2023

Public Perceptions of Exonerees' Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement

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by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

in

Sociology: Corrections

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2023

February 17, 2023

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This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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Dr. Tyler Vaughan – Advisor

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Dr. Pedro Thomas – Committee Member

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Dr. Jaime S. Henderson – Committee Member

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for my thesis advisor, Dr. Tyler Vaughan. He provided a tremendous amount of time and guidance to me as I worked to complete this project. His knowledge and advice have been greatly appreciated from beginning to end. Thank you so much for your support and understanding throughout both my graduate career, and as I established my professional career.

I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Pedro Thomas and Dr. Jaime S. Henderson. I am grateful for Dr. Thomas' support, advice, and feedback during my graduate career. I am also thankful for Dr. Jaime S. Henderson who provided her valuable knowledge and insight to this project.

I am also forever thankful for my mother, partner, family members, friends, professors, and colleagues who have supported and encouraged me along the way. I am especially grateful for those who continued to believe in me and encouraged me to never give up when I needed it the most.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude for those who have been wrongly convicted and worked hard to fight for their innocence. Your determination and perseverance is inspiring to all. May the fight continue to free those who have been wrongly convicted.

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Abstract

To date, over 3,300 people in the United States have been wrongly convicted and exonerated for crimes they did not commit. This issue warrants immediate attention and reform. Sadly, many exonerees struggle to receive compensation for their wrongful convictions and have the wrongful convictions expunged from their criminal records. Researchers have begun to examine this complex issue by studying a range of topics regarding wrongful convictions and exonerees. However, little research has focused on factors that influence public perceptions of exonerees and their deservingness of both compensation and expungement. To address this gap in the literature, the current study used a factorial vignette design to examine whether or not three experimental manipulations (prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and presence/absence of DNA evidence) influenced public perceptions of exonerees and their deservingness of compensation and expungement. To gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive process individuals experience as they perceive exonerees, mediating variables (blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger) were also measured. Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) online platform was utilized to survey 1,536 participants about their perceptions of exonerees. The results indicated the public generally supports exonerees in that most participants believed they were deserving of compensation and expungement, as well as shed light on factors that influence public perceptions of exonerees. That is, exonerees were generally perceived to be less deserving of compensation and expungement when they had prior criminal conviction records, their false confessions contributed to their wrongful convictions, and DNA evidence was not present in their exonerations. The findings of the current study point to several implications surrounding education and awareness efforts about wrongful convictions, policy reform, and future research to advance the Innocence Movement.

Chapter One: Introduction

The overarching role of the United States criminal justice system is to enforce the law and hold offenders accountable for their wrongdoings by imposing penalties on those who commit criminal offenses. However, the criminal justice system is not infallible and, on occasion, miscarriages of justice occur. The most heinous miscarriages of justice occur when innocent individuals are wrongly convicted and incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. In turn, those who are wrongly convicted become victims of the criminal justice system's failure, and the actual persons responsible are not apprehended. In the last few decades, numerous exonerations were publicized across the nation, drawing attention to the issue of wrongful convictions. Additionally, scholars' efforts resulted in numerous research studies, and the efforts of criminal justice professionals and policymakers resulted in policy change. However, there is more work to be done. Currently, there is little research that focuses on whether or not the public believes exonerees deserve both compensation and expungement. To fill this gap in the literature, the current study examines public perceptions of exonerees and their deservingness of compensation and expungement.

One of the most shocking wrongful conviction cases is that of Jonathan Fleming. On August 15, 1989, a drug dealer named Darryl Rush was shot and killed in Brooklyn, New York. Four days later, Fleming, who was also known to be a drug dealer in the local area, was arrested and charged with Rush's murder. Fleming maintained his innocence and told investigators he was not in New York at the time Rush was killed. Rather, Fleming and his family were on vacation over 1,000 miles away at Disney World in

Florida when Rush's murder occurred. In 1990, Fleming took his case to trial during which an unreliable witness testified that Fleming was the gunman. To refute this testimony, Fleming's attorney presented evidence to prove Fleming was on vacation with his family when Rush was murdered. This evidence included plane tickets, home video footage of Fleming and his family in Florida, testimonies from several of Fleming's relatives explaining Fleming was on vacation with them in Florida, and the testimony of another relative who picked Fleming up from the airport on August 16, 1989. Despite this evidence, Fleming was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to twenty-five years to life in prison (Possley 2016).

The unreliable witness in the case later recanted her testimony and explained she falsely implicated Fleming due to the police threatening to send her to jail when she was arrested for a crime. Following Fleming's many unsuccessful appeals, his team presented additional evidence that further supported his innocence. This evidence included the unreliable witness' sworn recantation, police notes that documented the witness' arrest and dismissal of charges against her, a receipt that showed Fleming paid a bill at a Florida hotel in person roughly five hours before the murder occurred, and police reports of interviews with hotel employees who stated they remembered Fleming staying at the hotel. Based on the new evidence, a prosecutor involved in the county's Conviction Integrity Unit agreed to review Fleming's case. During the review, the man who was suspected of being the getaway driver during Rush's murder was interviewed. He stated Fleming was not involved in the murder and identified a different person as the gunman (Possley 2016).

"On April 8, 2014, the defense filed a motion to vacate Fleming's conviction and the prosecution did not object. The motion was granted, the case was dismissed and Fleming was freed" (Possley 2016:n.p.). Fleming was released from prison after serving nearly twenty-five years (Possley 2016). On the day he was released, Fleming only had ninety-three dollars and had no resources to help him reenter society (Jonathan Fleming Foundation 2018). Two months after his release, Fleming filed a lawsuit seeking $162 million for his wrongful conviction. Ultimately, the lawsuit settled in 2015, and Fleming was awarded $6.25 million (Possley 2016). Fleming is just one of many individuals who were wrongly convicted in the United States.

The Innocence Project, a non-profit organization whose mission is to help exonerate innocent individuals who were wrongly convicted, reports 375 DNA exonerations in the United States since the advent of DNA evidence in 1989 (Innocence Project 2022a; Innocence Project 2022c). While DNA evidence is useful in exonerating wrongly convicted individuals, exonerations also occur without the use of DNA evidence. At the end of 2022, The National Registry of Exonerations (2022a), an organization that maintains a database of known exonerations, reports 3,348 exonerations in the United States since 1989. Of these 3,348 exonerees, 474 were sentenced to life in prison, 239 were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, and 135 were sentenced to death. Adding these numbers together yields 848 known cases in which innocent people were sentenced to die in prison.

Furthermore, according to The National Registry of Exonerations (2022a), those who were exonerated since 1989 lost a total of more than 28,450 years behind bars due to

their wrongful convictions. Anthony Mazza currently holds the record for the longest time spent wrongly incarcerated by an exoneree. Mazza was wrongly convicted of murder and robbery and sentenced to life without parole in 1973. The factors that contributed to Mazza's wrongful conviction included mistaken witness identification, false accusation/perjury, and official misconduct. Fortunately, Mazza's conviction was vacated in April 2020. He was later released from prison in June 2020 at the age of seventy-three after serving forty-seven years and two months behind bars. The state of Massachusetts ultimately dismissed the charges against him in March 2021 (Otterbourg 2021a).

Additionally, The National Registry of Exonerations (2022a) reports there were 447 exonerations before 1989. When adding the number of exonerations that occurred both prior to and since 1989, there have been 3,795 known exonerations to date. Despite evidence that exonerations have occurred before 1989 (The National Registry of Exonerations 2022a), this year is significant in the Innocence Movement as it was the year when the first person, Gary Dotson, was exonerated by DNA evidence in the United States (Innocence Project 2018b). Dotson was wrongly convicted of aggravated kidnapping and rape and sentenced to no less than twenty-five and not more than fifty years in prison in 1979. At the time of the crime, the victim's underwear was found to be stained with semen and taken as evidence. In 1988, DNA testing conducted on the semen found on the victim's underwear revealed the semen did not match Dotson's DNA. Dotson was officially exonerated in 1989 and released from prison after being wrongly incarcerated for ten years (Kennedy 2012).

Dotson's DNA exoneration attracted national attention as it was the first case in which reliable scientific evidence proved a person had been wrongly convicted by the United States criminal justice system and questioned the system's legitimacy. Subsequently, Dotson's exoneration is commonly referred to as the event that sparked the Innocence Movement (Norris 2017). Following Dotson's exoneration, Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck founded the Innocence Project in 1992 which works to exonerate wrongly convicted individuals. The Innocence Project also works to improve case law and prevent injustice by advocating for criminal justice system reform. Furthermore, the Innocence Project produces a variety of research reports and publications on wrongful convictions (Innocence Project 2022a).

While such efforts are remarkable, it is noteworthy that the first organization dedicated to freeing wrongly convicted and incarcerated individuals was Centurion which was established in 1983 and has helped free sixty-seven innocent people (Centurion 2022). With the growth of the Innocent Movement, there has also been growth in the number of organizations dedicated to exonerating the innocent. For example, the Innocence Network, an affiliation of organizations located around the world dedicated to combating wrongful convictions and reforming the criminal justice system, reports there are currently seventy-one organizations in their network. Fifty-nine of the organizations are located in the United States (The Innocence Network 2022).

As more wrongly convicted individuals were exonerated, attention gravitated toward exonerees' needs after exoneration. In response, organizations such as After Innocence, Life After Innocence, and The Life After Exoneration Program were

established to provide support to exonerees upon their release and help them rebuild their lives. The reentry services these organizations provide to exonerees include, but are not limited to, helping exonerees obtain housing, employment, legal services, counseling services, healthcare, and expungement for their wrongful convictions, acquire identification documents, learn technology skills, and work with money managers for those who receive compensation. These organizations also advocate for criminal justice policy reform and better compensation laws (After Innocence 2019; Life After Innocence 2019; The Life After Exoneration Program 2019).

Also as a response to the growing number of exonerations, the amount of Conviction Integrity Units (CIUs) has grown. Generally, CIUs are established in prosecutorial offices to prevent wrongful convictions and investigate claims of innocence. Their work includes reviewing legal files such as incident reports, trial transcripts, prosecutors' files, and forensic reports, as well as (re)testing DNA evidence. In 2000, the first CIU in the United States was established in San Diego County, California by Deputy District Attorney George "Woody" Clarke. In 2004, Santa Clara County, California followed suit by establishing their own CIU. Unfortunately, these two units were shut down due to budget cuts (Chandler 2016). The next CIU was established in Dallas County, Texas in 2007 and still exists today. According to The National Registry of Exonerations (2022b) database, there are currently ninety-three CIUs in the United States.

As the Innocence Movement progressed, media coverage of wrongful convictions drew the public's attention. Today, there are countless media productions dedicated to

sharing the stories of those who were wrongly convicted. Some of these productions include *After Innocence*, *Amanda Knox*, *The Central Park Five*, *David and Me*, *Deadline*, *Fear of 13*, *Making a Murderer*, *Murder on a Sunday Morning*, *Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four*, *The Thin Blue Line*, *Time Simply Passes*, *An Unreal Dream*, and more (Innocence Project 2016). In particular, Netflix's *Making a Murderer* was streamed by 19.3 million viewers thirty-five days after part one was released (Lynch 2016). *Making a Murderer* tells the stories of Steven Avery and his nephew Brendan Dassey. Part one details how Avery was wrongly convicted of sexual assault, attempted murder, and false imprisonment in 1985 and sentenced to thirty-two years in prison. In 2003, after serving eighteen years in prison, Avery was exonerated by DNA evidence. However, just two years later, Avery and Dassey were investigated for the murder of Teresa Halbach. Subsequently, Avery and Dassey were both convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Part two follows Avery's and Dassey's cases as they attempt to prove their innocence in Halbach's murder while they are incarcerated.

Moreover, exonerees also engage in advocacy work for the wrongly convicted and help others who were involved in the criminal justice system. For example, Jonathan Fleming, who was discussed above, established the Jonathan Fleming Foundation which focuses on helping individuals reenter society and empowering youth to prevent them from becoming involved in the criminal justice system (Jonathan Fleming Foundation 2018). Another exoneree who engages in advocacy work is John Bunn. He was arrested at age fourteen and wrongly convicted of murder and assault. After being exonerated,

Bunn founded A Voice 4 the Unheard which provides books to prison inmates and at-risk youth and advocates for rehabilitation and prison reform (A Voice 4 the Unheard 2019).

Jeffrey Deskovic, who was wrongly convicted of rape and murder at seventeen-years-old, used some of the compensation money he was awarded to establish The Deskovic Foundation which works to exonerate those who have been wrongly convicted (The Deskovic Foundation 2021). Sunny Jacobs, who was wrongly convicted in the United States, and Peter Pringle, who was wrongly convicted in Ireland, came together to form The Sunny Center. This organization provides exonerees with immediate emotional, physical, and spiritual support to help them as they reenter society. The Sunny Center also opened the world's first exoneree community in Tampa, Florida to provide housing and additional support to exonerees upon their release (The Sunny Center 2018).

Another exoneree who engages in advocacy work is Ronald Cotton. After he was exonerated of rape and burglary, he became friends with Jennifer Thompson-Cannino, the woman who mistakenly identified Cotton as her assailant. Cotton and Thompson-Cannino later wrote the book *Picking Cotton* to share their experiences with the world, as well as do speaking engagements to educate the public about wrongful convictions and advocate for eyewitness identification reform (Innocence Project 2019). These examples are just a few of the many exonerees who are working to educate the public about wrongful convictions, advocate for criminal justice reform, and help others who were involved in the criminal justice system.

The progress made by the Innocence Movement has undoubtedly raised awareness about wrongful convictions and put this issue in the spotlight. Those invested

in this movement are working to exonerate the remaining individuals who were wrongly convicted and reform the criminal justice system to prevent wrongful convictions from occurring. Unfortunately, not all exonerees are guaranteed compensation and expungement despite proving their innocence. Thus, wrongful conviction activists are continuing to focus on raising awareness about wrongful convictions, gaining public support, and improving policy to ensure all exonerees receive compensation and expungement of their wrongful convictions from their criminal records.

Generally, public opinion is important because it plays a role in public policy (Burstein 2003). For example, greater recognition of the issue of wrongful convictions (also referred to the "discovery of innocence") has influenced and transformed the way some view the death penalty (Baumgartner, DeBoef, and Boydstun 2008). This transformative thinking contributed to the declining number of death penalty sentences, as well as the abolishment of capital punishment in some states. To date, the discovery of innocence has also led to policy reforms regarding eyewitness identification, interrogation procedures, evidence preservation, forensic oversight, DNA access laws, and the use of informants to prevent wrongful convictions. However, the passage of policy reforms aimed at assisting exonerees after their release has progressed much more slowly (Baumgartner, Westervelt, and Cook 2014).

Therefore, the lack of research on public perceptions of exonerees' deservingness of compensation and expungement must be addressed. Discovering where the public stands on this may give policy reform advocates greater insight as to whether or not the public will back their efforts. If the public views exonerees as deserving of compensation

and expungement, policymakers may be more successful in passing and implementing policy reform to help exonerees recover from the injustices they experienced. This study contributes to wrongful conviction literature by examining public perceptions of exonerees' and their deservingness of compensation for their wrongful convictions and having their wrongful convictions expunged from their criminal records.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The criminal justice system is founded on the presumption of innocence

("innocent until proven guilty"), yet wrongful convictions do happen. Since 1989, there

have been 3,348 exonerations in the United States (The National Registry of

Exonerations 2022a). Based on this number alone, it is clear the United States criminal

justice system is susceptible to error. Furthermore, the number of exonerations continues

to grow, making wrongful convictions a serious issue that warrants concern and justice

system reform. In turn, scholars in various fields developed an interest in researching

wrongful convictions and exonerees. In this chapter, I will begin by providing an

overview of wrongful convictions, their contributing causes, and estimated prevalence. I

will then review existing wrongful conviction literature focusing primarily on exonerees'

challenges and needs, compensation and expungement, and public perceptions of

wrongful convictions and exonerees. This chapter focuses on these topics to present

readers with the scope of the problem and outline the hardships wrongly convicted

individuals face to explain why providing exonerees with compensation and

expungement is a necessary piece to help them rebuild their lives after exoneration. This

chapter concludes by providing an overview of the current study.

Defining Wrongful Convictions and Reviewing their Contributing Causes

Findley (2008) explains there are two types of wrongful convictions: legally

innocent and factually innocent. A legally innocent wrongful conviction occurs when the

criminal conviction of an individual results from procedural errors and/or inadequate

evidence. In other words, people who are convicted under these circumstances may be guilty of committing the crimes for which they were convicted but may claim legal innocence and appeal their cases. If their convictions are overturned on the grounds of procedural errors and/or inadequate evidence, it is considered a wrongful conviction. While this thesis focuses only on wrongful convictions of factually innocent individuals, this type of wrongful conviction is important to note because it shows the criminal justice system is susceptible to error in cases in which justice-involved individuals are both legally and factually innocent. A factually innocent wrongful conviction occurs when an individual is convicted of a crime he or she did not commit. Findley (2008) further explains the causes of factually innocent wrongful convictions include eyewitness misidentification, faulty forensic science, false confessions, unreliable jailhouse snitch or informer testimony, perjury, police misconduct, prosecutorial misconduct, and ineffective counsel.

Of the first 325 DNA exonerations the Innocence Project was involved in, West and Meterko (2016) report 72% of these wrongful conviction cases involved eyewitness misidentification, 47% involved the misapplication of forensic science, 27% involved false confessions, and 15% involved informants. During their analysis, West and Meterko (2016) compared their findings to the 1,529 cases of wrongful conviction listed on The National Registry of Exonerations' database at the end of 2014. They found 55% of these wrongful conviction cases involved perjury or false accusation, 46% involved official misconduct, 34% involved eyewitness misidentification, 23% involved false or misleading forensic evidence, and 20% involved false confession. It must be noted that

West and Meterko (2016) did not report the percentage of cases involving official misconduct because the Innocence Project does not systematically track this information. They further explain both official misconduct and ineffective counsel are difficult factors that contribute to wrongful convictions to analyze as it is challenging to both define and uncover all potential misconduct and ineffectiveness.

While it appears there are some substantial differences between the contributing causes of wrongful convictions in the cases analyzed by West and Meterko (2016) and The National Registry of Exonerations, West and Meterko (2016) explain the differences between the two findings are due to the different distributions of crime types among each dataset. For example, the difference between the eyewitness misidentification findings may be because homicide was the most common type of crime listed among The National Registry of Exonerations cases whereas most of the DNA exonerations involved non-homicide cases. In non-homicide cases, eyewitness identification is central to obtaining convictions, whereas homicide cases generally do not have surviving victims available to identify perpetrators. Additionally, they explain the data presented by The National Registry of Exonerations involves many cases in which DNA was not available to prove innocence. Therefore, deeper investigations occurred during which additional contributing causes may have been discovered. Although additional contributing causes may have also been present in the DNA cases, these causes may not have been discovered after the exonerating DNA evidence was obtained and the investigations into these wrongful convictions ended. Of the current 3,348 cases listed on The National Registry of Exonerations (2022c) database, 61% of these wrongful convictions involved

perjury or false accusation, 57% involved official misconduct, 26% involved eyewitness misidentification, 23% involved false or misleading forensic evidence, and 12% involved false confession.

Estimating the Prevalence of Wrongful Convictions

While 3,348 individuals have been exonerated to date (The National Registry of Exonerations 2022a), the actual number of wrongful convictions is unknown. Thus, researchers have attempted to estimate the prevalence of wrongful convictions by surveying justice system professionals, while other researchers have attempted to do so by using existing crime and exoneration data.

Risinger (2007) utilized capital rape-murder cases tried from 1982 to 1989 to estimate the prevalence of wrongful convictions. He found the wrongful conviction rate of those cases to be at least 3.2% with a likely maximum of 5%. Similarly, Gross et al. (2014) estimate 4.1% of the individuals sentenced to death in the United States from 1973 through 2004 were wrongly convicted. When looking at cases of sexual assault, Walsh et al. (2017) estimates wrongful convictions occur at a rate of 11.6%. While their research was conducted on cases in Virginia, they report their findings are not significantly different from other states. Walsh et al. (2017) further reports the most widely projected estimates of wrongful convictions are between one and five percent.

