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**SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, POST-RELEASE EFFECTS
AND SOCIAL BONDS: An exploratory, auto/biographical
analysis**

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the master of
2017-18 MSc Degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice.

3 September 2018

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ABSTRACT

Solitary confinement is a method of punishment where prisoners stay alone in a cell for 22 to 24 hours, with no human contact. In the USA, thousands of people are isolated under this method every year, with some 'supermax' prisons containing nothing but solitary confinement cells. Literature on the impact of isolation on an individual has identified depression, hallucination and delirium as some of the consequences of solitary confinement, but little is known about the impact on prisoners after they have been released. Considering the importance of social bonds, this dissertation explores the potential effects of solitary confinement on the process of re-entry and eventual desistance from crime. It does so by analysing a series of autobiographies, collected in the book 'Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement', by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd. Specifically, the dissertation focuses on six narratives from former solitary confinement prisoners that address the relationship between the effects of isolation and its impacts on social bonds. The findings tentatively suggest that the post-release effects of solitary confinement are easier to overcome for those supported by encouraging relationships, in comparison to those without social support, making the process of re-entry a more successful one.

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INTRODUCTION

Solitary confinement is the term used to define an involuntary segregation in prison, where prisoners can stay confined for 22 to 24 hours a day alone in a small cell, acoustically isolated and with no personal contact. This method of punishment is also known by a variety of other names, being the most common: SHU (special housing unit), special control unit or supermax – the short for supermaximum security units (Kupers, 2017, Shalev, 2008, Haney and Lynch, 1997, Cassella, Ridgeway and Shourd. 2016, Guenther, 2013).

Solitary confinement originated in 1790, in the USA, which stands alone in the world incarcerating thousands of prisoners in supermax for long or indefinite term, according to Amnesty International (2014). At least one in five prisoners across the country has experienced solitary (Reiter, 2016) and estimations of Solitary Watch (2015), a non-profit national watchdog group, indicates that at least forty-four states in the USA have supermax prisons, composed exclusively of solitary cells. Around 80.000 to 100.000 prisoners are isolated in confinement and thousands of these people leave prison and return to society annually, ending up jobless or homeless (Thompson, 2015). Considering that there are no follow-up studies of formerly isolated prisoners following their release from prison, as argued by Shalev (2008), this paper reflects upon how they will manage their re-entries after experiencing complete isolation.

The damaging physical and psychological effects of solitary confinement on the individual are well established in the literature. Although they can vary according to factors such as personal background and duration of isolation, findings from

multiple studies (Guenter,2013, Shalev, 2009, Kupers, 2017, Casella et al. 2016) have revealed a set of symptoms including: delirium, agitated psychosis and random violence (Kupers, 2017). Some of the clinical impacts of isolation can be similar to those of physical torture, exhibiting different negative psychological and physiological reactions (Casella et al. 2016).

After observing that patients who had spent long times in SHU exhibited a tendency to psychosis and isolation, psychiatrist Terry Kupers (2017) articulated the 'SHU post-release syndrome', which includes a range of symptoms that goes from hyperawareness of one's surrounding to problems with memory. According to the author, significant portions of the SHU post release syndrome are reported by the vast majority of prisoners and ex-prisoners he has met. Shalev (2008) also attributes symptoms caused by reinsertion in society after release from solitary confinement and argues that some may continue to live in relative social isolation for being unable to regain the necessary skills for living in community. Moreover, previous research (Mears and Bales, 2009) has noted that isolated confinement method prevents inmates from sustaining or creating a social bond.

Reducing recidivism and promoting desistance are important goals of the correctional system and research on the both topics has been converging lately. However, there has been limited overlap between the study on desistance from crime and prison outcomes (Maruna and Toch, 2005, Nakamura and Bucklen, 2014). Considering that criminal justice interventions should act in sympathy with broader processes in offender lives that can lead to change, institutions and their methods must concern that inmates will interact with society again, at some point (Maruna and Toch, 2005, Farral, Calverley and Dawson, 2006). According to Sampson and Laub's theory of informal social control, crime and deviance are

products of a broken weak bond of one to society (2005) and, as the investment in social bonds grows, the incentive for avoiding crime increases (Nagin, Laub and Sampson, 1998). Knowing that very few studies have examined what happens after prisoners are released from supermax facilities (Reiter, 2016), is relevant to address, hence, whether the post release effects of solitary confinement impact on bonding to society, taking into consideration the promotion of desistance from crime.

Drawing from Sampson and Laub's (1993) proposed theory, this dissertation's purpose is to explore the relationship between the central role of social bonds in the movement away from crime and the suggestion that a successful transition back to society can be critical for those coming from solitary confinement (Mears and Bales, 2009). For that, data will be collected from a single source: the book 'Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement', by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd. Specifically, the dissertation focuses on the self-reports of six people, men and women, all former solitary confinement prisoners in the USA (contained within the section of the book titled 'Surviving'). The method used is biographical analysis, an approach growing in importance in helping criminological researchers to understand the routes that different people's lives take as criminal (Goodey, 2000). As a qualitative method, biographical analysis searches for experiences that are connected to life course stages (Denzin, 1989), and in so doing reveals people's understandings of the meaning of those experiences and their relationship to the contexts within which they live (Corti and Bishop, 2005). In relation to the current topic, it will be used to explore the impacts of solitary confinement on social bonds and subsequent desistance from crime, from the perspective of ex-prisoners.

The overall structure of the dissertation takes the form of five chapters. This initial introductory chapter has outlined the background and context to the study, and the dissertation aims and methodology. Chapter 1, the literature review, will provide an introduction to relevant research relating to solitary confinement, identifying the key issues and evidence of literature gap. Chapter 2, Methodology, will describe how the research was conducted, and the strengths and weaknesses arising from this. Chapter 3, Data analysis, will report the results of the narratives analysed and discuss what are the findings and their implications for criminology. Lastly, the concluding chapter will summarise and bring together the main points of the research, reflecting on the topic and suggesting future work regarding it.

CHAPTER ONE:

Literature Review

The introduction delimited the discussion areas of this research and offered the principle ideas on how this work will be developed. This chapter will more broadly outline the research topics of discussion, addressing the literature gap and pointing out key issues regarding it. To begin with, it will present a definition on what solitary confinement means, its background and possible consequences, as suggested by literature. After explaining the construction of the post-release syndrome, which is the point to be explored in the research, it will discuss the importance of desistance and recidivism for the criminal justice system, evidencing the link between both topics. Finally, the importance of social bonds will be highlighted, based on the Sampson and Laub's theory of informal social control.

Solitary Confinement

Solitary Confinement is generally used to refer to conditions of isolation of others. As stated by Kupers (2017), it is an involuntary confinement, apart from other mainstream prisoners, where prisoners stay confined for upwards of twenty-three hours a day and afforded limited access to meaningful programming of any kind and any kind of social contact. Kupers, who is also a psychiatrist, describes his visits to supermaximum security prison facility, attesting that prisoners spend almost twenty-four hours a day alone, eating meals alone and don't have opportunities to be productive.

On 'A Sourcebook of Solitary Confinement', Shalev (2008) classifies the punishment as a form of confinement where prisoners spend 22 to 24 hours a day

alone in their cell in separation from each other. For Amnesty International, it means all forms of incarceration that totally remove a prisoner from inmate society, often meaning that the prisoner is also visually and acoustically isolated, and has no personal contact (Haney and Lynch, 1997). Casella et al. (2016) define solitary confinement as the practice of isolating people in closed cells for 22 to 24 hours a day, free of human contact, for an indeterminate time; it can go from days to decades. These authors also mention that the term 'solitary confinement' is not commonly used by prison systems and this kind of incarceration can be also known as segregate units, special housing units, security housing units, special management units among others. To the people who are confined, they are the SHU (pronounced 'shoe'), or even the box, the hole, the bing or the block. Also, Guenther (2013) mentions 'special control unit', 'intensive management unit' as names for these very similar prisons, but states that generic and most commonly used term is 'supermax', the short for 'super-maximum security'. To better define the term, Guenther mentions Riverland (1999, p.6) in the study commissioned by the US Department of Justice's National Institute of Corrections:

A highly restrictive, high-custody housing unit within a secure facility or an entire secure facility, that isolates inmates from the general prison population and from each other due to grievous crimes, repetitive assaultive or violent institutional behaviour, the threat of escape or actual escape from high-custody facility(s) or inciting or threatening to incite disturbances in a correctional institution. (2013, p.03).

On Riverland's research, the definition presented of solitary confinement had the agreement of more than 95 per cent of US prison wardens, according to a survey carried in 2004 by Mears (2005).

The argument that sustains prison administrators view on the topic is that supermax prisons serve as a general deterrent with the correctional population (insert ref). It occurs as individuals observe the imposition of the threatened punishment on others and understands that, if punishment is distributed in adequate manners and appropriate severity, offending rates are expected to decrease. However, research on supermax facilities is limited, making difficult to draw conclusions about effects that it might have on inmates' behaviour and mental health (Pizarro and Stenius, 2004).

