

HOW PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AFFECT
DECISION-MAKING AS A MOCK JUROR

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology & Philosophy
Sam Houston State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Caitlin Lefebvre

May, 2021

HOW PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AFFECT
DECISION-MAKING AS A MOCK JUROR

by

Caitlin Lefebvre

APPROVED:

Hillary Langley, PhD
Committee Director

Marcus Boccaccini, PhD
Committee Member

Daniella Cash, PhD
Committee Member

Chien-Pin Li, PhD
Dean, College of Humanities and Social
Sciences

ABSTRACT

Lefebvre, Caitlin, *How perceptions and beliefs about child abuse affect decision-making as a mock juror*. Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology), May, 2021, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Child abuse is a highly prevalent problem in the United States, yet only a small number of substantiated cases ever make it to trial. While past literature has examined the influence of various factors on jurors' decision-making, there is very limited research examining variables that may moderate those links. In the present study, I investigated the moderating effect of mock jurors' perceptions and beliefs about child abuse – as assessed by endorsement of misconceptions – on conviction decisions in cases involving child abuse (sexual and physical). Participants read a series of trial summaries describing an ambiguous child abuse case involving an eight-year-old child and a known, trusted adult. Participants then completed a battery of questionnaires to assess their perceptions and beliefs about child abuse and their conviction decision. Hierarchical regression analyses explored the moderating effects of mock jurors' misconceptions about abuse severity, victim characteristics, and perpetrator characteristics, between abuse type, victim gender, and perpetrator gender on conviction decisions. While the hypotheses were not supported, results revealed multiple significant associations and significant group differences between these variables. These findings can inform the development of trial interventions designed to minimize the impact of this prejudice on jurors' perceptions and legal decision-making.

KEY WORDS: Childhood abuse, Child maltreatment, Mock juror, Jury decision making, Misconceptions, Perceptions, Beliefs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Hillary Langley, for her guidance, mentorship, patience, and all of the support she provided throughout the development of this thesis project. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Daniella Cash and Dr. Marcus Boccaccini for their time spent reviewing and assisting with this thesis. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support and encouragement of my husband, parents, and cohort, whose support kept me going and propelled me across the finish line. Thank you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Misconceptions About Child Abuse and Neglect.....	3
Extralegal Factors Influencing Jury Decision-Making.....	6
The Present Study	8
CHAPTER II: METHOD.....	10
Participants	10
Procedures.....	11
Measures	11
CHAPTER III: RESULTS	18
Exclusions and Missing Data.....	18
Preliminary Analyses.....	19
Analyses of Research Hypotheses	22
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION	28
Limitations.....	30
Implications & Future Directions	32
REFERENCES	34
APPENDIX A.....	44
APPENDIX B.....	54

VITA..... 55

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Child abuse is an alarmingly prevalent problem in the United States, affecting nearly 675,000 children in the United States (US) every year (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2019). Research has well-established that experiencing child abuse, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect, is associated with a range of adverse outcomes including mental health problems (Afifi, Boman, Fleisher, & Sareen, 2009; Kendall-Tackett, 2002; Spataro, Mullen, Burgess, Wells, & Moss, 2004), physical health problems (Gilbert et al., 2009; Kendall-Tackett, 2002; Norman et al., 2012), and behavior problems (Gilbert et al., 2009; Moylan et al., 2010; Steel & Herlitz, 2005). Silverman and colleagues (1996) found that 80% of young adults who reported experiencing child physical or sexual abuse also reported suffering from at least one psychiatric concern, including major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), antisocial behavior, and suicide attempts. Furthermore, being abused as a child increased the likelihood of being arrested as a juvenile by almost 60% and as an adult by almost 30% (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). In addition, as many as two-thirds of individuals receiving treatment for substance abuse report being abused as a child (Swan, 1998). Clearly, child abuse is a huge public health problem.

Unfortunately, only approximately half of substantiated cases of child abuse will even be prosecuted, and less than a fifth of those cases will ever make it to trial (Cross, Walsh, Simone, & Jones, 2003). Block & Williams (2019) conducted a retrospective analysis of 500 child sexual abuse (CSA) cases referred for prosecution over a five-year period and found that only 19.6% of cases moved forward to prosecution. There is often

limited evidence, especially in cases of CSA, creating unique challenges and therefore making them difficult to prosecute.

Research shows that extralegal factors, such as juror demographics and victim age, play a role in the prosecution of a defendant in trials of child abuse. Specifically, female jurors are more likely to convict than male jurors (Crowley, O'Callaghan, & Ball, 1994; Gabora, Spanos, & Joab, 1993; Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, & Nysse-Carris, 2002) and male jurors are more likely to rate child complainants as less credible than adult complainants (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Crowley et al., 1994; Quas et al., 2002; Quas, Thompson, & Clarke-Stewart, 2005). Furthermore, juror education level is positively associated with higher conviction rates as participants with high levels of education are more likely to convict the defendant (Quas et al., 2005). Regarding victim age, older victims are generally evaluated as less credible and more responsible for the abuse than younger victims, decreasing the likelihood of the case ending in a conviction (Bottoms, Davis, & Epstein, 2004). In fact, almost half of students in Cromer and Goldsmith's (2010) study endorsed the belief that older children have a responsibility to resist adult sexual advances. Extralegal factors – such as those outlined above – may influence jurors' perception of victim credibility, thereby acting as a barrier to prosecution. Indeed, research suggests that prosecutors' decision to take legal action may be influenced by their perception of victim credibility and misconceptions about child abuse (Anderson, 2014; Block & Williams, 2019).

Misconceptions About Child Abuse and Neglect

Literature has well-established the extent to which laypeople, jurors, and even some professionals hold stereotypes and misconceptions about child abuse (Anderson, 2014; Cossins, Goodman-Delahunty, & O'Brien, 2009; Quas, Thompson, & Clarke-Stewart, 2005). Due to stereotypes and misconceptions, jurors may have preexisting attitudes and beliefs about abuse characteristics, victim reactions to abuse, and victim reliability. For instance, many people believe children are highly suggestible and often make up stories or tell lies, so therefore they can easily fabricate stories of abuse (Child Matters, 2019; National Children's Advocacy Center, 2019). In reality, research shows that false accusations account for less than 2% of all allegations (Oates et al., 2000). Furthermore, there are mixed findings in the literature regarding the suggestibility of children's memory. Historically, studies have found that younger children are typically more suggestible than older children and adults, however recent research suggests this may not always be true (Davis, 1998; Goodman et al., 2001; Otgaar, Howe, Brackmann, & van Helvoort, 2017). For example, recent evidence shows that adults are sometimes at greater risk of accepting suggestive information than children (Otgaar, Howe, Merckelbach, & Muris, 2018). Otgaar and colleagues (2016) conducted multiple misinformation experiments and found that adults had more suggestion-induced false memories than children aged 7-8 years when presented with false suggestions by an interviewer after watching a video of a bank robbery. In their second experiment, they included children aged 4-6 years and found suggestion-induced false memories increased with age (Otgaar, Howe, Brackmann, & Smeets, 2016). Interestingly, when conducting this misinformation experiment within in a sample of maltreated children, they found that

maltreated children had lower levels of suggestion-induced false memories than non-maltreated children (Otgaar, Howe, & Muris, 2017). It is important to note that research shows children's accuracy greatly increases in the absence of suggestive techniques. Indeed, a review of the literature indicates children of all ages are capable of providing highly accurate reports when interviewed without the use of suggestive techniques (Bruck & Ceci, 1999). These findings suggest the reliability of children's testimony likely has more to do with the style and skills of the interviewer than natural limitations of their memory.

Another misconception people hold is that only extremely severe cases of child abuse are harmful and that seemingly less severe cases – such as sexual abuse involving older children or cases of neglect – are not harmful to the victim (Child Matters, 2019). Unfortunately, the misconception that only extreme cases of child abuse are harmful has even emerged in courtrooms. Some judges and/or jurors have little knowledge about child abuse and are misinformed about the signs and symptoms of abuse and the detrimental effects abuse can have on the child (Hamilton, 2008; Shackel, 2008). In fact, a New Jersey Supreme Court Judge made a statement in a 2002 statutory rape case against a 43-year-old female teacher that he did not believe any harm was done to the 13-year-old boy because there was “mutual consent” and believed the boy experienced pleasure from the abuse (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). This misconception may have profound effects, such as decreasing the likelihood that the perpetrator will be convicted, due to doubt that any actual harm occurred (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010).

In addition, many people hold the misconception that children who are being abused would immediately tell their parents (Child Matters, 2019). However, only a third

of child and adolescent victims ever disclose their abuse to anyone, let alone immediately after the abuse occurred (London, Bruck, Ceci, & Shuman, 2005). Children do not tell for a variety of reasons, including self-blame or feelings of responsibility, threats to the child, fear of the perpetrator, a lack of opportunity, or a lack of an understanding of abuse (Malloy, Brubacher, & Lamb, 2011; Schaeffer, Leventhal, & Asnes, 2011; Tashjian, Goldfarb, Goodman, Quas, & Edelstein, 2016). Furthermore, many children feel shame and fear; particularly, fear of their parents' reaction, of not being believed, or of causing trouble in the family (Crisma, Bascelli, Paci, & Romito, 2004; Hershkowitz, Lanes, & Lamb, 2007). Despite what some may think, a child may even fear for the perpetrator's well-being if the perpetrator is someone with whom they have a close relationship (Lewis, 2015). Previous literature has found that characteristics surrounding the abuse and the victim are also associated with the likelihood of disclosure. Specifically, multiple studies found that children who are abused by a family member are less likely to disclose and more likely to delay disclosure than those abused by someone outside the family (Smith et al., 2000; Kogan, 2004; Lyon, Ahern, Malloy, & Quas, 2010). Goodman-Brown and colleagues (2013) report results that take these findings a step further as they found young children are less likely to disclose than older children. Additionally, sexually abused males and African American youth exhibit lower rates of disclosure than females and youth of other ethnicities (Ullman, 2007).

These common misconceptions lead to adverse effects seen within child abuse trials. Specifically, research has found that mock jurors who strongly endorsed common misconceptions regarding child abuse rated the child as less credible and voted to convict the defendant less frequently than those who did not highly endorse these misconceptions

(Anderson, 2014; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins, & O'Brien, 2010). Goodman-Delahunty and colleagues (2011) evaluated mock jurors' knowledge and misconceptions about children's credibility and verdict decisions for cases of child sexual abuse. Not only did they find that the majority of the mock jurors moderately endorsed common misconceptions about CSA, but they also found that the more mock jurors endorsed misconceptions, the less credible they perceived the complainant and the less likely they were to vote to convict the defendant (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011). Interventions designed to increase knowledge of child abuse found that increased knowledge was associated with a higher likelihood of convicting (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011). Additionally, perceived victim credibility mediated the effect of child abuse knowledge on jurors' verdict; specifically, information presented via judicial directions or expert testimony enhanced perceptions of victim credibility, which in turn increased convictions (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2011).

