

Gender-based Differences in the Effects of Solitary Confinement on Institutional Behavior

Ryan M. Labrecque, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Portland State University

Paula Smith, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, University of Cincinnati

Paul Gendreau, O.C., Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus, University of New Brunswick

Presented at the 71st Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology
on November 21, 2015 in Washington DC



Portland State
UNIVERSITY

Solitary Confinement (SC)



Solitary Confinement Debate: Theories of Imprisonment

- **General and specific deterrence**
 - SC suppresses antisocial behavior and is an important tool for the management of safe prisons.
- **Schools of crime/Cruel and unusual punishment**
 - The experience of SC causes undue psychological distress and increases criminal behavior.
- **Importation/Behavioral deep freeze**
 - SC has little impact (depending on conditions of confinement and other moderators).

Solitary Confinement Debate: Summary of Empirical Findings

- Despite the fact that SC has long been used in the U.S. and is more expensive than other housing options, there have been few evaluation studies conducted to date (Mears & Watson, 2006).
- The majority of studies have focused on psychological (rather than behavioral) outcomes (Gendreau & Labrecque, 2015).
- Further, behavioral evaluations tend to focus on post-release recidivism rather than measures of institutional adjustment.
- Two recent studies found no effect of SC on subsequent institutional behavior (Labrecque, 2015; Morris, 2015).

Solitary Confinement Debate: Female Inmates

- Female prisoners may face unique harms in SC (see ACLU, 2014) which increase maladaptive behaviors (Dell et al., 2009).
- **Gendered perspective**
 - Gendered pathways (Brennan et al., 2012)
 - Differences (e.g., trauma) might influence reactions (e.g., agitation) to SC
 - Relational-cultural theory (Martel, 2001)
 - Disconnections through SC (e.g., visitation) might be especially detrimental for females (Celinska & Sung, 2014).
- **Gender-neutral perspective**
 - Effect of SC does not vary by gender (see Andrews & Bonta, 2010).
 - The laws of effective punishment should not vary by gender (see Matson & DiLorenzo, 1984)

Current Study

- There is very little empirical information available about how female inmates respond to the experience of SC.
- This study seeks to add to this gap in knowledge.
- The primary goal of the current study is to examine if there are any gender differences in the effect of SC on subsequent inmate behavior.

Data

- Data was obtained from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC).
- The sample included information on 69,149 inmates admitted into ODRC custody between 7/1/07 and 6/30/10.
- Demographic data, institutional information (e.g., housing, misconduct) and mental health diagnoses were also available.

Independent Variable

- ODRC categorizes segregation into the following types:
 - Administrative control
 - Protective control
 - Security control
 - **Disciplinary control**

Disciplinary Control

- Inmates must be found guilty of a rule violation to be placed in disciplinary control.
- A single violation/event can result in up to 15 days.
- Two or more unrelated violations can be imposed consecutively.
- Rule violations in disciplinary control can result in up to an additional 15 days.
- No combination shall require an inmate to serve more than 30 days.

