

DANGEROUS OPINIONS: PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES ON
JURY DECISION MAKING

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine whether a potential juror would give harsher sentences to defendants based only on the manipulation of the defendant's personal hobby. This was investigated by manipulating the hobby through a hypothetical manslaughter scenario in a vignette. Participants were asked to answer questions pertaining to the defendant's guilt and potential sentencing. Results indicate that participants' sex, participants' authoritarianism, and defendant's hobby were significant factors. Significant interactions were found pertaining to whether the defendant should receive counseling across sex by violence and sex by avocation. These results are evidence that the use of jurors in the legal system is flawed and needs to be improved upon. Future research should examine an age distribution closer to the national mean, and the online setting should be replaced with an in person mock jury that will have more realistic group dynamic and higher ecological validity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I wish to thank my professors, Dr. Valerie Sims, Dr. Matthew Chin, and Dr. Mason Cash for their guidance and support throughout the course of my thesis. It was Dr. Sims who put me on this path nearly eighteen months ago and, without her kind encouragement, I would have never believed I could write and defend a thesis. I would like to thank my family for putting up with my incessant complaining these past several months and my friends for keeping me sane in the few moments I could spare from this project. Finally, I wish to thank the members of the Applied Cognition and Technology Lab (ACAT) for being my second set of eyes and assisting with anything I needed on this project. My professors, family, friends, and peers have made this thesis possible and without one of these components my thesis would not have become a reality.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the creation of video games, several people and the media have portrayed video games to be detrimental to those individuals who play them. In 1976, the creation of a video game, *Death Race*, caused so much uproar from citizens that the television show *Sixty Minutes* did a special on the pixelated racing game, where the player's car ran over stick figure gremlins, and it was banned almost immediately after it became available for the public, with some of the machines even being pulled out of stores and set on fire by enraged protestors (Kent, 2001).

This active disdain for violent video games has not stopped, but video games have become more readily available—and in some cases, more violent. A recent Harris Poll found that of 2,278 Adults surveyed in the United States, 1,321 of them believed there was a causal link between violent video games and those individuals playing those video games (Smith, 2013) and a market research study consisting of 1,050 adults in the United States found that 89% of their participants believed that violence in video games is a problem (Common Sense Media, 2013).

Although the public and the media are often very outspoken against violent video games, the research that has been completed has predominantly spawned two separate schools of thought. Several researchers have found a link between violent video game play and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson, 2004), while many prominent researchers in the field have indicated no such link in their respective studies (Fergusson et al., 2008; Williams & Skoric 2005).

Anderson and Bushman (2001) performed the first ever comprehensive meta-analytic review of the scientific literature covering all entries in PsycINFO up to the year 2000, which retrieved 35 research reports spanning 54 independent studies and 4,262 participants. There

review found that the relationship between video game violence and aggression yielded a positive and significant effect size. The review also determined that short-term exposure to violent video games causes a temporary increase in aggression. Finally, Anderson and Bushman found that exposure to video game violence are correlated with individuals' aggression in the real world.

Anderson (2004) revisited his flagship study by examining more articles and analyzing each article as one of five possible types of outcome variables: aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, cardiovascular arousal, and a decrease in helping behavior. The updated approach yielded a significant causal link between violent video games and the five outcome variables tested.

Fergusson et al. (2008) performed two studies examining undergraduate students at two public universities. The first study had males and females play either a violent or non-violent video game and found that males were more violent than females, but previous exposure to violent video games did not cause any differences in aggression. The second study examined exposure to violent video games, family violence, trait aggression, and violent criminal acts. Results indicated that family violence, trait aggression, and violent criminal acts were predictive of violent crime, but exposure to violent video games was not.

Williams and Skoric (2005) completed a longitudinal study where participants were assigned to a very violent massively multi role playing game (MMRPG) or a control group that did not play a violent video game. It was hypothesized that individuals in the experimental group would have more aggressive behavior and social interactions. Participants were tested before the

study began and again after one month of playing their assigned video game. The data indicated that violent video games do not cause increases in real-world aggression.

In 2011, the Supreme Court reviewed the research and with a 7-2 majority struck down a California law, which banned the sales of violent video games to minors (*Brown V. Entertainment Merchants Assn.*, 2011), yet the media still mentions violent video games after any violent event where the perpetrator was a teenager or in their early twenties—whether or not the perpetrator even played video games. This was the case with the Virginia Tech shooting, where Dr. Phil McGraw publicly explained that violent video games were a causal factor for this horrible tragedy (McGraw, 2007) and it was later revealed that the perpetrator, Cho, had scarce exposure to violent video games (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Fergusson's (2008) meta-analysis on school shootings' link with violent video games has even shown that as violent video game sales by units have increased, violent crime has decreased dramatically.

