Spring 2021

The Effects of Race, Sociopolitical Attitudes, and Geographic Location on Criminal Scripts

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THE EFFECTS OF RACE, SOCIOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES, AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION ON

CRIMINAL SCRIPTS

by

TO'MEISHA EDWARDS

(Under the Direction of C. Thresa Yancey)

ABSTRACT

Recent social unrest has highlighted differences in how crime is perceived based upon the race of

the perpetrator. Decades of research suggests criminality is more easily associated with racial

and ethnic minorities leading to the racialization of crime. Mutz (1994) noted there are personal

factors as well as impersonal factors influencing views regarding race and crime. Research

suggests the strongest impersonal influence on society's perception is the media (Gilliam et al.,

2002; Umair, 2016). Therefore, the narrative of linking race and crime, which is prevalent in

news media, is reinforced every time viewers tune in to their local news. Additionally, personal

factors such as values, personality, the area in which one resides, and political beliefs influence

one's acceptance of the racialized crime narrative (Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002).

Thus, the primary aim of the current study was two-fold: (a) to examine differences in the

saliency racial bias regarding who commits crime in rural and non-rural areas and (b) to examine

if the presence of a racially stereotypical name within a crime vignette elicits prejudicial beliefs

when compared to a non-descript crime vignette. Results were inconsistent with expected

findings. Specifically, neither geographic location nor vignette type significantly influenced

participant's racial bias regarding crime, punitive judgments, or sentencing recommendations.

Additionally, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)

are associated with racially prejudicial beliefs and influence views on who commits crime (e.g.,

Crawford, Jussim, Cain, & Cohen, 2014). Therefore, the second aim of the study was to examine

the association between sociopolitical constructs, as measured by SDO and RWA, and punitive

judgments and sentencing recommendations. Results revealed punitive judgments were

positively related to both SDO ($r = .194$, $p < .05$) and RWA ($r = .246$, $p < .01$). Similar findings

revealed a significant association between *racial bias* and SDO ($r = -.222$, $p < .05$) and RWA ($r = -.132$, $p < .01$), respectively. Surprisingly, length of sentencing recommendations failed to

significantly correlate with either SDO ($r = -.033$, $p > .05$) or RWA ($r = .024$, $p > .05$). These

findings support current literature noting multiple factors contributing to racially prejudicial

ideas about racial minorities. Thus, interventions to reduce racial bias, and subsequent

discrimination, must target various factors. Research suggests that inter-group contact may be

beneficial in reducing the saliency of these beliefs (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

INDEX WORDS: Race, Crime, Right-wing authoritarianism, Social dominance orientation, Rurality

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CRIMINAL SCRIPTS

by

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M.S., Georgia Southern University, 2019

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Electronic Version Approved:
May 2021

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those that have lost their lives or have had their lives forever changed due to preconceived notions regarding race and crime. May we forever remember their names and their loved ones.

Amadou Diallo. Tamir Rice. George Floyd. Breonna Taylor. Stephon Clark. Trayvon Martin. Philando Castile. Alton Sterling. Terence Crutcher. Walter Scott. Michael Brown. Eric Garner. Sandra Bland. Stephon Clark. Justin Howell. Ahmaud Arbury. Elijah McClain. Sean Monterrosa. Jamel Floyd. John Crawford III. Ezell Ford. Dante Parker. Michelle Cusseaux. LaQuan McDonald. George Mann. Tanisha Anderson. Akai Gurley. Rumain Brisbon. Jerame Reid. Matthew Ajibade. Frank Smart. Natasha McKenna. Tony Robinson. Anthony Hill. Mya Hall. Phillip White. Eric Harris. Walter Scott. William Chapman II. Alexia Christian. Brendon Glenn. Victor Manuel Larosa. Jonathan Sanders. Freddie Gray. Joseph Mann. Salvado Ellswood. Alt Joseph Davis. Darrius Stewart. By Ray Davis. Samuel Dubose. Michael Sabbie. Brian Keith Day. Christian Taylor. Troy Robinson. Asshams Pharoah Manley. Felix Kumi. Keith Harrison McLeod. Junior Prosper. Lamontez Jones. Paterson Brown. Dominic Hutchinson. Anthony Ashford. Alonzo Smith. Tyree Crawford. India Kager. La'Vante Biggs. Michael Lee Marshall. Jamar Clark. Richard perkins. Nathaniel Harris Pickett. Benni Lee Tignor. Miguel Espinal. Nichael Noel. Kevin Matthews. Bettie Jones. Quintonio Legrier. Keith Childress Jr. Janet Wilson. Randy Nelson. Antronie Scott. Wendell Celestine. David Joseph. Calin Roquemore. Dyzhawn Perkins. Chistopher Davis. Marco Loud. Peter Gains. Torrey Robinson. Darius Robinson. Kevin Hicks. Mary Truxillo. Demarcus Semer. Willie Tillman. Terrill Thomas. Sylville Smith. Paul O'Neal. Alteria Woods. Jordan Edwards. Aaron Bailey. Ronell Foster. Antwon Rose II. Botham Jean. Pamela turner. Dominique Clayton. Atatiana Jefferson. Christopher Whitfield. Christopher McCorvey. Michael Lorenzo Dean. Tanisha Anderson. Eric Reason. Jonathan Price. Fred Williams III. Kevin Peterson Jr. Leonard Thomas. Levar Jones. Saheed Vassell. Daunte Wright. Adam Toledo. Anthony Thompson Jr. Makiah Bryant. Andrew Brown Jr.

This is not an exhaustive list. May we continue to fight for reform and the reduction of racial biases regarding crime.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I thank God for providing me with the knowledge, strength, and determination to continue my education in this amazing field. Though the journey to getting here has not been easy, I truly believe He has guided me to overcome every obstacle.

Additionally, I am eternally grateful to my mentor, Dr. Thresa Yancey. This study, let alone this manuscript, would not exist without her patience. Thresa, I sincerely appreciate all of your guidance, advice, and encouragement. You have made this journey a lot more bearable, even when I didn't listen (like finishing before I left for internship, haha). Special thanks to Dr. Klibert and Dr. Couillou for serving on my committee. Your feedback made this project more streamlined and feasible. I cannot thank you all enough for your support throughout my graduate career.

Also, thank you to my family and friends for your unwavering support, prayers, and love. Even on the days when I felt like I wanted to quit, you reminded me of how far I've come and why I continue to push myself to greater heights: for people who look like us to know they can heal. Thank you to my grandmother and mother, who often have no idea what I'm talking about when discussing therapy or research but are always willing to listen. The most thanks to my sister, Shanda Edwards. Your willingness to read every draft, send care packages, and just listen to me gripe have been invaluable!

To my cohort, here's to being eight strong until the end! Thank you all for your friendship along this journey, it has definitely made it easier.

To the rest of my Georgia Southern family in the Psychology Department and the OCPD, I've finally made it. After a decade at Southern, this Eagle is soaring off. Mischief Managed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Decades of research demonstrates that people often associate minority individuals with criminal behavior (e.g., Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Dixon & Linz, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Mancini, Mears, Stewart, Beaver, & Pickett, 2015). Mutz (1994) suggests beliefs regarding racial minorities are often shaped by personal and impersonal influences such as values, personality, media, and culture. One of the strongest impersonal influences on these stereotypical beliefs is media. The association of racial minorities with criminality is partially attributed to media representation of minority members (Dixon & Azocar, 2007; Entman, 1992; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). In fact, news articles and television shows are more likely to portray villains as members of an ethnic minority group than they are to portray them as white, thus furthering the narrative that ethnic minorities are criminals (Chiricos, Wlech, & Gertz, 2004; Dixon & Williams, 2015; Entman, 1992; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1997; 2000; Gilliam et al., 2002; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Moreover, the psychological and sociocultural impact of such portrayals are associated with mental health difficulties, physical illness, and lack of opportunity within society for members of minority ethnic groups due to stigma (Carter, 2007; Chávez & French, 2007; Klonoff, Landrine & Ullman, 1999; Monteith & Pettit, 2011; Welch, 2016).

However, research predominately neglects examining the interaction of sociopolitical ideology and geographic location on perceptions of crime when race of the perpetrator is ambiguous. Thus, the purpose of the study is to examine the influence of sociopolitical attitudes, geographic location, and racial bias on beliefs regarding crime.

Background and Significance

Media and Information Dissemination

Happer and Philo (2013) suggest individuals often rely upon outside resources to make sense of their world. Dissemination of such information usually takes the form of media coverage considering the media serves in a watchdog role (Pew Center, 2007). The media has a responsibility to investigate and disseminate information to the general public. In fact, researchers argue the media selects and arranges the picture of social and political reality in the minds of viewers (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997). However, media coverage has become more polarized, reflecting the diversity of audiences, and leading to a general skepticism of information provided (Gunther, 1992; Lee & Tandoc, 2017). Consequently, individuals seek to engage media outlets they deem more credible, reflecting a content bias (Entman, 2007; Gunther, 1992). The measure of credibility seems to center on outlets reflective of an individual's personal values, beliefs, and ideological motives, as opposed to the veracity of the information presented (Entman, 2007).

Sociopolitical Attitudes and Information Processing

Research suggests that belief of a just world governed by a legitimate force, as measured by right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), and the endorsement of the domination of a certain social group over other socially stratified groups, as measured by social dominance orientation (SDO), are influential in the processing and interpretation of information (Crawford, Jussim, Cain, & Cohen, 2014). Thus, groups portrayed as devious and law breaking are viewed more negatively by individuals higher in right-wing authoritarianism and, as a result, are subjected to more prejudice from individuals holding these beliefs. Furthermore, individuals subscribing to socially dominant ideals are more likely to hold prejudicial beliefs regarding groups viewed as subordinate or disadvantaged (Crawford et al., 2014). Therefore, ethnic minorities are more

likely to encounter prejudicial attitudes from individuals with greater socially dominant viewpoints (Pratto, Sidnaus, & Levin, 2006). These beliefs act as filters that are activated when presented with stimuli (e.g., a news story) to be processed and interpreted. This activation results in the formation of a biased opinion. As such, the media has a critical role in shaping individuals' perceptions of their environment and the world at large.

