



# Cognitive Reactions to Committed Crimes

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## INTRODUCTION

- Stereotypes**
- U.S. states where Black people committed higher rates of violent crimes show a stronger Black-violence stereotype (Johnson & Chopik, 2019)
  - U.S. states where white people committed higher rates of violent crimes show a weaker Black-violence stereotype
  - Nonetheless, Black-violence stereotypes still persist everywhere
- Inherent Racism in the Criminal Justice System**
- Crack users typically receive a higher sentence than any other drug (Nolan, 1997)
  - 80% of crack users identify as Black/African American
  - Raises the question of if it's the drug or race that is giving them a longer sentence
- Sentencing**
- Racial disparities occur early on in the case before it even makes it to trial (Kim & Kiesel, 2018)
  - People of color are arrested at higher rates than white people
  - Court proceedings - minorities are at a higher risk of imprisonment
- Guilt**
- Defendants accused of race stereotypical crimes were more likely to be perceived as guilty (Gordon, 1993)

## HYPOTHESES

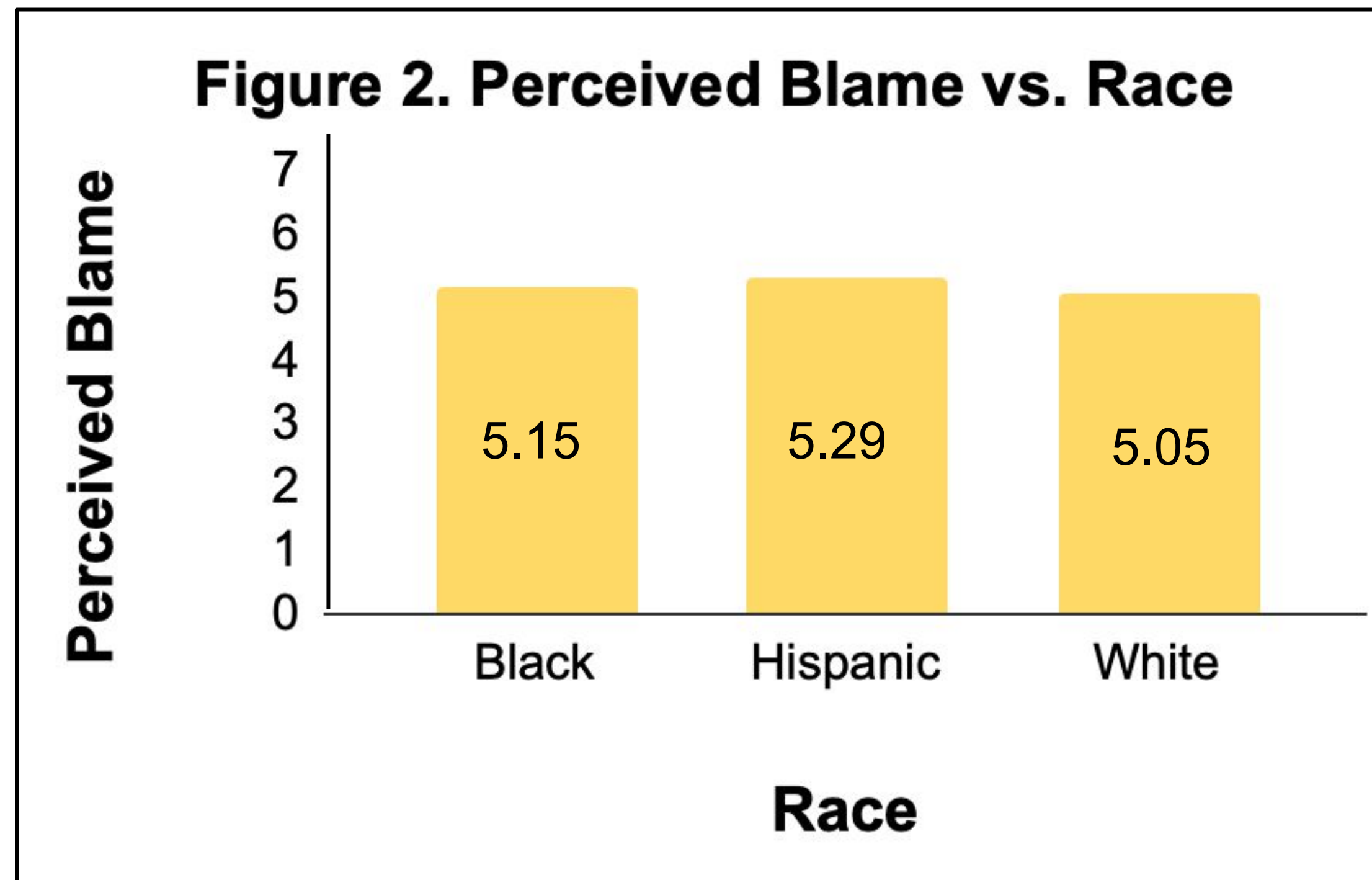
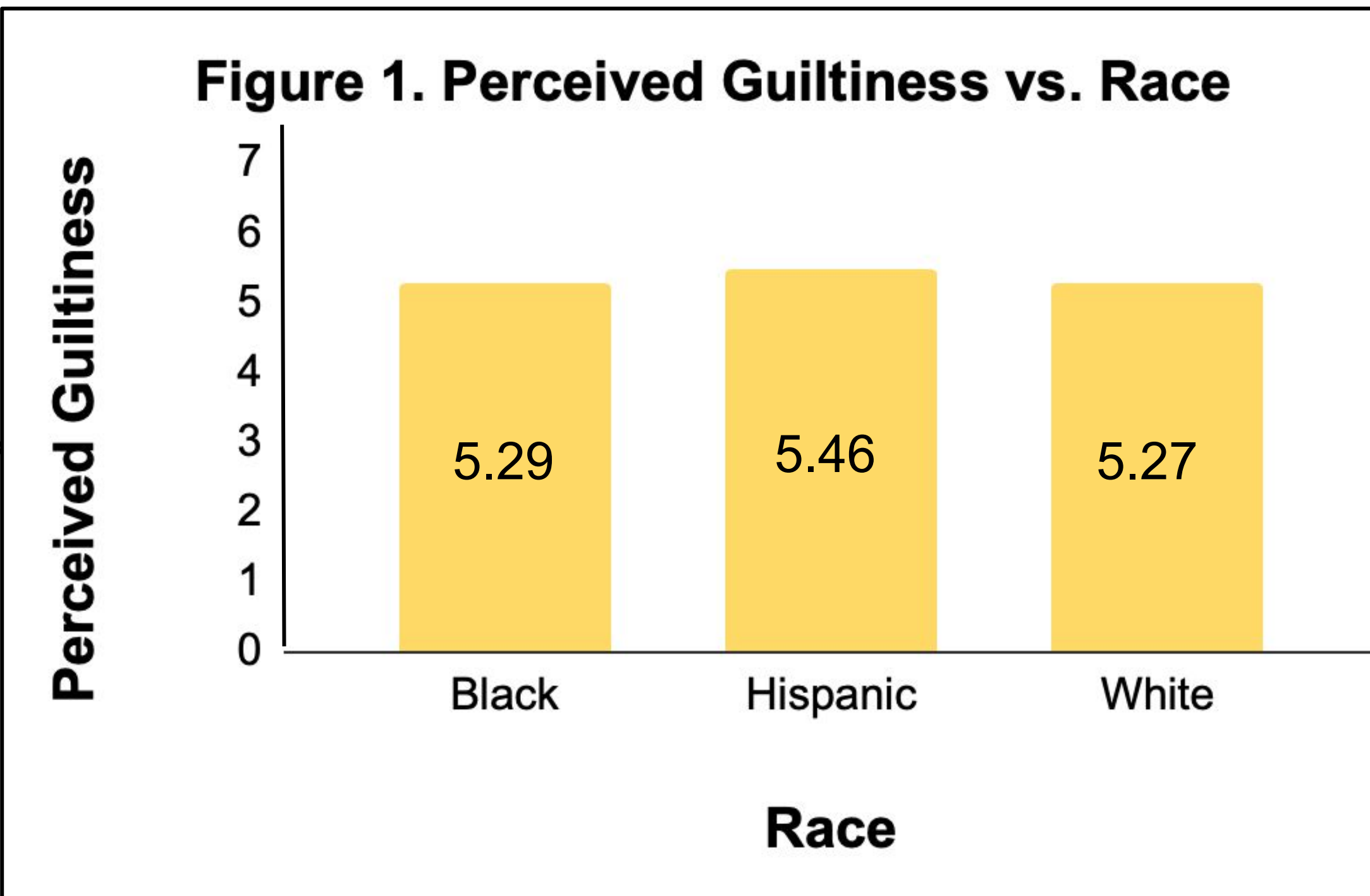
- Participants will perceive the Black and Hispanic offenders as more guilty than white offenders
- The perpetrator will be blamed more if the offender is a minority
- Participants who enjoy thinking more will have similar perceptions of blame and guilt for all three races

