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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN IN CONFIDENCE IN JURY SETTING

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Introduction

Men tend to be more overconfident than women in settings typically perceived as masculine (Lichtenstein et al, 1982; as cited in Baldiga, 2014). Women are also more likely to defer to men in mixed-sex group situations than men are to women (Hopcroft, 2009). Deference is correlated with women having lower self-esteem and lower confidence than men, both beginning to show around puberty. In same sex situations, deference is related to social ranking and physical features, but in mixed-sex situations it tends to be sex-based. Propp (1995) found that in mixed-sex groups, men tend to verbally contribute more than women, whereas in all male or all female groups, contribution is about equal. In situations where there is risk associated with decision making, men tend to answer more confidently than women as women have been found to have high risk aversion than men (Badiga, 2014). Given this, it seems probable that there would be differences in confidence when making jury decisions as a function of gender. This study looked at differences in confidence levels between men and women in a jury setting.

Purpose and hypothesis

The purpose of the current study was to examine the impact of gender on confidence in decision making in a jury setting. It was hypothesized that men would answer with more confidence than women.

Method

Participants

Participants were 105 male and 388 female Eastern Washington University students. The sample was primarily White, ranging in year in school from freshmen to graduate students.

Measures

Demographics Questionnaire. Measuring age, gender, race, year in college, and previous experience with the legal system.

Jury Perception Scenarios. Six scenarios, with women committing various crimes manipulating pregnancy status, created by the authors of this study in which the participant answers following questions as a hypothetical juror. There were questions regarding how confident participants were in their decision of guilt versus innocence for each of six crime scenarios. Participants rated their confidence in their decision on a scale from 1 (not confident at all) to 10 (very confident).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through online site used by the university for research and completed the online questionnaire packet via Survey Monkey. All procedures were in accordance with American Psychological Association ethical guidelines and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board.

Results

Six separate 2 (male vs. female) x 2 (condition 1 vs. 2) Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) revealed some differences in confidence of decision as a function of gender, especially when the stakes are higher. Specifically, male participants rated higher confidence than female participants in the murder scenario, $F(1, 489) = 5.994, p = .015, \eta^2 = 0.012$, but there no other main effects as a function of gender.

Table 1. Mean confidence rating by gender on a scale from one to ten.

	Males M(SD)	Females M(SD)
Grand theft	8.05(2.19)	7.71(2.10)
Murder	6.62(2.22)	5.98(2.22)
Assault	7.36(2.25)	7.13(2.17)
Kidnapping	7.43(2.40)	6.97(2.13)
Possession of illicit substances	8.43(1.95)	8.35(1.85)
Grand theft auto	6.43(2.43)	6.02(2.04)

Discussion

Findings

Findings were somewhat consistent with the prediction that there would be a gender difference in confidence. Specifically, there was a significant main effect for gender for the murder case scenario, but not for the other crime scenarios. Confidence does seem to be impacted by gender of a hypothetical juror, with males indicating more confidence, but this pattern does not remain consistent for other less serious types of crimes. Additional research is necessary to better understand what might be occurring.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations of this study that need to be addressed in future research. This sample was limited to college students taking psychology classes and scenarios placed participants in hypothetical jury situations. Additionally, only students who identified as male or female were included in this analysis. Future studies examining confidence by gender should include individuals identifying as a gender other than male and female. Confidence should also be examined in other types of decision making within and outside of the criminal justice system.