

Effects of Victim and Defendant Race on Jurors' Decisions in Child Sexual Abuse Cases¹

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We examined the influence of victim and defendant race, victim age, juror gender, and juror prejudice on jurors' decisions in child sexual abuse cases. In Experiments 1 and 2, mock jurors judged Black and Hispanic child victims to be more responsible for their sexual abuse than White victims. In Experiment 2, jurors assigned more guilt to defendants in cases involving victims and perpetrators of the same race compared to different races. Experiment 3 illustrated that laypeople believe same-race cases to be more plausible generally. Experiment 2 revealed that high-prejudiced White mock jurors made no more racially biased judgments than low-prejudiced mock jurors. Finally, women were generally more pro-victim in their case judgments than were men, and older victims were disadvantaged compared to younger victims in terms of perceived credibility and responsibility, and their cases were less likely to draw convictions.

Many child sexual abuse cases are investigated and tried in United States courts (Mannarino & Cohen, 1986; Tzeng & Schwarzin, 1990). The task facing jurors in these cases is a particularly difficult one. Physical evidence and corroborating witnesses are often unavailable, so jurors must sometimes base their decisions largely on the testimony of alleged victims (Myers, 1997, 1998). Thus, it is important to understand how jurors respond to child witnesses. A small but growing body of research on this topic has illustrated that jurors' perceptions and case decisions are influenced not only by case evidence, but also by extralegal factors, such as juror gender and pretrial attitudes (e.g., Bottoms, 1993; Gabora, Spanos, & Joab, 1991), and by victim characteristics, such as age and gender (e.g.,

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Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Nightingale, 1993; Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, & Nysse, 2002; Schmidt & Brigham, 1996). More research on these and other factors is necessary to ensure that prejudicial influences in child sexual abuse cases are identified.

In this paper, we describe three experiments using mock-trial methodology to examine the impact of victim and defendant race on jurors' perceptions of child sexual assault victims and case decisions. We also investigate the effects of victim age, juror gender, and juror prejudice on perceptions and judgments.

Victim Race/Ethnicity

Although relatively little research has examined child sexual abuse rates within minority populations, it appears that Black children are sexually abused as often as are White children (Finkelhor & Baron, 1986; Wyatt, 1985), if not more often (Epstein & Bottoms, 1998; Linholm & Willey, 1986; Tzeng & Schwarzin, 1990), and they might be abused at earlier ages than are White children (Pierce & Pierce, 1984). Children of Hispanic origin are also abused at rates comparable to White children (Epstein & Bottoms, 1998; Linholm & Willey, 1986). Even so, there has been virtually no research on the effect that victim race or ethnicity might have on juror judgments in child sexual abuse cases. In fact, there have been few studies on the effects of race on jurors' decisions in any kind of case (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000).

Victim-based racial biases certainly have been documented in actual legal decisions (for a review, see Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001). For example, defendants accused of murdering White victims are more likely to receive the death penalty than are those accused of murdering Black victims (Baldus, Woodworth, & Pulaski, 1990; Bohm, 1994; Keil & Vito, 1995). Similarly, defendants accused of raping White women are more likely to be found guilty than are those accused of raping Black women (Lafree, Reskin, & Visher, 1985). In day-care sexual abuse cases, people accused of assaulting White girls have been arrested and convicted more often than those accused of assaulting Black girls (Williams & Farrell, 1990).

Why might race or ethnicity play a role in adults' perceptions of a child sexual abuse victim's credibility? How could race affect jurors' verdicts? Theories of stereotyping and prejudice suggest that schemas about out-groups (e.g., minority groups) often include negative information that leads to unfavorable evaluations of and assumptions about out-group members (e.g., Allport, 1958; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987). In the absence of compelling physical evidence, victims' actual and assumed (stereotypical) characteristics might be weighed heavily in jurors' decisions. Although research on prejudice against Hispanic Americans is lacking, some studies have revealed negative stereotypes against this population (Deaux & Ethier, 1998; Wilson, 1996).

Negative stereotypes of Black Americans in our culture are widespread and well documented (e.g., Brigham, 1972; Devine, 1989; Landrine, 1985; Niemann, Jennings, Rozelle, Baxter, & Sullivan, 1994; Weinberg & Williams, 1988; Wyatt, 1982, 1985, 1990). Stereotypes of Blacks include sexual information: beliefs that Blacks are more sexually promiscuous than are Whites (Powell, Wyatt, & Bass, 1983; Weinberg & Williams, 1988; Wyatt, 1982), sexually perverse (Devine, 1989), and more sexually experienced (Wyatt, 1982). Sexual stereotypes also include beliefs about the development of sexuality and sexual experience; namely, that Blacks learn about and engage in premarital sex at early ages (Wyatt, 1982).