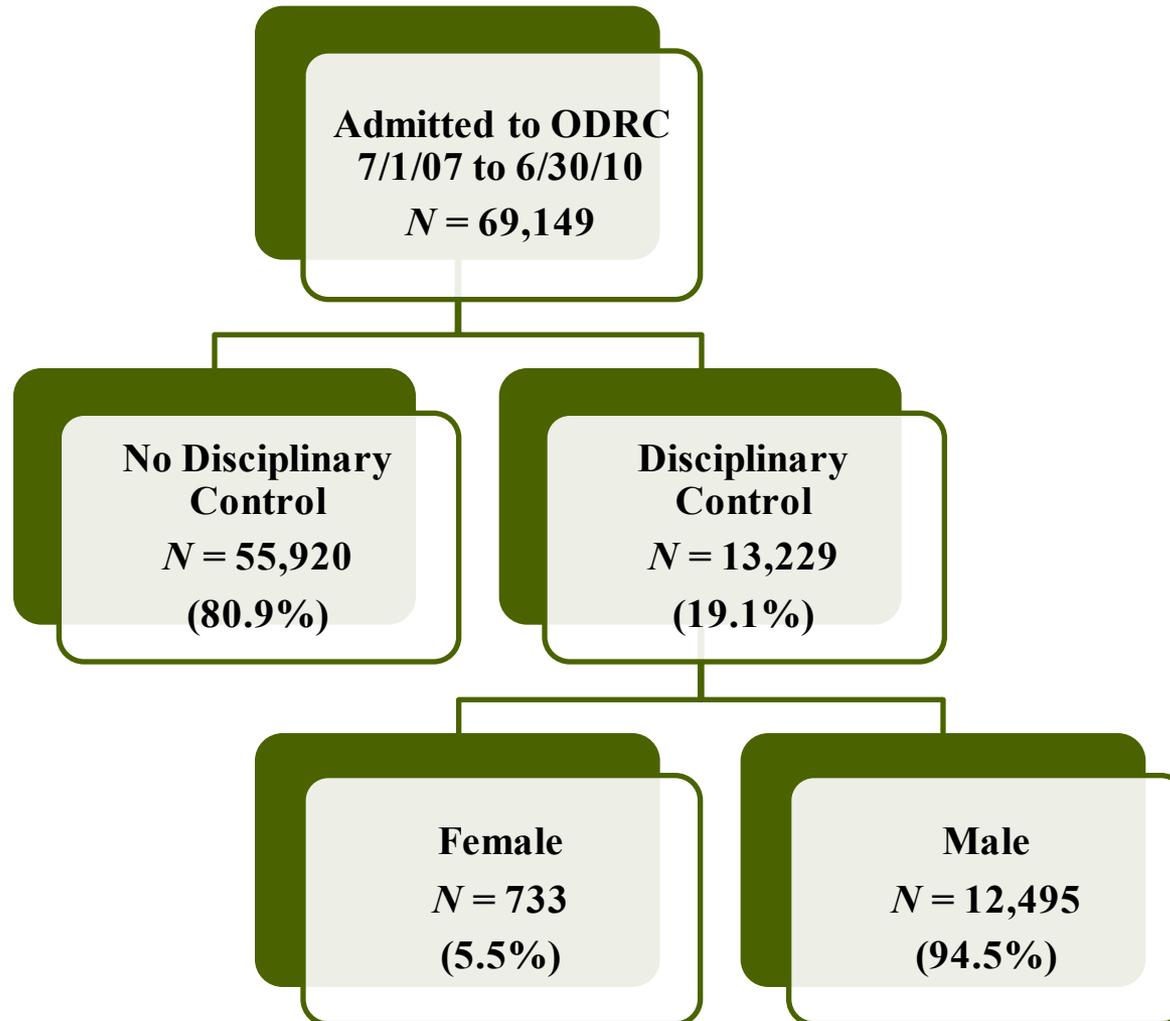
Dependent Variable

- Institutional misconduct is defined as a finding of guilt for any violation of an ODRC rule of conduct.
- Consistent with previous research by Steiner and Wooldredge (2013), misconducts were further subdivided into three categories:
 - Violent/serious offenses (e.g., assault)
 - Non-violent/less serious offenses (e.g., damage to property, theft)
 - Drug/alcohol offenses

Analysis

- Propensity score matching (PSM) was used to match male and female inmates who experienced disciplinary control.
- One-to-one nearest neighbor matching with a .001 tolerance level.
- PSM is useful because it reduces potential biases due to confounding variables (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983).
- Once matched, the differences in the incidence and prevalence of the dependent variables are examined by gender at 90, 180, 270, and 365 day follow-ups.

Flow Chart of ODRC Admissions



Comparison of Characteristics (Full Sample)

Characteristic	Female (N = 733)		Male (N = 12,495)		t
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Age at intake (in years)	29.65	(8.99)	28.52	(9.46)	-3.15**
Black	.44	(.50)	.53	(.50)	5.16**
Serious mental illness	.74	(.44)	.33	(.47)	-24.81**
Gang member	.03	(.17)	.32	(.46)	38.61**
High-risk	.07	(.26)	.09	(.28)	1.38
Felony level (1-5)	2.73	(1.25)	2.51	(1.19)	-4.81**
Sentenced for violent offense	.49	(.50)	.63	(.48)	7.01**
Sentenced for nonviolent offense	.37	(.48)	.27	(.45)	-5.33**
Natural log of time served (in months)	3.41	(.43)	3.53	(.41)	6.84**
Pre-segregation violent misconduct	.47	(.50)	.45	(.50)	-1.28
Pre-segregation nonviolent misconduct	.53	(.50)	.48	(.50)	-2.09*
Days spent in disciplinary control	9.98	(5.70)	9.58	(5.73)	2.78**

