

6-2016

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### Recommended Citation

Monroe, Tyler (2016) "Arming Airline Pilots," *Psychology Research Methods Journal*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 19 , Article 6.

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## Arming Airline Pilots

*Tyler Monroe<sup>5</sup>*

*The issue whether to arm pilots has been a great debate for the last decade. With terrorism on the rise, the idea of arming pilots has also become an interesting subject. The purpose of this study was to examine the opinions of individuals about arming airline pilots. The article was about the past issues of gun control in America. Once the participants read the letter, then they will answer questions based off of what they read. Then the target question was asked, which was whether the participants believe the pilot shown should be armed. The variable that was manipulated was the race of the pilot shown. Each email had a picture of a pilot on it. The pilot either was Caucasian, African American, or Middle-eastern. They were be male pilots. The race of the pilot inserted in the letter was randomly assigned to each participant. I believe that the race of the pilot will have an impact on the readers' decision whether to arm the pilot or not. My hypothesis is that the participants will agree to arm a pilot if they received the picture of a Caucasian pilot along with the email. I also believe that participants will least likely choose to arm the Arabic pilot. Results showed that the participants did not want to arm the Arabic pilot vs. the other two races.*

The purpose of this study is to examine the opinions of individuals about arming airline pilots. Also in America, race inequality has risen over the years. Race inequality is showing no signs of slowing down, so it is a very important variable to always consider when discussing topics. This study will also look at race factors, and it will examine if race has an impact on participants decision to arm pilots or not.

Fraher (2004) conducted a study about why U.S airline pilots want to carry guns (Fraher, 2014). Fraher used a field theory, systems psychodynamics, and a participant observation to

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analyze defense mechanisms created after the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001. Fraher's main hypothesis was that pilots desired the right to be armed because of internal and external pressures, personal valences, and work life changes. This study examined collected data from different perspectives over a 20 year span. Many formulated findings/hypothesis were presented, but one that stuck out was the "American hero myth." This basically means that American wants to be the savior of situations. Fraher argued that pilots want to be armed after 9/11 so they can potentially stop a catastrophic event from happening again. Before 9/11, there was not a push for pilots to be armed. However, afterwards there were immediate pushes to arm pilots. Other theories Fraher presented were that pilots did not feel safe after 9/11, and pilots developed major anxiety after 9/11(Fraher, 2014).

After 9/11, people had major fears of terrorism. Researchers Cameron, Maslen, and Todd (2013) conducted a study examining the dialogic construction of the self and other in response to terrorism. The study consisted of 12 different study groups and the researchers wanted to examine of the effects terrorism had on individuals' personal and social and landscapes. The most common emotional response found in response to terrorism was the fear of violence around everyday activities (Cameron, Maslen, & Todd, 2013). The findings of these two different studies can correlate with each other. Everyone has a fear of terrorism because it is growing. People have anxiety and a substantial amount of fear. After the attack on the Twin Towers, pilots (as well as everyone else) became very fearful of the event happening again. Pilots where

probably more afraid because the event happened at their place of work. After 9/11 occurred, pilots grew fears of terrorism, so the push to be armed came about.

Arming pilots is a very hard decision to make. People may have developed a fear of individuals having a weapon on board after 9/11. Would individuals will safe if only certain races was armed? Researchers Winter, Rice, and Mehta (2014) conducted a study examining the trust in pilots. A sample on Indian participants were given a description about the pilot of their plane that they would be flying with (the flight was imaginary). The participants were then asked to rate their level of trust in the pilot based on variables such as age, weight, gender, and ethnicity. The researchers believed the results of the study were likely impacted by social stigmas. The study consisted of 56 males, and 46 males. Results showed that the participants showed extremely low levels of trust in Arabic pilots. The researchers believed this was due to emotional stressors of terrorism (Winter, Rice, & Mehta, 2013). After 9/11, the trust in Arabic pilots most likely diminished greatly. The trust in Arabic people depleted no matter what occupation they had. Following 9/11, individuals probably did not feel safe at all if the pilot was Arabic because of the threat of terrorism. Researchers Saleem and Anderson (2013) conducted a study to examine the effects of stereotypes within violent contexts on attitudes, perceptions, and affect. There were two experiments conducted in the study. In one experiment, the participants played an Arab terrorist game (violent). For the other experiment, individuals played an anti-terrorism videogame with Arab characters. For the participants who played the Arab terrorism

game, they were more likely to draw “typical” Arabs with stereotypic traits, negative affect, and weapons. For the individuals who played the non-violent game, they still showed increase anti-Arab attitudes. The participants were asked to draw pictures of an Arabic man, Arabic female, Caucasian man, and a Caucasian female. The drawings for both experiments showed strong negative views of the Arabic people. The Caucasian males were usually drawn with smiles on their face. However, Arabic males were drawn with evil faces and bombs (Saleem& Anderson, 2013).

American airline pilots are usually white. This can lead to less trust in minority pilots because society has never really experienced flying with them. When new situations happen, people usually feel uncomfortable. Why are the pilots mostly white? Researchers Barucky and Stone (1999) wanted to find possible answers. The United States Air Force expressed their concerns with the lack of minority pilots in the workforce. Traditionally, there have been a very small percent of African-American and Hispanic pilots. Researchers gathered information by focus group interviews with African-American and Hispanic pilots and trainees at the Air Force Academy. The study consisted of 38 subjects. The results showed that the minorities had a lack of interest as a military officer, especially for the most qualified students. A lack of interest in flying was also noted. Other reasons were minorities had a distrust with the military, so they did not want to commit to multi—year agreements. Findings also show that a lack of interest in flying can be due to a lack of general knowledge about aviation (Bucky & Stone, 1999).

