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Empathy for a Black Woman Victim of Police Sexual Violence:

The Roles of Crime-Related Stress and Stereotype Attributions

Abstract

Objective: Police sexual violence has been ranked as the second most common form of misconduct among police officers. Moreover, there is evidence that Black woman are at heightened risk to be victims of such police violence. A report entitled *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality against Black Women* has brought international attention to the minimal empirical focus on such police violence towards Black women. To address this lacuna in the literature, using an incident of police sexual assault of a woman, we assessed whether victim race and participants' level of crime-related stress (i.e., stress due to crime victimization) would influence empathic responding towards the victim. **Method:** *Prolific* participants (N = 411) first completed a measure of crime-related stress. They then read an article describing a White police officer's sexual assault of a Black or White woman. Next, participants completed a racial stereotype-related measure (i.e., Black women's higher sexual proclivity) and a stereotype-unrelated measure (i.e., perceived victim untrustworthiness), and reported their victim-directed empathic responding. **Results:** At high stress levels, participants reported less empathy for the Black (relative to White) victim. At low stress levels, there was greater Black victim-directed empathy. The race effects on empathy were mediated by heightened attribution of Black women-related stereotypical beliefs to the Black victim at high stress levels and by diminished attribution at low stress levels. **Conclusions:** In sum, we addressed the lacuna in the literature on police sexual violence against Black women while providing evidence that stress can play a critical role in the occurrence of the oft-cited outgroup-directed empathy deficit.

Key words: Stress, Empathy, Black women victim, Stereotype, Police Violence

Empathy for a Black Woman Victim of Police Sexual Violence: The Roles of Crime-Related Stress and Stereotype Attributions

In January 2016, former Oklahoma City police officer Daniel Holtzclaw was sentenced to 263 years in prison for sexually assaulting eight women of color between December 2013 and June 2014. In reviewing police sexual violence, Purvis and Blanco (2020) state that the incidence of such violence in America is "staggering" (p. 1491). Further, Stinson and colleagues (2014) identified 548 cases of sex-related crimes committed by on duty police officers, including 118 cases of sexually assaulting adult and minor victims within a three-year period. The findings revealed other forms of serious police sexual violence, including forcible sodomy (93 cases), aggravated and simple assaults (43 cases), and sexual assault with an object (11 cases). Moreover, the Cato Institute (2010) revealed that sexual misconduct was the second most common form of infractions among police officers in that year.

Most relevant for the current examination is the growing evidence that Black women are at heightened risk for being victimized by sexual violence committed by on duty police officers (Jacobs, 2021; Trombadore, 2016). Notably, civil rights activists suggest that a "climate of social intolerance" towards unwarranted and illegal minority-directed police violence can be created when Americans of *all* races begin to genuinely care and empathize with those who suffer from such violence (Jeffery, 2020; Oppel et al., 2021). In support of this contention are findings that empathy for the victim is linked to important legal outcomes such as greater support to punish the harm-doer (Deitz et al., 1982; Jones et al., 2020). Thus, in the interest of further ensuring that the suffering of diverse populations who face police violence is empirically addressed (e.g., Sewell et al., 2021; West et al., 2020), one of the central goals of the present study was to shed

greater light on factors that might influence societal empathy for Black women who are victims of police sexual violence.

Although previous research has focused on factors that influence empathy for Black men who were victim of police violence (Johnson et al., 2020), there has been limited empirical exploration of any form of police violence against Black women (see Brown-Iannuzzi, 2021 for one of the few exceptions). This lacuna in the literature is especially relevant in light of the central conclusion of a recent African American Policy Forum report entitled *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality against Black Women* (Crenshaw et al., 2015)—the failure to demand accountability for the numerous Black women victims of police violence over the last few decades leaves Black women vulnerable to such violence as well continuous suffering from such violence. For the current study, our fundamental goal was to explore what factors will lead non-Black Americans to feel empathy for a Black woman who was sexually victimized by a police officer. Specifically, in a case of police sexual assault, we examined whether victim race (Black vs. White) effects on victim-directed empathic responding would be moderated by the degree of stress from crime victimization experienced by participants.

