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John Priddy

April 9, 2019

“It Does Not Reform; It Kills”: Examining the Role of the News, Race, and Crime on U.S.
Opinion Towards Solitary Confinement

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Abstract

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By John Priddy

Political scientists have long studied how public opinion is formed, especially public opinions about government policies and programs. Included in their interests is the study of how public opinions about the criminal justice system in the United States are formed. Although there has been a lot of attention paid by political scientists and other social scientists to public opinions about the criminal justice system, there is a lack of attention paid to public opinions about the use of solitary confinement by prisons and jails in the United States. This thesis empirically examines how a set of theoretically-derived factors, including news consumption, race, and criminal offenses, influence public opinion about solitary confinement. To do this, this study employs a set of news analyses, observing how solitary confinement is both mentioned and framed in the news media. Additionally, the study uses a public opinion survey of a random sample of adult volunteers to understand public opinion about the use of solitary confinement. It focuses on peoples support for or opposition to the use of solitary confinement. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how individual knowledge about racial bias and criminal offenses influence the degrees of support and opposition to the use of solitary confinement in the United States. The findings of the study identify the importance of the news media in understanding public opinion towards solitary confinement but find no significant results on changes in public opinion based on the racial or violence frames in the survey experiment.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. The Correctional Practice and Politics of Solitary Confinement.....	13
Chapter 2. Punitive Public Opinion and Penal Policy Design.....	24
Chapter 3. News Analyses.....	41
Chapter 4. Survey Experiment.....	49
Conclusion.....	74
Appendix.....	82
Bibliography.....	101
Tables and Figures:	
Figure 1: U.S. State and Federal Prison Population.....	4
Figure 2: Study Research Question.....	9
Figure 3: Public Opinion, Policy Design, and Punitiveness.....	39
Figure 4: Mentions of Solitary Confinement, Prison Reform, and Mass Incarceration...	44
Figure 5: Solitary Confinement in the Mainstream Commercial Media.....	46
Figure 6: Solitary Confinement Framing in the Mainstream Commercial Media.....	47
Table 1: Vignette Treatment Groups by Number of Respondents.....	50
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables.....	56
Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Variables.....	58
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables.....	62
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables.....	64
Table 6. “Do you support the use of Solitary Confinement in the U.S. prison system?”..	65
Table 7. “Do you support the use of Solitary Confinement in the U.S. prison system?”..	67
Table 8. Racial Resentment and Treatment Variables.....	67
Table 9. Results of Ordinal Logit Models.....	69

Table 10: Solitary Confinement, Prison Reform, and Mass Incarceration in the News.....	82
Figure 7: Histogram of Age.....	83
Figure 8: Histogram of Racial Identity.....	83
Figure 9: Histogram of Gender.....	84
Figure 10: Histogram of Education.....	84
Figure 11: Histogram of Income.....	85
Figure 12: Histogram of Ideology.....	85
Figure 13: Histogram of Party Identification.....	86
Table 11: Regression Table of Opinion on Killing another Inmate.....	87
Table 12: Regression Table of Opinion on Mental Health Considerations.....	88

Introduction

In 1842 Charles Dickens visited the Eastern State Penitentiary in Pennsylvania on his tour of the United States. He observed the unique punishment it used against inmates: solitary confinement. The prison was built to hold people in solitary confinement for lengthy periods, with the intent to reform. Upon his visit, Dickens remarked that:

“I believe that very few men are capable of estimating the immense amount of torture and agony which this dreadful punishment, prolonged for years, inflicts upon the sufferers; and in guessing at it myself, and in reasoning from what I have seen written upon their faces, and what to my certain knowledge they feel within, I am only the more convinced that there is a depth of terrible endurance which none but the sufferers themselves can fathom, and which no man has a right to inflict upon his fellow creature. I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body; and because its ghastly signs and tokens are not so palpable to the eye and sense of touch as scars upon the flesh; because its wounds are not upon the surface, and it extorts few cries that human ears can hear; therefore the more I denounce it, as a secret punishment which slumbering humanity is not roused up to stay” (Dickens 1842, 81).

Nearly 170 years later, the American prison system still uses solitary confinement.

Across America, states employ solitary confinement in their prisons, jails, and detention centers in increasingly large numbers (Kupers 2017). One man, William Blake, who has spent 36 years in indefinite solitary confinement at New York’s Great Meadow Correctional Facility for murdering a guard, describes it in an essay called “A Sentence Worse than Death”:

“Had I known in 1987 that I would spend the next quarter century in solitary confinement, I would certainly have killed myself. If I took a month to die and spent every minute in severe pain, it seems to me that on balance that fate would still be far easier to endure than the past twenty-five years have been. If I try to imagine what kind of death, even a slow one, would be worse than twenty-five years in the box - and I have tried to imagine it - I can come up with nothing. Set me afire, pummel and bludgeon me, cut me to bits, stab me, shoot me, do what you will in the worst of ways, but none of it could come close to making me feel things as cumulatively horrifying as what I’ve experienced through my years in solitary. Dying couldn’t take but a short time if you or the state were to kill me; in [solitary confinement] I have died a thousand internal deaths.” (Casella et al. 2016, 32-33)

Solitary confinement does more to punish prisoners than any other practice used in the American prison system. Humans designed solitary confinement to explicitly remove individuals from society and punish them for their actions. This type of punishment, and punishment in general, is a uniquely human idea. Only human society inflicts pain, suffering, and enacts justice against those who violate societal norms of the time. However, punishment is not just an anthropological or sociological issue, it is a political one. Throughout history, political theorists and philosophers have questioned and critiqued how punishment intersects with and influences our political institutions and vice versa (Beccaria 1764; Allen 2002). Since governments have been created and organized, punishment for criminal behavior has been a significant matter. In democratic societies such as Athens, where citizens possessed individual freedoms and liberties, theorists questioned what empowered the state to inflict punishment on its citizens? To what length should punishment be inflicted? And when does punishment become excessive, or punitive? Citizens and leaders continue to grapple with the purpose of punishment and who has the authority to punish on our collective behalf. Ultimately, punishment, whether inflicted in the public or private realm, was intended to stabilize society, inflict retribution, and legitimate civic authority (Allen 2002, 36).

Although punishment is a classical matter, it continues to have contemporary relevance. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault traced how punishments in eighteenth century France transitioned from public displays of punishment on the body, to punishments that were enacted privately, away from the public eye, with intent to punish the mind. Foucault describes how “punishment, then, will tend to become the most hidden part of the penal process. This has several consequences: it leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness...it is the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of

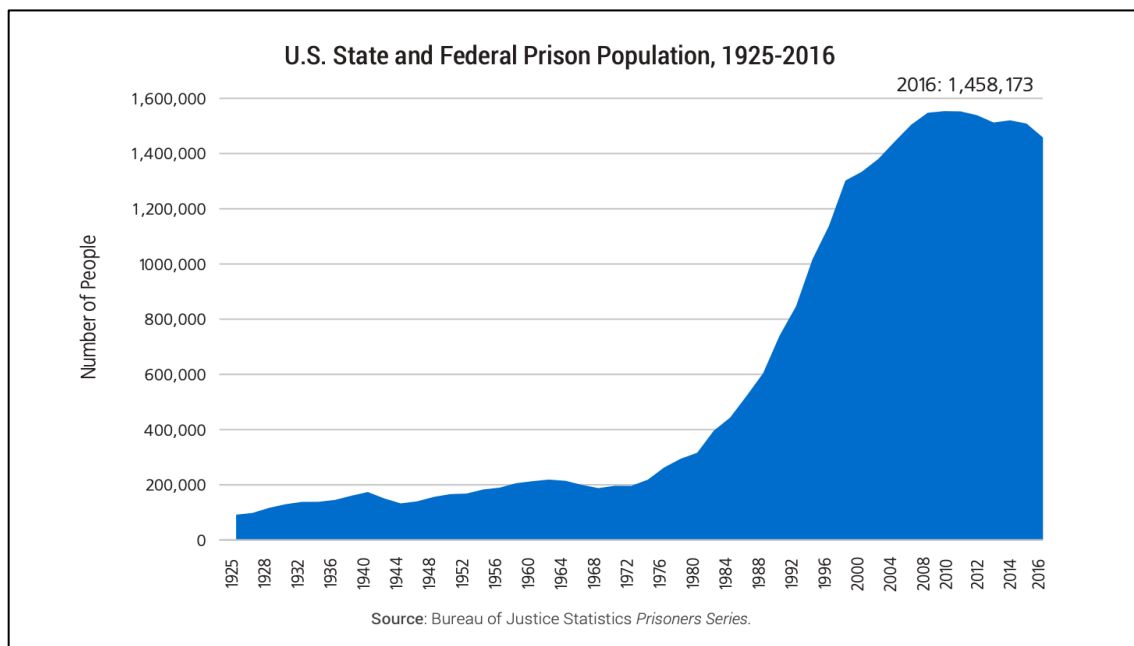
public punishment that must discourage crime” (Foucault 1995, 8-9). Modern punishments are hidden away, inflicted against those deemed as deviant, often in harsh and brutal manners, intended to cause penal harm (Clear 1994). However, empirical political science scholarship has largely ignored criminal punishments, especially carceral institutions that harm the mind, until recently (Gottschalk 2006; Miller 2010; Murakawa 2014; Enns 2016). Little scholarly attention had been paid to the administrative implementation of harsh policies and the impact that the state has on the application of criminal punishment.

The state plays an important and primary role in the administration of punishment. The state is responsible for building carceral institutions, enforcing criminal justice policies, and reforming criminal justice laws. The United States government is particularly known for the creation of harsh punishments for offenders. There are about 2 million people currently incarcerated in the United States prison system, representing an increase of about 500% since the 1970s (Barker 2009). Compared to other Western democracies, one out of every 100 adults are imprisoned, which is about seven times higher than the incarceration rate in France and Germany (Whitman 2003). This phenomenon, of the United States prison population rapidly increasing on an unprecedented scale, is called mass incarceration.

Mass incarceration refers to the rapid growth in incarceration rates in the United States, often in relation to the “War on Drugs” but also the general prison population (Alexander 2011; Enns 2016). Figure 1 depicts the rapid growth in the United States prison population in the modern era. Today, the United States “hands down longer sentences, spends more money on prisons, and executes more of its citizens than any other advanced industrial democracy” (Enns 2016, 3). The scale of imprisonment in the United States is unmatched. The system consumes between \$200 to \$250 billion a year and employs 2.4 million people, when law enforcement,

courts, and prisons are combined (Perkinson 2010). The dollar amount represents about 40% of the total United States national defense budget and about “five-and-a-half times what the federal government spent on unemployment compensation, and more than seventeen times what the government spends on foreign aid” (Enns 2016, 5).

Figure 1. U.S. State and Federal Prison Population, 1925-2016
(Reprinted from *The Sentencing Project*, 2018)



Mass incarceration is closely associated with race, especially African Americans, and socioeconomic status. Middle-and higher-income white suburbanites are relatively removed from feeling the effects of the prison system and mass incarceration (Perkinson 2010; Enns 2016). The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that only one in thirty-nine white men has been to prison, while one out of every six black men has been imprisoned. (Perkinson 2010; Alexander 2011). Eighty percent of criminal defendants are qualified as indigents by the courts, and roughly half of today’s prisoners are illiterate (Perkinson 2010). No other country in the world incarcerates and imprisons as large a proportion of their minority populations as the United

States (Alexander 2011). The prison population in the United States is largely poor, racially diverse, and locked up for increasing amounts of time.

Mass incarceration is intimately connected with public opinion related to harsh, “tough on crime policies” (Alexander 2011; Enns 2016). These policies had a substantial effect on the rise in the prison population beginning in the 1960s. The public shift towards harsher and more excessive punishments is known as public punitiveness (Enns 2016). What exactly is punitiveness? Punitiveness is the degree to which punishment is inflicted beyond what is necessary to correct (Whitman 2003). The intention of prison systems could be to rehabilitate the incarcerated. Rehabilitation is a theory of punishment that argues that punishment and incarceration should have the goal of reorienting the offender (Whitman 2003). However, punitiveness is not about rehabilitation; it is about retribution. The American criminal justice, generally, is punitive and retributive nature, by design. American punishments inflict pain, suffering, and damage upon incarcerated persons to a degree which is not seen in other Westernized democracies (Whitman 2003; Howard 2017).

Political science research demonstrates that harsh policy designs originated from a punitive public, that was drawn towards excessive punishments from a perceived fear of crime beginning in the 1960s. (Alexander 2011; Reiter 2016; Enns 2016). The punitive public pushed for the imprisoned to be subjected to retributive policies such as the death penalty, rather than rehabilitative ones. The punitive public’s influence on policies such as mass incarceration and the death penalty has been well noted in the literature (Alexander 2011; Enns 2016). However, the punitive attitudes that created and allowed mass incarceration to fester in the United States prison system are consequential to the adoption of solitary confinement in greater numbers across the nation.

Other than execution, solitary confinement is the most punitive punishment inflicted by the American criminal justice system. As the prison population increased, prisoners began to be moved to special housing units and solitary confinement facilities (Shalev 2009; Kupers 2017). The increased use of solitary confinement as a punitive practice followed changes in public opinion towards support of “tough on crime” policies (Reiter 2016). As a result, the use of solitary confinement in the modern era is a byproduct of mass incarceration in the United States (Shalev 2009). The larger prison populations resulted in overcrowded facilities, greater violence in the system, and fewer resources (Shalev 2009). Solitary confinement allowed prison wardens and guards to maintain a greater sense of control over the prison environment (Shalev 2009). Dangerous or controversial inmates were identified, removed from the general prison population, and placed in solitary confinement to maintain safety, order, and control in the overcrowded prison system (Shalev 2009).

The prison spaces for solitary confinement have many names—Special Housing Unit, Security Housing Unit, Control Unit, and Administrative Maximum Facility (Guenther 2013). Regardless of the name, the space and practice of solitary confinement have the same intentions— isolation and punishment. Thousands of American citizens incarcerated in the prisons of the United States reside in some form of solitary confinement, defined as “the physical isolation of individuals in which they are confined in their cells for around 23 hours each day” (Smith 2006, 448). A 2005 study by the Bureau of Justice Report found that 81,622 prisoners reside in some form of restricted housing (Guenther 2013). Often, they experience no physical or human contact for days, months, and even years. Daily, thousands of citizens are subjected to solitary housing. The increase in the use of solitary confinement through the creation of

supermax prisons is associated with the public's changes in attitudes towards crime (Kupers 2017).

Because the number of people in prison, especially imprisoned in solitary confinement, is growing, the use of such a punitive incarceration practice warrants understanding by scholars, the American criminal justice system, and the American public. This thesis examines public opinion about solitary confinement. It contributes to the scholarship on the connection between public opinion and punitive policies. Specifically, this thesis empirically examines how a set of theoretically-derived factors, including news consumption, race, and criminal offenses, influence public opinion about solitary confinement in the United States. This connects the punitive public, the news media, and the harsh punishments inflicted as a result.

This study evaluates the relationship between public opinion and solitary confinement. This study employed a survey experiment, collected on a sample of U.S. adults, and news analyses of the largest U.S. news sources, to elucidate the connection between media frames and solitary confinement. Additionally, this study addresses a subject that political science ignores, namely, the influence of race and offense on attitudes toward the use of solitary confinement in the United States prison system.

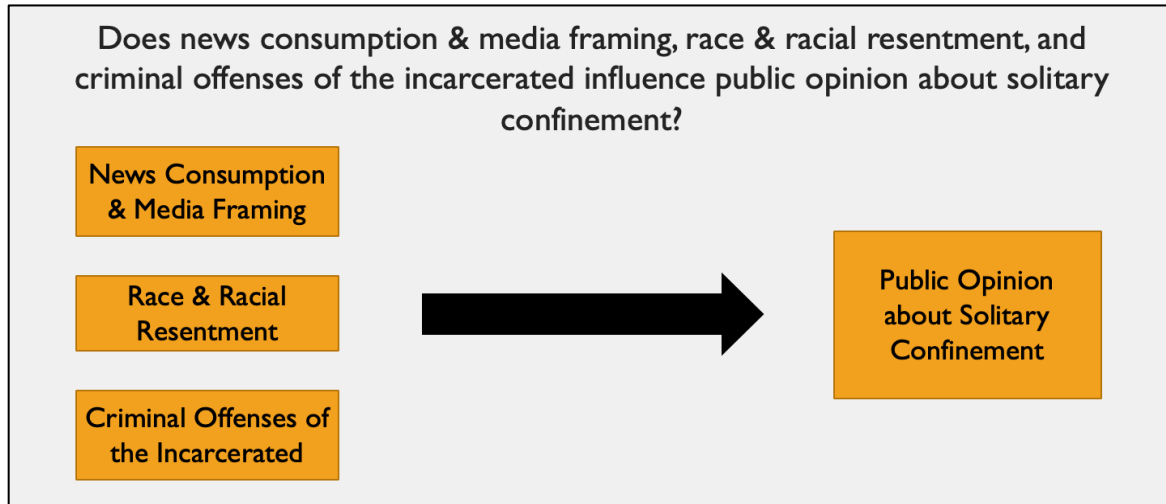
Chapter 1 of this thesis undertakes an overview of the correctional practice and politics of solitary confinement. It begins with a historical overview of solitary confinement, which has existed as a practice for 200 years in the United States, despite critics noting its punitiveness. The chapter traces the use of solitary confinement across the United States to the creation of the supermax prison, a prison designed solely for the use of solitary confinement. Chapter 1 also interrogates the practice and efficacy of solitary confinement, questioning who is held in solitary confinement and whether it affects rehabilitative outcomes. The theory of the “worst of the

worst” being held in solitary confinement is the core focus of Chapter 1. The “worst of the worst” theory argues that the public believes that those in solitary confinement are there because they have committed the most offensive and heinous of crimes (Mears 2013). As a result, the public is more likely to support solitary confinement, especially against violent offenses. The “worst of the worst” theory is later tested in this thesis, drawn from the data and results of the survey experiment, where respondents were asked if they were more likely to support solitary confinement when the crime is more violent.

Chapter 2 addresses public opinion formation, punitiveness, and correctional policy design. Extensive evidence from the literature strongly demonstrates that the news media plays a significant role in the development of opinions, whether it be television, newspapers, or radio. (Erbring et al 1980; Page et al 1987; Enns 2016). The commercial media, through agenda setting, influences what the public finds important (Cook et al. 1983). The media also has the ability to frame issues, which changes how the public perceives these issues. The commercial media, through agenda setting and framing, changed how the public perceived criminal justice issues (Enns 2016). This leads into the connection between the punitive public and the rise of mass incarceration in the United States (Enns 2016). The punitive public lead political elites who drafted and implemented the harsh policy design (Enns 2016). These punitive policies are implemented through “degenerative policy design”, which are policymaking designs that target “deviant” populations (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). Incarcerated persons, who are negatively constructed and politically weak, are key examples of deviant populations. Theoretically, their position as “deviants” explains much of why solitary confinement and other punitive practices are inflicted against them with little political backlash from the public. Figure 2 depicts the basic argument this thesis makes about how news consumption and media framing, race and racial

resentment, and criminal offenses of the incarcerated influence public opinion about solitary confinement.

Figure 2. Study Research Question



Furthermore, Chapter 2 engages the general theories surrounding the relationship between public opinion and public policy, especially in the criminal justice literature. Few studies analyze public support for solitary confinement (Koczela and Parr 2017; Wagage et al. 2017). Moreover, there is little experimental data on general public opinions on solitary and what factors may influence that support. Support for the death penalty, felon disenfranchisement, and other punitive policies have been extensively tested and observed by scholars (Barkan and Cohn 1994; Barkhan and Cohn 2005; Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). Solitary confinement remains relatively unexamined. One reason for this is the difficulty defining solitary confinement. Different prisons use different names for the practice and incarcerated persons can be moved into solitary without judicial oversight or approval, thus it is difficult to track the numbers of people in solitary confinement.

Additionally, Chapter 2 provides a theoretical overview of the influence of race on the criminal justice system. Race plays an incredibly large role in the development of policies in the

United States, especially when those policies are racialized (Barkhan and Cohn 1994; Gilens 1999; Chiricos et al. 2004; Green et al. 2006; Bobo and Johnson 2004; Hurwitz and Peffley 2007, 2010; Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). The criminal justice system operates no differently, and scholars have extensive evidence that throughout the entire system, blacks are treated differently than whites (Barkhan and Cohn 1994; Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). Scholars have observed racial differences in public opinion among a variety of policies, both racial and non-racial (Barkhan and Cohn 1994; Gilliam 1999; Green et al. 2006). However, none of these studies focus on solitary confinement. This is disconcerting, as solitary confinement disproportionately impacts incarcerated persons of color and lower socioeconomic status (Resnik et al. 2016). Any practice that disproportionately harms segments of the population necessitates further investigation and analysis.

