

GANGS, GUNS, AND DRUGS: RECIDIVISM AMONG SERIOUS, YOUNG OFFENDERS*

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Research Summary:

The primary goal of this study is to understand the factors that best explain recidivism among a sample of 322 young men aged 17 to 24 years released from prison in a Midwestern state. Specific attention is paid to the predictive validity of gang membership, gun use, and drug dependence on the timing of reconviction and the current research on desistance frames the analyses. Results from a series of proportional hazard models indicate that race, gang membership, drug dependence, and institutional behavior are critical factors in predicting the timing of reconviction. Contrary to expectations, gun use was not related to post-release involvement in the criminal justice system.

Policy Implications:

Much of current violence policy has focused on the identification and enhanced prosecution of individuals deemed to be serious and chronic offenders; particular emphasis has been placed on gun offenders. The findings presented here indicate that preprison weapon involvement is not significantly associated with recidivism, likely because gun use is prevalent among young, serious offenders. Although policies aimed at the incapacitation of young, violent offenders may reduce community levels of crime in the short term, the chances for recidivism are likely to increase in the long term if factors like gang membership and drug use, and the deficits that these behaviors engender for social and emotional

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capital, are not addressed. More broadly, the strong, significant effect of the institutional misconduct measure signals the salience of accounting for institutional behavior when making release decisions. Institutional misconduct may be an important marker of sustained gang membership, making institutional programming and appropriate after-care services a priority for this group of offenders.

KEYWORDS: Recidivism, Gang, Drug Use, Guns, Survival Analysis

The sharp escalation in youthful crime, particularly gun violence, during the 1980s and 1990s has been well documented (Cook and Laub, 1998). General consensus exists in both the public policy and the research communities that the dramatic growth in serious violence is largely attributable to the availability of weapons, the recruitment of young people into illicit drug markets (Blumstein, 1995), and gangs (Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993). Because of this research, an inextricable nexus exists among young adults, drugs, guns, and gangs in the minds of policy makers, researchers, and the public.

Much of the national concern over drug, gun, and gang violence occurred at a time when the research community was developing research programs that articulated the value of focusing attention to a narrow group of offenders commonly referred to as “serious and chronic offenders” (Loeber and Farrington, 1998). The rising levels of gun violence also spawned federal and state policy initiatives aimed at reducing crime by directing prevention, intervention, and suppression at the most serious at-risk populations. Such efforts are based on the premise that serious and chronic offenders, particularly men with histories of gang involvement and gun violence, are uniquely dangerous and deserving of enhanced prosecution.

Recognizing the unique community safety challenges posed by this group of offenders, initiatives such as Project Safe Neighborhoods, Operation Ceasefire, and others have focused intensive intervention and prosecutorial efforts at serious and violent offenders. These programs use what is commonly referred to as the carrot-and-stick approach that delivers comprehensive intervention services at offenders most at risk for continued offending and long incarceration periods for those who continue to offend. The aim is to increase community safety by strategically targeting the most intensive efforts to the most persistent offenders.

To date, a fair amount of research has been conducted on the intersections of guns, gangs, and drugs and their effects on offending, particularly at the aggregate level, and mostly about homicide. Current research suggests that individual-level interventions with high-risk offenders can reduce aggregate crime rates (McGarrell et al., 2006). In fact, researchers

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associated with *Ceasefire* regularly attribute the dramatic decline in youthful homicides in Boston in the 1990s directly to the program (Braga, 2003; Kennedy et al., 1996), but the conclusions by the wider research community on the effectiveness of these programs have been mixed (Rosenfeld et al., 2005).

Although substantial resources have been directed at this narrow subgroup of offenders, few researchers have examined the timing and incidence of recidivism for a sample of high-risk men after release from prison. It is particularly important to understand the long-term outcomes of this population because nearly all offenders sentenced to prison will be released—most within three years of entry (Hughes et al., 2001). Failure to consider the needs of offenders returning to the community may undermine the ultimate effectiveness of deterrence and incapacitation-based justice policy.

The goal of this research is to sharpen the focus of recidivism research by concentrating on the reconviction outcomes of a sample of paroled adult men aged 17 to 24 years who fit most operational definitions of a serious offender. In specific, we hope to understand how the nexus of gun, gang, and drug involvement affect the timing of reconviction, while controlling for measures of individual, institutional, family, and community context associated with both the risk of incarceration and recidivism. The current research on desistance serves as the theoretical basis for the analyses. Researchers have argued that correlates of offending and desistance can be meaningfully considered within the same theoretical framework (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Moreover, there has been a call for greater overlap between research on desistance and recidivism; however, this area is still in its infancy, particularly as it pertains to young men with few ties to society. Together, the analyses presented provide greater context to the study of recidivism while expanding the theoretical basis of research in this area. Finally, the research has potential implications for the development of social policy aimed at incapacitation of high-risk offenders.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A considerable amount of research has been amassed on the predictors of recidivism. For the most part, the analyses have been actuarial in nature and have shown that young men, property offenders, and individuals with extensive criminal histories are most likely to recidivate (Gendreau et al., 1996; Langan and Levin, 2002). More recently, there has been a call to broaden the understanding of recidivism within the larger purview of the study of desistance and the life course (Bushway et al., 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2001; Visher and Travis, 2003). Instead of focusing narrowly on

the actuarial prediction of a discrete outcome, this research strives to better understand the context of postrelease behavior. Numerous theories have been developed to explain desistance, including changes in social bonds, peer relationships, and cognitive transformations. Although we cannot rigorously test each theory of desistance, the relevant literature is presented below as a guide for understanding the multifaceted nature of prisoner reentry.

Much of the research conducted on desistance has been based on Sampson and Laub's (1993) age-graded social control theory of offending. Building on control theory (Hirschi, 1969), they argue that, in adulthood, strong social bonds to institutions can inhibit offending by fostering a stake in conformity (Sampson and Laub, 1993:141). In addition, social bonds increase social capital, which makes possible the achievement of certain ends that would not have been previously available (Coleman, 1988). Thus, investment in social bonds, particularly bonds that are characterized by commitment and mutual obligations, gives one "something to lose" (Maruna and Toch, 2005), which further limits the chances that an individual will become involved with deviant behavior or sustain a criminal career. Conversely, individuals with fewer ties to society will have more barriers to successful reentry, which makes recidivism more likely.

Desistance has also been associated with changes in peer and social relations. Counter to social bond theory, Warr (1998) argues that desistance comes about because of changes in peer networks; social bonds to marriage and employment in adulthood do not directly affect crime. Instead, adult, prosocial relationships draw individuals away from negative peer networks that encourage deviance. The drift away from peer social relationships reduces opportunities to model criminal behavior and to develop definitions favorable to crime, which thereby limits motivation for criminal behavior (Akers, 1998). Therefore, it is likely that men with greater opportunities for negative peer interaction, particularly gang members, will be more likely to recidivate after release from prison.

