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Measuring the Influence of personal narrative in changing perceptions of prisoners

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MEASURING THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL NARRATIVE IN CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF PRISONERS

by

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Abstract

With the highest incarceration and recidivism rates, the United States has a large portion of prisoners and ex-prisoners in its society. This subset of the population struggles with reentry, especially with finding stable housing and employment. These struggles are exacerbated by the perceptions of the general public, sourced from stereotypes and stigma that can lead to discrimination. This study examined the differences in attitude changes towards prisoners engendered by using a narrative. This was done by using an ex-convict's testimonial account of how the struggles involved in the incarceration process and the lack of support within the system led to recidivism (experimental condition), versus an emotionless version of the same tale (control condition). Univariate ANCOVAs with covariates including gender, race, education, socio-economic status, and age, as well as being previously victim to a crime and having a family member incarcerated, revealed no significant impact of condition on attitudes towards prisoners nor fear of crime. A logistic regression on whether participants believed prisoners are treated fairly revealed significant impacts of age, race and having a family member incarcerated. This research suggests that attitudes towards prisoners are not easily influenced and requires further research to fully grasp how attitudes towards prisoners may be improved.

Measuring the influence of personal narrative in changing perceptions of prisoners

Almost 2 million individuals incarcerated across the United States fill over 1,500 state prisons, 100 federal prisons, and 4,600 jails, juvenile correctional and detention facilities, as well as other institutions (Wagner & Sawyer, 2022). Every year, over half a million prisoners are released and struggle with reentry, and of those released, two thirds will likely reoffend within 3 years of their release (Alpher et al., 2018). The released struggle to find jobs, and those who do will make around half of the average income for non-offenders or find jobs with no upward trajectory, forcing them to move constantly from job to job (Wagner & Sawyer, 2022).

To fix the employment difficulties that make all facets of reentry hard and lead to a greater chance of recidivism, prisons have implemented prison credentials. These are programs prisoners complete while incarcerated that are intended to signal employability and a lack of criminal desire, with the goal of making ex-offenders more employable. However, these programs do not work as intended because employers do not interpret these credentials consistently, and they often fail to lead to steady work (Lindsay, 2022). Therefore, the issues prisoners face are not fully due to lack of resources offered in a prison environment, but also stem from how society in general, and most notably employers, views and treats offenders. In this study, a testimonial is employed in an attempt to discover how a first-person narrative from a previously incarcerated individual can change people's attitudes and stigmas towards prisoners.

Attitudes Towards Prisoners

To begin understanding attitudes towards prisoners, one must understand attitudes and what influences them. Attitudes are evaluations or judgements about people, places, events, or behaviors. They can be positive or negative and are shaped by experiences and beliefs. Although attitudes are not behaviors, they can influence behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005), but sometimes

attitudes and behaviors can be completely inconsistent (LaPiere, 1934). Attitudes can be influenced by stereotypes, which can also be positive or negative, but are typically over-simplified and generalized beliefs about a group or individual based on characteristics including by not limited to age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or social class (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986). Although stereotypes are not always negative, stigma is a negative attitude or belief towards a group or individual that can lead to discrimination, prejudice, and social consequences—as Goffman (1963) defines it, stigma is "an attribute that is deeply discrediting". According to Link & Phelan (2001), stigma includes a power situation that allows labeling, stereotyping and discrimination to occur. By these definitions, criminalization is stigmatized – individuals who have been to prison are stripped of some rights, leading to power imbalance situations with other civilians, and having been to prison is a discrediting quality that separates prisoners from the rest of society. Prisoners are also stereotyped—some stereotypes include they are dangerous, uneducated, addicts, cannot change or lacking in empathy (Madriz 1997). The combination of these can lead to negative attitudes towards prisoners.

As noted above, stereotypes and stigmatization of prisoners creates barriers to ex-offender success upon reentry into society, and can make transition back into society more difficult, with many failing to fully re-enter as functioning members of society. Stigmas, both on individual and institutional levels, can restrict access to resources even as basic and necessary as housing (Keene et al., 2018). Having a criminal record can lead to fewer callbacks from employers who ask for that information in their application (Agan & Starr, 2018). And because when incarceration history is not or cannot be requested, Black applicants suffer in their callback rates because the history is inferred as a proxy, stigma towards ex-prisoners or those with

criminal records harms not only that population, but also disadvantages other members of our society.

The most common measure for assessing attitudes towards prisoners in the literature is the scale developed by Melvin et al. (1985). This measure looks at how people consider prisoners different from other members of society -- whether they are nice and deserve respect or understanding, or if they are untrustworthy and selfish, or bad people. Although attitudes and behavior are not synonymous, attitudes can influence behavior, and the attitudes of those who have the most interaction with the subject of their attitudes –for prisoners, this would be guards or correctional officers--are most likely to have those attitudes influence the behavior of the subjects, e.g., prisoners (Glasman & Albarracin, 2006).

Factors that affect attitudes towards prisoners

Familiarity with people of a stigmatized group can influence a person's attitudes towards that group (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). This effect is known as the normalization thesis. Another influencing factor is the credibility a person gives the structures that label the stigmatized person—in this case, the stigmatized person is the prisoner, and the structures that label prisoners include the police and court system. This effect is known as the legitimation thesis, and if people do not give credit or respect to systems such as the American court system, they are less likely to stigmatize prisoners than people who do believe strongly in the court system. In line with these theories, research has found that non-Hispanic White people, southern residents and conservatives held the most negative views towards ex-offenders (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). This indicates that people from these demographics are the least likely to be friendly or familiar with ex-offenders and most likely to believe in the credibility of the justice

system. Therefore, these are demographics that are likely to have more negative attitudes towards prisoners, which is supported by previous research (Rade et al., 2016).

Personal characteristics such as religiosity and gender also can impact views on prisoners, but those impacts are reduced when other factors are applied. For example, self-identifying religious people in Hong Kong had less favorable attitudes towards prisoners than non-religious people, though that effect was moderated by their spirituality, such that more spiritual-identifying religious people had less favorable attitudes than less spiritual religious people (Chui & Cheng, 2015). Although gender might be an influential factor in determining attitudes towards prisoners, gender differences disappear after controlling for demographics such as race, income, and education, and the type of media consumed (such as type of crime news and crime TV shows; Haghighi & Lopez, 1998). Additionally, people are more alike than different in their attitudes towards prisoners, with the strongest factors predicting differentiation being political views/ideology, and contact with prisoners or the criminal justice system, such that people who have contact with an ex or current offender and those that are Democrat or liberal are likely to have more positive attitudes towards prisoners and offenders (Rade et al., 2016). However, although there are differences of opinion on prisoners and punishment, people generally support transitional programs and housing for released offenders (Garland et al., 2016). This might imply that although people hold stereotypes about prisoners as individual people, they are in support of programs that benefit prisoners when those programs are likely to benefit society—in this case, housing for former inmates keeps them off the streets and can perhaps reduce crime.

