

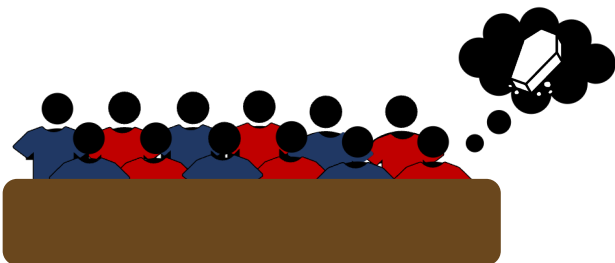
# Terror Management and Partisanship at Trial: The Effect of Mortality Salience and Partisanship on Mock Juror Judgments

Alexis Hardy<sup>1,2</sup> and Michael Leippe<sup>1</sup>

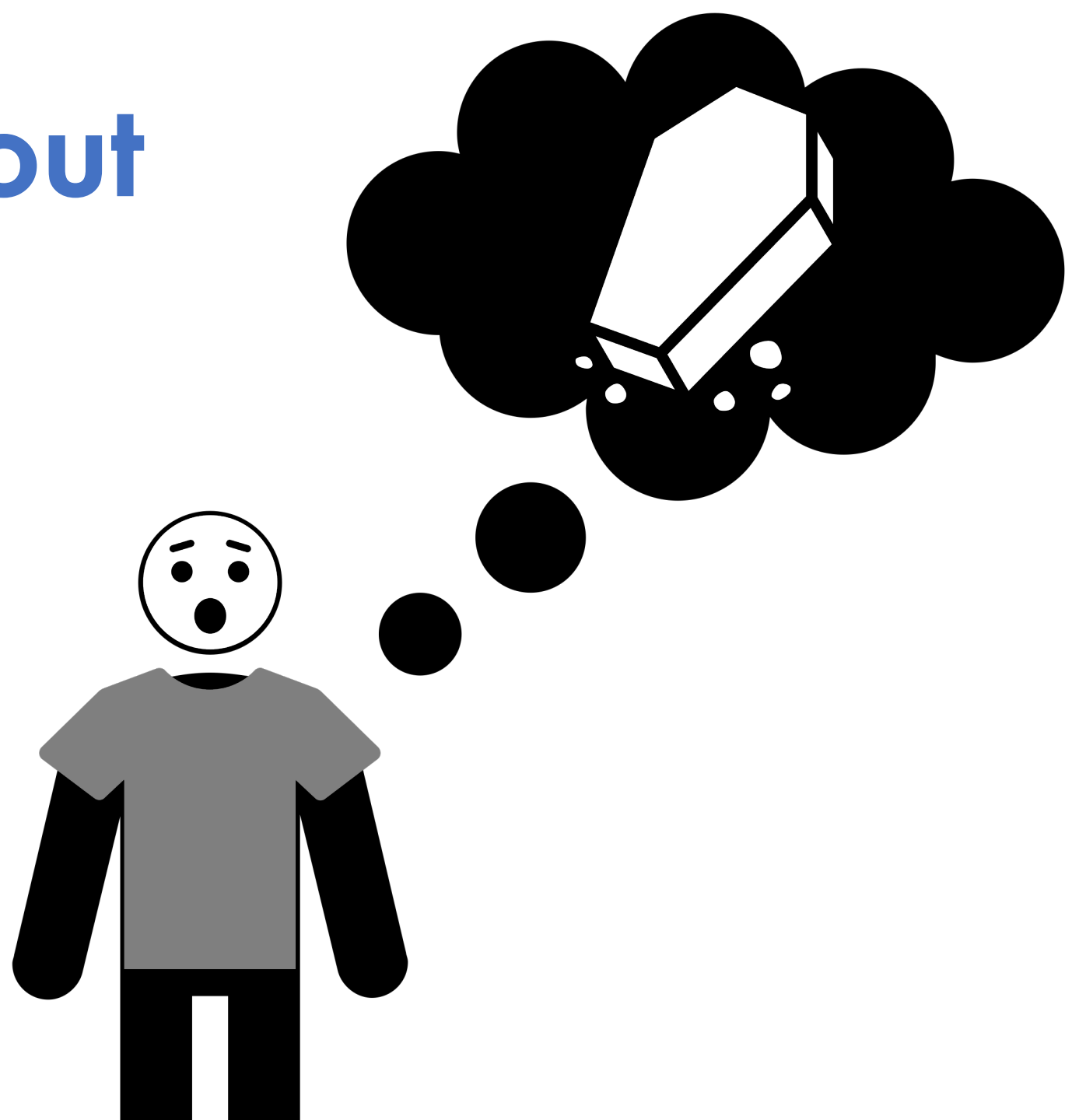
Psychology Research Day

The Graduate Center, The City University of New York<sup>1</sup>

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The City University of New York<sup>2</sup>

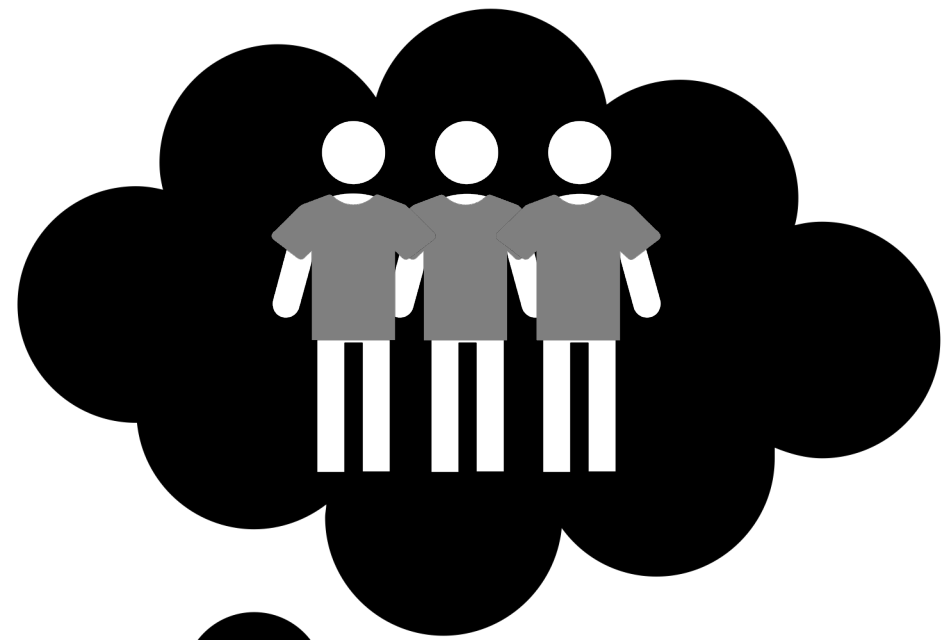
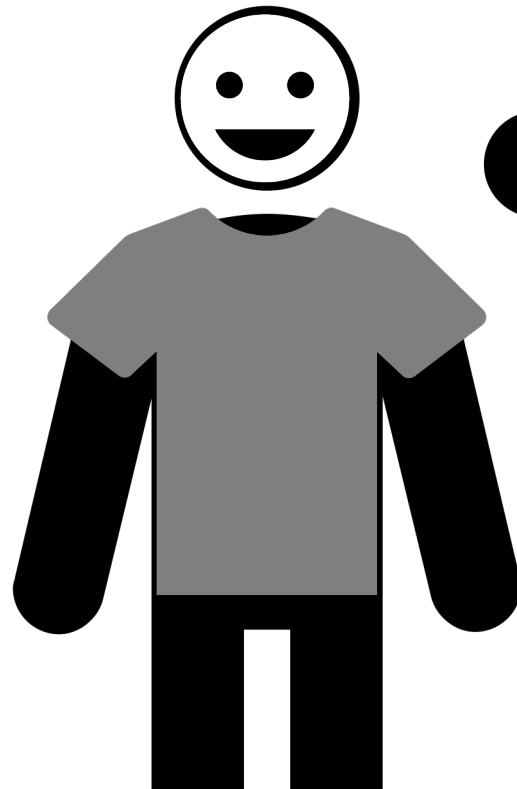


# Anxiety about death...



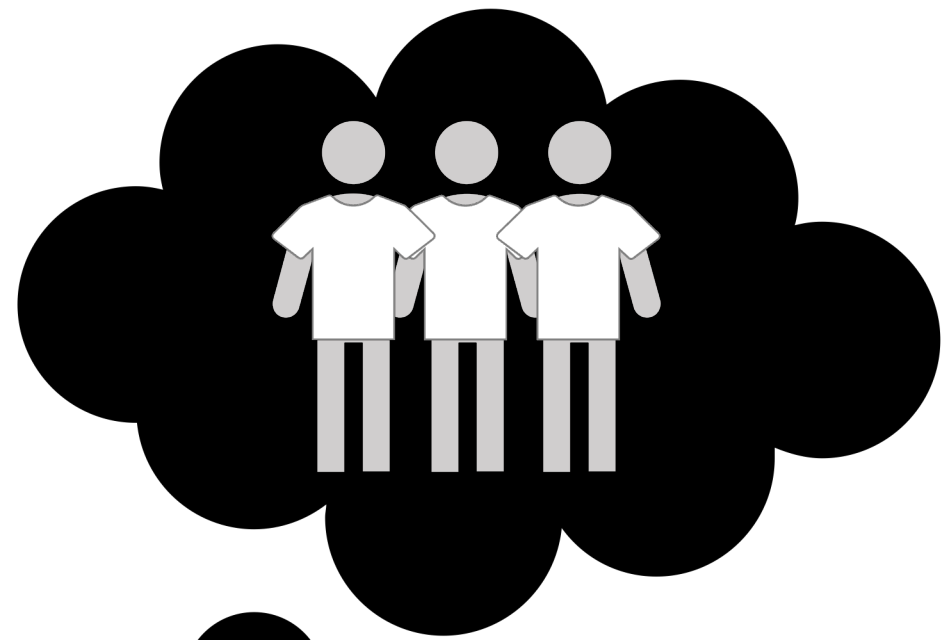
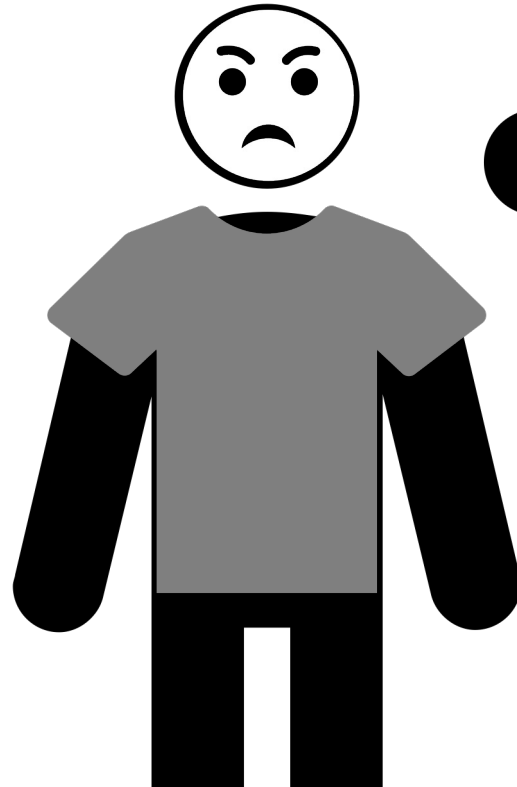
Pyszczynski et al. (2015)

# Ingroup favoritism



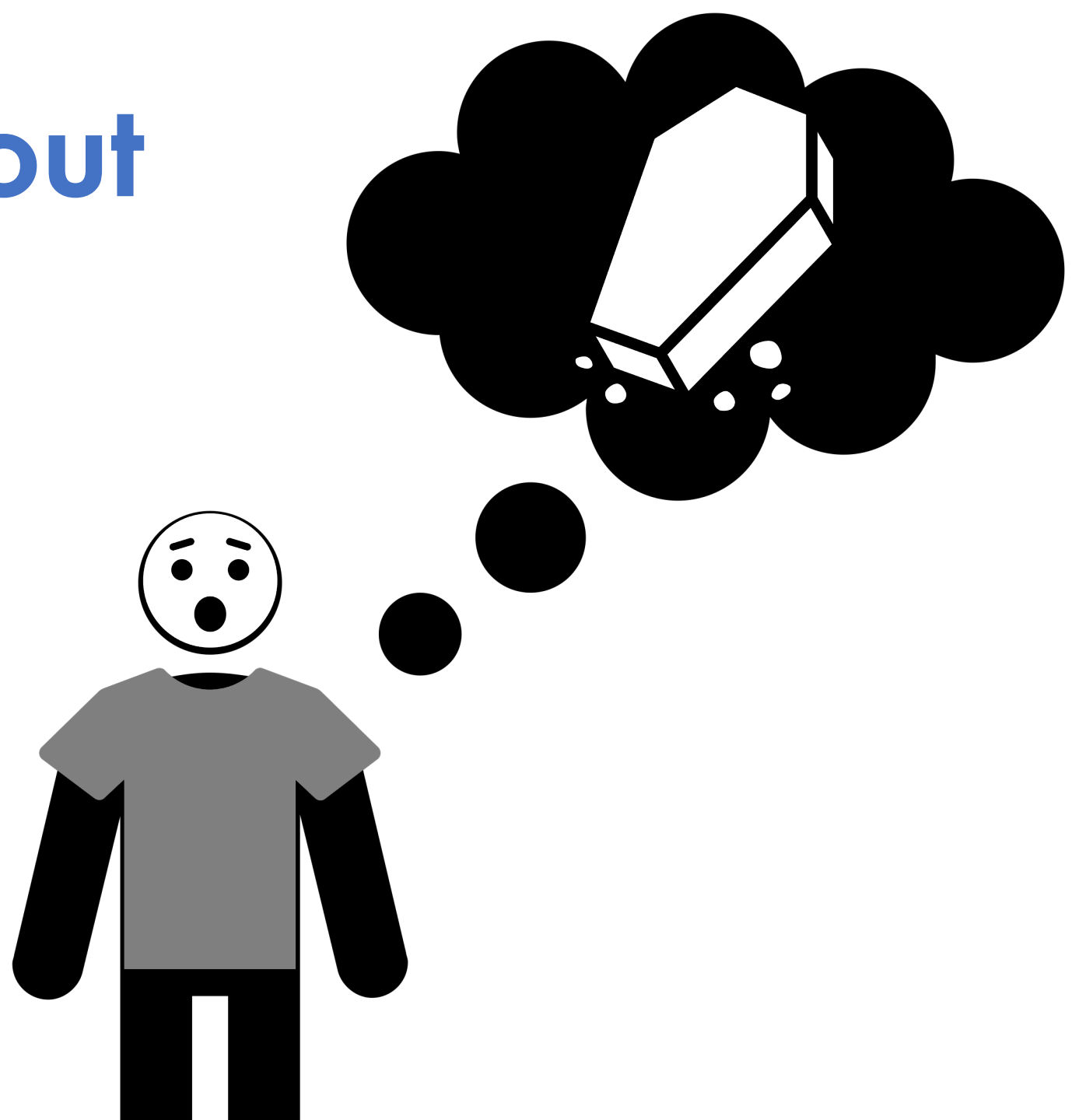
Pyszczynski et al. (2015)

# Outgroup discrimination



Pyszczynski et al. (2015)

# Anxiety about death...



**Threats**  
**against**  
**one's own**  
**symbolic**  
**immortality**

Greenberg et al (1986)





# Cultural worldview defense

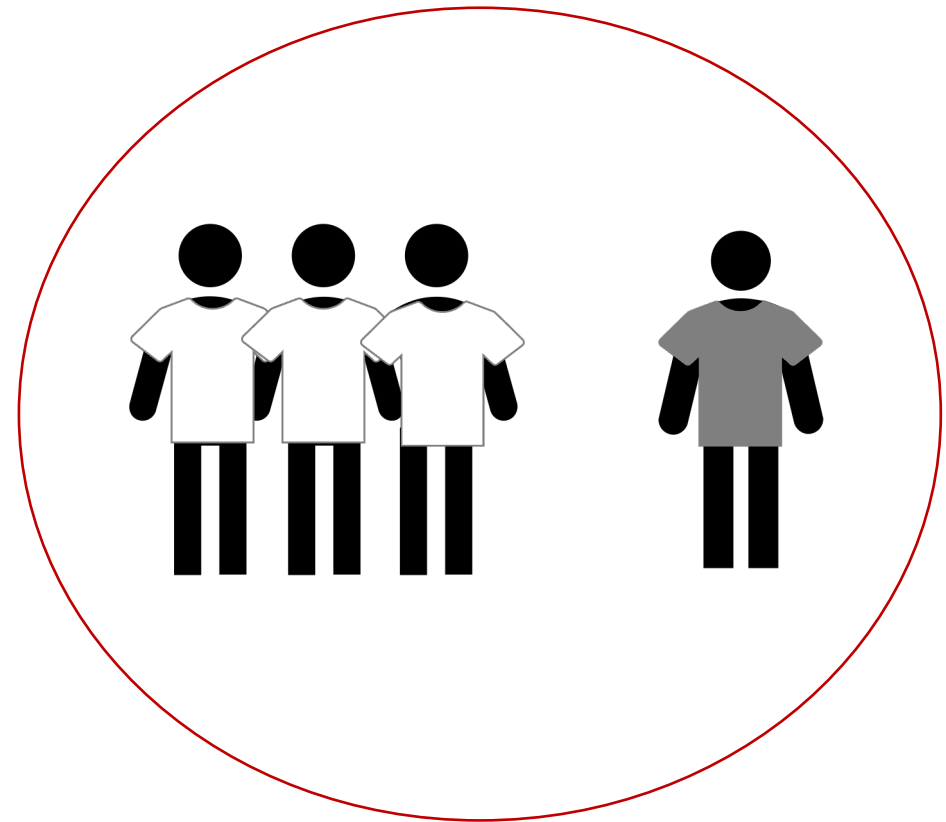
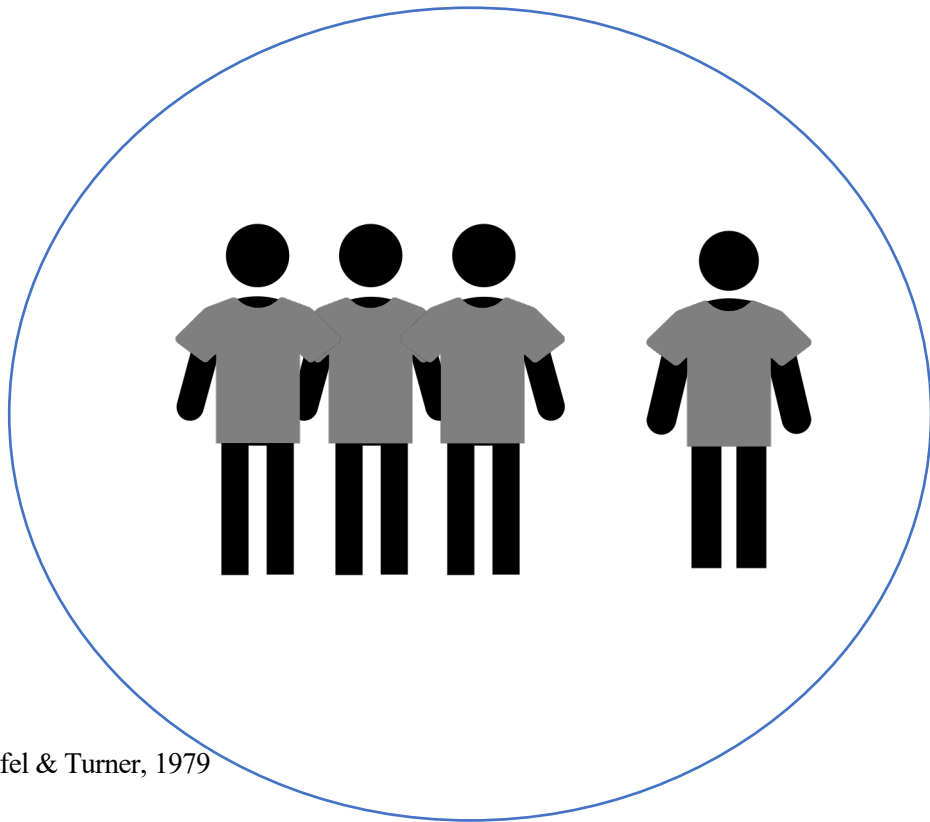
Greenberg et al (1986)