History and development of solitary confinement in the USA

According to Amnesty International, the USA stands virtually alone in the world in incarcerating thousands of prisoners in long-term or indefinite solitary confinement (2014). It is also the country in which the use of solitary confinement as a method for punishment has its origins, in 1790. As explained by Casella et al. (2016), The Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia built a new kind of cellblock where 16 individuals were held in single cells, so they wouldn't be able to communicate with one another. The ideal behind this innovation for the time was a belief that all human beings were capable of redemption, assuming that the new regime was softer somehow and more effective than overcrowded jails. That's because the prison population was in massive expansion in the US; jail and prison crowding due to The War on Drugs, along with harsh prison sentences, has built a scenario which

led the way to the propagation of isolation as a method of confinement (Kupers, 2017).

In 1829, Pennsylvania inaugurated the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, where two hundred fifty men and women could be held in solitary confinement (Casella et al. 2016). But it was in October of 1983 that an event dictates the new turn for solitary confinement. Two officers were stabbed to death at a maximum security federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, and prison administration decided to 'lock down' the entire prison. From that moment on, all prisoners were confined to their cells for nearly twenty-four hours per day and all rehabilitations programs were cancelled. The use of solitary confinement didn't last only for days or for as long as the prison control was re-established – it inaugurated a new form of control and continued for the next twenty-three years (Kupers, 2017).

In the early-to mid-nineteenth century, crime was seen as an infectious, but curable disease through reform in prison. The idea was to separate the sick from the healthy environment, the bad from the good influences. The penitentiaries proposed reform through solitary and presented a vision of order, where punishment was to be humane and private. Solitary confinement was considered, then, a civilized punishment (Shalev, 2009).

The numbers of solitary confinement

Despite of the research evidence attesting the harmful effects of solitary confinement and the complications that its involved with it, 'at no point in the modern history of imprisonment have so many prisoners been so completely isolated for so long in a period of time in facilities designed so completely for the

purpose of near total isolation' as today (Haney and Lynch, 1997, p. 480). Although data regarding solitary confinement is sparse and there's not an official number about how many prisoners are held under this kind of segregation (Kupers, 2017), Shalev (2009) indicates that from 1995 to 2000, the number of individuals held in solitary confinement increased by 40% and in 2005, much faster than the number of prison population. Reiter (2016) indicates that state and federal system across the United States have failed to track how many prisoners are in isolation and for how long. These numbers are hardly educated guesses and the best estimates consists of voluntary institutional self-reports.

According to the non-profit national watchdog group Solitary Watch (2015), at least 44 states in the United States have supermax prisons, which are composed exclusively of solitary confinement cells, and it's estimated that around 80,000 to 100,000 incarcerated persons are in some form of isolated confinement. Reiter (2016) also argues, based on organizations reports, that in 2015, at least one in five prisoners across the United States had spent time in isolated confinement in the previous year and that average lengths of such stays can be as long as two or three years.

Moreover, Reiter (2016) observes that tens of thousands of people experience solitary confinement annually, and thousands of them leave prison and return to communities, bringing to reflection what happens after it. The Marshall Project, a non-profit organization covering the U.S criminal justice system, contacted corrections departments in all 50 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons to ask what data they collect on the prisoners being released directly from any kind of segregated housing unit into the community. The organization asked for annual release counts from 2008 through 2014 and had found that 24 states

released more than 10.000 people from solitary in 2014. The actual total is higher, as 26 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons could not say how often it happens.

These individuals go from complete isolation one day to complete freedom the next, yet they are in many ways the least equipped to make the transition home... And in several states once those inmates in solitary are freed, they are more likely to be released without the help of a probation or parole officer. Those who make the jarring leap from solitary to the streets can easily end up jobless, homeless — or back in prison. (Thompson, 2015)

Purposes

Although the use of solitary confinement in the US has been constant, the purpose of it has changed across the decades. In the late 1970s, it was clear that prisons had abandoned any notions of rehabilitation and the US was dealing with a critical scenario of massive incarceration. Casella et al. (2016) also mention the shift toward the deinstitutionalization of people with mental illness, which received almost no treatment and support in the community. The sum of all these factors led to an increase in prison violence and solitary confinement seemed to be the reasonable strategy, putting prisoners under total control. For Lovell et al. (2007), citing Rhodes (2004), 'For many staff, the decision to send someone to supermax, or to keep him there, is more a reactive than a preventive or predictive judgment, often proceeding from a feeling that they have no other means of responding appropriately to prisoners who keep on misbehaving' (p. 651).

Kupers (2017) indicates that administrators and police makers did believe that long-term solitary confinement was the solution for controlling prison gang and violence problems, however, the gang problem remained the same and violence didn't get any better. The results of solitary observed were immense human damage, reflected in the degree and chronicity of serious mental illness in the prisoner population and in rising recidivism rates and parole violation rates' (p. 09).

Cohen and Taylor (date ref), mentioned by Haney and Lynch (1997) explain that special security 'wings' were created in Britain justified by a creation of the media and the judiciary about a new type of criminal, who were somehow worse than others. The idea that some prisoners are 'the worst of the worst' generates an escalation on punishment levels, represented by the use of solitary confinement (Haney and Lynch, 1997).

A significant number of prison institutions use solitary confinement for undetermined time to punish, protect, house, or treat some of the young people who are held there (Kysel, 2012). In fact, juveniles placed in adult prisons and jails are more likely to be in solitary confinement because of immature misbehaviour, and, as Casella et al. (2016) explains, people who are LGBTQ or immigrants are frequently held in solitary confinement, whether for 'safety' reasons or for 'failing to speak English when able'. Solitary is also designed for gang members, who are subjected to increase punishment under this method of incarceration (Haney and Lynch, 1997). Similarly, Shalev (2009) cites different roles of solitary confinement that varies across the time: reformation, behaviour modification, punishment, protection, prisoner management and control.

However, as mentioned by Kupers (2017), whatever justifies separation must not entail isolation. That's a must needed differentiation when approaching this topic; prisoners who need to be separated from the others because of a delicate situation must be transferred to another setting where they will not be isolated in a cell, keeping their freedom and access to opportunities such as jobs and education, that their classification level permits.

Effects

Studies reveal that the effects of solitary confinement are psychologically severe, consistent in terms of history and geography and experienced by a great number of those who had been held in solitary confinement (Guenther, 2013). The extent of these effects varies according to multiple factors such as personal background, environmental conditions, context and duration of the isolation (Shalev, 2009). Mental illness in supermax prisoners, for example, has been found to be particularly high. As indicated by Kupers (2017), findings from the research conducted by the psychiatrist Grassian in the 1980s described a particular set of symptoms that constituted a clinically distinguishable psychiatric syndrome, that could have the features of a delirium and among the more vulnerable population could result in an acute agitated psychosis and random violence. Some of them were hypersensitiveness to external stimuli (noises, smells, etc) and massive free-floating anxiety, besides hallucinations and perceptual illusion, cognitive difficulties such as confusional states, difficulty concentrating and memory lapses. More, it was identified paranoia, aggressive fantasies, and impulsive control problems, as well as suicide attempts (Kupers, 2017). A briefing paper from the American Civil

Liberties Union's National Prison Project affirmed that some of the clinical impacts of isolation can be similar to those of physical torture, exhibiting a variety of negative psychological and physiological reactions, such as hypersensitivity to stimuli, perceptual distortions, and hallucinations; increased anxiety and nervousness; revenge fantasies, rage and irrational anger; fears of persecution; lack of impulse control; severe and chronic depression; appetite loss and weight loss; heart palpitations; withdrawal; blunting of affect and apathy; talking to oneself; headaches; problems sleeping; confusing thoughts processes; nightmares, dizziness; self-mutilation; lower levels of brain function, including a decline in the electroencephalograms (EEG) activity after only seven days in solitary confinement (Casella et al. 2016).

P. Smith, on his turn, classified a range of symptoms identified in solitary confinement literature, based on studies, also confirming the following ones: anxiety, fatigue, confusion, paranoia, depression, hallucinations, headaches and uncontrollable trembling (2006, p.488).

Kupers' forensic examination (2017), in which most of the research was conducted at the Supermax House Unit at California's Pelican Bay State Prison, exhibits the testimonials of inmates (men and woman) interviewed during the past forty years combined with psychiatric analysis. In his research, many prisoners who have spent years in solitary reported that the anger they felt all the time keeps building in intensity, and they worry that they will lose control of it. Sleep deprivation is also common, and it intensifies psychiatric symptoms by interfering with the normal diurnal rhythm, also amplifying anxiety.

