

# RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46

## EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

**Norman Holt**  
Associate Social Research Analyst  
Southern Conservation Center

**Donald Miller**  
Associate Social Research Analyst  
Los Angeles Research Unit

Research Division  
California Department of Corrections  
Sacramento, California  
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### **SUMMARY**

*Some Conclusions and Implications*

The central finding of this research is the strong and consistent positive relationship that exists between parole success and maintaining strong family ties while in prison.

Only 50 percent of the "no contact" inmates completed their first year on parole without being arrested, while 70 percent of those with three visitors were "arrest free" during this period. In addition, the "loners" were six times more likely to wind up back in prison during the first year (12 percent returned compared to 2 percent for those with three or more visitors).

For all Base Expectancy levels, we found that those who maintained closer ties performed more satisfactorily on parole.

This suggests that it might be well to view the inmate's family as the prime treatment agent and family contacts as a major correctional technique. This approach has numerous advantages not the least of which is that it's free. It wouldn't require the specially trained staff or costly staff augmentations so common to most treatment approaches.

A second major advantage is the built-in inmate motivation. Most treatment techniques have limited value because the inmates most in need are also the least motivated for treatment. Motivation for visits is consistently high.

There are two areas in which changes might increase correctional effectiveness through promoting strong family ties. First, there are several ways in which special programs could become more effective. Most extensive use should be made of temporary releases. Their potential seems almost unlimited. Temporary releases should be used as pre-release preparation throughout the entire period of incarceration. Home leaves beginning a few months after reception would go a long way toward promoting strong family ties. Home visit privileges should be extended to a few non-violent, married prisoners in low risk categories on an experimental basis and slowly be granted to other groups.

The Family Visit Program should be reserved strictly for those inmates who cannot make use of temporary releases. These would probably include such cases as chronic parole absconders, perpetrators of very violent crimes such as murder, or inmates who need to work out marital problems in a more structured setting than is provided by the home. Since common-law marriages are increasing in prevalence, those of some duration should be recognized in both programs.

Family counseling should be utilized more with each institution required to have at least one person as a State-certified family counselor who would be designated as the coordinator for the program.

The second area concerns routine institutional procedures. The further visitors have to travel and the more difficult the procedures, the more likely are the visitors to reduce

contacts as the sentence is served. Thus, every effort must be made to place the inmate in the institution closest to his home in order to facilitate family contacts. This research has shown the high cost in terms of parole failure of interfering with important social ties. Correctional systems can no longer afford to incarcerate inmates in areas so remote from their home communities as to make visiting virtually impossible. Proximity to the inmate's home should be the first consideration in making assignments to institutions.

All correctional institutions in California, like most institutions throughout the world, make arrangements for inmates to visit and correspond with their family and friends. Although such arrangements have existed since the beginning of prisons in this state, little systematic information is available about the nature and consequences of these outside contacts. This research project was undertaken as an exploratory study of the effects of these contacts on the inmate in prison and later on parole. The data for this study were obtained from inmate files at the Southern Conservation Center. The question was also raised of the effects of the Family Visiting and Temporary Release Program at the California Correctional Institution.

Some general information on marital status and patterns of outside contact is presented in the report as an introduction to the discussion of the influence of these contacts on the individual as inmate and as parolee.

## **Summary of Findings**

**Prisoners are less likely to be married than the average male.**

**Patterns of outside contacts reflect the differences in family structure of different ethnic groups.**

**In general, contacts with family and friends do not necessarily decrease as the time is served. Marital ties are an exception, however.**

Contacts with legally married wives of first term inmates grew fewer through the second year, suggesting that the marital relationship erodes as the years in prison pass.

Given what appears to be a major deterioration of marriages after the first and second year of prison (about one-fourth fewer of the wives were still visiting after three or more years), it is surprising that a hard core of wives continues the same level of contacts through four years plus and on into the second or third prison term.

**Frequent visits don't seem to improve the inmate's institutional behavior but do lead to better parole plans and a better chance of being paroled.**

**Inmates who maintained frequent outside contacts while in prison did significantly better on parole,**

A twelve-month parole follow-up study of 412 men paroled from the Southern Conservation Center in 1968-69 revealed that men with more people visiting them during their last 12 months in prison experienced significantly less difficulty and less serious difficulty in their first year of parole than did those with fewer visitors.

Men who had more people visiting them in prison experienced fewer difficulties on parole regardless of Base Expectancy Score. However, in the lower score range (00-32), the difference was small, and the Base Expectancy measure seemed more predictive of outcome for those with more numerous visitors.

**Family Visiting and the Temporary Release Programs were strongly supported by the inmate body with no hint of negative reactions from those who couldn't participate.**

All restrictions on visitors and mail should be closely scrutinized with an eye to eliminating all regulations whose purpose is other than protecting the absolute basic security of the institution. No restriction should be allowed to remain the only reason for which is the lack of space. Space must be found. The effectiveness of family contacts is such that very high priority should be given to finding space that may be utilized to increase the frequency of family contacts.

## **Chapter I**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

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#### **CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION**

Fostering inmate-family relationships has only recently assumed some measure of importance to correctional planners and administrators with the advent of Work Furlough programs in several states and the Family Visiting Program in California. While prisoner visiting programs date back to the colonial period, relatively little time or effort was devoted to such programming, and the prisoners were in effect expected to maintain their family relationships as best they could under a number of restrictions involving eligibility, time limitations, and travel distances. Even today visiting and

correspondence are largely viewed as "privileges" in many prison systems and not as an integral part of a treatment or rehabilitation program. 1/

The growing awareness of the family and its importance in American correctional systems collates well with developments along these lines in other countries and with general social science theory and findings regarding delinquent sub-cultures and the dehumanizing effects of total institutions. 2/ Certainly it seems clear that other criminal justice agencies, such as the police and the courts, routinely take marital status and family ties into consideration in making very important decisions concerning the individual. 3/

In keeping with the current general trend in corrections toward community-based treatment programs and increased community involvement and recognizing the relative lack of information on the family and rehabilitation 4/, this report will attempt to pull together the existing information in California regarding the prevalence of various types of prisoner-family relationships, and their impact on inmate behavior, both inside prison and later on parole. Information from several independent sources is presented in this report, some obtained from already existing studies and some obtained from new studies designed to provide data for this report.

This work is an exploration of the subject and attempts only to define issues and look for probabilities rather than provide definitive answers. Even the strongest findings reported here suffer from a lack of replication.

### **Methodology and Overview**

Chapter II introduces the subject by presenting data regarding the prevalence of the various kinds of marriage ties among newly committed inmates and how this prevalence compares with that in the general population. The data for this chapter were compiled by the Administrative Statistics Section of the Research Division of the California Department of Corrections. It covers all new admissions to the Department during 1968.

Chapters IV, V, and VI report the results of the investigation of the relationship of prisoners with their families. The basic concern was to find out what effects imprisonment had on the inmate's ties with the outside world and what effects these social ties had on his behavior, first in prison and later on parole. By way of setting the stage for these three chapters, Chapter III presents data on the frequency of outside contacts and the relationship of visitors and correspondents to the inmates. The data are broken down by ethnic group and marital status in order to show the diversity of social patterns inmates bring to the institution. Chapter IV takes up the problem of the deteriorating effect imprisonment is generally thought to have on the inmate's relationship with his family and friends. Here the concern is whether or not inmates who have served longer amounts of time have fewer outside contacts. Chapter V explores the relationship between the inmate's institutional performance and the number of his visitors and correspondents, attempting to answer the question, "Do inmates behave better when frequent contact with family and friends is maintained?" Chapter VI investigates the often stated proposition that maintaining strong family ties has a rehabilitating effect on the inmate. The inmate's performance on parole is analyzed in attempting to answer the question, "Are former inmates who had more contacts with the outside world while in prison more successful on parole?"

The data for this section were gathered at the Southern Conservation Center in Chino, California. The location of the center and its five conservation camps greatly facilitates visiting, as the vast majority of the approximately 1,000 inmates are from counties in Southern California. In the camps visiting is allowed all day Sunday in a picnic atmosphere, while the Center provides for visiting Wednesday through Sunday in the morning and afternoon. Each inmate is limited to a list of ten approved visitors, but the number of times he is visited by these people is limited only by the number of hours he has for this purpose. Similarly, all his approved visitors may visit at the same time. The list of approved correspondents is likewise limited to ten people, but no restrictions are placed on the total number of letters that can be received. Outgoing mail is limited, however, to one letter each day. To be approved each correspondent

or visitor must first fill out and return a short questionnaire which is checked by the inmate's caseworker.

The sample used in the study consisted of the 843 inmates who appeared before the Adult Authority parole board at the Southern Conservation Center from July 1968 to July 1969. The usual procedure is for the inmate, after he becomes legally eligible for parole, to have a hearing before the board once each year until a parole date is granted. Thus the sample should adequately represent the institution's population. In the few cases which were heard twice during the year, only data developed for the first appearance were used.

The document which supplied the data was the pre-board report to the Adult Authority. These reports are made up by each inmate's caseworker about a month prior to his parole hearing. Information on the inmate's contacts with his family and outside friends is contained in the "social" section of the report. The caseworkers compile this section from the inmate's visiting and correspondence card, on which each letter and visit is logged in. The caseworker lists each person contacting the inmate and tallies the number of visits or letters received since the inmate's last board appearance and then roughly divides these by months or weeks to get an overall average. By the name of each person, he lists his relationship to the inmate and the average frequency of his visiting or corresponding during the previous year (e.g., Mrs. Jones, wife, visits once a month, corresponds twice per week). In this report, the focus will generally be on the number of different people who have visited the inmate during the year rather than the total number of visits he has received.

Marital status is not routinely recorded in the pre-board reports and was available from another source for only 362 of the cases in the sample.

The institution's population is composed of short-term offenders doing their total sentence in the conservation program and long-term inmates sent from more secure institutions to finish their time under minimum security conditions. While this

population has representatives of most of the categories of California prisoners, there are notable exceptions, such as sex offenders. In addition, the inmates in the conservation program are more likely to be at a later point in their institutional careers than their counterparts in medium security prisons. While this sample might be taken as reasonably representative of felon prisoners in California, no information was available to the authors on the comparability of California prisoners to those in other systems.

The most appropriate population to which the results of this study can be generalized is the minimum security inmates in California, although there are reasons to believe that most of the results could be replicated in California's medium security prisons. Any attempt to extend the findings to other populations, however, must be done highly tentatively. Because of this and the summary nature of the available data on contacts, we have chosen to interpret the results of the study conservatively. A difference of a few percentage points has generally been ignored unless it is reflective of a trend in the data or reinforced by other findings.

Chapter VI contains a follow-up of inmates in the sample to a point approximately two years after their parole board hearings and an evaluation of the parole performance during their first year after release of those who had been paroled before February 1970. Involved in this evaluation were 412 cases or about half the original group. The parole follow-up data were collected by the Research Measurement Unit of the Research Division of the California Department of Corrections. This unit also supplied the information for the parole follow-up in Chapter VII. In the system of the Research Measurement Unit, the parole status of each parolee is recorded at six months, one year, and two years. Any difficulty with a law enforcement agency is noted and the status on parole of each parolee is expressed in summary form in terms of the most serious disposition received. For purposes of this study, dispositions were classified into three categories, no arrests at one extreme, return to prison at the other, and all other dispositions in the middle.

In Chapter VII two experimental programs, Family Visiting and Temporary Release, are evaluated in terms of inmate acceptance and the success on parole of their participants. Both are viewed as constructive alternatives designed to overcome some of the problems associated with conjugal visiting programs. Since much of the resistance among prison administrators to marital visits appears to result from a concern about management problems which might be created by those who cannot participate, the reactions of inmates to these programs are examined closely to discover just how resentful non-participants actually are. The second part of the chapter compares the parole performance of inmates involved in the two experimental programs with a comparable group of non-participants to determine if participants have less difficulty on parole.

In the final chapter, there is an attempt to draw out some of the implications of these findings and suggest some directions for future research.

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1/ For example, see *The Manual of Correctional Standards*, American Correctional Association, 1969, p. 342.

2/ See, for example, Glueck, S. and E. Glueck, *One Thousand Juvenile Delinquents*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1934; Rodman, H. and P. Evans, "Juvenile Delinquency and the Family: A Review and Discussion" in *Task Force Report: Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1967; and Goffman, E., *Asylums*, Anchor Books, New York, 1961.

3/ See Babst, D. and J. Mannering, "Probation Versus Imprisonment for Similar Types of Offenders," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1965; and Cicourel, A.V., *The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice*, John Wiley & Son, Inc., New York, 1968.

4/ For details concerning an earlier attempt to introduce a family treatment program into the California correctional system see Fenton, N., *The Prisoners Family: A Study of Family Counseling in an Adult Correctional System*, Pacific Books, Palo Alto,

California, 1959.

## **Chapter II**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

#### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

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**Sacramento, California**

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#### **CHAPTER II. MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS OF CALIFORNIA PRISONERS**

In this section of the study, attention will be focused on possibly the inmate's most important voluntary social tie, the marital relationship. The specific concern of this chapter is with the prevalence of the various kinds of marital status in California's prison population. Some awareness of the marital status patterns of entering inmates would seem to be useful to an understanding of the chapters that follow dealing with inmate visiting and correspondence patterns and parole outcome. Inmate marital relationships

will be examined in terms of how they relate to crime patterns, broader social conditions, and the operations of the criminal justice system.

The population chosen for the investigation of marital relationships was all new commitments to California prisons for the year 1967. Marital status at time of reception as reported by the inmate was recorded without any documentary verification. Marriage was defined to include formal legal marriages and "common-law" marriages at least one year in duration. It is assumed that since admissions ordinarily do not change greatly from year to year in their characteristics, this sample probably is typical of new admissions in California during recent years.

Marital status was tabulated against age at admission, commitment offense, ethnic background, and number of prior commitments in this analysis.

### **Marital Status**

It has long been noted that prisoners as a group tend to be quite different from the general population with respect to their marital status. They are more likely to be single or to have disrupted marriages and therefore less likely to have intact marriages. <sup>1/</sup> This general tendency is apparently true for California prisons. The 4,496 new admissions in 1967 were found to be approximately equally divided into three marital groups composed of 1,538 single men; 1,557 married men; and 1,401 men who were either divorced, widowed, or separated.

It is interesting to note that a number of studies indicate that marital status itself plays a role in the screening process used by the criminal justice agencies along with such factors as type of offense and prior record of arrests and convictions. Studies in California <sup>2/</sup> and Wisconsin <sup>3/</sup> point up the fact that the recommendations of probation agencies and the dispositions of the courts tend to result in the placement of married offenders on probation and the commitment of unmarried offenders to prison. Some further understanding of the fact of the relatively small percentage of prisoners who are married will be gained from examining evidence on other characteristics of the prison

population.

**Marital Status and Age**

Some information that seems to throw some light on the question of the low percentage of married admissions to prison is available from arrest statistics. For many serious offenses likely to lead to imprisonment, the peak age of involvement is below 24 years. The offenses referred to are burglary, larceny, auto theft, and certain crimes of violence.<sup>4</sup> To the extent that persons in this age group, 24 years and younger, tend to be unmarried, it might be expected that the prison population would have a greater proportion of single people than the general public without regard to age, since almost half of the new prison admissions are in this particular age range. Table 1 seems to confirm this expectation, since a large majority of these in the age range of 25 and under are single.

TABLE 1  
 AGE AND MARITAL STATUS  
 OF CALIFORNIA PRISONERS  
 (In Percentages)

<b>Marital Status</b>					
Age	Single %	Married %	Divorced Widowed Separated %	Total	
				%	N
-20	74	18	8	100	(482)
21-25	47	31	22	100	(1,713)
26-30	21	41	38	100	(850)
31-35	15	43	42	100	(518)

36-40	15	41	44	100	(391)
41+	11	39	50	100	(542)

In the age range 26-35, the largest proportion consists of those men presently considered married. However, among those over 35 years of age, the combined divorced, widowed, or separated form the largest category.

Clearly, then, the marital patterns of prisoners seem in part a reflection of the relationships between age and the likelihood of arrest for certain crimes.

### **Marital Status and Commitment Offense**

The fact that certain offenses such as robbery, assault, and burglary tend to be young men's crimes would lead to the expectation of a somewhat higher proportion of single men in these offense groups. In Table 2 it can be noted that a larger proportion of single men does indeed appear in these offense groups and that these offense groups constitute a large proportion of the new admissions. All other offense categories have a noticeably smaller percentage of single people. This is in line with what would be expected, inasmuch as murder, manslaughter, and check forgery are offenses of somewhat older men.