This world view protection often manifests in ways that promote contact and validation from others who hold similar world views and **dismissal** or **avoidance** of **those who hold different world views**, thus creating an anxiety buffer

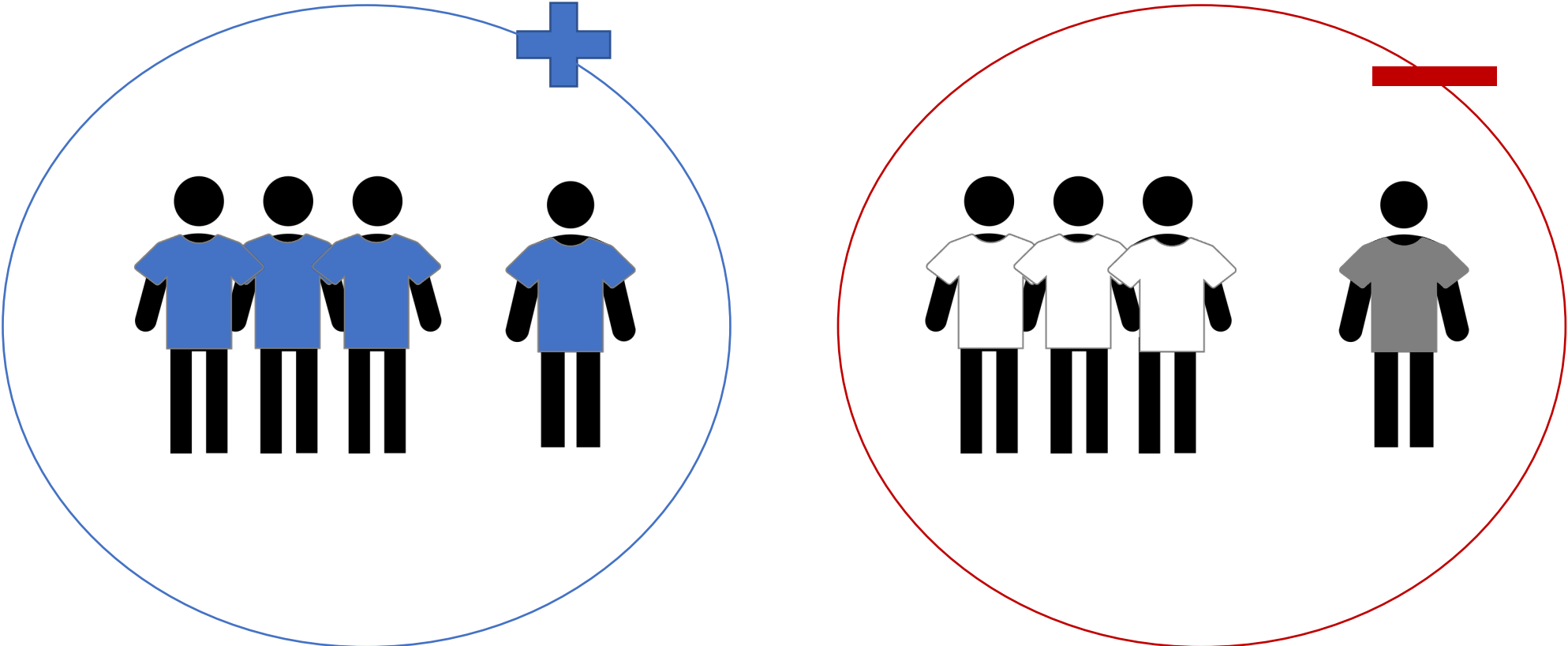




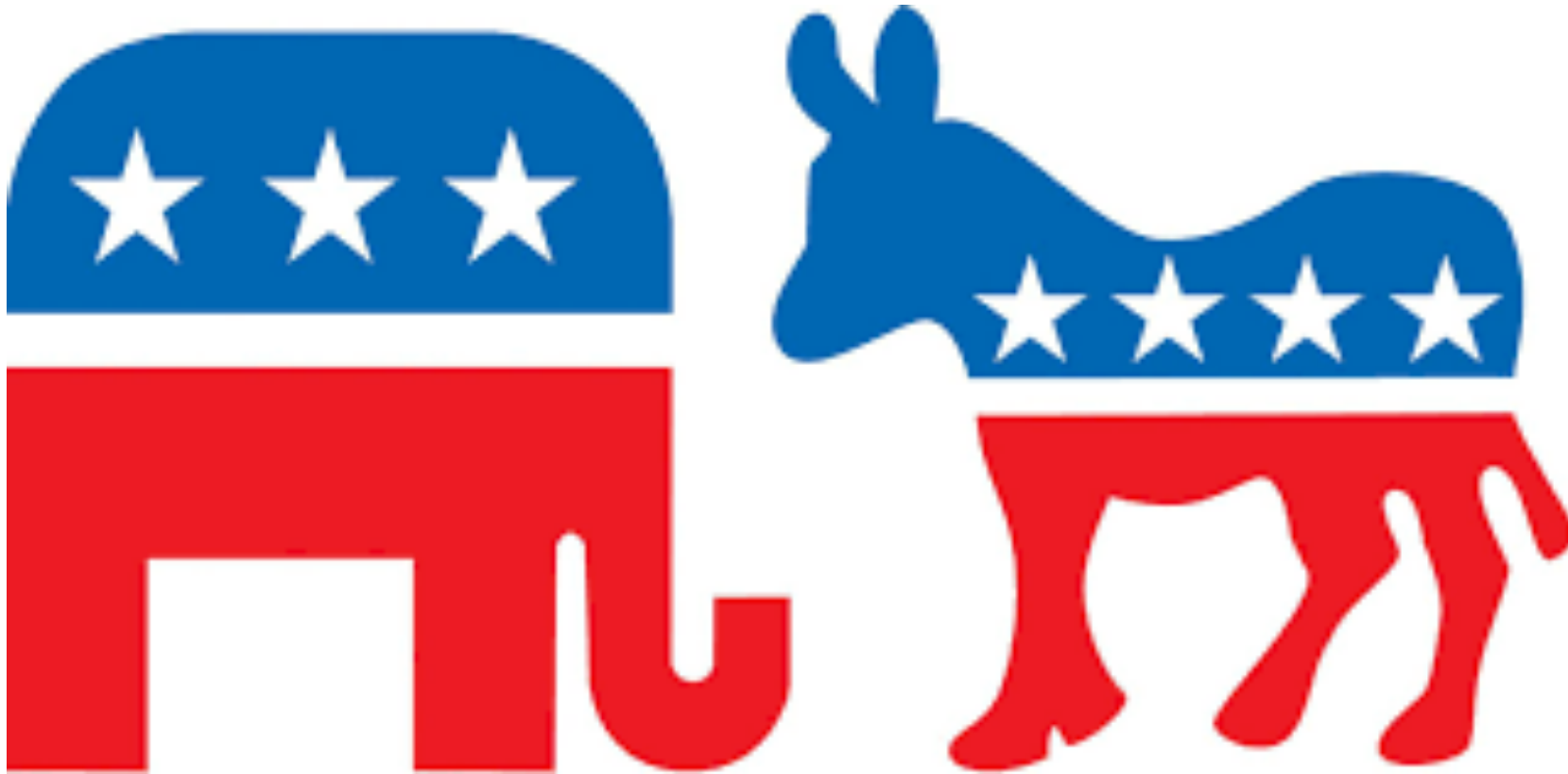
Social groups allows us to categorize other individuals in such a way that separates them into part of our **“ingroup” (us)** or part of an **“outgroup” (them)**.



This enables individuals to emphasize **negative** aspects of outgroup members and **positive** aspects about ingroup members

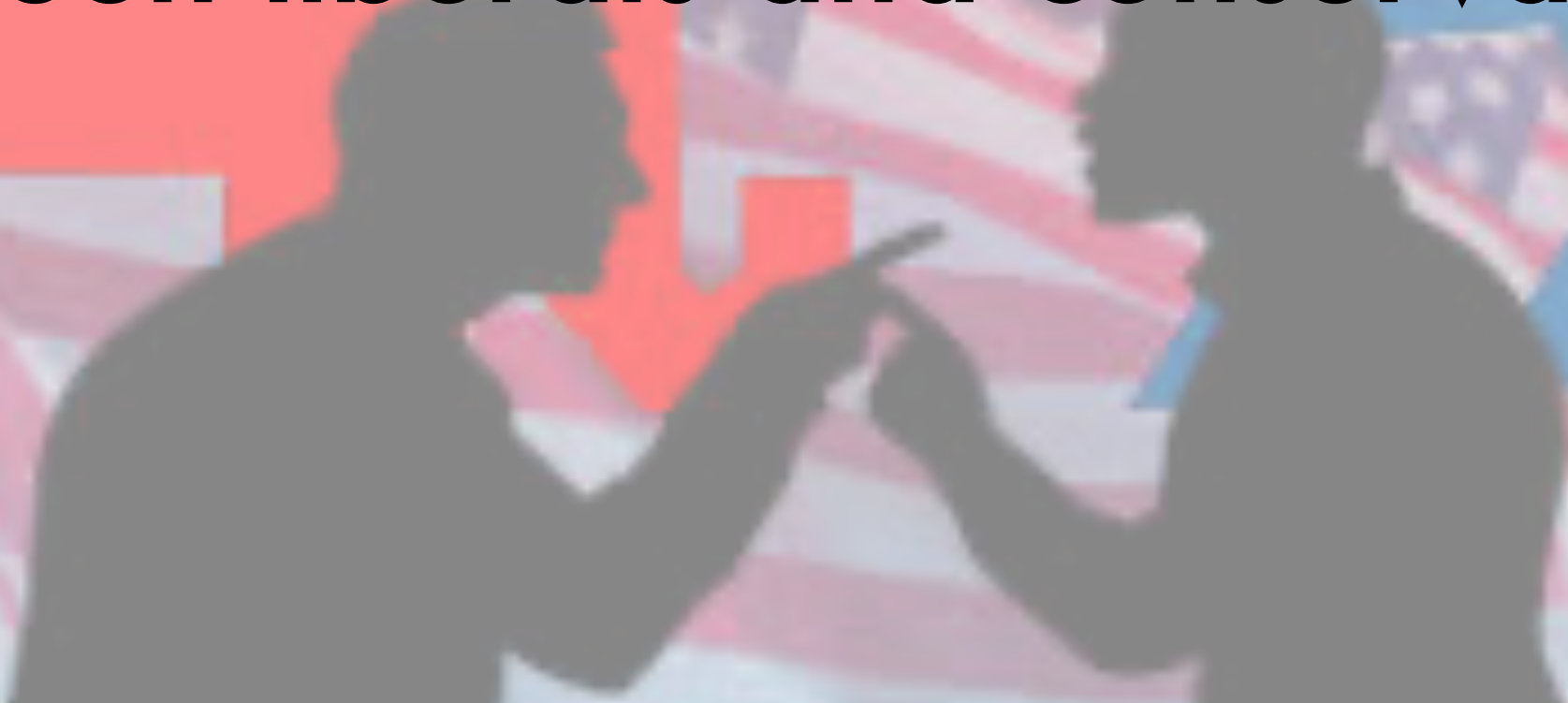


**Political party** is a clear example of **group membership**

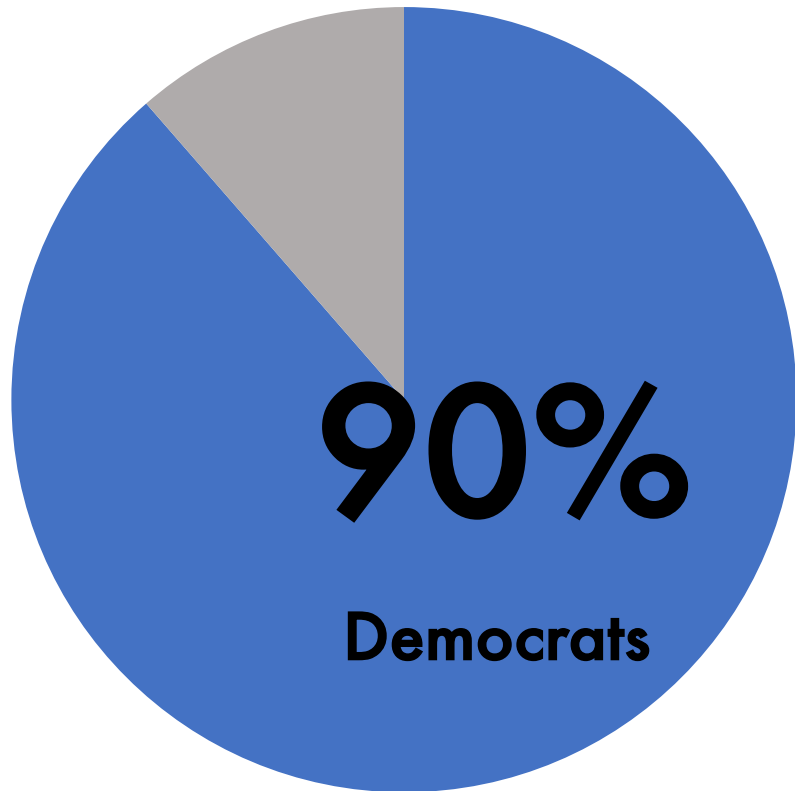


Greene (1999)

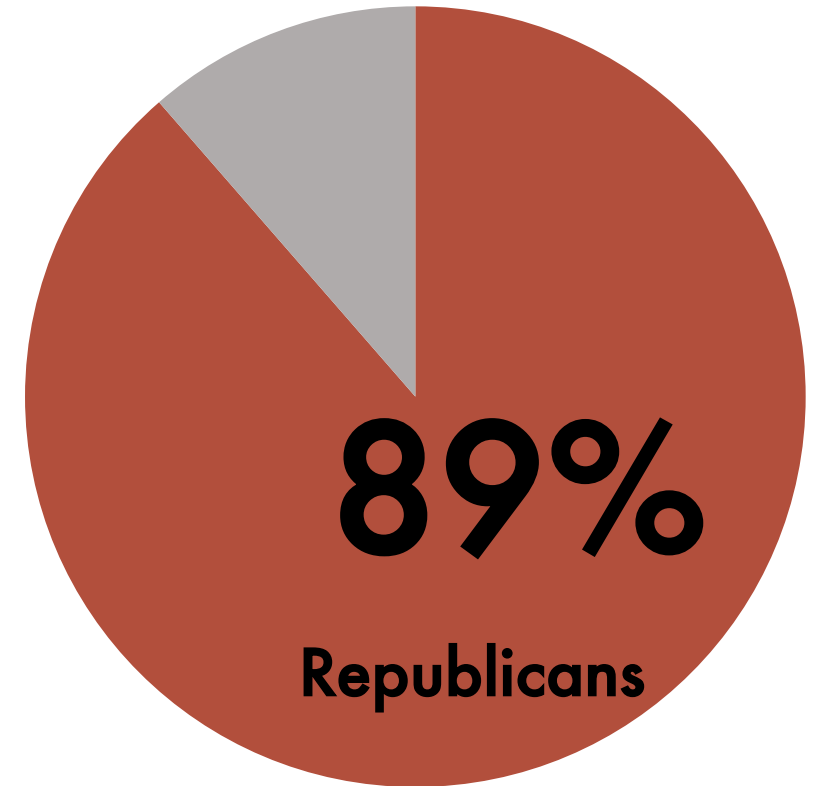
**Exposure to mortality salience  
increases feelings of polarization  
and intensifies moral differences  
between liberals and conservatives**



# Tension and animosity between the two major parties in the United States continues to worsen




The United States would suffer from irreversible and lasting harm



A large crowd of people is gathered in front of the U.S. Capitol building. Many individuals are holding American flags and banners. Visible banners include "Trump 2020" and "Don't Tread On TRUMP KEEP AMERICA". The scene is set in front of the iconic white dome of the Capitol building under an overcast sky.

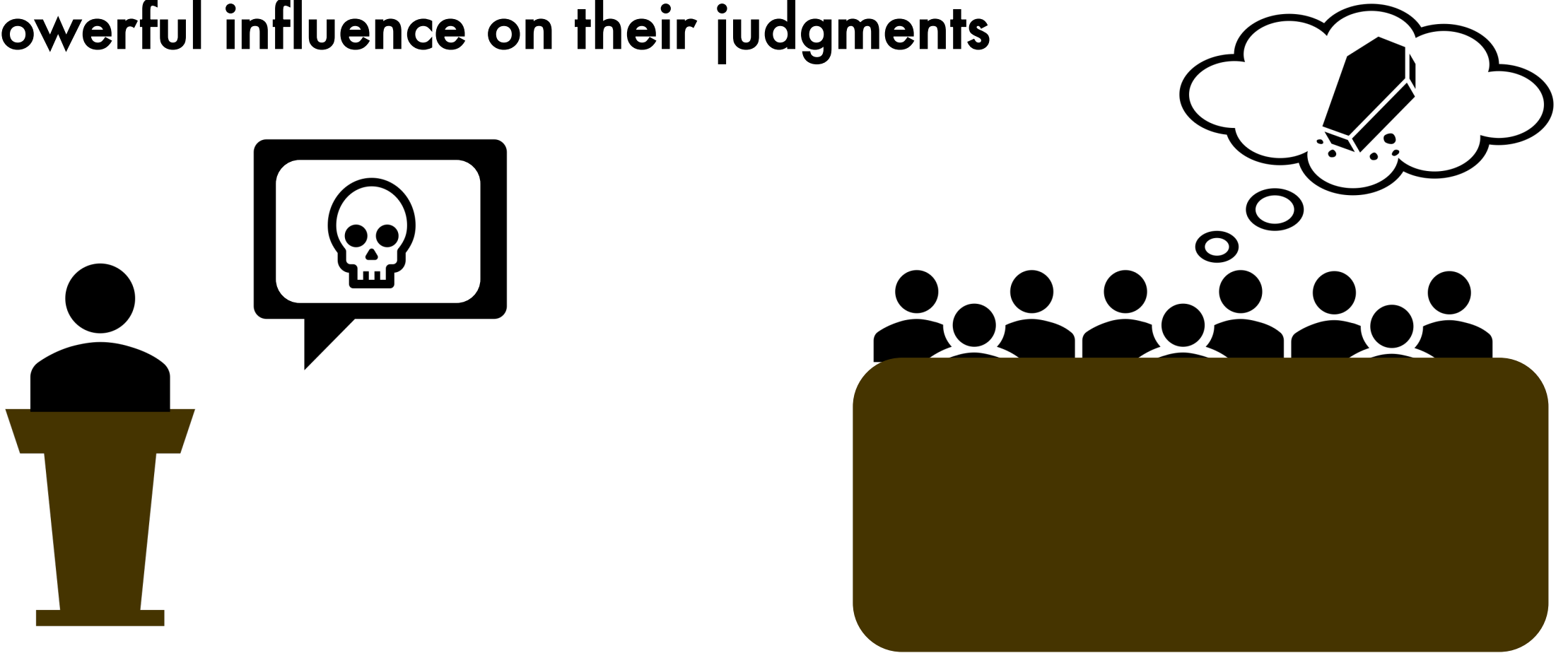
There are **discrepancies** in how each party views the impending **prosecution** of the insurrectionists.