Post release effects

Reflections on this debate bring an important issue to discussion: SHU postrelease syndrome. After noticing a very strong impulse to isolate in patients who had spent long times in SHU, Kupers (2017) articulated the symptom complex that appeared often in this kind of prisoner: a tendency to retreat into a circumscribed, small place, greatly limit the number of people one interacts with, anxiety in unfamiliar places and with unfamiliar people, hyperawareness of one's surrounding, heightened suspicion of everyone who comes close, difficulty expressing feelings, difficulty trusting others, problems with concentration and memory, personality changes and, in some cases, a tendency to resort to alcohol and illicit substances. The psychiatrist noted that a significant number of these symptoms emerge whether the prisoner has been released to the community or transferred to a general-population. For him, they have become so habituated to being isolated in a small place, that they would recreate their isolated cells in the bigger world of the community or general population prison, because somehow that's how they would feel safe. According to Kuper, there's no universal duration for the referred symptoms and it works similarly to a posttraumatic stress disorder: significant portions of the SHU postrelease syndrome are reported by the vast majority of prisoners and ex-prisoners he has met, who have been released from solitary confinement after a long stint.

Shalev (2008), on her turn, claims that there are no follow-up studies of formerly isolated prisoners following their release from prison. However, the author mentions an evidence of a study conducted at the Western prison in Copenhagen by Andersen et al. (2003), which found a decrease in symptoms soon after transfer to the general population. Again, a rapid diminution of symptoms during breaks in

confinement were attested in Grassian's (1983) research, also mentioned by Shalev. She contrasts these two findings with Hocking (1970) study, which reported sleep disturbances, nightmares, depression, anxiety, phobias, emotional dependence, confusion, impaired memory and concentration long after release from solitary confinement. Finally, based on prisoners' reports, she concludes that some former prisoners may continue to live in relative social isolation after release for being unable to regain the necessary social skills for living a life in society.

In the pages that follow, it will be analysed how this complex of post-release symptoms can influence the process of re-entry in terms of social bonds: does it hinder the process of desistance from crime?

The criminal justice system role, desistance and recidivism

The subject of 'what works' in ex-prisoner re-entry has become one of the most pressing matters within the field of criminology. There's a particular interest in predicting the success or failure of prisoners prior to their release and what post prison factors are most closely to determine it. Recidivism is usually the norm rather than exception after a prison sentence. In the USA, Bureau of Justice Statistics on Recidivism show that, by 2014, within three years of release, almost 68% of released prisoners were rearrested. Half of the 68% rearrested were arrested by the end of the first year. According to the National Institute of Justice of the USA, funds were provided to conduct an important research on desistance from crime in the country, that builds on earlier work that examined the main effects of re-entry programming on recidivism (National Institute of Justice, 2014).

Nevertheless, little has been studied regarding the role of the correctional system in desistance and it's not possible to ignore the marks that imprisonment can leave in one's life. A lot of practices done in the name of 'corrections' can be counterproductive in terms of producing defiance or creating dependence, rather than developing one's good ability (Maruna and Toch, 2005). As Farrall et al. (2006) assert, criminal justice interventions should act in sympathy with broader processes in offender lives that can lead to change. Institutions, their methods and sanctions must concern that the person maintained in custody for a certain period will eventually interact with society again. Indeed, interventions are most likely to be effective when it works with offenders, not on them (McNeill et al. 2014).

Moreover, Nakamura and Bucklen (2014), based on the evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, suggest that correctional and re-entry interventions may facilitate longer-term offending reduction and desistance. Unless the criminal system is concerned with rehabilitation and reducing reoffending, desistance theory cannot go further (McNeill et al. 2014). That said, is relevant to question whether the effects of solitary confinement influence on the process of reintegration of former prisoners, considering that reducing recidivism, promoting desistance and successful re-entry are very important goals of the correctional system. According to the US National Institute of Justice, recidivism is an important feature when considering the core criminal justice topics of incapacitation, specific deterrence and rehabilitation. Many funded studies by the institution depend on recidivism measurement to inform probation and parole policy, for example (insert 2008).

It is also important to note that the idea of human agency cannot be divorced from this discussion. It must always be considered the importance of programs in

corrections systems that focus on providing opportunities for work, housing and education for those returning to society, but, conversely, increased opportunities itself wouldn't be enough in reducing recidivism once cognitive, motivational change has not taken place (Nakamura and Bucklen, 2014). 'In short, human beings make choices to participate in crime or not, and life course criminology has been remiss to have left agency, which is essentially human social actions' (Sampson and Laub, 2005, p. 38-39). Therefore, is not possible to expect behavioural change even when support is offered if the individual has not taken the decision to desist, on the same way that this choice, without structures of support, is destined to fail.

Until very lately there has been limited overlap between the research on desistance from crime and research on prison outcomes, regardless of the evident connection between these two topics, which have been converging lately (Maruna and Toch, 2005, Nakamura and Bucklen, 2014). Likewise, Sampson and Laub (2005) indicate that persistent offending and desistance can be comprehended within the same theoretical framework. 'Desistance and recidivism are obviously related, both conceptually and empirically' (Paternoster et al. 2013, p. 85). While the former means the end of a criminal career, the latter is the renewal of the offending career, usually after a contact with the criminal justice system such as incarceration. According to Paternoster, Brame and Bushway (2013), these two models are, in fact, measuring the same concept, with hazard rate models focusing on short-term change in the chances of offending and trajectory models focusing on the long-term of it. Considering that, they concluded on their research that the offending rate should be able to predict the hazard rate and that studies of recidivism and desistance can perfectly learn from each other.

Lovell, Johnson and Cain (2007) conducted a study entitled 'Recidivism of Supermax Prisoners in Washington State', using a retrospective matched control design. Considering how little systematic research has been conducted on who gets assigned to supermax, how it affects them while they're there and whether such facilities reduce violence within prison systems, their research concluded that supermax assignment did make a significant difference to recidivism, but only for those held in supermax until the end of their prison sentences. That means that they reoffend more quickly than comparable supermax offenders who weren't release directly to the community. They point out to two processes that could be responsible for it: first, supermax confinement may induce perceptual and emotional states making it difficult to cope with the demands of society. Second, that the reason that some offenders are kept in supermax right up to the day of their release is that they are more antisocial than others. However, the authors mentioned that 'No inference to a causal explanation of our findings can be solid in the absence of random assignment of offenders to different custody and release conditions' (p. 650), explaining that their explanations about it are only a possibility. They also attest that 'Nevertheless, this study provides little support for the hypothesis that the likelihood of recidivism is exacerbated by supermax assignment by itself' (p. 652), and demonstrate the need of a longitudinal analysis, based on narrative data, of what prisoners do and how they are treated through various stages including post supermax prison life and the transition to society. The authors understand that a qualitative rich study is required to asses the effect of keeping prisoners in solitary until release.

Mears and Bales (2009) also evidence the lack of empirical assessment of whether solitary confinement actually increases or decreases recidivism, although

the authors argue that a careful reading of the literature reveals strong theoretical grounds to support views on the impact of supermax incarceration. On one hand, they demonstrate the central argument for the hypothesis that supermax confinement decreases recidivism: a notion of specific deterrence and a deterrent effect stemming from the severity of punishment. Accordingly, inmates held under solitary confinement should be deterred from committing any crime, specially those that might result in a return to a supermax unit. Citing King (2005) and Pizarro and Narag (2008), the authors indicate that such confinement may enable some inmates to develop more patience and self-control. Another argument, citing Pizzaro and Narag (2008), is that isolation gives inmates a chance to reflect on their actions.

On the other hand, Mears and Bales identify as an argument for supermax housing increasing recidivism the 'rage hypothesis', which is the idea that inmates become so angry and frustrated by their experience in supermax that they emerge with desire for revenge. Another argument is that the nature of supermax can be critical to successful transitions back into society – therefore, the ability to maintain or develop a strong social bond is diminished, increasing the risk of recidivism according to social bond theory, which will be further discussed in this paper. Again, a third argument is the accounts of inmates reporting the unfairness of their placement in solitary, making this sense of mistreatment an expectation for future offending. Using data from the Florida Department of Corrections, a matched sample from the general inmate population were compared with supermax inmates in an attempt to clarify those divergent hypotheses. In their findings, there was no evidence that supermax prisoners were more likely than general prisoners to be violent recidivists. As attested by the authors, when comparing to the Lovell,

Johnson, and Cain's (2007) study of Washington supermax inmates, 'As with their study, we found no effect of supermax incarceration on recidivism in general, but in contrast to their study, we found that such incarceration was associated with an increase in violent recidivism' (p. 1154).

Another very relevant point noted by Mears and Bales (2009), citing Gottfredson (2006) and Hirschi (1969), was that such housing prevents inmates from sustaining or creating a social bond and doesn't assist inmates in developing effective strategies to achieve goals or manage interpersonal conflict. The effect is predicted in part from studies of prisoner re-entry, suggesting that a successful transition back to society can be critical. Citing Maruna (2001), Sampson and Laub (2005), they indicate that it is anticipated by life-course theories that highlight the critical role of transitions as turning points in individual's lives.

Overall, Keramet Reiter (2016) emphasize that very few studies have examined what happens after prisoners get out of supermax facilities, and the ones that have examined the dangerousness of supermax released inmates are inconclusive – for that, he mentions Mears and Bales (2009) and Lovell et al. (2007).