## METHOD

- Participants**
- 67 university undergraduates
  - 48 were female, 16 were male, and 3 were non-binary
  - 62.7% were Caucasian, 13.4% Asian, 23.9% Hispanic/Latino, 7.5% Black/African American, 1.5% Native Pacific Islander, 4.5% other
- Materials**
- Survey consisting of a vignette about a physical assault with the race of the offender different in each condition (Black, Hispanic, white) and 4 measures
  - Measures: *Revised Need for Cognition* (Cacioppo, Petty & Kao 1984) scale, *Perceptions of Perpetrator Blame* scale, & *Perpetrator Guilt* (Clark et. al. 2003) rating
  - Survey concluded with a series of demographic questions
- Procedure**
- Sought out students over the age of 18 through SONA Systems and each class Facebook groups
  - Conducted survey over a period of 4 months

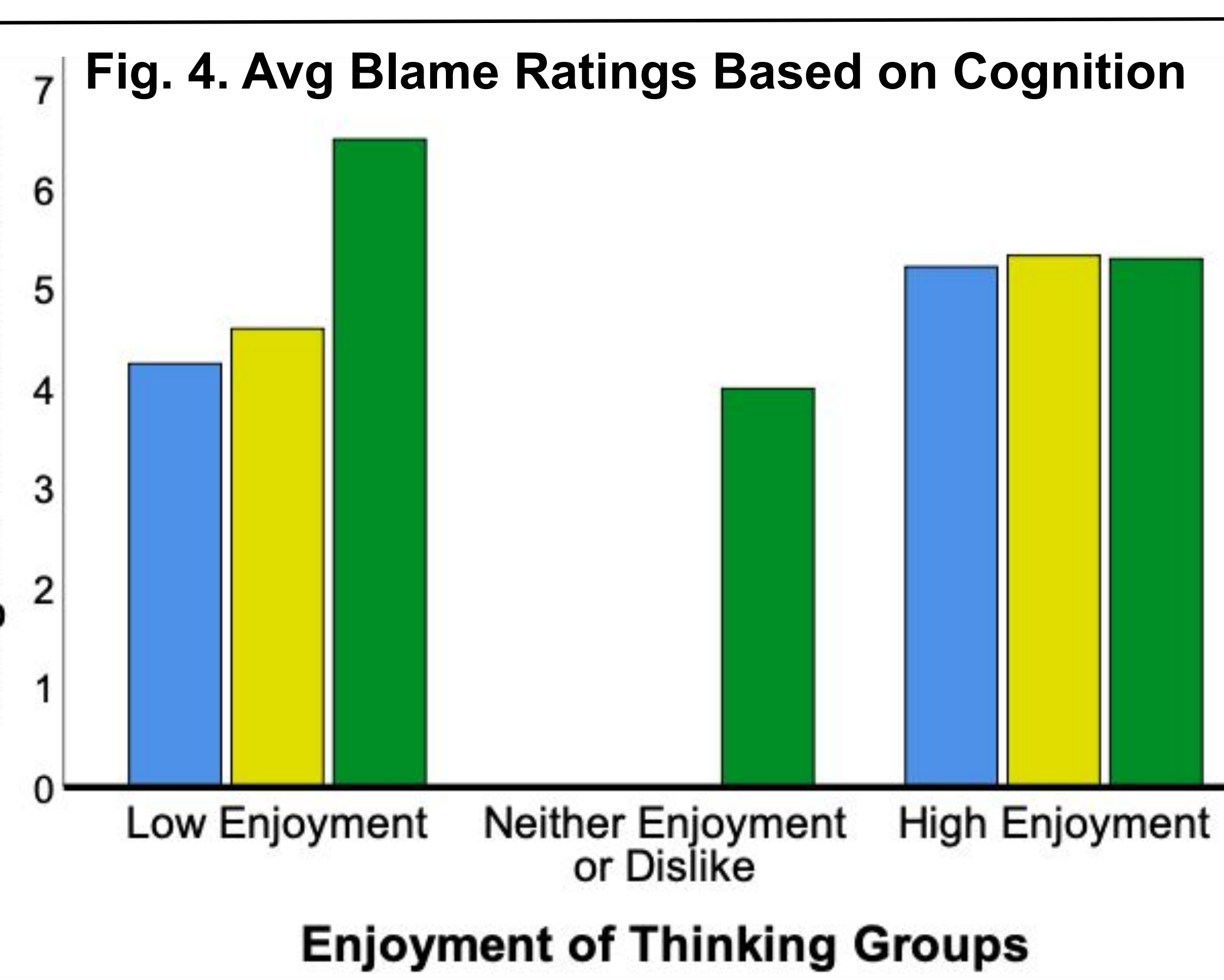
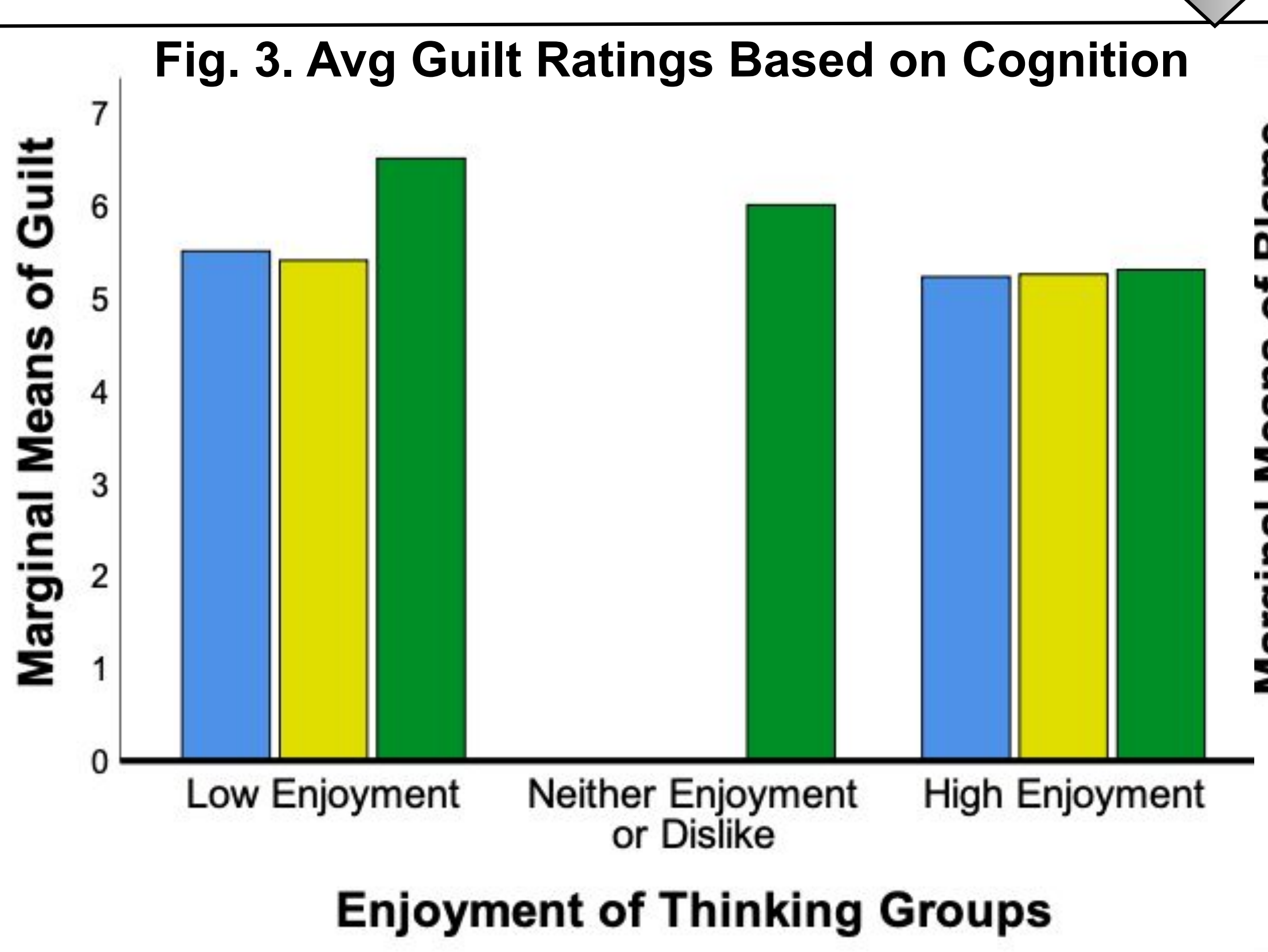
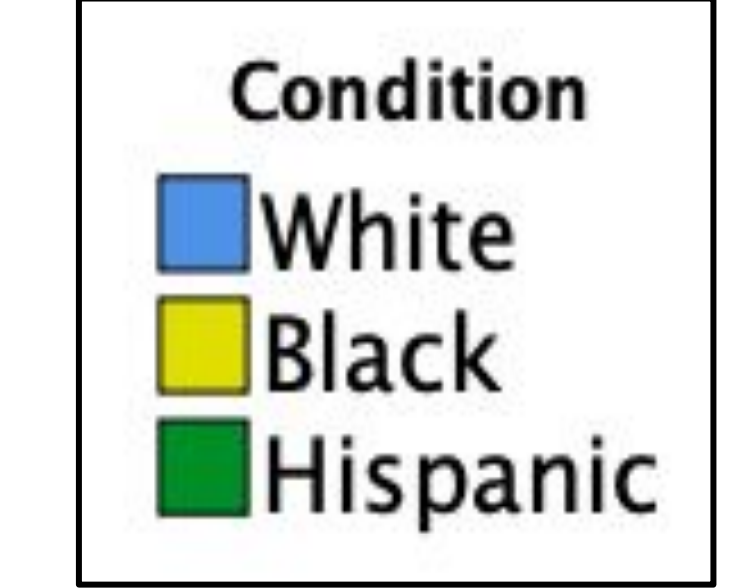
## RESULTS