The present experiment is not meant to solve the debate between whether or not violent video games can have a negative impact on a player's real world personality, but rather to see whether the beliefs of potential jurors are swayed without conclusive evidence. The current experiment will utilize jury vignettes. A vignette is a short descriptive hypothetical scenario, which can describe several things, including a character or an event.

Mock jury simulations have been used countless times to determine experimental factors that illustrate biases that potentially effect jurors making decisions about court cases. It is important to note that although jurors are responsible for finding whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty in criminal cases, the judge is the one who determines the sentence for the defendant. It is difficult to quantify guilty versus more guilty on a Likert scale, and thus in many

mock juror studies, as well as my own, participants are asked to give an incarceration sentence to give researchers an accurate approximation of guilt.

Past juror simulations have been able to determine that more severe sentences could be given to those defendants who are less attractive, have lower socio-economic status, and are of African-American descent (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). Mossiére and Dalby (2008) have found that the participants' age also greatly effects the outcome of the mock juror sentencing and found that those participants who are younger are more likely to give a sentence of guilt, while those older participants—when they do find the defendant guilty—give much harsher sentences in terms of sentence length.

Mazzella and Feingold (1994) utilized a meta-analysis of 80 studies examining the effects of physical attractiveness, race, socioeconomic status, and gender on mock juror simulations. The experiment showed that in general perpetrators who are more physically attractive, have a higher socioeconomic status, and are female, received more lenient sentences, but for some crimes there was no effect present.

In Mossiére and Dalby's (2008) study, 239 participants were pulled from the community and a university. The participants fell into three distinct age groups: 18-25, 30-45, and 46-60. The experiment gave participants two possible manslaughter scenarios. The only difference between the two vignettes are the names of the perpetrator with one being female, Rachel, and the other being male, Robert. My present experiment has been modeled after this study. Rather than manipulate gender, the present experiment manipulates hobby, while leaving the rest of my vignette untouched.

Porter and Wrightsman's (2007) novel, *Forensic Psychology*, suggests that jurors are very poor at ignoring their past experience and allowing their interpretations to influence their jury decision making, known as juror bias. Another form of bias is known as the third person effect, which has been extensively studied in media (Davison, 1983). The third person effect pertains to responding differently to a question based on one's social distance from the subject, or how much you separate yourself from the person in question.

One example of the third person effect was found in a study where parents were asked if they believed violent video games negatively affected children (Kutner et al., 2007). Nearly all parents in the study reported that they believed violent video games negatively affected children, however when asked about their own children they stated that violent video games had little to no effect on their behavior. The criminal court system in the United States is meant to have impartial jurors use only the facts presented in the case to determine the innocence or guilt of a defendant, but when a juror uses these implicit biases, the defendant may no longer receive a fair and impartial trial.

The simulated jury experiment will have participants read a jury vignette with one manipulated variable—hobby about a hypothetical crime and answer a set of questions pertaining to guilt and sentencing, as well as complete Altemeyer's Right Wing Authoritarian Scale (2006). It is predicted that, holding sex constant, of the five hobby variables tested: violent video game (first person shooter), non-violent video game (puzzle), violent sport (hockey), non-violent sport (tennis), and a control (reading), participants will give the harshest sentence to those perpetrators who play violent video games. It is important to note that reading was present in each experimental vignette as a lesser hobby and the control simply made reading the main

hobby. First person shooter video games and puzzle video games were chosen as variables over specific violent and non-violent video games depicting these genres due to individuals rating games they are familiar with more favorably than generic video games (Ivory & Kalyanaraman, 2009).

In addition, it was predicted that the younger the age of the participant, the shorter the incarceration sentence given to the perpetrator will be, within a particular experimental condition. Additionally, for those participants who are considered authoritarian based on a median split distribution of the Right Wing Authoritarian scale data, it is hypothesized that those participants will assign sentences of guilt with more frequency and assign a greater number of years for incarceration.

Finally, secondary hypotheses were made regarding restricting access to vulnerable populations, additional rehabilitation for the hypothetical perpetrator, and the purchasing of firearms. These variables have been used in previous studies (Sims et. Al, 2007) and it was predicted that variable differences will be present in the aforementioned areas across sex, violence, and avocation.

METHOD

Participants

Four hundred and fifteen students (226 male and 189 female) from a south eastern metropolitan area in the United States participated in this study. The mean age of participants in the study was 22 ($SD = 5.84$), with participants ranging in age from eighteen to fifty five. Forty percent of the participants were computer science majors and twenty two percent were psychology majors. An additional sixty four participants completed the study, but were eliminated due to failing a manipulation check.

