

Retribution or Reform? A Qualitative Analysis of Racial and Gendered Opinions towards Rehabilitative Justice

Emil Cucksee, Department of Sociology

Mentor: Dr. Robert Thomson, Department of Sociology

Overview/Introduction

Previous research has compared punitive attitudes between men and women but largely ignores gender minorities. The current study takes an intersectional approach to more comprehensively examine gendered and racialized attitudinal differences.

Sampling/Methodology

We recruited 22 participants from Discord and used snowball sampling in June-July 2024. Participants completed 45-minute long interviews and demographic questionnaires.

Key Findings/Results

- People of all gender and racial identities, in our relatively liberal sample, leaned towards rehabilitative approaches to criminal justice.
- Gender minorities were more receptive to themes of abolition and/or reform than were cisgender men and women.
- People of color were more likely to cite false convictions in support for the abolition of the death penalty.
- Cisgender women were more likely to define criminal justice as fairness, whereas cisgender men and gender minorities were more likely to define it as restoration.

Descriptive Statistics of White People and People of Color

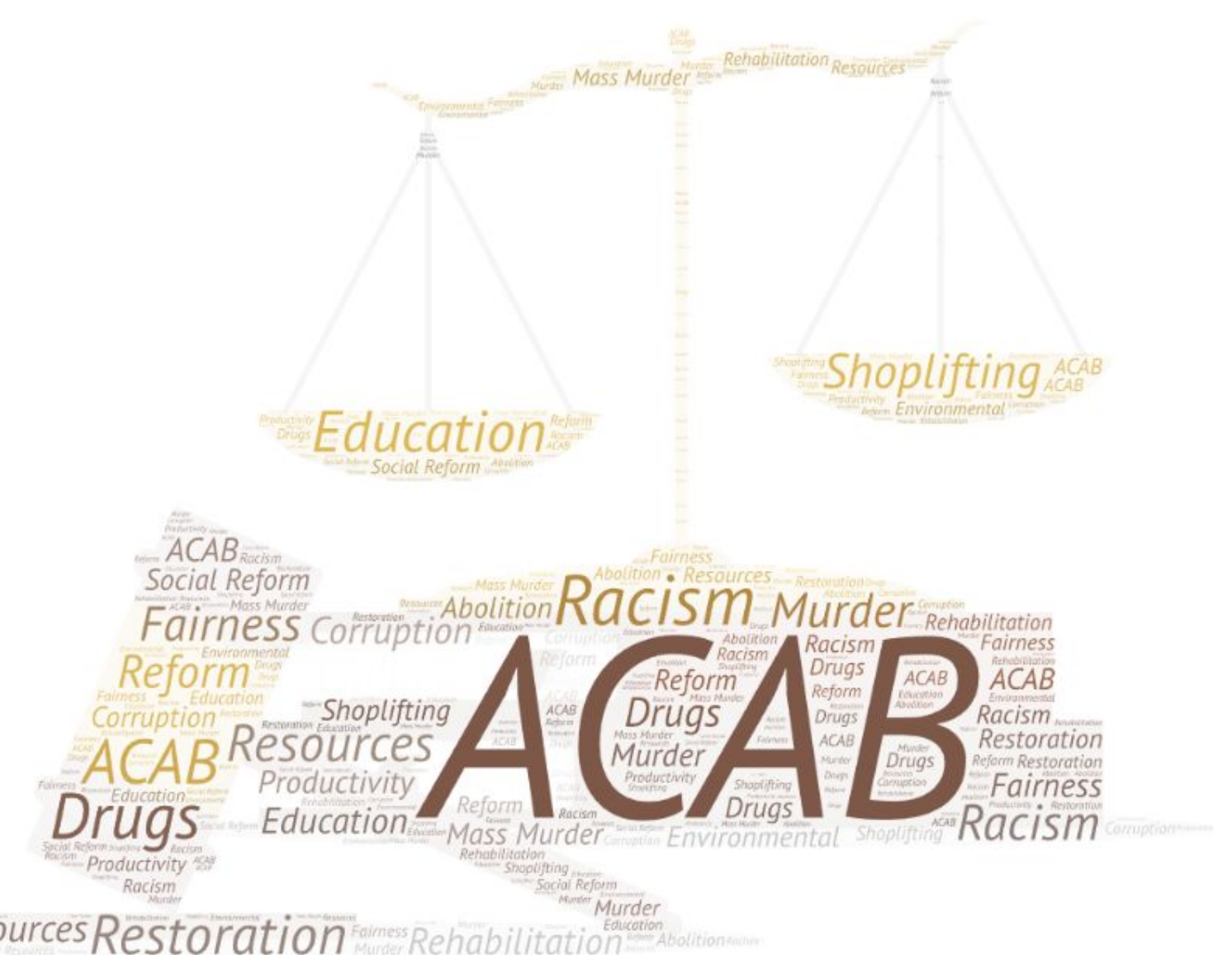
Themes	White People		People of Color	
	Mode(s)	% (n = 16)	Mode(s)	% (n = 5)
General				
Defining Justice	Fairness/Punishment	31.3%*	Rehabilitation/Punishment/Restoration	40%*
Reasons People Commit Crime	Necessity	56.3%	Necessity	100%
Belief on Intrinsic Good/Evil	Both Good and Evil	37.5%	Good	40%
Opinions on Justified Crime	Altruism	31.3%	Oppressive Laws	40%
Effective Ways to Prevent Crime	Resources/Education	56.3%*	Resources	80%
Policing				
Opinion on Police	Racism/Negative	25%*	Abuse of Power	60%
Problems with Police	Racism	43.8%	Abuse of Power	60%
Prisons				
Goal of Prisons	Rehabilitation	87.5%	Rehabilitation	80%
Crimes Appropriate for Imprisonment	Sex Offenses	62.5%	Sex Offenses/Violent	60%*
Opinions on Solitary Confinement	Cruel	37.5%	Cruel/Torture	40%*
Opinions on Prison Abolition	Impractical or Impossible	37.5%	Don't Know	40%
Death Penalty				
Opinions on Death Penalty	Abolish	56.3%	Abolish/False Conviction	80%
Appropriate Execution Methods	Lethal Injection	43.8%	No Mode	N/A

