

**PERCEPTIONS OF CRIMINAL OFFENDERS**

**BY**

**KIMBERLY PEREZ**

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**SCHOOL OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES**

The thesis of Kimberly Perez, "Perceptions of Criminal Offenders," approved by her Committee, has been accepted and approved by the Faculty of the School of Behavioral Sciences, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology.

Thesis Committee:

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Troy W. Hinrichs, J.D.,  
Committee Member

---

Ana M. Gamez, Ph.D., MBA  
Committee Chairperson

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**DEDICATION**

I am profoundly grateful to my parents, brothers, and to my boyfriend for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of completing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

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**ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS**

Perceptions of Criminal Offenders

by

Kimberly Perez

School of Behavioral Sciences

Ana M. Gamez, Ph.D., MBA

Thesis Committee Chairperson

2017

The War on Crime first began in the late 1960's and although being fought for approximately four decades it continues to be unresolved. Through the years War on Crime has evolved, for the purpose of this paper we will focus on the evolution to the war on drugs. It has been found that media has heightened crime salience. Various studies support this idea, demonstrating that behaviors including consumption of illicit drugs are portrayed more and more on movies and music. This paper will focus on the community perspective of drug offenders, specifically perceptions of dangerousness, threat, socialization, sentencing, convictions, safety, and re-offense, based on race of the offender. Previous studies have found that darker skin-

tones are associated with bad behavior as opposed to lighter skin tones. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D in perceptions of offender threat, dangerousness, and socialization. Results were not significant. It was also hypothesized that there will be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D in perceptions of safety and re-offense. There was only a significant difference in re-offense between groups B and D, which were not supportive of previous research that indicated darker skin tones to be associated with bad behavior more than lighter skin tones. It was also hypothesized that there will be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D in perceptions of sentencing. Results were not significant. Lastly it was hypothesized that sentencing convictions will differ significantly by race. Results were not significant. It is important to look at underlying perceptions to prevent race from being a determining factor in the justice system.

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## Chapter 1

### **THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

#### **Introduction**

Understanding attitudes of individuals is important when considering how such attitudes may possibly affect decision-making, specifically regarding criminal offenders. Persons tend to make decisions based on personal beliefs, values, and/or experiences. As a society, it is believed stereotypes are a thing of the past but there may be some underlying attitudes one may not be completely aware of.

Social media has drastically expanded and become widely relevant in everyday life. According to Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz (2009), the increased exposure of crime through social media has made crime more relevant. Now that crime seems to be more common, it is important to make sure underlying attitudes when associated with criminal offenders do not have negative biases. This is important to the justice system where community members are allowed to determine an offender's future, whether it is in juries or when testifying. Knowing underlying perceptions may exist, it is beneficial to investigate how much these attitudes

play a role, if any, in regard to criminal offenders, decision-making and opinions of them.

### **Problem Statement**

Studies show prejudice and stereotyping are main concerns in the United States due to diversity. These issues have resulted in biases, not only on a social level, but in those that participate in the justice system (Free, 2001).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study intends to enhance existing research and bring awareness to the underlying issues of prejudice and stereotyping by examining the perceptions of dangerousness, threat, socialization, sentencing, convictions, safety, and re-offense of a criminal based on the race of the individual committing the crime. This in turn, should promote awareness of how these prejudices may play a role, not only in social settings, but also in regards to the law and how these individuals are perceived based on race in hopes of minimizing negative outcomes towards them. In turn, promoting a criminal justice system that is fair and increasing positive community perceptions toward the justice system.

### **Research Questions & Hypothesis**

The following research questions and hypotheses were explored:

RQ1: Is there a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of offender threat, dangerousness, and socialization?

HO: There will not be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of offender threat, dangerousness, and socialization.

HA: There will be significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of offender threat, dangerousness, and socialization.

RQ2: Is there a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of safety and re-offense?

HO: There will not be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of safety and re-offense.

HA: There will be significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of safety and re-offense.

RQ3: Is there a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D, in perceptions of sentencing?

HO: There will not be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C and D, in perceptions of sentencing.

HA: There will be significant mean difference between groups A, B, C and D, in perceptions of sentencing.

RQ4: Do sentencing convictions differ significantly by race?

HO: Sentencing convictions will not differ significantly by race.

HA: Sentencing convictions will differ significantly by race.

### **Delimitations**

This research intends to bring awareness about the many variables that may contribute to the perceptions towards criminals. Variables included in the study are: dangerousness, threat, socialization, sentencing, convictions, safety and re-offense. For purposes of this study, only California law will be considered since it is the location of the study. Participants will be recruited from local public parks in both Riverside County and Orange County - both located in Southern California. Due to transportation limitations, other counties in Southern California will not be included. Public parks were chosen

for convenience purposes. Only participants 18-years of age or older participated in the study in an effort to focus on the population who is allowed to participate in the judicial system (i.e. serve in a jury).