Chapter 2 concludes with the hypotheses of this study, applying the theories from the literature review to the hypotheses. The hypotheses explain how based on the literature, I expect the news media to portray solitary confinement. For the news analyses, I hypothesize that the commercial media devotes more attention to mass incarceration and prison reform than solitary confinement. I further hypothesize that media coverage of solitary confinement will be more supportive or neutral than critical of it and that the media will emphasize the race and criminal offenses of the confined over other attributes. The hypotheses also explain how I expect respondents to react to the racial and violence frames applied in the survey experiment. I hypothesize that the racialized frames will increase support for solitary confinement more than race-neutral frames. I further hypothesize that the violent frames will increase support for solitary confinement more than violence-neutral frames.

Chapter 3 covers the data, methods, and results of an original content analysis of major newspapers in the United States over two decades about imprisonment, particularly solitary confinement, and an original survey experiment about support for solitary confinement. The chapter begins with the news analyses conducted in this study. The news analyses identify how solitary confinement is presented in the media, which leads into the survey experiment. Specifically, the content analysis identifies the factors that influence public opinion on solitary confinement. As the chapter makes clear, based on the results of the news analyses, solitary confinement is mentioned similarly to other criminal justice topics such as mass incarceration and prison reform. Solitary confinement is also not framed negatively in the commercial news media.

Chapter 4 reports the data, methods, and results of the survey experiment. The experiment investigated the factors that influence public support or opposition to, or ambivalence towards, the use of solitary confinement in correctional systems of the United States. The survey experiment explored the influence of racial and offense framing on the public's support for the use of solitary confinement. The survey experiment reveals that the public generally opposes the use of solitary confinement. The results indicate that race has little to no effect on support for the use of solitary confinement. But, my empirical findings suggest that racial resentment towards Blacks increases support for solitary confinement. Furthermore, my findings suggest that more violent offenses lead to greater support for the use of solitary confinement. Viewing the news also influenced respondents' support for the use of solitary confinement, increasing it. Additionally, the empirical results indicate an important priming effect of the treatment variables. All respondents who observed the treatments, which were presented in a news article about a person in solitary confinement, opposed the use of solitary confinement. This indicated

that news stories of those in solitary confinement are important in understanding public opinion towards the practice. In sum, while the respondents indicated general disapproval for the use of solitary confinement, across all treatment groups, perceptions of blacks and crime remain relevant in understanding public opinion towards solitary confinement.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the results of the analyses and identifies future directions for research on punitive attitudes and practices in the United States regarding corrections. Public opinion is massively important in understanding criminal justice policies. Few studies have observed the connection between the news media, public opinion, and solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is a particularly punitive practice that necessitates further research. This study attempts to fill the scholarly gaps and demonstrate the need for further research on the topic.

Chapter 2

The Correctional Practice and Politics of Solitary Confinement

At the center of this study is the practice of solitary confinement. As a result, it is fundamental to understand the penal practice itself. Solitary confinement in the United States is widespread and increasing in usage and it is important to understand what is driving this change. The history of solitary confinement, the rationales that continue to support its usage, and the consequences prisoners experience as a result of being in solitary confinement, help to explain public perception of the practice.

The purpose of solitary confinement centers on incapacitation, deterrence, and retribution as punishment. Incapacitation, deterrence, and retribution are theories that question why society punishes (Whitman 2003). Incapacitation refers to isolating or removing individuals from the public eye, effectively detaching them from society. Deterrence argues that harsh punishments, such as solitary confinement, deter individuals from committing crimes from fear of punishment. Finally, retribution refers to the classic idea of an “eye for an eye” or that the crime should fit the punishment. Solitary confinement as a punishment acts to remove, caution, and inflict pain upon those who have committed crimes. But it is part of a larger set of practices, whereby the American prison system degrades, humiliates, and dehumanizes its prisoners daily, with solitary confinement being one of its most powerful and harmful tools of social control. The system centers around one of the central facets of punishment, “that punishment only works if it succeeds in making the punished person feel inferior” (Whitman 2003, 20). In solitary, inmates lose their sense of time, while corrections officers and administrators starve them with insufficiently nutritious meals and deny them physical human contact (Kupers 2017). Solitary confinement is the prison of the prison system, as it removes the individuals from society, even

prison society, and prevents them from engaging with other members of that society. This instills the inferiority and inflicts substantial psychological harm (Whitman 2003).

Solitary confinement is built around punishment. Punishments are inflicted with the intent to reduce the offender and solitary confinement is one of the clearest examples. Solitary confinement is also explicitly punitive. One of the fundamental tenets of punitiveness is degradation. Degradation is the power to “reduce another person in status, to treat another person as inferior” (Whitman 2003, 8). The entire purpose of degradation is to label another as acting bad or evil and inflict punitive measures against them as a result. Solitary confinement is a primary method in which the carceral state degrades those in prison. Locking a person away for days, months, or years functions as an effort to remove the offender from the public eye, while also preventing the person from engaging in human contact. Unlike prisoners who are able to interact with one another, the individual in solitary confinement is deeply marked as inferior, to the point that contact with other humans is forbidden. As a method of punitiveness and degradation, solitary confinement ranks as one of the nation’s harshest.

While the total prison population grew 28% between 1995 to 2000, the number of prisoners in solitary confinement increased by 40% (Guenther 2013). Additionally, solitary confinement is not reserved for prisoners who commit the most violent offenses. Of the estimated 81,622 prisoners in solitary confinement, many are in for non-violent reasons, despite public beliefs that solitary confinement is reserved for the most violent of crimes such as terrorism and mass murder (Guenther 2013). Inmates have ended up in solitary confinement for many offenses, such as fighting, wearing a hijab or headscarf, being affiliated with a gang, possessing contraband, or attempted suicide (Guenther 2013). The stories of those in solitary confinement reveal the effect the practice can have on the mental health. People who have

experienced solitary confinement report that the beds cut into your body, that they lose their sense of space and time, and slowly descend into madness (Guenther 2013).

Solitary confinement is intimately connected with the implementation of the “supermax” or super-maximum security prison. The Pelican Bay State Prison in California, the first modern supermax prison built in 1989, ushered in a multi-state era of solitary confinement. As of 1996, “over two-thirds of states had supermax facilities that collectively housed more than 20,000 inmates” (Mears 2006, ii). By 2004, 44 states had supermax prisons, and the use of supermax prisons and solitary confinement has diffused across the nation, with no signs of slowing. While supermax prisons hold dangerous prisoners, such as Al-Qaeda terrorists, solitary confinement as a general practice of imprisonment covers a range of inmates and crimes. Additionally, since 1989, prisons began to develop special housing units reserved specifically for solitary confinement. The development of supermax prisons and special housing units is intimately connected with changes in public opinion towards punitiveness, especially tough on crime attitudes (Pizarro et al 2006). Also referred to as penal populism, scholars argue that public support of tough on crime policies resulted in voters approving billions of dollars in public bonds to finance new prisons, specifically super maximum prisons (Gilmore 2007; Reiter 2016). The creation of the super-maximum prison ushered in a new era in the United States prison system, where solitary confinement was used in greater numbers and often, indiscriminately.

Historical Background of Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement was originally employed in America’s first prisons, as noted during the 19th century exploration of the United States prison system by Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville. Then, solitary confinement was only applied to the criminals who were essentially on death row, awaiting their execution in darkness (de Beaumont and de Tocqueville

1964, 39). However, with the construction of the Auburn Prison in the State of New York in 1818, solitary confinement and complete isolation were applied to all the prisoners (de Beaumont and de Tocqueville 1964). The Auburn prison focused solely on solitary confinement, as the state legislature believed other prisons had failed as a result of overcrowding of the few available cells (de Beaumont and de Tocqueville 1964). De Beaumont and de Tocqueville argued that solitary confinement inflicted intense mental harm against those who suffered it. They described how “the unfortunates upon whom this experiment was made, fell into a state of depression, so manifest...their lives seemed in danger” (de Beaumont and de Tocqueville 1964, 41). Moreover, they concluded the experiment in the Auburn prison was non-rehabilitative, described as “destroy(ing) the criminal without intermission and without pity; it does not reform, it kills” (de Beaumont and de Tocqueville 1964, 61).

The psychological damage to the human psyche that occurred under solitary confinement was unprecedented, yet the practice continued. Horrific examples are evident in states such as Texas, where solitary confinement was used in 1912 as a method called dark ceiling. It was described as “a form of solitary in which inmates were temporarily locked in a small, pitch-black box and sustained on bread and water” (Perkinson 2010, 170). At one point, in response to a cotton strike, twelve field hands were placed in dark ceiling, and when the door was opened sixteen hours later, “eight men were dead, their naked corpses piled on top of the other...four survivors...their mouths wrapped around floor pipes, gasping for air” (Perkinson 2010, 174).

Solitary confinement continued in multiple places across the country, including the infamous Hole in Alcatraz. Another infamous example was the Adjustment Center at San Quentin State Prison. The Adjustment Center was known for the use of harsh solitary confinement against political dissidents, radicals, and members of the Black Panther Party

(Kupers 2017). Solitary confinement as a punishment is intimately connected with the punishment of black people in the United States. George Jackson, a prominent black revolutionary leader, was held in the Adjustment Center at San Quentin. While residing there, he was shot and killed by guards, inciting a prison uprising and leading to extremely brutal and harsh retaliation of solitary confinement against other black radicals in the prison (Kupers 2017).

The most prominent use of solitary confinement, that indicated the practice was being institutionalized in the prison system, was in 1983 during incidents in the United States Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois. Two guards were killed in separate attacks in the prison, and the warden placed the prison in permanent lockdown, where inmates were held in 23 hour a day confinement without communal time (Smith 2006). Following the incident in Marion, other correctional facilities across states began to construct prisons built solely for solitary confinement, called the supermaximum prison [supermax]. Supermax prisons were designed not only for control and maximum security, but also to inflict maximum damage against the human body.

The first supermax was Pelican Bay State Prison in California, built in 1989 (Reiter 2016). Pelican Bay was the first instance of a prison built solely for the purpose of solitary confinement. Its rooms were small, desolate, and intended for sensory deprivation, with constant overhead lights and often no accessible windows (Reiter 2016). The supermax method was copied across the United States. By 1996, according to the National Institutes of Corrections Survey, 34 states had supermax prisons. Six years later, ten more had supermax prisons (Mears 2006). Supermax prisons and solitary confinement are now staples of the American criminal justice system. Supermax prisons hold those offenders considered the most violent and dangerous. The supermax allows the federal prison system to have total control over these

individuals and keep them separate from the general prison population (Shalev 2009). The rest of the correctional facilities in the United States adopt solitary confinement with the explicit goal of controlling risk and violence in the prison (Shalev 2009). As Mears argues, “that growth is striking and suggests that supermax prisons are likely to remain a common feature of criminal justice in the United States for the indefinite future” (Mears 2006, 45). Correctional facilities are now dependent on solitary confinement as the method of control, moving inmates around as sanction for their bad actions or even, in some cases, to protect them from harm by other inmates (Shalev 2009).

Rationales for Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement is used as a punishment for prisoners who are dissident within the prison, operating as the prison of the prison system. Solitary confinement cannot be understood without insight into who resides in restricted housing. Foremost, the common idea of solitary confinement is that it is reserved for the “worst of the worst” offenders (Mears 2013). Within solitary confinement, there are certainly these types of offenders, such as Zacarias Moussaoui, who is held in ADX Florence for his planning of the 9/11 attacks. However, many prisoners within solitary confinement are held for seemingly innocuous reasons. In the prison, the warden and administrators have jurisdiction over who is held in solitary confinement and can place inmates in solitary without a warrant or judicial order, without violating a prisoner’s constitutional rights (Kupers 2017). Thus, prisoners can be placed in solitary confinement for non-violent offenses, such as being identified as gang members (Shames et al. 2015). Identification as gang-affiliated presents a danger to the prison environment that guards argue can lead to violent attacks or riots between prisoners (Kupers 2017). That practice is called

administrative segregation, as it is not based on individual activity, rather, it is based on identification as a risk within the prison environment (Shames et al. 2015).

Furthermore, inmates can be placed in solitary for disruptive behavior, such as talking back or failure to obey an order (Shames et al. 2015). For example, in Pennsylvania, the most common violation associated with a sentence to segregated housing was failure to obey an order, with “85 percent of those written up for this type of violation sent there [solitary confinement]” (Shames et al. 2015, 13). The lengths of confinements can also vary drastically (Kupers 2017). For example, William Blake, the prisoner in New York’s Great Meadow Correctional Facility mentioned earlier, “is considered a permanent risk to prison safety and is in isolation indefinitely, despite periodic pro forma reviews of his status” (Casella et al. 2016, 25). Prisoners in supermax facilities are often serving life-sentences, facing no possibility of parole or release from solitary confinement (Shalev 2009).

Those who support solitary confinement argue that it is an effective punishment that is necessary to maintain control within the prison environment (Shalev 2009). Generally, correction officials state that solitary confinement keeps both the prison environment and the prisoners safer. In a study of prison effectiveness, prison wardens, correctional staff, and prison commissioners were asked what they perceived as the goals of solitary confinement. In total, 60 respondents were questioned through the study (Mears 2006). The responses revealed that prison wardens expected solitary confinement to “increase safety, order, and control throughout prison systems and incapacitate violent or disruptive inmates” (Mears 2006, 40). However, prison wardens were not entirely in agreement about the effectiveness of solitary. The study found that “there is less agreement about whether they improve inmate behavior throughout prison systems; decrease riots, the influence of gangs, or escapes; successfully punish, reduce the recidivism of,

or rehabilitate violent or disruptive inmates; or deter crime in society” (Mears 2006, 40). Prison officials, as the chief implementers of solitary confinement, are unsure how it aids in their prison administration, yet they continue to use the practice.

Consequences of Solitary Confinement

Guards in supermax prisons can use obtuse and impressible rules to move prisoners into solitary confinement. In solitary, prisoners are permitted few personal items, such as books, papers and pencils, or family photos. These items are not guaranteed, and literature is often restricted based on what the prison considers appropriate (Casella et al. 2016). Furthermore, when prisoners disobey an order or commit a violation, their personal possessions can be removed and never returned. Guards can also restrict prisoner’s access to more than their personal items. For example, guards can take away a person’s phone calls, commissary, and time outside (Kupers 2017).

Denying these basic rights operates to punish people with the few reliefs from solitary confinement they have, resulting in worse mental health outcomes. Guards also employ harsher punishments against those in solitary. For example, staff may restrain an incarcerated person through the shackling of all limbs, the abdomen, the head, and the neck, and leave them in their cells for hours in this condition (Kupers 2017). Staff can also use immobilizing tear gas when prisoners refuse to eat their food and may forcibly extract them from their cells and lock them in lightless, windowless, bed-less rooms (Kupers 2017).

The impact of solitary confinement on the psyche of the prisoner is important to understanding its punitive impact. A prisoner can go for “years, even decades, without experiencing any form of touch beyond the chaining and unchaining of wrists” (Guenther 2013, 164). Prisoners in solitary confinement experience drastic changes in physical and mental health.

Craig Haney, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, testified before Congress on the conditions of solitary confinement. In his testimony, he argued that prisoners in solitary confinement are often catatonic, covered in their own feces, or in complete despair (Haney 2003). Haney argued that the 23 hours a day of isolation led prisoners to shriek wildly and lose complete control of their minds, often descending into complete madness (Haney 2003). Among inmates in Pelican Bay, 83 to 91 percent reported “anxiety, headaches, lethargy, irrational anger, confused thought processes, and social withdrawal” (Smith 2006, 493). Research also notes higher levels of psychopathy, self-mutilation, and suicide among inmates in solitary confinement (Haney 2003).

The Department of Justice, Congress, and prison wardens are all aware of the dire conditions in which prisoners are held in solitary confinement, yet the practice continues. Solitary confinement continues to be used as a method of punishment, despite the negative effect on mental health, because of perceptions of the people held within solitary as the “worst of the worst.” Recidivism, meaning the rate at which prisoners return to prison after their release, is an important measure of the effectiveness of punishment. The literature on this topic suggests that solitary confinement does not reduce recidivism, it increases the recidivism rate. A state-wide study in Massachusetts showed that people who were released from solitary confinement had a recidivism rate of 64%, while those released from a normal prison setting had a recidivism rate of 41% (Gibbons and Katzenbach 2006, 55). The study analyzed the rates at which those who were in solitary confinement returned to the prison system once released against the rates of those who never were placed in solitary confinement. Prisoners in solitary confinement were more likely to return to prison in general, than prisoners who had never been in solitary confinement (Gibbons and Katzenbach 2006). Additionally, states that reduced their number of

prisoners in solitary confinement saw a 75% reduction in prison violence (Gibbons and Katzenbach 2006, 55). However, 95% of prison wardens believe that solitary confinement successfully increases safety and order, and reduces violence in prisons (Mears 2006, 40). Mears analysis reveals discrepancies between what the wardens believe solitary confinement achieves, and the actual results.

In *Solitary Confinement, Public Safety, and Recidivism*, Gordon addresses the relationship between solitary confinement and recidivism. Gordon argues that the high recidivism rate of prisoners in solitary confinement is explained by the rage hypothesis, which posits that “prisoners become so angry and frustrated by their incarceration in solitary confinement that they gain an active desire, or a heightened readiness, to exact revenge on society” (Gordon 2014, 519). Unfortunately, Gordon does not provide statistics or research to defend the rage hypothesis, she merely presents it as a possibility. However, solitary confinement presents greater risks for recidivism as prisoners are prevented from accessing educational or work programs (Gordon 2014). This based on theory that access to rehabilitative programs, such as education programs while in prison, reduces the rate of recidivism (Gordon 2014). If the intended purpose of solitary confinement is to rehabilitate, then it is not an effective form of punishment.

Little is known about the costs of solitary confinement in the United States prison system. However, one study estimates that the average price paid by taxpayers to fund solitary confinement in Pelican Bay was \$12,317 (Rodriguez 2011). Taxpayers funded the development of Pelican Bay Prison, as they voted to appropriate money to its construction before it was built (Reiter 2016). However, a cost-benefit analysis of supermax prisons is largely missing in the literature, due to its complexity and difficult. Mears argues that supermaxes represent a close to

\$1 billion investment over 30 to 40 years (Mears 2006). Solitary confinement, as a method of punishment, is extremely expensive.

Prisons will continue to use solitary confinement because it is one of the main ways that correctional facilities are able to handle their ever-growing populations (Shalev 2009). The lack of accountability on the part of prison administrators allows prisoners to be placed in solitary confinement without notice, warrant, or reason. Incarcerated persons continue to be placed in solitary confinement because the “worst of the worst” theory perpetuates. Mears et al. argue that people who most associate solitary confinement with the worst of the worst are concerned with symbolic threat, essentially fear of threat, the idea that those in solitary are a threat to society at large (Mears et al. 2013). This engages the general theories of punishment and the idea of isolation, that dangerous people must be separated and removed from society. Solitary confinement is understood as the prison of the prison system, where the most “heinous” and “dangerous” of offenders are sent. Isolation emphasizes the need to remove these individuals from society. Solitary confinement is the harshest and most significant form of isolation possible within the American prison system.

Understanding the practice of solitary confinement is central to explaining public perception of the practice. Public opinion on solitary confinement indicates that the majority, 56%, of Americans believe it is an appropriate form of punishment rather than a method torture (Jagel 2013). This indicates that the public is thinking of solitary confinement differently than experts on the topic (Reiter 2016; Kupers 2017). Public opinion is an influential factor in American politics, especially in the criminal justice field. The next chapter considers how punitive public attitudes create punitive policy designs such as solitary confinement.

Chapter 2

Punitive Public Opinion and Penal Policy Design

Public opinion is integral to the development of mass incarceration policies in the American criminal justice system. The public pushed for tough on crime policies and policymakers obliged, resulting in America having the highest incarceration rate across Western democracies (Enns 2016). Public opinion supporting these punitive policies developed from the news media, which stoked a fear of crime among the public (Enns 2016). Public opinion has a profound impact on the development of punitive policies in the American criminal justice system (Enns 2016). This study examines the role of public opinion in the implementation of a specific punishment, solitary confinement. As a result, it is important to understand how people form their opinions. But, how does public opinion, especially punitive public opinion, develop?

Public Opinion Formation

News media play a significant role in the development of opinions, whether it be television, newspapers, or radio. (Erbring et al 1980; Page et al 1987; Enns 2016). The commercial news media influences public opinion through a variety of avenues. One of the commercial media's main avenues is called agenda setting, which is "the process by which problems become salient political issues meriting the attention of the polity" (Cook et al. 1983, 17). The ability to set the agenda allows the commercial media to highlight important issues and bring attention to both the public and policymakers. Cook et al. find that the public, when presented with agenda setting information through the commercial media, "changed their perceptions on issues of importance and altered their policy priorities" (Cook et al. 1983, 33). Cook et al. designed an experimental trial, where respondents were randomly assigned to different television programs, created by the researchers. The target program featured a fake

story about abuse in the home health industry (Cook et al. 1983). The respondents who observed the target program were more likely to place significance on that issue in a post-viewing survey (Cook et al. 1983). They concluded that watching the target program significantly altered the views of the general population, empirically confirming the agenda setting theory (Cook et al. 1983). Iyengar et al. find that television news has a significant impact on what viewers believe is important (Iyengar et al. 1982). Through an experimental research design, in which viewers are treated with doctored news broadcast, they found that television news has a substantial impact on the issues that viewers find important (Iyengar et al. 1982).