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Comparison of Characteristics (Matched Sample)

Characteristic	Female (<i>n</i> = 644)		Male (<i>n</i> = 644)		<i>t</i>
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Age at intake (in years)	29.67	(9.06)	29.76	(9.72)	0.20
Black	.44	(.50)	.48	(.50)	1.29
Serious mental illness	.71	(.46)	.70	(.46)	-0.31
Gang member	.03	(.18)	.02	(.14)	-1.39
High-risk	.08	(.27)	.07	(.26)	-0.21
Felony level (1-5)	2.66	(1.25)	2.67	(1.21)	0.20
Sentenced for violent offense	.53	(.50)	.58	(.49)	1.57
Sentenced for nonviolent offense	.34	(.48)	.31	(.46)	-1.19
Natural log of time served (in months)	3.45	(.43)	3.45	(.41)	-0.15
Pre-segregation violent misconduct	.47	(.50)	.47	(.50)	0.06
Pre-segregation nonviolent misconduct	.53	(.50)	.48	(.50)	-1.73
Days spent in disciplinary control	9.32	(5.78)	9.51	(5.68)	0.60

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Impact of DC on Violent Misconduct, by Gender

	Female (n = 644)	Male (n = 644)	Difference	Standard Error	<i>t</i>
Prevalence					
90 days	.09	.07	-.02	.02	-1.32
180 days	.18	.13	-.05	.02	-2.56*
270 days	.25	.17	-.08	.02	-3.38**
365 days	.29	.21	-.09	.02	-3.55**
Incidence					
90 days	.09	.08	-.01	.02	-0.72
180 days	.21	.17	-.04	.03	-1.52
270 days	.33	.25	-.09	.04	-2.30*
365 days	.45	.32	-.13	.04	-2.80**

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Impact of DC on Nonviolent Misconduct, by Gender

	Female (n = 644)	Male (n = 644)	Difference	Standard Error	<i>t</i>
Prevalence					
90 days	.24	.25	.01	.02	0.24
180 days	.34	.36	.02	.03	0.70
270 days	.40	.44	.04	.03	1.58
365 days	.46	.49	.04	.03	1.28
Incidence					
90 days	.56	.58	.02	.08	0.27
180 days	1.03	1.06	.03	.11	0.23
270 days	1.34	1.46	.12	.14	0.85
365 days	1.74	1.84	.10	.17	0.58

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Impact of DC on Drug Misconduct, by Gender

	Female (n = 644)	Male (n = 644)	Difference	Standard Error	<i>t</i>
Prevalence					
90 days	.01	.03	.02	.01	2.87**
180 days	.01	.06	.05	.01	4.85**
270 days	.02	.09	.07	.01	5.45**
365 days	.03	.10	.07	.01	5.18**
Incidence					
90 days	.01	.04	.03	.01	2.74**
180 days	.01	.08	.07	.01	4.64**
270 days	.02	.13	.11	.02	5.29**
365 days	.04	.21	.13	.03	5.23**

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Summary of Results

- Male and female inmates had statistically similar rates of nonviolent misconduct and shorter-term violent misconduct post-DC.
- However, in the longer-term females were significantly more likely than similarly matched males to be found guilty of violent/serious rule infractions.
- Across all time periods examined, males were significantly more likely than females to be found guilty of subsequent drug infractions.

Limitations

- Findings may not be applicable to all SC settings and inmates.
- The current study is limited to adult inmates from Ohio who served one year or more in prison.
- Results were also limited to inmates who were placed in SC for disciplinary control.
- It is possible that unobserved group differences may have influenced the results (e.g., gender differences in conditions of confinement, availability of other services/programs, responses to misbehavior).

Conclusion

- One of the first empirical studies to compare differences in institutional misconduct outcomes between male and female inmates post-SC.
- Preliminary evidence suggests that the effects of disciplinary control *may* differ by gender, but at this point these findings are difficult to interpret.
- However, there is need for more research in this area, especially for studies that are better able to account for other potentially influential variables (e.g., conditions of SC, climate, official response to inmate behavior).

Contact Information

Ryan M. Labrecque, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Division of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Portland State University

Phone: 503-725-5164

E-mail: rml@pdx.edu

Web: www.ryanmlabrecque.com



Portland State
UNIVERSITY