences or motivations to visit may be consequential for visitation. Even if an incarcerated individual wants to receive visits, if family or friends find visits to be too inconvenient or difficult then they may not visit (Comfort, 2003). More investigations of visitors' perspectives is warranted.

Not least, the proposed social ecological framework offers a way of organizing and theorizing about visitation enablers and barriers across contexts. In this way we hope to facilitate more systematic empirical assessments of these factors. Future studies can identify whether their analyses were (more or less) influenced by practical, relational, or experimental factors. Over time this evidence could tell us whether and which factors are most impactful and help to identify primary predictors of visitation.



PART III

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRISON VISITATION



5

Receiving visits in prison and aggressive and contraband misconduct among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Although scholars have emphasized the implications of social support for in-prison behavior, and prison administrators worldwide use visitation as a correctional tool to manage individuals' behavior, few empirical studies have provided an articulate account of the visitation-misconduct relationship. This study expands research in this field by (a) addressing various features of visits, such as whether, from whom, and how often individuals receive visits in prison and (b) examining two specific types of misconduct: aggression and contraband. Using a combination of survey and administrative data from 3,885 individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands, multilevel analyses were conducted. Receiving visits in prison is associated with higher probabilities of contraband misconduct, especially when partner or friends visit. Receiving visits is, however, not significantly associated with aggressive misconduct, but weekly visits from friends increased the likelihood of aggressive misconduct. Post hoc analyses suggest that visits are not associated with verbally aggressive behaviors, but they are associated with lower likelihoods of physically aggressive behaviors. No significant associations were found between child or family visits and any type of misconduct. Policy implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Visitation, misconduct, multilevel, prisons

5.1 Introduction

Acts of verbal and physical aggression and the presence of contraband, such as drugs and weapons, in prison can pose a risk to safety, threaten the well-being of individuals and prison staff, and adversely affect prison order (Bottoms, 1999). Scholars have proposed that strengthening incarcerated individuals' social ties could mitigate these problems as social support may help individuals adjust to incarceration and improve conduct (Jiang et al., 2005). It is therefore not surprising to see that visitation is an important part of prison programming worldwide. Prisons in several countries also use visitation as a behavioral incentive to improve prison order (Boudin et al., 2014; Hutton, 2017). While there has been a recent surge of empirical work on the effects of visitation using articulate measures (e.g., Casey et al., 2021; Cochran et al., 2020; McNeely & Duwe, 2020), studies that have examined whether receiving visits is associated with misconduct have thus far yielded inconsistent findings. Some studies find that individuals who receive visits engage in less misconduct (Cochran, 2012; D'Alessio et al., 2013; Ellis et al., 1974; Gonçalves et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2015), while others report that they engage in more misconduct (Benning & Lahm, 2016; Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Jiang et al., 2005; Lindsey et al., 2017; Siennick et al., 2013), and even others find no significant relationship between the two (Clark, 2001; Goetting & Howsen, 1986; Hensley et al., 2002; Woo et al., 2016).

Before the existing literature on visitation and misconduct can be reviewed, it is important to highlight that visitation is a heterogeneous experience which, therefore, may elicit heterogeneous responses. Individuals in prison differ namely not only in *whether* they receive visits, but also *from whom* and *how often* they receive visits. For instance, individuals receive visits from diverse relationships, ranging from romantic partners, child(ren), siblings, grandparents to community workers. It is plausible that certain relationships may have a greater effect on misconduct than others. In addition, while some visitors may visit on a weekly basis, others only visit sporadically. Such differences may exert varying influences on individuals' behavior. Although a substantial amount of research has been done on the visit-misconduct relationship, far less is known about these features (but see Cihan et al., 2020; Cochran, 2012; Siennick et al., 2013). Moreover, it is unclear how these features relate to specific types of misconduct. It is possible that receiving frequent visits may reduce feelings of stress for incarcerated individuals, resulting in less verbal and physical aggression in prison; however, receiving visits may provide opportunities to bring in prohibited items (i.e., more contraband infractions). These

possibilities are obscured in prior research since studies typically use a global measure of misconduct.

Against this backdrop, the goal of this study is to advance research on the visit-misconduct relationship by examining potential links between several operationalizations of visits – whether incarcerated individuals received visits, the type of visitor received, and how often they receive visits – and two prevalent types of misconduct: aggression (including both verbally and physically aggressive behaviors) and contraband. This study uses survey and administrative data on a large cohort of adults incarcerated in the Netherlands and multilevel techniques to examine links between visitation and misconduct.

Receiving Visits in Prison and Misconduct

Two main arguments have been advanced in the literature to explain how receiving visits in prison relates to misconduct. First, arguments from Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory have been applied to visitation. Visits allow for the maintenance, and even strengthening, of bonds to conventional society. Since these bonds tend to discourage antisocial behavior and can act as a key source of informal social control (Laub & Sampson, 2003), receiving visits may reduce misconduct. However, while it is possible that visitors may disapprove of serious types of misconduct, such as aggression, they may not be as likely to disapprove of minor types of misconduct, particularly those that are noncriminal (such as possession of a mobile phone). It is also possible that visitors, especially those that are criminally involved, could even encourage misconduct by bringing in prohibited items. A second line of argument stems from strain and deprivation theories. Visits can provide emotional support, thus helping individuals cope with the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958). This improved ability to cope could reduce misconduct, especially aggression since individuals would be less likely to act out towards those imposing the deprivations (Cullen, 1994; Lin, 1986). Even though researchers have emphasized that visits are not necessarily positive experiences nor are visitors always supportive (Meyers et al., 2017), it is still generally assumed that visits are beneficial for individuals' ability to cope with their imprisonment, even if visits function primarily as a distraction from prison life. While these two theoretical arguments offer differing underlying mechanisms to explain how receiving visits relates to misconduct, the type of misconduct in question seems to matter.

As evident above, the theoretical expectations are vastly different for two prominent types of misconduct: aggression and contraband. Despite this expectation the bulk of prior research on the visit-misconduct relationship has

examined how receiving visits relates to whether a person received a disciplinary report for any misconduct (i.e., dichotomous, global measure), which may explain why these studies have yielded mixed findings (e.g., Benning & Lahm, 2016; Clark, 2001; Cochran, 2012; Goetting & Howsen, 1986; Lindsey et al., 2017). Studies that have examined specific forms of misconduct tend to focus on serious, violent misconduct (Ellis et al., 1974; Lahm, 2007; Reidy & Sorensen, 2020; Woo et al., 2016), even though receiving visits has considerable implications for aggressive and contraband misconduct (but these are rarely studied, see Jiang et al., 2005; Siennick et al., 2013). Concerning these types of misconduct, we expect that *receiving visits in prison is related to lower likelihoods of aggressive misconduct, but higher likelihoods of contraband misconduct.*

To further untangle the visit-misconduct relationship, it is also important to examine heterogeneity in visitation as this can be anticipated to differentially relate to aggression and contraband. We discuss below how the type of visitor and the frequency of visits may relate to these two types of misconduct.

Type of Visitor Received and Misconduct

Incarcerated individuals are visited by a variety of visitors, including partners, parents, children, and friends. If visits are thought to reduce aggression through alleviating stress, then any person close to the incarcerated individual who provides a listening ear may improve their ability to cope (as illustrated in Schuhmann et al.'s [2018] study on visits from volunteers). While some relationships may help individuals cope with their time in prison, other relationships could be more stress-inducing. It is possible that visits from children impose greater strain if incarcerated parents are reminded of their inability to parent their children. Indeed a few American studies on incarcerated parents find that child visits are associated with higher levels of misconduct (Benning & Lahm, 2016), and more specifically serious, violent infractions (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004). Notably, not all studies observed significant differences between individuals who received child visits and those who did not (Jiang et al., 2005). If visits reduce aggression through the mechanism of informal social control, then it is likely that spouses or romantic partners have a greater effect since they are most central to theories of informal social control (Bales & Mears, 2008). Siennick et al. (2013) did indeed find that spousal visits had greater effects on disciplinary infractions. In line with these arguments, we generally expect that *receiving visits from partner, family, or friends is related to lower likelihoods of aggressive misconduct, but partners will have a stronger effect.* Contrastingly, we expect that *receiving visits from children is related to higher likelihoods of aggressive behavior.*

With regards to contraband, any type of visitor could bring in prohibited items. Visitors are not likely to disapprove of individuals possessing ‘harmless’, noncriminal items such as a mobile phone. Seeing the limited options available for contact, it is even possible that visitors may have an incentive to smuggle in a cell phone so that they can have more contact with their loved one. Visitors are however more likely to disapprove and be less willing to bring in dangerous and illegal items such as drugs or weapons. While there may be different motivations and underlying reasons behind why a visitor may (or may not) bring a certain prohibited item, any visitor can bring prohibited items. This was evidenced in the study by Jiang et al. (2005) which found that even child visits were associated with drug and property rule violations. We therefore expect the following: *receiving visits from any visitor type is related to higher likelihoods of contraband misconduct.*

Frequency of Visits and Misconduct

While some incarcerated individuals receive frequent visits from one or more visitors, others are only visited sporadically. If visitors visit frequently, then they can exert informal social control by monitoring individuals’ behavior. Also, by visiting frequently visitors can provide individuals with more support, which may help them cope with the pains of imprisonment. In turn, this is likely to be most effective in reducing aggressive reactions towards prison staff or fellow incarcerated individuals (Sykes, 1958). Similarly, if individuals can see family and friends in prison on a regular basis then the negative effects from separation could be tempered. For example, Siennick et al. (2013) found that adults in Florida prisons who had closely spaced visits were more likely to show a rapid decline in disciplinary infractions post-visit. Moreover, two other American studies examining visitation patterns and misconduct using administrative data found that consistent visitation was associated with less misconduct (Cochran, 2012; Cihan et al., 2020). While these studies imply that frequent, regular visits can be beneficial in reducing overall levels of misconduct, it is unclear whether the results apply to aggressive misconduct. Still, based on the aforementioned theoretical arguments, we expect that *receiving frequent visits in prison is related to lower likelihoods of aggressive misconduct.*

Contrastingly, frequent visits can be assumed to increase the likelihood of contraband misconduct since more visits provide more opportunity to bring in prohibited items. This possibility is obscured in the few studies that have examined the effects of visitation frequency by the use of a global measure of misconduct (Cochran, 2012; Cihan et al., 2020). While Siennick et al. (2013) did consider officially recorded contraband infractions, they did not differentiate between the different

types of infractions in their analysis of visitation frequency. Since defiance infractions (e.g. disobeying orders, disrespecting officials) were most common in their data, their findings concerning visitation frequency are arguably most applicable to aggressive misconduct. As frequent visits provide more opportunity to bring in prohibited items, we expect that *receiving frequent visits in prison is related to higher likelihoods of contraband misconduct.*

The Current Study

As few studies have addressed how variations in visitation differentially relate to specific types of misconduct, the current study aims to explore the visit-misconduct relationship by operationalizing visits in three different ways, namely: 1) the *receipt* of visits, 2) the *type of visitor* received, 3) the *frequency* of visits. For the type of visitor we expand the focus from spouses and children, as is common in the visitation literature, and include family members and friends as well. We examine how these three features of visits specifically relate to aggressive and contraband misconduct, while controlling for several socio-demographic and criminological variables as well as relevant unit-level variables known to be related to receiving visits and/or misconduct. In sum, based on theory and prior research, the following hypotheses were formulated: receiving visits in prison is related to lower likelihoods of aggressive misconduct (H1). With regards to visitor type and frequency, we expect that receiving frequent visits from partner, family or friends is related to lower likelihoods of aggressive misconduct, but partners will have a stronger effect (H2a). Contrastingly we expect that receiving visits from children is related to higher likelihoods of aggressive misconduct (H2b). We further hypothesize that receiving visits in prison is related to higher likelihoods of contraband misconduct (H3). Lastly, we hypothesize that receiving frequent visits, from any type of visitor, is related to higher likelihoods of contraband misconduct (H4).

To examine our aims and investigate the hypotheses above, we utilized multilevel techniques with self-report (visitation) and administrative (aggressive and contraband misconduct) data from a large cohort of adults incarcerated in the Netherlands, as such minimizing the risk of inflated correlations due to shared method bias. Given that the research field is dominated by American studies, we describe below the Dutch prison context in which these data were collected.

The Dutch Prison Context

The Dutch Prison Service ('Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen') strives towards a positive, humane prison climate evidenced by prison regimes with daily schedules consisting

of work, education, and recreation. Visitation is a standard part of this schedule. Adults incarcerated in a Dutch prison have the right to one hour of visits a week with up to three unique visitors per visit (with children under 16 often not counted toward this maximum). This right applies to all regimes, including the most common regimes (prison and pretrial detention) and more specialized regimes such as extra care (for more vulnerable individuals), short-stay custody, and persistent offenders. Notably, individuals in open regimes do not receive visits in prison since they can see their family and friends during furlough. Also, individuals in prison regimes can earn an extra hour of visits (maximum of two hours per week) by behaving well.

Since visitation is a right, individuals cannot lose their visits. Prison governors can, however, alter usual visitation practices for safety reasons, for example by letting visits take place behind glass. Moreover, prison governors can temporarily restrict access for certain visitors for a certain period, for instance because they were caught smuggling in prohibited items. Since November 1, 2019, visitors can even be criminally charged for bringing prohibited items into prison, including noncriminal items such as cell phones (Amendment of the Criminal Code with the criminalization of bringing in prohibited items, Article 429a). Visitors are, however, not screened or denied access due to their criminal records. While the prison climate in Dutch prisons is considered rather liberal and humane (Kruttschnitt & Dirkzwager, 2011), the amount of visitation legally allowed could be considered restrictive in comparison to some other (Western) European countries (like Belgium, see for example Eechaudt, 2017).

5.2 Method

Data & Sample

Data was used from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS), which is part of a nationwide survey study on prison climate in The Netherlands (the Life in Custody study; Van Ginneken et al., 2018). The DPVS aims to examine prison visitation from different perspectives and in all its variety. This paper specifically uses data from the 2017 data collection which targeted the full population of male and female persons, in all regimes, who were incarcerated between January and April 2017 in one of the 28 operating Dutch prisons ($N = 7,109$). Individuals were individually approached by research assistants to participate in the study. They were asked to fill in the Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ), an instrument measuring several facets of individuals' perceptions of prison life (Bosma et al., 2020a). Those who wished to participate were also asked for permission to match their survey data

with administrative data. In total, 6,088 people could be reached to take part in the study. Of those approached, 4,538 individuals from 244 prison units participated and gave permission for accessing administrative data for research purposes. The overall response rate was therefore 81% (see Van Ginneken et al., 2018 for an extensive description of the 2017 data collection).

Since we are interested in visitation, we excluded individuals in open regimes ($N = 166$) because they have furlough every weekend and therefore do not receive visits in prison. Also, 376 participants did not fill in questions concerning whether they received visits and thus were excluded from the analyses. Moreover, we controlled for several unit-level variables known to be related to misconduct. We therefore had to exclude four units (111 participants) since no unit characteristics were available. The excluded sample did not significantly differ from the included sample on aggressive misconduct $\chi^2(1, N = 4,538) = 0.05, p = .825$ or contraband misconduct $\chi^2(1, N = 4,538) = 1.60, p = .206$.

In total, 3,885 male and female adults in prison, pretrial, extra care, persistent offender, and short-stay custody regimes were included in this study, making the study participants a good representation of the total Dutch prison population.

Measures

Misconduct

In the present study we examined official prison records and documented if an individual had received a disciplinary report for aggressive or contraband misconduct in the three months prior to the data collection (or if their imprisonment was shorter than three months, since entry into this prison; this is in line with the self-reported visitation period). Aggressive misconduct constitutes both verbally and physically aggressive behaviors, including: arguing, using insulting, cursing or provocative language, threats or other conflict, kicking, beating, stabbing, spitting, pushing or throwing things toward others, breaking or damaging property, including kicking or punching doors. All aggressive behaviors were included whether directed at staff or fellow incarcerated individuals. Contraband misconduct was defined as possession of or use of drugs, illegal medication, phones, and other items prohibited in prison.

Visits

In the PCQ participants were asked how often they received visits from partner, child(ren), family, and friends in the three months prior to the data collection (or

if their imprisonment was shorter than three months, since entry into this prison). Response options were: never, monthly, weekly or daily. While individuals in open regimes can see family and friends daily, this is not possible in other regimes; therefore, for the included sample weekly visits is the highest possible frequency. Participants could also choose not applicable because, for instance, they did not have a partner. For the purposes of exploring the receipt of visits, we dichotomized answers to indicate whether an individual had received at least one visit from any one of these visitors (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Next, we zoomed in on the type of visitor received (partner, child(ren), family and/or friends). In total four dummy variables were created, namely whether an individual received at least one visit from a partner, child, family member or friend (0 = no, 1 = yes). In order to receive a '1' on the dummy variables for partner or child visits, individuals must have indicated that they had a partner or child.

Finally, we recorded how often each type of visitor visited. We created a dummy variable indicating how frequent visits were from partner, child, family, or friends (0 = monthly or less, 1 = weekly).

Individual-level Control Variables

In keeping with prior research into misconduct, we controlled for several socio-demographic and criminological variables, including: age (in years), gender (0 = female, 1 = male), country of birth (0 = outside of the Netherlands, 1 = the Netherlands), has a partner and/or child (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprisoned for a violent offense (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprisoned for a property offense (0 = no, 1 = yes), prior imprisonments (number of prior imprisonments in the past five years), and time served (months).

Unit-level Control Variables

We also controlled for unit-level variables that are known to be important for misconduct in Dutch prisons (see Bosma et al., 2020b). Dummy variables were included for the type of regime: prison (reference group), pretrial detention, extra care, persistent offenders, and short-stay custody. We also included staff-prisoner ratio (number of staff on a unit divided by the number of incarcerated individuals).

Analytic Strategy

We utilized multilevel analyses in order to account for the nested structure of the data (individuals are housed in units). Moreover, using multilevel analyses is important since it is recognized that misconduct, particularly officially recorded

misconduct, is influenced by unit-level factors (Bosma et al., 2020b). Aggression, contraband, visits, and various control variables were measured at the individual level (level 1, $N = 3,885$). In addition, important unit-level characteristics were included at level 2 ($N = 230$ prison units). All independent continuous variables were centered around their grand mean before they were included in the multilevel models to allow for easier interpretation of effects. Multilevel logistic regression analyses were performed since the dependent variables are dichotomous. Analyses were carried out using full information maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR) estimation and were conducted in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017).

5.3 Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 5.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables (including level 1 and level 2 control variables). For misconduct, around 5% of the sample received a disciplinary report for aggressive misconduct and 17% received a report for contraband misconduct. In total, 1,412 disciplinary reports were coded. Of the 253 reports concerning aggressive misconduct, 50% involved incidences of verbal aggression, 33% physical aggression, and 32% destruction of property (note, these do not add up to 100% since one disciplinary report can include several different types of aggression). Although the reports were not always clear as to whom the aggressive behaviors were directed at, in 60% of the reports on verbal aggression it was clear that the behaviors were directed at prison staff. For physical aggression, 55% of the reports showed that these behaviors were directed at fellow incarcerated persons. Thus, in our data, the types of aggressive behavior are not particularly directed at a specific party. The overwhelming majority (82%) of the reports on contraband misconduct concerned possession of or use of drugs.

In the same period, 73% of the sample had received at least one visit. With regard to visitor type: 72% of the sample who reported having a partner received at least one visit from their partner. Just over half of incarcerated parents received a visit from their child(ren). Around 56% of the sample received at least one visit from a family member and just under half of the sample (47%) received at least one visit from a friend. With regard to the frequency of visits, 57% of the sample who reported having a partner received weekly visits from their partner. Nearly one-third of incarcerated parents reported receiving weekly visits from their children. Just under 30% of the sample indicated that family members visited on a weekly basis and 20% received weekly visits from friends.

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics (Total N = 3,885 across 230 units)

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Dependent variables					
Aggressive misconduct	3,885	0	1	0.05	0.22
Contraband misconduct	3,885	0	1	0.17	0.38
Independent variables (visits)					
Received a visit from					
Anyone	3,885	0	1	0.73	0.44
Partner	2,161	0	1	0.72	0.45
Child	2,105	0	1	0.52	0.50
Family	3,735	0	1	0.56	0.50
Friend	3,679	0	1	0.47	0.50
Weekly visits from					
Partner	2,161	0	1	0.57	0.50
Child	2,105	0	1	0.30	0.46
Family	3,735	0	1	0.29	0.45
Friend	3,679	0	1	0.20	0.40
Individual-level control variables (level 1)					
Gender (male)	3,885	0	1	0.95	0.23
Age (in years)	3,885	18	81	36.71	11.65
Country of birth: the Netherlands	3,790	0	1	0.66	0.47
Has a partner	3,735	0	1	0.60	0.49
Has a child(ren)	3,801	0	1	0.60	0.49
Index offense					
Violent	3,374	0	1	0.42	0.49
Property	3,374	0	1	0.30	0.46
Prior imprisonments (# in past five years)	3,882	1	30	3.06	3.02
Time served (months)	3,883	0	326	11.93	22.05
Unit-level control variables (level 2)					
Regime					
Prison	230	0	1	0.35	0.48
Pretrial detention	230	0	1	0.37	0.49
Extra care	230	0	1	0.11	0.31
Persistent offenders	230	0	1	0.08	0.27
Short-stay custody	230	0	1	0.07	0.26
Staff-prisoner ratio	230	0.11	3.06	0.30	0.25

Descriptive statistics for individual-level control variables show that most individuals in this study are male (95%), on average 37 years old, and born in the Netherlands (66%). At the unit-level ($N = 230$), most individuals were housed either in prison (35%) or pretrial detention (37%) regimes. On average, the staff-prisoner ratio was 0.30 ($SD = 0.25$), meaning there are three staff members for every 10 individuals on a unit.

Bivariate Analyses

Before proceeding to the multilevel analyses, bivariate associations between the various visit measures and aggressive and contraband misconduct were examined. Table 5.2 shows the percentage of individuals who received a report for aggressive or contraband misconduct per visitor type and frequency (monthly versus weekly visits). As shown, a similar percentage of individuals received a report for aggressive misconduct, whether they were visited or not. Small differences can be seen between the percentage of incarcerated parents who got a report for aggressive misconduct and did not receive a child visit (6%) and incarcerated parents who did receive child visits (3.8%). This percentage was even lower (3.3%) for incarcerated parents who received frequent child visits. Contrastingly, figures were slightly higher for individuals who were visited frequently by partner or friends in comparison to individuals who were not visited by partner or friends.

Table 5.2 Percentages of Aggressive and Contraband Misconduct by Visitor Type and Visit Frequency

Aggressive misconduct				
	Not visited	Visited	Visited monthly	Visited weekly
Partner	5.4%	5.2%	3.4%	5.6%
Child	6.0%	3.8%	4.4%	3.3%
Family	4.8%	5.8%	5.7%	5.8%
Friend	5.5%	5.3%	4.1%	7.0%
Contraband misconduct				
Partner	16.0%	19.4%	23.6%	18.3%
Child	18.3%	16.2%	18.1%	14.7%
Family	13.2%	20.6%	20.9%	20.5%
Friend	13.5%	21.5%	21.4%	21.8%

Note. The percentages represent the proportion of the sample that received a report for either aggressive or contraband misconduct.

In comparison to individuals who were not visited, the percentage of individuals who got a report for possessing or using contraband was higher when visited by partner, family or friends, ranging from an increase of 3.4% (partner) to 8% (friend). Individuals who received monthly visits from partner, child or family had higher percentages of contraband misconduct in comparison to individuals who received weekly visits. The opposite was true for friend visits, although the difference in contraband reports between monthly and weekly visits here is minimal (0.4%).

Multilevel Analyses

Null Models

Before proceeding with the multilevel logistic regression models, null models were estimated (not shown) to examine the amount of variation in the dependent variables (aggressive and contraband misconduct) across prison units. For aggressive misconduct, the interclass correlation (ICC) was 0.192, indicating that 19% of the variance in the odds of receiving a report for aggressive misconduct lay between units (variance = 0.79, $p < .001$). For contraband misconduct, this amount was higher with an ICC of 0.216, indicating that 22% of the variance in the odds of receiving a report for contraband misconduct lay between units (variance = 0.91, $p < .001$).

Logistic Regression Models

Results from the full multilevel logistic regressions models containing all explanatory variables at the individual and unit level are reported in Table 5.3 for both aggressive and contraband misconduct. Below we discuss the results per visit feature (receipt of visits, type of visitor received, and frequency of visits) and describe firstly how they relate to aggressive misconduct, followed by contraband misconduct. We conclude with the results from all models concerning the individual and unit level control variables.

The Receipt of Visits. The results from the multilevel analysis showed that receiving a visit in prison was not significantly related to aggressive misconduct. Individuals who received visits were, however, 63% more likely to get a disciplinary report for possession or use of contrabands than non-visited individuals.

Type of Visitor Received. Whether individuals received visits from partner, child or family was not significantly related to aggressive misconduct. Receiving at least one visit from a friend, however, decreased the likelihood of receiving a report for aggressive misconduct by 34%. For contraband misconduct, individuals who received visits from friends were 40% more likely to get a disciplinary report for possession or use of contrabands. Receiving partner visits also increased the

likelihood of contraband misconduct (OR = 1.52). Receiving visits from the other two visitor types (child and family) was not significantly related to contraband misconduct.

Frequency of Visits. We also explored whether the frequency of partner, child, family or friend visits is associated with misconduct, above and beyond *whether* they visited. No significant associations were found between weekly visits from partner, child, family, and aggressive misconduct. Receiving weekly visits from friends, however, was associated with higher likelihoods of aggressive misconduct. Because frequency effects were estimated simultaneously with visitor types effects, this finding should be interpreted as a small, positive association between weekly friend visits and aggressive misconduct ($b = -0.42 + 0.57 = 0.15$). For contraband misconduct, no significant associations were found for frequency of visits regardless of visitor types.

Control Variables. In terms of socio-demographic and criminological variables, individuals who are young and have a history of imprisonment had higher odds of both aggressive and contraband misconduct. This is consistent with results from prior research which finds, in high levels of agreement, that these individual characteristics are related to misconduct more generally (Steiner et al., 2014). Also, being imprisoned for a violent offense increased the odds of aggressive misconduct. Likewise, being imprisoned for a property offense increased the odds of aggressive misconduct. Moreover, being male and imprisoned for a violent offense increased the odds of contraband misconduct.

In terms of unit-level variables, several regime differences were found for aggressive and contraband misconduct. Compared with prison regime, imprisonment in short-stay custody was related to lower likelihoods of both aggressive and contraband misconduct. Imprisonment in pretrial detention was also related to lower likelihoods of contraband misconduct. Imprisonment in persistent offenders' regime, however, related to higher likelihoods of contraband misconduct. Finally, more staff per incarcerated individual decreased the odds of contraband misconduct.

Table 5.3 Multilevel Logistic Regression Models (N = 3,885)

	Aggressive misconduct					
	b	SE	OR	b	SE	OR
Received a visit from						
Anyone	-0.12	0.18	0.89	-	-	-
Partner	-	-	-	-0.54	0.46	0.58
Child	-	-	-	0.01	0.30	1.01
Family	-	-	-	0.21	0.20	1.23
Friend	-	-	-	-0.42*	0.21	0.66
Weekly visits from						
Partner	-	-	-	0.63	0.39	1.89
Child	-	-	-	-0.49	0.38	0.61
Family	-	-	-	-0.34	0.24	0.71
Friend	-	-	-	0.57*	0.24	1.77
Individual-level control variables (level 1)						
Age	-0.08***	0.01	0.92	-0.08***	0.01	0.92
Gender (male)	0.48	0.39	1.62	0.52	0.38	1.68
Country of birth (NL)	-0.11	0.16	0.90	-0.16	0.16	0.86
Has a partner	-0.04	0.17	0.96	-0.04	0.23	0.97
Has a child(ren)	0.24	0.17	1.28	0.36	0.19	1.43
Index offense						
Violent	0.77**	0.27	2.15	0.79**	0.28	2.20
Property	0.64*	0.26	1.89	0.65*	0.26	1.92
Prior imprisonments	0.11***	0.02	1.11	0.11***	0.02	1.11
Time served	0.01	0.00	1.01	0.01	0.01	1.01
Unit-level control variables (level 2, N = 230)						
Regime						
Prison	Ref	Ref		Ref	Ref	
Pretrial detention	0.32	0.26		0.18	0.24	
Extra care	0.11	0.52		-0.05	0.65	
Persistent offenders	0.89	0.55		0.73*	0.34	
Short-stay custody	-1.75**	0.58		-1.71	1.68	
Staff-prisoner ratio	-0.24	1.21		-0.16	0.74	
Constant	4.66***	0.45		4.64***	0.43	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Contraband misconduct					
b	SE	OR	b	SE	OR
0.49**	0.14	1.63	-	-	-
-	-	-	0.42*	0.20	1.52
-	-	-	-0.21	0.19	0.81
-	-	-	0.14	0.15	1.15
-	-	-	0.34**	0.13	1.40
-	-	-	-0.33	0.17	0.72
-	-	-	-0.19	0.20	0.83
-	-	-	-0.17	0.15	0.85
-	-	-	0.08	0.15	1.09
-0.06***	0.01	0.94	-0.06***	0.01	0.94
1.59***	0.39	4.89	1.67***	0.41	5.32
-0.11	0.11	0.90	-0.08	0.11	0.92
-0.04	0.11	0.97	-0.07	0.18	0.93
0.17	0.12	1.18	0.36*	0.14	1.43
0.58***	0.14	1.79	0.64**	0.15	1.90
0.14	0.17	1.14	0.14	0.20	1.15
0.09***	0.02	1.09	0.08**	0.03	1.08
0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Ref	Ref		Ref	Ref	
-0.30	0.46		-0.20	0.83	
-0.23	0.79		-0.26	1.04	
1.26*	0.60		1.29	1.59	
-2.36***	0.42		-2.36**	0.84	
-2.61*	1.07		-2.36	1.37	
4.03***	0.21		4.21***	0.69	

Post hoc Analyses on Verbally and Physically Aggressive Behaviors

As we have argued in this article, it is important to specify the type of misconduct in question in order to understand more about the visit-misconduct relationship. Although several theoretical arguments and prior literature suggest that receiving visits in prison is likely to lower all types of aggressive behavior, there are compelling reasons to separately examine verbally and physically aggressive behaviors as they constitute distinct phenomena with possibly different etiologies (Patrick, 1998; Stoliker, 2016). While official reports on verbally aggressive behaviors are likely to be directed at prison staff, physically aggressive behaviors are likely to include incidences of violence directed at either fellow incarcerated persons or prison staff. Staff may exercise discretion when deciding to report on verbally aggressive behaviors, but this is less likely for physically aggressive behaviors due to their greater threat to prison safety. Considering this, we explored how the aforementioned visit features (receipt of visits, type of visitor received, and the frequency of visits) relate to verbally aggressive (e.g., arguing, using insulting, cursing or provocative language, threats or other conflict) and physically aggressive (e.g., kicking, beating, stabbing, spitting, pushing or throwing things) behaviors directed at either prison staff or fellow incarcerated persons.