According to Bronson and Carson (2019), there were 1,489,363 people incarcerated in United States prisons at the end of 2017. When applying the conservative end (1%) of the most widely projected estimates of wrongful convictions to the prison

population, there may be approximately 15,000 people in prison who were wrongly

convicted. Keep in mind this estimate does not include people who are in jail and on

community supervision. Overall, it is beneficial to know the estimated prevalence of

wrongful convictions as it raises awareness about the problem of wrongful convictions

and invokes inquiry into the justice system's accuracy. However, to fully grasp the

problem of wrongful convictions, it is also critical to understand the struggles and needs

of those who have been exonerated.

Challenges and Needs After Exoneration

The struggles faced by exonerees are vast. To better understand exonerees'

experiences, scholars have conducted interviews with exonerees to obtain firsthand

accounts of their challenges and needs after their exonerations and release from prison

(Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). Most exonerees reported struggles

with their housing, employment, physical and mental health issues, healthcare, basic

living skills, feelings of grief and loss, and stigmatization. Additional challenges and

needs exonerees face include receiving compensation for their wrongful convictions and

having the wrongful convictions expunged from their records (Shlosberg et al. 2020;

Westervelt and Cook 2010).

While the struggles exonerees face after their release from prison are similar to

that of individuals on parole, exonerees receive even less assistance than those on parole

because of their unique situations. For example, sometimes exonerees are given a few

hours to a day's notice that they will be released and are not eligible for resources

individuals on parole receive such as reentry assistance, job training, and rehabilitation. With the little notice exonerees receive, housing is a major challenge and need for exonerees immediately following their release (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). Shabaka Brown, an exoneree who spent fourteen years on death row, lived with his attorney for six months following his release from prison. Sabrina Butler, an exoneree who spent five years wrongly incarcerated, described her release from prison as being "kicked to the curb" as she was not even given the opportunity to make a phone call to coordinate transportation (Westervelt and Cook 2010).

Employment is also a major issue exonerees face after their release, especially when the wrongful convictions remain on their criminal records upon exoneration. This is because it is typically up to the exonerees to hire their own attorneys to have the wrongful convictions expunged from their criminal records and have their civil rights restored. Securing employment can be even more challenging for exonerees who are recognizable in their communities (Westervelt and Cook 2010). In support of these findings, Weigand (2009) reports 57% of exonerees never achieve the same level of income they earned prior to their wrongful convictions. Additionally, about 33% of exonerees reported being financially dependent on others and 44% reported having to live with others indefinitely.

Exonerees also reported experiencing serious health problems including malnutrition, digestive disorders, cancer, asthma, arthritis, muscular atrophy, diabetes, high blood pressure, hepatitis, skin rashes, dental needs, and more (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). Obtaining healthcare is yet another obstacle exonerees experience because health insurance is commonly offered by employers, and as

mentioned previously, it is not easy for exonerees to obtain employment. Furthermore, some exonerees apply for Social Security or disability benefits but are often denied (Westervelt and Cook 2010). Exonerees further reported it took months for them to obtain medical coverage which was often inadequate. This caused them to pay out of pocket for medical expenses or withheld them from receiving treatment (Shlosberg et al. 2020). In addition to physical health issues, exonerees often experience mental health issues due to the trauma they experienced from being wrongly convicted and incarcerated (Konvisser 2015).

Trauma is commonly identified in psychological research on exonerees. For example, Kukucka, Horodyski, and Dardis (2022) found a majority of the fifty-nine exonerees they surveyed experienced (79.7%) and/or witnessed (74.6%) at least one of eight traumatic events while wrongly incarcerated in prison. The list of traumatic events included natural disaster, transportation or other serious accident, physical assault, assault with a weapon, sexual assault, other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience, life-threatening illness or injury, and sudden violent or accidental death.

Konvisser (2015) interviewed twenty-one female exonerees to examine the psychological consequences of being wrongly convicted and incarcerated. Many of the women described their experiences in jail and prison as degrading, demeaning, dehumanizing, and traumatic. Eight of the women interviewed were wrongly convicted of either harming or murdering their children. Their convictions increased the level of trauma these women experienced because, in addition to being wrongly convicted of crimes against their children, they had to cope with the harm and/or loss of their children.

The exonerees further reported experiencing thoughts of suicide while incarcerated, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, nightmares, panic attacks, and paranoia both while incarcerated and after their exonerations.

In addition, research indicates exonerees experience higher rates of mental health disorders than the general public. Weigand (2009) reported findings from The Life After Exoneration Program's survey of sixty exonerees which indicated at least 28% of the exonerees had PTSD, 38% had anxiety, and 40% had depression. Wildeman, Costelloe, and Schehr (2011) found similar results from their interviews with fifty-five exonerees: 27.3% of the exonerees scored above the threshold for PTSD, 40% for anxiety and depression, and 43.6% for depression. Moreover, these rates were higher for those who spent ten or more years incarcerated, had been out of prison for ten years or less, and were not employed full time. Kukucka et al.'s (2022) sample of exonerees scored higher on measures of mental health with 48-52% meeting clinical standards for or reporting symptom patterns consistent with PTSD and 51% for depression. For comparison, the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (2007) reported 3.6% of adults in the United States had PTSD, 19.1% had any anxiety disorder (including PTSD), and 6.8% had major depressive disorder. See Table 1.

Table 1: Exonerees' Rates of Mental Health Disorders Compared to Rates in the				
	Weigand (2009)	Wildeman et al. (2011)	Kukucka et al. (2022)	U.S. Rates: National Comorbidity Survey Replication (2007)
PTSD	28%	27.3%	48-52%	3.6%
Anxiety	38%	40% (anxiety and depression together)	Not Measured	19.1% (including PTSD)
Depression	40%	43.6%	51%	6.8%

Exonerees must also relearn basic living skills after they are released from prison. For example, Juan Melendez explained his sense of direction suffered after being confined to a prison cell for over seventeen years. After his release, he often found himself getting lost in buildings. Alan Gell, an exoneree who spent over eight years in prison, reported it was difficult for him to sleep in the dark because he was used to the lights being kept on in prison all day and night (Westervelt and Cook 2010). Furthermore, technology is always evolving which makes it difficult for exonerees to adapt to society. Some exonerees had never seen cell phones, CD players, DVDs, computers, ATM machines, etc. until they were released from prison (Westervelt and Cook 2010)in using modern forms of communication including e-mail and social media (Shlosberg et al. 2020).

Moreover, exonerees report feelings of loss and grief, such as the loss of time, loss of security, loss of loved ones, and loss of self. Several of the exonerees were wrongly convicted and incarcerated when their children were young and released when their children were grown. They lost years of their children's lives and had to reestablish relationships with their families (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). Regarding loss of sense of security, Ray Krone explained he experienced this feeling in public places. He explained he intentionally travels in groups and takes precaution when going out in public by placing a recording device in his pocket to protect himself if he were to be stopped by police (Westervelt and Cook 2010).

Exonerees experienced feelings of grief as they simultaneously suffered from the loss of their family members and being wrongly convicted of their family members'

murders. Scott Taylor, a man who was wrongly convicted of killing his wife, toddler, and five other people explained he was unable to mourn their deaths until the day he was released from prison and able to see their gravesites (Westervelt and Cook 2010). Feelings of grief were also expressed by exonerees whose loved ones passed away while they were in prison (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). Kirk Bloodsworth explained his mother passed away only five months prior to his release, and he believed the stress she experienced from his wrongful conviction caused her death (Westervelt and Cook 2010).

Exonerees expressed feelings of loss of self and identity after their release. Prior to being wrongly convicted, their identities were constructed by their families, friendships, and jobs, all of which dissipated over time from being wrongly convicted and incarcerated. Upon release, they had to construct new identities by building new relationships, obtaining new jobs, and taking on their new identities as "exonerees" (Westervelt and Cook 2010). Gary Gauger, an exoneree who was incarcerated for three years, stated, "My life is no longer my own. I really feel sometimes, I was actually murdered the same day my parents were, and this is like a [sic] alternate life I'm living. 'Cause the difference is just so abrupt and different" (Westervelt and Cook 2010:270).

Stigma is another obstacle exonerees experience. Upon release, exonerees are met with fear and suspicion by their community members, and sometimes even their family members who may doubt their innocence (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). Additionally, exonerees reported they have received hate messages. For example, Bloodsworth reported he often had the words "child killer" written in the dirt on his

vehicle (Westervelt and Cook 2010). To combat the stigma exonerees experience, exonerees often express their desire for the government and convicting agencies to acknowledge the errors they made and apologize for their wrongful convictions, yet this is hardly ever obtained (Campbell and Denov 2004; Westervelt and Cook 2010).

Exonerees have also identified receiving a formal apology is an important piece to help them move on from their wrongful convictions because it provides a sense of validation and formal "delabeling." (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010). In turn, a formal apology may impact exonerees' communities' opinions about them, influence how they are treated upon exoneration, and lessen the stigma exonerees experience. Aside from an apology, exonerees report the desire to be accepted. Bloodsworth explains, "A hug. He needs to be loved…That was what I wanted more than anything. I wanted to be loved again. I wanted people to respect me. And I didn't want people to think I was a child killer anymore…I wanted love and acceptance" (Westervelt and Cook 2010:271).

Last but not least, exonerees struggle to obtain legal assistance to seek compensation for their wrongful convictions and have the wrongful convictions expunged from their criminal records (Shlosberg et al. 2020; Westervelt and Cook 2010), both of which are critical as they provide exonerees ways to be formally "delabeled" and help them rebuild their lives after exoneration. First, compensation provides exonerees with monetary assistance to obtain their needs. Receiving compensation for their wrongful convictions is also meaningful to exonerees as it implies the government has taken responsibility for its error and acknowledges its wrongdoing (Karaffa, Page, and

Koch 2017). Second, expungement seals or removes the wrongful convictions from their criminal records which addresses government error and provides exonerees better opportunities to obtain housing, schooling, employment, and government benefits (Shlosberg et al. 2014).

Compensation

Despite having their freedom taken away and reputations damaged, exonerees are not guaranteed to receive compensation for their wrongful convictions. While the actual number of exonerees who have received compensation for their wrongful convictions is unknown, organizations and scholars have attempted to estimate this. The National Registry of Exonerations (2017) found approximately 49% of the 351 individuals who were exonerated between 2005 and 2009 received compensation. Gutman (2017) also analyzed compensation awards among exonerees who were wrongly convicted and incarcerated in states that had compensation statutes at the time of the study. Of the 1509 exonerees in his sample, Gutman (2017) found approximately 34.66% received compensation, 38.17% did not file for compensation, 7.22% had their compensation claims denied, and 4.3% had their compensation claims pending. The remaining 15.4% of exonerees had recently been exonerated and still had time to file compensation claims. It must be noted these statistics do not include exonerees who were wrongly convicted but not incarcerated and exonerees who were wrongly convicted in states that did not have compensation statutes at the time of the study.

It must also be noted there are many reasons why 38.17% of the exonerees did not file for compensation. First, Gutman (2017) explains compensation statutes vary by state, and some states have barriers that exclude some exonerees from receiving compensation. For example, at the time of the study, Florida did not allow exonerees who had been convicted of felonies prior to their wrongful convictions to receive compensation, while Missouri only allowed exonerees who were exonerated by DNA evidence to receive compensation. Second, there are some states that have statutes in which compensation awards are limited. For example, Montana's form of compensation is in tuition remission, and exonerees in Wisconsin may only be awarded a maximum of $25,000. Third, some exonerees were exonerated prior to the passage of their state's compensation statutes. Some states allow exonerees to retroactively file for compensation whereas other states do not explicitly declare whether or not exonerees are allowed to do so. Additional reasons some exonerees may not have filed include that they were not aware of their states' statutes, had passed away, were reincarcerated after their exonerations, among others. The remainder of this section focuses on the methods exonerees may use to try to receive compensation, as well as the shortcomings and challenges of existing compensation statutes.

How Do Exonerees Receive Compensation?

There are three options exonerees may utilize to try to obtain compensation for their wrongful convictions: lawsuits, private bills, and statutes. First, exonerees may file lawsuits for civil damages. Typically, in order to win these lawsuits, exonerees have to

prove they are "victims of intentional government misconduct" which is difficult to prove (Innocence Project 2009a:12). Examples of cases involving intentional government misconduct include those in which evidence was intentionally fabricated by police, evidence was intentionally withheld from prosecutors, and false confessions were coerced. It must be noted prosecutors have absolute immunity. This is an additional barrier of obtaining compensation through lawsuits because it protects prosecutors from being sued by those who have been wrongly convicted. Lastly, lawsuits are expensive to pursue and do not guarantee exonerees will be awarded compensation. And, even if exonerees win their cases, it is likely a portion of their awards will be spent on litigation fees (Innocence Project 2009a).

Second, when exonerees cannot file a lawsuit and state compensation statutes do not exist, exonerees may attempt to have legislators introduce private bills on their behalf. A private bill asks the state in which the wrongful conviction occurred to compensate the individual exoneree. Private bills may be a desirable option for the state as they are decided on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, the state is not obligated to compensate all wrongly convicted individuals. However, private bills have shortcomings. Exonerees must lobby for themselves and may not have the political connections to see this option through. Additionally, compensation awarded through private bills lacks consistency both within and among states (Innocence Project 2009a).

Third, exonerees may be awarded compensation if the states in which they were wrongly convicted have compensation statutes. Compensation statutes can provide a standard way to award money to exonerees to offset the harm they experienced from their

wrongful convictions. While all three methods of receiving compensation require a waiting time as their claims are being processed, exonerees are typically awarded compensation more quickly through compensation statutes than lawsuits and private bills (Innocence Project 2009a).

Existing Compensation Statutes

According to the Innocence Project (2022b), thirty-eight states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government currently have compensation statutes for those who were wrongly convicted. The remaining twelve states that do not have compensation statutes include Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming. However, existing compensation statutes vary by state in regard to eligibility criteria, standard of proof to be met, who determines whether or not exonerees are granted compensation, the time limit in which exonerees must file for compensation, awards granted to exonerees, and additional provisions exonerees must meet (Innocence Project 2018a).

For example, the state of Minnesota passed its compensation statute in 2014. In order to be eligible for compensation, exonerees must meet one of the following eligibility criteria: The "[c]ourt vacated or reversed conviction on grounds consistent with innocence and charges dismissed; claimant found not guilty or had charges dismissed at new trial; or the time for appeal of the order resulting in exoneration has expired or the order has been affirmed and is final" (Innocence Project 2018a:8). Exonerees must also meet the preponderance of the evidence standard of proof and file for compensation

within two years but no less than sixty days after they have been exonerated to be eligible

for compensation. In addition, the Court must have a hearing to determine whether or not

exonerees are granted compensation (Innocence Project 2018a).

In the state of Minnesota, exonerees may receive a minimum of $50,000 with a

maximum of $100,000 for each year they were wrongly incarcerated and a minimum of

$25,000 with a maximum of $50,000 for each year they were on probation, parole, or

required to register as a predatory offender. Exonerees may receive additional awards to

reimburse them for their attorney fees, as well as "(1) economic damages, associated with

the claimant's criminal defense; (2) reimbursement for medical and dental expenses; (3)

noneconomic damages; (4) tuition and fees associate [*sic*] with education at public four

year college; (5) paid or unpaid child support payments; [and] (6) costs of immediate

services upon exoneration and release" (Innocence Project 2018a:8).

In contrast, Minnesota's neighboring state, Wisconsin, passed a compensation

statute in 1913 with amendments made in 1987. Wisconsin exonerees must meet the clear

and convincing standard of proof, and a claims board determines whether exonerees are

granted compensation. In Wisconsin, there are currently no eligibility criteria exonerees

must meet and no time limits specified in which exonerees must file for compensation.

Exonerees may receive a maximum of $5,000 for each year they were wrongly

incarcerated with a maximum of $25,000 total. However, the claims board may petition

the legislature for exonerees to receive additional compensation. In order to receive

compensation, exonerees must not have contributed to or brought about the conviction

(Innocence Project 2018a).

Shortcomings and Challenges of Existing Compensation Statutes

There are several shortcomings and challenges with existing compensation statutes. First, existing compensation statutes vary by state which contributes to the wide range of compensation awards exonerees may receive. This was demonstrated in the previous section with Minnesota's and Wisconsin's statutes. To provide another example of this, exonerees in New Hampshire can receive a maximum of $20,000 for their wrongful convictions, while exonerees in Texas can receive $80,000 per year they were wrongfully incarcerated, an annuity, and up to $10,000 for reintegration financial assistance, attorney fees, and lost wages. Exonerees in Texas may also be awarded compensation for counseling expenses for up to one year, child support, and tuition for up to 120 credits. Additionally, Texas exonerees are eligible to obtain health insurance through the state's Department of Criminal Justice as if the exoneree were an employee of such (Innocence Project 2018a).

Second, exonerees may be required to meet strict eligibility criteria in order to qualify for compensation. For example, in order for exonerees to receive compensation in Missouri and Montana, they must have been exonerated with DNA evidence. In other states, exonerees may be disqualified from receiving compensation if they falsely confessed or pleaded guilty to the crimes for which they were exonerated. Lastly, some state statutes exclude exonerees from receiving compensation if they have prior felony convictions or are subsequently convicted of a felony upon being exonerated (Innocence Project 2009a).

Third, compensation statutes often lack provisions to provide social services to exonerees. While monetary awards provide financial assistance to exonerees, exonerees are also in need of additional services to ensure they successfully reintegrate into society upon their exonerations. Exonerees may benefit from various social services including job training and placement, counseling, health care, housing assistance, legal assistance, and more (Innocence Project 2009a).

Fourth, compensation is not immediately awarded to exonerees. In order to receive compensation through a state compensation statute, exonerees must file a claim and go through the claims process. Eligibility requirements and the claims processes differ by state, but typically, exonerees who file a claim must again prove they did not commit the crimes for which they were wrongly convicted. On average, it takes almost three years for exonerees to receive compensation through state compensation statutes (Innocence Project 2009a).

Compensation in Minnesota

As outlined above, exonerees experience challenges when attempting to receive compensation for their wrongful convictions. Furthermore, the existing shortcomings in state compensation statutes present exonerees with additional obstacles they must overcome to be compensated for their wrongful convictions. The experiences of two exonerees in Minnesota, Michael Hansen and Javon Davis, provide examples of the differences in compensation awarded (or lack thereof) to exonerees within the same state.

In 2006, Michael Hansen was convicted of murdering his infant daughter, Avryonna. On the night of the incident, Hansen woke up and found Avryonna unresponsive. Paramedics responded to his home but were unable to save her. Upon discovering Avryonna had a skull fracture, the initial autopsy ruled her death as a homicide caused by blunt force trauma. During Hansen's trial, Avryonna's mother explained, six days prior to the incident, Avryonna was involved in an accident. Avryonna had been in her car seat which was resting on a shopping cart. The car seat fell off the shopping cart and landed on the pavement. Avryonna's mother believed she was not injured during the fall because the handle of the car seat had been in an upright position and protected her from directly hitting the pavement. Despite this information, a doctor testified Avryonna died due to her skull fracture which he believed was not caused from the fall six days prior to the incident. Rather, this doctor claimed Avryonna's head injury was caused by being pushed or shoved into a surface. A former jail inmate also testified and made statements that indicated Hansen murdered Avryonna. This jail inmate was released from jail upon agreeing to testify for the prosecution. A second doctor testified during trial and explained that, based on Avryonna's state of healing, her skull fracture did not occur the night she died. Rather, this doctor asserted Avryonna either died due to the head trauma she sustained six days prior to her death or due to a natural cause. Ultimately, Hansen was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to fourteen-and-a-half years in prison (Possley 2017).