Extralegal Factors Influencing Jury Decision-Making

As previously mentioned, research has identified several extralegal factors that influence jury decision-making in trials involving child abuse. In addition to juror demographics and victim age, gender of the victim and perpetrator have also been identified as factors affecting juror decision-making. Women perpetrators are evaluated more leniently by both male and female jurors (McCoy & Gray, 2007; Quas et al., 2002). In one study looking at the effects of defendant gender on verdicts in cases of CSA, male defendants were more likely to be found guilty especially when the defendant was the victim's father (McCoy & Gray, 2007). In fact, McCoy and Gray (2007) found that fathers were almost two and a half times more likely to be convicted than mothers. The

finding that males are convicted at a higher rate than females in cases of child abuse is consistent with broader research findings on gender disparities in federal criminal cases. A study using data from four different federal sources found that females are significantly more likely to avoid charges and convictions and receive 63% shorter sentences on average than their male counterparts; additionally, females are twice as likely to avoid incarceration if convicted (Starr, 2012). It seems from these findings that the general public perceives females to be less culpable in criminal cases than males, which presents an obstacle when prosecuting a case with a female defendant.

Another factor that influences conviction decisions is victim gender. Male victims of child abuse are perceived more negatively than female victims, particularly for sexual abuse (Davies & Rogers, 2006). Jurors, especially male jurors, tend to place more responsibility on the male victim for failing to prevent the abuse from occurring. This (mis)attribution of blame to male victims is associated with gendered stereotypes of male strength and assertiveness, which implies males are more capable of resisting and avoiding situations of abuse (Esnard & Dumas, 2013). Furthermore, instead of being seen as a victim, jurors view males who are sexually abused by a female as gaining sexual experience (Rogers & Davies, 2007). This finding lends evidence to the belief that mixed-gender sexual abuse is less abusive than same-gender sexual abuse (Maynard & Wiederman, 1997). Thus, prosecuting cases with male victims and mixed-gender sexual abuse may be extra challenging.

There is a consensus in the literature that the majority of individuals who experience abuse as a child do not disclose the abuse until adulthood, and even when disclosure does occur in childhood it is frequently delayed. It is hard to determine

disclosure rates due to differences in research designs across studies. How researchers define and measure “immediate” and “delayed” disclosure varies greatly. However, past research indicates that immediate disclosures – as defined by “disclosed within 24 hours” – constitutes less than a quarter of abuse victims (Kogan, 2004; Smith et al., 2000), while delayed disclosure – when defined as “delayed disclosing more than 1 month” – constitutes over half of abuse victims (Kogan, 2004; Smith et al., 2000). Even with inconsistent research designs, it is clear that the majority of child abuse victims delay disclosure. As previously discussed, there are many reasons why a child might delay disclosing abuse. Unfortunately, delayed disclosure presents as a barrier to prosecution. Cases with delayed disclosures are half as likely to be investigated and prosecuted compared to cases with immediate disclosures (Block & Williams, 2019).

The Present Study

The findings outlined above raise serious concerns and prompt empirical inquiry into the question of how, why, and for whom these factors influence jurors’ decision-making in cases involving allegations of child abuse. As the literature suggests, the amount of impact each of these variables have on jury decision-making varies considerably; but what factors influence this association? While many studies attempt to identify factors that impact jury decision-making, there is a dearth of literature examining possible moderating factors. One possible influential factor might be personal perceptions and beliefs about child abuse, based off of common misconceptions (Anderson, 2014). The present study sought to address this gap in the literature by examining the moderating effect of mock jurors’ perceptions and beliefs about child abuse on the relationship between three previously identified predictors of verdict decisions (i.e., type

of abuse, gender of victim, and gender of perpetrator) and conviction decisions (i.e., guilty vs. not guilty; confidence in conviction decision) in cases involving child abuse.

Based on the extant literature, the following hypotheses were explored:

1. Participants with higher endorsements of *misconceptions about abuse severity* will be less likely to convict in cases of sexual abuse than in cases of physical abuse.
2. Participants with higher endorsements of *misconceptions about victim characteristics* will be less likely to convict in cases of sexual abuse involving a male victim than in cases involving a female victim.
3. Participants with higher endorsements of *misconceptions about perpetrator characteristics* will be less likely to convict in cases involving a female perpetrator than in cases involving a male perpetrator.

CHAPTER II

Method

Participants

A total of 513 individuals recruited from psychology courses at a large southern state university using the psychology research participation (PeRP) undergraduate research system signed up to participate in the present study. Within the initial sample of 513, 45 (8.77%) individuals did not complete the study, 10 (1.95%) individuals were not eligible to participate, 15 (2.92%) participants did not provide a verdict, and seven (1.36%) participants selected “prefer not to answer” for the majority of survey items. Additionally, 65 (12.67%) participants did not score 100% correct on the manipulation checks, and six (1.17%) participants failed the alleged perpetrator identity comprehension check. Therefore, 148 participants were subsequently excluded resulting in a dataset of 365 participants.

Participants were 365 jury-eligible individuals residing in the United States. Most of the sample was female (81.10%) with a mean age of 20.79 years ($SD = 4.45$). Just under half of the sample identified themselves as Caucasian (49.00%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (26.30%), and Black or African American (18.10%). A majority of participants reported having never served on a jury (97.50%) nor ever receiving training related to childhood abuse (76.70%). Seventy-one participants (19.50%) endorsed a history of childhood abuse, with most of this subset of participants reporting having experienced more than one type of abuse (73.24%). Only 22 participants reported having children (6.00%).

Procedures

All procedures received university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Participants were recruited through the PeRP undergraduate research system at a large southern state university and completed all measures online through Qualtrics. Once the survey was accessed and informed consent was obtained, participants read one of eight randomly assigned trial transcripts describing an alleged child abuse case. They were asked to answer three manipulation checks and three comprehension checks, and then to respond to questions on the Juror Verdict Questionnaire regarding conviction decisions for the case, factual guilt, and perceptions of the child's credibility. Participants also completed three measures assessing their perceptions and beliefs about child maltreatment and concluded the online study by completing a demographic survey. Participants received either extra credit or course credit for an assignment depending on the psychology course they were enrolled in.

Measures

Trial Summaries

Eight versions of a simulated trial summary of a criminal trial involving a child abuse case were created for the present study (see Appendix A, p. 30). The summary was adapted from a trial summary used in previous research (Narensky, 2008). The basic trial summary was the same for all eight conditions and only varied in terms of the type of abuse (i.e., sexual or physical), gender of the complainant (i.e., male or female), and gender of the defendant (i.e., male or female). Specifically, the eight transcripts varied as follows: 1) physical abuse, female complainant, male defendant; 2) physical abuse,

female complainant, female defendant; 3) physical abuse, male complainant, male defendant; 4) physical abuse, male complainant, female defendant; 5) sexual abuse, female complainant, male defendant; 6) sexual abuse, female complainant, female defendant; 7) sexual abuse, male complainant, male defendant; and 8) sexual abuse, male complainant, female defendant. Due to the low number of trials prosecuting cases of child psychological abuse, this type of abuse was not included in the current study. The age of the complainant, age of the defendant, relationship between the complainant and defendant, and victim recantation were consistent across all eight trial summaries. Specifically, each summary included the following common details: 1) the victim was 8 years old, 2) the perpetrator was a known, trusted adult, and 3) the victim recanted their allegation one time. These details were chosen because they are commonly seen in cases of abuse or have been shown to be a consistent misconception among individuals, as well as to create ambiguity.

Perceptions and Beliefs About Child Abuse

Perceptions and beliefs about child abuse were assessed by participant endorsement of misconceptions about child abuse; specifically, misconceptions about abuse severity, victim characteristics, and perpetrator characteristics.

Participants completed a questionnaire adapted from the 26-item CSA Misconceptions Questionnaire (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2010). Cossins et al. (2009) originally developed the CSA Misconceptions Questionnaire to assess mock jurors' endorsements of CSA misconception statements in three broad domains: a) children's typical reactions to sexual abuse; b) typical child abuse offense or offender characteristics; and c) children's susceptibility to suggestion and ability to provide

reliable testimony. Given the questionnaire's focus on child sexual abuse and the present study's inclusion of physical abuse, an additional 16 items related to child physical abuse were added, resulting in a total of 42 items. The Mock jurors in the present study were instructed to rate their agreement to each statement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Some examples of statements found on the adapted CSA Misconceptions Questionnaire include: "An abused child will typically cry for help and try to escape"; "The perpetrator of child sexual abuse is normally a stranger to that child"; and "Children sometimes make false claims of physical abuse to get back at an adult." This scale has demonstrated adequate internal reliability among jury-eligible individuals (Cronbach $\alpha = .76$; Cossins et al., 2009). The Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .86.

Participants also completed the 30-item Public Perceptions of Child Abuse and Neglect questionnaire (Price et al., 2001), which was developed to assess individuals' perceptions of child abuse, specifically on types of children most likely to be abused, who is most likely to be a child abuser, and the likely long-term effects of child abuse. There is also a subscale containing 8-items on perceptions of what constitutes abuse; however, these items were not used in this study, resulting in a 22-item questionnaire. Mock jurors were instructed to report the extent to which they agreed or disagreed on a 3-point Likert-type scale (0 = no, 1 = unsure, 2 = yes) for each item. Some examples of statements include: "They are more likely to be involved in violence against others"; and "They are more likely to be involved in substance abuse." This scale has demonstrated adequate internal reliability in past research (Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$; Price et al., 2001). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .54.

Additionally, participants completed the 34-item Perception of Child Maltreatment Scale (Fakunmoju & Bammeke, 2013), which was developed to assess individuals' perceptions on what constitutes abuse. This scale consists of five subscales assessing each type of abuse; the current study did not include the 7-item child labor subscale, resulting in a 27-item questionnaire. Mock jurors were instructed to report the extent that they agreed or disagreed on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = no, 2 = don't know, 3 = maybe or sometimes, 4 = yes) for each item. Some examples of statements included: "Allowing a child younger than 11 years old to wander the streets without supervision"; "biting a child as a form of discipline"; and "peeping constantly at a naked teenager in the room/toilet for sexual pleasure." This scale has demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha = .95$; Blevins et al., 2015) and validity (Fakunmoju & Bammeke, 2013). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for the scale was $\alpha = .69$.