The results of these post hoc analyses showed that none of our visit measures were associated with verbally aggressive behaviors (full results can be found in Appendix 5A). Individuals who received visits were, however, 49% less likely to get a disciplinary report for physically aggressive behaviors than non-visited individuals. Moreover, receiving at least one visit from a friend was associated with lower likelihoods of physically aggressive behaviors ($OR = 0.42$). No significant associations were found for other visitor types or the frequency of visits on physically aggressive behaviors. These results were found even when controlling for the same socio-demographic, criminological, and unit-level control variables used in the previous analyses. In sum, the post hoc analyses suggest that our reported finding regarding the association between receiving visits and aggressive misconduct pertain specifically to verbally aggressive and not physically aggressive misconduct, whereas the opposite is true for our finding on type of visitor.

5.4 Discussion

Although scholars have emphasized the importance of social ties for incarcerated individuals adjustment and misconduct, and although prisons worldwide allow visitation and use it as an incentive to improve individuals' behavior, few empirical

studies have provided a detailed account of the visitation-misconduct relationship. The goal of this study was to advance research in this field by exploring how receiving visits in prison relates to misconduct. Drawing on the unique strengths of our self-report and administrative data, we examined several features of visits, including: the receipt of visits, the type of visitor received, and how often they visited. These measures acknowledge that visits are a heterogeneous experience. A central contribution of this study is specifically investigating how these features relate to aggressive and contraband misconduct. It is important to tease these forms of misconduct apart since theoretical arguments lead to differing predictions (see hypotheses 1-4). To test these predictions we utilized multilevel analyses, which accounts for the clustered nature of the data and controls for unit-level influences. This work contributes to the visit-misconduct literature and extends this literature by studying visitation in the Netherlands. Below, we discuss and evaluate our results against our theoretical expectations and prior studies.

Receiving Visits in Prison and Aggressive Misconduct

Our first hypothesis was that individuals who receive visits would have lower odds of aggressive misconduct. Our results show, however, no association between receiving visits in prison and aggressive misconduct in the multilevel analysis. This result is similar to two prior studies which also found no significant associations between receiving visits and aggressive misconduct (Lahm, 2007; Jiang et al., 2005), however, there is some empirical evidence that individuals who received visits engage in less violent infractions than individuals who do not receive visits (Ellis, 1974; Woo et al., 2016; Gonçalves et al., 2016). We also found evidence of this in our post hoc analyses on physically aggressive behaviors. This provides some support for theoretical arguments stemming from Hirschi's social bond theory (1969) that the visit-misconduct relationship operates via informal social control, since we find associations between receiving visits and serious forms of aggressive misconduct (such as kicking, beating, stabbing, spitting, pushing or throwing things toward others), but not with less serious forms of aggressive misconduct (such as arguing, using insulting, cursing or provocative language, or threats).

We further expected that frequent visits from partner, family, and friends would be associated with lower odds of aggressive misconduct (H2a). The multilevel models indicate, however, that only friend visits were associated with less aggressive misconduct, although practically the differences seem minimal (as evidenced by the bivariate analyses) and only applicable to physically aggressive behaviors (as evidenced by the post hoc analyses). It is possible that friends play a bigger role

in informal social control than is often suggested in the literature. Friendships are likely to deteriorate during incarceration; perhaps, the friendships that remain are strong social ties (Volker et al., 2016). Nevertheless, we found that weekly visits from friends were associated with *higher* likelihoods of aggressive misconduct (but not verbally or physically aggressive misconduct directed towards prison staff or fellow incarcerated persons). This suggests that these visits are linked to other forms of aggressive behavior, such as destruction of property, throwing objects or beating against doors. Such acts of frustrations could be associated with the visit experience. Recent literature about visitation experiences emphasizes that visits are not a uniformly positive experience (e.g. Meyers et al., 2017). If visits are stressful then individuals may get frustrated, which could increase these forms of aggression. Perhaps this association would be more pronounced when self-report data on misconduct is examined. Official records reflect the detection and discretion of prison staff (Bosma et al., 2020b), thus acts of frustration are potentially less likely to result in a disciplinary report, especially when prison staff know that an individual had a stressful visit.

In contrast to partner, family, and friends, we expected that receiving visits from children would be associated with an increased risk of aggressive misconduct (H2b). Our results show, however, no association between receiving (frequent) visits from children and aggressive misconduct (this was also found in the post hoc analyses). At bivariate level, incarcerated parents who received weekly visits from their children seemed less likely to receive a report for aggressive misconduct, however, this association did not show when all visitor types were considered. Perhaps this association is negated by weekly partner visits which seemed related to higher levels of aggressive misconduct at the bivariate level. Since it can be assumed that partners accompany children to visits, these opposite effects may have cancelled each other out at the multivariate level. Although past studies also identified null effects concerning child visits (Jiang et al., 2005), findings are mixed, thus, further investigations of how these visits relate to misconduct are needed.

Receiving Visits in Prison and Contraband Misconduct

Our expectation for contraband misconduct was that receiving visits would be related to increased odds of contraband misconduct (H3). In line with this expectation, we found that individuals who received visits had a 63% increased likelihood of receiving a report for possessing or using contrabands in comparison to non-visited individuals. Siennick et al. (2013) also found that receiving visits

strongly increased the probability of contraband infractions. These results are understandable as there are few avenues for prohibited items to get into prisons.

Since any visitor can bring in prohibited items and frequent visits provide more opportunity to bring in such items, we hypothesized that receiving frequent visits, from any type of visitor, would increase the odds of contraband misconduct (H4). Our results, however, show that only partners and friends were associated with higher odds of contraband misconduct (family and children were not significant). We offer a few possible explanations for this result. First, although all visitor types may be capable of bringing in prohibited items, it is possible that a certain amount of trust is necessary, which could explain why partner visits show an increased risk of contraband misconduct. Second, there is a possibility that individuals specifically ask certain relationships to smuggle in items, so that they can still receive visits from other visitors (while this offers an explanation for the result from this study, with data from 2017, it is less likely that this selection effect would occur now due to the recent criminalization of bringing prohibited items into prison). Third, it is also possible that friends are criminally involved and are facilitating such infractions by bringing in contrabands since visitors in the Netherlands are not screened nor denied access to prisons due to having a prior criminal record.

With regards to the frequency of visits, while the multilevel analyses showed no association between weekly visits from any visitor type and contraband misconduct the figures from the bivariate analyses did show higher percentages of contraband misconduct among individuals who received monthly versus weekly visits. This alludes to the possibility that such sporadic visits may serve a specific purpose for individuals (for example, by providing them with drugs), however, these differences were not significant in the multivariate analyses. This suggests that who is visiting matters more for contraband misconduct than how often one visits. While these results partially contrast our fourth hypothesis, prior work has indicated that the relation between visitation frequency and misconduct is ambiguous and may even be reciprocal. Cihan et al. (2020) for instance found that individuals who were visited infrequently were most likely to be in the persistent misconduct group. Such findings could be a result of sanctions, since individuals who receive a disciplinary report may lose their visits. While this is not possible in Dutch prisons, common sanctions for disciplinary infractions, including possession of contraband, is placement inside individuals' cell without television and exclusion from participation in regular programming (apart from yard time and visits) which can make it more difficult to arrange a visit. Unfortunately, since our data about visits, aggressive,

and contraband misconduct were reported about the same time period, we could not investigate these possibilities.

Strengths and Limitations

The current study examined the association between receiving visits in prison and aggressive and contraband misconduct using multilevel analyses to test self-report visitation data and official records of misconduct. Although this study is one of the first to expand our knowledge about visitation to western European prisons, the study is not without limitations. A first shortcoming is that the data analyzed for visits, aggressive, and contraband misconduct were reported about the same period (namely, three months prior to the data collection). Due to the cross-sectional nature of our data we cannot rule out the possibility of a reciprocal relationship (as explained above). Recently some suggestive evidence has been found that adjustment problems in prison (both in mental health and behavioral) resulted in more visits (Gonçalves et al., 2019). For this reason, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Future research should examine whether these associations are causal by capitalizing on methods that control for potential confounding influences, such as a within-persons design or instrumental variable analysis.

Next, the self-report data on visits was only available for a period of three months. While this may be warranted due to the relatively short prison stays in the Netherlands, we recognize that having data on a longer period could have different implications for aggressive and contraband misconduct (especially since prior research shows that individuals experience varying visitation patterns across their entire prison term, see Cochran, 2012; Cihan et al., 2020). Also, having data over a longer period could make it possible to elucidate the mechanisms behind the associations found in this study. Future research therefore ought to include visitation data that spans an entire prison term or self-report data from a longer period.

Study Implications

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study advances our understanding of how visits relate to aggressive and contraband misconduct in Dutch prisons. Our results show that receiving visits in prison, especially visits from partner and friends, is primarily related to an increased likelihood of (drug-related) contraband misconduct. To a lesser extent, our data suggest that receiving visits, especially from friends, is related to lower likelihoods of (physically) aggressive misconduct, but weekly friend visits are related to higher likelihoods of aggressive misconduct. Taken together, our results point to the importance of relationship dynamics and

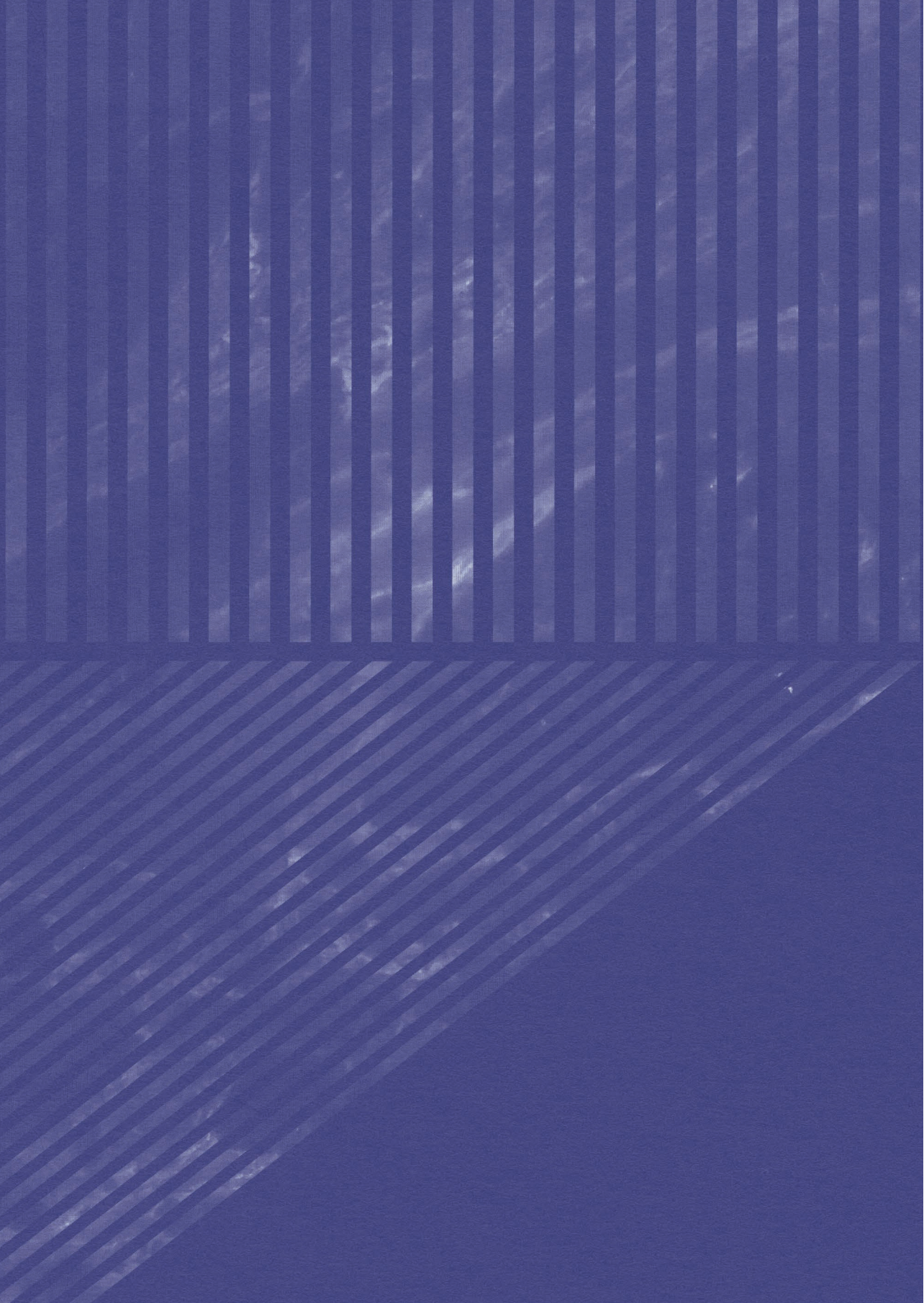
visitation experiences when theorizing and investigating the visit-misconduct relationship. Past work says little about these aspects, thus they deserve further study. Especially useful would be studies examining the role of different visitors in relation to contraband misconduct, which could illuminate some of the findings here. Because scholars emphasize that visits are not uniformly positive, future studies should examine how experiences during visits differentially impact behavior using, for example, self-report or observational data. Such research can illuminate under which conditions visits affect in-prison behavior (perhaps more specifically the relation between visits and aggressive behavior). Here, too, studies examining the effects of virtual visits on misconduct could be informative. For example, virtual visits can also provide emotional support, but removes the possibility of visitors bringing in prohibited items, so it would be interesting to know whether they affect misconduct in a similar way. Also, scholars could examine how these behaviors interrelate. For example, if receiving visits leads to more (drug-related) contraband, it is possible that drug use or drug dealing can influence levels of aggression and other types of misconduct in prison. Relatedly, the way visits and misconduct relate may differ across individuals (e.g., males and females, short and long-term stays in prison). Exploring these possibilities can help determine how to modify existing visitation programs to help temper negative prison experiences and better anticipate and manage misconduct. While we urge prison officials to be cautious in interpreting the results of this study for such purposes, our study does suggest that visits may only limitedly help in diminishing aggressive behaviors but considering programs and procedures that encourage visits and improve the visitation experience could help lower incidences of physical aggression against others and objects. If correctional staff wish to minimize contraband risks in prisons, especially drug-related contraband, then closer inspection of who is visiting could be useful.

Appendix 5A Multilevel Logistic Regression Models on Verbally and Physically Aggressive Behaviors
(N = 3,885)

	Verbally aggressive behaviors					
	b	SE	OR	b	SE	OR
Received a visit from						
Anyone	-0.25	0.37	0.78	-	-	-
Partner	-	-	-	-0.46	0.44	0.63
Child	-	-	-	0.26	0.35	1.29
Family	-	-	-	0.02	0.30	1.02
Friend	-	-	-	-0.22	0.29	0.80
Weekly visits from						
Partner	-	-	-	0.05	0.37	1.05
Child	-	-	-	-0.47	0.45	0.63
Family	-	-	-	-0.24	0.33	0.79
Friend	-	-	-	0.47	0.35	1.60
Individual-level control variables (level 1)						
Age	-0.08***	0.02	0.93	-0.08***	0.02	0.93
Gender (male)	0.75	0.72	2.12	0.84	0.72	2.32
Country of birth (NL)	-0.29	0.24	0.75	-0.29	0.23	0.75
Has a partner	0.02	0.24	1.02	0.24	0.28	1.28
Has a child(ren)	0.19	0.27	1.21	0.19	0.27	1.21
Index offense						
Violent	1.04*	0.43	2.83	1.09*	0.43	2.96
Property	0.89*	0.44	2.43	0.95*	0.43	2.58
Prior imprisonments	0.12***	0.03	1.13	0.12***	0.03	1.13
Time served	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.01	0.01	1.01
Unit-level control variables (level 2, N = 230)						
Regime						
Prison	Ref	Ref		Ref	Ref	
Pretrial detention	0.51	1.28		0.36	0.33	
Extra care	0.19	0.78		0.26	0.89	
Persistent offenders	0.81	1.01		0.50	0.36	
Short-stay custody	-1.59	2.31		-1.70	3.46	
Staff-prisoner ratio	-0.14	9.99		-0.14	0.80	
Constant	5.76***	0.97		5.81***	0.77	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Physically aggressive behaviors					
b	SE	OR	b	SE	OR
-0.67*	0.26	0.51	-	-	-
-	-	-	-1.12	0.68	0.33
-	-	-	-0.44	0.49	0.64
-	-	-	0.02	0.30	1.02
-	-	-	-0.88*	0.36	0.42
-	-	-	1.12	0.72	3.05
-	-	-	-0.07	0.63	0.94
-	-	-	0.10	0.31	1.10
-	-	-	0.41	0.49	1.50
-0.10***	0.02	0.91	-0.10***	0.02	0.91
-	-	-	-	-	-
-0.14	0.24	0.87	-0.20	0.24	0.82
-0.06	0.29	0.94	0.01	0.37	1.01
0.45	0.24	1.57	0.64*	0.27	1.89
0.99	0.69	2.70	1.11	0.69	3.02
0.64	0.72	1.89	0.75	0.71	2.12
0.10**	0.04	1.11	0.10**	0.04	1.10
-0.01	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.01	1.00
Ref	Ref		Ref	Ref	
-0.27	0.27		-0.32	0.34	
0.06	0.47		-0.04	0.93	
0.58	1.16		0.65	0.98	
-1.92***	0.54		-1.71	1.21	
-1.85	1.20		-1.77	2.01	
4.94***	0.70		5.42***	0.66	



6

Effects of the timing of prison visits on disciplinary infractions: a replication and expansion

This chapter was submitted for publication as: Berghuis M.L., Sentse, M., Palmen H., & Nieuwbeerta P. (2022). Effects of the timing of prison visits on inmate disciplinary infractions in Dutch prisons.

Abstract

Objectives: This study tests the timing effect of prison visits on the probability of disciplinary infractions.

Method: Our sample is a cohort of 823 males who participated in the Dutch Prison Visitation study (2017) and had visitation and misconduct data. Using two-level random effects logistic regression models, we examined week-to-week associations between infractions and prison visits, including visits from partner, family, friends, and official visitors.

Results: The probability of an infraction is comparable to average levels in anticipation of visits, increases up to 18 percent in the weeks immediately following visits, and then returns to baseline levels. This pattern is found for contraband infractions, but no effects were found for aggressive infractions. Strongest effects were found for family and official visits. When individuals are visited frequently, the risk of infractions postvisit is similar to average levels.

Conclusions: The findings show that visits can have harmful effects on disciplinary infractions. These effects seem to stem from the security risks concerning contraband. More research is needed to further understand the mechanism behind visits' effects.

Keywords: Prisoners, Incarceration, Corrections

6.1 Introduction

Imprisonment, by definition, involves separation from family, friends, and the broader community. Separation from social relationships is a central concern among individuals and can result in a range of adjustment problems (Adams, 1992; Liebling, 1999; Monahan et al., 2011). One of the few opportunities presented to incarcerated individuals to facilitate meaningful social interaction and stay connected to the community is through prison visitation, which has led scholars to emphasize the consequences these events may have on day-to-day prison life (De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Tahamont, 2013). The promise of seeing loved ones can distract from prison life and give individuals something to look forward to, which could improve compliance to prison rules (Bottoms, 1999; Toch & Adams, 1989). Seeing family and friends during a visit may provide individuals with comfort and emotional support, but not all visitors are supportive, and conflicts can arise, potentially leaving individuals vulnerable when dealing with prison staff and others after a visit (Meyers et al., 2017; Moran & Disney, 2019; Wallace et al., 2016). Moreover, at the end of each visit, individuals must separate (again) from their visitors which may increase feelings of loss and isolation and exacerbate misconduct (Dixey & Woodall, 2012; Turanovic & Tasca, 2019). Despite implications that behavior may change both prior to and following visits, we know surprisingly little about the short-term effects of visits on infractions. Examining when and under which circumstances visits shape behavior is crucial for identifying how individuals' social ties affect behavior and informing prison officials who seek to better anticipate when visits are beneficial and when visits have adverse consequences on prison safety and order.

No single work did more to examine the short-term effects of a visitation event on infractions than Siennick, Mears and Bales' study published in 2013, "Here and Gone: Anticipation and Separation Effects of Prison Visits on Inmate Infractions". In this study a within-persons design was employed to assess week-to-week changes in probabilities of infractions in the six weeks leading up to a visit, the visit week, and six weeks following a visit for 7,000 individuals incarcerated in Florida. In doing so, they estimated the impact of visits by comparing individuals' risk of disciplinary infractions during periods when they received visits with periods when they did not receive visits. One of the central contributions of this study was evidence of an anticipatory effect: individuals' risk of infractions decreased in the weeks leading up to a visit. This suggests that individuals moderate their behavior in anticipation of visits. They additionally found that the probability of an infraction sharply increased

in the weeks immediately following a visit (coined as the separation effect) and then gradually returned to normal levels. These effects were similar across a wide range of infractions, although effects were strongest for contraband infractions. Even though individuals received visits from a diverse group of visitors, the effects on infractions were similar across all visitor types. Postvisit increases were, however, largest after spousal visits. Lastly, Siennick et al. (2013) found that frequent visits decreased the risk of infractions, suggesting that any harmful effects stem from the separation from family and friends at the end of each visit.

These findings counter theoretical notions that visits can reduce misconduct by distracting individuals from their current situation and providing them with access to loved ones and emotional support (Adams, 1992; Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2002). Although visits may serve these purposes, “they may not have the lasting effects needed to produce sustained improvements in behavior” (Siennick et al. 2013:435). Nonetheless, there are studies that rigorously tested articulate measures of visitation and found that visits can cause lasting declines in misconduct (Cihan et al., 2020; Cochran, 2012; Tahamont, 2013). Since Siennick et al.’s (2013) study is the only study, to our knowledge, that has applied a within-persons design to the visit-misconduct relationship the results are in need of replication. Generally, replication is a key feature of science as it verifies hypotheses and results and assures generalizability beyond the specific circumstances of a particular study (Pridemore et al., 2018). In the context of prison visits, replication is crucial as visits qualitatively look different across contexts, and policies can hinder or encourage visits, which may have implications for visitation effects. For example, if correctional staff can restrict visits based on behavior, then effects may be purely due to the use of visitation as a behavior management tool, rather than the experience of the visit itself. Moreover, understanding variations in visits’ effects across contexts can also help inform strategies for improving the manageability of prisons, enhance the well-being of those incarcerated, and those affected by incarceration, and ultimately, increase individuals’ post-release success (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2016). Despite this, and the significant contribution of Siennick et al.’s (2013) study to the visitation literature, attempts to replicate and expand on their results are absent.

In an effort to further our understanding of visitation effects on infractions, the current study examines within-individual changes in the probability of receiving a disciplinary report in the weeks leading up to visits, the visit week, and the weeks following visits among 823 adult males incarcerated in the Netherlands. In doing so, we seek to replicate and expand upon Siennick et al.’s (2013) study. Using similar

measures of visits and infractions, we examine how visitation effects vary by the type of misconduct in question, who is visiting, and how frequently visits occur. To extend existing research we explore not only the personal visitors tested in Siennick et al.'s study (partner, family, and friends), but also visits from children and official visitors (e.g., lawyers, parole officers, social workers). As will be evident later, investigating visits from these relationships can provide important insight into the mechanisms behind visitation effects. We will first provide a description of the Dutch incarceration and visitation context, as characteristics of these contexts may have consequences for visitation effects. We highlight our hypotheses in light of these characteristics. Then, we discuss theory and prior work concerning the effects of visits from children and official visitors on disciplinary infractions.

Dutch Incarceration and Visitation Context

The imprisonment rate in the Netherlands is the lowest in Europe at 50 per 100,000 inhabitants (Aebi et al., 2014). This amounts to around 31,000 individuals entering a Dutch prison per year (De Looft et al., 2018). Of all individuals entering a Dutch prison, 44% enter in the pretrial stage. The average length of combined pretrial and penitentiary detention is four months, and more than 70% is released in less than six months (De Looft et al., 2018).

The prison climate in the Netherlands is internationally considered rather liberal and humane despite the past two decades of budget cuts, a growing politically punitive climate, and a loss of the rehabilitation ideal (Kruttschnitt & Dirkzwager, 2011). Although prisons have limited their programming in recent years, prison regimes have daily schedules consisting of work, education, recreation, and visitation.

Adults incarcerated in the Netherlands have the right to one hour of visits¹ per week with up to three unique visitors per visit (children under 16 often do not count toward this maximum). This right applies to all regimes, including the most common regimes (prison and pretrial detention) and more specialized regimes such as extra care (for more vulnerable individuals). Notably, individuals in prison regimes can earn an extra hour of visits (maximum of two hours per week) by behaving well. All individuals share the same visit rooms, as individuals in different regimes are often housed in the same facility but on separate units. Most visit rooms are designed so that individuals sit on one side of a long table (typically with a clear plexiglass divider of several inches on top), while visitors enter and sit on the other side. Brief physical

1 This legal right applies only to standard visits. Conjugal visits are considered a privilege and thus, can be revoked.

contact (i.e., kiss and/or hug at beginning and end of visit) is allowed. Most visiting hours are during the week, but some prisons allow evening and weekend visits.

Since individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands have the legal right to one hour of visits per week, this means that standard, weekly visits cannot be revoked. Prison governors can limit or (temporarily) defer visits if prison safety or order makes this necessary (Regulation on Restrictive Housing in Penitentiary Institutions, Article 21, section 2). Jurisprudence from the Criminal Justice Council (*Raad voor Strafrechtstoepassing en Jeugdbescherming*), however, shows that prison governors often take measures to ensure that visits can still occur, even if they then take place behind glass (see for example RSJ S-19/1651/SGA from May 22, 2019). Prison governors can temporarily restrict access for specific visitors for a certain period, for instance because they were caught smuggling in prohibited items. Since November 1, 2019 visitors can even be criminally charged for bringing prohibited items into prison, including noncriminal items such as cell phones (Amendment of the Criminal Code with the Criminalization of Bringing in Prohibited Items, Article 429a).

Hypotheses

In sum, the following aspects characterize the Dutch incarceration context: low imprisonment population (and as a result, most individuals are housed in a single cell and there is no overcrowding), relatively high pretrial population, and short prison stays. These characteristics may have consequences for individuals' in-prison experiences. For example, the initial stages of a prison stay, including pretrial detention, are considered very stressful due to the shock of imprisonment, uncertainty about the trial, and adjustment to the new environment (Adams, 1992; Liebling, 1999). In such instances, visits may have stronger effects on in-prison behavior. Since many individuals in Dutch prisons spend a significant amount of their time awaiting trial, it is possible that a greater portion of individuals experience these stresses. While visits could help relieve these stresses, there are grounds for anticipating that repeated reminders of life outside can exacerbate these strains even for individuals with short terms of confinement (see for example Moran & Disney, 2019). We therefore expect to find that the probability of infractions is higher than average levels in the weeks following a visit among Dutch individuals (H1).

In light of our replication, it is also worth highlighting two differences between American (Floridian) and Dutch prisons concerning visitation. First, visits in Florida are seen as a 'privilege', as is common in many US states (Boudin et al., 2014). Visits thus can be revoked when an individual misbehaves, which led Siennick et al. (2013) to hypothesize an 'anticipation effect' of visits. But in the Dutch prison context,

weekly visits are legally conferred and therefore cannot be revoked. Second, visitation rates (i.e., the proportion of individuals visited and the average number of visits), are much higher in the Netherlands than Siennick et al.'s (2013) Florida sample. In their sample around 20% of individuals were visited (see Cochran [2012, 2014]) where the same cohort is used) and individuals received on average less than one visit per month. Dutch studies show that most incarcerated individuals (estimates ranging from 74-89%) in the Netherlands are visited (see Chapter 4 and Hickert et al., 2019). Notably, even in comparison to other US states the visitation rates of this Florida study are on the low-end (for example in a New York sample 72% of individuals received visits and received on average 3.7 visits per month, Hickert et al., 2018). Thus, given the Dutch visitation context, we expect to find that the probability of infractions is similar to average levels in the weeks leading up to a visit (H2).