Attitude Change

Although stereotypes can influence attitudes, the two are separate concepts. Stereotypes are fixed beliefs that are widely held by society, typically about members of a certain group -- such as “prisoners are bad people”. Stereotypes of prisoners influencing attitudes towards prisoners can predict and impact attitudes towards the justice system, towards punishment practices, and towards ex-offenders. These stereotypes can influence attitudes, but they are not attitudes themselves. Attitudes are a person’s own thoughts and feelings towards some object (Aizer & Fishbein, 2005), in this case, prisoners and ex-prisoners. Attitudes can range from feeling positively to negatively and can be informed by stereotypes. Therefore, one way to change attitudes is to try to disprove the stereotypes.

Changing stereotypes is not easy. When stereotype-incongruent information was presented, participants under a high cognitive load were less likely to use that information to predict group variability than participants with a low cognitive load, demonstrating the mental capacity rewiring stereotypes requires (Garcia-Marques & Mackie, 1999). Additionally, when given information about an individual who challenges a person’s view of a stigmatized group, people are more likely to view that person as an exception to the rule rather than changing their opinion of the entire group (Batson et al., 1997). People also are reluctant to change their stereotypes, for a multitude of reasons – stereotypes are heuristics that make the world easier to process, challenging stereotypes challenges one’s view of the world (including whether or not it is just) or changing stereotypes may engender cognitive dissonance unless one acts to rectify the injustices inflicted on the stigmatized group (Lerner & Miller 1978).

However, attitudes can change. In an experiment on attitudes towards solitary confinement, a video on why solitary confinement is necessary led to more support for the

practice, and a video outlining the harmful attributes led to less support of the practice, regardless of the participant's initial opinion (LaBranche & Labrecque 2021). Exposure to a certain argument or point of view may also lead to attitude change, especially when the attitudes are about a particular group of people. For example, officer attitudes towards offenders become significantly more negative after they underwent police training (Cunha et al., 2022). Given that the main job of the police is to arrest and detain offenders, the evidence that training teaches them to have more negative attitudes towards offenders is unsurprising. However, the reverse may be true as well – the training of police officers revolves around protecting society from the "bad people," but if officer training humanized prisoners and educated them on the difficulties that lead them into the system or keep them in the cycle of crime, the effect may be more positive or empathetic attitudes towards offenders or prisoners. If society in general had more empathy for prisoners and this was expressed in the process of justice, perhaps the justice system would achieve more rehabilitation, and recidivism rates would be lower, with higher rates of successful reentry after time in prison.

The contact hypothesis is commonly employed in attempts to change attitudes, especially towards stereotyped groups. This hypothesis is the idea that a person's stereotypes and beliefs can change or improve after contact with someone from the stereotyped group (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 2010). A person's beliefs may be changed because of many different tenets (Cook & Selltiz, 1955), but the most important for this study is disconfirmation potential – that is, the ability for the member of the stereotyped group to behave in a manner incongruent with the person's initial stereotypes of the entire group, resulting in stereotype change. The contact hypothesis has been used to attempt to influence attitudes towards stereotyped groups with positive results. For instance, meeting a nice asylum seeker improved attitudes towards asylum

seekers generally (Kotzur et al., 2019), and having a roommate with stigmatized mental health diagnoses led college students to more favorable attitudes towards mental health (Ballinger et al., 2022). Moreover, contact does not have to be real to have an effect. Turner and Crisp (2010) found that simply imagining contact with another group's member led to less negative group bias. Therefore, it stands to reason that the imagined contact that comes with reading a narrative about a person's experiences could be enough to shift attitudes towards that person and the group.

The Effect of Narratives on Persuasion

Persuasion is the process by which a person's beliefs, attitudes or behaviors are influenced by some type of message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Persuasion encompasses a wide variety of psychological strategies, including techniques such as foot in the door, which is a technique in which asking a person to do a small favor increases their likelihood of saying yes to a bigger favor (Burger, 1999). Another widely employed persuasive technique, and the one that this study will employ, is the use of narratives, testimonials, or first-hand accounts. Parents telling teens about people they know whose lives were ruined by an unplanned pregnancy is an example of a narrative being used to persuade the teens not to engage in premarital sex, or to at least take precautions. Stories are powerful; they are how we connect with one another. In this study, a personal narrative was used to elicit empathy for prisoners. In a meta-analysis of 74 narrative-focused studies, Braddock & Dillard (2016) found that narratives do influence persuasion, such that exposure to narratives significantly increases attitudes.

Narratives can be effective in reducing stigma -- a meta-analysis reveals that across many studies, attitudes towards stigmatized groups were improved when participants were exposed to narratives (Zhaung & Guidry, 2022). Additionally, compared to news, narratives were more

impactful in changing political attitudes (Frazer et al., 2021). In a study by Tarrant and Hadert (2010), participants who read an account of a person with AIDS's experience improved their attitudes towards the stigmatized group (people with AIDS), and also had improved attitudes towards other stigmatized groups as well. Therefore, there is evidence that the first-hand account does induce some empathy or experience-sharing that can change attitudes. Tarrant and Hadert did find an effect of the affected person's responsibility by looking at difference in attitudes when the account was of someone who got AIDS via an infected blood transfusion (something that would not be their fault) versus someone who had AIDS as the result of sexual intercourse and found that the lack of fault led to better attitudes. Therefore, although there is evidence that the first-hand testimony can impact attitudes towards stigmatized groups, these results do not directly translate to all stigmatized groups, such as prisoners, where most are to blame for their imprisonment because they committed a crime. Consequently, more research on the impact of narratives of other stigmatized groups, particularly where group members are at fault for their stigmatized situation, is necessary.

The knowledge that something is intended to sway an opinion can have a positive or negative impact depending on the subject matter. Explicit persuasion refers to informing the target of persuasion that you are attempting to influence them to a specific goal, and implicit persuasion is using tactics to influence without stating outright the intention to persuade. Schindler et al., (2017) finds that for marketing campaigns surrounding non-charity-based goals, explicit persuasion is more efficient. For charity or cause related marketing campaigns, implicit persuasion is more effective. In this study, the goal of persuading will not be stated explicitly in order to maximize effectiveness. Although changing attitudes towards prisoners can be used for advocacy, much like a marketing campaign, this study does not involve asking for support or

money, a more likely scenario with cause-related marketing. This study aligns more with charity-based goals in terms of type of persuasion and empathy sought. Therefore, the goal of persuasion will not be explicitly stated.

The Effect of Empathy

Although the prisoner and ex-offender populations are large in the United States, they remain a small part of the overall population. Citizens without experience in the justice system are unlikely to be able to know or understand what an offender goes through—not only in terms of time in the system, but also in life leading up to the offense and the experience of reentry after release. Several studies have found that increasing empathy for prisoners leads to more favorable attitudes towards prisoners, prison reform and reentry programs (Batson et al., 1997; Moak et al., 2020; Rade et al., 2018). Therefore, knowing, relating to, or understanding a prisoner may lead to empathy, which may lead to less favorable attitudes towards the judicial system or more favorable attitudes towards prisoners. Individuals who know someone who has been or is incarcerated are more likely to have low opinions of formal control (such as prisons and the justice system), as well as low opinions on informal social control (such as standards set by families and communities; Rose & Clear 2004). This may be because the contact with an incarcerated individual can shed light on the conditions of prisoners or the difficulties of their lives, which can lead to empathy and better attitudes. Empathy as a process requires thinking about another person's feelings and experiences and connecting with or sharing them. This process can humanize the other person and make them seem more relatable. This study is conducted in the hopes of replicating this effect with a simple testimony.