Others have argued desistance is attributable to certain social-psychological processes that facilitate social attachments. Although desistance may coincide with changes in social relationships, behavior is driven by a determination and resolve to abandon crime (Shover, 1996). By developing a "replacement self", or prosocial identity, individuals can transform the manner in which they view behavior and future opportunities (Giordano et al., 2002). In the same light, individuals "make good" by rebiographing past social roles and reinterpreting earlier behaviors, which thereby reduces some dissonance between past behavior and the current self (Maruna, 2001). Community responses to individuals retuning to the community can affect the change process. Maruna (2001) observed "redemption rituals" in which prosocial others encouraged and helped

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reinforce the new prosocial identity of an individual. Conversely, individuals who are embedded in negative social groups are more likely to identify with the roles of the group and are less likely to transform their identity after imprisonment (Matsueda and Heimer, 1997). Uggen et al. (2003) also argue that larger societal laws and norms, like felon disenfranchisement, can affect the ability of an individual to develop a positive sense of self after imprisonment. It follows that individuals who return to supportive communities, peers, or families may have greater impetus for cognitive transformation and less deviance.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON RECIDIVISM

DRUGS

Researchers have amassed considerable evidence that suggests that prisoners disproportionately use drugs and that drug use contributes to recidivism. A national study of inmates in federal and state institutions in 1997 revealed that 83% of all state inmates reported ever using drugs, 57% had used drugs in the month before the offense, and 52% were using drugs at the time of the offense (Mumola, 1999). Drug offenders also have some of the highest rates of parole violations and reconviction (Chaiken and Chaiken, 1990; Harrison, 2001; Langan and Levin, 2002). For example, 67% of drug offenders released from prison in 1994 were reconvicted (Langan and Levin, 2002). Multivariate analyses also reveal that drug involved offenders are more likely to be reconvicted after release from prison and to do so more quickly than any other type of offender (Spohn and Holleran, 2002).

Multiple causal roles have been identified that link drugs to criminal behavior. For example, the pharmacological effects of certain drugs have also been linked to erratic behavior (Fagan, 1990), and the compulsion for drugs may provide an incentive to commit crime with the aim of procuring money for drugs (Wright and Decker, 1997). As noted, some evidence also shows that systemic violence is an integral part of the illegal drug market, particularly as it pertains to crack cocaine (Blumstein, 1995; Cork, 1999).

Drug use can also increase the chances of recidivism because of the consequences it can have for sustaining employment and family relationships and for developing a prosocial sense of self (Laub and Sampson, 2003). For example, Shover (1996) highlighted the importance of daily structures and routines for desistance; however, substance abuse facilitates disorganization and desperation further reducing the chances for the achievement of positive social relationships and long-term goals. In fact, most qualitative studies of prisoner reentry have reported a substantial entanglement among substance abuse, poor social relationships, and repeat offending (Maruna, 2001; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Zamble and Quinsey, 1997).

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The relationship between negative peers and recidivism has been documented (Gendreau et al., 1996); however, something seems to be uniquely important about the involvement of youth and young adults in gangs that facilitates delinquency, particularly serious violent crime. Consistent with theories of differential association, gangs can provide the motivation and opportunity for deviance. In fact, gang membership has been shown to intensify delinquent behavior in ways that far exceed the simple effects of association with delinquent peers. For example, Esbensen and Huizinga (1993), using the Denver Youth Survey, found that gang members self-report two to three times more delinquency, even when controlling for association with non-gang-delinquent peers and prior delinquency. Similarly, the Huff (1998) examination of high-risk youth revealed that gang-involved youth had significantly higher levels of violent and firearm-involved crime.

Gang membership has also been linked with drug use. In their longitudinal study of youth in Seattle, Battin-Pearson et al. (1998) found that gang-involved youth self-reported higher levels of violent crime and nonviolent crime and were more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol than their peers, even when compared with at-risk youth with non-gang-delinquent friends. Fagan (1989), in a study of gangs in three inner-city neighborhoods, found that drug use was normative and widespread among gang members, with 50% of respondents in the most cohesive of gangs reporting regular marijuana use, 45% regular cocaine use, and 31% regular heroin use. More recently, Decker (2000), using data from the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program, documented pervasive drug use among the arrestee population. Drug use was also prevalent among gang members, with 58% testing positive for any drug; however, non-gang members were overall more likely to test positive (65%) for any drugs and had particularly high levels of cocaine use.

Peer association can also interfere with positive social relationships and prosocial activities, which may encourage desistance. For example, Anderson (1989) found that inner-city youth were reluctant to become married because they were concerned with the effect that marriage would have on their attachments and relationships with their peer group. Few men had friends who were married, and the norms of marriage were often in conflict with that of the group. For young men, peer groups often offer more prestige and validation than family, which further reduces the value in establishing long-term spousal relationships (Nurse, 2000).

The lure of the gang may be stronger after imprisonment. Imprisonment often reduces opportunities for traditional employment and severs family ties and social relationships (Huebner, 2005; Pager, 2003; Western, 2002;

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Western et al., 2004). Therefore, the stigmatization of incarceration and resulting alienation from traditional society may lead individuals to search for self-respect and affiliation with similarly situated individuals. The cultural expectations of imprisonment may also help perpetuate gang relationships once an individual is released. The codes of imprisonment, or prisonization, reward hypermasculine behavior and loyalty to a group (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Wacquant, 2000). These codes are likely perpetuated in the community, particularly in light of blocked opportunities for positive social outlets (Maruna and Toch, 2005). Finally, the embeddedness of the individual in the gang could preclude cognitive changes that are integral for behavioral change as negative peer relationships do not facilitate the redemption rituals, or positive social interactions and reinforcement, that are an important part of the desistance process (Maruna, 2001).

Although a strong theoretical link exists between gang membership and recidivism, little empirical research has explored the relationship using a contemporary sample of men released from adult correctional facilities. Most current research has been conducted with juveniles (Benda and Tollett, 1999; Lattimore et al., 1995; Lattimore et al., 2004; Visher et al., 1991) or adult probationers (Adams and Olson, 2002) and suggests a strong relationship between gang membership and rearrest. Recent research from Illinois confirms the positive association between gang membership and recidivism rates among a sample of parolees (Olson et al., 2004). Gang members were significantly more likely to be rearrested and to do so quickly; although, the gang recidivism relationship was weaker for individuals aged 17 to 24 years.

GUNS

The prevalence of weapon use and violent crime is well documented. For example, Perkins (2003), in his analyses of National Crime Victimization Survey data, revealed that approximately one quarter of all violent victimizations were committed by offenders armed with a weapon. That noted, it is unclear whether gun use is an independent predictor of crime, particularly gun violence, or whether gun use is a risk marker for other, more substantive factors that explain the features of criminal offending. In fact, many programmatic initiatives use gun involvement in crime as a measure of "risky" offenders who are ultimately targeted for intensive reentry services (McDevitt et al. 2006).

Even less is known about the relationship between gun involvement and recidivism. Some evidence shows that individuals who are convicted of a weapons-related offense are more likely to recidivate. Analyses of a national cohort of inmates released in 1994 reveal that 71% of individuals who were serving time for a weapons-related offense were rearrested

within three years (Langan and Levin, 2002). In their experimental study of the effectiveness of gun purchasing restrictions on arrest outcomes among a sample of violent misdemeanants, Wintemute et al. (2001) found that individuals who were given permits to purchase a handgun were significantly more likely to be arrested for a violent crime when compared with individuals who were denied gun ownership. Individuals who purchased a handgun were also arrested more quickly; a relationship between gun purchase and nonviolent crime was not observed. Although this research provides important insight into a possible relationship, multivariate analyses of the effect of gun involvement on recidivism have not been widely published.