General emotional stress has been shown to be negatively associated with empathic responding in healthcare (Frierson & Lippmann, 2021; Koehl-Hackert et al., 2012; Newton, 2013) and laboratory (Buruck et al., 2014; Mazza et al., 2015) settings. However, we propose that a more challenging test of the stress and diminished empathy link would involve stress that is directly associated with the response domain in a manner that could actually enhance empathic responding. More specifically, for the current study, we examine the extent that victimization-related stress would play a role in victim-related empathic responding. Notably, there is evidence that empathy for others' pain is closely linked to the extent that one has felt similar pain (Meng

et al., 2013; Rütgen et al., 2015). Consequently, in the current study, we consider whether psychological reactions to being victimized may heighten empathic responding towards another person who has been victimized (i.e., “I feel your pain because I have been through what you are facing”). Therefore, a negative stress and empathy association under these conditions would provide powerful evidence of the robustness of the deleterious impact of stress. More practically, an examination of the role of crime-related stress has clear practical relevance because almost 20 million Americans of all ethnicities are victims of an array of crimes on an annual basis (Morgan & Truman, 2020). Moreover, these victims are at heightened risk of developing significant long-lasting aversive stress-related mental health outcomes (Cuevas et al., 2014; Hien et al. 2004; McCart, 2010). Thus, we provide one of the first empirical assessments of potential intergroup implications (i.e., reactions to minority victims of police violence) of experiencing such common crime-related emotional strain. In sum, our focus on the relationship between crime-related stress and empathic responding has significant theoretical and practical implications.

Finally, we test the extent that victim race effects on empathic responding would be mediated by the attribution of pejorative stereotypes associated with Black women (but not general negative beliefs regarding the victim). Because White male officers are the most likely perpetrators of police violence even after accounting for the fact that White males comprise most of the police force (Harvard Political Review, 2017), we focused on excessive use of force by a White police officer.

Intergroup Empathic Responding: New Empirical Directions

Consistent with research by Batson (e.g., Batson, 1991; Batson, 2016), we define empathy as an other-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another. One of the most oft-cited findings in the empathic responding literature is that empathic responses (and

associated physiological indicators) tend to dampen or are even absent in face of the pain suffered by outgroups (e.g., Cikara et al., 2014; Decety et al., 2010; Han, 2018; Hein et al., 2010). The current study provides two critical extensions to the extant intergroup empathy literature. First, there has been limited work examining factors that might moderate the likelihood of diminished empathic responding for outgroup members. The sparse research in this area has focused on the influence of majority group member prejudicial attitudes (e.g., Hudson et al., 2019). To our knowledge, the current study represents one of the first empirical examinations of whether intergroup empathic responding might be moderated by the extent that individuals suffer stress from experiencing challenging life circumstances such as crime victimization.

Second, we believe that social scientists should give greater attention to factors that might *mediate* the impact of target race on empathic responding in real world settings. We examined the extent that the application of stereotypes typically associated with Black women would mediate victim race effects on empathy in cases of police violence. Notably, Black feminist scholars contend that pejorative stereotypes (see *Intersectionality Theory*; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981; Hooks, 1990) of Black women have endured since the Antebellum Period, when Black women were commonly subjected to various forms of exploitation (i.e., sexual, labor; Collins, 2000; Davis, 1981; Hooks, 1990; Thomas et al., 2004). We chose stereotype attributions towards Black women as our critical mediator for two reasons. First, there is evidence that pejorative stereotypes directed towards Black women still play a critical role in how contemporary societal members react to them (Brown-Iannuzzi et. al, 2022; Ponce de Leon & Rosette, 2022). Second, an assessment of the influence of stereotypes in other-race empathic processes also has vital implications for the intergroup empathy literature. Meconi et al. (2015) suggest that social scientists have consistently neglected the role of stereotypes in empathic

reactions towards the suffering of outgroup members. They further contend the lack of attention to this issue is unfortunate because diminishing stereotype attributions towards outgroup members, due to anti-prejudice cultural norms, could provide an important "tool to limit empathic race bias" (p. 5).

Putting it all Together: Moderation and Mediation of Victim Race Effects on Empathy

We believe that the extent to which victim-directed stereotype attribution underlies victim race effects on empathic responding will depend on the crime-related stress level of participants. More specifically, under high crime-related stress, it was expected that participants' empathic responding towards the Black (but not White) victim should be reduced because of greater attribution of pejorative Black women stereotypes. To support this contention, there is substantial evidence that culturally sensitive responses require both motivation (Major et al., 2013; Monteith et al., 2002) and cognitive resources (Spears & Haslam, 1997). Various forms of duress (e.g., crime-related stress) tend to deplete executive functioning (which minimizes motivational and cognitive resources) and should therefore enhance the likelihood of relying on stereotypical beliefs in a wide array of perceptual domains (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2002; Kleider et al., 2012). For the current study, we focused on stereotypes that Black women are more sexual than White women (Jerald et al., 2017; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016).

