



Do Honesty Perceptions Differ Across White and Black Children?

Implications for Child Victims in the Criminal Justice System

This study explored implicit and explicit honesty perceptions of White and Black children and whether these perceptions predicted legal decisions in a child abuse case.



Explicit: Within our conscious awareness



Implicit: Below our conscious awareness

The Experiment:

Child accused coach of physical abuse

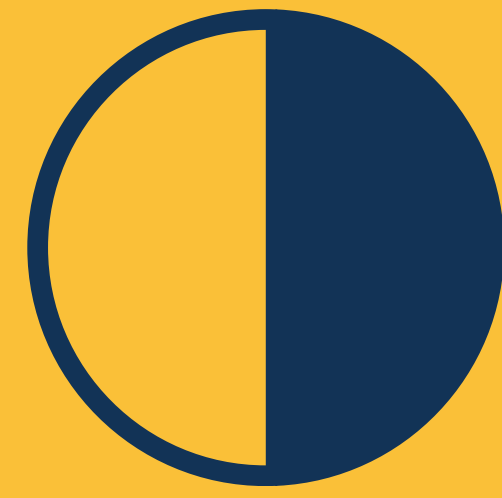


Child is **7** Years Old



Child resides in the UK

Participants read about either a black or white child victim



After reading the trial description, participants were asked the **likelihood that the child's testimony was honest** on a scale from I to II +
Asked to report whether they would render a **guilty or not guilty verdict for the coach** if they were a jury member

The Results:

Honesty of Legal Testimony

Implicit

Participants showed an implicit racial bias to associate dishonesty more strongly with Black children over White children.

Having a stronger implicit racial bias predicted a lower likelihood of convicting the coach of abuse alleged by a Black child victim.

Explicit

In contrast to what was found on the implicit measure, participants rated the Black child's testimony as significantly more honest than the White child's testimony.



Verdict

Compared to older adults, younger adults were more likely to render a guilty verdict for the coach if they read about a Black child victim

94%

Younger Adults (18-30 yrs)

67%

Older Adults (60-88 yrs)

Woman rendered more guilty verdicts overall than men

84%

Women

64%

Men

Compared to those who read about a white child victim, those who read about a Black child victim were significantly more likely to render a guilty verdict for the coach

79%

Black Child Victim Condition

69%

White Child Victim Condition



Conclusions:

Greater implicit racial bias predicted a lower conviction rate for the Black child's alleged abuser. Yet, when asked explicitly, participants rated Black children as more honest than White children, suggesting a **divergence in racial attitudes across implicit and explicit measures**. We hope that these results raise awareness of the harms of implicit racial bias and contribute to research dedicated to reducing and overcoming racial bias to ensure children of all races are treated justly within the legal system.

How to Cite:

O'Connor, A. M., Hall, W., & Campbell, K. L. (2023). Rating the Honesty of White and Black Children via Implicit and Explicit Measures: Implications for Child Victims in the Criminal Justice System. *Child Maltreatment*, 28(3), 450-461.

[See the full report here:](#)