Media Representation of Minorities

Like biases activated when processing information, the content of the information presented can also be biased. This is often the case with widely disseminated information as it is often tailored to a specific narrative. In terms of media coverage, the most common misrepresentation or biased presentation deals with the overrepresentation of ethnic minorities as the culprits of crime (Dixon & Williams, 2015). Mastro (2009) demonstrates that such stereotypical characterizations of race and ethnicity in the media influence the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of viewers. However, these portrayals impact Caucasian Americans and ethnic minorities in different ways (Mastro, 2009). Specifically, when Caucasian Americans are exposed to unfavorable depictions of ethnic minorities, such as depictions of minorities as criminals, this exposure promotes harmful perceptions of these individuals. In turn, these harmful perceptions foster prejudicial attitudes, endorsement of punitive judgments, and less favorable views regarding public policy benefitting minority groups (e.g., affirmative action). In contrast, for individuals who are ethnic minority group members, exposure to unfavorable depictions often results in lower racial and social self-esteem as well as poorer outcomes in performance-related tasks due to fear of confirming a stereotype (Mastro, 2017). Thus, negative portrayals of ethnic minorities in media are damaging to the well-being of minority members.

Rural and Non-Rural Areas

Much of the research examining media influence on perceptions of minority members and crime has not specifically focused on rural areas (i.e., Dixon, 2000; 2008a). This is likely due to larger, more diverse populations as well as more availability of crime related stories within the media in areas that are non-rural. However, given the differences in values and beliefs between individuals residing within rural areas and those in non-rural areas, previous findings from non-rural populations may not generalize to rural populations (Pew Research Center, 2018). For instance, right-wing authoritarianism is more prevalent in rural areas where individuals report higher levels of religious and political conservatism (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Pratto et al., 2000). Furthermore, residing in rural areas increases the likelihood that ethnic minorities will encounter prejudicial attitudes as rural areas are more homogenously inhabited by conservative, Caucasian Americans compared to non-rural areas (Barlow et al., 2012; Pew Research Center, 2018). As such, the current study aimed to provide a better understanding of how individuals' biases and perceptions of crime differ given geographic location (i.e., rural vs. non-rural).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Overview of Perceptions of Racial Minorities

Since the first formal census, White Americans have been considered the dominant, majority race in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 2019). This position provides White Americans with power and prestige allowing their behaviors and ideas to be accepted as the status quo (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013). Consequently, racial minorities, who are considered out-group members, are compared and judged based upon these standards and are often viewed negatively based upon their differences from the in-group (i.e., White Americans). Such social categorization and fixation on perceived differences creates social stratification. Thus, White Americans are given a position of power and dominance while racial minorities are viewed as inferior (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). This hierarchical structure is reinforced through negative stereotypes of minorities. Stereotypes serve a functional purpose in that they provide justification for the belief that racial minorities are inferior (Little, 2014).

Solorzano (1997) suggests racial stereotypes can fall within three categories: (a) intellectual and educational; (b) personality characteristics; and (c) physical appearance. Solorzano hypothesizes these stereotypes are often negative in order to rationalize the subordinate position of minorities in society (Solorzano, 1997). These stereotypes are often interchangeable between racial minority groups. For instance, the stereotype of "uneducated" has been applied to both African Americans and Hispanic Americans (Mastro & Robinson, 2000; Solorzano, 1997). This stereotype was used for justifying the prior segregation of schools, low expectations in academic achievement, and as a justification for menial labor (Solorzano, 1997).

Racial comparisons between African Americans and their White American counterparts are the most documented (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019; Mindiolan Jr., Niemann, &

Rodriguez, 2009). Depictions of African Americans as lazy, violent, unclean, uneducated, and criminal have become common place and accepted throughout society (Solorzano, 1997). Such attitudes predate modern mass media and extend back to slavery. For instance, the lack of "humanness" of African Americans was used to rationalize slavery (Dates & Barlow, 1993). Green (1998) categorizes four pervasive stereotypical portrayals of African American men and women since the days of slavery. In terms of African American men, the images range from a docile, simple-minded Black man who exhibited childlike behaviors and was honored to serve his master, to brute savages who were mentally inferior but physically superior, and, as such, must be viewed as a threat. Further associations of stereotypical features of African Americans as "ape-like" extended the narrative. For African American women, stereotypes ranged from large women who were happy to nurture their masters' children but dismissive and belittles those within her household, to the hyper-sexualized women attempting to seduce men. While these caricatures were mainstays in past media, more recent portrayals further narratives of African Americans as lazy, unintelligent, and criminal (Czopp & Monteith, 2006).

Research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that, historically, ethnic minorities have been viewed negatively throughout society (e.g., Solorzano, 1997; Suleiman, 1999). Such depictions are still prevalent among the general public as they are prompted by both personal and impersonal influences (Mutz, 1994). Impersonal influences can include mass media, such as television news and newspapers, and social media (Umair, 2016). Personal influences focus more on an individual's personality, values, and social group affiliation (Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002).

Mass Media as an Impersonal Influence on Racialization of Crime

Mass media may be the most effective impersonal influence in public perception (Gilliam et al., 2002). Mass media plays a crucial role in the narrative people see daily based upon the

images displayed and the slant of the content conveyed (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Kamalipour & Carilli, 1998). Forms of mass media include news sources such as television news, newspapers, and the internet, and entertainment sources such as movies and television shows. Much of the information individuals have regarding others outside of their immediate vicinity is received through these sources (Kamalipour & Carilli, 1998). With the media holding such authority, it is important to evaluate the messages being disseminated.

Despite the audience, much of news coverage appears to focus on crime (Klite, Bardwell, & Salzman, 1997). Klite and colleagues (1997) found that, compared to weather, sports-related information, and other news-related topics, crime coverage dominates local news broadcasts. Specifically, the researchers found crime coverage accounted for more than 75% of news coverage (Klite et al.,1997; Reiner, 2007). Similar patterns were found in national coverage of state news, such that national news tended to focus on crime (Jerin & Fields, 1994). For decades, research shows significant correlation between the inaccuracy of crime statistics and media print or television coverage of crime such that media representations of crime are inflated compared to actual crime statistics (e.g., Davis, 1952; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Jerin & Fields, 1994). Specifically, media broadcasts dedicate more time to crime than actual crime in the area. Additionally, there is a greater amount of coverage when the perpetrator is an ethnic minority. The distorted portrayal of crime contributes to a heightened fear of crime itself as well as fear of the presumed perpetrators of crime on both a personal and societal level (Jerin & Fields, 1994; Romer, Hall Jamieson, & Aday, 2003).

Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) suggest that since the adaptation of an "action forward" approach to media, there has been a drive for stories that are dramatic, attention-capturing, and evoke emotions in the audience. Crime stories meet these criteria, leading to them being

sensationalized and featured more often in news coverage than other stories (Best, 2009; Klite et al., 1997). Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) identified three essential characteristics for a newsworthy crime story: a violent crime for which there were specific and episodic details and a causal agent or suspect. Furthermore, in an effort to complete a visual narrative, the race of the suspect is often included in the story. The repeated pairing of this information creates a narrative script of all crime for the audience (Gilliam & Iyengar, 1997; 2000).

The concept of narrative scripts is based upon Bartlett's theory of remembering (Bartlett, 1932). Bartlett was specifically interested in the impact of past experiences on present experiences. This led to Bartlett hypothesizing that previously held memories provide the blueprints for incoming information (Bartlett, 1932). Thus, scripts are mental building blocks categorizing general information by relating concepts and attributes (Brewer & Nakaumra, 1984; Iran-Nejad & Winsler, 2000). These scripts are held in our long-term memory and often subconsciously activated when presented with new, related information (Brewer & Nakaumra, 1984; Kant, 1999). As a result, when we process new information, our scripts fill in details based upon our previously held associations (Brewer & Nakaumra, 1984; Kant, 1999).

Schank and Abelson (1977) extended Bartlett's theory of remembering by noting that the continuous activation of a script furthers the notion that new experiences, when encountered, are categorized based upon previously encoded scripts. Moreover, research suggests it is easier to recall information fitting scripts compared to information not fitting scripts (Graesser, Gordon, & Sawyer, 1979). For instance, it is easier to remember that a house minimally consists of bedrooms and bathrooms than a sunroom. Thus, re-creating a memory of a home previously visited, we are less likely to recall information regarding sunrooms as it does not fit the script of a typical house. Generally, scripts provide predictable scenarios which makes it easier for

individuals to draw conclusions and set expectations for events (Gullian & Iyengar, 2000; Smith & Graesser, 1981).

Research demonstrates the impact of scripts on memory in various areas, such as eye-witness recall (i.e., Garcia-Bajos, Migueles, & Anderson, 2009; Holst & Pezdek, 1992; Migueles & Garcia-Bajos, 1999; Rae Tukey & Brewer, 2003); simulated classroom behavior (Peterson & Comeaux, 1987); and ability to recall information regarding common household items and rooms (Meade & Roediger, 2002). These scripts are formed from general world knowledge. Rizella and Brien (2002) demonstrated that information fitting these scripts are more quickly retrieved; thus, biasing new information.