Misconceptions About Abuse Severity. Misconceptions about child abuse severity were measured using the Perception of Child Maltreatment Scale (27 items). After each item score was standardized, the items were summed to create a total score. Participants' total scores were standardized before use in analyses. As stated above, this scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .69$) within this sample.

Misconceptions About Victim Characteristics. Misconceptions about child abuse victim characteristics were measured using a composite scale including nine items from the Public Perceptions of Child Abuse and Neglect questionnaire and 10 items from the adapted the CSA Misconceptions Questionnaire. The nine items from the Public Perceptions of Child Abuse questionnaire assessed mock jurors' perceptions of the likely long-term effects of child abuse; this scale demonstrated good internal consistency within

this sample ($\alpha = .81$). Driven by a factor analysis conducted by the author on the adapted CSA Misconceptions Questionnaire, two subscales were formed: one to assess mock jurors' perceptions of children's susceptibility to manipulation (4 items) and one to assess children's fabrication of false reports (6 items). Within this sample, the Cronbach's alpha for the manipulation subscale was $\alpha = .87$, and the fabrication subscale was $\alpha = .87$. To create the composite scale score, each item score was standardized and then all items were summed together to produce a total score. Participants' total scores were standardized before use in analyses. The overall composite scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Misconceptions About Perpetrator Characteristics. Misconceptions about child abuse perpetrator characteristics were measured using four items from the adapted CSA Misconceptions Questionnaire; this decision was driven by the results of a factor analysis. Each item score was standardized and then all items were summed to create a total score. Participants' total scores were standardized before use in analyses. The Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .62.

Juror Questionnaire

The juror questionnaire was developed by the author and asked participants whether they would vote to convict the defendant (i.e., yes or no), and to rate their confidence in their conviction decision (1 = Not at all, 5 = Extremely). The author created a summary variable that considered participants' verdict decision (guilty vs. not guilty) and confidence level in that decision (not at all confident – extremely confident) to represent mock jurors' conviction decision (1 = Extremely confident not guilty, 5 = Not at all confident not guilty, 10 = Extremely confident guilty), which was used in analyses.

Manipulation and Comprehension Checks

After reading the trial summary, mock jurors were asked to respond to a total of six questions regarding the case (see Appendix B, p. 40). These questions assessed whether mock jurors paid attention to the trial information and could accurately recall trial details. The first three questions referred to the experimental manipulations (i.e., manipulation checks) and asked participants to select the type of abuse that allegedly occurred in the story, as well as the genders of the child complainant and adult perpetrator. Three additional questions were used to assess whether participants understood the material contained within the trial summary (i.e., comprehension checks), specifically regarding the identity of the alleged perpetrator, the location of the alleged abuse, and the identity of the person the child first disclosed the abuse to. These questions were used to identify and exclude participants who did not understand or pay close attention to the details of the trial summaries. Only the data from participants who correctly answered all three of the objective manipulation checks and at least the first question on the comprehension checks (i.e., “Who allegedly abused *Child’s Name* in the story?”) were included in analyses to investigate the research hypotheses.

Participant Demographics

Participants were asked to complete a demographic information survey referring to various characteristics of the individual. Questions on the demographic survey asked participants to report personal information about their sex/gender (male, female), age, race/ethnicity (Caucasian; African American; Hispanic, Latino, Spanish; Asian; American Indian; or Other), history of jury service (yes, no), experience with child abuse

(e.g., training, personal history) and previous involvement in legal proceedings (civil or criminal; plaintiff or defendant).

CHAPTER III

Results

Exclusions and Missing Data

All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 25 (IBM Corp., 2013). A missing value analysis revealed 49 variables (79.25%) had incomplete data, 214 participant cases (58.63%) were missing at least one value, and 2.96% of all values were missing; a majority of these values were coded as missing due to participants selecting “prefer not to answer” on survey items. The results of Little's MCAR test indicated missing data were not missing completely at random ($\chi^2 = 7183.67, p = 0.00$). As such, multiple chi-square tests were conducted to examine the relationships between the variables with missing data and participant age, sex, and race/ethnicity (Enders, 2010). Specifically, 46 chi-square tests were conducted at a significance level of 5%; thus, approximately two erroneous rejections of the null hypothesis were expected. There were significant findings between participant age and nine variables with missing data, as well as between participant sex and two variables with missing data. These results demonstrate a systematic relationship between the propensity of missing values and the observed data, suggesting the data were missing at random (MAR; Buuren, 2018). As such, participant age and sex were included as auxiliary variables in the multiple imputation model.

Multiple imputation in SPSS was used to account for the missing data. This method replaces missing data with plausible values (Schafer, 1999). Along with the two auxiliary variables, 50 variables were included in the multiple imputation model (i.e., all variables planned for use in analyses). Predictive mean matching was used to ensure realistic values within the observed data ranges were imputed (Buuren, 2018). Five imputations were created for the current sample. All analyses utilized this imputed

dataset. After the imputed datasets were each analyzed, the study results were pooled into the final study result.

Preliminary Analyses

The mean scores of the measured variables are as follows: abuse severity misconceptions scores ($M = 3.17$; $SD = 3.31$), victim characteristics misconceptions scores as assessed by the perceptions of child abuse ($M = 4.87$; $SD = 3.40$) and the two subscales of the misconceptions questionnaire, ($M = 28.40$; $SD = 8.70$), and perpetrator characteristics misconceptions scores ($M = 9.93$; $SD = 3.40$). For reference, the maximum possible scores were 54 for abuse severity misconceptions, 18 for perceptions of child abuse, 60 for the combined subscales of the misconception questionnaire (i.e., fabrication and manipulation scale), and 24 for victim characteristics misconceptions. Higher scores indicated higher endorsement of misconceptions.

Pearson and point-biserial correlations were run to determine the relationship between all variables of interest. Participants' sex was significantly associated with abuse severity misconceptions scores ($r_{pb} = -0.18$, $p = .001$) and victim characteristic misconceptions scores ($r_{pb} = -0.12$, $p = .02$), such that males reported higher levels of misconceptions about abuse severity and victim characteristics than females.

Additionally, abuse severity misconceptions scores were significantly positively correlated with victim characteristic misconceptions scores ($r = 0.18$, $p = .001$).

Conviction decisions were significantly associated with participant age ($r = -0.28$, $p > .001$) and participant sex ($r_{pb} = 0.25$, $p > .001$), such that younger participants and female participants were associated with a high confidence guilty verdict. Therefore, these variables were treated as covariates. Additionally, victim characteristic misconceptions

scores ($r = -0.14, p = .008$) and abuse type ($r_{pb} = 0.26, p > .001$) were significantly correlated with mock jurors' conviction decisions, such that a lower endorsement of victim characteristic misconceptions was associated with an increased likelihood of rendering a guilty verdict, and cases of sexual abuse had a higher likelihood of receiving a guilty verdict.

As the conviction decisions variable considered participants' verdict decision (guilty vs. not guilty) in conjunction with their confidence level in that decision, additional Pearson and point-biserial correlations were conducted to further assess the relationship between conviction decisions and the associated variables. Participant sex significantly correlated with verdict decisions (guilty vs. not guilty; $r_{pb} = 0.21, p = .02$) and confidence in not guilty verdicts ($r_{pb} = -0.24, p = .01$), such that males were more likely to render a not guilty verdict and report higher levels of confidence in a not guilty verdict than females. Participant age significantly negatively correlated with verdict decisions ($r_{pb} = -0.27, p > .001$) and confidence in verdict decisions ($r = -0.13, p = .02$), particularly confidence in guilty verdicts ($r = -0.14, p = .008$). Specifically, younger participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict and report higher levels of confidence in a guilty verdict than older participants. After controlling for abuse type, participant age was significantly correlated with verdict decisions in both physical ($r_{pb} = -0.17, p = .02$) and sexual ($r_{pb} = -0.41, p > .001$) child abuse cases, revealing younger participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict in both cases of physical and sexual abuse than older participants. Additionally, abuse type was significantly associated with verdict decisions ($r_{pb} = 0.25, p > .001$) and confidence in verdict decisions ($r_{pb} = 0.12, p = .02$), such that participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict and report

higher levels of confidence in a guilty verdict in cases of sexual abuse compared to physical abuse. Victim characteristic misconceptions scores also significantly correlated with verdict decisions ($r = -0.12, p = .02$), with participants who endorsed higher levels of victim characteristic misconceptions being less likely to render a guilty verdict.

Chi-square tests for independence were conducted to clarify the relationship between mock jurors' verdict decisions (guilty vs. not guilty) and the associated dichotomous group variables. Verdict decisions significantly differed between male and female jurors, with female participants being more likely to render guilty verdicts than male participants, a difference in proportions of .29, $p < .001$. Female participants were significantly more likely to render a guilty verdict in alleged cases of sexual abuse compared to alleged cases of physical abuse, a difference in proportions of .22, $p < .001$. Male participants were also significantly more likely to render a guilty verdict in alleged cases of sexual abuse compared to alleged cases of physical abuse, a difference in proportions of .27, $p = .03$.

Independent-samples t-tests were run to clarify the differences between mock jurors' conviction decisions and the additional associated group variables. Verdict decisions (guilty vs. not guilty) significantly differed as a function of age, $M = 2.68$, 95% CI [1.71, 3.66], $t(363) = 5.384, p < .001$, with younger participants more likely to render guilty verdicts ($M = 20.00, SD = 2.75$) than older participants ($M = 22.68, SD = 6.65$). Conviction decisions (summary score) significantly differed between physical abuse and sexual abuse, $M = -1.72$, 95% CI [-2.37, -1.07], $t(363) = -5.216, p = .023$, with participants rendering guilty verdicts with higher confidence in cases of sexual abuse ($M = 8.04, SD = 2.79$) than physical abuse ($M = 6.32, SD = 3.48$).

Analyses of Research Hypotheses

Prior to conducting a series of hierarchical multiple regression models, the relevant assumptions of this statistical analysis were tested. The assumption of independence of observations was met, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.741. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. The assumptions of linearity, as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values, normality, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot, and homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values, were all satisfied. Additionally, there were no significant or highly influential outliers within this data set.