CURRENT STUDY

The primary objective of the current analysis is to explore the congruence of guns, gangs, and drugs in explaining the timing of recidivism among a sample of young, serious offenders. The work of Visser and Travis (2003) and the work of Laub and Sampson (2001) on desistance together serve as a theoretical template for the analyses. We augment prior research by focusing on a population at high risk for recidivism: men aged 17 to 24 years incarcerated in state facilities. Although researchers have examined the effect of gang memberships and drug use on recidivism using a sample of juveniles (Lattimore et al., 2004), very little research has considered these relationships using a modern cohort of young adult men released from prison. In addition, we expand the use of control measures to include both preprison and in-prison experiences and community characteristics to better understand the context of reconviction. Finally, the use of proportional hazard models, coupled with long-term follow-up data, helps us further illustrate the heterogeneity in the recidivism patterns of parolees.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study were drawn from a larger research project examining firearm involvement among a sample of young men incarcerated in a Midwestern state. The department of corrections is relatively large and manages an institutional population of approximately 40,000–50,000 offenders. Participation was limited to inmates who were aged 17 to 24 years and had been incarcerated for less than 18 months as of June 1996, the date of original data collection. The sampling frame was designed to better understand the relationship between preprison experiences and correctional outcomes among young, incarcerated men. Participation was voluntary, and all inmates who met study criteria were given the opportunity to participate. Inmates were not provided any incentives to participate.

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In total, 525 inmates participated in the original study.¹ Excluded from the current study sample are offenders who remained in prison for the duration of the study period (203), as their incarceration status made it impossible to examine the postrelease patterns of this group.² Study participants were selected from three state correctional facilities located within a larger correctional complex. Most offenders were interviewed at a maximum-security facility designated to house primarily youthful offenders (203). The remaining inmates were interviewed at either a medium-security (81) or minimum-security prison (41). The institutions were chosen primarily because they are responsible for processing and housing young offenders.

The final sample includes 322 men who were released between June 1996 and September 2005.³ Supplementary analyses revealed that, apart from age, little difference exists between the study sample and the state-wide institutional population in terms of race, ethnicity, and instant offense.⁴ Reconviction data are also current as of September 2005. Sample members had differing sentences and corresponding release dates; therefore, men were followed in the community for durations ranging from 4 to 90 months (mean = 47.55, S.D. = 27.00).

1. At the time of data collection, 929 men met the study eligibility requirements. In total, 525 inmates volunteered to participate, which resulted in a response rate of 57%. Although no absolute standard exists for a minimum response rate, the study response rate raises some potential concerns with selection bias. For example, Fowler (1984) recommends use of the 75% standard that is generally recognized by the Office of Management and Budget as the target response rate for federal research initiatives. As noted, few differences existed between the total institutional population and the offenders that elected to participate in the current study, which thereby limited some concern with selection bias.

2. Censoring is a concern for the current study because part of the original study sample was not released during the study period and was excluded from the study sample. We can assume that potential bias is minimized because the follow-up period ended, not because of sample attrition; therefore, men who were not released from prison are likely representative of men who would have remained in the study had it not concluded (Singer and Willett, 2003:315–324). That noted, conclusions should be made in light of the sample omissions and study design.

3. In total, 148 men were released from prison between 1996 and 1999, 137 between 2000 and 2002, and 47 between 2003 and 2005.

4. Most inmates in the sample and the total institutional population are of minority race and were serving time for a serious personal offense. The study sample and total population did differ in terms of age and educational level. The average age of the total institutional population is 35 years and 20% had completed high school at the time of incarceration, whereas the study sample averaged 21 years of age and 10% had graduated from high school. The differences between the study and the institutional population in terms of age and education are to be expected, particularly in light of the purposive sample. Caution should be exercised when making conclusions based on this research to larger correctional populations.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We draw on three data sources to present a comprehensive picture of recidivism outcomes among the study sample. First, inmate surveys provide data on patterns of gun use and acquisition, attitudes and perceptions of gun use and violence, nature and level of involvement with crime and victimization, and gang membership.⁵ Data on the current offense, criminal history, individual and familial demographic characteristics, and drug dependence were gleaned from presentence investigation (PSI) reports. Finally, we obtained data on reconvictions from official reports maintained in a central data repository that is under the authority of the state police and is maintained by the department of corrections. The repository includes data from the department of corrections, state court system, and the state police and other law enforcement agencies and is updated weekly.

MEASURES

DEPENDENT MEASURE

The focus of the research is reconviction. More specifically, recidivism is defined as the time (in months) between the release from prison and a new conviction. In total, 37% of the sample was reconvicted during the study period, with 15% of the reconvictions for violent, personal crimes; 32% for property crimes; 24% for drug crimes; 12% for weapons-related offenses; and 17% for other offenses (e.g., failure to pay child support). Substantial variation occurred in reconviction timing among the study sample, with men who were reconvicted averaging 47.55 months in the community before the recidivism event. Overall, 13% of all eventual convictions came during the first year on release, 25% by the second year, 37% by the third year, 50% by the fourth year, and 77% by the sixth year. Descriptive statistics for the total sample and by reconviction outcome are presented in Table 1, and a description of measures used in the analyses is provided in Appendix A and a correlation matrix in Appendix B.

As noted, substantial variation has occurred in the manner in which recidivism has been measured (Maltz, 1984). The choice to include reconviction as the dependent measures in the current study was one of availability. The reconviction measure eliminates some bias of arrest measures by filtering out arrest incidents that are not substantiated in the courts;

5. The research staff administered surveys to groups of 10 to 20 inmates. Each question and its answers were read aloud to the inmates to increase comprehension. The survey contained both open-ended and close-ended questions and was adapted developed based on research of similar phenomenon (Decker et al., 1997; Lizotte et al., 1994; Wright and Rossi, 1986).

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however, the reconviction measure is incomplete as it fails to capture criminal behavior that is not reported to the police or does not result in an arrest or reconviction. Although concerns over measurement are common to research of this type, care should be exercised when making cross-study comparisons of recidivism rates.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY CONVICTION OUTCOME

	Total Sample (n = 332)		New Conviction (n = 124)		No New Conviction (n = 208)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Preprison Inmate Characteristics						
Black*	0.44	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.41	0.49
Hispanic	0.08	0.26	0.06	0.25	0.08	0.27
Age	20.51	1.85	20.40	1.80	20.58	1.89
Years of Education*	9.87	1.20	9.70	1.02	9.97	1.28
Proviolence Attitudes	7.24	3.17	7.67	3.18	6.99	3.15
Prior Convictions (natural log)	0.62	0.33	0.65	0.31	0.60	0.34
In Prison Context						
Length of Imprisonment (months)*	49.53	26.65	42.64	23.70	53.59	27.49
Institutional Misconduct (natural log)*	0.71	0.50	0.81	0.48	0.64	0.50
Community and Family Context						
Familial Incarceration	0.29	0.45	0.28	0.45	0.30	0.46
Community Disadvantage	2.35	1.98	2.52	2.00	2.25	1.95
Guns, Drugs, Gangs						
Gun Offense	0.33	0.47	0.30	0.46	0.34	0.48
Drug Abuse	0.52	0.50	0.57	0.50	0.50	0.50
Gang Membership*	0.37	0.48	0.51	0.50	0.28	0.45

*Groups are significantly different at $p < 0.05$.

