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**THE EFFECT OF SPATIAL DISPLACEMENT ON VISITATION
FOR PRISONERS UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH**

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ABSTRACT

To the extent that incarceration strains an inmate's relations with family, friends, and significant others, these strains for the death row inmate are likely exacerbated. With death row populations centralized in only a handful of prisons, the condemned inmate may be housed exceptionally far from home making regular contact through visitation more difficult for the family. In this paper, I explore the extent of displacement of prisoners who are under a sentence of death in the state of Alabama. I further explore how this spatial displacement affects family relationships, particularly in regards to visitation.

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INTRODUCTION

America has one of the highest execution rates in the world, however, it is virtually unique in the fact that it houses its condemned for years before sentence is carried out. The average length of time spent on death row in the United States is currently 11.2 years (Death Penalty Information Centre, 2007). This delay between sentencing and execution is theoretically intended to allow the inmate time to exhaust all appeals, but it is quite possible that the experience of this extended death row confinement places an added emotional strain on the condemned. There is likely also an impact on the family of the condemned who may suffer unnecessarily as a result of their loved one's imprisonment. The emotional strain of their relative facing possible execution would be compounded with restrictions on communications and visits. Additionally, lengthy death row incarceration almost certainly affects the relationship between the inmate and their family, as maintaining contact is, in large part, constrained by the rules and regulations of the institution.

Death row incarceration makes family relationships difficult to maintain. To the extent that incarceration strains an inmate's relations with family, friends, and significant others, these strains for the death row inmate are likely exacerbated. Death row is often

concentrated in only one or two penitentiaries within the state, meaning the condemned may be housed far from home, making visiting hard for the family. Further, death row offenders are typically poor, and travel is costly, which exacerbates the problem of maintaining family ties. Phone contact may be difficult to maintain as well. As Schlosser (1998) pointed out, telephone companies charge extortionate rates for inmate phone services, because it is a very lucrative business. There are around two million people incarcerated, and, if they wish to maintain phone contact with their loved ones, they have no choice but to use the pay phone on offer in the facility. Schlosser states that a pay phone in a prison can make about \$15,000 a year – which is five times what a pay phone on the street would make. Of course, it is the family members of the incarcerated who have to foot this bill, which may be an expense they can ill afford.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is little prior research on the effect of death row incarceration on family relationships. In his 1978 ethnographic study of Alabama's death row inmates, Robert Johnson looked at the overall experience of confinement prior to execution. Johnson interviewed 35 out of the 37 condemned men on death row at that time. He conducted the study, to gain insight into life on death row from the point of view of the prisoners themselves.

As a result of their incarceration, prison inmates have only three ways of maintaining relationships with family and friends: visits, phone calls, and written correspondence. Specific to family relationships, Johnson found that the relatively strict visitation regulations for death row inmates were disruptive to maintaining family ties.

The Alabama Department of Corrections (ALDOC) did not permit contact visits for death row inmates. This lack of physical contact was painful to both parties and it was often not worthwhile to make the trip to the prison when visits are so short. The mail policy of the Alabama Department of Corrections (ALDOC) also proved to be a barrier in communicating with family members, as packages from the outside would often be returned to the sender because of a technical violation of strict prison regulations. Overall, the custodial regime – with regards to visits, letters and phone calls – was quite restrictive and ultimately detrimental to the maintenance of family relationships. Although contact with family was quite limited and made more complicated by ALDOC policies, Johnson concluded that family was an “emotional lifeline” (1989, p.53) to the condemned man.

More generally, some studies have been conducted on prison siting and the effect of incarceration on families. Prisons tend to be located in rural areas. In 2003, King, Mauer and Huling’s authored a study on the economics of big prisons being located in small towns. King, Mauer and Huling (2003) argued that prisons are sited in rural areas because of a perceived economic benefit to the region through the creation of jobs and rural development. In their study, King, Mauer and Huling compared economic data spanning 25 years for rural counties in New York, comparing those with prisons to those without. The researchers examined the unemployment and per capita income rates to determine the impact of the prison siting. The authors found that there was no correlation between employment and the siting of prisons, leading the authors to conclude that prisons do not, in actual fact, bring any notable economic benefits. This could be

interpreted as meaning that there is little reason to situate prisons in out of the way, rural areas.

Research on prison location having a deterrent effect was conducted in 2000 by Bedard and Helland. They looked at both the effect of custody rate and prison location on female crime rate. They hypothesised that the further away the women would be incarcerated, the less likely they would be to commit crime, because this distance added to the punitiveness of the punishment. Bedard and Helland's findings supported more distance, less crime hypothesis, as it showed that if the average distance to a prison was increased by 40 miles, the violent crime rate for females lowered by about 7%. The researchers suggested that a key determining factor taken into account by women deterred from committing crime may be the increased difficulties of visitation when prisons were sited further away.

