

# WHAT HAPPENS IN HOME VISITS?

## Examining a Key Parole Activity

TAMMY MEREDITH

SHILA RENÉ HAWK 

SHARON JOHNSON

*Applied Research Services, Inc.*

JOHN P. PREVOST

*Georgia State University*

GEORGE BRAUCHT

*Brauchtworks Consulting*

---

---

Home visits provide a space for officer–supervisee encounters. However, little is known about the dynamics of home visits and their association with supervision outcomes. This study examines the context, content, and role of home visits in parole. Home visits are described using systematic observation data of officer-initiated contacts ( $N = 383$ ). The average visit included only those on parole, inside a single-family home, lasted 8 minutes, was conducive to discussions, and covered rules and needs topics. A separate agency records dataset ( $N = 26,878$ ) was used to estimate Cox hazard models. Findings suggest that each visit is related to reduced risk of a new felony arrest or a revocation, controlling for criminogenic factors and supervision activities. Risk was further associated with a reduction if officers engaged in mixed-topic discussions (rules and needs). Home visits can enable officers to help people on parole successfully navigate the challenges of reentry.

**Keywords:** parole; community corrections; supervision; home visits; reentry

---

---

### INTRODUCTION

The majority of the nearly 900,000 U.S. residents on parole will fail one or more conditions of supervision, resulting in violations, arrest, or revocation (Kaeble, 2018; Meredith & Prevost, 2009). Determining what reduces supervision failure is a public health concern as

---

**AUTHORS' NOTE:** *This article was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice (2013-IJ-CX-0062). The contents of this document reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official opinion or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. The authors wish to thank the many people at the Georgia Department of Community Supervision who made this project a successful collaboration. The authors are also grateful to Dr. Mary A. Finn, Director and Professor of the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. Her contributions to this research were invaluable. The authors also appreciate the reviewers who helped improve earlier versions. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Tammy Meredith, Applied Research Services, Inc., 3235 Cains Hill PL NW, Atlanta, GA 30305; e-mail: meredith@ars-corp.com.*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND BEHAVIOR, 201X, Vol. XX, No. X, Month 2020, 1–23.

DOI: 10.1177/0093854820910173

Article reuse guidelines: [sagepub.com/journals-permissions](http://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)

© 2020 International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology

it can affect individual and community safety and wellness, corrections management, and institutional spending. Research thoroughly examines the role of individual risk factors (e.g., personal characteristics and criminal histories) on parole outcomes (Gendreau et al., 1996; Petersilia, 1985, 2009), whereas far less attention is paid to the effects of specific supervision activities (Grattet et al., 2011; Grattet & Lin, 2014; Luallen et al., 2013). This study expands the correctional literature by examining a common supervision activity—home visits.

Policymakers prioritize home visits as a critical supervision activity, despite the time, cost, and concern for officer safety (Lindner, 1992). The practice is seen as a risk management tool, and thus the time spent with people on parole varies based their assessed risk/assigned supervision level (Bakke et al., 1990; DeMichele, 2007). Higher risk individuals receive increased supervision intensity (i.e., closeness of monitoring or frequency of contacts). However, research rarely delves into whether the home setting is a viable location for reliable and valid supervision activities, and assessment of the independent effects of home visits on supervision outcomes is limited (Ahlin et al., 2013; Aland, 2015). As a next step in explaining “the role of supervision itself” in outcomes (Grattet et al., 2011, p. 373), this study focuses on both systematically defining the attributes of home visits and examining their association with parole outcomes.

Empirical assessments of risk–need–responsivity (RNR) variables posited to enhance supervision effectiveness (Bonta & Andrews, 2007) have recently included examining the intensity of supervision for its independent effects on parole outcomes (Grattet et al., 2011; Grattet & Lin, 2014). The manner and how closely people on parole are supervised (i.e., monitoring requirements) are often based on assessed risk. People on parole assigned to the highest supervision risk/level receive the most intense supervision (including service provisions). Thus, research often measures supervision intensity using individuals’ risk/level. Grattet and colleagues (2011) observed that the variation in the effect of supervision on outcomes was in part due to differences in the application of supervision standards by agency officials, pointing to the importance of measuring the multiple dimensions of monitoring activities. Next, research measuring the actual number and types of contacts is needed to fully understand dimensions of intensity. In addition, subsequent research found that supervision intensity influenced some outcomes but not others, pointing to the importance of examining multiple measures of parole behaviors (Grattet & Lin, 2014). Acknowledging the dynamic interplay between supervision monitoring and the behaviors of those supervised (Rudes, 2012), Grattet and colleagues (2011) recommended that future research empirically disaggregate the two, which would require data that independently measured both over time. We begin to fill this gap using such data to estimate Cox hazard models<sup>1</sup> with multiple measures of supervision activities and behaviors, focusing on risk of arrest and revocation by home visit frequency and discussion types.

Although increasing contact frequency would intuitively translate into more intensive supervision, direct measurement of monitoring encounters is lacking in the literature. Observation of officers as they encounter people on supervision may be important for understanding how environment facilitates or impedes parole success. Observations of interactions outside the comfort and safety of the office are particularly limited. Knowledge of contact features, what officers communicate and with whom, all in the home setting could contribute significantly to officers’ professional development and supervision

effectiveness (Viglione, 2017). Only recently has research emerged exploring the complex relationships between criminogenic risk, supervision activities, and the content of officer encounters (Viglione, 2017; Viglione, Rudes, & Taxman, 2017). We add to this nascent research and inform our multivariate analyses by detailing the context and content of home visit encounters.

The first are the basic questions about the nature of home visits: What does “home” mean? What is discussed, how, and with whom during home visits? We answer these questions using quantitative data from a systematic observation study<sup>2</sup> of parole officers conducting home visits in 2014 and 2015 ( $N = 383$  high-risk cases). The systematic observation study allowed us to measure the experiential facets of home visit contacts and validate that officers accurately documented the content of home visit discussions in their electronic case notes. The second are the questions about home visit significance: Is there a relationship between home visits and parole outcomes? If so, in what way and how much? We answer these questions using agency data, including home visit electronic case notes. That a separate dataset of 26,878 parole exits between 2011 and 2013 allowed us to test the cumulative association of home visits on arrest and revocation, independent of individual risk factors and supervision level. A brief history of home visits frames our findings, followed by relevant supervision literature.

## HOME VISITS

The primary purpose for home visits in community supervision has teetered along a continuum between assistance and surveillance. Adopted from social work, the casework process served as the model for individual supervision (Bennett, 1938). “Friendly visiting” in the home was believed to afford a relaxed environment for offering help and gaining an understanding of someone’s circumstances for creating the best service plan (Beder, 1998, p. 515). Community corrections assumed that the same practice would facilitate reentry (Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005). Parole officers were expected to use the quantity and content of home visits to balance public safety and rehabilitation; use the home environment to engage those on parole and their families in meaningful ways; and, collect evidence to verify residences and rehabilitation (Dressler, 1941).

Following extensive challenges with attracting and training qualified caseworkers and Martinson’s (1974) argument that rehabilitation efforts were futile, surveillance became the primary determinant of home visit frequency (Ahlin et al., 2013; Feeley & Simon, 1992; Rothman, 1980). Unannounced home visits increased the likelihood of detecting noncompliance, while verifying residence and conducting drug tests (Ahlin et al., 2013; Rothman, 1980). Correspondingly, the time spent during a home visit was short (e.g., low-risk cases averaged about 12 min and high-risk cases averaged 48 min) and contacts occurred irrespective of needs (Bakke et al., 1990; Bercovitz & Bemus, 1993). DeMichele (2007) reported that officers engaged in home visits only 5 hr per week, or 12.5% of their time. The time spent in home visits has not been measured in relation to the context and information conveyed.

