



5-7-2015

Biases in Race and Social Desirability within Jury Simulations

Michelle Hallaran

Follow this and additional works at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj

 Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hallaran, Michelle. (2015). Biases in Race and Social Desirability within Jury Simulations. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects*. Item 89. Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/89
Copyright © 2015 Michelle Hallaran

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Biases in Race and Social Desirability within Jury Simulations

Michelle Hallaran

Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in Psychology

Bridgewater State University

May 7, 2015

Dr. Laura Ramsey, Thesis Director
Dr. Michelle Mamberg, Committee Member
Dr. Caroline Stanley, Committee Member
Dr. Melissa Singer, Committee Member

Abstract

This study examined how the defendant's race and the victim's social desirability influence sentencing. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four crime scenarios, featuring either a Black or White defendant or a socially desirable or undesirable victim. For each scenario the defendant's race was manipulated and participants were shown a picture of either a Black or White male. Data were collected at two different time periods, because of potential influence of media coverage of racial bias in jury decisions. Therefore, the effects of defendant race, victim social desirability, and time period were tested through an experiment using a 2x2x2 design. The predicted main effect was that Black defendants would receive a harsher sentence than White defendants. It was also predicted that crimes against a socially desirable victim would lead to greater sentencing than for a socially undesirable victim. The predicted interaction was that the defendant's race would influence sentencing less for the socially desirable victim, because the crime of hurting someone who is good is uniformly negative. However it was predicted that the defendant's race would influence sentencing more for the socially undesirable victim, because the crime of hurting someone who is bad is more ambiguous. While there was a significant three-way interaction, results did not map on to predictions. Future research should continue to examine the effect of racial bias on jury decisions.

Keywords: race, jury decisions, social desirability, sentencing

Biases in Race and Social Desirability within Jury Simulations

Throughout history there have been clear issues regarding racial inequality in the United States' legal system. Prior to the Civil War, there were many heavily enforced laws which unequally affected Blacks. In Virginia, there were over 70 crimes, which were punishable by death for a Black individual, but only one for Whites (as cited in Sommers and Ellsworth, 2001). The laws encouraged both judges and jurors (all of whom were White) to make racially motivated decisions. Racial bias in the courtroom continued as the United States began its reconstruction period, introducing both the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th Amendment. These acts of legislature required states to legally punish racial discrimination, leaving White politicians unable to act upon their existing negative racial attitudes (Coleman, 1996). The 1930's marked a critical period in our country's courtrooms, and it was evident that they were heavily influenced by the pervasive racial prejudices which existed during this time.

In our courts, when it's a White man's word against a Black man's, the White man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life...The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right to a jury box (Lee, 1960).

This quotation, from Harper Lee's (1960) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, illustrates the extreme views of racial inequalities during the 1930's. Currently, the racial prejudices that are seen in the modern legal system are less blatant than this interpretation, but they continue to exist in more subtle ways.

Racial Bias

In today's legal system there are many biases which affect the decisions of jurors. Race is a very important component in juries' decisions on sentencing defendants in criminal court cases. Race is a term used to define groups of people who have similarities in biological traits deemed

significant by society and especially used as justification for treating others differently. The inequalities prevalent towards Black defendants have been shown through previous research (Gordon et al., 1988). In a meta-analysis, Sweeney and Haney (1992) examined 14 studies with over 2,800 participants and determined that White mock jurors were more likely to give harsher sentence recommendations for Black defendants than they were for White defendants.

White juror bias is a term that refers to the prejudice facing Black defendants from White jurors in United States courtrooms. The majority of juries in the U.S legal system are comprised of mainly White individuals, while the majority of convicted criminals are non-White (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001). One contributing factor to why the majority of convicted criminals are non-White is because of White juror bias. Due to the over representation of Whites in judges and juries there are more opportunities for White juror bias to occur. Sommers and Ellsworth (2001) conducted a mock jury trial study examining sentencing patterns for defendants. Results showed that the White jurors were more likely to convict a Black defendant (90%) than a White defendant (70%). When the race of the defendant was not told to the jury, the conviction rates were comparable, Black defendant (66%) and White defendant (69%). This evidence shows that juries are more likely to demonstrate racial bias and give harsher sentencing to Black defendants.

One reason that white juror bias exists is because Black defendants are part of the jurors' out-group. In-groups and out-groups are important in how a juror is able to identify with individuals involved in a given crime. The ability to identify with the defendant of a crime can be influential to the jury decision-making process. An in-group is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as a member, whereas the out-group is a social group which a person does *not* identify as a member. Inevitably jurors can identify more easily with defendants in their in-group compared to their out-group (Hymes, Leinart, Rowe, & Rogers, 1993).

A juror has a greater tendency to identify with someone of the same race. Meaning, if the defendant is Black and they are White, then they will not identify. When this occurs it is likely that the juror will associate the defendant as an out-group member and will sentence them longer. On the other hand, if the defendant is White and the juror is White, they will be able to identify with the defendant and will likely be more lenient about how they sentence. Kerr, Hymes, Anderson, and Weathers (1995) examined defendant-juror religious similarities in a mock jury trial. Participants holding strong identification with their religious group were selected, increasing the researcher's confidence that the defendant's membership to their in-group could not be denied. The selected participants identified as either Christian or Jewish, and were not informed that their recruitment was due to their strong religious views. Results indicated that overall religious similarity to the defendant lead to a greater leniency towards the criminal defendant.