Moreover, we expect to find relatively small postvisit increases in the probability of infractions among individuals incarcerated in Dutch prisons because 1) individuals are certain that their next visit will continue due to their right to visit and 2) individuals generally receive more frequent and regular visits. Without the uncertainty if and when a next visit will occur it is possible that saying goodbye to family and friends after a visit is experienced as less stressful and feelings of separation may be less intense. We therefore expect that visits have relatively small effects on infractions in the weeks following a visit among individuals who are visited frequently versus those who are visited infrequently (H3). In addition to these three hypotheses, we turn to our expectations concerning our additional visitation measures in the section below.

Visits from Children

While some relationships may help individuals cope with their time in prison, other relationships could be more stress-inducing. It is possible that visits from children impose greater strain if incarcerated parents are reminded of their inability to parent their children. These visits may also confront parents with the reminder that their children are ageing and life is continuing without them (Mignon & Ransford, 2012). Experiences during child visits may also illicit particularly strong emotions, as rules limit movement and activity between parent and child (Beckmeyer & Arditti, 2014; Hutton, 2016). Incarcerated parents try to make the visit special, show their affection, and be a father or mother to the child, whilst parenting efforts may be undermined by caregivers and prison staff (Moran et al., 2016). Such tensions, especially when a conflict of authority between individuals and prison staff occurs,

could have implications on interactions with staff postvisit. A few studies on incarcerated parents found that child visits were associated with higher levels of misconduct (Benning & Lahm, 2016), and more specifically serious, violent infractions (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004). However, not all studies observed significant effects (Jiang et al., 2005). While these studies imply that incarcerated parents who receive visits from their children are more likely to commit misconduct than those who do not, it is unclear whether individuals commit infractions during weeks when their child(ren) visit and not in other weeks (notably, Siennick et al. [2013] were unable to include children's visits since they were very rare). Nonetheless, we expect that the probability of infractions will be higher than average levels, and perhaps even higher in comparison to other visitors, in the weeks following a child visit (H4).

Visits from Official Visitors

Given that many arguments concerning visits' effects stem from social support and deprivation and strain theories, it is not surprising that scholars (including Siennick et al.'s study) most often examine close, familial relationships (such as spouses, children, or parents). These relationships namely are likely to be most impactful on individuals' emotional state. Still, incarcerated individuals commonly receive visits from an entirely different category of persons including lawyers, parole officers, city officials, and social workers. For some individuals these 'official' visitors may be one of the few social ties and sources of social capital they maintain while incarcerated (Bares & Mowen, 2020). For such individuals, these visits provide a distraction from prison life. Even for those who do receive personal visits, these visits provide extra hours outside of their cells and could help them feel more hopeful as they arrange things for their future (Kjellstrand et al., 2021). That said, visits from professionals can also be stressful. For example, lawyers may bring upsetting news about an awaiting trial. To our knowledge no study has considered the effect of official visits on in-prison behavior. Since official visits have similar theoretical implications, albeit of a less personal nature, we expect that the probability of infractions will be higher than average after an official visit (H5).

6.2 Method

Data & Sample

The data for this study comes from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS), which is part of a nationwide study on prison climate in The Netherlands (the Life in Custody study; Van Ginneken et al., 2018). The DPVS aims to examine prison

visitation from different perspectives and in all its variety. All individuals housed in eight prisons² in the Netherlands between January and April 2017 were approached to participate ($N = 2,095$). Of these eligible, 1,397 agreed to participate. Participants were specifically asked to give permission to use administrative data, such as visitation records, for research purposes. Of the 1,397 participants, 49 individuals did not give permission to use administrative data and hence were not part of the study.

Visitation data were pulled from a nationwide database used to track individual-level information (such as demographic characteristics, transfer records, and visitation data). Data from six months prior to the data collection (August 2016) and six months post data collection (September 2017) were made available. In the same period, prison staff recorded the dates of disciplinary infractions and the type of infraction in the Central Digital Depot (CDD). Our sample consists of all participants of the DPVS study who received personal visits between those dates, with three exceptions. First, we excluded individuals in open regimes because they have furlough every weekend and therefore do not receive visits in prison. Second, we excluded individuals in persistent offender regimes since they can see family and friends on furlough. While some individuals in this regime do receive visits in prison, it is not uniformly recorded in administrative records. Third, consistent with Siennick et al. (2013), we excluded those individuals who had only been visited once in the research window (so that visit spacing can be examined). We created a person-week file containing one row for each week that an individual was incarcerated during the study window. Our resulting sample size is 33,201 observation weeks for 823 individuals.

Notably, this sampling method differs from that used by Siennick et al. (2013). In the Florida study all individuals were selected at admittance to prison, meaning all observations concerning visits and infractions start in every individual's first week of incarceration. But, for our sample some individuals were already in prison for several months, or even years, before the start of our data collection. Thus, the first week in our study window is not necessarily the first week in prison for each person. Since we do know in which incarceration week the data collection began for each individual, we included the week of incarceration as a control variable.

2 While many Dutch prisons have administrative data on visitation, not all prisons use the nationwide system 'TULP Bezoek' and even when they do the quality of the information recorded varies enormously. After site visits and inspection of the data, eight prisons were shown to have the most complete visitation data. These eight prisons are in both urban as well as more rural areas throughout the Netherlands. These prisons house adult males from all regimes. In terms of cell capacity and staff-prisoner ratio these prisons are comparable to other Dutch prisons.

Siennick et al. (2013) also excluded individuals who served less than four weeks since their visitors would not be approved within this time. Seeing that there is no visitor approval process in the Netherlands, we did not exclude individuals based on time spent in prison.

Measures

Disciplinary Infractions

Using the event date recorded in the CDD, we created a dichotomous variable of whether each individual received a report for a disciplinary infraction during each week in our data collection window. Using the details in these reports we also created dummy variables for whether an individual committed one (or more) of the following infractions: (a) aggressive infraction (e.g., arguing, threats or other verbal conflict, kicking, beating, throwing things toward others; aggression directed at either prison staff or fellow incarcerated persons were included), (b) contraband infraction (i.e., possession of or use of drugs, phones, and other prohibited items), or (c) rule breaking (e.g., violating house rules, work refusal, unauthorized absence). Our categories are very similar to Siennick et al. (2013), but due to low incidences of certain types of infractions the created categories are slightly broader³.

Visits

The administrative data indicates on which date(s) each individual received a personal visit. This was used to record whether an individual received a visit during each week. Information concerning the individuals' relationship to the visitor were used to record who the visitor was, including partner, family member, friend, and child. Beyond personal visits, we also separately recorded whether an individual received a visit from an official visitor (e.g., lawyer, parole officer, city official, social worker) during each week. Our categories of visitors are similar to Siennick et al. (2013), with a few exceptions. Instead of using two separate categories for spouse and partner, we created one category for 'partner' since cohabitation is common in the Netherlands (Van Schellen, 2012). We also combined parent and relative into one overarching category 'family member' since our expectations are similar across these groups and Siennick et al.'s (2013) results do not give cause to assess them separately. Lastly, we added two new categories of visitors: children and official visitors.

3 For example, Siennick et al. (2013) examined violent infractions (e.g., fighting, assault). These infractions were very rare in our data; only 52 individuals received a report for physical violence. Although we did include these in our aggressive infraction measure, we could not examine them separately.

Like Siennick et al. (2013) we wish to examine within-individual changes in infractions in relation to visits. We therefore created similar sets of dummy variables for visits: one dummy variable to indicate if an individual was visited in a week (then “visited this week” equals 1) and 12 dummy variables which flag the six weeks leading up to the visit and the six weeks following the visit. For example, if an individual was visited in his fifth person-week, then that individual scores 1 on the visited this week for that person-week, 1 on the “1 week to visit” on his fourth person-week, 1 on the “2 weeks to visit” on his third person-week and so on. This means that person-weeks outside of this visitation window score ‘0’ on all visitation variables, and, thus, are the reference category.

Some person-weeks scored a 1 on both previsit and postvisit indicators when two visits occurred within six weeks of each other. To examine whether this overlap impacts visits’ effects, we created a set of dichotomous variables indicating whether each of the 12 weeks preceding and following a visit overlapped with the previsit or postvisit window of another visit. Ninety-two percent of visits occurred within six weeks of another visit⁴. Most individuals had at least one non-overlapping visitation window; for 106 individuals all visitation windows overlapped.

Time-varying Control Variables

We controlled for the same external factors that change over time as Siennick et al. (2013) since they could potentially impact either the receipt of visits or infractions: the week of incarceration and holiday week (i.e., whether a national holiday took place in that week).

Individual Characteristics

Consistent with Siennick et al. (2013) we included some variables to control for the fact that visits may have different effects for individuals who are visited frequently. We calculated each individuals’ average number of weeks between visits and then created two individual-level indicators of visit spacing: 1) whether an individual scored in the bottom quartile of the average spacing measure and, 2) whether an individual scored in the top quartile of this measure. We also controlled for characteristics known to be associated either with visits or misconduct: age during data collection (years), whether an individual was born in the Netherlands (0 = no,

4 The amount of overlap in our visitation data is substantially more than Siennick et al. (2013) where 24% of visits overlapped.

1 = yes), whether an individual was committed for a violent offense (0 = no, 1 = yes), and the number of prior incarcerations (in the past five years).

Analytical Strategy

We estimated two-level random effects logistic regression models using MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). These models predict week-to-week associations between disciplinary infractions and the occurrence of a visit, upcoming visits, and visits in the recent past. The models include the 13 dummy variables described in the visit measures section at the person-week-level (level 1, $N = 33,201$ observations) and the time-varying control variables and individual characteristics at individual-level (level 2, $N = 823$ individuals). In order to examine an individual's own change we must compare them to themselves under different circumstances (i.e., their "average" state). We therefore added individuals' means on level 1 visitation indicators to the analyses at level 2. These act as control variables, such that the coefficients of the person-week-level (level 1) variables represent the within-individual change. This approach is in line with recent developments in multilevel modelling, which show that these estimates replicate fixed effects analysis within people while also estimating effects of time-invariant control variables, modeling heterogeneity bias, and providing interpretable estimates (Bell et al., 2019; Bell & Jones, 2015; Firebaugh et al., 2013). All continuous individual-level variables were grand mean centered. The intercepts therefore can be interpreted as the log-odds of an infraction during the weeks outside of the visitation window for an 'average' incarcerated individual. Since visitation is measured using sets of dummy variables, we also present results from multiparameter Wald tests of the joint significance for sets of visitation indicators.

Our replication follows the same four analytical steps as Siennick et al. (2013). First, we used the global measures of visitation to examine if the probability (log-odds) of an infraction changes in the weeks surrounding a personal visit (the 'main model'). Second, we assessed visitation effects on different types of infractions by substituting the outcomes into this model. Third, we tested in separate models whether effects differ across partner, family, and friend visits. In addition to Siennick et al.'s study, we also examined whether visits' effects differ across child and official visits. Fourth, we examined whether visitation effects depend on how often individuals are visited. We examined this in two ways: 1) by adding overlap indicators (see visits measures section) to our main model and 2) by testing our main model across subsets of individuals who were visited relatively frequently, infrequently, and had an average spacing. This second test is different than Siennick et al. (2013). They added (26) cross-level interactions between individual-level spacing variables

and person-week-level visit variables to their main model. Unfortunately, due to a lack of power, we were unable to repeat the analyses in this way. Our analyses therefore give an indication of whether visitation effects look differently based on visit frequency.

6.3 Results

The results are presented here in four sections, in line with the steps described above. Before getting into the results of our analyses, we first present and compare the descriptive statistics for our study variables with Siennick et al.'s (2013) study.

Descriptive Analyses

The descriptive statistics on each of the study variables are reported in Table 6.1. In terms of disciplinary infractions, our sample is quite similar to Siennick et al. (2013). For example, 48% of our sample committed at least one disciplinary infraction (in comparison to 42%). In terms of visits, however, our sample differs considerably. Individuals in our sample received on average nearly 20 visits across the 13 study months. The Florida sample received on average 11 visits across a longer study period of 17 months. Also, the average number of weeks between visits was lower in our sample (2.87 vs 7.5 weeks). In sum, while levels of disciplinary infractions are similar between the two samples, the Dutch sample receives more, as well as more frequent, visits.

Timing Effects of Visits on Infractions

First, we start by presenting our main model regarding the timing effects of visits on disciplinary infractions. Table 6.2 shows logistic estimates predicting whether individuals received a disciplinary report in a given week from indicators of whether they were visited⁵ that week or surrounding weeks and from the control variables. Given the characteristics of the Dutch incarceration and visitation context, we hypothesized to find that the probability of infractions is similar to average levels in the weeks leading up to a visit but are higher than average levels in the weeks following a visit.

The intercept shows that the average weekly probability of an infraction outside of the visitation window is $.007 \text{ (exp}[-4.93] / (1 + \text{exp}[-4.93]) = .007$). The log-odds

5 Consistent with Siennick et al. (2013), we examined the timing effects of personal visits on disciplinary infractions. Since we also have data on official visits, we additionally ran all models using dates of personal and official visits; the results yielded similar conclusions (available upon request).

of an infraction are not significant in the weeks leading up to a visit, except for four weeks to visit (logistic $b = 0.21$, $p < .05$). The log-odds of an infraction are significantly higher than baseline in several postvisit weeks (logistic $b = 0.33, 0.32, 0.23, 0.26$ for 2, 3, 5, and 6 weeks afterwards; weeks 2, 3 and 6 $p < .001$, week 5 $p < .01$). Wald tests of the joint significance of coefficients indicate that individuals' previsit risk is not significantly different than their usual risk and that their postvisit risk is significantly higher than their usual risk ($\chi^2 = 99.23$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$).

Table 6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Unit of Analysis	Variable	Range	Mean / %	SE
Person-week ($N = 33,201$)	Disciplinary infraction	0-1	3.3	
	Aggressive infraction	0-1	0.4	
	Contraband infraction	0-1	2.3	
	Rule breaking	0-1	0.8	
	Visited	0-1	42.6	
	Visited by			
	Partner	0-1	6.0	
	Family	0-1	22.8	
	Friend	0-1	11.4	
	Child	0-1	4.6	
	Official visitor	0-1	14.2	
	Holiday week	0-1	14.2	
	Week of incarceration	1-1451	78.44	122.57
Individual ($N = 823$)	Any disciplinary infraction	0-1	47.5	
	Number of visits	2-115	20.15	18.60
	Proportion of weeks visited	.02-1	0.44	0.26
	Average weeks between visits	1-36	2.87	4.05
	Age at data collection (years)	18.4 - 75.6	35.18	11.53
	Born in the Netherlands	0-1	71.5	
	Index offense: violent	0-1	44.0	
	Prior incarcerations (# in past five years)	1-21	2.78	2.62

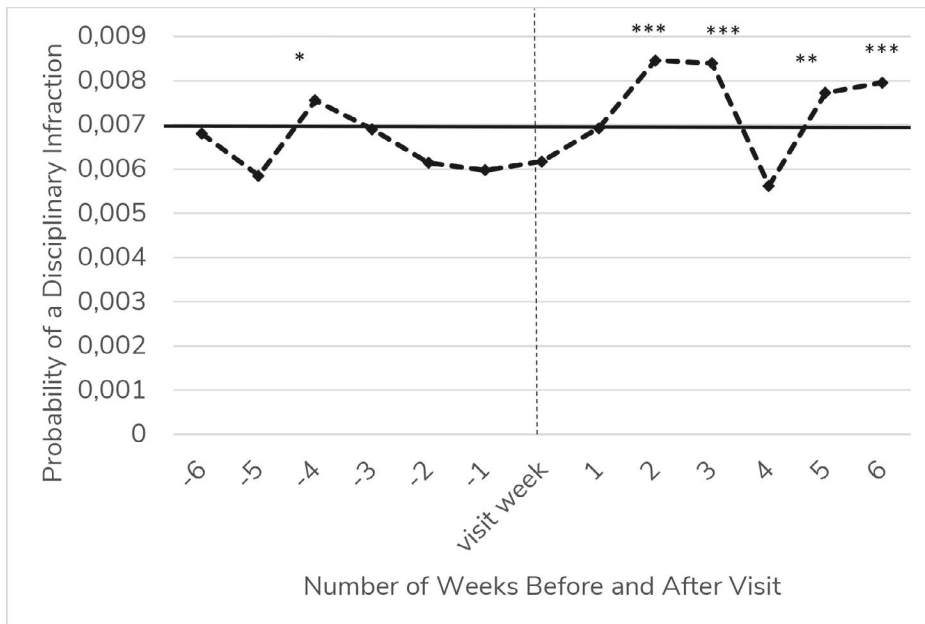
Table 6.2 Within-individual Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting the Log-odds of Receiving a Disciplinary Report from Prison Visits and Control Variables

	<i>b</i>	OR
Intercept	4.93***	
Person-week level		
Six weeks to visit	0.11	1.11
Five weeks to visit	-0.05	0.96
Four weeks to visit	0.21*	1.24
Three weeks to visit	0.12	1.13
Two weeks to visit	0.00	1.00
One week to visit	-0.02	0.98
Visited this week	0.01	1.01
One week since visit	0.13	1.13
Two weeks since visit	0.33***	1.39
Three weeks since visit	0.32***	1.38
Four weeks since visit	-0.09	0.92
Five weeks since visit	0.23**	1.26
Six weeks since visit	0.26***	1.30
Holiday week	-0.07	0.93
Week of incarceration	0.00	1.00
Individual level		
Proportion of weeks falling 6 weeks before visit	-0.67	
Proportion of weeks falling 5 weeks before visit	-1.72	
Proportion of weeks falling 4 weeks before visit	1.15	
Proportion of weeks falling 3 weeks before visit	0.12	
Proportion of weeks falling 2 weeks before visit	2.93	
Proportion of weeks falling 1 week before visit	-2.62	
Proportion of weeks visited	1.07	
Proportion of weeks falling 1 week after visit	-4.52	
Proportion of weeks falling 2 weeks after visit	4.61	
Proportion of weeks falling 3 weeks after visit	-3.67	
Proportion of weeks falling 4 weeks after visit	-0.14	
Proportion of weeks falling 5 weeks after visit	1.67	
Proportion of weeks falling 6 weeks after visit	-0.26	
Mean week of incarceration	0.00	
Age	-0.07***	
Born in the Netherlands	-0.02	
Index offense: violent	0.15	
Number of prior incarcerations	0.11***	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 6.1 illustrates these findings. It shows that the predicted probability of an infraction is relatively stable in the weeks leading up to a visit (except for four weeks to visit, but the difference [6% increase] is minimal). After a visit, the probability is statistically indistinguishable from the baseline probability in the first week after a visit (logistic $b = 0.13, p > .05$). Then the probability spikes when it is 18% higher than baseline in week 2 and 17% higher than baseline in week 3 after the visit (respectively .008). The probability of infractions remains 8-11% higher than baseline up to six weeks after a visit (although the predicted probability is similar to baseline in week 4). By the seventh week the probabilities decline to average levels (not shown).

Figure 6.1 Timing of the Effect of a Prison Visit on the Probability of a Disciplinary Infraction



Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ for difference from average probability

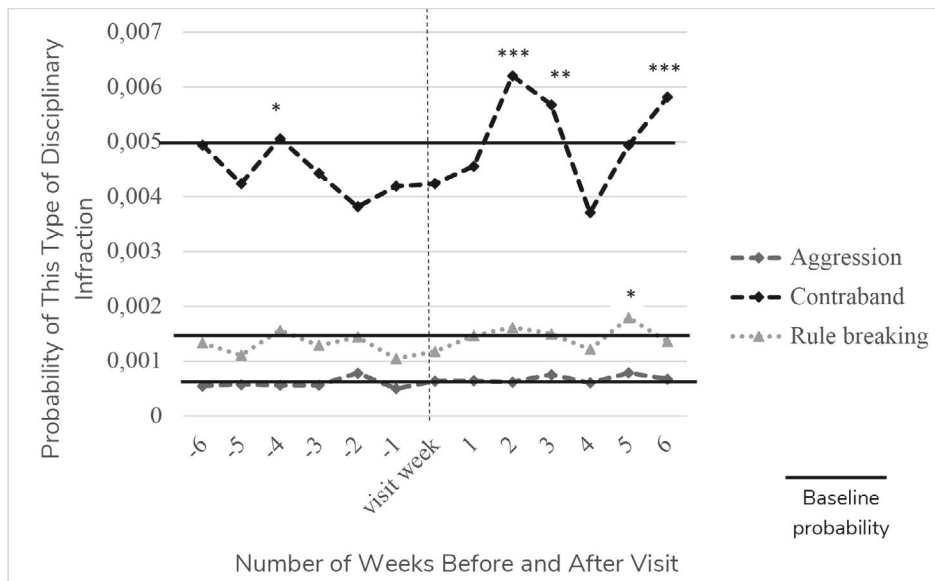
Effects of Visits on Different Infractions

The second set of logistic regression models predicted separately the effect of a prison visit on the probability of aggressive infractions, contraband infractions, and rule breaking. Figure 6.2 shows the predicted probabilities (regression estimates are not shown but are available upon request). The differing heights of the lines indicate that the baseline probabilities of infractions differ: the greatest is for contraband infractions (.005), followed by rule breaking (.0017), and aggressive infractions

(.0006). The predicted probability of each type is similar to baseline in the weeks leading up to a visit (except for four weeks to visit on contraband infractions, but the difference [1% increase] is minimal). After a visit, the probability increases for contraband infractions (in weeks 2, 3, and 6) and rule breaking (in week 5), but the probability of aggressive infractions is similar to baseline in all postvisit weeks. Wald tests confirm that individuals' postvisit risk of contraband infractions ($\chi^2 = 79.88$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$) and rule breaking ($\chi^2 = 24.94$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$) are significantly higher than their usual risk.

While both contraband infractions and rule breaking show an increase at some point in the postvisit weeks, the magnitude of these effects differ. Contraband infractions show the greatest percentual change, namely 23% higher than baseline two weeks after a visit (and respectively 12 and 15% higher in week 3 and 6 postvisit). Percentual changes in rule breaking were much smaller, i.e., 9% higher than baseline.

Figure 6.2 Timing of the Effect of a Prison Visit on the Probability of Different Types of Disciplinary Infractions



Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Effects of Different Visitors on Infractions

Third, we analyzed whether visits' effects depend on who is visiting. Following Siennick et al. (2013), we first examined partner, family, and friend visits. Then, we additionally explored the effect of visits from children and official visitors on

disciplinary infractions. The results of these analyses are summarized per visitor in Figure 6.3 (to compare results across the different visitor types, see Appendix 6A). Each analysis was conducted including only the subset of individuals who received a visit from the type of visitor in question (see Table 6.1 for descriptive information) and thus the samples are smaller than our total sample⁶.

Partner, Family, and Friend Visits

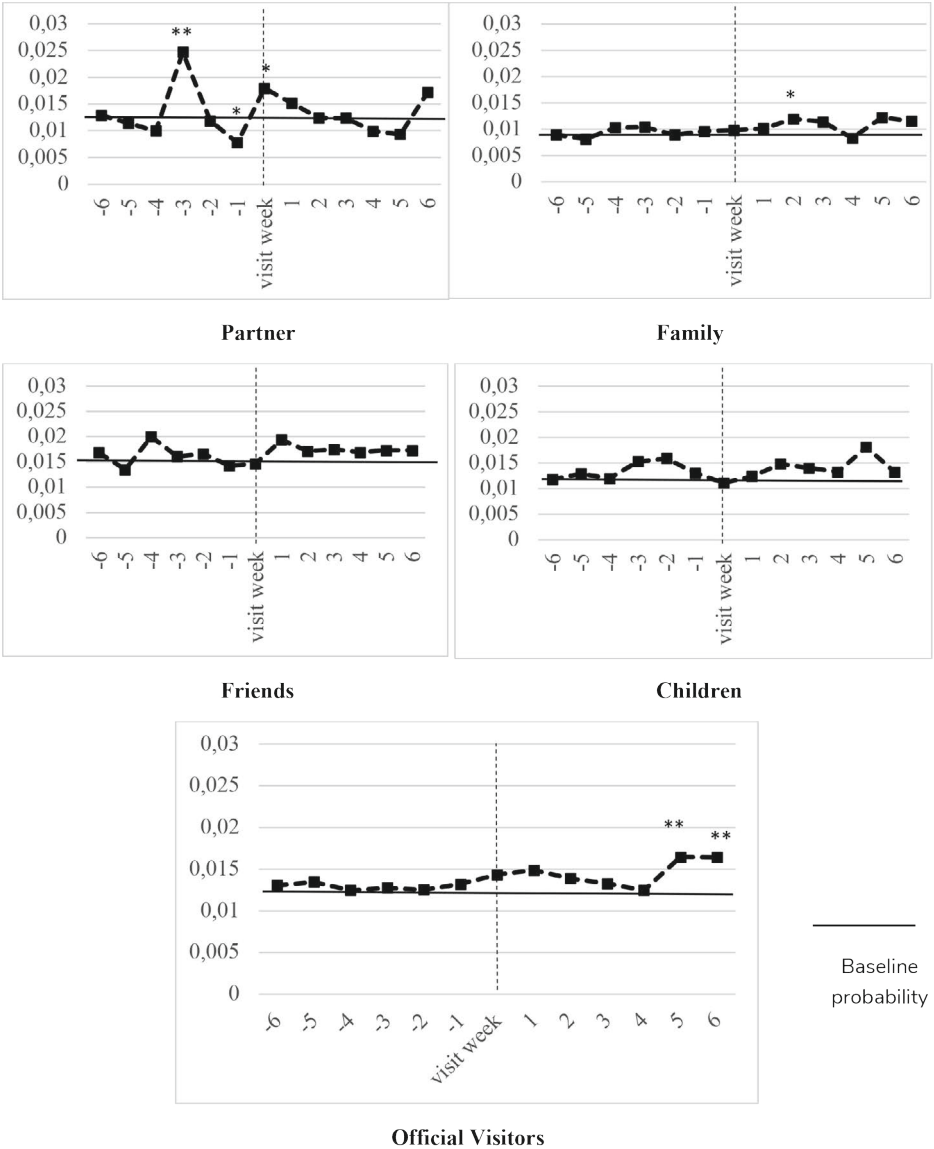
The baseline probabilities varied across the visitor types as the differing heights of the line in Figure 6.3 suggest. Individuals who received family visits had the lowest baseline probability (.009), whereas individuals who received friend visits had the highest baseline probability (.015) for infractions. Trends differ across these visitor types. For partner visits, the predicted probability of an infraction increases three weeks prior to a visit but decreases by 38% in the week before a visit. Visits from partner appear to increase the probability of an infraction in the visit week, but then the probability returns to baseline levels. Wald tests indicate that individuals' previsit risk is significantly different than their usual risk when a partner visits ($\chi^2 = 23.50$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$). Contrastingly, the probability of infractions is similar to baseline in the weeks leading up to a family or friend visit. After a family visit, the probability increases up to 34% higher than baseline two weeks after a visit, but the probability is similar to baseline in all other postvisit weeks. Wald tests confirm that individuals' postvisit risk is not significantly different than their usual risk when a family member visits. For friend visits, the probability of infractions is similar to baseline in all postvisit weeks.

Child Visits

Based on prior scholarship, we hypothesized that child visits, in comparison to other personal visitor types, would show pronounced increases in infractions postvisit. The baseline probability of infractions for child visits is .012. As Figure 6.3 illustrates, the probability of an infraction is slightly higher than baseline in the second and third week prior to a visit. After a child visit, the probability begins to increase two weeks after a visit and spikes when it is 48% higher than baseline four weeks after a visit. However, Wald tests indicate that individuals' previsit and postvisit risks do not differ from their usual risk when a child visits.

6 The partner visit model included 5,960 observations on 122 individuals; the family visit model included 26,167 observations on 631 individuals; the friend visit model included 17,801 observations on 392 individuals; the child visit model included 8,557 observations on 181 individuals, and the official visitor visit model included 28,852 observations on 681 individuals.

Figure 6.3 Timing of the Effect of Different Visitors on the Probability of Disciplinary Infractions, Among Individuals Ever Receiving That Type of Visit



Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Official visitors

While official visits may be of a less personal nature, we expected that these visits would produce similar postvisit increases in infractions. Just like personal visitors, the probability of an infraction is comparable to baseline (.012) in the weeks leading up to an official visit. After a visit, the probability is similar to baseline in the four weeks after a visit, and then spikes in weeks 5 and 6 (the probability is 31% higher than baseline). Wald tests confirm that individuals' postvisit risk is significantly higher than their usual risk when they receive an official visit ($\chi^2 = 27.35$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$).

Effects of Frequency of Visits on Infractions

Lastly, we examined whether visitation effects depend on the frequency of visits. We expected that visits would have less pronounced effects on infractions in the weeks following a visit when individuals are visited frequently versus infrequently.

Effects of Overlap of Visits

Following Siennick et al. (2013), we first added our visit overlap indicators to the main model. The logistic estimates reveal that when visits occur within six weeks of each other, the log-odds of an infraction increase in the third week after a visit (all other weeks are not significant; results are available upon request). This suggests that previously found postvisit increases up to five or six weeks after a visit are likely a result of the overlapping visitation window (i.e., a second visit occurring).

