The Influence of Victim and Defendant Gender on Juror Decisions in a Child Sexual Abuse Trial

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ABSTRACT
This research examined mock juror decisions in a child sexual abuse trial in which the gender of the victim and defendant were varied.

INTRODUCTION
- Existing research has shown that juror gender interacts with defendant and victim gender in child sexual abuse cases.
- Specifically, researchers have shown that male mock jurors are more lenient toward female defendants accused of abusing a male child (Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, and Nyssse-Carris, 2002). However, their research used a child abuse case in which the victim was 15 years old.
- Other research shows that the age of the child victim in an abuse case impacts juror perceptions of the believability of the victim (Holcomb & Jacquin, 2007).
- Therefore, we conducted research to replicate the results of Quas et al. (2002) with a younger abuse victim (i.e., 6 years old).

METHOD: PARTICIPANTS
- N = 1,356
- Age: M = 19.4, SD = 2.8, range = 18 to 51
- 66% Caucasian/European-American, 30% African-American
- Gender: 62% female, 38% male

METHOD: PROCEDURE
- Mock jurors were randomly assigned to read one of four trial summaries (these summaries were the same with the exception of victim and defendant gender)
- Mock jurors made individual verdict ratings (on a 4-point scale).

RESULTS
- The hypotheses were tested using ANOVA with victim gender, defendant gender, and mock juror gender as the IVs and juror verdict ratings as the DVs.
- There was a significant main effect for defendant gender, $F(1, 1333) = 4.14, p = .04$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$.
- Specifically, jurors rated male defendants as significantly guiltier than female defendants (see Figure 1).
- A significant main effect was also found for mock juror gender, $F(1, 1333) = 7.87, p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$.
- Specifically, female jurors rated the defendant guiltier than did male jurors (see Figure 2).
- There was no main effect for victim gender, $F(1, 1333) < 1, p = .86$, but there was a significant interaction between victim gender and defendant gender, $F(1, 1333) = 5.83, p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$.

DISCUSSION
- The results have implications for how jurors are likely to view defendants in a child sexual abuse case.
- Additional research is needed to determine methods for presenting evidence that reduces bias based on extralegal factors such as defendant gender.

SELECTED REFERENCES