Martin and Myers (2005) study on the public response to prison siting examined the public perception of, and attitude towards, the location of prisons. They found that the public generally endorses the Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) principle when it comes to prison siting. While a community may accept the necessity and usefulness of prisons, they do not want one to located anywhere near them. The NIMBY phenomenon may in part explain why prisons tend to be located in rural areas. Martin and Myers surveyed the reaction of residents to the constructions of a prison in or near their neighborhood. They found that those who lived nearer to the proposed location expected to see increases in crime and expressed safety concerns. What's more, the respondents expressed the belief that the inmates' visitors would cause problems for the community, and create safety

issues for the residents, or worse, would move to their neighborhood in order to be close to their incarcerated loved one.

Shichor states, however, in his study on the myths and realities of prison siting, that incarceration does not lead to the “camp followers” (1992, p. 75) phenomenon that communities so fear. That is, it is not common for inmates’ families to move near the prison where their loved ones are incarcerated. This is because many inmates either do not have immediate family, or, if they do, their family ties tend not to be strong enough as to justify such an upheaval. He notes also that many married inmates end up separated or divorced during their time in prison. Thus, the public’s fear that their community will be overrun by offenders’ families is unfounded. Unfortunately, the myth is sustained, and, as Shichor points out, a prison cannot be built in a particular area without “substantial community support” (1992, p. 71).

In regards to the effect of incarceration on family relationships, Travis, McBride and Solomon carried out a study in 2003, specifically looking at parent-child relationships. They note there is a difficulty in maintaining contact because of strict prison visiting regulations, the cost of collect calls, and the distance to the prison. The child’s emotional and psychological development is at risk of being damaged by the removal of a primary care giver (that is, the parent). The study was predominantly a review of current literature on the subject of incarceration and parent-child relationships, and Travis, McBride and Solomon concluded that more research into this area was required.

Casey-Acevedo and Bakken looked into visitation for women prisoners in a 2002 study. They collected data on 222 women incarcerated in a maximum security prison

over a 22 month period. The researchers discovered that 79% received at least one visit from family or friends – although friends were more likely to visit than family. Of the incarcerated women who had children, 61% never received visits from their offspring. Distance to the prison and institutional regulations were found to be major impediments to visiting inmates.

Comfort, in 2000, carried out a field work study of the prison visitors to San Quentin over a nine month period. Comfort observed that about 95% of the visitors were female, and that visitors suffered a “secondary prisonisation”, as they were, in many respects, subjected to some of the confinement, surveillance and restrictions of prison inmates themselves. The regulation and distortion of their lives caused by prison visiting is compounded by the ‘courtesy stigma’ of associating with and visiting a convicted criminal. The rules and restrictions of the institution make their visits more difficult. Comfort notes that the strict dress code at San Quentin – which is subject to frequent and capricious changes – can result in visitors being refused admittance or cause embarrassment. In particular, she discussed how under-wired bras are banned. A female visitor wearing one would set off the metal detector, and then have a male guard inform her she needs to remove the wire, before handing her a pick with which to do so. Comfort notes that this can be humiliating for the woman. These obstacles to visitation make it less likely that inmates will actually receive visitors.

Although there has been some research on the siting of prisons and a handful of studies on the potentially detrimental effects of that siting, to my knowledge, no one has yet systematically studied the effect of death row incarceration on family relationships. Death row incarceration likely compounds the problems faced by death row inmates as

not only the rules and regulations surrounding visitation likely to be strict (they are, after all, maximum security by virtue of being under sentence of death), which is burdensome and restrictive to both inmate and visitor. Further, there may be a sense of futility in maintaining relationships for both parties, as, unlike with other incarcerations, the inmate is not expected to ever be released, making there no need to maintain ties to the outside world. What is more, they face execution, and family or friends may feel there is no point in fostering a relationship with someone who is condemned.

METHODOLOGY

Alabama was chosen as the research location because of the size of its death row, and its southern location. With 192 inmates on death row in Alabama, it was feasible to include all death row inmates in the study and would provide enough cases to render more valid results. Further, Alabama was chosen because it is in the south, and is a state active in execution. Thirty five executions have been carried out in Alabama post *Furman*, fifteen of which have taken place since 2000. This makes Alabama the 9th most active execution state. Alabama also has the sixth largest death row population in the country. The average number of people on death row per state is 88.9 (Death Penalty Information Centre, 2007).

Texas has the highest execution rate in the country, having executed twenty four people in 2006 and seven already this year. Since *Furman*, Texas has carried out 385 executions – far higher than any other state, and making it responsible for 36% of all executions in the last thirty one years. Virginia has the second highest execution rate,

having executed ninety eight inmates since 1976. Currently, thirty eight states still have the death penalty, although New York's death penalty statute was ruled unconstitutional in 2004. Of those thirty eight states, five have not carried out any executions since the reinstatement of capital punishment. Further, fifteen retentionist states have carried out fewer than ten executions post *Furman*. 82% of all executions since 1976 have occurred in Southern states (DPIC, 2007).