Of interest to the current study is the standard narrative of the crime script. News coverage focuses on violent crimes; however, the presence or description of the suspect may be the most influential information impacting public opinion (Entman, 1990; 1992; Gulliam & Iyengar, 1997; 2000). The focus on racial imagery as a descriptor has led to the "racialization of crime" (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Mancini et al., 2015). The racialization of crime refers to the idea that race and crime have become synonymous in the news, television shows, and even political messages (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Mendelberg, 1997). Thus, the script of minorities as criminals has become salient in the minds of the general public, specifically White Americans. Research consistently demonstrates that White Americans both associate ethnic minorities with criminal activity and overestimate the proportion of crimes committed by ethnic minorities (Chiricos, McEntire, & Gertz 2001; Chiricos, Welch, & Gertz 2004; Pickett et al., 2012; Soler 2001); however, less is known regarding these beliefs among ethnic and racial minorities (Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, & Bender, 2016). These messages reinforce negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities and are often perpetuated in media.

Jussim (1990) described the dangerous influence of negative stereotypes through the expectancy theory. The expectancy theory suggests depictions in media are reinforced with continued exposure, resulting in behavioral expectations. These expectations, in turn, influence one's social reality (Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995). Such social expectancies may subconsciously influence implicit prejudices and contribute to instances of discrimination for racial minorities.

Media Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities

Social expectancies are shaped and spread through mainstream media. Work by Valentino and colleagues (1999; 2002) demonstrated exposure to racial cues in media influence judgments regarding race-based issues. Specifically, Valentino, Hutchings, and White (2002) found racial cues embedded in advertisements increase the saliency of racial schemas in an individual's memory. Further, Valentino (1999) found exposure to crime news highlighting the race of the perpetrator extends to the associated racial group. This is turn sheds a negative light on racial minorities as a community.

There has been a growing trend of minority representation in the media dating back to the 1980s (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013); however, the growth has not been consistent across all ethnic groups (e.g., Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Mastro and Greenberg (2000) examined the frequency as well as the portrayal of ethnic minorities during prime television hours on four primary television networks. Results reflect an increase from previously collected data regarding the frequency of ethnic minorities portrayed in mainstream television. Specifically, African American gained more major and minor roles, yet were still relegated to characters portraying negative stereotypes (Masto & Greenberg, 2000). African Americans were often conveyed as lazy, disrespected, and disheveled in attire. These characteristics appear to be consistent across decades. Greenberg, Mastro, and Brand (2002)

assessed over three decades of television shows and advertising, noting that African Americans are and have been consistently depicted as lazy, unintelligent, poor, and unemployable.

More recent research focused on African Americans' portrayals as criminals (e.g., Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Mastro, 2008). Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) analyzed Los Angeles crime reports over a two-year period and found violent crimes were disproportionately highlighted. Moreover, crimes specifically referencing a minority suspect accounted for two-thirds of violent crime portrayals. Not only are African Americans overrepresented as perpetrators of crime, they are also underrepresented in positive roles such as police officers (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). Follow-up studies also show Whites are more likely to be represented as victims of crime compared to their African American counterparts. Contrary to prior research, however, Dixon and colleagues (2003) noted more equitable portrayal of White Americans and African Americans as perpetrators of crime than past studies. These findings regarding equitable portrayal of African Americans and White Americans as perpetrators of crime are inconsistent with more recent data, which support initial studies indicating disproportionate portrayals, with more African American perpetrators than White perpetrators depicted (e.g., Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Dixon & Linz, 2000b; Dixon, 2008).

Dixon (2008) examined the impact of the over-representation of Blacks as criminals on public perception of Blacks. Dixon utilized telephone surveys to collect data on media consumption via newspapers, beliefs regarding crime and race, and demographic information. Regression analyses suggest attention to crime news was positively associated with concerns regarding crime and culpability judgments of guilt for Black suspects, but not White suspects.

Additionally, more consumption of local news yielded more activation of the stereotype regarding Blacks as violent, resulting in increased perceptions of Blacks as violent.

Dixon and Azocar (2006) found the portrayal of African Americans as criminals and suspects has not decreased over the years. Instead, their research demonstrates the perception of African Americans as criminals has trickled down to juvenile offenders. Particularly, portrayals of juvenile crime are more likely to include the race of the perpetrator when that perpetrator is Black compared to White (Dixon & Azocar, 2006).

Furthermore, Smiley and Fakunle (2016) demonstrated that negative portrayals of African Americans are not merely limited to those who are alive. Reviews of media coverage surrounding the deaths of unarmed African Americans males from law enforcement encounters emphasized the victims' size, behavior, and overall appearance. Authors conclude such portrayals are consistent with a White supremacist structure in that it emphasizes negative stereotypes of African Americans. Moreover, coverage of the victims following the event of their deaths often utilized unflattering images such as previous mugshots or images of the victim socializing with friends while appearing disheveled (e.g., pants sagging, baggy clothing). Smiley and Fakunle assert these portrayals of minorities are strikingly different than portrayals of White alleged perpetrators of crime. When reporting on White offenders, reports highlight the humane aspects of the offender and are often accompanied by images of family members (Sun, 2018).

Negative portrayals are particularly harmful as they impact not only the individual but the entire racial group (Akalis, Banji, & Kosslyn, 2008). Akalis et al. (2008) examined attitudes toward Whites and African Americans following visualizing scenarios of each as a perpetrator of crime. When participants were prompted to visualize scenarios of African American criminals, participants held more negative stereotypes toward African Americans as a group. Similar results

were not found in participants prompted to visualize a White perpetrator. A second study

revealed that when participants read a description of a crime with a Black perpetrator,

participants demonstrated more anti-Black and pro-White stereotypes via an implicit association

test (Akalis et al, 2008). Additionally, when asked to respond to questions such as, "Who's more

criminal?" or "Who's more hostile and dangerous?," participants' responses indicated more

explicit bias toward African Americans. The authors concluded that while crime alerts aim to

warn individuals of potential danger, they may also unintentionally perpetuate racial stereotyping

of crime to ethnic minorities.

Further, research shows an increase in punitive attitudes toward African Americans due

to media depictions. For instance, Mastro and colleagues examined how exposure to media

depictions of ethnic minorities impacts participants' racial judgments (Mastro, Lapinski, Kopacz,

& Behm-Morawitz, 2009). The researchers found the race of the suspect significantly impacted

suspected culpability with higher ratings of suspected culpability attributed to African American

males, compared to White males or to suspects whose race was not identified. As a result, longer

sentencing was recommended when the perpetrator was described as a Black man compared to a

White man or a suspect with no race given (Mastro et al., 2009).

Stereotypes and Mental Health Outcomes of Racial Minorities

Non-dominant ethnic minority people within the United States are often negatively

stereotyped. Research from the 1990 General Social Survey demonstrated these negative

stereotypes have persisted through time (Davis & Smith, 1990). The study found over 50% of

Whites believed African Americans prefer to utilize government welfare programs and are prone

to violence, 45% viewed African Americans as lazy, and almost 30% of Whites viewed African

Americans as unintelligent (Davis & Smith, 1990).

These historical views of ethnic minority individuals have not greatly improved since the 1990s. Given the historically negative portrayal of ethnic minorities in the media, it is not uncommon for the general public to hold negative stereotypes regarding ethnic minorities (Ramasubramanian, Doshi, & Saleem, 2017; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Moreover, literature demonstrates that when confronted with these stereotypes, ethnic minority individuals display reduced performance and lower feelings of well-being (Jones, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele and Aronson (1995) coined the term "stereotype threat" to encapsulate the consequences of negative stereotyping, especially when there is a fear by a member of a minority group of confirming the negative stereotypes about their group. Stereotype threat occurs when environmental cues make negative stereotypes of one's affiliated group salient (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In turn, individuals become preoccupied with possibly confirming the negative stereotype, which negatively impacts their performance and psychological well-being (Jones, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Studies demonstrate that when under stereotype threat, individuals may experience anxiety, an inability to regulate their emotions, decreased self-esteem, impaired self-control, and physiological responses such as increased blood pressure and heart rate (Appel, Kronberger, & Aronson, 2011; Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn & Steele, 2001; Burkley & Blanton, 2009; Reyna, 2000).

Performance. Much of the research regarding stereotype threat focused on examining the differences in achievement testing among White Americans and minorities. Research from Steele and Aronson (1997) proposes that Blacks underperform on standardized testing due to fear of confirming a negative stereotype regarding their intellectual abilities. Results from the multi-study experiment suggest that when participating in a diagnostic ability test, Blacks performed worse than Whites. This shows the salience of a negative stereotype can in fact impact

performance on standardized testing. Steele (1997) utilized domain identification theory to explain that achievement barriers faced by African Americans are due to negative stereotypes associated with the education system. In school domains where African Americans are negatively stereotyped, dramatic decreases in standardized test performance of African Americans (and women in advanced quantitative areas) were noted. In contrast, when in an athletic setting, African Americans may perform to their full potential given that athletic ability is a positive stereotype associated with their racial group. Thus, the saliency of the stereotype may depend upon the frame of reference and the domain in which it is activated.

Mental Health. While the majority of research examining stereotype threat centers on academic achievement, more recent literature also examined the psychological impact. For instance, Ritsher et al. (2003) found participants who reported being exposed to higher levels of negative stereotyping also endorsed higher levels of depressive symptoms. These participants also reported more physiological symptoms than those reporting experiencing less negative stereotyping. Klonoff, Landrine, and Ullman (1999) examined the impact of negative stereotyping and discrimination on psychiatric symptoms among Blacks. Results of the study showed experiences of discrimination based upon race, specifically experiences of stereotyping and discrimination, were predictors of generic stressors and social status. Therefore, experiences of discrimination exacerbated everyday life stressors and contributed to somatic, anxiety-related, depressive, and interpersonal sensitivity issues.

Contrada et al. (2001) examined the impact of ethnic-related stressors such as stereotype threat, group conformity pressure, and perceived discrimination on the mental health of college students. Results indicate ethnic-related stressors significantly predicted physical and mental health among Latino American and African American college students. Ethnic-related stressors

also impacted accessing help-seeking behaviors in the forms of healthcare visits and mental health care among ethnic minorities more so than their White counterparts.