Design

The Study utilized a 2 (male vs. female) x 2 (violent vs. non-violent) x 2 (video game vs. sport) between-subjects design with the control, reading, being used to check for sentencing differences without avocation or violence included. Hobbies were used as a predictor variable with the following hobbies being randomly assigned to defendants in the jury vignette: first person shooter (violent video game), hockey (violent sport), puzzle games (non-violent video game), tennis (non-violent sport), and reading (control). Gender of the participants was used as a subject variable. Criterion variables were the social restrictions and recommended punishments given by participants within the study.

Materials

Participants read one of five fictitious scenarios using the following format:

On March 13, 2012 at 4:47 pm, police were dispatched to the first block of NE Second Avenue where a person was reported to be dead on the scene. Several eyewitnesses reported that the victim and Michael Williams were in a heated argument when he forcefully pushed the victim, causing the victim's head to hit the cement, resulting in the victim's death. Williams showed little remorse after the incident.

Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, reads regularly, and spends the majority of his free time playing first person shooter video games/hockey/puzzle-based video games/tennis.

Michael Williams has been charged with manslaughter and currently awaits trial. You are a member of the jury sitting on the trial and will cast your vote as to whether you believe the defendant to be guilty or not guilty of the accused crime and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire based on your previous response.

Florida Statute 782.07 defines manslaughter as "The killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or culpable negligence of another, without lawful justification..."

The fifth scenario replaced the final sentence in paragraph two with, "Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search

of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, and spends the majority of his free time reading.

After finishing the jury vignette, participants were asked to respond to twelve questions. Two of the questions asked participants to input the number of years the defendant should be incarcerated (0-15) and placed on probation (0-99), while the remaining ten questions utilized a Likert Scale from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). The ten questions which were modeled after the Sims et al. study (2007) are listed below and abbreviations are used for the remainder of the paper.

1. The defendant is guilty (Guilt).
2. The defendant should be incarcerated (Incarceration).
3. The defendant should be given probation (Probation).
4. The defendant should be allowed to work with children (Children).
5. The defendant should be allowed to purchase a gun (Firearm).
6. The defendant should be allowed to work with the elderly (Elderly).
7. The defendant should receive counseling (Counseling).
8. The defendant should be allowed to work with animals (Animals).
9. The defendant should be forced to complete community service (Community Service).
10. The defendant should be allowed to adopt an animal (Adopt).

After completing the above questions, participants partook in the most recent Right Wing Authoritarian Scale (RWA) survey which consists of twenty-two questions, with an additional question presented as a manipulation check (Altemeyer, 2006). The first two questions do not

count towards the participants' authoritarian scale and half of the remaining questions are negatively scored. A right-wing authoritarian is an individual who submits to authoritarian figures, adheres to societal norms, and is hostile towards individuals who do not follow these practices (Stenner, 2009). Participants were then asked demographic questions, which included familiarity with the variable in the participants' vignette, relevant jury experience, and additional manipulation checks.

Procedure

All participants completed the questionnaire online through an external Qualtrics' link. The majority of participants gained access to the study through SONA, while the remaining participants were drawn from professors that offered the online survey to their students as an alternative assignment for extra credit. Prior to the start of the study, participants signed an informed consent stating that the survey would pertain to simulated jury decision-making. Upon completion of the study, participants received a debriefing statement, which explained the purpose of the study and listed contact information for the researchers. Before any data collection began, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university where the study was completed.

RESULTS

Incarceration Sentence by Condition

A one way ANOVA comparing five hobbies: first person shooter video games, puzzle video games, hockey, tennis, and reading was completed analyzing incarceration sentence. Listed in order of harshest sentence the variables were as follows: first person shooter video games ($M=6.77$, $SD=4.53$), puzzle video games ($M=6.60$, $SD=4.58$), reading ($M=6.42$, $SD=4.59$), hockey ($M=6.01$, $SD=4.24$), and tennis ($M=5.90$, $SD=4.46$). Although there was no significant effect, the trend matches the hypothesis that violent video games would receive the harshest punishment.

Incarceration Sentence by Age

A linear regression model was generated to see if age was a significant predictor of jail time. It was predicted that the younger the age of the participant the harsher the sentencing. There was a marginally significant correlation ($r= -0.94$, $p=.056$) found between age and jail time, however the data was in the opposite direction of the prediction.

Incarceration Sentence by Authoritarianism

A one way ANOVA was run utilizing a median split ($Md=61$) on authoritarianism based on the Right Wing Authoritarian Scale. The authoritarian group consisted of 205 participants and the remaining 210 participants were considered not authoritarian by contrast. It was hypothesized that those individuals who were authoritarian would give more severe incarceration sentences than those participants who were not. A significant effect was found $F(1, 413)=5.83$, $p=.02$ where individuals who were authoritarian, above the median, ($M=6.87$, $SD=4.67$) gave

significantly harsher sentences than those individuals who were not considered authoritarian ($M=5.82, SD=4.21$).