The capacity for empathy is informed by self-perception. Political affiliation (a way of viewing oneself) can change the empathetic effect. Silvia et al., (2005) found that after being

asked to think about similarities between themselves and prisoners, Democratic participants held more humanitarian views, whereas Republican participants held more punitive views towards offenders. Further, self-perception in terms of likelihood of incarceration also impacts views on prisoners' rights. In fact, the lower the participant's expectation that they might one day be incarcerated is correlated with less support for prisoner's rights (Silver & Witt, 1991). This result may indicate that when a person is able to project themself in a similar situation, such as imagining what it would be like to be a prisoner, support for prisoners increases, which may not be direct empathy, but which is a factor in the first part of the process of empathizing -- imagining oneself in another person's situation or experiences. This study aims to show that a first-person narrative may have a similar effect in terms of evoking empathy.

Several strategies have been used to foster empathy towards prisoners. Reentry simulations where a participant was able to experience what it might be like attempting to re-enter society after serving a sentence were successful in fostering understanding and empathy for the difficulty of release and led to more positive attitudes towards prisoners (Moak et al., 2020). Practicing empathy for a member of a stigmatized group can improve attitudes towards the entire group. Although attitudes towards convicted murderers did not improve immediately, they improved in a follow up 2 weeks later (Batson et al., 1997).

Because empathy involves connecting with another person's feelings, firsthand narrative can be used to elicit attitude change. This was shown by Tarrant and Hadert (2010), where their manipulation increased positive attitudes towards people with AIDS after reading a first-hand account of their experience. By reading a first-hand account of how the process of being incarcerated felt to an ex-convict and the degree of hopelessness and lack of support he felt from

the system, participants will feel empathy for the struggle of prisoners and will hopefully have more positive views towards prisoners generally.

Fear of Crime

Fear of crime is a person's fear of being the victim of the crime at some point in the future (Dolliver et al., 2018). This is different than perceived risk, which is a calculated thought process about a person's situation and their risk of becoming a victim; fear of crime is an emotional response to the idea of being victimized (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987). However, this fear can stem from a feeling of risk – that the people in your neighborhood/community are likely to commit crimes, and you have a great chance of being the victim. Every individual perceives this risk differently, and different characteristics can impact a person's fear of crime.

Factors that affect fear of crime

A person's gender influences their fear of crime, such that women fear crime more than men do for most offenses, but most notably in relation to rape or sexual assault (Chui et al., 2013). When people perceive their neighborhood or community to be disorderly or that the police are less efficient or trustworthy, their fear of crime increases (Carter & Wolfe, 2021; Lytle & Randa, 2022). Fear of crime is not only a fear for oneself, but also for one's loved ones. When people are dissatisfied with their community's first responders or legal leisure activities, they are more concerned for themselves and the likelihood they will fall victim to a violent crime (Steele et al., 2021). However, when they perceive inadequacy in the community's available housing, people become more concerned with the potential victimization of their loved ones (Steele et al., 2021).

Given people's fear of crime increases according to their perceptions of their environment, when introducing a prison into a new location, many considerations must be made

about its impact on the local community. In a community impact assessment, Young (1998) found that local residents were not concerned about the impact of the prison itself, believing it would be good for the economy and would reduce fear of crime and security concerns, as it would act as another layer of security. Additionally, when a prison was already in their community, residents of Mississippi who believed in the prison's economic benefit had favorable attitudes towards prison expansion (Robertson, 1994). However, participants were more worried about the possibility of prison releases joining their community, which they perceived would increase crime rates in their area. This concern is one indication that fear of crime accompanies existing attitudes towards prisoners even though it does not directly predict attitudes towards prisoners (Chui et al., 2013). Along the same lines, attitudes towards juvenile offenders do change as perception of the risk that a juvenile poses to the community changes, such that study participants support a continued life sentence when the risk towards the community is greater (Heilbrun et al., 2018). Therefore, although literature does not demonstrate a direct relationship between fear of crime and attitudes towards prisoners, fear of crime can be influenced by the perceived risks of being in proximity to a prisoner. Whether a testimony is enough to provoke this proximity effect can be answered by the results of this study.

In this study, fear of crime is included as a dependent measure. Although attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime are not directly related, as one does not predict the other in previous literature, both have to do with the general justice system. If participants are significantly changing their overall opinions on fear of crime as well as attitudes towards prisoners in both conditions, this could indicate that participants are changing their views because they think that is what the research "wants," or that thinking about the prison system in general makes them think about their personal safety differently. The results are expected to

reveal no differences in fear of crime pre and post manipulation because the factors that typically predict fear of crime are not present in the study.

Study Overview and Aims

Previous research shows that attitude towards prisoners and fear of crime are personal beliefs that can be predicted by personal characteristics. Attitude towards prisoners tends to be more positive among people who know incarcerated individuals as well as more liberal leaning people, whereas fear of crime is more impacted by gender and environmental conditions (Chui & Cheng, 2015; Chui et al., 2013; Rade et al., 2016). However, although attitudes can be changed, most attitudes towards prisoners come from a place of stigmatization and stereotyping, which can be harder to change. Research has shown that practicing empathy for stigmatized groups can lead to a change in attitudes (Batson et al., 1997). Additionally, narratives can impact persuasion, but the mechanism through which they impact attitudes is debated.

It is unknown whether the mechanism that leads to people who know prisoners having more positive attitudes towards prisoners in general is the result of understanding their story and having empathy for them or whether there is another mechanism at play. It is hoped that this study will provide more evidence to disentangle this question by determining whether a testimony impacts attitude change. Additionally, there is no research on how a narrative/first-hand account of a prisoner can impact a person's fear of crime or attitudes towards prisoners as a whole. Therefore, this study will be breaking new ground in terms of whether first-hand narrative can be used to influence these areas.

This study will shed light on how testimony from an ex-offender detailing the trauma of incarceration and lack of support from within the system differs from a reading or hearing a short report on statistical evidence about the justice system, recidivism, and outcomes for prisoners in

changing attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime. Based on the effectiveness of narratives in persuasion and prior research (Braddock & Dillard, 2016), it is expected that the testimonial condition will be more effective in changing opinions on attitudes towards prisoners than the control condition but will not affect fear of crime.