Personal and Geographic Factors Influencing Racialization of Crime

Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested racial prejudice and stereotyping are connected to social group position rather than to individual feelings of discontent toward a different racial group. Blumer posited racial prejudice is based on identification with a specific racial group; thus, it extends beyond mere individuality and instead focuses on the relationship between racial groups (Blumer, 1958). This creates a social hierarchy which provides a basis for racial prejudice in an effort to maintain that social hierarchy.

Individuals with a preference for a stratified social hierarchy are typically higher in social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The theory indicates group conflict is minimized by maintaining the status quo of hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Additionally, beliefs regarding racism, xenophobia, and sexism are coined "hierarchy-legitimizing myths" (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). These beliefs give justification to stereotyping, discrimination, and oppression in society through social allocation of roles and resources (Pratto et al., 1994). The hierarchy created contributes to one group being recognized as dominant over others, such as White Americans being dominant over other racial groups. The majority group gains a disproportionate amount of privilege relegating other groups to an inferior position. The desire to maintain this power contributes to prejudicial attitudes and stereotyping by way of perceived threat from socially subordinate groups challenging the existing hierarchy (Cohrs & Ashbrock, 2009; Duckitt, 2001; 2006).

Coryn and Borshuk (2006) indicate acceptance of negative stereotypes about out-groups, or socially subordinate groups, justify the exclusion and unequal treatment of those groups. For instance, White Americans may be more likely to believe negative stereotypes about African

Americans in an effort to justify discrimination and oppression (Hadarics & Kende, 2018).

Moreover, a threat to the status quo will likely elicit similar feelings. For example, the influx of

racial minorities into rural areas may lead to increased socially dominant attitudes and thus more

racial prejudice. Majority group members may see minority group members' decisions to move

into areas or places not typically inhabited by ethnic minority individuals as a change in the

social hierarchy (Council, 2012).

Similarly, desire for order, predictability, and respect for authority, as defined in specific

ways by right-wing authoritarian (RWA) attitudes (e.g., the status quo as related to social status),

also contributes to prejudicial beliefs (Hadarics & Kende, 2018). Individuals high in right-wing

authoritarian attitudes tend to submit to the norms set forth by the socially dominant group and

devalue out-groups that may hold different views, as these differences are interpreted as a threat

to a safe, secure, and stable world (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2001; Hadarics & Kende, 2018).

Therefore, when confronted with negative stereotypes of racial minorities as the primary

perpetrators of crime, people high in right-wing authoritarian attitudes are more likely to express

prejudicial beliefs (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). Likewise, the threat of social disorder, due to

upward mobility of a perceived subordinate social group, activates social competition among

individuals higher in right-wing attitudes. Altemeyer (1998) suggests these attitudes are more

prevalent among individuals with conservative beliefs and among those in rural areas.

Though the motivation behind prejudicial attitudes may differ, Stenner (2005) as well as

Pratto and Shih (2000) found racially prejudiced attitudes were activated when group identity,

rather than competition, was made salient and there was a perceived attack against in-group

status. Along the same lines, prejudice toward dissimilar minority groups (Arab, Black and Asian

people) was significantly predicted by RWA when cultural identity was salient but not when

competitive identities were highlighted as primed by political parties or sports groups (Dru, 2007). Alternatively, SDO was a significant predictor when the competitive identity was highlighted, but not when cultural identity was activated. Both RWA and SDO predict prejudice, but the underlying mechanisms are different, such that concerns regarding social cohesion and identity are relevant in response to RWA, and concerns about social in-group dominance and superiority drive SDO attitudes.

Research suggests holding prejudicial beliefs makes individuals more susceptible to endorsing negative stereotypes (Collier, Taylor, & Peterson, 2017). As such, individuals who endorse more beliefs regarding SDO and RWA are more likely to accept the negative portrayals of ethnic minorities in the media (Collier et al., 2017). Furthermore, research shows people seek out and interpret news stories confirming their pre-existing beliefs (Shaver, Sibley, Osborne, & Bulbulia, 2017).

Johnson, Labouff, Rowatt, Patock-Peckham, and Carlisle (2012) assessed implicit and explicit prejudice toward individuals identifying as African American. Their findings demonstrated individuals higher in RWA held more implicit and explicit prejudicial attitudes regarding ethnic minorities. Similar results were found by Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, and Birum (2002). Similar attitudes were found among individuals scoring high in SDO (Dambrun, 2007).

Rurality. Rural areas have predominantly been occupied by White Americans. Research shows that when confronted with negative, racially stereotypical coverage of African Americans, White Americans residing in racially homogenous areas are more likely to suggest punitive judgments, endorse more negative stereotypes, and feel more socially distant than White Americans living in more diverse areas (Gilliam & Valentino, 2002). Specifically, White

Americans living in areas that were traditionally more heterogeneous were less impacted by the influx of African Americans resulting in them holding less negative and punitive ideas toward African Americans compared to White Americans from racially homogenous areas (Gilliam & Valentino, 2002).

Extension of Previous Research

Previous research demonstrates racially stereotypical names are enough to activate stereotypes. More ethnic-sounding names are shown to contribute to more infrequent hiring of racial minorities compared to their White counterparts with more "desirable" names (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Herbert & McDavid, 1973). Specifically, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) submitted identical resumes with stereotypical African American or White sounding names to help-wanted ads in newspapers. Stereotypical White named resumes were more likely to receive a call-back than stereotypical African American named resumes. Comparable findings were observed when college professors were emailed to meet with potential doctoral students (Milkman, Akinola, & Chugh, 2012). Of the prospective students, males with stereotypical White-sounding names received more follow-up emails and with quicker response times than students with ethnic-sounding names (specifically African American, Hispanic, Chinese, or Indian-sounding names). Such preferences for stereotypical-White or "common" names were also observed in children (Busse & Seraydarian, 1977).

These findings have been replicated within the employment and educational sector; however, of current interest is the possible impact of such a bias in criminal justice settings, specifically, how individuals' perception of culpability of guilt are impacted when a racially stereotypical name is presented within a crime vignette versus when no name is provided. In addition, examining the role of sociopolitical attitudes such as Right-Wing Authoritarianism

(RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) may contribute to knowledge of prejudicial attitudes regarding crime.

Current Study

Examining the literature on sociopolitical orientation suggests individuals higher in SDO and RWA hold greater prejudicial attitudes toward ethnic and racial minority group members. However, there is no available research examining if names alone saliently activate racial stereotypes regarding crime. Moreover, the literature suggests individuals residing in rural communities are more likely than those in non-rural areas to endorse SDO and RWA ideals and are likely to endorse negative stereotypes of out-group members (i.e., racial minorities). Thus, the aim of the study was to examine the relationships among geographic region (i.e., rural vs. non-rural), and sociopolitical attitudes (SDO and RWA) on judgements of crime. Further, I sought to examine if the predictive effect of these attitudes on alleged perpetrator guilt persist when primed with various ethnic-related cues. Specifically, when perpetrator name is varied to sound as if they identify as a particular ethnic group (i.e., African American) or when no name is provided.

Therefore, the first goal of the current study was to examine whether individuals attribute crime to a minority group member when presented with a non-descript or racially cued vignette. The second goal of the study was to determine whether sociopolitical attitudes influence assumed race of a suspect as well as suggested *sentencing* and *punitive judgments*.

Specific Aim #1. H1: Given the literature regarding media influences on crime narratives, I hypothesized that vignette type (no name vs. racially cued) would result *in racial bias regarding the perpetrator* of the crime such that the crime will be attributed to a racial minority (Entman, 1992; Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Dixon, 2008; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2002). Additionally, I expected vignette type would impact *sentencing recommendations and punitive judgments*,

such that the racially cued vignette condition would receive more severe punishments and be related to greater punitive judgements.

Specific Aim #2. H2: Ashwood (2018) noted that much of the rural south has experienced an exodus of idealistic, young people. This has led to more conservative and xenophobic views grounded in pro-stated ideology persisting within this community (Ashwood, 2018). With this in mind, I hypothesized the geographic location in which one was raised (rural vs. non-rural) would account for *racial bias regarding the perpetrator of crime*. Likewise, I expected geographic location to account for *sentencing recommendations* and *punitive judgments*.

Specific Aim #3. H3 and H4: Personal influences such as political orientation, personality, geographic location, and values impact public perceptions of crime (Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002). Thus, I hypothesized that SDO (H3) and RWA (H4) attitudes would significantly correlate with *suspected race of perpetrator, punitive judgments,* and *sentencing recommendations.*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Demographics

A community sample of 1027 participants was recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk, hereby referred to as MTurk, a data collection system operated through Amazon. This platform was utilized to obtain a diverse population reflecting various areas of residence (rural vs. non-rural), age groups, religions, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Given the importance of geographic location, oversampling occurred to obtain a significant number of rural participants. To ensure data quality, MTurk Masters members were recruited to complete the survey. Specifically, individuals recruited had a HIT (Human Intelligence Task) approval rate of over 95% and a minimum of 500 hits. Of the original sample of 1027 participants, 313 were removed from analyses due to failure to complete more than 60% of the survey items and/or not correctly answering the survey validity questions. No analyses were completed to examine if the inclusion of these participants would alter data in any way. A total of 714 participants were retained in the final sample. See Table 1 for demographic information. Despite inclusion of data, all participants were compensated $1.00 for completing the study. Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 77 ($M = 38.78$, $SD = 10.77$).

Materials and Measures

All measures and materials were presented via an online survey and data collection tool. The measures included were either public domain or created for the current study. Participants completed several surveys, read a crime vignette, and responded to a questionnaire of related questions. Finally, participants provided demographic information.