TABLE 2  
 COMMITMENT OFFENSE AND MARITAL STATUS  
 OF CALIFORNIA PRISONERS  
 (In Percentages)

	<b>Marital Status</b>				
<b>Commitment Offense</b>	Single %	Married %	Divorced Widowed Separated %	<b>Total</b>	
				%	N

Murder - Mans.	29	32	39	100	( 379)
Robb. - Assault	41	33	26	100	(1,207)
Burglary	39	33	28	100	( 723)
Theft - GTA	33	35	32	100	( 525)
Forg. - Checks	19	38	43	100	( 326)
Rape - Sex	27	38	35	100	( 321)
Narcotics	33	38	29	100	( 738)
Other	32	32	36	100	( 277)

### **Marital Status and Prior Commitments**

As mentioned earlier, among the factors considered by the courts in sentencing is the number of prior convictions. Typically, a commitment to prison is the last recourse to be used. This is especially true for the less serious types of offenses. 5/ In Table 3 it can be seen that, as expected, relatively few new prison commitments have a record of no prior commitments; only 674 men or about 15 percent have none. In terms of prior commitments, the largest single group of admissions were those 1,407 men or 31 percent having three or more jail or juvenile commitments.

It can also be seen in Table 3 that those men with one or more prior prison commitments have, as a group, disproportionately fewer single men and more men who are divorced, separated, and widowed than do those admitted with no previous commitments. More will be said of this in later chapters of this report dealing with visiting and correspondence patterns and parole follow-up data. Since these men are probably somewhat older than the others, this may be an indication of a greater

opportunity to engage in and fail in marriage and/or the strain of extensive criminality and incarceration on marital ties. It may also indicate a greater tendency for men lacking in marital relationships to recidivate, even after discharge, in much the same fashion as such men tend to recidivate more often on parole as described in Chapter VI. The greater rate of return of these men to prison would tend to increase significantly the number with disrupted marital relations in the total prison population.

**TABLE 3**  
**NUMBER OF PRIOR COMMITMENTS AND MARITAL STATUS**  
**OF CALIFORNIA PRISONERS**  
(In Percentages)

Prior Commitments	Marital Status				
	Single %	Married %	Divorced Widowed Separated %	Total	
				%	N
None	36	36	28	100	( 674)
1-2 Jail or Juv.	40	34	26	100	(1,262)
3+ Jail or Juv.	38	33	29	100	(1,407)
1 or More Prison	22	38	40	100	(1,153)

**Marital Status and Ethnic Background**

In view of what is known from arrest statistics about the relationship between socio-economic status and crime, one should expect an overrepresentation of minority group members in our prison population. Some studies have gone so far as to say the overrepresentation of Blacks among offenders would disappear if economic conditions and opportunity levels were equalized. To quote from the President's Commission "...the picture that emerges from this data is of a group of young adult males who come from disorganized families, who have had limited access to educational and occupational opportunities, and who have been frequently involved in difficulties with the police..."6/

Similarly in the sentencing phase it has been demonstrated that income, education and employment, and residential stability can influence the court's decision. 7/

It can be seen in Table 4 that Blacks constituted about 28 percent of the new commitments in 1967 or over twice their 12 percent representation in the general population. The fact that the largest proportion of Blacks are single (42 percent) may reflect the younger age of this group as well as the fact that Blacks tend to marry somewhat later than do whites. 8/

**TABLE 4**  
**ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND MARITAL STATUS**  
**OF CALIFORNIA PRISONERS**  
(In Percentages)

	Marital Status				
	Single %	Married %	Divorced Widowed Separated %	Total	
<b>Ethnic Background</b>				%	N
White	31	35	34	100	(2,469)
Mexican-American	33	38	29	100	( 685)
Negro	42	31	27	100	(1,273)
Other	38	33	29	100	( 69)

**Summary**

This preliminary information on marital status and other selected characteristics of California prisoners revealed the following:

New prisoners are approximately evenly divided into three groups: 1) single men, 2) currently married men (including common-law), and 3) those men currently divorced, separated or widowed.

Roughly half of the new admissions are younger men whose commitment offense tends to be robbery or burglary and who also tend to be single.

The divorced, separated or widowed new admissions are composed largely of older, multiple termers who tend to be minor property offenders.

The marital status and other characteristics of California prisoners seem to be consistent, with or closely related to the social and economic conditions prevailing in the larger society and to general crime patterns as well as to the decision-making apparatus of the criminal justice system itself. The complex process which produces the observed distribution of marital status deserves much further study in order to contribute to a fuller understanding of what kinds of social ties are present upon admission to prison.

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1/ President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, U.S. Printing office, 1967, p. 45.

2/ San Francisco Project, *A Study of Federal Probation and Parole*, NIMH Report, April 1969, pp. 18-22.

3/ Babst, D. and J. Mannering, "Probation Versus Imprisonment for Similar Types of Offenders," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1965.

4/ President's Commission, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

5/ Babst, D. and J. Mannering, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

6/ President's Commission, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

7/ San Francisco Project, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

8/ Farley, R. and A. Hermalin, "Family Stability: A Comparison of Trends Between Blacks and Whites," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, February 1971, p. 3.

## **Chapter III**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

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#### **CHAPTER III. PATTERNS OF INMATE CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

Virtually all prisons make some arrangements for inmates to maintain some social ties with the outside world. These usually include allowing visitors and mail, permitting telephone calls in emergencies, and providing for home furloughs. In an international survey of 28 countries by Cavan and Zemans, all were found to provide at least for the visiting of spouses. / In all these countries a trend was also noted toward the expansion of family contacts. Not much is known, however, about the frequency of the contacts with the outside world of the inmates in any prison system or who these contacts are with. There are two studies which deal with this matter in a limited way. Sykes

concluded, after studying a sample of records covering a one-year period, that "41 percent of the prisoners in the New Jersey State Prison had received no visits from the outside world." 2/ Using a self-reporting technique with questionnaires, Glaser found that most federal prisoners sampled described the frequency with which they received letters from family and others as "very often" or "often," suggesting a high level of satisfaction. These same inmates reported sending and receiving two or more letters a week from minimum and medium security institutions and one or two letters per week from penitentiaries. 3/ However, no data were available on the differences in the correspondence activity of various inmate groups.

Two basic characteristics, marital status and ethnic group membership, have generally been found to be important determinants of social relationships. Marriage brings with it a new and complex network of relations in the form of in-laws and requires a restructuring of existing family ties. Less time is available for parents, while brothers and sisters share time with the in-laws. The addition of children further alters these interactions. A number of authors have suggested the existence of different family structures among various ethnic groups. In the present study our population consists of inmates from white, Mexican-American and Negro backgrounds, therefore it seems worthwhile at this point to review the literature on family structure in these groups.

### **Ethnic Background and Patterns of Contact**

Frazier, in his classic book on the Negro family, traced these patterns back to emancipation, the slavery period, and pre-slavery times on the African continent. 4/ More recently the Moynihan Report has related the structure of the Negro family, particularly its matriarchal character, to various difficulties Negro migrants to urban areas have experienced. 5/ Jackson, however, has challenged this emphasis on the matriarchal nature of the Negro family. In a study of Negro male "heads of household," he found that their valuation of family life and the accompanying role expectations varied little from that of white males. 6/ It can be argued, however, that male Negro "heads of household" represent only the more conventional part of the population, and thus in Jackson's study the question of the frequency of matriarchal family structures is

left unanswered. To the extent that such matriarchal structures exist, they should be represented in the families of Negro prisoners, since they are recruited predominately from urban ghettos.

The structure of Mexican-American families has not been extensively investigated, but several good accounts, e.g., Lewis 7/, are available of family structure in Mexico. The structure of families in Mexico is generally described as patriarchal, with the father being somewhat distant and autocratic, while the mother assumes virtually all responsibility for the day-to-day child rearing. Godparents also play a much greater role on the child's life.

These differences in family structure should be reflected in the patterns of contact that inmates from the various ethnic groups have with their families. In the analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and family contacts in this report, data are presented only for white, Mexican-American, and Negro inmates. Nine percent of the original study group were from other or unknown ethnic backgrounds and were not included in this part of the study.

Table 5 presents the number of family and friends with whom inmates from the various ethnic groups maintain contact. All groups seem to maintain reasonably extensive relationships with the outside world. Although one-third of the inmates had received no visitors, only one out of ten had not received correspondence.

TABLE 5  
 NUMBER OF PERSONS  
 VISITING AND CORRESPONDING  
 WITH INMATES BY ETHNIC GROUP  
 (In Percentages)

	Visiting				Corresponding			
Number	White	Mexican	Negro	Total	White	Mexican	Negro	Total

None	29%	26%	37%	32%,	11%	8%	11%	11%
One	22	20	17	20	18	20	21	19
Two	22	17	22	21	24	23	26	24
Three	15	21	12	15	25	26	22	24
Four	6	6	6	6	10	13	9	10
Five or More	6	10	6	6	12	10	11	12
Median Number	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Total Inmates*	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)

\* Eighty-one inmates of other races or whose race was unknown were excluded from Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Mexican-American inmates received the most visits and Negroes the fewest. While 37% of the Negro group received no visitors, only 26% of the Mexican-Americans were not visited, and 37% of these were visited by three or more people. However, there were no differences among the ethnic groups in correspondence

The patterns of visiting and correspondence are shown in Table 6. Inmates were visited by and wrote to their parents more extensively than was the case with any other relationship category. They were three times as likely to be corresponding with a parent as another relative. Over half of the inmates maintained written communication with their parents with 39% receiving visits. Next to their parents, the inmates had their most extensive relationships with their brothers and sisters. Those who maintained relationships with persons outside the family were more likely to have them with females; 7% more of the inmates corresponded with female than with male friends, and 3% more were visited by female than by male friends. The major difference in family

patterns that appeared among the different ethnic groups was the somewhat more frequent visiting with parents among Mexican-Americans and the far more frequent visiting and corresponding with brothers and sisters. Mexican-Americans were twice as likely to have received letters from siblings than were whites, and 10% more of them than in the other groups received visits from this source.

TABLE 6  
INMATES VISITING AND CORRESPONDING  
WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
BY ETHNIC GROUP AND RELATIONSHIP  
(In Percentages)

Relation- -ship	Visiting				Corresponding			
	White	Mexican	Negro	Total	White	Mexican	Negro	Total
None	29%	26%	37%	32%	11%	8%	11%	11%
Parents	37	44	39	39	59	57	58	63
Spouse	20	21	18	20	26	28	22	24
Siblings	26	37	27	28	27	65	42	41
Relatives	14	12	16	15	20	17	25	21
Male Friend	8	5	7	8	15	6	8	11
Female Friend	12	8	10	11	17	11	18	17
Total Number of Inmates	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)

TABLE 7  
 AVERAGE\* NUMBER OF VISITS  
 AND CORRESPONDENCE PER YEAR  
 INMATES RECEIVED BY DIFFERENT  
 ETHNIC GROUPS AND BY RELATIONSHIP

Relationship	Visits Per Year			Correspondence Per Year		
	White	Mexican	Negro	White	Mexican	Negro
Parents	3 or 4	12	3 or 4	12	12	12
Spouse	24	12	3 or 4	24	24	24
Siblings	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	12	3 or 4	12
Relatives	3 or 4	1	3 or 4	3 or 4	12	3 or 4
Male Friend	3 or 4	1	1	12	3 or 4	3 or 4
Female Friend	12	3 or 4	3 or 4	24	24	12
Total Number of Inmates	(390)	(117)	(255)	(390)	(117)	(255)

\* Median computed for inmates with such contacts.

Some ethnic group differences can also be observed is the frequency with which contacts with friends and relatives are maintained (Table 7). The frequency of correspondence with parents was the same in all groups, averaging one letter a month, but the whites receiving visits from wives averaged two per month, twice as many as the Mexican-American and several times more than the Negro.

While the Mexican-American was more likely to have siblings corresponding, Table 7 shows that they very infrequently received letters, and their visiting pattern was essentially the same as that of the Negroes. When social ties were maintained with male or female friends, the contacts for whites were likely to be more numerous than for the other groups.

TABLE 8  
 TYPE OF CONTACT BETWEEN  
 INMATES AND THEIR PARENTS  
 BY ETHNIC GROUP AND PARENT INVOLVED  
 (In Percentages)

Parent Involved	Visiting			Corresponding		
	White	Mexican	Negro	White	Mexican	Negro
Mother Only	42%	44%	64%	46%	47%	71%
Father Only	7	-	3	6	5	3
Mother and Father	41	54	25	40	44	21
Parents and Step-parents	4	2	3	4	1	3
Mother and Father But Separately	6	-	5	4	3	2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Number of Inmates with	(164)	(55)	(103)	(252)	(73)	(155)

Parent Contact						
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When parental contacts are broken down by the parents involved, some major differences in family structure are revealed. All groups are most likely to maintain ties with the mother only or the mother and father together. The father alone plays a very minor role (Table 8). The principal differences among the groups are reflected in the high rate of contact of the Negro inmates with the mother only and the accompanying low rate with both parents together. Almost three-fourths (71%) of the Negroes receive letters from the mother alone compared to less than half in this category for whites. While only 25% of the Negroes have parents visiting them together, 54% of the Mexican-American visits with parents are with both the mother and father.

### Marital Status and Patterns of Contact

The second major factor which should contribute to structuring the inmate's ties with the outside world is his marital status. Information on this factor was available for only 362 of the cases in the sample, but there is no reason to believe that they are not a representative sub-sample. The number of people with whom the inmates were in contact is reported in Table 9 in terms of the Marital status of the inmates.

TABLE 9  
NUMBER OF PERSONS VISITING AND  
CORRESPONDING WITH INMATES OF  
DIFFERING MARITAL STATUS  
(In Percentages)

Marital Status of Inmates Receiving Visitors								
<b>Number of Visitors</b>	Single	Married	Common -Law Married	Separated , Legal Wife	Separated , Common-	Divorced	Widowed	Total

					Law			
None	32%	11%	36%	23%	32%	34%	20%	25%
One	21	23	12	39	14	25	20	24
Two	23	23	26	16	36	17	20	21
Three	15	26	10	19	9	10	40	18
Four	3	6	8	3	9	7	-	5
Five+	6	11	8	-	-	7	-	7
Total Number of Inmates	(109)	(84)	(52)	(31)	(22)	(59)	(5)	(362)
Median Number of Visitors	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)

**Marital Status of Inmates Receiving Correspondence**

<b>Number of Correspondents</b>	<b>Singl e</b>	<b>Marrie d</b>	<b>Common -Law Married</b>	<b>Separated , Legal Wife</b>	<b>Separated , Common- Law</b>	<b>Divorce d</b>	<b>Widowe d</b>	<b>Total</b>
None	8%	6%	13%	10%	14%	10%	-	8%
One	15	23	15	10	18	14	-	16
Two	31	26	29	33	23	27	(1)	29
Three	31	29	21	26	18	19	(2)	27
Four	7	10	6	6	18	12	(1)	9
Five+	8	6	16	15	9	18	(1)	11
Total Number of Inmates	(109)	(84)	(52)	(31)	(22)	(59)	(5)	(362)
Percentage With Each Marital Status	30%	23%	14%	9%	6%	17%	1%	100 %

Median Number of Correspondents	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(2)
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Over half 56% of the inmates were corresponding with two or three people, but very few were receiving letters from five or more people. Inmates who were divorced or separated tended more characteristically to correspond with five or more people. Those with common-law relationships were twice as likely to receive no letters as were legally married individuals. Married persons, on the other hand, were somewhat more likely to correspond with only one person.

Only 11% of the legally married inmates had no visitors, while 25% of the overall population was in this category. Thirty-six percent of those with common-law marriages at admission received no visits. Eleven percent of the legally married received five or more visitors. Inmates separated from their legal wives had approximately the same percentage with no visits as the sample considered as a whole and a very high percentage with only one visit.

TABLE 10  
 AVERAGE FREQUENCY PER YEAR OF VISITS  
 AND CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY INMATES BY  
 MARITAL STATUS OF INMATE AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE VISITOR AND  
 CORRESPONDENT

<b>Visits Per Year</b>						
<b>Relationship</b>	Legally Married	Common-Law Married	Single	Separated, Legal Wife	Separated, Common-Law	Divorced
Parents	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	12
Spouse	24	3 or 4	-	12	-	-

Siblings	3 or 4	12	3 or 4	12	12	12
Relative	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	-	3 or 4	3 or 4
Male Friend	3 or 4	1	-	-	-	-
Female Friend	-	12	3 or 4	-	3 or 4	3 or 4
Total Number of Inmates	(84)	(52)	(109)	(31)	(22)	(59)

Correspondence Per Year						
Relationship	Legally Married	Common-Law Married	Single	Separated, Legal Wife	Separated, Common-Law	Divorced
Parents	12	12	12	12	12	12
Spouse	50	24	-	50	-	-
Siblings	12	3 or 4	12	12	3 or 4	12
Relative	12	12	3 or 4	-	12	3 or 4
Male Friend	12	-	3 or 4	3 or 4	-	12
Female Friend	-	12	12	-	12	24
Total Number of Inmates	(84)	(52)	(109)	(31)	(22)	(59)

Differences in the frequency of the various types of contacts are also associated with marital status (Table 10). Wives of legal marriages visited much more frequently and corresponded twice as often as common-law wives. In fact legally married individuals received more frequent visits in general than did the individuals in most of the other marital status categories. Single persons were visited less frequently than any of the other groups.