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed the existing literature used in regards to this topic was collected in an ethical manner and the results provided are accurate and valid.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Victimless crimes*: a case that does not have an identifiable victim other than perhaps the offender; the court considers the amount of public harm caused by the offense (United States Sentencing Commission, 2016)

*Saliency*: Collectively raised consciousness (Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009)

*Prejudice*: hostile attitudes that are directed toward "a person that belongs to a *group*, simply because he belongs to that *group*" (Allport, 1954, as cited in Cooley & Payne, 2017)

## Chapter 2

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The *War on Crime*, a war that been fought for approximately four decades continues to be unresolved. Throughout American history, the *War on Crime* has evolved to take on different perspectives. This war began in the late 1960's, during the Lyndon B. Johnson presidency, and continues to present day. The Johnson administration was focused on developing a Great Society, "a place where the meaning of a mans life matches the marvels of man's labor." (Freidel & Sidey, 2006). The Great Society program included many aspects from aid to education, Medicare, urban renewal, fight against poverty, to control and prevention of crime and delinquency.

#### **History Overview**

Although President Johnson was steadily exerting his influence against segregation, to the black community, it was not quick enough. It was during this time the *War on Crime* rose to riots and protests in the black ghettos (Freidal & Sidey, 2006). This in turn increased public concerns of crime. Politicians fueled the fear of crime as

they used their platforms to instill such fear into the community. In 1971, the *War on Crime* evolved to Nixon's war on drugs. Author Jonathan Simon observed the *War on Crime* being a persistent issue to date. Simon states the *War on Crime* is beginning to evolve yet again but this time, it is the *War on Terrorism* (Simon, 2007). This paper will focus solely on the *War on Crime*, also known as, *the War on Drugs*.

It has been recognized crime has become a popular topic of discussion, especially in the political spectrum. President elections, both past and present, have almost always contained some form of discussion about the *War on Crime*. According to Garland, in Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz (2009) article, social media fuels the fire by providing selective coverage of crime stories that can result in distorted public perceptions of the problem. Such overexposure has created a culture of fear, as Simon stated in his book *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*. Simon concludes this exposure has made situations probable for many, meaning that they now see themselves as potential victims of crime, and as a result, communities are frightened. According to Dubber (2001), a crime is no



longer defined as requiring the infliction of harm to another, but simply as the threat to harm. *War on Crime* efforts, in totality, focus on the general well being of community members with the goal to eliminate, or at least, reduce fears that have been instilled into the community thus far.

According to Simon (2007), crime has become an important factor of being able to exert authority in America. By the end of the twentieth century, there have been more Americans confined in prisons and other detention centers than ever before (Simon, 2007). Dubber (2001) proposes the *War on Crime* has been by far a victimless war. A victimless crime meaning that the only person getting hurt is the offender himself or herself. According to Dubber the majority of inmates in detention centers are not murderers or high-level predator types but rather possessors of a sort (2001). Dubber suggests sentencing of offenders was not based on infliction of harm to victims but rather by the danger they posed (2001). This makes the *War on Crime* preventative, where the key is threat. Is this system controlling threats rather than punishing offenders?

## **Victimless Crimes**

Victimless crimes are defined as illegal crimes that do not affect anyone in particular, other than perhaps, the offender (Underground, 2009). This is because the people involved are usually voluntarily, consenting adults. Examples of victimless crimes include, possession, gambling, prostitution, trespassing, traffic citations, public intoxication, suicide and drug use. These crimes do not affect others, except those involved. The 2016 United States Sentencing Guidelines considers victimless crimes, crimes that do not have an identifiable victim, however takes into consideration the commonwealth, and society as a whole who are seen as ultimately being harmed by these acts making them crimes.

What most of these victimless crimes have in common is there is the potential of someone being harmed, presuming a threat. For example, possession of a firearm, although the person may not be using the firearm or deliberately threatening a person, a bystander has the potential to get hurt because of it. Another example includes traffic citations. A person may receive a citation for speeding, running a red light, passing a stop sign, or driving under the influence. In these types of situation, citations are

given in an effort to deter such behavior again in order to avoid someone being hurt by reckless driving. This research paper will focus on victimless crimes with regards to drug use. With drug usage, the victims are those consuming the drugs but that is a choice they have made.

### **Drug Offenses**

It is estimated that approximately 46.4% of crimes are drug related offenses (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016). From a legal perspective, drugs are characterized as illegal based on a few criteria. These include (a) the type of substance, (b) whether it is a licit or illicit substance, and (c) use or abuse of the substance for purposes other than the intended uses. Other than the drug itself being illegal there are other aspects related to substances that are illegal as well. These substances related offenses include Health and Safety Code violations. For purposes of this paper the focus will be on California legislation.