Demographics Form. Participants provided basic sociodemographic information such as race, age, ethnicity, level of education, and geographic location. In terms of geographic location,

participants classified the area in which they were raised as either rural or non-rural. To ensure the accuracy of geographic location, participants estimated the population size of their residence. Areas with a population of less than 50,000 were considered rural. This was based upon the information provided by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (2020); the article highlights that the definition of rural is not completely defined by the Census Bureau, rather any area not meeting the criteria to be considered urban, 50,000 people or greater, is considered rural (HRSA, 2020). In contrast, areas with a population of greater than 50,000 were considered non-rural.

Social Dominance Orientation. Social dominance orientation, "the extent to which one desires that one's in-group dominate and be superior to outgroups," was measured by the Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994, p. 742). The SDO scale is a 16-item questionnaire examining attitudes regarding in-group dominance and egalitarian ideals. All items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *very negative* (1) to *very positive* (7). Higher scores indicate higher level of social dominance attitudes. Previous research demonstrates the measure has strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$; Pratto et al., 1994). Test-retest reliability of the SDO measure ranges from .81 to .84 (Pratto et al., 1994). The SDO also demonstrates strong discriminant validity, as it was minimally correlated with Altemeyer's (1988) RWA measure, despite both being utilized as predictors of prejudice and conservatism (Pratto et al., 1994). In the current study, the internal consistency was very high ($\alpha = .95$).

Right Wing Authoritarianism. Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) is a personality construct comprised of three ideals: authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism (Altemeyer, 1998). The RWA Scale consists of 30 items utilizing a 9-point Likert scale ranging from *very strongly disagree* (-4) to *very strongly agree* (4). A score of 0

represents neutrality. Higher scores indicate higher levels of right-wing authoritarianism. The measure has strong internal consistency ranging from .85 to .94 (Altemeyer, 1996). Altemeyer (1988) indicates the 30-item measure has moderate to strong discriminant validity ($\alpha = .78$). In the current study, the internal consistency was strong ($\alpha = .96$).

Punitive Judgments Questionnaire. The Responsibility of Crime and Punitive Judgments Questionnaire was created for this study to assess participants' beliefs regarding crime. Participants recommended a punishment for the perpetrator of the crime vignette they read. Additionally, participants responded to items on a 7-point Likert scale regarding their beliefs about crime and those who commit crimes. Reliability for this instrument was moderately reliable ($\alpha = .76$).

Attention Check. Participants responded to questions regarding the information provided within the vignette to ensure participants understood the core components of the vignette. In addition, this ensured participants connected the name of the suspect to an ethnic group.

Vignette. The vignette was adapted from a study published by Gilliam and Iyengar (2000). Elements of the story were altered. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two vignettes, created for the current study, detailing a police search for a robbery suspect. The text of each vignette is identical, except for name of the suspect. The two conditions were: stereotypical African American name vs. no-name. I aimed to examine whether participants hold more punitive judgments and negative evaluations toward suspects with ethnic-sounding names as opposed to a vignette with no name included. The name was generated by examining common names for African Americans. The search yielded the name Andre Wilson. The vignette reads as follows:

Camden Heights Police request any witnesses to come forward.

On the night of Friday, September 14, 2018, at approximately 11:15 pm, police officers

responded to a report of an attempted robbery on the corner of Main St. and Churchill Rd.

Reports suggest a man (name is withheld for confidentiality purposes) was accosted

following leaving a convenience store. The victim reported he was approached from

behind and shoved into a nearby alley. He reports the assailant demanded cash, jewelry,

and other valuables that he had on his person. While complying with the assailant, the

victim stated that the slamming of a nearby door allowed him to turn around and hit his

assailant in an attempt to flee the scene. The victim reported that he was unable to

immediately get away as his assailant pushed him into the brick wall of a building.

During the exchange, the victim reports he "got into a tussle" with the assailant and

sustained minor injuries. The victim was treated and released from emergency services

following the encounter.

The suspect, identified as [Name vs. No Name], a 22-year-old man, was seen fleeing the

scene of the crime. Witnesses provided varying accounts of the altercation. The suspect

later turned himself in and was released on bond. Police do not currently have more

information.

Procedure

Participants completed an electronic informed consent. Following completion of the

informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to either receive the non-descript or

racially cued vignette. Participants read through the vignette and immediately responded to

questions about the crime scenario presented. Questions included punishments in the form of

sentencing recommendations for the crime and attributes made about the perpetrator of the

crime. Participants completed an attention check regarding details of the crime narrative, such as

name and gender of offender, presence of weapon, and type of crime, to ensure they fully read

the vignette. Next, participants completed both SDO and RWA measures. Finally, demographic

information was obtained at the end of the study as to avoid priming effects.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Data Integrity

Prior to analyses, to ensure accuracy, data were examined to assess participants'

responses to attention questions. Five attention questions as well as a CAPTCHA item were built

into the survey to ensure data quality. For data to be included, participants must have answered

three of the five attention questions correctly, answered 60% or more of study questions and

taken at least eight minutes to complete the study. This timeframe was determined from the mean

time for individuals to complete the study during a pilot trial. These criteria led to the removal of

313 of the original sample of 1027 participants. See Table 1 for demographic information.

Analyses

Pearson's correlations were performed to examine if relationships existed among the

dependent variables. Significant relationships existed among outcome variables (see Table 2).

Specifically, *sentencing recommendations* was positively related to both *punitive judgments* and

racial bias; however, there was a non-significant relationship between *racial bias* and *punitive*

judgments.

A 2 (Vignette Type: No Name vs. Racially Cued) X 2 (Geographic Location: Rural vs.

Non-Rural) Factorial MANOVA was conducted to assess the influence of vignette type and area

of residence on the *racial bias regarding the perpetrator*, *sentencing recommendations*, and

punitive judgments. Of the 714 participants in the sample, an additional 96 participants were

removed from the analysis due to inconsistent responses regarding race of suspect. Specifically,

participants who were excluded noted no race was mentioned regarding the perpetrator but chose

a race for the suspect. For example, an individual reported no race was reported for the suspect;

however, chose a Caucasian American as the race of the suspect. It is unclear if such responses

were reflective of attentional variability or a result of the participant's own internal attributions regarding crime, thus they were removed from the analyses.

When examining *racial bias*, there was a non-significant main effect for geographic location $F(1, 614) = 3.446$, $p = .64$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$, such that beliefs regarding the race of the perpetrator did not differ based on participants' residing in a rural or non-rural community. Despite trending towards significance, a similar non-significant main effect was found when examining the influence of vignette type on *racial bias*, $F(1, 614) = 3.621$, $p = .58$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$. This suggests there was not a significant difference in suspected race of the perpetrator when participants were presented with a non-descript vignette or a racially-cued vignette (i.e., a racially biased name). Additionally, the results did not reveal a significant interaction of area of residence and vignette type on *racial bias*, $F(1,614) = 3.426$, $p = .065$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$. See Figure 1.

Similarly, the results did not support a main effect of geographic location on *sentencing recommendations*, $F(1,614) = 1.375$, $p = .241$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$, meaning participants' recommended sentences did not vary based upon where they resided. There was also a non-significant effect of vignette type on *sentencing recommendations*, $F(1,614) = .848$, $p = .357$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$, indicating that participants statistically recommended similar sentences despite the vignette received. There was a non-significant interaction effect of vignette type and geographic location on *sentencing recommendations* $F(1,614) = 0.100$, $p = 0.752$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$. See Figure 2.

Additionally, there was a non-significant main effect of geographic location on *punitive judgments*, $F(1,614) = .044$, $p = .835$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$, implying that participants' judgments of the crime did not significantly differ based upon their area of residence. There was also a non-

significant main effect for vignette type on *punitive judgments*, $F(1,614) = .191$, $p = .663$, partial

$\eta^2 = .000$, suggesting participants' punitive views on the crime did not vary significantly by

which vignette they received. Combined, geographic location and vignette type, did not yield a

significant interaction on *punitive judgments*, $F(1,614) = .389$, $p = .533$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$. See

Figure 3.

　　　To examine the among socio-political attitudes, punitive judgments, racial bias and

sentencing recommendations, bivariate correlations were conducted; however, to account for

violations of normalcy, each variable was standardized via Fisher's *Z* transformations.

Sentencing recommendations, *punitive judgments*, and *racial bias* as well as participants' scores

on SDO and RWA were converted to a standardized score (Tables 4). Results indicated *punitive*

judgments were positively correlated with length of *sentencing recommendations* ($r = .498$, $p <$

0.01); however, *punitive judgments* were not significantly correlated with *racial bias* ($r = .054$, p

> 0.05). Findings showed *racial bias* was positively significantly related to *sentencing*

recommendations ($r = .216$, $p < 0.01$). As expected, *punitive judgments* were positively related to

SDO ($r = .194$, $p < 0.05$) and RWA ($r = .246$, $p < 0.01$). Surprisingly, length of *sentencing*

recommendations failed to significantly correlate with either SDO ($r = -.033$, $p > .05$) or RWA (r

$= .024$, $p > 0.05$). Consistent with expectations, *racial bias* was negatively related to SDO ($r = -$

$.222$, $p < 0.01$) and RWA ($r = -.132$, $p < 0.01$). Standardized correlations of scores on SDO and

RWA measures were positively correlated ($r = .609$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Variables	Mean	SD
Age	38.78	10.76

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Women	289	40.5%
Men	419	58.7%
Other	6	0.8%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	33	4.6%
Caucasian	454	63.6%
Asian American	184	25.8%
Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
First People (Native American/Alaskan Native)	1	0.1%
Hispanic	19	2.7%
Bi/Multi-racial	20	2.8%
Other	2	0.3%
Geographic Region		
Rural	201	28.2%
Non-Rural	513	71.8%
Education		
Less than High School	4	0.6%
High School Diploma/GED	62	8.7%
Currently Enrolled in College	6	0.8%
Some College, NOT Currently Enrolled	68	9.5%
Associate Degree	86	12.0%
Bachelor's Degree	362	50.7%
Some Post Graduate Work	28	3.9%
Post Graduate Degree	98	13.7%
Religious Affiliation		
Protestant Christian	145	20.3%
Catholic	124	17.4%
Jewish	15	2.1%
Muslim	19	2.7%
Buddhist	6	0.8%
Evangelical Christian	15	2.1%
Hindu	101	14.1%
Atheist/Agnostic	251	35.2%
Other	38	5.3%