Pew Research (2021)

A black silhouette of a person is shown in profile, facing right. The person's right arm is raised, and their hand is near a series of three circles that lead to a large, cloud-shaped thought bubble. The thought bubble contains the text: "Could these discrepancies reflect future decision-making behavior from potential jurors?".

Could these discrepancies  
reflect future decision-making  
behavior from potential jurors?

Terror Management Theory suggests that **death imagery in a trial** can make **mortality salient** to jurors, which can have a powerful influence on their judgments







What about political group membership?

# Present Research



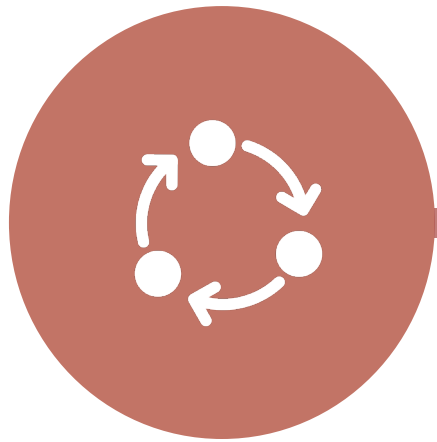


Do **political differences** between mock jurors and a defendant affect trial outcomes?

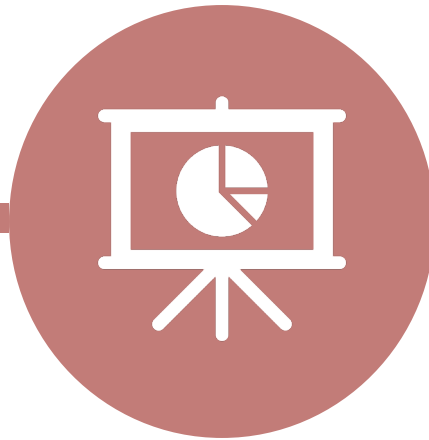
Does **mortality salience** affect trial outcomes?

Does mortality salience **exacerbate** the effects of outgroup **discrimination** at trial?

# Present Study



**Method**

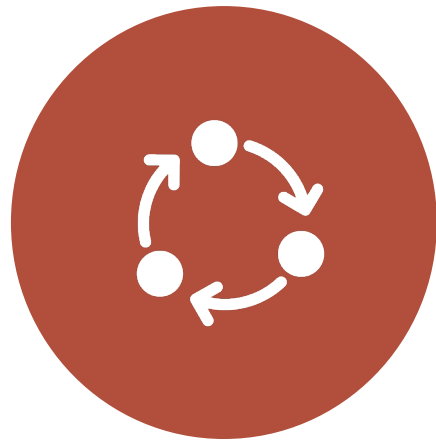


**Results**

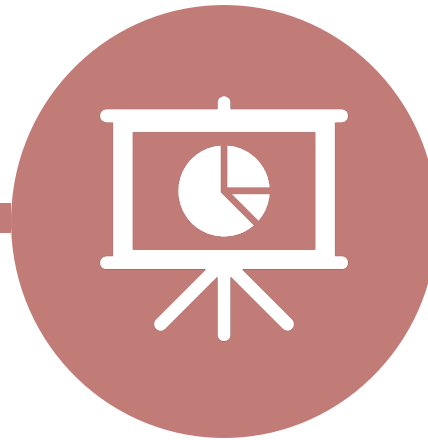


**Discussion**

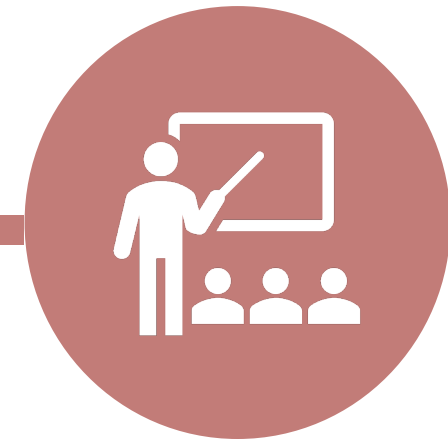
# Present Study



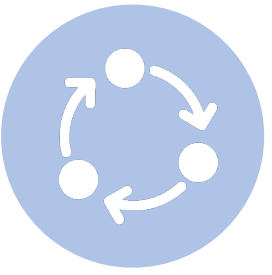
**Method**



**Results**

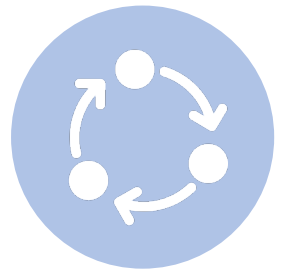


**Discussion**



**We sampled 310 MTurk workers**

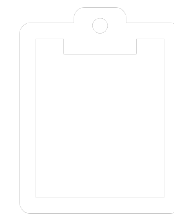




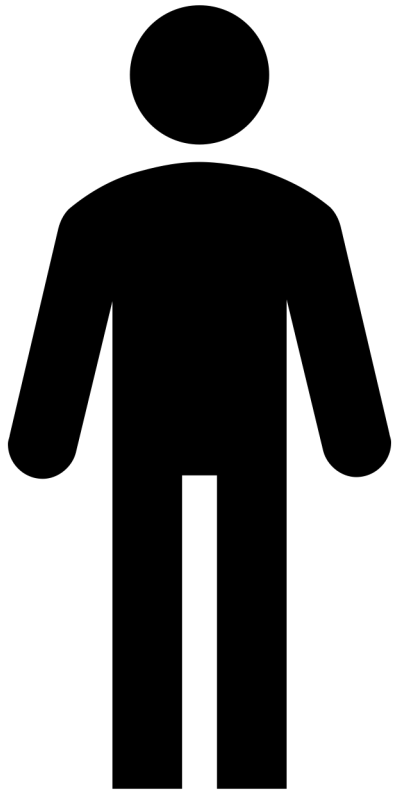
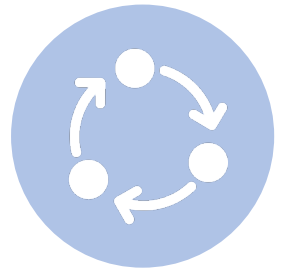
**We sampled 310 MTurk workers**



**Read a mock trial transcript**



# We implemented a 3 x 2 between subjects design

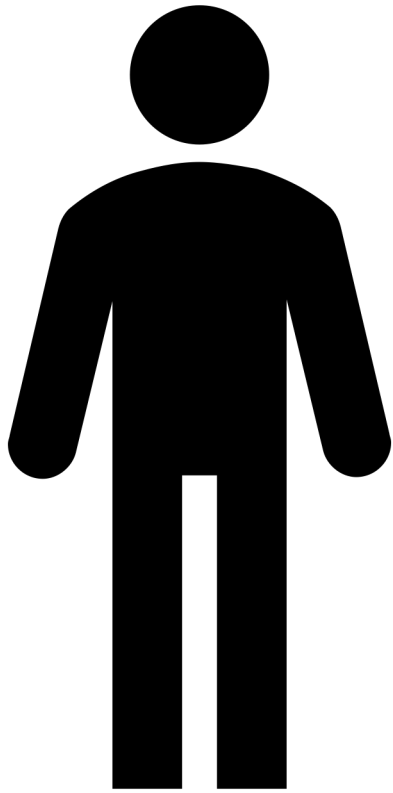
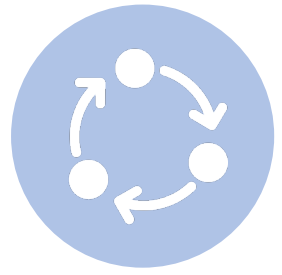


**X**

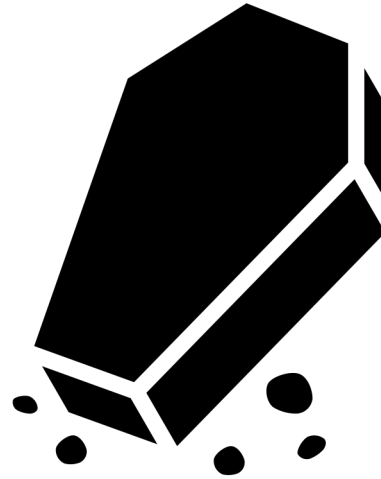




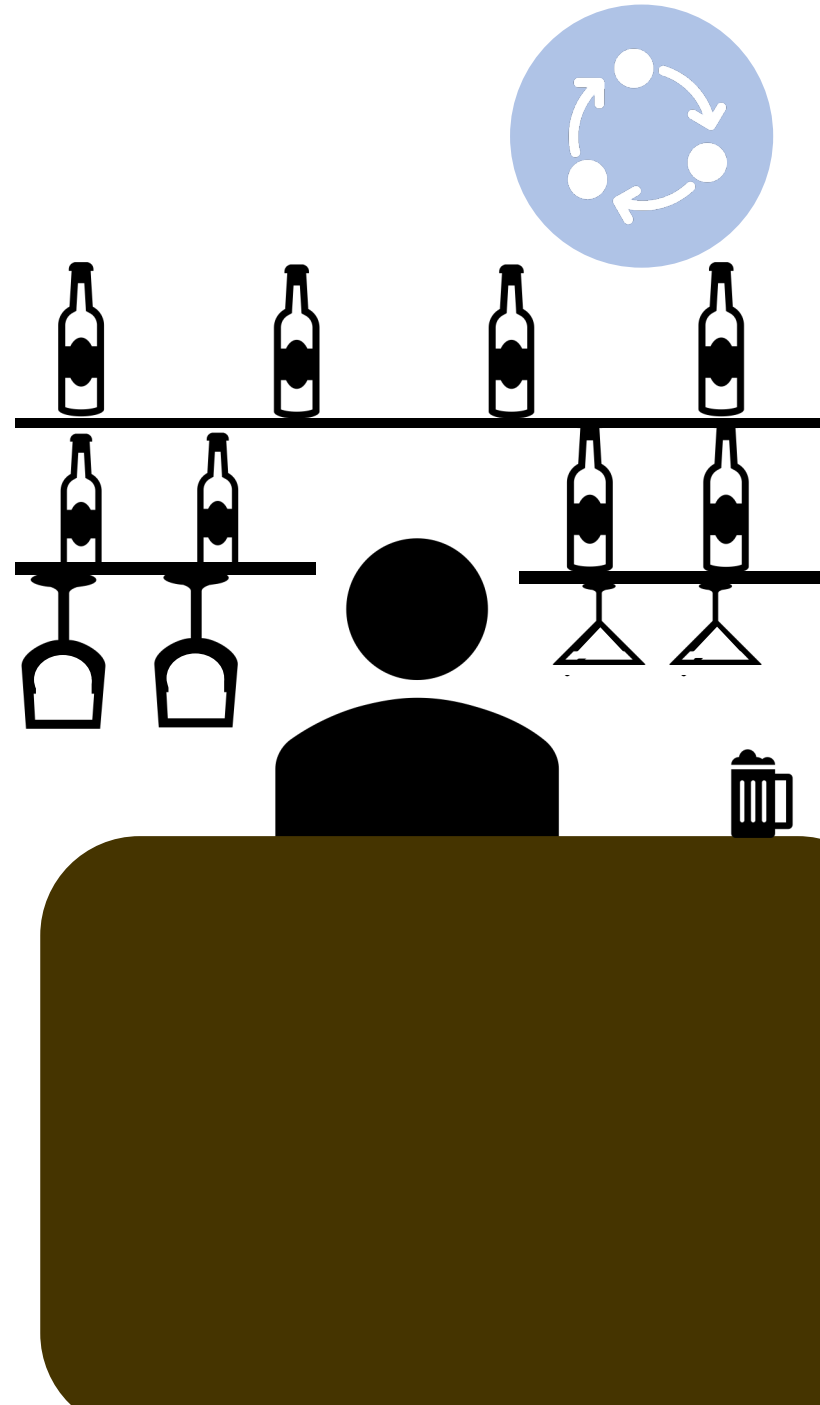
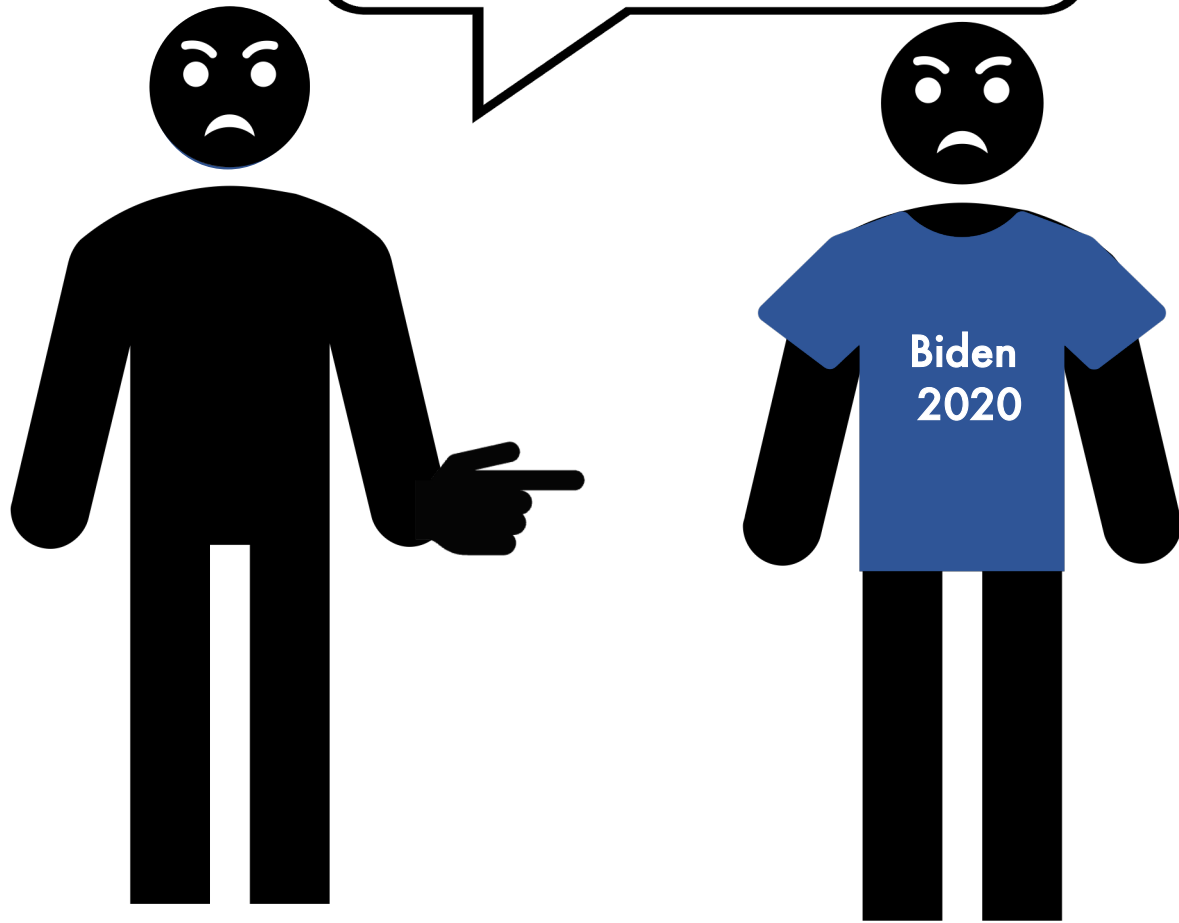
# We implemented a 3 x 2 between subjects design



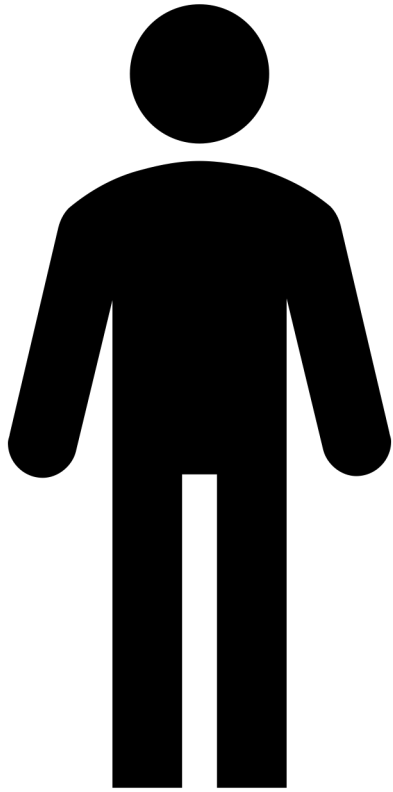
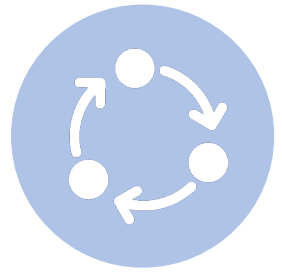
**X**



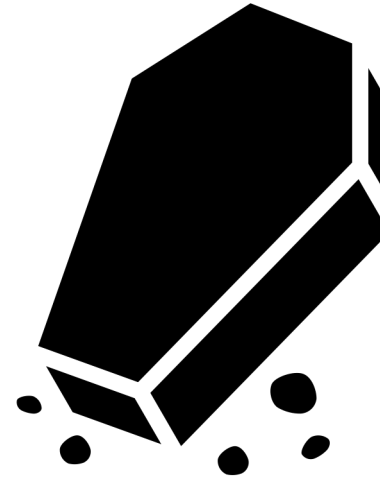
“You liberals are ruining our country! You snowflakes won’t get your way, not with Trump in office! So, go ahead and cry about it! We’ll get another four more year’s commie!”