Hansen appealed his conviction, but it was upheld by the Minnesota Court of Appeals. He continued to fight for his innocence and began working with the Innocence

Project of Minnesota who petitioned for a writ of habeus corpus. In the spring of 2011, a

hearing was held in which five doctors testified that Avryonna's death was not caused by

the skull fracture, and they believed her death was likely cause by positional asphyxia. In

July 2011, a District Court judge vacated Hansen's conviction (Possley 2017). Hansen

filed a claim for compensation in which he sought nearly $917,000. His claim was

reviewed and approved by a Minnesota legislative committee (Sepic 2016).

However, Javon Davis' experience in petitioning for compensation had vastly

different results. Davis was wrongly convicted of attempted murder in 2015. On the night

of the offense, Kibbie Walker and Cortez Blakemore finished their shifts at Target Field.

Outside of the stadium, they came across three men and were shot by one of them. Both

Walker and Blakemore survived. Prior to this incident, Walker was believed to be

involved in gang violence between his gang and the "1-9" gang. Specifically, Walker was

rumored to have been involved in the murder of Tyrone Washington, a 1-9 leader, who

was friends with Davis. Additional rumors naming Davis as the shooter of the incident

that occurred outside Target Field began spreading. This caused investigators to focus on

Davis. Upon being released from the hospital, Walker was interviewed by police during

which they falsely implied Davis was captured on video surveillance. Walker then

claimed Davis was the shooter and selected his photo from a lineup. Despite having an

alibi, presenting three alibi witnesses in court, and Walker's statements during trial in

which he stated he was not certain who shot him, Davis was convicted of two counts of

attempted murder and sentenced to just over twenty-eight years in prison in 2015

(Otterbourg 2021b).

Davis appealed his conviction and filed a motion for post-conviction relief. Both were rejected. He then began working with the Innocence Project of Minnesota which filed another motion for post-conviction relief based on his ineffective assistance of counsel. In 2020, Davis' conviction was vacated by a District Court judge, and a new trial was ordered. The charges against Davis were dismissed two weeks later by the District Attorney (Otterbourg 2021b). Davis later filed a petition for compensation. In response to his petition, the County Attorney's office asserted, despite having insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt Davis was the shooter, he should not be compensated. The County Attorney's office further claimed they did not believe Davis was factually innocent. In 2021, the same judge who vacated Davis' conviction denied his petition for compensation. The judge explained the denial was due to the language in Minnesota's compensation statute that states an exoneree's wrongful conviction must be vacated based on actual innocence making Davis ineligible for compensation (Haavik 2021).

These two wrongful conviction cases in Minnesota show the effort it takes individuals to have their convictions reexamined and vacated, as well as the shortcomings in compensation statutes. These cases also highlight the uncertainty exonerees face when attempting to receive compensation for their wrongful convictions even when the states in which they were wrongly convicted have compensation statutes. It is critical to address the limitations in existing compensation statutes to eliminate the barriers exonerees face and ensure all exonerees are compensated for their wrongful convictions.

Standardized Compensation Statute Recommendations

The Innocence Project (2009a) has made recommendations for standardized state compensation statutes for exonerees. The Innocence Project recommends exonerees should be awarded a minimum of $50,000 per year of wrongful imprisonment with an additional $50,000 per year for those who spent time on death row. The Innocence Project further recommends the monetary compensation awarded to exonerees should be exempt from taxation. In addition, the Innocence Project recommends states should cover attorney's fees associated with filing compensation claims, as well as provide exonerees with immediate services to address housing, transportation, education, workforce development, physical and mental health care, and other transitional needs. Finally, the Innocence Project (2009a) recommends states should "[i]ssue an official acknowledgement of the wrongful conviction" (5).

While not all fifty states have compensation laws, the United States Congress has taken steps to ensure those who receive compensation receive the entirety of their awards. In 2015, Congress passed the Wrongful Convictions Tax Relief Act. This bill excludes compensation awarded to exonerees from being taxed by the federal government (Innocence Project 2015). The tax exclusion applies to civil damages, restitution, and other monetary awards (Wrongful Convictions Tax Relief Act 2015). Overall, adopting standardized compensation statutes is a critical step in guaranteeing exonerees receive aid upon being exonerated.

Expungement

Generally, expungement refers to the process in which one's arrests and convictions are sealed or removed from his or her criminal record. Unfortunately, even less is known about expungement for exonerees compared to compensation. What is known is that exonerees are not guaranteed expungement after being exonerated. This is because expungement is difficult to accomplish at both the federal and state level due to varying state expungement laws. In turn, the inability to achieve expungement causes reentry to be problematic for exonerees. For example, exonerees who do not have their records expunged may be ineligible for services and have limited employment and housing opportunities (Shlosberg et al. 2014). In some cases, expungement is their only hope of being "delabeled" as criminals to secure more opportunities in society and begin the process of moving on (Westervelt and Cook 2010).

Post-Exoneration Offending Behavior

Existing research examines exonerees' post-exoneration offending behavior. Specifically, this area of research focuses on whether having their records expunged and receiving compensation impact exonerees' offending behavior after they are exonerated. For example, Shlosberg et al. (2014) examined the post-exoneration offending behavior of exonerees who were wrongly convicted in Florida, Illinois, Texas, and New York. Of these exonerees, 67.5% had their records expunged and 32.5% did not. Their results indicate expungement is significantly associated with post-exoneration offending. That is, 50% of the exonerees who did not have their records expunged committed a post-

exoneration offense while only 31.6% exonerees who had their records expunged committed a post-exoneration offense. The relationship between exonerees without expunged records and post-exoneration offending was strongest (87.5%) for those who had no criminal record prior to their wrongful convictions.

Shlosberg et al. (2014) suggest their findings support Howard Becker's (1963) labeling theory which posits that individuals who are labeled as "criminals" are stigmatized by society. This stigmatization further influences their behavior as they respond to the "criminal" label by engaging in subsequent deviant behavior. Shlosberg et al. (2014) applies labeling theory to their findings in that exonerees who did not have their records expunged and remained formally labeled as criminals had higher rates of post-exoneration offending. Their results may further support Merton's (1938) strain theory which postulates individuals engage in criminal behavior when they lack socially acceptable means and opportunities of achieving their goals. It is widely known that those with criminal records experience barriers in achieving basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare, education, and employment (Reentry Coordination Council 2022). These obstacles may cause individuals with criminal records to experience strain in achievement which influences them to obtain their goals through socially-deviant means. Strain theory can be applied to exonerees who do not have their records expunged as the criminal label remains attached to them, thus causing them to experience the same barriers as those with criminal records. Therefore, it is worth noting that exonerees may be better understood through the application of labeling theory and strain theory as these theories help explain the lingering effects of their wrongful convictions and how that

influences their post-exoneration behavior, especially when they are not afforded expungement.

It must be noted that Shlosberg et al.'s (2014) sample was comprised of data on individuals exonerated in Florida, Illinois, Texas, and New York. This is important to consider because, at the time of the study, New York had the most favorable expungement policies out of these four states. Furthermore, all New York exonerees in the sample had their records expunged, and the New York exonerees had a dramatically lower rate of post-exoneration offending (8.6%) in comparison to the other states in the sample. Illinois exonerees had the next lowest rate of post-exoneration offending at 38.7%. The inclusion of the New York exoneree data may influence the findings to appear as though more exonerees have their records expunged than they actually do nationwide. Thus, it is critical to remain cautious to not generalize Shlosberg et al.'s (2014) findings.

Using the same data set from Shlosberg et al. (2014), Mandery et al. (2013) examined the relationship between compensation and post-exoneration offending. Mandery et al. (2013) examined compensation as both a dichotomous variable (whether compensation was provided or not) and a continuous variable (how much compensation exonerees were provided). Of the 118 exonerees, seventy-one (60.2%) received compensation, forty-five (38.1%) did not receive compensation, and two (1.7%) were unknown. For those who received compensation, the amount exonerees received ranged from $100 to $18.5 million. When examining compensation as a dichotomous variable, compensation had no apparent effect on post-exoneration offending. In other words,

exonerees who received compensation offended at about the same rate (36.6%) as exonerees who did not receive compensation (37.8%).

However, when examining compensation as a continuous variable, the results were quite different. Exonerees who were awarded more than $500,000 committed significantly less post-exoneration offenses (18.2%) than both exonerees who were awarded less than $500,000 (50%) or received no compensation at all (40%). It is also important to note that all four states in the sample have compensation statutes for exonerees. This may further influence the findings to appear as though more exonerees generally receive compensation than they do nationwide. Thus, it is important to remain cautious when applying these findings as the study did not include post-exoneration offending behavior of those who were exonerated in states that did not have existing compensation statutes.

In summary, exonerees who have their records expunged and/or receive compensation commit less post-exoneration offenses than those who do not. When applying labeling theory and strain theory to exonerees, the challenges they face become more apparent and their post-exoneration offending behavior may be better understood. That is, failing to expunge their records and failing to award them compensation for their wrongful convictions can have consequences for not only them, but also the public, as the failure to do so may influence exonerees to engage in higher rates of post-exoneration offending behavior. If the harm of being wrongly convicted is repaired through expungement and compensation, exonerees will be in a better position to rebuild their lives which may further protect public safety. Shedding light on this may be useful in

generating greater public support for the enhancement of compensation and expungement

policy to ensure exonerees receive these two critical forms of aid. This is a necessity

owed to exonerees as their wrongful convictions should not have happened in the first

place, and exonerees as well as the public should not have to continue to suffer from the

effects of the justice system's failure to protect innocence especially without reparation.

Perceptions of Wrongful Convictions and Exonerees

As awareness of wrongful convictions has continued to rise, the public has

become more informed about this topic and conscious of the mistakes the criminal justice

system makes. As such, researchers have taken interest in examining public perceptions

of wrongful convictions and exonerees. Assessing public opinion is important for two

major reasons. First, public opinion is important to the progress of the Innocence

Movement as it can influence policy change and justice system reform. Second, public

opinion is important to exonerees as it affects their lives after exoneration. This section

provides an overview of existing research on public perceptions of wrongful convictions

and exonerees.

Frequency of Wrongful Convictions

Prior research suggests a majority of people believe wrongful convictions occur at

some rate, and people agree this rate warrants justice system reform. For example,

Zalman, Larson, and Smith (2012) surveyed 737 Michigan residents and found 75.2% of

them believed wrongful convictions occurred occasionally or frequently, 24.6% believed

wrongful convictions occurred very rarely, and only two respondents believed wrongful convictions never happen. Those who believed wrongful convictions occurred more frequently included non-Whites, those with a high school education or less, and those who were not married. Additionally, over half (57.4%) of the respondents believed wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to warrant justice system reform. Those found to endorse greater support for criminal justice reform included non-Whites, women, those with less education, unmarried individuals, and death penalty opponents.

When turning to studies measuring perceptions of criminal justice professionals, findings are a bit scattered. Ramsey and Frank (2007) examined 798 Ohio criminal justice professionals' perceptions about the frequency of wrongful convictions. Participants included sheriffs, chiefs of police, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges. Almost one fourth (24%) of the participants believed wrongful convictions occur between 1-3% of the time, and 40.7% of participants believed wrongful convictions occur more than 3% of the time. Participants were also asked to specify an acceptable rate of wrongful convictions. Over half (51.4%) of the participants believed a rate of 0% is acceptable, while 26.6% believed less than 0.5% is acceptable, 11.5% believed 0.5-1% is acceptable, and roughly 10% believed 1% or more is acceptable. These findings indicate criminal justice professionals generally believed wrongful convictions occur, and their perceived rate of wrongful convictions is unacceptable. These findings may further suggest criminal justice professionals may be more willing to accept and support criminal justice system reform designed to reduce the amount of wrongful convictions that occur.

Smith, Zalman, and Kiger (2011) replicated Ramsey and Frank's (2007) study with criminal justice professionals in the state of Michigan. When asked whether wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to warrant change in the criminal justice system, 90.4% of police, 72.7% of prosecutors, and 69.9% of judges believed wrongful convictions do not occur frequently enough to justify change, whereas 91.6% of defense attorneys believed wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to justify change. This finding suggests there is substantial variability among criminal justice professionals' perceptions of wrongful convictions in the United States. Furthermore, the findings from this section suggest that while general members of the public and some criminal justice professionals believe their perceived rate of wrongful convictions warrant justice system reform, there may be some pushback from other criminal justice professionals who may oppose such efforts.

Stigma

Research has found exonerees experience stigmatization. For example, Thompson, Molina, and Levett (2012) examined Florida college students' perceptions of exonerees. The participants were asked to read a fictitious news article about one of three targets – an ex-convict, an exoneree, or an average individual – and complete a questionnaire about the target. Participants generally rated the exoneree more positively than the ex-convict and rated the average individual more positively than the exoneree. Yet, the exoneree target was rated at or near the midpoint of a stigma scale. This finding suggests that despite being exonerated, the public may stigmatize wrongly convicted

individuals at some level. Thus, it is important to examine and understand why exonerees are stigmatized by the public as public opinion influences policy and impacts exonerees' reintegration to their communities.

The stigmatization of exonerees may also be impacted by the time they spent wrongly incarcerated. Blandisi, Clow, and Ricciardelli (2015) found just over 25% of their thirty Canadian respondents admitted to having personal biases toward exonerees. The respondents explained that either themselves or the public stigmatize exonerees due to their exposure to other justice-involved individuals. In other words, these respondents believed exonerees may be perceived as dangerous individuals because they were incarcerated with other stigmatized individuals. Respondents discussed other potential reasons exonerees are stigmatized including media coverage of the cases when the wrongly convicted were assumed to be guilty, lack of knowledge about wrongful convictions and the Canadian justice system, doubts of innocence, and fear of becoming victims of courtesy stigma (Blandisi et al. 2015). Courtesy stigma refers to the idea that members of the public believe they may be stigmatized if they associate with individuals who are already stigmatized (Goffman 1963). Respondents further explained that doubts of the exonerees' innocence may be influenced by crime type and their prior criminal records. That is, exonerees who were wrongly convicted of crimes that are generally perceived to be more severe and exonerees who had more prior criminal convictions on their records may have their innocence called into question and be stigmatized by the public. Only two respondents directly spoke out against the stigmatization of exonerees

and believed wrongful convictions negatively impact exonerees' mental health and limit their opportunities (Blandisi et al. 2015).

Factors Found to Influence Public Perceptions of Wrongful Convictions and Exonerees

Due to the stigmatization of exonerees, additional research focuses on identifying factors that influence public perceptions of wrongful convictions and exonerees. Existing research demonstrates the public's level of education may impact the stigmatization of exonerees. For example, Vegh et al. (2016) surveyed undergraduate students about their knowledge and perceptions of wrongful convictions. Their population consisted of students enrolled in criminal justice and political science courses (78.5% of which identified themselves as criminal justice majors). There was no significant difference found between criminal justice majors' and non-criminal justice majors' knowledge of wrongful convictions. However, differences were found between lower-level and upper-level students. Specifically, more advanced students agreed more often than their less advanced counterparts that eyewitnesses can be fallible, false/coerced confessions occur, police are susceptible to tunnel vision, arrests may be made prematurely due to public pressure, justice-involved individuals may take plea bargains due to their fear of being found guilty of serious crimes despite their innocence, ineffective defense can produce unfavorable outcomes, and being of lower socioeconomic status contributes to wrongful convictions.

In regard to perceptions of assistance provided to exonerees, criminal justice majors were less likely than non-criminal justice majors to agree that there should be a

limit on the maximum compensation exonerees can receive. Additional significant differences were found between more and less advanced students. Upper division students were more likely to agree that there should be state compensation laws, those sentenced to death row as well as those placed on the sex offender registry should receive additional compensation, and exonerees should have their criminal records expunged immediately upon exoneration. Furthermore, upper division students were more likely to agree that wrongly convicted individuals should receive reentry assistance (Vegh et al. 2016). These findings may suggest people who receive more education are more aware of the contributing causes of wrongful convictions, less likely to stigmatize wrongly convicted individuals, and more supportive of providing assistance to exonerees.

Existing research also examines whether race influences perceptions of exonerees. Generally, the exoneree's race was not a significant predictor of his perceived guilt (Howard 2019) or deservingness of compensation (Karaffa et al. 2012). However, the exoneree's race did impact other perceptions of him. Howard (2019) asked participants to read a vignette about an exoneree who was wrongly convicted based on his false confession and later exonerated through DNA evidence. The race of the exoneree was manipulated in the vignettes as either black or white. Participants perceived the black exoneree to be more aggressive, less deserving of government assistance, and more likely to return to prison for committing a post-exoneration offense than the white exoneree. Overall, these findings suggest that black exonerees may be perceived more negatively than white exonerees. This further suggests that black exonerees face even more barriers upon their exonerations in comparison to white exonerees.

Another factor found to influence perceptions of exonerees is cause of wrongful conviction. Drawing from Weiner, Perry, and Magnusson's (1988) attributional analysis of reactions to stigmas and Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation, Clow and Leach (2015) examined whether exonerees are stigmatized differently based on the causes of their wrongful convictions. To do so, they asked college students in an introductory psychology course to either read a fictional newspaper article about an exoneree (experimental condition) who was exonerated by DNA evidence after serving ten years in prison for a murder he did not commit or not read an article (control condition). The newspaper article included three experimental manipulations for the cause of the wrongful conviction: false confession, mistaken eyewitness, or jailhouse informant. Only three of the eight-five participants in the experimental condition believed the exoneree was guilty, all three of which read the false confession article. Clow and Leach (2015) also found the exoneree who falsely confessed was rated lower on measures of competence and warmth compared to the exonerees who were wrongly convicted due to a mistaken eyewitness or a jailhouse informant.

Similarly, Scherr, Normile, and Putney (2018) found that the cause of wrongful conviction influenced public perceptions of exonerees. In their study, participants read a news story about an exoneration in which the type of crime (murder or grand theft auto) and cause of wrongful conviction (false confession or eyewitness misidentification) were manipulated. They found when the exoneree's false confession contributed to his wrongful conviction, participants perceived him to be less intelligent and more likely to have mental health issues, as well as expressed more doubt surrounding his innocence.

Also inspired by Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation, Savage et al. (2018) asked Canadian college students to read one of four vignettes in which police procedure (high bias or low bias) and the cause of wrongful conviction (false confession or mistaken eyewitness identification) were manipulated. Their results support Weiner's (1993) theory in that when poor police procedures were enacted (high bias condition), participants rated the police as more responsible and the exoneree as less responsible for the wrongful conviction. In turn, these participants expressed feelings of anger toward the police. Additionally, participants perceived the exoneree as more responsible for his wrongful conviction, expressed more anger toward the exoneree, and reported more negative attitudes toward the exoneree in the false confession condition compared to the mistaken eyewitness identification condition. These findings suggest exonerees who falsely confess are perceived more negatively than exonerees who are wrongly convicted under other circumstances.

Compensation and Assistance

Existing wrongful conviction research also focuses on exonerees' perceived deservingness of compensation and assistance. For example, Clow et al. (2012) conducted interviews with a convenience sample of fifteen community members in Canada to examine whether or not members of the public believe exonerees should receive compensation. All fifteen interviewees believed those who are wrongly convicted should receive financial compensation and other forms of assistance. Factors the interviewees felt were worth considering when determining the amount of compensation

exonerees deserve included their length of time served in prison, lost earning potential, impact of the wrongful convictions on their relationships with others, character damage, severity of the crimes for which they were wrongly convicted, age, dependents they were responsible for, physical and mental health issues, and retirement funds. Only one interviewee mentioned legal costs as a factor to consider.

The other forms of assistance mentioned by the interviewees included education, job training, housing, help obtaining a vehicle, counseling, community reintegration assistance, expungement, apologies, publicizing their innocence, and witness-protection services. Specifically, all fifteen interviewees felt exonerees should receive apologies and believed the apologies would assist them in moving on from their wrongful convictions. When asked who should issue the apology, interviewees mentioned the government, justice system as a whole, lawyers, judges, courts, and the police. Furthermore, interviewees believed apologizing would positively impact the criminal justice system. Some felt the apology would help keep the system honest and show accountability, acknowledge its errors, humanize the justice system, encourage the system to fix what has caused wrongful convictions, and encourage criminal justice actors to be more careful in the future. Interviewees further felt public apologies would serve as a way to inform the public that wrongful convictions do occur, and the justice system is fallible. Lastly, interviewees felt issuing apologies would remove doubt surrounding the exonerees' innocence and increase the amount of assistance exonerees receive. These findings suggest members of the public support compensating and apologizing to individuals who have been wrongly convicted. These findings may also suggest issuing

public apologies would produce more positive effects rather than negative effects by reducing the stigma experienced by wrongly convicted individuals and restoring faith in justice systems that are willing to admit to their shortcomings and take responsibility for them (Clow et al. 2012).