Guilt by Authoritarianism

A one way ANOVA was completed using the same median split seen above. It was additionally hypothesized that individuals who were authoritarian ($M=5.39, SD=1.31$) would assign guilt at a higher frequency than those who were not considered authoritarian ($M=5.27, SD=1.40$).

Although no significant effect was found $F(1, 413)=0.85, p=.36$ the results are trending with the aforementioned hypothesis.

Specific Variables

A 2 (sex) x 2 (violence) x 2 (avocation) ANOVA was completed for the following twelve variables: guilt, incarceration, incarceration time, probation, probation time, children, firearm, elderly, counseling, animals, community service, and adopt. For the purpose of this experiment, marginally significant results at $p < 0.10$ will be reported.

There was a main effect for sex for the following variables: see table 1. For the italicized variables, lower numbers indicate endorsement of greater restrictions.

Table 1. Significant and marginally significant main effects for sex.

Variable	Males	Females	F	p-Value
Incarceration Time	$M=5.88, SD=4.49$	$M=6.85, SD=4.36$	3.80	.052*
<i>Children</i>	$M=3.61, SD=1.61$	$M=3.07, SD=1.54$	9.70	.002
<i>Firearm</i>	$M=2.81, SD=1.67$	$M=2.24, SD=1.48$	10.47	.001
<i>Elderly</i>	$M=4.03, SD=1.58$	$M=3.25, SD=1.62$	19.51	<.0005

<i>Counseling</i>	<i>M=5.98, SD=1.07</i>	<i>M=6.34, SD=0.97</i>	10.22	.002
<i>Animals</i>	<i>M=4.61, SD=1.50</i>	<i>M=3.93, SD=1.67</i>	15.42	<.0005
Community Service	<i>M=5.43, SD=1.32</i>	<i>M=5.81, SD=1.19</i>	7.45	.007
<i>Adopt</i>	<i>M=4.91, SD=1.52</i>	<i>M=4.28, SD=1.72</i>	12.74	<.0005

There was a main effect for violence for the following variables: see table 2.

Table 2. Significant and marginally significant main effects for violence.

Variable	Non-Violent	Violent	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>-Value
Probation	<i>M=5.97, SD=1.62</i>	<i>M=5.61, SD=1.72</i>	3.60	.059*
Probation Time	<i>M=6.34, SD=9.02</i>	<i>M=9.98, SD=18.32</i>	5.05	.025
Community Service	<i>M=5.71, SD=1.27</i>	<i>M=5.49, SD=1.28</i>	2.90	.090*

There were no main effects found for avocation in this experiment.

Should the defendant receive counseling

There was a significant Sex by Violence interaction, $F(1,326)=6.31, p=.013$. For the non-violent condition males ($M=5.88, SD=1.18$) were less likely to endorse counseling than females ($M=6.52, SD=0.94$). However, for the violent condition males ($M=6.08, SD=0.92$) and females ($M=6.16, SD=1.97$) similarly endorsed counseling.

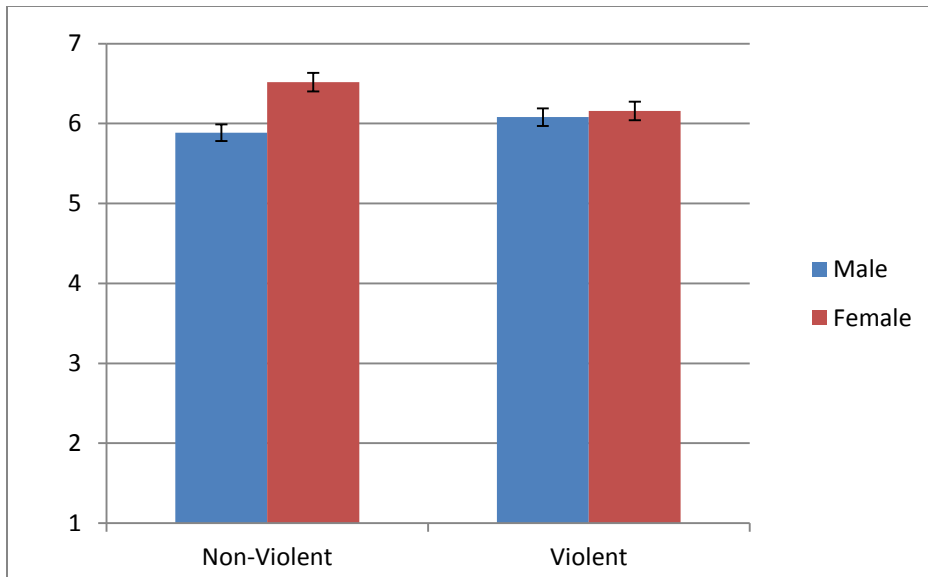


Figure 1: Sex by violence interaction for the counseling variable.