Method

Participants

Three hundred and fifty-four U.S. citizens participated in this study. Participants were eliminated if they took less than 5 minutes to complete the survey due to the length of the materials and were also eliminated if they answered the open-ended question with either only "good" or a response that was the same as other participants and did not answer the question (for example, a description of reading that one might find on google). Participants were between the ages of 20 and 70, with a mean age of 35 and a standard deviation of 10.6. Full demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Full Sample	
	n	%
Gender		
Male	216	61.0
Female	135	38.1
Non-Binary	2	0.6
Race		
White	321	90.7
Black	13	3.7
Hispanic	5	1.4
Asian	15	4.2
Political Affiliation		
Conservative	144	40.7
Liberal	155	43.8
Moderate	46	13.0
Socio-economic Status		
Lower class	18	5.1
Lower middle class	139	39.3
Upper middle class	183	51.7
Upper class	12	3.4
Education		
HS/GED	13	3.7
Some college	7	2.0
Associate's	13	3.7
Bachelor's	284	80.2
Higher than a Bachelor's	36	10.2
Previously Victim		
Yes	108	30.5
No	236	66.7
Family Member Incarcerated		
Yes	132	37.3
No	221	62.4

Note: missing information is not included in the percentages

Ethics approval was obtained before recruiting participants. The study was advertised through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing marketplace that allows businesses to hire remote workers for on-demand tasks and was advertised to anyone over the age of 18 living in

the United States. Participants were self-selected and were compensated $1 for their time in a 15-minute study.

An a priori power analysis using a small estimated effect size from research on demographic variables on attitudes towards prisoners (Rade et al., 2016) revealed that 352 participants were necessary. With 354 participants, this metric was achieved.

Materials

Stimulus Materials

The purpose of the experimental condition was to provide a humanized version of the impact of the justice system through the lens of someone who has been through the system as a prisoner. This contrasts with the control condition, which had the same information without the touch of personal thoughts and feelings.

Participants were be exposed to one of two conditions. In the experimental condition, participants read a testimony from an ex-felon that details the process of intake for prisoners, the involvement of the guards in the political environment inside the prison, and the lack of support or help he felt he had (see Appendix A for full text). In the control condition, participants read an sanitized version of the experimental condition (see Appendix A). This version contained the main points of the narrative without any first-person narration or emotional language. That is, it presented the same events as the experimental condition, but rather than relating the events as they are happening to the narrator, the control condition simply stated that these events typically happen to prisoners. For example, when discussing the transfer from jail to prison, the experimental condition reads:

“When transferring you to State Prison from the County Jail they first pull you out of your cell and take you to a holding tank the night before so they can get all your paperwork and

property in order. The holding tank is a concrete slab with a stainless-steel toilet in the corner. The capacity is 6-8 people, but they usually shove 10-12 inmates in there at a time. The process takes about 6-8 hours. During this time no food or water is provided, nor is toilet paper to use the restroom, and you are not allowed to sleep."

This contrasts with the control condition text, which, regarding the same event, reads:

"In order to transfer prisoners from county jail to state prison after their court decision, prisoners are brought to a holding area while their paperwork and property is organized."

Filler Task

As a distraction, and to create a buffer between reading the manipulation material and completing the measurement of the scales a second time, participants were asked to complete a simple sorting task, where they sorted 18 items into one of three categories: fruits, household items, and animals.

Measures

To measure the differences in attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime before and after exposure to the experimental or control condition, there were two iterations of measurement. Participants' baseline scores were measured before the manipulation and included all the odd questions of both measures, and the post-manipulation iteration included all the even questions. This was done so that participants are only exposed to each question once, but the average scores still reflect how participants felt overall during both iterations.

Fear of crime. To measure fear of crime, Ferraro and Lagrange's (1987) Fear of Crime (FOC) Scale was used. This scale was developed to measure the emotional component of fear of future crime (Dolliver et al., 2018). This scale, measured on a 5-point Likert rating scale, consists of 11 statements and addresses fear of being victimized in one's home, outside of one's home,

and with or without violence. Participants indicated how much they agreed with each statement (1=*strongly disagree*, 3=*neutral*, 5=*strongly agree*) about crime related fears, such as feeling afraid someone would steal their car, or feeling afraid of being stalked (for full scale, see Appendix B). Answers were averaged and each participant had a fear of crime scores where higher scores indicate more fear of crime. Reliability of the scale when it was developed was not available, but this study's sample had a Cronbach's alpha of .903, indicating high reliability.

Attitudes towards prisoners. To measure attitudes towards prisoners, the Attitudes Towards Prisoners Scale (ATPS) developed by Melvin et al., (1985) was used. This scale was developed as a standardized measure of how people view prisoners (Melvin et al., 1985). The scale contains 36 statements, ranging from how prisoners think and behave to a person's level of comfort interacting with prisoners and is measured as a 5-point Likert scale, (1-*Strongly Agree,* 5-*Strongly Disagree).* Example statements include "Most prisoners are stupid," and "Prisoners are no better or worse than other people" (see Appendix B). In the original version of the scale, 19 of the questions were reverse coded, and higher average scores indicate more favorable attitudes towards prisoners. This scale has high test-retest reliability (r=.82) and split-half reliability (r=.84). In this study, the scale had a Cronbach's alpha =.902, indicating high internal reliability.

Other dependent variables. Because this study was conducted online, as a check for bots, participants were asked what they thought about the reading (with an open-ended answer). They were also asked whether, based on the reading, they believe prisoners are treated fairly in the US, with a simple *yes* or *no* response. These questions were used as a dependent variable to measure participants' feelings towards prisoners in addition to the scales. Participants were also asked if they felt empathetic towards prisoners, again with a simple *yes* or *no,* and how much

empathy they felt towards prisoners, either *none, neutral, some empathy,* or *very empathetic*. The first question was treated as a binary, and the follow up was treated as a continuous variable, with higher scores indicating more empathy.

Demographic questions. Participants also completed demographic questions. They responded about their race with a multiple-choice question for which they could provide more than one answer with options including *White/Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Mixed,* and *Other* with a fill in the blank. Participants gave their age with a fill in the blank box, and their gender with a multiple-choice question with answers including *Man, Woman, Non-binary* and *Prefer not to answer*. They gave their political affiliation, which was asked as a multiple-choice item with response options including *liberal*, *conservative*, *moderate* or *other*; and socio-economic status with answer options including *lower class*, *lower middle class*, *upper middle class* or *upper class*. Level of education was also asked, which was multiple choice with options of *high school (GED) or less, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree*, and *higher than a bachelor's degree*. Participants were asked whether they had been a victim of a crime, as a simple *yes* or *no* answer, and whether they have a family member who is or has been incarcerated, also with a simple *yes* or *no* answer.

Procedure

Participants provided informed consent prior to participation. All participants were informed during the consent process that the survey contains information about prisons and prisoners and that they might be asked about their prior experience with crime victimization or the justice system. This is because experiences with the justice system or crime can be potentially triggering. The survey was administered using MTurk. Participants were randomly assigned to a control (quantitative evidence) or experimental condition (testimonial).

All participants answered the baseline measurement of attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime. After participants read their excerpt, they participated in the distraction card-sorting task. Participants then answered the post-manipulation attitudes towards prisoner and fear of crime measures, and then were asked other measures and demographic questions. Finally, participants were compensated and debriefed.

Ethical Considerations

Although the method outlined above presents minimal risk to participants, there were certain issues that must be accounted for. One such issue relates to asking participants to disclose whether they were previously a victim of a crime or have a family member who has been incarcerated. Although this might be a sensitive topic and potentially triggering, it was necessary to account for these cases, as that might impact their initial attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime. However, to avoid triggering participants more than necessary, these questions were asked in a simple *yes* or *no* answer format, and no further elaboration was required.