Although some comparisons of Blacks' and Whites' sexual behavior do not support these assertions (e.g., Belcastro, 1985), some studies do find that Black individuals, including adolescents, engage in more sexual activity than do Whites (Barone et al., 1996; Muram, Rosenthal, Tolley, Peeler, & Dorko, 1991). Regardless, if jurors generalize stereotypes of promiscuity to all Black children, and not to White children, Black children's claims of abuse might be taken less seriously. Stereotyped beliefs about a Black child victim's sexual desire and experience, specifically that he or she is promiscuous at early ages, might influence jurors' perceptions about the child's involvement in an alleged sexual assault. Even very young Black victims might be perceived by jurors to be knowledgeable about sexuality, and perhaps more likely to have consented to sexual contact, than White victims of the same age.

Modern racism theory supports predictions that race might affect juror decision making. According to modern racism theory, present-day racism is subtler than "old-fashioned racism," which included overt displays of racist behavior and blatant racist attitudes (McConahay, 1986). In today's society, social inhibitions preclude open displays of racism; thus, prejudicial acts occur most often in ambiguous situations, where there are no clear norms or guides for behavior. Child sexual abuse cases are typically ambiguous, with little corroborating evidence. Thus, according to modern racism theory, a child sexual abuse case is precisely the type of situation in which racial prejudice could influence jurors' beliefs and perceptions, and perhaps even guilt judgments. Research examining jurors' perceptions of adult rape cases (another type of case often lacking corroborative evidence) supports these predictions (Nickerson, Mayo, & Smith, 1986). For example, White mock jurors are less likely to sentence defendants accused of assaulting Black victims, compared to White victims (Feild, 1979; Ugwuegbu, 1979), and they sometimes rate Black victims to be less truthful and more responsible for an alleged assault than White victims (Willis, 1992).

In summary, given the widely documented examples of racial and ethnic stereotypes and unfavorable evaluations of minorities in various legally and non-legally relevant situations (e.g., Brigham, 1972; Devine, 1989; Landrine, 1985; Niemann et al., 1994; Weinberg & Williams, 1988; Wilson, 1996; Wyatt, 1982,

1985, 1990), there is good reason to predict racial biases in cases involving children's testimony about abuse. Jurors in courtroom cases might not take sexual abuse reports made by minority children seriously. Jurors might view minority victims as being sexually precocious and therefore more responsible for their abuse than White children. In turn, this could lead jurors to distrust the credibility of minority victims and perhaps render fewer guilty verdicts in cases involving minority victims, as opposed to White victims.

We varied victim race in Experiments 1 and 2, predicting that minority children would be blamed more for their abuse than would White victims. We included several measures of jurors' perceptions and decisions (guilt, confidence in guilt, victim and defendant responsibility, and victim and defendant credibility). We were particularly interested in the effects of child race on jurors' perceptions of responsibility for abuse. If jurors blame minority child victims more for their abuse than White victims, then an important racial bias would be documented; one that could affect case outcomes.

Defendant Race

Defendant race might also play a role in child sexual abuse case decisions. In a variety of legal decision-making tasks, mock jurors have been found to favor White defendants, relative to Black defendants (e.g., Sweeney & Haney, 1992). Other studies, however, have found no such racial discrimination (for reviews, see Mazzella & Feingold, 1994; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001). Further, in mostly White jurisdictions, the death penalty is disproportionately administered to Black defendants (Baldus et al., 1990; Bohm, 1994). Although the results are mixed, some mock-juror studies have reported that Black defendants accused of rape are found guilty more often and are given longer sentences than are White defendants (Feild, 1979; Klein & Kreech, 1982; Ugwuegbu, 1979).

As discussed, such biased decisions might be driven by stereotypes. Blacks are perceived to be more promiscuous than Whites, and such perceptions could lead to negative biases against Black defendants accused of sexual abuse, just as the same stereotype might lead to negative perceptions of Black victims who allege sexual abuse. Further, stereotypes about Blacks include the belief that Blacks are hostile and criminal-like (e.g., Devine, 1989), perceptions that might increase the likelihood that a Black defendant will be perceived to be guilty of an assault. Thus, we reason that White jurors will be particularly likely to believe that Black defendants are guilty of child sexual assault.

We also recognize the importance of examining defendant and victim race simultaneously. Homicides involving Black defendants and White victims are the most likely to be "upgraded" (i.e., classified as more serious felonies; Radelet & Pierce, 1985). Further, Howard (1975) and Hagen (1974) reported that the largest proportion of death sentences in rape cases were imposed when a Black

defendant was accused of raping a White woman. Research investigating racial discrimination in mock rape cases has found a somewhat similar pattern of victim race by defendant race interactions (Feild, 1979; Klein & Kreech, 1982; Pfeifer & Ogloff, 1991; Ugwuegbu, 1979). Likewise, in cases of child sexual abuse, Whites might perceive assaults committed by Black defendants against White victims as particularly outraging and punishable.