Racial bias is also likely to occur in ambiguous situations. For example research conducted by Dovidio (2000) asked participants to evaluate a candidate for a particular employment position. The given excerpts were systematically varied in order to manipulate both the candidate's strength of qualifications (strong, weak, or mediocre) and their race based on listed activities (i.e. Black Student Union was listed for a Black candidate). Results indicated that bias against Blacks manifested primarily when the candidate's qualifications for the position were mediocre, and thus it was ambiguous as to whether or not the candidate was suitable for the position. The study also found that when a Black candidate's qualifications for the position were both clear and sufficient, or blatantly not appropriate for hiring, there was no discrimination against them. The same pattern of results was shown in examining college admission decisions (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002). These studies support the idea that as a situation's

ambiguity increases the possibility of racism also increases. Therefore if a criminal case is ambiguous, White juror bias is more likely to influence the results of the case.

Social Desirability of the Victim

Previous research on jury biases have primarily focused on the defendant and characteristics of the crime. However, characteristics of the victim may also create jury bias. In the examination of crime situations, the social desirability of a victim could hold a significant amount of importance for jurors and their decision-making. Social desirability is defined as how favorably society views a person in regards to his or her behaviors, attitudes, and physical attractiveness. When a victim of a crime is seen as a socially desirable individual, the crime becomes less ambiguous because hurting someone who is good is uniformly negative. Since there is no previous research examining ambiguous situations in relation to social desirability of the victim, the concepts drawn from research on racism and how it is more likely in ambiguous situations can be applied. Crimes against socially undesirable victims may cause ambiguous situations for jurors, which could intensify racial biases in sentencing.

Furthermore, the social desirability of the victims could influence jurors independent of race. One reason that social desirability of a victim may influence juror decisions is the Belief in a Just World Theory. This theory refers to the tendency for people to believe that the world is fair and that because of this people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980). With consideration of this theory, crimes that are committed against people who have not contributed to society are not viewed as negatively. The criminal in this type of situation doesn't seem as negative to a juror because the socially undesirable victim got what they deserved, thus leading to reduced sentencing. However, crimes that are committed against socially desirable individuals seem

increasingly worse because a good person was targeted and hurt. The juror would likely feel that the defendant needs to be punished for this crime and a harsh sentencing will result. This is also related to the fact that the crime is less ambiguous because when negative things happen against good people, it violates their Just World Beliefs. Since the victim did not deserve what happened to him/her, the juror gives the defendant a harsh sentence to justify the wrong (Strömwall, 2013). In sum, when a juror's Just World Beliefs are violated, they feel the need to create justice in the form of sentencing.

Few studies have examined the social desirability of victims in a crime. Landy and Aronson (1969) conducted an experiment looking at the influence of the victim's social desirability on the sentencing of the defendant. Half the participants involved in this study received a crime scene involving a socially desirable victim, and the other half received crime scenarios involving a socially undesirable victim. The desirable victim was a CEO, widowed, and founder of an orphanage. The undesirable victim was a notorious hoodlum, with extensive criminal background, and had a gun in his possession at the time of the crime. The crime used in this study was negligent vehicular homicide (Landy & Aronson, 1969). Results showed that participants in the desirable victim condition penalized the defendant to a higher number of years in prison than the participants in the undesirable victim condition, but the difference only reached marginal statistical significance. In another study conducted by Callan, Powell, and Ellard (2007) the consequences of victim physical attractiveness on reactions to injustice were examined. The participants were presented with a scenario where a woman died as a result of a house fire. Participants were randomly presented with either an attractive or unattractive picture of a woman. Results indicated that participants rated the death of the woman as more tragic and unfair when she was physically attractive rather than unattractive. Because physically attractive

people are more socially desirable, together these findings offer evidence that the social desirability of the victim can influence jury decisions.

The Present Study

In the present study, defendant race and victim social desirability were manipulated in a 2x2 design. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four crime scenarios, featuring either a Black or White defendant or a socially desirable or undesirable victim (see Appendix A). In the socially desirable condition, the victim is a philanthropist who regularly donates money to local charities. In the socially undesirable condition, the victim is a politician who steals large amounts of money from the government for personal use. All of the scenarios described an armed robbery, and the participants were then asked to indicate how many years the defendant should be sentenced for committed the crime.

It was predicted that the combination of the race of the defendant and the social desirability of the victim would result in different sentencing patterns (see Figure 1). We predicted that there would be a main effect that Black defendants would receive a longer sentence than White defendants overall. Additionally, we predicted crimes against a socially desirable victim would lead to longer sentencing than for a socially undesirable victim. The predicted interaction was that the defendant's race would not influence sentencing for the socially desirable victim, because the crime of hurting someone who is good is uniformly negative, and therefore not ambiguous. However, the defendant's race would influence sentencing for the socially undesirable victim, because the crime of hurting someone who is bad is more ambiguous, thus making racial bias more likely.