Hypothesis 1

To test the hypothesis that mock jurors' *misconceptions about child abuse severity* moderates the relationship between *type of abuse* in cases of alleged child abuse and *conviction decisions*, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The abuse severity misconceptions scores variable was standardized, and an interaction term was created. The overall model contained four independent variables: abuse severity misconceptions scores, abuse type, as well as participant age and gender as covariates. The outcome variable was conviction decision. The overall model statistically significantly predicted mock jurors' conviction decisions, $R^2 = .201$, $F(5, 359) = 18.03$, $p < .001$.

In the first step, the two covariates (i.e., participant age and gender) were entered into the model. These variables accounted for a significant amount of variance in conviction decisions, $R^2 = .131$, $F(2, 362) = 27.35$, $p < .001$, revealing that the covariates

were predictive of mock jurors' conviction decisions. Abuse severity misconceptions scores and abuse type were entered in the second step. Abuse type significantly added to the amount of variance in the criterion accounted for, $\Delta R^2 = .069$, $\Delta F(2, 360) = 15.52$, $p < .001$, $\beta = 0.25$, $p < .001$; however, abuse severity misconceptions scores did not improve the predictive utility of the model ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = .33$). In the last step, the interaction term between abuse severity misconceptions and abuse type was entered, which also did not account for a significant proportion of the variance in mock jurors' conviction decisions $\Delta R^2 = .069$, $\Delta F(1, 359) = 15.52$, $p = .65$, $\beta = 0.05$, $p = .66$. Refer to Table 1 for the results of the multiple regression model.

Table 1

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Abuse Severity Misconceptions

Scores and Type of Abuse

Model	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>
Step 1					0.13	0.13**	27.35**
	(Constant)	9.56**	0.88				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.26**			
	Sex	1.91	0.41	0.23**			
Step 2					0.20	0.69**	15.52**
	(Constant)	8.54**	0.85				
	Age	-0.18	0.04	-0.25**			
	Sex	2.00	0.40	0.24**			
	Abuse Type	1.66	0.31	0.25**			
	Abuse Severity Misconceptions	1.75	0.18	0.06			
Step 3					0.20	0.001	18.03**
	(Constant)	8.56**	0.85				
	Age	-0.18	0.04	-0.25**			
	Sex	1.99	0.40	0.24**			
	Abuse Type	1.66	0.31	0.25**			

(continued)

Abuse Severity Misconceptions	0.04	0.35	0.01
Interaction	0.17	0.39	0.08

*Note: Interaction = Abuse Type * Abuse Severity Misconceptions Scores.*

** $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .001$.*

Hypothesis 2

To test the hypothesis that mock jurors' *misconceptions about victim characteristics* moderates the relationship between *victim gender* in cases of alleged child abuse and *conviction decisions*, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The victim characteristics misconceptions scores variable was standardized, and an interaction term was created. Including the same covariates as used in the previous regression analysis, the model contained four independent variables: victim misconceptions scores, victim gender, participant age, and participant gender. The outcome variable was conviction decision. The overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .143$, $F(5, 359) = 11.96$, $p < .001$.

In the first step, the two covariates (i.e., participant age and gender) were entered into the model. Consistent with the previous model, step one was statistically significant, $R^2 = .131$, $F(5, 539) = 27.35$, $p < .001$. Victim misconceptions scores and victim gender were entered in the second step. While these variables did not significantly add to the amount of variance in the criterion accounted for, $\Delta R^2 = .011$, $\Delta F(2, 360) = 2.22$, $p = .18$, victim characteristics misconceptions scores significantly predicted conviction decisions within this model ($\beta = -0.10$, $p = .04$). This suggests that victim characteristics misconceptions improved the predictive utility of the model, albeit the majority of the variance accounted for was explained by participant age and sex. In the final step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between victim misconceptions scores and

victim gender was entered, which also did not improve the predictive utility of the model, $\Delta R^2 = .001$, $\Delta F(1, 359) = 0.35$, $p = .56$, $\beta = -0.04$, $p = .56$. When all four variables and the interaction term were included in the final stage of the regression model, victim misconceptions scores were not a significant predictor of mock jurors' conviction decisions ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = .25$). Refer to Table 2 for the results of the multiple regression model.

Table 2

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Victim Characteristics Misconceptions Scores and Victim Gender

Model	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>
Step 1					0.13	0.13**	27.35**
	(Constant)	9.59**	0.88				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.26**			
	Sex	1.91	0.41	0.23**			
Step 2					0.14	0.01	14.88**
	(Constant)	9.59**	0.88				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.25**			
	Sex	1.80	0.41	0.22**			
	Victim Gender	0.05	0.32	0.01			
	Victim Characteristics Misconceptions	-0.34	0.16	-0.10*			
Step 3					0.14	0.001	11.96**
	(Constant)	9.59**	0.88				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.25**			
	Sex	1.81	0.42	0.22**			
	Victim Gender	0.05	0.32	0.01			
	Victim Characteristics Misconceptions	-0.25	0.22	-0.08			
	Interaction	-0.19	0.32	-0.04			

(continued)

*Note: Interaction = Victim Gender * Victim Characteristics Misconceptions Scores.*
** $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .001$.*

Hypothesis 3

To test the hypothesis that mock jurors' *misconceptions about perpetrator characteristics* moderates the relationship between *perpetrator gender* in cases of alleged child abuse and *conviction decisions*, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The perpetrator characteristics misconceptions scores variable was standardized, and an interaction term was created. Including the same covariates as used in the first regression analysis, the model contained four independent variables: perpetrator misconceptions scores, perpetrator gender, participant age, and participant gender. The outcome variable was conviction decision. The overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .147$, $F(5, 359) = 12.42$, $p < .001$.

In the first step, the two covariates (i.e., participant age and gender) were entered into the model. Consistent with the previous models, step one was statistically significant, $R^2 = .131$, $F(5, 539) = 24.35$, $p < .001$. Perpetrator misconceptions scores and perpetrator gender were entered in the second step. Neither perpetrator misconceptions scores ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = .21$) or perpetrator gender ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = .36$) significantly added to the amount of variance in the criterion accounted for, $\Delta R^2 = .006$, $\Delta F(2, 360) = 1.28$, $p = .29$. In the final step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between perpetrator misconceptions scores and perpetrator gender was entered, which also did not improve the predictive utility of the model, $\Delta R^2 = .006$, $\Delta F(2, 360) = 1.28$, $p = .29$, $\beta = 0.12$, $p = .11$. However, within the final model, with all variables and the interaction term entered into the model, mock jurors' perpetrator misconceptions scores significantly contributed

to the predictive utility of the model ($\beta = -0.15, p = .04$). Refer to Table 3 for the results of the multiple regression model.

Table 3

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Perpetrator Characteristics

Misconceptions Scores and Perpetrator Gender

Model	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>
Step 1					0.13	0.13**	27.35**
	(Constant)	9.56**	0.88				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.26**			
	Sex	1.91	0.41	0.23**			
Step 2					0.14	0.01	14.34**
	(Constant)	9.42**	0.91				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.26**			
	Sex	1.93	0.41	0.23**			
	Perpetrator Gender	0.29	0.32	0.04			
	Perpetrator Characteristics Misconceptions	-0.21	0.17	-0.06			
Step 3					0.15	0.01	12.42**
	(Constant)	9.43**	0.90				
	Age	-0.19	0.04	-0.26**			
	Sex	1.92	0.41	0.23**			
	Perpetrator Gender	0.29	0.32	0.01			
	Perpetrator Characteristics Misconceptions	-0.48	0.24	-0.15*			
	Interaction	0.54	0.34	0.12			

*Note: Interaction = Perpetrator Gender * Perpetrator Characteristics Misconceptions Scores.*

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .001$.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

The current study aimed to determine whether mock jurors' perceptions and beliefs about child abuse, as measured by endorsement of misconceptions, influenced the relationship between extralegal factors and conviction decisions in cases of alleged child abuse. Based on the previous literature, it was expected that higher endorsements of misconceptions would strengthen the association between conviction decisions and abuse type, victim gender, and perpetrator gender. Overall, the analyses did not support these hypotheses. No significant interactions were found between misconceptions about child abuse and abuse type, victim gender, and perpetrator gender. Additionally, and contrary to findings in past research, victim gender and perpetrator gender did not predict mock jurors' conviction decisions.

One possible explanation for the lack of support for the initial hypotheses, as well as the previous research findings regarding the influence of victim and perpetrator sex on juror conviction decisions, is the overrepresentation of females and individuals with above-average levels of education within in the current study's sample. As previously discussed, research has demonstrated that female jurors are more likely to convict than male jurors (Crowley, O'Callaghan, & Ball, 1994; Gabora, Spanos, & Joab, 1993; Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, & Nysse-Carris, 2002) and individuals with high levels of education are more likely to convict the defendant than individuals with lower levels of education (Quas et al., 2005). A review of conviction decisions within the present study indicated most participants rendered guilty verdicts ($N = 252$, 69.0%) and were moderately to extremely confident in their conviction decision ($N = 233$, 63.8%). In addition to the vast

majority of the sample consisting of female participants, it is possible that individuals with a college education may have more knowledge and awareness of child abuse and are therefore less likely to consider extralegal factors, such as gender, when making legal decisions in cases of child abuse.

Past research has shown that male jurors report higher endorsements of misconceptions than female jurors (Gabora et al., 1993). As previously discussed, mock jurors who strongly endorse common misconceptions about child abuse are more likely to rate the child complainant as less-credible and vote to convict the defendant less frequently than those who do not highly endorse misconceptions (Anderson, 2014; Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins, & O'Brien, 2010). Consistent with the literature, participants with a higher endorsement of misconceptions about victim characteristics were less likely to render a guilty verdict in the present study. Moreover, male participants endorsed higher levels of misconceptions about abuse severity and victim characteristics than female participants.

As expected, abuse type predicted mock jurors' verdict decisions (guilty vs. not guilty). Participants were more likely to convict in cases of sexual abuse and felt more confident in their verdict compared to cases of physical abuse. This finding may be in part due to the lack of medical evidence presented in the trial summaries. Given medical evidence is often a prerequisite for the prosecution to proceed in cases of child physical abuse, the lack of medical evidence likely caused hesitation within participants to render a guilty verdict. Additionally, considering the intrusive nature of sexual abuse and increased awareness of sexual assault in response to the recent #MeToo movement, participants may have felt more confident rendering a guilty verdict in cases of sexual

abuse. In fact, dismissal of sexual assault significantly decreased following the #MeToo movement among both men and women (Szekeres et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, juror demographics significantly predicted conviction decisions. Specifically, male participants were more likely to render a verdict of not guilty and be more confident in that decision than female participants. Indeed, just over half of male participants rendered a not guilty verdict, with the majority feeling moderately or extremely confident in that decision. On the contrary, about a quarter of female participants rendered a not guilty verdict, with the majority feeling not at all or only slightly confident in that decision. As suggested by the literature, males may perceive child complainants as less believable and credible than adult victims (Quas et al., 2005). So, while the #MeToo movement positively impacted the level of belief for sexual assault victims by men, this impact may not have generalized to child victims.