The differences between those in legal and common-law relationships in the frequency of contact with their spouses were striking (Table 11). Eighty percent of those with

common-law relationships were not visiting with their wives, and 61% were not receiving letters from them. Only one inmate received as much as one visit every two weeks. By contrast legally married inmates averaged two visits per month with their wives, and one in four was visited by his wife every week. Only one-third of these wives were not visiting.

TABLE 11  
 FREQUENCY OF VISITING AND  
 CORRESPONDING WITH SPOUSES  
 BY TYPE OF MARRIAGE  
 (in Percentages)

Frequency	Contact With Legal Wife		Contact With Common-Law Wife	
	Visit	Correspond	Visit	Correspond
None	37%	32%	80%	61%
One or More Per Week	23	34	2	11
Twice Per Month	13	13	2	10
Once a Month	13	8	4	10
Three or Four Times Per Year	8	11	10	8
Once or Less This Year	6	2	2	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Number of Inmates	(84)	(84)	(52)	(52)
Median for Those	2/month	1/week	3 or	2/month

with Contacts			4/year	
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### **Summary and Conclusions**

The data presented thus far suggest that both the ethnic group membership and the marital status at admission of the inmate are important determinants of his relationship with the outside world during incarceration.

The differing family patterns of each ethnic group are reflected in the type and frequency of family contacts. The matriarchal nature of the Negro inmate's family is clearly seen in the high percent who have no contact with the father. When the Negro inmate maintains contact with a spouse, she is likely to visit only 3 or 4 times per year. The close family ties of the Mexican-American are seen in the higher percentage who have parents visiting as well as the large proportion who maintain relationships with brothers and sisters. Parents of Mexican-American inmates visit them on the average three times as frequently as parents from the other ethnic groups. Among white inmates more emphasis appears to be placed on visits from the conjugal family and friends. Their wives visit two or three times more frequently than wives from the other groups, as do female friends also. The male friends of the whites also write and visit twice as frequently, but only one out of four white inmates maintains contact with brothers or sisters.

Marital status appears related to several social patterns. If the inmate's marriage is intact upon admission, he also seems to maintain many other important relationships. Conversely, the single individual at admission is likely to be relatively isolated in other respects as well, having less frequent contacts with friends and relatives. The less binding nature of the common-law relationship compared to the legal marriage is reflected in the patterns of contact in prison, for only a small minority of the common-law marriages lead to sustained corresponding or visiting.

In this chapter some general descriptive material was presented by way of discussing the relationship of two background factors with the inmate's pattern of contact with the outside world. His race and marital status are part of the package of attributes which he brings with him to prison. In the following chapter, the effect of incarceration upon the social ties with the outside community will be explored.

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1/ Cavan, R. and B. Zemans, "Marital Relationships of Prisoners in Twenty-Eight Countries," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, Vol. 49, July-August 1958, pp. 133-139.

2/ Sykes, G., *The Society of Captives*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 65.

3/ Glaser, D., *The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System*, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1964, p. 363.

4/ Frazier, F., *The Negro Family in the United States*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939.

5/ Moynihan, D., "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," published in Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, eds., *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1967.

6/ Jackson, M., "Family Role Expectations of Married Black Males." Paper read at annual meeting of American Sociological Association, 1968.

7/ Lewis, O., *Five Families*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959.

## **Chapter III**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

#### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Norman Holt**

**Associate Social Research Analyst  
Southern Conservation Center**

**Donald Miller**

**Associate Social Research Analyst  
Los Angeles Research Unit**

**Research Division**

**California Department of Corrections  
Sacramento, California**

**January 1972**

#### **CHAPTER III. PATTERNS OF INMATE CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

Virtually all prisons make some arrangements for inmates to maintain some social ties with the outside world. These usually include allowing visitors and mail, permitting telephone calls in emergencies, and providing for home furloughs. In an international survey of 28 countries by Cavan and Zemans, all were found to provide at least for the visiting of spouses. / In all these countries a trend was also noted toward the expansion of family contacts. Not much is known, however, about the frequency of the contacts with the outside world of the inmates in any prison system or who these contacts are with. There are two studies which deal with this matter in a limited way. Sykes

concluded, after studying a sample of records covering a one-year period, that "41 percent of the prisoners in the New Jersey State Prison had received no visits from the outside world." 2/ Using a self-reporting technique with questionnaires, Glaser found that most federal prisoners sampled described the frequency with which they received letters from family and others as "very often" or "often," suggesting a high level of satisfaction. These same inmates reported sending and receiving two or more letters a week from minimum and medium security institutions and one or two letters per week from penitentiaries. 3/ However, no data were available on the differences in the correspondence activity of various inmate groups.

Two basic characteristics, marital status and ethnic group membership, have generally been found to be important determinants of social relationships. Marriage brings with it a new and complex network of relations in the form of in-laws and requires a restructuring of existing family ties. Less time is available for parents, while brothers and sisters share time with the in-laws. The addition of children further alters these interactions. A number of authors have suggested the existence of different family structures among various ethnic groups. In the present study our population consists of inmates from white, Mexican-American and Negro backgrounds, therefore it seems worthwhile at this point to review the literature on family structure in these groups.

### **Ethnic Background and Patterns of Contact**

Frazier, in his classic book on the Negro family, traced these patterns back to emancipation, the slavery period, and pre-slavery times on the African continent. 4/ More recently the Moynihan Report has related the structure of the Negro family, particularly its matriarchal character, to various difficulties Negro migrants to urban areas have experienced. 5/ Jackson, however, has challenged this emphasis on the matriarchal nature of the Negro family. In a study of Negro male "heads of household," he found that their valuation of family life and the accompanying role expectations varied little from that of white males. 6/ It can be argued, however, that male Negro "heads of household" represent only the more conventional part of the population, and thus in Jackson's study the question of the frequency of matriarchal family structures is

left unanswered. To the extent that such matriarchal structures exist, they should be represented in the families of Negro prisoners, since they are recruited predominately from urban ghettos.

The structure of Mexican-American families has not been extensively investigated, but several good accounts, e.g., Lewis 7/, are available of family structure in Mexico. The structure of families in Mexico is generally described as patriarchal, with the father being somewhat distant and autocratic, while the mother assumes virtually all responsibility for the day-to-day child rearing. Godparents also play a much greater role on the child's life.

These differences in family structure should be reflected in the patterns of contact that inmates from the various ethnic groups have with their families. In the analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and family contacts in this report, data are presented only for white, Mexican-American, and Negro inmates. Nine percent of the original study group were from other or unknown ethnic backgrounds and were not included in this part of the study.

Table 5 presents the number of family and friends with whom inmates from the various ethnic groups maintain contact. All groups seem to maintain reasonably extensive relationships with the outside world. Although one-third of the inmates had received no visitors, only one out of ten had not received correspondence.

TABLE 5  
 NUMBER OF PERSONS  
 VISITING AND CORRESPONDING  
 WITH INMATES BY ETHNIC GROUP  
 (In Percentages)

	Visiting				Corresponding			
Number	White	Mexican	Negro	Total	White	Mexican	Negro	Total

None	29%	26%	37%	32%,	11%	8%	11%	11%
One	22	20	17	20	18	20	21	19
Two	22	17	22	21	24	23	26	24
Three	15	21	12	15	25	26	22	24
Four	6	6	6	6	10	13	9	10
Five or More	6	10	6	6	12	10	11	12
Median Number	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Total Inmates*	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)

\* Eighty-one inmates of other races or whose race was unknown were excluded from Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Mexican-American inmates received the most visits and Negroes the fewest. While 37% of the Negro group received no visitors, only 26% of the Mexican-Americans were not visited, and 37% of these were visited by three or more people. However, there were no differences among the ethnic groups in correspondence

The patterns of visiting and correspondence are shown in Table 6. Inmates were visited by and wrote to their parents more extensively than was the case with any other relationship category. They were three times as likely to be corresponding with a parent as another relative. Over half of the inmates maintained written communication with their parents with 39% receiving visits. Next to their parents, the inmates had their most extensive relationships with their brothers and sisters. Those who maintained relationships with persons outside the family were more likely to have them with females; 7% more of the inmates corresponded with female than with male friends, and 3% more were visited by female than by male friends. The major difference in family

patterns that appeared among the different ethnic groups was the somewhat more frequent visiting with parents among Mexican-Americans and the far more frequent visiting and corresponding with brothers and sisters. Mexican-Americans were twice as likely to have received letters from siblings than were whites, and 10% more of them than in the other groups received visits from this source.

TABLE 6  
INMATES VISITING AND CORRESPONDING  
WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
BY ETHNIC GROUP AND RELATIONSHIP  
(In Percentages)

Relation- -ship	Visiting				Corresponding			
	White	Mexican	Negro	Total	White	Mexican	Negro	Total
None	29%	26%	37%	32%	11%	8%	11%	11%
Parents	37	44	39	39	59	57	58	63
Spouse	20	21	18	20	26	28	22	24
Siblings	26	37	27	28	27	65	42	41
Relatives	14	12	16	15	20	17	25	21
Male Friend	8	5	7	8	15	6	8	11
Female Friend	12	8	10	11	17	11	18	17
Total Number of Inmates	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)	(390)	(117)	(255)	(762)

TABLE 7  
 AVERAGE\* NUMBER OF VISITS  
 AND CORRESPONDENCE PER YEAR  
 INMATES RECEIVED BY DIFFERENT  
 ETHNIC GROUPS AND BY RELATIONSHIP

Relationship	Visits Per Year			Correspondence Per Year		
	White	Mexican	Negro	White	Mexican	Negro
Parents	3 or 4	12	3 or 4	12	12	12
Spouse	24	12	3 or 4	24	24	24
Siblings	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	12	3 or 4	12
Relatives	3 or 4	1	3 or 4	3 or 4	12	3 or 4
Male Friend	3 or 4	1	1	12	3 or 4	3 or 4
Female Friend	12	3 or 4	3 or 4	24	24	12
Total Number of Inmates	(390)	(117)	(255)	(390)	(117)	(255)

\* Median computed for inmates with such contacts.

Some ethnic group differences can also be observed is the frequency with which contacts with friends and relatives are maintained (Table 7). The frequency of correspondence with parents was the same in all groups, averaging one letter a month, but the whites receiving visits from wives averaged two per month, twice as many as the Mexican-American and several times more than the Negro.

While the Mexican-American was more likely to have siblings corresponding, Table 7 shows that they very infrequently received letters, and their visiting pattern was essentially the same as that of the Negroes. When social ties were maintained with male or female friends, the contacts for whites were likely to be more numerous than for the other groups.

TABLE 8  
 TYPE OF CONTACT BETWEEN  
 INMATES AND THEIR PARENTS  
 BY ETHNIC GROUP AND PARENT INVOLVED  
 (In Percentages)

Parent Involved	Visiting			Corresponding		
	White	Mexican	Negro	White	Mexican	Negro
Mother Only	42%	44%	64%	46%	47%	71%
Father Only	7	-	3	6	5	3
Mother and Father	41	54	25	40	44	21
Parents and Step-parents	4	2	3	4	1	3
Mother and Father But Separately	6	-	5	4	3	2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Number of Inmates with Parent	(164)	(55)	(103)	(252)	(73)	(155)

Contact						
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When parental contacts are broken down by the parents involved, some major differences in family structure are revealed. All groups are most likely to maintain ties with the mother only or the mother and father together. The father alone plays a very minor role (Table 8). The principal differences among the groups are reflected in the high rate of contact of the Negro inmates with the mother only and the accompanying low rate with both parents together. Almost three-fourths (71%) of the Negroes receive letters from the mother alone compared to less than half in this category for whites. While only 25% of the Negroes have parents visiting them together, 54% of the Mexican-American visits with parents are with both the mother and father.

### Marital Status and Patterns of Contact

The second major factor which should contribute to structuring the inmate's ties with the outside world is his marital status. Information on this factor was available for only 362 of the cases in the sample, but there is no reason to believe that they are not a representative sub-sample. The number of people with whom the inmates were in contact is reported in Table 9 in terms of the Marital status of the inmates.

TABLE 9  
NUMBER OF PERSONS VISITING AND  
CORRESPONDING WITH INMATES OF  
DIFFERING MARITAL STATUS  
(In Percentages)

Marital Status of Inmates Receiving Visitors								
<b>Number of Visitors</b>	Single	Married	Common-Law Married	Separated, Legal Wife	Separated, Common-Law	Divorced	Widowed	Total

None	32%	11%	36%	23%	32%	34%	20%	25%
One	21	23	12	39	14	25	20	24
Two	23	23	26	16	36	17	20	21
Three	15	26	10	19	9	10	40	18
Four	3	6	8	3	9	7	-	5
Five+	6	11	8	-	-	7	-	7
Total Number of Inmates	(109)	(84)	(52)	(31)	(22)	(59)	(5)	(362)
Median Number of Visitors	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)

**Marital Status of Inmates Receiving Correspondence**

<b>Number of Correspondents</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Common-Law Married</b>	<b>Separated, Legal Wife</b>	<b>Separated, Common-Law</b>	<b>Divorced</b>	<b>Widowed</b>	<b>Total</b>
None	8%	6%	13%	10%	14%	10%	-	8%
One	15	23	15	10	18	14	-	16
Two	31	26	29	33	23	27	(1)	29
Three	31	29	21	26	18	19	(2)	27
Four	7	10	6	6	18	12	(1)	9
Five+	8	6	16	15	9	18	(1)	11
Total Number of Inmates	(109)	(84)	(52)	(31)	(22)	(59)	(5)	(362)
Percentage With Each Marital Status	30%	23%	14%	9%	6%	17%	1%	100%
Median Number	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(2)

of Correspondents								
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Over half 56% of the inmates were corresponding with two or three people, but very few were receiving letters from five or more people. Inmates who were divorced or separated tended more characteristically to correspond with five or more people. Those with common-law relationships were twice as likely to receive no letters as were legally married individuals. Married persons, on the other hand, were somewhat more likely to correspond with only one person.

Only 11% of the legally married inmates had no visitors, while 25% of the overall population was in this category. Thirty-six percent of those with common-law marriages at admission received no visits. Eleven percent of the legally married received five or more visitors. Inmates separated from their legal wives had approximately the same percentage with no visits as the sample considered as a whole and a very high percentage with only one visit.

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 AND CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY INMATES BY  
 MARITAL STATUS OF INMATE AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE VISITOR AND  
 CORRESPONDENT

<b>Visits Per Year</b>						
<b>Relationship</b>	Legally Married	Common-Law Married	Single	Separated, Legal Wife	Separated, Common-Law	Divorced
Parents	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	12
Spouse	24	3 or 4	-	12	-	-
Siblings	3 or 4	12	3 or 4	12	12	12

Relative	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4	-	3 or 4	3 or 4
Male Friend	3 or 4	1	-	-	-	-
Female Friend	-	12	3 or 4	-	3 or 4	3 or 4
Total Number of Inmates	(84)	(52)	(109)	(31)	(22)	(59)

Correspondence Per Year						
Relationship	Legally Married	Common-Law Married	Single	Separated, Legal Wife	Separated, Common-Law	Divorced
Parents	12	12	12	12	12	12
Spouse	50	24	-	50	-	-
Siblings	12	3 or 4	12	12	3 or 4	12
Relative	12	12	3 or 4	-	12	3 or 4
Male Friend	12	-	3 or 4	3 or 4	-	12
Female Friend	-	12	12	-	12	24
Total Number of Inmates	(84)	(52)	(109)	(31)	(22)	(59)

Differences in the frequency of the various types of contacts are also associated with marital status (Table 10). Wives of legal marriages visited much more frequently and corresponded twice as often as common-law wives. In fact legally married individuals received more frequent visits in general than did the individuals in most of the other marital status categories. Single persons were visited less frequently than any of the other groups.

The differences between those in legal and common-law relationships in the frequency of contact with their spouses were striking (Table 11). Eighty percent of those with common-law relationships were not visiting with their wives, and 61% were not receiving letters from them. Only one inmate received as much as one visit every two weeks. By contrast legally married inmates averaged two visits per month with their wives, and one

in four was visited by his wife every week. Only one-third of these wives were not visiting.