There was also a significant Sex x Avocation interaction $F(1, 326)=5.40, p=.021$. For the game condition males ($M=6.13, SD=.84$) and females ($M=6.24, SD=1.09$) similarly endorse counseling. However for the sport condition, females ($M=6.45, SD=.84$) were more likely to endorse counseling than males ($M=5.83, SD=1.24$).

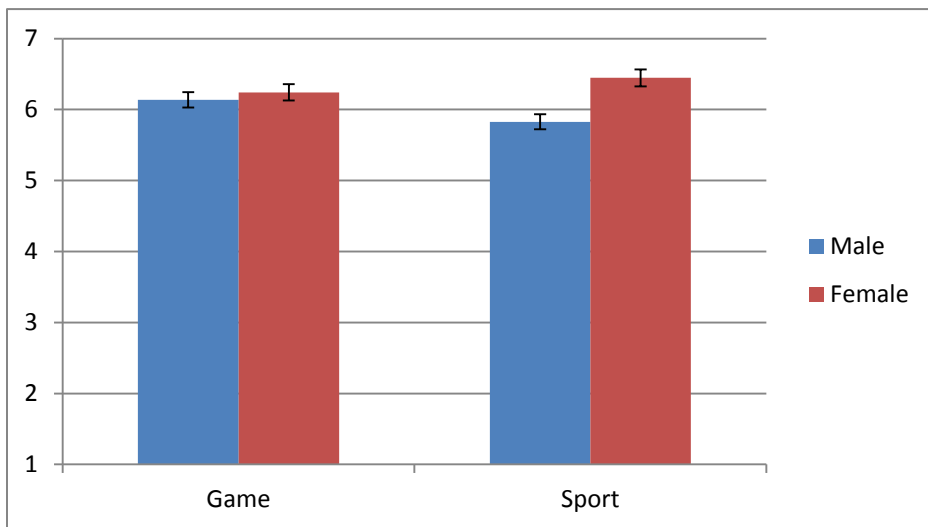


Figure 2: Sex by avocation interaction for the counseling variable.

Should the defendant be allowed to purchase a firearm

There was a marginally significant Sex x Avocation interaction $F(1, 326)=3.29, p=.071$. For the game condition males ($M=2.51, SD=1.52$) were only slightly more lenient than females ($M=2.25, SD=1.57$), however for the sport condition males ($M=3.10, SD=1.76$) were considerably more lenient than their female counterparts ($M=2.22, SD=1.39$).

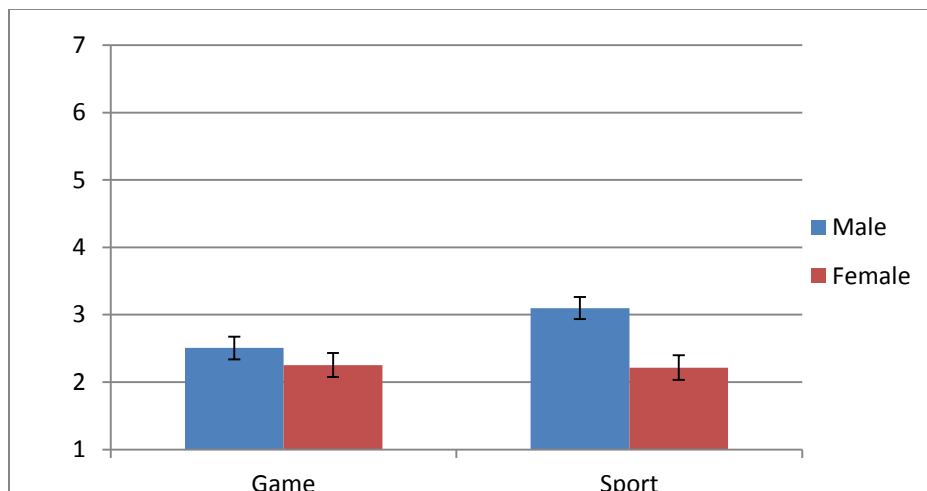


Figure 3: Sex by avocation interaction for the gun variable.

DISCUSSION

It was hypothesized that different types of avocation with differing violence levels would result in differing incarceration sentences for the same crime, with the violent video game category receiving the harshest sentence. The data trended in this direction with violent video games receiving the highest average incarceration sentence, but there was no significant effect. A possible explanation for this finding is that guilt has historically been the hardest question to answer in a court of law and incarceration sentence is a direct extension of guilt.