Contemporary discussions about how to conduct community supervision are shifting to the use of evidence-based communication skills such as motivational interviewing (Viglione, Blasko, & Taxman, 2017; Viglione, Rudes, & Taxman, 2017), responding to needs, and monitoring prosocial behavior (Ahlin et al., 2013). Once more, the assumed relaxed and personalized environment of the home is thought to afford optimal opportunities to address

relevant issues, develop relationships, and connect people on parole to prosocial community resources (Center for Civic Innovation, 1999). Using motivational interviewing, cognitive-behavioral, and crime desistance approaches during interactions likely contributes to both short- and long-term outcomes (Bonta et al., 2011; Taxman, 2008). Indeed, there is some evidence that supervision activities, such as encounters with skilled officers, can contribute to parole success (Blasko et al., 2015; Grattet et al., 2011; Petersilia, 2011), and officer orientations do vary by contact location (Dembo, 1972; Viglione, Blasko, & Taxman, 2017). However, there remains limited empirical knowledge regarding the viability or effectiveness of the home for meaningful supervision activity, whether for surveillance, rapport building, problem-solving, or mentoring. Safety, comfort, distractions, and home conditions are important questions. We simply do not know the extent to which the use of home visits is worth the investment of limited correctional resources.

#### THE ROLE OF SUPERVISION

Research has explored how supervision is shaped by officer attitudes (Steiner et al., 2011), affected by the quality of the relationship between people on parole and officers (Blasko et al., 2015), and enhanced by supervision skill, competency training, and ongoing workforce development that focuses on blending casework and surveillance and/or emphasizing desistance rather than compliance (Bonta et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2012). Other research investigated the impact on outcomes of a set of system-level factors, referred to as the parole regime, or the agency's capacity to supervise individuals, the officers' tolerance for violation behavior, and the intensity of supervision (Grattet & Lin, 2014; Grattet et al., 2011). More recently, research has focused on the use of evidence-based actuarial risk assessment and communication strategies to apply appropriate levels of individual monitoring and motivation (Viglione, 2017; Viglione, Blasko, & Taxman, 2017; Viglione et al., 2015a, 2015b; Viglione, Rudes, & Taxman, 2017).

As agents of surveillance and change, officers are thought to influence the likelihood of reentry success (Blasko et al., 2015; Grattet et al., 2011; Petersilia, 2011). Rather than exercising a benign role, using the right skills and receiving ongoing performance support are believed to enhance the parole officers' ability to successfully guide individuals through reintegration. In contrast, supervision tends to be less effective when conducted by officers on the extreme ends of a supervision philosophy continuum from placing "undue emphasis on surveillance and ha[ve] little interest in treatment thereby making the delivery of helpful services difficult" to, at the other extreme, focusing on social work or counseling that is "nondirective, unstructured, and permissive" (Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005, p. 461). Indeed, better outcomes are associated with the use of a balanced model emphasizing treatment and surveillance (Taxman, 2008), particularly among those at greater risk of failure (Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005).

Supervision framed by the principles of RNR can reduce violations and recidivism (Andrews et al., 1990; Gendreau et al., 1996). Risk refers to identifying a person's likelihood of committing a new crime; need requires targeting for intervention the criminogenic needs (e.g., low education, unemployment, criminal thinking, substance abuse) of individuals; and *responsivity* stresses the importance of adapting interventions and services to each individual (Andrews et al., 1990; Ross & Fabiano, 1985). Although RNR is now widely applied to matching individual characteristics with programs, less attention has been paid to how it is applied to officer-supervisee encounters to improve

supervision outcomes. Officers who effectively incorporate changes in risk, needs, and responsivity may make the most of limited face-to-face encounters in the office and in the home. Community corrections organizations may need to provide officers more than training on balanced approaches and evidence-based communication skills, as evidence suggests that those skills may not be as prevalently applied as assumed (Viglione, Blasko et al., 2017; Viglione, Rudes et al., 2017).

### **Responses to Risk**

Community reintegration is the goal of supervision. High rates of noncompliance and illegal activities (Langan & Levin, 2002) led to the wide application of risk classification systems (Bonta & Andrews, 2007) originally to set contact standards (Clear & Gallagher, 1985), though lately to guide the allocation of program resources (Latessa & Allen, 1999). A higher supervision intensity is assumed to promote public safety by deterring criminal behavior (Byrne et al., 1989). Therefore, individuals classified as high risk/supervision level are placed under more stringent conditions including increased contact frequency and/or more intensive or restrictive treatment (Aland, 2015; Olson & Lurigio, 2000).

Research on the effectiveness of intensive supervision is somewhat inconclusive with some studies suggesting reduced recidivism (Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005), no impact on recidivism (Petersilia & Turner, 1993a, 1993b), or increased recidivism (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Petersilia & Turner, 1993b; Rudes, 2012). Notably absent from this research is an examination of the relationship between risk and the context or locations of officer contacts. Officer-supervisee encounters in the home are assumed to provide a unique natural, in-community setting in which officers can respond to someone's risks and needs (Hyatt & Barnes, 2017), and thus it is still a primary requirement for high-risk supervision cases (Sieh, 2006).

### **Officer Safety in the Home**

The most important question related to what can be accomplished in a home visit may be determined by the perception, if not the actual level, of physical risk to the officer. In the 1980s and 1990s, community supervision caseloads increased in quantity and seriousness (Lindner, 1992; Parsonage, 1990). Officer safety, especially outside the office and in individuals' homes, was an increasing concern (Lindner, 1992; Parsonage, 1990). Although many correctional agencies issued weapons and safety equipment, implemented self-defense training, and improved electronic communication methods (Lindner, 1992; Parsonage, 1990), community supervision also moved toward an office-based approach later criticized as a "bunker mentality" (Petersilia, 2011, p. 525). In recent years, community corrections leaders have called for probation to move back to working in the neighborhood, not in the office (Center for Civic Innovation, 1999). However, the call for more field interactions is not informed by research about what that involves.

### **Supervision Outcomes**

The most serious parole failure results in a return to prison, either due to committing a new crime or being revoked (Lowenkamp et al., 2010; Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005). Therefore, the majority of supervision outcome studies focus on predicting rearrest or

revocation (Blasko et al., 2015; Grattet et al., 2011; Hyatt & Barnes, 2017; Luallen et al., 2013; Petersilia & Turner, 1993a). Research shows “the type and strength of predictive factors varie[s] depending on the outcome measure used” (Olson & Lurigio, 2000, p. 83). The processes behind each negative outcome reflect discretionary decisions by the person on parole and a variety of officials at many points in the justice system (see McNeill et al., 2013, or Serin & Lloyd, 2009, for an overview of desistance theory and practices). An arrest for a new felony crime often results in a period of detention that may or may not lead to revocation. Similarly, revocations can occur for something other than an arrest for a new crime, such as one or more technical violations. More research is needed that explores various responses to noncompliance among people on supervision.

### THE CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Parole officer fieldwork, including home visits, is central to community supervision. Unfortunately, evidence is lacking on what constitutes a home visit, its use as a tool of supervision, and its influence on supervision outcomes. Given renewed calls for conducting supervision outside the office and in the community where people on parole live and work, understanding the practicalities of the home as the place to conduct supervision is timely. This study investigates these gaps in understanding parole home visits using two sources of data: systematic observations of home visits and archival data from the Georgia statewide parole case management system (CMS), which included information about parole home visit contacts, officer case notes, individuals’ characteristics and histories, supervision activities, and outcomes. Three research questions guided the analysis.

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** What is the context of supervision home visit contacts—location types, conditions, safety, time spent, and people involved?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** What is the content (conversation subject matter) of home visits?

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** Are home visits significantly related to parole outcomes?

We considered if home visit frequency and discussion topics (being more rules or needs focused compared with a blend of both) are related to a new arrest or revocation, while controlling for common criminogenic factors and other relevant supervision measures. To our knowledge, this is the first study to test the influence of home visits and the use of mixed rules/needs discussions during home visits, which reflects the supervision style that prior research identifies as most likely to improve case outcomes.

### METHOD

This study was part of a larger project funded by the National Institute of Justice that focused on using mixed methods to explore the role of home visits in parole supervision.