Data collection for this study occurred at two different time periods. This was because during the week of the initial data collection the verdict of the Ferguson trial was announced and became national news. The decision was made by the grand jury that they would not indict Officer Darren Wilson (who is a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri) for the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black man. Within minutes of the verdict being announced, riots and protests erupted throughout the U.S. The Ferguson verdict not only became a focal point for the U.S media, but also throughout the world. Since there were concerns about the idea of racial bias being such a prevalent topic in the media, we decided to collect data again in January to see if a different pattern of results would emerge. Therefore, the design became a 2x2x2 analysis where defendant race, victim socially desirability, and time were all examined.

Method

Participants

Two hundred ninety-three all White participants were recruited through a web service called Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). This program distributes tasks to a population of workers throughout the United States who volunteer to complete tasks (such as a survey) for a nominal amount of money. For this study, participants were compensated \$0.25 for the completion of the survey. Previous research has shown that MTurk can be used to produce high-quality data inexpensively and rapidly (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Findings also indicate that participants are slightly more demographically diverse than standard internet samples, and are significantly more diverse than typical American college samples. Overall, MTurk can be used to collect data appropriate for social science research that is generally a reliable representation of the U.S population.

Five attention questions were inserted randomly throughout the survey to assess the extent to which participants were reading each question carefully. An example of an attention question is “Please select strongly agree.” Participants who did not select “strongly agree” were recorded as answering the attention question incorrectly. Participants who did not answer all 5-attention questions correctly were eliminated from the dataset ($n=59$), as well as one person who did not respond to the primary dependent variable question. This left a sample of two hundred thirty-three participants (99 Men, 133 Women, 1 Non-binary). The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 73 ($M=35.78$, $SD=12.10$).

Research Design and Procedure

Data collection for this study occurred during two different time periods. The first data collection took place during the months of November and December and the second data collection occurred during the month of January. The data were examined both independently and combined in order to assess all possible outcomes of the study.

The design of this study was a 2x2x2 between subjects design, containing three different independent variables. The first independent variable was the race of the criminal; the second was the social desirability of the victim; the third was the time of data collection. There were two levels for each of the independent variables, for race this was White or Black, and for social desirability it was either desirable or undesirable, and for time it was either November/December or January. Therefore, there were four different versions of the survey randomly assigned to participants in order to address all variables involved (see Appendix). The only difference between the surveys was the crime scene scenario given to the participant to read prior to answering a series of questions. The questions the participants were asked were standard for all versions of the administered surveys.

Participants accessed the study online, where the first page was the consent form. It was made clear to each participant that they did not need to answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable or that they simply do not wish to complete. It was also made clear that they could leave the study at any point if they wished. The participants were instructed to read the scenario and then complete the questions that follow. The participants were debriefed after they completed the study by being informed that they participated in a jury simulation study examining possible biases based on race and social desirability.

Measures

After reading the crime scenario participants were given the following background information about typical sentencing for the defendant's crime. "Johnson was caught by police as he exited the house. He was charged with armed robbery, a crime that is punishable in the state of Massachusetts from 5 to 25 years imprisonment." Additionally participants were asked to sentence the defendant; "Please determine how many years of imprisonment Paul Johnson should receive after reading the case above, and indicate how many years you would sentence him to?" They were also asked how much they identified with both the defendant, "How much do you identify with Mr. Johnson?" and victim "How much do you identify with Mr. Williams?" Each of these items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale where higher scores indicated higher identity. Additionally, there was space provided for them to explain why they thought the defendant committed the crime. The responses for this were read by several different researchers, and coded in order to provide reliable data. Participants filled out a general survey about demographic information such as race, age, socioeconomic status, and highest level of education achieved. The following instruments were administered:

Modern Racism Scale (MRS). This scale measures the more subtle forms of racial attitudes and prejudice that are present in the United States today (McConahay, 1986). A sample item included is, “Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to Black people than they deserve.” Each of the 6 items is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores on this scale indicate greater racist beliefs, whereas lower scores indicate fewer racist beliefs.

Belief in a Just World Scale (BJW). This scale measures the extent to which individuals believe in a just world, that is a world which is fair and where people get what they deserve (Dalbert, 1987). A sample item from the scale states, “I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve.” Each of the 6 items is rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores on this scale indicate greater just world beliefs, whereas lower scores indicate fewer just world beliefs.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). This scale contains 10 items measuring both positive and negative feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance (Rosenberg, 1965). Sample items include “I take a positive attitude toward myself,” and “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.” Responses to the 10 items range on a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores on this scale indicate high self-esteem, whereas lower scores indicate one’s lack of self-esteem.

Procedural and Distributive Just World Beliefs Scale. This 16-item scale measures the extent to which individuals believe in a just world, that is a world which is fair and where people get what they deserve (Lucas, Zhdanova, & Alexander, 2011). However, it distinguishes between a Procedural Just World (PJW) which is a belief in a world with “fair rules, procedures, and interpersonal treatment” and a Distributive Just World (DJW) with “fair outcomes”. Additionally

it distinguishes between perception of justice for the self and for others. Responses to the 16 items range on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. There are four subscales in the measure, each containing 4 items. The four subscales within the measure are Distributive Justice-Others (a sample item includes: “*I feel that people usually receive the outcomes that they are due*”), Procedural Justice – Others (a sample item includes: “*People usually use fair procedures in dealing with others*”), Distributive Justice- Self (a sample item includes: “*I usually receive the outcomes that I deserve*”), and Procedural Justice-Self (a sample item includes: “*I feel that people generally use methods that are fair in their evaluations of me*”).