Table 2.
Correlation of Outcome Variables

	Sentencing Rec.	Punitive Judg.	Racial Bias
Sentencing Rec.	1	.498**	.216**
Punitive Judg.		1	.054
Racial Bias			1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations by Vignette Type and Geographic Location

		Vignette Type	Racially-
		Non-Descript (n =325)	Cued (n =293)
Sentencing Recommendations			
Rural (*n* = 174)			
	Mean	3.56	3.69
	SD	1.18	1.21
	n	99	75
Non-Rural (*n* = 444)			
	Mean	3.46	3.53
	SD	1.23	1.27
	n	226	218
Punitive Judgments			
Rural (*n* = 174)			
	Mean	4.71	4.69
	SD	1.10	1.14
	n	99	75
Non-Rural (*n* = 444)			
	Mean	4.67	4.77
	SD	1.02	1.04
	n	226	218
Racial Bias			
Rural (*n* = 174)			
	Mean	.18	.04
	SD	.60	.26
	n	99	75
Non-Rural (*n* = 444)			
	Mean	.28	.28
	SD	.76	.77
	n	226	218
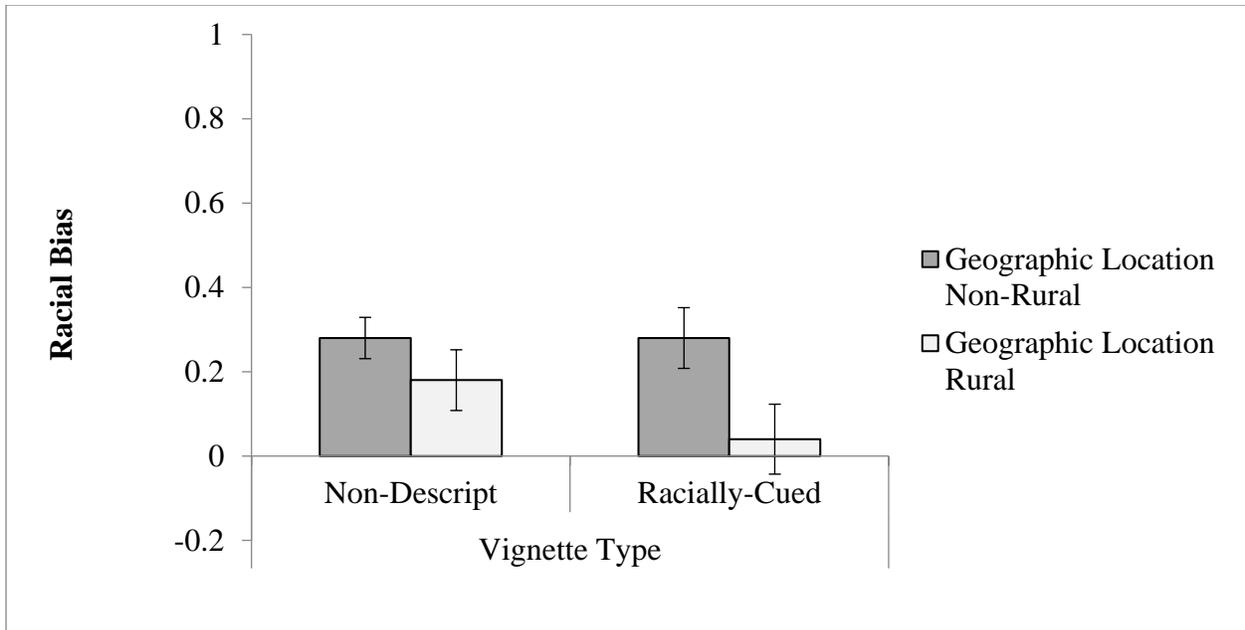
Figure 1. Interaction Between Geographic Location and Vignette Type on Racial Bias. There was a non-significant interaction effect among these variables.
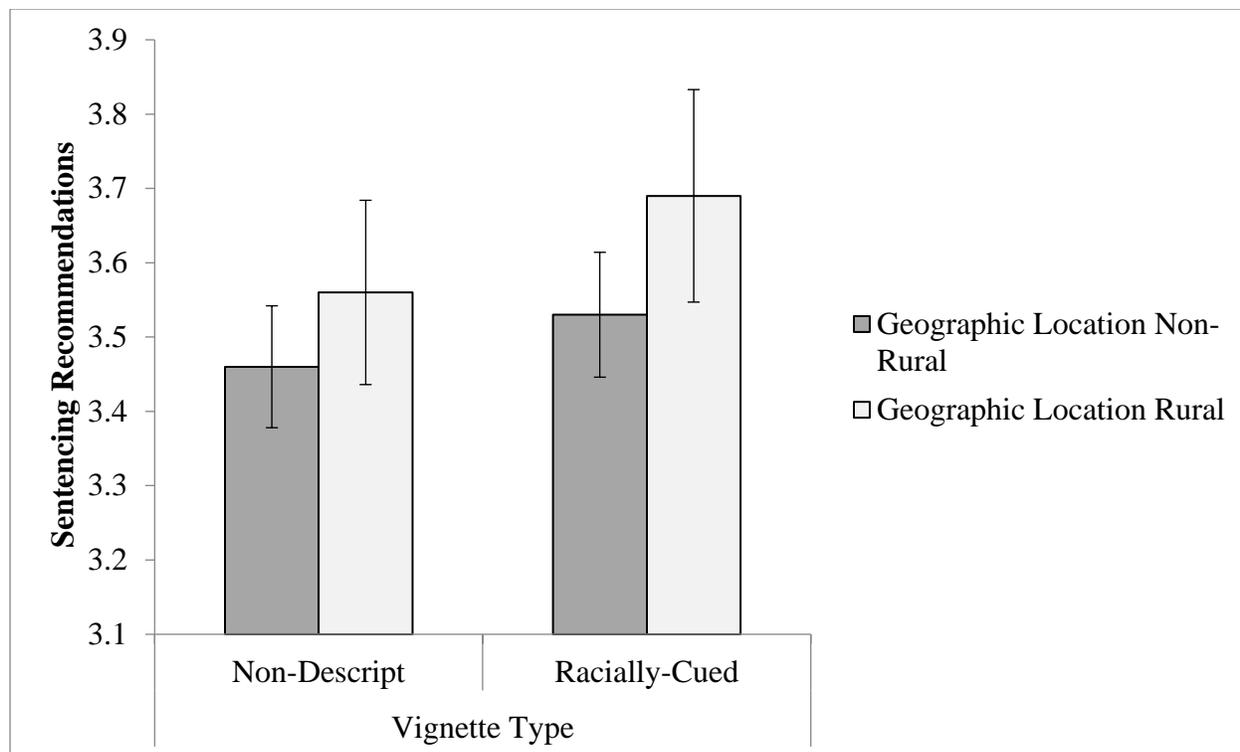
Figure 2. Interaction Between Geographic Location and Vignette Type on Sentencing Recommendations. There was a non-significant interaction effect among these variables.
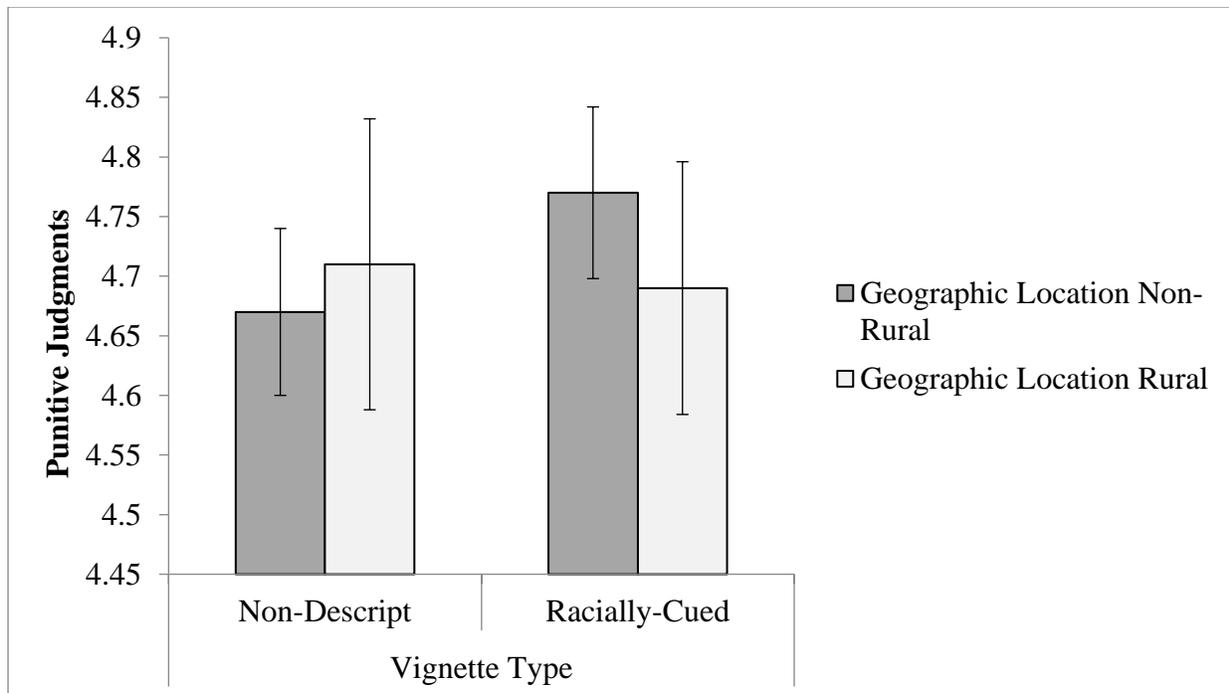
Figure 3. Interaction Between Geographic Location and Vignette Type on Punitive Judgments. There was a non-significant interaction effect among these variables.