#### STUDY SITE

At the time of this study, the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles was responsible for reviewing statutorily eligible individuals in custody for discretionary release from prison and for supervising more than 23,000 people on parole with a staff of 300 parole officers. Parole officers worked out of field offices throughout the state and maintained an average caseload size of 84. For each case, officers monitored compliance with release conditions,



responded to violations, and matched those supervised with needed services. Education and training requirements included a baccalaureate degree, 8 weeks of intensive basic training (that covers agency policies and procedures as well as addressing criminogenic needs), and the completion of annual training to requalify with firearms and maintain law enforcement certification.

Parole agency policy required officers to conduct home visits for all cases except those with the lowest level of supervision or on administrative status. Contact frequency varied based on supervision levels informed by a validated actuarial risk instrument (Meredith et al., 2007) and case circumstances. Cases with people on parole who committed egregious, high-profile, and violent offenses were automatically assigned as high risk, and persons with serious mental health issues and sexual crime convictions were designated as specialized cases. High and specialized supervision required two contacts outside the office each month, with at least one unannounced face-to-face encounter at the home. Standard supervision (known as medium risk in other states) required at least one face-to-face interaction every 90 days at the home or job site. Two types of data are used to understand home visits in this study: field observations and agency records.

#### THE SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION STUDY

Quantitative field data were collected to understand the context of home visits (What does “home” mean? What is discussed, how, and with whom during home visits?) and assess the extent to which the subject matter discussed during observed encounters were documented accurately by officers in the agency’s electronic CMS. Six members of the research team individually accompanied 64 parole officers (who varied by race, age, gender, and tenure) as they made 383 home visits (i.e., one visit per supervision case/person) across the state in 13 districts including a mixture of urban, suburban, and rural areas. Parole officers were allowed to choose their workday schedule so that researchers would be least disruptive to case management requirements as possible, and thus home visits were a nonrandom sample. Ride-along shifts occurred throughout work—weekdays over 5 months from the end of 2014 to the beginning of 2015. Observations were recorded after each contact (in the car traveling to the next stop) via a standardized coding template (Reiss, 1971). The coding sheet was created with input from parole officers and their managers to ensure that it included all the topics common among home visit interactions.<sup>3</sup> Observational data elements included the home visit interaction length, setting type, relationship of other people present, and conversation subjects (organized as surveillance/rules and needs/programs/assistance categories). Home visits were timed beginning when the officer exited the vehicle until returning to the vehicle at its conclusion. Our own observational notes were used to review the officer’s electronic case notes to determine the extent of congruence between what we observed and what officers electronically captured. That validation was critical to assess our confidence in using electronic case notes in this study.

#### AGENCY CASE MANAGEMENT DATA AND MEASURES

Historical agency records were used to examine the significance of home visits, in addition to the characteristics of people on parole and supervision activities. Longitudinal data were extracted from several Georgia criminal justice system agency databases, with the parole CMS serving as the primary source. CMS data were extracted for all persons

supervised between 2011 and 2013 ( $N = 26,878$ ) to include the demographics, offenses, prison release types, and supervision levels of those who were supervised and to exclude cases transferred to another state, expired by death, and with supervision length outliers.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the officer's CMS text notes were used to count the home visit conversation topics by category (i.e., surveillance/rules and needs/programs/assistance which are described below).<sup>5</sup> Parole data were matched to the state's computerized criminal history (CCH) records repository that includes arrest and conviction details for all persons fingerprinted in Georgia. Finally, Department of Corrections custody assessment and incarceration history data were added.

### Dependent Variables

The multivariable models were focused on two types of serious supervision failure separately: felony arrests or revocations. The felony arrest measure was coded as a binary indicator of cases where the returning citizen was arrested for a new felony crime (yes = 1, no = 0). Revocation, wherein the Parole Board terminated supervision, was coded 0 for those who successfully completed parole or set to 1 if parole was revoked so the person had to return to prison. Felony arrests represented 24% of outcomes and revocations 14%. The survival time for each measure was calculated by the number of days from starting parole until the event date or censored at the end of supervision for those with success (i.e., no event date). Parole cases in this study (i.e., all supervision exit types) ranged 1,888 days ( $M = 535.55$ ,  $SD = 399.09$ ). Among those who had a new felony arrest during supervision, the average survival time was 572.79 days ( $SD = 402.79$ ), and revocations typically occurred at 460.75 days ( $SD = 347.10$ ). Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for all measures.

### Independent Variables

Predictor variables included the demographics, criminal justice history, prison episode description, and the subsequent supervision details of those on parole. Other than the home visit measures (which were informed by the above-reviewed literature and study practitioners and fieldwork), the variables were all constructed based on prior supervision studies (see Feeley & Simon, 1992; Gendreau et al., 1996; Grattet et al., 2011; Grattet & Lin, 2014; Harcourt, 2007; Petersilia, 2009; Petersilia & Turner, 1993, among others).

The four "demographics" measures were sex (male = 1, female = 0), race (non-White = 1, White = 0), marital status (not married = 1, married = 0), and parole start age (date of birth minus parole start date, range = 52). As shown in the second set of rows in Table 1, the cohort was primarily male, non-White, unmarried, and averaged 35 years old. Next, the three "criminal justice history" measures were documented mental health conditions in prison (diagnosis, treatment, or medication = 1, none = 0), number of convictions prior to the current prison episode (range = 69), and a previous supervision revocation (yes = 1, no = 0). More than a quarter of the individuals on parole had a history of mental illness and a prior revocation, and they averaged nine convictions. The dichotomous "prison episode" measures were reflective of the most recent incarceration. Few individuals had what is considered a short sentence (2 years or shorter = 1, longer sentence = 0), a third had been convicted of a property crime (serving for property offense = 1, other offenses = 0), and 61% had a prison disciplinary problem (documented infraction = 1, no reports = 0).



**TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Variables	<i>n</i>	Range	<i>M</i> or percentage	<i>SD</i>
<b>Outcomes</b>				
Felony arrest	26,878	0–1	24%	—
Felony arrest survival days	26,878	1,888	478.68	386.84
Revocation	26,878	0–1	14%	—
Revocation survival days	26,878	1,888	535.55	399.09
<b>Demographics</b>				
Male	26,878	0–1	88%	—
Non-White	26,878	0–1	61%	—
Unmarried	26,878	0–1	86%	—
Parole start age	26,786	16–68	34.68	10.22
<b>Criminal justice history</b>				
Mental health issue	26,878	0–1	27%	—
Number of prior convictions	26,878	3–72	8.86	4.79
Previous revocation	26,878	0–1	26%	—
<b>Prison episode</b>				
Property offense	26,878	0–1	36%	—
Short sentence ( $\leq 2$ years)	26,558	0–1	9%	—
Prison discipline problem	26,558	0–1	61%	—
<b>Parole supervision</b>				
High/special level	26,878	0–1	40%	—
Positive drug test	26,878	0–1	34%	—
Unemployed	26,878	0–1	41%	—
Technical violation arrest	26,878	0–1	19%	—
<b>Home visits</b>				
Number of home visits	26,878	81	12.17	18.35
Proportion of mixed topics	26,878	0–1	31%	0.40

The last set of rows in Table 1 display the supervision activities measures (including home visits), labeled “parole supervision.” The high/specialized supervision level measure (based on Grattet & Lin, 2014) was informed by an actuarial risk tool and thus captured those people on parole considered at risk of failure (yes = 1, no = 0) and assigned to intensive monitoring (40%).<sup>6</sup> A third of the individuals on parole failed a random drug screening (positive drug test = 1, none = 0) while on supervision and 41% never reported employment (unemployed = 1, any parole employment = 0). Technical violations included failure to report, failure to attend programming, curfew violation, possession of a weapon, and other rule infractions. In total, 60% of the sample had one or more technical violations while under supervision. As violations accrue or if a single significant violation occurs, officers request a warrant for a technical violation arrest (warrant issued = 1, none = 0). Technical violation arrests do not require immediately ending supervision, thus allowing the parole officer significant discretion. As such, technical violation arrests introduce an independent predictor which may be associated with parole officer decision effects. Approximately one in five cases in the study sample included a technical violation arrest.