Attitudes Toward Crime Survey-Crime Items—Forms A and B. This scale measures attribution and sentencing goal attitudes towards crime (Carroll, Perkowitz, Lurigio, & Weaver, 1987). The scale is divided into items related to sentencing goals, or items related to attributions of crimes. Each of the items was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes towards sentencing goals, while lower scores indicate more negative attitudes. Sample items include “Many new correctional procedures are too lenient,” and “Criminal are people who don’t care about the rights of others or their responsibility to society.”

Results

A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis was used to examine defendant race, victim social desirability, and time of data collection. For each variable there were two levels. For race of the defendant there was Black vs. White, social desirability of the victim there was socially desirable vs. socially undesirable, and for time there was November/December vs. January (data collection 1 vs. data collection 2). Figure 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and significance level for all variables in the hypothesis.

We predicted that there would be a main effect of race, such that the Black defendant would be sentenced longer than the White defendant would. The results for main effect of race indicated that this was not the case and that Black defendants ($M=12.59$, $SD=6.35$) were punished similarly to white defendants ($M=13.60$, $SD=6.81$), $F(1,225) = 1.76$, $p = .19$. When examining social desirability we predicted there would also be a main effect where the socially desirable victims ($M=13.94$, $SD=7.22$) would lead to harsher sentencing for the defendants than the socially undesirable victims ($M=12.32$, $SD=5.89$). In support of this prediction, there was a marginally significant main effect for social desirability, $F(1,225) = 2.81$, $p = .095$. The two-way interactions were not significant. However when examining the three-way interaction between defendant race, victim social desirability, and data collection time, there was a significant interaction $F(1, 225) = 5.08$, $p = .03$.

When examining the results from November/December, there was a marginally significant difference between sentencing for a Black defendant ($M=11.05$, $SD=5.52$) and a White defendant ($M=14.74$, $SD=7.16$) when the victim was socially desirable $F(1,225) = 3.53$, $p = .06$. However, there was no racial difference when the victim was socially undesirable $F(1,225) = .86$, $p = .36$. Additionally, White defendants showed a statistically significant difference in sentencing when the victim was socially desirable ($M=14.74$, $SD=7.16$) than when the victim was socially undesirable ($M=11.00$, $SD=6.40$), $F(1,225) = 4.10$, $p = .04$. However, for Black defendants there was no significant difference $F(1,225) = .71$, $p = .40$. (see Figure 2).

When examining the results from January there was no significant difference in sentencing for the Black defendant ($M=11.74$, $SD=5.54$) and a White defendant ($M=14.00$, $SD=5.57$) when the victim was undesirable $F(1,225) = 2.64$, $p = .11$. There was also no racial difference when the victim was desirable $F(1,225) = .00$, $p = .98$. However there was a

statistically significant difference in crime sentencing for the Black defendant when the victim was socially desirable ($M=14.56$, $SD=7.45$) compared to when the victim was socially undesirable ($M=11.74$, $SD=5.54$), $F(1,225) = 4.04$, $p = .05$. However, for White defendants there was no significant difference $F(1,225) = .14$, $p = .71$. (see Figure 3).

In addition to these findings, analysis indicated that there were significant differences when comparing results for specific conditions from November/December (data collection 1) and January (data collection 2). Black defendants with socially desirable victims were sentenced less in November/December ($M=11.05$, $SD=5.52$) than January ($M=14.56$, $SD=7.45$), $F(1, 225) = 3.86$, $p = .05$. Black defendants with a socially undesirable victims showed no difference across time $F(1,225) = .50$, $p = .48$. There was also a marginally significant increase in years sentenced for White defendants with a socially undesirable victim from November/December ($M=11.00$, $SD=6.40$) to January ($M=14.00$, $SD=5.57$), $F(1,225) = 3.20$, $p = .08$. White defendants with a socially desirable victim showed no difference across time $F(1,225) = .02$, $p = .94$.

In an effort to further understand why Black defendants were sentenced less than White defendants, we examined the relationship between how similar participants viewed themselves in relation to the defendant. Overall, the participants reported that they identified more with the Black defendant than they did with the white defendant, $t(134) = 2.185$, $p < .05$. This indicated that the all White participant pool identified more with the Black defendants, potentially explaining why the Black defendants were overall punished less than expected throughout the study.

Finally, each of the scales measured in the study (i.e., questions regarding racism, belief in a just world, and self-esteem) were included as a covariate in the 2x2x2 analysis, but none of

the covariates were statistically significant, nor did they alter the pattern of results. Crime attributions were used as qualitative research. Three researchers coded the raw data in order to examine participants' responses. The responses were assigned specific labels depending on the type of attribution interpreted by the researcher. Although no significant results presented with the attribution scale as a covariate, participants' responses gives reason for further examination.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between defendant race and the social desirability of a victim when examining sentencing in a criminal case. Overall, the data revealed mixed support for the hypotheses proposed. The predicted main effect that Black defendants would receive a harsher sentence than White defendants was not supported within our results. A second hypothesis was that crimes against a socially desirable victim would lead to greater sentencing than for a socially undesirable victim. Tests of this hypothesis yielded marginally significant results with defendants committing crimes against socially desirable victims were sentenced longer. The third hypothesis predicted an interaction where the defendant's race would not influence sentencing for a socially desirable victim, but would influence sentencing for a socially undesirable victim. While there was not a significant two-way interaction, there was a three-way interaction between race, social desirability, and time, where different patterns emerged between the first and second data collection.

