



Rating Targets Accused of Drug-Related Crimes: Implicit & Explicit Bias

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Introduction

- **Black Americans are disproportionately arrested and jailed for drug crimes compared to White Americans** (Lum, Swarup, Eubank, & Hawdon, 2014). A particularly salient example includes the *War on Drugs in the 1980's*, which saw harsher punishments for **possession/use of crack cocaine versus powdered cocaine** that were primarily associated with Blacks and Whites, respectively (Hendricks & Wilson, 2013).
 - Today, **opioids** and heroin (both opiates) follow the same criminal/political trajectory as cocaine in the past (Cicero, Ellis, Surratt, & Kurtz, 2014).
- **Crimes associated with each type of drug yield different sanctions that benefit Whites compared to Blacks** in terms of rate of imprisonment, promotion of diversion from imprisonment by use of social workers, and access to medical attention or treatment (Acevedo et al., 2015; Netherland & Hansen, 2016).
- **Perceptions of individuals of color can be influenced by:**
 - **Explicit racial attitudes**, which are the conscious attitudes people harbor toward certain groups based on characteristics like race (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).
 - While, **implicit attitudes** are those that people are unaware of but can exert influence on their perceptions and judgments (Greenwald et al., 2009; Perugini, 2005).

Offender Stimuli – Electronic Case Records

Electronic Case Record: a fictional record, replicated from publicly available case records from the *District Court of Maryland*, with one record for each offender condition (White, Black, & Race Unspecified/Control); each offender was charged with *possession of heroin* regardless of race.

DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND	
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Case Information	
Court System:	DISTRICT COURT FOR FREDERICK COUNTY - CRIMINAL SYSTEM
Case Number:	3T0005742 Tracking No: 07100171852
Case Type:	CRIMINAL
District Code:	10 Location Code: 01
Document Type:	SUMMONS Issued Date: 09/26/2012
Defendant Information	
Defendant Name:	WILLIAMS, MICHAEL
Sex:	M Height: 6'0" Weight: 180 DOB: 05/28/1968
Address:	9302 RODMAN RD
City:	FREDERICK State: MD Zip Code: 21707
Charge and Disposition Information	
<i>(Each Charge is listed separately. The disposition is listed below the Charge.)</i>	
Charge No:	004 Description: CDS: POSS-HEROIN
Statute:	CR.5.601.(a)(1) Description: CDS: POSS-HEROIN
Amended Date:	CJIS Code: 1 0573 MO/PLL: Probable Cause: X
Incident Date From:	09/23/2012 To: 09/23/2012
Disposition:	
Plea:	OTHER PLEA
Disposition:	NOLLE PROSEQUI Disposition Date: 05/14/2013
Fine:	\$0.00 Court Costs: \$0.00 CICEF: \$0.00
Fine:	\$0.00 Court Costs: \$0.00 CICEF: \$0.00
PBJ EndDate:	Probation End Date: Restitution Amount: \$0.00
Jail Term:	Yrs: Mos: Days:
Suspended Term:	Yrs: Mos: Days:
Credit Time Served:	