Framing is another avenue through which the media can influence public opinion. A frame is simply a “cognitive structure that helps individuals to make sense of their surroundings” (Haynes et al. 2016, 17). Framing theory suggests that different images or ideas, when presented to people, will elicit different responses. This is based on cognitive science and sociology. The theory follows that people have inherent biases or preferences, and exposure to images that trigger those biases or preferences elicits responses (Haynes et al. 2016). The frames are shown through survey experiments, with different viewers receiving different images and then comparing the results. One of the main ways scholars observe the effect that race has on the criminal justice system is through survey-based framing experiments. Experiments are useful in observing racial bias in an experiment, as the respondents are randomly assigned the treatment or control. In experiments where race is the treatment, everything else between the treatment and control remain the same except for the race of the individual or subject in question. As a result, surveyors are able to see how two groups of similar people respond to race. Hurwitz and Peffley conducted such an experiment, where they observed changes in responses based on racial frames. In their experiment, randomized respondents received different vignettes, or treatments,

about people of different races committing crimes. Hurwitz and Peffley found a strong relationship between white's perceptions of African Americans and judgements of crime and punishment, but only for black criminals who commit violent crimes (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997). This suggests that more violent crimes also trigger greater judgments of punishment.

Enns in *Incarceration Nation* examines the importance of the commercial media in the criminal justice system and the development of a law and order society. He argues that the rise of mass incarceration in the United States was largely a political response to the increasingly punitive public throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In order to test this theory, Enns tracks public opinion on various survey questions that asked about punitive attitudes. He then creates a measure tracking the response to those survey questions cumulatively overtime, combining the responses into one measure of punitiveness, establishing that punitiveness increased as the prison population did the same (Enns 2016). Enns finds that as newspaper coverage of crime increased in the 1960s, the public's punitiveness also rose (Enns 2016). He finds that the relationship between news coverage and punitiveness is consistent over time (Enns 2016). He argues that the primary factor driving the rise in public punitiveness was news coverage of criminal activity, because as news coverage of crime increased, punitiveness matched the rise (Enns 2016). News coverage of crime increased because the crime rate increased during this time period; yet, the media focused heavily on violent crimes and crimes committed by African Americans (Enns 2016).

Enns' argument provides insight into influence of the commercial media on public opinion. The commercial media is a powerful American institution that can utilize its capabilities to influence public opinion. The commercial media through their agenda setting capabilities created a sense of lawlessness and crime that initiated significant fear in the American public.

The commercial and news media created a public that clamored for punitive policies. A significant factor in the need for punitive policies was fear of the crimes written about in the commercial media (Langworthy and Whitehead 1986). Fear of crime is a significant factor in understanding the relationship between punitiveness and the American public. Research has demonstrated that fear is a statistically significant predictor of punitiveness (Langworthy and Whitehead 1986). Once people's opinions are formed, how may those opinions influence policy?

Public opinion affects policymaking because elected officials, generally, care about the opinions of their constituents and implement policies to attend to those opinions (Downs 1957, Fenno 1978). Policymaking surrounding crime and punishment operates in a similar manner. A significant amount of research demonstrates that punitive public opinion influenced the development of punishments in the criminal justice system in the late twentieth century (Jacobs and Carmichael 2001, Enns 2016). For example, research indicates that the punitive public played a significant role in the development of California's three strikes laws because the public at the time preferred more punitive measures against criminal offenders (Cullen et al. 2000). Cullen et al. demonstrate this through an analysis of support for three strikes laws among the public when the three strikes laws were passed in California. The authors found that in a 1994 Time/CNN Poll, "81% of adults favored mandatory life imprisonment for anyone convicted of a third serious crime" (Cullen et al. 2000, 38). In the same year, the California electorate passed a three-strikes law with 72% voting in favor and only 28% voting against (Cullen et al. 2000).

Researchers argue over whether political elites push for more punitive policies or if the public leads political elites (Page et al 1987; Enns 2016). More recent scholarship indicates that while the opinions of elites and the public can reinforce one another, the evidence indicates that the elites usually respond to public opinion (Enns 2016). Enns specifically focuses on public

opinion in relation to attitudes on crime and punishment during the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, which is especially important to this study. Enns demonstrates that the public began illustrating more punitive attitudes towards crime before leaders, such as Richard Nixon, began espousing the importance of law and order and tough on crime policies (Enns 2016). When political leaders did address “tough on crime” and “law and order” issues, they often connected them to race (Alexander 2011; Enns 2016). Scholars have also argued that public opinion can shape policy implementation in bureaucratic and legislative structures (Burstein 2003; Brace and Boyea 2008; Lax and Phillips 2009). Burstein’s study is especially useful, as he conducts an analysis of 30 studies that purported to observe a relationship between public opinion and public policy, on policies such as welfare, taxes, and capital punishment. Burstein observes the effect of the predictor, public opinion, on the dependent variable, creation of public policy (Burstein 2003). He measures the relationship between public opinion and public policy through observing a statistically significant effect in the original paper between the predictor and the dependent variable (Burstein 2003). Burstein finds that 75% of the relationships between public opinion and public policy are statistically significant and that public opinion had a substantive effect on public policy (Burstein 2003).

Public Opinion and Policy Design

Public punitiveness effects policy design and implementation of criminal justice punishments and incarceration through several mechanisms. First, punitiveness influences the budgetary and appropriations process for law enforcement and corrections (Enns 2016). Through appropriations, legislators have the authority to control the number of prosecutions, investigations, and incarcerations. Second, legislators have the ability to decide the length of sentences and the punishment inflicted based on the crime. As a result, legislators possess the

authority and power to capitalize on the public's punishment-oriented opinions (Enns 2016). Third, state and federal actors beyond legislators are also influenced by public opinion. For example, prosecutors are elected in 46 states across the nation (Gordon and Huber 2009). The role of the prosecutor is intimately connected to criminal justice policies and enforcement, as the prosecutor has authority to decide which crimes to prosecute (Gordon and Huber 2009). In the 38 states that elect their Supreme Court Justices, scholars found that attitudes towards the death penalty influenced their votes on the matter (Brace and Boyea 2008; Enns 2016). The authors measured public opinion towards the death penalty in states that elected their judges (Brace and Boyea 2008). In those states, when public opinion was either in support of the death penalty, or opposed towards the death penalty, State Supreme Court Justices in their election year would affirm or overturn lower-state court rulings on the death penalty that were consistent with public opinion (Brace and Boyea 2008). They found that "in states that retain their judges electively, a direct effect exists which encourages judges to affirm lower court punishments where the public is more supportive of capital punishment" (Brace and Boyea 2008, 370). Across the government, elites remain concerned about their public approval, which influences the policies they chose to enact. As a result, public opinion has several mechanisms through which it can influence the actions of political elites and government actors (Enns 2016).

Political actors implement punitive policies through degenerative policy designs. Degenerative policy designs are policymaking structures that impart negative political actions on certain populations. Schneider and Ingraham (1997) establish the theory of degenerative policy design in *Policy Design for Democracy*. In a societal context, there are populations that are advantaged, such as the wealthy and political connected, and those that are disadvantaged, such as the poor and uneducated. Schneider and Ingraham describe these social constructs as

“stereotypes about certain groups of people that have been created by politics, culture, socialization, history, media, literature, religion, and the like” (Schneider and Ingraham 1997, 335). The social constructions are deeply ingrained in societal perceptions and have been established in the public consciousness, whether consciously or unconsciously.

These constructions can be broken down further. As Schneider and Ingraham (1997) theorize, and what others empirically verify (Kreitzer and Smith 2018), groups vary in two ways, namely political power and deservedness. Accordingly, we can think of four categories of groups. The advantaged are politically strong and deserving, people in business, science, and the military (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). The politically weak but deserving are the dependents, who are mothers, children, and depending on the circumstance, the poor (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). The underserving, but politically powerful, are the contenders. The contenders are those who have negative portrayals in society, such as Wall Street Bankers, but have outsized influence as a result of their wealth (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). The advantaged, contenders, and dependents all have a combination of deserving social status or political power, giving them influence in some areas of society. One group has a negative social construction and lacks political power. Deviants are those who “have virtually no political power and are negatively constructed as underserving, violent, and mean” (Schneider and Ingraham 1997, 102). Incarcerated persons are key examples of deviants, as they lack any type of political power and are considered outcast from society.

Deviants can be contrasted against the advantaged. The advantaged have a close connection to policy design, and they create, implement, and design policies that positively benefit their own interests (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). The advantaged have an outsized influence in policy design over the disadvantaged, especially deviants. Through degenerative

policy design, the advantaged create policies that will better their political opportunities and lead to better public appearance, more wealth, or outsized political power, at the expense of deviant populations (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). All institutions are subject to degenerative policy designs that implement social constructions of in groups and out groups. The advantaged political leaders politicize issues and create targets out of the deviant populations while ascribing benefits to those deemed more deserving or good. Deviant groups act as scapegoats for political problems. As a result, politicians encounter little public backlash for inflicting punishments upon them. On the contrary, public opinion supports the punishing and infliction of punitive policies among deviant groups because they believe deviants deserve to be punished for their actions (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). The punishment of deviant populations connects with the “worst of the worst” theory of solitary confinement. The “worst of the worst” are the most deviant, most deserving of punishment, which may explain the use of solitary confinement as a punishment against them.

The political benefits of punitive policies implemented against deviant groups can be observed across all levels of government. For example, public opinion shows that ordinary citizens believe that there has been a significant increase in the most violent of crimes such as homicide, yet these violent crimes have been decreasing since 1973 (Bortner et al. 1993). Despite this, federal politics has appropriated millions of dollars to be spent on punishments, rising from \$750 million a year in 1993 to \$20 billion by the end of the 1990s (Schneider and Ingraham 1997). The development of supermaximum prisons and the increased use of solitary confinement exemplifies the theory of degenerative policy design. Although solitary confinement worsens recidivism, makes prisons more violent, and inflicts harm on the mental and physical health of the individual, the policy increases in use. Solitary confinement is inflicted

against a powerless, deviant group, and the negative social constructions, such as “the worst of the worst” make it “likely that these groups will receive *burdens* even when it is illogical from the perspective of policy ineffectiveness” (Schneider and Ingraham 1997).

Schneider and Ingraham’s theory of degenerative policy making was empirically tested in a recent study. Kreitzer and Smith empirically establish that Schneider and Ingraham’s theory holds up when surveying the general population. In their study, they surveyed respondents over the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform to evaluate the deservedness and perceived power of certain groups (Kreitzer and Smith 2018). The respondents ranked them in the theory established by Schneider and Ingraham, with four quadrants moving from weak to powerful and deserving to undeserving. The results empirically establish that public opinion places prisoners in the deviant category (Kreitzer and Smith 2018). The placement of certain categories of people, such as white women differs from Schneider and Ingraham, but both studies - the theoretical and empirical - place prisoners in the deviant category.

The empirical testing of social construction theory establishes that public perceptions of prisoners are mostly negative, explaining why punishments such as solitary confinement can be inflicted without negative consequences for policymakers. Kreitzer and Smith (2018) support the degenerative policy making theory, as the public perception of prisoners as deviant allows for punitive policy design in the criminal justice system.

Race, Attitudes, and the Criminal Justice System

Race has historically played an incredibly large role in the criminal justice system. Overall, the American criminal justice system is noted for the harshness with which it applies punishments, described as “comparatively harsh, comparatively degrading, [and] comparatively slow to show mercy” (Whitman 2003, 19). However, the harsh, degrading, and merciless aspects

of the American criminal justice system are deeply and intimately connected with race. The enslavement of African Americans in America substantively contributed to the many ways in which the United States inflicts punishment. Criminal treatment is intimately connected with the punishment slaves experienced (Whitman 2003). Slaves were constantly degraded and made to feel as different, characteristics present in the American prison system today (Whitman 2003). The creation of a status inferior, the African American slave, is directly connected with the status inflicted upon prisoners.

Texas Tough analyzes the relationship between slavery and the prison system in Texas. Perkinson argues that “just as slavery once stood as a glaring exception to the American promise, so does imprisonment more than two centuries after the birth of the republic” (Perkinson 2010, 1). It is impossible to decouple race and slavery from the current criminal justice system, as both operated to “preserve privilege, bolster political fortunes, and...to discipline those on the social margins, especially African Americans” (Perkinson 2010, 8). The beginnings of the carceral system reflect the institution of slavery. America’s first penal codes distinguished how whites and blacks would be punished. Whites were relegated to the penitentiary, while blacks were subjected to brutal whippings, beatings, or often execution (Perkinson 2010). Today, “young African Americans...are more likely to spend time in prison-and less likely to get out-than their parents or grandparents were before the civil rights movement” (Perkinson 2010, 365). The harsh punishments-especially solitary confinement-inflicted upon prisoners today disproportionately affect African Americans, due to their origins in slavery.

This study engages this phenomenon and observes its occurrence in the practice of solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is ostensibly race neutral, yet, it is racially disparate in its application against prisoners. There are more black men in solitary than in the general

prison population in 31 states. (Flagg et al. 2016). Demographically, white men are underrepresented in solitary confinement in comparison to the prison system (Flagg et al. 2016). In 43 states, African American men make up 40.1% of inmates in the total custodial population, while 45% in restricted housing or solitary confinement (Flagg et al. 2016, 1). White men consist of 36.5% percent of the total custodial population and are 31% of the population in restricted housing. A study performed by the American Friends Service Committee in Arizona found that although African Americans consisted of only 4 percent of the state population, they were grossly overrepresented in both the prison population and in solitary confinement (Kupers 2017). The study noted that “there is an unmistakable pattern in Arizona where prisoners of color are nearly always placed in supermax facilities and other conditions of isolation at significantly higher rates than white prisoners...given that there is no evidence that race can be even remotely tied to prison violence or rule violation, this suggest an inherent bias on the part of the Arizona Department of Corrections” (Kupers 2017, 72-73).¹

The interconnected history between race and criminal justice leads scholars to study observable effects on the relationship between race and the criminal justice system. Whites generally support policies that harm blacks disproportionately. The two theories that argue this phenomenon are racial threat and the idea that negative racial attitudes affect that policy positions of whites. The racial threat theory argues that intergroup competition for resources creates policies and policy preferences that disproportionately harm blacks (Blumer 1958; Giles and Hertz 1994; Bobo 1999; Parker et al. 2005; Campbell et al. 2006). Specifically, as the numbers of a minority group grow in size, members of the majority perceive a threat and will

¹ Solitary confinement in the federal prison system operates in a similar matter. The federal prison system does not report the racial makeup of the supermax prisons across the country. However, research shows that across the United States, black people and people of color are disproportionately represented in the population in solitary confinement (Kupers 2017, 72-73).

take steps to reduce competition (Parker et al. 2005). The racial threat theory centers on economic arguments and interpretations and emphasizes that whites take actions against blacks to preserve their economic positions. The theory also underscores the threat to the status of whites, that blacks will unfairly take away the high status they have achieved in American society as a result of centuries of discrimination and systemic racism.

The theory that negative attitudes towards blacks affect the policy positions of whites is seen not only in the criminal justice system, but in welfare policy, education, and other supposedly non-racial areas (Barkhan and Cohn 1994; Gilens 1999; Chiricos et al. 2004; Green et al. 2006; Bobo and Johnson 2004; Hurwitz and Peffley, 2007, 2010; Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). This theory is different from the racial threat theory, as the negative attitudes theory highlights that whites are prejudiced against blacks simply because they are black. The negative attitudes theory demonstrates that whites simply hold prejudices against blacks and these prejudices have significant policy implications. For whites that express racial resentment towards blacks, racial threat theory expects them to oppose racially coded policies because they do not want to support blacks. Gilens, in *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, demonstrated that racial stereotypes towards less “deserving” blacks promoted much of the hatred towards welfare policy (Gilens 1999). The death penalty represents a punitive policy, similar to solitary confinement, that whites generally support as they perceive it as disproportionately harming blacks (Barkhan and Cohn 1994). Prejudice is measured through questions from the General Social Survey, which asked respondents to rate blacks on a scale of intelligence, express their opinions on living in a neighborhood with black people, and how they would react if a close family member married a black person (Barkhan and Cohn 1994). Respondents who indicated more racial prejudice among these questions supported the death penalty at significantly higher rates (Barkhan and Cohn

1994). Regardless of the policy, race has a clear effect on support or opposition to various policies among the American public.

Race has a significant impact on the criminal justice system, yet, few studies employ survey experiments to demonstrate how race can alter opinions on individual policies. Hetey and Eberhardt employed a survey experiment to see how race affected support for punitive policies (Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). They recruited participants, in-person, to respond to videos of prisons with altered information about the percentage of black to white inmates (Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). Respondents were then asked to sign a petition that would amend California's three strikes laws (Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). Respondents who observed a prison with a higher percentage of black inmates were significantly less likely to sign the petition changing three-strikes laws (Hetey and Eberhardt 2014). Hetey and Eberhardt's study elucidates the importance of framing in understanding punitive responses to criminal justice. However, this study employs a similar tactic with the racial and offense frame, but with a more punitive policy.

A few studies have attempted to gauge public opinion on solitary confinement in various states and when used against juveniles. One study analyzed public opinion on various criminal justice topics in Massachusetts (Koczela and Parr 2017). The primary focus of the study was not solitary confinement, although it did ask Massachusetts voters their opinions on solitary confinement. The question asked respondents their opinions on solitary confinement based on what supporters of the practice said, that it is necessary to keep control in the prison environment, and what opponents say, that it has a long-lasting effect on the mental health status of prisoners and is cruel and unusual punishment (Koczela and Parr 2017). They found that when confronted with both sides of the argument, the benefits and harms of solitary confinement, that 52% of voters supported the practice and 43% opposed it. The study noted that additional

research into what influences attitudes towards solitary confinement was necessary (Koczela and Parr 2017). Another study investigated public opinion towards solitary confinement specifically in the case of juveniles (Wagage et al. 2017). The study surveyed 1,809 respondents to measure acceptability of solitary confinement based on demographic factors like age and race. The results most related to this study was the finding that support for solitary confinement was not altered by the race of the offender, although the result was not statistically significant. This provides a basis for this study's analysis of the effect of the race of the offender on opinions toward solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement functions differently in people's minds due to their perception of the "worst of the worst" being held in solitary confinement. It is important to understand how solitary confinement as a punishment functions differently than other, less punitive policies. This study also presents the treatment in the form of a news article. This is both unique and purposeful. The news has a significant impact on opinions towards any type of public policy, and more research is necessary to understand how a punitive policy, when presented in a news format, influences public opinion.

Public opinion is a powerful force in American politics. This chapter traced the development of the punitive public in the United States. The news media, through framing and agenda setting, influenced the way Americans perceived crime in their daily lives (Iyengar et al. 1982; Cook et al. 1983; Enns 2016). The punitive public pushed for harsher policies against prisoners, which political elites, who are responsive to public opinion, implemented through "degenerative policy design" (Schneider and Ingraham 1997; Brace and Boyea 2008; Kreitzman and Smith 2018). Race also plays a significant role in public perception of policies. In criminal

justice policies, whites support more punitive policies against blacks (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010; Hetey and Eberhardt 2014).