Additionally, younger participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict and report feeling more confident in that decision than older participants. Few studies have examined the impact of juror age on conviction decisions in cases of child abuse; however, older jurors have been found to hold less favorable attitudes toward victims of child sexual abuse (Goodman et al., 1998). In the current study, older participants were less likely to convict in both physical and sexual child abuse cases. It is possible that older adults demonstrate higher levels of skepticism than young adults and rely more heavily on direct evidence, such as medical evidence.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the present research that warrant consideration. First, the sample size was small. The initial G*Power analysis indicated a sample size of 400 was necessary to detect medium effects. Due to participant non-response, a number

of participants had to be removed from the data set. This could affect the power of the analyses to detect significant effects. Also, participants only received one trial summary, out of 8 variations, which limited analyses to between-subject. It would have been beneficial to conduct within-subject analyses as that would have provided more insight into the effect of each participant's biases and misconceptions on their legal decision-making. Furthermore, the measures used in data collection did not directly or comprehensively assess the constructs being examined in the current study (i.e., misconceptions about abuse severity, and victim and perpetrator characteristics). As such, it is possible these constructs were not adequately assessed and did not accurately capture or represent mock jurors' misconceptions about child abuse severity, victim characteristics, or perpetrator characteristics. This could have negatively impacted the findings by failing to identify significant factors that contribute to mock jurors' legal decision-making.

Additionally, most participants – especially female participants – within the current study rendered guilty verdicts and were moderately to extremely confident in their conviction decision. In addition to the possible influence of sample characteristics (e.g., education, gender, age), the prosecution-favoring verdict results reported in the present study may be due to the trial summaries more heavily presenting the prosecution's perspective, and perhaps did not present a sufficiently compelling defense (Narensky, 2008). Narensky (2008), whose research the present study's trial summaries were adapted from, consulted with a criminal defense attorney specializing in child sexual abuse litigation who suggested that in a real trial, the defense would have also presented past examples of the child complainant lying and established the child's history of lying; the

present study did not present this type of defense. By not presenting a more comprehensive defense strategy in the trial summaries, it is possible the case appeared less ambiguous than intended and, in turn, extralegal factors (e.g., gender) may have had far less of an impact on legal decision-making.

Furthermore, the convenience sample of undergraduate students used in the current study is not fully representative of the population of interest (i.e., jury-eligible US citizens). Indeed, both males and older adults were underrepresented in the sample. Additionally, participants' level of education is higher than the average American citizen, with 94% of Americans having a high school diploma versus 39% having a bachelor's degree (US Department of Education, 2020). As such, participants' knowledge, perceptions, and misconceptions about child abuse may not be representative of those held by the average jury-eligible individual and may not be typical of actual jurors' conviction decisions.

Implications & Future Directions

This research supports past literature by demonstrating that extralegal factors influence juror decision-making in cases of child abuse, particularly juror demographics. Additionally, the results of the current study supported past findings that males endorse significantly higher levels of misconceptions about child abuse than females. Males were also more likely to render a verdict of not guilty compared to females. Based on these findings, it is important to address jurors' differential knowledge of child abuse in order to support the right to a fair trial and impartial jury. The implementation of trial interventions targeted at disseminating specialized child abuse knowledge can minimize the impact of this prejudice on jurors' perceptions and legal decision-making. The

literature demonstrates the effectiveness of specialized jury instructions on increasing jurors' perceptions of the child complainant's credibility and reducing endorsement of common child abuse misconceptions.

Future research should seek to improve upon the current research by addressing the limitations of this study including exploring the interaction of extralegal factors and jurors' misconceptions and beliefs about child abuse among a community sample and obtaining larger samples with more effective and refined measures. Doing so will expand upon the current findings to either provide additional support for these results or provide greater insight into the effects of jurors' misconceptions about child abuse on conviction decisions. Additionally, given jurors take many factors into consideration when deciding on a verdict for a case, it is particularly important to continue investigating the ways in which these factors interact instead of solely focusing on the individual influence of each factor on jurors' decision making in cases of child abuse.

REFERENCES

- Afifi, T. O., Boman, J., Fleisher, W., & Sareen, J. (2009). The relationship between child abuse, parental divorce, and lifetime mental disorders and suicidality in a nationally representative adult sample. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 33*, 139-147.
- Anderson, A. Z. (2014). *Is knowledge power? An investigation of mock jurors' perceptions of CSA victim credibility*. Unpublished master's thesis. Appalachian State University, Boone, NC.
- Block, S. D., & Williams, L. M. (2019). The prosecution of child sexual abuse: A partnership to improve outcomes. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/252768.pdf>
- Bottoms, B. L., Golding, J. M., Stevenson, M. C., Wiley, T. A., & Yozwiak, J. A. (2007). A review of factors affecting jurors' decisions in child sexual abuse cases. In M. P. Toglia, J. Read, D. F. Ross, R. L. Lindsay (Eds.), *The handbook of eyewitness psychology, Vol I: Memory for events* (pp. 509-543). Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Bruck, M., & Ceci, S. J. (1999). The suggestibility of children's memory. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50*, 419-439.
- Buuren, S. V. (2018). *Flexible imputation of missing data* (2nd ed.). CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Child Matters (2019). *Myths and Realities*. Retrieved from <http://www.childmatters.org.nz/58/learn-about-child-abuse/myths-and-realities>

- Cossins, A., Goodman-Delahunty, J., & O'Brien, K. (2009). Uncertainty and misconceptions about child sexual abuse: Implications for the criminal justice system. *Psychology, Psychiatry & Law, 16*, 1–18.
- Crisma, M., Bascelli, E., Paci, D., & Romito, P. (2004). Adolescents who experienced sexual abuse: Fears, needs and impediments to disclosure. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 28*, 1035- 1048.
- Cromer, L. D., & Goldsmith, R. E. (2010) Child sexual abuse myths: Attitudes, beliefs, and individual differences. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 19*, 618-647, doi:10.1080/10538712.2010.522493
- Crowley, M. J., O'Callaghan, M. G., & Ball, P. J. (1994). The juridical impact of psychological expert testimony in a simulated child sexual abuse trial. *Law and Human Behavior, 18*, 89-105. doi:10.1007/BF01499146
- Davis, S. (1998). Social and scientific influences on the study of children's suggestibility: A historical perspective. *Child Maltreatment, 3*, 186–194. doi:10.1177/1077559598003002011.
- Davies, M., & Rogers, P. (2006). Perceptions of male victims in depicted sexual assaults: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 11*, 367–377.
- Enders, C. K. (2010). Applied missing data analysis. New York: Guilford Press.

- Esnard, C., & Dumas, R. (2013). Perceptions of male victim blame in a child sexual abuse case: Effects of gender, age and need for closure. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 19*, 817-844. doi:10.1080/1068316X.2012.700310
- Fakunmoju, S. B., & Bammeke, F. O. (2013). Development of perception of child maltreatment scale: Reliability and validity analyses. *SAGE Open, 1-14*. doi:10.1177/2158244013490703
- Gabora, N. J., Spanos, N. P., & Joab, A. (1993). The effects of complainant age and expert psychological testimony in a simulated child sexual abuse trial. *Law and Human Behavior, 17*, 103-119. doi:10.1007/BF01044540.
- Gilbert, R. E., Widom, C. S., Browne, K., Fergusson, D., Webb, E., & Janson, S. (2009). Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high-income countries. *The Lancet, 373*, 68-81.
- Goodman-Delahunty, J., Cossins, A., & O'Brien, K. (2010). Enhancing the credibility of complainants in child sexual assault trials: The effect of expert evidence and judicial directions. *Behavioral Sciences & The Law, 28*, 769-783. doi:10.1002/bsl.936
- Goodman-Delahunty, J., Cossins, A., & O'Brien, K. (2011). A comparison of expert evidence and judicial directions to counter misconceptions in child sexual abuse trials. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 44*, 196-217. doi:10.1177/0004865811405140

- Goodman, G. S., Bottoms, B. L., Rudy, L., Davis, S. L., & Schwartz-Kenney, B. M. (2001). Effect of past abuse experiences on children's eyewitness memory. *Law and Human Behavior, 25*, 269–298.
- Hamilton, M. A. (2008). Justice denied: What America must do to protect its children. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hershkowitz, I., Lanes, O., Lamb, M.E. (2007). Exploring the disclosure of child sexual abuse with alleged victims and their parents. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31*, 111–123.
- Kendall-Tackett, K. (2002). The health effects of childhood abuse: four pathways by which abuse can influence health. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*, 715-729.
- Klettke, B., Graesser, A. C., & Powell, M. B. (2009). Expert testimony in child sexual abuse cases: The effects of evidence, coherence and credentials on juror decision making. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 24*, 481-489. doi:10.1002/acp.1565
- Kogan, S. M. (2004). Disclosing unwanted sexual experiences: Results from a national sample of adolescent women. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 28*, 147–165.
- London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S. J., & Shuman, D. W. (2005). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? *Psychology, Public Policy, & Law, 11*, 194–226.