Effects of Visit Spacing

Next, we also examined whether visitation effects depend on how often individuals are visited. Based on the average number of weeks between visits ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 4.05$), we created three subsets of individuals: 1) individuals who scored in the bottom quartile of the average visit spacing (i.e., were visited relatively frequently, meaning they were visited on a weekly basis [$N = 205$]), 2) individuals who scored in the top quartile of the average visit spacing (i.e., were visited relatively infrequently, meaning visits were on average seven weeks apart, with a range of 3 – 36 weeks between visits⁷ [$N = 205$]), and 3) individuals with average spacing (scoring 0 on both previous indicators, $N = 413$). We ran models separately for each subset, see Table 6.3 for results (only estimates for the visitation indicators are shown, but models

7 Some individuals in our infrequently visited group would be considered 'frequently visited' in Siennick et al.'s (2013) study as their frequently visited group had a typical visit spacing of less than four weeks.

were computed using all person-week-level and individual-level variables from the main model).

Despite differences in visit frequency, previsit trends look similar across all groups. Postvisit trends, however, do differ across the groups. Most notably, the log-odds of an infraction are not significant in all postvisit weeks for frequently visited individuals. However, the log-odds are significantly higher in several postvisit weeks for individuals in both the average visited and infrequently visited group. After a visit the probability of an infraction increases up to 73% higher than baseline for infrequently visited individuals (in week 5) and up to 41% higher than baseline for the average spacing group (in week 6).

Table 6.3 Within-individual Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting the Log-odds of Receiving a Disciplinary Report Based on Visit Frequency

	Individuals visited with average spacing		Individuals visited relatively frequently		Individuals visited relatively infrequently	
	<i>b</i>	OR	<i>b</i>	OR	<i>b</i>	OR
Intercept	4.78***		5.76***		4.06***	
Person-week level						
Six weeks to visit	0.02	1.02	0.65*	1.91	0.25	1.28
Five weeks to visit	-0.05	0.95	-0.53	0.59	0.17	1.18
Four weeks to visit	0.24*	1.27	-0.41	0.66	0.33*	1.39
Three weeks to visit	0.08	1.08	0.58	1.78	0.17	1.18
Two weeks to visit	-0.01	0.99	0.15	1.16	-0.01	0.99
One week to visit	-0.03	0.97	-0.15	0.86	0.00	1.00
Visited this week	0.10	1.10	0.36	1.45	-0.37*	0.69
One week since visit	0.10	1.11	0.22	1.25	0.13	1.14
Two weeks since visit	0.32**	1.38	0.33	1.39	0.32*	1.37
Three weeks since visit	0.29*	1.33	0.57	1.78	0.36*	1.44
Four weeks since visit	-0.11	0.90	-0.07	0.93	0.03	1.03
Five weeks since visit	0.12	1.13	0.17	1.18	0.56***	1.75
Six weeks since visit	0.35***	1.42	0.09	1.10	0.17	1.19
Holiday week	-0.04	0.96	0.04	1.04	-0.15	0.87
Week of incarceration	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.99

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

6.4 Discussion

Theory and prior scholarship suggest that incarcerated individuals' behavior may change both prior to and following visits (Adams, 1992; Bottoms, 1999; Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2002; Monahan et al., 2011; Toch & Adams, 1989), therefore, it is important to examine the timing effects of visits on infractions. Siennick et al.'s (2013) study provided considerable insight on how visits can have both an anticipatory and separation effect on infractions, but as this is the only study which has applied a within-persons design to this question, it is important to assess whether these findings are robust across contexts and populations. Moreover, since visitation policies and practices differ across prisons, states, and countries exploring these questions in diverse contexts can help further our understanding of how visits affect behavior and inform strategies for promoting prison safety and order. Beyond replicating Siennick et al.'s (2013) study, this study adds to the literature by examining the effects of visits from children and official visitors on infractions. We begin below with a summary of our replication of the Florida study. Then, we summarize the results of our extension. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and policy implications of our study.

Summary of Replication

Despite differences between Dutch and American (Floridian) incarceration contexts, we expected to find an increased risk of infractions in the weeks following a visit (H1). Our analyses reveal that when individuals receive a visit the probability of an infraction increases in the third week following a visit before returning to average levels (controlling for the overlap between visitation windows). This finding is similar to Siennick et al. (2013), who found postvisit increases during the four weeks immediately following a visit. However, the results are different when the type of behavior in question and the visitor type are examined. Siennick et al. (2013) found that postvisit increases were similar across various infraction types and visitors, however, in our replication we find that visits mainly increased risks of contraband infractions but had little to no effect on aggressive infractions and rule breaking. Moreover, our data shows that visits' effects vary based on who is visiting. For example, while visits from friends did not affect infractions, visits from family members increased the risk of infractions two weeks after visits. Partner visits had no postvisit effects but did decrease the risk of infractions in the weeks *prior* to a partner visit. Beyond these results concerning partner visits, we found no further

evidence for an anticipatory effect in all other models (as we hypothesized, see H2). This contrasts the Florida study which consistently found that the probability of infractions declined in the weeks leading up to a visit. Finally, while we could not fully replicate Siennick et al.'s (2013) findings concerning visit frequency, and our sample was visited substantially more frequently in comparison to theirs, we did find that when individuals were visited relatively frequently, the risk of infractions did not differ from the usual risk in postvisit weeks. For both 'infrequently' visited individuals (i.e., visits were on average seven weeks apart) and individuals with an average spacing between visits, infractions increased in the weeks following a visit. Thus, it seems that consistent with Siennick et al. (2013) frequent visits temper postvisit increases in infractions (H3).

Upon comparing the findings of our analyses to Siennick et al.'s (2013) study, four conclusions can be drawn. First, visits likely only have an anticipation effect when they are used as a behavior management tool. In Dutch prisons visits are legally conferred, whereas visits are considered a privilege in Floridian prisons. In this study we did not find anticipation effects, whereas the Florida study consistently found them. This suggests that if individuals are certain of their visits, then they are not likely to modify their behavior in anticipation of visits. That said, we did find that the risk of infractions decreased slightly in the weeks preceding a partner visit. Since regular visits from a partner are required for gaining access to conjugal visits in Dutch prisons, it is possible that individuals adjust their behavior to ensure that these visits are not delayed. Since studies have rarely examined anticipatory effects of prison visits, scholars should attempt to replicate and expand on these findings.

Second, and consistent with Siennick et al. (2013)'s conclusion, while visits may provide support and diversion for individuals, they may not be able to produce sustained improvements in in-prison behavior. Rather than reducing misconduct, visits *increased* individuals' risk of infractions in the weeks immediately following a visit in two entirely different prison contexts. Notably, postvisit increases in the Florida study appear to be stronger (e.g., probabilities spiked up to 58% higher than baseline) and more immediate (e.g., highest in the first week following a visit) than our study. Perhaps visits' effects are less pronounced among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands as they are visited more often. We do see that effects are stronger among infrequently visited individuals, who may be more comparable to the Florida sample. Differences in the immediacy of these effects may be because visits' effects among our sample are not a result of the separation, to which we now turn.

Third, we suspect – differently from Siennick et al., (2013) – that these postvisit effects stem from the security risks concerning contraband. Siennick et al. (2013) proposed that postvisit increases were brought on by repeated separations, however, if that were the case then increases in aggression would be expected. No such effects were found in our data. What did appear is large increases in contraband infractions. While it is possible that differences in results are due to contextual differences (for example, individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands may experience visits, and the separation at the end of each visit, less intensely as they are visited more frequently and imprisoned for short periods of time), we doubt that context could fully explain our findings as Siennick et al. (2013) also found strong effects for contraband. This suggests that visits may provide an avenue to bring in prohibited items, and thus the label ‘separation effects’ may not fully explain postvisit increases in infractions.

Fourth, frequent visits seem to temper postvisit increases. This is a surprising result considering our previous conclusion. Given that frequent visits provide more opportunities to bring in prohibited items, it would seem reasonable to anticipate that the risk of (contraband) infractions would increase, however, our results suggest otherwise. It is possible that supportive visitors – those who are willing to travel to the prison often and (emotionally) support an individual – are the ones coming on weekly visits. Perhaps visits that occur more sporadically serve other purposes, such as providing an individual with prohibited items, which could explain why infrequent visits show large increases in infractions. Alternatively, we recognize that as these individuals are visited every week and we examine weekly risks of infractions, that the lack of an increase in postvisit effects among the frequently visited group may be due to a ceiling effect (evidenced by higher baseline levels of infractions). More research is therefore needed to explain these findings.

Summary of Extension

We further extended Siennick et al.’s (2013) study by including the effects of visits from children and official visitors. Based on theory and prior scholarship, we expected that child visits would show pronounced increases in infractions postvisit in comparison to other personal visitors (H4). We, however, found that child visits did not significantly increase the risk of infractions. We offer three explanations for this result. First, scholars indicate that incarcerated parents often choose to hold off visits from children, especially when they are imprisoned for a short period of time (Moran & Disney, 2019). It is possible that individuals who do choose to receive visits from their children experience these visits as less emotionally loaded.

Second, as the trends we find are most applicable for contraband infractions, it is possible that child visits are less related to this specific infraction type. Prior studies indicate that child visits are associated with rule violations (Benning & Lahm, 2016) and serious, violent infractions (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004). Third, given the current study focuses on a sample of adult males, it is possible that child visits have less pronounced effects among this sample. Child visits are not only more common in female prisons, but prior work also suggest that these visits may have stronger effects on incarcerated mothers (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004). Future studies therefore ought to explore these effects among incarcerated mothers.

For official visits, we expected to find postvisit increase in infractions (H5). We found that official visitors increased the probability of infractions in the fifth and sixth week postvisit. Since official visits are on average 5.6 weeks apart, it is possible that the resulting increases are due to a second visit. Perhaps individuals are hopeful after a first visit, but a second visit may bring disappointment, stress or frustration in addressing legal or reintegration needs. This is a likely explanation as we observed in an exploratory analysis that official visits increased the probability of aggressive infractions but had no significant effects on contraband infractions or rule breaking. While we can only speculate about the mechanism behind this effect, finding an effect of official visits on (aggressive) infractions is an important finding in itself. Most prior studies, including the broader visitation literature, focus on personal visitors, even though lawyers, parole officers, city officials, and social workers are common visitors. Our results at the very least warrant the inclusion of these visitors in future studies.

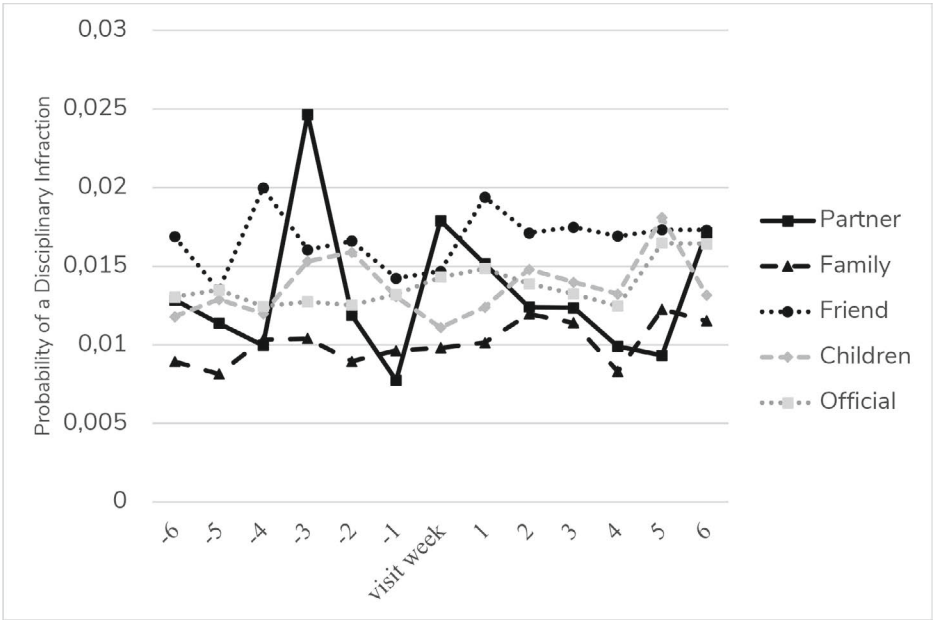
Study Implications

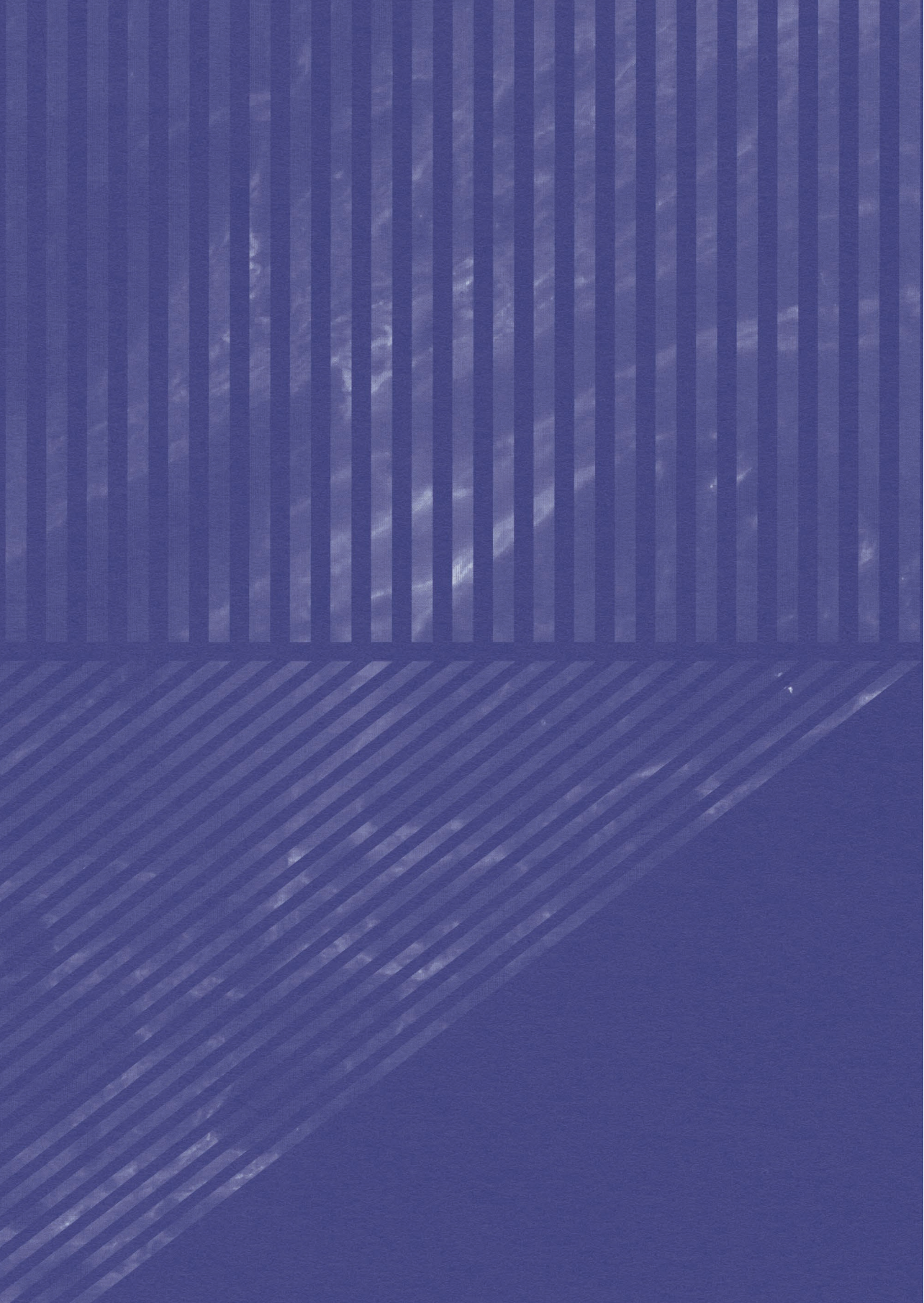
If visits indeed influence behavior both prior to and after a visit, the findings pose important implications for theories concerning social support, social control, and deprivation, which directly or indirectly emphasize the role of social ties in reducing institutional misconduct. Collectively, these theories emphasize that visits can reduce deprivation-related misconduct. Yet research has not yielded consistent support for this, and even illustrates the opposite. Scholars have proposed several possibilities to explain these harmful effects, including adverse visitation experiences (Turanovic & Tasca 2019), pain of separation (Siennick et al. 2013) and, as proposed in this study, increased security risks. More research is needed to identify underlying mechanisms of how and why visits affect institutional misconduct. Our results suggest that this may be less rooted in feelings of isolation and deprivation (perhaps because visits are too temporal to produce substantial changes in this)

and more in informal social control or instrumental support (i.e., provision of goods). Critical questions remained to be addressed concerning the multifaceted role of visits for life in prison as well as how different relationships impact misconduct. Also, more investigations are needed to determine whether visits have anticipatory effects on behavior beyond their use as an incentive tool.

In short, further work is needed to determine when, how, and for whom visits affect institutional misconduct. That said, based on our conclusions it is understandable that correctional officials, at least in the Netherlands, have increased security measures surrounding visits in recent years. While this may help minimize risks, our study indicates that not all visits nor visitors are of equal risk. For example, perhaps only certain visits, such as infrequent ones, are used for smuggling in prohibited items. Thus, it seems important to find a balance between weighing risks while also creating environments that encourage and promote supportive relationships. The latter is particularly important as social ties are especially crucial for a successful reentry (e.g., Mitchell et al. 2016). In contrast to risk-focused policies, our study and Siennick et al.'s (2013) indicate that postvisit increases in infractions can be tempered by allowing more frequent visits. Correctional officials therefore ought to consider implementing policies like placing individuals in prisons near their social network to increase visit frequency (see Chapter 4). Also, our study shows that postvisit increases were less pronounced among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands than those in Florida, perhaps because they are certain that their visits will occur. While prisons worldwide use visits as a behavioral incentive, and these incentives may result in individuals adjusting their behavior, there are real concerns about using visits for such purposes. Not only does it undermine fundamental rights to respect for private and family life (Article 8, European Court of Human Rights), but may also hinder the development and maintenance of the social ties that are critical for reaching the ultimate goal of prison systems: improving reentry outcomes.

Appendix 6A Timing of the Effect of Different Visitors on the Probability of Disciplinary Infractions, Among Individuals Ever Receiving that Type of Visit





7

Visitation patterns and post-release offending: exploring variations in the timing, rate, and consistency of prison visits

A slightly different version of this chapter was accepted for publication as:
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Exploring variations in the timing, rate, and consistency of prison visits.
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Abstract

Purpose: Prior research and theory suggest that receiving visits in prison can reduce recidivism. However, recent scholarship shows that there is variability in whether, how often, and when individuals are visited while incarcerated which may affect post-release outcomes. This study therefore investigates how the frequency and timing of prison visits relate to post-release offending among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands.

Method: Data were drawn from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study, which includes detailed measures of visitation, recidivism, and several covariates. Group-based trajectory models were employed to identify visitation patterns. Then, logistic regression models were used to estimate the effects of these trajectories on the likelihood of reconviction.

Results: The results demonstrate that consistent, frequent visitation and visits near release are associated with reductions in reconvictions, especially in the first six months after release. No significant associations were found between individuals who only sporadically receive visits or experience a decrease in visits in the months before release on recidivism when compared to non-visited individuals.

Conclusions: These findings suggest that some visits (such as frequent, consistent visits) may be beneficial for reducing recidivism in the short-term. More research is needed to understand how and why these visits contribute to reductions in recidivism.

Keywords: visitation, recidivism, prison, social support, group-based trajectory modelling

7.1 Introduction

Each year over 10 million individuals are incarcerated worldwide (Walmsley, 2015). Although the time spent in prison is intended to prevent crime, recidivism risks are high among individuals released from prison (Durose et al., 2014; Weijters et al., 2019). This is perhaps not surprising as persons released from prison face major challenges and stresses of having a criminal background (Visser et al., 2004). A critical differentiating factor between those who can manage these challenges and those who are less successful is the availability of social support (Kjellstrand et al., 2021; Maruna & Toch, 2005). Existing research shows that individuals who have social support after being released from prison are less likely to recidivate (Boman & Mowen, 2018), have improved mental health during reentry (Wallace et al., 2016), and are more likely to find housing and employment (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Hickert et al., 2019). Yet, maintaining contact with loved ones while incarcerated can be challenging. One of the few opportunities presented to individuals to facilitate meaningful social interaction and stay connected to family, friends, and the community while incarcerated is through prison visits.

A considerable amount of scholarship has already been directed at studying the extent to which receiving visits in prison is related to post-release outcomes. The bulk of this research focuses on recidivism. While such studies have found that visits are associated with reductions in recidivism (see Mitchell et al., 2016 for a systematic review and meta-analysis), an examination of recent empirical work on visits' effects suggest that the relation is more complex. Current scholarship consistently finds that the relation between visitation and recidivism is heterogeneous. For instance, not all visits are positive experiences nor necessarily suitable for improving relationships, which can impact outcomes. Baker et al. (2021) found that negative visitation experiences as opposed to positive visitation experiences actually *increased* individuals' concerns about recidivism, housing, and debts. Similarly, evidence suggests that more restrictive conditions of confinement, which impose more constraints and surveillance for visiting, are less effective in reducing recidivism (Turanovic & Tasca, 2021). These studies raise an important question: which visits and when are visits related to reductions in recidivism? To probe this question, articulate measures which capture the heterogeneity of prison visitation are needed. The work produced in recent years has made a good start, as studies have shifted the focus from whether individuals are visited to who is visiting (Bales & Mears, 2008; Duwe & Johnson, 2016) and how visits are experienced (Baker et al.,

2021; Turanovic & Tasca, 2021). But, with one exception (Cochran, 2014), research rarely considers how the timing of visitation is associated with recidivism.

Distinct visitation patterns have been identified among diverse samples of individuals incarcerated in the United States (U.S.; Cihan et al., 2020; Cochran, 2012, 2014; Hickert et al., 2018; Young & Hay, 2020), showing that some individuals are never visited, some are visited every month, some only received a single, sporadic visit, and some are only visited early in their prison term. Such diverse visitation experiences in terms of how often individuals receive visits and when individuals are visited may differentially affect post-release outcomes. For example, it is possible that a single, sporadic visit is less effective than frequent visitation in reducing recidivism. Also, receiving visits near release may be crucial for planning for an individuals' imminent reentry.

Against this backdrop, the current study seeks to advance research on prison visitation and recidivism by examining whether the frequency and recency of visits (i.e., near release) influence post-release offending among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands. This study uses group-based trajectory modelling to identify longitudinal visitation patterns among 541 men. Then, we use logistic regression models to test how these patterns relate to all offending and serious offending up to two years after release.

Theory and Research on Visitation Patterns and Recidivism

Visitation patterns can be defined by their frequency (e.g., consistent vs. sporadic) and recency (e.g., at the start or end of prison term). Individuals may receive visits during certain periods in prison and not at all in other periods. Some individuals may receive visits upon admission but then experience a slow decline in the frequency of these visits later on. Others may experience an increase in visits leading up to their release. Even for those who are consistently visited, the amount of visitation may differ from weekly, monthly, or even yearly visits. Such patterns – differing in frequency and timing – have been identified in five U.S. studies (Cihan et al., 2020; Cochran, 2012, 2014; Hickert et al., 2018; Young & Hay, 2020). All five studies also identified a relatively large group of individuals who did not receive visits while incarcerated. Yet, since the extant knowledge about visitation patterns in prison stems solely from the U.S., it remains unclear as to whether other patterns exist for different populations and contexts.

Even so, several theoretical arguments can be made that both the frequency and recency of visits may have differential implications for recidivism. To start, the most common pattern found in prior research is 'never visited' (Cihan et al., 2020;

Cochran, 2012, 2014; Hickert et al., 2018; Young & Hay, 2020). There are several reasons why some individuals are not visited in prison, ranging from practical challenges (e.g., American and Dutch research show that far travelling distance impedes visits, see Chapter 4 and Clark & Duwe, 2017) to relational difficulties (e.g., social relationships may become strained as individuals engage in criminal behavior, Connor & Tewksbury, 2015). Moreover, some individuals even opt out of visits to spare family and friends emotional or financial hardship (Janssen, 2000; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018). Even though some individuals are not visited, they may still have contact with family and friends in other ways such as phone calling or letter writing. However, visits are considered a vital bonding opportunity to maintain and cement relationships (Turanovic & Tasca, 2021). Recent studies also suggest that visits in and of themselves are important for reentry expectations and outcomes (Anderson et al., 2020; Hickert et al., 2019). Thus, without such relationships, non-visited individuals may have difficulties finding housing, securing employment, and overcoming the negative labels (i.e., criminal, offender) and processes (i.e., discrimination in jobs) that individuals experience after being released from prison (Maruna & Toch, 2005; Visser et al., 2004), and consequently, are more likely to recidivate.

Conversely, there are individuals who consistently receive visits in prison (Hickert et al., 2018). Receiving visits throughout a prison term may be especially protective against harmful impacts of incarceration (De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Liebling, 1999). Also, receiving constant visits can help protect against adopting a criminal identity while incarcerated (Wolff & Draine, 2004). That said, experiencing at least some visitation – even if consistent – could still not be “enough” to produce such changes. For instance, receiving visits every other month may be less effective than when someone receives regular, weekly visits. Frequent visits namely allow individuals the opportunity to not only maintain, but also *strengthen*, their relationships to prosocial others which, according to the social bonds theory, helps restrain individuals from committing crime (Hirschi, 1969). Also, if relationships are willing to visit often, they may also be more willing (or able) to provide critical emotional or instrumental support in navigating the dramatic change in circumstances and uncertainty after release (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Christian et al., 2006; Hickert et al., 2019; La Vigne et al., 2016). Consequently, the expectation is that individuals who receive frequent visits would have the lowest rates of recidivism.

Beyond whether and how often individuals receive visits, the timing or recency of visits may also be important for recidivism. Visits near release may be useful for planning and organizing practical matters for an individuals’ imminent reentry. These visits could also help individuals feel more optimistic about their return (Visser &

O'Connell, 2012), reduce anxiety about their return (Mancini et al., 2015), and help remind individuals of their social roles within their outside networks (Cochran & Mears, 2013; LeBel, 2012). Contrarily, if individuals' experience a decrease in visits over time than relationships have likely weakened, making it difficult to access these contacts upon release.

Unfortunately, research providing empirical testing of visitation patterns on recidivism is scant. A study conducted by Cochran (2014) stands as the sole exception. Using prison administrative data on visits across the entire prison term, Cochran (2014) conducted group-based trajectory models for over 11,000 individuals incarcerated in Florida serving 8-17 months in prison. The results showed that visited individuals were less likely to recidivate than non-visited individuals, but different visitation patterns correlated with differing levels of recidivism. Individuals who were visited early and consistently were less likely to recidivate than non-visited individuals. Surprisingly, receiving visits near release was not associated with recidivism.

The Current Study

The current study advances the literature on visitation effects by identifying common visitation patterns among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands and testing how these patterns relate to recidivism. Data from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS) were used which includes detailed measures of visitation, recidivism up to two years after release, as well as a long list of measures on individuals' characteristics known to be important for visitation and recidivism (including demographic characteristics, criminal history, and individuals' pre-prison social networks). Controlling for these covariates helps to account for possible selection effects into visitation.

Since the data were collected in the Netherlands, this study provides unique insight into visitation patterns in Dutch prisons. The Dutch Prison Service (*Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen*) strives towards a positive, humane prison climate evidenced by prison regimes with daily schedules consisting of work, education, and recreation. Visitation is a standard part of this schedule. Individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands have the right to one hour of visits a week with up to three unique visitors per visit. Extant studies demonstrate that most incarcerated individuals (estimates ranging from 74-89%) in the Netherlands receive visits while incarcerated (see Chapter 3 & 4; Hickert et al., 2019). Most visits are contact visits, meaning individuals and their visitors can sit together with limited physical contact (i.e., brief kiss and/or hug at beginning and end of visit). Visiting conditions are thus, relatively uniform across prisons and regimes. This last point is important as

research indicates that differences in visiting conditions may impact visits' effects on recidivism (Turanovic & Tasca, 2021). In addition, even though Dutch penal policies became harsher in recent decades (Kruttschnitt & Dirkzwager, 2011), reentry is studied in a relatively mild penal climate (e.g., short sentences, humane prison climate, limited access to criminal records) compared to other Western countries. Together with this penal climate, the relatively high visitation rates indicates that a study of visitation effects in the Netherlands offers an interesting alternative to many Western countries and the bulk of visitation research that is largely based on American data.

7.2 Method

Dutch Prison Visitation Study

This study uses data from the DPVS, a unique nationwide study which aims to examine prison visitation from different perspectives and in all its variety. This study is a part of a large-scale national research project (the Life in Custody study) which periodically measures the quality of life in Dutch prisons using the Prison Climate Questionnaire (Bosma et al., 2020a) among all persons incarcerated in the Netherlands (Van Ginneken et al., 2018). All persons are individually approached and invited to participate. The purposes of the study are explained and participants are handed paper surveys to complete in private, or offered the opportunity to complete the survey with researcher assistance. Surveys were distributed and collected by research assistants from the university in the same week to ensure confidential treatment of the data. Participants were asked explicitly to consent for research participation and to link their survey data to administrative information, including visitation and criminal records.