INDEPENDENT MEASURES

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Three dichotomous variables were constructed to represent inmate involvement in guns, gangs, and drugs before entering prison. The *gun offense* measure is unique in that it captures whether an individual was currently serving time for a firearm-related offense (e.g., carrying concealed weapon), whether the offender was in possession of a gun during the offense, or whether a firearm was used, shown, or threatened at any point during the offense for which the individual was incarcerated (1 = firearm-related offense or firearm used or shown to the victim in the

course of the crime; 0 = firearm was not used or present during crime).⁶ Thus, this determination is not based merely on the most serious conviction charge as is often used in other research, but it is inclusive of *any* charges or behaviors associated with the instant offense. Data for the measure were gleaned from official records and the narrative report of the crime provided in the presentence investigation. This effort to conceptualize offense type is unique to this study as the concept of gun offender is difficult to discern with most conventional prisoner data sets, which often only report data on the *most serious* arrest or conviction charge. Traditionally, offenses that include felonious assault with a firearm are often aggregated into classifications of aggravated assault or attempted murder. In using a more refined measure of offense type, we can present a more detailed representation of the relationship between gun use and recidivism. However, the bivariate analysis reveals that individuals who were imprisoned for a gun-involved offense were no more likely to be reconvicted after release from prison.

Of particular importance to this article is the inclusion of measures of gang involvement and drug abuse as both have been linked to negative parole outcomes. *Drug dependence* is dichotomous and was appraised at the time of incarceration using the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (Miller, 1997) (1 = moderate-to-high probability of dependence at the time of imprisonment; 0 = little or no probability of dependence). *Gang membership* is a dichotomous measure and was determined by inmate self-identification during the interview portion of data collection (1 = ever been a gang member; 0 = respondent did not report gang involvement). Respondents were asked, "When you were on the street, were you ever a member of a gang?" In total, 37% of the sample reported gang membership.

Crafting a cogent definition and measurement scheme for gang membership has been a topic of great concern in recent scholarship (Klein and Maxson, 2006). To ascertain the level of gang development and organization, six additional questions were asked of inmates, including was the gang organized, did it have an official name, did the gang have a leader,

6. In total, 31% of the sample was serving time for a serious personal offense (i.e., criminal sexual conduct, murder, robbery, felonious assault, or arson), 46% for a property crime (i.e., larceny, fraud, or malicious destruction of property), 12% for a drug-related offense, and 12% for a systems-related offense. A series of dichotomous variables measuring offense classification were included in preliminary models. No classification was significant in the bivariate or multivariate models. Similar variables were constructed for prior criminal history, but we did not observe significant differences between the nature of criminal history measures and reconviction. As such, the variables were removed to maintain the parsimony and statistical power of the model. As the primary interest of this article is the intersection of guns, gangs, and drugs, the weapons-related offense classification was maintained in the model.

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did it hold regular meetings, did you wear special clothing, and did the gang have specific areas that it considered its turf. Overall, 76% of self-identified gang members responded yes to each of the six questions, and the remaining 24% responded in the affirmative to three to five questions. Because little variation was found in the levels of gang involvement, we elected to use a dichotomous indicator of gang membership. The results of this analysis are similar to current research that has confirmed the robustness of the self-nomination technique to separate gang from non-gang youth (Esbensen et al., 2001), and the consistency of sample responses further signals the appropriateness of the measure. That noted, the current measure as constructed might capture current and prior gang members; results should be evaluated in this light of these measurement decisions.

PREPRISON INMATE CHARACTERISTICS

We also include controls for race (1 = *black*), ethnicity (1 = *Hispanic*), *age* (age in years at time of arrest), and *education* (highest grade completed) as these variables are often associated with recidivism and imprisonment.⁷ Consistent with research of this type, the sample was predominantly of minority race and had not completed high school before imprisonment.

The diffusion of guns has been linked to a greater tolerance of gun-related violence (Sheley and Wright, 1993). In addition, individuals who report greater acceptance of gun violence are more likely to be entrenched in the criminal subculture and, thereby, less likely to seek out change after imprisonment. As such, we hypothesize that positive attitudes toward guns will be associated with accelerated time to reconviction. The *proviolence attitudes measure* is a 4-item additive scale and includes the following items: Is it OK to shoot someone who doesn't belong in the neighborhood, if they disrespect you, if they have done something to hurt you, or if that's what it takes to get what you want? The respondent could 1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "disagree," 3 = "agree," or 4 = "strongly agree." Scores ranged from 4 to 16, and respondents had an average score of 7. Although men who recidivated reported greater general acceptance of violence, the difference between groups was not statistically significant.

CRIMINAL HISTORY

An additive measure of *prior convictions* was included in the model to capture previous involvement with the criminal justice system. The

7. Although research has highlighted the importance of social bonds in the study of recidivism and desistance, sample members had few prosocial ties to society. In total, 9% of the sample was married at the time of incarceration and 26% were employed full time. Both measures were included in initial analyses, but they were removed from the final model because they were not statistically significant.

measure includes the total number of prior adult or juvenile convictions; the natural log of the construct was taken to account for skewness in the data. The sample members had substantial involvement with the criminal justice system before the current incarceration event, with the sample averaging 5.5 prior juvenile and adult convictions; however, the relationship between criminal history and reconviction was not significant at the bivariate level.

IN-PRISON CONTEXT

Researchers have hypothesized a strong association between in-prison behavior and postrelease outcomes (Maruna and Toch, 2005; Visher and Travis, 2003); however, little empirical work has been conducted in this arena. In the current study, *institutional misconduct* represents the number of misconduct tickets, for any offense, sustained while imprisoned for the instant offense. Sample members averaged nine misconduct tickets during imprisonment, and misconduct was positively and significantly related to reconviction. The misconduct measure used in the analysis was log-transformed to mitigate skewness.

In addition, a measure of length of imprisonment was included to account for absence from the community. Current research on the relationship between time imprisoned and recidivism has been mixed, but most have detailed the detrimental effect long periods of imprisonment has on ties to employment and family (Hariston, 2002; Lynch and Sabol, 2001), which further limits opportunities for successful integration. However, some evidence shows that lengthy prison terms may deter individuals from future crime, particularly among men with little ties to society (DeJong, 1997). *Length of imprisonment* represents the time spent in prison, in months, before release. Overall, the men spent approximately four years in prison before being released, and individuals who recidivated spent significantly less time in prison than those who did not have a subsequent reconviction.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY CONTEXT

A measure of family context is included in the model as bonds to parents and other relatives have been identified as a central factor in understanding recidivism and desistance (Sampson and Laub, 1993), and parental deviance and incarceration have been tied to negative outcomes (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999). As such, men were asked to indicate whether one or more of their family members had been incarcerated for a weapons-related offense in the past [1 = inmate reported *familial incarceration* (parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, cousin) for a weapons-related offense; 0 = family members had not be incarcerated for a weapons-related offense].