TABLE 11  
 FREQUENCY OF VISITING AND  
 CORRESPONDING WITH SPOUSES  
 BY TYPE OF MARRIAGE  
 (in Percentages)

Frequency	Contact With Legal Wife		Contact With Common-Law Wife	
	Visit	Correspond	Visit	Correspond
None	37%	32%	80%	61%
One or More Per Week	23	34	2	11
Twice Per Month	13	13	2	10
Once a Month	13	8	4	10
Three or Four Times Per Year	8	11	10	8
Once or Less This Year	6	2	2	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Number of Inmates	(84)	(84)	(52)	(52)
Median for Those with Contacts	2/month	1/week	3 or 4/year	2/month

## Summary and Conclusions

The data presented thus far suggest that both the ethnic group membership and the marital status at admission of the inmate are important determinants of his relationship with the outside world during incarceration.

The differing family patterns of each ethnic group are reflected in the type and frequency of family contacts. The matriarchal nature of the Negro inmate's family is clearly seen in the high percent who have no contact with the father. When the Negro inmate maintains contact with a spouse, she is likely to visit only 3 or 4 times per year. The close family ties of the Mexican-American are seen in the higher percentage who have parents visiting as well as the large proportion who maintain relationships with brothers and sisters. Parents of Mexican-American inmates visit them on the average three times as frequently as parents from the other ethnic groups. Among white inmates more emphasis appears to be placed on visits from the conjugal family and friends. Their wives visit two or three times more frequently than wives from the other groups, as do female friends also. The male friends of the whites also write and visit twice as frequently, but only one out of four white inmates maintains contact with brothers or sisters.

Marital status appears related to several social patterns. If the inmate's marriage is intact upon admission, he also seems to maintain many other important relationships. Conversely, the single individual at admission is likely to be relatively isolated in other respects as well, having less frequent contacts with friends and relatives. The less binding nature of the common-law relationship compared to the legal marriage is reflected in the patterns of contact in prison, for only a small minority of the common-law marriages lead to sustained corresponding or visiting.

In this chapter some general descriptive material was presented by way of discussing the relationship of two background factors with the inmate's pattern of contact with the outside world. His race and marital status are part of the package of attributes which he

brings with him to prison. In the following chapter, the effect of incarceration upon the social ties with the outside community will be explored.

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## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

## **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Norman Holt**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Southern Conservation Center**

**Donald Miller**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Los Angeles Research Unit**

**Research Division**

**California Department of Corrections**

**Sacramento, California**

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### **CHAPTER IV. THE EFFECTS OF IMPRISONMENT ON THE INMATE'S FAMILY AND SOCIAL TIES**

A person's current social relationships represent the aggregate of his social history. Each individual has his own unique network of reciprocal contacts forged out of his past experience. The characteristics of this network reflect the contributions of a great number of factors many of which, if not unique in themselves, are at least unique in their combination. Thus, when social relationships are examined through group data, only the gross factors are likely to stand out. In the current chapter, some of the major effects of incarceration on the inmate's ties with the outside world will be discussed. Some of the

mechanisms through which these effects occur will be suggested; but, with the above difficulty in mind, much of this discussion will be speculative.

The act of imprisonment itself has an immediate and dramatic effect on the person's social life. The forced separation, usually a traumatic experience, requires the individual to reorder his relationships. That prison inmates relate to family and friends in different ways than non-inmates is an obvious fact, but these differences are not the present concern. Given the fact of imprisonment, the focus of this chapter is on the effects of its duration. In other words, the question asked is what changes occur in the inmate's relationship with the outside world as he moves through his prison career? This question would be relatively straightforward if all inmates began their institutional stay with the same social patterns. As pointed out above, however, this is not the case, because each new arrival brings to the institution a different set of existing social ties.

### **Initial Ostracism**

One experience which new inmates share and which is thought to have a major effect on social relations is prior involvement with the criminal justice system. At the very least they will all have been through the courts and spent some time in jail for the offense for which they are currently in prison. Most will have had at least some previous experience with the justice system, while for many the current felony charges are simply the latest in a lengthy history of arrests and dispositions.

This prior involvement with the criminal justice system seems to affect the inmate's social relationships in three ways. First, each arrest and conviction brings with it a certain social stigma which would ordinarily make former friends and family less willing to become involved. The extent to which the inmate is ostracized in this way varies with the degree of stigma of the particular crime and the cumulative effect of repeated charges and convictions. There should be a difference between the degree of ostracism experienced by child molesters, drug addicts, and check forgers. Some differences in the extent of ostracism are also related to the different degrees of stigma different groups attach to various crimes. A conviction for possession of marijuana, for example,

is viewed lightly by some segments of the population but carries a heavy stigma in others.

This process also seems to work in reverse, as a few inmates attempt to restrict their contact with former friends and family because of shame and guilt over their imprisonment. Some avoid letting their situation be known simply to avoid the negative reactions of friends. In some cases, selected family members or friends may conspire with the inmate to keep his incarceration secret from others and thus restrict his outside contacts. Other friends might be told, for example, that the inmate is working out of state and can't be reached or that his specific address is unknown. In a few extreme cases, the inmate attempts to keep his incarceration secret from all of his family and friends. For the most part, however, new inmates are anxious to maintain as many social ties with the outside world as possible, and it is the people outside who determine the limits of their contacts.

### **Using Up Favors**

Brushes with the law and involvement with the justice system consume considerable resources. Money, often in large sums, is required for bail, lawyer's fees, and incidentals; and friends and relatives are often asked to contribute. They are also frequently asked to run errands, serve as character witnesses, or give testimony in court. Thus, with each arrest, trial, and sentence, the inmate usually has to make heavy demands on his friends and relatives and begins to use up their good will and whatever reciprocal favors he has coming. With this process repeating itself each time the person is arrested, his least loyal friends are likely soon to begin to make themselves unavailable, while even close family members eventually reach a point of no longer responding to his requests for aid. As arrests are repeated, favors and good will are used up, and the rejection (or the freeze out) process begins often with strong feelings on the part of family and friends of being betrayed by his unrealized promise of reform.

Family and friends are sometimes among the direct victims of the inmate's criminal career. Narcotics addicts, and to a lesser extent alcoholics, occasionally steal, cheat,

deceive, or defraud family and friends during an emergency to support a habit. The "hype" who periodically resorts to hocking his parents' T.V. set for a fix doesn't exactly endear himself to the family. A deterioration of social relationships, then, is a natural part of certain criminal careers in which the significant others are themselves sometimes victimized.

In summary, there are three processes through which the inmate's prior criminal involvement serves to erode social relationships even before his prison term begins, (1) the stigma associated with his crimes leads to ostracism, (2) he wears out his friends and relations by making repeated demands on their resources as he is arrested and tried for crimes, and (3) his lengthy involvement in certain, types of crimes often includes family and friends among the victims.

### **Inability to Reciprocate**

Once imprisoned, the inmate faces two major barriers to maintaining his social relations with the outside world, (1) his inability to reciprocate certain aspects of relationships, and (2) his inability to replace withering social ties with new outside relationships. Social relationships are based on reciprocity, but the prisoner is in no position to reciprocate in very significant kinds of ways. It is the rare individual who, from his earnings from hobby work or an institution job, is able to send money home. Typically, the resources flow the other way, with relatives crediting money to the inmate's account each month, arriving on visiting day with a basket of goods, or sending in a heavy Christmas package with all the items allowable. For his part, the inmate is scarcely able to return a birthday greeting or Christmas card. He is incapable of even returning a visit. In correspondence, the news is also apt to flow one way. While the inmate is anxious to learn about what is happening outside, he has little motivation for writing about prison events and is usually officially restricted from mentioning such things as other individuals. Combined with this is the fact that prisons are not very eventful places, and each day bears a close resemblance to the previous one. The inmate is thus in a taking role with little opportunity to return favors.

The removal of the inmate from the community deprives him of the normal opportunity to remold and refurbish his social relations as he moves through his life cycle. Through the normal course of living, one's relationships with family and friends are steadily changing. Old acquaintances fade away, and new friends emerge to take their place. Parents pass on, sisters marry, and friends move ; but the inmate has no way to restructure his relationships following these events. Thus, a long-term inmate might enter prison with a spouse, parents, siblings, and numerous friends but depart with little left but an unusually faithful wife.

### **The Decrease of Family Contacts with Time Served**

To examine the effects of length of imprisonment on social ties, the inmates in the sample were divided into five groups based on the number of years they have been in prison. Factors associated with recidivism were controlled by considering only inmates serving their first prison term. The hypothesis was that if prison has the anticipated deleterious effect on relationships with people on the outside, there should be a steadily increasing percentage of inmates receiving no visitors or correspondence as the years go by and that the average number of outside contacts would drop in a similar manner. The data in Table 12, however, show no such trend. There is little difference between the number of visitors and correspondents or the frequency of such contacts among inmates who have served one, two, three, or four or more years. In fact, a slightly higher percentage of those with two or more years served had such contacts. The effects of time on the patterns of contact seem to vary somewhat with the type of relationship. Slight increases over time in contacts with the parents are indicated in Table 12 and probably with brothers and sisters in the second and third years of confinement. The contacts which are ordinarily most intense, those with spouses, appear to decrease sharply after the first year. Only 21% of those who had served two years or more had wives visiting compared to 37% for the first year. Correspondence follows a similar pattern with 50% of those in their first year receiving mail from wives, while this was true of less than one-third of those with two or more years in prison. In general, however, the pattern of correspondence, like visiting, does not reflect any increasing isolation from people on the outside with the passage of time.

The figures in Table 12 on contacts with wives are difficult to interpret, because an unknown percentage in each group is not married. Therefore, for the further analysis which is presented in Table 13, only those who were known to have been married at admission were selected. The data are presented in ratios because of the small number of cases involved.

Consistent with the data is the previous table, Table 13 shows fewer married men serving their first terms visited by their wives during the third and fourth year, only 53% were still receiving visits by that time, compared to

TABLE 12  
 FIRST TERM INMATES RECEIVING VISITS  
 AND MAIL BY RELATIONSHIP AND  
 MONTHS SERVED IN PRISON  
 (In Percentages)

<b>Months Served in Prison</b>					
<b>Visitors</b>	6 - 11	12 - 23	24 - 35	36 - 47	48+
No Visitors	28%	30%	22%	25%	24%
Median Number	(1)	(1)	(2)	(2)	(2)
<b>Visitors</b>					
Parents	47%	45%	57%	60%	56%
Spouse	37	23	25	5	24
Siblings	25	37	39	46	33
Relative	19	15	19	16	30
Male Friend	6	6	7	12	15
Female Friend	6	13	12	14	6

<b>Months Served in Prison</b>					
<b>Correspondents</b>	6 - 11	12 - 23	24 - 35	36 - 47	48+
No Correspondents	3%	12%	3%	10%	4%
Median Number	(2)	(2)	(3)	(2)	(3)
<b>Correspondents</b>					
Parents	66%	67%	77%	65%	71%
Spouse	50	27	31	10	29
Siblings	34	49	57	56	50
Relative	25	22	29	26	39
Male Friend	3	11	12	12	15
Female Friend	6	19	24	21	11
Total Number	(32)	(184)	(120)	(57)	(66)
N = 459					

TABLE 13  
RATIO OF MARRIED INMATE WITH SOME VISITS  
FROM WIFE BY NUMBER OF PRISON TERMS,  
LENGTH OF INCARCERATION,  
AND TYPE OF MARRIAGE

First Prison Term						
Type of Marriage	Months in Prison					Total
	Less than 12	12 - 23	24 - 35	36 - 47	48+	
Legally Married With Visits	79%			53%		67%
<u>Total Married</u>	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{11}{15}$	$\frac{6}{9}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{7}{11}$	$\frac{29}{43}$
Common-Law With Visits	50%			29%		36%
<u>Total Common-Law</u>	$\frac{0}{1}$	$\frac{5}{9}$	$\frac{1}{5}$	$\frac{0}{3}$	$\frac{2}{4}$	$\frac{8}{22}$
Recidivists						
Type of Marriage	Months in Prison					Total
	Less than 12	12 - 23	24 - 35	36 - 47	48+	
Legally Married With Visits	64%			66%		60%
<u>Total Married</u>	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{7}{11}$	$\frac{4}{9}$	$\frac{5}{7}$	$\frac{3}{5}$	$\frac{21}{35}$
Common-Law With Visits	0			22%		16%
<u>Total Common-Law</u>	$\frac{0}{2}$	$\frac{0}{6}$	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{2}{5}$	$\frac{0}{4}$	$\frac{4}{25}$

79% during the first two years of their prison terms. All four of the married inmates in their first year of imprisonment were visiting with the wives. While a similar decrease is seen with the common-law marriages (only two of seven visiting in the third and fourth year), the overall figures show legally married men to be more than twice as likely to be visited by their spouses.

The lower half of the table, which shows for the inmates who have previously served at least one term in prison the relationship between time served and visits from their wives, suggests that the pattern of decreasing visits from wives doesn't hold up after the first prison term. If the inmate is a parole violator or is in his second or subsequent term, he is as likely to be still visiting with his wife during the fourth year as the first. Visiting with common-law wives is very unlikely to occur at any time during the second or subsequent prison terms. One determinant of total time in prison is the number of terms the inmate has served. Recidivists as a group will have served much more total time than first termers. However, many factors other than time served also distinguish between these two groups which serve to complicate the interpretation of the relationships between time served and visits from wives.

In table 14 those serving their first, second, and third or more terms are compared in

terms of frequency and types of contact. In all but one of the comparisons, every statistically significant difference showed more contacts with the outside world for inmates serving their first prison terms. Over ten percent more of the recidivists received no visits. While two people had visited the average first term, the second or third term had only one. Only about one-third of the recidivists received visits from parents, compared to 52% of the other group. Among the first termers, 14% more received visits from brothers and sisters. Second and third termers were also slightly less likely to be corresponding and visiting with other relatives.

TABLE 14  
 INMATES RECEIVING VISITS AND CORRESPONDENCE  
 BY NUMBER OF PRISON TERMS SERVED AND RELATIONSHIP  
 (In Percentages)

Number	Visiting			Correspondence		
	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	2nd Term	3 or More Terms	1st Term	2nd Term	3 or More Terms
None	26%	35%	38%	8%	14%	12%
Median Number	(2)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(2)
<b>Relationship</b>						
Parents	52%	33%	31%	70%	58%	54%
Spouse	23	24	16	28	29	24
Siblings	37	27	21	51	39	40
Relative	18	16	12	27	21	20
Male Friend	9	7	7	11	13	13
Female Friend	11	9	14	18	15	21

Total Number*	(459)	(135)	( 200)	(459)	(135)	(200)
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\* Excludes 49 cases with no information on term status. Parole violation is considered as another prison term.

The major exception to this trend appears to be contact with wives. However, this is partly a function of differences in the number of married men. When only common-law and legally married inmates are considered, 57% of the first termers have visits from wives compared to 42% of the recidivists. On the other hand, this difference is due almost entirely to the high rate of contact during the first two years. There is no significant difference in visits from wives between married recidivists and those who have served three or more years of their first term.

**Summary and Conclusions**

The effects of prison on inmates remain an elusive matter surrounded by much speculation but little evidence. The few available studies of time in prison and recidivism were recently summarized by Bennett who observed that "if one examines the parole outcome of those incarcerated for shorter periods of time compared with those who spent longer periods confined, those spending shorter periods in the institution had more favorable outcomes on parole."<sup>1/</sup> The evidence for this is so unclear, however, that the California Department of Corrections is currently involved in an experimental program of early release to parole which is designed to determine the relationship of time served to recidivism.

On a more theoretical level, Goffman has suggested ways in which the "moral career" of the inmate in a total institution affects his character.<sup>2/</sup> A recent attempt by Karmel to test Goffman's notion, however, failed to produce any supporting evidence. When "self-mortification" was defined as (1) loss of self-esteem, (2) loss of role identification, and (3) increased depression, the mental patients sampled showed no deterioration from the

first day through the fourth week. 3/ This limited "non-finding," however, has been challenged by Bohr on methodological grounds.4/ After retesting inmates at a reception center once a week for a month, Distefano reported, "Analyses of variance revealed significant mood changes between the four tests and administration of four mood factors. Systematic reduction in anxiety, depression, concentration, and skepticism scores were found as a function of test replication."5/

In the area of the effects of length of imprisonment on attitudes and values, only a limited amount of information is available. Wheeler's classic and often quoted study seemed to establish a definite U-shaped trend in adherence to inmate values. When inmates were divided by the proportion of their sentence already served and compared in terms of their adherence to the inmate code, Wheeler found that there was an increasing commitment to the inmate value system during the first part of their prison stay but a decreasing adherence as they approached their release dates. 6/ Although Wheeler's finding was widely accepted for many years, a recent replication of the study by Atchley and McCabe in a federal prison failed to find any such trend suggesting the early findings may have been a reflection of the particular prison where the research was done.7/

While there is little information about the impact of prison on recidivism, personalities, or values, there is even less about its effects on family relationships. A reasonably thorough search of the literature failed to turn up even one relevant study aside from a few impressionistic accounts. Thus, the findings outlined in this report cannot be compared with those from other correctional settings.

