

INDIVIDUAL VS. SYSTEMIC JUSTICE:  
USING TRUST AND MORAL OUTRAGE TO PREDICT  
REACTIONS TO VIGILANTE MURDER

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ABSTRACT

Jurors can approach their charge of meting out justice in different ways, two of which include focusing on the outcome of a specific trial and/or focusing on upholding justice more broadly by adhering to procedures and laws set forth by the legal system. An experiment was designed to investigate two factors (trust in the legal system and moral outrage) that may influence mock jurors' orientations toward justice and affect their sentencing decisions. A 2 (system trust: high vs. low) x 2 (moral outrage: manslaughter vs. rape/murder) between subjects factorial design was used to predict participant reactions toward a murder committed in response to the death of the vigilante's daughter. While the manipulated trust variable did not influence the results, a continuous measure of personal trust interacted with moral outrage and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) to predict participant reactions toward the vigilante murderer. Additional effects were moderated by beliefs in a just world (BJW). Thus, both RWA and BJW appeared to be important indicators of social values which influence perceptions of justice. Implications of the findings and future research directions are discussed.