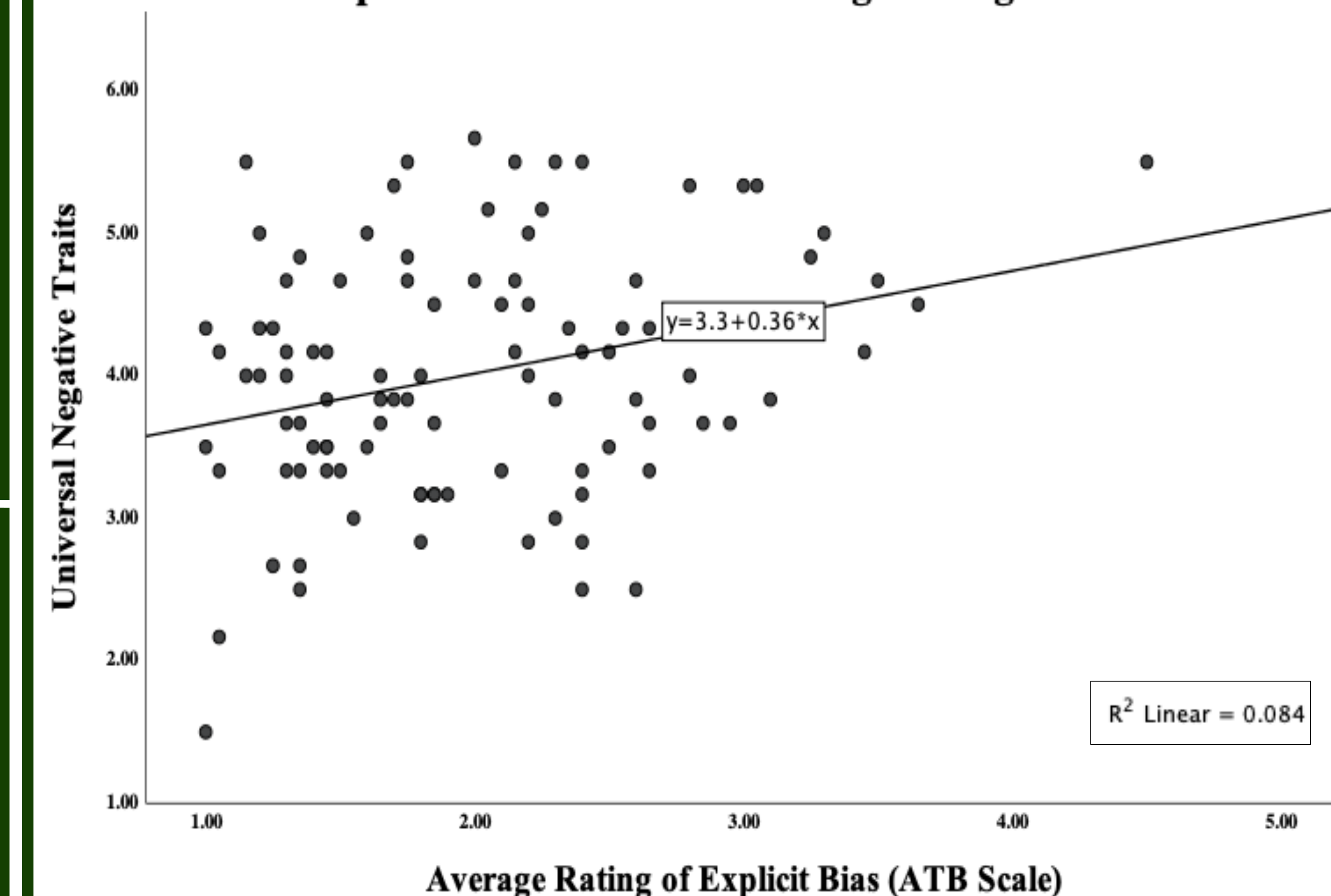
Results Continued

Explicit Bias Predicted Stereotype Associations and Preferential Treatment

Of those in the Black Offender condition ($n=31$), explicit bias demonstrated statistically significant predictive quality via *Multiple Regressions* regarding:

- Perceptions of offender **Violence** ($t = 3.35, \beta = .54, p = .002$)
- Likelihood offender commit **Domestic Abuse** ($t = 3.22, \beta = .53, p = .003$)
- Deserve **Health Resources vs Incarceration** ($t = 3.38, \beta = .53, p = .002$)
- Number of **Years** should be **Incarcerated** ($t = 2.70, \beta = .45, p = .01$)
- Universal **Negative** traits ($t = 2.39, \beta = .42, p = .024$)
- Universal **Positive** traits ($t = -.75, \beta = -.14, p = .46$) *nonsignificant*

Explicit Racial Bias and Ratings of Negative Traits



Study Objective

The current study examined how perceptions of drug users in the criminal justice system might differ based on the race of the offender, as well as explicit and implicit biases.

Method

Study: $N = 99$ undergraduates

- 41 females, 58 males; $M_{age} = 19.1$ years ($SD_{age} = 0.82$),
- 7 Black, 12 Asian, 8 Hispanic, and 72 White