- One-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of perceived guiltiness on race in white, Black, and Hispanic offenders
- There was not a significant effect of perceived guiltiness on race at the  $p < .05$  level for the three races,  $F(2,66) = .116, p = .890, \eta^2 = .248$
- Post hoc comparisons were unnecessary



- One-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to look at whether the perpetrator would be blamed more if there was a minority assaulting a white person
- There was not a significant effect of perceived blame on race at the  $p < .05$  level for all three races,  $F(2,66) = .151, p = .680, \eta^2 = .352$
- Post hoc analyses were not necessary and thus not conducted

- Two Univariate ANOVAs were run to look at how participants rated the guilt and then the blame of the offender separated by their score on the Need for Cognition test and the condition they were in
- Ratings were almost identical across the board and had no significance



## DISCUSSION

- The first hypothesis which was that Black and Hispanic offenders will be perceived as more guilty than white offenders was not supported by the data that was collected. There was no significance, meaning that on average the participants rated offenders with the same level of guilt no matter their race.
- The second hypothesis dealt with the blame placed onto offenders after committing a crime, and that minority offenders would be blamed more for the crime than their white counterpart. This hypothesis was also not supported by the data. All offenders were thought to be blameworthy in almost equal amounts regardless of race.
- The third hypothesis looked at how people who enjoyed thinking more rated the guilt and blame of the offender. The ratings were almost identical across the conditions which supported our hypothesis. But that was the case for all cognition groups and was not statistically significant.

## CONCLUSIONS

- While the study did not yield significant results, it is still important to continue to study the issue of racism within the criminal justice system.
- The continued study of this field can help educate people on where the criminal justice system fails people of color and things that can be done to change these failings.

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