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The Impact of Juvenile Offender Race on Public Perception of Crime Seriousness

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The Doctorate Program in Clinical Psychology
Illinois School of Professional Psychology
at National Louis University

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Clinical Research Project

This is to certify that the Clinical Research Project of

Megan Whitaker

has been approved by the CRP
Committee on

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as satisfactory for the CRP requirement
for the Doctorate of Psychology degree
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The Impact of Juvenile Offender Race
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Abstract

Public perception of crime is an important focus of research, especially when considering juvenile offenders. However, there is very limited research in this area. This study looked at how the public perceives crime seriousness and how race of the juvenile offender impacts the overall seriousness rating. An online survey that included 15 crime scenarios was completed by 176 participants. It was hypothesized that a crime would be rated as more severe when the juvenile offender is African American as compared to a Caucasian juvenile offender. Results found that participants overall rated the seriousness of offenses as significantly higher for Caucasian offenders than for African American offenders.

Introduction

In 2018, the total population in the United States for youth ages 0–17 was 38,516,794 Caucasians and 11,118,967 African Americans (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2019). However, when comparing juvenile arrest rates in 2018, only 1,792.7 Caucasians, per 100,000 juvenile offenders, were arrested compared to 4,618.3 African Americans (OJJDP, 2019). These numbers reveal an obvious disproportionate representation of African Americans in the juvenile justice system. Not only are African Americans more likely to be arrested, but these individuals are also more likely to receive time in detention centers and less likely to be placed on probation compared to their Caucasian peers (OJJDP, 2019). One study found that African Americans were 2 times more likely to be placed in a secure detention center than non-African Americans, even when a standardized risk assessment was completed and considered (Campbell et al., 2017).

There has been a consistent pattern of a higher representation of African Americans in every aspect of the justice system for both juveniles and adults. Racial bias is defined as the negative treatment towards an individual based solely on their racial categorization (Maddox, 2004). This includes the concept that lighter skin and eye color, straighter hair, narrower nose, and thinner lips, or White Eurocentric phenotypic characteristics, are preferred to African American-like features (Maddox, 2004). Historically, bias based on skin tone has been occurring since the slavery era (Maddox, 2004). Even after the abolishment of slavery, individuals with lighter skin have been afforded better social, educational, and economic opportunities (Maddox, 2004). Social psychologists have conducted research to better understand the complexity of this

concept. This diverse research has included race-based stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Bridges & Steen, 1998). These concepts are seen throughout the different stages of the justice system starting from initial police contact to the sentencing of a defendant.

Disproportionate Minority Contact

There has been some recognition of this racial bias in the justice system by justice system officials and lawmakers. The concept of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) is used to describe the higher representation of African Americans within the juvenile justice system (Brinkley-Rubinstein et al., 2014). The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was created so that states would have to explore whether DMC existed in their juvenile justice system. States are then able determine the causes to help reduce the occurrences of DMC (Jones, 2016). The states that then put into place DMC reduction efforts were provided with federal funds (Brinkley-Rubinstein et al., 2014). Regardless of the efforts that have been established, there has not been an improvement in DMC rates in approximately 20 years (Jones, 2016). DMC is expressed in every aspect of the justice system, but usually begins with initial police interactions, during which authorities determine whether an individual will be further processed. A study completed by Feinstein (2015) found that a majority of police officers who patrol racially diverse juveniles are predominantly Caucasian. Additionally, police officers are more likely to give second chances to Caucasian juveniles compared to juveniles of color (Feinstein, 2015). When interacting with juveniles of color, police officers are also more likely to use unnecessary force (Feinstein, 2015). A study by Jones (2016) gathered data from the OJJDP's DMC Relative Rate Index web-based data entry system for arrest, confinement,

and transfer stages of the juvenile justice system. The data were collected from 10 counties, five of which were urban, where African Americans represented the majority population, and five rural, where Caucasians represented the majority population (Jones, 2016). The results found that overall, African American juveniles represent a higher rate of DMC at arrest, confinement, and transfer stages of the juvenile justice system (Jones, 2016). These results suggest that racial profiling and heavy policing in neighborhoods of color lead to an increased DMC.

Racial Bias of Bail

Once arrested, the racial bias continues through every aspect of the justice system. Various research studies from multiple states have found that an individual's race, for adult offenders, impacts their bail severity. Patterson and Lynch (1991) analyzed an archival data sample of 335 nonnarcotics felony arrests that occurred in Florida from 1985–1986. The goal of the study was to explore the influence of offender and offense characteristics on bail amounts. Results found that non-Whites were less likely to receive bail below the guidelines compared to Caucasians in the state of Florida. Additionally, the typical gender differences in bail severity where females receive a lower bail compared to their male counterparts were not present for non-White individuals (Patterson & Lynch, 1991). Research completed by Ayres and Waldfogel (1994) compiled data from defendants who were arrested, processed, and released by using the services of bond dealers in the state of Connecticut. Results indicated that African American and Hispanic men on average had 19%–35% higher bail amounts when compared to Caucasian men (Ayres & Waldfogel, 1994). Additionally, African American women received bail amounts that were approximately 7.5% higher than Caucasian men

(Ayres & Waldfogel, 1994). The results also found that African American males and females were given a higher bail compared to Caucasians, even when controlling for risk of flight (Ayres & Waldfogel, 1994). Researchers have also discovered that a lower socioeconomic status puts African Americans at a greater disadvantage than it does for Caucasians when it comes to bail severity (Free, 2001). A stage that occurs concurrently with bail is pretrial release. Overall, African Americans are 1.6 times more likely to be detained prior to trial than Caucasians (Free, 2001). Research has looked into the recommendations of pretrial officers and the role that defendant race plays. Free (2001) reviewed 52 studies that looked at presentencing decisions. The studies examined the effect of race on bail, pretrial release, and decisions to dismiss, reject, or prosecute cases (Free, 2001). These studies were conducted starting in 1970 and used a multivariate statistical analysis (Free, 2001). It was found that race was the highest predictor for a more positive pretrial officer recommendation (Free, 2001). Results indicated that Caucasians were more likely to receive positive recommendations, regardless of prior convictions and probation or parole status (Free, 2001).