Alabama has a total of nineteen correctional facilities, ten work release centres and two community work camps. Of the nineteen correctional facilities, five are maximum security, nine are medium security, and five minimum security. Alabama houses its current population of 192 condemned prisoners in three different maximum security correctional facilities - Holman and Donaldson for the men, and Tutwiler for the three women sentenced to die. According to the Alabama Department of Corrections website, Tutwiler was opened in 1942, with a capacity for 400 inmates. It is the only women's prison in Alabama, and, as it houses a death row, it is a maximum security facility. Holman was opened in 1969, originally with a capacity for 520 medium security inmates, and a death row with twenty cells. Currently, Holman has 630 general population beds, 200 single cells and 168 death row cells. It has the capacity for 998 inmates, maximum to minimum security.

Donaldson was opened in 1982 with a capacity for 700 medium and minimum security inmates. It is currently classified as a maximum security prison, and has a death row capacity of twenty four cells (twenty one of which are currently occupied), and houses only those inmates who need to be incarcerated in the Birmingham judicial area. The actual death chamber is at Holman, along with the remaining male inmates. The

prison at Holman is located in the furthestmost southern part of the state. It is 212 miles from Birmingham, 122 miles from Montgomery, and 310 miles from Huntsville (the three biggest cities in the state).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Given the concentration of death sentenced inmates in one or two prisons in a state, how extensive is the spatial displacement of death row inmates? In other words, how far from home are the facilities in which the inmates are imprisoned. It is hypothesized that death row inmates are confined in prisons that will be substantial distances from their hometowns (and their families). Secondly, in what ways does the spatial displacement of death row inmates impact the frequency and quality of contacts and visitation? I hypothesize that the greater the distance the inmate is from his or her hometown, the less frequent contact and visitation will be. I further hypothesize that, in addition to physical distance, the length of incarceration (temporal distance) will be negatively related to visitation (e.g. the longer the inmate has been confined, the less frequent the visits and contacts will become).

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The study involved two separate methodologies. The first involved assessing the extent of spatial displacement using secondary sources (newspapers and news sources) and the second involved collecting original data on the nature and frequency of inmate contact with their families and friends. These methodologies are described more fully in the discussion that follows.

The first part of the study involved mapping the hometowns of the condemned in relation to death row, in order to determine how far they have been displaced from their hometown. Lexis Nexis's newspaper search feature was used to collect as many articles as possible related to the inmates on death row. The Lexis Nexis search included all Alabama news sources and these news sources were searched for articles on each Death Row inmate. All inmates on Death Row on 1st September 2006, as listed on the Alabama Department of Corrections website, were looked up by name during this phase of the research.

Any newspaper articles found on the inmate were searched for mention of a hometown, and, if that was not reported, then the town where the crime took place was noted. Next, the distance between the town the inmate was from and the facility where the inmate was being held was calculated using Google's Map feature (www.maps.google.com). Where neither a hometown nor a crime location could be found, the county where the crime was committed – as listed on the Alabama Department of Corrections Website – was used.

Establishing how the distance affects family relationships required that we have access to information regarding inmate contact with their family. Because the ALDOC does not publish visitation records, it became necessary to collect self-report data from the death row inmates themselves. The second phase of the study therefore involved surveying all inmates on Alabama's death row (N=192).

SECURING PERMISSIONS

In order to survey the death row inmates, I needed to secure multiple permissions. The consent to send the surveys into the institutions was secured from each of the three wardens on my behalf by Brian Corbett (the public information officer for the Alabama Department of Corrections). Formal permission to conduct the study was ultimately secured from the commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections, Richard Allen.

Human subject's protocols require that Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval be sought in any and all research that involves human subjects. Because prison populations are protected populations, a full IRB review was required. An IRB application was submitted in the first week of November and my honours project mentor (Natasha Frost) met with Northeastern University's IRB on November 15th, 2006. We were asked to make minor changes to the informed consent form, and the Northeastern University IRB approved the cover letter, informed consent, and survey instrument on 8th December, 2006 (the IRB application is attached as Appendix A).

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

The participants were recruited through a written request for participation. A cover letter, an informed consent form, and a self-addressed stamped envelope were included with the survey. The surveys and accompanying materials were sent directly to the death row inmates using their institutional address. The ALDOC initially suggested that we send a box of surveys to each warden and the correctional staff would distribute the surveys. Because the subjects are prisoners, we felt this method of distribution may introduce an undesirable level of coercion into the process and so opted to send the

surveys individually to each inmate. In the cover letter, the inmates were told the purpose of the research and the qualifications of the researchers. They were further told that they that they should only answer the questions asked and that they did not have to participate in the study.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey was formatted as a one page, two sided document, consisting of close ended questions. The respondents were first asked to fill in blank answer as to their age, length of their incarceration on death row, whether they had siblings or children, and their marital status, both now and prior to their imprisonment. They were also asked to provide their hometown. A matrix style question asked how far their relatives (spouse, mother, father, brothers, sisters, children, other relatives and best friend) lived from the prison. The response options were 1-25 miles, 26-50 miles, 51-100 miles, more than 100 miles and not applicable. They were then asked a series of matrix questions with regards to how often they wrote letters, received letters, or had phone contact. They were asked to fill in from a choice of daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, never, or not applicable, for each relative (as listed above). Finally, they were asked how many visits they received from relatives per month, being given the choice of never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times, more than 4 times and not applicable. We ended the survey with one open-ended question, "If you have any other comments about contact or visitation with family or friends, please write them in here." (See Appendix B)

RESULTS

Regarding the first part of the study, I was able to map the hometowns of 169 of the 192 inmates (88%) in the sample. 107 of those were mapped from the newspaper searches for hometowns, and the remaining 62 were mapped from completed surveys. As Table 1 illustrates, the average distance an inmate is located from his or her hometown is 219 miles. The median distance is 202 miles.