We know of only one study in which the race of both a child sexual assault victim and a defendant were manipulated (Foley & Chamblin, 1982). Black and White mock jurors heard an audiotaped description of a trial in which a Black man or a White man was accused of sexual battery on an 11-year-old Black child or White child. Victim and defendant race interacted to influence guilt judgments, but the nature of the interaction depended on the juror's race. White jurors assigned higher guilt ratings to a Black defendant accused of assaulting a White child than to defendants in the other three conditions (i.e., Black defendant/Black victim, White defendant/Black victim, and White defendant/White victim). Black jurors assigned higher guilt ratings when the defendant's race matched the victim's, regardless of the specific defendant-victim race combination. All race effects, however, were eliminated when mock jurors' perceptions of victims' and defendants' socioeconomic status (SES) were controlled statistically.

In Experiment 1, our main concern was to examine the effects associated with victim race, thus we held defendant race (White) constant. In Experiment 2, we systematically manipulated both victim race and defendant race. We described the defendant as a teacher in all scenarios to control for participants' perceptions of the defendant's SES. We predicted that Black defendants would be at a disadvantage relative to White defendants, and that victim and defendant race would interact to affect jurors' decisions. Specifically, we predicted that Black defendants accused of sexually assaulting White victims would be judged guilty more often than other defendants.

Juror Prejudice

We were also interested in the effects of individual differences in White jurors' racial prejudice on their case judgments. We chose to examine White jurors because (a) White jurors are overrepresented on juries (Fukurai, Butler, & Krooth, 1993); (b) historically, more harm has resulted in the legal system from White juror prejudice than from minority prejudice against Whites (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001); and (c) measures of racial prejudice currently exist only for White samples. As described earlier, modern racism is theorized to be a new form of expression for racism, but also has been conceptualized and operationalized as an individual-difference factor measured by the Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986). That is, Whites have been found to differ in their levels of

modern prejudicial attitudes. Scores on the Modern Racism scale are predictive of racially biased judgments in legal and nonlegal domains (Biernat & Vescio, 1993; Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; McConahay, 1983, 1986; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). There has been no research examining the relationship between modern racism and judgments in child abuse cases involving minority victims or defendants. In Experiment 2, we measured the prejudice levels of White jurors with the Modern Racism scale. We hypothesized that prejudiced jurors would be more likely to make racially biased decisions than would nonprejudiced jurors.

Juror Gender

Previous research has revealed that juror gender affects perceptions and decisions in child sexual assault cases, just as it affects perceptions and decisions in adult rape cases (e.g., Borgida & Brekke, 1985). On average, women make more pro-victim case decisions than do men in terms of credibility, responsibility, or guilt judgments (Bottoms, 1993; Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Duggan et al., 1989; Golding, Sanchez, & Sego, 1999; Golding, Sego, Sanchez, & Hasemann, 1995; Isquith, Levine, & Scheiner, 1993; Quas et al., 2002; Schmidt & Brigham, 1996; Swim, Borgida, & McCoy, 1993; for a review, see Schutte & Hosch, 1997). Differences in men's and women's attitudes toward children's believability and honesty, attitudes toward adult-child sexuality, and level of child victim empathy can partially explain these gender differences (Bottoms, 1993). In the present research, we also examined the effects of juror gender, predicting that gender differences would replicate and generalize across cases involving victims of different ages and racial groups.

Victim Age

Research has revealed that victim age affects jurors' perceptions and judgments in child sexual abuse cases (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Duggan et al., 1989; Gabora et al., 1991; Goodman, Bottoms, Herscovici, & Shaver, 1989; Isquith et al., 1993; Leippe & Romanczyk, 1989; Nightingale, 1993). Compared to older children, younger children are thought to be less cognitively competent, but more honest and sexually naïve, thus less able to fabricate false allegations of sexual abuse and less likely to encourage and consent to sexual encounters (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Brigham & Spier, 1992; Duggan et al., 1989; Goodman et al., 1989). Research has suggested that the age at which jurors begin to perceive children as losing their sexual naïveté is approximately 12 or 13 years. For example, the median estimated age at which mock jurors in a study by Bottoms and Goodman (1994) thought a child was capable of making up sexual abuse allegations was 13 years ($M = 12$ years), similar to estimates given by

participants in Scheiner's (1988) study. In these mock juror studies, differences in case perceptions and judgments emerged when comparisons were made between victims aged as young as 6 years and victims 14 years and older (e.g., Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Nightingale, 1993). Bottoms and Goodman found differences in judgments when the victim was portrayed as 11 versus 14 years old, but to our knowledge, no researchers have yet pinpointed more specifically the exact age at which case perceptions shift. For example, it is unknown whether victims aged 12 years would still be considered naïve and therefore credible.