**Possession.** The legal possession of certain drug related substances has evolved since the 1900's. Many decades ago the United States went through a prohibition era, from 1920 through 1933. The government attempted to regulate the distribution and consumption of alcohol in

hopes to decrease the evils that arose from alcohol consumption. To be allowed to sell liquor special licenses needed to be obtained and restrictions were imposed. As the prohibition era sought for the legislation of morality this also seems to be the case with current law debates about the legalization of marijuana in some states. The issues with legalizing marijuana as portrayed by opposing parties include the negative consequences that will arise for future generations. Parents may be concerned that the accessibility to marijuana will be increased. Take alcohol for example, currently there are laws for alcohol consumption and distribution like the age requirement being 21 years of age, a person that sells the alcohol must verify this with an identification. Although alcohol is closely monitored presently there is a lot of underage drinking that occurs and the consequences of that can sometimes be fatal, as with alcohol poisoning and car accidents. Concerns may also include those regarding the impaired judgment that may occur. This as with alcohol is was is the issue, not consuming the drug but what will happen after.

According to the 2007 Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime Reports 82.5% of arrests in the

United States were for possession (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). One way to prevent from getting to the ingestion phase laws about possession have also been set in place. Possession refers to carrying something on ones person. And for certain vices possession is illegal and reason for punishment. Dubber (2001) states that possession is the Velcro defense in the justice system. However simple possession cannot be seen as a crime, therefore justifying that there was intent to use what is possessed is the selling point. Although clearly not having used what is being possessed the legal system claims it to be "an intent without an act". Currently with marijuana laws depending on the state any possession at all may be considered illegal, other states set certain amount limits that makes the possession legal or a misdemeanor.

As it occurred with alcohol, marijuana is being sought to undergo legalization in California for the November 2016 election. Legalization of marijuana entails the use of adults 21 or older, allowing them to possess, grow, and use for nonmedical purposes as well. Legalization will also allow for taxing sales and cultivation. Making marijuana legal will include stricter protections for children against it. Doing this and much more in hopes to decrease

the evils of marijuana use and reduce criminal justice costs, because as mentioned by Dubber (2001) many of those incarcerated are due to possessors, as were the hopes with alcohol during the prohibition era. Eventually legalizing alcohol was accepted and seems to be more beneficial than not which looks good for legalization of marijuana.

**Drug Paraphernalia.** Another drug related offense is drug paraphernalia, which is a health and safety code violation. Drug paraphernalia applies to anything that a person may use to unlawfully smoke or inject a controlled substance as stated by the Law Offices of Randy Collins website. These devices used to consume drugs may include such items as pipes, spoons, syringes or needles to name a few. In the state of California this code is California Health and Safety Code 11364 HS. Having drug paraphernalia on ones person or around them suggests to police officers that the devices in question are intended to be used for the consumption of illegal substances. Or if the devices may have already been used, they may look used and even have substance residue that tell police officers a controlled substance has been consumed already which is illegal. Some examples as to being charged with drug paraphernalia include there being a search of a house where

a person was found in the living room where drug paraphernalia was also found. Although the device may not have been this persons' the police does not know that and that person can be charged with California Health and Safety code 11364 (HS 11364). The charge may be acquitted if the person argues and proves that other tenants also use the living room and states the device is not theirs, it can help the case if the person does not have a drug related record. One can also be convicted of HS 11364 without being aware that the paraphernalia was present. This is the case when persons let each other borrow cars, clothes, purses and so on. There are instances where finding drug paraphernalia is considered inadmissible and those are when there has been an unlawful seizure.

### **Racial Prejudice**

The United States is a country of immigrants since the beginning of time. Most recent statistics of the United States census bureau (2015) show a steady increase in all minority groups along with a slight decline for 'white alone, not Hispanic or Latino' when compared to the previous series of statistics. It has been shown that many residents of the United States tend to overestimate minority numbers in the demographic breakdown, with many

perceiving white as a minority since 2000 (Alba, Rumbaut, & Marotz, 2005). New people meant not only new but also different, different looks, customs, cultures, beliefs, and ideas. Alba et al.'s (2005) analysis of previous research indicated that changes in racial demography were perceived as a threat to the majority race thus building barriers to exclude the change and preserve its social privileges. Through those barriers exists hostility and other forms of prejudices directed toward the demographically expanding minority.

It became common to distinguish persons by their differences, soon after they became preconceptions. Today it is commonly believed by many throughout the country that those prejudices that were once more pronounced are a thing of the past following civil rights legislation in the 1960's (Cooley & Payne, 2017). That as a whole, persons have become more accepting of each other's differences and do not distinguish people by those differences anymore. However, although it may not be intentional persons do seem to still have underlying prejudices.

According to Allport (1954) prejudice refers to hostile attitudes that are directed toward an individual "who belongs to a *group*, simply because he belongs to that



*group*" (Cooley & Payne, 2017). Cooley et al.'s research focuses on the importance of groups rather than the individual. They argued an individual person belongs to other social categories simultaneously; therefore responses can vary depending on which category is salient at the time. In the study the researchers compared images of groups to images of individuals in order to identify which was more representative of their racial category. It was hypothesized that groups would elicit racial prejudices; results supported their hypothesis. It was easier to determine the category to which the individuals in the images shared when in groups; this in turn facilitated the activation of associated stereotypes. Images of an individual did not elicit automatic prejudices because there was no identifiable category of race initially, other factors such as gender or socioeconomic status were considered before race. Cooley and Payne (2017) believe that because prejudice exist because of group membership as Allport's definition indicated, then it is not surprising that groups better measure prejudice than do individuals.