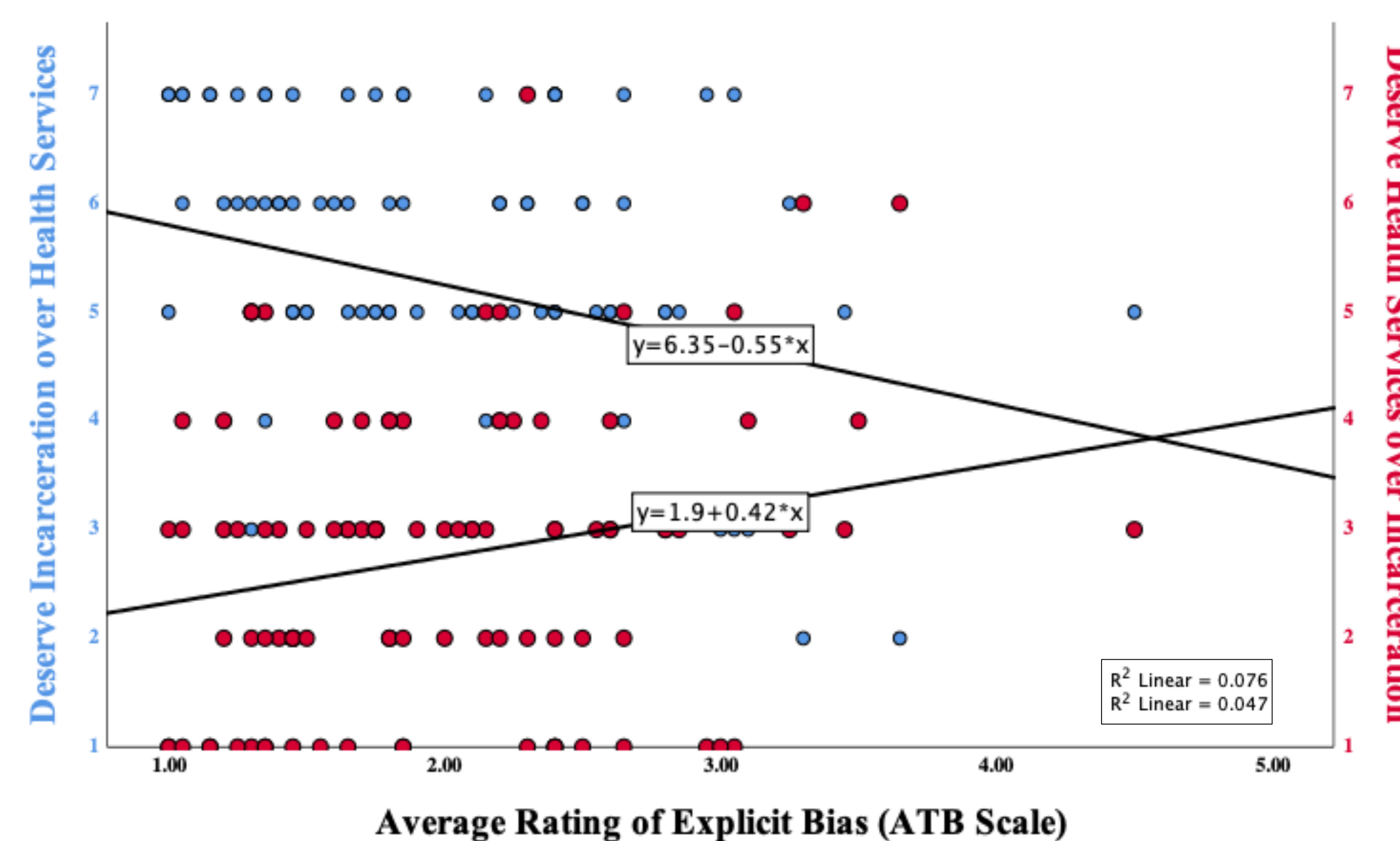
Study Questionnaires & Materials:

- *Attitudes Towards Blacks Scale (ATB; Brigham, 1993)*.
- *Race Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998)*: includes three blocks pairing White or Black faces to Pleasant or Unpleasant words
- *Preferences for Incarceration vs. Health Treatment*: a series of questions meant to evaluate the extent to which participants' support incarceration or provisions of health resources for drug users and/or addicts
- *Evaluations of Perceptions of Target*: a series of questions evaluating participants' perceptions and how closely they associated racial stereotypes with a drug user of a certain race. 24 questions, e.g. "How likely do you believe it is for this person to commit physical/sexual assault?"

Results

Explicit Racial Attitudes (average ATB Scale scores) were significantly correlated with perceptions of the target offender as: Violent ($r = .41, p = .000$); Likely to commit Domestic Violence ($r = .34, p = .001$); Deserving Incarceration over Health resources ($r = -.28, p = .006$); How many years participants felt the offender should be incarcerated ($r = .28, p = .004$); as well as universal Negative traits ($r = .29, p = .004$) but *not* Positive traits ($r = .03, p = .777$)

Explicit Bias and Preferential Treatment of Offenders



Discussion

- White college students with more negative explicit attitudes toward Blacks rated Black drug offenders more negatively than White drug offenders, while implicit attitudes were not significantly associated with perceptions of the target or explicit attitudes.
- Black drug users were predicted to be less successful in a health treatment option compared to drug users who were of an unspecified race.
- These findings can have implications for understanding the legal processes and sanctions imposed on White versus Black drug users in the opioid epidemic (Netherland & Hansen, 2016).