- Lyon, T. D., Ahern, E. C., Malloy, L. C., & Quas, J. A. (2010). Children's reasoning about disclosing adult transgressions: Effects of maltreatment, child age, and adult identity. *Child Development, 81*, 1714-1728.
- Malloy, L. C., Brubacher, S. P., & Lamb, M. E. (2011). Expected consequences of disclosure revealed in investigative interviews with suspected victims of child sexual abuse. *Applied Developmental Science, 15*, 8–19.
doi:10.1080/10888691.2011.538616.
- Maynard, C., & Wiederman, M. (1997). Undergraduate students' perceptions of child sexual abuse: Effects of age, sex, and gender-role attitudes. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 21*, 833-844. doi:10.1016/s0145-2134(97)00045-8
- McCoy, M. L., & Gray, J. M. (2007). The impact of defendant gender and relationship to victim on juror decisions in a child sexual abuse case. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 37*, 1578–1593.
- Moylan, C. A., Herrenkohl, T. I., Sousa, C., Tajima, E. A., Herrenkohl, R. C., & Russo, M. J. (2010). The effects of child abuse and exposure to domestic violence on adolescent internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. *Journal of Family Violence, 25*, 53-63. doi:10.1007/s10896-009-9269-9
- National Children's Advocacy Center (2019). *10 Common Myths about Child Abuse*. Retrieved from <https://nationalcac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FINAL-10-Common-Myths-with-References.pdf>

- Narensky, C. (2008). *The influence of recantation, witness demeanor, and expert testimony on child witness credibility in sexual abuse prosecutions*. (Publication No. 3326843) [Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Norman, R. E., Byambaa, M., De, R., Butchart, A., Scott, J., & Vos, T. (2012). The long-term health consequences of child physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS Medicine*, *9*, e1001349. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001349
- Oates, R. K., & Cohn-Donnelly, A. (1997). Influential papers in child abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *21*, 319–326. doi:10.1016/S0145-2134(96)00169-X.
- Oates, R. K., Jones, D. P. H., Denson, A., Sirotiak, A., Gary, N., & Krugman, R. (2000). Erroneous concerns about child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *24*, 149–157.
- Otgaar, H., Howe, M. L., Brackmann, N., & Smeets, T. (2016). The malleability of developmental trends in neutral and negative memory illusions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology General*, *145*, 31-55. doi:10.1037/xge0000127
- Otgaar, H., Howe, M. L., Merckelbach, H., & Muris, P. (2018). Who is the better eyewitness? Sometimes adults but at other times children. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *27*, 378-385. doi:10.1177/0963721418770998

- Otgaar, H., Howe, M. L., & Muris, P. (2017). Maltreatment increases spontaneous false memories but decreases suggestion-induced false memories in children. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 35*, 376-391. doi:10.1111/bjdp.12177
- Quas, J. A., Bottoms, B. L., Haegerich, T. M., & Nysse-Carris, K. L. (2002). Effects of victim, defendant, and juror gender on decisions in child sexual assault cases. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 1993 – 2021.
- Quas, J. A., Thompson, W. C., & Clarke-Stewart, K. A. (2005). Do jurors ‘know’ what isn’t so about child witnesses? *Law and Human Behavior, 29*, 425–456.
- Pettalia, J., Pozzulo, J. D., & Reed, J. (2017). The influence of sex on mock jurors’ verdicts across type of child abuse cases. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 69*, 1-9.
doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.03.025
- Pozzulo, J. D., Dempsey, J. L., & Crescini, C. (2010). Factors affecting juror decisions in historic child sexual abuse cases involving continuous memories. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 37*, 951-964. doi:10.1177/0093854810373587
- Pozzulo, J. D., Dempsey, J., Maeder, E., & Allen, L. (2010). The effects of victim gender, defendant gender, and defendant age on juror decision making. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 37*, 47-63. doi:10.1177/0093854809344173
- Price, J. H., Islam, R., Gruhler, J., Dove, L., Knowles, J., & Stults, G. (2001). Public perceptions of child abuse and neglect in a midwestern urban community. *Journal of Community Health, 26*, 271-284.

- Rogers, P., & Davies, M. (2007). Perceptions of victims and perpetrators in a depicted child sexual abuse case: Gender and age factors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22*, 566-84.
- Schaefer, J.L. (1999). Multiple imputation: A primer. *Statistical Methods in Medical Research, 8*, 3-15.
- Schaeffer, P., Leventhal, J. M., & Asnes, A. G. (2011). Children's disclosures of sexual abuse: Learning from direct inquiry. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 35*, 343-352.
- Shackel, R. L. (2008). Beliefs commonly held by adults about children's behavioral responses to sexual victimization. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 32*, 485-495.
- Silverman, A. B., Reinherz, H.Z., & Giaconia, R. M. (1996). The long-term sequelae of child and adolescent abuse: A longitudinal community study. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 20*, 709-723.
- Smith, D. W., Letourneau, E. J., Saunders, B. E., Kilpatrick, D. G., Resnick, H. S., & Best, C. L. (2000). Delay in disclosure of childhood rape: Results from a national survey. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 24*, 273-287.
- Spataro, J., Mullen, P. E., Burgess, P. M., Wells, D. L., & Moss, S. A. (2004). Impact of child sexual abuse on mental health: Prospective study in males and females. *The British Journal of Psychiatry, 184*, 416-421. doi:10.1192/bjp.184.5.416
- Starr, S. B. (2012). Estimating gender disparities in federal criminal cases. University of Michigan Law and Economics Research Paper, No. 12-018.
doi:10.2139/ssrn.2144002

- Steel, J. L., & Herlitz, C. A. (2005). The association between childhood and adolescent sexual abuse and proxies for sexual risk behavior: a random sample of the general population of Sweden. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 29*, 1141-1153.
- Swan, N. (1998). Exploring the role of child abuse on later drug abuse: Researchers face broad gaps in information. *NIDA Notes, 13*(2).
- Szekeres, H., Shuman, E., & Saguy, T. (2020). Views of sexual assault following #MeToo: The role of gender and individual differences. *Personality and Individual Differences, 166*.
- Tashjian, S. M., Goldfarb, D., Goodman, G. S., Quas, J. A. & Edelstein, R. (2016). Delay in disclosure of non-parental child sexual abuse in the context of emotional and physical maltreatment: A pilot study. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 58*, 149-159.
doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.06.020
- Ullman, S. E. (2007). Relationship to perpetrator, disclosure, social reactions, and PTSD symptoms in child sexual abuse survivors. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 16*, 19-36.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). The Condition of Education 2020 (NCES 2020-144), Educational Attainment of Young Adults.
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2019).

Child Maltreatment 2017. Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>.

Widom, C. S., & Maxfield, M. G. (2001). An Update on the “Cycle of Violence. *National Institute of Justice Research in Brief*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/184894.pdf>

APPENDIX A

Trial Summary

THE STATE OF TEXAS, Plaintiff

v.

LAUREN/BRANDON JONES/WILLIAMS, Defendant**No. 18-CR-5012**

The following is an unofficial summary from a physical assault trial involving a minor, Alexis/Alex Jones, and Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams. The alleged assault occurred at the complainant's home on the day of August 12th, 2017.

TX Penal Code, § 22.04, (a)(3) bodily injury to a child under the age of 14.

The grand jury charges: On August 12th, 2017, in Harris County, Texas, the above-named defendant committed intentional bodily injury to a child Alexis/Alex Jones, a child under the age of 14.

The prosecution alleged that Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams intentionally and knowingly caused bodily injury to Alexis/Alex Jones in her/his home on August 12th, 2017 at some point after 6:00PM. At the time of the alleged physical abuse, Alexis/Alex was 8 years old and Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams was 40 years old. The state is charging Mrs. Lauren Jones/Mr. Brandon Williams with one count of child physical abuse in violation of TX Penal Code § 22.04. The prosecution will call two witnesses: Mrs. Michelle Brown (social worker) and Alexis/Alex Jones.

Mrs. Lauren Jones/Mr. Brandon Williams pled “not guilty” to the charge of bodily injury to a child. The defense attorney will argue that Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams is a law-abiding citizen, who cares for her/his stepdaughter/son, Alexis/Alex Jones, and that the charge of physical abuse is untrue. The defense will argue that Alexis/Alex Jones lied about being abused because s/he was angry with Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams. The defense will call two witnesses: Michael Jones/Brianna Williams (Mrs. Jones's/Mr. Williams's husband/wife and Alexis's/Alex's father/mother), and Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams.

The medical evidence for the case was inconclusive, so it will not be presented in this summary.

Prosecution's Case:

Witness Number 1: Mrs. Michelle Brown

Direct Examination:

Mrs. Brown testified about her interview with Alexis/Alex on August 15th, 2017. Alexis/Alex told Mrs. Brown that her stepmother/father (Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams) punished her/him by holding her/his hand against a hot stove. Mrs. Brown described how Alexis's/Alex's father/mother (Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams) was enraged but did not believe Alexis/Alex. Alexis's/Alex's father/mother refused to let Alexis/Alex come home unless s/he told "the truth". Mrs. Brown placed Alexis/Alex with her/his maternal/paternal grandmother until Alexis's/Alex's accusations were confirmed or dismissed. Mrs. Brown testified that on September 20th, 2017, Alexis's/Alex's family member told her that Alexis/Alex had "changed his/her story". Mrs. Brown met with Alexis/Alex who said s/he "made it all up" because s/he "was mad at Lauren/Brandon" for not letting her/him go to her/his friend's house. Mrs. Brown notified the police and prosecutor that Alexis/Alex withdrew her allegation. Alexis's/Alex's grandmother called Mrs. Brown the following day and asked her to return. On September 21st, 2017, Alexis/Alex told Mrs. Brown that Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams actually did force her/his hand onto a hot stove as s/he originally claimed. Alexis/Alex said s/he missed her father/mother and wanted to go home so badly that s/he tried to "take it all back".

Cross Examination:

Mrs. Brown acknowledged that placing Alexis/Alex with her/his grandmother did not mean that she "had made up her mind" about Alexis's/Alex's accusations. She said she always removes a child from their home when a parent reacted to abuse allegations the way Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams had. Mrs. Brown denied pressuring Alexis/Alex to reaffirm her/his allegations when Alexis/Alex recanted.

Witness Number 2: Alexis/Alex Jones

Direct Examination:

Alexis/Alex Jones is a 10-year-old girl/boy. S/he was 8-years old at the time of the alleged abuse. S/he testified that on the evening of August 12th, 2017, s/he accidentally dropped her dinner plate which broke when it hit the floor. S/he said Lauren/Brandon became "very angry" and forced her hand down on the hot stove top as punishment. Alexis/Alex said Lauren/Brandon made her/him promise to not tell anyone about what happened or else s/he will get them both into trouble. Alexis/Alex decided to tell her father/mother because s/he was afraid that Lauren/Brandon was going to hurt her/him again. S/he told her/his father/mother three days later on the way to school. Her/his father/mother "got super mad" and did not believe her/him. Alexis/Alex said that s/he told her/his teacher later that day when s/he realized that her/his father/mother would tell Lauren/Brandon that s/he "had told". Alexis/Alex stated that the teacher did not ask

her/him about what Lauren/Brandon [Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams] did but called the police who sent Mrs. Brown to talk with Alexis/Alex. Alexis/Alex said that s/he told Mrs. Brown what Lauren/Brandon had done, and Mrs. Brown called her/his father/mother at work. Alexis/Alex testified that her/his father/mother called her/him a "little liar" and that he/she "wouldn't let me [Alexis/Alex] come home until I told the truth". Alexis/Alex stated that s/he was sent to live with her/his grandmother. S/he testified that s/he later told Mrs. Brown that s/he had lied about the intentional burning but explained that s/he tried to "take it all back" because s/he "really missed Dad/Mom and wanted to go home". Alexis/Alex and her/his grandmother called her/his father/mother to tell him/her that Alexis/Alex had "taken it back." Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams put Lauren/Brandon on the phone. Alexis/Alex stated this made her/him too scared to go back home so s/he called Mrs. Brown the next day to "tell the truth again about what s/he [Lauren/Brandon] did."