It is important to note that in a true criminal trial, the jury would determine the defendant's guilt, but the judge would assign a jail sentence to the perpetrator. The judge is the assigner of the sentence due to the fact that twelve individuals would have a very difficult time deciding on an incarceration sentence and the judge is the interpreter of the law who is familiar with sentencing for particular crimes. Participants were asked to assign incarceration sentences because it allows for a secondary analysis of guilt in addition to the seven point Likert scale, where it was predicted that few individuals would chose the extremes of the scale.

With the data trending towards defendants who spent the majority of their free time playing violent video games incurring the harshest incarceration sentence, it is possible that participants were not able to give unbiased judgment in the experiment. In a simulated experiment, this finding is not startling, but in a real jury case this could mean an individual who would otherwise have been acquitted could receive a sentence of guilt.

The media has implied that violent video games cause individuals to become violent and countless studies have been completed on the matter. These results indicate that potential jurors do not see violent video games as being inherently different than any other violent activity.

Violence indicates harsher level of punishments for variables rather than avocation, which is a finding indicating that violent video games may be a subject that is not given any more weight than any other violent avocation in a court setting. Engaging in violent avocations only increased the sentencing that does not occur in court settings, suggesting that participants are able to differentiate their personal views from their job as a potential juror.

A secondary hypothesis was that participants who were younger in age would give a harsher incarceration sentence to the defendant and no significant result was found. The vast majority of individuals who partook in the study fell within a very small average age group, which resulted in an insignificant finding.

It was predicted that individuals who were authoritarian would be more likely to give harsher incarceration sentences and assign guilt more frequently. The results indicated that those who were authoritarian were significantly more likely to give harsher sentences. In addition, although authoritarian individuals did not significantly assign guilt more often, the data was trending in the predicted direction. These results lead to an interesting interpretation because in a real jury trial the incarceration sentence would not be determined by the jury and the sentence of guilt was trending yet not significant. The incarceration sentence can be used as a secondary determinant of participant's willingness to find the accused guilty for the purposes of this experiment and could lead to authoritarian participants over assigning sentences of guilt. If the defense attorney is not able to accurately figure out which jurors are authoritarian during voir dire, the only time attorneys may ask the jurors questions, then defendants who would otherwise be innocent could be sent to jail simply due to the personality of a juror.

Sex of participant was the most prevalent variable in the study resulting in a significant main effect for seven criterions (children, firearm, elderly, counseling, animals, community service, adopt) and a marginally significant main effect for an eighth criterion (incarceration time). A significant difference in sentencing because of sex is not an uncommon occurrence in mock jury settings. This finding is also supported by other studies that examined gender gaps in sentencing and found that females are more likely to give harsher punishments than men (Applegate, Cullen, and Fisher 2002). This is probably the most startling effect as juries are rarely balanced for sex and women were harsher in nearly all variables in the study. This could mean that for a truly unbiased case the jury must be split evenly between males and females for jury cases.

The manipulation of violence in the study resulted in a significant main effect for probation time and marginally significant effects for probation and community service. It is interesting that in a jury scenario when a defendant commits a minor felony the court will often place them on probation and force them to complete community service. Further research will be necessary, but it is possible that participants, who thought the defendant was not guilty, still believed the defendant should receive a minor sentence in the form of the three previously stated variables.

There were no main effects found for avocation in this study. A potential explanation for this finding could be that participants were able to ignore the accompanying stereotypes of someone who plays video games or sports and were able to focus on the violence level of said avocation. This would explain why significant effects were found with violence, but not with avocation.

There was a significant sex by violence interaction for the counseling criterion, where females were significantly more likely to endorse counseling in the non-violent condition than males. In addition, there was a sex by avocation interaction for the counseling criterion, where females were significantly more likely to endorse counseling than males for the sport condition. The second largest population in the study and the single largest female population in the study were psychology majors. Historically, individuals have been skeptical about the success of counseling, however psychology students are taught about the possible benefits for several semesters in college. It is likely that psychology majors assign counseling more than any other major at a university. This in turn explains why there was both a sex by violence and a sex by avocation interaction with counseling.

A marginally significant sex by avocation interaction was found for the gun criterion. Although males were slightly more lenient than females in the game condition, males were considerably more lenient than females in the sports condition. A possible explanation for the finding is that males associate sports with violence at a lower frequency than females. This would explain why females became stricter on the defendant when they were playing sports in comparison to when the defendant was playing video games.