In our work, we were most interested in the credibility of adolescent sexual abuse victims because their credibility suffers more than does that of younger victims. We also were interested in identifying the upper age at which children will still be perceived as naïve and credible. In Experiment 1, we examined jurors' reactions to a 12-year-old or a 16-year-old child victim. We predicted that an older adolescent (16 years old) would be held more responsible for abuse and less credible than a younger child (12 years old). We expected to find significant main effects of victim race/ethnicity, such that minority victims (Black and Hispanic) would be at a disadvantage relative to White victims in terms of jurors' perceptions and judgments. Interactions between victim age and victim race were of particular interest: If stereotypes regarding minority groups differ with regard to the age at which promiscuity defines an adolescent's sexuality, minority children might be held accountable for adult sexual contact at an earlier age than White children. In Experiment 2, we focused on other variables and kept age constant at 12 years.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 was conducted to explore the effects of victim race, victim age, and juror gender on jurors' judgments in a child sexual assault case. It conformed to a $3 \times 2 \times 2$ (Victim Race: White, Black, or Hispanic \times Victim Age: 12 or 16 Years Old \times Juror Gender) between-subjects design. Consistent with previous research, we predicted that women would make more pro-victim judgments than would men. We also predicted that jurors would make more pro-victim judgments (a) when the victim was 12 years old, as compared to 16 years old; and (b) when the victim was White, as compared to Black or Hispanic.

Method

Participants

Participants were 241 Introductory Psychology students (111 men, 130 women) who each received course credit. The sample was ethnically diverse (45% White, 15% Black, 21% Hispanic, 19% Asian or "Other") and jury

eligible; that is, they were at least 18 years old ($M = 19$, $Mdn = 18$) and were United States citizens.³

Materials

Case scenario. A one-page scenario described a child sexual assault case. Previous research has revealed that this case is ambiguous, with approximately a 50% defendant conviction rate without defendant and victim race specified (Bottoms, 1993). In the case, a 12-year-old girl claims to have been sexually assaulted by her 28-year-old male teacher. Specifically, she alleges that her teacher had often driven her home from school, and that during these rides he had taken her to his apartment where he forced her to perform oral sex acts (in her own words). There were six different versions of this basic scenario to accommodate factorial variations of victim race and victim age. The defendant was always portrayed as White. The victims' and defendant's names were ethnically plausible (as revealed by pilot testing). Specifically, the defendant was named "Don Reed." The White, Black, and Hispanic victims were named "Jessica Kelly," "Tonya Jones," and "Maria Gonzalez," respectively.

Dependent measures. Separate rating scales measured participants' judgments of the defendant's guilt (dichotomous guilt judgment) and their confidence-in-guilt judgment on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all confident*) to 3 (*very confident*). The combination of these ratings resulted in a more sensitive, 6-point degree-of-guilt scale ranging from 1 (*not guilty, very confident*) to 6 (*guilty, very confident*). Separate 6-point scales also assessed the victim's and defendant's credibility, ranging from 1 (*not at all believable*) to 6 (*extremely believable*). To measure jurors' perceptions of the victim's responsibility for the alleged sexual contact, jurors were asked, "If you believe that sexual contact between [the victim] and Don Reed occurred, how responsible do you think [the victim] was for the contact?" Answers ranged from 1 (*not at all responsible*) to 6 (*extremely responsible*). Perceptions of the defendants' responsibility were assessed similarly.

Demographic questionnaire. Several questions assessed information about participants' basic demographic characteristics: age, citizenship status, ethnicity, and gender.

Procedure

A proportionately equal number of men and women were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions. In non-interacting, mixed-gender, and

³An additional 26 participants, who were equally distributed across conditions, failed manipulation checks and were dropped from all analyses. Specifically, 21 participants incorrectly recalled the child victim's age, 3 incorrectly recalled the defendant's race, and 2 incorrectly recalled the victim's race.

mixed-condition groups of approximately 10 to 20, participants individually read the case scenario and completed the rating scales at their own pace. Participants did not expect to deliberate about the case.

Results

We present the results of (a) logistic regression analyses considering dichotomous guilt judgments; (b) separate $2 \times 3 \times 2$ (Victim Age \times Victim Race \times Juror Gender) ANOVAs considering degree of guilt, credibility, and responsibility judgments; (c) regression analyses examining the ability of credibility and responsibility judgments to predict guilt judgments; and (d) post hoc examinations of effects of juror-victim racial similarity.