Prosecution and Racial Bias

Racial bias continues as the prosecutor decides if they will pursue charging the individual and the severity of those charges. The prosecutor has the power to decide whether they will initiate or decline prosecution, and race has a significant impact on this decision. A study completed by Adams and Cutshall (1987) looked at 745 shoplifting cases from prosecution records that occurred between 1974 and 1975 that contained both arrest charges and prosecutor filed criminal charges. Results concluded that Caucasian offenders were more likely than African American shoplifters to have their charges

dropped by prosecutors (Adams & Cutshall, 1987). Meyers (1982) analyzed 16,196 cases from the District of Columbia from 1974–1975 that were filed and disposed by the U.S. Attorney. The goal of the study was to examine the prosecution of felonies and misdemeanors (Meyers, 1982). The study reported that Caucasians were more likely to have their misdemeanor case dropped compared to African Americans with similar charges. Another study obtained data from 54,266 juvenile justice intake records for Caucasian and African Americans in Florida between 1979 and 1981 (Bishop & Frazier, 1988). Results found that African American juvenile offenders in Florida were more likely to be recommended for formal processing compared to Caucasian juvenile offenders with similar charges (Bishop & Frazier, 1988). The next decision a prosecutor has after deciding whether to formally charge an individual is the severity of the charges. Prosecutors have been found to pursue more severe charges against African Americans, including interracial crimes (Babikian, 2015; Free, 2001). A research study that supports this idea collected data from attorneys' standardized information sheet for homicide cases in Florida from 1973–1977 (Radelet & Pierce, 1985). Results found that prosecutors were significantly more likely to charge a felony for Black-on-White homicides compared to White-on-White or Black-on-Black homicides (Radelet & Pierce, 1985). When considering the possibility of a death penalty sentence, one study collected data from the Durham County Courthouse and other public records in 2009 to assess when a prosecutor seeks this charge (Unah, 2009). The prosecutor at the Durham County District Attorney's Office was 5 times more likely to seek the death penalty against an African American defendant with a Caucasian victim than an African American defendant with an African American victim (Unah, 2009). If a prosecutor decides to charge an individual, the next

movement through the justice system would be a trial if the defendant chooses not to accept a plea deal.

Juror Racial Bias

When a defendant goes to a jury trial, the expectation is that the jury will be unbiased and include a group of their peers. However, extensive research has been completed on jurors and mock jurors, or pseudo jurors, that have consistently been found to be racially biased. Juror racial bias tends to be more prevalent when the verdict outcome is more severe for the defendant (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). Researchers Mazzella and Feingold (1994) completed a meta-analysis that included 80 studies that manipulated at least one of the following: physical attractiveness, race, socioeconomic status, or gender. The goal of the study was to examine how personal characteristics of a defendant may influence jurors (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). Results reported found that the type of crime played a significant role in verdict decision process (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). For example, jurors gave longer sentences to African American defendants for crimes such as negligent homicide, and longer sentences to Caucasian defendants for crimes of fraud (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). Similar results were found in studies in which participants attributed a higher degree of guilt towards an African American defendant for the crime of murder (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). When looking at sentencing decisions, Sweeney and Haney (1992) completed a meta-analysis on experimental studies that examined the influence of defendant race on sentencing decisions by mock jurors. Results found that in a mock jury, African American defendants were punished significantly more harshly than Caucasian defendants (Sweeney & Haney, 1992). Additionally, the analysis by Sweeney and Haney found

similar results that racial bias is present when considering the race of the victim, juror, and defendant. Caucasian participants also tended to give African American defendants longer sentences (Sweeney & Haney, 1992).

Victim race plays a role in juror decisions as well. One study examined 225 undergraduate students who were presented with a written trial transcript in which the juvenile defendant's and adult victim's race were varied across conditions (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). It was found that jurors were more likely to give guilty verdicts when the juvenile defendant was African American and the victim was Caucasian compared to an African American victim (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). However, some studies have found that victim-defendant race did not have an impact on a guilty verdict. One study examined data from the Ohio Supplemental Homicide Report which resulted in a death sentencing to assess the impact of race on these sentences (Williams & Holcomb, 2001). It was found that guilty verdicts were not impacted by victim-defendant race, even though contradictorily African American defendants were given longer sentences when crimes were against Caucasian victims (Williams & Holcomb, 2001). Due to varying results of different studies, the study by Mitchell et al. (2005) completed a meta-analysis examining 34 studies that looked at juror decision-making in which the defendant race was manipulated. It was found that there was an impact of racial bias on both verdict and sentencing decisions (Mitchell et al., 2005). Racial bias impact is seen in multiple decisions made by jurors, typically involving African American defendant being found guilty more often and receiving a harsher sentence.

Sentencing and Racial Bias

Not only are there racial disparities in the involvement of individuals in the justice system, but there are also clear differences in the sentencing and punishment of African Americans compared to Caucasians. When making sentencing recommendations, it has been suggested that officials use an individual's race to influence their opinions of an offender's personal attributions and their crime. Officials have been found to judge African American youth as more dangerous due to attributing their criminal activity to their personalities or attitudinal traits, compared to their Caucasian counterparts whose criminal activity was more likely to be attributed to external factors (Bridges & Steen, 1998). These results were found in a study that looked at reports written by probation officers from juvenile court cases (Bridges & Steen, 1998). Considering this, some research on juvenile offenders found that they are viewed as mature, calculating, and incapable of being rehabilitated (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009), while others are viewed as immature, incapable of understanding the consequences of their actions, and unable to be rehabilitated (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). This viewpoint can have a significant impact on possible sentencing. Additionally, it is common for African Americans to have committed more serious crimes and have prior justice system involvement, which can then lead to harsher sentencing recommendations as well. At the time of sentencing, African Americans are significantly more likely to receive harsher sentencing. A report completed by Human Rights Watch (2000) indicated that African Americans with a drug charge are more likely to be sentenced to jail time, even though the estimated drug use rates for African Americans and Caucasians are equivalent. Overall, African Americans are more often given longer and more severe sentences compared to Caucasians (Mitchell

et al., 2005). For example, African American defendants are 4 times more likely to be sentenced to the death penalty for the same crime (Mitchell et al., 2005). When researchers looked at federal courts sentencing, Mustard (2001) found that African American defendants were often given longer sentences even after controlling for crime seriousness. Even at the highest level of the justice system, racial bias is present in the Supreme Court with sentencing guidelines. As the research presented has shown, racial bias exists at every level of the justice system, which greatly impacts an individual's life.

View of Crime Rates

Besides the consistent racial bias within the criminal justice system, another factor to consider is how the public views and perceives crime. Around the world, the public tends to view crime as consistently increasing when in fact crime rates have been decreasing and there has been a change in victimization. Research from the U.S. Department of Justice found that from the years 2011–2020, violent crimes, such as rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault, declined from 22.6 to 16.4 victims per 1,000 people (Morgan & Thompson, 2022). Additionally, from 2012–2020, property crime, such as burglary, residential trespassing, and motor vehicle theft, was found to have decreased from 51.1 to 31.2 victims per 1,000 households (Morgan & Thompson, 2022). Statistics clearly show that crime rates have continued to decrease, although a large crime perception gap remains.