For the present study, we use data from the 2017 data collection which combines collected survey data on individuals' social network (using procedures described above, for more details see Van Ginneken et al., 2018) and prison administrative data on several individual characteristics (including age and nationality) and visitation. While many Dutch prisons have administrative data on visitation, not all prisons use the nationwide system '*TULP Bezoek*' and even when they do the quality of the information recorded varies enormously. After site visits and inspection of the data, eight prisons were shown to have the most complete visitation data. These eight prisons are in both urban as well as more rural areas throughout the Netherlands and house adult males from all regimes. In terms of cell capacity and staff-prisoner ratio these prisons are comparable to other Dutch prisons.

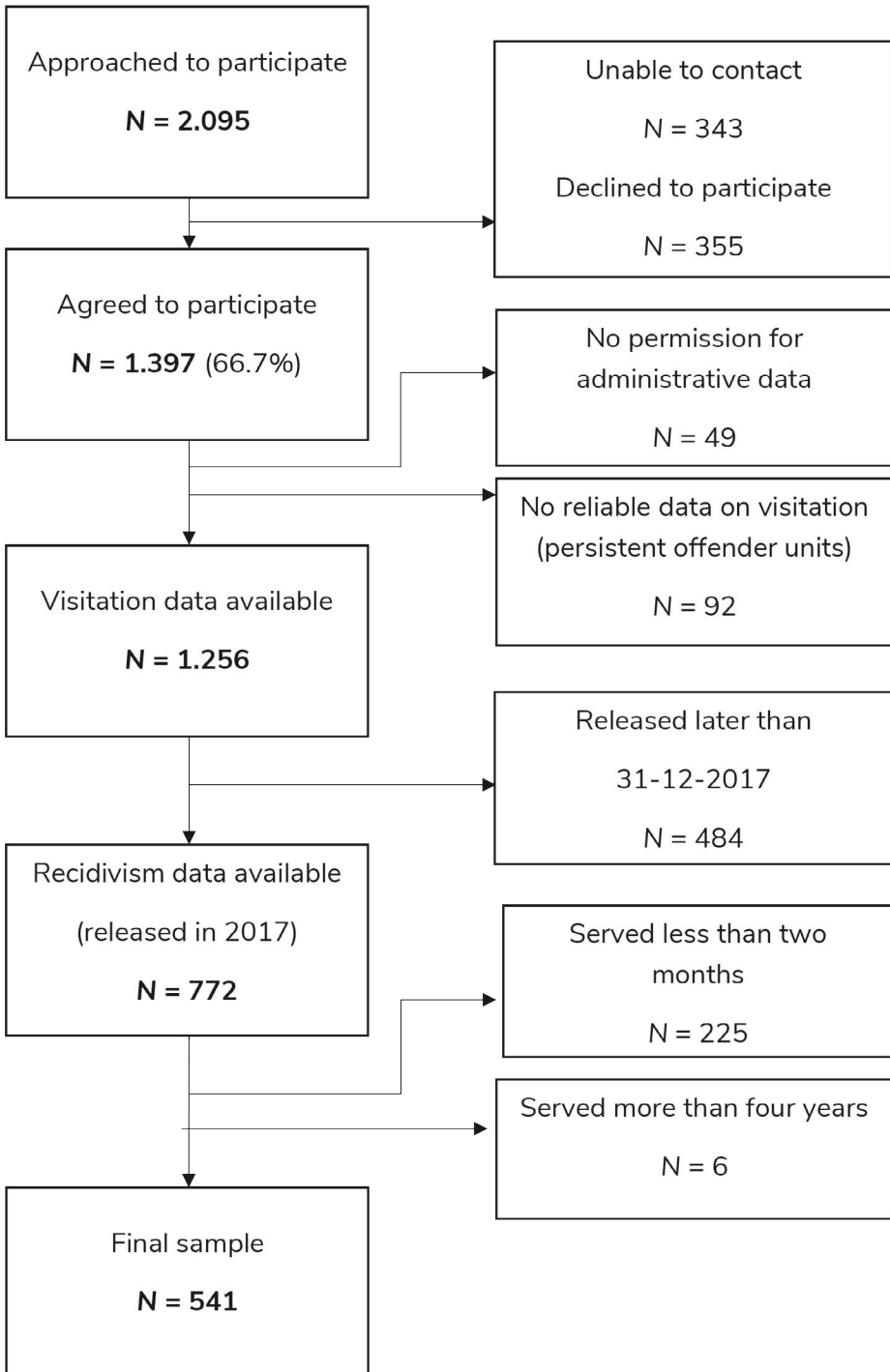
In addition to survey and prison administrative data, data for this study are extended with administrative data on criminal history and recidivism, provided by the Scientific Research and Documentation Center of the Ministry of Justice and Security. This database consists of detailed information on registered crimes and convictions and was made available for all DPVS participants who were released in 2017 and gave permission for obtaining administrative data.

Sample

All individuals housed in the eight selected prisons in the Netherlands between January and April 2017 were approached to participate ($N = 2,095$). Of those eligible, 1,397 agreed to participate¹, 1,348 gave permission to use administrative data, such as visitation records, for research purposes. Since visitation records are not uniformly recorded for individuals in persistent offender regimes, these individuals ($N = 92$) were excluded from this study.

For the 1,256 participants with available visitation data, 772 were released in 2017 and could be linked with data concerning recidivism. For the purposes of investigating visitation patterns in terms of frequency and recency, we excluded individuals who served less than two months in prison ($N = 225$). Moreover, six individuals served substantially longer prison terms (namely, 5-15 years in prison) than is common in the Netherlands. We therefore omitted these individuals from our sample. The final sample consists of 541 individuals (see Figure 7.1). In comparison to the total population of the eight prisons at the time of the survey data collection, this sample is slightly younger (on average 35 years old versus 37, $t(2093) = 3.38$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.17$), more likely to have been incarcerated for a property offense ($\chi^2(1, N = 2095) = 34.5$, $p < .001$), and had served on average less time in prison (on average five versus 12 months, $t(2089) = 6.42$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.32$) than those who were excluded from the analyses.

1 Some individuals ($N = 343$) were unable to be contacted due to language barriers, severe psychological problems or being placed in isolation during the data collection. The most common reasons for not participating were: "lack of interest" ($N = 228$), "distrustful of research" ($N = 35$), and "almost being released" ($N = 10$).

Figure 7.1 Flowchart Displaying the Sample Selection

Measures

Recidivism

For the tests of how the visitation trajectories relate to recidivism, several measures of recidivism were used to account for the complexity of reoffending. We included short and long-term measures of recidivism² from the administrative data on recidivism, as well as measures of the seriousness of the offense for which an individual was reconvicted. Short-term recidivism was measured based on whether a participant was reconvicted within six months after release (0 = no, 1 = yes). Long-term recidivism was measured based on whether a participant was reconvicted within two years after release (0 = no, 1 = yes). Observing recidivism up to two year allows for a conservative test of visitation effects, as prior research has found that visits' effects may weaken over time (Mitchell et al., 2016). All participants had an equal time at risk using these recidivism measures.

In addition, separate measures were created for reconviction for a serious offense (0 = no, 1 = yes) and reconviction for a very serious offense (0 = no, 1 = yes) respectively within six months and two years of release. Serious offenses include any offense with a maximum sentence of four years' incarceration and higher, or any offense that allows for the imposition of pretrial detention. Very serious offenses include any offense with a maximum sentence of eight years' incarceration and higher.

Visitation Patterns

Using prison administrative records from '*TULP Bezoek*' individuals' visitation experiences in the months prior to release were reconstructed. The administrative data indicates on which date(s) each individual received a personal visit. This was used to record the number of visits an individual received in a given "month". Each visit with a unique combination of visitor and visit date were counted as a separate visit³. Following prior research (e.g., Cochran, 2014; Hickert et al., 2018), months were standardized to include four weeks or 28 days so that a consistent number of weekend days were included each month.

Visitation events were analyzed for up to 24 months prior to release. This observation period was chosen since the vast majority of individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands spend less than two years in prison (De Looft et al., 2018). Since

2 We additionally ran analyses with a measure of reconviction within one year of release. The results, which can be requested from the first author, yielded similar conclusions as our models on long-term recidivism (i.e. within two years of release).

3 To illustrate, two unique visitors on one date equaled two visits, like one unique visitor on two dates also equaled two visits.

we are interested in the recency of visits prior to release, we began coding the number of visits in each month preceding release (up to 24 months). The month of release⁴ was therefore considered ‘month 0’. Then, for each month prior to release the total number of visits was recorded. For example, if an individual received three visits in the last two months before release, then that individual scores 3 on the ‘-1 month to release’ and ‘-2 months to release’.

Control Variables

We controlled for several individual characteristics known to be correlated with visitation and recidivism. To start, we included some measures of pre-prison social networks measured with survey data. First, we included a binary measure of whether individuals reported having a partner (0 = no, 1 = yes). Then, we included three measures concerning the amount of contact individuals had with partner, family, and friends prior to incarceration. Participants indicated whether they had no, monthly, weekly, or daily contact with each relationship. We created three separate binary measures of at least weekly contact with partner (0 = no, 1 = yes), at least weekly contact with family (0 = no, 1 = yes), and at least weekly contact with friends (0 = no, 1 = yes). This gauges whether individuals had preexisting sources of social support, which has shown to be a predictor of visitation and post-release success (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018).

From administrative data variables were included on age (in years, this pertains to an individuals’ age during the 2017 data collection⁵), nationality (0 = non-Dutch, 1 = Dutch), time served (i.e., the number of months between entry into a Dutch penitentiary and release), the total number of prior incarcerations in the past five years, and index offense (including: property offense [reference category], violent offense, sex offense, drug offense, or other offense).

4 For most of our sample, month of release means release from a closed prison to society. Some individuals were, however, first released from a closed prison to an open regime (and then into society). Since visits are not a part of the programming in open prisons (as individuals are able to see family and friends on furlough), we considered entrance into an open regime as ‘released’. This was the case for 44 individuals in the sample (8.1%). To account for the fact that these individuals may have had less time at risk for recidivism, we controlled for whether individuals were released into an open regime in the logistic regression models. The multivariate results (not shown but can be requested from the first author) yielded the same conclusions.

5 Since our sample consists of individuals who were released in 2017, the recorded age is similar to age at release.

Analytic Strategy

The analyses proceeded in two stages. First, to identify longitudinal visitation patterns, group-based trajectory models were employed using STATA Trajectory Procedure in STATA 2013 (Jones & Nagin, 2013). Parameters defining the level and shape of visitation trajectories were allowed to vary freely across groups. When estimating trajectories, we excluded individuals who were never visited ($N = 113$). This was done because a) adding individuals who never received visits would only add a flat trajectory to the model (Broidy et al., 2015; Ferrante, 2013), b) there is the risk that individuals with few visits would be pulled into the non-visited group, complicating a comparison between non- and low-visited individuals. For the trajectory models, months served in prison prior to release were used as observation points, and the outcome was a count measure of the (unique) number of visits in a given month.

Due to variations in the number of months served in prison between individuals (see Table 7.1; the sample served on average ten months in prison), there is also variation in the number of observation periods each contributes. Since all individuals spent at least two months in prison, scores on ‘-1 month to release’ and ‘-2 months to release’ are complete for all visited individuals included in the trajectory analyses ($N = 428$). Around 22% of this sample served two to four months in prison, meaning visit data was available for 335 individuals at ‘-4 months to release’. Another 18% of the sample spent four to six months in prison, such that 256 individuals still contributed to the trajectories at ‘-6 months to release’. Then, turning to what is considered ‘long-term’ prison stays in the Netherlands (Wermink, 2014), almost one-third of the sample served six months up to one year in prison. Thus, visit data was available for 118 individuals at ‘-12 months to release’. After one year to release, the visitation trajectories are based on a small number of individuals. At the end of our observations (‘-24 months to release’) visit data was available for 27 individuals. Importantly, since we know in which month an individual entered prison, the records for months in the observation period exceeding entrance into prison were set as missing (and thus did not contribute to estimating the trajectories).

We identified the best fitting model based on cubic shaped trajectories, and a count-specific zero-inflated Poisson regression model. In doing so, we were able to prevent disjunct changes in the modeled visitation patterns caused by months without any visits (Hickert et al., 2018). In line with Nagin’s recommendations (2005), the optimal number of groups was selected based on the following criteria: the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), average posterior probabilities (AvePP), and odds of correct classification (OCC). In addition,

Wald tests were performed to test for group differences in terms of intercepts and cubic slopes across trajectory subgroups.

Second, we assigned individuals to subgroups based on their maximum posterior group probabilities and used group membership – with non-visited individuals denoted as a separate group – to estimate the effects of these longitudinal visitation trajectories on the likelihood of reconviction within six month and two years after release. Since the outcome is dichotomous, logistic regression models were used. The multivariate models include all control variables described in the ‘measures’ section. Notably, squared variables of age and time served were tested, since these variables may have a non-linear relationship with recidivism, and were omitted if not significant.

7.3 Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 7.1 provides a descriptive overview of the 541 men included in the analyses. Based on registered crime, 26% of the sample was reconvicted for all convictions, 21% for serious convictions, and 4% for very serious convictions within six months of release. Within two years of release, half of the sample was reconvicted (respectively 42% for a serious offense and 11% for a very serious offense). In terms of visits, individuals in the sample received on average 2.37 visits per month.

Identifying Longitudinal Visitation Patterns

To select the optimal number of groups, we began with estimating a one-group model and proceeded up to a seven-group model. While the BIC statistic is the preferred statistic to choose the optimal number of groups (Nagin, 2005), the BIC and AIC did not reach a minimum in the current study (see Table 7.2 and Blokland et al., 2005). As such, the BIC and AIC failed to identify the optimal number of groups. Additionally, average posterior probabilities (exceeding .79) and OCC values (exceeding 14) were well above the recommended guidelines of respectively 0.7 and five for all groups (Nagin, 2005). We therefore turned to substantive differences between the models to determine the best fitting model.

Table 7.1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	%	M	SD
Reconviction within						
Six months						
All	541	0	1	26	-	-
Serious	541	0	1	21	-	-
Very serious	541	0	1	4	-	-
Two years						
All	541	0	1	50	-	-
Serious	541	0	1	42	-	-
Very serious	541	0	1	11	-	-
Number of visits (per month)	541	0	18.20	-	2.37	2.67
Has a partner	498	0	1	59	-	-
Weekly contact prior to incarceration with						
Partner	484	0	1	60	-	-
Family	541	0	1	67	-	-
Friends	541	0	1	54	-	-
Age (during data collection, in years)	541	19	81	-	35.19	11.63
Nationality (Dutch)	511	0	1	69	-	-
Time served (months)	541	2.07	46.93	-	9.70	8.36
Number of prior imprisonments (in past five years)	541	0	17	-	1.59	2.27
Index offense						
Property	493	0	1	42	-	-
Violent	493	0	1	30	-	-
Sex	493	0	1	5	-	-
Drugs	493	0	1	17	-	-
Other	493	0	1	5	-	-

Table 7.2 Model Fit Statistics of One- to Seven-group ZIP Models

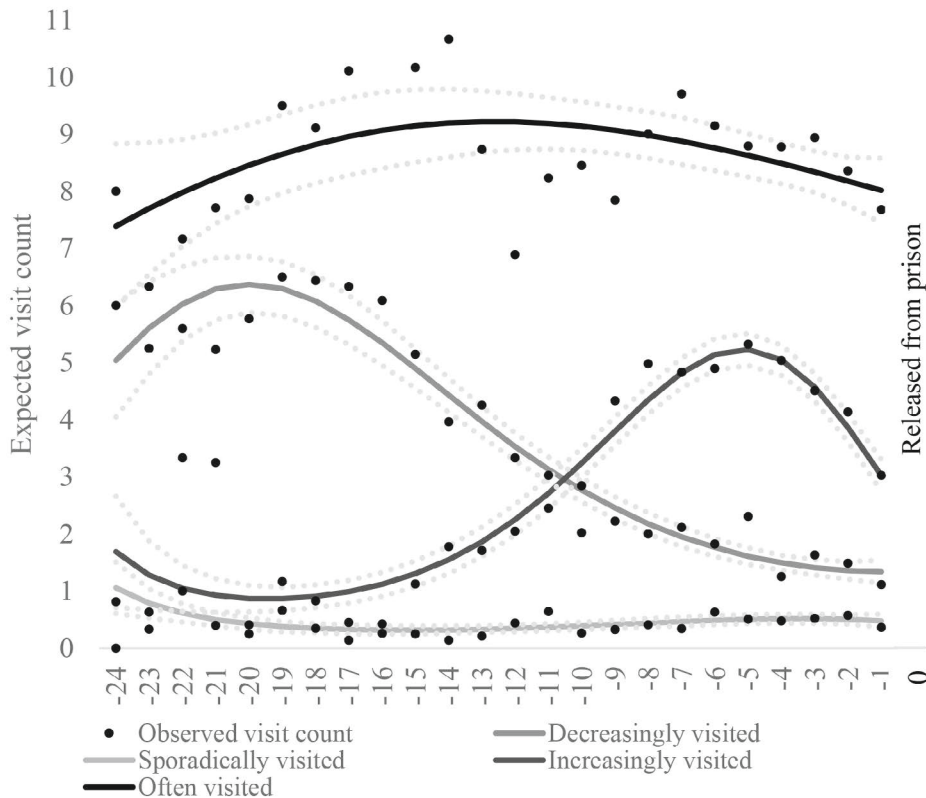
Model	BIC	2(Δ BIC)	AIC	Lowest AvePP	OCC	Group membership %
1	-12637.89	-	-12629.78	1	-	100
2	-9523.25	6229.28	-9504.98	.98	68, 45	48, 52
3	-8810.73	1425.04	-8782.32	.94	48, 20, 59	34, 42, 24
4	-8455.82	709.82	-8417.26	.87	19, 36, 23, 124	26, 23, 33, 18
5	-8296.21	319.22	-8247.51	.79	32, 19, 20, 24, 108	10, 23, 22, 29, 16
6	-8212.29	167.84	-8153.43	.81	38, 26, 40, 24, 14, 99	16, 18, 9, 16, 27, 14
7	-8180.35	63.88	-8111.35	.76	175, 17, 25, 22, 16, 52, 373	5, 14, 15, 17, 29, 15, 5

Note. Δ BIC indicates the relative change in BIC values.

Based on the theoretical and practical relevance of the trajectories identified in the four-group model, this model was preferred. The four-group model distinguished groups of individuals based on frequency (i.e., individuals who were seldom visited or often which visited which remained relatively consistent throughout the observation period) and recency (i.e., individuals who experienced an increase in visits in the months before release, and contrastingly, a group that experienced a decrease in visits in the months before release). Wald's tests were significant for each of the four trajectory subgroups, indicating that each group differed in developmental pattern of visitation (see Appendix 7A for Wald tests).

The three-group model was not preferred because it only distinguishes between groups based on overall frequency of visitation, and therefore fails to reveal the distinct developmental patterns of visitation of the group who experience fluctuations in visits in the months preceding release. The five-group model was not preferred as the fifth subgroup consisted of individuals who were conceptually embodied by a larger trajectory in the four-group model (namely individuals who experience a decrease in visits in the months before release). Finally, the six- and seven-group models were not preferred as the additional subgroups only further distinguished between groups with very slight increases or decreases in the months before release, and thus did not add to the substantive story of visit patterns.

In addition to the a-priori defined group of individuals who were never visited (21%, $N = 113$), the four-group model shows wide variety in the average number of visits in a given month (see Figure 7.2). One group, which we call 'sporadically visited' (18%, $N = 99$), receives on average one visit every two months. This pattern remains consistent throughout the observation period. Another group labelled 'often visited' (14%, $N = 75$) receives between seven to nine visits per month, which remains consistent up until release. While visitation patterns are relatively stable for the 'sporadically visited' and 'often visited' groups, Figure 7.2 shows two other groups that experience fluctuations in visitation patterns in the months preceding release. For the 'increasingly visited' group (27%, $N = 144$), the number of visits increases in the months before release (on average three to five visits in the months before release), while the 'decreasingly visited' group (20%, $N = 110$) experiences a decrease in visits in the months before release (on average one visit per month in the months before release).

Figure 7.2 Longitudinal Visitation Trajectories for the Four-group Model

As noted earlier, our sample spent a diverse amount of time in prison. To address this, we performed robustness checks by separating our sample into four cohorts based on the amount of time served in prison (2-4 months, 4-6 months, 6-12 months, and 1-4 years) and separately analyzed their visitation trajectories (the trajectory models can be requested from the first author). The resulting trajectories are similar to the four-group model presented above, although trajectories distinguishing fluctuations in visits (e.g., ‘decreasingly visited’ and ‘increasingly visited’) were only found for cohorts who spent at least six months in prison.

We also examined the proportion of individuals from each cohort assigned to each visitation trajectory (see Table 7.3). As shown, the largest percentage of individuals who were never visited are in the cohort serving 2-4 months in prison (36%). This is in line with prior Dutch research which suggests that individuals who serve short sentences may choose to opt out of visits, to spare family and friends the hardship of visiting and seeing them in prison (Janssen, 2000). Notable

too is that individuals who served between one and four years in prison have the highest prevalence in the ‘sporadically visited’ and ‘decreasingly visited’ groups, which may suggest that sustaining visits becomes difficult over time. In terms of group assignment, one of the most common patterns across the cohorts was the ‘increasingly visited’ group (ranging from 15 to 34%). Finally, across the cohorts 13-15% of individuals were assigned to the ‘often visited’ group.

Table 7.3 Group Assignment Percentages by Cohort

		Never visited	Sporadically visited	Decreasingly visited	Increasingly visited	Often visited
Cohorts	N	%	%	%	%	%
2-4 months	145	36	8	14	28	15
4-6 months	97	19	18	17	34	13
6-12 months	169	18	17	23	30	13
1-4 years	130	9	33	28	15	15

Taken together, we did not find very different patterns among the separate cohorts than the four-group model presented for the full sample. Moreover, the distribution of individuals in each cohort across the four-group model is logical and in line with prior research. This substantiates that our findings are relevant for the full sample, with a caveat that conclusions concerning the ‘decreasingly visited’ and ‘increasingly visited’ group are most applicable to individuals who spent at least six months in prison. Thus, although attrition led to decreasing power with the amount of time spent in prison, it seems that the potential biases due to attrition are not likely a threat to the validity of our trajectories.

Relation Between Visitation Patterns and Recidivism

Now we consider whether these distinctive visitation patterns predict the likelihood of reconviction within six months and two years after release. Before preceding to the logistic regression models, bivariate associations between the different visitation trajectories and reconviction were examined. Table 7.4 shows the comparison between the four visitation trajectories and the ‘never visited’ group.

Bivariate Analyses

As shown in Table 7.4, compared to the ‘never visited’ group, the three groups with the highest visitation frequency (i.e., ‘often visited’, ‘increasingly visited’, and ‘decreasingly visited’) were less likely to be reconvicted for all convictions and

serious convictions. As anticipated, the group that was often visited was least likely to be reconvicted when compared to the group that was never visited (OR = 0.19 for all convictions, see table for serious convictions). Trajectory group membership was not associated with very serious reconvictions, likely due to low incidences of very serious reconvictions.

Within two years of release, only the ‘often visited’ group significantly differed from the ‘never visited’ group on reconviction for all convictions and serious convictions. For this group the risk of reconviction was significantly lower (OR = 0.34 for all and serious convictions) in comparison to individuals who were never visited while incarcerated. None of the trajectory groups were associated with a very serious reconviction within two years.

Table 7.4 Probability of Reconviction Based on Visitation Trajectory

	Reconviction within six months								Reconviction within two years					
	All		Serious		Very serious			All		Serious		Very serious		
	N	%	OR	%	OR	%	OR	%	OR	%	OR	%	OR	
Never visited	113	39	Ref	30	Ref	5	Ref	55	Ref	46	Ref	9	Ref	
Sporadically visited	99	37	0.94	33	1.16	7	1.36	57	1.07	49	1.15	15	1.84	
Decreasingly visited	110	22	0.44**	19	0.55	5	1.03	50	0.83	45	0.94	15	1.75	
Increasingly visited	144	20	0.40**	16	0.44**	1	0.25	53	0.95	42	0.84	10	1.11	
Often visited	75	11	0.19***	7	0.17***	1	0.24	29	0.34**	23	0.34*	8	0.90	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Logistic Regression Models

Next, we examined the multivariate relationship between the visitation trajectory groups and reconviction. Here we omitted very serious reconvictions as a separate category since the trajectory groups were not associated with very serious reconvictions at the bivariate level (with one exception). Table 7.5 shows the resulting estimates from the logistic regression models which includes the trajectory group and all individual characteristics.

As can be seen in Table 7.5, the ‘often visited’ and ‘increasingly visited’ groups were less likely to be reconvicted within six months, even after controlling for important individual characteristics, including measures of individuals’ pre-prison social networks. Individuals who consistently received a high number of visits (OR = 0.29) and who were increasingly visited (OR = 0.44) had a significantly lower risk of reconviction

within six months than non-visited individuals. Effect sizes were smaller for serious reconvictions but still significant for those who were often visited (see Table 7.5). No significant associations were found between being in the ‘sporadically visited’ and ‘decreasingly visited’ groups and reconviction within six months. Moreover, none of the trajectory groups were associated with reconviction within two years.

In terms of control variables, none of the measures of pre-prison social networks emerged as having a significant relation with recidivism. The other control variables do, however, generally show significant effects on recidivism in the expected direction. For instance, individuals with less extensive incarceration history are less likely to recidivate. Since the coefficients presented in the bivariate analyses have changed compared to the logistic regression models, this suggests that the multivariate analyses are at least accounting for the potential selection biases that stem from the included characteristics.

7.4 Discussion

Prison officials worldwide have been encouraged to implement prison visits based on the belief that visits will improve reintegration. The consistency of empirical studies in supporting this premise provides justification for such policy recommendations (Mitchell et al., 2016). Yet, just as consistently, scholars find that the relationship between visitation and recidivism is heterogeneous (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Bales & Mears, 2008; Cochran et al., 2020). This is not surprising as visitation is a heterogeneous experience, which may elicit heterogeneous responses. Individuals differ not only in *whether* they receive visits, but also *how often* and *when* they receive visits while incarcerated. To further our understanding of how these aspects of visitation relate to post-release offending, this study first identifies visitation patterns among Dutch males and then tests how these patterns relate to several measures of recidivism.

Four key findings emerged from our analyses. First, the group-based trajectory models show that individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands tend to experience one of the five patterns of visitation: no visits, sporadically visited, decreasingly visited, increasingly visited, and often visited. While some groups experience relatively steady patterns (which differ in terms of amount), others experience relatively drastic increases or decreases in the months prior to release. This confirms that visitation patterns can also be identified in the Dutch prison context. Interestingly, despite differences in incarceration and visitation context, these patterns seem comparable to those found in prior research. One difference is apparent: while extant American studies find that the most common visitation pattern is no

Table 7.5 Logistic Regression of Reconviction on Visitation Trajectory Groups and Controls (N = 541)

	Reconviction within six months		
	All		
	B	SE	OR
Visitation trajectory groups			
Never visited	Ref	Ref	Ref
Sporadically visited	0.10	0.33	1.11
Decreasingly visited	-0.52	0.34	0.59
Increasingly visited	-0.82*	0.33	0.44
Often visited	-1.25**	0.46	0.29
Control variables			
Has a partner	0.37	0.31	1.44
Weekly contact prior to incarceration with			
Partner	-0.37	0.31	0.69
Family	0.11	0.27	1.12
Friends	-0.21	0.26	0.81
Age (during data collection, in years)	-0.03*	0.01	0.97
Nationality (Dutch)	0.00	0.01	1.00
Time served (months)	-0.03	0.02	0.97
Number of prior imprisonments (in past five years)	0.33***	0.05	1.39
Index offense			
Property	Ref	Ref	Ref
Violent	0.17	0.23	1.18
Sex	0.08	0.48	1.09
Drugs	-0.14	0.31	0.87
Other	-0.11	0.44	0.90
Constant	-0.05	0.54	0.95
Nagelkerke R ²	0.24		

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Reconviction within six months			Reconviction within two years					
Serious			All			Serious		
B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
0.34	0.34	1.4	0.22	0.32	1.25	0.30	0.32	1.34
-0.24	0.36	0.79	0.12	0.31	1.13	0.34	0.31	1.40
-0.65	0.35	0.52	0.13	0.29	1.14	0.11	0.29	1.11
-1.31*	0.55	0.27	-0.61	0.36	0.54	-0.51	0.38	0.60
0.27	0.32	1.31	-0.02	0.27	0.99	0.00	0.27	1.00
-0.28	0.32	0.67	0.01	0.27	1.01	-0.01	0.27	1.00
-0.01	0.29	0.99	0.00	0.25	1.00	-0.14	0.25	0.87
-0.40	0.27	0.67	-0.21	0.23	0.81	-0.36	0.22	0.70
-0.03*	0.01	0.97	-0.03**	0.01	0.97	-0.02*	0.01	0.98
0.01	0.01	1.01	0.00	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.01	1.00
-0.02	0.02	0.98	-0.02	0.01	0.98	-0.01	0.01	0.99
0.31***	0.05	1.36	0.42***	0.06	1.52	0.34***	0.06	1.41
Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
0.24	0.24	1.27	0.32	0.20	1.38	0.22	0.20	1.24
0.70	0.49	2.02	-0.39	0.39	0.68	-0.03	0.38	0.97
-0.34	0.35	0.71	-0.10	0.34	0.90	-0.37	0.25	0.69
-0.6	0.53	0.55	0.17	0.35	1.18	0.18	0.35	1.20
-0.23	0.58	0.79	0.63	0.49	1.88	0.22	0.49	1.25
0.24			0.25			0.22		

visitation (Cihan et al., 2020; Cochran, 2012, 2014; Hickert et al., 2018; Young & Hay, 2020), we find a relatively even spread across the visitation groups.