While the previously mentioned research was conducted in Canada, researchers in the United States have also begun to examine public support for compensating the wrongly convicted. Karaffa, Page, and Koch (2017) surveyed college students at a public university in Texas in which the participants were randomly assigned to read one of six case vignettes. The case vignette described an exoneree who was wrongly convicted of rape, incarcerated for fourteen years, exonerated through DNA evidence, and eligible to receive $700,000 in compensation. The vignette conditions modified the exoneree's race (Caucasian or African American) and prior convictions (no prior convictions, one prior misdemeanor conviction for drug possession, or one prior felony conviction for drug possession).

Regarding predictors of deservingness of compensation, males, minority group members, and older participants were more likely to rate the exoneree as more deserving of compensation, and participants with higher right-wing authoritarianism scores rated the exonerees as less deserving of compensation. In addition, the exoneree who had no prior convictions was perceived to be more deserving of compensation compared to those with either a misdemeanor or felony conviction on their prior record (Karaffa et al. 2017). Overall, the findings were generally positive in that 86.1% of the participants believed

the exoneree was deserving of compensation. These findings suggest members of the public may be supportive of compensating exonerees in the United States.

Lastly, the cause of wrongful conviction has been found to impact exonerees' perceived deservingness of compensation and assistance. For example, participants who served as mock jurors in a simulated civil trial perceived the exoneree who falsely confessed as more responsible for his wrongful conviction and awarded him less compensation, even when told his confession was coerced, compared to exoneree who was wrongly convicted by eyewitness misidentification (Kukucka and Evelo 2019). In another study, participants were less willing to support reintegration services including psychological counseling, career counseling, and job training when the exoneree falsely confessed compared to when eyewitness misidentification caused the wrongful conviction (Scherr et al. 2018).

Current Study

Existing research has begun to examine public perceptions of wrongful convictions and exonerees. However, most of this research has targeted general attitudes toward exonerees and wrongful convictions by assessing the perceived frequency of wrongful convictions (Ramsey and Frank 2007; Smith et al. 2011; Zalman et al. 2012) and stigmatization of exonerees (Blandisi et al. 2015; Thompson et al. 2012; Vegh et al. 2016). To achieve a deeper understanding of perceptions of exonerees, research has focused on factors that influence public perceptions of them. Some factors have been specific to the exoneree including race (Howard 2019; Karaffa et al. 2012) and prior

criminal conviction record (Karaffa et al. 2012), while other factors have been specific to the circumstances of the wrongful conviction including the cause of wrongful conviction (Clow and Leach 2015; Kukucka and Evelo 2019; Savage et al. 2018; Scherr et al. 2018) and police procedures (Kukucka and Evelo 2019; Savage et al. 2018) to assess whether these factors influence some exonerees to be perceived differently than others. Clow and Leach's (2015) and Savage et al.'s (2018) work was guided by Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation to develop a greater understanding of the process in which specific factors shape perceptions of exonerees. The current study builds upon their work and intends to expand wrongful conviction literature.

The general notion driving the current study is that not all exonerees are perceived the same due to the complexity of wrongful convictions in that each case of wrongful conviction is unique. In turn, some exonerees are perceived as less deserving while others are perceived as more deserving due to a number of varying factors surrounding them and their wrongful convictions. Therefore, it is imperative that public perceptions of exonerees are examined on a situational (case-by-case) basis to enhance the understanding of the extent to which situational factors shape individuals' evaluations. As such, the current study aims to identify some of these factors, as well as the cognitive process individuals undergo when evaluating exonerees and their perceived deservingness of aid. This inquiry was examined by introducing situational factors surrounding exonerees and their wrongful convictions to participants and measuring their individual reactions to exonerees on a case-by-case basis through factorial vignette methodology. The current study assessed individuals' reactions to the cases of wrongful

conviction through both mediating variables and deservingness measures. The

deservingness measures are the primary focus of the study to assess what situational

factors affect public support for exonerees in areas in which they need it the most:

compensation and expungement.

The findings of the current study may generate a greater understanding of factors

that impact public perceptions of exonerees in regard to public support. This is necessary

to study as public opinion influences the policies that impact their ability to receive aid.

In turn, the findings of the current study may further help guide advocacy and policy

work within the Innocence Movement to reform the justice system and improve the

conditions wrongly convicted individuals face upon their exonerations.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This study aims to answer the following research question: What factors influence

public perceptions of exonerees' deservingness of compensation and expungement?

Specifically, the current study examines the following three factors: 1) the exoneree's

prior criminal conviction record, 2) cause of wrongful convictions and 3)

presence/absence of DNA evidence in the exoneration. The following hypotheses will be

tested:

Hypothesis 1: Exonerees who had no prior criminal convictions will be perceived as more

deserving of compensation and expungement compared to exonerees who had prior

criminal convictions (one prior conviction for a drug crime and one prior conviction for a violent crime).

Hypothesis 2: Exonerees will be perceived as less deserving of compensation and expungement when the contributing cause of wrongful conviction is false confession in comparison to other causes of wrongful conviction (mistaken eyewitness identification, informants/perjury, unreliable forensic evidence, or official misconduct).

Hypothesis 3: Exonerees who were exonerated by DNA evidence will be perceived as more deserving of compensation and expungement in comparison to exonerees who were not exonerated by DNA evidence.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

The current study focuses on developing a deeper understanding of public perceptions of exonerees by fundamentally examining individuals' evaluations of others and the process in which those evaluations occur. Bernard Weiner's (1993) work has guided prior research on public perceptions of exonerees (Clow and Leach 2015; Savage et al. 2018). To summarize, Weiner (1993) theorizes individuals undergo a cognitive process when deciding whether or not they will help a person in need. He posits people in need are less likely to receive help when individuals perceive them to be responsible for the cause of their need while others in need are more likely to receive help when individuals perceive them to not be responsible for the cause of their need. Existing research demonstrates the relevance in applying Weiner's (1993) theory to wrongful convictions. Specifically, exonerees were perceived more negatively when they falsely confessed to the crimes for which they wrongly convicted (Clow and Leach 2015; Savage et al. 2018), and exonerees were perceived as less responsible for their wrongful convictions when the police did not follow best practices (Savage et al. 2018). Due to the utilization of Weiner's (1993) work in prior research, Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation serves as the foundation of the theoretical framework in the current study to develop a greater understanding of the cognitive process in which evaluations of exonerees are made and how those evaluation impact helping behavior in the form of exonerees' perceived deservingness of compensation and expungement.

Donileen Loseke's (2017) construction of social problems also contributed to the theoretical framework of the current study. Loseke's (2017) work explains how negative conditions people face can be constructed as social problems by appealing to observers' emotions. This is done by forming images of people who have been harmed which evokes feelings of sympathy, as well as constructing villains who caused the harm which evokes feelings of hatred. She further details the criteria that need to be met in order for this to happen. The current study applies Loseke's (2017) work to wrongful convictions and exonerees as a means to better understand how wrongful convictions may be shaped and perceived as a social problem through both the construction of victims and villains.

The remainder of this chapter begins by providing an overview of the development of Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation. This chapter then explains how Weiner's (1993) work guided the current study. Next, this chapter outlines Loseke's (2017) explanation of the construction of social problems and describes how wrongful convictions can be framed as such. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the application of the theoretical framework to the current study.

Bernard Weiner's Theory of Perceived Responsibility and Social Motivation

Bernard Weiner has conducted a considerable amount of research grounded in attribution theory to examine the relationship between causal attributions and judgments of help-giving behavior. After conducting six experiments, Weiner (1980) developed a temporal sequence of attribution-affect-action. In other words, he found when people observe others in need, they first experience cognition in which they attribute a cause for

the need of aid. Second, the cognition produces an affect. And third, the emotion(s)

experienced by observers influence whether aid is provided to those in need.

Weiner refined his theory over many years. Specifically, Schmidt and Weiner

(1988) found there is a significant path ("thought-affect-action" sequence) people follow

when deciding how to react when they observe someone in need of help. First, people

perceive whether the person could or could not control the cause of the need. If the cause

is perceived as controllable, anger is elicited, and aid is withheld. If the cause is perceived

as uncontrollable, sympathy is elicited, and aid is provided. See the following diagram

below:

person in need → perceived cause of need → (if controllable) → anger → neglect
→ (if uncontrollable) → sympathy/pity → help

This attributional analysis has been applied to people's reactions to social stigmas.

Stigmas are typically believed to represent undesired qualities with regard to the bearers'

character, behavior, or physical attributes. This analysis is applicable to stigmas because

the stigmas imply particular causes. In turn, the observation of stigmas initiates people to

embark on an attributional search to identify what caused the stigma. For example,

people who have physical disabilities are often faced with the question, "How did that

happen to you?" (Weiner, Perry, and Magnusson 1988).

To examine this theory with regard to social stigmas, Weiner et al. (1988) asked

participants to rate ten stigmas on the 1) responsibility and blame for the stigma and its

changeability, 2) affective behavioral consequences associated with controllability

(liking, pity, anger, charitable donations, and personal assistance), and 3) likelihood of

improved life satisfaction if those who bear the stigmas receive interventions (job

training, professional-educational training, welfare, medical treatment, and psychotherapy) linked to causal stability. The ten stigmas were split into two categories: mental-behavioral (AIDS, child abuse, drug abuse, obesity, and Vietnam War Syndrome) and physical (Alzheimer's disease, blindness, cancer, heart disease, and paraplegia).

With the exception of Vietnam War Syndrome, mental-behavioral stigmas were perceived as more controllable than the physical stigmas. Those who were described as having controllable stigmas received increased ratings of responsibility, blame, and anger, and decreased ratings of liking, pity, charity, and personal assistance. Additionally, with the exception of AIDS, participants expressed less liking, pity, charity, and personal assistance for and more anger toward those with mental-behavioral stigmas compared to those with physical stigmas. They found physical stigmas, perceived uncontrollability, positive affect, and help-giving were positively related while the reverse was found for mental-behavioral stigmas. Lastly, they also found judgments of help were correlated most highly with affect rather than perceived controllability (Weiner et al. 1988).

Overall, Weiner et al.'s (1988) findings support the claim that physical stigmas and mental-behavioral stigmas are perceived differently in regard to controllability. That is, physical stigmas are perceived to be more uncontrollable while mental-behavioral stigmas are perceived to be more controllable. Uncontrollable stigmas are linked to the presence of feelings of pity and liking, the absence of anger, and judgments of help-giving, and vice versa for controllable stigmas. These findings have negative implications in that those who are perceived to bear controllable stigmas are less likely to receive public support.

Weiner (1993) further expanded his theory by examining perceived responsibility and social motivation. He theorized perceived controllability influences perceived responsibility. This sequence follows:

attribution (causal controllability) → assigned responsibility → emotion → behavior

The above model developed by Weiner (1993) can be applied to wrongful convictions and exonerees. That is, when an exoneree is observed to be in need of help, observers attempt to identify the cause of the wrongful conviction, perceive that cause as either controllable or uncontrollable, and assign responsibility. In turn, if the cause of wrongful conviction is perceived as controllable, the exoneree should receive increased ratings of responsibility, blame, and anger, and decreased ratings of liking, pity, charity, and personal assistance, whereas the opposite should be found for an exoneree whose wrongful conviction is perceived as uncontrollable.

Weiner's (1993) theory guided the current study as it focuses on whether certain factors impact individuals' perceptions of exonerees and their deservingness of aid. These factors serve as the independent variables in the current study in which the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and presence/absence of DNA in the exoneration are manipulated. Following Weiner's (1993) theory, the independent variables were thought to influence the formation of participants' perceptions of the exonerees' attributions in terms of causal controllability, assigned responsibility, and perceived dangerousness, as well as impact the emotions elicited (sympathy and anger) by the participants. The attributions made and emotions elicited by the participants serve the mediating variables in the current study. Lastly, aligning with

Weiner's (1993) theory, the dependent variables in the current study examine the last step in his sequence: participants' helping behavior. This is measured through participants' perceptions of the exonerees' deservingness of aid (compensation and expungement).

Donileen Loseke's Construction of Social Problems

In Loseke's (2017) book *Thinking About Social Problems: An Introduction to Constructionist Perspectives*, she examines social problems and how they are constructed. The fourth chapter focuses on the construction of motivational frames that appeal to emotion, as well as the construction of victims and villains in social problems work. She explains appealing to emotion allows audience members to feel sympathy for victims and/or anger toward villains of social problems. This is advantageous in the construction of social problems because people have the desire to make the world a better place and help those in need. Therefore, constructing conditions to evoke sympathy, compassion, and pity for victims helps motivate people to evaluate their conditions as social problems. Additionally however, people have the capacity to feel hate and the desire to seek revenge. Therefore, evoking hatred and hostility can be accomplished by constructing villains who cause harm to others.

Loseke (2017) details how images of people can be constructed to evaluate certain conditions as social problems and those impacted are viewed as victims deserving of sympathy. To construct a person as being worthy of sympathy, there are four major things that need to happen. First, those who were harmed need to be perceived as not responsible for the harm they experienced. Second, those who were harmed need to be

perceived as moral. Third, those who were harmed need to be evaluated as being in troublesome conditions. Fourth, feelings of sympathy need to be linked with helping behavior. To summarize, Loseke (2017) states, "We tend to reserve the status of victim for people we feel sympathy toward and we feel sympathy when our evaluations lead us to conclude that *morally good people are greatly harmed through no fault of their own*" (79). As such, claims-making strategies are employed to satisfy the components necessary to evoke sympathy. These strategies include (1) constructing victims as suffering horribly, (2) constructing potential victims as anyone, (3) constructing victim purity, (4) constructing cultural biases in sympathy evaluation, and (5) personalizing victims. Four of these five claims-making strategies can be applied to exonerees.

First, exonerees suffer horribly because they were convicted of crimes they did not commit and are stigmatized even after being exonerated. Furthermore, they lose months and years of their lives wrongly incarcerated which further causes them to be isolated from their families and friends during a time when they most need support. Second, being that exonerees are innocent of the crimes for which they were wrongly convicted, this contributes to the sense that anybody could be wrongly convicted. Third, victim purity refers to victims having no involvement in or responsibility for the harm they experienced. This is applicable to exonerees because they are innocent of the crimes they were wrongly convicted of committing. In other words, had they participated in the crime, the conviction would not have been wrongful. Fourth, as awareness of wrongful convictions increased, media outlets personalize exonerees through news articles, documentaries, and more. Additionally, exonerees personalize themselves by sharing

their stories and participating in advocacy work. The remaining claims-making strategy, constructing cultural biases in sympathy evaluation, refers to strategically focusing on victims who resemble those with social power despite the actual victims' demographics. This claims-making strategy is challenging to employ for wrongful convictions because African Americans are overrepresented among the exoneree population in comparison to their representation among the general public (Gross et al. 2022).

Loseke (2017) further explains that when people evaluate social problems and victimhood, it is also important that they are able to identify the villains. Villains are people or things that are blamed for the harm caused to victims. Blame is only assigned when the person or thing intentionally caused the harm. This is because when harm is believed to be unintentional, the harmful situation is identified as an accident. However, when harm is perceived to have been for "no good reason," hatred is evoked. Claims-making strategies utilized to evoke sympathy for victims include (1) not constructing villains (because people are more drawn to claims about victims than villains), (2) constructing villains as dangerous outsiders, and (3) deflecting blame and condemnation.

These three claim-making strategies are also applicable to wrongful convictions and exonerees. First, not constructing villains is strategic because people tend to be more drawn to claims about victims than villains to evoke sympathy. Therefore, because each wrongful conviction case is different and there are several contributing causes of wrongful conviction, sometimes it is easier to not construct a villain. And while the Innocence Movement advocates for criminal justice system reform, they also focus on sharing the narratives of exonerees and explain how they are victims of wrongful

conviction. Second, the villains of wrongful convictions are sometimes constructed as dangerous outsiders. This includes criminal justice system professionals who engage in official misconduct to secure convictions. Misconduct includes utilizing improper eyewitness identification techniques that influence eyewitnesses to choose specific persons during lineup procedures, employing aggressive interrogation techniques that result in false confessions, using informants who are given leniency in their own criminal cases for providing incriminating false testimonies, fabricating or destroying evidence, failing to disclose evidence to the defense team, and more. In line with the construction of villains as dangerous outsiders, these criminal justice professionals are often labeled as "bad apples."

Third, deflecting blame and condemnation refers to pointing out the individuals who have caused harm but also constructing these people as not responsible for the harm they caused. This strategy can also be applied to wrongful convictions. For example, despite knowing there are "bad apples" in the criminal justice system, blame is deflected from these individual actors by placing the overarching blame on the flaws within the criminal justice system. This points to the broader issue which is that the criminal justice system needs to be reformed. In turn, this strategy constructs the criminal justice system as the villain to signify the severity of the problem.

Discussion

As outlined above, the current study was guided by Weiner's (1993) and Loseke's (2017) work to better understand the cognitive process individuals experience as they

make evaluations about exonerees and wrongful convictions. Given the centrality of attributions to helping behavior, individual support for compensation and expungement depends on individuals' assignment of exonerees' controllability of and responsibility for their wrongful convictions. These attributions likely vary case-by-case as each case of wrongful conviction is different. In turn, these attributions are dependent upon certain factors surrounding exonerees and their wrongful convictions and likely lead to differences in helping behavior. Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that not all exonerees are perceived the same. The current study intends to uncover the extent to which the exonerees' prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and presence/absence of DNA in the exoneration impact attributions and helping behavior.

Upon reviewing Weiner's (1993) theory, it is possible that exonerees' prior criminal conviction record may influence perceptions of exonerees as those with criminal records are often stigmatized. Thus, participants may perceive an exoneree who has a criminal record as more blameworthy for the wrongful conviction, more dangerous, feel less sympathy for and more anger toward the exoneree, and be less likely to perceive the exoneree as deserving of aid compared to exonerees who do not have prior criminal records.

Similarly, the cause of wrongful conviction may also influence individuals' perceptions of exonerees. Exonerees who are wrongly convicted due to causes believed to be beyond their control may be perceived more positively than those who are perceived to be more responsible for their wrongful convictions. Therefore, it is possible that exonerees who were wrongly convicted due to mistaken eyewitness identification,

informants/perjury, unreliable forensic evidence, and official misconduct may be perceived as less blameworthy for their wrongful convictions compared to those who are wrongly convicted due to false confession. This may be because it is difficult for people to understand why a person would falsely confess to a crime they did not commit. In turn, participants may perceive an exoneree who falsely confessed as more blameworthy for his wrongful conviction, more dangerous, feel less sympathy for and more anger toward the exoneree, and be less likely to perceive the exoneree as deserving of aid compared to exonerees who were wrongly convicted under other circumstances.

Lastly, the presence or absence of DNA evidence in exonerations may also influence perceptions of exonerees. This is because DNA evidence is a powerful tool that serves to identify perpetrators and/or eliminate suspects in criminal cases as DNA is unique to the individual. Therefore, when DNA is used to exonerate an individual, the exoneree may be perceived as less blameworthy for the wrongful conviction as the DNA evidence supports the exoneree's innocence. In turn, participants may perceive the exoneree as less dangerous, feel more sympathy for and less anger toward the exoneree, and be more likely to perceive the exoneree as deserving of aid compared to exonerees who are exonerated without the use of DNA evidence.