Cross Examination:

Alexis/Alex stated that s/he waited to tell because s/he was afraid that her/his father/mother would get angry. Alexis/Alex acknowledged that the night before s/he told her/his father/mother what happened, s/he and Lauren/Brandon had argued. S/he told Lauren/Brandon s/he hated her/him and wished s/he would "go away forever." S/he denied that s/he had "made up a story" about Lauren/Brandon out of anger. Alexis/Alex repeated that s/he was "telling the truth now" about what Lauren/Brandon had done to her/him. Alexis/Alex said that s/he changed her/his story because s/he missed her/his father/mother and wanted to go home.

Prosecution's re-direct examination:

The prosecutor asked Alexis/Alex to describe what it was like living at her/his grandmother's house. Alexis/Alex stated that s/he loved her/his grandmother, but that s/he did not like living there. Alexis/Alex explained that her/his grandmother lived "far away", so s/he had to attend a new school. The kids did not like Alexis/Alex at this school and s/he had not been able to play with any of her/his old friends since s/he went to her/his grandmother's. S/he stated that the hardest part of living at her/his grandmother's house was that s/he really missed her/his father/mother. Alexis/Alex testified that her/his father/mother refused to talk to her/him or visit her/him until s/he "took it [her/his allegations] all back." Alexis/Alex had thought that her/his father/mother would love her/him again and take her/him home if s/he pretended that Lauren/Brandon had never burned her/him.

Re-cross examination:

Alexis/Alex repeated that s/he was telling the truth about what Lauren/Brandon had done. S/he did expect people to believe her/him even if her/his father/mother did not.

Defendant's Case

Witness Number 1: Mr. Michael Jones/Mrs. Brianna Williams

Direct Examination:

Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams testified that he/she married Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams two years after the death of his/her first wife/husband, Alexis's/Alex's mother/father. He/she said Alexis/Alex had a difficult time accepting Lauren/Brandon as "her/his new mother/father" and that Alexis/Alex and Lauren/Brandon argued frequently as s/he resisted her/his attempts to parent her/him. Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams said that Alexis/Alex and Lauren/Brandon had argued the night before Alexis/Alex "lied to everyone about Lauren/Brandon". He/she described how Alexis/Alex had "looked at Lauren/Brandon with such hate in her/his eyes". Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams believed Lauren/Brandon was "incapable" of abusing Alexis/Alex. He/she said he/she was shocked and hurt by his/her daughter's/son's accusations. He/she testified that he/she would have known if someone had been abusing his/her child, especially if it had been Lauren/Brandon.

Cross Examination:

Mr. Jones/Mrs. Williams acknowledged that he/she often worked nights and therefore was not home to witness the alleged incident. He/she also acknowledged that he/she had seen burns on Alexis'/Alex's hand but believed it was an accident.

Witness Number 2: Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams

Direct Examination:

Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams stated that s/he regularly volunteers at the local animal shelter, is an active member in a faith-based organization, and that s/he works as an accountant. S/He described her/himself as an upstanding member of her/his community. Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams stated that becoming Michael's wife/Brianna's husband was "the best thing that ever happened to me [Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams]." S/He firmly denied ever having physically harmed a child. S/He said s/he "never laid a finger" on Alexis/Alex. Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams stated that s/he cared deeply for Alexis/Alex. S/He testified that Alexis/Alex is a troubled child who "hasn't gotten over her/his mother's/father's death." Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams stated that Alexis's/Alex's anger over her/his role as a "new mother/father figure" was understandable, but her/his accusations and the charges against her/him were false and extremely upsetting.

Cross Examination:

Mrs. Jones/Mr. Williams acknowledged that s/he had been angry at Alexis's/Alex's rejection. S/He had hoped Alexis/Alex would accept her/him. S/He acknowledged that s/he had punished Alexis/Alex in the past but denied physically harming her/him.

Closing argument by prosecution:

Alexis/Alex Jones was physically abused by a wo/man who s/he should have been able to trust. S/he was traumatized by the physical abuse, and further traumatized by her/his father's/mother's cruel disbelief. The removal from her/his home, from her/his family and from her/his friends, has been almost too much for this child to bear, and s/he deserves closure. Please assist her/him in her/his healing and restore her/his trust in the world. Find Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams guilty of physically abusing Alexis/Alex Jones and give her/him the justice s/he deserves.

Closing arguments by defense:

Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams has been falsely accused of heinous acts by a troubled young girl/boy. S/he is angry over her/his mother's/father's death and resents Mrs. Jones's/Mr. Williams's attempt to be a new mother/father figure. S/he made up a story and sold it to her/his teacher and to child protective services. But it should be clear that s/he made this story up. S/he said so her/himself when s/he told Mrs. Brown that s/he had lied because s/he was angry with Lauren/Brandon. Don't take the inconsistent claims of an emotionally disturbed child over those of a respected member of your community. Find Lauren Jones/Brandon Williams innocent of the charges against her/him and end her/his nightmare.

Instructions to the Jurors

Judge John Roberts charged the jurors with the following instructions: "You will find the defendant guilty on one count of felonious child physical abuse under this instruction if, and only if, you believe from the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt all of the following: That in this county on August 12th, 2017, before the finding of the indictment herein, the defendant intentionally or knowingly caused bodily injury to a child by burning Alexis/Alex Jones, a child under 17 years of age.

Trial Summary
THE STATE OF TEXAS, Plaintiff
v.
NICOLE/ANTHONY SMITH/JOHNSON, Defendant
No. 18-CR-5012

The following is an unofficial summary from a sexual assault trial involving a minor, Jennifer/Jordan Smith, and Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson. The alleged assault occurred at the complainant's home on the evening of August 12th, 2017.

TX Penal Code, § 21.11, (a)(1) indecency with a child by sexual contact under the age of 17.

The grand jury charges: On August 12th, 2017, in Harris County, Texas, the above-named defendant committed indecency with a child by fondling Jennifer/Jordan Smith, a child under the age of 17 for his/her own sexual gratification.

The prosecution alleged that Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson fondled Jennifer/Jordan Smith in her/his bedroom on August 12th, 2017 at some point after 9:00PM. At the time of the alleged sexual abuse, Jennifer/Jordan was 8 years old and Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson was 40 years old. The state is charging Mrs. Nicole Smith/Mr. Anthony Johnson with one count of child sexual abuse in violation of TX Penal Code § 21.11. The prosecution will call two witnesses: Mrs. Sophia Wilson (social worker) and Jennifer/Jordan Smith.

Mrs. Nicole Smith/Mr. Anthony Johnson pled “not guilty” to the charge of committing Indecency with a child by sexual contact. The defense attorney will argue that Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson is a law-abiding citizen, who cares for her/his stepdaughter/son, Jennifer/Jordan Smith, and that the charge of sexual abuse is untrue. The defense will argue that Jennifer/Jordan Smith lied about being abused because s/he was angry with Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson. The defense will call two witnesses: Ethan Smith/Kayla Johnson (Mrs. Smith's/Mr. Johnson's husband/wife and Jennifer's/Jordan's father/mother), and Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson.

The medical evidence for the case was inconclusive, so it will not be presented in this summary.

Prosecution's Case:

Witness Number 1: Mrs. Sophia Wilson

Direct Examination:

Mrs. Wilson testified about her interview with Jennifer/Jordan on August 15th, 2017. Jennifer/Jordan told Mrs. Wilson that her stepmother/father (Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson) touched her/him inside of her/his underpants. Mrs. Wilson described how Jennifer's/Jordan's father/mother (Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson) was enraged but did not believe Jennifer/Jordan. Jennifer's/Jordan's father/mother refused to let Jennifer/Jordan come home unless s/he told "the truth". Mrs. Wilson placed Jennifer/Jordan with her/his maternal/paternal grandmother until Jennifer's/Jordan's accusations were confirmed or dismissed. Mrs. Wilson testified that on September 20th, 2017, Jennifer's/Jordan's family member told her that Jennifer/Jordan had "changed his/her story". Mrs. Wilson met with Jennifer/Jordan who said s/he "made it all up" because s/he "was mad at Nicole/Anthony" for not letting her/him go to her/his friend's house. Mrs. Wilson notified the police and prosecutor that Jennifer/Jordan withdrew her allegation. Jennifer's/Jordan's grandmother called Mrs. Wilson the following day and asked her to return. On September 21st, 2017, Jennifer/Jordan told Mrs. Wilson that Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson actually did "touch" her/him as s/he originally claimed. Jennifer/Jordan said s/he missed her father/mother and wanted to go home so badly that s/he tried to "take it all back".

Cross Examination:

Mrs. Wilson acknowledged that placing Jennifer/Jordan with her/his grandmother did not mean that she "had made up her mind" about Jennifer's/Jordan's accusations. She said she always removes a child from their home when a parent reacted to abuse allegations the way Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson had. Mrs. Wilson denied pressuring Jennifer/Jordan to reaffirm her/his allegations when Jennifer/Jordan recanted.