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Men who recidivated were no more likely to have had a family member who had been incarcerated; however, the prevalence of familial incarceration is worthy of note as 29% of the sample indicated that a family member had spent time in prison for a weapons-related offense.

Neighborhood context has also emerged as an important consideration for studies of recidivism. Ecological characteristics, particularly as it relates to poverty and disadvantage, have been tied to the presence and quality of institutions in the community (Sampson et al., 1997). Neighborhood context is of particular import for the current study because youth violence has traditionally been concentrated among young black men living in disadvantaged urban environments (Cook and Laub, 2002). Although little research on the neighborhood context of recidivism has been conducted, early research suggests that individuals living in more disadvantaged neighborhoods have greater chances for recidivism. For example, Kubrin and Stewart (2006) found that neighborhood characteristics explained roughly 20% of the total variation in rearrest rates for a sample of ex-offenders, net of individual-level characteristics.

In the current study, neighborhood data represent the offender city of residency at the time of release and were provided by the Department of Corrections. A 5-item factor score was created to represent *concentrated disadvantage* using 2000 census data at the place level and includes the proportion of individuals who were on public assistance, below the poverty level, unemployed, black, and living in female-headed households (eigenvalue 2.99; factor loadings > 0.68; $\alpha = 0.76$). The construct explained 60% of the total variance and is consistent with research of this type (Sampson et al., 1997).⁸

Not surprisingly, most offenders in the sample returned to extremely disadvantaged communities. In total, 45% of the men paroled returned home to communities that had disadvantage rates 2 standard deviations above the state average. One quarter of the sample returned home to a large metropolitan area that had rates 4.5 standard deviations above the state average, and 15 men (5%) were paroled to the most disadvantaged community with a score nearly 7 standard deviations above the mean.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

A series of Cox proportional hazard models are estimated to better understand the timing and chances of reconviction for any crime after

8. Consistent with the work of Kubrin and Stewart (2006), we also constructed measures of concentrated affluence using the Index of Concentration at the Extremes (ICE) measure. In addition, a measure of residential stability was included in preliminary models. Neither measure was significant in the multivariate or bivariate analyses and thus excluded for reasons of parsimony.

release from prison. Proportional hazard models are ideal for the current analysis. First, proportional hazard models account for censoring that is common in analyses of recidivism (Cox, 1972; Singer and Willett, 2003). The current analysis includes men with differing sentences and release dates; proportional hazards models account for the variation in release dates by modeling the time interval between release from prison and reconviction. By estimating the timing of reconviction, instead of a more traditional logistic model, we can include all men released from prison in our analyses, regardless of the time at risk in the community, which thereby increases the follow-up times and accuracy of the model.

Modeling the timing of recidivism also allows us to better detect heterogeneity among the study sample, which has important implications for the study of desistance. If desistance is to be understood as a process (Bushway et al., 2001; Maruna, 2001), it is equally important to differentiate whether an offender recidivates in the short term or after an extended period, as it is to consider why an offender does not return to criminal behavior at all.

RESULTS

BIVARIATE ANALYSES

Results from the bivariate proportional hazard models are presented in Table 2. Coefficients should be considered in reference to the hazard rate, which is an estimate of the probability of reconviction at time t , given the individual has been released, and that failure (reconviction) has not yet occurred (Cox, 1972; Singer and Willett, 2003). Therefore, a positive coefficient signifies that an individual with this characteristic (or a higher value on a given variable) is reconvicted more quickly, whereas negative coefficients denote delayed time to reconviction.

As hypothesized, men who reported gang membership or were dependent on drugs at the time of arrest were reconvicted more quickly. The magnitude of the coefficients signals the particularly strong, positive relationship between gang membership and reconviction. Gang members were nearly two times as likely to be reconvicted, and drug dependence significantly accelerates the timing of reconviction. Contrary to expectations, we did not observe a significant relationship between gun involvement and reconviction. In addition, prior conviction history and length of incarceration were unrelated to reconviction timing.

Community and institutional context did influence reconviction outcomes at the bivariate level. In particular, men with misconduct histories and men who returned home to disadvantaged communities were reconvicted more quickly. The positive coefficient for the institutional behavior measure signals that each misconduct ticket significantly accelerates the

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timing of a new conviction, and the magnitude of the coefficients highlights the strength of the relationship. Community disadvantage was also positively associated with reconviction timing, although the relationship was small in comparison with others observed.

Finally, preprison inmate characteristics were important correlates of reconviction timing. Black men were reconvicted more quickly than white men, although differences by race were small. In addition, higher levels of education hastened the chances and timing of reconviction, and individuals who reported proviolence attitudes also were reconvicted more quickly. The relationships between education and proviolence attitudes and reconviction were small and were not replicated in the multivariate analyses. Hispanic ethnicity and familial incarceration were unrelated to the timing of recidivism in the bivariate and multivariate models. Finally, age was not significantly associated with recidivism, although, the truncated nature of the sample may have affected the age-recidivism relationship commonly observed in studies of this type.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

Coefficients from the multivariate Cox proportional hazard models are presented in Table 2. Model I includes measures of preprison inmate characteristics, prison context, and community and family context and was designed to serve as a baseline model. As observed in the bivariate analyses, black men were reconvicted more quickly than white men. Institutional misconduct remained an important and strong determinant of reconviction timing in the multivariate models. However, the effect of education, proviolence attitudes, and community disadvantage were attenuated in the multivariate models.

Next, measures of gang membership, drug dependence, and gun use were added to model II to understand their effect on reconviction timing, net of measures traditionally linked to post-release behavior. Contrary to expectations, men who committed a crime with a weapon were no more likely to recidivate than men who were serving time for non-weapon-involved offenses. The absence of significant findings may be from the prevalence of gun ownership and use among the offender sample. Survey results reveal that 82% of the sample owned a gun at one time and that 49% reported carrying it every day. Moreover, two thirds (75%) of the sample reported being shot at in the past and 71% agreed that a lot of guns were available on the street in their neighborhood. Results from this work reinforce that of other surveys of gun use among offender populations (Sheley and Wright, 1993; Wright and Rossi, 1986) and highlight the prevalence of gun ownership among young, incarcerated men.

TABLE 2. SURVIVAL ANALYSIS OF VARIABLES ON TIMING OF RECIDIVISM (NEW CONVICTION)

	Bivariate Model		Model I		Model II		Model III		
Preprison Inmate Characteristics									
Black	0.34*	0.18	1.40	.35†	.21	1.42	.39†	.21	1.45
Hispanic	-0.11	0.37	0.89	-0.14	0.39		-0.12	-0.15	0.39
Age	-0.08	0.05		-0.04	0.06		-0.02	-0.02	0.06
Years of Education	-0.15*	0.08	0.87	-0.08	0.08	-0.07	0.09	-0.05	0.09
Providence Attitudes	0.07**	0.03	1.07	0.04	0.03	-0.00	0.03	0.00	0.03
Prior Convictions	0.28	0.28		0.20	0.30	0.18	0.30	0.20	0.29
In Prison Context									
Length of Imprisonment	0.01	0.00		-0.00	0.01		-0.00	-0.00	0.01
Institutional Misconduct	1.09***	0.19	2.93	1.06***	0.22	2.87	1.01***	0.22	2.74
Community and Family Context									
Familial Incarceration	0.07	0.20	-0.12	0.21	-0.25	0.22	-0.24	0.22	
Community Disadvantage	0.08†	0.04	1.08	0.03	0.05		0.03	0.05	0.05
Guns, Drugs, and Gangs									
Gun Offense	0.01	0.20					-0.22	0.21	-0.19
Drug Abuse	0.23†	0.18	1.30				0.30†	0.20	1.34
Gang Membership	0.68***	0.18	1.97				0.64***	0.20	1.90
Gang*Drug									0.90***
Model Fit									
Log Ratio Statistic (LR)				34.81***			53.29***		56.50***
-2 Log Likelihood				1265.83			1241.98		1240.55

