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Abstract

Poster

Major: Forensic Psychology

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The Effect of Race & Emotionality on Juror Perceptions of Child Witness Credibility in Sexual Abuse Cases

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The present study attempts to establish an unexplored relationship between race and emotional behavior as it would affect juror perceptions. Prior studies show jurors may adhere to the Jezebel stereotype, a bias where individuals believe that Black women and girls are more to blame for their sexual abuse due to inherent promiscuity (e.g., Alley et al., 2019). Prior research also shows jurors are uneducated about the emotional behavior of child sexual abuse (CSA) victims, resulting in using personal beliefs to make verdicts (e.g., McGuire & London, 2017). The current study hypothesizes 1) regardless of emotional display, participants will view the child of their matching race, or similar race, as more credible, and 2) participants will view a sad child of their own race, or similar race, as more credible than a child displaying anger or neutral expression.

Participants (N = 222) read one of six fictional trial testimonies regarding a case of CSA, separated by the child's race (Black or White) & emotional behavior (sad, neutral/calm, anger) during direct and cross-examination. Participants then completed 1) a demographic questionnaire, 2) a two-item guilt measurement where participants delivered a verdict and rated their confidence in the verdict, 3) a seven-item credibility scale where participants rated the child's believability, credibility, accuracy, and likeability on a 7-point scale, and 4) an 18-item "Prior Beliefs Questionnaire," which had questions regarding adherence to the Jezebel stereotype and beliefs regarding emotional behavior CSA cases.

Data analysis is currently in progress.