Second, we find that these distinctions are important, as it does not necessarily follow that receiving visits in prisons provides substantial improvements in post-release offending behavior. Results from the multivariate analyses showed that individuals who only sporadically received visits or who experienced a decrease of visits prior to release (i.e., ‘decreasingly visited’) did not significantly differ from the never visited group on reconviction within six months and up to two years after release. One possibility for this result is that these trajectories are a reflection of weak or turbulent relationships. Prior Dutch research has demonstrated that there is a high turnover rate in individuals’ social network and that relationships dissolve while incarcerated (De Cuyper, 2015; Volker et al., 2016). Seeing the declining trajectory, perhaps relationships are complicated for these individuals, which could make visits more unstable, upsetting, and, consequently, less effective (Beckmeyer & Arditti, 2014; Tasca, Mulvey, et al., 2016; Turanovic & Tasca, 2019). Notably, this result diverges from Cochran (2014), as he found that visits early on were important for recidivism (and our ‘decreasingly visited’ did at some point experience a moderate frequency of visits). It is possible that visits early in the prison term may be more important in an American context as individuals are incarcerated substantially longer than in the Netherlands. For long-term prison stays, visits early on may be especially important to combat adverse prison effects (such as strain), which could have long-term implications.

Third, analyses strongly support the idea that consistent, frequent visitation is linked to reductions in recidivism, especially in the first six months after release. We found that individuals who were often visited had a 71% decreased likelihood of being reconvicted for all convictions and 45% decreased likelihood for serious convictions within six months of release when compared to the ‘never visited’ group. This was found even when accounting for several individual differences, including pre-prison social networks. This association did, however, seem to attenuate over time (as evidenced in our model on long-term recidivism). There are several possible reasons for this (Bahr et al., 2010; LeBel et al., 2008; Visher et al., 2004), including that social network may mainly work as a “landing spot” after release, as many individuals turn to family for help once released. While family members may be welcoming, a prolonged reliance on family for instrumental support may be difficult and increase tensions (Mowen et al., 2019). Nonetheless, our results suggest – similarly to Cochran (2014) – that sustained, frequent visits seem most effective at reducing future offending. This may, in part, be due to the types of relationships

from which these individuals receive visits and the quality of the visits. This is a likely explanation as we observed in an exploratory analysis that individuals in the ‘often visited’ group were more likely to have a partner and have had weekly contact with them prior to incarceration when compared to the never visited group. A few studies have found that visits from romantic partners were associated with reductions in recidivism (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Bales & Mears, 2008). More research is needed, however, to understand the mechanisms behind this result.

Fourth, receiving more visits near release seems important for short-term recidivism. Individuals who experienced an increase in visits in the months prior to release were 56% less likely to be reconvicted within six months than non-visited individuals but these visits were not associated with reconviction within two years of release. One plausible explanation for this short-term effect is potential differences in the expectation and actual provision of practical and emotional support that families can provide for individuals when returning home (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Nevertheless, even if these visits may only reduce risks of recidivism in the short-term, any reduction can be considered beneficial as recidivism risks are especially high in the first months following release (Wartna et al., 2011).

Given the results of this study, policy measures aimed at providing opportunities for incarcerated individuals to be visited more frequently or consistently are warranted. Based on prior Dutch and American research, one measure which is likely to increase the number of visits individuals receive is placing them in prisons close to their social network (see Chapter 4; Clark & Duwe, 2017; McNeely & Duwe, 2020). Additionally, the results of this study suggest that investments in increasing visits near release may be promising, but as it remains unclear as to why these visits are important, more research is needed. It is possible that intensifying visits with other important social groups (such as community volunteers) or probation services may be useful to keep individuals informed of the sources of support available to them upon release. With that said, purely increasing visit possibilities may not necessarily reduce recidivism, as visits are not uniformly positive, nor are all visitors supportive. More research is needed to further unpack when and under which circumstances visits are beneficial.

Finally, there are some limitations worth noting. First, although our rich data allowed us to account for known differences between visited and non-visited individuals, which substantially reduced selection bias, our analyses only account for observable confounding influences and the small (sub)samples limit the statistical power of our models. Future studies therefore ought to further confront the issues of selection bias by using large samples and analytical strategies such as instrumental variable analyses

to increase confidence in the results. Second, and relatedly, while we accounted for important measures of individuals' pre-prison social networks, these measures do not capture the quality of the relationships, which may be more consequential than the frequency of contact (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018). Using more dynamic measures of individuals' social networks has the potential to further untangle some of the results found here. Also, we were unable to include measures of an individuals' social economic status. This seems important as visits often require the availability of economic resources and individuals who come from families and communities that lack such resources may be less likely to receive visits (Cochran et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2016). Moreover, lack of such resources may also make it more difficult for individuals to find housing and employment, perhaps making these individuals more vulnerable to reoffend (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Christian et al., 2006). Third, as our sample served on average ten months in prison, our trajectory analyses included very few individuals at the end of our observation period. This could lead to biased estimates as the composition of the groups may change over time, therefore the trajectories should be interpreted cautiously. That said, when we separated our sample based on their differing lengths of time in prison, we did find similar trajectories. However, the trajectories 'decreasingly visited' and 'increasingly visited' seem most applicable to individuals who have spent at least six months in prison.

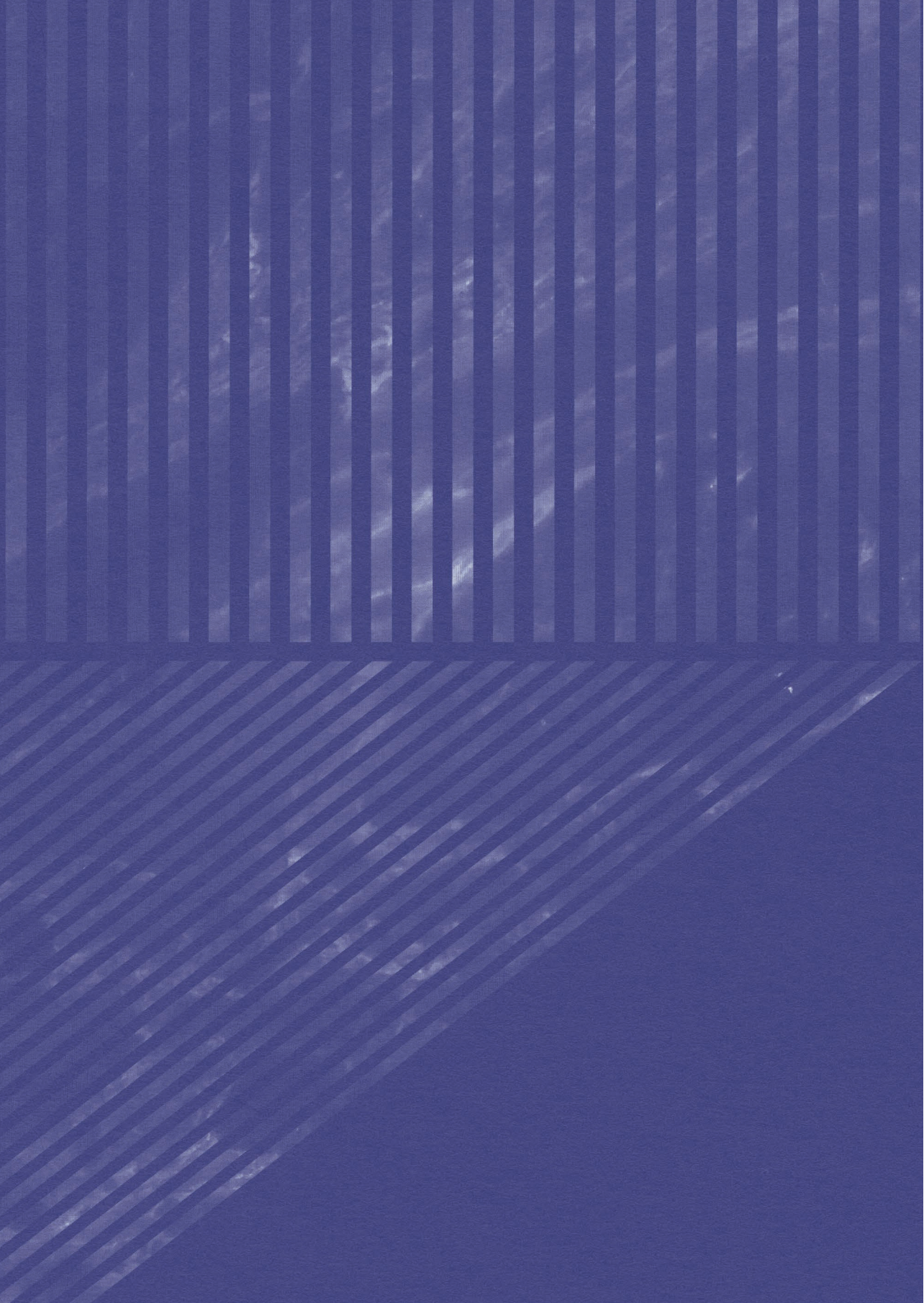
These limitations notwithstanding, the current study demonstrates that when we account for differences in visitation experiences (in terms of frequency and recency) and potential selection effects, visit effects are modest. Nevertheless, the results are striking for a context in which individuals are incarcerated for short periods of time and where prison regimes are considered to have a rehabilitative focus (although the Dutch prison climate has become more punitive in recent years, Kruttschnitt and Dirkzwager, 2011). It is also possible that these modest effects are a result of testing visits' effects on recidivism, which is a rather limited measure of post-release success. Recidivism is only one outcome of a process which demands many changes from individuals and these measures capture not only individual behavior, but also reflect the decision making of the criminal justice system (Berghuis, 2018; Wright & Cesar, 2013). Not only that, but theoretical arguments suggest that visits may have broader benefits for emotional and instrumental support after release, yet the overwhelming focus of empirical study is on recidivism (with a few exceptions, see Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017; Hickert et al., 2019). Explorations of whether and how receiving visits – in all its complexity – impacts the emotional and practical challenges individuals face during reentry seem fruitful and

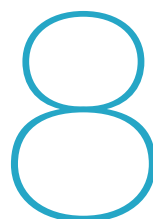
may even reveal that visits' effects are more profound once we understand when, which, for whom, and in what ways visits are effective.

Appendix 7A Wald Tests on Differences Between Intercepts and Cubic Slopes Across Four Trajectory Subgroups

	Often visited vs. Sporadically visited	Decreasingly visited vs. Sporadically visited	Increasingly visited vs. Sporadically visited	Decreasingly visited vs. Increasingly visited	Increasingly visited vs. Often visited	Decreasingly visited vs. Often visited
Intercept	255.04***	29.07***	72.96***	15.03**	239.06***	242.13***
Cubic slopes	8.45**	21.73***	7.09**	113.47***	70.70***	13.45**

Note. Last group is reference group; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$





General discussion

8.1 Introduction

Within the corrections field worldwide, it has long been held that contact with the outside world is especially important for helping individuals both during and after imprisonment. One of the few ways individuals can have meaningful contact with the outside world while incarcerated is through prison visits. Prison visitation has steadily gained academic attention in the past decade as theoretical accounts highlight that receiving visits in prison is beneficial and empirical studies largely reinforce this, leading to increased calls for stimulating prison visits. Yet not all results lead to unequivocal conclusions, and little is known about whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits and under which circumstances visits affect behavior, especially across different contexts and populations. Work on this topic is complicated as visitation is a heterogeneous experience and researchers rarely have comprehensive measures of visitation. Individuals can, for example, be visited at different times in their prison term; some are visited only once while others are visited on a weekly basis; individuals receive visits from a range of relationships and have diverse experiences during visits. Moreover, the social and incarceration contexts in which visits take place are complex and include a wide range of actors who have diverse interests and concerns. This underscores the need for holistic research and rigorous investigations into visitation and its effects.

Against this backdrop, this dissertation sought to provide a comprehensive description and examination of prison visitation in the Netherlands. Since this dissertation is one of the first to examine visits in Dutch prisons on a large-scale, the first aim was relatively explorative: to describe how visitation works in law, policy, and practice. Both the legal and correctional context were considered to provide an overview of the legal basis of prison visits, how visits are implemented in policy and practice, and to explore the contours of how prison administrators use their discretion to prescribe visitation policies. Detailing these contextual aspects was an important starting point given the novelty of visitation research in contexts outside the U.S.

Then, building on this contextual knowledge, this dissertation further aimed to advance our understanding of the determinants and consequences of prison visitation. These aims were pursued by a) including multifaceted measures of visitation from several sources to specify and nuance our explorations of prison visits, b) using a holistic approach to study individual as well as contextual aspects of visitation, c) applying rigorous multilevel tests to empirically investigate under

which circumstances visits affect (which type of) offending behavior, and d) assessing the robustness and generalizability of prior research by exploring the determinants and consequences of prison visitation among individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands.

To accomplish these aims, data was used from the Dutch Prison Visitation Study (DPVS) which combines information from multiple data sources to capture the complexities of prison visitation. Data on whether, how often, and from whom individuals received visits while incarcerated was collected via self-report (Prison Climate Questionnaire, PCQ, Bosma 2020a), and was available for a nationally representative group of over 4,000 incarcerated adults. Individuals were also asked about their visitation experiences in the PCQ. In addition, for a subsample of over 1,000 adult males housed in eight prisons geographically spread throughout the Netherlands, detailed prison administrative data was available. Administrative data further provided longitudinal data about the timing and patterning of visits across the entire prison term. In addition, by means of site visits, data was collected on the set-up and organization of visitation. To test visits' effects, information on misconduct (including aggressive misconduct, contraband, and general rule breaking) and recidivism was collected from official prison and criminal records. Finally, data on diverse individual and prison unit characteristics known to be important for visits and its effects, such as social support prior to incarceration, were included in the analyses.

This final chapter first provides a summary of the main results (see also w 8.1) and then reflects on how these results fit the theoretical frameworks discussed in the introduction. Thereafter, the strengths and limitations of the current dissertation and avenues for future research are discussed. This chapter concludes with implications of these findings for correctional policy and practice.

8.2 Summary of main results

Part I: The Visitation Context in the Netherlands

To provide an overview of how prison visitation works in Dutch law, policy, and practice, Chapter 2 investigated the current state of affairs of prison visitation in the Netherlands by examining legal documents and case law about visitation, talking to prison staff involved with visits, and conducting observations in all Dutch prisons. By law, incarcerated adults have a right to one hour of standard visits per week, meaning visits from partner, parents, children, family, or friends (Article 38, Section 1 of the Penitentiary Principles Act). In comparison to some other European countries

(like Belgium, see for example Eechaudt, 2017), the amount of visitation legally allowed in Dutch prisons could be considered restrictive. That said, policy changes in the past ten years have expanded visit possibilities in Dutch prisons. Incarcerated parents are offered more possibilities to see their children, individuals can receive an extra hour of visits per week (maximally two hours) through a behavioral incentive program, and conjugal visits have been made available to individuals in pretrial regimes as opposed to only being available in prison regimes.

In practice, the conditions and forms of visitation look similar across prisons. Generally, incarcerated individuals are responsible for planning their visits, the set-up of visiting rooms is quite uniform, the same types of visits are offered (i.e., standard visits, conjugal visits, and special family visits), and security measures and procedures are consistent. However, some prisons clearly had adopted more *flexible* practices (such as having weekend visits or allowing individuals to choose visits on various time slots spread across several days), which could make it possible for more individuals to receive visits or for certain relationships to visit (especially for those with less flexible schedules, like children). Bivariate analyses of DPVS participants indicated that these differences between prisons, as well as differences between individuals (such as age and ethnicity), are related to whether and how often individuals receive visits.

In sum, Part I demonstrated how the increasing number of developments and initiatives concerning prison visits have altered Dutch law, policy, and correctional practice. Correctional administrators increasingly seek to find a balance between ensuring safety of incarcerated individual and staff in prison, while also trying to encourage contact with the outside world. Notable too is the focus of many policy directives and research pilots on parent-child relationship and improving child visits. Finally, it is evident that – while all individuals have a right to one hour of visits per week – the practical implementation of this right looks different across prisons. There are several possible reasons for this, including sharp budget cuts, the incorporation of managerial discourse in penal policy, and differences in the ethos of prison governors. While exploratory bivariate analyses in Chapter 2 do indicate that such differences (as well as individual differences) may impact the receipt of visits, multivariate analyses are needed to control for the number of determinants at play, to which I now turn.

Part II: The Determinants of Visitation

Chapter 3 and 4 of this dissertation provided insight into the determinants of prison visitation. Chapter 3 focused on to what extent visits are determined by

individual characteristics. The central research question was to what extent social network characteristics (e.g., family situation, contact prior to incarceration) and criminal history (e.g., index offense, prior incarcerations, incarceration length) relate to receiving partner, child, family, and friend visits. Self-reported visitation data from 4,376 incarcerated males and females in diverse prison regimes were used, making this the first large-scale study of the determinants of prison visits in the Netherlands. The results indicated that nearly one-third of individuals did not receive a visit in the three months prior to the data collection. Individuals who had a strong and large social network prior to incarceration were more likely to be visited in prison than those who had limited contact with their social network prior to incarceration, were single, and did not have children. A few measures of criminal history were associated with receiving visits (such as, individuals with a more extensive incarceration history were less likely to receive visits) but appeared to be less impactful than social network characteristics and varied across visitors. For example, although certain groups appeared at first to be less likely to receive visits, such as sex offenders, when specific relationships were considered, it became clear that such groups were only less likely to receive visits from *certain* relationships (in the case of sex offenders: children and friends).

Building upon these observations, Chapter 4 broadened the focus from individual characteristics to include more contextual influences (such as prison policies and experiences during visits). Specifically, this chapter investigated how practical, relational, and experiential (that is, experiences during incarceration) factors explain variation in whether and from whom individuals receive visits. Moreover, Chapter 4 tests how these factors relate to how often individuals are visited. This is important as it can be assumed that some factors, such as offense seriousness, may strongly impact the likelihood of the first visit, but exert limited effects on having many visits. A combination of survey and administrative data on visits were used and detailed information about the set-up and organization of visits for each prison unit were added to investigate how visitation policies affect the receipt and frequency of visits. The results of the multilevel analyses showed (similarly to Chapter 3) that having a strong network prior or during incarceration is important for visits. However, even when visitors may have a close relationship with the incarcerated individual, far travelling distances still seem to hinder them from visiting frequently. The results further showed that having visits available on more days during the week increased the odds of receiving visits from parents and friends. Such flexible policies appear to be especially important for relationships who are less willing, or able to take time off work, as having weekend visits also increased the likelihood and frequency of

friend visits. Relatedly, providing more opportunities to receive visits, especially at desirable times, was related to more frequent visits. Finally, the findings further demonstrated that individuals who had positive emotional experiences during visits were visited more frequently, specifically by partner and family. This suggests that incarcerated individuals make willful and active decisions about visits based, in part, on their visit experiences.

Taken together, Part II demonstrated that practical, relational, and experiential factors play out at once to influence whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits in prison. Importantly, this part of the dissertation indicated that visitation policies – assumed to be consequential for whether and how often individuals can receive visits, but rarely tested – do seem to impact access to external social ties. That said, the studied policies appeared to have less of an impact than expected. This may, in part, be because visitation policies look relatively similar across prisons in the Netherlands (i.e., most prisons have visiting hours during the week and are typically one hour long). It is possible that visitation policies may exert a greater influence in other contexts where differences between facilities are more extreme (such as in the U.S). Generally though, the findings from Chapter 3 and 4 (particularly concerning individuals' social networks and the impact of travelling distance on visitation) provided some empirical support for the generalizability of prior research on prison visitation in the U.S. to the visitation context of the Netherlands. This suggests that these broad categories of factor might be more universal, and perhaps informative for other incarceration and visitation contexts in Western Europe.

Part III: The Consequences of Visitation

Chapter 5, 6, and 7 focused on the consequences of receiving prison visits on offending behavior in prison and after release. Chapter 5 investigated how several operationalizations of visits – whether individuals received visits, the type of visitor received, and how often they received visits – related to aggression (including both verbally and physically aggressive behaviors) and contraband misconduct. Multilevel techniques were utilized with self-report (visitation) and administrative (aggressive and contraband misconduct) data from a sample of 3,885 males and females housed in 230 prison units. The results demonstrated that receiving visits in prison, especially visits from partner and friends, was primarily related to an *increased likelihood of (drug-related) contraband misconduct*. Receiving visits was not associated with verbally aggressive behavior, but individuals who received visits from friends were *less likely to engage in physically aggressive behaviors*.

Contrastingly, weekly visits from friends increased the likelihood of aggressive misconduct. This association was found for aggressive behaviors towards things (i.e., destruction of property), suggesting that these visits may be stressful or frustrating. The frequency of visits did not relate to contraband, which suggest that who is visiting matters more for understanding contraband misconduct than how often one receives visits.

In Chapter 6, week-to-week associations between misconduct and prison visits (including visits from partner, family, friend, child, and official visitors) were explored *within* individuals. This design was applied to eliminate potential confounds and to isolate the short-term effects of visits on individuals' engagement in misconduct in the weeks prior to and following visits. The results showed that an individuals' risk of infraction is similar to average levels in the weeks leading up to a visit, increases up to 18% in the weeks following a visit, and then returns to baseline levels. This pattern was found for contraband infractions, but visits had little to no effect on aggressive infractions and rule breaking. Visits' effects varied based on who is visiting (but child and friend visits did not affect misconduct). Strongest effects were found for family and official visits. Exploratory analyses revealed that official visits increased an individuals' risk of aggressive infractions but had no significant effects on contraband infractions or rule breaking. This suggests that these visits may bring disappointment, stress, or frustration in addressing legal or reintegration needs. Finally, the findings showed that when individuals are visited frequently, the risk of infractions postvisit is similar to average levels, indicating that frequent visits may temper any 'harmful' effects of visits.

Finally, Chapter 7 examined whether visitation patterns – that is, differences in timing, rate, and consistency of visits while incarcerated – related to post-release offending for a subsample of DPVS participants released in 2017 with administrative data on visits. To identify visitation patterns, group-based trajectory models were used. Individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands tend to experience one of the five patterns of visitation: never visited, sporadically visited (a consistent, low number of visits), decreasingly visited (a decrease in the number of visits leading up to release), increasingly visited (an increase in the number of visits in the months before release), and often visited (a consistent, high number of visits). Then, logistic regression models tested whether these patterns relate to reconviction up to two years after release for all offending and serious offending (meaning, any offense with a maximum sentence of four years' incarceration and higher, or any offense that allows for the imposition of pretrial detention). The results demonstrated that consistent, frequent visitation and visits near release are linked to reductions in

all and serious offending within six months after release even when controlling for important individual differences. Other patterns, including receiving sporadic visits or experiencing a decrease in visits prior to release, were not associated with recidivism. Within two years of release, consistent, frequent visitation was still related to recidivism, but the effect seemed to attenuate.

In short, Part III showed that receiving visits in prison may not necessarily have positive behavioral outcomes in prison, but that visits do seem important for post-release offending. The relationship between visitation and misconduct is complex (as it seems to differ across visitors) and is not necessarily positive (as there is evidence of increases in contraband and of visits being stressful or upsetting). However, receiving consistent, frequent visits or visits near release – compared to never receiving visits – did relate to reductions in (serious) offending, at least in the short-term.

8.3 Theoretical Reflection

This dissertation set out to progress earlier theoretical assessments of the maintenance and importance of social ties during incarceration that have been mostly tested on American data. This section firstly reflects on the implications of the findings of this dissertation on the social ecological framework used to understand the determinants of prison visits and then on various criminological theories that link receiving visits to offending behavior.

Reflection on a Social Ecological Model of Visitation

The current work on the determinants of prison visitation was rooted in a social ecological model of visitation, informed by the broader literature on the maintenance of social support in times of stress (Vaux, 1988). This model, applied to the prison context, theorizes that incarcerated individuals and visitors decide whether and how often they (receive) visits within the social and incarceration contexts in which they reside. Based on prior theory and research it can be assumed that three broad categories of factors are important for visitation, namely practical, relational, and experiential factors. The expectation is that these factors are interrelated as factors at one level influence factors at another level.

Even though not all practical, relational, or experiential factors that were expected to play a role in whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits were found to exert an influence, the results of this dissertation provide support for theoretical arguments that prison visits are a product of practical

challenges, but also the social and incarceration contexts in which individuals reside and the factors impacting prison visits differ across relationships.

Evidence of these factors playing out at once to influence visitation was found in Chapter 3 and 4. Chapter 4 showed that relational factors are important for determining whether an individual receives visits but did not necessarily dictate frequent visits (here frequent travelling distance appeared to be more pertinent). This suggests an interplay between these two sets of factors, such that those close to an individual may be willing to come visit but could have a hard time maintaining frequent contact due to practical challenges. Chapters 3 and 4 also showed that certain individual characteristics generally considered to be important predictors of visitation, such as criminal history, were less impactful when other factors were simultaneously considered. Again, this suggests that criminal history may be one of the factors considered in whether to (receive) visits but is likely not the most decisive. Unfortunately, the data did not allow for a direct test of how these factors impact one another, but these results at least emphasize that determinants from various levels need to be assessed together to estimate the effects of these factors more accurately.

Beyond the interrelated nature of these factors, the findings of Chapter 3 and 4 also demonstrate that the determinants of visitation differ across relationships. For example, criminal history only seemed to lower the likelihood of visits for certain relationships – which could be a result of stigmatization (e.g., Moerings, 1978). Notable too was that visitation policies had differential impacts on whether and how often individuals received visits from certain relationships – which could have more to do with practical issues. While the social ecological model assumes that factors predicting visits could differ across relationships because of differences in the nature of ties (e.g., familial versus friendship) and investment considerations (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001), these mechanisms were not directly investigated. A deeper understanding of the processes underlying these differences requires qualitative research. Interview data from both incarcerated individuals and visitors can help to understand how visiting decisions are made, which could create new insights for further theory development.

Reflection on Theories on the Effects of Visitation

Several criminological theories anticipate that maintaining social ties through prison visitation can prevent or reduce offending behavior. From a strain and deprivation perspective, visits can improve individuals' ability to manage the pains and stress related to incarceration, thus decreasing engagement in criminal behavior. From a

social bonds perspective, visits can strengthen bonds to family, friends, and the community which would help restrain individuals from committing crimes. This constraint may work via informal social control, as loved ones monitor individuals' behavior and encourage conformity. These bonds may also be essential for the desistance process as these connections to society could help promote a positive sense of personal identity. Finally, visits help activate and preserve important sources of emotional and instrumental support which are likely to benefit individuals in navigating the many challenges they may face during and after imprisonment. While these theories collectively suggest that visits will reduce offending behavior, quantitative and qualitative accounts have shown that visits are not uniformly positive and can have negative effects on behavior (e.g., Siennick et al., 2013).

As evident above multiple theoretical arguments have been proposed for visits' effects, but scholars rarely derive more specific hypotheses to test underlying mechanisms. This dissertation contributed to a better understanding of how specific aspects of visits (such as who is visiting) relate to specific types of offending behavior, but still more is needed to disentangle the mechanisms behind visitation effects. Nevertheless, the results of this dissertation do provide suggestive evidence to the mechanisms behind visits' effects.

First, this dissertation does not provide much evidence for strain and deprivation-related arguments. If visits act as a coping mechanism, then decreases in aggression in prison would be expected. However, Chapter 5 and 6 show that visits had little to no effects on aggression. Perhaps visits are too short to help individuals cope with the pains and stresses of life in prison. It is also possible that context plays a role, as individuals in Dutch prisons may experience the pains of imprisonment less intensely since they tend to be imprisoned for short periods of time. That said, results from Chapter 6 suggest that official visits may be stressful as these visits *increased* aggressive behavior (namely, destruction of property). These visitors have been largely disregarded in theories about visits' effects. On the one hand, this is understandable as strain and deprivation-related arguments propose that close, familial relationships are most likely to impact individuals' emotional state. On the other hand, the lack of theorizing about official visits is surprising as they are common visitors, and for some incarcerated individuals, are their only visitors. Therefore, more explorations including official visitors is justified.

Second, this dissertation suggests that the underlying mechanism of visits' effects may be more rooted in informal social control. To start, small negative associations were found between receiving visits and physically aggressive behaviors in Chapter 5. It can be expected that more serious forms (like physically

aggressive behaviors) could disappoint a visitor, whereas more minor forms (like verbally aggressive behaviors) may not be as consequential for the relationship. Likewise, visitors are less likely to disapprove of individuals using or possessing ‘harmless’ items such as a mobile phone. This could explain the results from Chapter 5 and 6 that visits were related to increased contraband infractions. This result was particularly robust as analyses using both between- and within-person designs showed these increases. Moreover, while most other theories propose a generalized effect (i.e., visits will have similar effects across visitors), theories of informal social control hypothesize that partners are important. Some estimates presented in this dissertation show evidence of this (as partners were the only visitor type that decreased the likelihood of receiving a report in the weeks surrounding a visit), but the evidence was not unequivocal (as partner visits were related to an increased likelihood of contraband infractions). Still, the finding that visits may have visitor-specific effects warrants more theoretical attention to relationship dynamics.