Social ties between the inmate and his family and friends proved remarkably resistant to the eroding influences of time spent in prison. At the end of four years, inmates had at least as many social contacts as those just beginning their prison terms, with one major exception. Contacts from legally married wives of first term inmates grew fewer through the second year, suggesting that the marital relationship deteriorates as the years in prison pass. At first glance it seems strange that marriage, the most intense

relationship, also is the only relationship which appears so affected by time. It may be this very intensity that is its vulnerability. The normal give and take among adult relatives is very minor by comparison and may not be that difficult to carry on from behind bars. On the other hand, the degree of reciprocity involved in marriage may be the ingredient which makes it so difficult to continue. Another consideration is that one is born into family relationships, and relatives are not replaceable in the same sense as spouses. A person who is dissatisfied with his relationship with his mother, for example, can't go out and look for a new one in the same way that a disenchanted wife may have her eye open for a new mate.

Given what appears to be a major deterioration in marriages after the first and second year of imprisonment (about one-fourth fewer of the wives were still visiting after three or more years), it is surprising that a hard core of wives continues the same level of contacts through four years plus and on into the second or third prison term. Some speculation might be offered here to account for this. At least one study has suggested that felon inmates and their wives may make a good match. One hundred and sixteen wives were compared with their husbands in prison, and the conclusion reached was that they tended to come from remarkably similar backgrounds and situations. Wives often exhibited similar patterns of deviant behavior and tended to show the same psychopathology seen among their husbands first-degree female relatives.<sup>8/</sup> Such assortative mating may provide the relationship with a potentiality for greater endurance.

Another process that appears to take place with some recidivists and their wives who maintain contact throughout the years is what might be called the "service wife syndrome." Career soldiers and their spouses sometimes find that they have made such a good adjustment to the long periods of separation that living together in a conjugal family situation becomes fairly difficult. The wife often learns to cope so well with being on her own that the returning soldier-husband has no role to play in the household or the child rearing. Frozen out of household affairs he is left with the role of provider, part-time lover, and ceremonial head for festive occasions. The marital relationship then

becomes extremely limited both in terms of the amount of sharing which takes place and the amount of close contact possible. The new tour of duty becomes a welcome reprieve for both. This arrangement may become very satisfying, particularly for women who are predisposed to find the role of mother and homemaker very gratifying but have difficulty relating to a man as a wife. In such situations, the role of service wife provides many of the benefits of legal marriage without many of the attendant problems.

A similar process may take place among some career prisoners and their wives. The first prison term is often preceded by a stormy period of personal and domestic problems. The forced separation may serve to reduce friction. The wife becomes eligible for welfare as soon as the husband is committed or returned to prison as a parole violator and is thus assured of at least a minimal level of support. If the husband has few job skills and frequent periods of unemployment, the forced separation may not even bring about a reduced living standard. The wife may even experience an increase in real income if the husband is a chronic alcoholic or otherwise indulges himself at the expense of the household. When the low economic status of most inmates-to-be is mixed with a turbulent domestic situation, the wife may have little motivation for being concerned about keeping her husband out of prison.

On the other hand, the welfare system provides motivation for the wife to remain faithful through the threat of discontinuing financial support if she takes up with another man. By pointing out that, in some cases, there are material benefits resulting from sticking with the incarcerated husband, the intention is not to depreciate the strong emotional ties which are usually involved also. The suggestion is simply that there may be less hardship involved than is often assumed. Another factor seems worth mentioning, although it probably occurs in only a few cases. Hardship seems to be a common experience of the wives of inmates, and the ability to deal with it a much admired trait. Indeed, hardship is often viewed as a test of character. In what might be called the "Queen for a Day syndrome," some prisoners' wives appear to derive considerable satisfaction out of what others perceive to be the great hardship which they must endure because of their husbands' being sent to prison. Family and friends are likely to provide

considerable sympathy and support. Additionally, if the couple had prior marital problems, his commitment may then serve as proof positive that the problems were really his all along: the wife is exonerated and may even take on the mantle of the silent sufferer. The high point comes when, through all this, she sticks by the side of her husband and visits him religiously every Sunday.

The type of contact itself, formal visiting, may also develop into an enjoyable activity. While most married couples undoubtedly find it much too constraining and unreal, for others it takes on many of the features of a renewed courtship.\* ( \* Suggested in conversation with Rudy A. Renteria, Parole Agent I, California Department of Corrections.) The two hours together every other Sunday are looked forward to much as a "date". Each wears his best clothes, makes his best appearance, and is on his best behavior carefully selecting what to say in order to make the best impression on the other. The conversation is light, reassuring, and affectionate. Dreams of the future are built around promises that the shortcomings of the past will be corrected. Gone are the realities of the former relationship with the harsh words and frequent conflicts. The courtship ends with parole, however, and the couple often finds the high expectations, developed over several year of holding hands in the prison visiting room, hard to meet.

While no overall deterioration in social ties appears to occur during the first prison term, major differences in social relationships can be seen between recidivists and first termers. There are two possible explanations for this finding. First, apart from the added time signified by the second or third prison term, there may be something special which occurs with the parole violation or the new prison term such as the extreme disillusionment of the family. This interpretation, however, is not supported by any of the other findings. The second possibility is that the recidivists are a biased sample of the first termers and, in particular, that they include an over-representation of that portion of the first termers population which has few social ties. In other words, the best explanation seems to be that those first termers who maintain strong family relationships while in prison are less likely to be parole violators and second termers. In Chapter VI this interpretation is tested when we examine this group's recidivism rate. In this chapter, the

emphasis was on what the experience of prison does to outside relationships. In the following chapter, this question is reversed as the focus is on discovering how the inmate's family ties affect his behavior in prison.

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3/ Karmel, M., "Total Institutions and Self-Mortification," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol.10, June 1969, pp. 134-142.

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5/ Distefano, M.K., Jr., "Prisoner Mood Shifts During Initial Incarceration," *American Journal of Corrections*, Vol. 26, Jan.- Feb. 1964, pp. 12-16.

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## **CHAPTER V**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

#### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Norman Holt**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Southern Conservation Center**

**Donald Miller**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Los Angeles Research Unit**

**Research Division**

**California Department of Corrections**

**Sacramento, California**

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**CHAPTER V, THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL TIES  
ON THE INMATE'S BEHAVIOR IN PRISON**

One reason often given for encouraging inmates to maintain contact with their families is the positive effect such contacts are thought to have on their performance in the institution. It is felt that the family is likely to encourage the inmate to conform to the

prison routine and rules if for no other purpose than to have him paroled sooner. In addition, the inmate who maintains a strong interest in outside friends and family is thought to be less involved with and less committed to the inmate social system and all that it entails. The outside ties are supposed to provide him with a different point of reference and source of emotional support making it less necessary for him to seek out and become involved with other inmates. The pro-social "Square John," for example, is often viewed as someone with a wife and family anxiously awaiting his release. This chapter will examine the influences that varying levels of contact with the outside world have on three areas of the inmate's prison experience, (1) disciplinary problems, (2) participation in prison programs, and (3) plans and preparation for parole.

### **Disciplinary Problems**

In a study of the relationship between visiting and rule infractions in a Florida correctional institution, Lembo divided a random sample of 100 inmates into those who had and had not received any visits during their first six months of incarceration and compared their disciplinary records. While a difference of nine percentage points was noted in the expected direction, the differences were not large enough to be statistically significant. Lembo concludes by saying "no statistically significant relationship has been shown between the amount of disciplinary infractions committed and the inmate's personal contact with the outside community. The demonstrated occurrence can be regarded as merely a chance variation to be expected in a random sample."<sup>1/</sup>

The limitations of Lembo's study, including the relatively small sample size, the short period of imprisonment, and the grossly dichotomized categories together with the percentage difference obtained suggested, however, that the hypotheses of "more contact = fewer disciplinaries" might possibly be supported in another study. In the interest of designing a more adequate approach, the authors of the present study classified disciplinary infractions into three categories as opposed to using the total number of rule infractions. The sample was also divided into groups on the basis of the number of visitors received. Those without visitors were separated in turn into those who received letters and those with no contact at all with the outside world. As a further

control, the sample was divided into first termers and recidivists. Table 15 presents the results of this analysis.

In line with Lembo's results, no major differences were found in the number of disciplinary reports among the groups defined in terms of number of social contacts. About half of the six groups had no infractions. The only exception seems to be the greater concentration of first termers with no contacts in the extreme disciplinary group with three or more infractions. Thirty-one percent of those with no contacts at all were in this group, compared to 22% for the total sample. The conclusion that this group is an exception was substantiated by the greater likelihood that its members would be transferred as disciplinary problems. They received twice as many of these transfers as those with one or two visitors (15% compared to 7%). Neither of these relationships, however, existed among the recidivists.

When those receiving different numbers of visitors were evaluated by the custodial staff, no significant differences were reported. About three-fourths of each group were not seen as custodial problems, with only 8% of the total sample posing a moderate or major problem. A comparison of disciplinary problems among first termers and recidivists is interesting. The parole violators and multiple termers are considerably less likely to cause trouble for the institution. They were only half as likely to be transferred as disciplinary problems, more likely to maintain clean disciplinary records, and less than half as likely to be considered by the custodial staff as major or moderate problems.

TABLE 15  
NUMBER OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS VISITING THE INMATE,  
BY NUMBER OF PRISON TERMS, NUMBER OF  
DISCIPLINARY REPORTS RECEIVED, GENERAL  
CUSTODIAL EVALUATION, AND TYPE OF DEPARTURE  
(In Percentages)

<b>Number of Disciplinary Reports</b>	<b>First Termers</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
None	50%	47%	45%	46%	44%	44%	46%
One	11	23	18	22	25	25	22
Two	8	9	16	5	10	16	11
Three or More	31	21	22	27	21	15	22
<b>Custodial Evaluation</b>							
No Problem	73%	75%	81%	71%	66%	72%	73%
Slight Problem	19	20	14	18	21	21	19
Moderate or Major Problem	8	5	5	11	13	7	8
<b>Type of Departure</b>							
Disciplinary Transfer	15%	13%	7%	7%	16%	5%	10%
Total Number*	(26)	(78)	(74)	(90)	(68)	(61)	(397)
<b>Number of Disciplinary Reports</b>	<b>Recidivists</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
None	60%	63%	54%	57%	46%	55%	56%
One	16	12	23	17	15	15	17
Two	5	10	6	6	10	3	7
Three or More	19	16	17	20	28	27	20
<b>Custodial Evaluation</b>							
No Problem	73%	78%	70%	82%	79%	73%	76%

Slight Problem	24	21	27	15	13	24	21
Moderate or Major Problem	3	1	3	3	8	3	3
<b>Type of Departure</b>							
Disciplinary Transfer	5%	6%	4%	6%	8%	3%	5%
Total Number*	(37)	(83)	(69)	(65)	(39)	(33)	(326)

\* 170 cases from the sample were excluded from this table because no information was available on the number of their prison terms

### **Program Participation**

In addition to the extent to which he poses a custodial threat to the institution, another measure of the inmate's performance is the breadth of his involvement in prison programs, particularly those which are thought to have some rehabilitative qualities. To consider this dimension of the prison experience, information on participation in the following six areas was obtained for each inmate in the sample: (1) work, (2) vocational training, (3) school, (4) religion, (5) group counseling, and (6) self-help groups. Overall ratings of how constructively the inmate had used his prison time were also obtained from the inmate's caseworkers. Table 16 shows the relationship between the ratings of program participation and the numbers of social contacts. The caseworkers generally saw no differences in the way inmates with few outside contacts used their time compared to those with numerous visitors. In the total sample, 22% were rated as having made poor use of their prison stay and about half as having used it constructively.

All groups had similar proportions, about 40%, with above average work grades but there appears to be some tendency for those with an abundance of visitors to have also an abundance of average or below average work ratings. Sixty-six percent of those with four or more contacts rated average or below, 12% above the percentage for the total group. A majority of each group did not attempt any vocational training. When it was

attempted, however, those with multiple visitors seemed to have a more satisfactory performance in it. While 29% of those with more than three visitors achieved average or above average grades in vocational courses, only 19% of those without contacts performed this well. This relationship, however, did not hold true with success in academic education, as all groups achieved at about the same level in that area.

Maintaining outside contacts seems to have some relationship to the regularity of attending church services. While only 14% of the isolates were regular goers, 22% of all the other groups combined attended on a weekly basis. Those without contacts along with those only receiving mail seemed to participate in and benefit less from group counseling. Only 26% of the isolates were listed as actively participating and benefiting from counseling compared to 40% for the total group. Similarly 41% of the isolates were listed as definitely not benefiting compared to 34% of the total.

TABLE 16  
 INMATE PARTICIPATION IN PRISON PROGRAMS BY THE  
 NUMBER OF VISITORS RECEIVED AND TYPE OF PROGRAM  
 (In Percentages)

	Caseworkers' Overall Evaluation						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
<b>Inmate Participation</b>							
No Information	7%	9%	6%	11%	5%	8%	8%
Time Not Used Wisely	23	22	22	20	23	24	22
Neutral	26	27	24	20	25	21	24

Positive Use of Time	44	42	48	49	47	47	46
Total	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
	<b>Work Record in Institution</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
No Information	12%	6%	3%	4%	7%	3%	5%
Above Average	40	46	45	40	40	31	41
Average or Below	48	48	52	56	53	66	54
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
	<b>Vocational Training</b>						
<b>Inmate Participation</b>	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
No Information	17%	5%	6%	3%	5%	6%	5%
No Training Attempted	61	65	68	66	61	58	66
Attempted but Not Successful	3	7	6	7	7	7	6
Attempted	19	23	20	24	27	29	23

with Average or Above Average Success							
Total	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
	<b>Academic School</b>						
<b>Inmate Participation</b>	No Contact	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
No Information	12%	8%	12%	11%	13%	13%	11%
No School Attempted	46	46	48	41	39	41	44
Attempted but Not Successful	8	6	6	8	11	8	8
Attempted with Average or Above Average Success	34	40	34	40	37	38	37
Total	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)

<b>Inmate Participation</b>	<b>Religious Attendance</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
No Information	16%	11%	9%	9%	12%	10%	11%
No Church Attendance	55	48	48	54	55	52	51
Seldom Attends	15	17	20	13	10	17	16
Regular Attendance	14	24	23	24	23	21	22
Total	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
<b>Inmate Participation</b>	<b>Group Counseling</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
No Information	18%	14%	11%	5%	12%	9%	11%
Active Participation and Benefits	26	38	44	47	37	41	40

Little Participation but Benefits	15	12	14	16	18	15	15
Little or No Participation and No Benefits	41	36	31	32	33	35	34
Total	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
	<b>Self-Improvement Groups</b>						
<b>Inmate Participation</b>	No Contact	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
No Record of Participation	66%	57%	46%	48%	47%	38%	50%
Alcoholics Anonymous	24	36	44	41	43	51	41
All Other Clubs	10	7	10	11	10	11	9
Total	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)

Self-improvement groups were divided into Alcoholics Anonymous and a residual category including such things as Gavel Club, Teen Challenge, or Yoke Fellows. While exactly half of the inmates in the sample had not participated (on record at least) in any of these groups, there are wide variations in participation among inmates with different numbers of contacts. Two-thirds of the isolates were not involved in any self-improvement group, while almost two-thirds of those receiving four or more visits were involved in such groups. Almost all the difference between the isolates and the others,



<b>Evaluation</b>	Contacts	Only	Visitor	Visitors	Visitors	Visitors	
No Information	59%	56%	49%	56%	53%	50%	53%
Good Parole Plans	9	9	21	20	25	29	19
Neutral Parole Plans	9	14	15	12	10	15	13
Poor Parole Plans	23	21	15	12	12	6	15
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
Caseworker Predictes Parole Failure	14%	13%	6%	5%	7%	5%	8%
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
	<b>Job Prospects</b>						
<b>Evaluation</b>	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
Claims Membership	32%	23%	32%	24%	37%	30%	29%

in Union							
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
Current Job Offer on File	15%	18%	21%	23%	29%	34%	23%
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
	<b>Account Money in Inmate's Account</b>						
<b>Available Money</b>	No Contact	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
Less than \$20.00	43%	36%	26%	30%	33%	29%	32%
\$20.00 - \$79.00	34	43	49	48	46	40	44
\$80.00 or More	23	21	25	22	21	31	24
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)

	<b>California Drivers' License</b>						
<b>Status of License</b>	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total

No Information	12%	8%	8%	3%	2%	6%	6%
Has Valid License	15	10	19	16	14	17	15
Never had a California License	18	13	6	8	9	8	10
Expired but is Renewable	34	38	38	37	40	40	38
Outstanding Tickets or Other Problems to Getting a License	8	19	24	24	30	26	23
No License, Renewability Unknown	13	12	5	12	5	3	8
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)
<b>Living Arrangements</b>	<b>Proposed Residence</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total
Establish Independent Residence	61%	49%	34%	29%	19%	14%	34%
Live with	12	18	30	34	43	39	29

Parents							
Live with Wife	9	7	21	17	22	23	16
Live with Brother or Sister	5	10	8	7	8	12	8
Other, No Information	13	16	7	13	8	12	12
Total Number	(74)	(192)	(170)	(170)	(126)	(111)	(843)

There is no clear relationship between claiming union membership and the number of visitors received. A different picture emerges when the actual job offers on file are the focus. The number with such offers increases steadily from 15% to 34% as the number of visitors increases. Each additional visitor appears to increase the likelihood of receiving a job offer by between 2% and 5%.

