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The Netherlands

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

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Citation

Berghuis, M. L. (2022, June 23). *Receiving visits in Dutch prisons: a study on the determinants and consequences of prison visitation*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3421468>

Version: Publisher's Version

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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

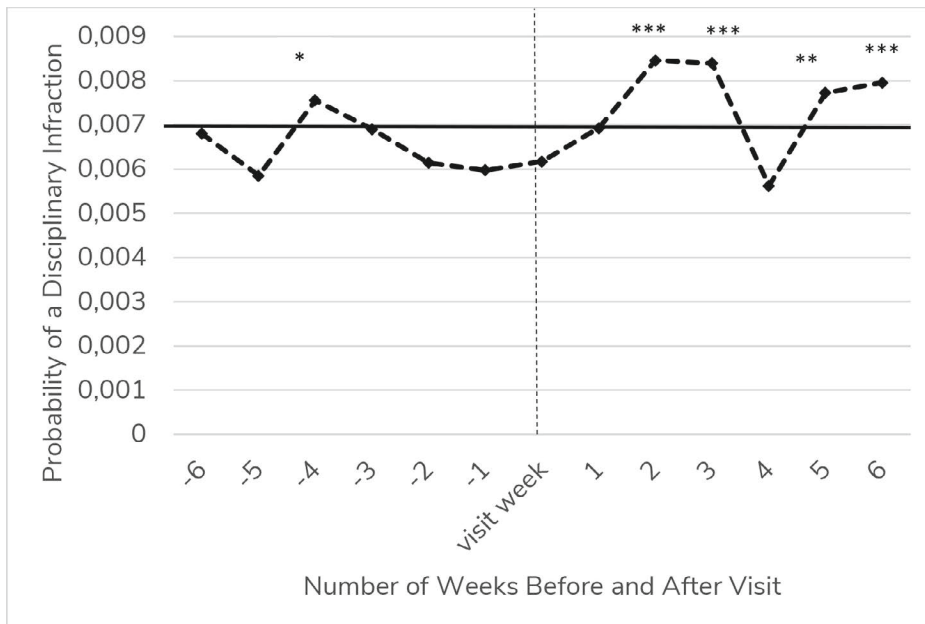
Table 6.2 Within-individual Logistic Regression Estimates Predicting the Log-odds of Receiving a Disciplinary Report from Prison Visits and Control Variables

	<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

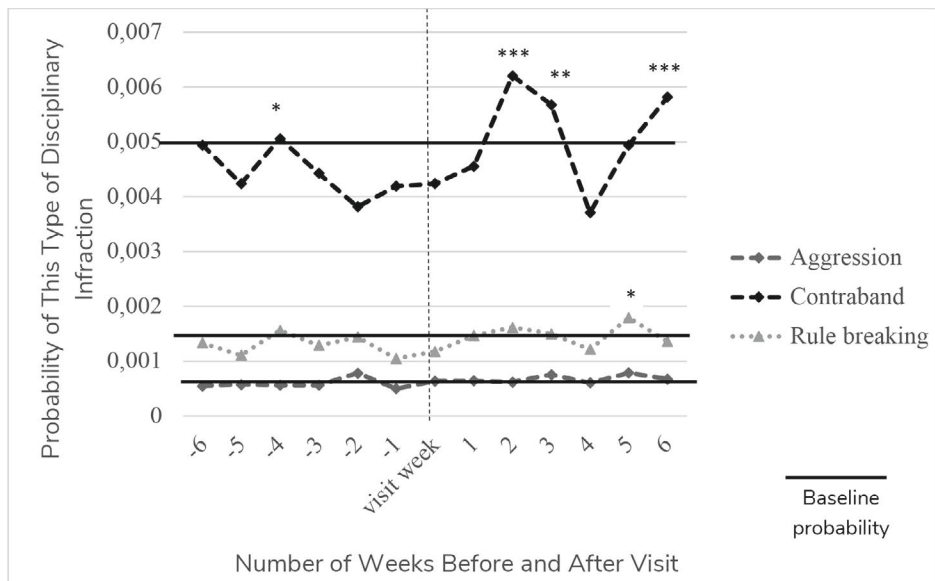
Effects of Visits on Different Infractions