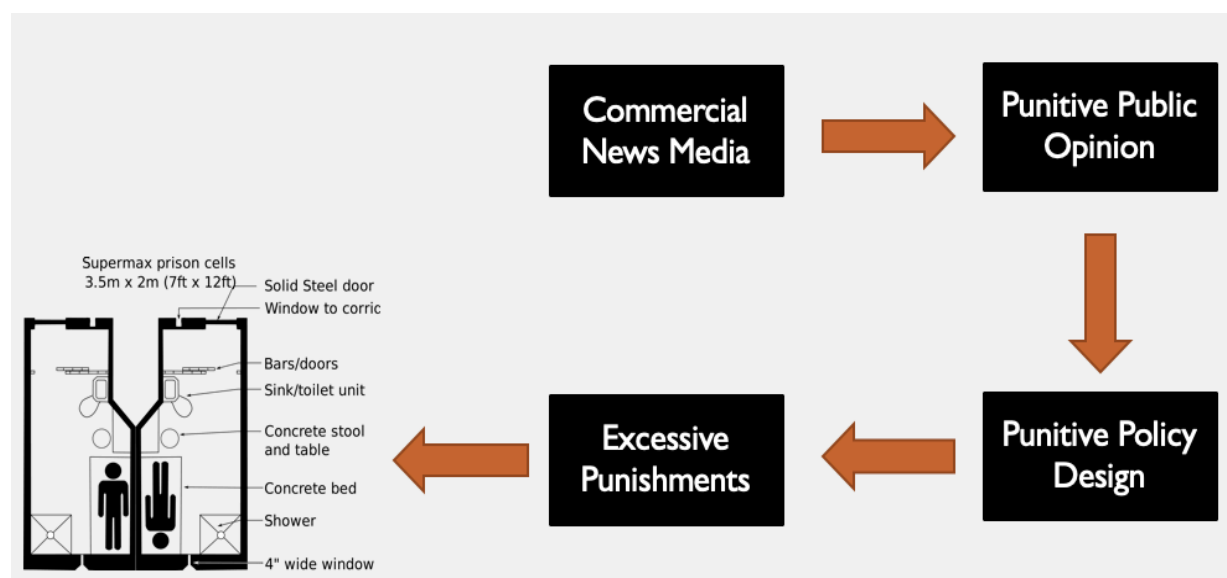
The creation of punitive attitudes in the public is intimately connected with the implementation of solitary confinement on a larger scale across America. Solitary confinement as a practice exemplifies how public opinion formation can lead to support for punitive policies and cruel correctional design. Solitary confinement is also applied racially, with more people of color being overrepresented in solitary housing units (Flagg et al. 2016; Kupers 2017). The role of the news media on public opinion, and the subsequent development of punitive policies, are tested in this thesis.

Hypotheses

This study analyzes factors that influence public opinion towards the use of solitary confinement through a qualitative news analysis, a content analysis, and a survey experiment. Figure 3 depicts the theoretical background of this study discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, displaying how the commercial news media, public opinion, and policy design are all connected to solitary confinement. The literature has revealed how public opinion towards deviant populations influences policymaking and design (Schneider and Ingraham 1997; Enns 2016; Kreitzman and Smith 2018). The punitive public advocated for harsher policies against prisoners, leading to mass incarceration and the increased use of solitary confinement in the prison system (Alexander 2011; Reiter 2016; Enns 2016). The news media, through agenda setting capabilities and framing, pushed the public to support more punitive policies (Iyengar et al. 1982; Cook et al. 1983; Enns 2016). This study connects the attitudes of the punitive public to support for the use of solitary confinement. The qualitative news analysis and content analysis examines how commercial news media content presents information on solitary confinement to the public. The

survey experiment narrows down to individual public opinion. It investigates what factors influence public support or opposition to, or ambivalence towards, the use of solitary confinement in the United States correctional system.

Figure 3. Public Opinion, Policy Design, and Punitiveness (with typical cell in ADX Florence from Wikimedia Commons, January 2015)



Based on the literature, I have expectations of how the news media will portray, frame, and address solitary confinement. I expect that media coverage of solitary confinement will be more supportive or neutral than critical of it. I further expect that the media will emphasize the race and criminal offenses of the confined over other attributes. This is because despite solitary confinement continues to be used against prisoners despite the harm it inflicts. This suggests that the media is not using their agenda setting capabilities to address solitary confinement (Iyengar et al. 1982; Cook et al. 1983). Race and crime remain relevant in news portrayals of punishment in the United States, leading the public to associate certain groups of people with higher rates of crime and imprisonment (Enns 2016).

The qualitative research also includes a total news analysis of mentions of solitary confinement in the commercial news media since the development of the first supermax prison. I

expect that the commercial media devotes more attention to mass incarceration and prison reform than solitary confinement (Iyengar et al. 1982; Cook et al. 1983). This may explain why prisons continue to employ solitary confinement. The news analysis reveals how often solitary confinement is mentioned in contrast to other prison related terms such as mass incarceration and prison reform. This elucidates how much attention the media is spending on addressing solitary confinement.

The survey experiment implements framing to observe a relationship between race, crime, and support for solitary confinement. Race and the offense committed are influential factors in both solitary confinement and public opinion on correctional policies. Based on the literature, this study establishes two hypotheses based on the two frames that were applied to individual respondents. First, I predict that racialized frames will increase support for solitary confinement more than race-neutral frames. This hypothesis is based on overwhelming scholarly theory that suggests race has a sustained and direct impact on opinions related to criminal justice policies (Barkhan and Cohn 1994; Gilens 1999; Chiricos et al. 2004; Green et al. 2006; Bobo and Johnson 2004; Hurwitz and Peffley, 2007, 2010; Hetey and Eberhardt 2014).

Second, I predict that violent frames will increase support for solitary confinement more than violence-neutral frames. This hypothesis supports the theory that the public considers solitary confinement to hold the “worst of the worst” criminals, and fear of these criminals leads to greater support for the policy (Mears 2013). It also explores the retributive nature of punitive attitudes towards criminals, and the need for an equal punishment fitting the crime.

Chapter 3

News Analyses

How much and how the commercial media reports on solitary confinement are important matters for understanding how media may shape public opinion about that correctional practice. This study relied on original news analyses and a survey experiment (Chapter 4) to empirically examine how a set of theoretically-derived factors, including news consumption, race, and criminal offenses, influence public opinion about solitary confinement. This chapter begins with the news analyses, a mentions analysis and a content analysis, conducted in this study. The news analyses identify how solitary confinement is presented in the media. The news analyses used data from the top United States newspapers to determine how solitary confinement is mentioned and framed in the media. The mentions analysis tracked how often solitary confinement was mentioned in the media, while the content analysis analyzed how solitary confinement was framed in the media. The chapter continues with a presentation of the results from the news analyses. I first analyze the results from the mentions analysis, conducted on the Top 50 major United States newspapers. I then analyze the results from the content analysis which assessed how major United States newspapers were framing solitary confinement. The news analyses inform how the commercial media is framing and depicting solitary confinement to the general American public.

Studying Mentions of and Content about Solitary Confinement: Data and Methods

The commercial news media plays a significant role in the development of public opinion towards punitive policies. I collected data from a sample of mainstream commercial news media to examine how it media portrays solitary confinement to the general public. I first focused on explicit use of the phrase “solitary confinement.” The analysis used only news articles from *The*

New York Times, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. These are the most prominent news sources in the United States and thus present the most significant area for analysis. I excluded all other news sources and articles that were not from the United States. The exclusion of opinion pieces, editorials, and other sources of writing was intended to demonstrate purely how the news discusses solitary confinement.

I chose a 10-year time period from 2008 to 2018. I selected the time period to observe the depiction of solitary confinement in the news 5 years before and after the prominent case of Kalief Browder. Kalief Browder was an African American male who was 16 years old, falsely accused of a crime, and ultimately was placed in solitary confinement for 400 days on Rikers Island, New York. The case gained widespread media attention surrounding solitary confinement, especially against juveniles, in the United States. The sample was randomly selected from a ProQuest search of news articles discussing solitary confinement. The articles were downloaded then randomly sorted. The search yielded 200 articles. I selected 100 of these articles for content analysis.

I specifically examined the articles for several criteria. The criteria were mentions of race, gender, age, juvenile status, crime committed, mental health, jurisdiction, length of time in solitary, past criminal activity, gangs, or a tone critical of solitary confinement. These criteria were selected for their relationship with the survey experiment I describe in Chapter 5. The survey experiment is intended to observe if race or offense influence support for the use of solitary confinement. News articles mentioning race, crime, and other criteria surrounding solitary confinement effects public opinion on the subject.

This study also used data from the top 50 newspapers, collected through Factiva, in the United States to further analyze the relationship between the media and solitary confinement.

The top 50 newspapers, as identified by Dow Jones, are reputable and popular newspapers that are read by millions of Americans and reach the entire nation. I researched how many times the top 50 newspapers wrote any articles that mentioned the phrases “solitary confinement”, “mass incarceration”, and “prison reform”. In each instance, I excluded the mention of the other phrases and words that were similar in nature. For example, with “solitary confinement”, I excluded the phrase “mass incarceration” to examine purely how many times “solitary confinement” was mentioned in an article. With “mass incarceration”, I excluded the phrase “solitary confinement” as well as mentions of “supermax”, and I conducted a similar measure with prison reform. I researched the mentions from 1989 to 2018. I chose 1989 as the start because it marks the construction of the first supermax prison in California, Pelican Bay State Prison. I did not start in other years because although solitary confinement existed as a practice no modern prison had been built purely for the purpose of solitary confinement.

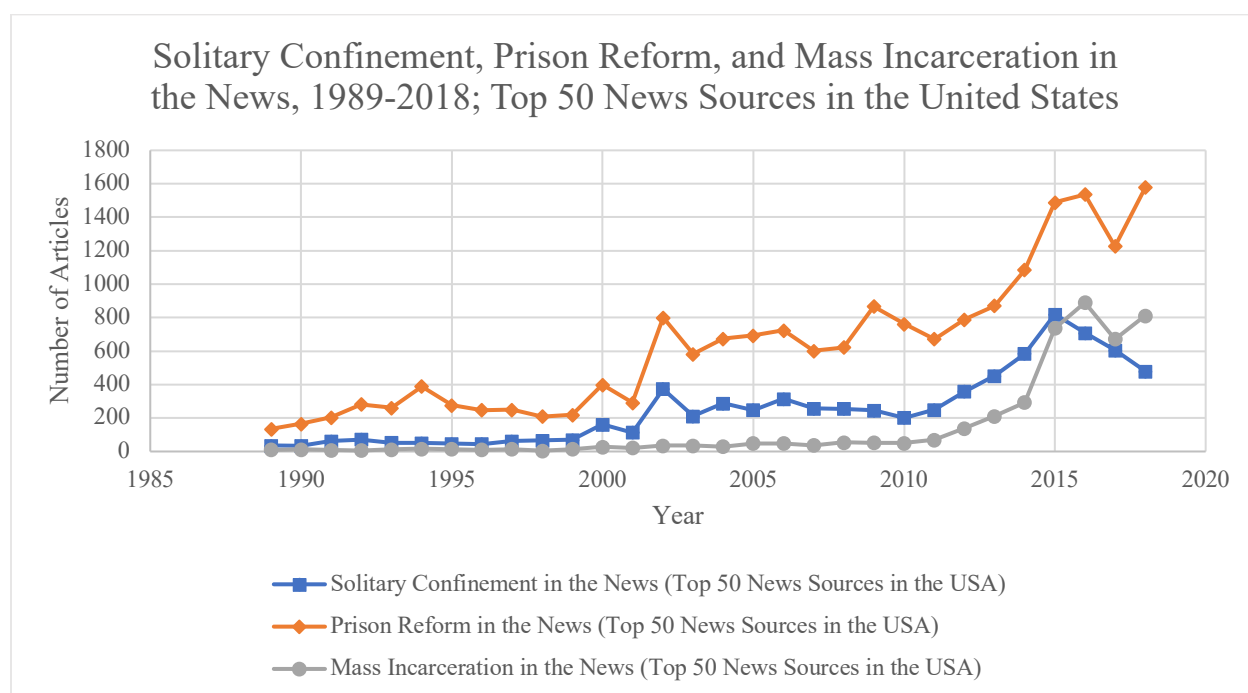
The mentions and content analyses provide a basis for understanding how often the mainstream commercial media mention solitary confinement and how it portrays the correctional practice. The analyses reveal how the commercial media shape how the public considers and understands the use of solitary confinement in the United States.

Mentions and Content Analysis Results

Figure 4 displays the results of the mentions analysis, based on a total of 30,815 articles I collected via Factiva. The phrase “solitary confinement” appeared in all types of news articles 7,519 times from 1989 to 2017. This indicates that 24.4% of the total number of articles were about solitary confinement. There was a high of 820, mentions in the year of 2015, and a low of 34 times in 1990, the year after the Pelican Bay State Prison was built. Prison reform was mentioned in the top 50 news a total of 18906 times from 1989 to 2017. This indicates that

61.4% of the total number of articles were about prison reform. There was a minimum of 135 mentions in the year 1991, and a maximum of 1578 in the year 2015. Mass incarceration was mentioned a total of 4390 times in the top 50 news. This indicates that 14.2% of the total number of articles were about mass incarceration. There was a maximum of 890 mentions in the year 2016. Mass incarceration spiked and continued to rise starting in the year 2012.

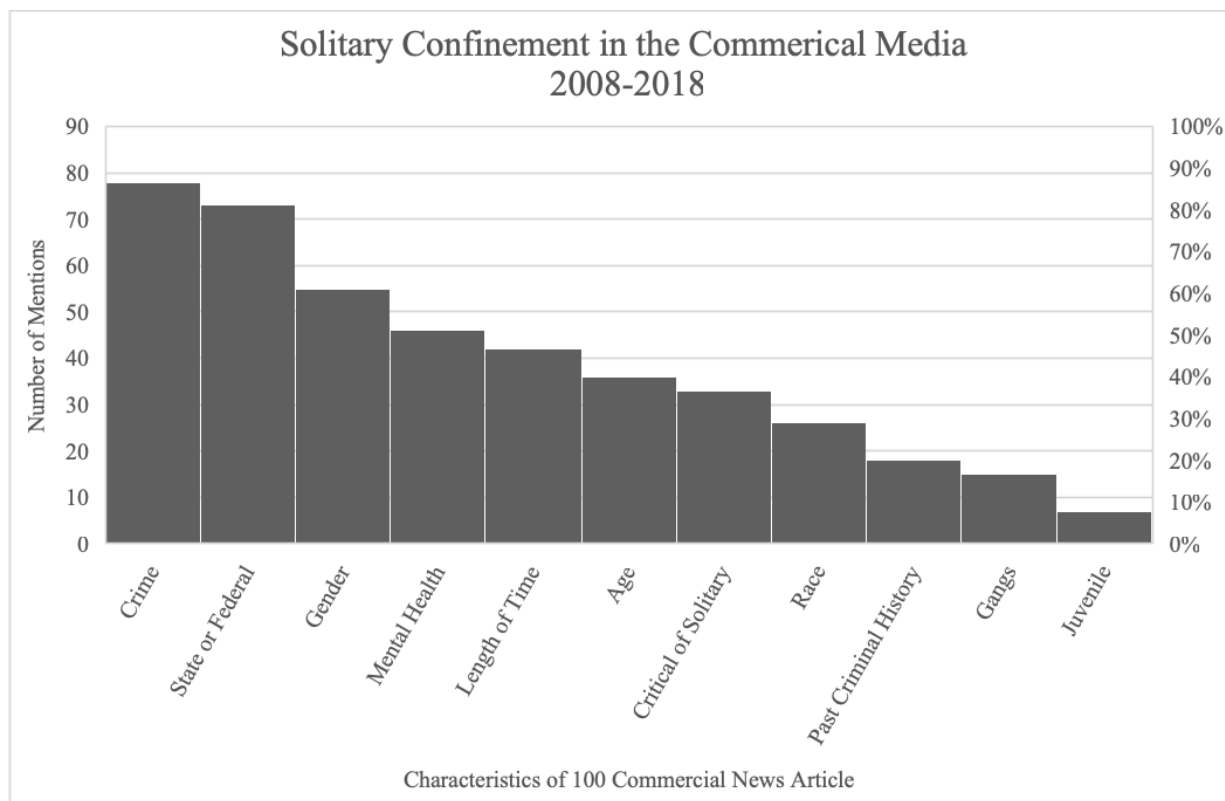
Figure 4. Mentions of Solitary Confinement, Prison Reform, and Mass Incarceration in the Top 50 News Sources in the United States, 1989-2018



Solitary confinement occupies a position between prison reform and mass incarceration in mentions. The data demonstrates that the most popular phrase is prison reform, although solitary confinement is written about a moderate amount of times. Solitary confinement was mentioned more than mass incarceration until the year 2015, when mass incarceration overtook solitary confinement. The majority of media attention is paid to prison reform. This suggests that solitary confinement is certainly mentioned in the media, but in recent years it has lagged in attention, despite the amount of people in solitary confinement increasing.

Figure 5 displays the results of the content analysis. The results support the hypothesis that the majority of articles are not critical of solitary confinement. Approximately 33% of the articles expressed a tone that was critical of solitary confinement. The results also support the hypothesis that the majority of articles would mention the crime of the individual. 78% of the articles mentioned the crime committed. The results accept the null hypothesis that race would be mentioned in the majority of the articles. Only 26% of the articles mentioned the race of the offender. The results indicate that gender, crime, and jurisdiction are mentioned in the majority of articles in the sample. Race, age, juvenile status, mental health, length of time in solitary, past criminal history, and gang affiliation are all mentioned in less than half of the articles. Few of the articles mentioned juveniles, despite recent activism surrounding the end of solitary confinement for juveniles. Additionally, mental health was only mentioned 46% of the time, despite solitary confinement often being associated with mental health concerns. However, as noted earlier, only 33% of the articles were critical of the use of solitary confinement, which may explain why mental health is mentioned or addressed less than half of the time.

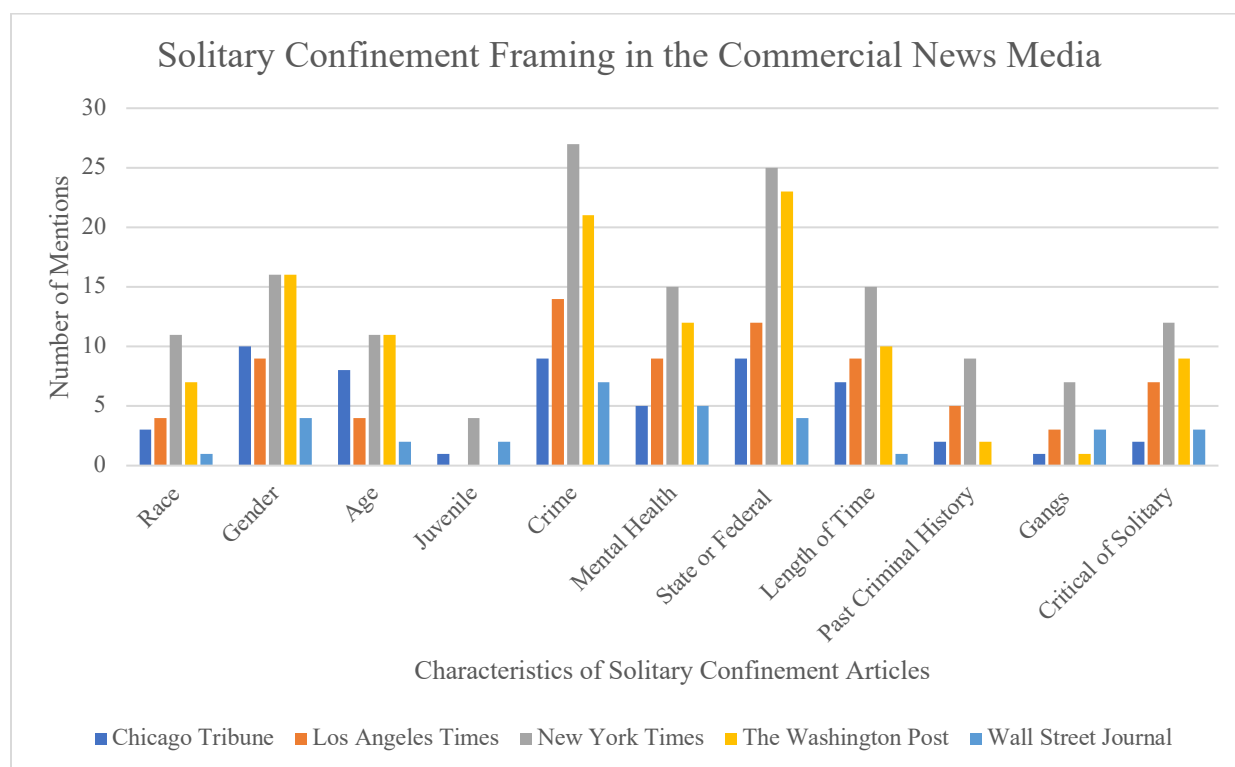
Figure 5. Solitary Confinement in the Mainstream Commercial Media, 2008-2018



The framing varied based on the newspaper covering solitary confinement. Figure 6 depicts several bar graphs that indicate the differences between the five newspapers framing of solitary confinement. *The New York Times* mentions race, crime, mental health, jurisdiction, length of time, past criminal history, gang affiliation, and a tone more critical of solitary than the other newspapers. The clearest difference is in mentions of crime, where *The New York Times* mentioned crime in 34.6% of the articles, more than any other newspaper. Taken together, the results reveal that *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* are the most prevalent throughout the content analysis. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* are the most prominent newspapers in the United States, explaining why they lead the other newspapers. Across the categories, they lead in the mentioning of various characteristics. *The Wall Street Journal* is the least represented. *The Wall Street Journal* represents the smallest percentage of

almost each category of mentions. *The Wall Street Journal* is more focused on economic and business issues and is also political conservative, which may explain why it focuses less on issues of solitary confinement. This suggests that an analysis of opinion editorials pieces on solitary confinement is necessary. The content analysis demonstrates that solitary confinement is framed uniquely in the media, with few articles being critical of the practice.