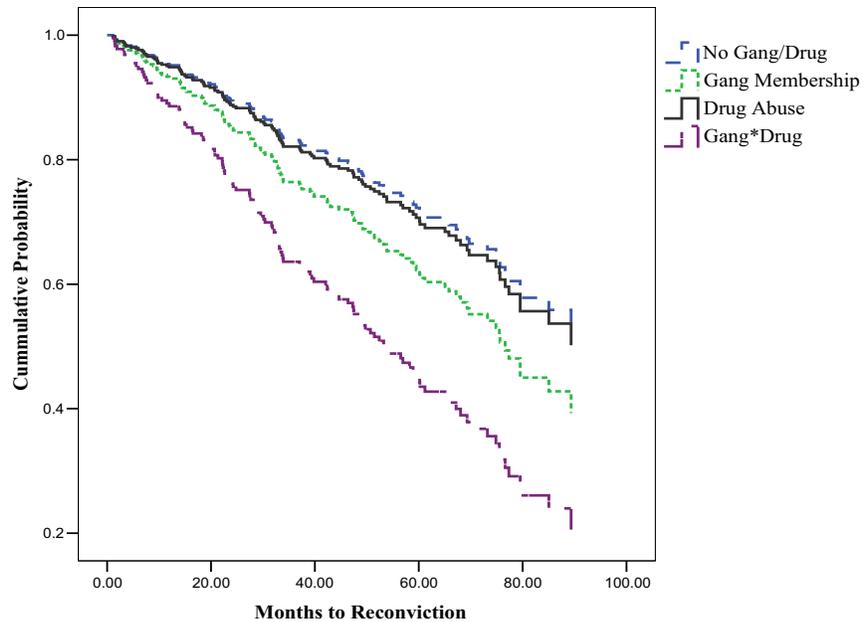
†p < 0.10; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 (two-tailed test).

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In contrast, gang membership and drug abuse were significantly and positively associated with reconviction. Men who reported gang membership or drug abuse failed more quickly than their counterparts who were not involved in gangs or drugs, and the magnitude of the coefficients denotes the strength of the relationship among gang membership, drug dependence, and reconviction timing. Finally, bivariate analyses reveal that gang members were significantly more likely to be reconvicted for a violent offense, although the small sample size precluded multivariate analyses.

Because researchers have consistently highlighted the interrelationships among guns, gangs, drugs, and crime, a series of interactions between these factors were calculated. The interactions between gun use and drug dependence ($B = 0.214$, $S.E. = 0.34$, $p = 0.53$) and gun use and gang membership ($B = 0.31$, $S.E. = 0.39$, $p = 0.42$) were not significantly related to the timing of reconviction. However, results from the inmate surveys do suggest a relationship between gun use and gang membership. For example, over two thirds of gang members indicated that people in their gang carried guns, guns were always around when the gang gathered, and a stash of guns was available that members could use.

FIGURE 1. SURVIVAL DISTRIBUTION BY DRUG DEPENDENCE AND GANG MEMBERSHIP



In contrast, the interaction between gang involvement and drug dependence is significant (see model III) and is presented in the cumulative survival graph presented in Figure 1. As displayed, a sharp decline occurs in the survival curve of the drug-dependent and gang-involved groups, which signals that men of these groups recidivated more quickly than men who did not report involvement in gangs and drugs. In fact, 56% of these men recidivated and averaged 29 months until reconviction. In contrast, 28% of men who did not report gang involvement and were not drug dependent at the time of the arrest were reconvicted and averaged nearly three years (37 months) in the community. Gang members also recidivated more quickly than drug-dependent individuals. In total, 45% of the gang-involved group and 29% of the drug-dependent group recidivated and averaged 40.34 and 32.59 months, respectively, until reconviction.

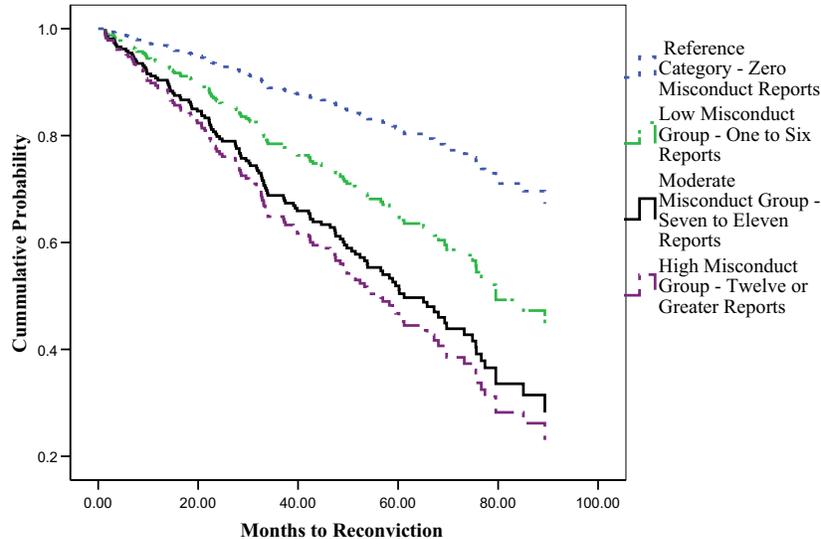
The findings as presented also suggest a significant, positive relationship between institutional misconduct and reconviction timing. The effect of institutional misconduct on time to reconviction is displayed more clearly in the cumulative survival distribution graph presented in Figure 2. To craft a graphical presentation of the relationship, we reclassified the misconduct measure to reflect high, medium, and low reconviction probabilities based on the individual count of total institutional misconduct events. Individuals with 1 to 6 institutional misconduct reports were classified as low, 7 to 11 events were classified as medium, and 12 and above were classified as high. Individuals who did not sustain any institutional misconduct reports during their term of imprisonment served as the reference category.

TABLE 3. INSTITUTIONAL MISCONDUCT AND RECONVICTION TIMING

	Coefficients	S.E.	Odds
Institutional Misconduct			
Low	0.73***	0.28	2.10
Moderate	1.16***	0.30	3.19
High	1.31***	0.30	3.70
Model Fit			
Log Ratio Statistic (LR)	49.09***		
-2 Log Likelihood	1245.56		

NOTE: This model includes controls for all variables included in Table 2. Individuals with zero misconduct reports serve as the reference category.