Conversely, under low crime-related stress, participants should be more likely *not* to report any empathic deficits towards the Black (relative to White) women victim of police violence. This was expected given that they should have a greater degree of available cognitive capacity to not depend on stereotypical beliefs (compared to those experiencing high crime-related stress). We also propose that it is likely that other factors play a role in diminishing the influence of stereotypes in empathic reactions towards the Black victim. Notably, the present data were

collected during a period (i.e., August through September 2020) of persistent national and international protests to support the minority victims of police violence (e.g., Dudziak, 2020; Kirby, 2020; Singh, 2020). There are a number of theoretical perspectives that emphasize contemporary norms against appearing prejudiced (see Crandall et al., 2002; McDonald & Crandall, 2015). Given the likelihood that exposure to an incident of police violence against an innocent Black women should increase the salience of such social justice norms, low stress participants may report less stereotypical attributions and greater empathy for the Black victim. This type of active positive responding towards minority group members requires the sufficient cognitive resources and necessary motivation that should be available under low stress (see Figure 1 for conceptual diagram).

Finally, the victim race x crime-related stress interaction was expected to be limited to stereotype-related concepts associated with Black women and was not expected to reach significance for negative but "stereotype-unrelated" concepts (e.g., perceived victim untrustworthiness). This pattern of findings would provide clear evidence that the pejorative effect of stress is restricted to stereotype attribution and does not extend to broader negativity reactions. This assessment would increase confidence in our perspective that stereotype-related cognitions drive the current effects.

The Present Study

Participants completed a measure of crime-related stress and then were randomly assigned to read an article (modeled after actual incidents) describing a White police officer's sexual assault of a Black or White woman. Thus, we utilized a 2 (Victim race: Black, White) x continuous variable (crime-related stress) design. Participants then completed a *stereotype-related measure* (i.e., sexual proclivity attributions towards the victim) and a *stereotype-*

unrelated measure (i.e., perceived victim untrustworthiness). Finally, participants completed a measure assessing *victim-directed empathic responding.*

Our central hypotheses were that, at high (but not low) levels of crime-related stress, participants should report greater sexual proclivity attributions (H1) and less empathic responding (H2) for the Black victim relative to the White victim. In addition, it was expected that the victim race x crime related stress interaction should not reach significance for the stereotype-unrelated perception of victim untrustworthiness (H3). We further expected that moderated-mediational analysis would reveal that, at high crime-related stress levels, the victim race effects on empathic responding should be mediated by enhanced sexual proclivity attributions and at low stress levels it should be mediated by diminished sexual proclivity attributions (H4).

Method

Participants and Sample Size

The participants were 411 (247 male, 159 female, 5 nonbinary) were U.S. citizens (1 Native American, 51 Asian-American, 57 “other” ethnicities, 302 White American) who were recruited using the crowdsourcing website *Prolific*. Black Americans were not included in the analyses. The average age was 27.52 (*SD* = 9.32, range 18 - 67). Twenty-three participants were not included because they failed the attention check (i.e., victim race detection). Participants received financial compensation for their participation. Sample size was based on the following factors: (a) it is similar to or far exceeds what was used in past research on societal reactions to minority-directed physical violence (Johnson et al., 2020a); and (b) a sensitivity analysis for a fixed linear regression with two predictors (i.e., victim race, crime-related stress) and alpha level set to .01 suggested our sample size of 411 could detect small deviations from null estimates for

the hypothesized crime stress x victim race interaction ($f^2 > .09$) with 99% power. For two-sided tests, the sample was sufficiently large to detect small-to-moderate effects (f~z > .27) with 99% power and Type I error rate remaining at 1%. The research was approved by the host institution's IRB. All conditions for the current research are presented. All data are available upon request to the first author.

Procedure, Materials, and Measures

Participants were presented with informed consent information, and if consent was given, they completed a 6-item *crime-related stress* measure which assessed stress due to crime-related threats (e.g., loss of feelings of control, loss hope, loss of optimism, loss of motivation, $\alpha = .95$), which assesses long-term stress associated with challenging life events, such as crime and terror attacks (Hobfoll et al., 2006; Sattler et al., 2014). Participants used a 5-point scale (1 = no loss to 5 = great loss) to indicate their responses.