Table 1. Spatial Displacement of Death Row Inmates (in Miles)

	Range	Median	Mean
Distance	5 – 1,056	202.0	218.5

Only 27 of the 169 inmates whose hometowns were mapped formerly resided within one hundred miles of the prison. Almost half (46.4%) lived more than 200 miles from where they are presently incarcerated. The distances were split into three groups for the purpose of comparison, as shown by Table 2.

Table 2. Spatial Displacement of Inmates – Distances Grouped

Distance	Frequency	Percent
Less than 100 Miles	27	14.1
100-199 Miles	53	27.6
More than 200 Miles	89	46.4

As described in the methodology, 192 surveys were sent to Alabama’s entire death row population. The surveys were sent on December 28th, 2006. Responses began to arrive in early January. All responses received by March 30th, 2007 are included in the

results. In total, as Table 3 shows, a total of 62 surveys were returned. The response rate of 32.3% is not as high as I would have liked, but given the truncated time in which I had to complete this project, I was not able to utilise a multiple mailing strategy.

Table 3. Completed Surveys

Completed Survey	Frequency	Percent
No	130	67.7
Yes	62	32.3

Despite a modest response rate, the sample closely represented the prison population from which it was drawn. The percentage of inmates incarcerated at Holman who returned surveys was identical to the percent they make up in the prison population (87%). The percentage of returned surveys from the other two facilities, Donaldson and Tutwiler, deviated from their representation in the population by only one percent. These results are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Facility of Inmates (in population and sample)

Facility	In Population	In Sample
Holman	87%	87%
Donaldson	11%	10%
Tutwiler	2%	3%

The characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 5. The youngest inmate was 21, and the oldest 61. The average age was 40 years old. Their time on the death row ranged from 3 months to 300 months (twenty five years), with an average length of

incarceration of 125 months (ten years, five months), which is slightly lower than the national average time on death row of 11.2 years (DPIC, 2007). One inmate’s hometown was only five miles from the prison, while another’s was 1036 miles. The average distance the death row inmates are from their hometown is 214 miles.

Regarding the inmates’ family, nearly all (98%) have siblings. The number of siblings ranged from 0 to 10 with an average of 3.85 siblings. Over half (60%) have children, the range being from none to nine, the average being 1.35. 36% of inmates were married prior to their current incarceration; however, only 3% are now married.

Table 5. Sample Characteristics

	Percent	Range	Mean
Age		21 – 61 years	40 years
Mother	75%		
Father	65%		
Children	60%	0 -9	1.35
Siblings	98%	0 – 10	3.85
Married	3%		
Married Prior	36%		
Time on Death Row		3 – 300 months	125 months
Distance		5 – 1036 miles	214 miles

The survey directly asked the inmates for the location of their hometown. Table 6 displays the relative distances that the 62 inmates who returned a survey are located from their hometowns. There are only 58 cases, as four respondents failed to identify a hometown. Well over half (61.3%) previously lived more than 200 miles away from where they are currently incarcerated.

Table 6. Spatial Displacement of Inmates Completing Survey

Distance	Frequency	Percent
Less than 100 Miles	7	11.3
100-199 Miles	13	21.0
More than 200 Miles	38	61.3

As so few of the respondents lived within 200 miles of the prison, the values ‘less than 100 miles’ and ‘100-199 miles’ were collapsed together in order to facilitate the comparison of distance and visitation more easily. The grouped results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Spatial Displacement of Inmates Completing Survey (Grouped Frequencies)

Distance	Frequency	Percent
Less than 200 Miles	20	32.3
200 or more miles	38	61.3

The survey asked a series of matrix questions with regards to contact (letters phone calls and visits) with family members. For those inmates who responded that they did enjoy some form of contact at least monthly, the majority did so with their mothers. It

is important to note that these percentages include only those inmates who reported actually having relatives in each of the various categories. Table 8 illustrates the results. For siblings, the first percent represents brothers, and the second, sisters. Sisters were a more likely to maintain contact with their incarcerated sibling than were brothers. Somewhat alarmingly, none of the respondents reported receiving letters from their brothers, although 14% indicated that they wrote letters to their brothers at least monthly. Similarly, none received letters from their children, despite almost half (49%) sending letters.

Inmates were most likely to receive visits phone calls and visits from their mothers (with 32% reporting that their mothers visited at least monthly. About 20-23% of the inmates responding received visits from their fathers, sisters, and children. Of all relatives, brothers were the least likely to visit.

Letters, perhaps unsurprisingly, were the most frequent form of contact with family that inmates have. However, it is interesting to note that a greater percentage of inmates actually receive visits from their children (21%), brothers (11%) and fathers (23%), compared to what percent receive letters from them (children and brothers never write, and fathers only to 21% of the sample.)