Witness Number 2: Jennifer/Jordan Smith

Direct Examination:

Jennifer/Jordan Smith is a 10-year-old girl/boy. S/he was 8-years old at the time of the alleged abuse. S/he testified that on the evening of August 12th, 2017, s/he awoke in her/his bed to find her/his stepmother/father "touching" her/him and feeling "inside of her/his underwear". S/he said Nicole/Anthony stopped when s/he saw how uncomfortable s/he was. Jennifer/Jordan said Nicole/Anthony told her/him it was alright and made her/him promise to not tell anyone about what happened or else s/he will get them both into trouble. Jennifer/Jordan decided to tell her father/mother because s/he was afraid that Nicole/Anthony would come into her/his room again while s/he was sleeping. S/he told her/his father/mother three days later on the way to school. Her/his father/mother "got super mad" and did not believe her/him. Jennifer/Jordan said that s/he told her/his teacher

later that day when s/he realized that her/his father/mother would tell Nicole/Anthony that s/he "had told". Jennifer/Jordan stated that the teacher did not ask her/him about what Nicole/Anthony [Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson] did but called the police who sent Mrs. Wilson to talk with Jennifer/Jordan. Jennifer/Jordan said that s/he told Mrs. Wilson what Nicole/Anthony had done, and Mrs. Wilson called her/his father/mother at work. Jennifer/Jordan testified that her/his father/mother called her/him a "little liar" and that he/she "wouldn't let me [Jennifer/Jordan] come home until I told the truth". Jennifer/Jordan stated that s/he was sent to live with her/his grandmother. S/he testified that s/he later told Mrs. Wilson that s/he had lied about the "touching" but explained that s/he tried to "take it all back" because s/he "really missed Dad/Mom and wanted to go home". Jennifer/Jordan and her/his grandmother called her/his father/mother to tell him/her that Jennifer/Jordan had "taken it back." Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson put Nicole/Anthony on the phone. Jennifer/Jordan stated this made her/him too scared to go back home so s/he called Mrs. Wilson the next day to "tell the truth again about what s/he [Nicole/Anthony] did."

Cross Examination:

Jennifer/Jordan stated that s/he waited to tell because s/he was afraid that her/his father/mother would get angry. Jennifer/Jordan acknowledged that the night before s/he told her/his father/mother what happened, s/he and Nicole/Anthony had argued. S/he told Nicole/Anthony s/he hated her/him and wished s/he would "go away forever." S/he denied that s/he had "made up a story" about Nicole/Anthony out of anger. Jennifer/Jordan repeated that s/he was "telling the truth now" about what Nicole/Anthony had done to her/him. Jennifer/Jordan said that s/he changed her/his story because s/he missed her/his father/mother and wanted to go home.

Prosecution's re-direct examination:

The prosecutor asked Jennifer/Jordan to describe what it was like living at her/his grandmother's house. Jennifer/Jordan stated that s/he loved her/his grandmother, but that s/he did not like living there. Jennifer/Jordan explained that her/his grandmother lived "far away", so s/he had to attend a new school. The kids did not like Jennifer/Jordan at this school and s/he had not been able to play with any of her/his old friends since s/he went to her/his grandmother's. S/he stated that the hardest part of living at her/his grandmother's house was that s/he really missed her/his father/mother. Jennifer/Jordan testified that her/his father/mother refused to talk to her/him or visit her/him until s/he "took it [her/his allegations] all back." Jennifer/Jordan had thought that her/his father/mother would love her/him again and take her/him home if s/he pretended that Nicole/Anthony had never touched her/him.

Re-cross examination:

Jennifer/Jordan repeated that s/he was telling the truth about what Nicole/Anthony had done. S/he did expect people to believe her/him even if her/his father/mother did not.

Defendant's Case

Witness Number 1: Mr. Ethan Smith/Mrs. Kayla Johnson

Direct Examination:

Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson testified that he/she married Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson two years after the death of his/her first wife/husband, Jennifer's/Jordan's mother/father. He/she said Jennifer/Jordan had a difficult time accepting Nicole/Anthony as "her/his new mother/father" and that Jennifer/Jordan and Nicole/Anthony argued frequently as s/he resisted her/his attempts to parent her/him. Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson said that Jennifer/Jordan and Nicole/Anthony had argued the night before Jennifer/Jordan "lied to everyone about Nicole/Anthony". He/she described how Jennifer/Jordan had "looked at Nicole/Anthony with such hate in her/his eyes". Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson believed Nicole/Anthony was "incapable" of abusing Jennifer/Jordan. He/she said he/she was shocked and hurt by his/her daughter's/son's accusations. He/she testified that he/she would have known if someone had been abusing his/her child, especially if it had been Nicole/Anthony.

Cross Examination:

Mr. Smith/Mrs. Johnson acknowledged that he/she had severe insomnia. He/she took heavy sedatives in order to sleep and was difficult to rouse as a result. H/she would probably not have known if Nicole/Anthony left their bed or heard Jennifer/Jordan if s/he had cried out in the night.

Witness Number 2: Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson

Direct Examination:

Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson stated that s/he regularly volunteers at the local animal shelter, is an active member in a faith-based organization, and that s/he works as an accountant. S/He described her/himself as an upstanding member of her/his community. Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson stated that becoming Ethan's wife/Kayla's husband was "the best thing that ever happened to me [Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson]." S/He firmly denied ever having any sexual contact with a child. S/He said s/he "never laid a finger" on Jennifer/Jordan. Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson stated that s/he cared deeply for Jennifer/Jordan. S/He testified that Jennifer/Jordan is a troubled child who "hasn't gotten over her/his mother's/father's death." Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson stated that Jennifer's/Jordan's anger over her/his role as a "new mother/father figure" was understandable, but her/his accusations and the charges against her/him were false and extremely upsetting.

Cross Examination:

Mrs. Smith/Mr. Johnson acknowledged that s/he had been angry at Jennifer's/Jordan's rejection. S/He had hoped Jennifer/Jordan would accept her/him. S/He acknowledged that s/he had entered Jennifer's/Jordan's bedroom on numerous occasions but denied touching her/him in a sexual manner.

Closing argument by prosecution:

Jennifer/Jordan Smith was sexually abused by a wo/man who s/he should have been able to trust. S/he was traumatized by the sexual abuse, and further traumatized by her/his father's/mother's cruel disbelief. The removal from her/his home, from her/his family and from her/his friends, has been almost too much for this child to bear, and s/he deserves closure. Please assist her/him in her/his healing and restore her/his trust in the world. Find Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson guilty of sexually abusing Jennifer/Jordan Smith and give her/him the justice s/he deserves.

Closing arguments by defense:

Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson has been falsely accused of heinous acts by a troubled young girl/boy. S/he is angry over her/his mother's/father's death and resents Mrs. Smith's/Mr. Johnson's attempt to be a new mother/father figure. S/he made up a story and sold it to her/his teacher and to child protective services. But it should be clear that s/he made this story up. S/he said so her/himself when s/he told Mrs. Wilson that s/he had lied because s/he was angry with Nicole/Anthony. Don't take the inconsistent claims of an emotionally disturbed child over those of a respected member of your community. Find Nicole Smith/Anthony Johnson innocent of the charges against her/him and end her/his nightmare.

Instructions to the Jurors

Judge John Roberts charged the jurors with the following instructions: "You will find the defendant guilty on one count of felonious child sexual abuse under this instruction if, and only if, you believe from the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt all of the following: That in this county on August 12th, 2017, before the finding of the indictment herein, the defendant engaged in indecency with a child by fondling Jennifer/Jordan Smith, a child under 17 years of age.

APPENDIX B

Manipulation and Comprehension Checks

Manipulation Checks

1. What type of abuse occurred in the story?
 - a. Physical abuse
 - b. Sexual abuse
 - c. Emotional/psychological abuse
 - d. Neglect
2. What gender was the child complainant?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What gender was the defendant?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

Comprehension Checks

1. Who allegedly sexually/physically abused *Child's Name* in the story?
 - a. Her/his father/mother
 - b. Her/his stepfather/stepmother
 - c. Her/his grandmother
 - d. The teacher
2. Where did the alleged sexual/physical abuse occur?
 - a. At school
 - b. At her/his grandmother's house
 - c. At home
 - d. At her/his friend's house
3. Who did *Child's Name* first tell about the alleged sexual/physical abuse?
 - a. A police officer
 - b. A teacher
 - c. Her/his grandmother
 - d. Her/his father/mother

VITA

CAITLIN H. LEFEBVRE

Department of Psychology and Philosophy
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, TX 77341

EDUCATION

- Present** **Doctor of Philosophy Candidate, Clinical Psychology**
Sam Houston State University – Huntsville, TX
Advisor: Hillary Langley, Ph.D.
- 2016** **Bachelor of Science, Psychology**
Texas A&M University – College Station, TX
- 2014** **Associate of Arts, Psychology**
Collin College – Collin County, TX

BOOK CHAPTERS

Langley, H. A., Barksdale, S., Barnes, B., **Child, C.**, Ramos, M., & Roberts, M. (2020). Normal Development. Chapter in forthcoming book edited by Venta, A., Sharp, C., Fonagy, P., & Fletcher, J., *Developmental Psychopathology*. Wiley Publishing.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Child, C., Rutherford, A., Rancher, C., Kolkman, R., Lara, R., Smoot, D., & Jouriles, E. N. (2018, July). *Using virtual reality to measure awareness of potential child abuse*. Poster presented at the International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conference, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

August 2018 – Present **Graduate Research Assistant**
GROWTH (Gratitude, Resilience, Overall Wellbeing after Trauma & Hardship) Lab
Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX.
Supervisor: Hillary Langley, Ph.D.

- Responsibilities:*
- Assist in recruiting participants, running focus groups, and collecting and compiling data pertinent to studying gratitude and prosocial behaviors in children and parents.

**August 2016 –
July 2018**

Research Assistant and Lab Manager

Family Research Center

Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX

Supervisor: Ernest Jouriles, Ph.D.

- Responsibilities:*
- Facilitated data collection for multiple ongoing studies related to family violence, family functioning, an evidence-based parenting intervention, and the recognizing and reporting of child abuse.
 - Administered psychological assessments to at-risk mothers and children, recruited from the Dallas Community, including domestic violence shelters and community agencies.
 - Developed and administered Virtual Reality simulations used in multiple psychological studies.
 - Coded audio tape data and managed large datasets
 - Organized intervention materials and evaluation materials.
 - Contacted participants on a weekly basis through phone and email to improve retention.
 - Reviewed and edited in-text citations and reference section of multiple manuscripts.
 - Conducted systematic literature searches for the development of new research projects.
 - Wrote protocol manuals, created codebooks, randomization procedure, and data tracking.
 - Assisted with writing IRB proposals and amendments.
 - Attended weekly research team meetings.

**January 2015 –
May 2016**

Research Assistant and Lab Scribe

Brain and Gender Research Laboratory

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

Supervisor: Gerianne Alexander, Ph.D.

- Responsibilities:*
- Facilitated data collection for various psychological studies related to impulsivity, gender differences, actigraphy, and sleep behaviors.
 - Guided participants through self-report assessments and other various measures.
 - Used ASL Eye Trac 6 to administer eye-tracking experiments to participants in a laboratory setting.
 - Recorded, coded, and cleaned study data.
 - Reviewed and investigated new and relevant psychological research.
 - Attended weekly lab meetings, emailed lab team weekly updates, and various other lab tasks.