

COGNITIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

EFFECT OF MOCK JUROR GENDER ON THE JUDGMENT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Abstract

Sexual violence is a major public health issue today, especially when it involves children, for whom the consequences on development are major. This study is inspired by Pettalia et al.'s (2017) work, as it examines the influence of the juror's gender on the assessment of the defendant's guilt and the testimony of a minor who has been the victim of sexual violence. It extends that study by analyzing the effect of the victim's age, and the type of sexual assault (Sexual Assault involving Touching – CSAT or Sexual Assault involving Penetration) on the judgment. Participants were 388 students (121 men, 267 women; $M = 20.54$, $SD = 1.87$) at a French University. They read a fictional account of a child abuse case, involving a young girl who is questioned by the police about the abuse she has been victim of. She describes what her aggressor (her 44-year-old stepfather) did to her while her mother was out working. The accusation involved either CSAT or CSAP, not punished the same way under the French Penal Code. Participants then completed a self-report questionnaire about the seriousness of the act, the guilt of the defendant, and the plausibility of the victim's testimony. In line with previous studies, results showed that sexual assault involving penetration was considered more severe than touching and to have more repercussions on the victim's development. The victim's age also influenced the participants' assessment, particularly regarding her honesty and the gravity of the act; adolescents were considered more reliable than children. However, this study revealed differences arising from the juror's gender; women were more likely than men to assess the defendant negatively and were generally more pro-victim. The major finding is the difference between men and women in relation to the type of abuse; women tended to differentiate less between the two types of abuse than men in terms of seriousness of the act and the honesty of the victim. In terms of application, these findings may be interesting for prosecutors, raising their awareness of the potential biases and attitudes of jurors, and enabling them to limit the effect of judgment bias in these cases that have major consequences on young victims.

Keywords: *Child abuse case, mock juror's assessment, judgment, sexual abuse, type of abuse.*

THE FRAGILITY OF REMEMBERING – DATA FROM CLINICAL CASES

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Abstract

False memories, memory distortions, confabulations, and other forms of memory aberrations and deficits occur in everyday life and – more frequently – in neurological and psychiatric patients. We studied such changes of memories in 42 patients with alcoholic Korsakoff's syndrome, 18 with clipped or ruptured aneurysms of the anterior communicating artery [ACoA], 41 with a diagnosis of dissociative amnesia, and 52 healthy control individuals. All three patient groups had severe memory deficits. The neurological patients had deficits both with respect to acquiring new semantic and episodic memories, while the psychiatric patients were unable to retrieve episodic memories only. Both the neurological and the

psychiatric patients had major problems in retrieving old episodic memories. However, the groups differed in that way, that the neurological patients tried to compensate their deficits by showing numerous confabulations (especially patients from the Korsakoff's group), while the group with ruptures and repairs of their ACoAs showed a considerably tendency towards producing false memories. The psychiatric patients, on the hand, demonstrated a total lack of retrieving episodic memories from their past and showed no efforts to invent or generate alternative memories. It is concluded that especially the prefrontal cortex (frontal lobes) and its associated structures (mediodorsal thalamus, which is regularly degenerated in patients with Korsakoff's syndrome) are relevant in controlling proper and accurate retrieval of information. This statement also seems to be confirmed from functional imaging results in patients with dissociative amnesia who show a reduced prefrontal metabolism. For normal individuals, states which reduce alertness (e.g., fatigue, sleep deprivation) and consequently dampen prefrontal control functions, similarly can lead to a heightened degree of fragile memory retrieval.

Keywords: *Anterior communicating artery rupture, Korsakoff's syndrome, dissociative amnesia, prefrontal cortex, false memory.*