Table 8. Visitation and Family Contact (Percent Responding at Least Monthly)

	Letters to	Letters from	Phone Contact	Visits
Mother	67%	39%	45%	32%
Father	29%	21%	34%	23%
Siblings	14% / 21%	0% / 48%	15% / 20%	11% / 21%
Children	49%	0%	17%	21%

The vast majority of the inmates surveyed had very little contact with their families. In fact, 68% of inmates responding indicated that they never received visits from their mothers, almost 80% never received visits from their fathers, siblings and children. For those inmates who responded that they never had contact with their family, as Table 9 shows, fathers and offspring were the least likely to maintain contact. Also, the inmates generally wrote letters much more frequently than they received them – with quite a few inmates sending letters to various relatives and reporting that they never received letters in return. The only instance in which this pattern did not hold was in written communication with their mothers. In terms of maternal contact, it seems that 20% of the inmates who responded to the survey neither wrote nor received letters from their mothers. Brothers (again, the first percentage under siblings) were more likely than other relatives to not have contact with their condemned sibling.

Table 9. Visitation and Family Contact (Percent Responding Never)

	Letters to	Letters from	Phone Contact	Visits
Mother	20%	20%	32%	68%
Father	31%	59%	51%	77%
Siblings	28% / 14%	43% / 23%	44% / 41%	89% / 79%
Children	24%	42%	59%	79%

The survey was designed so as to measure the distance between the inmates' families and the prison where the inmate is currently incarcerated. For each relative, the inmate reported whether the relative lived of 1-25, 26-50, 51-100, or more than 100

miles. However, as so few of the responses were under 100 miles, the categories were collapsed together into two categories (less than and more than 100 miles) for the purpose of comparison of familial distance and visitation (see Table 10). The vast majority of the inmates' relatives lived more than 100 miles from the prison. However, about a quarter (26%) of the inmates' children do live within 100 miles, and yet they are the group that inmates tend to have the least contact with (as illustrated in Table 6). This may be because inmates are estranged from their partners. Recall that although 36% of all inmates responding were married at the time they were incarcerated, only 3% were currently married.

Table 10. Familial Distance from Prison

	1-100 Miles	More than 100 Miles
Mother	17%	83%
Father	3%	97%
Siblings	12%	88%
Children	26%	74%

The survey asked how the frequency of the inmates' contact with their family and friends compared to their first year of incarceration, and whether they would like more, less or the same contact. As Table 11 shows, 72% have less contact with their family than their first year on death row, and 80% would like to have more contact with their family. Only 2% said they would like less contact, and 5% claimed to have more contact than the first year. Contact had remained the same for almost a quarter of the inmates

(23%), and 19% were happy with the present rate of contact they had with their friends and family.

Table 11. Contact with Family and Friends

	Less Often	Same	More Often
Vs. Year 1	72%	23%	5%
Would Like	2%	19%	80%

A problem we encountered was that few of the inmates received any visits at all. As Table 12 illustrates, 59.7% of respondents to the survey indicated that they never received visits from any family members listed. The categories (spouse, mother, father, sibling, children, other relatives and best friend) were grouped together. No inmate received visits more than once or twice a month, and, combining all eligible visitors, only 37.1% received monthly visits at all. This was most usually from a relative – most frequently immediate family – parents, sibling or children.

Table 12. Does the Inmate Receive Any Visits From Anyone?

	Frequency	Percent
No Visits – from anyone	37	59.7
At Least One Visit Monthly	23	37.1

Table 13 presents the cross-tabulation for familial distance and visitation. The distances have been collapsed into two groups – less than 200 miles and 200 or more miles – as have the visits. The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = .007$) demonstrates that the

difference between these groups was not significant indicating that spatial displacement is not related to visitation.

Table 13. Distance and Visitation

	No Visits	At least one visit monthly
Less than 200 miles	13	7
200 or more miles	23	13

Inmates had spent an average of twenty five months (ten years, five months) on death row (see Table 5). For purposes of comparison, time on death row was grouped into three categories – less than 5 years, 5-10 years, more than 10 years. As Table 13 shows, 50% of the sample have spent over ten years on death row.

Table 14. Grouped Frequency Distribution: Time Spent on Death Row

	Frequency	Percent
1-60 months (less than 5 years)	16	25.8
61-120 months (5-10 years)	15	24.2
More than 120 months (more than 10 years)	31	50

As half of the sample had spent over ten years on death row, time was grouped into two groups: 10 years or less and more than ten years, to test the hypothesis that time on death row would affect visitation. When grouped, thirty one respondents (50%) had been incarcerated for ten years or less, and other thirty one respondents (50%) had been on death row for more than ten years. Table 15 presents the cross-tabulation for time on death row and visitation. There was little variation between those who had been

incarcerated for 10 years or less, and those who had served more than 10 years as to the visits they received. The majority had no visits. 20 respondents (32%) who had been on death row for 10 years or less received no visits, compared to 17 inmates (27%) who had been on death row for more than 10 years. The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = .635$) indicated that the difference between these groups was not significant suggesting that time spent on death row is not related to visitation.