Moreover, Loseke's (2017) work drives the claim that harm may be indicative of a greater problem. This is because individuals' evaluations of harm tend to encompass feelings (sympathy and anger) and those feelings often have targets (victims and villains). Therefore, it is possible that when individuals evaluate others in need, they may make additional evaluations of the general problem at hand. When applying this to wrongful

convictions, it is possible that when individuals evaluate exonerees in need they also identify wrongful convictions as a social problem which may further lead them to feel motivated to advocate for change. As such, Loseke's (2017) work guided the current study through the inclusion of the mediating variables – blame, sympathy, and anger, as well as how these reactions may impact helping behavior through the deservingness measures. In addition, exploratory items were included to measure participants' perceptions of wrongful convictions as a social problem and whether or not its severity warrants reform. Overall, the findings of the current study may be insightful to the Innocence Movement as advocates continue to raise awareness about wrongful convictions and work to obtain greater support for exonerees.

Chapter Four: Methods

Institutional Review Board Approval

The current study involved the development and administration of an online

survey to examine public perceptions of exonerees' deservingness of compensation and

expungement. This method required approval from Minnesota State University,

Mankato's Institutional Review Board (IRB). To ensure anonymity, no identifying

information such as participants' names were recorded. Participants who completed the

survey were given $0.50 to compensate them for their time and was paid to participants

through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) website.

Prior to starting the online survey, participants were provided an informed consent

form that explained their participation was voluntary and they could stop taking the

survey at any time. The informed consent form also provided participants with the

researcher's, Institutional Review Board's, and Information and Technology Services'

contact information. Participants were asked if they agreed to voluntarily participate in

the survey and had to select "I consent" before they could move forward in the survey.

Participants who selected "I do not consent" were thanked for their time but did not

receive compensation. See the Informed Consent Form in Appendix A.

Sample

Participants were recruited through the crowdsourcing platform Amazon

Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in which people voluntarily register to become a member and

complete small tasks (HITs) for compensation. To recruit participants, the researcher

posted a HIT on MTurk which included the researcher's name, title and description of the HIT, amount of compensation participants would receive for completing the HIT, and instructions which described what participants were expected to do. This information comprised the "recruitment material" the MTurk workers were exposed to as they decided whether to participate in the study. Participants then chose to accept and complete the HIT at their own will. Participants who chose to accept the HIT clicked on the survey link which took them to the survey on Qualtrics.

A total of 1,610 participants consented to take the survey. However, 74 cases were dropped for the following reasons: 32 were dropped because the participants quit taking the survey directly after the informed consent form, 35 were dropped because the participants quit taking the survey before reading a vignette, and 7 cases were dropped for quality reasons (i.e., straightlining and large amounts of missing data). This resulted in a total sample size of 1,536 participants.

Design

Given that vignettes depicting wrongful conviction cases have been used in existing research (Howard 2019; Karaffa et al. 2017; Savage et al. 2018), the current study used factorial vignette methodology to examine public perceptions of wrongful convictions and exonerees' deservingness of compensation and expungement. This study utilized a between-subjects 2 x 3 x 5 full factorial design which resulted in a total of thirty vignettes. The vignettes were constructed to depict a news article that described a hypothetical exoneration of a wrongly convicted person. Each vignette described a man

who was wrongly convicted of and sentenced to life in prison for a murder he did not commit. After spending fifteen years in prison, the man was recently exonerated and now in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and have the wrongful murder conviction expunged from his criminal conviction record.

The vignettes were carefully created to present participants with a realistic case of wrongful conviction. The exoneree's first (Michael) and last names (Johnson) were chosen because they were the most common names of actual exonerees who were wrongly convicted of murder listed on The National Registry of Exonerations database at the time of vignette construction. Similarly, the crime (murder) and sentence (life in prison) were chosen because murder was the most common crime wrongly convicted individuals were exonerated for, and life in prison was the most common sentence wrongly convicted individuals received among the exonerees listed in the database. Age at the time of conviction (twenty-two years old) was chosen based on the sum of the most common age on the date of the reported crime and average time that had passed until conviction among the exonerees who were wrongly convicted of murder in the database. Time spent wrongly incarcerated (fifteen years) was chosen based on the average amount of time that had elapsed between incarceration upon conviction and the exonerations of those who were wrongly convicted of murder in the database. Subsequently, age at exoneration (thirty-seven years old) was chosen based on the sum of the age at the time of wrongful conviction and the amount of time spent wrongly incarcerated by exonerees in the database.

The vignettes featured three experimental conditions that served as the independent variables in the current study: (1) the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record, (2) the contributing cause of wrongful conviction, and (3) DNA evidence. The current study included three levels for prior criminal conviction record: (1) no prior convictions, (2) one prior conviction for a drug crime, and (3) one prior conviction for a violent crime. Contributing cause of wrongful conviction and DNA evidence were chosen as experimental conditions because these two variables have yet to be examined in wrongful conviction literature in such detail. Five levels were included for the contributing cause of wrongful conviction condition. These were based on the main contributing causes listed on The National Registry of Exonerations' website: (1) mistaken eyewitness identification, (2) informants/perjury, (3) false confession, (4) unreliable forensic evidence, and (5) official misconduct. Two levels were included for the DNA evidence condition: (1) presence of DNA evidence in the exoneration and (2) no mention of DNA. See vignettes in Appendix B.

Data for this study were collected in January 2020 using an anonymous, nationwide, online survey of adults residing in the United States. Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) website and given $0.50 in compensation for completing the survey. The survey included four sections. First, participants were asked demographic questions. Second, participants were asked to read three definitions related to wrongful convictions and directed to use the provided definitions when completing the remainder of the survey. Third, participants were randomly assigned to read one of the thirty vignettes. Fourth, participants were asked to

answer follow-up questions to examine their perceptions of wrongful convictions and

exonerees' deservingness of compensation and expungement. The survey took

approximately ten minutes to complete. See survey in Appendix C.

Measures

The dependent variables measured in the current study were separated into two

categories: main outcomes and mediating variables. The following three main outcomes

were measured: deservingness of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and

fairness of compensation received. To better understand why some exonerees may be

perceived as more deserving than others, the following four mediating variables were

measured: blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger.

Main Outcomes

Deservingness of compensation. The first dependent variable measured the

participants' perceptions of the hypothetical exoneree's deservingness of compensation.

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "Michael

Johnson deserves to receive financial compensation for his wrongful conviction," on a 6-

point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly agree," "2 = moderately agree," "3 =

slightly agree," "4 = slightly disagree," "5 = moderately disagree," and "6 = strongly

disagree." For analysis purposes, this item was reverse coded. Therefore, greater values

indicate greater levels of the exoneree's perceived deservingness of compensation. Note:

All survey items in which participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a

statement were measured using a 6-point Likert scale, and the response choices were reverse coded as explained above.

Deservingness of expungement. The second dependent variable measured participants' perceptions of the hypothetical exoneree's deservingness of expungement. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "Michael Johnson deserves to have the wrongful conviction expunged from his criminal record," on a 6-point Likert scale.

Fairness of compensation received. The third dependent variable measured participants' perceived fairness of the compensation awarded to the exoneree as a secondary measure of deservingness of compensation. Participants were asked their opinion about the statement, "The state paid Michael Johnson $375,000 for his wrongful conviction ($25,000 for each year he was wrongly incarcerated). Would you say the amount of money Michael Johnson received was…" Response choices for this question included "too little," "about right," and "too much." For analysis purposes, this item was recoded as a dichotomous variable in which the response choices "about right" and "too much" were collapsed together and labeled as "1 = fair." The response choice, "too little," remained on its own and was labeled "0 = not fair." The purpose of this was to differentiate between participants who felt the exoneree deserved more money than he received (not fair) and those who felt the amount of money the exoneree received was either appropriate or more than what they felt he deserved (fair).

Mediating Variables

Blame. The first mediating variable measured the exoneree's perceived controllability, responsibility, and blame for his wrongful conviction. These three constructs were chosen as mediating variables based on Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation. For simplicity purposes, these three constructs were combined into one variable labeled "blame" as they were correlated with one another. Blame was generated via an index of six survey items that were modified from Mantler, Schellenberg, and Page (2003). To measure this variable, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following six statements on a 6-point Likert scale: 1) "Michael's wrongful conviction was under his personal control," 2) "Michael could have prevented his wrongful conviction," 3) "Michael is responsible for his wrongful conviction," 4) "Michael's wrongful conviction resulted from his own negligence," 5) "Michael is to blame for his wrongful conviction," 6) "It is Michael's own fault that he was wrongly convicted."

Dangerousness. The second mediating variable measured the exoneree's perceived dangerousness linked to the stigmatization of his involvement in the criminal justice system which may further be associated with the time he spent incarcerated. Furthermore, this variable was measured as it has yet to be examined in wrongful conviction literature. Dangerousness was generated via an index of three survey items. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following three statements on a 6-point Likert scale: 1) "Michael poses a danger to his community upon

his release from prison," 2) "People should *not* feel safe around Michael," and 3) "Michael will commit crime in the future."

Sympathy. The third mediating variable measured participants' feelings of sympathy toward the exoneree. This variable was constructed based on Weiner et al.'s (1988) findings that those who are perceived to be less responsible for their stigmas receive more sympathy while those perceived to be more responsible for their stigmas receive less sympathy. In the current study, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I feel bad for Michael," on a 6-point Likert scale.

Anger. The fourth mediating variable measured participants' feelings of anger toward the exoneree. This variable was also constructed based on Weiner et al.'s (1988) findings that those who are perceived to be less responsible for their stigmas elicit less anger while those perceived to be more responsible for their stigmas elicit more anger. For the current study, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I feel angry at Michael," on a 6-point Likert scale.

Exploratory Items

Twelve items were included in the survey for exploratory purposes. These items measured a series of variables including the exoneree's perceived innocence and deservingness of an apology, factors that may influence compensation awarded to exonerees, participants' helping behavior and support for exonerees, wrongful convictions as a social issue, how much money participants believed the exoneree

deserved for his wrongful conviction, and public opinion about wrongful convictions and compensation.

First, to develop a baseline measuring Michael's perceived innocence, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I believe Michael Johnson is innocent of committing murder" on a 6-point Likert scale. Rather than utilizing "yes" or "no" response choices, a 6-point Likert scale was used to examine the level of doubt participants may have surrounding Michael's innocence.

Participants were also asked to rate their level of agreement with the following eight statements on a 6-point Likert scale: 1) "Michael Johnson deserves an apology," 2) "The amount of time a wrongly convicted individual spent incarcerated should be taken into consideration when determining the amount of compensation he or she deserves," 3) "If a wrongly convicted individual has prior criminal convictions, he or she does not deserve compensation for their wrongful conviction," 4) "I would be willing to support legislation that would provide compensation to those who have been wrongly convicted," 5) "I would be willing to support legislation that would expunge the criminal records of those who have been wrongly convicted," 6) "Wrongful convictions are a social problem," 7) "Wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to justify criminal justice system reform," and 8) "It is better to let a guilty person go free than to convict an innocent person."

Lastly, three open-ended items were included to explore how much money participants believed the exoneree deserved for his wrongful conviction, as well as public opinion about wrongful convictions. First, participants were asked, "How much money

do you think Michael Johnson deserves to receive for his wrongful conviction and the 15 years he spent wrongly incarcerated?" In regard to public opinion, participants were asked, "Why might people think an exoneree should not receive compensation?" and "Why might people think an exoneree is guilty of the crime despite there being evidence to prove he/she did not do it?" Participants were presented with text boxes to answer these three questions.

Control Variables

The control variables included the following participant demographics: age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of education, individual level of income, political view, marital status, and region of residence. Age was measured as a continuous variable in years. Gender was measured as a nominal variable in which participants were asked to select one of the following choices: "Male," "Female," and "Other." Race/ethnicity was measured as a nominal variable in which participants were asked to select all that apply from the following choices: "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," "Black or African American," "Hispanic or Latino," "Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander," and "White or Caucasian." Level of education was measured as an ordinal variable in which participants were asked to select one of the following choices: "Less than high school diploma," "High school diploma or GED," "Associate's degree," "Bachelor's degree," "Master's degree," or "Doctorate degree."

Individual level of income was measured as an ordinal variable in which participants were asked to select one of the following choices: "Less than $25,000,"

"$25,000 – $34,999," "$35,000 – $49,999," "$50,000 – $74,999," "$75,000 – $99,999,"

"$100,000 – $149,000," or "More than $150,000." Political view was measured as a

nominal variable in which participants were asked to select one of the following choices:

"Very liberal," "Slightly liberal," "Slightly conservative," or "Very conservative."

Marital status was measured as a nominal variable in which participants were asked to

select one of the following choices: "Single, never married," "Married," "Widowed,"

"Separated," or "Divorced." Lastly, region of residence was measured as a nominal

variable in which participants were asked to select one of the following choices:

"Northeast (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, or VT)," "Midwest (IA, IN, IL, KS, MI,

MN, MO, OH, ND, NE, SD, or WI)," "Southeast (AL, AR, D.C., DE, FL, GA, KY, LA,

MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, and WV)," "Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, or TX)," or "West

(AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, NV, MT, OR, UT, WA, or WY)."

Analytic Plan

First, descriptive analyses of four individual variables (innocence, deservingness

of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and fairness of compensation received)

will be discussed to provide a general overview of participants' perceptions of the

exoneree's innocence and deservingness of compensation and expungement.

Second, the hypotheses testing results will be discussed. To estimate the effects of

the experimental manipulations on the dependent variables, linear regression, logistic

regression, and two sample t-tests were used. Specifically, linear regression was used to

estimate the effects of the prior criminal conviction record and cause of wrongful

conviction experimental manipulations on the exoneree's perceived deservingness of compensation and expungement. Logistic regression was used to estimate the effects of the prior criminal conviction record and cause of wrongful conviction experimental manipulations on the perceived fairness of compensation received by the exoneree as it was collapsed into a dichotomous variable (fair and not fair). Comparison percentages of participants who perceived the compensation received as fair and not fair were included to further explore the magnitude of the effect. Lastly, t-tests were used to estimate differences in mean deservingness of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and fairness of compensation received ratings for the DNA experimental manipulation (no DNA present in the exoneration and DNA present in the exoneration).

Third, additional regression analyses will be discussed to better understand the cognitive process in which participants develop perceptions of the exoneree's deservingness of compensation and expungement, as well as fairness of compensation received. These analyses were guided by Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation in which he posits that people respond to individuals who are in need of help in a unique sequence: the cause of the need is perceived as either controllable or uncontrollable, a determination is made as to whether or not the individual was responsible for the cause, an emotional reaction is elicited which is either anger toward or pity/sympathy for the individual, and a decision is made regarding whether or not they will engage in helping behavior for the individual. Kenny's (2021) explanation of mediation was utilized to guide these additional regression analyses.

According to Kenny's (2021) explanation of mediation, Diagram 1 depicts a situation in which a variable (X) is assumed to cause another variable (Y). The letter "c" in this diagram represents the total effect in this causal model (see Diagram 1 below). However, this causal process may typically involve a mediating or intervening variable (M) which is depicted in Diagram 2 (see Diagram 2 below). To follow Kenny's (2021) explanation of mediation, three sets of regression models were included in the additional regression analyses section.

Diagram 1
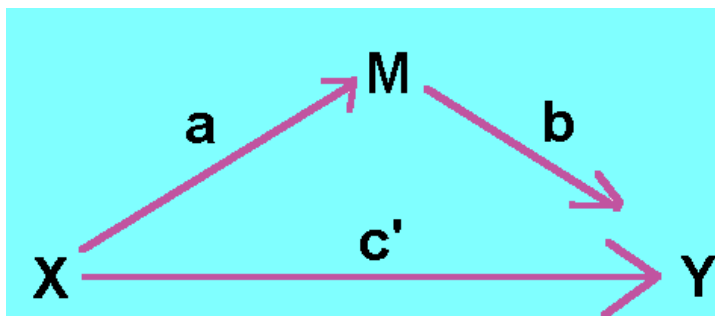
Diagram 2

The first set of regression models examined the relationship between (X and Y) all three experimental manipulations (X – prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and presence/absence of DNA evidence in the exoneration) and each dependent variable (Y – deservingness of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and fairness of compensation received). This relationship was examined because situational factors surrounding the exoneree, his wrongful conviction, and

subsequent exoneration were hypothesized to affect public perceptions of his deservingness.
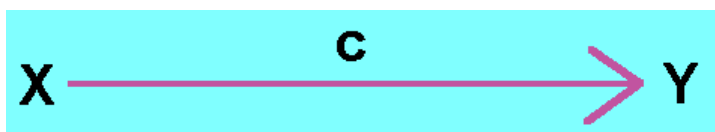
The second set of regression models examined the relationship between (X and M) all three experimental manipulations (X – prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and presence/absence of DNA evidence in the exoneration) and each of the four mediating variables (M – blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger). Guided by Weiner (1993), this relationship was examined to estimate the effects of the experimental manipulations on participants' evaluations of and emotional responses to the exoneree.

The third set of regression models examined the relationship between (M and Y) the mediating variables (M – blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger) and each dependent variable (Y – deservingness of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and fairness of compensation received). This relationship was examined to estimate the effects of the mediating variables on public perceptions of the exoneree's deservingness.

Lastly, descriptive statistics will be discussed to analyze the quantitative exploratory items included in the survey.

Chapter Five: Results

Sample Description

The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 87 with an average age of 38.52 years old (n=1,489). Gender was nearly evenly split as 50.52% of participants identified as female (n=776) and 46.29% (n=711) as male. Less than one percent identified as "other" (0.20%, n=3), and nearly 3% (n=46) of participants chose not to select a gender. In terms of race/ethnicity, most participants identified as White or Caucasian (71.94%, n=1,105), followed by Black or African American (8.98%, n=138), Asian (6.71%, n=103), Hispanic or Latino (4.56%, n=70), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.46%, n=7), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.07%, n=1). Approximately 4.62% (n=71) of participants identified as more than one race/ethnicity, and 2.67% (n=41) chose not to select a race/ethnicity.

Regarding level of education, most participants obtained a Bachelor's degree (43.82%, n=673), followed by high school diploma or GED (22.40%, n=344), Master's degree (14.65%, n=225), Associate's degree (14.06%, n=216), Doctorate degree (1.56%, n=24), and less than high school diploma (0.52%, n=8). Nearly 3% (n=46) chose not to select a level of education. For individual level of income, 21.94% (n=337) of participants earned less than $25,000 before taxes, 15.56% (n=239) earned $25,000-$34,999, 17.90% (n=275) earned $35,000-$49,999, 22.20% (n=341) earned $50,000-$74,999, 11.52% (n=177) earned $75,000-$99,999, 5.60% (n=86) earned $100,000-$149,999, 2.67% (n=41) earned more than $150,000, and 2.60% (n=40) chose not to select an individual level of income.

In terms of political view, 19.21% (n=295) of participants indicated they were very liberal, 38.48% (n=591) were slightly liberal, 28.58% (n=439) were slightly conservative, 10.74% (n=165) were very conservative, and nearly 3% (n=46) chose not to select a political view. For marital status, most participants were married (48.31%, n=742), followed by single never married (37.83%, n=581), divorced (8.14%, n=125), widowed (1.63%, n=25), and separated (1.24%, n=19). Nearly 3% (n=44) of participants chose not to select a marital status. Regarding region of residence, 17.25% (n=265) of participants lived in the Northeast, 21.74% (n=334) lived in the Midwest, 28.58% (n=439) lived in the Southeast, 11.85% (n=182) lived in the Southwest, 18.16% (n=279) lived in the West, and 2.41% (n-37) chose not to select a region of residence. See Table 2.