Further, in order to protect participants' personal information, the study was anonymous and was stored on a password protected computer to which only the researcher had access. Additionally, there was no collection of identifiable information, such as names, IP addresses or MTurk worker numbers, so data cannot be traced back to any one participant. Participation was also completely voluntary, and participants were able to terminate their participation at any time, an option of which they were informed before providing consent. By asking for consent, participants had the ability to choose not to participate, and to confirm that they volunteered to participate in the study.

The benefits of the study outweigh potential risks and include learning more about how attitudes towards prisoners, who are a non-negligible portion of the U.S. population, can change.

Because being or having been incarcerated is viewed negatively by society and prisoners face stereotyping and discrimination, discovering strategies to improve attitudes towards prisoners can benefit society. The study was minimal risk, as it did not contain questions or tasks that go beyond what participants might encounter in daily life by consuming the news or watching television. This is important because participants did not incur any more risk of distress or damage than they would incur by going about everyday life. Additionally, no questions are required, so participants had the right to skip a question they feel uncomfortable answering and were informed of this right before providing consent. It also targeted the general population and did not include deception. Although the study revolves around prisoners, who are a protected population, participants were not explicitly selected for being members of a protected population. The benefits, which include learning about the influence of testimonies on persuasion as well as how attitudes towards prisoners can be influenced, outweighed the risks.

Results

Participants' data were eliminated first based on time taken to complete the study. Participants who took fewer than five minutes to complete were eliminated due to the amount of time it would take an average person to read and answer all questions. Participants were also eliminated if they responded with just "good" to the free response question or if their answer was the same as another participant's answer and did not directly address the question at hand – for example, a description of reading that may have come from Google.

To run analysis on the difference between the iterations of the scale, new variables were created. First, the questions from the first iterations of the scales were averaged to create "before" or "baseline" scores. The same was done for the questions of the second iterations of the scales, to create "after treatment" scores. Then, a new variable subtracting the baseline score

from the after-treatment score was created for both attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime, called the "difference" scores. This was done so that a positive difference score for attitude towards prisoners would indicate an increase in positive attitudes, and a positive difference score for fear of crime would indicate an increase in fear of crime. Additionally, total scores were created by averaging every question for both scales.

Overall, participants did not have strong opinions about prisoners. The mean for the total score for attitudes towards prisoners was 3.52, and the standard deviation was .56. Similarly, there was not overwhelming fear of crime, with the mean for the total score for fear of crime being 3.45 with a standard deviation of .83. As both these scales are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, these average scores reflect overall neutrality on both scales. There was also not a large average difference in before and after scores for attitudes towards prisoners (M=.04, SD=.35) or for fear of crime (M=-.03, SD=.51).

To test whether the condition of the participant effected a change in scores on attitudes towards prisoners or fear of crime, univariate analysis of covariances (ANCOVAs) were conducted on the difference in attitudes towards prisoners and the difference in fear of crime. Covariates included age, race, political beliefs, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), educational attainment, whether they were previously victim of a crime, and whether they had a family member incarcerated. Age was included as a continuous variable, as was socioeconomic status, with higher numbers indicating higher status, and education, with higher values indicating more education. The other variables were included as binary variables, with race coded as White or not White gender as male or not male, political beliefs as conservative or not conservative, and victim of crime or family incarcerated as yes or no. These were chosen as covariates because previous literature (Chui & Cheng, 2015; Chui et al., 2013; Rade et al., 2016) has indicated that

many of these demographics can predict attitudes towards prisoners, fear of crime, or both. Additionally, whether they were previously victim of a crime or had a family member incarcerated could influence how they perceive the justice system, which could influence fear of crime or attitudes towards prisoners.

It was hypothesized that attitudes towards prisoners would increase across the two testing periods more for participants in the experimental condition than the control condition. Contrary to hypothesis, there was no significant difference in the shift in attitudes towards prisoners between the experimental (*M*=.03, *SD*= .37) and control conditions (*M*= .05, *SD*= .32) $F(9,311) = .28$, $MS_e = .13$, $p = .98$, $\eta^2 = .008$, $R^2 = .008$. It was also hypothesized that fear of crime would not change significantly across the conditions, and there was also no significant difference for the shift in fear of crime between the experimental (*M*=.002, *SD*=.47) and control conditions (*M*= -.08, *SD*=.56) $F(9,311) = 1.09$, $MS_e = .26$, $p = .37$, $\eta^2 = .03$, $R^2 = .031$.

A hierarchical model using logistic regression was created to examine the effects of the variables on whether a participant believed prisoners are treated fairly. The outcome variable in the model was the judgement of whether prisoners are treated fairly in the U.S. (coded as 1=yes and 2=no). For step one of the model, the covariates from the ANCOVA, including age, race, gender, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, education, whether they were previously victim of a crime and whether they had a family member incarcerated were entered. For the second step of the model, the independent variable condition was entered. For the last step, initial responses to the attitude towards prisoners and fear of crime scales were entered, since the initial response indicates the attitudes that participants came into the study with and are most likely to reflect their true beliefs.

Table 2. Hierarchical Logistic Regression

	Summary of Results (N=321)					
Treated Fairly	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald*	*df*	*Sig*	*exp (B)*
Step 1						
White	-.989	.475	4.339	1	.037	.372
Conservative	.195	.308	.403	1	.525	1.216
Male	.192	.315	.370	1	.543	1.211
SES	-.194	.244	.633	1	.426	.824
Education	-.050	.208	.058	1	.810	.951
Prev. Victim	.605	.515	1.384	1	.239	1.832
Fam. Incarc	1.256	.496	6.408	1	.011	3.513
Age	.031	.013	5.792	1	.016	1.032
Constant	-4.480					
Step 2						
White	-1.010	.475	4.530	1	.033	.364
Conservative	.226	.310	.532	1	.466	1.253
Male	.238	.318	.558	1	.455	1.268
SES	-.201	.247	.662	1	.416	.818
Education	-.089	.209	.181	1	.670	.915
Prev. Victim	.593	.514	1.329	1	.249	1.809
Fam. Incarc	1.247	.497	6.309	1	.012	3.482
Age	.032	.013	5.832	1	.016	1.032
Condition	.408	.315	1.678	1	.195	1.504
Constant	-4.553					
Step 3						
White	-1.147	.545	4.426	1	.035	.318
Conservative	.239	.338	.500	1	.479	1.270
Male	.143	.341	.175	1	.676	1.153

SES	-.100	.266	.141	1	.707	.905
Education	.047	.237	.040	1	.842	1.048
Prev. Victim	.521	.560	.866	1	.352	1.683
Fam. Incarc	.711	.544	1.710	1	.191	2.036
Age	.035	.014	6.146	1	.013	1.036
Condition	.494	.340	2.108	1	.147	1.639
Initial ATP	-1.640	.380	18.615	1	<.001	.194
Initial FOC	-.135	.205	.433	1	.511	.874
Constant	1.575					

Note. Step 1: Goodness of fit $X^2(8) = 30.654$, $p<.001$, -2 Log Likelihood = 240.269; Cox & Snell $R^2= .111$; Nagelkerke $R^2= .172$.