Another important determinant of prejudice is color. According to Alter, Stern, Granot, and Balcetis' (2016) research, lightness has long been associated with good

while darkness has been associated with bad. This association is referred to as shade based. The race based association, which implies that more negative attitudes are associated with African Americans and motivations to maintain racial hierarchies in the modern Western society reinforce the shade based association (Alter, Stern, Granot, & Balcetis, 2016). Alter et al.'s research consisted of several studies that looked at ads in magazines and campaigns and compared the skin tone of celebrities or politicians in different articles. The celebrities and politicians of these articles were all African American. It was found throughout that lightened pictures accompanied positive articles where the persons skin tone was lighter than actuality. It was concurrently found that darkened pictures accompanied negative articles where the persons skin tone was darker than actuality. An example provided in the study was when *Time Magazine* had been accused of darkening the cover image of accused murderer O.J. Simpson in 1994. The darkened image reflects the bad behavior associated with the individuals' picture. It was also found that people rely on physical features more than traits or behaviors to distinguish people (Alter et al., 2016). When looking at race based factors that are

associated to bad behavior these include physical similarities to African American people. Having prototypically Black physical features such as a wider nose or bigger lips result in more negative evaluations (Alter et al., 2016).

Although it may not seem that race is much of an issue to one person, it may not be true for another, different people have different experiences whether they share a common race or not. One's experiences may be reflective of their everyday social environment, where the more one encounters a racial minority the more perceptions one may have of that group (Alba et al., 2005). According to Wortley (1996), the histories of different minority groups can in turn result in different perceived racial prejudices. In his article, Wortley provided an example between blacks and Asians, two racial minorities in Canada, although both groups are immigrants the history of blacks being the descendants of immigrated slaves leaves distrust for white social institutions; while on the contrary most of the Asian immigrants had voluntarily immigrated for refuge from home towns, having Asians look at these institutions more favorably. Another thing to consider is the length as to the existence of the prejudices. The

longer they have been known to exist the more strongly people may feel toward them, the harder for those with the prejudices to shake off even though they do not mean to offend that group. The group being offended may also have strong feelings about the prejudices and are able to detect such prejudices more frequently than those that have not been exposed to them.

As previously stated as a community it is thought that discrimination is a thing of the past, and for the most part it is true, people have become more accepting of each other. For the remaining underlying feelings that arise it is important to know when to notice their presence. It is important to notice these biases in general in order to treat others with respect but it is extremely important to identify biases in places such as in the justice system where person's futures are at stake. Based on Rayner and Lewis' (2011) study it is found that there are significant overrepresentations of minorities in detention centers. Rayner and Lewis therefore looked into how much of the overrepresentation of minority groups in detention centers was accounted for by discriminatory processing and how much could be accounted for by other differences such as offending differences, age, or residential area. Although

a lot of the overrepresentation was accounted for by other factors that were not racial discrimination, there was still some unexplained tendencies. It was found that minority ethnic offenders that had lower criminal needs such as low-risk offender and low-recidivism risk, received the same sentences as did higher-risk white majority offenders. It was also found that both black and white offenders had similar offending levels contradicting the belief that minority groups are particularly prone to crime (Raynor & Lewis, 2011).

### **Safety/Punitive Measures**

According to Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz (2009) do to the steady escalation of crime portrayals and exposure it has also raised the consciousness of crime, in turn one of the focuses in their research is the salience of crime and punitiveness. In their research study Costelloe et al. define crime salience as fear of crime, victimization experience, vulnerability to crime and the general concern about crime as a social issue. Costelloe et al. found that fear and concern of crime were the two strongest predictors for high punitive levels, consistent with previous research. Among blacks and Hispanics it was fear of crime that drove harsher punishments while among whites concern

was the driving factor for harsher punishments with fear being the second driving factor. It is suggested and supported through various researches including that of Taylor, Scheppele, and Stinchcombe (1979) that those who experience higher levels of fear toward crime somehow relate to the neighborhood they live in.

One suggestion includes that of economic and social position shifts has led more individuals to more aggressive controls against the "underclass"; the underclass being those whom are seen as disorderly, drug-prone and dangerous (Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009). This is further supported by Taylor et al. (1979) where they found that urbanization and integration both correlated with fear of crime that has been supported by previous research. Meaning that the size of the community one lives in can make one feel more or less safe. Taylor et al. found that in any sized location white people that lived in integrated neighborhoods felt more afraid than those who lived in segregated neighborhoods. Those that lived in integrated neighborhoods felt that they were personally victimized more frequently than those that lived in segregated communities.

