INTRODUCTION

Background
- Biases against Latinos and individuals of low socio-economic status (SES) exist within the legal system
- Individuals who have been incarcerated have difficulties finding jobs, housing, or receiving adequate pay after release
- Exonerees face unjust post-incarceration stigmatization despite being proven innocent of their crime

Purpose: To determine if prejudicial attitudes would be predictive of biased perceptions of exonerees based on race and SES

Hypotheses
- Individuals with high Mexican American bias (MABS) ratings will find the Latino exonerees more culpable
- Latino exonerees with low SES will be found more culpable than White exonerees or Latino exonerees with high SES

METHODS

Participants
- 246 adult U.S. citizens (See Table 1 for univariate statistics)
- 40% of participants believed that someone who has been incarcerated has something fundamentally wrong with them

Materials
- Online self-report survey
  - Demographics; culpability measures (Cronbach α = .89), 9 items (Table 2); MABS (α = .86), 23 items (Martinez, 2015)
  - Manipulated news articles varying race (Latino vs White) and SES (high vs low) of the exoneree

Procedure
- Recruited from the online service MTurk (Mechanical Turk) and directed to Qualtrics to complete the study
- Completed demographics, read the manipulated articles, completed manipulation checks, culpability measures, and MABS scale

RESULTS

Public’s Knowledge and Opinions of Exonerees
- Only 35% of participants knew what an exoneree was before the manipulation
- 40% of participants believed that someone who has been incarcerated has something fundamentally wrong with them

Mexican American Bias and Latino Exonerees
- MANOVA for MABS and SES for Latino exonerees yielded no interaction, but there were significant main effects for SES and MABS
  - SES: F (9, 108) = 2.60, p < .009, η² = .18
    - Participants saw themselves as less likely to be in the low SES Latino (M = 4.72) exoneree’s position, compared to the high SES Latino (M = 3.85) exoneree (Reverse Coded)
      - F (1, 116) = 6.02, p < .016, η² = .05
    - MABS: F (9, 108) = 13.07, p < .001, η² = .52
      - Every culpability measure was significant (see Table 2). Participants with high MABS found the exonerees more culpable
  - MABS was a significant predictor of the belief that the exonerees’ children would become criminals
    - F (1, 118) = 113.09, p < .001, R² = .49 (β = .70)

DISCUSSION

Race and SES: While there was no interaction, the main effects show that low SES exonerees are found more culpable

MABS: MABS was highly predictive of biases against Latino exonerees

Limitations: Participants were limited to individuals who use MTurk. Additionally, the majority of the participants were White (67%) and male (70%)

Future Research: Effect of incarceration time on culpability, perceived culpability of African American exonerees, and the attribution process