



E76 Human Bias in the Case of JonBenet Ramsey

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand characteristics of human bias, factors of contextual influences, how human bias can affect the field of forensic science, and how the public's perception can be distorted due to contextual influences.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by serving as an aspect in understanding the importance of human judgment and how it can greatly persuade the process of forensic analyzation and the public's perception of forensic science and justice. It is highly recommended that all forensic analysts, police officers, and laboratory specialists become very familiar with the potential hazards of human bias.

This study will present a case study that has scrutinized the use of forensic science with examples of errors in human judgment, evidence collection, processing and interpretation, the dangers of outside influences, and society's views on the consequences as it pertains to solving criminal cases and justice. This presentation will also share potential solutions in order to correct or minimize negative feedback as it pertains to the field of forensic science. These solutions include advancements in crime scene investigation such as appropriate training in collection techniques, written procedures, acceptable standards, and well-educated personnel.

There are many cases all over the world that have caused heartache due to botched investigations, bias association, and inadequate skills and/or judgment in crime scene processing, collecting, and analyzing. This research examines the new techniques and standards that have undoubtedly increased the significance of crime scene investigation and forensic analyzation.

In cases such as the 1996 murder of JonBenet Ramsey, errors in investigation methods, evidence analysis, and human judgment have been shown to leave long-term effects in not only the field of forensic science but also the criminal justice system as a whole. The use of excessive media coverage, wealth, and misleading information are just a few factors that constantly contribute to the alteration of public perception. The term "contextual influences" can most often be noted as the outside sources that can contribute to the alteration of human thoughts, ideas, and/or judgments. Misleading and leaked information has been shown to sway society more than the world wants to notice. Once falsified data is released, the process of separating the incorrect information from the correct data is almost impossible. Altered perceptions from a visual perspective are shown when there is too much media coverage. Excessive media coverage affects the public by allowing people to interpret favoritism or bias thoughts when television broadcasts show potential suspects under a "different" light. Wealth, on the other hand, can "buy" justice and innocence even if a person can bluntly be seen as guilty.

In many cases, both criminal and civil, the content of contextual influence varies greatly. These types of influences can contribute to the process of decision-making, which more often than not involves substantial consideration and various factors that can affect the final conclusion. Because judgment relies on brain function and interpretation, perception and judgment are a critical part of the human brain that cannot be replaced. But, by gaining knowledge and experience, the brain is more than capable of correcting issues and making careful decisions. By providing effective training in human bias and analyzing and understanding errors in previous cases, forensic analyzers and investigators have shown the capability to interpret crime scenes more clearly and effectively.

It has been nearly 20 years since the death of JonBenet Ramsey and the effects of her case, as well as many others, have permanently left their mark in the field of forensic science; however, over the years, forensic scientists and forensic investigators have learned to improve and develop their skills in order to secure a positive role not only in the eyes of society but also in the justice system.

Forensic Science, Human Bias, Public Perception