Walklate (1998), states that people are the ones that are in charge of handling dangers and fears through emotional and behavioral formulas one generates and includes in their every day routines. How does someone take charge of their fears and the dangers they are exposed to in order to reduce fear of crime? Walklate's study compared two neighborhoods in Manchester. These neighborhoods differed in social economic status, geographical size, and population. One of the neighborhoods in the study was Oldtown; Oldtown was the area with the lowest standard housing that did not have many stores near by. Bankhill was smaller in geographic size but it contained more residents, this was a much more diverse area that is connected to more surrounding areas which include several businesses. For this study people were interviewed about the neighborhood they lived at. The majority of people in Oldtown described their community as close-knit, everyone knew everyone in their neighborhood including both the good people and the "local villains". One person stated they believed they felt safe in their neighborhood despite lower socioeconomic status because most people have lived there a majority of the time and they have gotten to know their neighbors fairly well. As

opposed to Bankhill although a wealthier neighborhood it is more densely populated and when asked about their neighborhood persons did not feel as connected to their neighbors. Having to get to know more people with higher foot traffic in this neighborhood may be more difficult than compared to a small neighborhood that has little amounts of people coming in or out. Because people did not know each other well there was no sense of trust, specially coming from older community members who saw themselves as targets because they are not as strong to defend themselves (Walklate, 1998). Overall that sense of belonging and knowing a person may make one feel more protected because someone knows them and that will get that person to more likely help them out. Not knowing someone that finds themselves in danger may make one stop and think twice before getting involved. Would someone risk himself or herself getting hurt for someone they do not know or barely know at all? This study demonstrates the importance of being a part of a community; a group of people is stronger than a person who stands alone. This in turn supports findings for both Tyler et al.(1979) and Walklate (1998) for supporting reasons as to why persons that have higher levels of fear of crime are those that feel alone therefore



are more likely than those with a community and feel safe to want and demand greater punishment on offenders.

There are other reasons as to why persons may want sentencing and punishment increased, including the type of crime and differences between races or genders. Miller, Rossi, and Simpson (1986) further define the term fear of crime to not only fear of the crime itself but extends it to persons perceptions of themselves probably being arrested as well as the perceptions of proximity to criminal behaviors. For example in the research of Miller et al. it was suggested by previous research that men are more likely to be involved in crime in general than women, however women were still found to show greater fear than men (1986). If a person believes that they are likely to commit a crime at some point then that person can find it more favorable to have less severe punishments. Regarding gender differences it is common that more men are in detention center compared to women, up to almost seven times more than woman (Minton, Ginder, Brumbaugh, Smiley-Mcdonald, & Rohloff, 2015). Although the amount of women in detention centers has increased between the years of 1999 to 2013 the rates of men has also increased and it is still larger for men than women. If gender is the

difference in who poses a greater danger, men are more often than not physically bigger than women that can support a relationship for the greater fear of crime in women and greater support for greater punishment. Women may perceive themselves as more vulnerable. However it is also found common that many people tend to overestimate the likeliness as to their being victimized therefore experiencing greater fears that what will be actually encountered. On the contrary it is also found that more dangerous crimes, such as murder, forcible rape, or setting off a bomb still hold less punitive sentences than minor ones (Miller, Rossi, & Simpson, 1986). One explanation for that being the case may be that those crimes are less likely to happen in general than say a minor crime.

### **Media**

Previous studies show that adolescent substance use stems partly from teen views of drinking and smoking as acceptable behaviors (Stern, 2005). Modern day media plays a huge role in influencing the usage of drugs upon their audience. Social cognitive theory proposes that people learn through observation. Studies that focus on the effects of media, including film and lyrics, incorporate Bandura's social cognitive theory, suggesting medias impact

on viewers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors by providing models from which viewers can learn (Stern, 2005).

Attending the movie theatre remains one of the most popular pass times for teenagers (Stern, 2005). Other than going to a theatre to watch a movies however with modern technology one has access to movies through various ports including internet websites, Netflix, Hulu, renting and featured on television as well. Stern found that in the top grossing films from 1999-2001 about 15% showed drug use by a teen, nearly 40% of teens were shown drinking alcohol, and about 17% of teen were shown smoking (2005). The movie, *Project X*, supports Stern's findings as this film portrays a high school party where excessive amounts of alcohol are consumed, people are smoking weed, and others consuming ecstasy. The movie, *Pineapple Express*, with Seth Rogan and James Franco normalizes the consumption of weed. Although weed was recently legalized, it has been illegal across America for decades. These films possibly normalize these behaviors and make it seem easy to obtain illicit substances.