Regardless of how the information is presented to the public, individuals will not have complete comprehension of the crime rates and trends, on both the national and local levels. As a result, the public believes that crime rates are continuously increasing and their personal safety is declining, which tends to result in blaming the government.

When individuals lack faith in their government's ability to control crime when crime rates are low, the public perception of crime will be impacted significantly when crime rates increase (Duffy et al., 2008). However, people tend to believe that the crime rates for their local area are overall lower and handled better than at the national level as a whole (Duffy et al., 2008). Determining how to narrow the perceptual gap is key when dealing with public crime perception. Due to continued incorrect beliefs regarding crime statistics, it is important to consider the sources from which the public gathers information, including the media.

Impact of Media

When considering how the public is influenced by the media in regard to crime perception, it is important to first examine the type of media, such as newspapers, television, or tabloids. Mohan et al. (2011) found that individuals who read tabloid newspapers tended to believe that crime at both the local and national levels had increased significantly; however, reading tabloids had a greater impact on the belief of higher national crime levels. Additionally, those who read daily newspapers that excluded national broadsheets were found to have higher levels of crime perception (Mohan et al., 2011). Callanan (2012) found that reading the newspaper had the strongest media effect on the fear of crime among Caucasians, although reading the newspaper did not influence the perception of local crime among any other demographic group. When looking at newspapers, it was found that most crimes that are reported are covered on the front page (Velasquez et al., 2020). Whether or not an individual chooses to read the crime story or not, the individual will notice the pictures and the headlines presented. However, another study found that reading newspapers has no impact on fear of crime

(Callanan, 2012). Callanan also found that the more an individual watches the news or a crime-reality program, the greater the increase in their fear of crime. Also, when individuals watch local television news, their perceptions of local crime and their fear of crime across all racial and ethnic groups are heightened (Callanan, 2012). In regard to crime-based reality programs, it was found that viewing these programs led to an increase of fear across all races and ethnic groups and increased the perception of local crime among Caucasians (Callanan, 2012). However, the viewing of crime dramas increased perception of local crime among African Americans, with no effect on Latinos or Caucasians, and reduced the fear of crime for Latinos, with no effect on African Americans or Caucasians (Callanan, 2012). The public also understands the media influence to a point. A study by Duffy et al. (2008) found that individuals reported a belief in higher crime rates due to television reports and newspapers.

Regardless of the type of media, research in Peru found that crime news overall has more than doubled from 2013–2017, with the most common type of crime presented being theft (Velasquez et al., 2020). Additionally, Velasquez et al. (2020) found that the news reported on the crimes of house theft, burglary of items such as vehicles or motorcycles, and theft of an individual's wallet or cellphone on the street leads to an increase in crime perception. The media can report on two different types of crime messages—positive and negative. With a positive message, the media is reporting on events such as disbanding a criminal gang or sentencing an individual who has murdered another individual (Velasquez et al., 2020). Most crime news is presented in a negative manner, with a focus on recent murders and theft (Velasquez et al., 2020). It has been found that positive crime news coverage can decrease overall crime perception, although

it takes approximately 3 times more newspaper space for positive crime news to undo the impact and shock value of negative crime news (Velasquez et al., 2020). Whether the message is positive or negative, the media is presenting information in a manner that gives the story drama. The issue with presenting information with a dramatic flair is that research has indicated that more drama results in a more emotional response, which could lead to having stronger effects on risk perception (Wahlberg & Sjoberg, 2000). In other words, the more a story tries to get an individual's attention, the higher the likelihood that it will influence how that individual views crime.

Looking specifically at the individuals who read newspapers and watch crime news, it has been found that women and previous victims of crime tend to be less impacted by negative crime news (Velasquez et al., 2020). The individuals who are the most impacted by crime news are those who have not been a victim of a crime within the past 12 months or those without a direct experience with crime (Velasquez et al., 2020). However, overall fear of crime is highest among victims of crimes, women, African Americans, and Latinos (Callanan, 2012). Women tend to perceive higher levels of local crime and have a higher fear of crime (Callanan, 2012). When considering the perception of local crime risk, it was found that Latinos have the greatest fear of crime, while the difference between African Americans and Caucasians was not significant (Callanan, 2012).

The specific details media provide about a particular crime story is important as well. The public may rate a crime as being more serious depending on how familiar they are with the crime and what the media has portrayed about that particular crime. For instance, Levi and Jones (1985) showed in their study that individuals rated fraud as

being less serious due to having less exposure to fraud and the media having minimal coverage of fraud crimes. The details are especially important when considering the race of the offender. One study found that violent crimes committed by African Americans was the most common story that was presented that featured African American individuals (Entman, 1992). Entman (1992) also found that when African Americans were presented in the media, the individuals were often unnamed, seen in handcuffs and in physical custody, and were less likely to speak for themselves. The issue with how the media is presenting crime is that the media continues to confirm an individual's biases and stereotypes by linking African Americans to criminal behavior.

Public Crime Perception

Research has been completed around the world looking at how people perceive crime. When considering demographic information, multiple studies found that older individuals tend to rank crimes as being more serious compared to their younger counterparts (Adriaenssen et al., 2020; Levi & Jones, 1985; O'Connell & Whelan, 1996; Rotarou, 2018). Additionally, Mohan et al. (2011) found that as age increases, there is a greater impact on perceptions of national crimes compared to crime occurring locally. However, Rotarou, (2018) found that age did not have an impact on crime perception with participants from Chile. When considering education, it was found that higher education and income are typically related to lower perceptions of crime rates (Mohan et al., 2011; Rotarou, 2018). Additionally, these individuals tend to rank crimes as being less serious (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). However, research by Adriaenssen et al. (2020) found that level of education does not impact crime seriousness ratings. Women were found to have a higher fear of crime (Rotarou, 2018) and men were found to have

lower levels of perceiving worsening levels of crimes (Mohan et al., 2011). However, a study looking at the crime seriousness ratings from individuals in England and Wales found that there were no significant differences between men and women (Levi & Jones, 1985), while a study in Ireland found that females rank crimes overall as being more serious (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). Regarding ethnicity of the individual, there was no finding to suggest that one specific race perceives crime as being more serious compared to another, except in the United States (Mohan et al., 2011). Research completed with American participants found that Caucasians tend to rate crimes committed by African American individuals as more severe compared to those within their own race (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). Research also found that an individual's employment has an impact on crime perception. For example, it was found that individuals working in managerial or professional occupations viewed worsening levels of crime (Mohan et al., 2011). Another study comparing crime seriousness ratings of the general public and police officers found that police officers rated violent offenses as being more serious when compared to the public, excluding the offense of assault against a police officer (Levi & Jones, 1985). Also, it was found that the public tend to have higher than average ratings of other offenses except burglary, social security fraud, and theft by a police officer when compared to the ratings of police officers (Levi & Jones, 1985).