The “number of home visits” measure was a count of completed face-to-face interactions between officers and a supervised person or a collateral party (i.e., family, spouse, or cohabitant) outside the parole office. Between 0 and 81 home visits were conducted per paroled person, with an average of 12.17 ( $SD = 18.35$ ). Home visits resulted in 302,692 officer case

note entries, which averaged 11.36 entries (range = 273,  $SD = 18.33$ ) per case as most home visits resulted in at least one comment about what was discussed. The systematic observation study of home visits informed the sorting of these case note entries, using the same two categories to code and organize officers' comments into "rules" and "needs." For this study, each home visit case note entry was categorized as (a) being only rule oriented if all documented conversation topics were related to the surveillance and compliance topics; (b) being only needs oriented if all documented conversation topics were related to the requests and assistance topics; or (c) mixed if the documented conversation included topics related to both rules and needs. Our specific interest in the home visit subject matter discussion was to test the influence of mixed rules/needs discussions indicative of the supervision style most likely to result in positive outcomes. Nearly half of the people on parole (45%) experienced a mixed-topic home visit.

### Procedure

The coding and analyses of these data were informed by the systematic observation study, primarily identifying conversation topics. Computer programs were written to locate specific words and phrases within each home visit case note that clearly fit into the "rules/surveillance" or the "needs/programs/assistance" categories (listed in Table 3) and then the entries were counted. For instance, the rules category included the "warning," "reprimand," "sanction," "warrant," "delinquency report," "arrested," "parole payment," "room search," "phone search," and "violation" comments. Similar examples for the needs category include "services," "doctor," "counseling," "medication," "mental health," "referral," "in school," "social security card," "birth certificate," "disability," and "treatment." A single case note entry could include multiple discussion subjects and each subject was counted.

A series of fine-tunings were completed upon review of case notes classified into each topic. For example, we removed "babysitting" in a description of employment which originally suggested a need for child care, and we had to differentiate between "needing work" and "verified work." These reviews also proved useful to further understand how certain subjects could be missed, such as the use of vendor names to denote electronic monitoring. Although this somewhat limited coding method likely produced false negatives, as we could not account for all possible rules- and needs-related topics, we were cautious not to create false positives (i.e., took a conservative approach), such as augmenting indexing constraints so the word "arrest" would not pick up "no arrest noted" (a neutral subject; see Finn et al., 2017). Future research will no doubt improve upon this approach; however, this is a first step in understanding the effects of home visit discussion topics. Once each home visit was categorized as including both rules and needs topics, a proportion of the conversations was calculated (i.e., a count of mixed-topic discussions over the total number of home visit case notes) per supervision case ( $M = 0.31$ ,  $SD = 0.40$ ).

### ANALYSES

To specify the context and content of home visits, field observation data were examined using univariate statistics. Then, to answer the research questions regarding the significance of home visits, Cox survival regressions were estimated on agency case management data. Although traditional logistic regressions on binomial dependent variables would accommodate the nonnormally distributed error terms (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2004), they only account

for one specific point in time (assumes events are constant) and are more sensitive to selection bias at the endpoints. The data in this study were collected longitudinally, and risk of failure with respect to time is not even. Specifically, survival regressions calculate logit transformations with the added benefit of considering information about outcome timing (a second layer of explanation) and accounting for censoring (Allison, 1984; Schmidt & Witte, 1988). The additional outcome data were incorporated to adjust the accuracy of the estimates.

Cox survival regressions are particularly suited to predict the trajectories of unfixed supervision cases, as no assumptions of the hazard time distribution or duration are required (Cox & Oakes, 1984; Parmar & Machin, 1995). The resulting hazard rates are like traditional odds ratios in that they can be interpreted as a unit increase in X, and only the ordering of the event in time means it is inversely related, making larger numbers suggest shorter time periods. Similarly, risk reduction can be converted to a percentage point estimate at any given time ( $1 - \text{hazard ratio} \times 100$ ) and then used to understand instantaneous risk relative to increments, compared with an odds ratio that is a cumulative risk. Models of arrest or revocation hazard over time included all the above-described independent variables, namely, home visit counts and discussion topics.

## RESULTS

### RQ1: WHAT IS THE CONTEXT OF SUPERVISION HOME VISIT CONTACTS?

#### Location Types

Our first research question required us to examine our field observation data. The parole officers observed in the systematic observation study ( $N = 383$ ) conducted between one and 21 home visits per shift, averaging eight contacts. Officers with rural jurisdictions were restricted by lengthy drive times between homes, thus generally completing five fewer home visits per day. About 65% occurred during morning hours, as early as 5:30 a.m., but some were conducted between 10 p.m. and midnight. Most of the people on parole visited in the study lived with family and friends, 60% of the time in a single-family home. As shown in Table 2, people on parole also lived in apartments, modular/trailer homes, and row or linked dwellings. One stated reason for home visits is that they allow the parole officer to observe inside the home for contraband and other potential problems; however, only half of the observed home visits occurred inside the residence. Among the contacts outside the home, the most frequent locations were at the door, on the porch, or in the yard. Other locations included the resident's driveway, sidewalk, or street and sometimes the officer spoke to people without leaving the car.

#### Conditions and Safety

Although most residences were considered in good condition, almost a third of exterior conditions were judged fair and 10% poor. Of the homes entered, the interior conditions were typically conducive to the visit—lighted, orderly, and quiet. Some residences were extremely smelly (e.g., pet/urine odors, smoke, rot/trash), dirty, dark, hot/cold, and noisy. One residence had no running water or electricity and five people on parole were homeless. Overall, officers seemed to regard the environments as standard home visit situations as the research team was cautioned only three times prior to a stop. Officer safety was rarely an issue and when a concern occurred it was related to the presence of a dog.

**TABLE 2: Characteristics Observed During Home Visits**

Visit characteristic	Count (%)	Visit duration (min)	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Observed contacts	383	7.55	9.21
Site			
Rural	101 (26)	8.12	8.35
Small town	30 (8)	5.17	2.94
Suburb	125 (33)	8.22	13.16
Urban	119 (31)	7.09	5.27
Home type			
Single family	229 (60)	7.31	9.76
Apartment	62 (16)	7.95	9.05
Modular/trailer	41 (11)	8.44	9.43
Duplex/row/linked	19 (5)	6.32	5.22
Other	23 (5)	8.52	7.57
Condition			
Good	219 (57)	7.49	10.76
Fair	113 (29)	7.77	7.34
Poor	38 (10)	7.37	4.38
Location			
Inside residence	201 (53)	8.16	7.84
If inside residence: comfortable	164 (82)	8.02	8.04
If less than comfortable:	37 (10)	8.81	6.98
Smelly	22 (11)	9.45	8.23
Dirty	15 (8)	10.00	8.72
Dark	8 (4)	5.38	1.30
Other (temp, noisy, cluttered/sparse)	8 (4)	7.87	5.14
Outside residence	180 (47)	6.73	10.24
If outside residence:			
At door	47 (26)	4.55	3.11
On porch	49 (27)	8.37	17.65
In yard	51 (28)	7.88	5.89
Garage/parking/driveway	14 (8)	4.64	2.53
Other (car, street, sidewalk)	19 (11)	4.75	2.85
Person present			
Parolee only	282 (74)	6.88	6.44
Collateral only	30 (8)	5.60	4.61
Mixed contact	71 (19)	11.03	16.50
If collateral contact:	101 (26)	9.42	14.24
Parental figure	46 (46)	9.02	10.98
Other relative	18 (18)	15.56	28.15
Spouse/partner/romantic	26 (26)	8.85	6.73
Friend/roommate	8 (8)	6.25	1.98
Other	7 (7)	5.14	1.22

### Time Spent

Home visits were as brief as 1 min and as long as 2 hr; the longest were generally the first contact that involved initiation paperwork. Home visits averaged about 8 min in length; however, half concluded within 5 min. Home visit duration varied depending on where and with whom the interaction occurred. Interactions in the suburbs were longer than those in

other areas. A little extra time was generally spent with people living in apartments and trailer homes compared with single-family and linked houses (see Table 2). Although home visit length varied slightly by exterior condition, conversations inside homes with noted issues (e.g., smelly, dirty, noisy) were generally a minute longer than the average. Overall, home visits conducted outside were shorter than 7 min, whereas going inside the residence increased the average time by more than a minute. Conversations at the door or parking areas averaged fewer than 5 min, whereas the porch and yard were generally 3 min longer.