Figure 6. Solitary Confinement Article Framing in the Mainstream Commercial Media



Discussion

The news analyses and survey experiment further knowledge related to public opinion on solitary confinement in the United States. First, solitary confinement occupies a position between prison reform and mass incarceration in mentions. Solitary confinement is recognized in the commercial media, although not as often as prison reform. Solitary confinement also experiences a drop in mentions in 2015. The hunger strike in Pelican Bay Prison in California could have increased coverage of solitary confinement, and after the hunger strike ended, coverage

decreased (Reiter 2016). Ultimately, the majority of media attention is paid to prison reform rather than solitary confinement.

The results support the hypothesis that the majority of articles would not be critical of solitary confinement. In the content analysis, less than half of the articles expressed a tone that was critical of solitary confinement. The commercial news media is largely not critical of solitary confinement, which may imply why the practice is increasing in usage, as the public is not aware of the reality of solitary confinement. The results also support the hypothesis that the majority of articles would mention the crime of the individual. 78% of the articles mentioned the crime committed. This indicates that the news frames solitary confinement in terms of the crime committed, which influences public opinion on solitary confinement.

Chapter 4

Survey Experiment

The survey experiment, which tested respondents' opinions on solitary confinement in the prison system, is the empirical center of this thesis. This chapter begins with the data and methods used to analyze the survey experiment. The survey experiment used original data collected from a survey distributed through Amazon Mechanical Turk. To analyze the survey data, I employed an ordinal logistic regression analysis. The chapter also reports the results of the survey experiment. I first assess the topline results from the survey questions, which are presented in tables. I then observe the cross tabulations of the dependent variable with the treatment variables and independent variables such as racial resentment. I then analyze the results from the ordinal logistic regression, which inform the discussion and conclusion of this study.

Data and Methods

I conducted a survey experiment to observe what factors influence public opinion on the use of solitary confinement in the United States prison system. Survey experiments are particularly useful for their high internal validity and ability to determine causality (Remler and Van Ryzin 2015). Randomized experiments are the gold standard for demonstrating causation (Remler and Van Ryzin 2015). Specifically, experiments have the “well known advantage of greater precision in estimating causal effects” (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000, 563). Randomized experimental research design involves the application of a treatment to the experimental groups, which can then be compared against a control group to observe a significant difference. In a randomized experiment, the treatment and control are randomly assigned. As a result, the treatment is exogenous. Furthermore, the treatment and control groups are statistically

equivalent, allowing for conclusions to be drawn based solely on the application of the treatment. Randomized experimental design was necessary for this study, as the racial and offense treatments were applied to statistically equivalent groups in order to infer causation. The control group, which received no treatment, served as the counterfactual, as it was statistically equivalent with the treatment groups.

The individuals were surveyed through an online platform called Amazon Mechanical Turk [Mturk]. The total number of respondents was 904. Table 1 depicts the breakdown of respondents by treatment, control, and image. The sample was checked for demographic distribution across the eight treatment groups. The survey included a test question to ensure respondents were actively engaged with the survey. 778 respondents answered the question, while 136 answered the question incorrectly. A chi-squared analysis was conducted between the incorrect responses and the eight treatment groups to ensure they were normally distributed. The chi-square test was not statistically significant, indicating that the people who responded incorrectly to the question were distributed normally. As a result, those respondents were kept in the overall survey analysis of 904 respondents.

Table 1. Vignette Treatment Groups by Number of Respondents, Data from Survey Experiment

Vignette Treatment Groups by Number of Respondents	Black Image	White Image	Control	Total
Non-violent offense (white collar crime)	79	102	0	181
Non-violent drug offense (buying drugs)	94	120	0	214
Violent drug offense (armed drug trafficking)	80	104	0	184
Violent offense (armed robbery)	101	116	0	217
Control	0	0	108	108
Total	354	442	108	904

As a survey experiment, the unit of analysis is the individual respondent to the survey experiment. The survey was designed through the Qualtrics Platform and then uploaded to Amazon Mturk. Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz conducted an analysis of the internal validity of Amazon Mturk, comparing respondents on Mturk to other survey populations and replicating previously done studies on the platform. They found several benefits to using the Amazon Mturk platform. One advantage is cost efficiency, relative to other surveying platforms (Berinsky et al. 2012). They also argued that “relative to other convenience samples, often used in political science, Mturk subjects are often more representative of the general population” (Berinsky et al. 2012, 366).

However, there are a few issues with the use of Mturk. Surveys on Mturk can rely on workers who have logged over 20 hours a week and quickly take the surveys to make more money (Berinsky et al 2012). This creates selection bias within the survey. This problem can be alleviated with the addition of test questions for the treatment and control group, which this study implemented in question 11 of the survey. Survey respondents on Mturk also tend to be younger, better educated, poorer, and whiter than the general population (Chandler and Shapiro 2016). For this experiment, a whiter population is preferred, as whites exhibit more racial bias than other races (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010). The sample was predominantly white, educated, and liberal, as expected based on previous studies using Amazon Mturk (Huber & Lenz 2012; Guisinger 2017; Rho & Tomz 2017). Mturk is also less generalizable than other survey platforms as it is a convenience sample. However, Mturk has methods available to stagger the distribution of the survey to ensure that respondents do not take the survey multiple times. The Qualtrics platform, which I used for survey data analysis, also allows for researchers to ensure representative distribution on demographic variables across the treatment groups.

The survey experiment is less generalizable to the general due to the use of Amazon Mturk (Remler and Van Ryzin 2015). Samples taken from Amazon Mturk are convenience samples rather than a random sample from the general population. They are convenience samples because respondents choose to take the survey on the platform, rather than being randomly sampled by the researcher (Chandler and Shapiro 2016). There are methods, however, that can increase the generalizability of a survey experiment done through Amazon Mturk. This study disguised the purpose of the study until the task was accepted. This prevented selection bias and reduced the amount of people that took the study because they were interested in the study (Chandler and Shapiro 2016).

Variables

The questions in the survey were specifically designed to test the causal effect the racial and offense treatments have on support for solitary confinement. The questions were also designed to maximize the internal validity and reliability of the study. The questions were all close-ended with simple words over specialized ones. Scholars suggest that surveys implement close-ended questions with simple wording to avoid confusing the survey takers (Remler and Van Ryzin 2015). Additionally, when relevant, questions were taken from other nationally recognized surveys, such as the American National Election Survey and the General Social Survey. Additional questions were implemented in the survey to ensure statistical equivalence existed between the treatment and control groups. For example, after the application of the treatment or control vignette, respondents were asked a general knowledge question about the vignette they read. This ensured that respondents both read the vignette and were actively engaging with the survey questions.

To measure the dependent variable, opinion on solitary confinement, respondents answered the question “In general, do you support the use of solitary confinement in the United States Prison system?” A battery of questions tested responses to the question based on offenses. The question with the most violent offense asked, “How strongly do you approve or disapprove of the use of solitary confinement against the following infraction: killing another inmate.” Another question treated mental health as the dependent variable and asked, “Should the mental health impact of solitary confinement be considered when using the practice on inmates.” Each of these questions had scaled (1-5) responses from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The dependent variables were then recoded onto a -1 to 1 scale, with -1 equaling disagreement, 0 equaling neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 1 equaling agreement. The somewhat categories were included in the larger agree or disagree category. The dependent variables were recoded this way to combine the somewhat categories into larger agree and disagree categories. This allowed for a more robust analysis in the ordinal logit model on the effect of the treatments and independent variables on the dependent variable.

I included standard control variables in the model. Age, Gender (male), Race (white), Protestants, Catholics, Atheists, Low Education, Democrats, Republicans, Conservatives, Liberals, Income Under 50 thousand, were all recoded into dummy variables. The codebook indicates how they were recoded in R and what categories were excluded. For example, Gender was categorized as males. Partisan identification and ideology were measured by the questions “What is your party affiliation?” and “Would you consider yourself to be conservative, Liberal or moderate?” (Appendix, Survey Experiment Questions). The distributions of key variables such as age, gender, race, and political ideology are depicted in histograms (Appendix, Table 8). The survey experiment includes several independent variables. The most important for my

analysis were, Watch News, Watch Prison Documentaries, Mental Health History, History of Incarceration, and Racial Resentment. These were all recoded into dummy categories. News and prison documentary viewing were measured through asking respondents how often they watched cable and network news and if they had seen specific Prison Documentaries. Respondents who had seen documentaries or television related to prisons or solitary confinement could have different opinions towards solitary confinement. As a result, viewing of prison-related documentaries and televisions shows was a significant variable. Mental Health history and History of Incarceration asked respondents if they or a family member had been diagnosed with a mental illness and if they or a family had been incarcerated respectively.

The results of the survey experiment further knowledge related to public opinion on solitary confinement in the United States. The descriptive statistics of the variables indicate that the sample was white, well-educated, and liberal. Table 2 depicts these descriptive statistics. The sample was younger than the general population, with 46.7% being in the age group 18-35. Only 3% of the sample was 64 or older. The sample was split nearly evenly between males and females. Men were 45.3% of the sample and women were 54.6% of the sample. Whites were 73.3% of the sample, while Blacks were only 8.3%. The majority of the sample either had some college or postsecondary school, at 31.9%, or a bachelor's degree, at 39.5%. Only 10% of the sample had a high school education or less, indicating that the majority of sample was at least college educated or higher. The sample was also heavily atheist, more-so than the general United States population, at 36.8%. Catholics and Protestants were the other major religious groups represented in the sample, with 20.3% of the sample identifying as Catholic and 24.8% identifying as Protestant. Respondents religious preferences are important as religion may be connected to punitive attitudes (Whitman 2003). Only 10% of the sample had a high school

education or less, indicating that the majority of sample was at least college educated or higher. The sample was also heavily atheist, more-so than the general United States population, at 36.8%. Catholics and Protestants were the other major religious groups represented in the sample, with 20.3% of the sample identifying as Catholic and 24.8% identifying as Protestant.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables; Data from Survey Experiment

	Response	N=904	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age			18	77	39.288	11.659
	18-35	423 (46.7)				
	36-50	308 (34.1)				
	50-64	143 (15.8)				
	64-100	28 (3.09)				
Gender			0	1	0.546	0.498
	Male	410 (45.3)				
	Female	494 (54.6)				
Race			1	5	1.602	1.132
	White	662 (73.3)				
	Black	75 (8.3)				
	Hispanic	53 (5.9)				
	Asian	87 (9.6)				
	Other	26 (2.9)				
Religion			1	11	6.461	3.805
	Catholic	184 (20.3)				
	Protestant	224 (24.8)				
	Atheist/Agnostic/Non-religious	333 (36.8)				
	Spiritual	72 (7.95)				
	Other	89 (9.85)				
Education			1	8	4.821	1.206
	Less than Grade 11	3 (0)				
	High School Graduate/GED	90 (9.95)				
	Some College	288 (31.9)				
	Bachelors Degree	357 (39.5)				
	Some Graduate Study	38 (4.20)				
	Masters	106 (11.7)				
	Doctorate	22 (2.43)				
Party Identification			1	7	3.431	2.002
	Strong Democrat	204 (22.6)				
	Not so strong, Democrat	168 (18.6)				
	Independent, leans Democrat	112 (12.4)				
	Independent	153 (16.9)				
	Independent, leans Republican	82 (9.07)				
	Not so strong, Republican	91 (10.1)				
	Strong Republican	94 (10.4)				
Political Ideology			1	7	4.448	1.972
	Very Conservative	81 (8.96)				
	Somewhat Conservative	132 (14.6)				
	Moderate, leans Conservative	73 (8.08)				
	Moderate	148 (16.4)				
	Moderate, leans Liberal	108 (11.9)				
	Somewhat Liberal	202 (22.3)				
	Very Liberal	159 (17.6)				
Income			1	6	2.873	1.321
	Under 25k	135 (14.9)				
	25k-50k	272 (30.1)				
	50k-74k	231 (25.6)				
	75k-99k	120 (13.3)				
	100k or higher	131 (14.5)				
	Refuse/Don't Know	15 (1.67)				

The survey questions also tested for racial resentment to observe a relationship between support for solitary confinement and racial resentment (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010). While a non-

experimental survey could gauge the effect of racial resentment on support for solitary confinement, scholars have already used non-experimental approaches to do similar studies with punishments such as the death penalty (Barkhan and Cohn 1994; Peffley and Hurwitz 2010). The novelty of this study is the use of a survey experiment to observe the relationship between both race and offense on opinions towards solitary confinement. The addition of the racial resentment questions allows for greater analysis, beyond just the survey experiment, into the influence of race on opinions towards solitary confinement. Racial Resentment was measured through responses to questions such as “Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.” Responses were then combined and recoded onto a 0-4 scale, with 0 indicating no racial resentment and 4 indicating total racial resentment. For example, an individual may strongly agree or somewhat agree with the question: “Irish, Italians, Jewish, and other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.” Respondents would then receive 1, moving upwards on the racial resentment scale. If respondents answered all the questions indicating they expressed racial resentment, they were assigned a score of 4.

I ran correlation tests between the various variables in the study, which are depicted in Table 3. The tests indicated that the majority of the variables had weak to no correlations. The variables that presented stronger correlations were Racial Resentment, Partisanship, and Ideology. Racial Resentment is negatively correlated with Ideology, with resentment decreasing as liberal ideology increases.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Variables; Data from Survey Experiment

Correlations	Age	Gender	White ID	White VD	White VC	Black ID	Black VD	Black VC	Black WC	Black VC	DV Solitary	DV Guard	DV Killing	DV Gang	DV Contra	DV Hijab	DV MH	Race	Education	Party	Ideology	Income	Incarcerated	MH Diagnosis
Age	1.00	-0.13	-0.04	-0.02	-0.05	0.01	-0.01	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.02	-0.04	-0.10	-0.11	0.00	0.01	-0.03	-0.17	0.02	0.09	-0.08	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
Gender	-0.13	1.00	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.03	0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.09	-0.02	0.06	-0.01	0.01	0.08	-0.02	0.02	0.12	-0.06	-0.01	0.05	0.18
White ID	-0.04	0.02	1.00	-0.14	-0.14	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	-0.14	-0.14	0.00	-0.02	-0.05	-0.04	0.02	0.00	-0.03	-0.02	-0.04	0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.01	0.03
White VD	-0.02	-0.01	-0.14	1.00	-0.13	-0.12	-0.11	-0.13	0.01	-0.13	0.04	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.00	0.02	0.01	-0.02	-0.04	0.05	-0.01
White VC	-0.05	-0.01	-0.14	-0.13	1.00	-0.12	-0.11	-0.13	0.04	-0.13	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.04	-0.05	0.01	0.02	0.03	-0.06	0.01	-0.08	-0.01
White VC	-0.02	0.01	-0.14	-0.14	-0.14	1.00	-0.12	-0.14	0.04	-0.14	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.02	-0.09	-0.02	-0.01	0.03	-0.01	0.02	0.00	-0.02	0.00
Black ID	0.01	0.03	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	1.00	-0.11	-0.11	-0.11	-0.12	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01	0.03	-0.01	0.04	0.01	-0.01
Black VD	-0.01	0.02	-0.12	-0.11	-0.11	-0.12	1.00	-0.10	-0.11	-0.11	0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.04	0.03	0.05	-0.01	-0.04	0.01	-0.04
Black WC	0.05	-0.02	-0.12	-0.11	-0.11	-0.12	-0.10	1.00	-0.11	-0.11	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.04	-0.06	-0.03	-0.03	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.03
Black VC	0.05	-0.02	-0.14	-0.13	-0.13	-0.14	-0.11	-0.11	1.00	-0.11	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.02	-0.07	-0.08	0.07	-0.05	-0.04	0.02
DV Solitary	0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.53	0.33	0.63	0.61	0.44	-0.52	0.01	-0.07	-0.29	0.38	-0.09	0.03	-0.14
DV Guard	-0.04	-0.09	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.05	-0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.53	1.00	0.71	0.65	0.57	0.21	-0.33	0.08	-0.03	-0.23	0.27	-0.06	0.03	-0.06
DV Killing	-0.10	-0.02	-0.05	-0.01	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.33	0.71	1.00	0.55	0.41	0.00	-0.16	0.06	0.05	-0.22	0.23	-0.03	0.03	0.01
DV Gang	-0.11	0.06	-0.04	-0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.53	0.65	0.55	1.00	0.64	0.31	-0.36	0.08	-0.05	-0.25	0.32	-0.05	0.03	-0.06
DV Contra.	0.00	-0.01	0.02	0.00	0.04	0.02	-0.01	0.05	-0.02	-0.02	0.61	0.57	0.41	0.64	1.00	0.43	-0.45	-0.02	-0.06	-0.21	0.29	-0.08	0.00	-0.12
DV Hijab	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.04	-0.09	0.01	0.04	-0.01	-0.01	0.44	0.21	0.00	0.31	0.43	1.00	-0.33	0.06	-0.06	-0.24	0.33	-0.05	0.04	-0.14
DV MH	-0.03	0.08	-0.03	0.04	-0.05	-0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.06	0.00	-0.52	-0.33	-0.16	-0.36	-0.45	-0.33	1.00	-0.07	0.05	0.26	-0.32	0.04	0.00	0.17
Race	-0.17	-0.02	-0.02	0.00	0.01	-0.01	-0.02	0.04	-0.03	0.02	0.01	0.08	0.06	0.08	-0.02	0.06	-0.07	1.00	0.08	-0.16	0.15	0.09	-0.04	0.00
Education	0.02	0.02	-0.04	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.03	-0.03	-0.07	-0.07	-0.03	0.05	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06	0.05	0.08	1.00	0.03	-0.06	0.34	0.13	0.11
Party	0.09	0.12	0.02	0.01	0.03	-0.01	0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.08	-0.29	-0.23	-0.22	-0.25	-0.21	-0.24	0.26	-0.16	0.03	1.00	-0.82	0.05	-0.02	0.14
Ideology	-0.08	-0.06	0.01	-0.02	-0.06	0.02	-0.01	0.02	0.07	0.38	0.38	0.27	0.23	0.32	0.29	0.33	-0.32	0.15	-0.06	-0.82	1.00	-0.10	0.04	-0.14
Income	-0.04	-0.01	-0.02	-0.04	0.01	0.00	0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.09	-0.09	-0.06	-0.03	-0.05	-0.08	-0.05	0.04	0.09	0.34	0.05	-0.10	1.00	0.12	0.12
Incarcerated	-0.04	0.05	0.01	0.05	-0.08	-0.02	0.01	0.03	-0.04	-0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.04	0.00	-0.04	0.13	-0.02	0.04	0.12	1.00	0.33
MH Diagnosis	-0.03	0.18	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.04	0.03	0.02	-0.14	-0.14	-0.06	0.01	-0.06	-0.12	-0.14	0.17	0.00	0.11	0.14	-0.14	0.12	0.33	1.00

Experimental Treatments

The vignette acts as the centerpiece of the experiment and was designed to introduce the racial and offense frames to the respondents. Vignettes refer to any type of text or images in an experiment or study to which research participants are asked to respond (Hughes and Huby 2004). In order for vignettes to be internally viable, they must capture the research topic in question (Hughes and Huby 2004). This study's vignette was designed on a real news article about solitary confinement that was edited for conciseness, clarity, and to protect the identities of the real people. The vignette was presented in a news article format. After a series of questions related to demographic information and general knowledge points, the participants were exposed to the vignette. Participants are randomly assigned either the story of a man incarcerated in solitary confinement or a short article about gardening. Four of the treatment groups see an image of a Black male at the beginning of the vignette. The other four treatment groups see an image of a White male at the beginning of the vignette.

To control for visual characteristics besides race that may affect or confound respondent's attitudes towards the images, significant efforts were employed to ensure both men look similar despite their race. Both men have similar facial hair and features, look at the camera in the same way, are wearing similar outfits, and lack distinguishing features such as tattoos or earrings. Scholars have employed this method to test for racial effects on support of crime and welfare policy in the United States (Gilliam 1999; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). The vignette purposefully avoids explicit statements in support or opposition to the use of solitary confinement in order to prevent any confounding of the effect of the treatments on the dependent variable. However, some aspects of the vignette discuss what occurs in solitary confinement,

which is presented in a negative light. All respondents will be exposed to these statements and thus it will not confound the results.

The survey participants are then treated with four possible offenses; non-violent drug offense, violent drug offense, violent offense, and white-collar offense. These four offenses were chosen specifically to more deeply understand the relationship between offense and opinions on solitary confinement. The addition of four treatment groups, across drug offenses and violence, allows the study to further contribute to the literature on the effect of race on support for punitive policies, especially in relation to drug offenses.

The control group vignette is a story unrelated to politics or criminal justice and discusses the importance of gardening. The name and gender of the person in the control group vignette are the same, to ensure that differences in name or gender do not confound the results between the treatment and control groups. Respondents are then asked a series of questions about their support for solitary confinement. By comparing levels of support across groups, I assess the causal effect of race and criminal action on individual opinion towards solitary confinement. Randomized experiments, when done correctly, result in the statistical equivalence of the treatment and control groups.