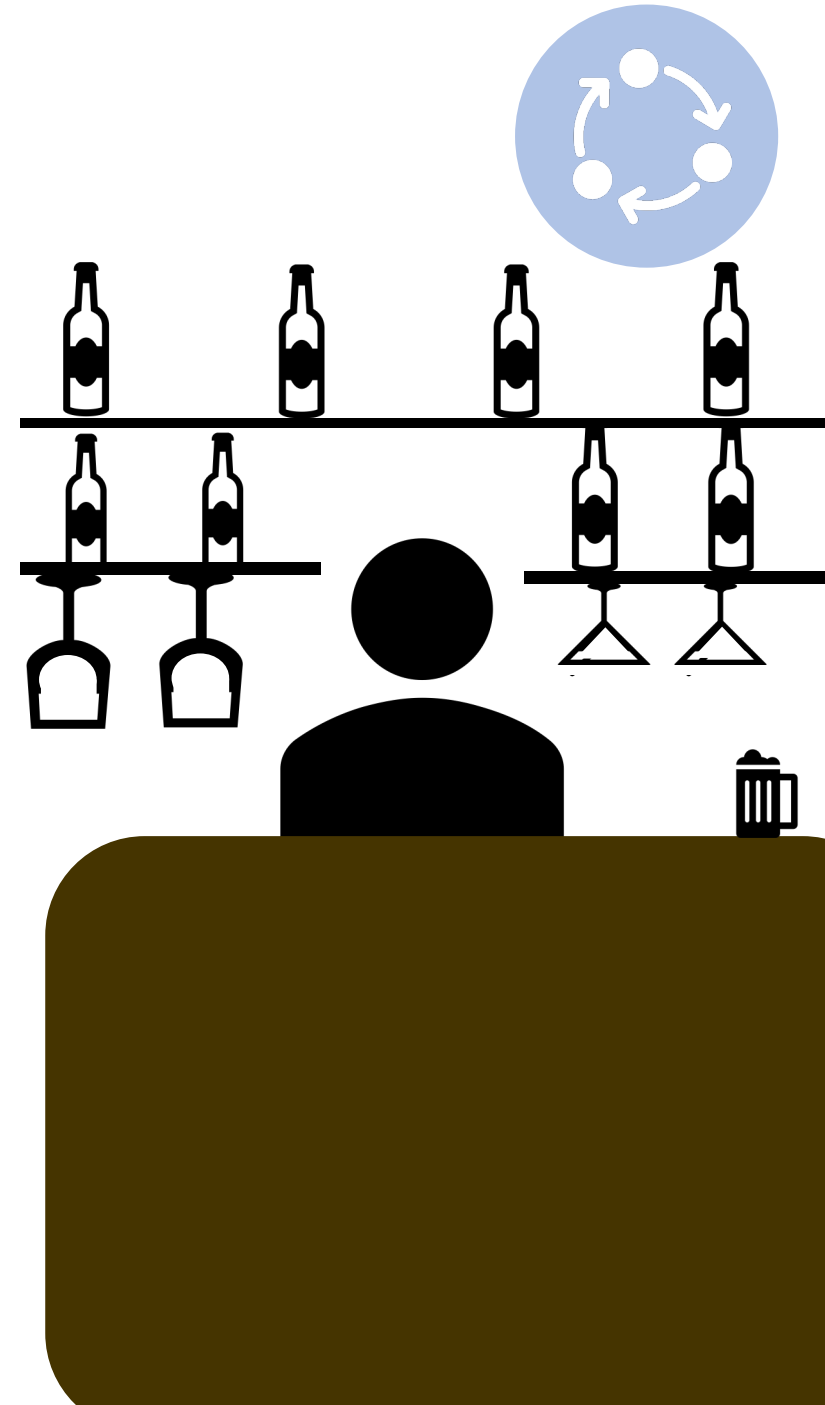
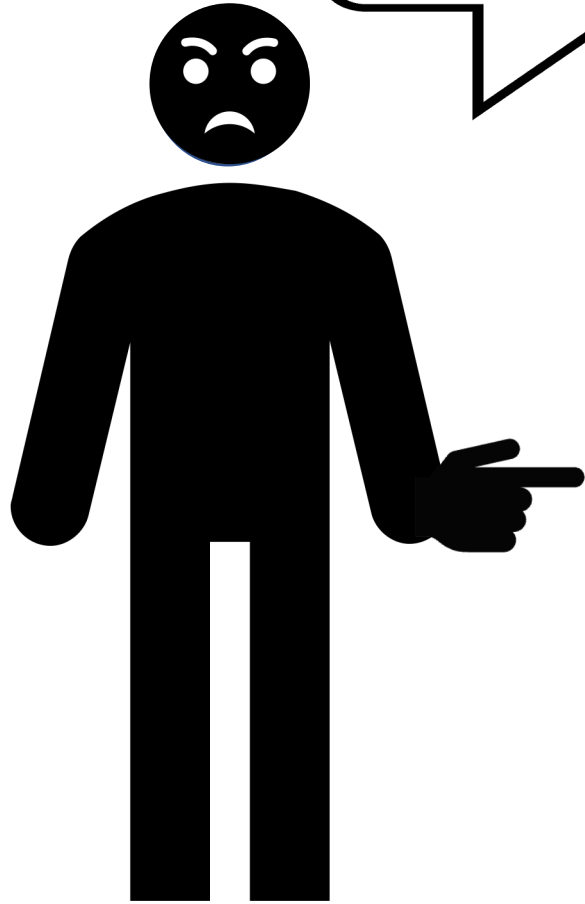
# We implemented a 3 x 2 between subjects design



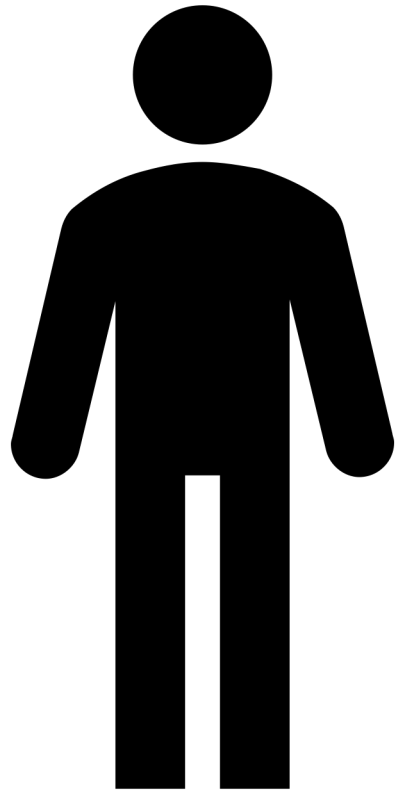
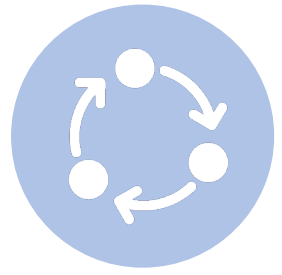
**X**



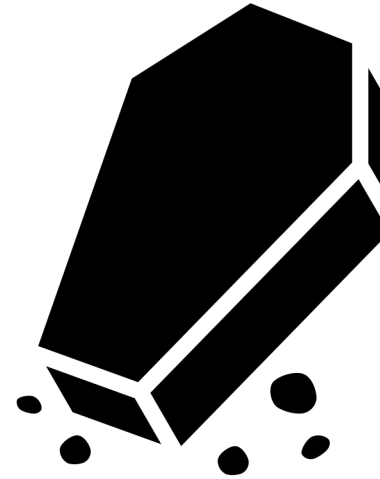
“You are a racist bootlicker who doesn’t care about anyone but themselves! Your president has ruined this country! Enjoy your bigotry while it lasts!”



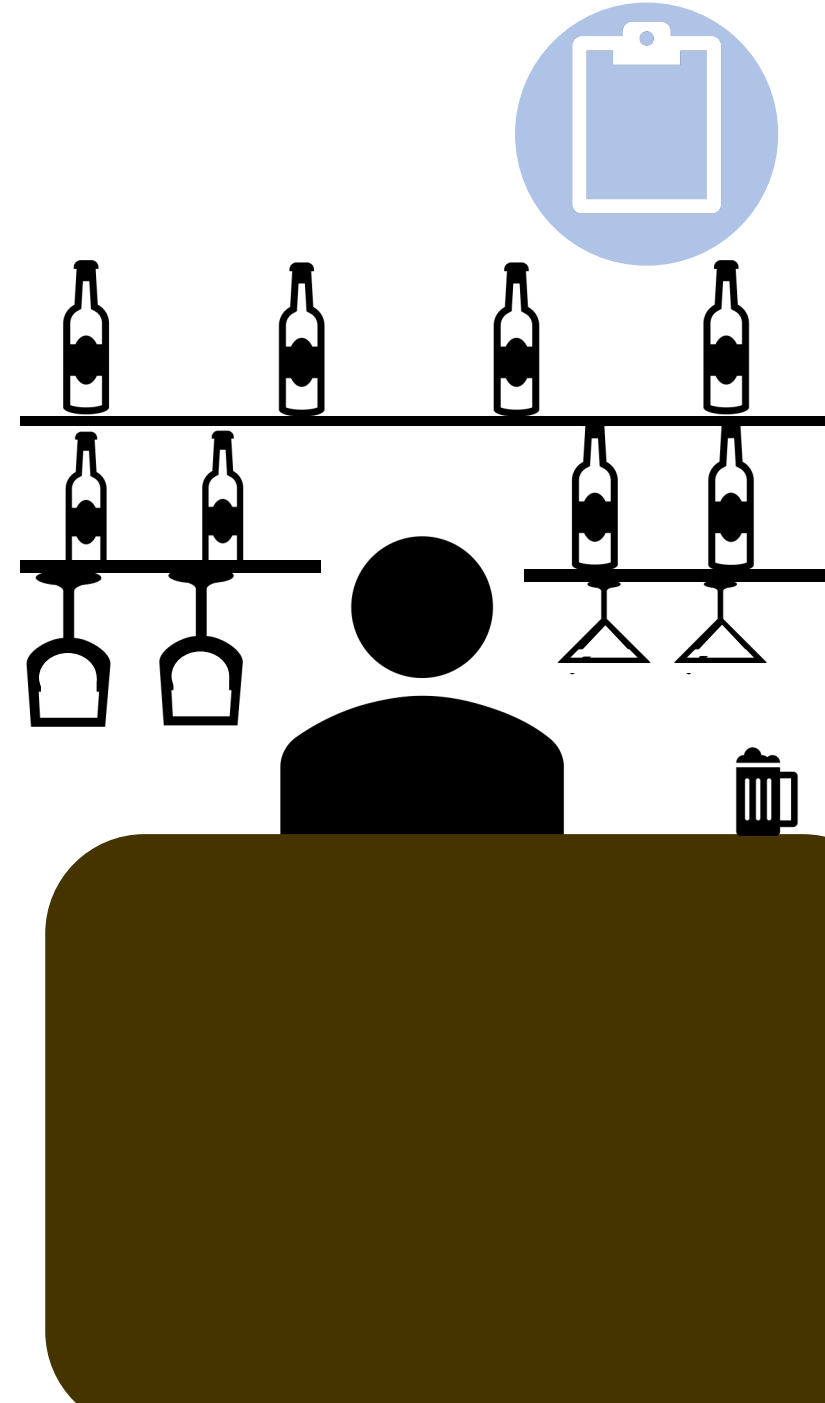
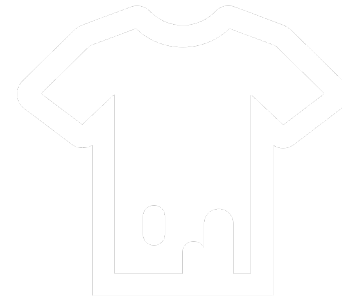
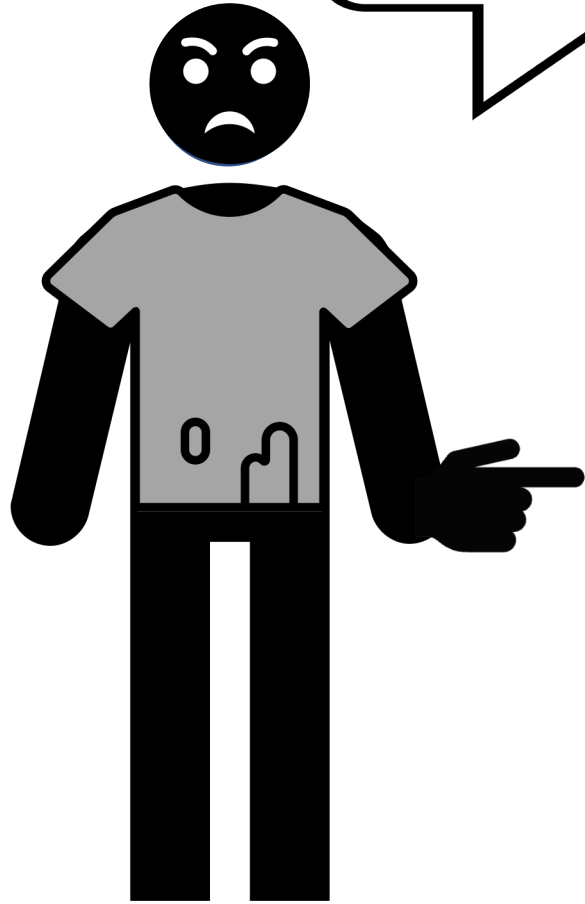
# We implemented a 3 x 2 between subjects design



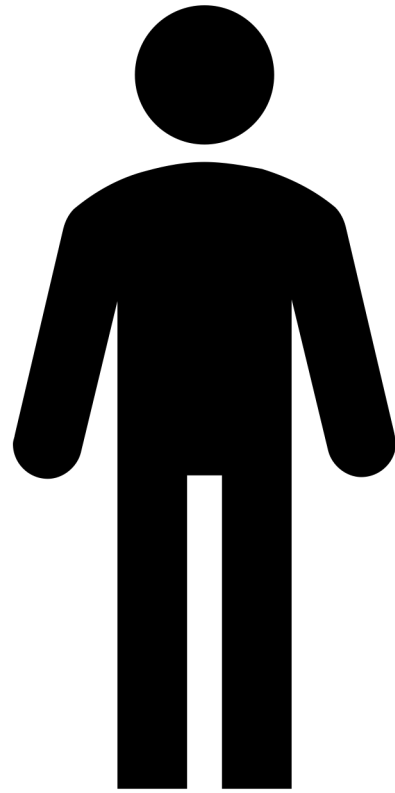
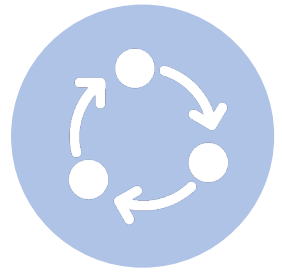
X



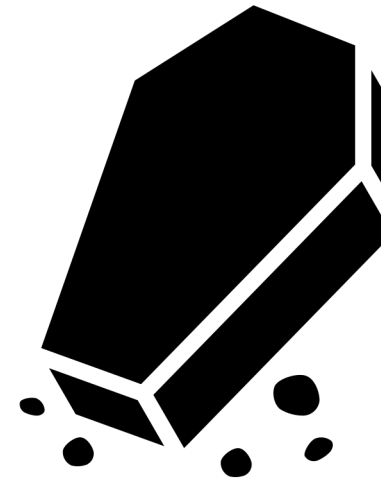
“Watch where you are going jerk!  
Are you F-ing kidding me! This is a  
new shirt! Do you have 150\$ you A-  
Hole? F-You! You’re going to pay for  
this!”



# We implemented a 3 x 2 between subjects design

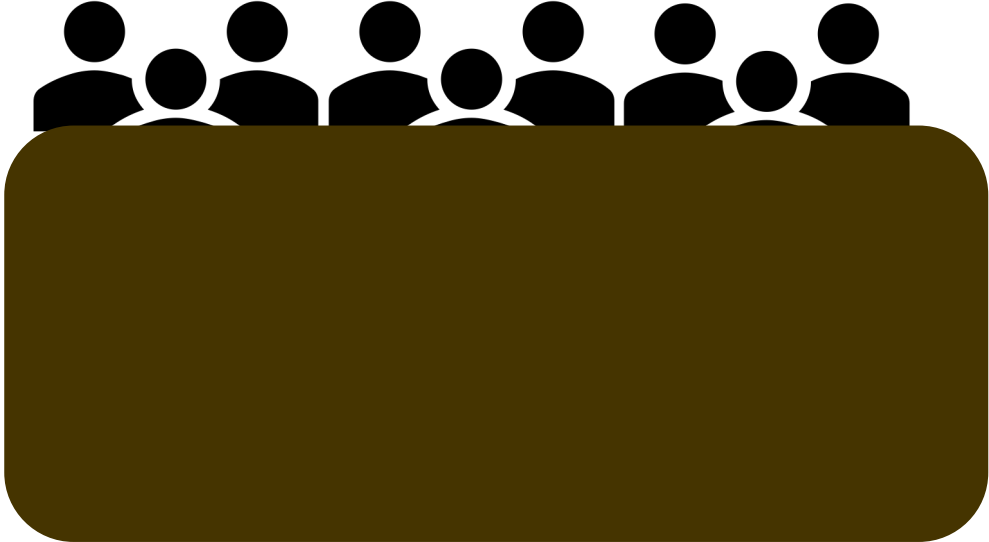


X



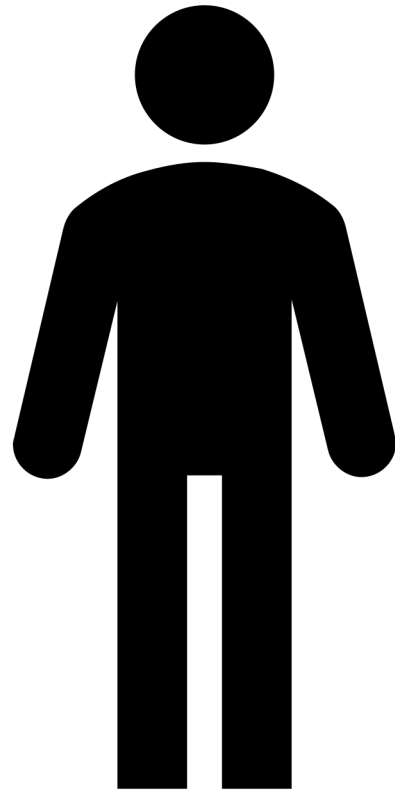
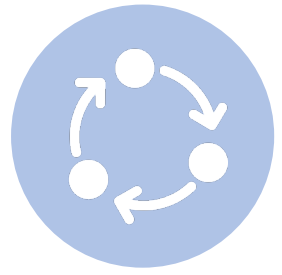


“Now ladies and gentlemen I again implore you to put yourself in Mr. Wright’s shoes. Please do me a favor and close your eyes and **imagine** if it was you yourself who was beaten and laying on the cold hard floor only inches from **death**.”