Table 2: Summary Statistics of Demographic Variables (Full Sample; n = 1,536)				
Variable	**Mean**	**(n)**	**(SD)**	**Range**
Age	38.52	1,489	12.59	18-87
Missing		47		
TOTAL		1,536		

Variables	**Frequency**	**(n)**
Gender		
Female	50.52%	776
Male	46.29%	711
Other	0.20%	3
Missing	2.99%	46
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536
Race / Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	71.94%	1,105
Black or African American	8.98%	138
Asian	6.71%	103
Hispanic or Latino	4.56%	70
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.46%	7
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.07%	1

More than one race	4.62%	71
Missing	2.67%	41
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536

Education

Less than high school diploma	0.52%	8
High school diploma or GED	22.40%	344
Associate's degree	14.06%	216
Bachelor's degree	43.82%	673
Master's degree	14.65%	225
Doctorate degree	1.56%	24
Missing	2.99%	46
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536

Income (individual)

Less than $25,000	21.94%	337
$25,000 - $34,999	15.56%	239
$35,000 - $49,999	17.90%	275
$50,000 - $74,999	22.20%	341
$75,000 - $99,999	11.52%	177
$100,000 - $149,999	5.60%	86
More than $150,000	2.67%	41
Missing	2.60%	40
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536

Political View

Very liberal	19.21%	295
Slightly liberal	38.48%	591
Slightly conservative	28.58%	439
Very conservative	10.74%	165
Missing	2.99%	46
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536

Marital Status

Single, never married	37.83%	581
Married	48.31%	742
Widowed	1.63%	25
Separated	1.24%	19
Divorced	8.14%	125
Missing	2.86%	44
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536

Region of Residence

Northeast	17.25%	265

Midwest	21.74%	334
Southeast	28.58%	439
Southwest	11.85%	182
West	18.16%	279
Missing	2.41%	37
TOTAL	100.00%	1,536

Descriptive Analyses

Descriptive analyses of the data indicate positive results regarding public perceptions of and support for exonerees. To develop a baseline measuring the exoneree's perceived innocence, participants were asked if they felt the exoneree was innocent. Over two-thirds (67.54%) of participants strongly agreed the exoneree was innocent, and a combined 95.5% of participants agreed the exoneree was innocent at some level. Less than 5% of participants disagreed to the statement at some level.

When looking at the two deservingness measures, nearly three-fourths (73.4%) of participants strongly agreed the exoneree was deserving of compensation, and a combined 92.95% of participants agreed the exoneree was deserving of compensation at some level. In addition, nearly 80% of participants strongly agreed the exoneree deserved to have the wrongful conviction expunged from his record, and a combined 93.78% of participants agreed to this at some level.

To take a closer look at public perceptions of the exoneree's deservingness of compensation, they were asked about the fairness of the amount of compensation the exoneree received. Just over two-thirds (67.04%) of participants believed the amount of compensation the exoneree received was not fair (too little). The remaining third (32.96%) of participants believed it was fair (too much or about right).

Overall, the findings of the descriptive analyses suggest the participants generally

believed the exoneree was innocent, deserving of compensation and expungement, and

the amount of compensation the exoneree received was not fair (too little). See Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Analyses – Public Perceptions of the Exoneree

	Strongly Disagree % (n)	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe Michael Johnson is innocent of committing murder.	0.85% (13)	1.11% (17)	2.54% (39)	9.52% (146)	18.45% (283)	67.54% (1,036)
Michael Johnson deserves to receive financial compensation for his wrongful conviction.	2.22% (34)	2.03% (31)	2.81% (43)	6.80% (104)	12.75% (195)	73.40% (1,123)
Michael Johnson deserves to have the wrongful conviction expunged from his criminal record.	1.83% (28)	1.64% (25)	2.75% (42)	5.56% (85)	8.63% (132)	79.59% (1,217)

	Fair (Too Much & About Right) % (n)	Not Fair (Too Little)
The state paid Michael Johnson $375,000 for his wrongful conviction ($25,000 for each year he was wrongly incarcerated). Would you say the amount of money Michael Johnson received was...	32.96% (505)	67.04% (1,027)

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Exonerees who had no prior criminal convictions will be perceived as

more deserving of compensation and expungement compared to exonerees who had prior

criminal convictions (one prior conviction for a drug crime and one prior conviction for a violent crime).

To address the first hypothesis, the prior criminal conviction record experimental manipulation was regressed onto the dependent measures of deservingness of compensation and expungement, as well as fairness of compensation received. The results indicate prior criminal conviction record did not have a significant effect on either participants' ratings of deservingness of compensation (F=1.76, *p*>.05) or expungement (F=2.66, *p*>.05). Despite these findings, participants viewed the exoneree as highly deserving of both compensation (mean ≈ 5.5 out of 6 for all three groups) and expungement (mean ≈ 5.6 out of 6 for all three groups) whether the exoneree had a prior criminal conviction record or not.

However, the results indicate fairness of compensation received was significantly predicted by the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record (LR χ^2(2, 1,532) = 11.66, *p*<.01). Generally, participants who read vignettes in which the exoneree had a prior drug conviction or a prior violent conviction on his criminal record were more likely to believe the compensation he received was fair compared to the reference group in which the exoneree had no prior criminal convictions. There is a nearly 10% difference between participants' ratings of fairness of compensation received when the exoneree had no prior convictions and when the exoneree had a prior violent conviction. That is, 72.57% of participants who read a vignette in which the exoneree had no prior criminal convictions perceived the amount of compensation received as not fair, while 62.92% of participants who read a vignette in which the exoneree had a prior violent conviction perceived the

amount of compensation received as not fair. Overall, Hypothesis #1 was partially

supported. See Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of the Effects of Prior Criminal Conviction Record on Perceptions of Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement and Fairness of Compensation Received

Panel A: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Compensation on Prior Conviction Record
    Reference group is no prior criminal conviction record

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Prior Conviction Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	-0.04	0.07	-0.53
Prior Violent Conviction	-0.13	0.07	-1.82
Constant	5.51***	0.05	112.16
Model Fit Statistics: F = 1.76, DF = 2, 1,527, R² = 0.002, RMSE = 1.11, n = 1,530			

Panel B: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Expungement on Prior Conviction Record
    Reference group is no prior criminal conviction

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Prior Conviction Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	-0.07	0.07	-1.04
Prior Violent Conviction	-0.15*	0.07	-2.30
Constant	5.64***	0.05	122.66
Model Fit Statistics: F = 2.66, DF = 2, 1,526, R² = 0.004, RMSE = 1.04, n = 1,529			

Panel C: Logistic Regression of Deservingness of Compensation (fair/not fair) on Prior Conviction Record
    Reference group is no prior criminal conviction

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z-statistic
Prior Conviction Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	0.33*	0.14	2.42
Prior Violent Conviction	0.44**	0.14	3.29
Constant	-0.97***	0.10	-9.84
Model Fit Statistics: LR χ² = 11.66, DF = 2, Pseudo R² = 0.006, n = 1,532			
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

Panel D: Deservingness of Compensation (fair/unfair) Based on Prior Conviction Record

	Fair (Too Much and About Right) (n) %	Not Fair (Too Little)	Total
No Prior Conviction Record	(141) 27.43%	(373) 72.57%	(514) 100.00%
Prior Drug Conviction	(176) 34.44%	(335) 65.56%	(511) 100.00%
Prior Violent Conviction	(188) 37.08%	(319) 62.92%	(507) 100%
Total	(505) 32.96%	1,027 67.04%	(1,532) 100.00%

Hypothesis 2: Exonerees will be perceived as less deserving of compensation and expungement when the contributing cause of wrongful conviction is false confession in comparison to other causes of wrongful conviction (mistaken eyewitness identification, informants/perjury, unreliable forensic evidence, or official misconduct).

To address the second hypothesis, the cause of wrongful conviction experimental manipulation was regressed onto the dependent measures of deservingness of compensation and expungement, as well as fairness of compensation received. The results indicate the cause of wrongful conviction had a statistically significant effect on participant ratings of deservingness of compensation ($F=7.33$, $p<.001$). Participants viewed the exoneree as least deserving of compensation when he falsely confessed to the crime (the reference group, mean = 5.18 out of 6). This was followed by the informants/perjury ($t=2.76$, $p<.01$), mistaken eyewitness identification ($t=3.76$, $p<.001$), unreliable forensic evidence ($t=4.22$, $p<.001$), and official misconduct ($t=4.89$, $p<.001$) conditions, all of which were statistically significant. Compared to the false confession

condition, participants viewed the exoneree as more deserving of compensation by 0.44 points when official misconduct contributed to his wrongful conviction.

The results also indicate the cause of wrongful conviction experimental manipulation had a statistically significant effect on participant ratings of deservingness of expungement (F=3.65, $p<.01$). Participants who were presented with the false confession and informants/perjury conditions viewed the exoneree as least deserving of expungement (mean deservingness $\approx$ 5.4 out of 6), followed by the mistaken eyewitness identification (t=2.03, $p<.05$), unreliable forensic evidence (t=2.48, $p<.05$), and official misconduct (t=2.71, $p<.01$) conditions. Compared to the false confession condition, participants viewed the exoneree as more deserving of expungement by 0.23 points when official misconduct contributed to his wrongful conviction.

Lastly, fairness of compensation received was significantly predicted by the cause of wrongful conviction (LR χ^2(4, 1,532) = 19.04, $p<.001$). In this model, the strongest predictor was official misconduct (b = -0.74, $p<.001$). Generally, participants were most likely to believe the amount of compensation received was not fair when official misconduct caused the wrongful conviction, and participants were most likely to believe the amount of compensation received was fair when the exoneree's false confession caused the wrongful conviction. There is a nearly 16% difference between participants' ratings of fairness of compensation received when official misconduct caused the wrongful conviction compared to when the exoneree's false confession caused the wrongful conviction. That is, 75.49% of participants who read the official misconduct vignettes perceived the amount of compensation received as not fair while 59.55% of

participants who read the false confession vignettes perceived the amount of

compensation received as not fair.

In all three measures of deservingness, participants perceived the exoneree as

least deserving when he falsely confessed to the crime and more deserving when official

misconduct contributed to his wrongful conviction. Overall, Hypothesis #2 was

supported. See Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of the Effects of Cause of Wrongful Conviction on Perceptions of Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement and Fairness of Compensation Received

Panel A: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Compensation on Cause of Wrongful Conviction

Reference group is false confession

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	0.25**	0.09	2.76
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	0.34***	0.09	3.76
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	0.38***	0.09	4.22
Official Misconduct	0.44***	0.09	4.89
Constant	5.18***	0.06	82.29

Model Fit Statistics: F = 7.33, DF = 4, 1,525, R^2 = 0.02, RMSE = 1.11, n = 1,530

Panel B: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Expungement on Cause of Wrongful Conviction

Reference group is false confession

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.003	0.08	-0.03
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	0.17*	0.08	2.03
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	0.21*	0.08	2.48
Official Misconduct	0.23**	0.08	2.71
Constant	5.44***	0.06	91.87

Model Fit Statistics: F = 3.65, DF = 4, 1,524, R^2 = 0.01, RMSE = 1.04, n = 1,529

Panel C: Logistic Regression of Deservingness of Compensation (fair/unfair) on Cause of Wrongful Conviction
    Reference group is false confession

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.40*	0.17	-2.34
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	-0.31	0.17	-1.85
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	-0.22	0.17	-1.34
Official Misconduct	-0.74***	0.18	-4.19
Constant	-0.39**	0.12	-3.34
Model Fit Statistics: LR χ^2 = 19.04, DF = 4, Pseudo R^2 = 0.01, n = 1,532			
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

Panel D: Deservingness of Compensation (fair/not fair) Based on Cause of Wrongful Conviction

	Fair (Too Much and About Right) (n) %	Not Fair (Too Little)	Total
Informants/Perjury	(97) 31.39%	(212) 68.61%	(309) 100.00%
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	(101) 33.22%	(203) 66.78%	(304) 100.00%
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	(107) 35.20%	(197) 64.80%	(304) 100%
Official Misconduct	(75) 24.51%	(231) 75.49%	(306) 100%
False Confession	(125) 40.45%	(184) 59.55%	(309) 100%
Total	(505) 32.96%	(1,027) 67.04%	(1,532) 100.00%

Hypothesis 3: Exonerees who were exonerated by DNA evidence will be perceived as more deserving of compensation and expungement in comparison to exonerees who were not exonerated by DNA evidence.

    To address the third hypothesis, two-sample t-tests were used to analyze differences in mean deservingness of compensation and expungement and fairness of

compensation received ratings for the DNA experimental manipulation (no DNA present in the exoneration and DNA present in the exoneration). The results indicate the DNA experimental manipulation did not have a significant effect on participant ratings of deservingness of compensation (t(df=1,528)=-1.0482, p>.05) and expungement (t(df=1,527)=-1.0328, p>.05). These findings further indicate participants viewed the exoneree as equally deserving of compensation and expungement whether DNA contributed to his exoneration or not (mean deservingness ≈ 5.4-5.5 out of 6).

However, the relationship between the DNA experimental manipulation and participants' perceptions of fairness of compensation received was significant (X^2(1,1,532)=3.9059, p<.05). The results indicate participants who read vignettes in which DNA contributed to the exoneration (69.42%) were more likely to believe the compensation awarded to the exoneree was not fair compared to those who read vignettes in which DNA evidence was not present in the exoneration (64.68%). Overall, Hypothesis #3 was partially supported. See Table 6.

Table 6: Analysis of the Effects of DNA Presence on Perceptions of Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement and Fairness of Compensation Received

| Panel A | DNA Presence in Exoneration | | | | | | | | |
| | No DNA | | | DNA | | | | | |
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	t	p-value	df
Deservingness of Compensation	5.43	1.15	769	5.49	1.08	761	-1.0482	0.295	1,528
Deservingness of Expungement	5.54	1.10	769	5.59	0.97	760	-1.0328	0.302	1,527

| Panel B | DNA Presence in Exoneration | | | | | | |
| | No DNA | | DNA | | | | |
	% not fair	n	% not fair	n	χ^2	p-value	V
Fairness of Compensation Received	0.6468	(770) 0.50	0.6942	(762) 0.50	3.9059	0.048	-0.05

Ultimately, the results of the hypotheses indicate that of the three experimental manipulations (prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and DNA evidence), only the cause of wrongful conviction was a statistically significant predictor of the exoneree's perceived deservingness of compensation and expungement. However, all three experimental manipulations were statistically significant predictors of participants' perceptions of the fairness of compensation received. Overall, participants generally viewed the exoneree as highly deserving of compensation and expungement and a majority of participants believed the compensation received by the exoneree was not fair regardless of the circumstances surrounding his wrongful conviction.

Additional Regression Analyses

Guided by Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation and Kenny's (2021) explanation of mediation, additional regression analyses were conducted to better understand the cognitive process in which members of the public develop perceptions of exonerees' deservingness of compensation and expungement.

The first set of regression models examined the relationship between all three experimental manipulations (cause of wrongful conviction, prior criminal conviction

record, and DNA evidence) and the three main outcome measures (deservingness of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and fairness of compensation received). Deservingness of compensation ($F(7, 1,522) = 4.87$, $p<.001$), deservingness of expungement ($F(7, 1,521) = 3.02$, $p<.01$), and fairness of compensation received (LR $\chi^2(7, 1,532) = 34.61$, $p<.001$) were all significantly predicted. The results indicate the strongest predictor in these regression models was official misconduct, meaning participants who read the official misconduct vignettes were more likely to believe the exoneree was deserving of compensation (0.44, $p<.001$), deserving of expungement (0.23, $p<.01$), and the compensation awarded to the exoneree was not fair (-0.74, $p<.001$) compared to the reference group in which a false confession contributed to the wrongful conviction, the exoneree had no prior criminal conviction record, and DNA was not present in the exoneration. However, little of the variance in deservingness of compensation ($R^2 = 0.0219$), deservingness of expungement ($R^2 = 0.0137$), and fairness of compensation received (Pseudo $R^2 = 0.018$) can be explained by these models. See Table 7.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of the Effects of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Perceptions of Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement

Panel A: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Compensation on Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA

Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	0.25**	0.09	2.76
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	0.34***	0.09	3.78
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	0.38***	0.09	4.24
Official Misconduct	0.44***	0.09	4.88

Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	-0.04	0.07	-0.51
Prior Violent Conviction	-0.13	0.07	-1.83
DNA			
DNA Present	0.06	0.06	1.08
Constant	5.20***	0.08	65.24
Model Fit Statistics: F = 4.87, DF = 7, 1,522, R² = 0.02, RMSE = 1.11, n = 1,530			

Panel B: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Expungement on Cause of Wrongful Conviction

Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.002	0.08	-0.03
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	0.17*	0.08	2.05
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	0.21*	0.08	2.50
Official Misconduct	0.23**	0.08	2.70
Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	-0.07	0.06	-1.03
Prior Violent Conviction	-0.15*	0.07	-2.31
DNA			
DNA Present	0.06	0.05	1.04
Constant	5.49***	0.07	73.23
Model Fit Statistics: F = 3.02, DF = 7, 1,521, R² = 0.01, RMSE = 1.04, n = 1,529			

Panel C: Logistic Regression of Deservingness of Compensation (fair/unfair) on Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA

Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.40*	0.17	-2.36
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	-0.32	0.17	-1.89
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	-0.23	0.17	-1.38
Official Misconduct	-0.74***	0.18	-4.19
Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	0.33*	0.14	2.40
Prior Violent Conviction	0.45**	0.14	3.28
DNA			
DNA Present	-0.22*	0.11	-2.00
Constant	-0.54***	0.15	-3.54
Model Fit Statistics: LR χ^2 = 34.61, DF = 7, Pseudo R² = 0.018, n = 1,532			
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

The second set of regression models examined the relationship between all three experimental manipulations (cause of wrongful conviction, prior criminal conviction record, and DNA evidence) and each of the four mediating variables (blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger). In order to examine this relationship, the exoneree's perceived level of blame, sympathy, and anger were measured based on Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation. The blame variable was generated to reflect participants' mean responses to six survey items measuring the exoneree's perceived controllability, responsibility, and blame. These three constructs (controllability, responsibility, and blame) were combined as the blame variable as they were correlated with one another. See Table 8.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix for the Controllability, Responsibility, and Blame Survey Items (n=1,491)

Variables	C1	C2	R1	R2	B1	B2
Michael's wrongful conviction was under his personal control. (C1)	-					
Michael could have prevented his wrongful conviction. (C2)	0.7581***	-				
Michael is responsible for his wrongful conviction. (R1)	0.8099***	0.7088***	-			
Michael's wrongful conviction resulted from his own negligence. (R2)	0.7836***	0.7203***	0.7804***	-		

Michael is to blame for his wrongful conviction. (B1)	0.7741***	0.6983***	0.7783***	0.7565***	-	
It is Michael's own fault that he was wrongly convicted. (B2)	0.7986***	0.7202***	0.8276***	0.7852***	0.7996***	-

Note: ***$p < .001$

And, while not specifically discussed in Weiner's work, dangerousness was also measured to examine the extent to which the exoneree's perceived dangerousness influenced his perceived deservingness. Ratings for items measuring these variables ranged from 1-6, with greater scores indicating greater levels of blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger. On average, descriptive statistics indicate participants believed the exoneree was not blameworthy for his wrongful conviction (mean = 1.93 out of 6) and not a dangerous person (mean = 2.12 out of 6). Participants also generally felt more sympathy (mean = 5.39 out of 6) and less anger toward the exoneree (mean = 1.73 out of 6). See Table 9.

Table 9: Summary Statistics for Blame, Dangerousness, Sympathy, and Anger

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
blame	1.93	1.24	1	6
dangerousness	2.12	1.14	1	6
sympathy	5.39	1.07	1	6
anger	1.73	1.33	1	6

Note: Ratings for these questions ranged from 1-6, with greater scores indicating greater levels of blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger.

This first subset of regression models focused specifically on blame and dangerousness to follow Weiner's (1993) theory in which causal controllability and assigned responsibility are present in the perceived responsibility sequence prior to the emotions elicited by observers. The first model in this set regressed all three experimentally manipulated variables onto blame. The results indicate the experimentally manipulated variables had a statistically significant effect on the exoneree's perceived blame (F=26.48, $p<.001$). The strongest predictor of blame was the cause of the wrongful conviction. Specifically, participants who were assigned the informants/perjury (t=-9.52, $p<.001$), mistaken eyewitness identification (t=-9.78, $p<.001$), unreliable forensic evidence (t=-10.34, $p<.001$), and official misconduct (t=-11.80, $p<.001$) conditions rated the exoneree as less blameworthy for his wrongful conviction by roughly one point compared to the false confession condition. In addition, the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record was a statistically significant predictor of blame. Participants perceived the exoneree as more blameworthy for his wrongful conviction by 0.18 points when he was convicted of a prior violent crime (t=2.35, $p<.05$) compared to the vignettes in which the exoneree had no prior criminal conviction record. See Panel A in Table 10.