I used an ordinal logistic regression to model the data from the survey. I selected ordinal logistic regression because the dependent variable opinion on solitary confinement is scaled from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Ordinal logistic regression predicts an ordinal dependent variable given multiple independent variables. Ordinal logistic regression allowed for an observance of opinion on solitary confinement based on the independent variables as well as the treatment variables. The analysis included runs of different models, varying by specifications informed by theory and in accordance with my hypotheses.

Results

Table 4 depicts the descriptive statistics of the independent variables in the survey experiment. The prison knowledge variables demonstrate that the sample was relatively aware of the prison system. 61.2% of respondents answered the prison population question correctly, estimating the population to be around 2 million. Additionally, a majority of the sample, 54.8%, estimated the white population correctly at 30% of the prison population. People were more likely to overestimate the numbers of Blacks in the prison system. The prison population is only around 30% Black, which 29.2% of the sample answered correctly, although Blacks are overrepresented based on their share of the United States general population. 40.4% of respondents believed Blacks were 50% of the prison population and a significant amount, 23.9%, believed Blacks were 70% of the prison population.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables; Data from Survey Experiment

	Response	N=904	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Prison Population			1	4	3.015	0.662
	About 100,000	15 (1.65)				
	About 500,000	146 (16.2)				
	About 2 million	553 (61.2)				
	About 5 million	190 (21.0)				
Prison Population White			1	4	2.249	0.781
	About 10%	125 (13.8)				
	About 30%	495 (54.8)				
	About 50%	218 (24.1)				
	About 70%	66 (7.30)				
Prison Population Black			1	4	2.816	0.871
	About 10%	59 (5.52)				
	About 30%	264 (29.2)				
	About 50%	365 (40.4)				
	About 70%	216 (23.9)				
Watch Cable News			1	6	3.611	1.693
	Never	159 (17.6)				
	Rarely	97 (10.7)				
	Sometimes	142 (15.7)				
	Frequently	169 (18.7)				
	Often	206 (22.8)				
	Always	131 (14.5)				
Watch Network News			1	6	3.589	1.664
	Never	141 (15.6)				
	Rarely	113 (12.5)				
	Sometimes	151 (16.7)				
	Frequently	172 (19.0)				
	Often	196 (21.7)				
	Always	126 (13.9)				
Watch Prison Documentaries			1	2	0.24	0.646
	Yes	134 (14.8)				
	No	770 (85.1)				
History of Incarceration			0	1	0.209	0.407
	Yes	189 (20.9)				
	No	715 (79.1)				
History of Mental Health Illness			0	1	0.377	0.485
	Yes	341 (37.7)				
	No	563 (62.3)				

The study included two variables about watching news. Respondents were asked how often they watched cable news and network news. 82.4% of respondents watched some form of cable news, while 83.9% of respondents watched network news. This indicates that in this study,

the majority of respondents were watching some form of the news at least once a year, with most watching sometimes or frequently.

Table 5 depicts the descriptive statistics of the main dependent variable, opinion on solitary confinement, and other related questions in the survey. The responses to the dependent variable and other questions about opinions on solitary confinement indicate that the survey sample generally opposes the use of solitary confinement. Foremost, the majority of respondents disagreed with the use of solitary confinement, 57.8% of the sample. 30.7% of the sample approved of the use of solitary confinement. The various offenses reveal how opinion changes depending on the crime. Notably, when the crime was killing another inmate, 59% of the sample strongly approved of the use of solitary confinement, and 77% of the sample at least approved of using solitary confinement. Another violent offense, fighting a guard, also garnered more approval for the use of solitary confinement. 58.6% of the sample indicated some form of approval for the use of solitary confinement when the offense was fighting a guard. This is contrasted when the offense was wearing a hijab. 66.6% of respondents strongly disagreed with the use of solitary confinement, with 80.6% indicating disapproval. A majority of respondents also disapproved when the offense was possession of contraband, with 61.5% indicating disapproval. The nature of the offense, whether violent or non-violent, clearly influences support for the use of solitary confinement against incarcerated persons.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables; Data from Survey Experiment

Dependent Variable	Response	N=904	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Opinion on Solitary Confinement (SC)				1	5	3.466	1.314
	Strongly Approve	72 (8.0)					
	Somewhat Approve	205 (22.7)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	104 (11.5)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	276 (30.5)					
	Strongly Disapprove	247 (27.3)					
Opinion on SC: Offense equals Guard Fighting				1	5	2.65	1.415
	Strongly Approve	221 (24.4)					
	Somewhat Approve	309 (34.2)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	84 (9.29)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	145 (16.0)					
	Strongly Disapprove	145 (16.0)					
Opinion on SC: Offense equals Killing an Inmate				1	5	1.868	1.284
	Strongly Approve	533 (59.0)					
	Somewhat Approve	163 (18.0)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	75 (8.3)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	60 (6.64)					
	Strongly Disapprove	73 (8.08)					
Opinion on SC: Offense equals Gang Affiliation				1	5	3.118	1.358
	Strongly Approve	128 (14.2)					
	Somewhat Approve	212 (23.5)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	178 (19.7)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	197 (21.8)					
	Strongly Disapprove	189 (20.9)					
Opinion on SC: Offense equals Contraband				1	5	3.648	1.269
	Strongly Approve	64 (7.08)					
	Somewhat Approve	137 (15.2)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	147 (16.3)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	261 (28.9)					
	Strongly Disapprove	295 (32.6)					
Opinion on SC: Offense equals wearing a Hijab				1	5	4.385	1.018
	Strongly Approve	22 (2.43)					
	Somewhat Approve	41 (4.54)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	106 (11.7)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	133 (14.7)					
	Strongly Disapprove	602 (66.6)					
Opinion on Considering Mental Health in SC				1	5	1.614	0.927
	Strongly Approve	537 (59.4)					
	Somewhat Approve	252 (27.9)					
	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	62 (6.86)					
	Somewhat Disapprove	33 (3.65)					
	Strongly Disapprove	20 (2.21)					

The survey also asked respondents if the mental health of the inmate should be considered when using solitary confinement. The vast majority of respondents, 87.3%, indicated that they approved with considering mental health when using the practice against inmates. This indicates that respondents support mental health considerations in the administration of solitary confinement in the United States Prison System.

Cross Tabulations

The cross tabulations further reveal the characteristics of the sample. Table 6 displays the cross tabulation between racial resentment and the dependent variable. 45.1% of respondents expressed no racial resentment to any of the four racial resentment questions. 52% of respondents who expressed the most racial resentment also approved the use of solitary confinement, while 76% of respondents who expressed no racial resentment disagreed with the use of solitary confinement. The approve column demonstrates that as racial resentment increases, support for solitary confinement increases among respondents. 14% of people who expressed no racial resentment approved of the use of solitary confinement, while 52% of people who expressed complete racial resentment approved of the use of solitary confinement. 41% of respondents who expressed complete racial resentment also disapproved with the use of solitary confinement, which further indicates how a majority of the sample disapproved of the use of solitary confinement. These statistics indicate that racial resentment is an important measure in understanding opinion on the use of solitary confinement.

Table 6. “Do you support the use of Solitary Confinement in the United States prison system?”

Cross Tab Racial Resentment and DV	Disapprove	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	Approve	Total
0	311(0.76)	39 (0.10)	58 (0.14)	408
1	46 (0.45)	20 (0.20)	36 (0.35)	102
2	57 (0.42)	24 (0.18)	55 (0.40)	136
3	42 (0.45)	10 (0.11)	42 (0.45)	94
4	67 (0.41)	11 (0.07)	86 (0.52)	164
Total	523	104	277	904
Chi-Square Test Statistic: 131.01 p-value: 2.2e-16*** ***p ≤ 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ .05				
Racial Resentment Coding: 0=No racial resentment expressed 4=Racial resentment expressed on every question				

The cross tabulation of the treatment variables and the dependent variable, in Table 7, illustrates how offense and race influence opinion on solitary confinement. The treatment that had the most disapproval was Black White-Collar Crime, with 71% of respondents disapproving of the use of solitary confinement in that case. White White-Collar Crime also had 64% of respondents who observed the treatment disapproving with the use of solitary confinement. White-Collar Crime, the clearest non-violent crime in the treatment groups, had the most disapproval of the use of solitary confinement within the sample. The offense that had the most approval was Black Violent Crime, with 35% of respondents indicating they approved of the use of solitary confinement in that case. However, 58% of respondents also disapproved of the use of solitary confinement in that case. Respondents who were treated with the control also were more likely to approve of the use of solitary confinement, with 48% of respondents indicating approval. This suggests the vignette influenced people's opinions on solitary confinement. The cross tabulation of the treatment variables and dependent variable indicates that the sample generally disapproved of solitary confinement, except when they were treated with the control.

Table 7. “Do you support the use of Solitary Confinement in the United States prison system?”

Cross Tab of Treatments and DV	Disapprove	Neither Approve Nor Disapprove	Approve	Total
Control	40 (0.37)	16 (0.15)	52 (0.48)	108
White: Illegal Drugs	67 (0.56)	13 (0.11)	40 (0.33)	120
White: Violent Drugs	63 (0.61)	11 (0.11)	30 (0.29)	104
White: White Collar Crime	65 (0.64)	10 (0.10)	27 (0.26)	102
White: Violent Crime	69 (0.59)	20 (0.17)	27 (0.23)	116
Black: Illegal Drugs	55 (0.59)	10 (0.11)	29 (0.31)	94
Black: Violent Drugs	49 (0.61)	11 (0.14)	20 (0.25)	80
Black: White Collar Crime	56 (0.71)	6 (0.08)	17 (0.22)	79
Black: Violent Crime	59 (0.58)	7 (0.07)	35 (0.35)	101
Total	523	104	277	904

Chi-Square Test Statistic: 36.823
p-value: 0.0021**
***p ≤ 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ .05

Table 8 depicts the cross tabulations between racial resentment and the treatment variables. The cross tabulation indicates the respondents who expressed racial resentment were spread throughout the sample population. Across the treatment variables, respondents with racial resentment were distributed almost evenly.

Table 8. Racial Resentment and Treatment Variables

Cross Tab Racial Resentment and Treatments	Control	White IC	White VD	White WC	White VC	Black ID	Black VD	Black WC	Black VC	Total
0	47 (0.12)	52 (0.13)	49 (0.12)	41 (0.10)	51 (0.12)	40 (0.10)	37 (0.09)	36 (0.09)	55 (0.13)	408
1	14 (0.14)	14 (0.14)	8 (0.08)	16 (0.16)	17 (0.17)	9 (0.09)	6 (0.06)	10 (0.10)	8 (0.08)	102
2	13 (0.10)	19 (0.14)	16 (0.12)	16 (0.12)	20 (0.15)	14 (0.10)	6 (0.04)	15 (0.11)	17 (0.12)	136
3	12 (0.13)	18 (0.19)	12 (0.13)	11 (0.12)	9 (0.10)	11 (0.12)	8 (0.09)	6 (0.06)	7 (0.07)	94
4	22 (0.13)	17 (0.10)	19 (0.12)	18 (0.11)	19 (0.12)	20 (0.12)	23 (0.14)	12 (0.07)	14 (0.09)	164
Total	108	120	104	102	116	94	80	79	101	904

Racial Resentment Coding: 0=No racial resentment expressed
4=Racial resentment expressed on every question

Chi-Square Test Statistic: 28.673
p-value: 0.6357
***p ≤ 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ .05

Table 9 presents the results of the main regression analysis of this study. The table depicts five models displaying results of an ordered logit analysis of the dependent variable; approval of the use of solitary confinement in the United States prison system. The table includes 5 models to see how the addition of variables to the regression influences the degrees of freedom the coefficients. The first model includes only the demographic variables. The reference category for Democrats, Republicans, Liberals, and Conservatives are Independents and Moderates respectively. In this model, age, Catholics, and liberals proved to be significant demographic variables. The younger age category, 18-35, was statistically less likely to approve of the use of solitary confinement. Liberals were also statistically less likely to approve of the use of solitary confinement. Catholics were more likely to support the use of solitary confinement in the sample.

Table 9. Results of Ordinal Logit Models

Model 1: Ordered Logit Estimates of Approval of the Use of Solitary Confinement					
(-1 = Disapprove; 0 = Neither Approve Nor Disapprove; 1 = Approve)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Demographic Variables					
Age (18-35)	-0.435** (0.160)		-0.345 (0.168)		-0.390* (0.170)
Gender (Male)	-0.064 (0.144)		-0.061 (0.147)		-0.050 (0.149)
White	-0.150 (0.162)		-0.247 (0.166)		-0.230 (0.169)
Protestants	0.256 (0.212)		0.271 (0.215)		0.224 (0.219)
Catholics	0.500* (0.222)		0.425 (0.225)		0.363 (0.229)
Atheists	-0.171 (0.208)		-0.069 (0.213)		-0.097 (0.217)
Education (Low)	-0.157 (0.287)		-0.123 (0.291)		-0.138 (0.297)
Democrats	-0.449 (0.231)		-0.321 (0.235)		-0.320 (0.241)
Republicans	-0.052 (0.260)		-0.270 (0.266)		-0.203 (0.272)
Conservatives	0.185 (0.256)		0.083 (0.261)		0.053 (0.266)
Liberals	-0.716** (0.233)		-0.645** (0.239)		-0.678** (0.241)
Income (Under 50k)	-0.461 (0.511)		-0.582 (0.520)		-0.209 (0.543)
Independent Variables					
Watch News		0.331* (0.144)	0.349* (0.159)		0.370* (0.161)
Watch Prison Documentaries		0.419* (0.182)	0.338 (0.201)		0.394 (0.205)
Prison Knowledge		0.055 (0.086)	0.050 (0.092)		0.037 (0.093)
Racial Resentment			0.314*** (0.053)		0.317*** (0.054)
Mental Health History			-0.134 (0.163)		-0.171 (0.167)
History of Incarceration		0.136 (0.161)	0.114 (0.187)		0.150 (0.192)
Treatment Variables					
White: Illegal Drugs				-0.693** (0.254)	-0.843** (0.281)
White: Violent Drugs				-0.896*** (0.267)	-1.089*** (0.297)
White: White Collar Crime				-1.02*** (0.272)	-1.298*** (0.299)
White: Violent Crime				-0.950*** (0.257)	-1.139*** (0.284)
Black: Illegal Drugs				-0.805** (0.273)	-0.958** (0.300)
Black: Violent Drugs				-0.974*** (0.287)	-1.154*** (0.314)
Black: White Collar Crime				-1.34*** (0.305)	-1.471*** (0.332)
Black: Violent Crime				-0.739** (0.269)	-0.713* (0.296)
***p ≤ 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ .05					

Model 2 includes only independent variables related to the news and the prison system; watching the news, watching prison documentaries, prison knowledge, and history of incarceration. In this model, respondents were statistically more likely to support the use of solitary confinement if they both the news and prison documentaries.

Model 3 includes all of the dependent variables and independent variables, adding racial resentment. In this model, Liberals remain statistically significant in disapproval towards the use of solitary confinement. Watching the news also increases support for the use of solitary confinement. Finally, expressing racial resentment indicated statistically significant higher approval for the use of solitary confinement. This follows the relationship observed between racial resentment and the dependent variable in the cross tabulations.

Model 4 includes only the treatment variables. The reference category for the treatment variables is the control article. The model indicates that across all treatment groups, regardless of crime or race, respondents opposed the use of solitary confinement. The model accepts the null hypotheses that respondents would be more likely to support the use of solitary confinement when shown a black offender with a more violent crime. However, differences arise between the levels of disapproval between whites and blacks. The treatment variable with respondents who were most likely to support the use of solitary confinement was a white offender who had committed a non-violent, illegal drug related crime. The treatment variable with respondents who were least likely to support the use of solitary confinement was a white offender who had committed a non-violent, white collar crime. In the treatment where I expected to observe the most support for the use of solitary confinement, when the offender was black and the crime was violent, respondents still opposed the use of solitary confinement. To observe differences between the treatment groups, a model was run where white illegal drugs served as the reference

point. In this model, the coefficient values did not change significantly from when the control served as the reference point in Models 4 and 5, indicating that there is no significant difference between the treatment conditions. However, the difference between the coefficients is not overwhelmingly large or operating in a different direction. This further demonstrates that respondents were overwhelmingly disapproving of the use of solitary confinement, regardless of race or offense.

Model 5 includes all of the variables in one regression. The model presents similar relationships between the variables and opinions on solitary confinement as the earlier models. Watching the news made respondents statistically more likely to support the use of solitary confinement. Respondents who expressed racial resentment were also statistically more likely to support the use of solitary confinement. Liberals and the young were statistically less likely to support the use of solitary confinement. The treatment variables all maintained statistically significant negative coefficients, again indicating that the sample disapproved of solitary confinement.

This study employed the use of other dependent variables to further investigate opinions on solitary confinement. Table 11 (Appendix) depicts the model of respondents' opinions on solitary confinement when the offender has killed an inmate, a violent offense. None of the treatment group variables were statistically significant, however, those who observed crimes that involved illegal or violent drug offenses, both black and white, were more likely to support the use of solitary confinement. Watching the news also statistically significantly increased support for the use of solitary confinement among respondents. Respondents who had seen at least one prison documentary were statistically less likely to support the use of solitary confinement. The demographic variables presented interesting findings. Catholics and Conservatives were

statistically more likely to support the use of solitary confinement in the case of the offender killing another inmate. Liberals, similar to Model 1, were statistically less likely to support the use of solitary confinement in this case.

Table 12 (Appendix) observed survey responses to the question, “Should the mental health of solitary confinement be considered when using the practice against inmates?”. Most notably, in this model the variable Mental Health history (“have you or a family member ever been diagnosed with a mental illness”) made those with a family history of mental health diagnoses statistically more likely to disapprove of using solitary confinement against incarcerated persons.

Discussion

The survey experiment findings indicate important trends that influence the study of public opinion and punitive policies. Respondents who watched the news were statistically more likely to support solitary confinement, indicating the importance of the news in understanding opinion towards solitary. Racial resentment was also a significant variable in the models. The respondents that indicated higher levels of racial resentment were more likely to support the use of solitary confinement. Although the treatment variables indicated no differences with race, racial resentment remains an important variable in understanding opinion on criminal justice policies in the United States. Other demographic variables also proved significant. Liberals, across all the models, were significantly less likely to support the use of solitary confinement.

The treatment variables presented an interesting relationship with opinion on solitary confinement. With the control variable as the reference category, every treatment variable was statistically significantly negative. This indicates that respondents in the sample generally disapproved of the use of solitary confinement. These findings have implications for priming and

the news media. Respondents who observed the news story about solitary confinement, as opposed to the control story about gardening, were significantly less likely to support solitary confinement. This indicates that news stories about solitary confinement, and the experiences of those who have been in solitary confinement, change people's perceptions on the issue. Respondents who were not primed on the issue and saw the control treatment were more likely to support solitary confinement. Priming respondents with the stories of those in solitary confinement reduces their support of the issue. This priming effect has important inferences for the news analyses, indicating that the stories of those in solitary confinement and the effect it has on their day to day lives may reduce public support for the practice. More research is necessary into how priming respondents with the stories of those in solitary confinement, whether presented in a news article or possibly another format, influences opinion on the practice.

Conclusion

Solitary confinement is a significantly punitive punishment. After the death penalty, no punishment does more to harm, dehumanize, and disregard the prisoner. Solitary confinement was noted for its inhumane nature in the 19th century, yet the practice continues over 200 years later in 44 states, showing no signs of slowing. It is important for scholars, the American criminal justice system, and the American public to understand the rise of solitary confinement. This study filled the gaps in the scholarly literature regarding the use of solitary confinement in the United States prison system, employing two news analyses and a survey experiment to better understand the effects of the news and public opinion on the use of solitary confinement in the United States prison system. The data demonstrates that solitary confinement is a unique punishment in the criminal justice system.

The news appears to be demonstrably important in understanding the use of solitary confinement in the United States. The mentions analysis of the top 50 news sources revealed that solitary confinement is written about often in the news, although not as often as prison reform or in recent years mass incarceration. In recent years, both prison reform and mass incarceration have surpassed solitary confinement, despite solitary confinement being employed in increasing numbers. This is a concerning trend and supports the idea that solitary confinement is operating in the background, hidden from public view. The content analysis demonstrated that when the news is writing about solitary confinement, it is not in a critical light. The lack of criticism against solitary confinement in major news sources contributes to public misunderstanding of the punishment. More criticism about the mental health impact and the increasing harshness that prisons are inflicting against those in solitary confinement is essential to understanding the practice. Furthermore, when newspapers write about solitary confinement, they rarely

acknowledge race. This may explain why race is often not a significant factor in respondents' opinions on solitary confinement in the survey experiment. Solitary confinement is associated with the crime committed, as the content analysis revealed, but race is not something the news connects with the implementation of solitary confinement. The news does connect crime with solitary confinement. The connection between crime and solitary confinement leads the public to support the use of the punitive policy against the deserving or the deviant.