Besides movies, music content has also been found to reflect to listeners an exaggerated image of the reality of the artists lives, including the world of alcohol and drugs

(Christenson, Roberts, & Bjork, 2012). Christenson et al.'s study examined the year-end *Billboard* top 100 songs for the years of 1968, 1978, 1988, 1998, and 2008, examining the top 100 songs per year allowed for the inclusion of various genres. These songs were examined for any references to drugs. Results found that 10.3% of all songs contained references to alcohol, 5.7% referenced drugs, 1% mentioned an unspecified but intoxicating substance, and 2.8% used substance related language in a figurative manner (Christenson et al., 2012). In examining the prevalence of drugs in both films and lyrics it was observed that most depictions were positive or failed to show and tell of the negative consequences related to drugs (Gibbons, Kingsbury, Wills, Finneran, Dal Cin, & Gerrard, 2016; Christenson, Roberts, & Bjork, 2012). The constant exposure to movies and music contribute to Bandura's social cognitive theory. Seeing more positive associations as opposed to negative associations encourages those with more impulsive characteristics to model consumption of alcohol and drugs (Gibbons et al., 2016).

## Chapter 3

**METHOD****Participants**

Participants were recruited using a sample of convenience. A total of 120 participants were recruited from local parks in Riverside County and Orange County, CA. Participant's ranged in age between 18 and 78 years ( $M = 32$ ,  $SD = 12.14$ ). A total of 29% ( $n = 34$ ) were males and 71% ( $n = 84$ ) were females, two participants did not disclose gender. Ethnicity background were as follows: A total of 27% ( $n = 32$ ) were White/Caucasian, 56% ( $n = 67$ ) Hispanic/Latino, 7% ( $n = 8$ ) African American, 7% ( $n = 8$ ) Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% ( $n = 4$ ) other. Educational levels were as follows: A total of 14% ( $n = 17$ ) completed a high school or equivalent, 6% ( $n = 7$ ) vocational/technical school, 43% ( $n = 51$ ) some college, 25% ( $n = 30$ ) bachelor's degree, 10% ( $n = 12$ ) master's degree, 1% ( $n = 1$ ) doctoral degree, and (g) 1% ( $n = 1$ ) professional degree (e.g., MD, JD, etc.). Marital status of participants were as follows: A total of 42% ( $n = 50$ ) were married, 1% ( $n = 1$ ) divorced, 51% ( $n = 61$ ) single/never married, 5% ( $n = 6$ ) living with another, and 1% ( $n = 1$ ) separated. Participants were asked if they believed that racial issues were a thing of the

past. Sixty-one percent of participants did not believe that racial issues were a thing of the past, whereas, a total 8% (n = 10) indicated that it was somewhat likely, 21% (n = 25) neutral, 7% (n = 8) very likely, and 3% (n = 3) believed that it was definitely a thing of the past.

### **Design**

The design used in this study was a self-report vignette survey. The study utilized a quantitative approach in order to identify any associations between race and variables, including dangerousness, threat, socialization, sentencing, conviction, safety, and re-offense.

### **Instruments**

The instrument utilized in this study was a self-report survey. A total of four identical vignettes (Appendix A) were developed for this study. All vignettes provided a brief summary of a case involving a drug offense that occurred in the workplace. Each of the vignettes differed only by the race of the offender. Each vignette included a total of seven 5-point Likert scale items that examined perceptions of dangerousness, threat, socialization, sentencing, conviction, safety, and re-offense. The Likert scale items ranged from: (1) Not at

All, (2) Somewhat Likely, (3) Neutral, (4) Very Likely, and (5) Definitely. Demographic questions followed the vignette questionnaire. A total of five demographic questions were included in the study.

### **Procedure**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before conducting any research for this study. A recruitment script was given orally to all potential participants. The study was given at the public parks in Riverside County and Orange County, CA. Participants who verbally agreed to participate in the study were provided with a consent form, Bill of Rights, and community resources. All vignette conditions were arranged sequentially (A, B, C, D) and distributed accordingly. Each participant read the vignette, completed the survey and demographic questions. Upon completion of the survey, researcher thanked each participant for their participation.

### **Data Analysis**

IBM SPSS statistical program was used to analyze the data. All data was analyzed for univariate, bivariate, and multivariate outliers. The statistical methods used to

analyze the data for this study included two one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), a 2 x 4 Chi-Square, and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The first one-way MANOVA was utilized to examine group differences between offender race and perceptions of threat, dangerousness, and socialization. The second one-way MANOVA was utilized to examine differences between offender race and perceptions of safety and re-offense. A one-way ANOVA was utilized to examine group differences between offender race in sentencing. Lastly, a 2 X 4 Chi-Square was utilized to examine the association between offender race and conviction.



## Chapter 4

**RESULTS**

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the difference between race of the criminal offender and perceptions of safety and re-offense. The race group conditions of criminal offenders included: (a) Caucasian, (b) African American, (c) Hispanic/Latino, and (d) Asian. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference between race conditions on perceptions of safety and re-offense. Specifically, perceptions of re-offense would be lower in the Asian condition, followed by Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American conditions, respectively.