Third, this dissertation also suggests that visits’ effects may be linked to the activation and preservation of important sources of support for life after release. Chapter 7 demonstrated that individuals who received consistent, frequent visits *and* individuals who experienced an increase in visits prior to release were less likely to be reconvicted within six months of release in comparison to individuals who were never visited. Since these effects are mainly found in the short-term, this suggests that visits may help connect or remind individuals of the social capital available to them. Importantly, these results were found even when controlling for individuals’ pre-prison social network, which suggests that visits are related to recidivism above and beyond the existence of support prior to incarceration (Anderson et al., 2020). Thus, visits in and of themselves seem important, however, it remains unclear as to whether visits are related to the actual *provision* of practical or emotional support after release. Finally, while the association between receiving consistent, frequent visits and having lower likelihoods of reconviction *could* mean that these visits helped protect individuals from developing a criminal identity while incarcerated, other (qualitative) research is needed to examine whether and how visits impact individuals’ personal identity and the desistance process.

8.4 The Current Study & Future Research

This dissertation has taken a comprehensive approach to illuminate how visits operate in the Dutch context and to advance theory, research, and policy conversations about visitation, its impacts, and its likelihood across people. This

dissertation is among the first to provide an overview of the current state of affairs for this key aspect of prison life. In doing so, this dissertation has provided unique insight into the implementation of visitation policies in Dutch prisons. More than that, by introducing a new context to the visitation literature, this dissertation contributed to the generalizability of the determinants and consequences of prison visitation. Also, by using the context as a starting point, this dissertation shifts the focus from individuals (as common in prior work) to other actors involved in visitation.

Moreover, this study made scientific progress by empirically evaluating how practical (including visitation policies), relational, and experiential factors impact whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits. And by not limiting this investigation to only one set of factors, unlike much of the previous work conducted, this dissertation advanced our understanding of which factors matter most for (frequent) visitation. In addition, the current examination of the determinants of visitation applied original theoretical insights, stemming from the broader social support literature on stress and trauma.

Furthermore, methodological progress was made by using unique datasets in which various data sources on visitation were combined and advanced methodological techniques were applied. Several administrative databases were also available for the study samples, including records of specific types of misconduct and recidivism data that made it possible to study offending behavior in prison and up to two years post release from prison. Also, due to the rich amount of data available, analyses included controls for a broad range of individual and prison unit characteristics known to be important for visits and its effects.

Limitations, Methodological Challenges, and Directions for Future Research

Although the current dissertation has several strengths, there are also some limitations that need to be acknowledged and need to be considered when interpreting the findings. This section addresses these limitations and offers directions for future research.

First, although this dissertation measured visitation using diverse measures—including whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits and the timing and patterning of visits using both survey and administrative data, as well as detailed information about the set-up and organization of visits – our measure is by no means exhaustive. The type of visit (e.g., conjugal, family visits, official) and form (e.g., in-person, behind glass, video) are potentially important aspects but were left largely unexplored in this dissertation (with exception of official visits

in Chapter 6). Moreover, our data provided limited information on the visitation experience. While the PCQ did provide indications of whether individuals had more positive or negative experiences with visits, it would be more interesting and informative to have a dynamic measure which also differentiates between visitor types. The latter is important as experiences are likely to differ across visitor types, as a visit from a partner is not the same as a visit from parents. Also, the content of these visits likely differs. More insight is needed into what happens during a visit. What is talked about during visits? Are plans for release discussed? Are visitors supportive? Do visits contribute to changes in relationship quality? Answers to these questions are vital for understanding why some visits continue and others stop, which mechanisms are behind visits' effects and, ultimately, what is needed to improve visitation experiences. This requires a mixed-method approach involving incarcerated individuals and their visitors which combines data on visitation experience gathered through interviews, in-depth surveys, or observational studies over time with administrative data which provides details on the patterning and timing of visits as well as important behavioral outcomes.

Second, and related to the point above, our measurement of visits in most chapters concerned the period three months prior to the data collection (or if individuals were incarcerated for shorter, since entry into prison). This time frame is relevant for the Dutch prison context, as 60% of individuals are incarcerated for less than three months (de Looft et al., 2018), meaning that this measurement covers a large part of an individual's prison term. That said, for those individuals spending longer than three months in prison these measures may not fully capture their visitation experience. As evidenced in Chapter 7, visitation patterns can be identified showing that individuals may be visited a lot in some periods and in other periods visits are largely absent. It is possible that the determinants and consequences of visits look different across these patterns.

Third, although this study paid more attention to visitors and the role of prisons than prior work, the examination of these actors is limited. While some factors concerning visitors and prisons were included (such as travelling distance and visitation policies), other factors that may contribute to prison visits were not able to be included. Information on visitors' social-economic background could not be retrieved and would perhaps have been beneficial. All visitors can experience practical challenges to visit incarcerated individuals, but economically disadvantaged families may experience even greater difficulties as they are less able to afford long trips, take time off work, or arrange childcare (Rubenstein et al., 2021). Also, information on visitors' experiences should be included in future studies as

these experiences are likely to impact whether and how often visitors wish to visit. Ideally, future studies would consider not only the emotional experience, but also make an inventory of the process that family and friends must undergo to visit an incarcerated individual. Surprisingly, little is known about these matters, especially in the Netherlands. Finally, explorations of the role of prison staff in visitation could be an interesting avenue for future research. This may also help understand how certain procedures, such as writing up of reports or cell inspections, are influenced by a visit event. In sum, more comprehensive research on the multiple actors involved in prison visits is needed.

Fourth, while this dissertation did distinguish between different types of misconduct, the data on misconduct was solely from administrative data. Official records may reflect the detection and discretion of prison staff (Bosma et al., 2020b), which could mean that certain behaviors are more or less likely to result in a report. It is possible that prison staff are less likely to give a report for acts of frustration when they know that an individual had a stressful visit. Therefore it would be interesting to examine self-report measures of misconduct. It is possible that visits' effects may even be more pronounced using these data.

Fifth, this dissertation investigated the effects of visits on misconduct but did not examine the effects of visits on well-being while incarcerated. Based on strain and deprivation-related arguments, it is also predicted that visits could reduce feelings of stress, depression, and lower the risk of suicide or self-harm in prison. A handful of studies have found evidence of this (Liebling, 1999; Monahan et al., 2011; Poehlmann et al., 2008; Van Ginneken et al., 2019), but empirical research is lacking, especially among incarcerated males. Also, visits may potentially have an impact on the well-being of those beyond the prison walls affected by incarceration, but such studies are rare (Comfort, 2008; Goede, 2018). Existing qualitative accounts even suggest that visitors may have negative experiences during visits (e.g., Comfort, 2016; Dixey & Woodall, 2012), thus the impact of visits on families and friends of incarcerated individuals warrants more empirical attention.

Sixth, although parts of this dissertation were able to include a large, representative sample of individuals incarcerated in the Netherlands, several analyses were done exclusively on incarcerated males in pretrial, prison, extra care, and short-stay regimes. I do not anticipate that this will have major implications on the validity of the results for the Dutch prison population, as most incarcerated individuals are males, and the investigated regimes are the most common regimes. Yet, the results are arguably limitedly generalizable to incarcerated females. Not only did correctional staff working in women's prisons describe visits as being

“different” for women, but empirical work also suggests that the composition of visitors is different (e.g., female, romantic partners are common visitors in men’s prisons, whereas children and family members are common visitors in women’s prisons), females are more inclined to reach out to family, and their incarceration is more likely to affect children (Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2002; Fuller, 1993). Due to these differences, there are potentially other factors that predict who gets visited and these visits may have different consequences on behavior. I also caution with generalizing these results to individuals in open and persistent offender regimes. Generally, the results of this dissertation are less applicable for individuals in open regimes as visits are not a part of their prison programming. For individuals in persistent offender regimes it is unfortunate that administrative data was not consistent for this regime such that they could not be included in several analyses. Future studies ought to specifically examine this group of individuals as it is possible that these individuals are most likely to benefit from visits as they may lack social capital due to their history of incarceration.

In conclusion, the visitation literature would benefit from explanatory research that examines the content of visitation encounters and relationship dynamics over time, incorporates more perspectives, combines self-report and administrative data, explores visits’ effects on well-being, and investigates visitation among incarcerated females and persistent offenders. This would provide a deeper understanding of visitation and create new insights for theory development.

8.5 Implications for Correctional Policy & Practice

In July 2019, the Ministry of Justice and Security, the Dutch Prison Service, the Probation Service, and the Association of Dutch Municipalities signed a monumental administrative act ‘Providing Opportunities for Reentry’ (*Kansen bieden voor re-integratie*) which details what is needed during and after imprisonment to ensure a successful reentry for the nearly 30,000 individuals being released from prison each year. Next to the five basic conditions generally known to be important for a successful reintegration (work, income, housing, healthcare, and valid identification), this act also introduced ‘building and strengthening a supportive social network’ as a necessary condition for post-release success. Given the results of this dissertation, the recognition of the importance of social ties within these organizations is an essential first step.

As a result of this act prison-based professionals have begun to screen and monitor problems concerning the social network. For example, as part of their

standard screening upon entry into prison, case managers now ask specific questions about an individual's social network and family situation. Based on the results of this dissertation, inquiries should include questions concerning how much contact individuals had with diverse relationships in the months prior to incarceration, as individuals who had little to no contact prior to incarceration are less likely to be visited by family and friends, especially when they have a more extensive incarceration history. This dissertation also showed that certain groups are less likely to receive visits including older individuals, singles, and persons born outside the Netherlands. While these groups of individuals may still have contact with their social network via telephone or letters, current scholarship suggests that visits are necessary for maintaining the connection to avenues of social capital (Anderson et al., 2020; Hickert et al., 2019). Therefore, it is recommended assisting these groups more intensively by, for instance, investigating why relationships are not visiting, or if individuals lack social ties, connecting these individuals to other important social groups (such as community volunteers).

These efforts are made to help incarcerated individuals *build* a supportive social network. To ensure that individuals can maintain or build a network while incarcerated, visits need to be made accessible. The results of this dissertation suggest that one way to ensure that more individuals receive visits in prison would be to adopt flexible visitation policies. While all incarcerated adults have the legal right to one hour of visits per week in the Netherlands, the implementation of this right differs across prisons. While these differences may be subtle, still the results of this dissertation show that when flexible policies are adopted, such as allowing individuals to pick from several different time slots or having visiting hours in the weekends, the likelihood of receiving visits from diverse relationships increases. This is important as having multiple relationships to lean on for support can be beneficial for life after release and perhaps lessen the burden on partners and families of incarcerated individuals.

The 'Providing Opportunities for Reentry' act also aims to *strengthen* social connections to family and friends. This dissertation suggests that other measures are necessary for this since strengthening a relationship inherently requires frequent contact. To increase the number of visits individuals receive, the results of this dissertation are straightforward: place individuals closer to their social network. A closer proximity between individuals and their social network could be additionally beneficial for municipalities who strive to do system-oriented work during reintegration. Moreover, it is arguable that the current amount of visitation allowed in Dutch prisons may be too limited to be able to strengthen relationships

while incarcerated. Presently, individuals are allowed one hour of visits per week, with a maximum of two hours per week (which is only allowed for individuals in the plus program who may not be the ones for whom visits hold the most benefits). I recognize that this recommendation would require substantial changes to prison programming and logistics as visits are a complex event for prison staff. Yet, such changes are likely less expensive than what is required for other types of prison programming. Perhaps as an important start, correctional administrators could investigate popular visiting times and invest in expanding these. Being more efficient with the spaces and times available could make (frequent) visits more accessible. To do this most effectively, it would be beneficial to inquire about which times are most compatible for visitors' schedules. Also, investments in improving the visitation experience seem promising for increasing the frequency of visits.

Finally, a key part of this act is not necessarily building and strengthening *all* social connections but focusing on *supportive* ties. While the Dutch Prison Service has already taken steps to improve parent-child relationships and child visits, a general observation from this dissertation is that partners are important. Partners visit often and appear to visit despite practical challenges and an individual's criminal history. Partners also seem to be an important link in the social network as having a partner also increased the likelihood of receiving visits from children, family, and friends. In addition, partners seem to be less related to the 'harmful' effects of visits on misconduct. To promote these relationships, more awareness can be created for secondary stigmatization and providing support to protect against negative effects of imprisonment ('t Hoff-de Goede, 2018). Next to partners, this dissertation provides some suggestive evidence that frequent, regular visitors (which for some may not be a partner) may be supportive relationships. Since consistent visits were shown to be important for life after release, it seems useful to continue screening and monitoring whether and how often individuals receive visits throughout the entire prison term.

In line with the notion that not all social ties are necessarily supportive nor helpful, this dissertation showed that some relationships may increase risks of disciplinary infractions, especially the use of or possession of drugs. But, as not all visits are of equal risk, we caution implementing stricter security measures as a response to these findings. The visitation literature suggests that doing so may dampen the visitation experience (Arditti, 2003), which could lead some individuals to limit or stop receiving visits (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2018; Turanovic & Tasca, 2019), and – perhaps most importantly – visits under stricter conditions seem to be less beneficial for reducing recidivism (Turanovic & Tasca, 2021). One way of reducing

these risks, while also allowing for the maintenance and strengthening of social ties, is by providing video visits. At the start of this dissertation (2017), video visits were not common in Dutch prisons. When video visits were available, they were only allowed under specific circumstances (for instance, for incarcerated individuals who could not receive standard visits because their family lived in a foreign country). In 2020 as the global COVID-19 pandemic began and, as a result, prisons could not allow in-person visits, video visits became widely available. All Dutch prisons offered incarcerated individuals access to computers or tablets to “see” family and friends. Although video visits may not necessarily reduce security risks and institutional costs (Renaud, 2014), some recent U.S. studies do show benefits of using video visits as a supplement to in-prison visits (Brown et al., 2014; Murdoch & King, 2020; Tartaro & Levy, 2017). This warrants further empirical attention.

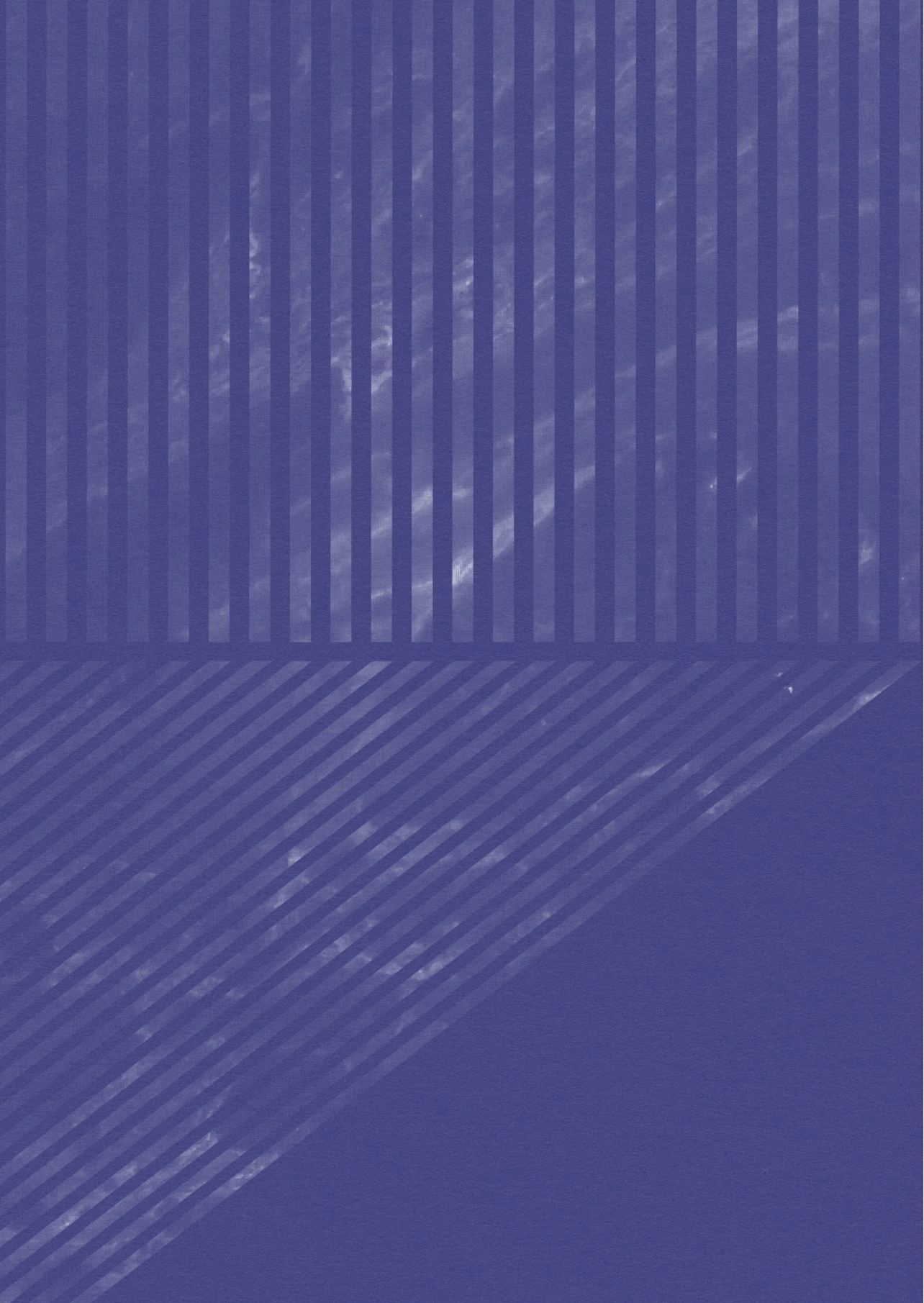
8.6 Conclusion

On a final note, although prison visitation has received increased scholarly attention, this research field is in a relatively early stage of development and many questions remain unanswered. To date, most accounts have advocated that prison visits can be beneficial. The present dissertation potentially reinforces them, but also shows that visitation is complex, especially in how it impacts life in prison. This dissertation provided insights into how visits can be facilitated, but it does not necessarily follow that merely increasing the number of visits or the number of individuals receiving visits can achieve the proposed benefits. Future research should be directed at even better understanding *why* visitation is influential to unpack its potential for managing correctional populations, lowering recidivism rates, and improving the well-being of persons affected by incarceration, even beyond the prison walls.

Table 8.1 Research Questions, Main Findings, and Policy Implications per Chapter

Chapter	Research question	Main findings	Policy recommendations
Part I. The Visitation Context	2	How is contact via prison visits regulated in Dutch law, policy, and practice? • Incarcerated adults have the right to one hour of standard visits per week • Since 2008 policy directives have expanded opportunities to receive visits • The form and amount of visitation is similar across prisons, but some prisons adopt more flexible policies	• Develop policies that stimulate the maintenance and strengthening of supportive relationships
	3	To what extent are social network characteristics and criminal history related to receiving visits in prison? • One-third of incarcerated adults are not visited in the past three months • Individuals with large, strong social networks prior to incarceration are most likely to receive visits in prison • Criminal history only affects visits from certain relationships • Individuals who have been incarcerated several times are less likely to receive visits from their child(ren) and family, but still receive visits from their partner	• Make an inventory of a person's pre-incarceration social network • Intensify efforts to improve access to social ties among 1) those who had limited contact prior to incarceration, 2) older individuals, 3) foreign nationals, 4) individuals serving short sentences
Part II. Determinants	4	To what extent are practical, relational, and experimental factors related to whether, how often, and from whom individuals receive visits in prison? • Whether an individual visits depends on their relationship to the incarcerated individual, but far travelling distances may still impede how often relationships come to visit • Providing more opportunities to receive visits increases the frequency of visits • Having positive visitation experiences is related to more frequent visits	• Place individuals close to their social network • Improve visit experiences • Investigate popular visiting times and adjust – where possible – visiting hours

Part III. Consequences	Chapter	Research question	Main findings	Policy recommendations
	5	To what extent does receiving visits in prison relate to aggressive and contraband misconduct?	- Receiving visits, especially visits from partner and friends, is primarily related to an <i>increased</i> likelihood of (drug-related) contraband misconduct - Receiving visits, especially from friends, is related to lower likelihoods of (physically) aggressive misconduct, but weekly friend visits are related to higher likelihoods of aggressive misconduct (specifically destruction of property)	- Improving the visit experience could help lower incidences of physical aggression against others and objects - To minimize drug-related contraband, focus on who is visiting
	6	To what extent does the probability of misconduct change in the weeks surrounding a visit?	- An individuals' risk of infractions is comparable to average levels in anticipation of visits, increases up to 18% in the weeks immediately following visits, and then returns to baseline levels - This pattern is found for contraband infractions, but visits have little to no effects on aggressive infractions - Family and official visits have the strongest effects on infractions - When individuals are visited frequently, the risk of infractions postvisit is similar to average levels	- Use security measures cautiously as not all visits nor visitors are of equal risk - Help individuals maintain weekly visits
	7	To what extent do visitation patterns relate to individuals' post-release offending?	- Individuals who receive consistent, frequent visits are less likely to be reconvicted for all and serious offending within six months after release - Receiving an increase in visits in the months prior to release is also associated with short-term reductions in reconvictions - Receiving visits in prison seems important for life after release, even for individuals who had a strong social network prior to incarceration	- Investigate ways to allow frequent, consistent visitation - Increase efforts to encourage visits near release



Nederlandse Samenvatting

(Summary in Dutch)

Het ontvangen van bezoek in detentie

Een studie naar de determinanten en gevolgen van gevangenisbezoek in Nederland

Achtergrond en doel

Een van de voornaamste manieren om zinvol contact met familie en vrienden te hebben tijdens de detentieperiode is door gevangenisbezoek. Diverse theorieën geven aan dat het ontvangen van bezoek tijdens detentie heel belangrijk is voor het leven in en na detentie. Empirische studies bevestigen dit ook grotendeels (o.a., Bales & Mears, 2008; Cochran, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2016; Monahan et al., 2011; Reidy & Sorensen, 2020), wat heeft geleid tot een toenemende roep van beleidsmakers en de dagelijkse gevangenispraktijk om het gevangenisbezoek te stimuleren. Toch leiden niet alle resultaten van de beschikbare empirische studies tot eenduidige conclusies. Ten eerste is er nog maar weinig bekend over de heterogeniteit van bezoek. Belangrijke vragen zijn wie er wel of niet bezoek ontvangt, hoe vaak iemand bezoek ontvangt, en van wie? Bovendien weten we nog weinig over welke rol bezoekomstandigheden kunnen hebben op het leven in en na detentie. Ten tweede zijn veel van de bestaande onderzoeken uitgevoerd in de VS, wat het effect van gevangenisbezoek buiten deze context onduidelijk maakt. Daarnaast is onderzoek naar gevangenisbezoek ingewikkeld omdat ervaringen met bezoek divers zijn en onderzoekers zelden uitgebreide informatie hierover tot hun beschikking hebben. Tot slot zijn de sociale- en detentiecontexten waarin bezoek plaatsvindt complex. Dit onderstreept de noodzaak van grondig onderzoek naar het ontvangen van bezoek en de effecten daarvan.

Dit proefschrift beoogt een uitgebreid empirisch onderzoek te doen naar gevangenisbezoek in Nederland. Het is daarmee één van de eerste onderzoeken die bezoek in Nederlandse gevangenissen op een grote schaal heeft onderzocht. Het doel van dit proefschrift is driedelig. Het eerste doel is het geven van een grondig overzicht van de huidige stand van zaken van gevangenisbezoek in Nederland. Voortbouwend op deze contextuele kennis, is het tweede doel het onderzoeken van de mate waarin kenmerken van de persoon en contextuele kenmerken bijdragen aan het (kunnen) ontvangen van bezoek in detentie van diverse relaties en ook hoe vaak deze relaties op bezoek komen. Het derde doel is om te onderzoeken in hoeverre het ontvangen van bezoek gerelateerd is aan wangedrag in detentie en crimineel gedrag na vrijlating.

Om deze doelen te bereiken is gebruik gemaakt van data van de Dutch Prison Visitation Study. Deze studie combineert meerdere databronnen om de complexiteit

van gevangenisbezoek te doorgronden. De data over of, hoe vaak en van wie gedetineerde personen bezoek ontvangen werd verzameld door middel van de Prison Climate Questionnaire van Palmen en collega's (2019). Deze landelijke gegevens waren beschikbaar voor een representatieve groep van meer dan 4.000 volwassenen in detentie. Aan deze gedetineerde personen zijn ook vragen gesteld over hun ervaringen met bezoek. Bovendien was gedetailleerde registratiedata over bezoek beschikbaar voor meer dan 1.000 volwassen mannen gehuisvest in acht gevangenissen verspreid door Nederland. Deze gegevens leverden gezamenlijk longitudinale informatie op over het verloop van bezoek in termen van consistentie en frequentie over de hele gevangenisstraf. Daarnaast zijn door middel van observaties gegevens verzameld over de opzet en organisatie van bezoek in de praktijk. Om de effecten van het ontvangen van bezoek te testen, werd ook informatie over wangedrag in detentie en recidive verzameld uit officiële gevangenis- en strafregisters. Tot slot werden gegevens over diverse kenmerken van gedetineerde personen en gevangenissen die belangrijk zijn voor zowel de determinanten als de gevolgen van bezoek (zoals contact met familie en vrienden voor detentie) in de analyses opgenomen.

In het vervolg van deze samenvatting worden de kernbevindingen van dit proefschrift aan de hand van de drie doelen besproken. De samenvatting wordt afgesloten met aanbevelingen voor beleid en suggesties voor vervolgonderzoek.

Deel I: Bezoek in Nederlandse gevangenissen

Om een overzicht te geven van hoe gevangenisbezoek werkt volgens de Nederlandse wet, het beleid en in de praktijk, is in hoofdstuk 2 de huidige stand van zaken van bezoek in Nederlandse gevangenissen onderzocht. Volgens artikel 38 lid 1 van de Penitenciaire beginselenwet hebben gedetineerde personen recht op ten minste één uur bezoek per week van familieleden of andere personen. In vergelijking met andere Europese landen (bijvoorbeeld België, zie Eechaudt, 2017), kan dit wettelijk minimum als vrij beperkt worden beschouwd. In de afgelopen tien jaar zijn de bezoekmogelijkheden in Nederlandse gevangenissen echter uitgebreid. Gedetineerde personen krijgen meer mogelijkheden om hun kinderen te zien en ze kunnen een extra uur bezoek per week verdienen (maximaal twee uur). Tevens is bezoek zonder toezicht nu ook mogelijk voor personen in voorlopige hechtenis.

In de praktijk zijn de voorwaarden en vormen van bezoek vrijwel gelijk in alle gevangenissen. Over het algemeen zijn gedetineerde personen zelf verantwoordelijk voor het plannen van hun bezoek, zijn de bezoeksalen vrij uniform, worden overal dezelfde bezoekmogelijkheden aangeboden en worden de veiligheidsmaatregelen en procedures op vergelijkbare manier toegepast. Sommige gevangenissen hebben

echter flexibelere regels over wanneer en hoe het bezoekuur wordt ingevuld. Er zijn gevangenen die werken met weekendbezoek, terwijl andere alleen doordeweeks bezoeken hebben. Ook zijn er gevangenen waar gedetineerde personen kunnen kiezen uit verschillende tijdstippen verspreid over meerdere dagen, terwijl andere slechts één tijdsblok op een vaste dag hebben. Verkennende bivariaten analyses geven aan dat zulke verschillen tussen gevangenen, evenals verschillen tussen personen (zoals leeftijd en etniciteit), samenhangen met of en hoe vaak iemand bezoek ontvangt.

Kortom, deel I laat zien hoe de Nederlandse wet, het gevangenisbeleid en de penitentiare praktijk op het gebied van gevangenisbezoek in de loop van de tijd is veranderd. Beleidsmakers zoeken in toenemende mate naar een evenwicht tussen het waarborgen van de veiligheid van gedetineerde personen en personeel in de gevangenis, en het stimuleren van contact met de buitenwereld. Opvallend is ook de focus van veel beleid en initiatieven in de praktijk op de ouder-kindrelatie en het bieden van meer bezoek mogelijkheden voor kinderen. Tot slot hebben alle personen in detentie recht op één uur bezoek per week, maar kan de praktische implementatie van dit recht er anders uitzien afhankelijk van waar iemand vastzit. Hoewel verkennende bivariaten analyses in hoofdstuk 2 aangeven dat dergelijke verschillen (evenals individuele verschillen) van invloed zouden kunnen zijn op het ontvangen van bezoek, zijn multivariate analyses nodig om te controleren voor de talloze determinanten die mogelijk een rol spelen.

Deel II: De determinanten van het ontvangen van bezoek

In de empirische hoofdstukken 3 en 4 zijn de determinanten van gevangenisbezoek onderzocht aan de hand van multivariate analyses. In hoofdstuk 3 zijn de individuele kenmerken (zoals gezinssituatie) en de criminele geschiedenis van gedetineerde personen gerelateerd aan het ontvangen van bezoek. De resultaten laten zien dat bijna één derde van de gedetineerde personen geen bezoek heeft ontvangen in de drie maanden voorafgaand aan de dataverzameling. Personen die al voor detentie een sterk en groot sociaal netwerk hadden, blijken meer kans te hebben om in de gevangenis bezoek te ontvangen dan personen die voor detentie beperkt contact hadden met hun sociale netwerk, alleenstaand waren of geen kinderen hadden. Ook kenmerken van iemands criminele geschiedenis blijken samen te hangen met het ontvangen van bezoek. Personen met een uitgebreide detentiegeschiedenis ontvangen bijvoorbeeld minder vaak bezoek. Het effect van iemands criminele geschiedenis op het ontvangen van bezoek in detentie is echter klein en afhankelijk van het type bezoeker. Hoewel in eerste instantie bepaalde groepen (zoals

zedendelinquenten) minder vaak bezoek lijken te ontvangen, werd bij het kijken naar specifieke relaties duidelijk dat dergelijke groepen alleen minder vaak bezoek ontvangen van bepaalde relaties. Bijvoorbeeld, in het geval van zedendelinquenten ging het om minder bezoek van kinderen en vrienden.