Guilt Judgments

A logistic regression analysis was conducted on dichotomous guilt judgments with juror gender, victim age, victim race, and all interaction terms entered into the model. Victim age was a significant predictor of guilt judgments, goodness of fit index (GFI) overall model ($df = 225$) = 236.98, $p = .28$. (See Table 1 for all means.) A higher percentage of jurors voted guilty when the victim was 12 years old (78%) than when she was 16 years old (64%). This effect, however, was qualified by a significant juror gender by victim age interaction, indicating that men, but not women, were affected by victim age. Specifically, cases involving a 16-year-old girl drew fewer guilt verdicts from men (51%) than did cases involving a 12-year-old girl (79%), but the percentage of women voting guilty in these two cases was similar (75% and 77%, respectively). Contrary to our expectations, there was no significant difference in the percentage of guilty verdicts rendered in cases involving a White (73%), Black (76%), and Hispanic (62%) victim (Wald = 4.38, $p = .11$). There were no other significant effects (all Walds ≤ 3.07 , $ps \geq .08$).

Degree-of-guilt judgments were entered into a $2 \times 3 \times 2$ (Victim Age \times Victim Race \times Juror Gender) ANOVA. As predicted, men assigned a lower degree of guilt to the defendant ($M = 4.07$) than did women ($M = 4.70$), $F(1, 225) = 7.94$, $p < .01$. However, this main effect was qualified by a significant Juror Gender \times Victim Age interaction, $F(1, 225) = 4.98$, $p < .05$ (Table 1). Simple effects analyses revealed that men assigned a lower degree of guilt to the defendant when the victim was 16 years old ($M = 3.63$) than when she was 12 years old ($M = 4.56$), $F(1, 107) = 7.47$, $p < .01$. Women's degree-of-guilt judgments were similar whether the victim was 16 years old ($M = 4.72$) or 12 years old ($M = 4.67$). Further, men's ($M = 3.63$) and women's ($M = 4.72$) judgments differed when the victim was 16 years old, $F(1, 119) = 11.39$, $p < .001$; but not when she was 12 years old ($Ms = 4.56$ and 4.67, respectively). There was also a significant main

Table 1

Summary of Mean Case Judgments as a Function of Juror Gender, Victim Race, and Victim Age: Experiment 1

Judgment type	Victim race					
	White		Black		Hispanic	
	12 years	16 years	12 years	16 years	12 years	16 years
Guilt ^{ab} (<i>n</i> = 237)						
Men	84%	53%	76%	55%	75%	44%
Women	73%	81%	86%	86%	71%	59%
Degree of guilt ^{cd} (<i>n</i> = 237)						
Men	4.79	3.74	4.47	3.65	4.38	3.50
Women	4.64	4.86	5.14	5.10	4.24	4.23
Victim credibility ^{ef} (<i>n</i> = 236)						
Men	4.58	3.50	4.12	4.05	4.56	3.78
Women	4.62	4.15	4.95	4.71	4.38	4.36
Defendant credibility ^{gh} (<i>n</i> = 238)						
Men	1.84	2.55	2.83	2.74	2.06	2.78
Women	2.64	1.90	1.95	2.00	2.48	2.32
Victim responsibility ^{ijk} (<i>n</i> = 224)						
Men	1.72	3.12	2.50	3.12	2.29	3.29
Women	1.48	2.37	1.86	2.90	2.29	2.62
Defendant responsibility (<i>n</i> = 223)						
Men	5.79	5.35	5.13	4.94	5.36	5.71
Women	5.75	5.79	5.81	5.19	5.24	5.14

^aSignificant main effect of victim age, $Wald = 4.55, p < .05$. ^bSignificant Juror Gender \times Victim Age interaction, $Wald = 4.18, p < .05$. ^cSignificant main effect of juror gender, $F(1, 225) = 7.94, p < .01$. ^dSignificant Juror Gender \times Victim Age interaction, $F(1, 225) = 4.98, p < .05$. ^eSignificant main effect of juror gender, $F(1, 224) = 6.68, p < .01$. ^fSignificant main effect of victim age, $F(1, 224) = 7.00, p < .01$. ^gSignificant Juror Gender \times Victim Race interaction, $F(2, 226) = 6.18, p < .01$. ^hSignificant Juror Gender \times Victim Race interaction, $F(2, 226) = 3.69, p < .05$. ⁱSignificant main effect of juror gender, $F(1, 224) = 5.96, p < .05$. ^jSignificant main effect of victim age, $F(1, 212) = 26.27, p < .001$. ^kSignificant main effect of victim race, $F(2, 212) = 2.91, p < .05$.

effect of victim age. Specifically, jurors assigned a higher degree of guilt when the victim was 12 years old ($M = 4.61$) than when she was 16 years old ($M = 4.18$). Again, contrary to expectations, jurors' degree-of-guilt judgments did not differ significantly for the White ($M = 4.52$), Black ($M = 4.61$), or Hispanic ($M = 4.09$) victim, $F(2, 225) = 2.03, ns$.