Limitations

This study contained several limitations, which can be addressed in future research. First, the largest limitation was the age group the experiment could readily access. With nearly all participants falling between ages 18 and 22, the study did not accurately represent jurors across the United States, or even in Florida for that matter, where jurors are significantly older. Secondly, due to accessibility and time restraints, participants completed the survey individually

in an online environment even though the study was written in a way to maintain ecological validity. Jurors deliberate amongst themselves to come to a fair and impartial decision and without this in place drastically different results could emerge. Completing this study took participants less than 30 minutes, while a true trial can take days or even weeks. In a jury trial, jurors have hours and days to analyze the facts of the case, where in this study participants basically used their initial reaction to answer the questions following the vignette. Due to the nature of psychological studies, participants cannot be accurately screened to remove direct biases.

Future Directions

In the future, a similar study should be run with three distinct age groups of individuals: 18-25, 30-45, and 46-60. This would allow for enough differentiation in age to check for sentencing differences between variables for age groups. An even number of males and females should be within each age group to prevent sex differences arising between the age groups.

If funding, time, and participants are of no concern, then a future study should take place with groups of twelve participants of the same age and sex. The twelve members would meet in person and each receive the same vignette. They would follow the same steps in determining the criterion variables, but for guilt and incarceration time they would be required to give a unanimous sentence of guilty or innocent and then if the defendant is found guilty determine the number of years the fictional defendant would receive. By keeping the age groups and sex the same throughout each group, comparisons between groups would allow for group analysis, which is relevant as jurors deliberate in groups. This scenario would also allow for in depth

analysis of whether groups are more likely to be biased than individuals, which has been seen in other mock trial experiments (Fosterlee et. Al, 2006).

Finally, there are several small things that could cause a juror to be excused from a court case and these are extremely difficult to determine through the use of a survey. Just as attorneys use voir dire to weed out jurors that they see unfit for trial, participants could be interviewed before the experiment to both maintain ecological validity and receive more accurate study results. Without these interviews, a single individual who has had a traumatic experience with an item in the vignette may sway the other participants to their opinion entirely. There is no way to eliminate this problem completely, and even in high profile cases today, attorneys are not able to fully eliminate jurors who cannot remain impartial, but these interviews would make the potential study closer to simulating real cases.

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Valerie K. Sims and Co-PI: Brock J. Jacobi

Date: May 30, 2013

Dear Researcher:

On 5/30/2013, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Jury Decision Making
Investigator: Valerie K Sims
IRB Number: SBE-13-09403
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 05/30/2013 11:21:42 AM EDT

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: Updated IRB Approval Letter



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138
To: Valerie K. Sims and Co-PI: Brock J. Jacobi
Date: November 08, 2013

Dear Researcher:

On 11/8/2013, the IRB approved the following modification to human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Modification Type: Protocol revision; increase sample size, modification to survey instrument
Project Title: Perception of Violent Video Games on Jury Decision Making
Investigator: Valerie K. Sims
IRB Number: SBE-13-09403
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis on 11/08/2013 04:30:51 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX C: Updated IRB Approval Letter



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
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Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Valerie K. Sims and Co-PIs: Brock J. Jacobi, Daphne E. Kopel, Elisabeth A. Niederman,
Jessica B. Siler, Stephen B. Perkins

Date: March 25, 2013

Dear Researcher:

On 3/25/2013, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Flashbulb Memory
Investigator: Valerie K. Sims
IRB Number: SBE-13-09274
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis on 03/25/2013 03:48:28 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patria Davis".

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX D: Jury Vignette (VG)

On March 13, 2012 at 4:47 pm, police were dispatched to the first block of NE Second Avenue where a person was reported to be dead on the scene. Several eyewitnesses reported that the victim and Michael Williams were in a heated argument when he forcefully pushed the victim, causing the victim's head to hit the cement, resulting in the victim's death. Williams showed little remorse after the incident.

Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, reads regularly, and spends the majority of his free time playing first person shooter video games.

Michael Williams has been charged with manslaughter and currently awaits trial. You are a member of the jury sitting on the trial and will cast your vote as to whether you believe the defendant to be guilty or not guilty of the accused crime and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire based on your previous response.

Florida Statute 782.07 defines manslaughter as "The killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or culpable negligence of another, without lawful justification..."

APPENDIX E: Jury Vignette (VS)

On March 13, 2012 at 4:47 pm, police were dispatched to the first block of NE Second Avenue where a person was reported to be dead on the scene. Several eyewitnesses reported that the victim and Michael Williams were in a heated argument when he forcefully pushed the victim, causing the victim's head to hit the cement, resulting in the victim's death. Williams showed little remorse after the incident.

Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, reads regularly, and spends the majority of his free time playing hockey.

Michael Williams has been charged with manslaughter and currently awaits trial. You are a member of the jury sitting on the trial and will cast your vote as to whether you believe the defendant to be guilty or not guilty of the accused crime and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire based on your previous response.

Florida Statute 782.07 defines manslaughter as "The killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or culpable negligence of another, without lawful justification..."