One contradictory population throughout the research involves individuals who have been a victim of crime. Results in England found that those who had been a recent victim of a crime perceived crime levels to be more than double compared to individuals who had not been a recent victim of a crime (Mohan et al., 2011). However, the study by Levi and Jones (1985) indicated that those who had been a victim of a crime within the

past year tend to rate crimes as being less serious than those who had been a victim of a crime more than a year ago and the general public (Levi & Jones, 1985). Results in Belgium found that only victims of burglary are impacted by crime seriousness rating in which they rate burglary as being more serious compared to individuals who have not been a victim of burglary (Adriaenssen et al., 2020).

Demographically, when comparing individuals who live in rural areas versus highly populated areas in Chile, it was found that individuals living in rural areas were 3.3 times less likely to have a negative perception of crime (Rotarou, 2018). Similar results were found in rural England, in which those living in less populated areas had a more positive view on crime levels compared to those living in more populated areas with a population greater than 10,000 (Mohan et al., 2011). While it has been found that individuals living in more populated areas perceive crime levels as being higher, those individuals tend to view crime overall as being less serious (Levi & Jones, 1985). This could mean that individuals in those areas are exposed to more crime and as a result are desensitized to the severity of crimes being committed. Additionally, those living in ethnically diverse areas viewed national crime levels as being lower (Mohan et al., 2011) and also rated crimes as being less serious, besides burglary (Levi & Jones, 1985).

Generally, when looking at how the public rates crimes, participants in Belgium ranked violent crimes as being the most serious offense followed by burglary and theft (Adriaenssen et al., 2020). The Belgian participants also tended to rank crimes such as drug trafficking, corporate fraud, and vandalism as being less serious (Adriaenssen et al., 2020). While previous research has looked at how specific demographics generally view crimes as being more or less serious, a study in Ireland examined how different

demographics rate specific crimes. Research has consistently found that older individuals tend to rate crimes generally as being more serious; however, the perceived seriousness of a specific crime such as selling marijuana increases with age, while that of the crime of corruption against the government decreases with age (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). Also, when considering age groups, it was found that middle-aged individuals rank burglary as being the most serious crime (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). Regarding the differences in ranking between men and women, it was found that men tend to rank mugging, burglary, and dole fraud as more serious, while women tend to rank underage sex, fraud against the public and company, and selling marijuana as more serious (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). When considering the race of the individual, stereotypes help shape how individuals rank a crime as being more or less serious. For example, research from the United States found that judgments of African Americans impact how Caucasians rate violent crimes, but not crimes such as embezzlement, which are typically associated with Caucasian criminals (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997).

While the results presented on public crime perception around the world are contradictory, it is clear that individuals are impacted by a multitude of factors, including media and personal bias. How the public perceives crime is an important topic to explore because it has historically been used to create policies and sentencing guidelines around the world.

Rationale

Currently, there is a lack of information regarding the topic of juvenile offenders and how they are perceived by the public. Existing research on the public's perception of juvenile offenders indicates two different viewpoints: Either juvenile offenders are seen

as mature, calculating, and incapable of being rehabilitated or, conversely, as immature, incapable of understanding the consequences of their actions, and unable to be rehabilitated (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). Most research completed in this area has focused on adult offenders. Research on the adult population has found a significant relationship between defendant's race and their sentencing outcome (Everett & Wojtkiewicz, 2002; Mitchell et al., 2005). Not only have justice system officials been found to have this racial bias, but so too the trial jurors (Mitchell et al., 2005; Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). Exploring the impact of race on public perception of juvenile offenders would add valuable data to the field. Gaining a better understanding of public perception with respect to this population would be of great significance due to the impact pejorative judgments and labeling could have on the adjudication process of these youths.

Specific Aims and Hypothesis

The aim of the study was to assess how the public's perspective, or judgment, of a crime varies depending on the race of the juvenile offender involved. It was hypothesized that a crime would be rated as more severe when the juvenile offender is African American as compared to a Caucasian juvenile offender when participants are asked to provide judgment of a hypothetical crime scenario.

Method

Participants

The target sample was 176 participants from the United States, 88 participants in each group, who provided information via a voluntary online survey. Sample size was determined by completing a power analysis. Participants were at least 18 years of age or older and varied in race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Participants needed to have access to the Internet to be able to complete the survey. Recruitment for the study occurred through snowball sampling which asked participants to share the survey and study invitation with other individuals who may have been interested in participating (Kuper et al., 2008). The original study invitation was posted on my personal Facebook page on a shareable post. The invitation to participate in the survey and study can be viewed in Appendix A.

Two hundred responses were initially collected. Twenty-seven cases were deleted due to greater than 10% of the data missing (i.e., most of these 27 participants did not answer any of the crime seriousness rating scenarios), and three additional cases were deleted following a Mahalanobis distance test (1 for the Caucasian group and 2 for the African American group). Two participants were missing data on one scenario and were retained but handled using mean-substituted single imputation. A final sample of 169 participants was obtained (77 in the Caucasian condition, 92 in the African American condition). The final sample is described in greater detail in the Results section.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants were given a brief self-reported demographic questionnaire prior to completing the next section of the study (see Appendix B). Questions asked for participant's age, gender, race, education, occupation, and experiences with the criminal justice system. For these questions, a multiple-choice format was provided for responses, with the exception of the occupation question for which the participant was asked to type in their answer. If one of the multiple-choice responses did not best represent their answer, an "other" option was provided to allow the participant to write in their answer.