Step 2: Goodness of fit $X^2(1) = 1.712$, $p= .191$, -2 Log Likelihood = 279.750; Cox & Snell $R^2= .104$; Nagelkerke $R^2= .167$.

Step 3: Goodness of fit $X^2(2) = 35.024$, $p<.001$, -2 Log Likelihood = 244.726; Cox & Snell $R^2= .197$; Nagelkerke $R^2= .315$.

As seen in Table 2, at step 1, the model was significant. Participant race was a significant predictor of response, such that White participants were 1.1% less likely to believe prisoners are not treated fairly. For every one year increase in participants' age, there was a 96.9% increase in odds of believing prisoners are not treated fairly. Having a family member incarcerated made participants 1.25 times less likely to indicate prisoners are not treated fairly. On the second step of the model significance of the model did not increase, and independent variable condition was not a significant predictor. On the last step of the model, the model increased in significance. At this step, race and age were still significant predictors, but having a family member incarcerated was not. However, initial attitudes towards prisoners did predict response such that an increase in positive attitudes by one decreased odds by 1.64 times that participants' would indicate that prisoners are not treated fairly.

One-tailed independent sample t-tests were used to test the hypotheses of what demographics would predict attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime overall. It was hypothesized that age, SES, gender and political ideology would impact change in opinion, but contrary to hypotheses, there were no significant predictors of change in either attitude towards prisoners nor fear of crime. It was also hypothesized that attitudes towards prisoners would be impacted by race, such that White participants would have lower attitudes towards prisoners and by SES, such that higher SES participants would have lower attitudes towards prisoners. Fear of crime was hypothesized to be impacted by previous victim status, such that previous victims would have higher fear of crime and by SES, such that participants of higher SES would have higher fear of crime.

Participants who indicated that they had empathy towards prisoners (M=3.54, SD=.54) were more likely to have more positive attitudes overall towards prisoners than participants who did not (M=3.35, SD=.63), $t(351) = 2.19$, p= .014, r^2=.01, 95%CI[.02, .35], Cohen's d=.55. Participants with a family member incarcerated (M=3.75, SD=.51) had more positive attitudes overall towards prisoners than participants without (M=3.38, SD=.54), $t(351) = 6.26$, p<.001, r^2=.10, 95%CI[.25, .48], Cohen's d=.53. Consistent with hypothesis, previous victims (M=3.72, SD=.52) were more likely to have higher attitudes towards prisoners than non-victims (M=3.42, SD=.55), $t(342) = 4.86$, p<.001, r^2=.06, 95%CI[.18, .43], Cohen's d=.54. Additionally, socio-economic status was a marginally significant predictor of the second iteration of attitudes towards prisoners, such that participants with SES of lower or lower middle class (M=3.57, SD=.56) predicted better attitudes than participants of upper middle or upper class (M=3.47, SD=.59), $t(350) = 1.64$, p=.051, r^2=.01, 95%CI[-.02, .22], Cohen's d=.57.

Consistent with hypothesis, participants who were previously the victim of a crime (*M*=3.75, *SD*=.64) were more likely to have higher total fear of crime than participants who were not (*M*=3.28, *SD*=.87), *t*(342) = 5.10, *p*<.001, r^2=.07, 95%CI[.29, .66], Cohen's d=.80. Participants who had a family member incarcerated (*M*=3.73, *SD*=.56) were more likely to have higher total fear of crime than participants who did not (*M*=3.27, *SD*=.91), *t*(351) = 5.44, *p*<.001, r^2=.08, 95%CI[.30, .65], Cohen's d=.79. Also consistent with hypothesis, participants of higher SES (upper middle or upper class) (*M*=3.52, *SD*=.76) were more likely to have higher total fear of crime than participants of lower SES (*M*=3.34, *SD*=.89), *t*(350) = 1.99, *p*=.023, r^2=.01, 95%CI[.00, .35], Cohen's d=.82. Lastly, participants with more education (a bachelor's degree or higher) (*M*=3.46, *SD*=.77) were more likely to have higher total fear of crime than participants of lower educational attainment (*M*=3.19, *SD*=1.19), *t*(351) = 1.82, *p*=.035, r^2=.01, 95%CI[-.02, .57], Cohen's d=.82.

Discussion

This study was created to investigate the effects of a testimonial from an ex-prisoner on attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime for U.S. citizens. To answer this question, a randomized study was conducted in which participants were exposed to read either a testimonial or a control reading and respond to fear of crime and attitude towards prisoner scales before and after exposure to the condition. The main findings suggest that whether the participant was exposed to the control reading or the testimonial from the ex-prisoner did not have an impact on any of the measurements, including their attitudes towards prisoners, their fear of crime, or their likelihood to believe prisoners are treated fairly in the US or have empathy towards prisoners. The results are not consistent with the hypotheses nor previous research suggesting narratives have an impact on attitudes and persuasion (Braddock & Dillard, 2016).

These findings have several implications. First, people do not have generally positive attitudes towards prisoners, with a mean around 3.5 out of 5, with 5 being the most positive. This suggests that although there are not overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards prisoners, there is certainly room for improvement. Additionally, although the scale measures attitudes, attitudes do not necessarily reflect action, and prisoners and ex-prisoners may still have a difficult time navigating social relationships despite overall attitudes being closer to neutral than anything. There is also not an overwhelming fear of crime in this sample, which may or may not reflect the general population, mostly depending on geography, which was not measured in this study.

Next, the lack of impact of the narrative on attitudes towards prisoners is surprising given the content and format. The lack of impact implies that people's attitudes towards prisoners are either too stable to be impacted by one narrative from an ex-prisoner, or that people do not account for the trials and tribulations of prisoners when they are deciding their attitudes towards them.

The lack of impact of the narrative may be for several reasons. First, because there were not proper attention checks, it may be that participants did not pay enough attention to the manipulation. However, previous research has shown that narratives have an influence on attitudes and can be persuasive. Therefore, it could also be that the manipulation was not strong enough, which could be for several reasons.

First, it could be that the manipulation simply did not work – however, given the previous literature on narratives and persuasion (Braddock & Dillard, 2016; Zhuang & Guidry, 2022), it should not be the case that the manipulation would never make a difference. Rather, it is more likely that the testimonial did not target the necessary components to create a shift in attitudes. For example, because both the testimonial and the control conditions discussed the intake

process of the prisoners, with the testimonial discussion how the intake process made him feel, it could be that the readings targeted attitudes towards the justice system rather than attitudes towards prisoners specifically. However, attitudes towards the justice system were not measured in this study.

Another potential flaw in the testimony is that it did not include a description of what the narrator had done to land himself in prison – and without confirmation of what had happened, the reader can assume any crime ranging from financial crimes to murder are plausible, and the reader may lean towards assuming the more violent crimes. This assumption that the narrator had done something truly awful or immoral may counteract any empathy the reader felt for prisoners after the reading. Additionally, the narrator of the testimony also admitted fault in this testimony, which may also prevent empathy or changing attitudes. More empathy may be evoked for prisoners who were wrongfully convicted or victims of an unjust system, as suggested by stigma with AIDS research (Tarrant & Hadert, 2010), and this would not be the case if they admit they committed crimes.