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). Percental 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

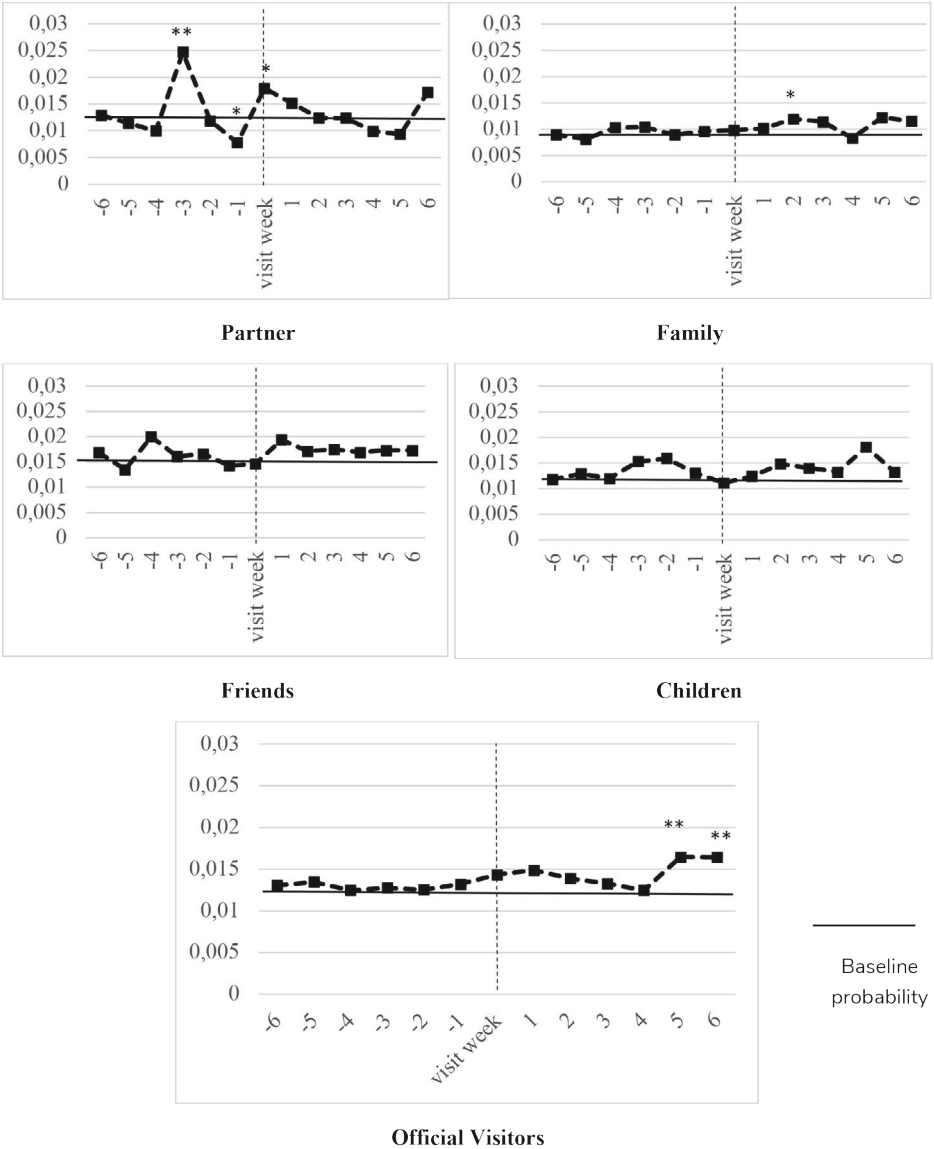
The baseline probabilities varied across the visitor types as the differing heights of the line in Figure 6.3 suggest. Individuals who received family visits had the lowest baseline probability (.009), whereas individuals who received friend visits had the highest baseline probability (.015) for infractions. 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