FIGURE 2. SURVIVAL DISTRIBUTION OF LEVELS OF INMATE MISCONDUCT



As displayed, individuals with high or moderate levels of institutional misconduct were reconvicted more quickly than individuals in the low misconduct group or reference category. Approximately 45% of the moderate-to-high misconduct groups were reconvicted; the high misconduct group averaged 34 months, and the moderate misconduct group averaged 38 months in the community before reconviction. In contrast, 38% of the low misconduct group was reconvicted during the study period and averaged 48 months in the community before reconviction. Finally, 24% of the group with zero misconduct reports recidivated averaging 65 months in the community, which is nearly twice that of the high misconduct group. The cumulative distribution graph suggests very different trajectories for the moderate and high probability groups from the low probability group, and the coefficients presented in Table 3 further signify the strength of the relationships.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our aim in this study was to consider the recidivism patterns of a group of serious young, male offenders released from prison. As noted, particular concern has existed among scholars and practitioners on the interconnectedness of gun, gangs, and drugs in understanding violent crime; however, little research has examined the outcomes of these high-risk offenders once released from prison. We drew on the desistance literature

to further the research literature on the context of recidivism for serious offenders and used long-term follow-up data to describe the variation in reconviction timing for the sample.

As hypothesized, men who were involved in a gang or were drug dependent before entering prison had higher reconviction rates and recidivated more quickly than men who did not report involvement in gangs or drug use. However, preimprisonment gun use did not have a direct effect on the timing of reconviction. The results from inmate surveys revealed a consensus among sample members that guns were widely available, and most men reported that they had carried a gun on a regular basis before imprisonment. Gun use may be a risk marker for recidivism among a broader, less disadvantaged group of offenders, but the normative presence of weapons was so pervasive among members of the study sample that it was difficult to separate the unique effect of the gun measure.

However, the research findings suggest that the negative influence of gangs and the challenge of drug dependence prove to be difficult barriers to overcome and have important effects on the timing of postrelease convictions. As noted in previous research, gang membership and drug use can hamper positive social integration at release. Gang members and drug users are less likely to develop stable relationships, maintain consistent routines, and adopt positive self-narratives when compared with individuals who are not involved with gangs or drugs. As such, offenders are often separated from families at release and cut off from employment opportunities, which further increases the incentive to escape traditional society and find solace and affirmation in deviant subcultures (Maruna and Toch, 2005). Gang members in the sample, in particular, entered prison with more substantial deficits that can hamper positive community integration. As displayed in Appendix B, gang membership was significantly correlated with proviolence attitudes, prior convictions, and familial incarceration, which are all factors that have been linked to recidivism.

These findings also highlight the importance of considering the social processes that facilitate gang relationships in prison and sustain membership when released back to the community. Although gang-like behavior is often reported by adolescent men, many drop out as they mature in late adolescence and early adulthood (Flannery et al., 1998). Those men who remain attached to the gang in their early-to-mid-20s are likely the most hardened members; gang identification is likely a central element of their sense of self, which makes integration with the mainstream community more difficult (Fleisher and Decker, 2001). In addition, the liabilities of gang membership are likely to increase over time, as gang involvement is contrary to desistance and positive social relationships. If incarceration maintains or enhances gang relationship, then the chances of positive social integration are reduced at release. Unfortunately, very little is

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known about prison gangs, and very few in-prison programs have been developed to address the specific needs of this population.

Furthermore, the current study reinforces the centrality of institutional behavior in studies of recidivism. Institutional misconduct had a strong, positive effect on reconviction in all models estimated. Misconduct may also serve as an important marker of sustained gang membership as self-identified gang membership has been associated with high levels of institutional misconduct, particularly violent conduct, in past research (Griffin and Hepburn, 2006; Huebner, 2003). In the current study, gang members had significantly higher levels of misconduct and averaged 11 misconduct reports, whereas the mean for non-gang members was 8. It is likely that higher levels of misconduct may be indicative of continued gang membership or other enduring antisocial behaviors in prison, whereas lower levels of problem behavior are likely associated with common normative adaptations to the institutional environment.

Finally, the community disadvantage measure did not achieve statistical significance in the multivariate model. This finding is inconsistent with the work of Kubrin and Stewart (2006) who observed a positive relationship between disadvantage and short-term rearrest incidence. The incongruence of findings may be linked to the characteristics of the study sample and to the relative nature of the communities in which offenders returned. As noted, the current sample was drawn from the state-wide correctional population, whereas Kubrin and Stewart sampled male and female probationers and parolees supervised in one community. Community-level factors may not have had a large effect on individuals who have been removed from the community when compared with individuals who remained in the community on probation. We also may have obscured the relationship between community context and recidivism by using city-level indicators of disadvantage measured at the time of release. In light of the mixed results, more research in this area is needed, particularly as it relates to cross-state and community comparisons over time. In addition, analyses that consider the effect of local-level and state-level legislation that mandates restrictions on individual freedom (e.g., disenfranchisement) are warranted.

Although our analyses provide important insight into the understanding of recidivism patterns, our results must be tempered in light of several acknowledged limitations. First, the analyses did not offer insight into the postrelease context of the sample. As Visher and Travis (2003:44) note, recidivism, "cannot be predicted by focusing solely on enduring individual traits or even past experiences." It would have been valuable to understand the support network to which individual offenders were released, as constructive, enduring, and meaningful social relationships can play a positive role in desistance; however, the research team could not interview

inmates after their release from prison. Although it is very likely that preincarceration gang membership and drug use may function as proxies for lifestyle features that reduce the chances and quality of an immediate prosocial support system for an individual at release.

Second, our use of reconviction as a dependent measure only captures serious involvement with the criminal justice system. The current analysis does not consider law breaking behaviors that are not brought to the attention of authorities or those that do not result in conviction. Similarly, most relevant research on postprison outcomes fails to address positive postrelease transitions like marriage and employment that are powerful correlates of desistance. Longer term studies that capture formal contact with the criminal justice system, self-reported criminality, and positive life transitions are warranted. Further exploring the context of postrelease behaviors and relationships, particularly within the purview of the desistance literature, is truly important for crafting effective reentry policy.

Finally, the sampling design may have influenced study outcomes. As noted, the sample included young men, many with few prosocial ties, released from prisons in one state; thus, the results may not be indicative of the reentry experiences of a more diverse sample of incarcerated men. Men in the study sample likely had greater predispositions for recidivism, possibly overestimating the prevalence of the dependent measure. In a similar light, data on incarcerated women were not included in the study. Some evidence shows that social relationships, like marriage, are not as important for positive reentry transitions for women; however, drug dependence often plays a more substantial role in the recidivism patterns of women (Griffin and Armstrong, 2003; Holtfreter et al., 2004).

Notwithstanding these limitations, these findings have important implications for the study of recidivism, in general, and violence policy, in particular. As noted, members of the study sample reported high levels of gun use and possession, but gun use was not significantly associated with recidivism in the current study. This finding is in contrast to many criminal justice interventions that have focused solely on legal definitions of the crime. Instead, the correlates of violence involvement, particularly gang membership, drug dependence, and institutional behavior, are better signals of recidivism. This finding highlights the importance of providing comprehensive services to offenders, as a failure to address the needs of this population while in prison and after return to the community may amplify any deficits that were present at the time of incarceration.