The one-way MANOVA results indicated a between-groups difference in conditions (Wilk's  $\Lambda = .892$ ,  $F [6, 230] = 2.26$ ,  $p = 0.04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.06$ ). Univariate ANOVA and Bonferroni tests were conducted as follow-up tests. Results revealed a main effect for perceptions of re-offense ( $F [3, 116] = 2.70$ ,  $p = 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.07$ ). Bonferroni post hoc tests indicated a significant difference between groups but only between the (B) African American ( $M = 3.0$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) and (D) Asian ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD =$

1.12) offender conditions. Perceptions of re-offense were higher in the Asian condition than in the African American condition. No main effect between groups was found for perceptions of safety.

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to examine the between group differences between offenders race (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian) and perceptions of threat, dangerousness, and socialization. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference between race conditions on perceptions of offender threat, dangerousness and socialization respectively. Specifically, perceptions of threat, dangerousness, and socialization would be lower in the Asian condition, followed by Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American conditions, respectively. Results were not significant.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine between group differences in sentencing by race of the criminal offender. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant mean difference between condition of race and sentencing perceptions. Results were not significant. Specifically, perceptions of sentencing would be lower in the Asian condition, followed by Caucasian, Hispanic, and African

American conditions, respectively. Results were not significant.

A 2X4 chi-square was conducted to examine the association between conviction and criminal offender race. It was hypothesized that sentencing convictions would differ significantly by race. Results were not significant.

## Chapter 5

**DISCUSSION**

The objective of the present study was to identify any underlying racial biases community members may have toward offenders. The study focused on perceptions of offender dangerousness, threat, socialization, sentencing, conviction, safety, and re-offense. It is important to make sure underlying attitudes, when associated with criminal offenders, do not have negative biases; in order to establish a fair and equal justice system throughout. Creating a justice system that is fair and balanced can further promote positive attitudes towards the system itself and law enforcement personnel. In order to identify any associations between race and variables, including those previously mentioned, the study used a quantitative approach. In order to measure participants' opinions towards offenders one of four vignettes was provided, along with a self-report survey. The study was conducted at local public parks in both Riverside County and Orange County, including Harada Heritage Park, Eastvale Community Park, Providence Ranch Park, West Haven Park, and Haster Basin Recreational Park. Participants were randomly

selected at the parks. Every third person encountered was asked to participate in the study.

In the present study for Hypothesis 1, it was hypothesized there would be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D in perceptions of offender threat, dangerousness, and socialization. However, results did not reveal statistical significance. Hypothesis 2 stated there would be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D in perceptions of safety and reoffense. Results indicated a significant difference between groups in perceptions of reoffense, specifically between groups B (African American) and D (Asian) only. Our findings did not support previous research of shade based and race based associations that found bad behaviour associated with darkness (Alter et al., 2016). Hypothesis 3 stated there would be a significant mean difference between groups A, B, C, and D in perceptions of sentencing. However, results did not reveal statistical significance. Lastly, Hypothesis 4 stated sentencing convictions would differ significantly by race. However, results were not significant.

**Limitations**

The study contained a number of limitations. First, participants were gathered through a convenience sample at local public parks. This presents a restraint in the population sample because there is a great majority that may not frequent parks. The majority of participants encountered were female, therefore gender was not equally dispersed. Although gender was not a factor for the analysis run, if gender differences were sought they could not be generalized to the greater population. This study was also limited to the state of California and further limited to two counties, Riverside County and Orange County. The population of these counties may not be representative of other counties throughout California and the greater population. Future studies should consider collecting data on a bigger sample size throughout the state to ensure generalizability; and potentially obtain a more equal and representative gender dispersion.

Another limitation was having used a vignette that did not clearly specify the drug of choice by the offender. Participants may have imagined different drugs depending on their personal beliefs, experiences, or knowledge of drugs, if any. The researcher does not know

the drug participants imagined at the time of answering the survey. This could be an important factor as to how participants responded. Future research studies should consider focusing on a specific drug to control for variability.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**A brief recruiting script will be given to all potential participants:**

Hello, My name is Kimberly Perez and I am a student at California Baptist University. I am conducting a research study that examines community perceptions. I am surveying participants' ages 18 or older. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are being asked to read a brief vignette and answer 5 likert scale questions along with 2 opinion questions, which is then followed by a demographic questionnaire. Refusing to participate or stop the study will not result in any penalties or loss. No identifiable information will be connected to the survey responses. I will provide you with a consent form that you can read and keep. Would you like to participate in my study?

APPENDIX B

Andrew Smith is a Caucasian male, was employed at a local supermarket. He was known to keep to himself and not generally cause trouble. On April 5, 2015, his supervisor found **him** using drugs at work. The supervisor called the police and Mr. Smith was arrested for possession of a controlled substance.

Please answer the following questions. Please select one answer per question.

1. How likely are you to socialize with this individual?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5	2. I f thi s
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person lived in your neighborhood how likely are you to feel safe?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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3. How likely do you believe this person is to reoffend?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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4. How likely is it that if released this person will be a threat?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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5. How dangerous is the individual to others?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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6. Should this individual be convicted?