Those without contacts and, to a lesser extent, those receiving mail only were also more prevalent among those with very little money in their accounts. The actual differences in the availability of money for parole are even greater, since those with outside contacts have a ready source of loans upon release. However, for the isolated inmate the prison account will usually represent all the money he will have available aside from the small release allowance. Forty-three percent of the isolates in this sample had less than \$20.00 available at the time of the Parole Board hearing compared to only 29% of the four or more visitor group.

The "no contact" group was more likely never to have had a California driver's license but also less likely to have a license which was encumbered with such things as outstanding traffic tickets. About one-fourth of those receiving visitors had such licensing problems.

The major difference in parole plans between the six groups, as might be expected, was in residence plans. The majority of those with no contacts and half of those receiving only letters planned to live alone in such places as boarding houses, motels, and apartments, while only 14% of those with more than three visitors planned to live alone. Between 30% and 43% of those with visitors were going to live with parents, and over 20% were hoping to reside with their wives. Residing with parents accounted for 12% of the "no contact" group and with wives 9%. One might ask, however, how realistic such plans were in view of the fact that these parents and wives weren't even writing letters to the inmates. Each additional visitor decreased by 5% or more the number who planned to establish independent residence.

What difference does the fact that those with strong family ties have better parole plans make in the actual granting of parole dates? To examine this question, the authors computed the average time for each offense beyond the minimum for eligibility for parole served by all those paroled from the institution during the prior three years. A comparison was then made of the time served to the Parole Board hearing for each inmate in the study with the average times served. Since the Parole Board at the time of the study was granting parole dates up to 12 months in advance, anyone who was within 12 months of the average time was considered to be a likely candidate for parole. For example, the average robbery case paroled during the previous three years served 22 months more than his minimum term. Thus, if a robber in the study sample had served 15 months more than his minimum at the time of his hearing, he was considered a good candidate for parole, since a parole date seven months in advance would have given him the average prison term. Data on the relationship between the strength of family ties and the receiving of parole dates are presented in Table 18. Parole violators appearing before the Board for consideration of reparole are excluded from the table.

For those inmates who had served at least the average amount of time for their offenses, the number of outside contacts and the associated differences in the quality of parole plans seemed to make little difference. Those without contacts were as likely to

be granted parole as those with two or three visitors (49%). On the other hand, having family ties proved to be very important for those inmates appearing before the Board with less than the average time served and therefore a lower probability of being paroled. While only 17% of the "no contact" group with less time served received parole dates, over 30% of the other groups received them. For the "isolate." having served enough time increased his chances for parole by almost three times, while it less than doubled the chances of the groups with outside contacts.

TABLE 18  
 INMATES GRANTED PAROLE DATES BY  
 NUMBER OF VISITORS RECEIVED AND TIME SERVED  
 COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE  
 (In Percentages)

<b>Time Served to Hearing</b>	<b>Parole Dates Granted</b>						
	No Contacts	Letters Only	One Visitor	Two Visitors	Three Visitors	Four+ Visitors	Total Average
Served the Average* Time or More	49%	61%	56%	49%	50%	57%	54%
Total Number	(35)	(84)	(78)	(77)	(54)	(51)	(379)
Served Less than the Average Time	17%	27%	23%	36%	37%	32%	30%
Total Number	(12)	(26)	(31)	(33)	(27)	(22)	(151)

\* Compared to the average of similar cases paroled from the same institution during the preceding three years. Parole violators excluded from both groups.

### **Summary and Discussion**

The data presented in this chapter support some hypotheses and refute others. Prison officials may be disappointed to learn that even numerous contacts with family and friends have little value as a controlling influence on behavior. A few differences in behavior were noted in program areas, but these differences did not appear to be very important. The major difference between the six groups, representing varying levels of outside contacts, was in their ability to get together constructive parole plans, as reflected in having a definite job to go to, a place to stay with family members, and some money to begin parole. These more constructive parole plans, in turn, seemed to increase the Parole Board's willingness to take a chance on those with numerous visitors when less than the average time had been served.

The authors expected to find a negative relationship between the number of disciplinary reports and the number of visitors. Conventional wisdom points to the family as the focus of social control. If crime in general or prison rule violations in particular are viewed as breakdowns in social control, then strong family ties should help shape the inmate's behavior in a conforming direction. However, with the exception of a small group of isolated individuals with three or more disciplinaries, the anticipated effects were not present.

Such expectations may have been unjustified in the first place and based more on value judgments of family life than on logic. After all, the same inmates who are now receiving visits must have had much closer contact with their families before being incarcerated. Such contact didn't seem to have the effect of inducing conformity then, at least not enough to keep them from committing crimes and going to prison.\* (\* Suggested in conversation by F.W. Forden, Regional Administrator, Parole and Community Services Division.) The possibility also exists that for some inmates maintaining close family ties

can make "doing time" very hard. This could lead to psychological anguish and depression which, in turn, could create custodial problems. It is not too difficult to imagine an inmate in this position becoming short tempered, disagreeable, and uncooperative. Also, in some cases the relationships in question played an important part in the inmate's original criminal behavior either by directly reinforcing criminal values or creating conflicts of such a nature that non-conforming behavior resulted. Where turbulence in a home has contributed to delinquent patterns or such patterns were sanctioned by siblings and friends, the continuation of these relationships shouldn't do much to encourage conformity to prison rules. The importance of this is emphasized in data presented by Glaser.<sup>2/</sup> Parolees who were living with their wives had a 29% higher rate of success on parole when no discord with the wife was reported. Similarly, those living with parents and experiencing discord had 7% more failures than in homes where no discord was reported.

Another process should be considered. It may be that many inmates simply compartmentalize their institutional experience from their outside relationships to such an extent that neither is allowed to seriously influence the other. The Sunday afternoon visits and the Wednesday night letter writing may occupy their own special place and be viewed as irrelevant to the daily prison routine. In a way this interpretation is supported by the general absence of increased program participation by inmates who have strong outside ties. There should have been a considerable difference between those without contacts and those with multiple visitors if the family was a strong general motivating force. As we saw, however, the only program areas in which increased contact led to increased participation were exactly those activities in which the family might have a very direct and vested interest, vocational training and Alcoholics Anonymous. Certainly parents who were previously supporting a son because of his lack of job skills would be greatly interested in his completing a vocational course and might be expected to bring pressure to bear on the son to achieve this end. Also, the wife of the alcoholic inmate might have a strong interest in his attending Alcoholics Anonymous and might even make a continuation of their relationship contingent on his further participation.

In contrast to the minor distinctions found in institutional performance between those with few and those with many social ties, fairly large differences were noted in their ability to secure job offers and establish constructive residence plans. The better plans of those with more social ties are taken cognizance of by the Parole Board in granting release dates. The importance to parole success of having a firm job offer is open to question, but convincing evidence has been gathered in support of the importance to parole success of being paroled to residence with a wife, parents, or family members. Among male adult federal prisoners released in 1956, 49% of those who planned to live alone subsequently failed on parole compared to only 25% who went to live with wives and 35% who left to reside with parents.<sup>3/</sup> In a three year follow-up study of residents released to outpatient status from the California Department of Corrections' institution for addicts under civil commitment, Bass found that those who lived with legal wives performed significantly better. While only 21% of the former addicts who were residing with their wives could be expected on the basis of the performance of all releases to complete three years in outpatient status, 37% actually reached this standard. <sup>4/</sup>

In this chapter, it has been pointed out how better parole plans are associated with more numerous visitors. The Parole Board, in turn, tends to give the cases with better parole plans special consideration at a time when they have only a remote chance for parole. Both of these judgments are based on the prediction that the better plans, and the more numerous contacts which go with them, are associated with better parole outcome. The following chapter investigates the relationships of these factors to parole outcome.

1/ Lembo, J., "The Relationship of Institutional Disciplinary Infractions and the Inmates' Personal Contact with the Outside Community." Florida Division of Corrections (Feb.) 1969, p. 6, mimeographed.

2/ Glaser, Daniel, The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System, New York: The Bobs-Merril Co., Inc., 1964, p. 379.

3/ Glaser, *ibid.*

4/ Bass, Richard, Narcotic Addict Outpatient Program, Research Report No. 36, Research Division, California Department of Corrections, Sacramento, California, September 1969.

## **Chapter VI**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

#### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Norman Holt**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Southern Conservation Center**

**Donald Miller**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Los Angeles Research Unit**

**Research Division**

**California Department of Corrections**

**Sacramento, California**

**January 1972**

#### **CHAPTER VI. INMATE SOCIAL TIES AND PAROLE OUTCOME**

The preceding chapters have dealt with the variety of inmate social ties and their

relationship or lack of relationship to the inmate's institutional behavior and parole plans. In this chapter the focus will be on the relationship of these social ties to the parole experience of the inmate. Previous studies have produced evidence that marital status and family ties are important factors in parole success, with more parole success noted for those men receiving the greatest amounts of correspondence and visits while in prison. I/

To investigate this relationship a parole follow-up was conducted on 412 men who were paroled from the Southern Conservation Center for at least 12 months as of February 1971 and who appeared before the Parole Board in the fiscal year 1968-69. Three categories of parole outcome were used in the analysis: (1) "no parole difficulties" meaning no known arrests or violations; (2) "minor difficulties," including arrests without convictions, misdemeanor convictions, fines, and absconding from supervision; and (3) "serious difficulties," referring to returns to prison as a result of technical violations or new felony commitments.

### **Visiting Patterns and Parole Outcome**

In Table 19 it can be seen that the number of visitors received by the parolee while he was in prison is related to how well he fared on parole. In general those men with a greater number of visitors tended to experience less difficulty on parole than did those with fewer visitors. With the possible exception of those inmates who had four or more visitors, there is a steady progression of success varying from about 50 percent with no parole difficulty for those with no visitors to almost 70 percent with no parole difficulty for those with three visitors.

TABLE 19  
ONE YEAR PAROLE OUTCOME BY  
NUMBER OF VISITORS  
(In Percentages)

	<b>Parole Difficulties</b>
--	----------------------------

<b>Number of Visitors</b>	None	Minor	Serious	Total	
	%	%	%	%	N
No Correspondence and No Visitors	50	38	12	100	(16)
Correspondence Only	48	42	10	100	(95)
One Visitor	53	38	9	100	(81)
Two Visitors	58	32	10	100	(85)
Three Visitors	70	28	2	100	(53)
Four Visitors	66	32	2	100	(61)
Total*	57	36	7	100	(391)

\* The number of cases in the following tables varies somewhat depending on how many of the 412 cases studied were removed due to lack of information.

While the number of prison returns is rather small, it is interesting to note that those parolees with three or more prison visitors have approximately a two percent return to prison rate as compared to a ten percent rate for those with two visitors or less.

This finding that those with fewer social ties tend to become involved in more serious difficulties including new commitments would seem to bear out the hypothesis noted earlier in Chapter IV that multiple termers tend to have fewer social ties in general.

Beginning with an examination of information relative to the parolees' immediate release program and a consideration of some general background factors, the rest of this chapter will explore the contribution of other factors to the previously reported associations between visiting and correspondence patterns and parole outcome.

## Release Money and Parole Outcome

One factor of considerable importance to parole outcome, particularly in the immediate post-release period, is the financial solvency of the parolee. Presumably if he has enough money to tide himself over until he finds employment, the parolee avoids the necessity of committing new property crimes. In California the amount of money the man is released with varies depending on his opportunities to work and save money in the institution and also on the possible contributions made by family and others.

Table 20 indicates that among those men receiving two or more visitors the amount of release money is not associated with parole outcome. Among those men with only one or no visitors, the percentage experiencing no parole difficulties increases from 42 percent for those released with less than twenty dollars to 57 percent for men with release funds of eighty dollars or more. It should be noted, however, that in every financial category men with more visitors are more successful than those with fewer visitors.

TABLE 20  
ONE YEAR PAROLE OUTCOME BY NUMBER OF  
VISITORS AND AMOUNT OF RELEASE MONEY\*  
(In Percentages)

	Parole Difficulties				
	None	Minor	Serious	Total	
	%	%	%	%	N
<b>0-1 Visitor Release Money</b>					
Less than \$20	42	42	16	100	(48)
\$20 - \$79	51	43	6	100	(92)
\$80 or More	57	35	8	100	(51)
<b>2+ Visitors Release Money</b>					

Less than \$20	63	35	2	100	(49)
\$20 - \$79	61	31	8	100	(92)
\$80 or More	66	29	5	100	(55)

\* The amounts of money cited refer to the inmate's account balance at the time of his Board hearing. Typically parole dates are within six months of the hearing date so the amounts at the time of the hearing and at release should not vary appreciably.

This evidence would seem to suggest that having close social ties with others serves the released offender as an economic buffer which reduces his need for money from other sources.

### **Release Job and Parole Outcome**

Having a definite job on release is usually considered to be a facilitator of adjustment on parole and, as shown in earlier chapters, is more characteristic of men with more social ties. It is apparent overall, however, that only 28 percent of this sample of releases had definite jobs awaiting them.<sup>2/</sup>

In Table 21 it can be seen that those with two or more visitors exceeded those with fewer visitors in terms of percentage of clear parole records, regardless of whether a definite job was available at release. Also, it should be noted that having a definite job offer was not associated with parole outcome when the number of visitors received was controlled. Given the same number of visitors, those with no jobs were as likely to have clear parole records the first year as were those with a job waiting for them.

TABLE 21  
ONE YEAR PAROLE OUTCOME BY NUMBER OF  
VISITORS AND JOB OFFER AT RELEASE  
(In Percentages)

	<b>Parole Difficulties</b>				
	None	Minor	Serious	Total	
	%	%	%	%	N
<b>0-1 Visitor</b>					
No Job Offer	50	40	10	100	(147)
Def. Job Offer	51	40	9	100	(45)
<b>2+ Visitors</b>					
No Job Offer	62	32	6	100	(135)
Def. Job Offer	65	30	5	100	(64)

Apparently having a job does not noticeably contribute to a better parole outcome when the variable of inmate social ties is held constant and hence does not help interpret the overall association observed between strength of social ties and parole outcome.

### **Planned Place of Residence and Parole Outcome**

Another item of interest in the analysis of parole outcome is the place where and the person with whom the parolee resides after release. Several studies have indicated that place of residence is associated with parole outcome. The usual finding is that men who live alone after release are the most likely to fail or recidivate, while those living with parents or wives are significantly less likely to violate parole.<sup>3/</sup>

In Table 22 it can be seen that men with stronger social ties, those with two or more visitors, experience less difficulty in their first year of parole than do those with fewer visitors, regardless of type of residence. Generally the least difficulty for both groups is observed among those released to reside with parents or wives, while a greater amount

of difficulty is associated with living alone or with siblings or others. However, these differences are small and rather insignificant.

TABLE 22  
ONE YEAR PAROLE OUTCOME BY NUMBER OF  
VISITORS AND PLACE OF RESIDENCE  
(In Percentages)

	Parole Difficulties				
	None	Minor	Serious	Total	
	%	%	%	%	N
<b>0-1 Visitor</b>					
Alone	51	40	9	100	(75)
Parents or Spouse	53	39	8	100	(74)
Other	44	44	12	100	(41)
<b>2+ Visitors</b>					
Alone	60	32	8	100	(47)
Parents or Spouse	67	28	5	100	(117)
Other	59	38	3	100	(34)

As expected the men with more visitors were overrepresented in the parent-spouse residence category, a fact which may well inflate the observed relationship of such housing to parole outcome. Indeed by combining both groups and looking only at place of residence, significantly higher rates of parole success are noted for those residing with parents or spouses, some 61 percent with no difficulty as compared to about 53

percent with no difficulty among those released to reside alone or with siblings and others.