### **People Involved**

Two-thirds of observed home visits involved only the person on parole. When others contributed to the interaction, they were most often an immediate family member or romantic partner. Interactions with people other than the supervised person were shorter than those with people on parole alone, yet the presence of two or more individuals increased the contact time to about 11 min (necessitating about 1.5 times longer visit). Contacts involving a person on parole and others were most likely to occur outside the residence; however, the majority of times parole officers went inside, they were likely to interact with more than one person and it was deemed comfortable. Conversations involving romantic partners (i.e., dating or married) or parental figure (i.e., grandparents, parents, aunt, or uncle) were more than 2 min longer than average, whereas contacts with friends and roommates were slightly shorter. The longest home visits often included younger relatives (e.g., cousins, children, siblings) and the shortest ones were with other types of individuals (e.g., nurse, director, counselor).

### **RQ2: WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF HOME VISITS?**

Turning to our second research question, we examined the conversation subject matter of home visits in the systematic observation study. Table 3 displays the count and proportion of each discussion topic and the average length of the home visit that included it (multiple subjects were often discussed). The research team recorded 1,538 subject discussions which were divided into two general categories: rules/surveillance and needs/programs/assistance. Rules-related subjects focus on compliance with conditions of supervision. Needs-related subjects focus on requests and problem-solving. On average, four subjects were discussed per home visit.

#### **Rules-Related Topics**

Considering that rules-related topics were observed 962 times, it was not surprising that nearly all home visits included at least one and almost two-thirds of visits covered more than one topic in this category. On average, a home visit covered two to three rules topics, with one conversation including 14. The largest proportion of home visit topics included employment status, other issue (e.g., sex offender registration and polygraphs), fees and payments, recent law enforcement contact, and following instructions. Other common topics were paystubs, drugs/alcohol, moving, issuing reprimands/warnings, room checks/searches, and electronic monitoring. Conversations involving at least one rules-related subject averaged 7 min; those with at least four averaged 6 min; six subjects took 8 min; and 11 lasted more than half an hour.



**TABLE 3: Conversation Subject Matter Observed During Home Visits (N = 383)**

Conversation subject matter	#Occurrence (%contacts)	Visit duration (min)	
		<i>M</i> (w/topic included)	<i>SD</i>
<b>Rules-related topics discussed</b>			
Employment status	231 (60)	7.48	9.91
Other	136 (36)	8.76	9.60
Fees/payments	105 (27)	7.60	6.88
Officer inquiry: any law contact	81 (21)	7.91	8.99
Following instructions	64 (17)	8.36	8.67
Drugs/alcohol	62 (16)	9.08	8.37
Electronic monitoring	56 (15)	10.20	16.75
Moving	47 (12)	8.55	9.76
Paystub	32 (8)	6.06	3.90
Reprimands/warnings	30 (8)	7.20	5.12
Room check	29 (8)	9.28	7.57
Special conditions	22 (6)	9.09	11.95
Contact information	19 (5)	11.68	13.00
Sentence/discharge	17 (4)	11.88	13.32
Self-report: law contacts	8 (2)	13.00	15.70
Business card	8 (2)	11.13	16.16
Arrests/convictions	7 (2)	20.29	18.01
Drug test	5 (1)	12.80	5.85
Weapons check	3 (1)	25.67	24.11
Total rules subjects discussed	962 (92)		
<b>Needs-related topics discussed</b>			
Other	156 (41)	8.04	11.12
Employment	101 (26)	7.68	7.59
Substance use recovery	73 (19)	8.86	9.34
Physical health	57 (15)	9.44	8.94
Behavioral health symptoms	40 (10)	8.55	10.97
Housing	29 (8)	8.93	10.56
Education	26 (7)	14.88	25.36
Mental health Recovery	20 (5)	13.70	15.59
Support network	17 (4)	13.94	14.75
Transportation	17 (4)	11.76	13.71
Leisure activities	13 (3)	10.85	10.52
Drug test results	12 (3)	9.42	6.27
Associates	7 (2)	20.71	15.48
Child care	6 (2)	13.00	18.67
Treatment	2 (1)	27.00	33.94
Cognitive skills	0 (0)	—	—
Total needs subjects discussed	576 (78)		
Total subjects discussed	1,538		

### Needs-Related Topics

More than two-thirds of the observed home visits included one or more needs topics, resulting in 576 assistance-related discussions. Generally, between one and two needs were discussed during a visit, with a maximum of 11. The most discussed needs category topic was “other,” which included several conversations about obtaining social security or identification cards and veterans or disability benefits. The officer–supervisee dialogue in this

category also frequently included employment, substance abuse recovery, physical health, housing, education, and mental health symptoms and recovery. Discussing needs topics often took longer compared with the rules topics. Needs conversations with one topic averaged 6 min, those with four topics were 10 min, six took 32 min, and the one home visit with 11 topics required almost an hour. Notably, 71% of home visits in the systematic observation study included a mix of conversation topics (i.e., at least one rules-related topic and one needs-related topic).

### **RQ3: ARE HOME VISITS SIGNIFICANTLY RELATED PAROLE OUTCOMES?**

Our next research question required the agency case management data. Table 4 displays the results of the two Cox regression survival models testing the significance of the number of home visits and the proportion of noted home visit conversations that had mixed topics (being more rules or needs focused compared with a blend of both) on new felony arrest or revocation, while controlling for individuals' demographics, criminal history, prison sentence, and other relevant supervision measures.<sup>7</sup> The presented hazard ratios (HRs) are the associated risk of an outcome at any fixed point in time over the entire supervision period. Adding to the community supervision literature, this study found that home visit activities are related to a risk reduction in parole failure.

Although the strength of the association between a supervision home visit and parole failure was moderate, it was significant and cumulative. The number of home visits correlates to a decreased hazard rate of both supervision outcomes. Each home visit was related to a 2.1% reduced risk of failure (HR = 0.979). A returning citizen receiving the average of 12 visits has an associated 25% reduced risk of felony arrest or revocation. Not only are home visits related to decreased HRs of serious supervision failure, but if those encounters include a conversation with mixed rules and needs topics, the associated risk of a new felony arrest or revocation is further reduced by 14% (HR = 0.857) and 11% (HR = 0.893), respectively. As some HRs are very small, it is worth noting that the magnitude is influenced by both the large range of predictor variables (such as home visits) as well as the large sample size. Substantive importance is always considered alongside statistical significance.

Turning to the next set of measures in Table 4, findings suggest that people on parole who were male, unmarried, and younger were associated with a greater risk of a new felony arrest and revocation compared with female, married, and older individuals. Georgia's returning citizens who were non-White had lower HRs of failing parole than those who were White. Among the criminal justice history measures, results suggest that supervised people with prior mental health issues, convictions, and revocations were all related to increased rates of supervision failure. Prior revocation was the strongest predictor of a new felony arrest and current episode of revocation. Next, results indicate that a person's prison experience can help foreshadow post-prison supervision outcomes. Being sentenced for a property offense had a positive relationship with an individual's hazards of a new felony arrest. Short sentences were associated with increased timing of revocations. Both outcomes were significantly related to prison disciplinary problems.