The significance of developing correctional interventions that address the needs of gang members, particularly as it relates to the development of prosocial support networks, is particularly poignant given the study

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results. Unfortunately, social support is often overlooked in reentry initiatives as most programs of this type focus on more tangible aspects of programming like employment, housing, and drug abuse. Failure to address the needs for prosocial support may be a critical omission as negative peer groups and gangs may draw offenders away from traditional support networks, which further jeopardizes the efficacy of this type of programming. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to assume that negative social ties can be severed only in the transition phase. Programming that works to break the social ties to gangs should be part of institutional correctional programming; conversely, programming that encourages maintenance and development of prosocial support networks while incarcerated is warranted. Truly effective reintegration programs should be also coupled with community-wide interventions that improve neighborhood economies, which may weaken some social and economic impetus that has been linked to gang development (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996).

Agencies have begun to enhance traditional deterrence-based criminal justice interventions to address the needs of offenders reentering the community. As part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, some jurisdictions have instituted offender notification reentry meetings that couple transitional, social services programming (e.g., employment training) with the traditional law enforcement message (McDevitt et al., 2006). The programs are also designed to provide an impetus for normative change among offenders by employing ex-offenders to describe their experiences of personal transformation. Family members are also encouraged to attend these meetings as to provide social support. For example, the program in Chicago employs an older, former gang leader to describe his personal transformation away from prison, drugs, and guns (Papachristos et al., 2005). The meeting concludes with various service providers describing available community resources (e.g., substance abuse, union training, GED courses, and behavioral counseling). More importantly, service providers can often identify immediate opportunities for jobs and treatment services, which allows offenders to promptly capitalize on the proactive message for change presented in the first part of the meetings.

The reentry meetings signal an important first step in incorporating prosocial services into traditional reentry programming; however, the programs are short in duration and are likely most effective when coupled with long-term programming provided in the institution and community. One example of a comprehensive reentry program is the Transition from Prison to Community Initiative (TPCI) sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections, which has been implemented in a few pilot states (Mitchell et al., 2002). These programs have yet to be evaluated, but they provide comprehensive programming that begins in prison and includes a

lengthy aftercare component that merges employment and educational assistance, enhanced supervision, and drug treatment.

In the larger scope, the research findings highlight the importance of a term of supervised release in the community; however, the need for reentry services comes at a time of mandatory parole and increases in the use of unconditional release. For example, the proportion of inmates released back into the community at the expiration of their sentence, or unconditional release, increased from 13% of all releases in 1990 to 21% in 2001 (Glaze and Bonczar, 2006), which makes community supervision an impossibility for this group of offenders. Expiration release is more common for men with high levels of institutional misconduct, prior parole failures, or more extensive criminal records as these are associated with increased chances for recidivism; institutional misconduct can also reduce the availability of good time credits, which makes early release less likely. In short, offenders with the greatest difficulties and challenges in making a successful reintegration may not be afforded the support and resources given to lower risk parolees. Researchers have called for the expansion of discretionary parole and mandated community supervision (Petersilia, 2003), which may allow greater consideration of factors like institutional misconduct, which may signal a need for enhanced attention, supervision, and programming both in and outside of prison.

Finally, it is important to note that most sample members had significant deficits when they entered prison; however, the majority of inmates were not reconvicted during the follow-up period. Unlike many portrayals of violence among this subject population, we did not observe an unusually high recidivism rate for such a serious offender group. Although the absence of self-reported data on postrelease behavior may have reduced the prevalence of recidivism observed in the current study, the results do reinforce the importance of considering why many of the men did not recidivate and most of the failures were for nonviolent crime. This finding further suggests that Sampson and Laub (1995) are correct in asserting that life-course desistance is the norm, even for the most disadvantaged of individuals.

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APPENDIX A. DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES

Variable	Description
Dependent Measures	
Time to Reconviction	Count of the total number of days between release from prison and reconviction for any crime.
Preprison Inmate Characteristics	
Black	A dichotomous variable with 1 = black; 0 = white.
Hispanic	A dichotomous variable with 1 = Hispanic; 0 = non-Hispanic.
Age	Age in years at time of incarceration.
Years of Education	Highest grade completed at time of incarceration.
Proviolence Attitudes	A 4-item additive scale ($\alpha = 0.876$), including It is OK to shoot someone who doesn't belong in the neighborhood, if they disrespect you, if they have done something to hurt you, if that's what it takes to get what you want. Responses include 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Disagree.
Prior Convictions	Number of prior convictions for any crime.
In Prison Context	
Length of Imprisonment	Count of total number of days served in prison before release.
Institutional Misconduct	Count of total misconduct tickets for any offenses received while incarcerated.
Community and Family Context	
Familial Incarceration	Dichotomous variable: Have any of your family members (parents, siblings, aunt/uncle, or cousin) ever been incarcerated for possessing a gun or using a gun to commit a crime? Response scale: 1 = Yes; 0 = No.
Community Disadvantage	Five-item factor score (eigenvalue 2.99; factor loadings > 0.68; $\alpha = 0.76$), measured at the county level, including percent of county residents on public assistance; percent below poverty; percent unemployed; percent black; percent living in female-headed households.
Guns, Gangs, and Drugs	
Gun Offense	A dichotomous variable with 1 = inmate serving time for an offense in which the offender was in possession of a gun and/or the firearm was shown, used, or threatened, and 0 = instant offense did not involve a firearm.
Drug Abuse	A dichotomous variable with 1 = individuals was classified as having a drug abuse problem at the time of arrest; 0 = no drug abuse history.
Gang Membership	Dichotomous variable: When you were on the street, were you a member of a gang? Response scale: 1 = Yes; 0 = No.

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APPENDIX B. CORRELATION MATRIX

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	X11	X12	X13
Time to Failure (x1)	1												
Black (x2)	-0.07	1											
Hispanic (x3)	-0.03	-0.25**	1										
Age (x4)	0.13*	0.12*	-0.14*	1									
Years of Education (x5)	0.04	0.07	-0.11	0.20*	1								
Proviolence Attitudes (x6)	-0.15*	0.05	0.08	-0.20* -0.11*	1								
Prior Convictions (x7)	0.06	-0.15**	-0.00	0.34*	0.06	0.03	1						
Length of Imprisonment (x8)	-0.57*	0.07	-0.03	-0.02	0.04	0.10	-0.27*	1					
Institutional Misconduct (x9)	-0.37*	-0.02	0.03	-0.16*	-0.13*	-0.26*	-0.28*	-0.39*	1				
Familial Incarceration (x10)	-0.10	0.13*	0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.25*	-0.07	-0.15*	0.09	1			
Community Disadvantage (x11)	-0.11	0.41*	-0.09	0.10	-0.07	0.14*	0.04	0.05	0.11*	0.09	1		
Gun Offense (x12)	-0.09	0.11*	0.02	-0.04	-0.02	0.13*	-0.13*	-0.02	0.26*	0.11	0.18*	1	
Drug Abuse (x13)	-0.02	-0.18*	0.11*	-0.01	-0.07	0.09	-0.03	0.03	0.01	0.05	-0.11*	-0.01	1
Gang Membership (x14)	-0.06	-0.05	0.04	-0.16*	-0.10	0.12*	-0.05	0.37*	0.14*	0.23*	0.03	0.08	0.09

*p < 0.05 (two-tailed test).