Data collected in each time period partially mapped onto our prediction, but in different ways. In November/December, results for the socially undesirable victim did not show a significant difference between Black and White defendants, but the means were in the predicted direction in that the Black defendant received a slightly higher sentencing (about 1.5 years).

While no difference was predicted for the desirable victim, the White defendant was punished marginally significantly more than the Black defendant. Data collected from January showed a different pattern. When looking at the sentencing for the desirable victim, both Black and White defendants received high sentencing (slightly over 14 years), as predicted. Results for the socially undesirable victim showed no significant difference between sentencing for a Black defendant and a White defendant.

There is a substantial amount of research regarding Black individuals receiving harsher sentences than White individuals in the U.S legal system. Since the incarceration system in the United States disproportionately affects Blacks the majority of convicted criminals in this country are Black (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001). This is why the inconsistencies in our findings compared to our predictions are so interesting. One reason that these results did not show White juror bias (i.e., harsher punishments for Black versus White defendants) could be the timing of the study. Two days after the first round of data began collection, the final verdict of the Ferguson trial was announced. The decision was made by the grand jury that they would not indict Officer Darren Wilson (who is a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri) for the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black man. Within minutes of the verdict being announced it became national news as riots and protests erupted immediately throughout the U.S. The Ferguson verdict not only became a focal point for the U.S media, but also throughout the world as well. A possible explanation for why the results showed lesser sentencing for Black defendants could be related to the Ferguson trial. Individuals participating in the survey may have sentenced the Black defendant less harshly because they were unusually aware of racial bias in the court system and thus concerned about sentencing a Black person more harshly than

they would a White person. Since the Ferguson trial had a strong media spotlight on it, participants may have been more conscious about race issues than they would otherwise.

Data were collected again in January after the initial data collection because of concern for the influence of the Ferguson trial on the data. However, the inconsistencies in the results collected in January could have still been influenced by the Ferguson trial verdict because it was only two months after the Ferguson news was released. Since the trial became national news it is possible that it was still influencing people's decisions regarding situations involving race. Additionally, riots and protests were still occurring during the January data collection. Other cases involving race issues were also under the media's spotlight, causing potential influence on the results.

Another explanation for why Whites were sentenced more than expected is that the participants reported that they identified more with the Black defendant than they did with the White defendant. The participants could have reported identifying with the Black defendant more than the White defendant because they were attempting to distance themselves from the defendant who was in the same in-group as them (White defendants). If a White defendant is in the same in-group as the participant, they may feel the need to sentence them more since that are trying to distance themselves from a negative group member. This phenomenon is called the Black Sheep Effect, where people derogate deviant in-group members more than out-group members (Marques, 1988). This could explain for both the fact that the Black defendant was punished less than expected, and the White defendant was punished more than expected.

Limitations

Interpretations of the results should take into account the limitations of this study. One central limitation is with the crime scenario given to the participants to read. The individual in the crime scenario is already guilty based on the situation given to participants. Since the subject is informed of the defendant's guilt, it takes away from the ambiguity of the crime. Having the crime be ambiguous is important because racial bias is more likely in an ambiguous situation (Dovidio, 2000). This could influence how the participant sentences the defendant because they were unable to infer the potential verdict.

Another key limitation relates to the pictures used in the manipulation. The two men are dressed in suits and appear to be sitting in an office. In relation to the type of crime committed in this study, the pictures would be more representative of someone who committed a white-collar crime as opposed to a blue-collar crime. The images were atypical from what stereotypical criminals look like. Another flaw with the images used is that they may not clearly convey the intended race. The image manipulated to look like a Black man was relatively light, which may have confused participants in what his race was supposed to be. Since the crime scenario given to participants did not give the race of the defendant, the image given to them was the only source they had to interpret the given race. This combined with the idea that the images depicted atypical representations of criminals could explain why we did not get the racial bias we expected.

Conclusion

This study is important because it addresses the many biases that exist which many individuals may not be aware of. Highlighting the inequalities that are prevalent in the U.S. legal system, and the internal and external influences involved in decision making during crime

sentencing is very important. Although this study did not provide evidence for racial bias in juror decisions, the findings of this study add to the literature on defendant race and social desirability of crime victims by showing both the fragility of human nature and influence of biases.

Additionally, little research has been conducted on how the social desirability of the victim of a crime potentially influences how a defendant is sentenced. By examining social desirability further it would develop a greater understanding to its potential influences in the legal system.

With focus on these issues, there can be attention brought to types of biases that exist in the U.S. legal system and the inequalities that Blacks face when on trial. The acknowledgement of these issues can help people of all races and assist them in becoming more aware of judgments they are making about other people due to biases. Although it is impossible to eliminate biases altogether, bringing attention to this issue would allow individuals to become more knowledgeable and lessen negative views towards others. Another important issue to examine is the media's influence on research. There is no way to prevent media related events on impacting on-going research. Further research should continue on the relationship between race of defendants, social desirability of crime victims, and media influence.