Participants were randomly assigned to read a passage describing what began as a traffic stop in which a White police officer pulled over a Black or White female motorist. The police officer asked the driver to go inside his police car. After about 30 minutes in the police car, the woman was allowed to return to her car and leave. After leaving the scene, she drove herself directly to the hospital. A medical examination revealed that during the time in the police car she experienced a fractured wrist and severe bruising to her arms and lower abdomen. The woman reported to the hospital staff that the police officer had sexually assaulted her. Later, during an investigation into the situation, the police officer stated there was "consensual sexual activity" in the car and denied that it was sexual assault. He stated that the victim was flirting and sending "sexual signals" which clouded his judgment. The story indicated the ethnicity of both the victim and the police officer, and a picture of each was presented.

After reading the passage, participants completed the central outcome measures. *Sexual proclivity attributions about the woman* were assessed by averaging (α = .80) participant certainty that: (a) the victim sent the officer sexual signals; and (b) the victim had many male sexual partners (1 = not certain at all, 7 = very certain). *Victim-directed empathy* (see Batson, 1991; Batson, 1995) was assessed by averaging (α = .94) the extent participants experienced five emotions for the victim (compassion, moved, soft-hearted, warmth, sympathy; 1 = very little, 7 = very much). *Perceived victim untrustworthiness* was assessed by questions assessing of the extent that participants were certain that the victim was an untrustworthy person (1 = not certain at all, 7 = very certain).

Statistical Analysis Plan

Analysis of the Victim Race x Crime-Related Stress Interaction. Because crime-related stress is a continuous variable, PROCESS Model 1 was run (Hayes, 2013) to determine the significance of the victim race x crime-related stress interaction. PROCESS is a software that executes path analysis–based moderation and mediation analysis using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.

Probing the Interactions. The PROCESS Macro Model 1 provides a method to examine the expected racial differences at low (16^{th} percentile), moderate (50^{th} percentile) and high (84^{th} percentile) of crime-related stress levels.

Moderated-Mediation. PROCESS Model 7 was run (Hayes, 2013) to test whether the impact of victim race at high (but not low) levels of crime-related stress would be mediated by greater sexual proclivity attributions.

Results

Victim Race and Crime-Related Stress

The overall effect of victim race on crime-related stress did not reach significance, $t(409) = 1.51$, $p = .132$, $\eta^2 = .006$. Thus, it can be concluded that the measured individual difference variable of crime-related stress was independent of the experimental manipulation for victim race.

Sexual Proclivity Attributions

Men ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.46$) reported greater sexual proclivity than women ($M = 1.54$, $SD = .98$), $t(403) = 6.57$, $p < .001$. Consistent with H1 (see Figure 2, Table 1), the victim race x crime-related stress interaction reached significance, R^2-*Change* = .020, $F(1, 407) = 8.49$, $p = .003$, b = -.31, 95% CI [-.53, -.10]. As expected, at high stress levels, participants reported greater proclivity attributions for the Black relative to White victim, b = -.47, $t = -2.33$, $SE = .21$, $p = .020$. There was no impact of victim race at moderate stress levels, b = .00, $t = -.001$, $SE = .13$, $p = .999$. However, at low stress levels, there were less proclivity attributions for the Black relative to White victim, b = .42, $t = 2.08$, $SE = .20$, $p = .038$.

Victim-Directed Empathy

Men ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.45$) reported less empathy than women ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.37$), $t(403) = 7.49$, $p < .001$. Consistent with H2 (see Figure 3, Table 2), the victim race x crime-related stress interaction reached significance, R^2-*Change*=.024, $F(1, 407) = 10.19$, $p = .001$, b=.39, 95% CI [.15, .63]. As expected, at high stress levels, participants reported less empathy for the Black relative to White victim, b = .48, $t = 2.11$, $SE = .22$, $p = .034$. There was no impact of victim race at moderate stress levels, b = -.10, $t = -.66$, $SE = .15$, $p = .505$. At low stress levels, there was greater empathy for the Black relative to White victim, b = -.62, $t = -2.71$, $SE = .23$, $p = .006$.