When regressing all three experimentally manipulated variables on dangerousness, there is also a statistically significant effect on participants' ratings of the exoneree's perceived dangerousness (F=9.05, $p<.001$). In this model, the strongest predictor of dangerousness was prior criminal conviction record. Specifically, compared to the reference group, participants viewed the exoneree as more dangerous by 0.48 points when he was convicted of a prior violent crime (t=6.82, $p<.001$), followed by 0.31

points when convicted of a prior drug crime (t=4.47, $p<.001$). Compared to the reference group, participants perceived the exoneree as less dangerous by 0.29 points when official misconduct (t=-3.21, $p<.01$) contributed to his wrongful conviction, followed by 0.18 points for the unreliable forensic evidence condition (-2.02, $p<.05$). In addition, participants perceived the exoneree as less dangerous by 0.13 points when DNA was present in the exoneration (t=-2.20, $p<.05$) compared to the reference group. See Panel B in Table 10.

In this set of regression models, 11% ($R^2 = 0.1111$) of the variance in blame can be explained by the experimentally manipulated variables, while just 4% ($R^2 = 0.0402$) of the variance in dangerousness can be explained by the experimentally manipulated variables. This finding suggests there are likely additional factors (other than the cause of wrongful conviction, the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record, and presence/absence of DNA in the exoneration) that affect exonerees' perceived blame and dangerousness.

Table 10: Regression Analysis of the Effects of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Perceptions of Blame and Dangerousness

Panel A: Linear Regression of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Blame
Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.91***	0.10	-9.52
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	-0.94***	0.10	-9.78
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	-0.99***	0.10	-10.34
Official Misconduct	-1.13***	0.10	-11.80
Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	0.13	0.07	1.72
Prior Violent Conviction	0.18*	0.07	2.35

DNA			
DNA Present	-0.05	0.06	-0.79
Constant	2.64***	0.09	30.83
Model Fit Statistics: F = 26.48, DF = 7, 1,483, R² = 0.11, RMSE = 1.17, n = 1,491			

Panel B: Linear Regression of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Dangerousness

Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.15	0.09	-1.71
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	-0.17	0.09	-1.92
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	-0.18*	0.09	-2.02
Official Misconduct	-0.29**	0.09	-3.21
Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	0.31***	0.07	4.47
Prior Violent Conviction	0.48***	0.07	6.82
DNA			
DNA Present	-0.13*	0.06	-2.20
Constant	2.08*	0.08	25.73
Model Fit Statistics: F = 9.05, DF = 7, 1,513, R² = 0.04, RMSE = 1.12, n = 1,521			
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

The second subset of regression models regressed the three experimentally manipulated variables onto participants' feelings of sympathy for and anger toward the exoneree. The results indicate the experimentally manipulated variables had a statistically significant effect on ratings of sympathy (F=3.73, $p<.001$). Specifically, participants who were assigned to read the official misconduct condition (t=3.00, $p<.01$) felt more sympathy for the exoneree by about 0.26 points compared to the false confession condition. Additionally, the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record was a statistically significant predictor of sympathy. Participants felt less sympathy for the exoneree by roughly 0.24 points when he was convicted of a prior violent crime (t=-3.62, $p<.001$) compared to the vignettes in which the exoneree had no prior criminal conviction record. See Panel A in Table 11.

The results further indicate the three experimentally manipulated variables had a statistically significant effect on ratings of anger (F=4.56, $p<.001$). The strongest predictor of anger was the cause of wrongful conviction. Specifically, participants felt the most anger toward the exoneree who falsely confessed. Compared to the false confession condition, participants felt the least anger toward the exoneree by 0.50 points when official misconduct (t=-4.75, $p<.001$) contributed to the wrongful conviction, followed by unreliable forensic evidence (t=-4.44, $p<.001$), mistaken eyewitness identification (t=-3.48, $p<.01$), and informants/perjury (t=-2.63, $p<.01$). See Panel B in Table 11

Overall, when the exoneree falsely confessed, participants were more likely to believe he was to blame for his wrongful conviction, and in turn, felt less sympathy for and more anger toward him. Further, when official misconduct contributed to the exoneree's wrongful conviction, participants were less likely to believe he was to blame for his wrongful conviction, and in turn, felt more sympathy for and less anger toward him. These findings align with Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation as participants perceived the exoneree who falsely confessed as more in control of and responsible for his wrongful conviction versus the official misconduct condition in which criminal justice professionals' actions caused the wrongful conviction.

Table 11: Regression Analysis of the Effects of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Perceptions of Sympathy and Anger

Panel A: Linear Regression of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Sympathy
Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	0.19*	0.09	2.26
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	0.22*	0.09	2.50

Unreliable Forensic Evidence	0.19*	0.09	2.26
Official Misconduct	0.26**	0.09	3.00
Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	-0.10	0.07	-1.52
Prior Violent Conviction	-0.24***	0.07	-3.62
DNA			
DNA Present	0.08	0.05	1.43
Constant	5.29***	0.08	69.01
Model Fit Statistics: F = 3.73, DF = 7, 1,523, R² = 0.02, RMSE = 1.07, n = 1,531			

Panel B: Linear Regression of Cause of Wrongful Conviction, Prior Criminal Record, and DNA on Anger

Reference group is false confession, no prior criminal record, and no DNA

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Cause of Wrongful Conviction			
Informants/Perjury	-0.28**	0.11	-2.63
Mistaken Eyewitness Identification	-0.37**	0.11	-3.48
Unreliable Forensic Evidence	-0.47***	0.11	-4.44
Official Misconduct	-0.50***	0.11	-4.75
Prior Criminal Record			
Prior Drug Conviction	0.02	0.08	0.24
Prior Violent Conviction	0.07	0.08	0.83
DNA			
DNA Present	-0.10	0.07	-1.44
Constant	2.07***	0.09	21.88
Model Fit Statistics: F = 4.56, DF = 7, 1,522, R² = 0.02, RMSE = 1.31, n = 1,530			
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

The final set of regression models examined the relationship between the mediating variables (blame, dangerousness, sympathy, and anger) and each dependent variable (deservingness of compensation, deservingness of expungement, and fairness of compensation received). Specifically, the first model in this set regressed the mediating variables onto deservingness of compensation. The results indicate blame, sympathy, and anger were statistically significant predictors of the exoneree's perceived deservingness of compensation (F=204.49, $p<.001$). For every unit increase in blame, deservingness of compensation decreased by 0.27 points (t=-8.69, $p<.001$). For every unit increase in

sympathy, deservingness of compensation increased by 0.25 points (t=9.68, $p<.001$).

Finally, for every unit increase in anger, deservingness of compensation decreased by

0.10 points (t=-3.62, $p<.001$). In this model, about 36% ($R^2 = 0.359$) of the variance in

perceived deservingness of compensation can be explained by the mediating variables.

See Panel A in Table 12.

The second regression model in this set regressed the mediating variables onto

deservingness of expungement. The results indicate blame, sympathy, and anger were

statistically significant predictors of the exoneree's perceived deservingness of

expungement (F=127.68, $p<.001$). For every unit increase in blame, deservingness of

expungement decreased by 0.12 points (t=-4.00, $p<.001$). For every unit increase in

sympathy, deservingness of expungement increased by 0.18 points (t=6.98, $p<.001$).

Finally, for every unit increase in anger, deservingness of expungement decreased by

0.16 points (t=-5.90, $p<.001$). In this model, nearly 26% ($R^2 = 0.259$) of the variance in

perceived deservingness of expungement can be explained by the mediating variables.

See Panel B in Table 12.

Finally, the mediating variables were regressed onto the fairness of compensation

received measure. The results indicate blame, dangerousness, and sympathy were

statistically significant predictors of the perceived fairness of compensation received by

the exoneree (LR $\chi^2(4, 1{,}471) = 255.91$, $p<.001$). The findings further suggest the more

participants believed the exoneree to be blameworthy for his wrongful conviction and

dangerous, the more they perceived the compensation he received was fair ("about right"

and "too much"). In addition, the more sympathy participants felt for the exoneree, the

more they perceived the compensation he received was not fair ("too little"). In this

model, nearly 14% ($R^2 = 0.138$) of the variance in perceived fairness of compensation

received can be explained by the mediating variables. See Panel C in Table 12.

Table 12: Regression Analysis of the Effects of Perceived Blame, Dangerousness, Sympathy, and Anger on Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement

Panel A: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Compensation on Perceived Blame, Dangerousness, Sympathy, and Anger

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Blame	-0.27***	0.03	-8.69
Dangerousness	-0.03	0.03	-1.06
Sympathy	0.25***	0/03	9.68
Anger	-0.10***	0.03	-3.62
Constant	4.87***	0.18	27.75
Model Fit Statistics: F = 204.49, DF = 4, 1,464, R² = 0.36 RMSE = 0.87, n = 1,469			

Panel B: Linear Regression of Deservingness of Expungement on Perceived Blame, Dangerousness, Sympathy, and Anger

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
Blame	-0.12***	0.03	-4.00
Dangerousness	-0.05	0.03	-1.69
Sympathy	0.18***	0.03	6.98
Anger	-016***	0.03	-5.90
Constant	6.42***	0.17	30.06
Model Fit Statistics: F = 127.68, DF = 4, 1,464, R² = 0.26, RMSE = 0.86, n = 1,468			

Panel C: Logistic Regression of Deservingness of Compensation (fair/unfair) on Perceived Blame, Dangerousness, Sympathy, and Anger

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z-statistic
Blame	0.36***	0.08	4.49
Dangerousness	0.16*	0.08	2.06
Sympathy	-0.46***	0.07	-6.65
Anger	-0.002	0.07	-0.03
Constant	-2.26***	0.45	1.43
Model Fit Statistics: LR χ² = 255.19, DF = 4, Pseudo R² = 0.14, n = 1,471			
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

Overall, these models suggest when the three experimentally manipulated

variables (cause of wrongful conviction, prior criminal conviction record, and

presence/absence of DNA in the exoneration) are regressed together onto the deservingness measures, they are statistically significant predictors of the exoneree's deservingness of compensation and expungement. However, little of the variance in the deservingness measures can be explained by only the experimentally manipulated variables. This indicates the presence of mediating variables during the cognitive process in which individuals evaluate the exoneree and develop perceptions of his deservingness of compensation and expungement. While there may be several mediating variables at play, the results further indicate the variance in the deservingness measures that can be explained increased when the mediating variables were regressed onto the deservingness measures. Specifically, in those models, perceived blame, sympathy, and anger significantly predicted perceived deservingness of compensation and expungement while perceived blame, dangerousness, and sympathy significantly predicted perceived fairness of compensation received.

Exploratory Item Analysis

Several items were included in the survey for exploratory purposes. For eight of the items, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a 6-point Likert scale. The first item measured the exoneree's perceived deservingness of an apology. Over three-fourths (76.85%) of participants strongly agreed the exoneree deserved an apology, and a combined 91.60% of participants agreed at some level.

The second and third items examined additional factors that may influence whether or not an exoneree should receive compensation and the amount they are

awarded. Nearly three-fourths (74.71%) of participants strongly agreed the amount of time a wrongly convicted individual spent incarcerated should be taken into consideration when determining the amount of compensation he or she deserves, and a combined 93.60% of participants agreed to this at some level. And, just over half (51.63%) of the participants strongly disagreed with the notion that if a wrongly convicted individual has a prior criminal conviction, he or she does not deserve compensation for his or her wrongful conviction, and a combined 81.57% of participants disagreed to this at some level.

The fourth and fifth items were intended to measure participants' helping behavior and support for exonerees. A combined 93.78% of participants agreed they would be willing to support legislation providing compensation to wrongly convicted individuals at some level, and a combined 93.72% of participants agreed they would be willing to support legislation to expunge the criminal records of wrongly convicted individuals at some level.

The remaining three items measured participants' opinions about wrongful convictions as a social issue. Two-fifths (40.96%) of the participants strongly agreed that wrongful convictions are a social problem, and a combined 87.13% of participants agreed to this statement at some level. Just over one-third (35.51%) of participants strongly agreed that wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to justify criminal justice system reform, and a combined 84.64% of participants agreed to this at some level. Lastly, just over one-quarter (27.53%) of participants strongly agreed that it is better to

let a guilty person go free than to convict an innocent person, and a combined 67.60% of

participants agreed to this statement at some level. See Table 13.

Table 13: Descriptive Analysis of Exploratory Items						
	Strongly Disagree (n) %	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Michael Johnson deserves an apology.	(26) 1.70%	(36) 2.36%	(66) 4.33%	(87) 5.70%	(138) 9.05%	(1,172) 76.85%
The amount of time a wrongly convicted individual spent incarcerated should be taken into consideration when determining the amount of compensation he or she deserves.	(29) 1.90%	(25) 1.63%	(44) 2.88%	(104) 6.80%	(185) 12.09%	(1,143) 74.71%
If a wrongly convicted individual has prior criminal convictions, he or she does not deserve compensation for their wrongful conviction.	(790) 51.63%	(291) 19.02%	(167) 10.92%	(106) 6.93%	(91) 5.95%	(85) 5.56%
I would be willing to support legislation that would provide compensation to those who have been wrongly convicted.	(21) 1.37%	(31) 2.03%	(43) 2.81%	(178) 11.65%	(322) 21.07%	(933) 61.06%
I would be willing to support legislation that would expunge the criminal records of those who have been wrongly convicted.	(24) 1.57%	(22) 1.44%	(50) 3.27%	(137) 8.97%	(212) 13.87%	(1,083) 70.88%
Wrongful convictions are a social problem.	(36) 2.40%	(71) 4.74%	(86) 5.74%	(284) 18.95%	(408) 27.22%	(614) 40.96%

Wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to justify criminal justice system reform.	(36) 2.40%	(60) 4.01%	(134) 8.95%	(333) 22.23%	(403) 26.90%	(532) 35.51%
It is better to let a guilty person go free than to convict an innocent person.	(156) 10.40%	(108) 7.20%	(222) 14.80%	(325) 21.67%	(276) 18.40%	(413) 27.53%

The findings of the exploratory items indicate the public is supportive of wrongly convicted individuals and criminal justice reform. A majority of participants agreed the exoneree deserved an apology, the amount of time a wrongly convicted individual spent incarcerated should be taken into consideration when determining the amount of compensation he or she deserves, and a wrongly convicted individual's prior criminal convictions should not interfere with his or her ability to receive compensation. Additionally, a majority of participants indicated they would support legislation to provide compensation to wrongly convicted individuals and expunge their records. Furthermore, a majority of participants agreed wrongful convictions are a social problem and occur frequently enough to justify criminal justice system reform. Lastly, a majority of participants agreed that it is better to let a guilty person go free than to convict an innocent person.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine public perceptions of exonerees and their perceived deservingness of compensation and expungement. Specifically, three experimental manipulations (cause of wrongful conviction, prior criminal conviction record, and presence/absence of DNA evidence in the exoneration) were introduced to participants through randomly assigned vignettes to examine whether these variables influence public perceptions of exonerees. Upon administering the survey on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), the results revealed positive findings in terms of public perceptions of and support for exonerees. Generally, most participants indicated they believed the exoneree was innocent of the crime for which he was wrongly convicted, deserving of compensation and expungement, and deserved more money than what he received for his wrongful conviction.

Additionally, the current study aimed to understand the cognitive process by which the public perceives those who have been wrongly convicted. This exploration was guided by Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation. This theory suggests when an individual is in need, observers will perceive the cause of the need as either controllable or uncontrollable. If the cause is perceived as controllable, the observer will feel anger toward the individual and neglect to help the individual in need. If the cause is perceived as uncontrollable, the observer will feel sympathy/pity for the individual and elect to help the individual in need.

The findings of the current study support the application of Weiner's (1993) theory of perceived responsibility and social motivation to exonerees. That is,

participants rated some exonerees as more blameworthy than others based on the experimental manipulations employed in the current study. Specifically, exonerees who falsely confessed were perceived as more blameworthy for their wrongful convictions, elicited participants to feel less sympathy for and more anger toward them, and perceived to be less deserving of compensation and expungement. These findings indicate that individuals evaluate those who falsely confess as more responsible for their wrongful convictions. Yet, their attributions are fundamentally inaccurate when considering how and why false confessions occur. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section. However, it must be noted that if the members of the public were more aware of the causes of false confession (and other contributing causes of wrongful convictions), their attributions of exonerees, perceptions of wrongful convictions, and stance on the criminal justice system as a whole may shift. Overall, the findings of the current study are valuable to the Innocence Movement by shedding light on public support for exonerees and providing direction for policy implications, advocacy work, and future research.

Policy Implications

The results of the current study indicate the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record was a significant predictor of participants' perceptions of fairness of compensation received by the exoneree. Specifically, participants were more likely to believe the compensation received by the exoneree was not fair ("too little") when he had no criminal conviction record. Alternatively, when the exoneree had a prior drug conviction or prior violent conviction on his criminal conviction record, participants were more

likely to believe the compensation received by the exoneree was fair ("about right" or "too much"). The exoneree was also perceived to be more blameworthy for his wrongful conviction when he was convicted of a prior violent crime compared to the other two conditions (one prior drug conviction and no prior criminal convictions). Furthermore, the exoneree was perceived to be more dangerous when he had a prior drug conviction or a prior violent conviction on his criminal record.

These findings are important to note for two reasons. First, these findings support the claim that those with prior criminal conviction records, including exonerees, are stigmatized. In the current study, the exoneree's prior criminal conviction record had some level of influence on participants' perceptions of him despite his prior record being unrelated to the wrongful conviction and being told the exoneree was innocent of the crime for which he was wrongly convicted. Second, there are existing compensation statutes that restrict exonerees with prior criminal conviction records from receiving compensation for their wrongful convictions. This points to the need to implement initiatives to educate the public about the stigmatization those with prior criminal records experience including exonerees, as well as the limitations of and restrictions in current compensation statutes. Furthermore, it is vital for policy reform to focus on removing the clauses in existing compensation statutes that exclude exonerees who have prior criminal records from receiving compensation. Doing so may provide greater certainty that exonerees are compensated for their wrongful convictions.

Additionally, the results of the current study indicate the cause of wrongful conviction influenced participants' perceptions of the exoneree. Specifically, when the

exoneree falsely confessed, participants perceived him to be the least deserving of compensation, least deserving of expungement, and were more likely to believe the compensation he received was fair in comparison to the other causes of wrongful conviction. Participants also rated the exoneree who falsely confessed as the most blameworthy for his wrongful conviction compared to the exonerees who were wrongly convicted under other circumstances. These findings suggest exonerees who falsely confess are perceived more negatively than others. This may be because the public is not aware of why and how false confessions occur.

There are three major types of false confession: voluntary, coerced-compliant, and coerced-internalized. Individuals who provide voluntary false confessions may do so for psychological reasons including an overwhelming desire for notoriety, the need to expiate guilt for real or imagined previous transgressions, or they cannot distinguish fantasy and reality. Individuals may also provide voluntary false confessions to receive leniency or to protect the guilty. Coerced-compliant false confessions refer to those when people know they are innocent but confess to relieve themselves of the stress and pressures induced through police interrogation tactics. Those who provide such false confessions often believe the short-term benefits of doing so outweigh the long-term costs. An example of this are the "Central Park Five," which are five teenagers who, after hours of interrogation, falsely confessed to sexually assaulting a jogger. The teens explained they believed the interrogations would stop and they would be able to go home if they falsely confessed. The teens were later exonerated after the actual perpetrator confessed and DNA evidence substantiated his confession. Lastly, coerced-internalized false

confessions refer to those where individuals falsely confess due to suggestive interrogation tactics that cause them to believe they actually committed the crimes for which they are accused (Kassin 2008; Kassin and Wrightsman 1985).

