



Department of
Psychology

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and Criminal Justice

The Effects of Defendant Race and Expert Testimony on Jurors' Perceptions of Recanted Confessions: Preliminary Comparisons between Samples from Canada and the United States



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in SA304



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Although empirical research indicates that suspects falsely confess to crimes for a variety of reasons, confessions remain one of the most influential forms of evidence in the courtroom. Expert witnesses are sometimes used to safeguard against the issues with confession evidence, but the effect of expert testimony on jurors' perceptions of recanted confessions is still unclear. Furthermore, the watchdog hypothesis would suggest that jurors may be particularly receptive to expert testimony (regarding factors that increase the likelihood of false confessions) when the defendant is BIPOC.

This talk will present research I have conducted with colleagues which has examined the interactive effects of defendant race and expert testimony on White jurors' perceptions of recanted confessions. Preliminary results suggest evidence of a watchdog effect with American, but not Canadian, White mock jurors. This finding comports with general research suggesting that many Canadians are either unaware of, or do not acknowledge, discrimination faced by Indigenous peoples.