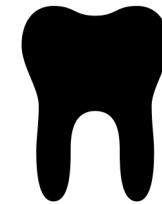
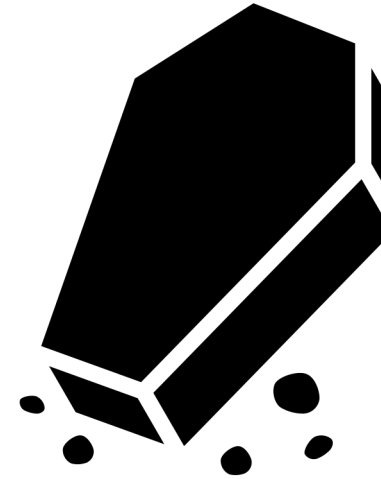


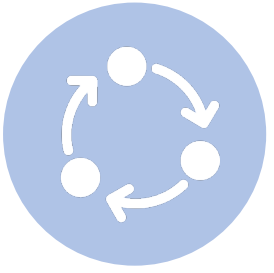


# We implemented a 3 x 2 between subjects design

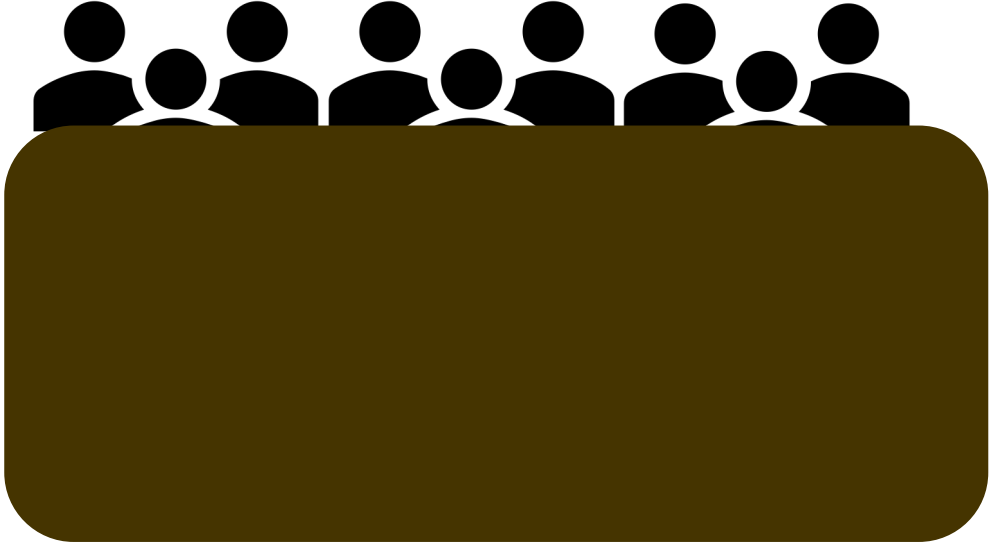


X

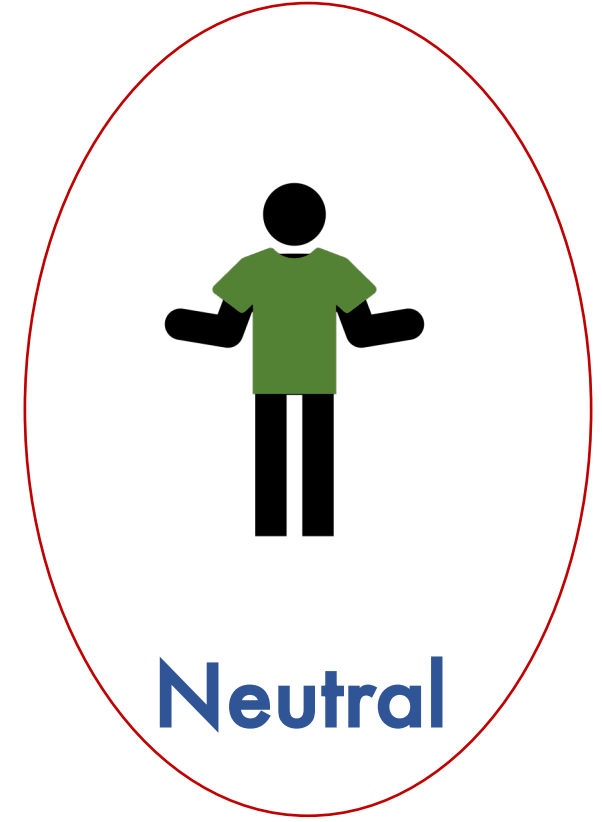
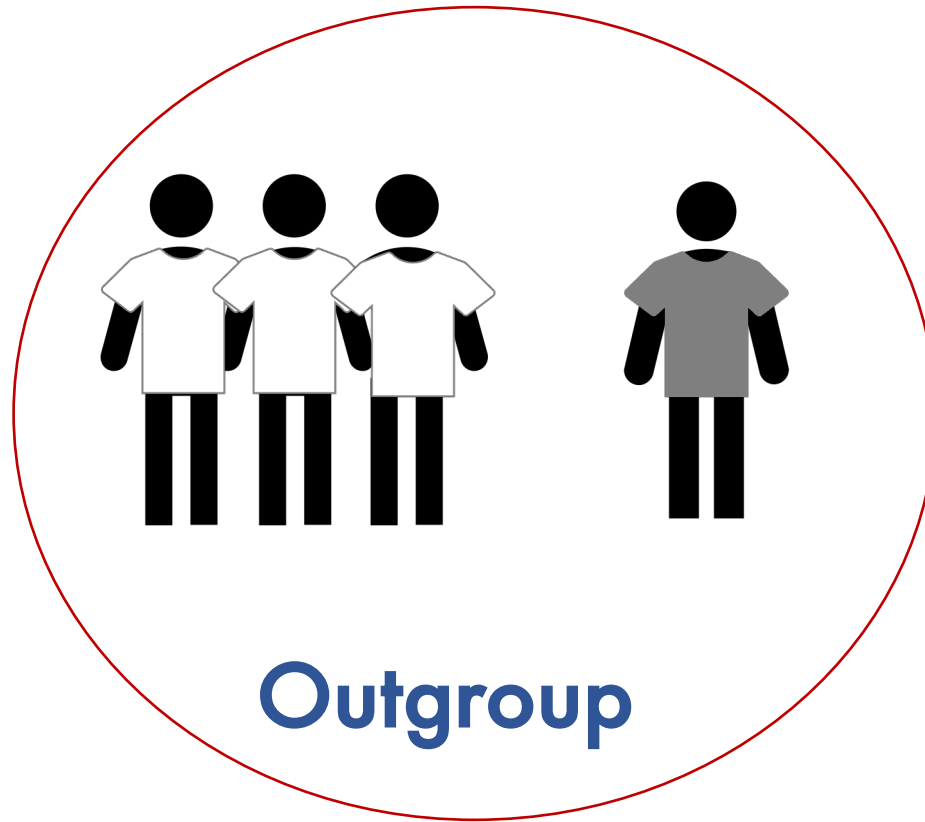
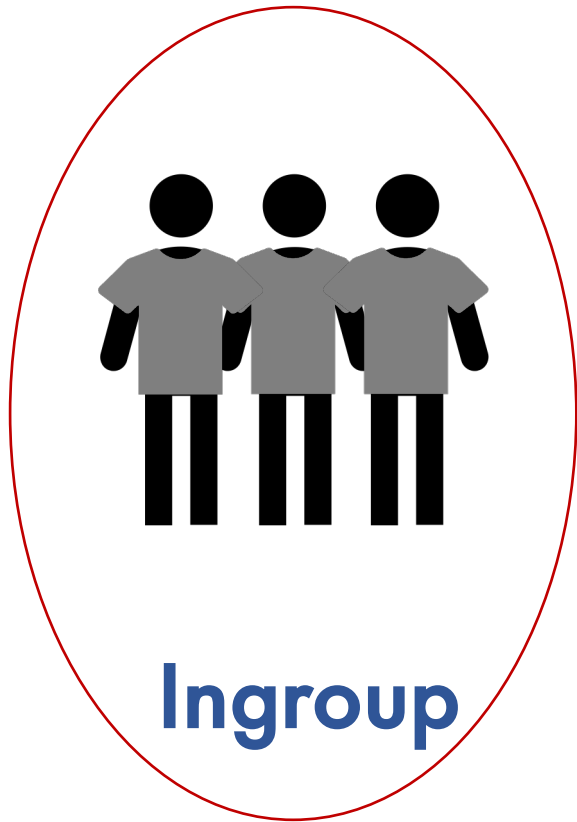
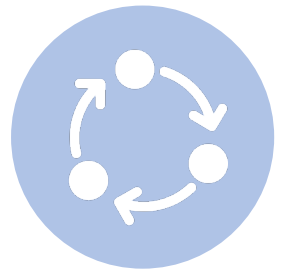


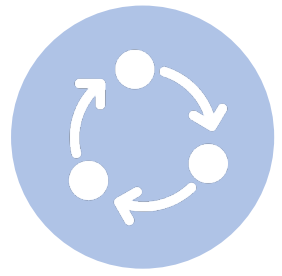


“Now ladies and gentlemen, I again implore you to put yourself in the shoes of Jonathon Wright. Please do me a favor and close your eyes and **imagine** it was you now suffering from several broken bones, including a **fractured jaw** and several **broken teeth**.”



# The defendant coded as either...





**We sampled 310 MTurk workers**



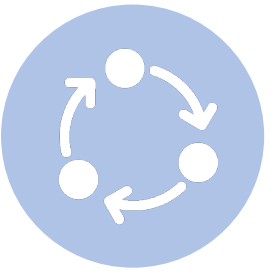
**Read a mock trial transcript**



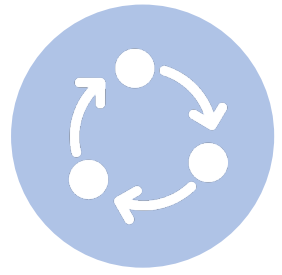
**Provided case judgments**



# Participants provided...

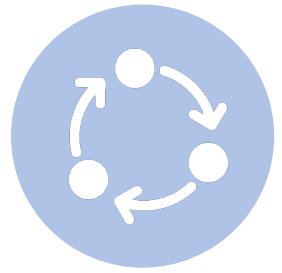


# Participants provided...



## Verdict Preference

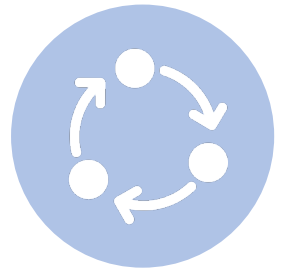
# Participants provided...



"Please indicate the  
verdict you prefer."

## Verdict Preference

# Participants provided...



"Please indicate the verdict you prefer."

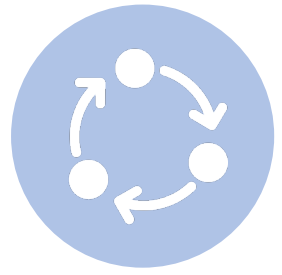
Guilty

Not Guilty

Verdict Preference



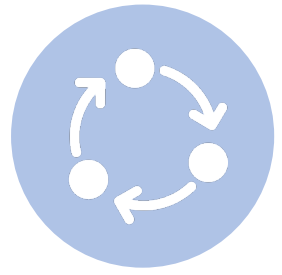
# Participants provided...



**Verdict Preference**

**Self-Defense Motivation**

# Participants provided...

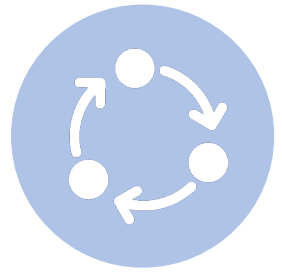


**Verdict Preference**

"In your opinion, what is the likelihood the defendant's actions during the bar fight were motivated by the desire to protect himself"

**Self-Defense Motivation**

# Participants provided...



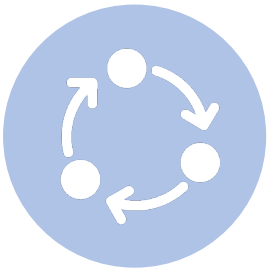
**Verdict Preference**

"In your opinion, what is the likelihood the defendant's actions during the bar fight were motivated by the desire to protect himself"

**Self-Defense Motivation**

Scale: 1-7

# Participants provided...

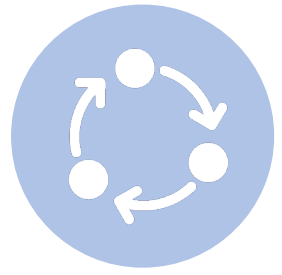


**Verdict Preference**

**Self-Defense Motivation**

**Perceptions of Blameworthiness**

# Participants provided...



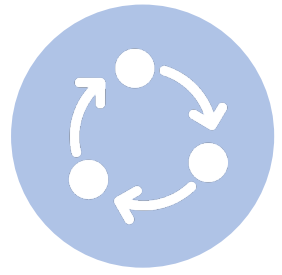
**Verdict Preference**

**Self-Defense Motivation**

**“To what extent is the defendant to blame for the injuries to the victim?”**

**Perceptions of Blameworthiness**

# Participants provided...



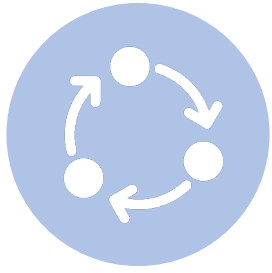
**Verdict Preference**

**Self-Defense Motivation**

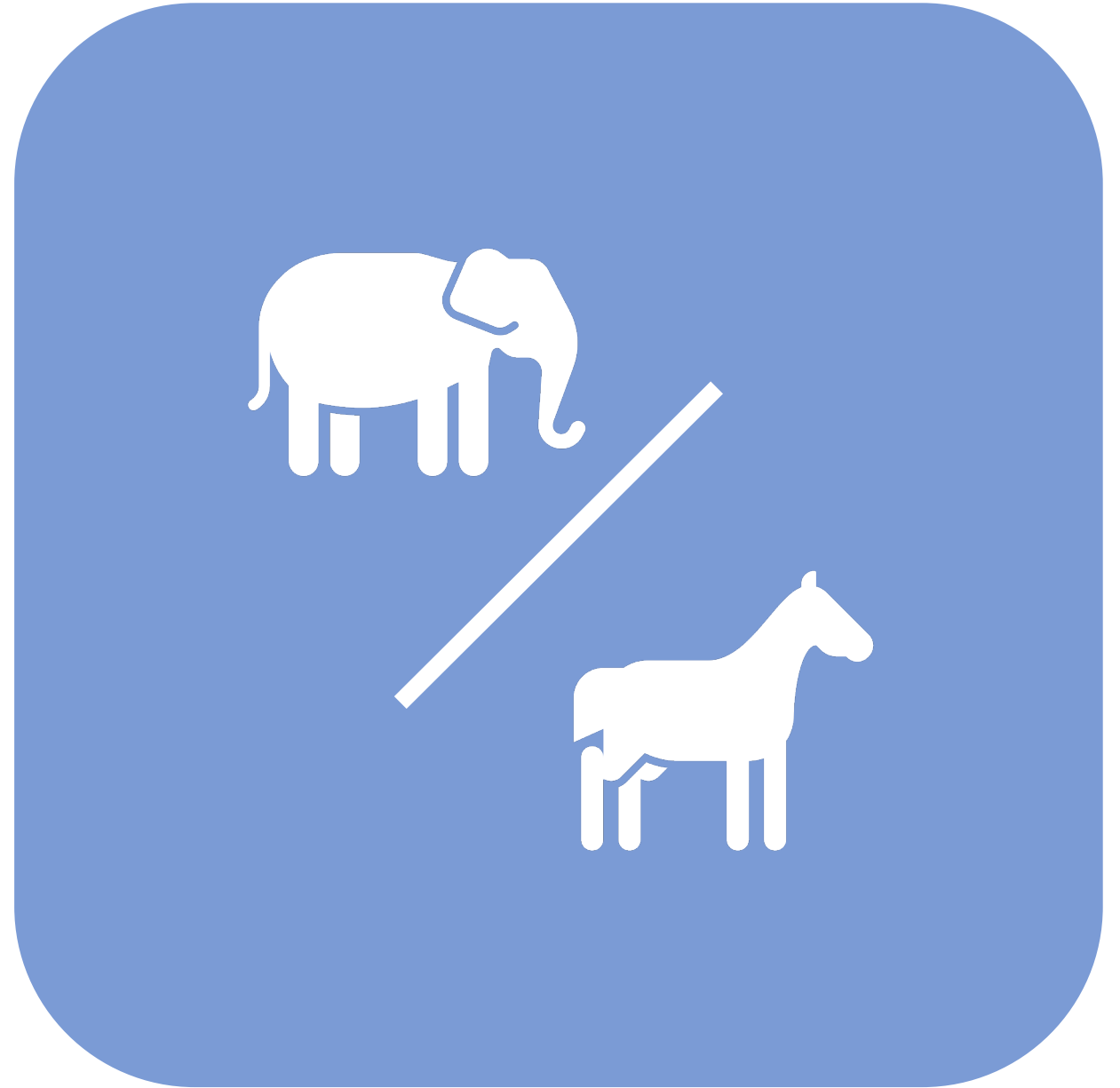
**Perceptions of Blameworthiness**

**“To what extent is the defendant to blame for the injuries to the victim?”**

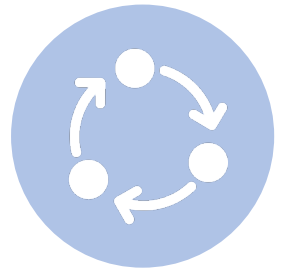
**0 – 100%**



# Political Identity Measures



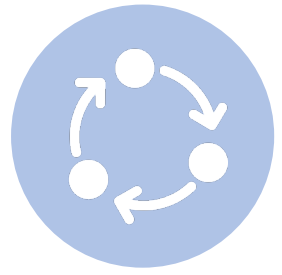
# Participants provided...



2020 Vote



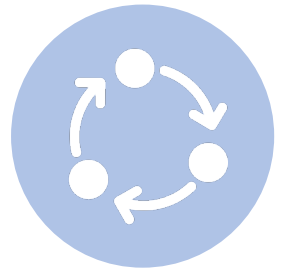
# Participants provided...



“Who did you vote for in the  
2020 US Presidential  
election?”

**2020 Vote**

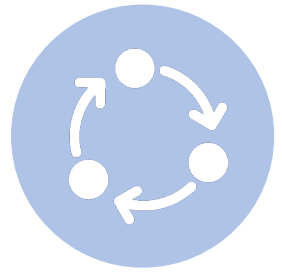
# Participants provided...



**2020 Vote**

**Political Orientation**

# Participants provided...

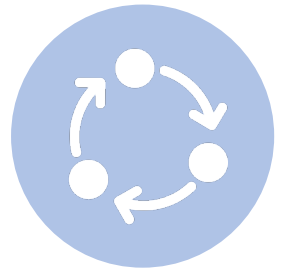


**2020 Vote**

“What is your political ideology?”