Additionally, attitudes towards prisoners and fear of crime may be fairly stable attitudes, and because participants only completed one distraction task in between being asked to read their condition and responding to the scales again, there might not have been enough time in between the measures for the manipulation to sink in and for attitudes to shift—especially as prior research suggests that exposure to narratives can change attitudes more after a couple weeks than immediately (Batson et al., 1997). Or, perhaps the written testimony was not powerful enough on its own, and would require being accompanied with imagery, video, or spoken testimony to really impact the viewer and evoke more powerful empathy to change those attitudes, as

suggested by Green & Brock (2000), who found that increased use of "transportation"—i.e., imagery and other tools, increased persuasion and story-consistent beliefs.

Whether the participant believed that prisoners are treated fairly in the U.S. ended up being the most predictable dependent variable, as it was predicted by race, age, having a family member incarcerated, and the participant's initial attitudes towards prisoners. White participants were more likely to believe prisoners are treated fairly, which makes sense given the racial disparity of the U.S. prison system, and the relative likelihood that a White person may end up in prison. Having a family member incarcerated predicts participants being more likely to believe that prisoners are treated fairly, which seems to oppose what should be true, since previous research indicates that connections to prisoners leads to more positive attitudes towards prisoners (Rade et al., 2016). Perhaps those with a family member incarcerated are more exposed to the system, and that contact makes them believe it is fair, or perhaps there is some cognitive dissonance happening because someone they care about has been incarcerated, and it is easier to believe that person is being treated fairly than it is to think the opposite.

Older participants were more likely to indicate that prisoners are not treated fairly; however, younger participants were more likely to have positive attitudes towards prisoners. Additionally, more positive attitudes towards prisoners predicts participants being more likely to believe prisoners are treated fairly. This indicates that the relationship between attitudes towards prisoners and a determination of whether they are treated fairly do not have the relationship one would expect—that is, believing that prisoners are not different than other people and deserving of respect and rights should lead to people believing prisoners are treated unfairly when they do not receive those basic rights or respect. However, it may be that participants believe that

prisoners are not different but recognize that most prisoners end up in prison due to breaking the law and therefore deserve the treatment they receive, which makes it fair.

For predictors of attitudes towards prisoners generally, although socio-economic status was a marginal predictor for the second iteration of the scale, typical demographics, such as political affiliation, did not predict attitudes towards prisoners. Instead, they were predicted by whether people indicated that they had empathy for prisoners, whether they had a family member incarcerated, and whether they were previously victim of a crime. Although the first two track with increased empathy and better attitudes, it makes less sense that previous victims would have more positive attitudes towards prisoners. That is, being the victim of a crime should make people feel more negatively towards prisoners, who represent those who victimized the person. However, it could be that being through a process of dealing with a crime and perhaps dealing with the court system increases attitudes towards prisoners by increasing empathy for their experiences.

Predicting fear of crime was fairly straightforward. Participants who had previously been victimized were more likely to have more fear of crime, which makes sense given their history. Participants with higher socio-economic status were also more likely to have more fear of crime – perhaps the growth in income and therefore nicer possessions makes people more sensitive to those things being damaged or stolen. Education also predicted fear of crime such that more educated participants had more fear of crime – this is less easy to explain, but it could be due to the correlation between socioeconomic status and education, such that more educated people also had property to protect. Lastly, having a family member incarcerated predicts a higher fear of crime– perhaps the reason that the family member is incarcerated is because the family lives in a

higher crime area that the member got into and/or gang affiliations that make life dangerous for the family.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include having used an online sample, which limited control. First of all, it is nearly impossible to tell if the participants paid attention to the reading and absorbed any of the information. The lack of attention checks also made it unclear whether the manipulation failed because it was not strong enough or whether participants failed to pay enough attention. An online sample also required weeding out bots—in this study, participants who took under five minutes to finish the survey were eliminated, as well as participants who answered the open-ended question with just "good" or with internet generated answers that other participants also used. These eliminations left a smaller sample of hopefully all real participants, but it is impossible to know for certain.

Additionally, there may not have been enough time between exposure to the condition and the second iteration of the scales to influence these attitudes. General empathy as well as attitudes towards the prison/justice system were also not measured, which limited ability to determine why the results turned out the way they did.

Future Directions

In the future, this research could be redone to account for some of the missing information from this study. For example, changes to the testimonial could help determine what information is necessary to target attitudes towards prisoners more specifically. Additionally, it may help persuasion to add another sense to the conditions, such as imagery, sound or a video. For understanding the results, adding scales to test for attitudes about the justice system or empathy and racism scales may help determine where the attitude change or lack thereof comes

from. Lastly, based on prior research, results may be seen when the measurements are tested again after a more significant time period, such as a couple of weeks.

Conclusion

This study was created to discover whether a testimony from an ex-prisoner would be a successful tool in improving attitudes towards prisoners. The findings suggest that it was not an effective narrative, as it did not have an impact on attitudes towards prisoners, fear of crime, empathy towards prisoners or the belief that prisoners are treated fairly. These findings suggest that attitudes towards prisoners, which are generally neutral in this sample, are not easily persuaded by a first-hand account. Whether this is a function of the narrative's lack of effectiveness and power, or a function of people's stable attitudes is not answered by this study. Future research can be done to determine whether a different narrative, either in content or delivery, can impact attitudes towards prisoners. Overall, the study highlights the complexity of attitudes towards prisoners and the need for further exploration in the area.

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Appendix A

Control Condition Text

Some states offer plea deals to non-violent low-level offenders. Plea deals mean the defendant pleads guilty in return for a sentence that is reduced from the average sentence should they be found guilty in court. In order to transfer prisoners from county jail to state prison after their court decision, prisoners are brought to a holding area while their paperwork and property is organized. After this, guards transfer prisoners to the state prison on a bus. Once they get to the prison, prisoners are checked for weapons before entering the building. Prisoners are then housed by being assigned to a cell with a cellmate and can meet the other prisoners. Sometimes the prison has to go on "lockdown," where prisoners are less able to leave their cell because of fighting between gangs. Some prisons offer programs and resources, but they are not always available. The United States as a whole has a one-year recidivism rate of 44%, and a 3-year rate of 60%.

Experimental Condition Text

My name is Marcos, and I first entered the prison system when I was 21 years old. I was serving a two-year sentence for possession of a stolen vehicle, but with good behavior I would be released after 12 months. California offers plea deals to non-violent low-level criminals to entice them to save the court time from having to go to trial and in return you get a reduced sentence, which is what they call half-time. They tell you that if you take the deal, you only have to serve 50 percent of the sentence but if you go to trial and lose you will serve 90 to 100 percent of the time. What they don't tell you is that if you take the plea, the sentence must be served in State Prison and not in the County Jail. Me being a first-time offender and not knowing any better, I took the plea and went straight to the Big Leagues.