APPENDIX F: Jury Vignette (NVVG)

On March 13, 2012 at 4:47 pm, police were dispatched to the first block of NE Second Avenue where a person was reported to be dead on the scene. Several eyewitnesses reported that the victim and Michael Williams were in a heated argument when he forcefully pushed the victim, causing the victim's head to hit the cement, resulting in the victim's death. Williams showed little remorse after the incident.

Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, reads regularly, and spends the majority of his free time playing puzzle-based video games

Michael Williams has been charged with manslaughter and currently awaits trial. You are a member of the jury sitting on the trial and will cast your vote as to whether you believe the defendant to be guilty or not guilty of the accused crime and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire based on your previous response.

Florida Statute 782.07 defines manslaughter as "The killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or culpable negligence of another, without lawful justification..."

APPENDIX G: Jury Vignette (NVS)

On March 13, 2012 at 4:47 pm, police were dispatched to the first block of NE Second Avenue where a person was reported to be dead on the scene. Several eyewitnesses reported that the victim and Michael Williams were in a heated argument when he forcefully pushed the victim, causing the victim's head to hit the cement, resulting in the victim's death. Williams showed little remorse after the incident.

Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, reads regularly, and spends the majority of his free time playing tennis.

Michael Williams has been charged with manslaughter and currently awaits trial. You are a member of the jury sitting on the trial and will cast your vote as to whether you believe the defendant to be guilty or not guilty of the accused crime and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire based on your previous response.

Florida Statute 782.07 defines manslaughter as "The killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or culpable negligence of another, without lawful justification..."

APPENDIX H: Jury Vignette (C)

On March 13, 2012 at 4:47 pm, police were dispatched to the first block of NE Second Avenue where a person was reported to be dead on the scene. Several eyewitnesses reported that the victim and Michael Williams were in a heated argument when he forcefully pushed the victim, causing the victim's head to hit the cement, resulting in the victim's death. Williams showed little remorse after the incident.

Based on accounts of several people who knew the defendant well (professors, dorm-mates etc.), as well as a search of Williams' dorm room, Williams is an average student, has a part-time job on campus, reads regularly, and spends the majority of his free time reading.

Michael Williams has been charged with manslaughter and currently awaits trial. You are a member of the jury sitting on the trial and will cast your vote as to whether you believe the defendant to be guilty or not guilty of the accused crime and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire based on your previous response.

Florida Statute 782.07 defines manslaughter as "The killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or culpable negligence of another, without lawful justification..."

APPENDIX I: Right-Wing Authoritarian Scale

Write down a -4 if you very strongly disagree with the statement.

Write down a -3 if you strongly disagree with the statement.

Write down a -2 if you moderately disagree with the statement.

Write down a -1 if you slightly disagree with the statement.

Write down a +1 if you slightly agree with the statement.

Write down a +2 if you moderately agree with the statement.

Write down a +3 if you strongly agree with the statement.

Write down a +4 if you very strongly agree with the statement.

If you feel exactly and precisely neutral about an item, write down a "0."

Important: You may find that you sometimes have different reactions to different parts of a statement. For example, you might very strongly disagree ("-4") with one idea in a statement, but slightly agree ("+1") with another idea in the same item. When this happens, please combine your reactions, and write down how you feel on balance (a "-3" in this case).

- ___ 1. The established authorities generally turn out to be right about things, while the radicals and protestors are usually just "loud mouths" showing off their ignorance.
- ___ 2. Women should have to promise to obey their husbands when they get married.
- ___ 3. Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.
- ___ 4. Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else.
- ___ 5. It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds.

- ___ 6. Atheists and others who have rebelled against the established religions are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who attend church regularly.
- ___ 7. The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.
- ___ 8. There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps.
- ___ 9. Our country needs free thinkers who have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.
- ___ 10. Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs.
- ___ 11. Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else.
- ___ 12. The “old-fashioned ways” and the “old-fashioned values” still show the best way to live.
- ___ 13. You have to admire those who challenged the law and the majority’s view by protesting for women’s abortion rights, for animal rights, or to abolish school prayer.
- ___ 14. What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path.
- ___ 15. Some of the best people in our country are those who are challenging our government, criticizing religion, and ignoring the “normal way things are supposed to be done.”
- ___ 16. God’s laws about abortion, pornography and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late, and those who break them must be strongly punished.

- ___ 17. There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action.
- ___ 18. A “woman’s place” should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past.
- ___ 19. Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the “rotten apples” who are ruining everything.
- ___ 20. There is no “ONE right way” to live life; everybody has to create their own way.
- ___ 21. Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy “traditional” family values.
- ___ 22. This country would work a lot better if certain groups of troublemakers would just shut up and accept their group’s traditional place in society.

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