Table 4.

Standardized Correlations

	RWA (*z*)	SDO (*z*)	Sentencing Rec.	Punitive Judg.	Racial Bias
RWA (*z*)	1	.609**	.024	.246**	-.132**
SDO (*z*)		1	-.033	.194**	-.222**
Sentencing Rec.			1	.498**	.216**
Punitive Judg.				1	.054
Racial Bias					1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

There is a breadth of research on the racialization of crime; however, these studies seem

to focus greatly on non-rural areas and are overt in mentioning race within their tasks (e.g.,

Dixon, 2008; Gillian & Iyengar, 2000). For instance, a common feature for crime narratives

centers on identifying and manipulating the race of the suspect (i.e., Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). It

is unclear if racialized beliefs are as prominent when race is more covertly alluded to but not

stated (e.g., racially cued name) or when there is no overt indication of the race of the suspect.

Thus, the current study sought to examine if the inclusion of a racially salient name and the area

in which one was raised accounted for differences in beliefs regarding who commits crimes. The

study was also designed to explore the extent to which sociopolitical attitudes, as measured by

SDO and RWA, are correlated with beliefs regarding crime.

Summary of Results

  Geographic Location. Non-significant results were found when examining how

geographic location accounts for differences in *racial bias about the suspect*, *sentencing*

recommendations, and *punitive judgments*. These findings are inconsistent with the study's

stated hypothesis. Given the literature regarding the conservative values of those within rural

areas, there was an expectation that individuals raised in rural areas would reflect more racial

bias and attribute the crime to an African American when no race of the perpetrator was stated.

In turn, we also expected to see stricter sentencing recommendations as well as harsher punitive

views by those from rural areas. Though the results were not as expected, they may reflect the

views of a more evolving rural population. There is an influx of racial/ethnic minorities

(Hispanic and African American) moving into rural areas (e.g., Litcher, 2012; Pew Research

Center, 2018). The Contact Theory (e.g., Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) suggests this migration

may result in less racial bias due to residents in rural areas having more socialization with racial

minorities than in previous generations and thus reducing out-group prejudice. Another potential

explanation is the heterogeneity of rural communities. Research demonstrates significant

variability regarding poverty, recreational activities, and way of living in rural areas (Deller,

2010). Also, there is considerable discrepancy regarding how to define a rural community.

Specifically, population within the area is often used to determine how an area is classified;

however, this can vary based upon federal guidelines as compared to social service programs

(Bucholtz, 2008). Complicating this picture even more can be considerations of how densely

populated an area is. Distance to resources as well as how the land within an area is utilized can

also impact whether an area is categorized as rural or nonrural (Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, & Fields,

2016). Thus, values and ideals regarding race and crime may differ based upon region.

Vignette Type. Likewise, when examining vignette type, there was non-significant main

effects on all three dependent variables. These findings are also inconsistent with the prevailing

literature. I expected individuals who received the racially cued vignette to attribute the crime to

an African American compared to those who received the non-descript vignette; however, this

pattern did not evolve within the data. It is possible that name alone is not enough of a cue to

elicit implicit attitudes regarding race, however, when considering hiring practices, there is

considerable evidence that ethnic-sounding names are less hirable than their counterparts even

when presented with superior resumes (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Previous studies (e.g.,

Gilliam & Iyengar, 2001: Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckman, 2002) blatantly stated the race and

manipulated the name of the suspect to assess racial bias. Gilliam and colleagues' (2002)

research demonstrated that when White participants were presented with racial stereotypes

consistent with those portrayed in news, they endorsed more punitive attitudes and expressed

more negative stereotypes regarding African Americans. Additionally, it is possible that the name selected for use in the current study failed to elicit the desired racial cue. Andre is a name of French and Portuguese descent; thus, it may not be associated with the African American community (Agassi, 2020). Future studies will benefit from the inclusion of a pilot study focusing on sampling racial associations for various names. This would, in turn, provide a more accurate depiction of racial bias especially when an individual is provided with a nondescript vignette.

Personality Characteristics. The Differentiated Threat Model (DTM) suggests minority groups are categorized based upon the perceived threat they pose to the status quo (Meuleman, Abts, Slootmaeckers, & Meeunsen, 2019). Meuleman and colleagues (2019) typified minorities within three categories: deviant groups, competing groups, and dissident groups (Jedinger & Eisentraut, 2019). Deviant groups are considered those that challenge the social order within society (Jedinger & Eisentraut, 2019). Competing groups are those that seek redistribution of resources such as jobs, healthcare, and housing (Jedinger & Eisentraut, 2019). Dissident groups are those that not only compete for resources but also are thought to undermine the morals and beliefs of society (Jedinger & Eisentraut, 2019).

The DTM offers the possibility of including personality (such as SDO and RWA) as well as societal motivations for prejudice. Individuals with RWA beliefs are more likely to express prejudice toward those who they feel do not follow the norms in society, deviant groups. In contrast, those endorsing SDO beliefs express more prejudicial beliefs regarding those that they assume will upset the power balance within society. Sibley and Duckett (2008) noted that SDO and RWA are among the strongest predictors of racial prejudice. As such, I expected participants' scores on sociopolitical measures, SDO and RWA, to positively correlate with

racial bias, *sentencing recommendations* and *punitive judgments*. Results revealed a significantly positive correlation between participants' RWA scores and *punitive judgments* and *racial bias.* This finding is in line with a handful of studies. For instance, Gerber (2012) found individuals who are higher in RWA beliefs view punishment positively and as a way to restore social order in society. Altemeyer (1981; 1998) found that individuals who are higher in RWA view crimes as more serious especially when there is a perceived threat (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). To combat such beliefs, education regarding the efficacy of rehabilitation instead of punishment should be highlighted.

Unexpectedly, *sentencing recommendations* did not correlate with RWA. Feather and Souter (2002) noted individuals high in RWA are more likely to endorse mandatory sentencing and even the death penalty. Given this, my findings appear to be inconsistent with the prevailing literature. It is possible the sentencing recommendations offered did not reflect a wide enough range of possible options to capture the relationship between these variables. Specifically, sentencing options ranged from community service up to "more than 6 months imprisonment." It may be that more severe imprisonment, such as five- or ten-year sentences, may have elicited a more significant response. Moreover, Gerber (2012) noted that individuals endorsing beliefs consistent with RWA tend to present as more submissive to authority figures. Thus, the background information provided regarding how judges come to sentencing decisions may have served to restrict the amount of punishment individuals felt allowed to give.

Similarly, participants' SDO scores failed to correlate with *sentencing recommendations*. These findings were also unexpected as individuals who endorse greater SDO beliefs seek to maintain a hierarchical structure in society (Duckitt & Sibley, 2008). Gerber (2012) noted that individuals who commit crimes often feel power over their victims and are viewed as a threat to

those in power. Thus, I expected SDO scores and *sentencing recommendations* to be positively

correlated such that those endorsing greater SDO beliefs would also recommend greater

sentencing lengths. It is possible that the absence of a weapon during the altercation removed

the concept of power from the narrative. Additionally, the victim was able to free himself from

the assailant which shifted the balance in power. Thus, the power dynamic may have been

perceived as corrected. In contrast, *punitive judgment* was significantly positively correlated with

participants' SDO scores such that *punitive judgments* increased as participants' scores on the

SDO scale increased. This is consistent with expected results as individuals higher in SDO tend

to view criminals as inferior and favor punishment to preserve the hierarchy (Gerber, 2012).

Duckitt (2009) also noted individuals endorsing greater SDO ideologies also display less caring

attitudes for the well-being of the criminal.

Overall, sociopolitical and personality traits seem to be associated with participants'

outlook on crime. While the underpinnings of these ideologies may differ, together they provide

a framework for understanding the role perceived societal threat can play in maintaining

prejudicial beliefs.

Limitations

To obtain a well-rounded sample of individuals, MTurk was utilized to procure

participants; however, to ensure data integrity, several criteria were required to be eligible to

complete the study. Specifically, participants were required to either be on the MTurk Masters

List or have over 1000 surveys completed with at least 95% of them approved and accepted by

the researcher. It is unclear if individuals removed from the study significantly differed from

those included. The impact of such differences remains unknown. Thus, further considerations

should run analyses to examine if there are differential responses between those included and

removed from the analyses.

Rural communities not only differ from non-rural communities, but they also vary significantly among themselves (Hawley et al., 2016; Johnson, Nucci, & Long, 2005). This reflects ambiguous, inconsistent criteria set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture, United States Census Bureau, United States Office of Management and Budget (Hawley et al., 2016; Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, & Fields, 2006). The differences in criteria reflect population, density, land use, and distance (Ratcliffe et al, 2006). In fact, rural areas are often dictated by anything not encompassed by an urban area. Such ambiguity makes it difficult to adequately make comparisons and generalizations for research findings. Specifically, when there is difficulty categorizing participants in one area or another it may increase the difficulty of obtaining statistically significant findings for rural populations.

A unique feature of the current study was a significant number of ethnic and racial minority participants. Over 30% of participants reported identifying as an ethnic minority. When considering the outcomes of the study, it is possible having such a diverse group diluted the effects of the narratives; thus, making it more difficult to garner the expected results. Specifically, it is possible that participants identifying as ethnic and racial minorities did not hold racialized views regarding crime, which may have impacted the saliency of the vignettes and subsequently the results of the study. Future research could benefit from assessing if differences exist by race of participant.