Juvenile Offense Scenarios

The measure for this research study involves participants ranking crime seriousness for 15 crime scenarios (see Appendix C), which was adapted from the study by Herzog (2003). In this study, Herzog used a questionnaire that asked participants to evaluate the seriousness of 18 different crime scenarios from 1 (*not serious*) to 10 (*very serious*). The crime scenarios included the following: murder, false tax declaration, burglary, serious assault, false testimony, rape, threats to a witness, arson, drug, robbery, sexual relations with a minor, illegal abortion, theft, fraud, bribery, and concealing evidence (Herzog, 2003). These scenarios included adult offenders, with the ethnicity of the offender and victim alternating between Jewish and Arab (Herzog, 2003). For the current study, adaptations were made to the nature of the crime scenarios such that they are more representative of more common juvenile offenses. These scenarios included murder, burglary, assault, rape, false testimony, arson, drug distribution, buying cigarettes and alcohol, robbery, sexual relations with a minor, theft, curfew violation,

vandalism, truancy, and possession of child pornography. The offender in each scenario was a male juvenile, and the race alternated between Caucasian and African American. The victim's race was not provided in these scenarios and each scenario only contained one victim. Form A was all Caucasian juvenile offenders and Form B was all African American juvenile offenders. Participants ranked each scenario on a Likert scale from 1–10, with one being the least serious and 10 being the most serious. The order in which the crime scenarios were presented was randomly determined, except for the first two scenarios which ranged from the highest and lowest point on the scale to provide the participant with a sense of the range of crime seriousness (Herzog, 2003).

Procedures

The survey was created through the platform SoGoSurvey. The invitation to participate in the study was posted on my personal Facebook page through a sharable post. Potential candidates who were interested in participating in the study first needed to provide informed consent (see Appendix D). All who selected to engage had the opportunity to discontinue at any time. They were informed that the research purpose of the study was to examine the public perception of crimes committed by juvenile offenders. Participants were randomly assigned to a crime scenario (Caucasian vs. African American offender) which was presented through SoGoSurvey. Participants first completed the demographic questionnaire and then proceeded to the juvenile offense scenarios. Each scenario was presented one at a time to the participants, and the participants were required to complete the survey in one session. At the completion of the study, participants were debriefed. In the debrief, supportive resources were provided to participants should any of them had experience some form of distress, which included the

national crisis hotline (1-800-273-8255). The debrief also included the aims of the study and asked participants not to share this information with others until the study has been completed. The script for the debriefing process can be seen in Appendix E.

Statistical Analysis

This study is a randomized survey experiment, similar to the Herzog (2003) study, which means that the independent variable is varied randomly across the crime scenarios. The seriousness values were statistically analyzed for each offense in each research condition to determine significant differences between the scores. Per the Herzog article, the external validity was increased due to the survey being conducted through the telephone, which provided them with a more representative sample. The present study used an online methodology, which hopefully allowed for a representative study.

Prior to completing hypothesis testing, a preliminary analysis of study variables occurred. This examined the characteristics of the data, distributions of scores to determine if there were any outliers, skewness and kurtosis, reliability, validity, and potential confounding variables. The relationship between demographic characteristics, the independent variable, and dependent variable were examined through Pearson's r correlation and ANOVAs. The hypothesis of the study is that a crime will be classified as more serious when the juvenile offender is African American as compared to a Caucasian juvenile offender when participants are asked to assign a level of seriousness to a hypothetical crime scenario. A Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed to assess the reliability of the rating scale. Results of this analysis suggest significant reliability within the rating scales ($\alpha = .91$). An independent-samples t test was completed to test this hypothesis. The independent variable has two levels (i.e., Caucasian and African

American juvenile offender) and the dependent variable is a continuous score (i.e., total rating of crime seriousness).

Results

Two hundred responses were initially collected. Twenty-seven cases were deleted due to greater than 10% of the data missing (i.e., most of these 27 participants did not answer any of the crime seriousness rating scenarios), and three additional cases were deleted following a Mahalanobis distance test (1 for the Caucasian group and 2 for the African American group). Two participants were missing data on one scenario and were retained but handled using mean-substituted single imputation. A final sample of 169 participants was obtained (77 in the Caucasian condition, 92 in the African American condition). The average age of respondents was 39.46 ($SD = 15.47$) and the majority were White (89.9%), females (83.4%), from Indiana (52.4%) or Illinois (17.9%), with a bachelor's degree or higher (62.7%). Table 1 includes the demographic variables of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Data

	Caucasian Condition		African American Condition	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	40.18	15.91	38.86	15.14
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Gender				
Male	14	8.33	12	7.14
Female	63	37.5	78	46.43
Nonbinary	0	0	1	0.60
Ethnicity				
White	71	42.01	81	47.93
Hispanic	3	1.78	3	1.78
Multiracial	2	1.18	2	1.18
Asian	1	0.59	0	0
Black	0	0	3	1.78
South Asian	0	0	2	1.18
Prefer Not to Say	0	0	1	0.59

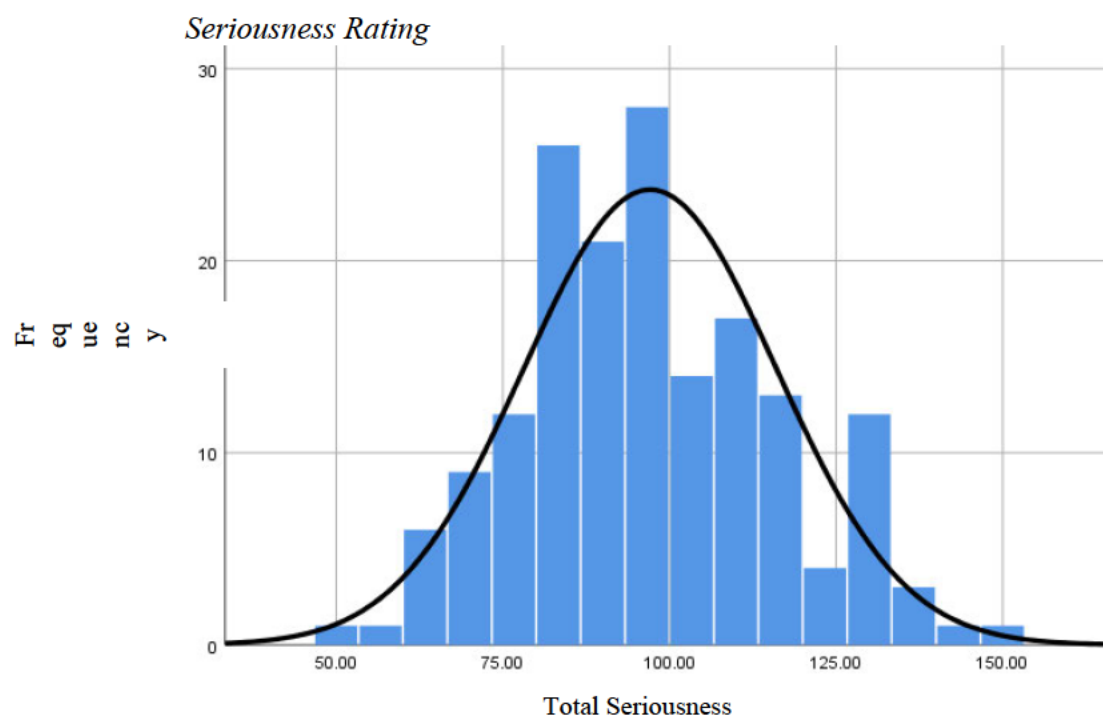
	Caucasian Condition		African American Condition	
Level of Education				
12 or Fewer Years	20	11.83	26	15.38
13–16 Years	32	18.93	35	20.71
17 or More Years	25	14.79	30	17.75
State of Residence				
California	1	0.60	3	1.79
Connecticut	1	0.60	0	0
Florida	2	1.19	3	1.79
Illinois	15	8.93	15	8.93
Indiana	41	24.40	47	27.98
Kentucky	8	4.76	3	1.79
Michigan	4	2.38	4	2.38
Nevada	0	0	1	0.60
Ohio	1	0.60	2	1.19
Texas	1	0.60	1	0.60
Virginia	1	0.60	0	0
Washington	1	0.60	0	0
Wisconsin	1	0.60	2	1.19
Alabama	0	0	1	0.60
Arizona	0	0	2	1.19
Georgia	0	0	1	0.60
Iowa	0	0	1	0.60
Minnesota	0	0	2	1.19
North Carolina	0	0	2	1.19
South Carolina	0	0	1	0.60
Professional Involvement in the Criminal Justice Field				
Yes	2	1.18	5	2.96
No	75	44.38	87	51.48
History of Arrest, Charged, or Sentenced				
Yes	4	2.37	10	5.92
No	73	43.20	82	48.52
Victim of an Adult Offender				
Yes	14	8.28	26	15.38
No	63	37.28	66	39.05
Victim of a Juvenile Offender*				