In aanvulling hierop is in hoofdstuk 4 de focus verbreedt van individuele kenmerken naar meer contextuele kenmerken, zoals gevangenisbeleid en ervaringen tijdens bezoek. In dit hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht in hoeverre praktische-, relationele-, en ervaringsfactoren (d.w.z., ervaringen tijdens detentie) gerelateerd zijn aan of, hoe vaak en van wie gedetineerde personen bezoek ontvangen. De resultaten van de multilevel analyses laten zien (in lijn met hoofdstuk 3) dat het hebben van een sterk netwerk voor of tijdens detentie belangrijk is voor het ontvangen van bezoek. Echter, zelfs als gedetineerde personen sterke relaties hebben met familie en vrienden, kan een verre reisafstand nog steeds de bezoekfrequentie negatief beïnvloeden. Daarentegen blijkt het aanbieden van meer mogelijkheden om bezoek te ontvangen, vooral op gunstige tijden, gerelateerd aan frequenter bezoek. Dit blijkt met name belangrijk te zijn voor bezoek van relaties die mogelijk minder bereid zijn (of in staat zijn) om vrij te nemen van hun werk om op bezoek te komen. Tot slot laten de resultaten zien dat personen die positieve emotionele ervaringen hebben met bezoek vaker bezoek ontvangen, en dan met name van hun partner en familie. Dit lijkt erop te wijzen dat gedetineerde personen een actieve beslissing nemen over hoe vaak ze bezoek ontvangen, deels op basis van hun ervaringen met bezoek.

Samenvattend toont deel II van het proefschrift aan dat praktische-, relationele-, en ervaringsfactoren tegelijk een rol spelen bij of, hoe vaak, en van wie gedetineerde personen bezoek ontvangen. Belangrijk is dat dit deel van het proefschrift laat zien dat het bezoekbeleid van gevangenen de toegang tot fysieke contact met familie en vrienden lijkt te beïnvloeden. Echter, de onderzochte aspecten van het bezoekbeleid bleken minder impact te hebben dan verwacht. Mogelijk komt dit doordat de meeste gevangenen vergelijkbaar beleid hanteren. Het bezoekuur is namelijk doorgaans een uur en vindt doordeweeks plaats. Het is mogelijk dat het bezoekbeleid in contexten waar de verschillen tussen gevangenen groter zijn (zoals in de VS) een grotere invloed heeft op het ontvangen van bezoek.

Deel III: De gevolgen van het ontvangen van bezoek

De empirische hoofdstukken 5, 6 en 7 richten zich specifiek op de vraag in hoeverre het ontvangen van bezoek gevolgen kan hebben op het gedrag van gedetineerde personen tijdens detentie en na vrijlating. In hoofdstuk 5 wordt onderzocht hoe het wel of niet ontvangen van bezoek in detentie, en de bezoekfrequentie per type

bezoeker, gerelateerd is aan agressie en het bezit van contrabande in detentie. De resultaten laten zien dat het ontvangen van bezoek in de gevangenis, en dan vooral bezoek van partner en vrienden, samenhangt met een grotere kans op het bezit van contrabande. Het ontvangen van bezoek hangt niet samen met verbale agressie. Gedetineerde personen die bezoek van vrienden ontvangen hebben tevens minder kans op het vertonen van fysieke agressie. Daarentegen verhoogt wekelijks bezoek van vrienden de kans op het vertonen van agressie richting spullen (d.w.z., vernieling). Wellicht dat deze bezoeken stressvol of frustrerend zouden kunnen zijn. De bezoekfrequentie hangt niet samen met het bezit van contrabande. Dit impliceert dat wie er op bezoek komt een belangrijkere verklaring lijkt voor het bezit van (met name drugs-gerelateerde) contrabande dan hoe vaak iemand bezoek ontvangt.

In hoofdstuk 6 wordt de relatie tussen gevangenisbezoek (van partner, familie, vrienden, kind(eren) en professionals) en wangedrag in de weken voor, tijdens, en na het ontvangen van bezoek binnen individuen onderzocht. De resultaten laten zien dat er geen extra risico is op wangedrag in de weken voorafgaand aan een bezoek. Het risico neemt toe (tot 18% hoger) in de weken na een bezoek en vervolgens keert het terug naar het gemiddelde niveau. Dit patroon werd gevonden voor incident-rapporten die betrekking hadden op het bezit van contrabande. Bezoek had weinig tot geen effect op verbale en fysieke agressie en het overtreden van gevangenisregels. De effecten van bezoek varieerden op basis van wie op bezoek was gekomen. De sterkste effecten zijn gevonden voor familiebezoek en bezoek van professionals (zoals advocaten). Mogelijk worden bezoeken van professionals als stressvol, frustrerend, of teleurstellend ervaren omdat deze bezoeken met name het risico op agressie-gerelateerde overtredingen verhogen. Ten slotte laten de resultaten zien dat wanneer een persoon vaak bezoek ontvangt, hij geen verhoogd risico loopt op het krijgen van een incident-rapport in de weken na bezoek. Mogelijk zijn deze frequente bezoeken van relaties die gedetineerde personen steun bieden, waardoor de 'schadelijke' effecten van bezoek getemperd worden.

In hoofdstuk 7 staat de vraag centraal in hoeverre patronen van bezoek – d.w.z. verschillen in de timing, frequentie en consistentie van bezoek tijdens detentie – samenhangen met crimineel gedrag na vrijlating. De volgende vijf groepen konden worden onderscheiden op basis van bezoekregistratiegegevens over de periode twee jaar voor vrijlating: 1) geen bezoek (21%), 2) sporadisch bezoek (d.w.z., een consistent, laag aantal bezoeken, 18%), 3) afnemend bezoek (d.w.z., een afname van het aantal bezoeken voorafgaand aan vrijlating, 20%), 4) toenemend bezoek (d.w.z., een toename van het aantal bezoeken in de maanden voor vrijlating, 27%) en 5) frequent bezoek (d.w.z., een consistent, hoog aantal bezoeken, 14%). De resultaten

laten zien dat de groepen die een consistent, hoog aantal bezoeken of een toename van het aantal bezoeken in de maanden voor vrijlating ontvangen minder kans op een veroordeling voor overtredingen binnen zes maanden na vrijlating. Dit werd ook gevonden voor ernstige overtredingen. De bezoekpatronen van de overige groepen waren niet gerelateerd aan recidive. Dit wijst erop dat niet zozeer het ontvangen van bezoek in detentie de kans op recidive vermindert, maar het ontvangen van consistent, frequent bezoek ontvangen, met name net voor vrijlating, de kans op recidive vermindert. Binnen twee jaar na vrijlating lijkt het effect af te zwakken, want dan zijn bezoekpatronen voor geen enkele groep gerelateerd aan recidive. Mogelijk werkt het ontvangen van bezoek vooral als een ‘landing spot’: door het ontvangen van bezoek worden belangrijke relaties onderhouden die gedetineerde personen direct na vrijlating kunnen helpen, maar deze zijn niet in staat om op de langere termijn de kans op recidive te beïnvloeden.

De resultaten van deel III laten zien dat er een complexe relatie is tussen het ontvangen van bezoek en wangedrag tijdens detentie en na vrijlating. Ten eerste omdat de relatie verschilt afhankelijk van wie op bezoek komt. Ten tweede omdat de relatie niet altijd positief is; zo lijkt het ontvangen van bezoek gerelateerd te zijn aan een toename in het bezit van contrabande en zijn bezoeken mogelijk stressvol of verontrustend. Echter, het ontvangen van frequent bezoek of een toename in bezoek voor vrijlating – vergeleken met geen bezoek ontvangen – hangt wel samen met een vermindering van (ernstige) overtredingen na vrijlating, althans op de korte termijn.

Beleids- en praktijkaanbevelingen

De resultaten van dit proefschrift hebben verschillende implicaties voor het gevangenisbeleid en de praktijk. In het bijzonder geeft dit proefschrift belangrijke aanknopingspunten voor het bestuurlijk akkoord “Kansen bieden voor re-integratie” (2019) waarin staat dat gedetineerde personen ondersteund zullen worden met het opbouwen, onderhouden, en verstevigen van een ondersteunde sociaal netwerk. Dit proefschrift biedt aanknopingspunten voor het realiseren van deze drie doelen, namelijk het opbouwen, onderhouden, en verstevigen van het contact met de buitenwereld.

Allereerst laten de resultaten zien dat bepaalde groepen mogelijk extra ondersteuning nodig hebben voor het opbouwen van een ondersteunend sociaal netwerk tijdens hun detentieperiode, zoals: oudere gedetineerde personen, alleenstaande, en personen niet geboren in Nederland. Door deze groepen intensiever te begeleiden door bijvoorbeeld ze te verbinden met andere sociale instanties zoals

vrijwilligersorganisaties of gemeenten, kunnen deze personen geholpen worden bij het opbouwen van een ondersteunend sociaal netwerk tijdens detentie.

De bevindingen van dit proefschrift impliceren dat het toegankelijker maken van bezoek gedetineerde personen kan helpen in het *onderhouden* van hun sociaal netwerk. Door bezoeken te verspreiden over verschillende tijden en dagen (ook in het weekend), zouden personen in detentie meer relaties kunnen zien, en dat zou kunnen helpen met het onderhouden van diverse relaties.

Op basis van dit proefschrift kan gesteld worden dat andere maatregelen nodig zijn om personen in detentie te helpen bij het *verstevigen* van hun sociaal netwerk. Om de bezoekfrequentie te vergroten, zijn de bevindingen van dit proefschrift duidelijk: plaats personen dicht bij hun sociale netwerk. Daarnaast kan gesteld worden dat het huidige wettelijke minimum voor bezoek mogelijk te beperkt is om relaties tijdens detentie te versterken. Momenteel mogen gedetineerde personen één uur bezoek per week, met een maximum van twee uur per week (wat alleen geldt voor personen die goed gedrag vertonen). Een uitbereiding van bezoeken vereist substantiële wijziging in het dagprogramma en logistiek binnen de gevangenis muren, maar toch zijn dergelijke veranderingen minder duur en ingrijpend dan wat vaak nodig is voor andere initiatieven. Wellicht zouden beleidsmakers kunnen onderzoeken wat de populaire bezoektijden zijn en investeren in het uitbreiden daarvan. Ook lijken investeringen in het verbeteren van de bezoekervaring kansrijk voor het verhogen van de bezoekfrequentie.

Ten slotte is een belangrijk onderdeel van het bestuurlijk akkoord niet noodzakelijkerwijs het opbouwen en verstevigen van alle sociale relaties, maar het focussen op ondersteunende en positieve banden. Terwijl er in de praktijk veel investeringen zijn geweest in de ouder-kind relatie, laat dit proefschrift zien dat ook partners belangrijke sociale contacten zijn. Meer aandacht voor deze bezoekers lijkt belangrijk. Naast partners, laten de resultaten van dit proefschrift zien dat de bezoekers die regelmatig op bezoek komen mogelijk ondersteunende relaties zijn. Het is daarom belangrijk om te blijven screenen en monitoren of en hoe vaak gedetineerde personen bezoek ontvangen.

In lijn met het idee dat niet alle sociale banden ondersteunend of positief zijn, heeft dit proefschrift laten zien dat sommige relaties het risico op wangedrag kunnen vergroten. Echter niet alle bezoekers brengen dezelfde risico's met zich mee, en daarom lijken strenge maatregelen rondom bezoek niet bevorderend. Bovendien lijkt bezoek onder strenge voorwaarden minder effectief te zijn voor het terugdringen van recidive (Turanovic & Tasca, 2021). Een manier om deze risico's te verkleinen en tegelijkertijd het sociaal netwerk in stand te houden en te versterken, is door middel

van videobezoeken. Aan het begin van dit proefschrift (2017) waren videobezoeken alleen toegestaan onder specifieke omstandigheden en behoorde dit niet in alle gevangenissen tot de mogelijkheid. Maar inmiddels – dankzij de wereldwijde COVID-19 pandemie – zijn faciliteiten voor videobezoeken nu beschikbaar in alle gevangenissen. Hoewel deze bezoeken niet noodzakelijk de veiligheidsrisico's en institutionele kosten verminderen (Renaud, 2014), tonen sommige internationale onderzoek wel voordelen aan van het gebruik van videobezoek als aanvulling op het gevangenisbezoek (Brown et al., 2014; Murdoch & King, 2020; Tartaro & Levy, 2017). Er is meer onderzoek nodig om te weten hoe videobezoeken worden ervaren en in hoeverre deze bezoeken kunnen bijdragen aan het welzijn en gedrag van gedetineerde personen en hun sociaal netwerk.

Suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek

Dit proefschrift heeft onze kennis over gevangenisbezoek vergroot door het ontvangen van bezoek in al zijn verscheidenheid te onderzoeken vanuit verschillende perspectieven. Tevens zijn eerder gestelde onderzoeksvragen beantwoord voor de Nederlandse context en er is ingegaan op nieuwe onderzoeksvragen. Hiervoor zijn geavanceerde analysetechnieken gebruikt met gedetailleerde survey- en registratiedata voor een grote groep gedetineerde personen. De bevindingen van dit proefschrift roepen ook nieuwe vragen op, welke aandacht verdienen in toekomstig onderzoek.

Allereerst blijkt het ontvangen van bezoek een persoonsafhankelijke ervaring te zijn, wat ook implicaties heeft voor de gevolgen van het bezoek op gedrag. Terwijl dit proefschrift meerdere kanten van bezoek heeft onderzocht, zou toekomstig onderzoek zich kunnen focussen op mogelijk verklarende aspecten van het verloop van bezoek, bijvoorbeeld wat er tijdens het bezoekuur gebeurt. Ook door steeds meer actoren (zoals bezoekers en gevangenispersoneel) mee te nemen in het onderzoek kan meer inzicht worden verkregen in de processen rondom bezoek. Er is weinig bekend over deze onderwerpen, vooral in Nederland.

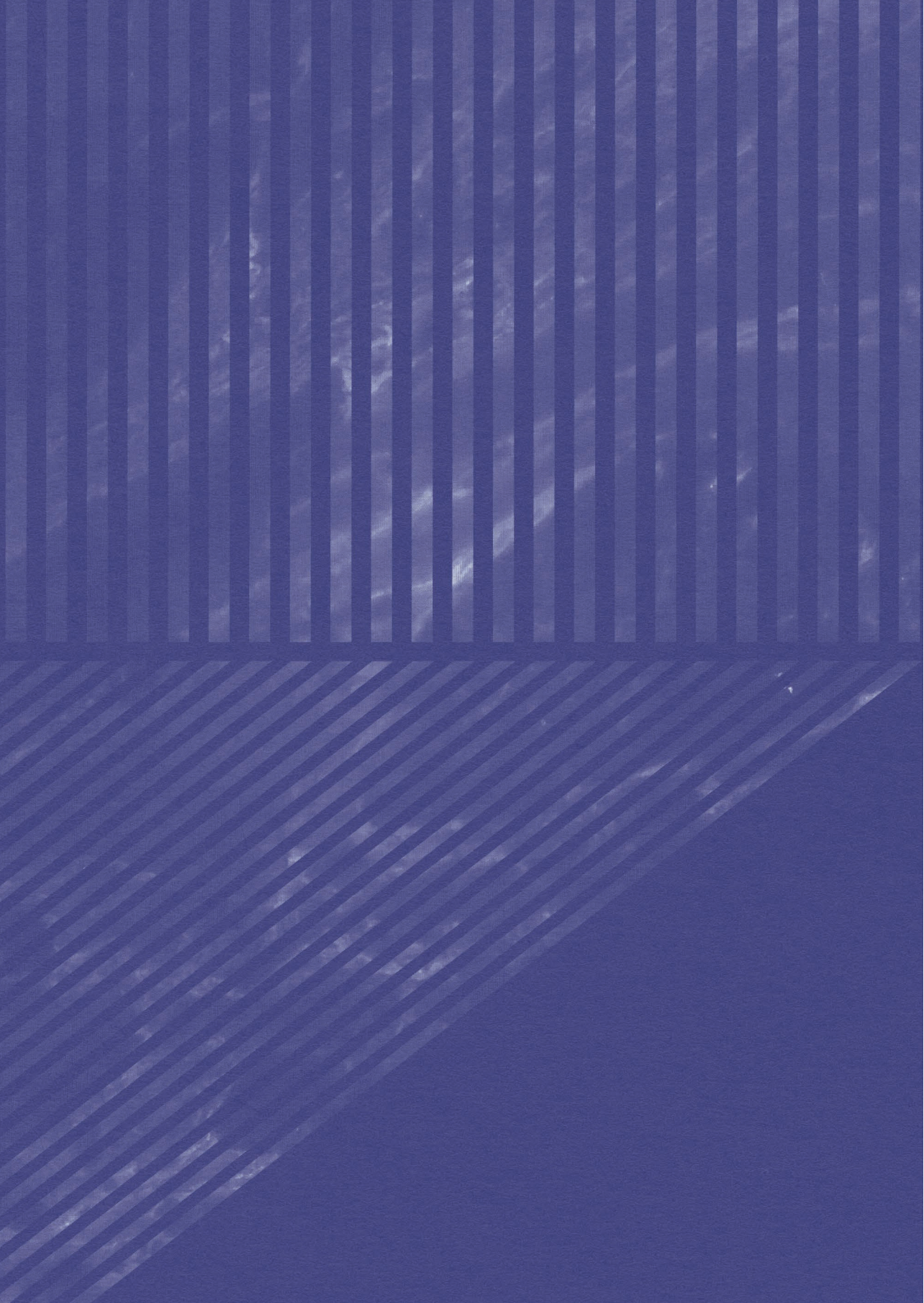
Tevens heeft dit proefschrift laten zien dat het ontvangen van bezoek niet altijd een positief invloed op gedrag in detentie heeft, maar mogelijk wel op het welzijn van personen in detentie. Theorie en eerder onderzoek suggereert dat het ontvangen van bezoek gevoelens van stress en depressie kan verminderen, en het risico op zelfmoord of zelfbeschadiging in de gevangenis kan verkleinen (Liebling, 1999; Monahan et al., 2011; Poehlmann et al., 2008; Van Ginneken et al., 2019), maar empirisch onderzoek is schaars, vooral bij gedetineerde mannen. Eveneens is de

impact van gevangenisbezoek op familie en vrienden van gedetineerde personen een onderbelicht onderwerp en zou wellicht interessant zijn voor vervolgonderzoek.

Tot slot heeft dit proefschrift belangrijke inzichten gegeven in de determinanten en gevolgen van het ontvangen van bezoek voor een grote en representatieve steekproef van gedetineerde personen in Nederland. Echter voor een aantal analyses met registratiedata zijn analyses uitsluitend onder mannelijke gedetineerden gedaan. Vervolgonderzoek op aanvullende data zou kunnen nagaan of de bevindingen uit dit proefschrift te generaliseren zijn voor vrouwen in detentie. Mogelijk zijn er andere determinanten van bezoek voor vrouwen omdat de samenstelling van bezoekers vaak anders is in inrichtingen met vrouwen dan mannen en vrouwen hebben vaak een andere rol in het gezin (Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2002; Fuller, 1993). Bovendien doordat er weinig vrouwelijke inrichtingen zijn in Nederland kunnen vrouwen ver weg van huis worden geplaatst (Brouwers & Sampiemon, 1988).

Conclusie

Dit proefschrift heeft laten zien dat het belangrijk is om frequent bezoek te kunnen ontvangen omdat degene die regelmatig bezoek ontvangen minder kans hebben op recidive in de eerste zes maanden na vrijlating. Ook laat dit proefschrift zien dat partners mogelijk een belangrijke schakel zijn in het sociale netwerk van gedetineerde personen. Tevens heeft dit proefschrift inzichtelijk gemaakt hoe bezoek in detentie kan worden gefaciliteerd waardoor meer personen bezoek kunnen ontvangen en de bezoekfrequentie kan worden verhoogd. Maar dit betekent niet noodzakelijk dat er positieve effecten ontstaan. De crux voor het gevangenisbeleid en de praktijk is dan om te zoeken naar een balans tussen het waarborgen van veiligheid en orde in de gevangenis en het bevorderen en in standhouden van een ondersteunend sociaal netwerk.



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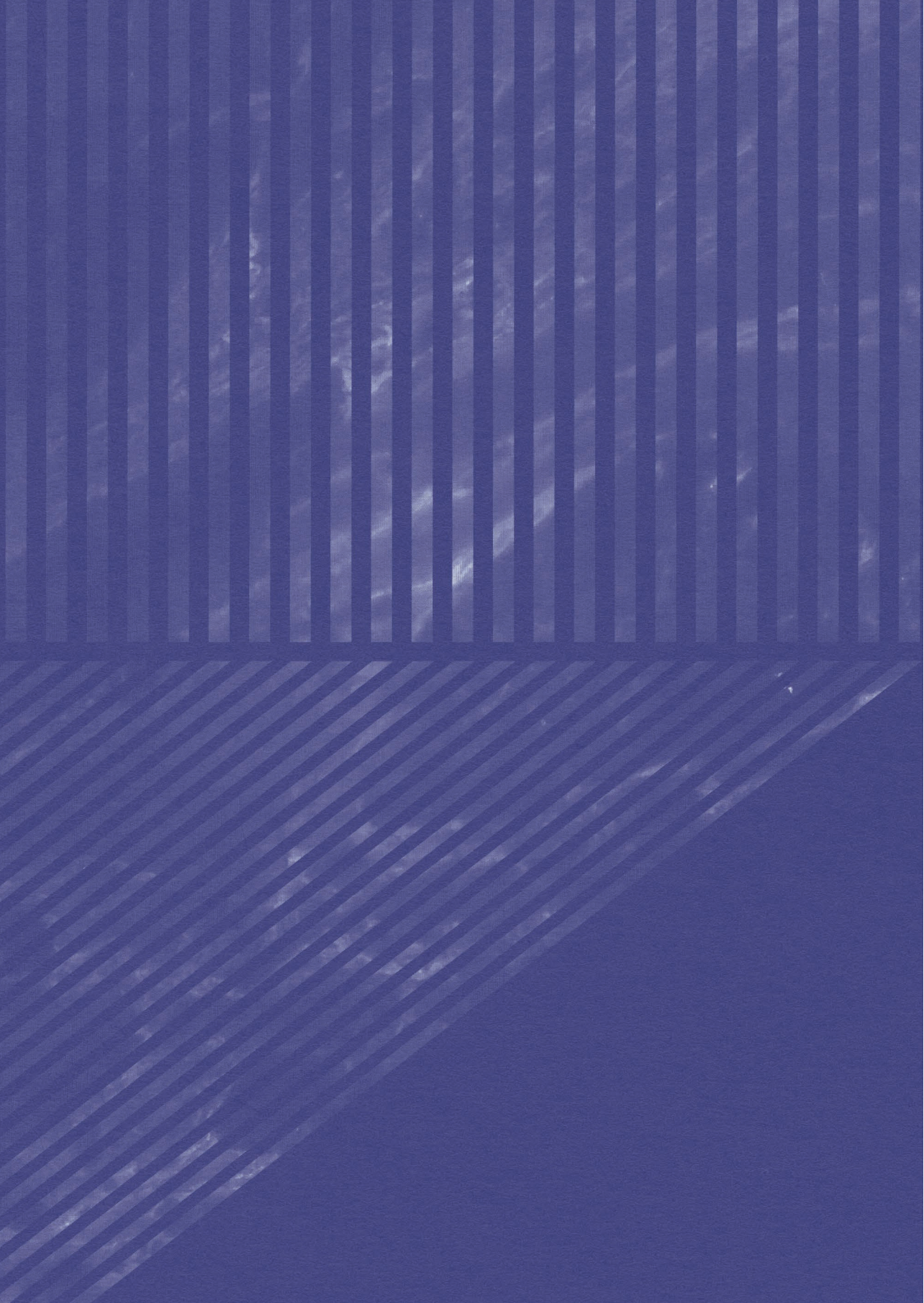
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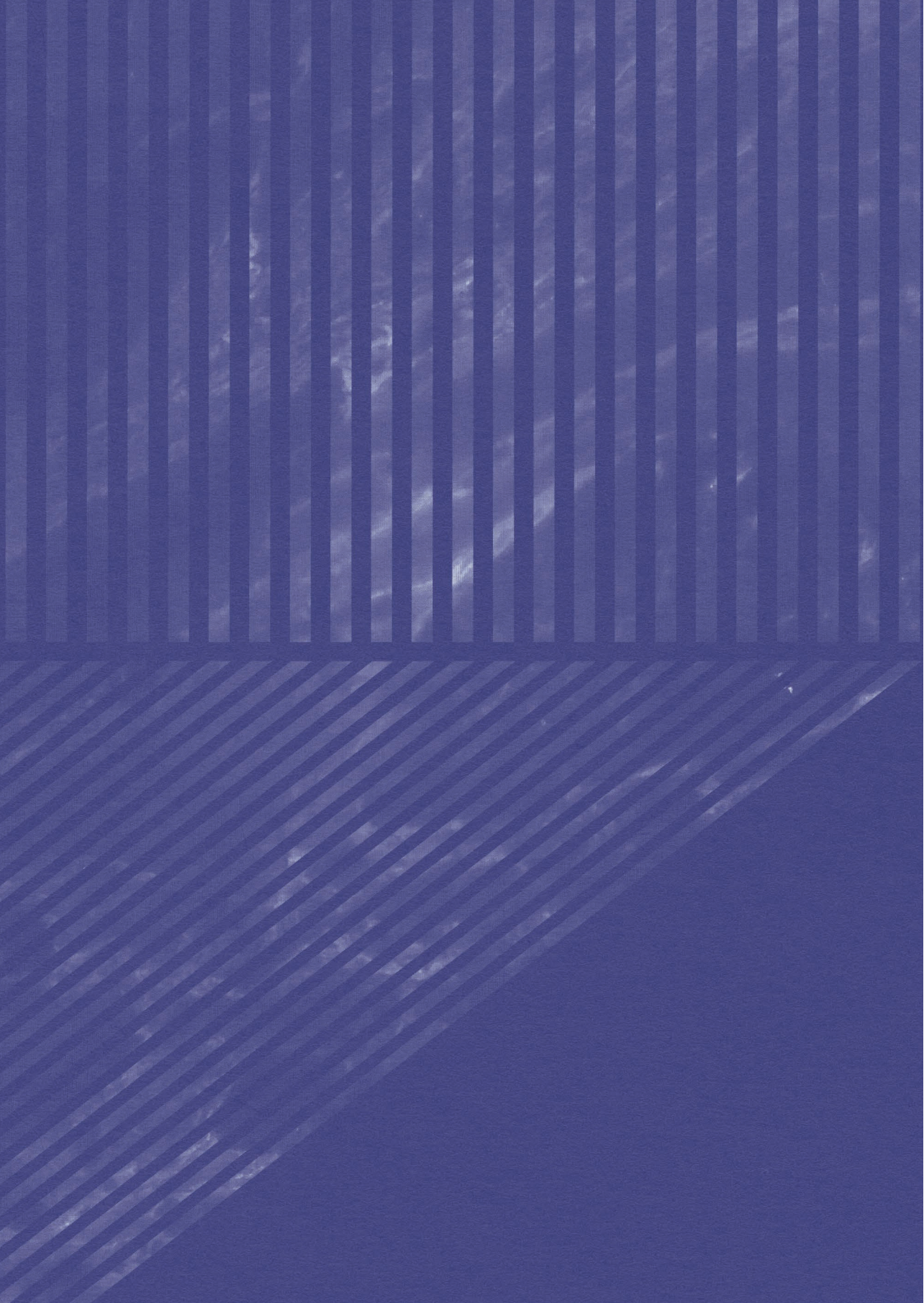
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Curriculum Vitae

Maria Lynn Berghuis was born on August 8, 1990 in Canton, Ohio, United States. She obtained her bachelor's degree (*magna cum laude*) in Social Sciences at the University College Utrecht in 2013 and her master's degree in Evidence Based Social Interventions at the University of Oxford in 2014. For her master's thesis, she conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis on the effectiveness of reentry programs for incarcerated adult males, which was published in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. After completing her master's degree, Maria started working at the Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology at Leiden University. In 2016, she worked as a lecturer and taught several criminological and methodological courses. From January 2017 until October 2021, Maria worked on her doctoral research into the determinants and consequences of prison visitation in the Netherlands. Her research at Leiden Law School is part of the Dutch Prison Visitation Study, which is an additional research project of the Life in Custody Study. These projects are a collaboration between Leiden University and the Dutch Prison Service. During her doctoral research, Maria contributed to the coordination of the 2017 data collection of the Prison Climate Questionnaire which was completed by more than 4,000 adults incarcerated in the Netherlands. She was also actively involved in gathering and analyzing information on prison visits and disciplinary reports within official prison records. Maria is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher for the Life in Custody Study at the Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology at Leiden University.