Perceived Victim Untrustworthiness

Men (M = 2.60, SD = 1.60) reported greater perceived untrustworthiness than women (M = 1.73, SD = 1.33), $t(403) = 5.70$, $p < .001$. Consistent with the H3, the victim race x crime-related stress interaction did not reach significance on the stereotype-unrelated item—perceived victim untrustworthiness, R^2-$Change$=.0009, $F(1, 407) = .35$, $p = .551$, b = -.07, 95% CI [-.32, .17].

Moderated-Mediational Analysis

In support of H4, greater sexual proclivity attributions for the Black victim mediated the effects of victim race on empathic responding at high levels of stress, 95% CI [.0168, .4865]. Lower sexual proclivity attributions for the Black victim also mediated the victim race effects at low levels of stress, 95% CI [-.4314, -.0204]. The index of moderated-mediation was also significant, b = .16, [.0399, .3080].

Discussion

Despite documented reports of police sexual violence in America (Purvis & Blanco, 2020), there has been minimal empirical attention given to factors that influence societal responding to such violence. We demonstrated that victim race and experiences of crime-related stress have significant implications for empathic responding towards a victim of police sexual violence. At high stress levels, there was less empathy for the Black relative to the White victim of a police sexual assault. However, we demonstrated that diminished empathic responding for the outgroup member suffering is *not inevitable*. Indeed, at low levels of stress, there was even greater empathic responding for the Black victim. These race-related effects on empathy at high and low stress levels were respectively mediated by heightened or diminished attributions of sexuality-related Black women stereotypes towards the Black victim. Further, none of the moderation or mediation effects were obtained for a general negative perception that was unrelated to specific stereotypes of Black women. This pattern of results allows greater confidence in our findings

because it shows that indirect effects are specifically due to stereotyping, but not sheer negativity towards Black women. Moreover, our findings build on the extant research demonstrating that generalized stress tends to predict diminished empathic responding in laboratory and health care settings (Mazza et al., 2015; West et al., 2020). We demonstrate that, when the stress and response domain are conceptually linked (i.e., victimization stress and victim-directed empathic responding), stress can actually *enhance* empathic responding. However, this positive link between crime-related stress and empathic responding was limited to the White victim. Consistent with our expectations, for the Black victim, enhanced stress was related to greater stereotype endorsement which, in turn, predicted diminished empathy.

Police Sexual Violence and Black Women

There is growing evidence that Black women are more likely to be forced to endure most forms of police sexual violence relative to women from other ethnicities (Jacobs, 2021; Trombadore, 2016). Thus, Black feminist scholars have called for greater empirical attention to police violence against Black women (Crenshaw et al., 2015). In heeding this call (see also Brown-Iannuzzi, 2021), our findings provide validation of the contention that seeking justice for police violence can be challenging for Black (relative to White) women because perceptions of their victimhood may be conflated with pejorative stereotypical beliefs associated with Black women. Notably, the current study must be considered within the framework of *Intersectionality Theory* (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981; Hooks, 1989) which suggests that there are generalized stereotypes that can be applied to all women, but that there are specific stereotypes linked to Black women exclusively (see West, 2008; Woodard & Mastin, 2005). Previous research in this area has focused on documenting the nature and incidence of these unique stereotypes associated with Black women (Anderson et al., 2018; Cheeseborough et al., 2020; Rosenthal & Lobel,

2016). We build on this important work by providing two extensions to intersectionality theory in the context of police violence against a Black woman. First, we demonstrated that the attribution of stereotypes unique to Black women can be suppressed or enhanced as a function of an individuals' level of crime-related stress. Second, we identified the consequences of such suppression or enhancement of stereotypes for empathic responding towards a Black woman who was a *target* of police violence.

Intergroup Empathic Responding

Previous research has shown that participants' prejudice (Forgiarini et al., 2011; Gutsell & Inzlicht, 2010; Hudson et al., 2019) and intergroup contact with outgroup members (Cao et al., 2015) can moderate target race effects on intergroup empathic responding. We extend the research in this area by demonstrating that stress from crime victimization can also moderate the influence of target race on empathic responding towards that target. Consistent with previous research on economic stress (Bianchin et al., 2018), there was an anti-Black victim bias at high levels of crime stress. However, under low stress, we provided one of the first demonstrations (to our knowledge) of a pro-Black victim bias in empathic responding among our participants.