	Caucasian Condition		African American Condition	
Yes	10	5.95	4	2.38
No	67	39.88	87	51.79

* $p < 0.05$

A distribution of the crime seriousness rating scale was examined, resulting in a mean seriousness rating of 97.08, median seriousness rating of 95.00, and mode serious rating of 83.00 (Figure 1). The skewness of the rating scale was 0.28 and the kurtosis of the rating scale was -0.26.

Figure 1



Chi-square analyses were conducted between the experimental condition and all categorical demographic variables. The only significant difference to emerge was for crime committed by juvenile $\chi^2 (1, N = 169) = 4.03, p = .045$. The analysis indicated that there were more participants who had been the victim of a crime committed by a juvenile in the Caucasian offender condition ($n = 10$) than in the Black offender condition ($n = 4$).

An independent-samples t test was conducted and no significant difference was found between the mean age between groups.

Next, associations between seriousness scores and demographic variables were examined. Participant level of education was condensed into three groups: those with 12 or fewer years of education ($n = 46$), those with 13–16 years ($n = 67$), and those with 17 or more years of education ($n = 55$). An independent-samples t test was conducted to determine the difference in crime seriousness ratings between participants who reported to be a victim of a crime committed by an adult and participants who had not, which was significant, $t(167) = -2.19, p = .030$. Thus, those who were previously a victim of a crime committed by an adult overall rated crimes as less serious ($M = 91.40, SD = 12.70$) than those who have not been a victim of a crime committed by an adult ($M = 98.85, SD = 19.06$). Independent-samples t tests were not significant for gender and being a victim of a crime committed by a juvenile, and a one-way ANOVA comparing crime seriousness across education group was also not significant. A Pearson correlation was conducted between age and crime seriousness rating and indicated a significant positive correlation, $r(167) = .29, p < .001$. Thus, older participants judged crimes as overall more serious.

To test the hypothesis that crimes will be classified as more serious when the juvenile offender is African American as compared to a Caucasian juvenile offender, an independent-samples t test was performed. Contrary to the hypothesis, participants overall rated the seriousness of offenses as significantly higher for Caucasian offenders ($M = 100.54, SD = 19.06$) than for African American offenders ($M = 94.19, SD = 18.49$), $t(167) = 2.19, p < .05$, Cohen's $d = .34$, power = .59.

An exploratory set of *t* tests was conducted to assess difference in seriousness ratings for Caucasian versus African American scenarios for each item of the seriousness scale (Table 2). Of the 15 items, 7, 9, 10, and 13 were significant different. For Item 7 (graffiti), the offense was rated as more serious if the offender was Caucasian ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 2.05$) than if they were African American ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 2.17$), $t(166) = 2.60$, $p = .010$. For Item 9 (false evidence), the offense was rated as more serious if the offender was Caucasian ($M = 6.91$, $SD = 2.04$) than if they were African American ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 2.16$), $t(166) = 2.80$, $p = .006$. For Item 10 (theft), the offense was rated as more serious if the offender was Caucasian ($M = 6.26$, $SD = 2.02$) than if they were African American ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 2.09$), $t(166) = 2.77$, $p = .006$. For Item 13 (possession), the offense was rated as more serious if the offender was Caucasian ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 2.02$) than if they were African American ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 2.08$), $t(166) = 2.91$, $p = .004$.

Table 2

Seriousness Crime Ratings

Item Number	Caucasian		African American	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Item 1 (Curfew)	2.48	1.60	2.14	1.74
Item 2 (Murder)	9.87	0.38	9.90	0.37
Item 3 (Burglary)	7.04	1.71	6.77	1.70
Item 4 (Pornography)	7.19	1.89	6.76	2.12
Item 5 (Battery)	7.40	1.67	7.39	1.64
Item 6 (Truancy)	5.34	2.47	4.86	2.52
Item 7 (Graffiti)*	5.00	2.05	4.15	2.17
Item 8 (Rape)	9.27	0.93	9.16	1.04
Item 9 (False Evidence)*	6.91	2.04	6.00	2.16
Item 10 (Theft)*	6.26	2.02	5.38	2.09
Item 11 (Arson)	8.12	1.55	7.79	1.57
Item 12 (Rape)	5.78	2.48	5.58	2.65
Item 13 (Possession)*	4.39	2.02	3.47	2.08
Item 14 (Robbery)	8.43	1.43	8.21	1.40
Item 15 (Distribution)	7.06	2.02	6.63	2.05

* $p < .05$

Discussion

The hypothesis of the study predicted that crimes would be rated as more severe when the juvenile offender is African American compared to a Caucasian juvenile offender. However, the results did not support the hypothesis, instead finding that crimes committed by Caucasian juvenile offenders were rated as more serious. Contradictory from the current study's results, within the United States, individuals tend to judge violent crimes more seriously for African Americans (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). The study by Hurwitz and Peffley (1997) found that how individuals rate crimes depends on the stereotypes surrounding particular crimes. When looking at the survey, only four items were considered to be significant, or likely due to something greater than chance. Out of the 15 total survey items, these four items included the crime scenarios of graffiti, false evidence, theft, and possession. For the crime scenarios of graffiti, false evidence, theft, and possession, participants rated the crime more serious for Caucasian juvenile offenders. These results could be explained by the fact that these crimes are not typically associated with African Americans. However, when considering international research, Mohan et al. (2011) found that ethnicity of the offender did not impact how a participant perceived crime.