- Yes
- No

7. If convicted, what sentence should this individual receive?

- Probation/Community Supervision
- County Jail 1 - 364 days
- Prison sentence of 1 - 10 years
- Prison sentence of 11 - 24 years
- Prison sentence of 25 years to life

### Perceptions of Criminal Offenders

Please answer the following demographic questions.

What is your age? (in years) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Please specify your ethnicity:

- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school or equivalent
- Vocational/technical school
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)

What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Single, never married
- Living with another
- Separated
- Widowed

Difficulties regarding racial issues are a thing of the past.

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

Andrew Johnson is an African American/Black male, was employed at a local supermarket. He was known to keep to himself and not generally cause trouble. On April 5, 2015, his supervisor found **him** using drugs at work. The supervisor called the police and Mr. Johnson was arrested for possession of a controlled substance.

Please answer the following questions. Please select one answer per question.

1. How likely are you to socialize with this individual?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5	2. I f thi s
--------------------	-------------------------	--------------	---------------------	-----------------	-----------------------

person lived in your neighborhood how likely are you to feel safe?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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3. How likely do you believe this person is to reoffend?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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4. How likely is it that if released this person will be a threat?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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5. How dangerous is the individual to others?

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

6. Should this individual be convicted?

- Yes
- No

7. If convicted, what sentence should this individual receive?

- Probation/Community Supervision
- County Jail 1 - 364 days
- Prison sentence of 1 - 10 years
- Prison sentence of 11 - 24 years
- Prison sentence of 25 years to life

### Perceptions of Criminal Offenders

Please answer the following demographic questions.

What is your age? (in years) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Please specify your ethnicity:

- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school or equivalent
- Vocational/technical school
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)

What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Single, never married
- Living with another
- Separated
- Widowed

Difficulties regarding racial issues are a thing of the past.

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

Andrew Garcia is a Hispanic/Latino male, was employed at a local supermarket. He was known to keep to himself and not generally cause trouble. On April 5, 2015, his supervisor found **him** using drugs at work. The supervisor called the police and Mr. Garcia was arrested for possession of a controlled substance.

Please answer the following questions. Please select one answer per question.

1. How likely are you to socialize with this individual?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5	2. I f thi s
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person lived in your neighborhood how likely are you to feel safe?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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3. How likely do you believe this person is to reoffend?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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4. How likely is it that if released this person will be a threat?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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5. How dangerous is the individual to others?

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

6. Should this individual be convicted?

- Yes
- No

7. If convicted, what sentence should this individual receive?

- Probation/Community Supervision
- County Jail 1 - 364 days
- Prison sentence of 1 - 10 years
- Prison sentence of 11 - 24 years
- Prison sentence of 25 years to life

### Perceptions of Criminal Offenders

Please answer the following demographic questions.

What is your age? (in years) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Please specify your ethnicity:

- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school or equivalent
- Vocational/technical school
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)

What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Single, never married
- Living with another
- Separated
- Widowed

Difficulties regarding racial issues are a thing of the past.

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5



Andrew Kim is a Asian male, was employed at a local supermarket. He was known to keep to himself and not generally cause trouble. On April 5, 2015, his supervisor found **him** using drugs at work. The supervisor called the police and Mr. Kim was arrested for possession of a controlled substance.

Please answer the following questions. Please select one answer per question.

1. How likely are you to socialize with this individual?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5	2. I f thi s
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person lived in your neighborhood how likely are you to feel safe?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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3. How likely do you believe this person is to reoffend?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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4. How likely is it that if released this person will be a threat?

Not at All 1	Somewhat Likely 2	Neutral 3	Very Likely 4	Definitely 5
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5. How dangerous is the individual to others?

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

6. Should this individual be convicted?

- Yes
- No

7. If convicted, what sentence should this individual receive?

- Probation/Community Supervision
- County Jail 1 - 364 days
- Prison sentence of 1 - 10 years
- Prison sentence of 11 - 24 years
- Prison sentence of 25 years to life

### Perceptions of Criminal Offenders

Please answer the following demographic questions.

What is your age? (in years) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Please specify your ethnicity:

- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school or equivalent
- Vocational/technical school
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)

What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Single, never married
- Living with another
- Separated
- Widowed

Difficulties regarding racial issues are a thing of the past.

Not at All	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C

### Community Resources

1. If you have medical insurance, you can contact your medical provider or behavioral health for a psychological or psychiatric consultation.
2. In case of emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Parkview Community Hospital Medical Center  
3865 Jackson St · (951) 688-2211

Riverside Community Hospital  
4445 Magnolia Ave · (951) 788-3000

Kaiser Permanente Riverside Medical Center  
10800 Magnolia Ave · (951) 247-3183

3. HELPLine is a free, confidential crisis/suicide intervention service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call: (951) 686-HELP or (951) 686-4357
4. 2-1-1 is a toll-free number that provides info and referrals for the health and social services in Riverside County.
5. California Baptist University Counseling Center 951-689-1120  
3510 Adam St., Riverside CA 92504