We believe that our most provocative finding involves the stereotype-related mediating factors in the interplay between victim race and empathic responding at different stress levels. At high stress levels, the victim race effect on empathy was mediated by the heightened attribution of Black women stereotypes to the Black victim. This may be due to the lack of motivational (Major et al., 2013; Monteith, 1993; Monteith et al., 2002) and cognitive resources (Spears & Haslam, 1997) to suppress stereotypical beliefs. Notably, there are other contemporary forms of stress (e.g., COVID-19—related stress) that might similarly heighten stereotype attribution and diminish empathy for a suffering minority group member (Johnson et al., 2021).

At low stress levels, the minority-directed favorability bias in empathic responding (i.e., greater empathy for the Black victim) was mediated by diminished stereotype attributions towards the Black victim. Although it is likely that greater cognitive resources reduced the low stress participants' reliance of stereotypes, one relevant issue involves what other factors may have played a role in these positive reactions towards the Black relative to the White victim. We propose that, in instances of "racially-charged" events such as police violence against minority group members, it is likely that contemporary social norms to appear non-prejudiced (Jargon & Thisj, 2020; McDonald & Crandall, 2015) and even woke (i.e., sensitive to racial injustice) might play a role. In support of this contention, there is recent empirical evidence that that those who are motivated to appear unprejudiced typically report more favorable reactions to victimized minority group members relative to victimized majority group members (Roussos & Dovidio, 2018; 2019).

Our findings raise a number of issues that might be examined in future research on intergroup empathic responding. For example, in the context of any number of "racially-charged" issues (e.g., a White supervisor mistreating a Black subordinate), it would be interesting to assess whether the minority-directed favorability in empathic responding under low stress would occur if empathy was measured through neural processing techniques. In addition, it is not clear whether minority-directed favorability would lead to concrete actions such as engaging in anti-police violence protests or voting decisions. Finally, there is recent evidence that intragroup variability (i.e., victim stereotypicality) among minority group members has implications for societal reactions to their mistreatment. More specifically, in cases of police violence, Johnson and colleagues found that the most stereotypical Black men tend to suffer the brunt of negative reactions (e.g., diminished empathy for their suffering) among Black

(especially those who report low ethnic identification) and White societal members (Johnson et al., 2020; Johnson & Lecci, 2020a, 2020b). However, they did not assess the moderating role of crime-related stress among the participants. It is possible that participants who report low stress might limit their minority-directed favorable empathic responding to the Black victim who is perceived as most prototypical (i.e., the stereotypical vs. counter-stereotypical Black victim).

Limitations and Conclusions

While the incidents depicted in the present study are consistent with a number of high profile police violence cases (e.g., police officer Daniel Holtzclaw's sexual assaults of minority women), one limitation of the current research was that it employed a vignette, which is not as realistic as presenting a video re-creation of the incident. However, with more realistic stimuli, it is likely that the role of crime-related stress may be even greater that what we have shown. Second, we do not know how reactions of Prolific participants might differ from those in the general population. It is possible that empathic reactions would be different if the officer was Black, because for instance there might be less motivation to adhere to contemporary social norms to appear non-prejudiced. Finally, we only assessed the outcomes associated with one form of stress pertinent to the topic investigated (i.e., crime-related stress). While a focus on this topic certainly extended the stress and diminished empathy literature, it would be interesting to explore whether the current findings would occur for other kinds of common "day-to-day" stressors such as work-related stress or general stress. Clearly, research examining these in cases with clear legal consequence, such as decisions made by jurors, is warranted. In term of direct implications for Black American victims of police violence, our findings suggest that any potential jurors who are crime-related stress (and potentially other stressors) might be excluded because such stress might facilitate diminished empathy for that victim.

In conclusion, in a criminal case involving a horrendous and insidious violation of human rights, the present findings clearly illustrate the "power of race" and difficult life circumstances to jointly elevate stereotypical attributions and reduce empathic responses despite insurmountable evidence which should preclude the influence of such extra-evidentiary factors. For the current study, the police officer admitted to having had sexual intercourse with a woman he stopped while on duty. He also inflicted additional physical injuries. Nevertheless, depending on the stress levels of participants, stereotypical attributions and empathic responding varied as a function of the victim's race. If such race-driven biased processing can occur under these circumstances with no justification for the officer's violence, then it is reasonable to assume that it will be difficult to ever achieve "true justice" in actual cases of White police officer violence which may involve higher degrees of ambiguity (e.g., the victim did not stop right away after the siren).

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