**Termer Status and Parole Outcome**

In Chapter IV, it was speculated that the fact that multiple termers tend to have fewer social ties or contacts may reflect the fact that men with fewer ties tend to get into more serious trouble on parole. When termer status of the inmate is controlled as shown in Table 23, it can be seen that men with more social ties have fewer difficulties on parole within each category with the possible exception of those with three or more prior commitments. At the same time first termers experience lesser amounts of difficulty on parole regardless of the number of social ties.

Although first termers do tend to have a somewhat greater number of social ties overall, this does not account for the fact that more numerous ties are associated with fewer parole difficulties. Further evidence bearing on the relationship of social ties and termer status to parole outcome indicates that first termers with few social ties are more likely to recidivate than are those with more extensive social ties.

TABLE 23  
 ONE YEAR PAROLE OUTCOME BY NUMBER OF  
 VISITORS AND TERMER STATUS  
 (In Percentages)

	<b>Parole Difficulties</b>				
	None	Minor	Serious	Total	
	%	%	%	%	N
<b>0-1 Visitor</b>					
First Term	58	35	7	100	(105)
Second Term	44	44	12	100	(32)

Three or More Terms	30	55	15	100	(33)
<b>2+ Visitors</b>					
First Term	66	29	5	100	(129)
Second Term	61	33	6	100	(36)
Three or More Terms	35	47	18	100	(17)

### Base Expectancy Scores

The Base Expectancy measure is designed to predict success on parole and is derived from eleven items relating to the background of the inmate. The scoring system is such that the higher the score the greater the likelihood of a successful parole.<sup>4/</sup>

With the possible exception of the lowest Base Expectancy Score category (00-32), it can be seen in Table 24 that men with more social ties have a history of fewer parole difficulties than do those with less extensive social ties. In the case of the lowest BE group, the difference is small, about four percent, and not significant. Nevertheless, it is in the expected direction.

The differences among Base Expectancy Score groups are comparatively small and inconsistent among those with less extensive social ties. In contrast, the differences are larger and more consistent among those with more numerous social ties. The largest difference among BE sub-groups in the percentage of cases having no parole difficulty was 13 among those with no or one visitor compared to 19 among those with two or more visitors. Also the low BE group exhibits the lowest return-to-prison figure among those with one or no visitors, 7 percent, whereas the lowest return-to-prison rate for those with two or more visitors is noted in the case of the highest BE group, 2 percent, which is the expected finding.

TABLE 24  
 PAROLE DIFFICULTY BY NUMBER OF  
 VISITORS AND BASE EXPECTANCY SCORE  
 (In Percentages)\*

<b>BE Score</b>	<b>Parole Difficulties</b>				
	None	Minor	Serious	Total	
	%	%	%	%	N
<b>0 -1 Visitor</b>					
Low	49	44	7	100	(61)
Medium	45	42	13	100	(67)
High	58	34	8	100	(62)
<b>2+ Visitors</b>					
Low	53	39	8	100	(49)
Medium	61	32	7	100	(69)
High	72	26	2	100	(81)

\* A three-fold classification of BE scores was used: Low = 00-32, Medium = 33-45, and High = 46-76.

In short, it would seem that the relationship of inmate social ties to parole outcome is clearer in the moderate and high Base Expectancy score ranges and that the Base Expectancy itself is a more effective predictor for those with stronger social ties than it is for those with weaker ties. Further research is needed to clarify these findings.

**Summary**

A follow-up study of 12 months on parole of 412 men released from the Southern Conservation Center in 1968-69 produced the following major findings:

In general, those men with more persons visiting them during their last 12 months in prison experienced significantly fewer and less serious difficulties in their first year of parole than did those with fewer visitors.

The amount of money available upon release was not associated with parole outcome for the men with stronger social ties. These men uniformly fared better on parole than did those with lesser social ties. The amount of release money, however, was associated with parole outcome for those with fewer ties, with more money associated with fewer parole difficulties. This indicates that social ties may operate as economic buffers.

Although those men with more visitors also tended to have definite jobs awaiting them, parole outcome was not related to whether jobs were waiting in the case of either those with fewer visitors or those with more.

Men receiving more visitors in prison had better parole outcomes regardless of initial place of residence, although in general those men released to residence with parents or wives tended to have less difficulty on parole than did those released to other types of residence.

Men with more visitors also exhibited fewer difficulties on parole regardless of term status, although the differences were rather small in the cases of men with three or more prior prison terms. In general, first termers experienced fewer parole difficulties than did multiple termers.

Men with more prison visitors experienced fewer difficulties on parole regardless of Base Expectancy score. In the lower score range (00-32) the difference was again rather small, and the Base Expectancy measure seemed more predictive of outcome for those with more numerous visitors.

These findings would seem to indicate the significant role played by inmate ties with family and friends in the correctional rehabilitation process. While this matter is deserving of much further study, the findings of this study would seem to corroborate the assumptions underlying such programs as the Family Visiting and Temporary Release programs which are considered in the next chapter.

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1/ Glaser, Daniel, *The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System*, Bobbs-Merrill, Inc., 1964, p. 366.

2/ The figures quoted refer to job offers at time of the Parole Board hearing not as of time of release.

3/ Glaser, Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

4/ For details of the Base Expectancy measure, see Don Gottfredson and Jack Bonds, *A Manual for Intake Base Expectancy Scoring*, California Department of Corrections, Research Division, March 1969 (mimeo). The BE 61A referred to takes into account the "favorability of the living arrangements" of the inmate prior to his commitment. Therefore, the Base Expectancy measure, to some extent, parallels the social ties variable used in this study.

## **Chapter VII**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

#### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Norman Holt**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Southern Conservation Center**

**Donald Miller**  
**Associate Social Research Analyst**  
**Los Angeles Research Unit**

**Research Division**  
**California Department of Corrections**  
**Sacramento, California**  
**January 1972**

CHAPTER VII. INMATE ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY VISITING AND  
TEMPORARY RELEASE AND THE PAROLE OUTCOME OF PARTICIPANTS

Marital visiting programs for prisoners have not gained such acceptance in American penal systems, nor do they seem likely to achieve much popularity in the foreseeable future. This may be partly due to six problems inherent in such visits recently discussed by Johns.<sup>1/</sup> These objections to conjugal visits can be summarized as follows: (1) few prisoners can participate, (2) lack of adequate facilities, (3) difficult program to administer, (4) only meager support among administrators, (5) the demeaning sexual nature of the visits, and (6) unwanted pregnancies. In addition many prison administrators have long felt that those inmates who couldn't participate would become more embittered, begrudge those who were eligible, and create a considerable management problem for the institution.

In 1968 the California Department of Corrections initiated two pilot programs at the California Correctional Institution which seem to have overcome some of these difficulties. Both programs are aimed at maintaining the inmate's family ties and providing some preparation for his eventual release back into the community, and have since been extended to other institutions in the system. One, the "Family Visiting Program," allows selected inmates to spend up to two days in relatively unsupervised

private visits on the prison grounds with members of their immediate family, i.e., wife, children and/or parents. This represents the first such program in any major American prison, 2/ although other countries have long used programs of this general sort.3/ The second program, the "Temporary Release Program," allows inmates about to be paroled to make visits to their home communities in order to arrange jobs and housing, spend time with their families, and otherwise prepare themselves for release.4/

At the time of this study Temporary Releases were limited to three per man, each for 72 hours or less. These restrictions have since been liberalized, however. While this also represents a major program innovation among the larger correctional systems in the United States, home furloughs and leaves have been features of correctional programs in some of the less-populated states and other countries.5/

The importance of the family in the rehabilitation of the ex-offender has been noted,6/ and studies have shown some association of success on parole with being married or residing with family members while on parole. Glaser found, for example, that adult parolees living alone were twice as likely to fail on parole as those living with their wives.

In addition he found a strong relationship between "family interest" and parole success. A sample of releases from federal prisons during 1956 were rated in terms of the degree of family contact while in prison. Their performance on parole was then analyzed in terms of these ratings. Glaser concludes:

The success rates varied directly with the degree of family interest indicated before release, from a high of 71 percent success for those whom we classified as having "active" family interest (28 percent of the sample), to a low of 50 percent success for those whom the reports indicated received no communication from relatives (only 3 percent of all the cases).7/

Morris concluded, after an extensive investigation of both prisons and jails, that a substantial number of family relationships are subject to severe stress due to the

disturbance brought on by the long separation, the criminality or deviance itself or both.  
8/

In the preceding chapter, the importance to parole outcome of maintaining strong family ties while in prison was discussed. In almost every comparison made, inmates with more visitors did better on parole than those with fewer visitors.

The California Correctional Institution is located outside of Tehachapi in a rural area approximately 150 miles north of Los Angeles. It is a combined "minimum" and "medium" security institution housing some 1,200 inmates in dorm type housing. The "minimum" portion of the prison has a perimeter of fencing while the "medium" side has towers and more secure fencing. Several vocational and educational programs are offered.

### **The Family Visiting Program**

A large modern duplex formerly used for staff residences is utilized for the visiting. Each unit has three bedrooms and is completely furnished. Transportation costs and food are provided by the inmate and his family. The Family Visiting Program is limited to those inmates who have: (1) at least six months of clear conduct, (2) a record of satisfactory accomplishment in their individualized programs, (3) no incidents of escape or contraband in their records, and (4) reached their minimum eligible release dates.<sup>9/</sup> The Temporary Release Program was authorized by Section 2690 of the State Penal Code.<sup>10/</sup> Participants must be within 90 days of their parole dates or already have had their case referred to the field. Travel under this program is limited to California.

The present study was conducted to help evaluate the impact and effectiveness of these programs, and concerns itself with the response of the inmates to the programs, a matter of some importance to many prison officials and some criminologists.<sup>11/</sup> Apart from moralistic objections, many experts are of the opinion that programs such as the Family Visiting Program would prove disruptive to institutional operations, because those not able to participate in the program would object to this differential treatment.

The next section of this chapter will therefore focus on the reactions of inmates, either favorable or unfavorable to each of the programs as well as examining some of their comments and suggestions for improving the programs.

### **Method of the Study**

A systematic sample of 105 names was drawn from the total minimum custody population who had been at the California Correctional Institution at least three months. After some pre-testing, a questionnaire was administered in March 1969 to a group of 100 men and all but two agreed to participate, giving a total of 98 men in our final sample. The other five men selected were unavailable for various reasons.

### **Findings**

With regard to the Family Visiting Program, it can be seen in Table 25 that when asked their personal opinion of the program, almost 88 percent of the sample approved to some degree and only about 4 percent disapproved.

TABLE 25  
INMATE APPROVAL OF THE  
FAMILY VISITING PROGRAM  
(In Percentages)

<b>Approval</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Approve	67
Approve	21
Disapproval	1
Strongly Disapprove	3
No Opinion	8
Total	100
N = 98	

Eight men either reported no opinion or did not respond. It would seem clear on the basis of this evidence that the program enjoys a great measure of acceptance by the inmate population as measured by their approval of the program concept.

In an effort to determine what, if any, effect the larger inmate culture or population might have on the acceptance and utilization of the Family Visiting Program, each respondent was asked to evaluate how he thought **most** inmates felt. With a few exceptions this was done, and the data in Table 26 show that the individual's perceptions of the group view, if anything, were that it was even more favorable than his own view of the program. Almost 91 percent reported that most inmates approved of the program. Eight men gave no opinion. The program then does not appear to be in any conflict with the so-called "con-culture" or for that matter with any sizable group within the prison population.

TABLE 26  
GENERALIZED INMATE ACCEPTANCE OF  
THE FAMILY VISITING PROGRAM  
(In Percentages)

<b>Approval</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Approve	73
Approve	18
Disapprove	0
Strongly Disapprove	0
No Opinion	9
Total	100
N = 98	

Another measure of the acceptance of a program is the extent to which members of the client population entertain plans to participate in the program. The members of the sample were asked whether they would participate if they were eligible. Table 27 shows their responses to this question.

While plans to participate in the program are not quite as prevalent as approval of the program, they still represent further evidence of strong support for the program. It is also instructive to examine more closely the characteristics of the nine men reporting they will definitely not participate. One man is only a month from his parole and is already utilizing the Temporary Release Program, two others are out-of-state cases, two have no families, and the remaining four have little if any contact with their families as measured by the frequency of their mail and visits. It would seem clear, then, that not desiring to participate is not so much a measure of disapproval but rather a matter of these respondents not being in a position to use the program.

TABLE 27  
PLANS OF INMATES TO PARTICIPATE  
IN THE FAMILY VISITING PROGRAM  
(In Percentages)

<b>Participation</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, Definitely	55
Yes, Probably	22
No, Probably	4
No, Definitely	9
Don't Know	10
Total	100
N = 98	

Comments and, suggestions about the program were solicited also and seem to show a very uncritical perspective held by most inmates concerning this program. First of all, it was noteworthy that no real negative criticism of the Family Visiting Program was made. Instead two types of recommendation were made. One tended to be made by married men, some of whom had already participated and usually involved the suggestion that longer stays or more frequent stays be permitted. The second class of recommendation, usually made by unmarried men, suggested a broadening of the eligibility criteria to include all or most of the men there with some asking that common-law unions be recognized as a form of marriage, especially those of long standing where children were involved. A few men went so far as to suggest legitimizing visits by girl friends and even permitting visits by prostitutes. More recently the Criminal Justice Committee of the California Assembly (lower house of the State Legislature) voted to allow anyone on an inmate's visiting list to participate in Family Visiting Programs, including girl friends. 12/

A number of men made no comments, and these tended to be the same men who did not plan to use the program due to lack of family in the area or for other reasons. With regard to broadening and liberalizing the eligibility requirements, various measures were suggested ranging from making all men eligible upon admission to making eligible those men who have served their minimum terms with good records. It is interesting to note that the administration did revise the criteria so that more men were eligible for the program.13/

### **The Temporary Release Program**

The second new program available at the California Correctional Institution, and at other institutions also, is the "Temporary Release Program" which allows selected men to visit their families on 3-day passes. When asked whether they approved of this program, 92 men, or about 94 percent of the sample indicated either strong approval or approval of this idea. (See Table 28.) This would seem to indicate even greater acceptance of this program than of the Family Visiting Program. It should be pointed out this program can be used by single men as well as married men to line up jobs, etc., in their home communities; so perhaps this explains its slightly greater popularity.

TABLE 28  
 REACTIONS OF INMATES TO THE  
 TEMPORARY RELEASE PROGRAM  
 (In Percentages)

<b>Approval</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Approve	77
Approve	17
Disapprove	1
Strongly Disapprove	1
No Opinion	4
Total	100
N = 98	

When asked how they thought most inmates feel about this program, 95 percent indicated the majority favored this program also (Table 29). In fact not one person reported that most inmates disapproved, indicating again the high degree of acceptance enjoyed by this program.

TABLE 29  
 GENERALIZED INMATE ACCEPTANCE OF THE  
 TEMPORARY RELEASE PROGRAM  
 (In Percentages)

<b>Approval</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Approve	76

Approve	19
Disapprove	0
Strongly Disapprove	0
No Opinion	5
Total	100
N = 98	

When asked if they would participate (Table 30), 82 men indicated they would either definitely or probably participate if eligible, and only 7 men indicated they would definitely not participate. As in the case of the Family Visiting Program, these seven men were men expecting to be released to other states or were men with no family to speak of. Indeed six of the seven were the same men mentioned earlier in conjunction with the Family Visiting Program. When the 98 men in the sample were asked for their comments and/or suggestions on improving the Temporary Release Program, no negative criticisms were expressed. Instead they either saw it as "fine" or merely asked for more of the same, such as longer stays, state financial support, more frequent stays, or a liberalizing of the criteria for eligibility.

TABLE 30  
 PLANS OF INMATES TO PARTICIPATE  
 IN THE TEMPORARY RELEASE PROGRAM  
 (In Percentages)

<b>Participation</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, Definitely	68
Yes, Probably	16
No, Probably	3

No, Definitely	7
Don't Know	6
Total	100
N = 98	

### **Program Participation and Parole Success**

If the reactions of inmates to these programs is a crucial ingredient for the programs' success, the ultimate test of success must be their effects on recidivism. This part of the chapter concerns itself with the initial parole experiences of men who participated in the Family Visiting Program and the Temporary Release Program at the California Correctional Institution during the period of June 1968 through July 1969. Participants and non-participants in these programs will be compared in terms of a one-year parole follow-up, and selected personal characteristics of the members of the groups will be compared to rule these out as an explanation of differences in parole outcome.

The sample is composed of 192 releases from the California Correctional Institution, 28 who had participated in the Family Visiting Program, 44 who had participated in the Temporary Release Program, and 129 from the same institution who had not participated in either program. Of the 63 who participated in one or the other of the two programs, nine had been in both. With respect to degree of participation in the two programs, the number of times inmates visited with their families ranged from one to eight visits, with a median of three visits per participant. For the Temporary Release Program, all participants received either one or two 72-hour furloughs prior to their release to parole, with the majority receiving only one.