Regarding supervision activities, study findings suggest that both people on parole and parole officers play a role in case success. Individuals who were monitored more intensely (defined by a higher risk and the corresponding supervision level, i.e., high/specialized) had higher hazards for being arrested and to be sent back to prison. Detected drug use was also

**TABLE 4: Cox Survival Regression Analyses of Factors Predicting Parole Supervision Outcomes (N = 26,465)**

Variables	New felony arrest					Revocation				
	B	SE	p	HR	95% CI	B	SE	p	HR	95% CI
Home visits										
Number of home visits	-0.021	0.001	.001	0.979	[0.977, 0.980]	-0.052	0.002	.001	0.979	[0.946, 0.952]
Proportion of mixed topics	-0.113	0.033	.001	0.857	[0.837, 0.953]	-0.328	0.044	.001	0.893	[0.660, 0.785]
Demographics										
Male	0.631	0.052	.001	1.848	[1.698, 2.079]	0.786	0.077	.001	2.194	[1.886, 2.553]
Non-White	-0.066	0.028	.017	0.935	[0.887, 0.988]	-0.171	0.036	.001	0.843	[0.785, 0.905]
Unmarried	0.135	0.040	.001	1.139	[1.059, 1.236]	0.203	0.055	.001	1.226	[1.100, 1.365]
Parole start age	-0.039	0.002	.001	0.962	[0.958, 0.964]	-0.028	0.002	.001	0.972	[0.969, 0.976]
Criminal justice history										
Mental health issue	0.255	0.030	.001	1.290	[1.218, 1.367]	0.239	0.038	.001	1.270	[1.180, 1.367]
Number of prior convictions	0.064	0.003	.001	1.066	[1.060, 1.071]	0.029	0.004	.001	1.029	[1.022, 1.036]
Previous revocation	0.789	0.027	.001	2.201	[2.090, 2.318]	2.033	0.039	.001	7.634	[7.068, 8.246]
Prison episode										
Property offense	0.257	0.026	.001	1.293	[1.228, 1.361]	0.054	0.035	.122	1.056	[0.986, 1.131]
Short sentence	0.052	0.044	.230	1.054	[0.967, 1.148]	0.506	0.045	.001	1.659	[1.519, 1.812]
Prison discipline problem	0.336	0.030	.001	1.399	[1.318, 1.485]	0.738	0.047	.001	2.092	[1.908, 2.293]
Parole supervision										
High/special supervision level	0.168	0.027	.001	1.183	[1.122, 1.247]	0.538	0.036	.001	1.713	[1.598, 1.837]
Failed drug test	0.322	0.028	.001	1.380	[1.308, 1.457]	0.197	0.036	.001	1.217	[1.134, 1.307]
Unemployed	0.501	0.028	.001	1.651	[1.563, 1.744]	0.565	0.036	.001	1.760	[1.639, 1.890]
Technical violation arrest	-0.343	0.032	.001	0.710	[0.666, 0.756]	-0.119	0.039	.002	0.888	[0.823, 0.958]
Likelihood ratio $\chi^2$			4,465					8,402		

Note. HR = hazard ratio; CI = confidence interval.

related to an increased risk and timing of the parole failure compared with those whose test results were negative. The same pattern was seen for those who did not obtain employment. However, technical violation arrests (the result of the supervised person violating supervision conditions to the extent that the officer thought required an arrest) were associated with a reduction in the hazard of more serious supervision failure.

## DISCUSSION

Community supervision research increasingly focuses on the officers' activities, orientations, and the use of communication skills (Bonta et al., 2008; Bourgon et al., 2018; Grattet et al., 2011; Kennealy et al., 2012). Although home visits are deemed an important staple of community supervision (Hyatt & Barnes, 2017; Luallen et al., 2013), little is known about the dynamics and impact on supervision outcomes. This study begins to fill these gaps by describing the nature of home visits, testing their significance as a fundamental supervision activity, and finding the extent to which they impact supervision outcomes.

### SUPERVISION HOME VISITS

The key variables in the survival models were the number of completed home visits and the topics of the conversations (as documented officers in a CMS). Although the predictive strength of home visits is small, it is cumulative—each home visit, regardless of purpose, is associated with reduced hazards of each supervision failure—suggesting that home visits contribute to improved community supervision outcomes. Considering the time and expense, more work is needed to determine which returning citizens benefit most from home visits.

This study also demonstrates that officer text-based comments entered into a CMS can be examined to better understand some aspects of the “black box” (Bonta et al., 2008, p. 248) of supervision. We created a series of computer programs to sort through and organize the subject matter of parole officer home visit case notes. Case notes were organized into three categories (rules, needs, and mixed) based on lessons learned during the observational study of parole officers conducting home visits. Following the literature suggesting that a balanced approach yields better results (Taxman, 2008), this study examined the relationship between parole outcomes and the proportion of officer comments that included a blend of both rules and needs subjects. Mixed conversations during home visits were associated with a reduced risk of a felony arrest and revocation.

This finding both confirms previous research regarding the importance of communication strategies and demonstrates the feasibility of using a categorical approach to examining supervision contacts and practices. Adding Chamberlain and colleagues' (2017) results that the type of rapport officers and those they supervise have affected recidivism, these findings suggest that there are specific training and performance support approaches that parole officers and their supervisors can use to affect positive change on parole outcomes. However, the widespread application of a balanced approach and evidence-based communication skills will require more work (Viglione, Rudes, & Taxman, 2017). Officer standards need to include developing those high-quality working relationships. Throughout data collection in this study, the research team discussed the unspoken mood, philosophy, and demeanor of the officers and its influence on the entire interaction. While driving, officers often described their personal view of their role in behavior change (or their complete disinterest in

anything other than the shift end). The way the officer described their role seemed to directly correspond to us witnessing a range of meaningful connections with sincere officers and those that could be described as more impersonal.

Our observational study sought to understand the nature of home visits which average about 8 min including the time required to walk up to (and in some cases around the outside of) the residence, have a conversation, and return to the officer's vehicle. This outside assessment of the home provides relevant health and safety information that informs immediate escape or future arrest plans if needed. Officers in this study did not always require residence entry. Only about half of the visits occur inside the house, with the remainder happening at the door or outside the home. Residence verifications can be done from anywhere during a home visit, some contacts were already outside when the officer arrived, and perhaps the benefits of the home environment encompass the property. Individuals other than the person on parole are present during about one-third of the visits and most residents are amenable to supervision conversations. In addition, officers rarely consider home environments to be dangerous. Nevertheless, agency policy and practices assume that a readiness for the potential of dangerous encounters is vital. In the research jurisdiction, officer preparation requires ongoing training and functional equipment (i.e., firearm, stun-type device, handcuffs, asp-baton, and body armor) for possible armed encounters. More study about situational and personal variables that may inform a threshold of dangerousness and suitable responses is warranted.

Although the observed home visits tended to be short, almost all home visits addressed rule compliance issues and the majority addressed needs-related subjects. In contrast to Viglione, Rudes, and Taxman's (2017) probation officer study that found directive strategies were more likely to be used than motivational approaches in field interactions, this study found that a blended model of supervision is typical. However, 40% more rule compliance topics were discussed than needs topics. In-the-residence visits allowed significant others to participate and thus may better enable officers to assist people on parole and their allies with successfully navigating reentry challenges (Clear & Latessa, 1993; Kennealy et al., 2012; Taxman, 2008). Field contacts are often described by officers as less scripted and regimented than office visits, providing more opportunities to prioritize discussion topics of immediate importance to the people on parole and officer. An ethnographic study of home visit or the use of new technologies such as body cameras/recorders could provide important feedback for training to improve not only the subject matter of interactions but also the consistent use of responsive communication skills. Studies of policy-driven officer responses or sequences of sanctions for positive and negative events represent another area for future research.

#### **OTHER PREDICTORS OF SUPERVISION ARRESTS AND REVOCATIONS**

The hypothesized predictive association among returning citizens' characteristics, crime/punishment variables, and supervision activities with supervision outcomes was confirmed. The demographic results are like those found in previous studies (Luallen et al., 2013; Steen & Opsal, 2007). However, individuals who were White had more new arrests or revocations, and those occurred more quickly, compared with similarly situated individuals who were non-White. This finding is contrary to the current literature which warrants further research. Supplemental analyses show that the average number of home visits for individuals who were non-White was just slightly higher than that among those



who are White suggesting that the additional contacts may account for the different outcomes. Concurrently, for non-Whites, the dampening effect of mixed conversation home visits was greater than that for Whites. Also, White individuals were more likely to have a history of mental health issues and be serving for a property offense, with both factors being traditionally associated with increased failure rates. These results may be region specific, not nationally generalizable. It is also possible that moderating factors, which are not calculated here, explain this difference. Replication and expansion of the model is necessary to enhance our understanding.