When transferring you to State Prison from the County Jail they first pull you out of your cell and take you to a holding tank the night before so they can get all your paperwork and property in order. The holding tank is a concrete slab with a stainless-steel toilet in the corner. The capacity is 6-8 people, but they usually shove 10-12 inmates in there at a time. The process takes about 6-8 hours. During this time no food or water is provided, nor is toilet paper to use the restroom, and you are not allowed to sleep. Roughly halfway through the process they make you remove all your county issued clothing and they give you a paper jumpsuit to be transferred in. Then they throw you back into the cell and you wait for the prison guards to pick you up.

The moment the guards show up you feel the atmosphere change around you, like one of those movies where a young boy is about to embark on a long journey through the woods at night in the dead of winter. That's the best way I can describe the feeling that passes over you at that moment. They call you out of the tank one at a time and shackle your hands and feet together, and then shackle you to another inmate to keep you from running. The whole time you are made to look straight ahead and keep silent, any subtle movement of the head or eyes and they are on you in an instant. It feels as if they are hoping you give them a reason to pounce on you. You are then taken by pairs to the bus and then shackled to the floor. Once all inmates are seated and shackled the bus departs on an 8-hour drive through back roads. Once again you are reminded not to speak, and if there is any talking, they slam on the brakes giving everyone whiplash and then they tighten everyone's shackles right to the point before blood flow stops.

After what feels like an eternity, you arrive at the prison. They take everyone off the bus and unshackle you from your partner. Before entering the building, you are made to remove the paper jumpsuit and stand naked in a line with your hands handcuffed behind your back. One by one you walk forward, and you have to state your name and prison gang affiliation to the guard

standing at the entrance to the building. He won't let you in the building until you make a choice, if you refuse to give him an answer, they throw you in the Hole until you make a choice. For those who have the intention to stay out of trouble you would either choose the "Christian Gang" or "Others Gang", but both of these come with great responsibility. You are held to a higher moral standard by the other inmates who are waiting for you to slip up so they can take out their anger on you and you have no one to defend you.

After entering the building, you stand in a line while the guards examine your naked body looking for paraphernalia and weapons, although they have you walk through an x-ray when walking into the building, so this part seems more for show. The guards are both male and female and you have to stand exposed and defenseless in front of them and everyone else. The only thing that makes it bearable is knowing you are not going through it alone. You are given a jumpsuit that is either too big or too small then thrown back into a tank where you wait another 6-8 hours to be housed, the whole process takes at least 24 hours where they demoralize you by depriving you of food, drink, sleep, and making you feel you are less than nothing.

After getting housed, I was greeted by other inmates who informed me of the rules and what's expected of me at the prison. Now when I say greeted, I mean they slid a note tied to a piece of string underneath my door. I was told that the prison was currently on lockdown due to a war going on between two gangs. Lockdown is where no inmates are allowed to leave their cells at all except for 10 minutes every 72 hours to take a shower. There is no dayroom or phone privileges and no outside recreation. Every 3-6 months they would lift the lockdown so we could get things in order, with the understanding we had a couple of weeks before we had to start another riot and go back on lockdown. The prisons and guards get more money for hazard pay when tensions are high, so the guards would ensure we didn't screw things up for them. In turn

they would sneak in contraband for us and allow us to pretty much do whatever we wanted in our cells. I lived like this for the remainder of my sentence which was about 10 and 1/2 months with no daylight, no privileges, and very little interaction with people other than my cellmate.

Now one can argue that I was responsible for my actions and choices that got me into the situation I was in, and they would be without a doubt 100% correct. I do not argue that fact. What I will say, not once was I offered any type of resources to help prepare me for release. Even if a resource was available, it would not have been accessible since all privileges were taken away from us. The only thing I learned was how to survive. Like a caged animal, I had to be mentally strong, and wait for my release. They demoralize you the moment you walk into prison and then send you home completely stripped of your humanity expecting you to somehow succeed. I did not succeed, and served two more sentences after my first release.

All this nonsense about continuing your education while incarcerated as a means to help you upon your release is insanity. High school and college courses don't address the root problem of what inmates need. We need to be taught a whole new way of thinking. We don't know how to process things correctly to make the right choices. We have our belief systems and learned behaviors cultivated in a toxic prison system as our moral compass. Inmates need psychological resources and life skills courses before being allowed to return to society. A diploma doesn't teach you to live life on life's terms! Inmates need to be treated with dignity and not degraded. The system is broken from top to bottom. As long as we as a society continue to ignore the institutionalization of inmates the results will remain the same.

Appendix B

Fear of Crime Measure

Question: On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*), how strongly do you agree with the following statements?

1. I am afraid someone will break into my house *while I am away.*
2. I am afraid that someone might steal something from me *without* using force while I am outside of my house.
3. I am afraid that someone will steal my car.
4. I am afraid that someone might attempt to take something from me *by force or threat of force.*
5. I am afraid that someone will break into my house *while I am there*.
6. I am afraid that someone might steal something from me *by force* while I am outside of my house.
7. I am afraid of being attacked by someone with a club, knife, gun or other weapon.
8. I am afraid to go out at night because I might become a victim of crime.
9. I am afraid of being murdered.
10. I am afraid of being stalked.
11. I am afraid of being sexually assaulted.

Attitudes Towards Prisoners Measure

Question: The statements listed below describe attitudes towards prisoners in jails and prisons in the United States. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express *your* feelings about each statement by indicating whether you (1) Disagree Strongly, (2) Disagree, (3) Undecided, (4) Agree, or (5) Agree Strongly. Please answer every item.

1. *Prisoners are different from most people.
2. Only a few prisoners are really dangerous.
3. *Prisoners never change.
4. Most prisoners are victims of circumstance and deserve to be helped.
5. Prisoners have feelings like the rest of us.
6. *It is not wise to trust a prisoner too far.
7. I think I would like a lot of prisoners.
8. Bad prison conditions just make a prisoner more bitter.
9. *Give a prisoner an inch and he'll take a mile.
10. *Most prisoners are stupid.
11. Prisoners need affection and praise just like anybody else.
12. *You should not expect too much from a prisoner.
13. *Trying to rehabilitate prisoners is a waste of time and money.
14. *You never know when a prisoner is telling the truth.
15. Prisoners are no better or worse than other people.
16. *You have to be constantly on your guard with prisoners.
17. *In general, prisoners think and act alike.
18. If you give a prisoner your respect, he'll give you the same.

19. *Prisoners only think about themselves.
20. There are some prisoners that I would trust with my life.
21. Prisoners will listen to reason.
22. *Most prisoners are too lazy to earn an honest living.
23. I wouldn’t mind living next door to an ex-prisoner.
24. *Prisoners are just plain mean at heart.
25. *Prisoners are always just trying to get something out of somebody.
26. The values of most prisoners are about the same as the rest of us.
27. *I would never want one of my children dating an ex-prisoner.
28. Most prisoners have the capacity for love.
29. *Prisoners are just plain immoral.
30. *Prisoners should be under strict, harsh discipline.
31. *In general, prisoners are basically bad people.
32. Most prisoners can be rehabilitated.
33. Some prisoners are pretty nice people.
34. I would like associating with some prisoners.
35. *Prisoners respect only brute force.
36. If a person does well in prison, he should be let out on parole.

*Reverse scored items