The importance of social bonds

In spite of all the difficulties in defining desistance, it is known that those who desist from crime seem to be involved with prosocial roles and positions of familial, occupational and community responsibility than those who do not (Maruna and Toch, 2005). That is to say that 'Desistance can only be understood within the context of human relationships; not just relationships between supervisors and

offenders (though these matter a great deal) but also between offenders and those who matter to them' (McNeill et al. 2014, p. 964). Drawing from the Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory of informal social control, considered by Maruna and Toch (2005) the best developed and best-known theory of desistance, Nagin et al. (1998) emphasize the central role of social bonds in the movement away from criminal behaviour. The authors' research attests that as the investment in social bonds grows, the incentive for avoiding crime increases because more is at stake.

Sampson and Laub (1995) defined that life trajectories and transitions may generate turning points or a change in the life course, and adaptation to life events is crucial because one event followed by different adaptations can lead to different trajectories. Social institutions and triggering life events such school, work, marriage and parenthood have the capacity to modify these trajectories. To this end, the main idea of social control theory is that crime and deviance are products of a broken or weak bond of one to society. The authors also argued that the stronger the adult ties to work and family, the less crime and deviance among both delinquents and nondelinquents controls. The same applies to marriage, regardless of that spouse's own behaviour (Sampson and Laub, 2005).

Notwithstanding the fact that these events in life are also conditioned by other factors such as the individual background, level of motivation, openness to change or interpretation of the events (LeBel et al., 2008), it must be recognized the great importance of social ties and how they can effectively impact in the process of desistance of crime and reintegration.

In sum, the USA numbers on incarceration and use of solitary confinement are prominent. There's a lack on data regarding the use of isolation methods in the

country, and estimations on it are provided by organizations, researchers and watchdog groups. Likewise, literature doesn't properly address the outcomes of solitary confinement. Reflecting on the concerns that the criminal justice system must have, it's, therefore, relevant to explore how the set of symptoms that comes from solitary confinement interfere on life post release, specially in terms of social relating, which will be studied on the following sections.

CHAPTER TWO:

Methodology

Having established concepts and the key issues that this dissertation will explore, it will now turn to the description of the methodology to be used in order to collect and analyse data. It will also attempt to detail the weaknesses and strengths of the chosen methods and understand why those are feasible for this project.

This dissertation aims to approach solitary confinement as a method of punishment from an inmate's own perspective. It will explore the impacts of this type of confinement on former prisoners and its implications for desistance from crime, drawing on first-hand accounts. The goal is to explore how and to what extent the considered effects of solitary confinement (such as hypersensitivity to external stimuli, paranoia, depression and hallucination) can impact the process of reintegration, in terms of interacting with other people and thereby building relationships.

Data will be sourced from the book 'Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement', by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd, which compiles first-hand accounts on solitary confinement experiences. This book is published by The New Press, which is guided by a 'not-for-profit' mission and is concerned to enrich and promote public discussion and comprehension on vital issues to democracy and an equitable world. Their focus is on several key program areas, like contemporary social issues, women's issues, human rights and the media, for instance. The press is very much an activist organisation and aims to broaden the audience for serious intellectual work red-lined by commercial

publishers, to bring out the work of traditionally underrepresented voices and address the problems of a society in transition (The New Press insert date ref).

'Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement', brings a collection of 16 first-hand accounts provided by men and women, currently and former imprisoned in solitary confinement, which are supplemented by the writing of noted experts, exploring the psychological, legal, ethical, and political dimensions of solitary confinement (Solitary Watch, 2016). The current dissertation analyses six stories from the chapter 'Surviving', based on self-reports from people who have already experienced solitary confinement and now are back in the community. The autobiographies presented include interviews with and letters written by prisoners – and are therefore considered (for the purposes of the current dissertation) as primary sources. It is recognise, however, that they have been collated for a specific purpose, in order to stimulate public debate on solitary confinement, around human rights and prison reform. They will have been edited by the book editors with this in mind, and cannot be considered to be representative of the wider prisoner population. That said, considering the lack of available research based on the voices of those who have experienced solitary confinement, they provide an appropriate source for analysis, albeit exploratory.

Autobiographical approaches

The questions to be addressed in the empirical research are: Do former solitary confinement prisoners reported suffering from the effects identified in the literature? If so, how did these affect the process of reinsertion in society, particularly the social factors related to the desistance process? Autobiographical methods offer a

suitable approach to answering these questions, and indeed are an important and longstanding tradition within criminological research. As Stanley (1993) notes, 'from one person we can recover social processes and social structure, networks and social change and so forth, for people are located in a cultural and social environment that constructs and shapes not only what we see but how we see it' (p.43). Hence the individual 'life stories can be extremely valuable as touchstones for evaluating our theories of crime' (Leonard 1988, cited in Goodey 2000), or indeed of punishment.

According to Gelsthorpe (2007), when questioning about the distinction between biography and autobiography, Merton *et. al* (1979) prefer the term 'sociological autobiography', while Stanley (1993) use 'auto/biography'. For the author, it makes sense to collapse the two categories and refer more generally to 'biography'. That's because, in practice, autobiographies are usually replete of biographies of significant others in the subject's life, which will be detailed further. In sum, autobiographies are now the most commonly used term for life writing (Smith and Watson, 2010).

Historically, life story has a long association with the Chicago School Sociologists of the 1920s/1930, who designed their studies within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism (Goodey, 2000). The impact that individual stories causes in criminal justice policy are, sometimes, much more than traditional scientific endeavours, as indicated by Gelsthorpe (2007), who also mentions one of the strengths of this method: the ability to synthesize the individual with the social and put the 'social' back in social science.

Another great strength in the use of examinations of individual autobiographies as a method of research lies in the fact that it helps the criminological researcher understand the particular route different people's lives take as criminal or non-criminal actors, under pressure of constraint and opportunity from powerful social structures, which the individual can obey, struggle against, adapt or try to ignore. Stanley (1993) notes that is by the use of live stories that connections between what is epistemologically crucial to the discipline and what is socially fascinating to the reading public, are demonstrated. For her, biography and autobiography are fundamental to sociology, because the sociological interest lies within the epistemological problems concerning how we understand 'the self' and a 'life' and how we justify the knowledge-claims we make in the name of the discipline.

Considering that life writing is a general term for writing that takes a life as it's subject, whether biographical, historical, or autobiographical (Smith and Watson, 2010), it must be emphasized the five strengths on the use of life-history approaches given by Laub and Sampson (2006). First, that life-history method reveals in the offenders' own words the personal-situational context of their behaviour and their views of the larger social and historical circumstances in which their behaviour is embedded. Second, it can uncover complex patterns of continuity and change in individual behaviour over time. Third, it reveals the complexity of criminal behaviour, offering a way to break down complex phenomena by providing detailed information about events as they are experienced and their significance for the authors involved. Fourth, life histories are based in social and historical context, and, finally, it shows the human side of offenders. Summarising, the method offers advantage that cannot be find in other quantitative data approach and has the power to reorient criminology to the concrete.

This method searches for experiences in one's life that are connected to socially established life course stages; for example, marriage, employment and unemployment - important points of discussion in this paper. It involves the studied use and collection of accounts, stories and narratives which describe turning-point moments in life. These turning-points are significant events that change the fundamental meaning structures in one's life. It leaves permanent marks and is usually moments of crisis, called epiphanies (Denzin, 1989). Goodey (2000) explains the biographical concept of epiphany as a thorough approach to individual biographies, combining the study of 'the individual' with elements of 'the social'. This experience's meaning is always given retrospectively, when a person tells about what has happened, and when it's done carefully, introduce the psychologically complex subject to criminology. In this case, the epiphany to be observed is the experience of solitary confinement, the marks left by it and its impacts in the post-prison life.

It must be taken into consideration that impacts of memories and temporality on people's version of their lives and the fact that the story being told represents a partial account of one's life (Goodey, 2000), realising that there's no absolute guarantee of reaching reality and truth. There's a line between fact and fiction when it comes to biography analysis and, as Denzin (1989) points out, an author can make up facts about his or her life, and it's not possible to tell what is true and what is false. That's for lives and the biographical methods that construct them are literary productions- 'A story is always an interpretive account; but, of course, all interpretations are biased' (1989, p. 74). The reader reads biographical texts using the eyes of a reader. That means, writers and readers conspire to create the lives they write and read about. 'A story that is told is never the same story that is heard.

Each teller speaks from a biographical position that is unique and, in a sense, unshareable' (Denzin, 1989, p.72).

Similarly, in Steedman (2000) analysis of Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Maria, or, The Wrongs of Woman', the author concluded that Jemima, the one that tells the story, is restored to herself and able to empathise with Maria, the one who the story is about. She emphasizes that in the case of possible expropriation of narratives by others in different classes and circumstances a story of the self – told or written- was not the same thing as the life lived. The author advises that one of the many ways in which forms of selfhood have been transmitted and appropriated is through the reading of literary selves. If ways of being a person, and ideas of what a person is, are read, appropriated and learned differently in different historical epochs, then they are also taught. Steedman's quotation of Hooks perfectly illustrates this:

'No need to heed your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become my own. Re-writing you I rewrite myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still coloniser, the speaking subject, and you are now at the centre of my tale.' (2000, cited Hooks, 1990, p. 343).