Credibility Ratings

As predicted, ANOVAs indicated that men rated the victim as significantly less credible ($M = 4.08$) than did women ($M = 4.54$), $F(1, 224) = 6.68, p < .01$ (Table 1). Further, as predicted, the 16-year-old victim was perceived to be significantly less credible ($M = 4.11$) than was the 12-year-old victim ($M = 4.55$), $F(1, 224) = 7.00, p < .01$. Jurors' perceptions of the Black ($M = 4.49$), Hispanic ($M = 4.27$), and White ($M = 4.21$) victims' credibility did not differ significantly, $F(2, 224) = 0.81, ns$.

There were no significant main effects of juror gender, victim age, or victim race on ratings of the defendant's credibility ($F_s \leq 3.01$). There was, however, a significant Juror Gender \times Victim Age interaction, $F(1, 226) = 6.18, p < .01$. Simple effects analyses revealed that men judged the defendant to be more credible when the victim was 16 years old ($M = 2.68$) than when she was 12 years old ($M = 2.25$), $F(1, 108) = 3.97, p < .05$; but women's ratings were not affected by victim age (16 year old $M = 2.08$, 12 year old $M = 2.35$), $F(1, 126) = 1.93, ns$. Further, men's ($M = 2.68$) and women's ($M = 2.08$) ratings differed when the victim was 16 years old (men's $M = 2.25$), $F(1, 118) = 10.02, p < .01$; but not when she was 12 years old (women's $M = 2.35$), $F(1, 116) = 0.23, ns$. Finally, there was also a significant Juror Gender \times Victim Race interaction. Simple effects analyses revealed that men rated the defendant to be significantly more credible ($M = 2.78$) than did women ($M = 1.98$), $F(1, 78) = 10.61, p < .01$; but only when the victim was Black. No other comparisons were significant ($F_s \leq 2.40$).

Responsibility Ratings

As predicted, men rated victims as more responsible for the alleged sexual contact ($M = 2.68$) than did women, ($M = 2.25$), $F(1, 212) = 5.96, p < .05$ (Table 1). In addition, the 16-year-old victim was rated as significantly more responsible ($M = 2.88$) than was the 12-year-old victim ($M = 1.99$), $F(1, 212) = 26.27, p < .001$. Perceptions of the victim's responsibility also differed significantly as a function of her race. Planned comparisons revealed that the White victim ($M = 2.13$) was perceived to be less responsible for her abuse than were either the Black victim ($M = 2.57$), $F(1, 224) = 4.47, p < .05$, or the Hispanic victim ($M = 2.62$), $F(1, 224) = 5.43, p < .05$. Analyses of defendant responsibility ratings revealed no significant main effects or interactions involving any of the independent variables ($F_s \leq 2.71$).

Relations of Credibility and Responsibility Judgments to Guilt Judgments

Next, we performed a multiple regression analysis to test the ability of victim credibility, defendant credibility, victim responsibility, and defendant responsibility judgments to predict degree-of-guilt judgments. Perceptions of victim credibility ($B = .44$), $t(209) = 7.04$, $p < .001$, and defendant credibility ($B = -.24$), $t(209) = -3.78$, $p < .001$, were significant predictors of degree-of-guilt judgments, model $F(4, 209) = 38.62$, $p < .001$ ($R^2 = .43$). Neither ratings of victim responsibility ($B = -.09$), $t(209) = -1.31$, $p = .19$, nor defendant responsibility ($B = .07$), $t(209) = 1.30$, $p = .20$, were significant predictors of degree-of-guilt judgments.

A logistic regression analysis testing the ability of the same variables to predict dichotomous guilt judgments revealed a similar pattern of results. Victim credibility ratings (odds ratio [OR] = 2.42, Wald = 23.98, $p < .001$) and defendant credibility ratings (OR = 0.61, Wald = 7.19, $p < .01$) significantly predicted dichotomous verdicts, GFI (overall model) = 196.81, $LR\chi^2(4, N = 214) = 76.57$, $p < .001$, with 80% of cases correctly classified. Neither perceptions of victim responsibility (Wald = 2.56, $p = .78$) nor defendant responsibility (Wald = 1.47, $p = .22$) were significant predictors of verdicts.

Juror-Victim Racial Similarity

Finally, we did not make a priori hypotheses regarding effects that might be associated with juror race. Even so, we recognized that jurors might exhibit in-group favoritism (e.g., Tajfel, 1982); that is, jurors might favor child victims who are similar to them in terms of race (Miller & Hewitt, 1978). Research in legal domains has demonstrated that mock jurors exhibit more leniency (in judgments of guilt and sentencing) for defendants who are similar to them on a variety of dimensions, including race (e.g., Miller & Hewitt, 1978; Mitchell & Byrne, 1973; Selby, Calhoun, & Brock, 1977; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000; Towson & Zanna, 1983; Ugwuegbu, 1979; but see Rector, Bagby, & Nicholson, 1993). Although we did not systematically balance the cells of our design with respect to juror race, there were enough participants in each cell to support post hoc analyses investigating the possibility of a juror-victim similarity bias on case judgments.