**Political Orientation**

# Participants provided...



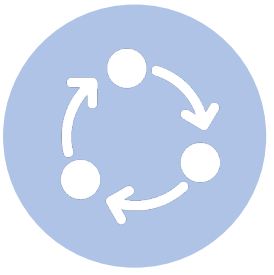
**2020 Vote**

“What is your political ideology?”

**Political Orientation**

1 = Very Liberal;  
7 = Very Conservative

# Participants provided...

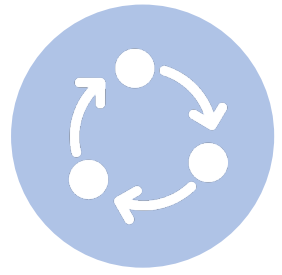


**2020 Vote**

**Political Orientation**

**Importance of Party Identification**

# Participants provided...



**2020 Vote**

**Political Orientation**

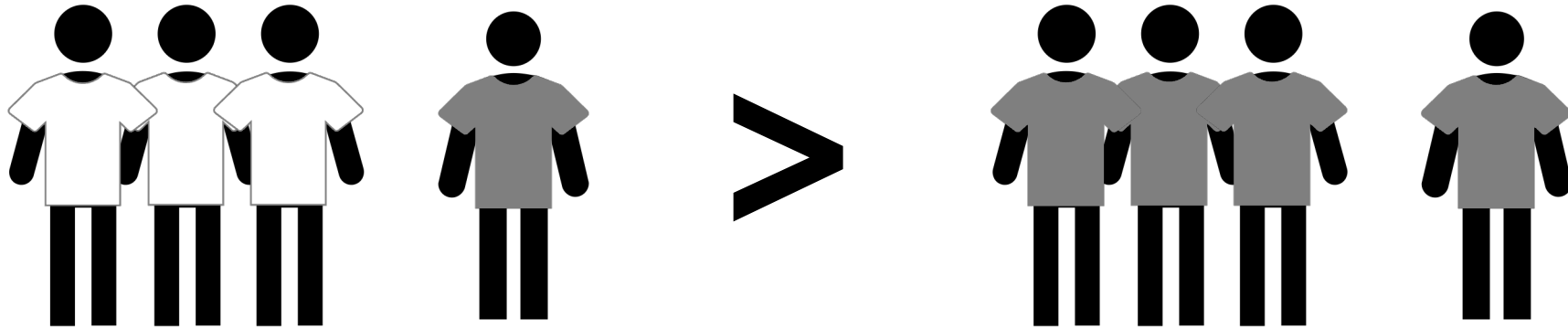
**Importance of Party Identification**

“How important is your party identification to you?”

1 = Not important at all;  
7 = Extremely important

# Hypotheses

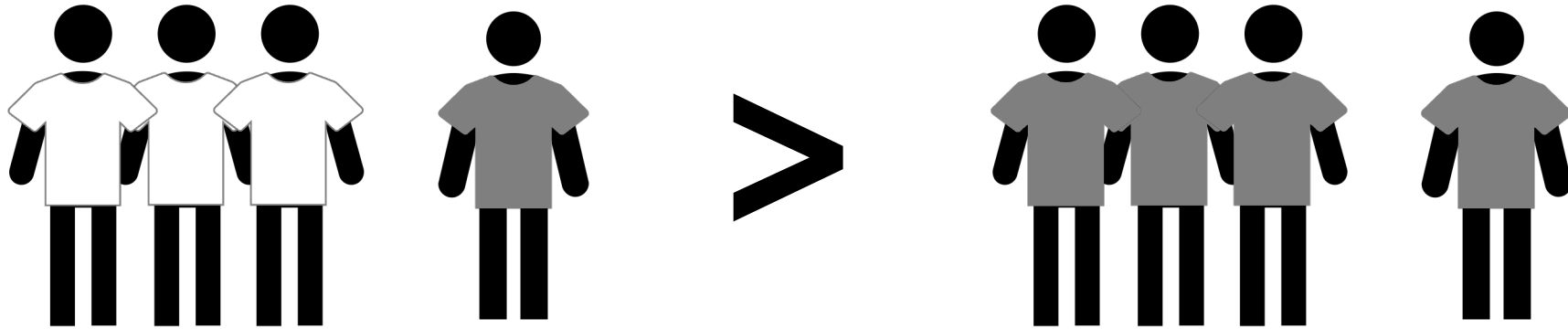
H1



Verdict

# Hypotheses

H1



Blameworthiness



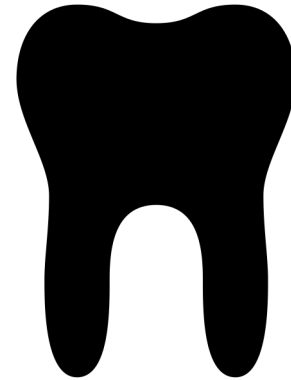


# Hypotheses

H2



>



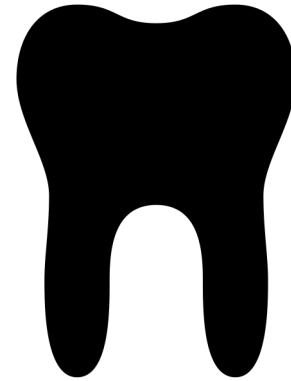
Verdict

# Hypotheses

H2



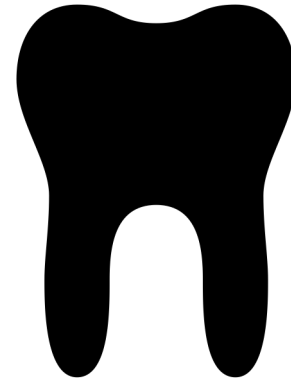
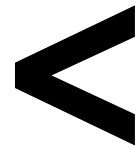
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Blameworthiness

# Hypotheses

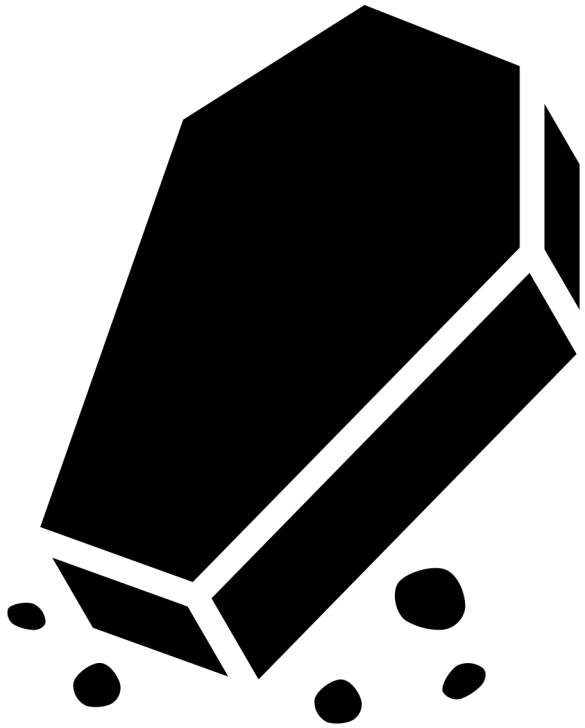
H2



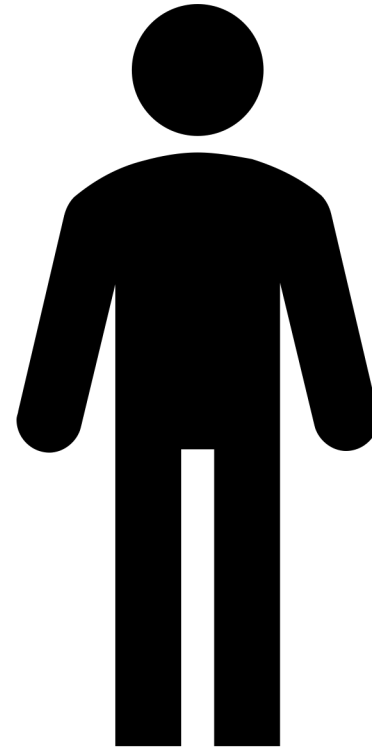
Self-defense

# Hypotheses

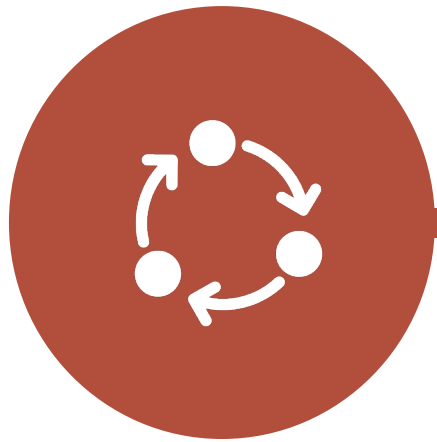
H3



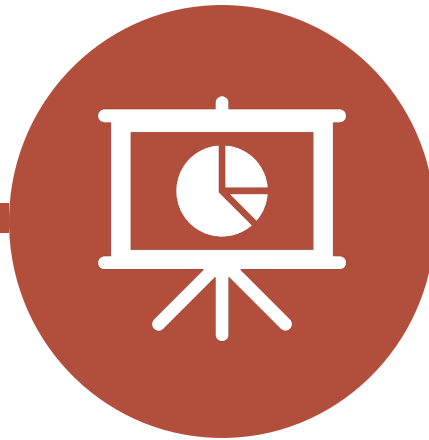
+



# Present Study



**Method**

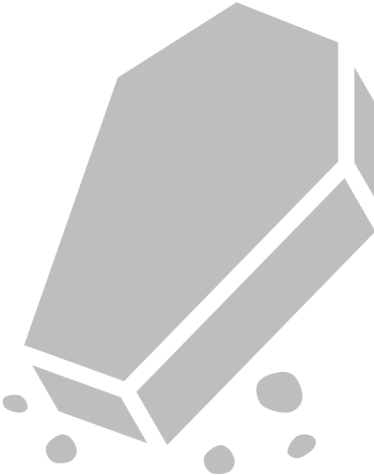
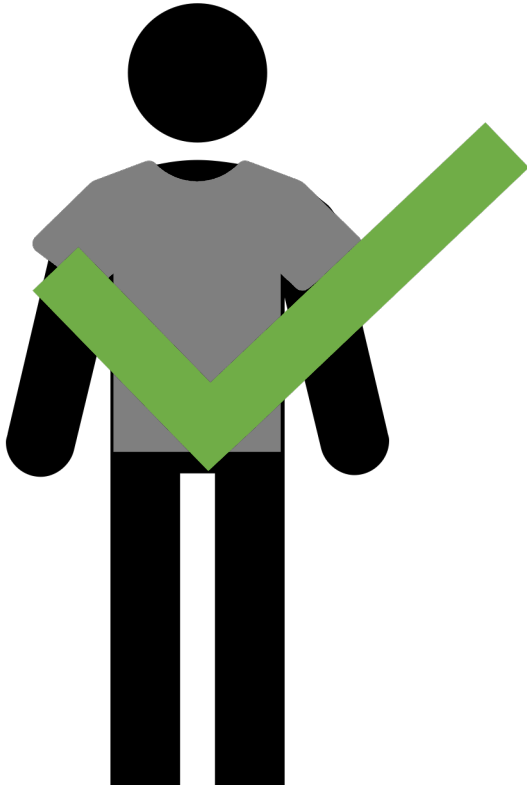
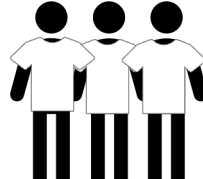
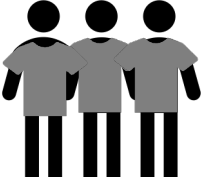


**Results**

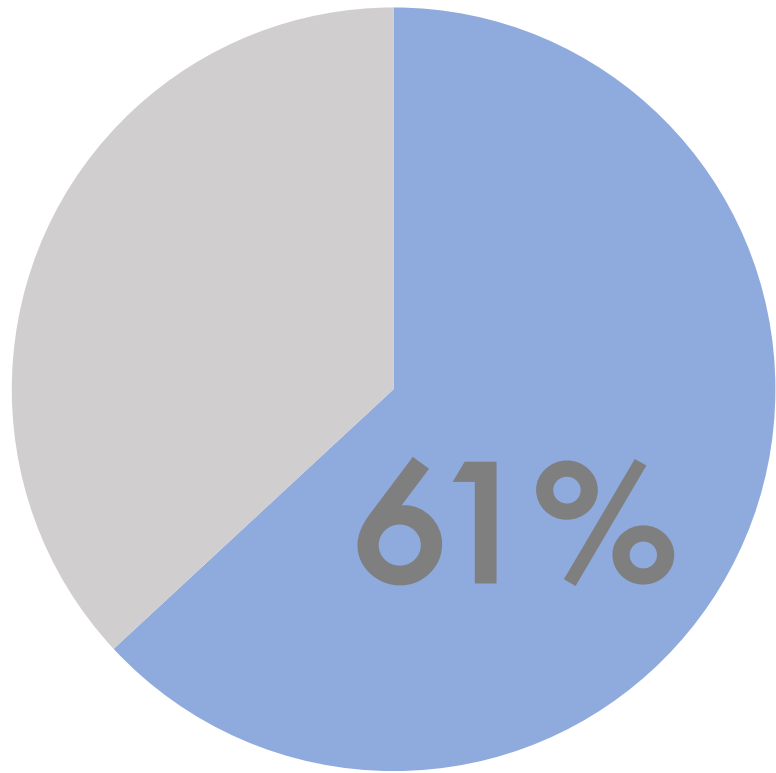


**Discussion**

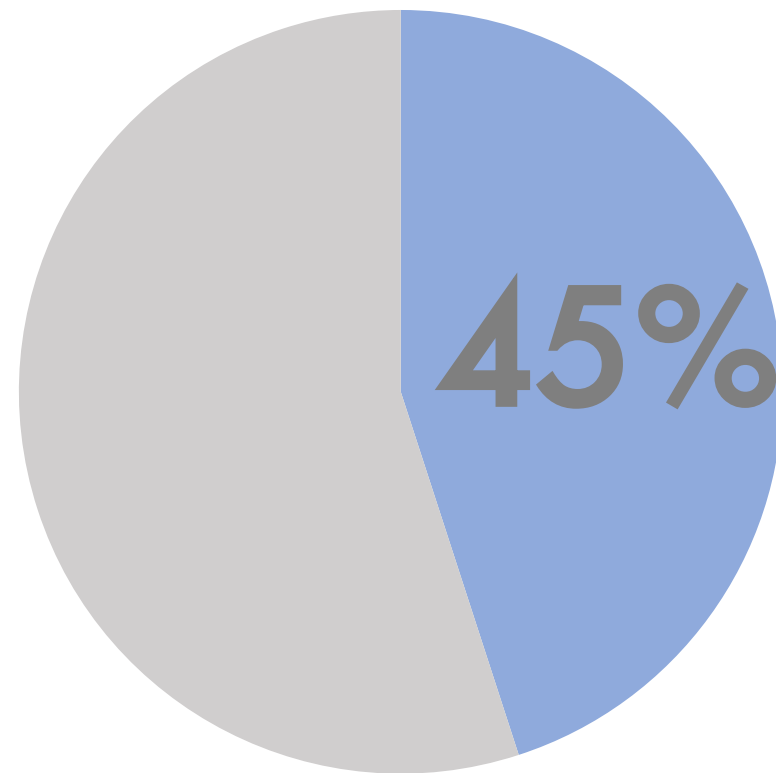
# VERDICT



# Participants found the outgroup defendant guilty at significantly higher rates than the ingroup defendant



Percentage  
of  
outgroup  
guilt  
verdicts

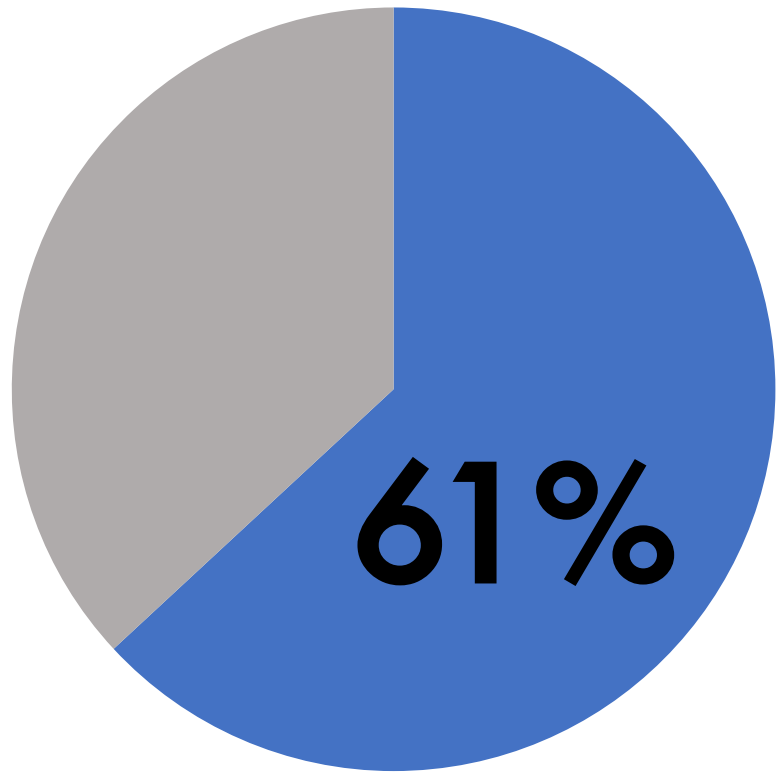


Percentage  
of ingroup  
guilt  
verdicts

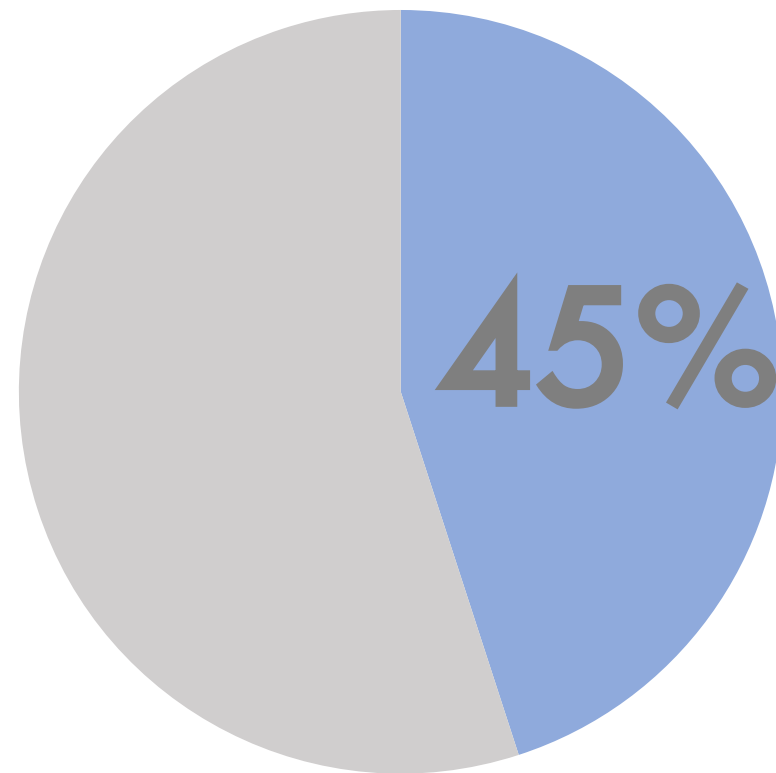
$$X^2 (1, N = 184) = 4.87, p = .027, \phi = .163$$