Before examining the parole performance of participants and non-participants, it is first necessary to establish their comparability. Basically the concern here is with the question of differences between those who use one or the other programs and those

who do not and how these differences might affect the observed recidivism rates of the respective groups. The two populations were compared on six important items.

No major differences were found on these six items which would favor better parole performance for participants over non-participants. On two items, "commitment offense" and "prior narcotic use," the non-participants had a slight advantage in terms of predicted parole outcome. Participants were somewhat more likely to have used narcotics (56% to 39%) and to have been committed for drug law violations (29% to 24%). While the age distribution of the two groups varied, the variations were highly unlikely to affect the parole outcomes. Ethnic minorities were representative in each population as was the proportion of first termers. The median scores on Base Expectancy scale were almost equal (39.8 and 41.3), further evidencing comparable populations.

### **Findings**

Table 31 provides a comparison of the parole outcome of participants and non-participants. There appears to be little difference in the actual rate of return to prison. Seven parolees from the participant group were returned to prison within twelve months for an 11 percent rate compared to 15 percent for the non-participants. If this small difference held up over a much larger sample, however, it could be significant. Major differences can be noted between the two groups, however, in the percentage who are arrest-free.

Increased program participation appears to be consistently related to an absence of difficulty on parole. Sixty-seven percent of those involved with both programs were arrest-free compared to only 42 percent of the non-participants.

TABLE 31  
ONE YEAR PAROLE OUTCOME FOR PAROLEES PARTICIPATING  
IN FAMILY VISITING OR TEMPORARY RELEASE COMPARED TO

NON-PARTICIPANTS BY MOST SERIOUS DISPOSITION  
(In Percentages)

Type of Participation	Parole Outcome (Most Serious Disposition)				
	No Difficulty	Minor Difficulty	Return to Prison	Total	
No Participation	42%	43%	15%	100	(129)
Family Visiting	55	28	17	100	(18)
Temporary Release	60	29	11	100	(35)
Both Family Visiting and Temporary Release	67	33	0	100	(9)
Total Percentage	48	38	14	100	(191)

**Summary and Discussion**

The data presented in this chapter indicate that these pilot programs enjoy a marked degree of acceptance by a cross section of the California Correctional Institution minimum custody inmates, especially considering the short time these programs have been in existence. It is doubtful if any of the other prison programs in California enjoy this much acceptance.

Both in terms of approval and intended utilization, these programs have great popularity among inmates, and this popularity in no way seems limited to any particular group of inmates. For example, only 20 men in the sample were married, and this obviously cannot explain the 76 to 90 percent approval figures recorded. Even those men not having families nearby or the necessary resources to use these programs did not disapprove to any extent of the programs. This would seem to indicate that the

unmarried men as a group do not reject the programs or otherwise object to them, at least at this time.

No one advocated abolishing or curtailing the programs, and indeed suggestions for improving the programs were largely confined to broadening and liberalizing the eligibility criteria so that more men could participate and extending the number and duration of visits in both programs. Actually the California Corrections Institution staff has broadened and liberalized the criteria for the Family Visiting Program, and the program has been extended to other institutions. In short, these programs to date are well received by both inmates and staff, and the extent to which they will be used will probably be limited only by the eligibility criteria and the economics of the situation rather than any inmate resistance or apathy.

The small number of parolees involved in the follow-up study prohibits any definitive conclusions, but the results strongly suggest that inmates who participate in Family Visiting or Temporary Release have less difficulty on parole.

While the evidence presented would thus seem to point out the efficacy of these programs, it should not be inferred from these comparisons, however, that some form of selection does not at least partially explain the better outcomes of our participant groups. It may well be that the participants, particularly the men who were in the Family Visiting Program, represent a better parole risk due to closer ties with their families and more stable life patterns on the outside and would therefore have done equally well without the programs. This seems especially likely in view of the findings noted in Chapter VI where men with more social ties encountered fewer difficulties on parole.

1/ Johns, D., "Alternatives to Conjugal Visiting," *Federal Probation*, Vol. 35, No. 1, March 1971, pp. 48 -52.

2/ Parchman State Penitentiary in Mississippi has had a traditional conjugal visiting program operating informally for sometime. For a discussion of that program see Hopper, C., "Conjugal Visiting: A Controversial Practice in Mississippi," *Criminal Law Bulletin*, 1967, pp. 288-289.

3/ In Mexico, for example, the practice of conjugal visiting is firmly established. See Hayner, N.S., *New Patterns in Old Mexico: A Study of Town and Metropolis*, New Haven, Conn., College and University Press, 1966.

4/ For a description and evaluation of this program at another institution see Holt, N., "California's Prerelease Furlough Program for State Prisoners: An Evaluation," *Crime and Delinquency* (accepted for publication).

5/ Puerto Rica and Argentina are among those nations which have home leave programs. See Cavan, R. S. and E. Zemans, "Marital Relationships of Prisoners in Twenty-Eight Countries," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, 49, pp. 133-139, July-August 1958.

6/ Zemans, E. and R.S. Cavan, "Marital Relationships of Prisoners," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, 49, pp. 50-57, May-June 1958.

7/ Glaser, D., *The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System*, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., New York, N.Y., pp. 360-378, 1964.

8/ Morris, Pauline, *Prisoners and Their Families*, Hart Publishing Co., New York City, 1965.

9/ For a complete description of the program see Lloyd, G.P., "A Family Visiting Programme for Offenders in Custody," *Medical and Biological Illustration*, July 1969, Vol. XIX, No. 3, pp. 146-149.

10/ 1968 Legislative Changes, *The Penal Code of the State of California*, Legal Book Corp., Los Angeles, 1968, pp. 43-44.

11/ See for example Balogh, T.K., "Conjugal Visitations in Prisons: A Sociological Perspective," Federal Probation, 28, 52-58, September 1964.

12/ Los Angeles Times, June 2, 1971.

13/ Originally, only those in "minimum' custody and with nine months or less to serve before parole were eligible.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **RESEARCH REPORT NO. 46**

#### **EXPLORATIONS IN INMATE-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Norman Holt**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Southern Conservation Center**

**Donald Miller**

**Associate Social Research Analyst**

**Los Angeles Research Unit**

**Research Division**

**California Department of Corrections**

**Sacramento, California**

**January 1972**

CHAPTER VIII. THE INMATE AND HIS FAMILY: SOME CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Any serious look at the end results of correctional programs is likely to be discouraging. Immediately the investigator faces the problem of trying to define "correctional programs," as the term has become so broad as to include almost everything convicted criminals are required to do in the course of their imprisonment. A second difficulty is the virtual absence of any theoretical basis for the programs. After a review of current correctional techniques, Cressey concluded that not only had their effectiveness not been demonstrated but that the techniques were "only vaguely related to any reputable theory of behavior or of criminality."<sup>1/</sup> Empey observed that most such programs, rather than being derived from theoretical constructs, are usually based on an "intuitive opportunism," involving a kind of goal-oriented guessing which develops into a strategy of activity.<sup>2/</sup>

A third area of frustration involves the inability to find empirical evidence showing any significant value for the great majority of current techniques of correctional intervention.<sup>3/</sup> Commenting on this lack of demonstrated effectiveness, Ward remarked:

"University investigators should find little comfort in the fact that while treatment evaluation results are not much to take to the legislature, the implications for the sociological and psychological theories underlying these programs are not much to take to their professional meetings. With the investment that all parties -- prison and parole departments, treatment specialists and theoreticians -- have in evaluations of correctional programs, there is no question that what would be helpful to all concerned, including the objects of treatment, would be the report of a prison treatment program that really worked."<sup>4/</sup>

At this point in our knowledge it seems fair to say that there are few correctional techniques whose proven value is such that their application would represent a significant improvement over doing nothing at all. To compound the difficulty most of these unproven techniques require high staff ratios or in other ways consume large amounts of scarce correctional resources. It is against this bleak backdrop that the

implications for corrections of the findings of this study relating to inmate social ties will be discussed.

### **Do Family Contacts Increase Parole Success?**

The central finding of this research is the discovery of a strong and consistently positive relationship between parole success and the maintenance of strong family ties while in prison. The reliability of this finding is substantiated by the results of other research undertakings. The earlier of these efforts was conducted by Lloyd Ohlin in the course of developing a parole success prediction scale for Illinois. Ohlin developed an index of family interest while in prison to capitalize on the belief of many parole agents that parolees with closer family ties tended to do better. Using a sample of releases from 1925-35, he found that 75% of the inmates classified as maintaining "active family interest" while in prison were successful on parole compared to only 34% for those regarded as loners.<sup>5/</sup> Glaser used Ohlin's classification technique with a sample of 1956 releases from federal prisons with very similar results. He found that 71% of the "active family interest" group were successful compared to only 50% of the "no contact with relatives" group.<sup>6/</sup> In an earlier study of 1940-49 releases from the Pontiac Branch of the Illinois State Penitentiary, which has a reformatory type population, Glaser found a 74% success rate for the "active interest" group and a 43% rate for those parolees without contacts.<sup>7/</sup>

This study found very similar percentage differences between groups. Only 50% of the "no contact" inmates completed their first year on parole without being arrested, while 70% of those with three visitors were "arrest free" during this period. In addition the "loners" were six times more likely to be returned to prison during the first year (12% returned compared to 2% for those with three or more visitors).

The convergence of these studies should be emphasized. Ohlin's study focused on inmates paroled in Illinois over a ten-year period. Glaser's work replicated Ohlin's findings with releases during one year from federal prisons as well as from a reformatory type population. The same results characterize our study's sample of 1969-

70 releases from a minimum security institution in California. The positive relationship between strength of social ties and success on parole has held up for 45 years of releases across very diverse offender populations and in different localities. It is doubtful if there is any other research finding in the field of corrections which can approximate this record.

One of the major problems with the earlier studies, which the authors of this study tried to overcome, was the strong interrelationship among social ties, other important variables, and parole outcome. The unique contributions of this study in this regard was to show the independent contribution of family ties to parole outcome. The importance of family ties held up in an analysis in which six other important factors were considered.

Glaser postulated that the amount of release money was important to parole outcome.<sup>8/</sup> We found this to be true only for those with few social ties. Difficulty on parole is somewhat predictable if the inmate has few contacts and less money. On the other hand, strong social ties appear to serve as an alternative material resource. Among those with many visitors the amount of release money assumed no importance.

Among federal prisoners Glaser also found significant differences in parole outcome associated with differences in type of residence. However, similar differences in California largely disappeared when the number of social ties was held constant. There was not much difference in parole outcome among parolees planning different types of residences who received numerous visitors. The relationship didn't disappear entirely, however, since those parolees planning to live with parents or wives still had a slight advantage in parole success. For example, 8% of those who had two or more visitors and who were living alone on parole recidivated compared to 5% of their counterparts with plans to live with their parents or wives.

Similarly, employment prospects among federal prisoners were important to parole outcome, but with the imposition of a control for family contact, job offers were not

important for the sample used in the present study. The importance of a job offer appeared to be primarily a function of the strength of the inmate's social ties. In other words, the presence of a job offer was unrelated to parole outcome when the inmate's social ties were taken into account, and the effects of social ties on parole success were independent of a job offer.

An alternative explanation of the findings of this study is that inmates receiving more visitors are less likely to recidivate anyway. In order to test this hypothesis, the authors divided the sample into three levels of predicted parole outcome and compared social ties and parole success within each. The predictive device was the California Base Expectancy Scale, which is based heavily on past criminal involvement. Within all Base Expectancy levels, it was found that those who maintained closer ties did better.

It might be claimed that, while other important variables were taken into account, inmates motivated to maintain strong social ties have some special motivation to succeed on parole. The same qualities which motivated the inmate to maintain frequent family contacts might have caused him to do better on parole. The data in Chapter V seem to invalidate this alternative explanation. If the results in parole outcome were caused by differential motivation, it would be necessary to hypothesize a somewhat generalized motivational difference. In other words, the difference in motivation ought to show up in other areas besides visiting and parole outcome. However, this was not the case. Those who maintained frequent family contacts received about as many disciplinary reports, had no better work records, were no more likely to participate in treatment programs, and did about the same in group counseling. In summary, all the evidence suggests that there is a strong independent, positive relationship between maintaining frequent family contacts while in prison and success on parole.

This evidence suggests that the inmate's family should be viewed as the prime treatment agent and family contacts as a major correctional technique. This approach has numerous advantages not the least of which is that it is free. It doesn't require the specially trained staff or costly staff augmentations so common to most treatment

approaches.

A second major advantage is the built-in inmate motivation. Most treatment techniques, even if they work, have limited value because the inmates most in need are also the least motivated for treatment. The few who volunteer are often the same ones who would succeed without the program. The desire for outside contacts, by contrast, is a central part of the inmate's existence. The data in Chapter IV clearly show that when adequate opportunity is provided for contacts the inmate's social ties need not erode away, the contacts of our sample were about as frequent after several years of incarceration as during the first six months. The one important exception to this was that a significant number of wives stopped visiting during the second year. It is necessary to emphasize, however, that this study was done at a correctional complex which is located within easy commuting distance from where most of the inmates' families live and which has very liberal arrangements for visiting. It seems apparent that the further visitors have to travel and the more difficult the procedures for visiting, the more likely are the visitors to reduce contacts as the sentence is served.

### **Can Correctional Systems Help?**

The next question is whether or not correctional systems can do anything to capitalize on the family's potential as a treatment agent. Chapter VII examined two experimental programs which aimed in this direction, the Family Visiting and the Temporary Release Programs. Both efforts are successful by almost any standard. Both enjoyed almost unanimous support from the inmate body. Almost all inmates hoped to participate, and those who couldn't were not resentful. Neither presented serious administrative problems. In addition, a follow-up study found that the participants in either program did better on parole than non-participants. Sixty percent of the participants experienced no difficulty during the first year of parole compared to only 42% of the non-participants. The number of participants was small, and the results must be interpreted with caution. However, the findings held up under the application of numerous control variables.

A final question about the temporary releases is whether they seriously threaten the

public safety. Currently, thousands of inmates in California are being released each year on temporary leaves and experience has shown that they are involved in no more difficulty than would normally be expected during the first few days on parole.

### **Some Recommendations**

There are two areas in which changes might increase correctional effectiveness through promoting strong family ties. First, there are several ways in which special programs could become more effective. More extensive use should be made of temporary releases. Their potential seems almost unlimited. Even with their rapidly expanding use in California, no limits have yet been found on who can benefit or the number of times benefit can be derived. The use of temporary releases as pre-release preparation should be extended to include the entire time of incarceration. Home leaves beginning a few months after reception would go a long way toward promoting strong family ties. Home visit privileges should be granted to a few non-violent, married prisoners in low risk categories on an experimental basis and slowly be extended to other groups.

The Family Visiting Program should be reserved strictly for those inmates who cannot make use of temporary releases. These would probably include such cases as chronic parole absconders, perpetrators of very violent crimes such as murder, or inmates who need to work out marital problems in a more structured setting than is provided by the home. Since common-law marriages are increasing in prevalence, those of some duration should be recognized in both programs.

Family counseling should be utilized more with each institution required to have at least one person certified as a family counselor who would be designated as a coordinator. This person would be available as a co-leader for family groups as well as a consultant to other staff. This individual's availability should be made known to visitors so as to encourage their consultation with him.

The second area concerns routine institutional procedures. Every effort must be made to place the inmate in the institution closest to his home in order to facilitate family

contacts. This research has shown the high cost in terms of parole failure of hindering important social ties. Correctional systems can no longer afford the expense of incarcerating inmates in areas so remote from their home communities as to make visiting virtually impossible. Proximity to the home community should be the first consideration in making assignments to institutions.

All restrictions on visitors and mail should be closely scrutinized with the objective of eliminating all regulations which are not necessary to promoting the absolute basic security of the institution. No restriction should be allowed to remain whose only reason is the limit in space. Space must be found. If some new correctional technique were invented tomorrow whose effectiveness were equal to family contacts, there would be a rush to find space for implementation even if it meant using the warden's office. Wherever possible visitors should be allowed to bring a lunch and share it with the inmate. This avoids terminating the visit for the meal and also provides for visiting in a setting focused on a central family ritual. There are undoubtedly many other ways in which family contacts could be promoted.

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4/ Ward, D.A., "Evaluation of Correctional Treatment: Some Implications of Negative Findings," paper read at the First National Symposium on Law Enforcement Science and Technology, Chicago, Illinois, March 1967.

5/ Ohlin, L.E., *The Stability and Validity of Parole Experience Tables*, (Ph.D. dissertation) University of Chicago, 1954, cited in Glaser, D., *The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System*, Bobbs-Merrill, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 366.

6/ Glaser, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

7/ *ibid.*

8/ Glaser, *op. cit.*, p. 316.