Table 15. Time on Death Row and Visitation

	No Visits	At least one visit monthly
10 years or less	20	10
More than 10 years	17	13

DISCUSSION

Neither of the hypotheses regarding death row incarceration and familial contact were supported. Family visitation for death row inmates is not affected by either length of incarceration or the distance the condemned has been displaced from his or her hometown. The relatively small sample size for the survey may mean this is not a true reflection on the general situation, but, due to time restrictions, we were unable to use follow up mailings in order to increase the response rate, and have a more representative sample. Some surveys, too, were not received in a timely manner – we continued to receive them up to three months after they were sent (this was possibly due to the mailing

policies of the Department of Corrections). Many of the respondents returned incomplete surveys.

What is clear from the survey responses is that death row inmates receive few visits. This research suggests that this is not because of the distance family have to travel in order to visit their condemned relatives. Future research could be conducted as to other possible causes – may be the people who end up on death row have bad family relationships to begin with, or perhaps the very nature of being under the sentence of death is detrimental to family relationships.

Interestingly, the inmates themselves did see distance as a reason their family did not visit. One inmate wrote:

“My parents try to visit about 1 time per month. More often than not, it’s every 2 months or so. I also get visits from a friend in Canada every few months. My family visits have fallen off drastically in the last 1 ½ years. More financial related than anything else. I am 365 miles away from home.”

The reason specifically that the distance posed a problem in visitation was because of the financial commitment – both getting to the prison, as well as taking the time of work in order to make the trip. Another inmate stated that:

“My mother, brother and sister visits about 4 times a year. My father died in 2001. Money and jobs keep family and friends from visiting as much as we would like.”

Inmates also noted that relatives had died since they have been on death row.

It's a 4 hour drive, one way, for my sisters to visit with me, they visit about every 2 ½ months. My older brother, my mother, and grandmother, have all died, since my stay on the row."

The rules and regulations of the institution also created obstacles to family visits. Several respondents to the survey brought up recent rule changes that had negatively affected their families' ability to visit them. One inmate explained that:

"From 1994, until 1997, I usually got one visit each month. I looked forward to visits with my sisters children, I have no children of my own. They changed visitation rules, and now I cannot see my nieces that are under 18 years old. In 2006, I only had 2 visits with my mom and dad."

Another inmate echoed that sentiment noting that administrative changes had resulted in changes in the visitation policy:

"Under our new administration, several rule changes have...systematically reduced the number of visitors and persons we could telephone which has also reduced the number of inmates that have visit and the number of visits each has overall. The Warden's policy is one of 'isolation', which is reflected in other new policies beyond visits and phone restriction."

The Alabama Department of Corrections does not publicly release the death row visitation policies, which made it difficult in regards to our study to draw any conclusions as to how they may affect family visits.

There is little prior research into the effect of incarceration on family relationships, and even less research on death row incarceration. This is a very

understudied area, and yet, from the responses of the death row inmates in the survey, it is clearly an issue that needs addressing. Although the quantitative analyses provided insight into inmate visitation, the comments of the inmates themselves painted a clearer picture. They have very little contact with their family, and few receive any visits. What becomes apparent is the isolation of most these inmates.

Works Cited

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Anticipated funding source for project (or none) Undergraduate Research Grant
(Provost and College of Criminal Justice)

Will this proposal be submitted through: DSPA ____ **Provost** X Corp & Found. ____
For NU IRB use:

Date Received: _____ NU IRB No. _____

Review Category: _____ Approval Date _____

C. Will participants be:	YES	NO	Does the project involve:	YES
NO				
Children (<age 18)?	_____	NO	Blood Removal?	_____
NO				
Northeastern U. students?	_____	NO	Investigational drug/device?	_____
NO				
Institutionalized persons/prisoners?	YES	_____	Audiotapes/Videotapes?	_____ NO
Cognitively impaired persons?	_____	NO		
Non or Limited English-speaking?	_____	NO		
People living outside USA?	_____	NO		
Pregnant women/fetuses?	_____	NO		
Other?	_____			

Please answer each of the following questions using non-technical language. Missing or incomplete answers will delay your review while we request the information.

D. State your research question(s) and related hypotheses.

The research questions are: Given the concentration of death sentenced inmates in one or two prisons in a state, how extensive is the spatial displacement of death row inmates? In other words, how far from home are the facilities in which the inmates are imprisoned. It is hypothesized that death row inmates are confined in prisons that are substantial distances from their hometowns/families. Secondly, in what ways does the spatial displacement of death row inmates impact the frequency and quality of contacts and visitation? The hypothesis is that the greater the distance the inmate is from his or her hometown, the less frequent contact and visitation will be. We further hypothesize that, in addition to physical distance, the length of incarceration (temporal distance) will be negatively related to visitation (e.g. the longer the inmate has been confined, the less frequent the visits and contacts will become).