Indeed, Gelsthorpe (2007) argues, mentioning Paul Rabinow, that even for researches there is no way to escape from our own consciousness in our own activities or those of others - there is no absolute perspective. To reflect on this weakness, the author uses 'The Jack-Roller' case as an example. In this book, Clifford Shaw, the writer of the auto-biographical book about the story of Stanley, who would 'drink and rob', mixed his own story with the context of the time and the

criminal story to produce 'The Jack-Roller'. That raised an important methodological question: the need for reflexivity in the research process. Likewise, Ian Shaw (2009) attests that the author of the autobiographical book discusses Stanley's story in the boy's own words, and not translated into the language of the person investigating the case. For Ian, it seems clear that interventions were agreed largely on the basis of Shaw's analysis and interpretations. Again, Gelsthorpe (2007) also mentions Jennifer Hunt, explaining that researchers and participants are subject and object, at once, and the meaningful character is accomplished in relation to each other. Further, she also brings to discussion the fact that 'Facts are a bit of biography', making reference to Lafferty, demonstrating that we pick up attitudes and expectations of our habits, spending much of our life in an unreflexively manner – most of what we do and say are thoughtless.

On the other hand, Gelsthorpe (2007) also stressed that personal values and beliefs have an important role in the type of theorizing we reflect upon. It must be shown that individuals can make a difference, otherwise there's no point in studying through a biographical approach.

Analysis

The approach to analysis that will be used in this research is qualitative content analysis, for its focus on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. In this method, data might have been obtained from narrative responses and interviews and the analysis is concerned with examining language intensely, providing knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon in observation (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Similarly, Corti and Bishop (2005) notes that qualitative data are collected, in this case, aiming to capture lived experiences of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspectives, which makes it completely feasible for this work. Therefore, qualitative content analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the context of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This method is designed to go beyond the story presented in the data, revealing, discussing and contextualizing the meaning of the story by 'grounding it in the social world and the broader social processes by which meaning is produced' (Kort-Butler, 2016, p. 09).

Kort-Butler (2016) advises about reliability in quantitative content analysis. Since protocols on ethnographic content analysis assume an open-ended format, it represents an obstacle for standard metrics to assess inter-rater reliability. The author suggestion, however, is that efforts can be taken to ensure a level of agreement among coders. Individual consistency in coding is considered more critical than inter-rater reliability, considering the emphasis on reflexivity during data collection.

Once the researcher is aware of the issues and take actions to address them, secondary analyses of existing qualitative data is a real option, according to Hinds, Vogel and Clarke-Steffen (1997). That said, secondary analysis of qualitative data is the best approach to answer the questions proposed in this study once it will allow a deeper understanding of the narratives analysed and, also, a connection between the stories' content and the theories of the effects of solitary confinement and the process of desistance and society reinsertion.

Data source and research design

The source used for data collection are the testimonials of prisoners and ex-prisoners that had been through solitary confinement experience, content of the following book: *Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*, by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd.

The authors, Jean Casella and James Ridgeway are the co-directors and editors of the non-profit American watchdog group called Solitary Watch, that disseminates information on the widespread use of solitary confinement in prisons and jails. Sarah Shourd, on her turn, has spent more than a year of solitary confinement and writes the preface about her life-changing experience. The book exposes the narratives of sixteen men and women currently and formerly imprisoned in solitary confinement describe its effects on their minds and bodies (Solitary Watch, n.d). There are two parts: first one is entitled 'Voices from Solitary Confinement' with the following subheadings: 'Enduring', 'Resisting', and 'Surviving', where the testimonials of the sixteen imprisoned ones are divided. The second part of the book is entitled 'Perspectives on Solitary Confinement' and brings the standpoints of five researchers on the topic: Stuart Grassian, Terry Kupers, Laura Rovner, Jeanne Theoharis and Lisa Guenther.

There are six biographies to be analysed in the chapter 'Surviving' of the book *Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement* (Casella et al. 2016). Data will be categorized in the following sections: 'Post-release symptoms', 'social bonds' and 'accomplishments and important life events after release'. Following,

the findings will be discussed, taking into consideration the literature exposed regarding the topic.

Taking into account what Marshall (1996) noted on his study about benefits of a qualitative approach, the ideal sample size for a qualitative study is one that answers the research question. Sampling must consider not only the individual's characteristics but also temporal, spatial and situational influences. For this reason, as this study searches for the impact that solitary confinement effects present on post-prison life, the selected data will be the six biographies of the chapter: 'Surviving', which are narratives of men and woman, in different life moments, that had already been through solitary confinement. Hence, it will allow a deeper understanding of the post-prison experience process and the consequences of the effects of solitary. The chapter is composed of the stories of Brian Nelson, age 50, Enceno Macy, put in solitary confinement at 13, Barbra Perez, 36, Galen Baughman, 32 and Dolores Canales, 55.

It's also important to highlight that there is no knowledge on the methodology used by the authors when selecting participants for being categorized in the chapter 'Surviving', object of analysis in this study. As noted by Marczyk et al (2005), a limitation that arises when a pre-existing group or targeted specific people are selected in a research study is that it may not be generalizable to other groups or other individuals. Moreover, when interpreting data and drawing conclusions, is relevant to consider the role of culture and cultural hypotheses. Perhaps there is a culturally based explanation for the research finding.

Other limitations must also be considered. It's possible that the prisoners who told their stories didn't feel comfortable to provide details on some aspects of their

experiences, and it's not possible to affirm that because it wasn't reported, it didn't happen. It may also have happened that they simply decided not to tell or weren't even asked about it. Those are due to the fact that this research works with personal facts and life narratives, supported by voices that experienced it, published on a book that attempt to raise a debate on the topic.

Finally, after data collection and analysis, evidences will be verified, drawing conclusions on whether the post-release effects of solitary confinement can impact the process of desistance of crime and reinsertion in society in terms of building relationships.

CHAPTER THREE:

Data Analysis

Considering that the methodology that will guide this work was explained on previous chapter, it's relevant now to explanate how the narratives will be examined and categorized, in order to conclude what are the findings. Following, this paper will proceed to the actual data analysis and the discussion of its findings,

First, descriptions of any of the post-release symptoms mentioned on the literature regarding the topic, when verified in the narratives, will be placed in the 'Post-Release Symptoms' section. Those are: A tendency to retreat into a circumscribed, small place, greatly limit the number of people one interacts with, anxiety in unfamiliar places and with unfamiliar people, hyperawareness of one's surrounding, heightened suspicion of everyone who comes close, difficulty expressing feelings, difficulty trusting others, problems with concentration and memory, personality changes and, in some cases, a tendency to resort to alcohol and illicit substances (Kupers, 2017). Also, sleep disturbances, nightmares, depression, anxiety, phobias, emotional dependence, confusion, impaired memory and concentration long after release from solitary confinement (Shalev, 2009). Second, whenever there is a concise suggestion of the importance of a social interaction or relationship during the process of re-establishing life in society, or whenever this is described in the stories studied, it will be placed in the section 'Social bonds'. Finally, last section, 'Accomplishments and important life events after release', will evidence possible turning points and new achievements/events in life, such as parenthood, getting a job and engaging in social causes.

Finally, the chapter will reflect on how eventual post-release symptoms may impact social relationships, turning points and what has happened in life after solitary confinement. Whilst analysing data from the narratives, relevant discussion will be made, highlighting how the findings correlates to previous studies presented in this paper and the literature on the topic.

1) Post-release Symptoms:

According to Terry Kupers (2017), the post-release syndrome from solitary confinement refers to a significant group of ex-prisoners' experiences. Any long-term effects are likely to be dependent on the individual, the type of confinement and its duration; indeed, there is a large and growing body of literature that demonstrates the harmful impact of isolation (Shalev, 2008).

When analysing the tendency to retreat into a circumscribed, small place, the reports of Brian Nelson (p. 117-120) and Five Mualimm-Ak (p. 147- 152) exposed the need for a restrict space and the discomfort of being surrounded by people. That's possible to observe when Brian Nelson mentions that: 'My office is almost the exact same size of my cell. I need this space' (p. 118); 'He attended a protest in front of the Pontiac Prison but had to leave because he felt sick to his stomach' (p. 117). Another example is when Mualimm-Ak says: 'And in that moment, all I wanted was to be back in a safe, confined place, knowing exactly what was around me, far away from all those people' (p. 150).

Both former prisoners also indicated an intolerance to people's contact. Brian Nelson reports that: 'I'm afraid of people, really scared of people' (p. 117). 'I like being away from people, I am so afraid of people ... how do I tell my mother I'm afraid of her?' (p.118). 'I love going to work at 5:00 a.m. I'm the only one there and

all I do is read letters from prisoners' (p. 118). Likewise, Five Mualimm-Ak mentions that: 'I don't like people to touch me... I'm only beginning to recover my ability to talk on the phone. I have a hard time feeling connected to people' (p.152). These symptoms, identified as a heightened suspicion of everyone who comes close, difficulty trusting others and the greatly number of people one interacts with, are also noticed on the testimonials of Enceno May (p. 121-124), who gave his testimonial on his last year on prison, after being held under solitary confinement. He explains that 'I still feel lonely and I have a hard time trusting, so I don't consider too many people my 'friends' (p. 123).

