

“Society is under threat, and I need to protect it! The defendant is **GUILTY**”

“Society is safe, and we should be fair to everyone in the justice system! The defendant is **NOT GUILTY**”



The harmful effects of System Justification in the justice system

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What is the problem in the justice system?

1. Juries should make decisions based on **probative**, not **prejudicial**, information.
2. However, juries are affected by prejudicial information [1] which means decisions are not always consistent.
3. So, why could this be the case?

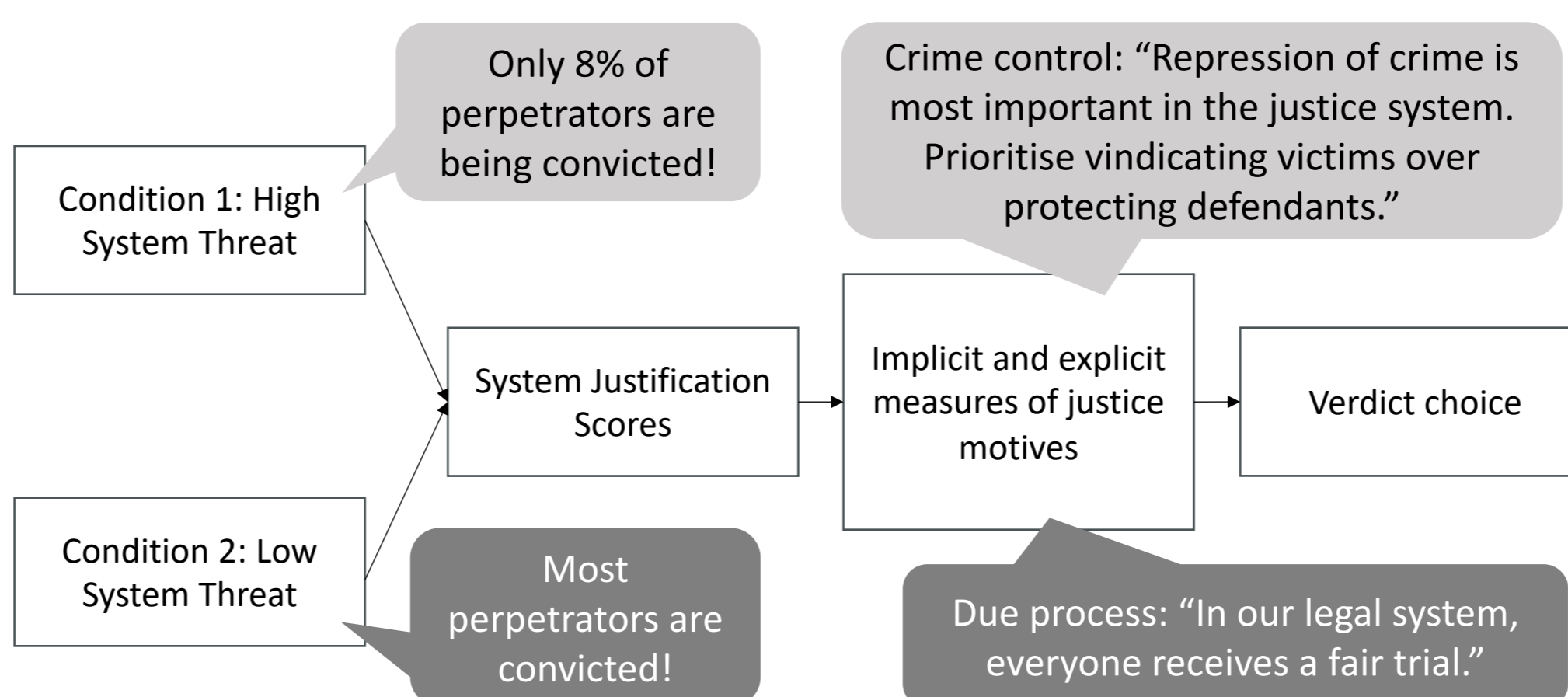
System Justification Theory (SJT):

People can be motivated to see themselves, and the groups they belong to, positively. However, they are also unconsciously motivated to justify the **status quo**.

This is known as SJT, which explains the “motivational tendency to defend, bolster or rationalize existing social, economic and political arrangements”. [2]

Threats to social order can increase punitiveness. [3]

Believing that the world is just can increase victim degradation, since people ‘get what they deserve’. [4]



How might this work?



Why is this important and how do we address it?

- System threat has the potential to bias juror judgments and lead to inconsistency.
- Jurors interpretations of legal standards may be influenced by threat.
- Amending legal procedure can reduce the influence of this bias.

How do we address this bias?

1. Conduct empirical research to investigate the relationship between SJT and verdict consistency.
2. Reduce threats felt by jurors by using fewer threatening exhibits (e.g., presenting exhibits in black and white). [5]
3. Emphasise due process perceptions of justice to encourage a more accurate threshold of ‘beyond a reasonable doubt’. [6]