There could be several explanations for why the results do not support the hypothesis. One explanation could be the fact that individuals have an expectation that African American juvenile offenders are more likely to commit a crime and Caucasian juvenile offenders are less likely; thus, when a Caucasian offender commits a crime, it is viewed as being less common and more serious. One explanation for this finding is the concept of availability heuristics. Availability heuristics look at the ease with which

instances or associations can be brought to mind (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). The more frequently an event occurs, the more easily aspects of that event can be recalled (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Considering that African Americans in general are negatively portrayed in the media and African American juveniles are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, it would be understandable that the public would tend to associate criminal behaviors with African American juveniles. However, when a participant is presented with a Caucasian juvenile offender, it goes against what is expected, possibly resulting in participants rating a Caucasian juvenile offender's crimes as being more serious. Also, as mentioned previously, participants could have rated Caucasian juvenile crimes as being more serious due to the fact that the crimes of graffiti, false evidence, theft, and possession are not stereotypical crimes associated with African Americans.

One point to consider is when the survey was released for participants to complete, which was during the beginning of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The BLM movement could have impacted how participants completed a survey regarding African American juvenile offenders, possibly being more careful or aware of their ratings than they would have been prior to the BLM movement. Cognitive dissonance may be able to explain people's change of behavior during the BLM movement. Cognitive dissonance occurs when two cognitions are opposite of one another which creates dissonance (Festinger, 1957). When an individual is experiencing dissonance, they will do what they can to reduce the discomfort they are experiencing (Festinger, 1957). To use cognitive dissonance to explain the results, an individual who was previously inclined to be biased against African Americans became confronted with the

media coverage and discussion that occurred during the BLM movement, resulting in cognitive dissonance. To alleviate the discomfort of the dissonance, the individual began expressing alliance. With that alliance, the participant of the study was more careful with their seriousness rankings. However, due to less exposure of the BLM movement over time, the individual may no longer experience the cognitive dissonance and return to their original biased beliefs. As a result, overall participant seriousness ratings may look significantly different if the survey was released now instead of during the peak of the BLM movement.

Considering the demographic variables of the participants, it was found that individuals who had been a victim of a crime committed by an adult offender rated the crime scenarios as less serious. Research has found contradictory results within the population of individuals who have been a previous victim of a crime. Supporting the findings of the current study, Levi and Jones (1985) found that individuals who had been a victim of a crime within the previous year rated crimes as being less serious. Other studies have found that individuals who had been a victim of a crime perceived crime levels as less serious (Mohan et al., 2011). Additionally, victims of crimes were found to be the most impacted by crime news (Callanan, 2012). When considering age, older participants in the present study rated the crime scenarios as more serious. Multiple studies have also found that older individuals tend to rate crime as being more serious (Adriaenssen et al., 2020; Levi & Jones, 1985; O'Connell & Whelan, 1996; Rotarou, 2018). However, Mohan et al. (2011) found that as age increases, the greatest impact occurs on the perception of crimes that transpire on a national level compared to a local level.

Initial exclusionary criteria included individuals who have professional involvement within the criminal justice system. However, due to an insignificant number of individuals reporting this, those participants were not excluded. The reason behind this initial exclusionary criterion was due to the possible bias that individuals who work within the criminal justice system may have as evidenced by previous research (Adams & Cutshall, 1987; Babikian, 2015; Bishop & Frazier, 1988; Bridges & Steen, 1998; Feinstein, 2015; Free, 2001; Meyers, 1982; Mitchell et al., 2005; Patterson & Lynch, 1991; Radelet & Pierce, 1985; Unah, 2009). If this study were to be replicated with a larger participant size, then this exclusionary criterion should be considered.

Limitations

There are several limitations to consider with this study. When creating the survey, no formal definition of seriousness was included in the directions. This may present an issue because the way in which researchers define seriousness may not correspond with how the public or participants define the term. When some people think of the term seriousness, they may be considering whether or not an individual deserves punishment (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). Research found that individuals who scored high in punitiveness also had significantly higher ratings of crime seriousness (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). Also, seriousness is typically viewed as a complex variable by researchers that has multiple dimensions, including wrongfulness and harmfulness (O'Connell & Whelan, 1996). Considering the available research, defining the term seriousness, or even using a different term, would have allowed participants clearer directions on how to rate the crime scenarios presented.

Another limitation to consider is the smaller participant size and the homogeneity of the participant demographics. For example, a majority of the participants were Caucasian and lived in Kentucky, Indiana, or Illinois. There was an overall lack of participation within racial groups besides African Americans and Caucasians. Having a wider range of demographics would allow the results to be more generalizable within the United States. Additionally, having an increase in participants from around the United States may significantly change the results due to higher populated areas tending to be more liberal.

Additionally, it is important to note that a majority of research completed in this area is from several decades ago and may be outdated. The results of the study may actually be a more accurate representation of the current beliefs of the population. However, due to the smaller participant size, an accurate assessment of the possible shift in public perception cannot be determined. Further and more complex research needs to be completed in this area to better assess current public perception.

Future Directions

In regard to possible future directions, the study would benefit from being completed by an increased number of diverse individuals. The results may change depending on the region of the participants, as well as the race of the participants. As previous research has found, those living in rural areas tend to have a lower and more positive perception of crime (Mohan et al., 2011; Rotarou, 2018). With a wider range of participants from more populated areas, the overall ratings of crime seriousness may change significantly. Also, as research has shown within crime perception, each country has different concerns and thoughts regarding crime. Overall, most countries tend to have

a lack of research regarding how the public perceives juvenile offenders. Continued research in this area is important because how a juvenile offender is treated and viewed can impact future possible crime.