References

- Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (2011). Amazon's Mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality, data? *Perspectives On Psychological Science*, 6(1), 3-5. doi:10.1177/1745691610393980.
- Callan, M. J., Powell, N. G., & Ellard, J. H. (2007). The consequences of victim physical attractiveness on reactions to injustice: The role of observers' belief in a just world. *Social Justice Research*, 20(4), 433-456. doi:10.1007/s11211-007-0053-9.
- Carroll, J. S., Perkowitz, W. T., Lurigio, A. J., & Weaver, F. M. (1987). Sentencing goals, causal attributions, ideology, and personality. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, 52(1), 107-118. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.52.1.107.
- Coleman, D. L. (1996). Individualizing justice through multiculturalism: The liberals' dilemma. *Columbia Law Review*, 96, 1093-1167.
- Dalbert, C., Montada, L., & Schmitt, M. (1987). Glaube an eine gerechte Welt als Motiv: Validierungskorrelate zweier Skalen [The belief in a just world as a motive: Validity correlates of two scales]. *Psychologische Beiträge*, 29, 596-615.
- Dovidio, J. L. (2000). Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 11 (4), 315.
- Gordon, R. L. (1988). Perceptions of Blue-Collar and White-Collar Crime: The Effect of Defendant Race on Simulated Juror Decisions. *Journal Of Social Psychology*, 128(2), 191.
- Hodson, G., Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2002). Processes in racial discrimination: Differential weighting of conflicting information. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(4), 460-471. doi:10.1177/0146167202287004.

- Hymes, R. W., Leinart, M., Rowe, S., & Rogers, W. (1993). Acquaintance rape: The effect of race of defendant and race of victim on White juror decisions. *The Journal Of Social Psychology, 133*(5), 627-634. doi:10.1080/00224545.1993.9713917.
- Kerr, N. L., Hymes, R. W., Anderson, A. B., & Weathers, J. E. (1995). Defendant-juror similarity and mock juror judgments. *Law And Human Behavior, 19*(6), 545-567. doi:10.1007/BF01499374.
- Lee, H. (1982). *To kill a mockingbird*. New York: Warner Books.
- Lerner, M.J. (1980). *Belief in a just world; A fundamental delusion*. New York; Plenum Publishing Corporation.
- Landy, D., & Aronson, E. (1969). The influence of the character of the criminal and his victim on the decisions of simulated jurors. *Journal Of Experimental Social Psychology, 5*(2), 141-152. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(69)90043-2.
- Lucas, T., Alexander, S., Firestone, I., & LeBreton, J. M. (2007). Development and initial validation of a procedural and distributive just world measure. *Personality And Individual Differences, 43*(1), 71-82. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2006.11.008
- McConahay, J.B. (1986). Modern racism, ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale. In J.F. Dovidio, S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism* (pp. 91-125). San Diego, CA, US: Academic Press.
- Marques, J. J. (1988). The 'Black Sheep Effect': Extremity of judgments towards ingroup members as a function of group identification. *European Journal Of Social Psychology, 18*(1), 1-16.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Sommers, S. R., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2001). White juror bias: An investigation of prejudice against Black defendants in the American courtroom. *Psychology, Public Policy, And Law*, 7(1), 201-229. doi:10.1037/1076-8971.7.1.201.
- Strömwall, L. A., Alfredsson, H., & Landström, S. (2013). Rape victim and perpetrator blame and the Just World hypothesis: The influence of victim gender and age. *Journal Of Sexual Aggression*, 19(2), 207-217. doi:10.1080/13552600.2012.683455
- Sweeney, L. T., & Haney, C. (1992). The influence of race on sentencing: A meta-analytic review of experimental studies. *Behavioral Sciences & The Law*, 10(2), 179-195. doi:10.1002/bsl.2370100204.

Table 1

Results of 2x2x2 Between Subjects Analysis

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Main effect of defendant race	1.76	.19
Main effect of social desirability	2.81	.10
Main effect of time	2.23	.14
Defendant race x social desirability	.68	.41
Social desirability x time	.20	.66
Defendant race x time	.02	.88
Defendant race x social desirability x time	5.08	.03

Note. For each effect, the between-groups degree of freedom is 1, and the within-groups degrees of freedom is 225.