The literature on the post-release symptoms notes that people become habituated to being isolated and being exposed to any more populated area is overwhelming and frightening. What happens is that they are recreating solitary inside community, for the reason which is where they feel safe (Kupers, 2017). According to Shalev (2008), studies indicated that it's a shock to leave a highly restricted environment and re-enter a free society, being such an overwhelming experience that some prisoners will seek to return to incarceration. Grassian, mentioned by Shalev (2008), attests that a manifestation of intolerance to social interaction often prevents the inmate from successfully readjust to general population prison and often severely impairs the inmate's capacity to reintegrate into the broader society. The descriptions provided by the former prisoners are in accordance to what Shalev (2008) argued: 'Unable to regain the necessary social skills for leading a 'normal' life, many former prisoners continue to live in relative social isolation after their release' (p. 201). It's also to say that solitary confinement former prisoners recede more deeply into themselves than the sheer physical

isolation of supermax has imposed, making some of them move from a great desire for social contact to being frightened by it (Haney, 2003).

When examining the hyperawareness of one's surrounding as a post-release symptom, a great example is provided by Five Mualimm-Ak, attesting that: 'I can't listen to music or watch television or sports' (p.152). Also, Barbra Perez testimonial (p. 125-128) indicated that: 'I still feel I've lost some of the security I once had. I try not to, but I find myself looking out the window of my apartment every time I hear a car slowing down' (p. 127).

Brian Nelson, Enceno May and Five Mualimm-Ak were also the ones who clearly described the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Brian Nelson describes that:

'Everyday I cry ... I'm not a human being ... I pray everyday to go to sleep, that means I want to die. Sometimes I walk through the worst neighbourhoods and hope someone will kill me ... I'm so tired ... Walk into a room with me, wait five minutes, and I'll tell you how many lights there are, how many windows, speakers. I count everything. I do it just to be calm' (pp. 117-119).

Although Enceno May was still imprisoned, he was out of solitary confinement and could already note the effects of it, as said:

'I was ruled by sorrow, fear, and anger. Deep depression about missing people I used to know, and my mom ... My panic attacks are so severe that they put me on antidepressants for PTSD ... I never cut myself or attempted

suicide, as I know a lot of kids in solitary do. But I did think about death a lot, and I had dreams of an apocalyptic world (and still do) ...I was even more deeply depressed than I had been growing up' (pp. 122-123).

Five Muallim-Ak, on his turn, said:

'I remember folding up right there in the bus station. I didn't know it at the time, but I was having my first panic attack. I was sweating, and I could feel my heart beating in my chest and my eyes darting back and forth. I just slid down to the floor in a corner ... Even though I am a free man now, I often feel as though I remain invisible, going through the motions of life' (p.150-152).

Shalev (2008) indicates that, on Haney's research (1993) with 100 randomly selected prisoners in a supermax unit, 77% suffered from chronic depression. She also highlights that self-harm and suicide incidents is particularly high when in segregation or isolation units.

Again, Brian Nelson and Enceno May reported symptoms related to confusion. Brian explained that: 'You make up a make-believe world. The worst part is I think I'm still there' (p. 119) while Enceno described: 'I had no concept of what time really meant, so fifteen years felt the same as fifty' (p. 122). 'I was so lost. My mind was like a bowl of spilled popcorn, scattered into a hundred individually unique, fragile pieces' (p. 123). He also attested difficulty in expressing feelings, saying that: 'Back then I wasn't skilled in identifying my emotions, let alone dealing with them appropriately' (p. 122).

Five Mualimm-Ak, however, was the one who pointed the greatest number of symptoms, describing, besides the ones supra mentioned, sleep disturbances and impaired memory: 'I can hardly sleep... I know that I have irreparable memory damage' (p. 152). Moreover, he indicated what Shalev (2009) argued: prisoners in solitary confinement become so dependent on the structure and routines of the prison that they have troubles trying to live without them, being apprehensive about a free life.

'It's sad, but it made me feel comfortable again-being escorted by people in uniforms, and being told what to do ...Then suddenly, I stopped walking. At first I didn't understand why I'd stopped. But then I saw that there was a huge yellow line running in front of the doors to the bus station. I had spent the past twelve years of my life in supermax or max, where there are yellow lines on the floor everywhere, and you are never allowed to cross a yellow line' (p. 150-151).

It's relevant to note that Five Mualimm-Ak also illustrated life under sensory deprivation when imprisoned, considering its profound effects. He explained that:

'I felt all of my senses start to diminish... I talked to myself' (p. 148). 'I try to explain to people how the sensory deprivation and the absence of human contact affects a person. I try to make them see how much we need human validation... Losing that contact, you lose your sense of identity. You become nothing. That's what I mean when I say I became invisible even to myself' (p. 149).

Guenther (2013) mentions Dickens considerations regarding sensory deprivation on solitary confinement, when he notes that even prior to their release, the sensory awareness of prisoners was radically diminished by solitary confinement:

‘It is only because we depend on the world, and on the others who constitute both the meaning of the world and our own sense of personhood, that solitary confinement and the sensory deprivation that inevitably accompanies it have the power to damage us at the very level of our being’ (p. 20).

Galen Baughman (p. 129-135) and Dolores Canales (p. 137-144) also described solitary confinement effects whilst still imprisoned. Galen admitted that when in isolation, he thought about manners to ‘give up and end his suffering’, explaining that he found himself ‘wondering if this ghostlike experience was real’ (p. 131). Dolores, on her turn, indicated that during confinement there was ‘no tomorrow, no perspectives of a better future’ (p. 141).

Overall, the literature indicates that many prisoners are likely to suffer permanent harm because of solitary confinement, which is most manifested by intolerance to social interaction, preventing them to readjust to society again (Shalev, 2009, mentioning Grassian, 2006). Supermax prisoners are under the risk of losing their grasp on who they are and how they are connected to a larger social world (Haney, 2003). That’s verified in the reports of the majority of the former inmates analysed here; Five Mualimm-Ak reported that: ‘Solitary doesn’t just confine your body; it kills your soul. And it makes It hard to ever live among other

people again' (p. 150). 'Even now that I'm out of prison, I suffer major psychological consequences from those years in isolation' (p. 151). Likewise, Enceno May asserted:

'I know that solitary confinement caused me considerable psychological damage – or really, added to what was already brewing. It encouraged me to retreat deep into a demented reality where I was so alone, it made me feel as though I wasn't meant for this world. I still feel that way to this day – like I don't fit ...But because of solitary I will never be mentally right, I fear' (p.123).

Barbra Perez also claimed that: 'Even though I know the charges are dropped, I still feel uneasy' (p. 127). Galen Baughman inferred that: 'The darkness that comes with solitary confinement is pervasive: it seeps into your soul, clouds your brain, and stains the pages of letters you send from your cell. It is the least natural place you can ever find yourself' (p. 131). For Dickens, mentioned by Guenther (2013), the violence of solitary confinement hits prisoners in such a way that it's not even possible to locate it or even describe the damage done, as it leaves no bruises.

To report a symptom, one must be conscious about it; also, the greater the conscious awareness, the higher the frequency and extent of negative effects. Conversely, in order to adapt to stressful conditions, many prisoners will strive to essentially get used to it, so they can create a more manageable routine. Moreover, many of the psychological and psychiatric reactions created or exacerbated by solitary may persist long after a prisoner has been released into society or general prison population (Haney, 2013).

2) Social bonds

After completing time in isolation, when they don't commit suicide (Kupers, 2017), prisoners are released back to society; some might go straight from solitary confinement, some might go back to general prison population before it. As Terry Kupers (2017) asserted, to the ones who have resources and resilience, the transition back to community can be successful; however, for many others this process may be more complicated, and the worst pain is yet to come. A very high number withdraw into isolation and are unable to work or enjoy social interactions because of the effects generated by time spent in solitary, which can strongly impact the way reinsertion in society happens.

The importance of social bonds is well emphasized when Sampson and Laub (1995) examined predictors of desistance and persistence in adult crime and violence in 'Crime in the Making'. They found that adult social bonds to work and family were significantly related to changes in adult crime. Turning points related to work, for example, was crucial to comprehend processes of continuity and change across adult life course (Sampson and Laub, 2006). Drawing from the post-release syndrome and the Theory of Informal Social Control presented by Sampson and Laub (1995), this paper will now analyse the reports of the six people of the chapter 'Surviving'.

To begin with, the role of family as a social bond was addressed by five of the six reports collected in the chapter. As concluded by Naser and La Vigne (2006) research, released prisoners rely on family members extensively for housing, financial support and emotional support. Respondents on their study placed great value on the role of family in the reintegration process, consisting in a much-needed

support to returning prisoners. That's what it's verified in Brian Nelson's testimonial when he tells about his brother:

'He keeps me on track ... 'Look where you are now. Look what you've accomplished in two years'. Then he punches me in the head. 'You've gotta wake up, man', he says. 'I love you'. Somehow my brother gets how hard this is for me' (p. 118).