Additionally, it would be interesting to see if the results change depending on the political climate. When the current study was conducted, racial inequalities and injustice were receiving widespread media coverage and protests were occurring in neighborhoods throughout the United States. The public was facing constant exposure to racial issues, regardless of whether the individual supported what was happening. Participants could have been impacted due to the mere exposure of the news. Collecting participant survey results during a time in which racial injustice is not at the forefront of the public's mind might change results in a way that is more expected and supported by the hypothesis presented. Another thing to consider would be the impact of the possible cognitive dissonance associated with the BLM movement or similar situations and how that impacts people's perceptions of crime.

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Appendix A

Hello, my name is Megan Whitaker and I am a doctoral candidate in the clinical psychology program at Illinois School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University. I am currently conducting research for my dissertation which examines public perception of crimes committed by juvenile offenders. If you are willing to participate, please click the link provided. Data collection will occur from August 1, 2020 to January 1, 2021.

To participate in the study, individuals must be at least 18 years of age. If you work in the criminal justice system in any capacity (for example, lawyer, judge, clerk, administrative assistant, etc.), you will be unable to participate in this study. Participation in this study involves taking an online survey that should take approximately 15 minutes and should be completed in one session. Participation in this study and responses will be anonymous and voluntary. No personally identifiable information will be collected, and IP address will not be recorded.

To participate in the study, please click the link below:

If there are any questions about the study, please contact me at

████████████████████. Thank you for your consideration and time. If you know anyone who you think would be willing to participate in this study, please forward this invitation.

Appendix B

1. What is your age?
 - a. Dropdown list with ages 18-100

2. What gender do you identify as?

Dropdown list with the following options:

 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Third Gender
 - d. Male-to-Female Transgender
 - e. Female-to-Male Transgender
 - f. Other: Write in option_____

3. What ethnicity do you identify as?

Dropdown list with the following options:

 - a. American Indian and Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino
 - e. Multiracial
 - f. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Other: Write in option_____

4. What is your highest level of education?

Dropdown list with the following options:

 - a. Some High School
 - b. High School Diploma
 - c. Certificate Program
 - d. Some College
 - e. Associate's Degree
 - f. Bachelor's Degree
 - g. Master's Degree
 - h. Doctorate Degree
 - i. Other: Write in option_____

5. What is your current occupation?
 - a. Write in option_____

6. What is your official state of residence?
 - a. Dropdown list with all 50 states and the District of Columbia listed

7. Do you have a history of professional involvement in the criminal justice field (for example, lawyer, judge, clerk, administrative assistant, etc)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. Have you ever been arrested, formally charged or sentenced in the criminal justice field?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

9. If you answered yes to the previous question, when did your involvement in the criminal justice system occur?
 - a. Under the age of 18 years old
 - b. 18 years old and older
 - c. Both

10. Have you ever been a victim of a crime committed by a juvenile offender?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

11. If you answered yes to the previous question, how long ago did this occur?
 - a. Dropdown list of how many years ago the incident occurred

12. Have you even been a victim of a crime committed by an adult offender?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

13. If you answered yes to the previous question, how long ago did this occur?
 - a. Dropdown list of how many years ago the incident occurred

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile male spray paints a side of a business' building.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile male takes a same-aged female on a date. During the date, he forces the female to engage in sexual relations, and continues despite her telling him no repeatedly and physically trying to stop him.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile is called to a police station to give evidence about a friend suspected of committing a crime. With the intention of protecting his friend, who did commit the crime, he gives false evidence.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile enters a pawnshop and while no one is looking he, slips a cell phone into his pocket. He leaves the shop without paying for it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile male was setting off fires and intentionally caught the neighbor's garage on fire.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

An 18-year-old Caucasian (African American) juvenile male has consensual sex with a 15-year-old individual female.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile gets pulled over by police and police search his vehicle. Police find cigarettes and an unopened bottle of vodka in the vehicle.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile male enters a gas station, pointing a gun at the clerk, and steals \$50 worth of product and \$700 in cash.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

A(n) Caucasian (African American) juvenile sells marijuana and Xanax to his peers at school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(not at all serious) (most serious)

Appendix D

My name is Megan Whitaker and I am a doctoral candidate in the clinical psychology program at Illinois School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University. I am currently conducting research for my clinical research project (dissertation equivalent) which examines public perception of crimes committed by juvenile offenders. For this research project, you will be asked to share basic demographic information, such as age, gender, race, education level, current occupation, and current state residence. Additionally, you will be asked to give your opinion of the level of seriousness of each crime scenario presented. This survey will be completed through a computer with Internet access and will remain confidential. This online survey should take approximately 15 minutes and should be completed in one session.

Your responses to this survey will remain confidential, including your identifying information and IP address, and will never be shared with anyone affiliated with or anyone outside of National Louis University. Only the supervising professor and myself will have access to the demographic information. All data will remain in a password protected computer and/or in a locked cabinet behind a locked office door. Once the study is completed and you would like to be provided with the results, please email me at

████████████████████.

The possible risks or ill effects from participating in this study are considered to be minimal. There is a small possibility that answering some of the questions may evoke some negative emotions. Please feel to contact me if you would like to discuss any negative emotional reactions you experience. In the unlikely chance you experience a

mental health emergency during or after participating in this study please call 9-1-1 or the national crisis hotline (1-800-273-8255).

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. There are no penalties for withdrawing from the study. Please note that for this research to be of maximum utility, completing the survey in its entirety is strongly encouraged and would be very much appreciated. The larger the number of responses to all questions the more complete the data analysis will be. Please feel free to ask any questions or make any comments prior to participating in the study. By checking the box below, you are confirming that you are at least 18 years of age and are willing to continue with the study. If you choose to participate, thank you, as your time and perspective are valuable and greatly appreciated.

By clicking this box, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years of age and have read the above consent and agree to participate in the study.

Please contact the following individuals with your questions or concerns:

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Appendix E

This study examines public perception of crime seriousness depending on a juvenile offender's race. In this study, all participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. Additionally, participants were asked to rate how serious a crime scenario was, as perceived by each participant. Every participant was provided with the same scenarios; however, some individuals received scenarios with Caucasian juvenile offenders whereas others received scenarios with African American juvenile offenders. For this study, we are interested in examining whether ethnicity affects perceptions of a crime.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact [REDACTED]. In the event that you experience emotional distress or a mental health emergency during or after participating in this study please call 9-1-1 or the national crisis hotline (1-800-273-8255). If you know any individuals who may be interested in participating in the study, please forward the link (_____) to them. Please refrain from sharing the purpose of the study and specific details with other individuals who may decide to participate in the study in order to maintain the integrity of the study and avoid influencing their responses.