We created a new dichotomous independent variable to indicate whether each juror's race was the same or different from the victim's race. We entered that variable, juror gender, and victim age into a logistic regression predicting verdicts, then into a series of ANOVAs examining degree of guilt, credibility, and responsibility judgments. In addition to the same pattern of results for victim age and juror gender, we also discovered evidence for a similarity bias: Jurors who were of the same race as the victim rated the defendant to be significantly less credible ($M = 2.10$) than did jurors who were of a different race than the victim ($M = 2.46$), $F(1, 230) = 5.99$, $p < .05$. Further, jurors who were of the same race

as the victim assigned a higher degree of guilt to the defendant ($M = 4.76$) than did jurors who were of a different race than the victim ($M = 4.23$), $F(1, 229) = 5.77$, $p < .05$. No evidence of similarity effects emerged from analyses of dichotomous verdict, victim credibility, or victim or defendant responsibility judgments.

Summary of Experiment 1 Results

In summary, our results reveal that, as expected, older victims were disadvantaged relative to younger victims. When the victim was younger, jurors were more likely to consider her credible and less likely to consider her responsible for her abuse, and men were more likely to assign guilt to defendants and less likely to consider the defendant credible. Also as expected, we replicated past research by revealing gender differences. Specifically, women's judgments were more pro-prosecution oriented than were men's. Main effects or interactions involving gender were found for guilt judgments, victim and defendant credibility ratings, and victim responsibility ratings.

Contrary to our expectations, there was no significant difference in guilty verdicts or credibility judgments as a function of victim race. As predicted, however, the White victim was perceived to be less responsible for her abuse than were either the Black victim or the Hispanic victim. Yet responsibility ratings did not significantly predict degree-of-guilt judgments or verdicts.

Finally, post hoc analyses uncovered evidence of a juror-victim similarity bias. Compared to jurors who were of a different race than the victim, same-race jurors rated the defendant to be significantly less credible, and they assigned him more guilt.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we continued our investigation of race and jurors' decisions by examining two key issues: (a) the effects of victim and defendant race on jurors' case judgments, and (b) the impact of jurors' racial bias on case judgments. We systematically varied both victim and defendant race in our case scenarios, and we measured individual differences in jurors' preexisting prejudice level. We simplified our design by limiting our observations to cases involving only 12-year-old victims and Black and White victims and defendants. Further, because we were interested in levels of White prejudice against Blacks, we included only White jurors. Thus, our study conforms to a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (Victim Race: Black or White \times Defendant Race: Black or White \times Juror Prejudice Level: High or Low) between-subjects design.

We predicted that Black defendants, like Black victims, would be at a legal disadvantage relative to White defendants and victims. In particular, we expected that White jurors would be most punitive toward Black defendants accused of

assaulting White victims. We hypothesized that high-prejudiced jurors would be more likely than low-prejudiced jurors to render racially biased case decisions. Finally, Experiment 2 served as an opportunity to replicate the effects associated with victim race in Experiment 1 by using an improved methodology. To increase the ecological validity of our work, we included the specific juror instructions used in Illinois courts for this type of child sexual abuse case (*Illinois Pattern Jury Instructions*, 1992). In addition, we added more comprehensive measures of victim and defendant responsibility.

Method

Participants

Participants were 228 jury-eligible Introductory Psychology students (112 men, 116 women) who received course credit. All participants were White United States citizens, and their mean age was 19.79 years ($Mdn = 19$ years).

Materials

Case scenario. The case scenario was identical to that used in Experiment 1, with the exception that both victim race and defendant race were varied systematically. The same names were used to identify the Black and White victims as in Experiment 1 (Tonya Jones and Jessica Kelly, respectively) and the White defendant (Don Reed). The Black defendant was named "Darryl Johnson," a name that pilot subjects perceived to be a plausible Black name.

Dependent measures. Rating scales were identical to those used in Experiment 1, with the following exceptions: First, we widened our confidence-in-guilt scale so that jurors made ratings on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all confident*) to 10 (*very confident*; as in Kassin, Rigby, & Castillo, 1991). The combination of jurors' dichotomous guilt judgments with the new confidence-in-guilt ratings resulted in a more sensitive 20-point degree-of-guilt scale ranging from 1 (*not guilty, very confident*) to 20 (*guilty, very confident*).