His brother is clearly a source of support which understand his pain. That encounters what Naser and La Vigne (2006) research indicates: released prisoners rely on their families for support and overall encouragement.

Likewise, Enceno Macy mentions how the minimal contact he had with his mother while in solitary (by letters) was the only comfort he had. He also mentions as a daily activity the waiting/hoping for the mail, which somehow helped him created expectancies on something. Barbra Perez indicates the important role her family members had on putting efforts for her release, saying that they 'made it a royal pain in the ass for ICE to continue holding me' (p. 127).

Dolores Canales, on her turn, put a lot of emphasis on how being a mother was the driven force for her to pursue a better future. 'All I wanted was to get out of prison and be a good mom. I was on a mission.' (p. 142). It's noticeable how the proud of her son about her is important to her: 'Every time I see Johnny he tells me how proud he is of me ... all he ever says is he's glad to have me back' (p. 143). When she mentions that: 'We families realized we needed to form a group and keep organizing' (p. 145), it's clear that she sees herself within a family, aiming to work hard to provide better conditions to her soon. Again, on the same vein as Naser and

La Vigne (2006) research's results, expectations for family support were positive for all the five mentioned former prisoners, demonstrating that the family bond was present in most of the cases, with no evidence of any post-release symptom affecting relationships in the hypothesis.

Regarding the role of friendship in terms of re-entry and the importance of it on the path of desistance, it is known that 'friends have historically been strongly implicated in the onset and persistence of criminal behavior' (Giordano, Cernkovich and Holland, 2003, p. 319). Again, five of the six reports mentioned interaction with someone identified as a friend and some of them highlighted their importance. Brian Nelson enjoys the company of someone who just comes and sits with him in the dark, because it's an activity that both like doing. Despite that there's no more information about this figure, Brian mentions a unique moment that he shares with someone who has a similarity with him. Barbra Perez also doesn't explain a lot about her friends but attributes to them, along with her family, one of the reasons why she got released from prison. She indicated that there was a group of people acting on behalf of her interests, which she evaluates.

Galen Baughman, on his turn, mentions going out with a friend to a Broadway show. He talks about how he feels part of society when he's having good moments with friends: "When I was there, in that place, I always felt like this is where I belonged; and now that I am here, in places like this with friends like you, I know that this is where I belong" (p. 134). For Dolores Canales, friends had a huge participation on her reencounter with her son, which was a very especial moment for her. One of them paid the flight to visit her son – but the flight was cancelled, and she thought she wouldn't be able to see him anymore. Because of a campaign on the social media Facebook people started to support her and she could find a

way to meet her son. She mentions that those that she didn't even know were saying: 'We're not going to leave without you' and she felt encouraged. Another point she mentions is a friend who participate with her in a very important event about solitary confinement, where she had a chance to make a speech.

Finally, Five Mualimm-Ak reported that some friends showed some interest in his life, asking questions about it to him. Following, he said that let some people get closer. However, important to note that he indicated how he felt hard to connect to people, which is also evidenced by the post-release symptoms he mentioned. The ones that he felt comfortable in meeting had come from solitary confinement as well or had worked with people coming out of solitary, and were the ones telling him that there was nothing wrong with him.

It's also relevant to highlight that two of the stories compiled in the chapter brings religion to discussion. Brian Nelson is a devout catholic and attests that one of his favourite books is the bible. He suggests that because of his religion he cannot kill himself. Dolores Canales mentions that the friend who was responsible for paying her flight to see her son, was from church. Giordano *et al.* (2008) argues that spirituality and religious participation are hooks for change and identified in his research that many individuals do believe that their spirituality has been fundamental to their desistance efforts. Positive changes were noticed when linked with religion and, moreover, spirituality is associated with positive emotions. In this regard, the study of Evan *et al.* (1996) attested that involvement in general delinquency was directly negatively influenced by both personal, religiosity and religious networks. Most religious respondents were less involved in delinquency, as those who had a majority of close religious friends.

The great importance of those mentioned social bonds are emphasized in Sampson and Laub's theory and research, which argues that offending is inhibited by the strength of bonding to society (Farrington, 2008). They identified that, consistent with a model of adult development and informal social control, the stronger the ties to work and family, the less crime and deviance among both delinquents and controls (Sampson and Laub, 1990). Naser and La Vigne (2006) also indicates that 'recent research suggests that tangible and emotional family support leads to positive post-release successes, such as employment and reduced substance use' (p. 104).

3) Accomplishments and important life events after release

Significant life events such as marriage, work and military service represents turning points, which are crucial for understanding the processes of change in criminal activity. This idea demonstrates the interactive nature of human agency and life events. That's also what Denzin means by epiphanies: a moment of problematic experience that illuminates personal character, and often signifies a turning point in life. Both epiphanies and turning points are more likely to be observed in the desistance process (Sampson and Laub, 2006).

Brian Nelson, Barbra Perez, Galen Baughman, Dolores Canales and Five Mualimm-Ak are all employed. Most probably, Enceno May couldn't mention anything about it because by the time of his statement he was on his last year of prison. Barbra Perez works for a lighting and electrical company, Galen Baughman has become an advocate against the excesses of sex offender laws in the United States. He was also named a Soros Justice Fellow by the Open Society Foundation for a project focuses on ending the practice of civilly youth as sexually violent

predators and is working for a coalition of LGBT rights organizations. His writings has appeared in The Washington Post and other publications.

It's important to note that Brian Nelson, Dolores Canales and Five Mualimm-Ak were the ones who starting to work against the system of solitary confinement; while Brian works as an advocate and organizer against the use of solitary confinement at the Uptown People's Law Center in Chicago, Dolores co-founded the organization California Families to Abolish Solitary Confinement, which played a great role during the hunger strike at Pelican Bay prison. She was part of the mediation team with prison officials to negotiate the terms of ending the strike. She was also named a Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow to support her work as founder of the Family Unity Network of Imprisoned people. Five has become a leading advocate in New York against mass incarceration in general and solitary confinement in particular, and has worked with the Campaign to End the New Jim Crow. He also become a founding member of the New York State Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement. In 2015, he launched his own advocacy group, the Incarcerated Nation Corporation. Haney (2003) explains that some supermax prisoners occupy their time fighting against the system and the ones that oppress them, and there are prisoners who create a revenge ideal, lashing out against those who have treated them in considered inhumane ways.

It was also noted how some of the reports demonstrated the engagement of the former prisoners in a cause that they might be working on and how it brought some unique experiences, considered sometimes as turning points in life. That's what's verified in Barbra Perez testimonial, when she attests that:

‘Last year I spoke at a Not One More rally in DC, standing on stage and outing myself as a trans woman in front of thousands of people. It was truly beautiful, I felt part of a cause that we all believe in, that immigrants are Americans, that we all deserve to be treated with dignity – the opposite of what I felt inside that place’ (pp. 127-128).

Brian Nelson declared that he joined a protest in front of a prison, although he felt sick after it. Galen Baughman proudly reflects on what he has accomplished in life after release:

‘I thought about the three years since I won my trial and freedom, and all that I had accomplished in that time as an advocate against the extreme, counterproductive, and dehumanizing policies that had almost succeeded in crushing me’ (p. 135).

He has also lectured across the countries, trained grassroots advocates, lobbied legislators.

Dolores Canales happened to perform a speech in an event on prisoner solidarity and everyone applauded. She attests: ‘That was another one of those big moments in my life: like quitting drugs, seeing Johnny again... there was no going back after that day’ (p. 144). It’s noticeable how deep she was engaged with the cause: ‘We were part of a movement, and we were inching closer, which just made us want to fight harder’ (p. 144). ‘So we started a group called California Families to Abolish Solitary Confinement’ (p. 145).

Five Mualimm-Ak argued that recovering from solitary meant fight against it and other aspects of mass incarceration. He talks about how his work has managed to ban children from being placed in solitary confinement and setting some limits on how long can others be there. He finds his motivation in making New York a model for the rest of the country and while working, he wrote the most progressive piece of anti-solitary legislation in the country. He truly believes that those who had experienced solitary firsthand should have leadership roles in the movement.

Overall, the stories have indicated that solitary confinement was a painful experience, that brought suffering in different extents, and that people reacted differently to what they had been through. Brian Nelson, for example, admitted that solitary caused him considerable psychological damage and: 'encouraged me to retreat deep into a demented reality... because of solitary I will never be mentally right, I fear' (p. 123). Enceno May indicated that he bears permanent scars from solitary confinement. Five Mualimm-Ak reflects on how this system doesn't contribute to formerly incarcerated to get housing, jobs, or public assistance, specially if you've been damaged by it. Some stories has demonstrated a strong position against the method and a hope on the future. For example, Barbra Perez affirms that she doesn't want her detention to define her, while Enceno May aims to rebuild his life after release. Others, such as Galen Baughman, leaned on his very own consciousness to overcome the traumas he had experienced: 'I was very fortunate to have the intellectual and educational resources to be able to escape those confines into my head' (p. 132). Also, Dolores Canales explain how she let go of the feeling of anger, which she identified as what would kept her using drugs. 'That wasn't letting me grow and succeed and move on. There just aren't simple answers. There's a story behind every answer. It's a life' (p. 144).