Participants found the **outgroup** defendant **guilty** at significantly **higher rates** than the ingroup defendant



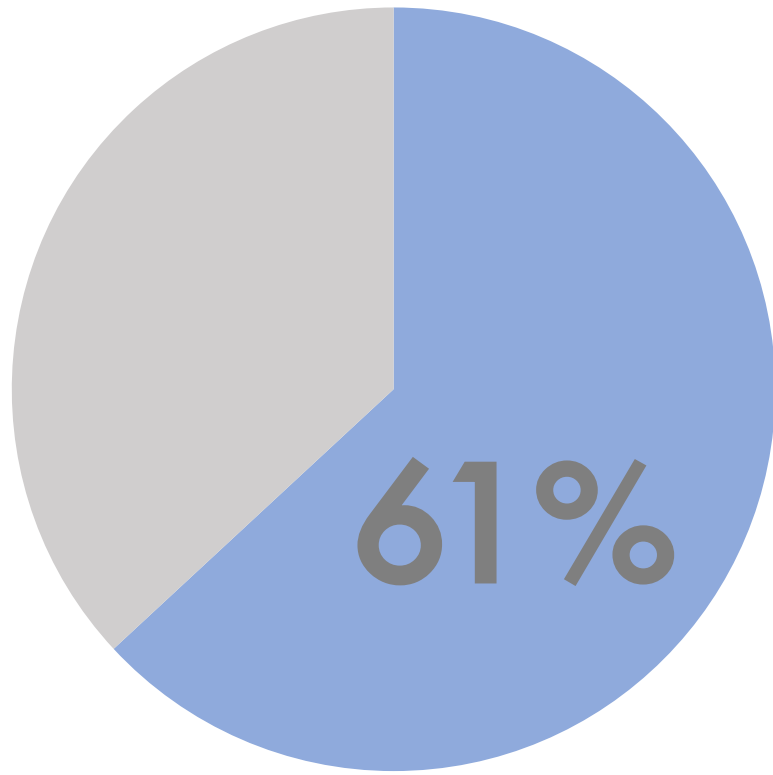
Percentage  
of  
outgroup  
guilt  
verdicts



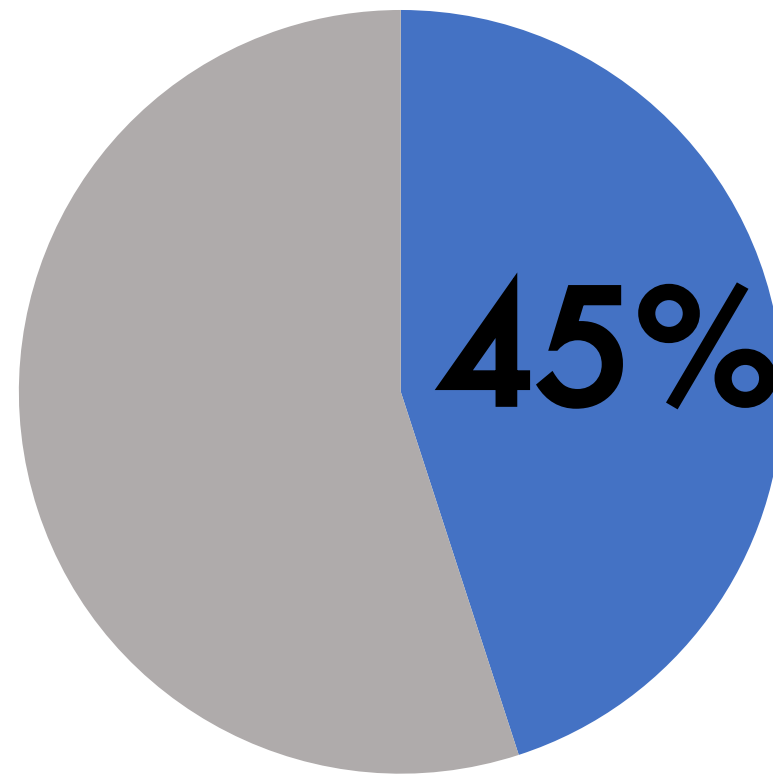
Percentage  
of ingroup  
guilt  
verdicts

$$X^2 (1, N = 184) = 4.87, p = .027, \phi = .163$$

Participants found the outgroup defendant guilty at significantly higher rates than the **ingroup** defendant



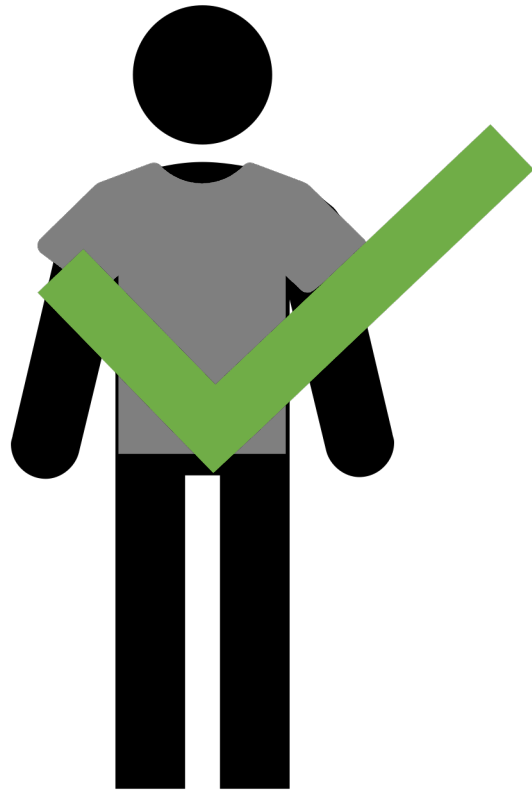
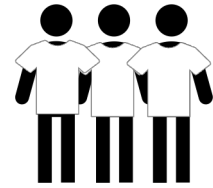
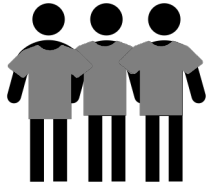
Percentage  
of  
outgroup  
guilt  
verdicts



Percentage  
of ingroup  
guilt  
verdicts

$$X^2 (1, N = 184) = 4.87, p = .027, \phi = .163$$

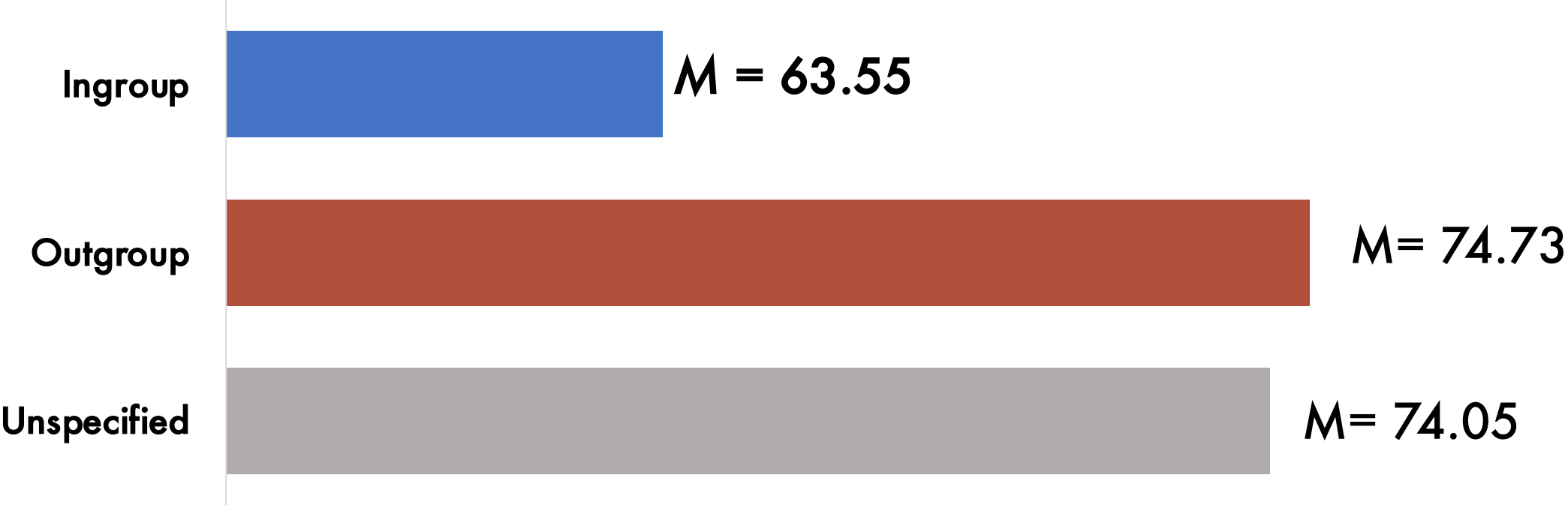
# BLAMEWORTHINESS



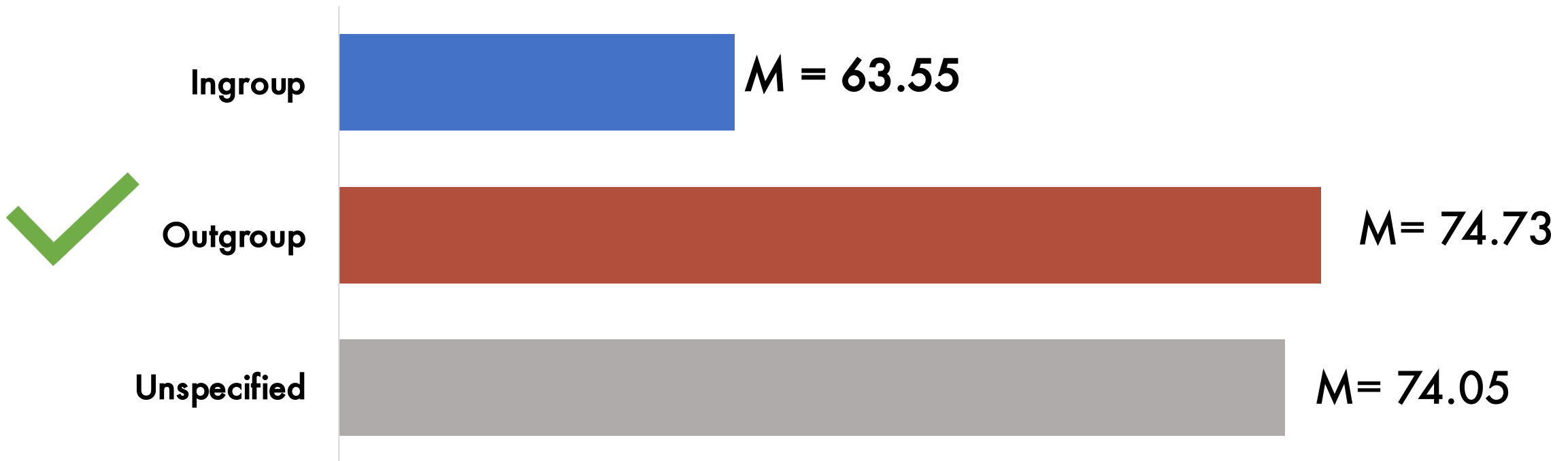
X



# Ingroup members were perceived as less blameworthy

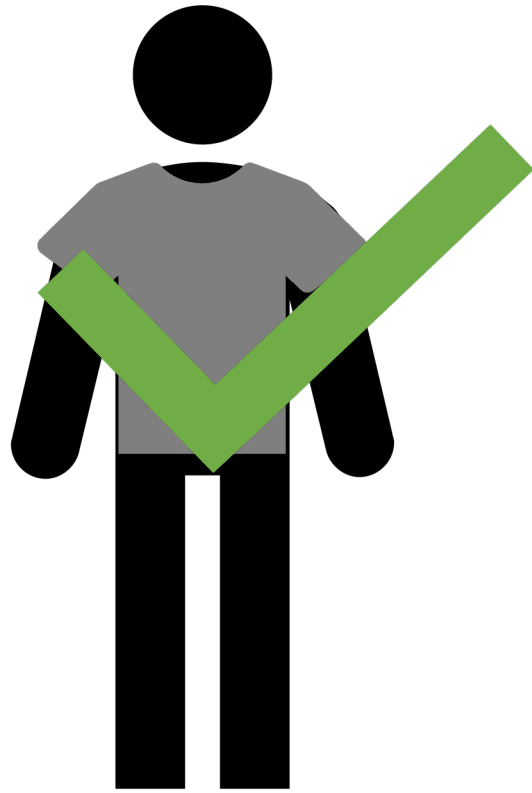
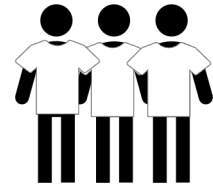
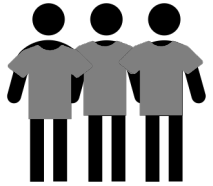


# Ingroup members were perceived as less blameworthy



$t(182) = -2.69, p = .008, d = -.396$

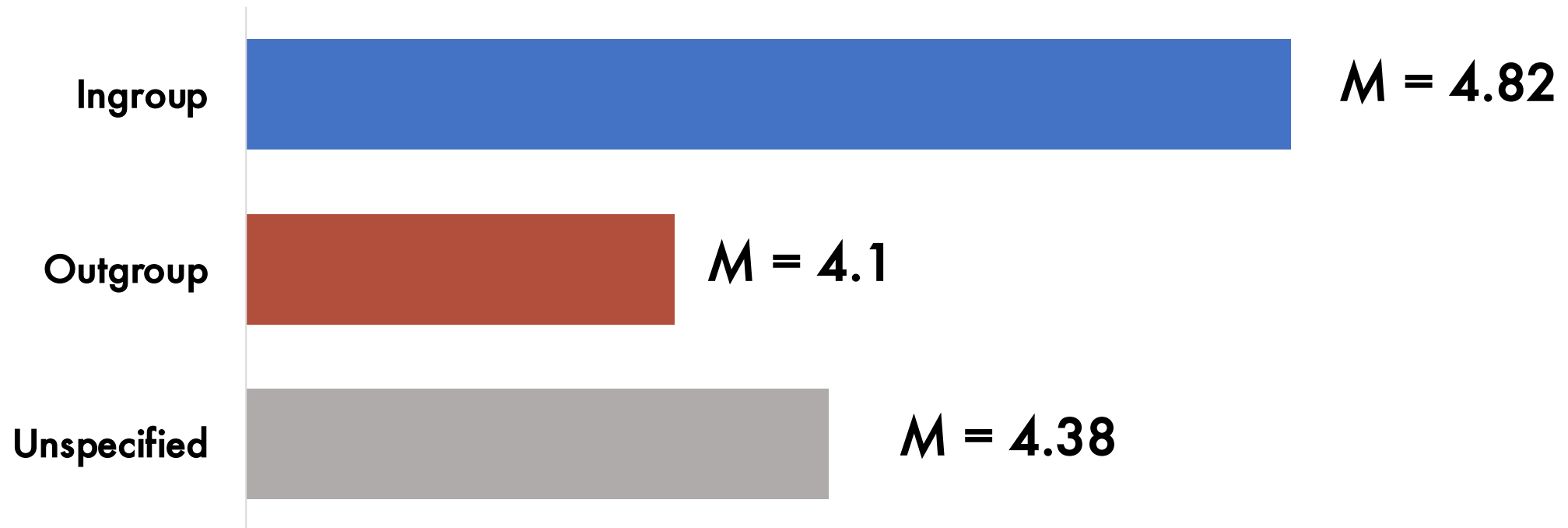
# SELF-DEFENSE



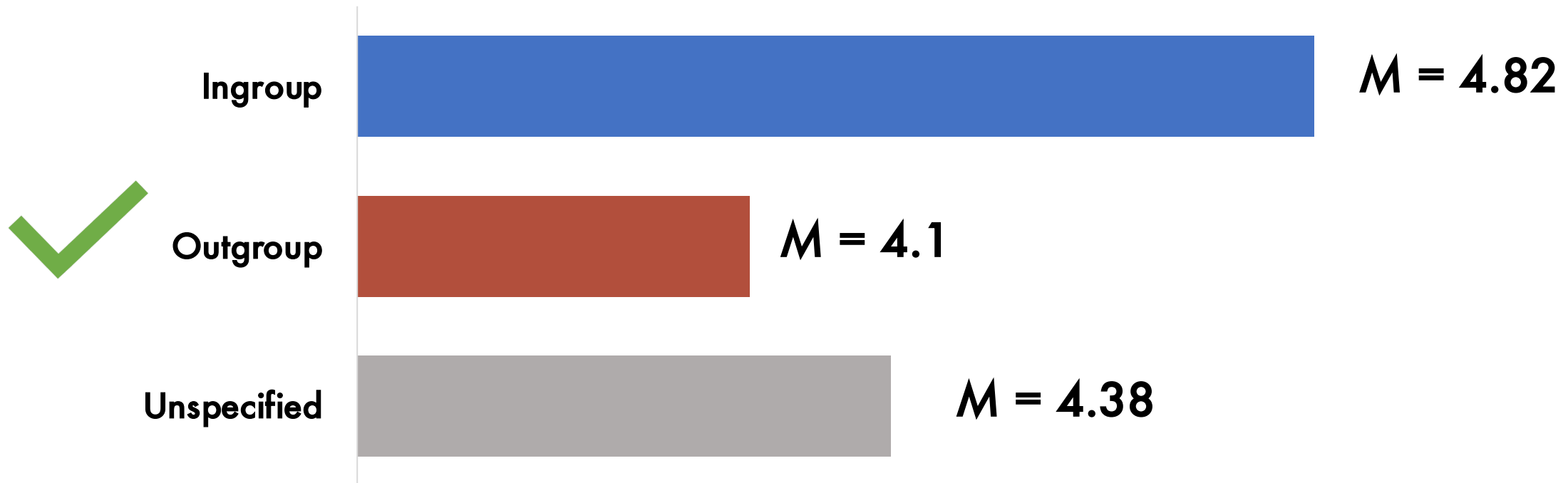
X



**Ingroup** defendants were perceived to be **more motivated** by self defense.



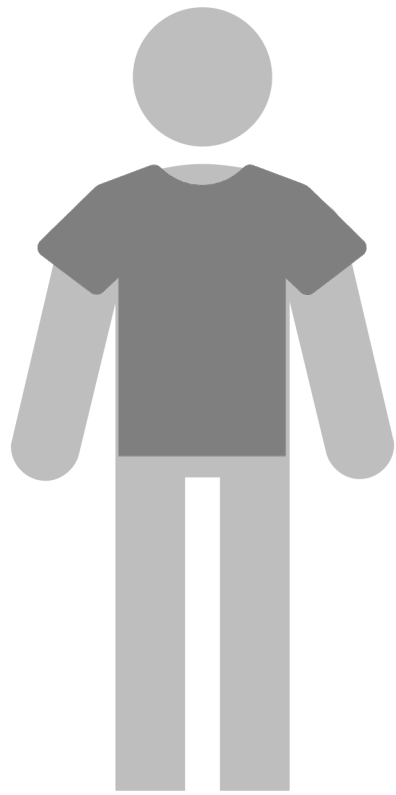
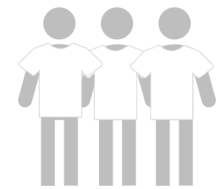
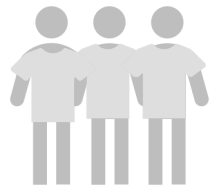
# Ingroup defendants were perceived to be more motivated by self defense.