The survey experiment indicates that further research is necessary into the effect news and watching prison documentaries has on support for the use of solitary confinement. Watching the news increased respondents support of solitary confinement across several of the models. The news clearly influences the way people understand solitary confinement in the United States. The influence of news on solitary confinement relates to the fear of crime hypothesis. The American News cycle, both cable and network news, often presents the most heinous offenses occurring throughout the nation. Network news even portrays the dangers of individual towns and neighborhoods. The news had a significant effect on the rising public punitiveness (Enns 2016), and that effect may translate into supporting solitary confinement.

The priming effect of the survey experiment also explains why the connection between the news and solitary confinement is significant. All the respondents who observed the treatment news article decreased their support of solitary confinement in comparison to the control group. This indicates that news articles telling the personal stories of those in solitary confinement could be a significant factor in reducing public support for solitary confinement. When activists and reformers search for ways to change public opinion on solitary confinement, they should consider using the personal stories of those who have endured the punishment.

Race remains relevant in understanding solitary confinement. This thesis noted how solitary confinement is applied racially across several states. Despite the race of the offender not significantly influencing the respondents, those who expressed racial resentment were significantly more likely to support solitary confinement. Throughout American political institutions, and especially in the criminal justice system, racial resentment continues to operate as an indicator for support for harsher policies against African Americans. Solitary confinement operates no differently. Solitary confinement is often thought of as a race-neutral policy, based more on crime or infraction. However, similar to nearly all other criminal justice policies, race is a relevant factor when considering support for solitary confinement.

The survey experiment revealed the effect of ideology on support for solitary confinement. Liberals, across the models, were not supportive of the use of solitary confinement. Liberals opposing solitary confinement follows political science theory that suggests liberal ideologies are less punitive. Model 2 indicated that certain demographic variables are more likely to support solitary confinement when the offense is severely violent, such as killing an inmate. Conservatives and Catholics were more likely to support solitary confinement in this case. Murder is a particularly heinous crime, which may explain why Catholics are more likely to support the infliction of solitary confinement against an individual who commits that act.

The content analysis and the news analysis of the top 50 news begs for further investigation. Greater attention must be paid to how is solitary confinement being framed in the media. Does the belief in the “worst of the worst” in solitary confinement outweigh any sympathetic framings? The media’s influence on the American public has spread beyond physical newspapers, to the television and online. A longitudinal study, similar to the one I conducted on the top 50 newspapers, on the number of television stories about solitary

confinement, is necessary. The data would reveal how deeply television has affected perceptions of solitary confinement. Furthermore, a study on the impact of the internet on solitary confinement is needed. If possible, the study would reveal if there has been attention paid to solitary confinement on the internet. Finally, the impact of books related to solitary confinement, such as *Hell is a Very Small Place*, requires research. The stories of people who are in solitary confinement are shocking and disturbing, and their collection in books such as *Hell* could reveal a relationship between the public's punitiveness and solitary confinement. Will people soften their views in the face of brutal stories about solitary confinement, or will they double down on their beliefs? The survey experiment in this study indicated that the general public opposes solitary confinement, but the story was relatively sanitized. A harsher story about the severity of solitary confinement, with more shocking offenses, such as terrorism or murder, could reveal different reactions to solitary confinement. These are questions that beg further study and would provide for interesting research topics.

The Department of Justice also must begin collecting overtime data on the numbers of people in solitary confinement. The lack of over time data prevents an analysis into the numbers of solitary confinement throughout the decades. Without this data, political scientists are unable to analyze how specific state and federal policies influence the amount of people in solitary confinement. Researchers can only estimate how many people are subjected to this punishment, which makes research difficult and leads to the practice of solitary confinement operating in the background without attention.

The cost of solitary confinement is an area that needs further research. Money is a large motivating factor in politics, and the costs of supermax prisons and solitary confinement are relatively unobserved. A cost benefit analysis of solitary confinement is important to

highlighting its ineffectiveness. The public must be made aware of the costs of solitary confinement, especially regarding the construction of increasingly complex and expensive supermax prisons. Furthermore, more information is necessary on the number of prisoners held in solitary confinement in public prisons and private prisons. Are private prisons more likely to use solitary confinement than public prisons? This is an important question that connects to the general acknowledgment of the issues with private prisons in the American prison system (Alexander 2011).

An analysis into how the public feels about the connection between safety and solitary confinement is necessary. Prison officials argue that supermax prisons are designed to keep the public safer and to remove the most dangerous individuals from society. One question that is important is, does the public feel safer with solitary confinement? Does the public feel safer with supermaximum prisons? The objective goal of the supermaximum prisons is “protecting the public”, but does the public actually feel protected with the construction and development of supermaximum prisons? These are important questions that require further analysis.

Another area of study is measuring what political factors influence the building of a Supermax prison in a state. Are conservative states more likely to construct and build supermaximum prisons? Additionally, are conservative states more likely to have higher numbers of people in solitary confinement. Research on the politics of solitary confinement, especially with the implementation of supermaximum prisons, would contribute greatly to the literature.

There are several areas where this study could be improved and where further research can expand on the findings. The use of Amazon Mturk limits the generalizability of the survey experiment. Amazon Mturk is a convenience sample that has whiter, more liberal, and better

educated respondents than the general population. Amazon Mturk was used due to the cost limitations of this study. However, the use of a better surveying platform would benefit the results of this study and increase the generalizability. The survey experiment also would have benefitted from the inclusion of questions about reading the news. Given the content analysis, a greater connection between the written news and opinions on solitary confinement could have been elicited. Furthermore, questions about awareness of mass incarceration and prison reform would have benefitted the prison knowledge variable and expanded the news analysis comparison between mass incarceration, prison reform, and solitary confinement.

Another area where the study could be improved is the addition of treatment categories that focus on variation of race and infraction, rather than the initial crime. The majority of prisoners end up in solitary confinement for committing an infraction in the prison system (Kupers 2017). As a result, an experiment that varies that infraction committed in the prison would be closer to the reality of solitary confinement and further elucidate opinions on solitary confinement.

There is hope for the abolition of solitary confinement. In Colorado, long-term solitary confinement was banned for longer than 15 days in October of 2017. Websites like solitary watch and groups such as the ACLU have organized successful campaigns to bring attention to solitary confinement. Colorado stands as an example to other states on successfully ending solitary confinement. The prison chief Rick Raemisch wrote, after spending 20 hours in a solitary cell, that “[solitary] has not solved any problems, at best it has maintained them” (Raemisch 2017). It is likely that one of the best ways to end solitary confinement is an appeal to the prison chief of the state.

Colorado is not the only state where reform has happened. Maine stands as another

example of reform. Maine implemented reforms to ensure fewer people were being sent to solitary, and those that did get sent to solitary, were spending less time there. They also implemented clear paths for people to leave solitary through achievable goals. Maine was able to change the way it deals with solitary confinement through legislation and activism. The stories of those who had endured solitary confinement, were particularly influential on changing the opinions of legislators. Through pressure from various organizations, including the NAACP and the ACLU, Maine passed the bill, An Act to Ensure Human Treatment for Special Management Persons (Heiden 2013).

Maine and Colorado demonstrate that opinion towards solitary confinement is changing. In both instances, the stories of those who had been in solitary confinement were particularly important in reducing the practice. This may suggest that highlighting the stories of the incarcerated, especially those in solitary confinement, can change the way the public thinks about punitive policies. Activists have learned to emphasize the damage solitary confinement does to both physical and mental health, essentially equating it with torture. Clearly, the punitive policymaking is at a turning point, and the way to create substantial change is to continue to highlight the abuses of the American criminal justice system.

The American criminal justice system is a beast. It dehumanizes and destroys its prisoners. Solitary confinement operates as a dangerous arm of the system, locking people away for years to be stored like produce. The testimonies from formerly incarcerated people in solitary confinement should shock the conscience of any moral person for their brutality. However, solitary confinement has shown little signs of slowing. It is the responsibility of the people to act as watchdogs against solitary confinement, otherwise, it will continue into perpetuity. However, it is not only the responsibility of the people. Scholarly fields, especially political science, must

pay more attention to the relationships between our punitive policies and political institutions. Solitary confinement has operated as a relatively hidden punishment. Despite this, political scientists must work to understand how this punishment is employed and how the carceral state continues to affect our political institutions. Solitary will not operate in secret forever. People are beginning to pay more attention to solitary confinement. Already, we see websites such as Solitary Watch and television shows such as *Orange is the New Black* highlighting the viciousness of solitary confinement. More work is required to bring attention to the practice and to create effective change in the criminal justice system.

Appendix

Table 10: Solitary Confinement, Prison Reform, and Mass Incarceration in the News, 1989-2018 -- Top 50 US News Sources in the USA (Data from Factiva)

Year	Solitary Confinement in the News	Prison Reform in the News	Mass Incarceration in the News
1989	36	135	11
1990	34	166	12
1991	62	203	8
1992	72	282	7
1993	52	261	12
1994	50	389	17
1995	47	277	14
1996	44	248	10
1997	62	249	14
1998	65	210	5
1999	70	218	15
2000	161	399	28
2001	114	291	22
2002	373	800	36
2003	211	582	35
2004	288	675	30
2005	248	694	48
2006	314	724	48
2007	257	601	38
2008	255	623	54
2009	246	868	53
2010	202	763	51
2011	249	673	69
2012	358	788	138
2013	452	872	211
2014	584	1086	293
2015	820	1488	738
2016	709	1537	890
2017	605	1226	672
2018	479	1578	811
Total	7519	18906	4390

Histograms of Survey Experiment Sample

Figure 7: Histogram of Age; Data from Survey Experiment

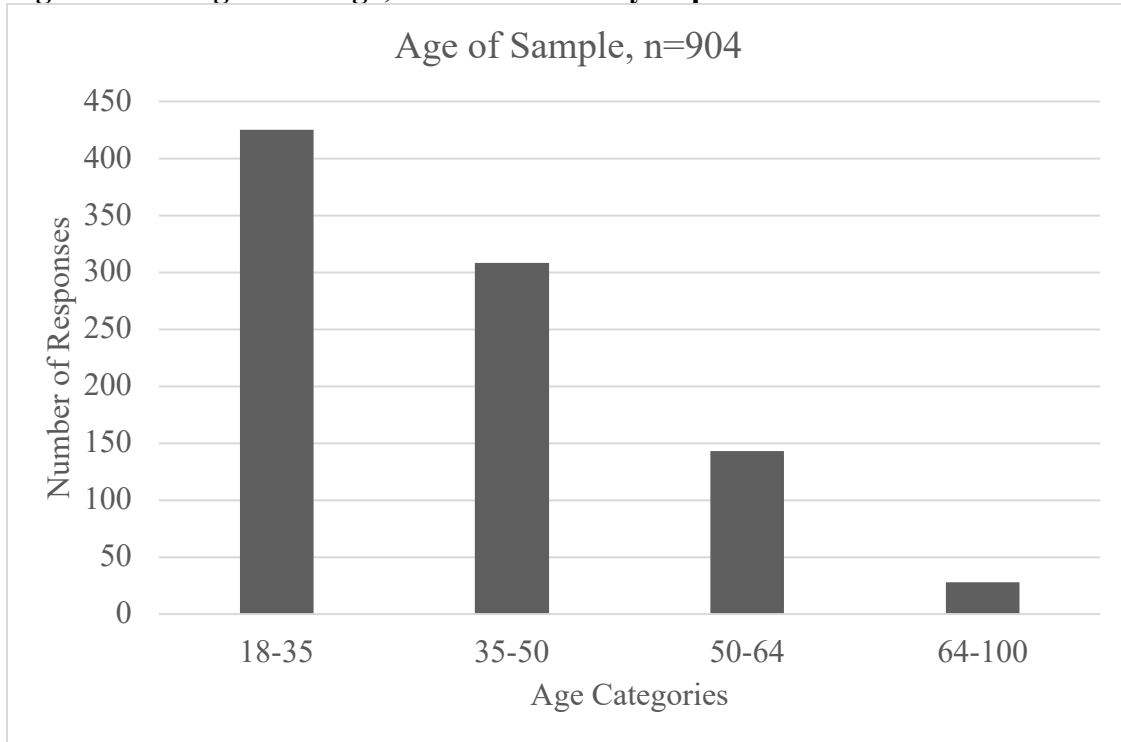


Figure 8: Histogram of Racial Identity; Data from Survey Experiment

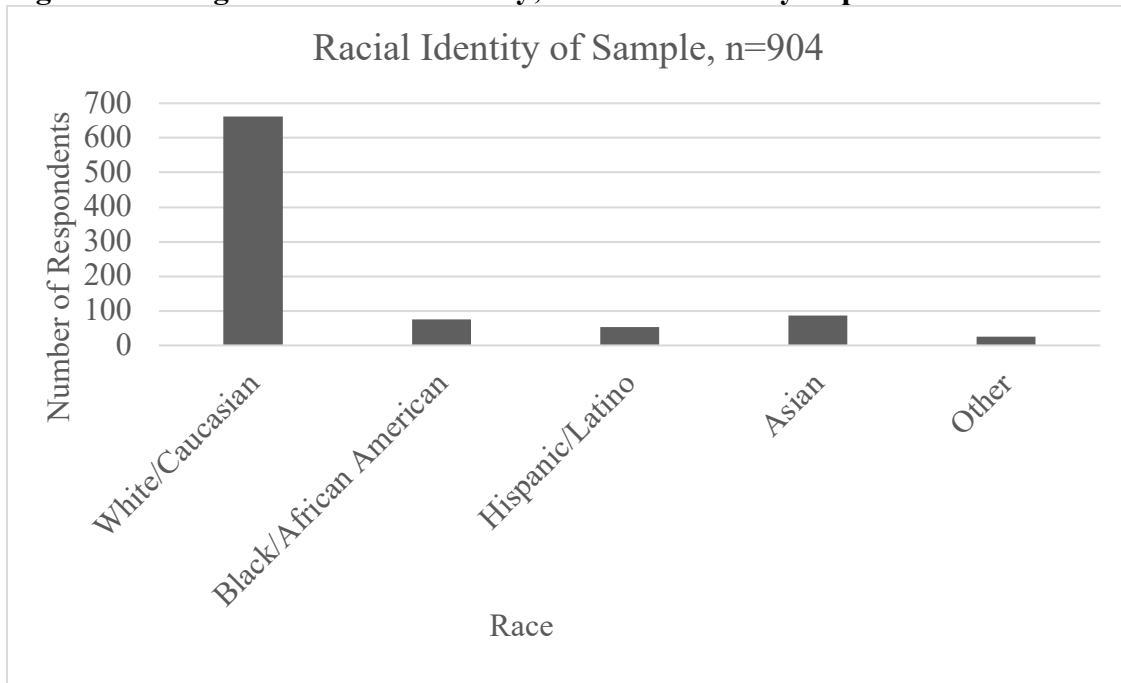


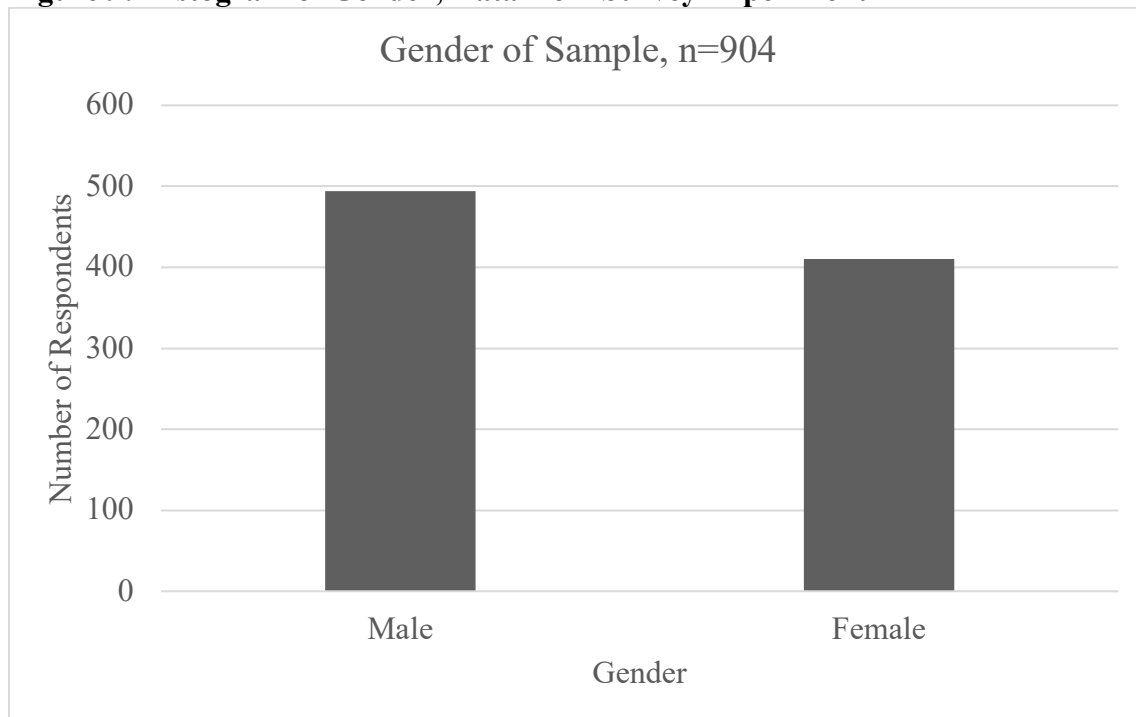
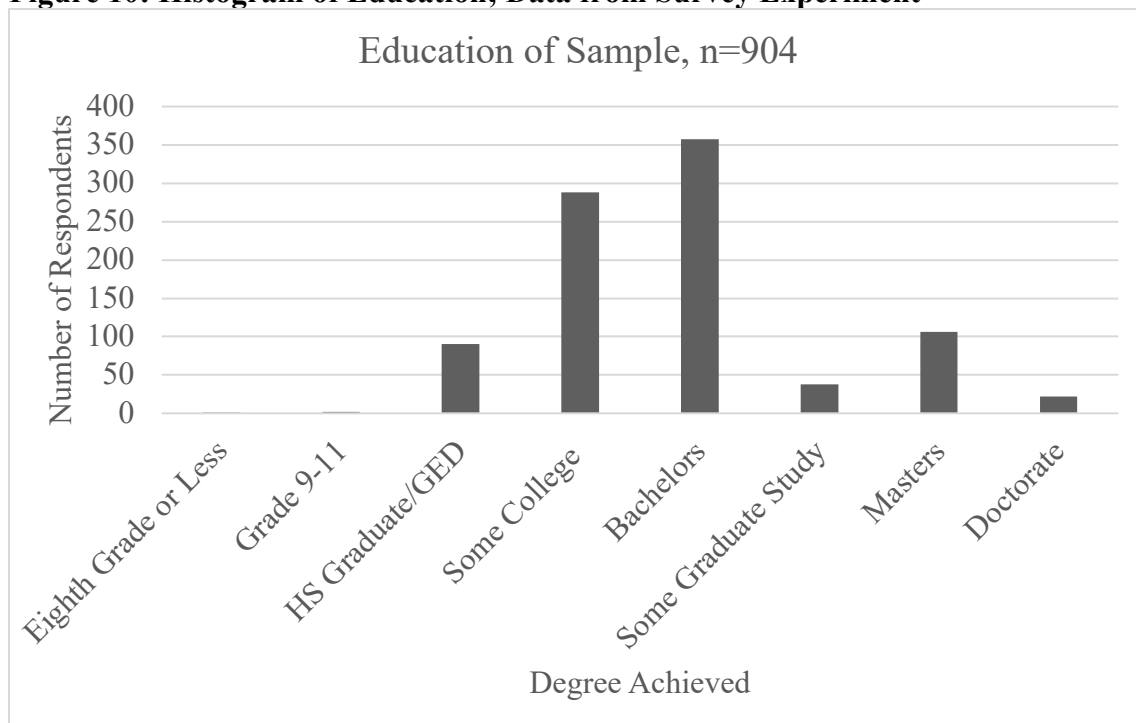
Figure 9: Histogram of Gender; Data from Survey Experiment**Figure 10: Histogram of Education; Data from Survey Experiment**