When analysing all the categories explored in this section, it was observed that life-stories analysed in this study has shown a great range of post-release symptoms accordingly to what Kupers (2017) and Shalev (2009) has indicated. Surprisingly, all stories have also indicated positive accomplishments in life post-release, most of them related to employment, being recognized for efforts on social causes and overcoming symptoms of solitary confinement. It's possible to say that all of the six ones succeeded somehow on their re-entries and all of them mentioned a source of support in society – family, friends, religion, employment.

Interestingly, it was also noted that a bad experience in life after release was mentioned only by Five Mualimm-Ak, before he could occupy his current position in work: when he went out of prison he lived on a shelter and only after a while he let people get close to him. Five didn't say much of relationships on his report; he just mention some friends who would question him about where he lived. However, he is the one who provides more details about the post-release syndrome and declared to suffer from the most of the symptoms pointed out by the literature. Some of the symptoms he still finds very difficult to overcome:

'I don't like people to touch me... I can't listen to music or watch television or sports... I'm only beginning to recover my ability to talk on the phone. I have a hard time feeling connected to people. Even though I am a free man now, I often feel as though I remain invisible' (p.152).

He also states that he feels more comfortable interacting with those who had been through the same experience as him.

Although some considerations must be taken in the case of Enceno May, who was on his last year of imprisonment when he was interviewed, it must be highlighted that he only mentions his mother as a relationship. Despite of the fact that finds in this a reason to be hopeful while imprisoned, he doesn't mention any other sign of relationship: just letters received from his mother. He also reports a great number of solitary effects comparing to the other ones, which are connected to the post-release syndrome. In regard of future perspectives, his report doesn't say much; he just hopes to rebuild his life.

Like Five and Enceno, Galen Baughman has also mentioned few points about relationships – he describes just the presence of a friend. However, the difference is that a lot of information about how he is overcoming the post-release syndrome is extracted from the scene he illustrates:

'Sometimes it's hard now to imagine that I was there... and for so, so long. "When I was there, in that place, I always felt like this is where I belonged; and not that I am here, in places like this with friends like you, I know that this is where I belong' (p. 134).

Moreover, he also evidences how his background on education and intentional cultivation of a sense of purpose in life: 'The same skills that had helped me succeed as a young person in the free world – having goals and a drive to work toward those goals – sustained me in those harshest of circumstances' (p. 133). Other testimonials (Brian Nelson, Barbra Perez and Dolores) accounted for more than one source of support: family and friendship bonds.

Again, the six reports have pointed out to the existence of social bonds in life, whether new or before imprisonment. What stands out is that, in regard of Five Mualimm-Ak story and Enceno May, a lot of symptoms were identified and detailed, in comparison to the other ones, while little was said about the existence of social bonds. Further, more specially with Five (considering that Enceno hadn't be released yet), the only negative event in life after prison, in spite all the symptom's traces, were identified in his report: he had to live on a shelter before he could get a job. It was not possible to verify how Enceno performed, once he was still imprisoned. Therefore, this paper suggests that, on the same vein as argued by Haney (2003) and Kupers (2017), those who don't have significant social and support needed to recover from such atypical experiences may never return to a resume normal and productive social life. That's to say that, as mentioned before, for those who have the resources and the resilience, the transition back into the community is ultimately successful.

Once there is a clear evidence of support of family or friends, or even a good education and self-consciousness development, the post-release effects were overcome and didn't affect much on social interactions, whether new or old ones. On the other hand, it seems that when there's a lack of support from social bonds and institutions, those effects tend to affect more the individual and present as a hinder in terms of building relationships. A good example that would support this idea is the difference between Brian Nelson behaviour after release when in comparison to Five Mualimm-Ak: they were the ones who mostly detailed and pointed out solitary confinement post-release symptoms and described a lot of suffering. However, Brian Nelson had a huge support from his brother when out of prison, being encouraged at all times. There's no mention of such thing for Five; he

just comments about 'some friends' that would question him about his life and a restrict group of people he interacts with.

Social control theory is based on a life course perspective, which aim is to explain continuity and change in behaviour across time, linking past events and experiences to the present. This perspective is also focused on turning points, which can modify life trajectories in unexpected ways (Laub, Sampson and Sweeten, 2006).

The suggestion that social bonds can impact how one manage the effects of solitary confinement on life post-release only reinforces the considerable evidence on the importance of social bonds, already demonstrated by Sampson and Laub's theory (Laub et al., 2006); what it's proposed is that, because of the existence of solid social bonds, such as family and friends support, the symptoms were more easily dealt with and represented no obstacle for other social interactions, like being employed after prison, meet new people, perform a speech and attend to events. Those are relevant points in an eventual path to desistance from crime. As highlighted by Laub et al. (2006), citing Shover (1996), a good job, for example, alter or terminates a criminal career. Overall, changing social bonds can induce a changing in offending patterns.

CONCLUSION

The present study was designed to examine the influence of post-release effects of solitary confinement on the process of reintegration of former prisoners in terms of social bonds. Based on Sampson and Laub's theory of informal social control, this paper investigated six self-reports of former solitary confinement prisoners, in order to explore the potential impact of what Kupers (2017) and Shalev (2009) have identified as a set of post-release symptoms and the maintenance or creation of attachments to life in society, such as family and friends. This approach was also informed by the literature relating to the importance of social bonds in the process of desistance of crime.

It must be noted that the findings presented here are merely exploratory and not generalisable. It is not possible to draw general conclusions when analysing such a small sample of reports on life after solitary confinement, although they do provide insights into the hitherto neglected experiences of those subject to solitary confinement.

In spite of its limitations, this study has identified that all of the six people from the chapter 'Surviving' illustrated suffering from symptoms in accordance to what the literature has claimed. It was observed that Brian Nelson, Enceno May and Five Mualimm-Ak were the ones that most reported the pains of solitary confinement, while Dolores Canales was the one that least provided details about it. In general, the majority of symptoms that compose the post-release syndrome were verified in the narratives – some in bigger scale, while others in a small one. Again, in different manners, all six stories reported the existence of a relationship that was a source of hope, support or encouragement. In particular, Enceno May didn't provide information about his life back in society due to the fact that he was

still imprisoned while telling his story, even though he was already out of solitary confinement. The most popular kinds of social bonds mentioned were family and friends and, further, all former prisoners indicated success in being employed – which is a helper for the process of desistance. It was also observed how the post-release syndrome was overcome in different extents: some prisoners publish papers, give lectures, perform speeches in events, work against the isolated confinement system, have friends with who they hang out with and more.

However, among the ones that have most evidenced the suffering from the syndrome, that are some interesting observations. Brian Nelson gave a lot of details on the effects of his isolation, but also mentioned how he intensively received support from his brother. It's clear how this relationship was fundamental to help him keep going in life. Enceno May, as mentioned, was still imprisoned, but he didn't mention a lot of social relations apart from receiving letters from his mother. Again, he didn't express much of expectations about his future, just mentioning that he hopes for better days. The striking point here is the evidence on Five Mualimm-Ak narrative: his testimony attests strong impacts of solitary confinement on mental health and describes almost all range of symptoms that literature has indicated as part of the post-release syndrome, which he still feels with intensity. Accordingly to the literature, many psychological and psychiatric reactions originated from solitary confinement may persist long after a prisoner has been released, interfering in long term adjustments (Haney, 2013). Regarding social bonds, he does mention some friends; however, differently from all the others reports, there's no evidence on the support and real presence of these relationships on his life. He does tell about his job and how he's now working against solitary confinement now; but, again, differently from the other reports, he indicates that he had experienced a negative

event on his first moments of solitary confinement. After release, he was homeless and had to leave on a shelter. Also, Five Mualimm-Ak is the one who clearly claims that the system doesn't contribute for incarcerated people to get housing, jobs or public assistance.

Rather than concluding if post-release effects impacts on social bonds and successful experiences after solitary confinement, data analysis on this paper ended up suggesting that the way former prisoners absorb these impacts and, further, make successful achievements in life, are, in fact, influenced by the absence or presence of strong social bonds. This observation is in accordance to what the literature has indicated, as mentioned: for those who have the resources, transition back into community is successful (Kupers, 2017). On the other hand, those who are not blessed with special personal resiliency and social support, may find difficulties when recovering from solitary (Haney,2013). The importance of social bonds was emphasized in this paper and indicated as a possible determinant factor for the way former prisoners deal with the post-release syndrome and how it impacts their experiences.

The reflections raised by the study point to the need for a broader research on the topic, comprehending a larger number of study participants and a more focused exploration of their past experiences, the occurrence of post-release syndrome, and whether their social attachments to family and friends were determinant in achieving success in life.

Considering the literature gap on prison outcomes after experiencing solitary confinement and, more, between it and desistance from crime, the insights gained from this work may assist a greater comprehension on life post-release and the matter of social bonds in terms of re-entry and an eventual process of desistance.

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