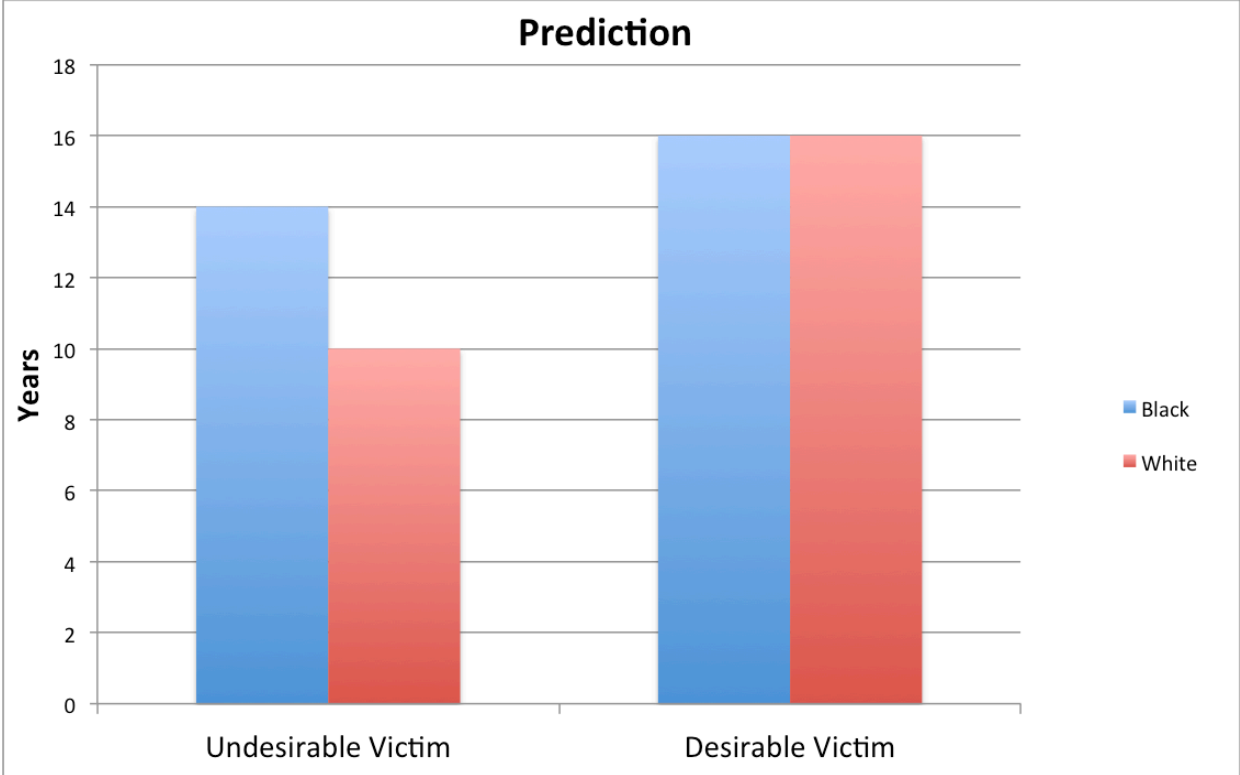


Figure 1. This chart shows pattern of results predicted for the 2x2 analysis.

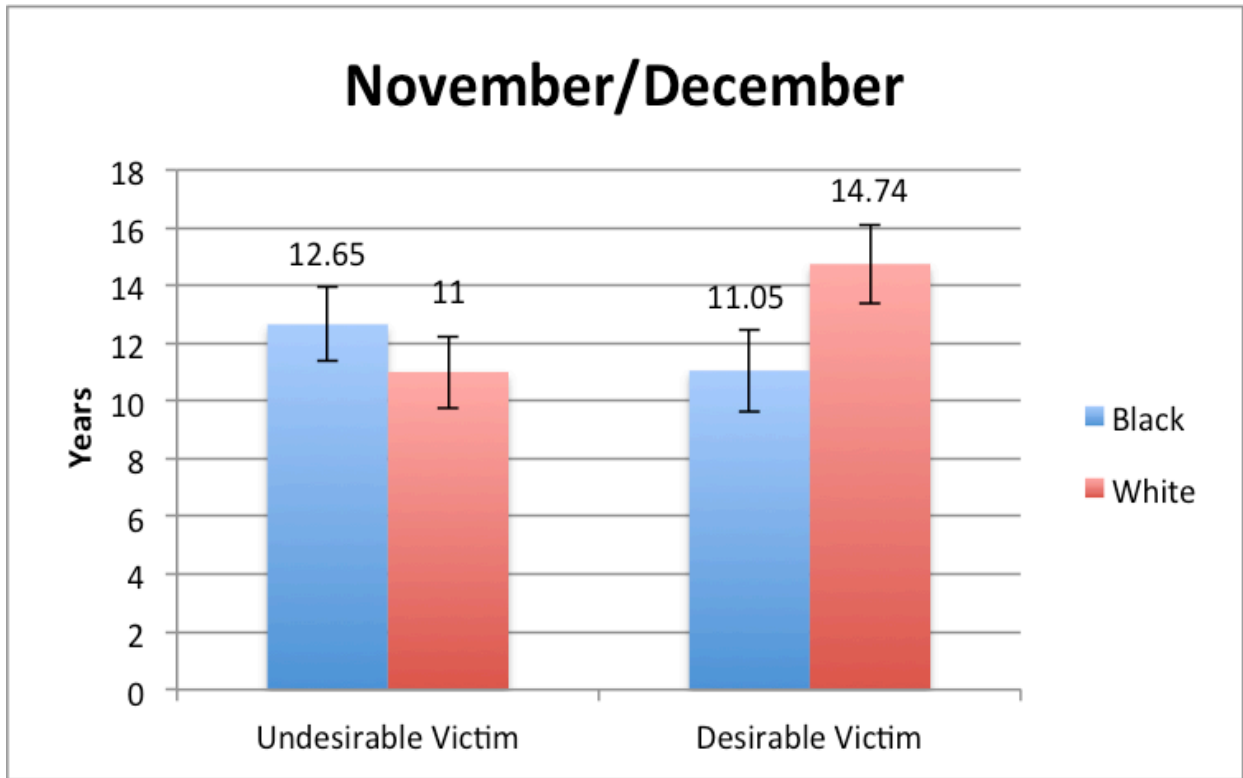


Figure 2. This chart shows the results from November/December data collection for the 2x2 analysis.