Figure 11: Histogram of Income; Data from Survey Experiment

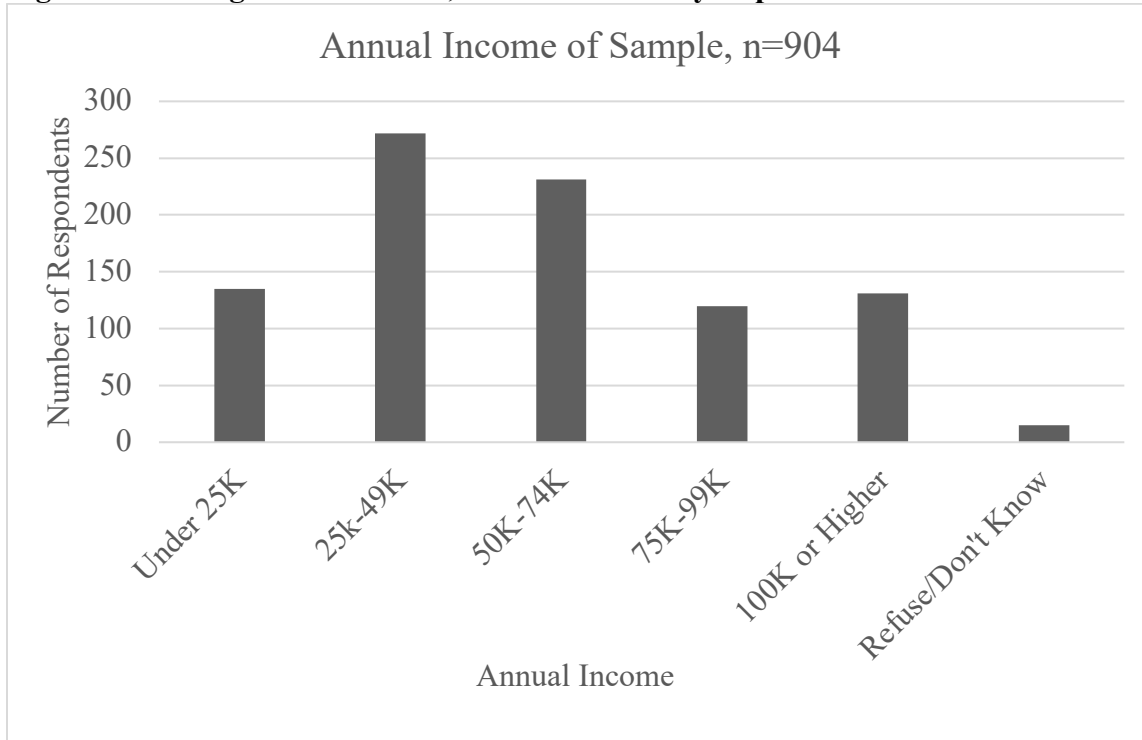


Figure 12: Histogram of Ideology; Data from Survey Experiment

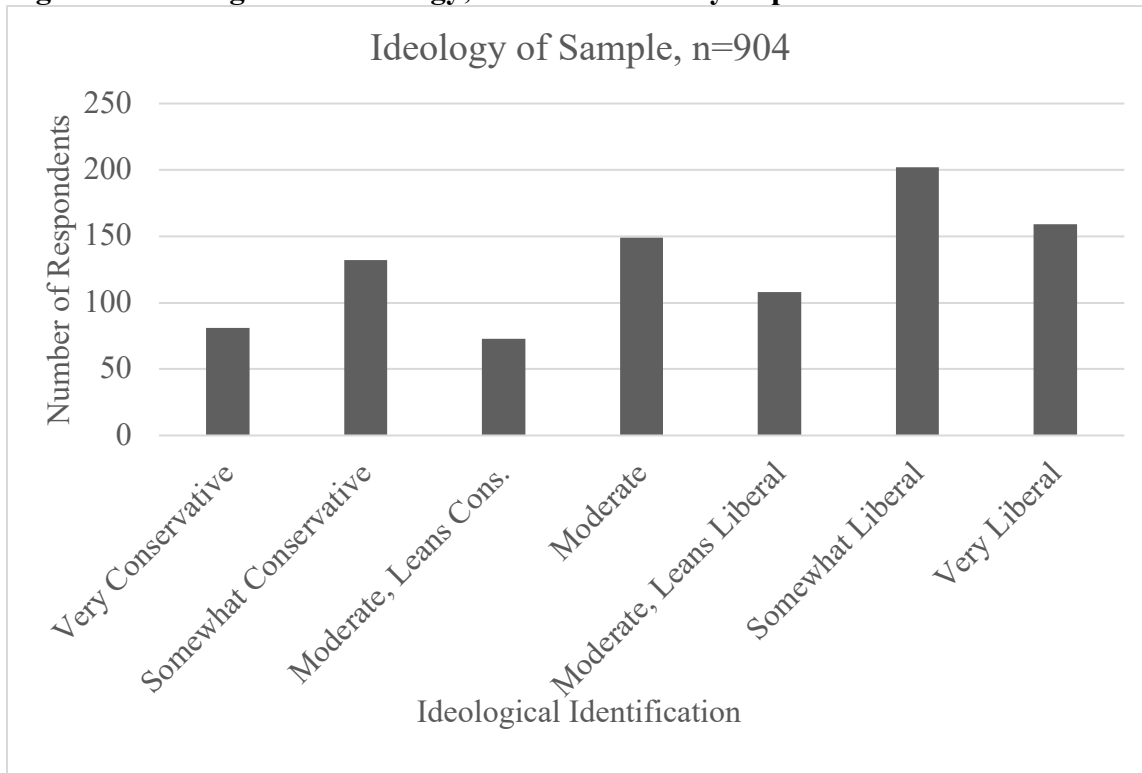


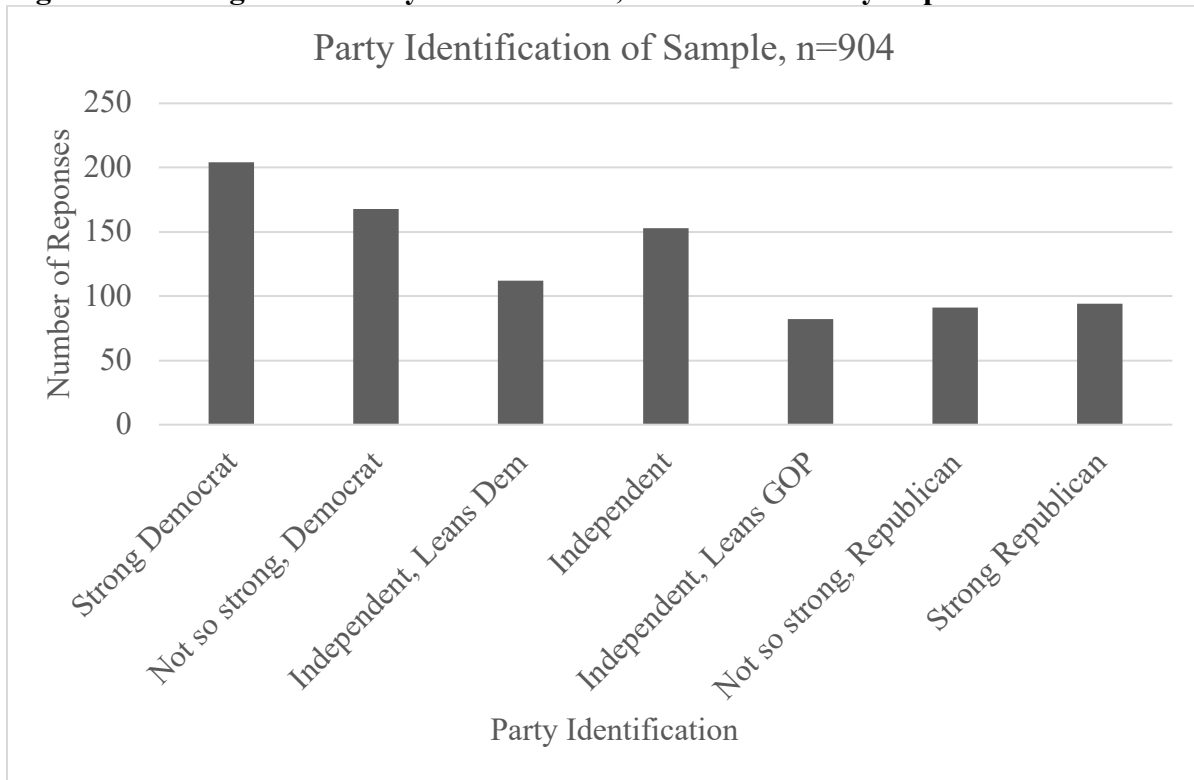
Figure 13: Histogram of Party Identification; Data from Survey Experiment

Table 11: Regression Table of Opinion on Killing another Inmate; Data from Survey Experiment

Ordered Logit Estimates of Approval of the Use of Solitary Confinement when the offense is killing another inmate			
(-1 = Disapprove; 0 = Neither Approve Nor Disapprove; 1 = Approve)			
		b	se
Treatment Variables			
	White: Illegal Drugs	0.052	0.343
	White: Violent Drugs	0.246	0.362
	White: White Collar Crime	-0.157	0.346
	White: Violent Crime	-0.107	0.333
	Black: Illegal Drugs	-0.052	0.358
	Black: Violent Drugs	0.113	0.378
	Black: White Collar Crime	0.192	0.391
	Black: Violent Crime	-0.070	0.340
Independent Variables			
	Watch News	0.366*	0.182
	Watch Prison Documentaries	-.927***	0.219
	Prison Knowledge	0.164	0.107
	Racial Resentment	0.177	0.070
Demographic Variables			
	Catholics	0.568*	0.274
	Republicans	1.043**	0.359
	Liberals	-0.886**	0.311
***p ≤ 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ .05			

Table 12: Regression Table of Opinion on Mental Health Considerations; Data from Survey Experiment

Ordered Logit Estimates of Considering Mental Health of the Incarcerated when using solitary confinement		
(-1 = Disapprove; 0 = Neither Approve Nor Disapprove; 1 = Approve)		
	b	se
Treatment Variables		
White: Illegal Drugs	-0.429	0.361
White: Violent Drugs	-0.614	0.379
White: White Collar Crime	-0.888*	0.392
White: Violent Crime	0.101	0.340
Black: Illegal Drugs	-0.394	0.387
Black: Violent Drugs	-0.555	0.412
Black: White Collar Crime	-0.986*	0.453
Black: Violent Crime	-0.228	0.369
Independent Variables		
Watch Prison Documentaries	0.966***	0.244
Mental Health History	-0.758**	0.234
Demographic Variables		
Atheists	-0.768**	0.288
Conservatives	0.767*	0.317
Liberals	-0.884*	0.347
***p ≤ 0.001; **p ≤ 0.01; *p ≤ .05		

Survey Experiment Questions

Pre-Vignette – Questions Randomized

1. Are you 18 years or older?
Yes
No
2. What is your age? (Please specify?)
3. What is your gender?
Male
Female

The next section includes general multiple-choice questions about American Government and society. If you do not know the answer, please refrain from using the internet and provide your best guess.

4. How many people are currently in the Prison system?
About 100,000
About 500,000
About 2 million
About 5 million
5. What percentage of the prison population is white?
About 10%
About 30%
About 50%
About 70%
6. What percentage of the prison population is black?
About 10%
About 30%
About 50%
About 70%
7. How many years does a United States Senator serve?
2 years
4 years
6 years
8 years
8. How many amendments does the Constitution have?
10
27

35
42

9. How many justices serve on the United States Supreme Court?

- 9
- 10
- 12
- 15

9. The following chart asks about your television and news viewing habits. Please let me know if you never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always watch the listed programs.

How often do you watch the following shows:	Never	Rarely (Once a Year)	Sometimes (Every Six Months)	Often (Monthly)	Always (Weekly /Daily)
Cable News (CNN, MSNBC, FOX)					
Network News (ABC, CBS)					
Sports (NFL, NBA)					
Reality TV (Real Housewives, The Bachelorette)					
Comedies (Modern Family, New Girl)					
Dramas (Orange is the New Black, Grey's Anatomy)					
Crime Procedurals (NCIS, CSI)					
Legal Procedurals (How to Get Away with Murder, Suits)					
Documentaries (Blackfish, Jiro Dreams of Sushi)					

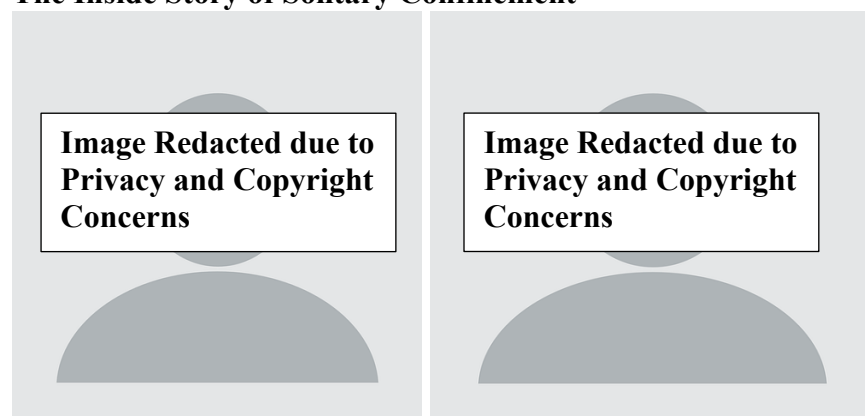
The following question only displays if Documentaries (Blackfish, Jiro Dreams of Sushi) are selected as Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Always

The following includes a list of documentaries released in the past five years. Please indicate if you have seen them before.		
	Yes	No
13 th		
Blackfish		
Casting JonBenet		
Food Inc.		
The Act of Killing		
Jiro Dreams of Sushi		
Time: The Kalief Browder Story		
Man on Wire		
Solitary: Inside Red Onion State Prison		
Hamilton's America		

Please read the following news article closely. Afterwards, you will be asked a few questions.

Vignette – Treatment

The Inside Story of Solitary Confinement



White Image

Black Image

Twelve days after his release from prison, Alexander Johnson hadn't let go of the routines that got him through 2½ years of solitary confinement.

Every day, 1,200 pushups.

Pacing to the point of exhaustion.

"You get used to being by yourself for so long, when you get out, you're not used to people being near you and touching you," the 32-year-old man said. "I don't listen to music when I'm walking down the street. I need to hear if someone's coming up on me," said Johnson, as he stood on his front porch two weeks after his release. "I gotta be on point with my surroundings."

Alexander Johnson spent nearly 1,000 days in solitary confinement, during each of which he spent 23 hours by himself. "I was losing my mind because I was locked up in the hole."

Time in Solitary

Solitary confinement is the practice of isolating someone for 23 hours a day, every day, without human contact. At the end of 2016, the average time an inmate spent in solitary confinement was five months. The lengthiest tenure in segregation, though, was 16 years.

Treatment 1

On June 1st, 2014, police arrested Johnson for buying illegal drugs. A judge later sentenced him to State Prison. In prison, guards caught Johnson in possession of a cell phone, smuggled in from the outside. Prison rules ban inmates from having cell phones. As a result, the warden moved him indefinitely to solitary confinement.

Treatment 2

On June 1st, 2014, police arrested Johnson for armed drug trafficking. A judge later sentenced him to State Prison. In prison, guards caught Johnson in possession of a cell phone, smuggled in from the outside. Prison rules ban inmates from having cell phones. As a result, the warden moved him indefinitely to solitary confinement.

Treatment 3

On June 1st, 2014, police arrested Johnson for tax evasion and filing a fraudulent tax return. A judge later sentenced him to State Prison. In prison, guards caught Johnson in possession of a cell phone, smuggled in from the outside. Prison rules ban inmates from having cell phones. As a result, the warden moved him indefinitely to solitary confinement.

Treatment 4

On June 1st, 2014, police arrested Johnson for the armed robbery of a homeowner. A judge later sentenced him to State Prison. In prison, guards caught Johnson in possession of a cell phone, smuggled in from the outside. Prison rules ban inmates from having cell phones. As a result, the warden moved him indefinitely to solitary confinement.

The Aftermath

Alexander Johnson said that in his experience, solitary confinement is "not a place of rehabilitation. It's a place of hell."

In August 2016, Johnson was released from solitary confinement and soon left prison. He's been trying to scrape together money for rent, food, and counseling. He's working odd jobs hoping to be hired permanently.

"It's a struggle out here" he explained.

"Solitary confinement changed me. It has a lot to do with the struggles that I try to deal with."

Vignette – Control

The Benefits of Gardening



Alexander Johnson started growing vegetables in his backyard three years ago, and he's now working on planting a bed of hydrangeas, butterfly bushes and rose campion.

"When you sit at a desk all day, there's something about literally putting your hands in the dirt, digging and actually creating something that's really beautiful," says Johnson, 42.

Johnson isn't the only one who feels this way. Many gardeners view their hobby as the perfect antidote to the modern world.

Physical Exercise and Gardening

Gardening gets you out in the fresh air and sunshine -- and it also gets your blood moving.

"There are lots of different movements in gardening, so you get some exercise benefits out of it as well," says William Maynard, the community garden program coordinator for the City of Sacramento's Department of Parks and Recreation.

Digging, planting, weeding, and other repetitive tasks that require strength or stretching are excellent forms of low-impact exercise, especially for people who find more vigorous exercise a challenge, such as those who are older, have disabilities, or suffer from chronic pain.

How to get started?

"People who are growing food tend to eat healthy," says Johnson. "The work that we do here with kids demonstrates it on a daily basis, throughout the seasons."

For some great gardening tips, just start up a conversation with one of the gardeners next time you are passing by a community garden.

Post Vignette

Please answer the following questions and base your answers on your gut reaction.

10 (control). How old was Alexander Johnson?

- a. 30
- b. 34
- c. 42
- d. 50

11. In general, do you support or approve of the use of solitary confinement in the United States prison system?

- a. Strongly Approve
- b. Somewhat Approve
- c. Neither approve nor disapprove
- d. Somewhat disapprove
- e. Strongly disapprove

13.

How strongly do you approve or disapprove of the use of solitary confinement towards the following infractions?	Strongly Approve	Somewhat Approve	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	Somewhat Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
Fighting a Guard					
Killing another Inmate					
Being affiliated with a Gang					
Having contraband					
Wearing a Hijab/Headscarf					

14. Should the mental health impact of solitary confinement be considered when using the practice on inmates?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

The next section includes a number of statements. Please let me know if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:

15. Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.

16. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

17. Over the past few years blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

18. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES ONLY

19. With which one of these racial or ethnic backgrounds you identify yourself most (Please select one)?

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Latino or Hispanic
- Asian American
- Other (Please be specific)
- Refuse

20. What is your current religion, if any? (Please select one)

- Catholic (including Roman Catholic or Orthodox)
- Protestant (Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and any other Christian Denomination)
- Jewish

Muslim
 Sikh
 Hindu
 Buddhist
 Mormons
 Atheist/Agnostic/non-religious
 Spiritual
 Other

21. What is your highest level of education achieved?

Eight Grade or less
 Grades 9-11
 High School Graduate/GED
 Some College or Postsecondary School
 Bachelor's Degree (BA/BS/BSN)
 Some Graduate Study
 Master's Degree (MA/MS/MSW/MSN)
 Doctoral Degree (PH.D./MD/OD/DVM/JD)

22. What is your party affiliation?

Strong Democrat
 Not so strong Democrat
 Independent, leans Democrat
 Independent
 Independent, leans Democrat
 Not so strong Republican
 Strong Republican

23. Would you consider yourself to be conservative, Liberal or moderate?

Very Conservative
 Somewhat Conservative
 Moderate, leans Conservative
 Moderate
 Moderate, leans Liberal
 Somewhat Liberal
 Very Liberal

24. What is your family's annual income?

Under \$25K
 \$25,000-\$49,999
 \$50,000-\$74,999
 \$75,000-\$99,999
 \$100,000 or higher
 Refused/DK

25. Have you or a close family member ever been incarcerated?

Yes

No

26. Have you or a family member ever had a mental illness

Yes

No

Vignette: Treatment Example and Control

The Finchworth Gazette

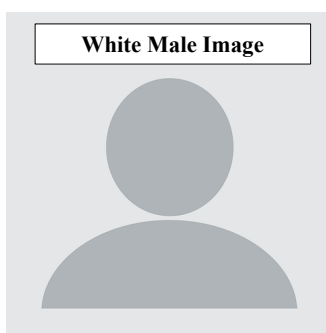
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Finchtown, CO

01-Jan-18

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The Finchworth Gazette

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Finchtown, CO

01-Jan-18

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Johnson isn't the only one who feels this way. Many gardeners view their hobby as the perfect antidote to the modern world.

Physical Exercise and Gardening

Gardening gets you out in the fresh air and sunshine -- and it also gets your blood moving. "There are lots of different movements in gardening, so you get some exercise benefits out of it as well," says William Maynard, the community garden program coordinator for the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. Digging, planting, weeding, and other repetitive tasks that require strength or stretching are excellent forms of low-impact exercise, especially for people who find more vigorous exercise a challenge, such as those who are older, have disabilities, or suffer from chronic pain.

How to get started?

"People who are growing food tend to eat healthy," says Johnson. "The work that we do here with kids demonstrates it on a daily basis, throughout the seasons." For some great gardening tips, just start up a conversation with one of the gardeners next time you are passing by a community garden.

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