Note: The highlighted section reveals a notable discrepancy between groups. * indicates more than one mode.

Descriptive Statistics of Cisgender Women, Cisgender Men, and Gender Minorities for Interview

Themes	Cisgender Women		Cisgender Men		Gender Minorities	
	Mode(s)	% (n = 6)	Mode(s)	% (n = 5)	Mode(s)	% (n = 11)
General						
Defining Justice	Fairness	50%	Restoration/Productivity	40%*	Restoration	36.4%
Reasons People Commit Crime	Environment	66.7%	Necessity	100%	Necessity	63.6%
Belief on Intrinsic Good/Evil	Good	83.3%	Both Good and Evil	60%	Nurture	36.4%
Opinions on Justified Crime	Necessity	33.3%	Altruism	60%	Oppressive laws	27.3%
Effective Ways to Prevent Crime	Education	50%	Resources	80%	Resources	72.7%
Policing						
Opinion on Police	Racism/Abuse of Power	33.3%*	Negative/Abuse of Power	40%*	Negative	27.3%
Problems with Police	Racism	66.7%	Racism	60%	Brutality/Abuse of Power	36.4%*
Prisons						
Goal of Prisons	Reform	83.3%	Rehabilitation	100%	Rehabilitation	90.9%
Crimes Appropriate for Imprisonment	Sex Offenses	83.3%	Violent Crime	80%	Violent Crime	81.8%
Opinions on Solitary Confinement	Cruel/Partial Support	50%*	Cruel/Harmful	40%*	Torture	36.4%
Opinions on Prison Abolition	Don't Know	50%	Impractical or Impossible	60%	Supportive	36.4%
Death Penalty						
Opinions on Death Penalty	Abolish	50%	Allow in Rare Exceptions	60%	Abolish	90.9%
Appropriate Execution Methods	Lethal Injection	50%	Lethal Injection/Firing Squad	40%*	Lethal Injection	27.3%

Note: Highlighted sections reveal some notable discrepancies between groups. * indicates more than one mode.



References

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