The finding that histories of mental illness and criminal justice contacts can affect parole outcomes fits with prior research as these issues are prevalent among correctional populations (Gendreau et al., 1996; Harcourt, 2007; Hughes et al., 2001; Petersilia, 1985, 2009; Steen & Opsal, 2007). Among prison episode measures, it makes sense that the person's preceding sentence experience is related to subsequent supervision success, or lack thereof. Property offenses, short sentence length, and prison discipline problems seem to be indicators of individuals who are less suited to abide by the conditions of supervision.

As for variables associated with community supervision activities, higher levels of assessed risk often result in enhanced monitoring (e.g., additional conditions, more frequent contact/oversight) that may increase the hazard of failure if risk and need factors are not consistently addressed. Additional metrics beyond the traditional independent variables—supervision level—to test interactions of contact intensities, encounter locations, and interaction topics could provide important insights. Home visits likely provide opportunities for officers to detect instability, aid in finding solutions, and reinforce progress toward stable reentry. Not surprisingly, those who test positive for drugs while on parole are arrested and revoked more often and faster than those who test negative. In addition, those who establish stable employment soon after prison release also tend to remain compliant, desist from crime, and avoid violations. One tool to promote getting back on track as one's risk increases might be the parole arrest warrant. Technical violation arrests in this study served as an intermediate sanction that effectively corrected supervision noncompliance and significantly contributed to a reduced hazard of revocation. This suggests that the intervention, when it prompts engagement in resources and prosocial allies, is congruent with RNR principles (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). A highlight of this study is that there are more dimensions to supervision than surveillance.

## LIMITATIONS

This study's findings may not be generalizable for three main reasons: sampling, jurisdiction differences, and data limitations. The systematic observation study was limited to people on high and specialized supervision levels (i.e., those who have the most home visits and might be impacted most by them), whereas the statistical analyses included those supervised at all levels (so that a high/special supervision level measure could be modeled). The agency data cohort excluded out-of-state transfers and anyone who died, and only contained one state's criminal history records. Jurisdictions with dissimilar populations; organizational cultures, policies, and procedures; and laws and supervision outcome metrics/rates should validate with local data the applicability of this study's findings. Although these data were robust, they are not as nuanced as qualitative data would have proved and factors not measured and information systems' variables that were not included in this study may be viable predictors of parole outcomes. For example, public opinion regarding rehabilitation,

supervision environment and contact duration, and officers' personal characteristics, histories, and supervision orientations should be examined in concordance with home visit effects (Clear & Latessa, 1993; Grattet et al., 2011; Olson & Lurigio, 2000). Future research should also examine how home visit contacts are related to parole outcomes controlling for calculated risk scores.

This study contributes to the examination of the parole officer's use of a balanced approach that includes surveillance and motivating progressive, prosocial change to influence supervision outcomes. Other areas of research not examined here but urgently needed are the association between outcomes and the use of the responsive communication skills thought to be associated with better outcomes, formally integrating assessed people on parole needs into the topics of home visit discussions, and the specific and timely supervision compliance subjects such as payments of fees, fines, and restitution plus other parole conditions.

## CONCLUSION

This study adds to the supervision literature by defining home visits and their relationship with decreased parole failure, particularly based on what is discussed during the contacts. Home visits have a positive and significant association with parole outcomes, but more studies are needed to explain why based on the differential contributions of various supervision activities, frequencies, intensities, contents, and contexts. Resultantly, policy and procedures that produce practice-based evidence of desired outcomes can be established and modified over time. This would elevate the field beyond the current era of using evidence-based practices.

## ORCID iD

Shila René Hawk  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1546-804X>

## Supplemental Material

Supplemental Material is available in the online version of this article at <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/cjb>.

## NOTES

1. Survival analyses are commonly used to account for variations in follow-up time or period at risk among a sample (see Bonta et al., 2011; Grattet et al., 2011; Grattet & Lin, 2014; Schmidt & Witte, 1988, among others).

2. A structured method of collecting reliable, unbiased data increases the credibility of scientific results because observation coding is easily replicable across researchers (Reiss, 1971).

3. Information about the process for constructing and testing the observation form and copies of the form can be obtained from the corresponding author. We acknowledge the limitations of our nonethnographic approach.

4. Parole supervision episode length ranged from less than a year to more than 22 years, with a mean of around 2 years; the outlying 5% of cases defined by the longest supervision periods were dropped from the analysis.

5. There were no home visits and no case notes in the electronic files for 20% of parolees.

6. Supervision levels are known to change from high to standard, and vice versa. Both levels require home visits.

7. Stepwise testing was conducted on all models. The results were not significantly different between blocks. Due to the large sample size, statistical significance was defined as  $p < .01$ . For more information, contact the lead author.

## REFERENCES

Ahlin, E. M., Antunes, M. J. L., & Tubman-Carbones, H. (2013). A review of probation home visits: What do we know? *Federal Probation*, 77(3), 32–50.