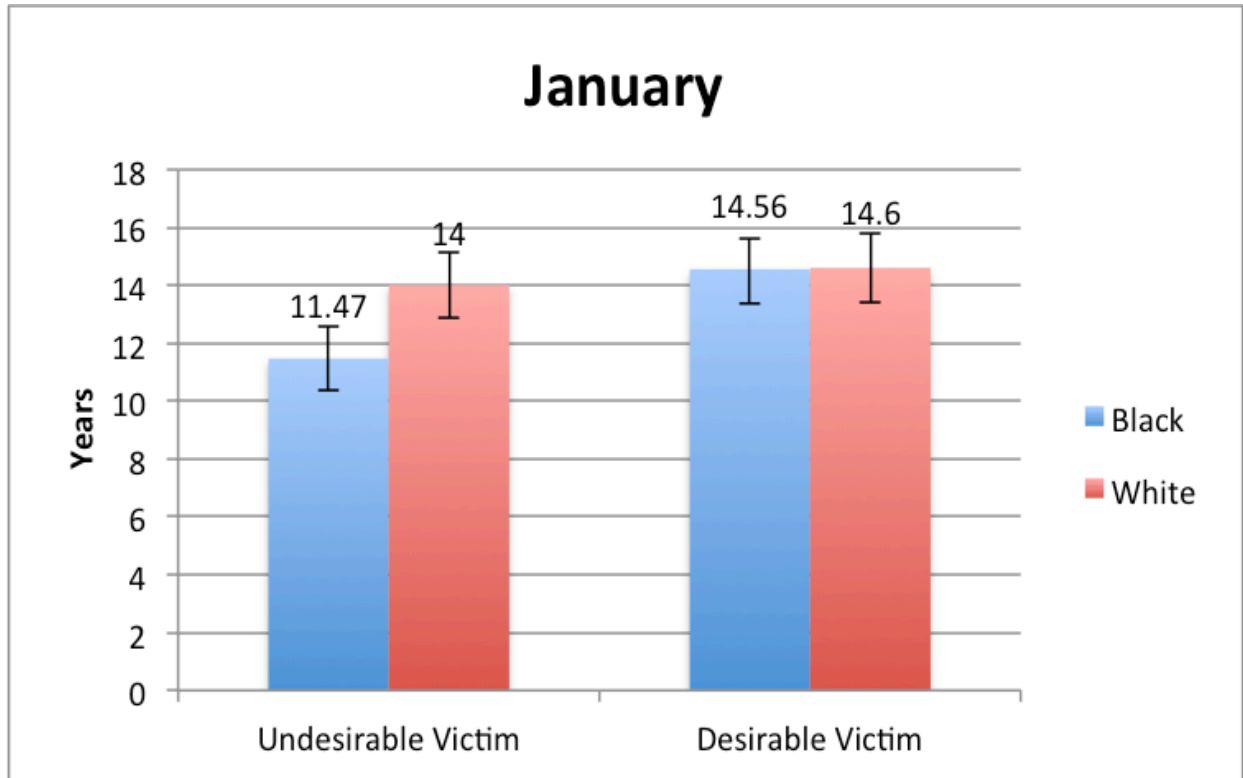
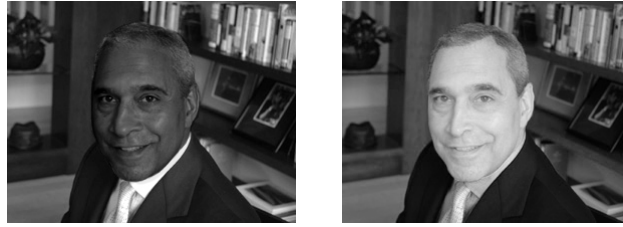


Figure 3. This chart shows the results from November/December data collection for the 2x2 analysis.

Appendix



One evening, Paul Johnson, drove through a quiet, affluent community and selected the home of the Williams family for a robbery. Mr. Williams is a fairly well known politician who steals large amounts of money from the government for his own personal use, and lives in a large, luxurious home [Mr. Williams is a fairly well known philanthropist who regularly donates large amounts of money to local charities.]. Johnson entered the home of the Williams family by breaking open a window and entering. Johnson placed his hand on the handgun, which was tucked into his pants through the duration of his robbery. He looked through each room of the house for valuables which he may be able to seize. As he approached the last room of the house the floor boards creaked, awakening the Williams family. He hoped no one heard the noise, and he continued to go through to the second floor room. Johnson found a desk drawer filled with several valuables and cash, which he stashed away to take with him. Mr. Williams did awake and called authorities immediately before going to check out the situation. As he turned on the hallway light, he noticed that the desk drawer had been opened. Upon entering his office, Mr. Williams found Johnson looking through his closet. Mr. Williams demanded Johnson leave his bag of their possessions, drop all the cash he found in the safe, and quietly leave. Johnson made a tighter grip on the bag and pulled out his gun and told Mr. Williams to get out of the way. Mr. Williams lunged forward and attempted to grab the gun out of Johnson's hand. Johnson anticipated this move, and quickly hit Mr. Williams in the head with the butt of the gun, which knocked him unconscious. Johnson gathered all the valuables together and fled from the house.

Johnson was caught by police as he exited the house. He was charged with armed robbery, a crime that is punishable in the state of Massachusetts from 5 to 25 years imprisonment.