The focal point of my study was to examine people's opinions about arming certain pilots. I hypothesize that the participants will feel more comfortable arming a Caucasian pilot over an African-American and Arabic pilot. An online survey was created to test my hypothesis.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were individuals in the age range between 18 and 65. There were 26 women in the study, and 37 men in the study. The races of participants were African-American, Caucasian, and Asian. There was a sample size of 53 participants in the survey. The recruitment process was mainly conducted through social media. A link was posted on Facebook and Instagram, asking individuals to take part in the survey. It was free will, so participants had the option to not take part in the survey. No physical compensation was awarded to the participants, but this project can provide healthy societal benefits for the future.

### **Materials/Procedure**

A computer and online survey were the main materials used for this study (see Appendix A). The survey through qualtrics was created as an online study, so participants had to use a computer (or any technology accessible to the internet) to take part in the study. The researcher did not provide a specific computer to use, so the participants had the liberty to take the survey where ever they chose to. The survey consisted of a make email from a pilot that was sent to the Air Traffic Control Center. The pilot was explaining why he would want to be armed while

flying. There were three different versions of the email. Each email had a picture of the pilot who was either African-American, Caucasian, or Arabic. After the email was read, the participants were asked to answer 15 questions. The questions were about safety while flying, and trust in the pilot. The procedure was completely random, so the participants was not aware that there were three different pilots. Before reading the email, the participants had to agree to a consent statement (see Appendix B). It was the participant's decision to agree or disagree with the statement. If they agreed, then they continued with the study. After the survey was complete, a feedback statement was given (seen Appendix C). The feedback statement thanked the participants for their participation. It also explained the true nature of the study.

### **Results**

My hypothesis is that the participants will agree to arm a pilot if they received the picture of a Caucasian pilot along with the email. A chi-square analysis to examine how likely people are to arm pilots based on race was conducted. The results revealed that participants responses greatly varied by race,  $\chi^2(2) = 19.26, P < .005$

### **Discussion**

My hypothesis was supported by data. Participants did not want to arm the Arabic pilot as suspected. The African-American and Caucasian pilots were not significant. Even though data supported my claim, there were limitations to this study. The sample size was very small. Also, better pictures of the pilots of each race could have been selected. Also, the mock letter was

probably too long for the participants to read. However, these results still do hold value. The results show that there is still racial inequality in America. Only one participant elected to arm the Arabic pilot. I plan to further this study with hopefully a bigger sample.

## Appendix A

Dear US Department of Transportation,

I am an airline pilot who is writing today to state my opinions on a specific issue. Over the last decade, the debate of whether to arm airline pilots has been intensifying. Many people are against it, and many people are for it. Terrorism is a huge problem in today's society. On the other hand, people understandably want to feel safe wherever they go. Stuck thousands of miles up in the air, it is hard to be in control of one's life. As an airline pilot, I believe guns should be allowed in the cockpit. I also believe that it should be optional for the pilot to choose to have the gun or not. If the pilots had guns, then the 9/11 probably would not have happen. The pilots would have had the opportunity to control the terrorists, and potentially save innocent lives. I believe passengers will feel safer on the plane I am flying if I had a gun. I believe I would feel comfortable flying with a gun near me. I am a firm believer in the second amendment, and I believe flying with guns will make the passengers feel safer.

1. On average, how often do you fly by plane a year?
2. On a scale from 1-5, how safe do you feel when flying? (1 feeling extremely not safe, and 5 feeling extremely safe)
3. In comparison to other means of travel, how safe do you think it is to fly?

Flying is much safer than other means of travel

Flying is safer than other means of travel

Flying is just as safe as other means of travel

Flying is less safe than other means of travel

Flying is much less safe than other means of travel

4. After reading this letter, would you arm this pilot? Yes or no?

5. If you would arm him, why? If not, why not?

6. Would you feel comfortable if the pilot had announced he had a gun in the cockpit? Why, or why not?

7. How old are you?

8. What is your race?

9. What State are you from?

10. What is your gender?

## Appendix B

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Tyler Monroe for a class project in the department of Psychology at Lindenwood University, under the guidance of Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair. The purpose of this study is to examine the opinions of individuals about arming airline pilots
2. Your participation will involve completing this anonymous online survey. The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 15 minutes.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. If you are in the LPP you will receive one extra credit point in the course for which you signed up for the LPP. You will receive extra credit simply by virtue of completing this informed consent; you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. Participants who are not part of the LPP will receive no compensation beyond the possible benefits listed above. However, your participation is an opportunity to contribute to psychological science.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. Your responses will be anonymous. No information that identifies you personally will be collected, not even your IP address. The primary investigator will not be able to identify your answers as belonging to you; data will be examined at the group level only. All data will be kept securely, in accord with the standards of the University, Federal regulations, and the American Psychological Association.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may call the Investigator, Tyler MONROE, at 314-503-4845 or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Nohara-LeClair, at 636-949-4519. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Lindenwood's Provost, Dr. Marilyn Abbott at [mabbott@lindenwood.edu](mailto:mabbott@lindenwood.edu) or 636-949-4912.

### Appendix C

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey for my class project at Lindenwood University. I wanted to see if race had an impact on individuals' decision to arm pilots. I manipulated the race of the pilot. There were three versions of this project. The survey either contained a Caucasian, African American, or Middle-Eastern pilot. The survey that you were given was completely random. I hypothesized that the participants would whether arm the Caucasian pilots instead of the other two races. I chose to do this study to potentially show that racism exists on many levels. Gun control is a big issue in today's society, so if most of the participants chose to only arm the Caucasian pilot, then that raises an issue.

If you would like to see the results of my survey after December 4, 2016, please feel free to contact me using the contact information below. Again, thank you very much for your time and effort!

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