In addition, the study was conducted during a turbulent sociopolitical time. During the time of data collection, there was significant media coverage on publicized incidents of police brutality including the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Given the number of protests and general civil unrest, there may have been a heightened consciousness regarding prejudicial beliefs regarding race. It is unclear how or if this may have impacted the individuals participating

in the study. Future studies could benefit from inquiring about racialized media viewed via social media or television.

Likewise, self-report measure may be subject to social desirability; thus, responses may not be true in nature. Likewise, introspection may be an issue as individuals may respond in a way that is consistent with previous responses rather than due to how they actually feel. With the media highlighting instances of racial injustice, it is possible individuals responded in a way reflective of what a socially acceptable answer will be. To overcome such responses, an in vivo experiment utilizing response time or observation may be beneficial.

Another potential limitation centers on the creation of the vignettes. One factor centers on the name chosen for the racially-cued vignette; it may not have been identifiable as someone from a minority community. Thus, it may have failed to elicit negative implicit associations held regarding African Americans and crime. Future research may examine various racially stereotypical names, through pilot studies or systematic review of names utilized in scientific literature, to identify more racially-associated names.

Clinical Implications

Negative portrayals of racial minorities have been well-documented throughout history (e.g., Dates & Barlow, 1993; Green, 1998; Soloranzo, 1997). Such stereotypic and negative portrayals impact mental health, self-confidence, academic achievement, and physical health (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Williams & Mohammed, 2013). Thus, it is important to understand the factors influencing these beliefs to identify ways to raise awareness of these implicit biases and actively seek to modify these negative associations.

The current study sought to highlight how these negative racial stereotypes influence society's perception of racial minorities. Specifically, I sought to extend previous research demonstrating the racialization of crime by examining differences in geographic location. While

results did not support expected findings of individuals in rural communities holding more racially biased views regarding crime, this could potentially be attributed to inter-group relations. Lichter (2012) highlighted that the influx of racial and ethnic minorities migrating to more rural areas in America, thus, increasing the likelihood for inter-group contact.

Allport (1954) indicated that inter-group relations are sufficient in reducing in-group out-group biases; however, this was not the case in all studies reviewed by Allport. Allport noted times when inter-group contact led to an increase in prejudice and bred conflict (Allport, 1954). Therefore, Allport noted there are conditions that increase the likelihood for prejudice to be reduced following inter-group contact: members of the group have equal status, the group shares common goals, members work together cooperatively, and the groups have authority figures who support group contact. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) extended these findings through a meta-analytic review and noted that there was a beneficial effect of the contact hypothesis even when some group members did not choose the contact. Binder et al. (2009) demonstrated longitudinal support noting contact effects were strengthened if outgroups appeared similar to one's on group. Thus, it is possible that current results actually reflect the benefits of the contact theory such that through shared living experiences, individuals in rural areas are less likely to hold racially prejudicial beliefs regarding crime. If these results can be generalized to other areas, clinical interventions can be employed to further reduce negative stereotypes about racial minorities.

Future Directions

Given the recent sociopolitical consciousness regarding race and crime, repeating this study while imbedding an Implicit Association Test (IAT) would provide more information regarding race-crime biases. The IAT allows researchers to examine potential biases that are not filtered through social expectations or cultural expectations, therefore providing a stronger measure of implicit biases.

In addition, future research can examine the influence of various ethnically diverse names on perceptions of crime. While the name "Andre" was utilized in this study, more ethnically diverse names (DeAndre or LaKeisha) may prove to be a more salient cue for race. Moreover, I think it would be interesting to assess if the type of crime influences who is perceived as the suspect. For instance, if the crime is a bombing, are individuals more likely to assume the suspect is someone of Middle Eastern descent? Likewise, if the crime involves illicit drugs such as methamphetamine, how will that impact the assumptions about the perpetrator?

Finally, more research on the saliency of these beliefs in various rural communities will help shape any potential interventions created for a positive out-group experience. Therefore, a better understanding of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of rural communities is needed. Information regarding access to media and the type of stories conveyed are also needed to gain a better idea of what messages rural viewers are perceiving.

Conclusions

The racialization of crime is a well-documented phenomenon. It is highlighted on the news, on television, and even in books. The primary aim of the current study was two-fold: (a) to examine differences in the saliency of this phenomenon in rural and non-rural areas and (b) to examine if a racially stereotypical name was enough of a cue to elicit prejudicial beliefs regarding crime. Though the study's hypotheses were not fully supported, the findings contribute to the current growing literature on rural areas. Rural areas have historically been considered homogenous — racially prejudiced and conservative; however, with an influx of racial minorities into these areas, such an assumption may lesson longer be accurate. Additionally, the study aimed to examine how sociopolitical characteristics (SDO and RWA) relate to beliefs regarding crime and influenced views of appropriate punishments (*punitive judgments* and *sentencing recommendations*). Findings from the current study support established literature

highlighting an association between social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism being associated with prejudicial beliefs on race and crime. While the overall findings suggest the effects of racialization of crime is not as profound as expected, it is hoped this study further facilitates conversations regarding race and crime in America.

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APPENDIX

MEASURES

Punitive Judgments Questionnaire

A robbery occurs when a person forcibly takes property from another person. During a robbery, the perpetrator often uses or threatens to use a weapon. Penalties for armed robbery can include jail time of up to fifteen years and probation, and fines may also be imposed that can reach up to $20,000. Most state laws specify degrees of robbery based on the severity of the crime (e.g., use of a weapon, having an accomplice, harming a vulnerable population, or resulting in a serious injury for the victim or persons not involved in the crime).

While judges often utilize previously established precedents as the basis for their sentencing, they are allowed to use their judgment when granting sentencing. For a charge such as robbery, sentencing varies greatly. Please observe the following sentencing options for the described crime:

a) Community Service
b) Restitution (restoring of loss; for example, paying the victim for the cost of the stolen item) and reimbursement
c) Minimum of 18 months of probation
d) 6-month imprisonment
e) More than 6 months imprisonment

Which of the above sentences would you recommend for the assailant?
Is there another sentence you would recommend that you believe fits the crime better? Yes or no. If yes, please indicate: _____

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Punitive Judgments							
	Strongly Disagree 1	Moderately Disagree 2	Slightly Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Slightly Agree 5	Moderately Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7
1. This individual deserves to be punished because he has harmed society and fellow citizens.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Sending this individual to jail is the only appropriate punishment for his crimes because he hurt others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. This individual can be rehabilitated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. It is likely that this individual has committed a crime before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. It is likely that this individual will commit a crime again.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Manipulation Check

1. What crime was committed?
   a. Murder
   b. Robbery
   c. Burglary
   d. Assault
2. Was the name of the suspect provided in the newspaper article?
   a. No
   b. Yes
3. What was the gender of the suspect?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Not given
4. What weapon was used during the course of the crime?
   a. Gun
   b. Knife
   c. No weapon
5. Where was the crime committed?
   a. Someone's home
   b. Store
   c. Street Corner
   d. Alley
6. Was the race of the suspect mentioned in the article?
   a. Yes
   b. No
7. Please indicate the race of the suspect (Only shown if participants answered yes to Question 6.)
   a. African American
   b. White
   c. Hispanic
   d. Middle Eastern
   e. Pacific Islander
   f. Asia
   g. Bi/Multiracial
   h. Not given

Demographics Questionnaire

Year of Birth: _____   Age:_____

Gender:

☐ Male   ☐ Female   ☐ Other _____

Race:

☐ White   ☐ African American   ☐ Hispanic ☐ Asian   ☐ Pacific Islander

☐ Native American   ☐ Bi/Multi Racial: _____

Current Marital Status:

☐ Single, Not dating   ☐ In exclusive relationship, Not married   ☐ Married

☐ Partnership/Civil Union   ☐ Divorced   ☐   ☐ Widowed

Other: _____

Sexual Orientation:

☐ Heterosexual   ☐ Homosexual (Lesbian/Gay)   ☐ Bi-Sexual ☐ Undecided

Highest Education:

☐ Post Graduate Degree   ☐ Some Post Graduate   ☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Associate Degree   ☐ Some College; not currently enrolled   ☐ Currently enrolled in college

☐ High School Diploma or GED   ☐ Less than high school diploma

Annual Household Income (Current)

☐ Less than $10,000   ☐ 10,000 to 19,999   ☐ 20,000 to 29,999   ☐ 30,000
       to 39,999

☐ 40,000 to 59,999   ☐ 60,000 to 89,999   ☐ 90,000 to 119,999   ☐ 120,000
       to 149,999

☐ 150,000 to 199,999 ☐ >200,000

If you are a student, what is your current major? _____

Current year in school?

☐ Freshman   ☐ Sophomore   ☐ Junior

☐ Senior   ☐ Post baccalaureate   ☐ Graduate student

How often to do you currently attend religious services?

☐ Once a week or more ☐ One to three times a month

☐ Less than once a month ☐ I do not attend religious services

How often, on average, did you attend religious services prior to the age of 18?

☐ Once a week or more ☐ One to three times a month

☐ Less than once a month ☐ I did not attend religious services

What is your religious affiliation?

☐ Protestant Christian ☐ Catholic ☐ Evangelical Christian

☐ Jewish ☐ Muslim ☐ Hindu

☐ Atheist/Agnostic ☐ Buddhist ☐ Other: _____

How would you best describe the area in which you were raised? (lived prior to 18 years of age)

☐ Urban/Large City ☐ Suburban ☐ Small city/Small town ☐ Rural

How would you best describe the area in which you live currently?

☐ Urban/Large City ☐ Suburban ☐ Small city/Small town ☐ Rural

Please provide an estimate of the number of people in the area of which you were raised.

☐ Less than 50,000 ☐ More than 50,000 _____

Please provide an estimate of the number of individuals residing in the area of which you currently reside.

☐ Less than 50,000 ☐ More than 50,000_____