Upon reviewing the three types of false confession, it is apparent that false confessors are not solely responsible for their false confessions. Rather, there are additional factors at play including psychological deficiencies and interrogation tactics that lead people to falsely confess. This highlights the need to further educate the public about the causes of wrongful convictions, especially false confessions, as this phenomenon is complex and often involves situational factors that, contrary to popular belief, are not under the false confessor's control. Raising awareness about this may positively impact public perceptions of wrongful convictions and exonerees which may further influence policy change in criminal investigative procedures to prevent false confessions and wrongful convictions from occurring. Furthermore, it is important to educate the public about false confessions, as well as reform compensation and expungement policy by eliminating the existing clauses that restrict exonerees who falsely confessed from receiving aid.

Lastly, the current study found the presence of DNA evidence in the exoneration influenced participants' perceptions of fairness of compensation received by the exoneree. Specifically, when DNA contributed to the exoneration, participants were more likely to believe the compensation awarded to the exoneree was not fair (too little). Additionally, participants perceived the exoneree as less dangerous when DNA was present in his exoneration. These findings suggest the public views exonerees more

positively and are more likely to be supportive of compensating exonerees when DNA

evidence contributes to their exonerations. In turn, those who are exonerated through

other means may be hindered from receiving as much public support compared to those

who are exonerated by DNA evidence. Therefore, it is important to educate the public

about the lack of DNA evidence in criminal cases, as well as the amount of exonerations

that have occurred without DNA evidence.

Biological evidence is not available in criminal cases and investigations as often

as the public may believe. It is estimated "only 5 to 10% of criminal cases in the U.S.

involve biological evidence" (Innocence Project 2009b). This means DNA evidence does

not always exist, nor is it the only way to prove innocence and exonerate those who were

wrongly convicted. Public opinion about wrongful convictions, as well as compensation

and expungement policies may be shifted by informing the public that many exonerations

occur without DNA evidence. For example, the National Registry of Exonerations

(2022a) reports DNA evidence was present in only 17% of the 3,348 exonerations to

date. To achieve exoneration when biological evidence does not exist, wrongly convicted

individuals must find non-DNA evidence to support their claims of innocence. For

example, those who work on wrongful conviction cases reinvestigate police reports,

witnesses, evidence, trial transcripts, and more with the hopes of discovering

uninvestigated leads, alternative suspects, exculpatory evidence, unreliable evidence,

official misconduct, and new witnesses (The Deskovic Foundation 2021). Medwed

(2005) emphasizes it is imperative for states to introduce policy reforms to both decrease

the risk of wrongly convicting innocent individuals and improve the process in which

non-DNA evidence can be presented in post-conviction efforts. Medwed's (2005)

recommended policy improvements include eliminating the current time limits in which

individuals are allowed to present newly discovered evidence, simplifying the legal

procedures that must be followed to present new evidence, allowing the new evidence to

be reviewed by a judge other than the original judge who presided over the case to

eliminate bias, and permitting appellate courts the ability to review new evidence claims

that were dismissed. Medwed (2005) asserts these improvements would aid in

exonerating innocent individuals.

Limitations and Future Research

First, the findings of the current study indicate the three experimental

manipulations (prior criminal conviction record, cause of wrongful conviction, and

presence/absence of DNA evidence) significantly predicted deservingness to some extent,

as well as the presence of mediating variables in the public's development of perceptions

of exonerees. However, based on the results, there is more variance to be explained.

Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to examine additional factors that

may influence perceptions of wrongful convictions and exonerees, especially in regard to

their perceived deservingness of compensation and expungement. Some factors worth

examining include type of offense for which the exoneree was wrongly convicted, time

spent wrongly incarcerated by the exoneree, the justice system's recognition (or lack

thereof) of the wrongful conviction, and individuals' proximity to the exoneree upon

release. Findings of such research may provide beneficial information to help those

involved in the Innocence Movement determine additional areas to work on and address
to improve compensation and expungement policy.

Second, while Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) has become a widely popular
tool to crowdsource online samples of research participants (Chandler and Shapiro 2016),
there are limitations that come with its use (Chandler and Shapiro 2016; Hauser,
Paolacci, and Chandler 2019). First, while the population of MTurk workers who reside
in the United States is diverse, it is not representative of the population as a whole
(Chandler and Shapiro 2016). For example, Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz (2012) found
differences between their MTurk sample and nationally representative samples. Their
MTurk sample tended to be younger, more educated, and report lower incomes compared
to the national samples. Similar representation was found for white MTurk workers while
African Americans and Hispanics were underrepresented compared to the national
samples. MTurk workers were also less likely to be married and more likely to identify as
democratic and liberal in comparison to the national samples. Lastly, nonsignificant
differences were found in gender and region of residence between the MTurk sample and
national samples.

Generally, the findings of the current study reflect participants' age, gender,
race/ethnicity, individual income, marital status, and region of residence were similar to
that reported in 2019 and 2020 census data (United States Census Bureau 2020a; United
States Census Bureau 2020b; United States Census Bureau 2020c; United States Census
Bureau 2020e; United States Census Bureau 2020f). It must be noted that the current
study allowed participants to select "Hispanic or Latino" as their race, while the United

States Census Bureau inquires respondents about their Hispanic or Latino origin as a separate question aside from race. However, there were differences between the current sample and population as a whole in level of education and political view (United States Census Bureau 2020d; Saad 2020). In regard to level of education, participants in the current study attained a higher level of education compared to the population as a whole (United States Census Bureau 2020d). Lastly, both conservatives and liberals were underrepresented in the current study compared to the 2019 Gallup poll findings (Saad 2020). However, this finding may be explained by the differences in survey construction. To measure political view, the current study allowed participants to select one of the following response choices: "very liberal," "slightly liberal," "slightly conservative," and "very conservative," while the Gallup poll response choices included "liberal," "moderate," "conservative," and "no opinion." Therefore, it is important for future research on wrongful convictions and exonerees to obtain samples from a variety of participant pools to better reflect the population as a whole.

It may also be beneficial to study criminal justice professionals who are involved in investigating and prosecuting individuals, as well as those involved in transforming public policy. Areas of research that are important to address include these professionals' perceptions of wrongful convictions, support for those who have been wrongly convicted, and opinions about policy change related to investigative and court procedure, compensation, and expungement. Findings of such research may reveal additional support for exonerees and further implications for improvements to criminal justice procedures.

Overall, more and more wrongly convicted individuals are being exonerated for crimes they did not commit, and the media is raising awareness about wrongful convictions to inform the public that the criminal justice system is not infallible. However, policy is not adapting as quickly to address the needs of those who were exonerated, those who are currently wrongly incarcerated and working toward exoneration, and those who may be wrongly convicted in the future. As such, it is critical to improve current criminal justice policy and procedure to prevent wrongful convictions from occurring, as well as make it easier for wrongly convicted individuals to achieve exoneration. Additionally, due to the variability and limitations in compensation and expungement statutes, this area of policy needs to be addressed to ensure those who have been wrongly convicted are guaranteed compensation and expungement to aid them upon exoneration. Based on the findings of the current study, it is reasonable to believe members of the public may be supportive of policy change aimed at preventing wrongful convictions and aiding exonerees. And, with this support, it may be easier to enact such critical policy change for the wrongly convicted.

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Public Perceptions of Exonerees' Deservingness of Compensation and Expungement

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Elizabeth Lopez under the guidance of Dr. Tyler Vaughan in the Department of Sociology and Corrections at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The purpose of the study is to better understand how the public views wrongful convictions and those who have been wrongly convicted. There are no direct benefits for participating. However, participating in this study may help the researcher better understand public perceptions of wrongful convictions.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to read one vignette about a case of wrongful conviction and answer questions related to the vignette. It will take approximately 12-15 minutes to complete the survey. The risks you will encounter as a participant in this research are not more than experienced in your everyday life. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Elizabeth Lopez at (507) 389-1561 or elizabeth.lopez@mnsu.edu.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You will be given $0.50 after you complete the survey for your time. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. If you withdraw from the survey, your responses will be discarded and you will not receive compensation. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board at (507) 389-1242.

Your responses will remain anonymous. Responses to the survey will be analyzed and reported in aggregate form, meaning individuals will not be identified or connected to the survey. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and indicate your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference.

MSU IRBNet ID#: 1524592
Date of MSU IRB approval: 12/12/2019

Do you consent to participate in this research?
- I consent.
- I do not consent.

Appendix B: Vignettes

Vignette #1: No prior convictions, mistaken eyewitness identification, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. An eyewitness who was at the convenience store when the murder occurred mistakenly identified Johnson as the shooter, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #2: No prior convictions, mistaken eyewitness identification, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. An eyewitness who was at the convenience store when the murder occurred mistakenly identified Johnson as the shooter, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #3: One prior drug conviction, mistaken eyewitness identification, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. An eyewitness who was at the convenience store when the murder occurred mistakenly identified Johnson as the shooter, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #4: One prior drug conviction, mistaken eyewitness identification, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. An eyewitness who was at the convenience store when the murder occurred mistakenly identified Johnson as the shooter, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #5: One prior violent conviction, mistaken eyewitness identification, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. An eyewitness who was at the convenience store when the murder occurred mistakenly identified Johnson as the shooter, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #6: One prior violent conviction, mistaken eyewitness identification, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. An eyewitness who was at the convenience store when the murder occurred mistakenly identified Johnson as the shooter, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #7: No prior convictions, informants/perjury, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. A police informant falsely testified in court that Johnson was the shooter in exchange for a reduced sentence for a different crime the informant committed. The informant's false testimony contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #8: No prior convictions, informants/perjury, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. A police informant falsely testified in court that Johnson was the shooter in exchange for a reduced sentence for a different crime the informant committed. The informant's false testimony contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #9: One prior drug conviction, informants/perjury, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. A police informant falsely testified in court that Johnson was the shooter in exchange for a reduced sentence for a different crime the informant committed. The informant's false testimony contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #10: One prior drug conviction, informants/perjury, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. A police informant falsely testified in court that Johnson was the shooter in exchange for a reduced sentence for a different crime the informant committed. The informant's false testimony contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #11: One prior violent conviction, informants/perjury, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. A police informant falsely testified in court that Johnson was

the shooter in exchange for a reduced sentence for a different crime the informant committed. The informant's false testimony contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #12: One prior violent conviction, informants/perjury, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. A police informant falsely testified in court that Johnson was the shooter in exchange for a reduced sentence for a different crime the informant committed. The informant's false testimony contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #13: No prior convictions, false confession, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. After twelve hours of interrogation, Johnson falsely confessed to the crime which contributed to his wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #14: No prior convictions, false confession, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. After twelve hours of interrogation, Johnson falsely confessed to the crime which contributed to his wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #15: One prior drug conviction, false confession, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. After twelve hours of interrogation, Johnson falsely confessed to the crime which contributed to his wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #16: One prior drug conviction, false confession, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. After twelve hours of interrogation, Johnson falsely confessed to the crime which contributed to his wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #17: One prior violent conviction, false confession, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. After twelve hours of interrogation, Johnson falsely confessed to the crime which contributed to his wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #18: One prior violent conviction, false confession, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. After twelve hours of interrogation, Johnson falsely confessed to the crime which contributed to his wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #19: No prior convictions, unreliable forensic evidence, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and

the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Originally, the ballistics evidence from the crime scene was believed to have matched the gun that was in Johnson's possession. However, it was later found that the ballistics evidence was faulty, and the ballistics evidence from the crime scene did not match Johnson's gun. The unreliable forensic evidence contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #20: No prior convictions, unreliable forensic evidence, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Originally, the ballistics evidence from the crime scene was believed to have matched the gun that was in Johnson's possession. However, it was later found that the ballistics evidence was faulty, and the ballistics evidence from the crime

scene did not match Johnson's gun. The unreliable forensic evidence contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #21: One prior drug conviction, unreliable forensic evidence, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Originally, the ballistics evidence from the crime scene was believed to have matched the gun that was in Johnson's possession. However, it was later found that the ballistics evidence was faulty, and the ballistics evidence from the crime scene did not match Johnson's gun. The unreliable forensic evidence contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #22: One prior drug conviction, unreliable forensic evidence, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a drug crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Originally, the ballistics evidence from the crime scene was believed to have matched the gun that was in Johnson's possession. However, it was later found that the ballistics evidence was faulty, and the ballistics evidence from the crime scene did not match Johnson's gun. The unreliable forensic evidence contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #23: One prior violent conviction, unreliable forensic evidence, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

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In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Originally, the ballistics evidence from the crime scene was

believed to have matched the gun that was in Johnson's possession. However, it was later found that the ballistics evidence was faulty, and the ballistics evidence from the crime scene did not match Johnson's gun. The unreliable forensic evidence contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #24: One prior violent conviction, unreliable forensic evidence, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Originally, the ballistics evidence from the crime scene was believed to have matched the gun that was in Johnson's possession. However, it was later found that the ballistics evidence was faulty, and the ballistics evidence from the crime scene did not match Johnson's gun. The unreliable forensic evidence contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #25: No prior convictions, official misconduct, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor of the case withheld evidence that supported Johnson's innocence, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #26: No prior convictions, official misconduct, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had no prior convictions.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor of the case withheld evidence that supported Johnson's innocence, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #27: One prior drug conviction, official misconduct, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

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As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #28: One prior drug conviction, official misconduct, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

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In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor of the case withheld evidence that supported Johnson's innocence, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #29: One prior violent conviction, official misconduct, DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor of the case withheld evidence that supported Johnson's innocence, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

As part of Johnson's attempt to prove his innocence, he requested that DNA evidence from the debris found under Smith's fingernails be tested. The DNA tests determined that the debris found under Smith's fingernails did not match Johnson and implicated another man for the murder.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Vignette #30: One prior violent conviction, official misconduct, no DNA evidence

Man Exonerated After Serving 15 Years for a Murder He Did Not Commit

Michael Johnson, a man who served 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has been exonerated and released from prison.

In June 2002, Anthony Smith was working at a convenience store. At around 10:30 p.m., a man entered the store and attempted to rob it. During the attempted robbery, Smith and the offender got into an altercation. The offender ultimately fatally shot Smith and fled the scene.

During the investigation, Michael Johnson became the main suspect in the case. Johnson had one prior conviction for a violent crime.

In April 2004, when Johnson was 22 years old, he was convicted of Smith's murder and sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor of the case withheld evidence that supported Johnson's innocence, which contributed to Johnson's wrongful conviction.

Johnson, now 37 years old, is currently in the process of attempting to receive financial compensation from the state for his wrongful conviction and get the wrongful murder conviction removed from his record.

Appendix C: Survey

Please read the following definitions carefully, and please use these definitions throughout the remainder of the survey. You will be able to advance to the next page of the survey in 15 seconds.

Exonerated refers to the situation in which a wrongly convicted individual has been found innocent of committing the crime they were wrongly convicted of and was released from prison.

An exoneree refers to a person who was wrongly convicted of a crime that he or she did not commit and has been found innocent of that crime.

Expungement refers to the process in which a person's criminal convictions are sealed in their state/federal records, meaning this information is no longer public.

On the next page, you will see a news article. Once the article has been displayed for 45 seconds, you will be able to advance to the next section. Please read the article carefully before moving on to the remaining sections of the survey.

Vignette: 1 of 30 vignettes randomly assigned and presented to each participant to read.

Please read each statement and select the choice that best represents your opinion about the statement.
*Questions #1-15 were randomized in the online survey.

1. Michael's wrongful conviction was under his personal control.
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Slightly agree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

2. Michael could have prevented his wrongful conviction.
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Slightly agree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

3. Michael had *no* control over the cause of his wrongful conviction.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. Michael is responsible for his wrongful conviction.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. Michael's wrongful conviction resulted from his own negligence.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. Michael should *not* be held personally liable for his wrongful conviction.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. Michael is to blame for his wrongful conviction.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. It is Michael's own fault that he was wrongly convicted.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree

- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. Michael did *not* deserve what happened to him.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. I feel bad for Michael.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. I feel angry at Michael.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. Michael poses a danger to his community upon his release from prison.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. People should *not* feel safe around Michael.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. Michael will commit crime in the future.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. Michael will be an upstanding citizen upon his release from prison.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please read the following statement and select the choice that best represents your opinion about the statement.

16. I believe Michael Johnson is innocent of committing murder.
- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

17. How much money do you think Michael Johnson deserves to receive for his wrongful conviction and the 15 years he spent wrongly incarcerated?

Please specify a dollar amount ($) using only numbers in the box below.

18. The state paid Michael Johnson $375,000 for his wrongful conviction ($25,000 for each year he was wrongly incarcerated).

Would you say the amount of money Michael Johnson received was...
- Too little
- About right
- Too much

Please read each statement and select the following choice that best represents your opinion about the statement.

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
19. Michael Johnson deserves to receive financial compensation for his wrongful conviction.						
20. Michael Johnson deserves to have the wrongful conviction expunged from his criminal record.						
21. Michael Johnson deserves an apology.						

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
22. The amount of time a wrongly convicted individual spent incarcerated should be taken into consideration when determining the amount of compensation he or she deserves.						
23. If a wrongly convicted individual has prior criminal convictions, he or she does not deserve compensation for their wrongful conviction.						

Please read each statement and select the following choice that best represents your opinion about the statement.

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
24. I would be willing to support legislation that would provide compensation to those who have been wrongly convicted.						
25. I would be willing to support legislation that would expunge the criminal records of those who have been wrongly convicted.						

Please read each statement carefully and select the following choice that best represents your opinion about the statement.

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
26. Wrongful convictions are a social problem.						
27. Wrongful convictions occur frequently enough to justify criminal justice system reform.						
28. It is better to let a guilty person go free than to convict an innocent person.						

29. Why might people think an exonerated individual should not receive compensation?

30. Why might people think an exonerated individual is guilty of the crime despite there being evidence to prove he/she did not do it?

The following questions concern factors that are important to making judgments about right and wrong. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking?

Please rate each statement using this scale:
(0) Not at all relevant (This consideration has nothing to do with my judgments of right and wrong)
(1) Not very relevant
(2) Slightly relevant
(3) Somewhat relevant
(4) Very relevant
(5) Extremely relevant (This is one of the most important factors when I judge right and wrong)

31. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone suffered emotionally
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

32. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not some people were treated differently than others
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

33. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

34. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

35. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

36. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone was good at math
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

37. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

38. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone acted unfairly
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

39. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

40. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

41. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone did something disgusting
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

42. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone was cruel
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

43. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone was denied his or her rights
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

44. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

45. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not an action caused chaos or disorder
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

46. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent is the following consideration relevant to your thinking?

Whether or not someone acted in a way that God would approve of
- (0) Not at all relevant
- (1) Not very relevant
- (2) Slightly relevant
- (3) Somewhat relevant
- (4) Very relevant
- (5) Extremely relevant

Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement:

47. **Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

48. **When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

49. **I am proud of my country's history.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

50. **Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

51. **People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

52. **It is better to do good than to do bad.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

53. **One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

54. **Justice is the most important requirement for a society.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

55. **People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

56. **Men and women each have different roles to play in society.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

57. **I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

58. **It can never be right to kill a human being.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

59. **I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

60. **It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

61. **If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

62. **Chastity is an important and valuable virtue.**
- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

63. What is your age?
- *A drop down bar appeared with ages 18-100+ individually listed out for participants to select from

64. What is your gender?
- Female
- Male
- Other

65. What is your race? Please check all that apply.
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian

66. What is the highest level of education you have obtained?
- Less than high school diploma
- High school diploma or GED
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

67. What was your individual level of income before taxes last year?
- Less than $25,000
- $25,000 - $34,999
- $35,000 - $49,999
- $50,000 - $74,999
- $75,000 - $99,999
- $100,000 - $149,999
- More than $150,000

68. How would you describe your political view?
- Very liberal
- Slightly liberal
- Slightly conservative
- Very conservative

69. What is your marital status?
- Single, never married
- Married
- Widowed
- Separated
- Divorced

70. What region of the United States do you reside in?
- Northeast (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, or VT)
- Midwest (IA, IN, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, OH, ND, NE, SD, or WI)
- Southeast (AL, AR, D.C., DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, and WV)
- Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, or TX)
- West (AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, NV, MT, OR, UT, WA, or WY)

Thank you for participating in our research!

Here is your completion code: XXXXXXX

After you have copied this code, please click the next button to submit your survey. Then, paste the code into MTurk to submit the HIT and receive your compensation.

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