- Aland, L. F. (2015). Perceptions of probation and police officer home visits during intensive probation supervision. *Federal Probation, 79*(1), 11–16.
- Allison, P. D. (1984). *Event history analysis: Regression for longitudinal event data*. SAGE.
- Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J., & Hoge, R. D. (1990). Classification for effective rehabilitation: Rediscovering psychology. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 17*(1), 19–52.
- Bakke, A., Quigley, P., Prestine, R., & Kiockzeim, B. (1990). *Oregon Department of Corrections: Analysis of the 1990 Time Study*. National Council on Crime and Delinquency.
- Beder, J. (1998). The home visit revisited. *Families in Society, 79*(5), 514–522.
- Bennett, J. V. (1938). Minimum standards for United States probation service. *Federal Probation, 2*(2), 2–6.
- Bercovitz, J., & Bemus, B. (1993). *Probation case classification and workload measures system for Indiana*. Indiana Judicial Center.
- Blasko, B. L., Friedmann, P. D., Rhodes, A. G., & Taxman, F. S. (2015). The parolee–parole officer relationship as a mediator of criminal justice outcomes. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 42*(7), 722–740.
- Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation. *Rehabilitation, 6*(1), 1–22.
- Bonta, J., Bourgon, G., Rugge, T., Scott, T., Yessine, A., Gutierrez, L., & Li, J. (2011). An experimental demonstration of training probation officers in evidence-based community supervision. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 38*, 1127–1148.
- Bonta, J., Rugge, T., Scott, T. L., Bourgon, G., & Yessine, A. K. (2008). Exploring the black box of community supervision. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 47*(3), 248–270.
- Bourgon, G., Rugge, T., Chadwick, N., & Bonta, J. (2018). The living laboratory studies: Providing insights into community supervision practices. *Federal Probation, 82*(1), 3–12.
- Byrne, J. M., Lurigio, A. J., & Baird, C. (1989). *Effectiveness of the new intensive supervision programs*. National Institute of Corrections.
- Center for Civic Innovation. (1999). *“Broken windows” probation: The next step in fighting crime*. Manhattan Institute.
- Chamberlain, A. W., Gricius, M., Wallace, D. M., Borjas, D., & Ware, V. M. (2017). Parolee–parole officer rapport: Does it impact recidivism? *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 62*(11), 3581–3602.
- Clear, T. R., & Gallagher, K. W. (1985). Probation and parole supervision: A review of current classification practices. *Crime and Delinquency, 31*(3), 423–443.
- Clear, T. R., & Latessa, E. J. (1993). Probation officer roles in intensive supervision: Surveillance versus treatment. *Justice Quarterly, 10*, 441–462.
- Cox, D. R., & Oakes, D. (1984). *Analyses of survival data*. Chapman and Hall.
- Dembo, R. (1972). Orientation and activities of the parole officer. *Criminology, 10*, 193–215.
- DeMichele, M. T. (2007). *Probation and parole’s growing caseloads and workload allocation: Strategies for managerial decision making*. American Probation and Parole Association. <https://www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/appa/pubs/SMDM.pdf>
- Dressler, D. (1941). Measuring parole officers’ work. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 32*(4), 424–432.
- Feeley, M. M., & Simon, J. (1992). The new penology: Notes on the emerging strategy of corrections and its implications. *Criminology, 30*(4), 449–474.
- Finn, M. A., Prevost, J. P., Braucht, G. S., Hawk, S., Meredith, T., & Johnson, S. (2017). Home visits in community supervision: A qualitative analysis of theme and tone. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 44*(10), 1300–1316.
- Gendreau, P., Little, T., & Goggin, C. (1996). A meta-analysis of the predictors of adult offender recidivism: What works! *Criminology, 34*(4), 575–608.
- Grattet, R., & Lin, J. (2014). Supervision intensity and parole outcomes: A competing risks approach to criminal and technical parole violations. *Justice Quarterly, 33*, 4565–4583.
- Grattet, R., Lin, J., & Petersilia, J. (2011). Supervision regimes, risk, and officer reactions to parolee deviance. *Criminology, 49*(2), 371–399.
- Harcourt, B. (2007). *Against prediction: Profiling, policing, and punishing in an actuarial age*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hosmer, D. W., Jr., & Lemeshow, S. (2004). *Applied logistic regression*. John Wiley.
- Hughes, T. A., Wilson, D. J., & Beck, A. J. (2001). *Trends in state parole, 1990-2000*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Hyatt, J., & Barnes, G. (2017). An experimental evaluation of the impact of intensive supervision on the recidivism of high-risk probationers. *Crime & Delinquency, 63*(1), 3–38.
- Kaeble, D. (2018). *Probation and parole in the United States, 2016*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Kennealy, P. J., Skeem, J. L., Manchak, S. M., & Loudon, J. E. (2012). Fair, firm, and caring officer-offender relationships protect against supervision failure. *Law and Human Behavior, 36*(6), 496–505.
- Kubrin, C. E., & Stewart, E. A. (2006). Predicting who reoffends: The neglected role of neighborhood context in recidivism studies. *Criminology, 44*(1), 165–197.
- Langan, P. A., & Levin, D. J. (2002). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994* (Special report—NCJ 193427). U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- Latessa, E. J., & Allen, H. E. (1999). *Corrections in the community*. Anderson Publishing.
- Lindner, C. (1992). The probation field visit and office report in New York State: Yesterday, today and tomorrow. *Criminal Justice Review*, 17(1), 44–60.
- Lowenkamp, C. T., Flores, A. W., Holsinger, A. M., Makarios, M. D., & Latessa, E. J. (2010). Intensive supervision programs: Does program philosophy and the principles of effective intervention matter? *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 368–375.
- Luallen, J., Astion, M., & Flygare, C. (2013). Supervision violations: Patterns and outcomes. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 52, 565–590.
- Martinson, R. (1974). What works? Questions and answers about prison reform. *The Public Interest*, 35, 22–25.
- McNeill, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C., & Maruna, S. (2013). Re-examining “evidence-based practice” in community corrections: Beyond “a confined view” of what works. *Justice Research and Policy*, 14(1), 35–60.
- Meredith, T., & Prevost, J. P. (2009). *Developing data driven supervision protocols for positive parole outcomes*. National Institute of Justice.
- Meredith, T., Speir, J., & Johnson, S. (2007). Developing and implementing automated risk assessments in parole. *Justice Research and Policy*, 9(1), 1–24.
- Olson, D. E., & Lurigio, A. J. (2000). Predicting probation outcomes: Factors associated with probation rearrest, revocations, and technical violations during supervision. *Justice Research and Policy*, 2(1), 73–86.
- Paparozi, M. A., & Gendreau, P. (2005). An intensive supervision program that worked: Service delivery, professional orientation, and organizational supportiveness. *The Prison Journal*, 85(4), 445–466.
- Parmar, M. K. B., & Machin, D. (1995). *Survival analysis: A practical approach*. John Wiley.
- Parsonage, W. H. (1990). *Worker safety in probation and parole*. National Institute of Corrections.
- Petersilia, J. (1985). Probation and felony offenders. *Federal Probation*, 49, 4–9.
- Petersilia, J. (2009). *When prisoners come home: Parole and prisoner reentry*. Oxford University Press.
- Petersilia, J. (2011). Community corrections: Probation, parole and prisoner reentry. In J. Q. Wilson & J. Petersilia (Eds.), *Crime and public policy* (pp. 499–531). Oxford University Press.
- Petersilia, J., & Turner, S. (1993a). *Evaluating intensive supervision probation/parole: Results of a nationwide experiment*. National Institute of Justice.
- Petersilia, J., & Turner, S. (1993b). Intensive probation and parole. *Crime and Justice*, 17, 281–335.
- Reiss, A. J. (1971). Systematic observation of natural social phenomena. In H. L. Costner (Ed.), *Sociological methodology* (pp. 3–33). Jossey-Bass.
- Ross, R. R., & Fabiano, E. A. (1985). *Time to think: A cognitive model of delinquency prevention and offender rehabilitation*. Inst of Social Sc & Arts Incorporated.
- Rothman, D. L. (1980). *Conscience and convenience: The asylum and its alternatives in progressive America*. Brown, Little.
- Rudes, D. (2012). Getting technical: Parole officers continued use of technical violations under California’s parole reform agenda. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35(2), 249–268.
- Schmidt, P., & Witte, A. D. (1988). *Predicting recidivism using survival models*. Springer-Verlag.
- Serin, R. C., & Lloyd, C. D. (2009). Examining the process of offender change: The transition to crime desistance. *Psychology, Crime, & Law*, 15(4), 347–374.
- Sieh, E. W. (2006). *Community corrections and human dignity*. Jones and Bartlett.
- Smith, P., Schweitzer, M., Labrecque, R. M., & Latessa, E. J. (2012). Improving probation officer’s supervision skills: An evaluation of the EPICS model. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 35(2), 189–199.
- Steen, S., & Opsal, T. (2007). “Punishment on the installment plan”: Individual-level predictors of parole revocation in four states. *The Prison Journal*, 87(3), 344–366.
- Steiner, B., Travis, L. F., Makarios, M. D., & Brickley, T. (2011). The influence of parole officers’ attitudes on supervision practices. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(6), 903–927.
- Taxman, F. S. (2008). No illusions: Offender and organizational change in Maryland’s proactive community supervision efforts. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 7(2), 275–302.
- Viglione, J. (2017). Acceptability, feasibility, and the use of evidence-based practices in adult probation. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 44(10), 1356–1381.
- Viglione, J., Blasko, B. L., & Taxman, F. S. (2017). Organizational factors and probation officer use of evidence-based practices: A multilevel examination. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(6), 1648–1667.
- Viglione, J., Rudes, D. S., & Taxman, F. S. (2015a). The myriad of challenges with correctional change: From goals to culture. *European Journal of Probation*, 7(2), 103–123.
- Viglione, J., Rudes, D. S., & Taxman, F. S. (2015b). Misalignment in supervision: Implementing risk/needs assessment in probation. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 42(2), 263–285.
- Viglione, J., Rudes, D. S., & Taxman, F. S. (2017). Probation officer use of client-centered communication strategies in adult probation settings. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 56(1), 38–60.

**Tammy Meredith** is a principal and cofounder of Applied Research Services, Inc. Her current research efforts include identifying and managing high-risk offender populations.

**Shila René Hawk** is a research associate at Applied Research Services, Inc. Her work is focused on evidence-based practices, law enforcement, data science, and violent crime.

**Sharon Johnson** is a research associate at Applied Research Services, Inc. Her recent efforts involve evaluating prisoner reentry initiatives, as well as the effectiveness of veterans' courts.

**John P. Prevost** received his PhD from Georgia State University after a 32-year career with Georgia Parole. His research touches on all aspects of reentry and supervision.

**George Braucht** is an LPC, CPCS, CARES, and, since retiring from the Georgia Department of Community Supervision, consults with behavioral health and criminal justice agencies.