E. Provide a brief summary in non-technical language.

To the extent that incarceration strains an inmate's relations with family, friends, and significant others, these strains for the death row inmate are likely exacerbated. With death row populations centralized in only a handful of prisons in each state, the condemned inmate may be

housed exceptionally far from home making regular contact through visitation more difficult for the family. In this project, we propose to explore the extent of displacement of prisoners who are under a sentence of death in the state of Alabama (through reviewing public records and newspaper accounts). We further hope to explore how this spatial displacement affects family relationships, particularly in regards to the frequency of visitation.

F. Identify study personnel on this project. Include name, credentials, role, organization affiliation.

Natasha Frost, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor in the College of Criminal Justice, is Diana's honor's thesis advisor and will supervise all aspects of the study.

Diana Peel, an NU undergraduate student in criminal justice, is working on her honor's thesis. She will be responsible for collecting, entering, and analyzing the data.

Identify other organizations or institutions that are involved. Attach current Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals or letters of permission as necessary.

Alabama Department of Corrections. Permission to mail the surveys is being sought. A copy of the letter requesting permission is attached. The survey portion of the study will only commence upon receipt of permission from the Alabama Department of Corrections and approval of the Institutional Review Board.

H. Recruitment Procedures

Describe the participants you intend to recruit. Provide all inclusion and exclusion criteria. Include age range, number of subjects, gender, ethnicity/race, socio-economic level, literacy level and health (as applicable) and reasons for exempting any groups. Describe how/when/by whom inclusion/exclusion criteria will be determined.

We intend to recruit all 193 inmates of Alabama's death row as potential participants in the survey - there will be no exclusions. Alabama's death row prisoners range in age from 20 to 71 years of age. The vast majority of the potential participants are males (190 males and only 3 females). About half of Alabama's death row prisoners are African American (94) and half are white (98) – one is listed as 'other'.

Describe the procedures that you will use to recruit these participants. Be specific. How will potential subjects be identified? Who will ask for participation? If you intend to recruit using letters, posters, fliers, ads, website, email etc., copies must be included as attachments for stamped approval. Include scripts for intended telephone recruitment.

The participants will be recruited through a written request for participation that will be mailed to all 193 inmates (these inmates are housed in two different facilities). A cover letter, an informed consent form, and a self-addressed stamped envelope will be included with the survey.

What remuneration, if any, is offered?

No remuneration is offered.

I. Consent Process

Describe the *process* of obtaining informed consent. Be specific. How will the project and the participants' role be presented to potential participants? By whom? When? Where? Having the participant read and sign a consent statement is done only *after* the researcher provides a detailed oral explanation and answers all questions. Include a copy of informed consent statements that you intend to use, if applicable. If translations are necessary, you may wish to wait until the consent statement has final approval in English.

The participants' role will be presented to potential participants through a covering letter mailed with the survey (see attached). The letter informs the participants of purpose of the research, outlines what is required of them, what the risks are, explains informed consent, and emphasizes that their participation is voluntary and confidential. The informed consent form itemizes the purposes, risks, and benefits in the manner suggested by the Federal Bureau of Prisons for conducting research with prison inmates.

If your population includes children, prisoners, people with limited mental capacity, language barriers, problems with reading or understanding, or other issues that may make them vulnerable or limit their ability to understand and provide consent, describe special procedures that you will institute to obtain consent appropriately. If participants are potentially decisionally-impaired, how will you determine competency?

As the population of potential participants are prisoners, the cover letter, informed consent form, and the survey itself each indicate that the subjects will receive no remuneration for participation nor will they receive any institutional benefit for completing the survey. The three documents will also all note that while the data will remain confidential once it reaches the researchers, the Department of Corrections reserves the right to inspect all incoming and outgoing mail.

J. Study Procedures

Provide a detailed description of all activities the participant will be asked to do and what will be done to the participants. Include the location, number of sessions, time for each session, and total time period anticipated for each participant, including long term follow up.

The participants will be asked to fill in a survey, and mail it back to the researchers in an enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

Who will conduct the experimental procedures, questionnaires, etc? Where will this be done? *Include copies of all questionnaires, interview questions, tests, instruments, etc.*

The surveys will be sent from, and the completed surveys will be reviewed by, only the researchers directly involved in the project (Natasha Frost and Diana Peel) in Professor Frost's office. A copy of the proposed survey is attached.

K. Risks

Identify possible risks to the participant as a result of the research. Consider possible psychological harm, loss of confidentiality, financial, social, or legal damages as well as physical risks. What is the seriousness of these risks and what is the likelihood that they may occur?

The possibility of risk to the participants is minimal. The participants may become disheartened if the survey reminds them of how little contact they actually have with their families.

Describe in detail the safeguards that will be implemented to minimize risks. What follow-up procedures are in place if harm occurs? What special precautions will be instituted for vulnerable populations?

We will do everything we can to protect the participants identities. All participants will be given a study ID number.

L. Confidentiality

Describe *in detail* the procedures that will be used to maintain anonymity or confidentiality during collection and entry of data. Who will have access to data? How will the data be used, now and in the future?

In order to maintain confidentiality, the returned surveys will be reviewed only by the researchers. All participants will be assigned a number for the purposes of collecting informed consent forms. Once the data has been entered, it will contain no participant identifiers. No reports or publications will contain personal identifiers of any type.

