

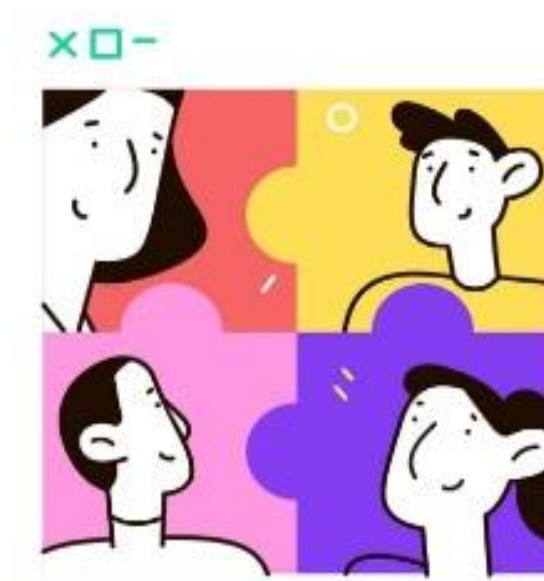
# GUILTY by Reason of VANITY?

## The Relationship Between Jurors' Socioeconomic Status and Trial Outcome



### Research Question

Are jurors of a higher socioeconomic status (SES) more likely to find defendants guilty than their less wealthy peers?



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### Literature Review



### Implications of My Results



### Background Information

#### Why should we care?



**Wrongful convictions occur at an alarming rate in the U.S.**

According to the National Registry of Exonerations's 2019 annual report, **2-10% of convicted prisoners in U.S. prisons are innocent** (that's anywhere from 46,000 to 230,000 people). (Walsh et al., 2017)

**Wrongful convictions may occur on a:**

- structural level:** official misconduct accounts for 31% of wrongfully convicted homicide exonerations (Clarke, 2020) OR on a
- micro-level:** eyewitness misidentification, misapplication of forensic evidence, **juror bias**, etc.

**The U.S. is also the world's leader in incarceration**

The prison population today is 500 times larger than what it was just 4 decades ago (Cullen, 2018). We clearly have a **mass incarceration problem**. How can new research on jury behavior address this?

-The greater the discrepancy between juror and defendant occupational status, the greater the conviction rate (Adler, 1973)

-Political conservatism, which focuses on maintaining law and order is related to high socioeconomic status (Reed & Reed, 1977)

-Political conservatives consider incarceration to be a vital part of our justice system and are more likely to support harsher sentences and convictions in general (Patil, 2018)

### My Research Proposal



#### General Methodology

-People who meet the eligibility criteria for jury service will be presented with court cases and asked to provide a verdict for each case

-They will also answer demographic questions, including questions about their education level and income, which will be used to measure their SEI

**Jury behavior research is not a new concept.** There is an abundance of existing research on jury behavior, including juror bias. However . . .

- the **intended audience** of existing research typically limited to practicing lawyers
- in these contexts, "**juror bias**" = the life experiences that all jurors bring to court and how those experience affect their perception of a "just" verdict

Some juror biases are relevant enough that they may **disqualify an individual for serving as a juror** on a specified or unspecified case. This study is uniquely interested in **juror biases that are not screened for during jury selection** that may still be predictive of a juror's final decision, or in our case, **socioeconomic status of the juror.**

If **socioeconomic status** is isolated as an independent variable....

and evidence supports socioeconomic status as a **predictor of strong conviction tendencies**

how might this knowledge be useful regarding the **improvement of the status quo?**



### Hypothesis

Conviction rate will be positively related to the juror's socioeconomic index (SEI) score. The higher the juror's SEI score, the more likely they are to find a defendant guilty of a crime.

### Jury Eligibility Criteria in the U.S.

U.S. citizens who are at least 18 years old who are fluent and literate in English with no felony conviction on record.

### References

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