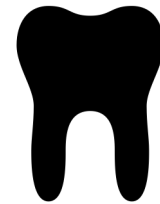
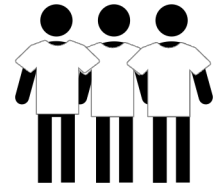
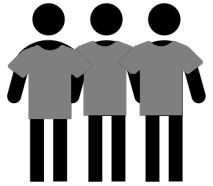
$t(182) = 2.75, p = .007, d = .405$



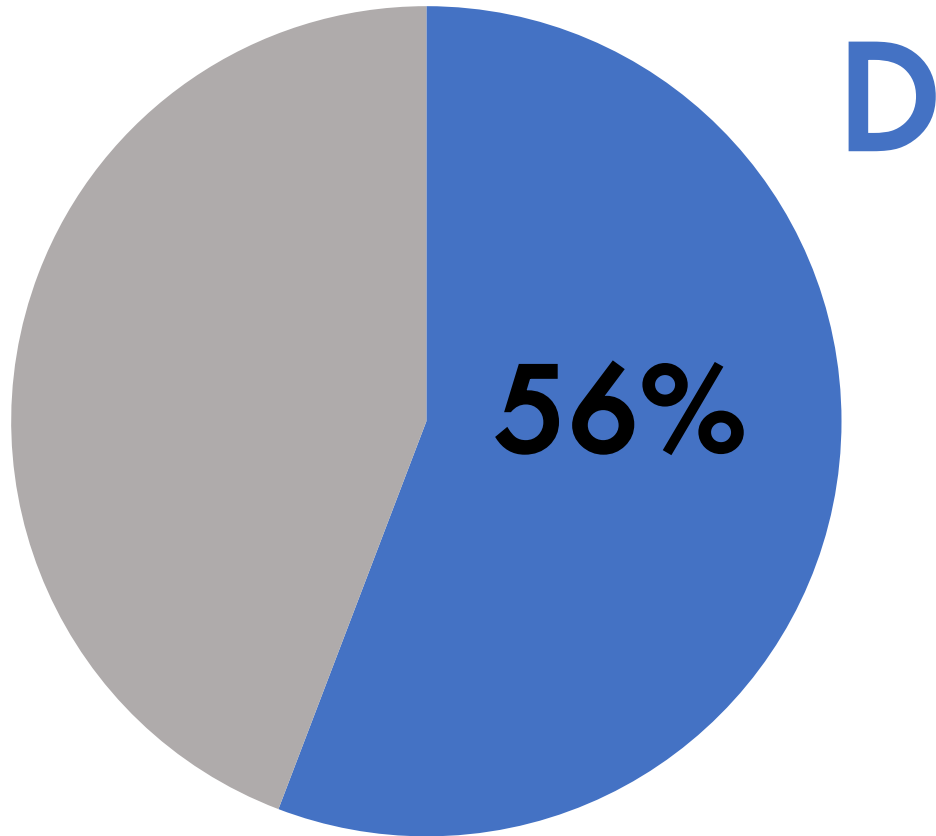
# ALL DVs



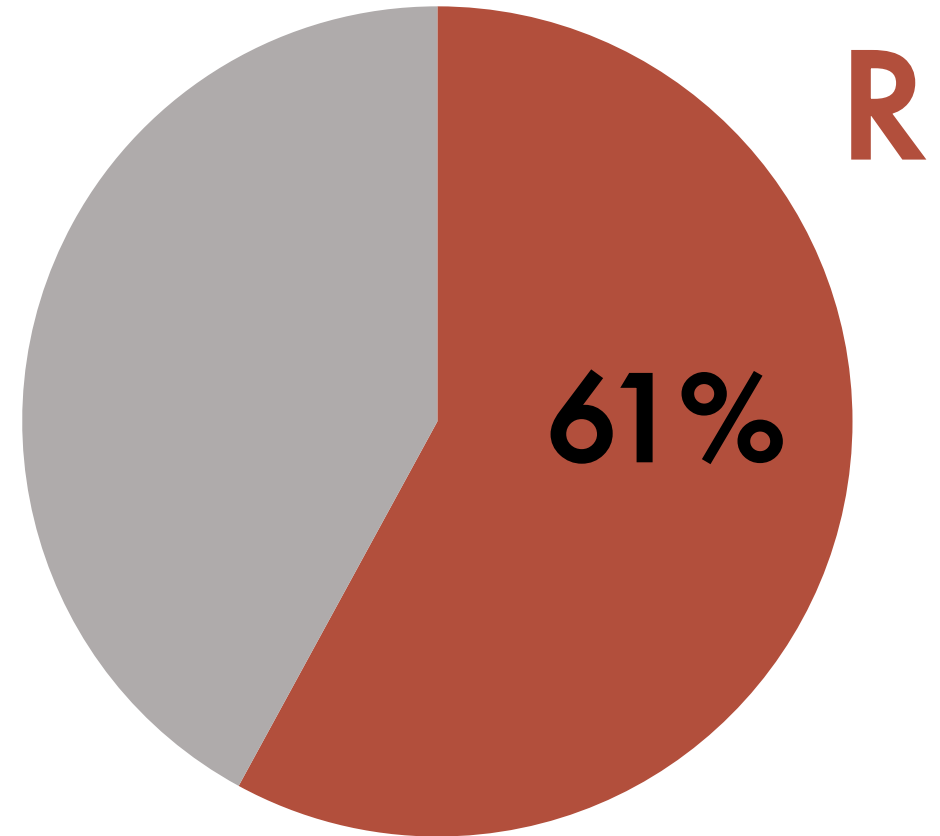
# ALL DVs



# Party identification **did not significantly** influence preferences for guilt for an outgroup defendant



$X^2(1, N = 92) = .225, p = .134, \phi = .156$

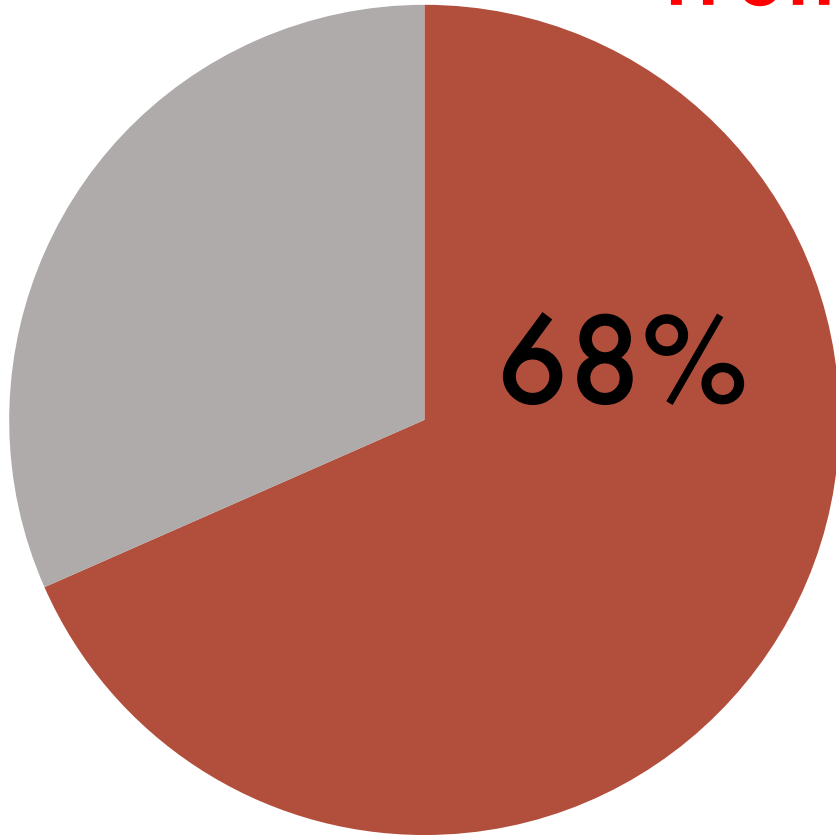


$X^2(1, N = 92) = 2.79, p = .095, \phi = .174$

# With respect those who **VOTED** in 2020...

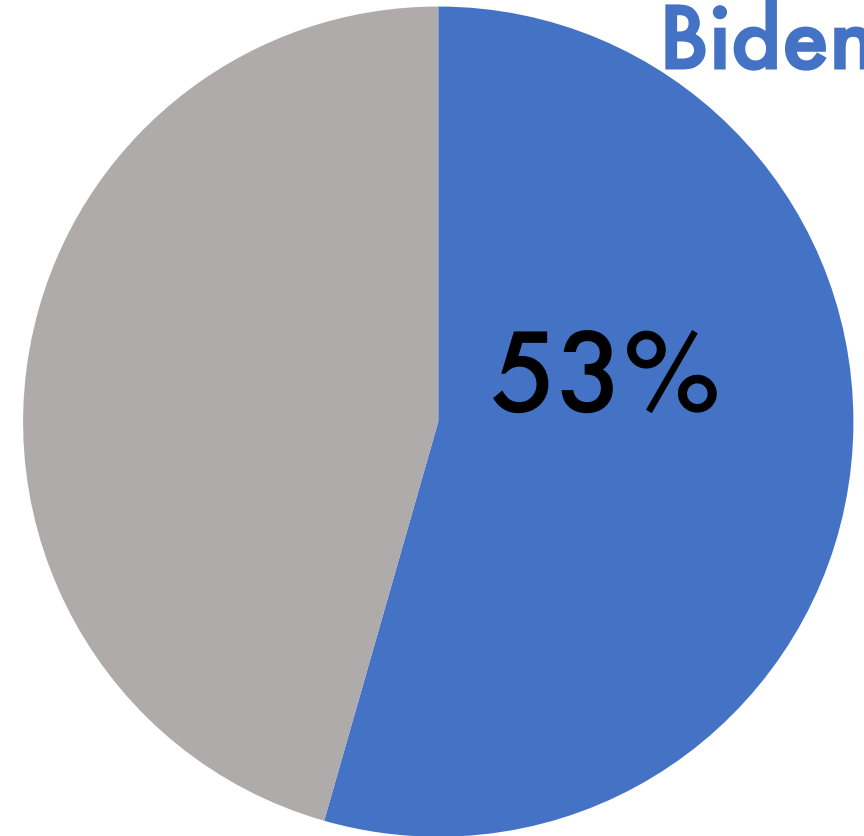


**Trump**

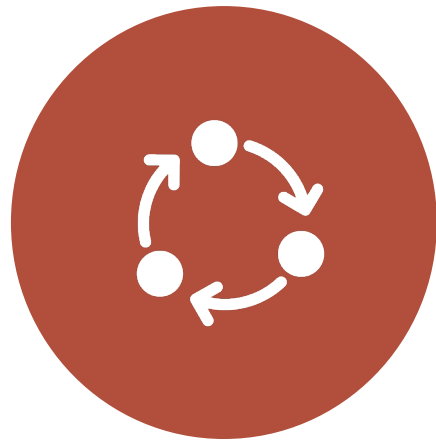


More likely to prefer a guilty verdict for an outgroup defendant than an ingroup defendant

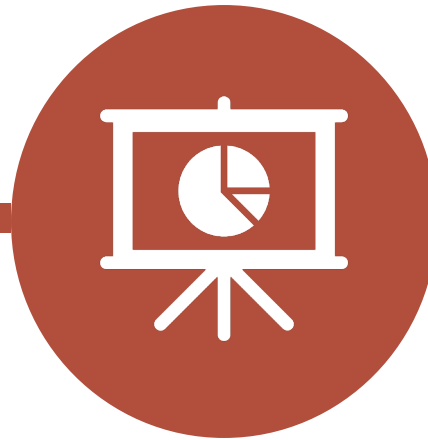
**Biden**



# Present Study



**Method**



**Results**



**Discussion**

What happens when mock jurors  
**differ politically** from the defendant ?



Case Judgements are affected



Perceptions of the defendant are  
affected



What happens when mock jurors  
differ politically from the defendant ?



Case Judgements are affected



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What happens when mock jurors  
**differ politically** from the defendant ?



Case Judgements are affected



Perceptions of the defendant are  
affected





# Specifically, for outgroup defendants ...



More guilt preferences



Higher perceptions of blameworthiness



Lower perceptions of self-defense  
motivation



# Specifically, for outgroup defendants ...



More guilt preferences



Higher perceptions of blameworthiness



Lower perceptions of self-defense  
motivation



# Specifically, for outgroup defendants ...



More guilt preferences



Higher perceptions of blameworthiness



Lower perceptions of self-defense  
motivation



# Specifically, for outgroup defendants ...



More guilt preferences



Higher perceptions of blameworthiness



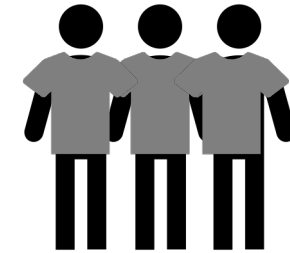
Lower perceptions of self-defense  
motivation



# Notably...



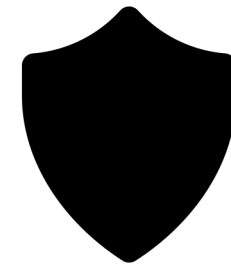
Evidence of ingroup favoritism opposed  
to outgroup discrimination



# Additionally...



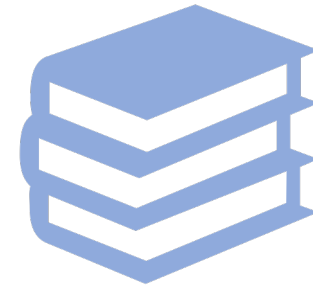
Mortality salience had **no** impact on



# Implications



Adds to the research literature



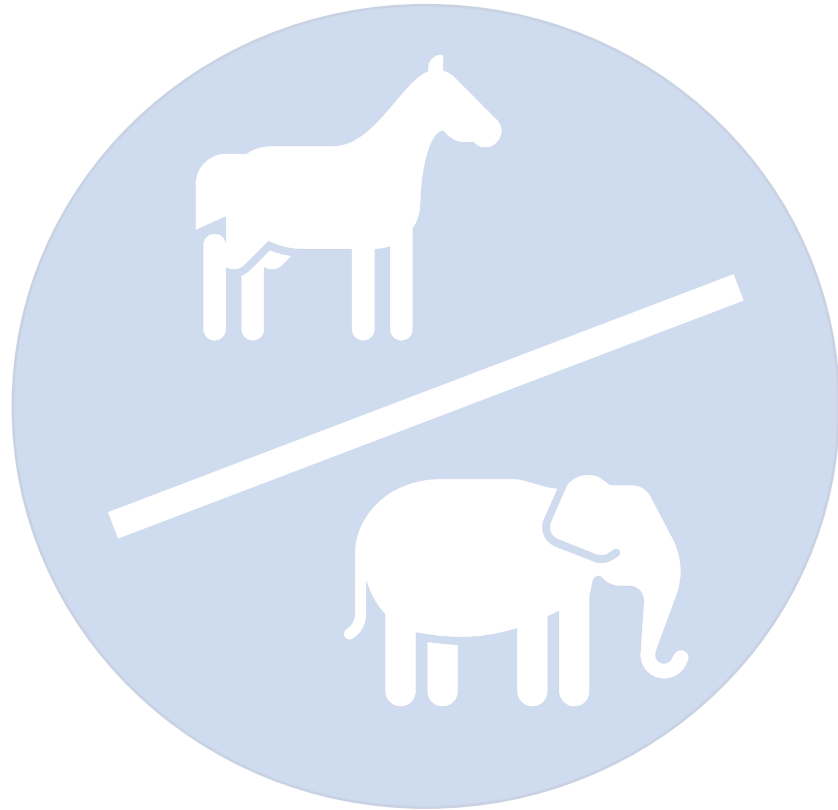
Recommendations for legal actors







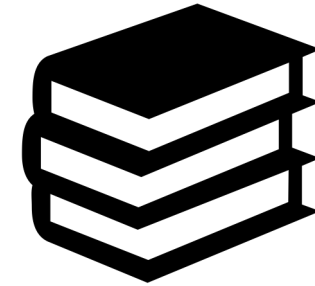




# Implications

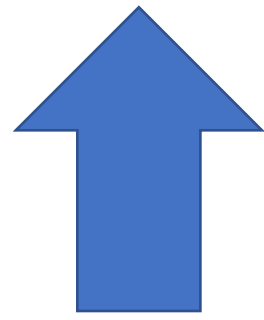


Adds to the research literature

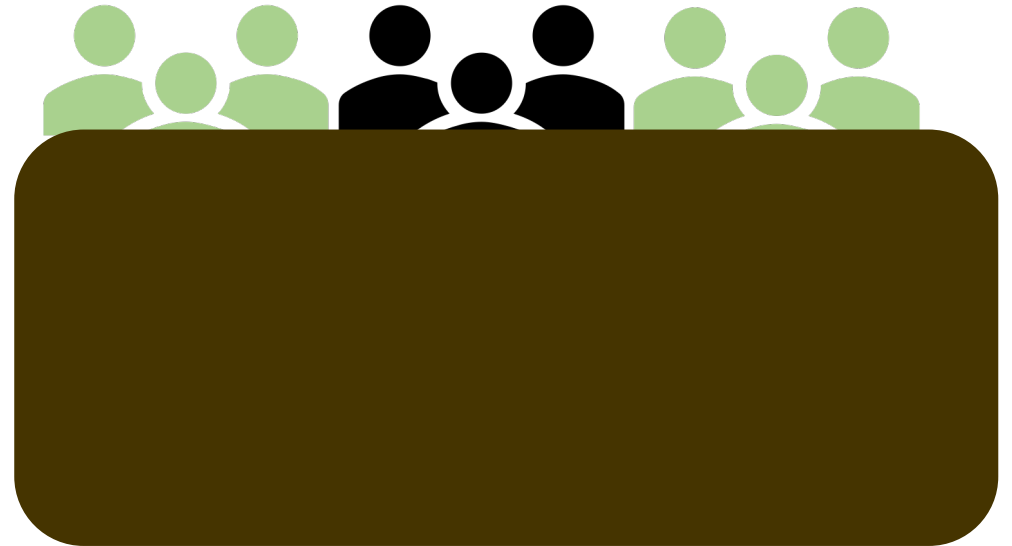


Recommendations for legal actors





# Conviction







**Thank you!**