How and where will data be stored? When will data, including audiotapes and videotapes, be destroyed? If data is to be retained, explain why. Will identifiers or links to identification be destroyed? When? Signed consent documents must be retained for 3 years following the end of the study. Where and how will they be maintained?

Informed consent forms (the only documents that will contain identifying information) will be stored in a locked file-cabinet in the locked office of Natasha Frost (faculty advisor) and will be kept separate from all data files. Data (with no personal identifiers) will be entered into spreadsheets. The original surveys will be kept for one year and then destroyed.

M. Benefits

What benefits can the participant reasonably expect from his/her involvement in the research? If none, state that. What are potential benefits to others?

The participants cannot reasonably expect any benefits from their involvement. However, there is a potential benefit to others as this research will contribute to an understanding of an understudied area.

Attachments

Identify attachments that have been included and those that are not applicable (n/a).

- Copy of fliers, ads, posters, emails, web pages, letters for recruitment
- Scripts of intended telephone conversations
- Copies of IRB approvals or letters of permission from other sites
- Informed consent statement (Approved form must be stamped by IRB before use)
- Copies of all instruments, surveys, focus group or interview questions, tests, etc.
- Signed assurance of principal investigator (required)

**THE EFFECT OF SPATIAL DISPLACEMENT ON VISITATION
FOR PRISONERS UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH**

Katharine Diana Peel

Natasha A. Frost (Faculty Advisor)

Major: Criminal Justice

College of Criminal Justice

ABSTRACT

To the extent that incarceration strains an inmate's relations with family, friends, and significant others, these strains for the death row inmate are likely exacerbated. With death row populations centralized in only a handful of prisons, the condemned inmate may be housed exceptionally far from home making regular contact through visitation more difficult for the family. In this paper, I explore the extent of displacement of prisoners who are under a sentence of death in the state of Alabama. I further explore how this spatial displacement affects family relationships, particularly in regards to visitation

Appendix B

Instructions: Please answer each of the by filling in the blank or checking the box next to the most accurate response. N/A means this question does not apply to you. If you are unsure, please leave the response blank. You may withdraw participation at any time. The Alabama Department of Corrections may screen your mail and therefore may see your responses to this survey.

Where did you live prior to this incarceration?

_____, _____
City

State
How long have you been on death row? _____ How old are you: _____

Are you currently married? Yes No Are you:
Male / Female

Were you married prior to your current incarceration? Yes No

Do you have any children? Yes No If yes, how many: _____

Do you have any brothers or sisters? Yes No If yes, how many: _____

Are you still in contact with the person you would consider your best friend? Yes
 No

Compared with your first year in prison, is contact with your friends and family now:

More often About the same Less often

Would like contact with your family and friends to be:

More often About the same Less often

About how **MANY MILES AWAY** do your family and friends live from the prison:

Spouse: 1-25 miles 26-50 miles 51-100 miles More than 100 miles N/A

Mother: 1-25 miles 26-50 miles 51-100 miles More than 100 miles N/A Father: 1-25 miles 26-50 miles 51-100

miles More than 100 miles N/A Brothers: 1-25 miles 26-50 miles

51-100 miles More than 100 miles N/A Sisters: 1-25 miles

26-50 miles 51-100 miles More than 100 miles N/A Children:

1-25 miles 26-50 miles 51-100 miles More than 100

miles N/A Other Relatives: 1-25 miles 26-50 miles 51-100

miles More than 100 miles N/A Best Friend: 1-25 miles 26-50
miles 51-100 miles More than 100 miles N/A

How often do you **WRITE LETTERS TO** your:

Spouse: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
Occasionally N/A
Mother: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
Occasionally N/A Father: Never Daily Weekly
Monthly Occasionally N/A Brothers: Never Daily
 Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Sisters:
Never Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A
Children: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
Occasionally N/A Other Relatives: Never Daily Weekly
Monthly Occasionally N/A Best Friend: Never Daily
 Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A

How often do you **RECEIVE LETTERS FROM** your:

Spouse: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
Occasionally N/A Mother: Never Daily Weekly
Monthly Occasionally N/A Father: Never Daily
 Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Brothers:
Never Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Sisters:
 Never Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally
 N/A Children: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
 Occasionally N/A Other Relatives: Never Daily
Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Best Friend: Never
 Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A

How often do you **HAVE TELEPHONE CONTACT** with your:

Spouse: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
Occasionally N/A Mother: Never Daily Weekly
Monthly Occasionally N/A Father: Never Daily
 Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Brothers:
Never Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Sisters:

Never Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally
 N/A Children: Never Daily Weekly Monthly
 Occasionally N/A Other Relatives: Never Daily
Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A Best Friend: Never
 Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally N/A

How many times PER MONTH do you receive VISITS FROM your:

Spouse: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Mother: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Father: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Brothers: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Sisters: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Children: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Other Relatives: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

Best Friend: Never 1-2 Times 3-4 Times More than 4
Times N/A

If you have any other comments *about contact or visits with family or friends*, please write them in here.

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING OUR SURVEY.
PLEASE RETURN IT WITH THE INFORMED CONSENT FORM IN THE
ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.**