Second, we used more elaborate measures of victim and defendant responsibility. Specifically, we first asked jurors to indicate, regardless of their guilt judgment, whether or not they believed sexual contact between the victim and defendant occurred on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*it absolutely did occur*) to 7 (*it absolutely did not occur*). Then, only participants who indicated that they believed sexual contact had occurred (i.e., those who did not give a rating of 7) completed separate multi-item scales measuring victim responsibility and defendant responsibility. These two scales each included four 6-point items measuring the extent to which jurors thought the victim (or defendant) (a) was to blame for the incident, ranging from 1 (*do not blame at all*) to 6 (*completely blame*); (b) was responsible for the sexual contact, ranging from 1 (*not at all responsible*)

to 6 (*extremely responsible*); (c) caused the sexual contact, ranging from 1 (*did not cause at all*) to 6 (*completely caused*); and (d) wanted the sexual contact to occur, ranging from 1 (*did not want at all*) to 6 (*wanted a great deal*). Both the victim and defendant responsibility scales were highly reliable for this sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ and $.83$, respectively; M inter-item correlations = $.62$ and $.56$, respectively).

Juror instructions. Juror instructions were those used in Illinois courts for child sexual abuse cases similar to the one depicted in the scenario (*Illinois Pattern Jury Instructions*, 1992). The instructions underscored the importance of the jurors' task, educated jurors about the legal elements of aggravated criminal sexual assault and about the presumption of innocence and burden of proof (beyond a reasonable doubt), and directed jurors not to be influenced by "sympathy or prejudice." This arguably produced a more stringent, but more ecologically valid test of race effects as compared to Experiment 1. That is, following from modern racism theory, some research has found that when the issue of racism is made blatant to White jurors, they are less likely to render racially biased judgments (Fein, Morgan, Norton, & Sommers, 1997).

Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986). The seven-item Modern Racism scale measures prejudicial attitudes about Blacks. Sample items include "It's easy to understand the anger of African Americans in America," "African Americans are treated unfairly in our society," and "African Americans should not push themselves where they are not wanted." Scale scores range from -21 (indicating low prejudice) to +21 (indicating high prejudice). Previous research has shown the scale to be reliable and valid, with Cronbach's alphas generally in the mid-.80 range (e.g., Devine, 1989; McConahay, 1986). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was $.85$, indicating good reliability. Consistent with prior research on racism (e.g., Devine, 1989), participants were classified as low prejudiced or high prejudiced by a median split on the scale.⁴

Procedure

Experiment 2 was conducted in two sessions. During Session 1, participants completed the demographic questionnaire and the Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986), along with numerous other unrelated questionnaires submitted by various other university experimenters during a mass testing session. In

⁴We also used the scores on the Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986) as a continuous measure in multiple regression analyses instead of the ANOVAs reported herein. Further, in a third set of analyses (ANOVAs), we used a quartile split instead of a median split of the distribution of Modern Racism scale scores. High-prejudiced participants were those in the upper quartile ($Mdn = 7$), and low-prejudiced participants were those in the lower quartile ($Mdn = -17$). Both of these alternative methods of analyzing our data revealed the same juror prejudice effects that resulted from the median-split ANOVAs that we report in the text.

Session 2, proportionately equal numbers of men and women and high and low prejudiced individuals who had participated in Session 1 were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions (i.e., Black victim/White defendant, Black victim/Black defendant, White victim/White defendant, and White victim/Black defendant) and participated in the mock-jury task. Participants were unable to connect the Modern Racism scale with the mock-jury task because Session 1 included many questionnaires and occurred from 1 to 3 months before Session 2, and because participants were not informed that Sessions 1 and 2 were related. This two-session procedure eliminated the possibility of the racism scale influencing decision making, or vice-versa.

During Session 2, participants read the case scenario in noninteracting, mixed-gender, and mixed-condition groups of approximately 10 to 20 participants. Then, an experimenter read the jury instructions aloud to all jurors. Afterward, participants completed the dependent measures individually.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses revealed gender differences similar to those reported in Experiment 1. Specifically, women (a) assigned higher degree-of-guilt ratings to defendants ($M = 10.72$) than did men ($M = 8.19$), $F(1, 210) = 7.32, p < .01$; (b) rated the defendant to be less credible ($M = 3.09$) than did men ($M = 3.52$), $F(1, 211) = 5.67, p < .05$; (c) rated the victim to be more credible ($M = 4.30$) than did men ($M = 3.72$), $F(1, 212) = 12.25, p < .001$; and (d) considered the victim ($M = 1.52$) to be less responsible than did men ($M = 1.86$), $F(1, 153) = 7.18, p < .01$. Women did not differ significantly from men in terms of guilty verdicts (Wald = 2.13, $p < .14$, $B = .83$), GFI overall model ($df = 226$) = 224.89, $p = .37$; nor did they rate the defendant as more responsible ($M = 5.24$) than did men ($M = 5.01$), $F(1, 159) = 2.10, p < .15$. Juror gender did not interact significantly with any other variables. Because effects of juror gender were not of primary interest in Experiment 2, we covaried for juror gender in all subsequent analyses.

Guilt Judgments

Dichotomous guilt judgments were analyzed with a logistic regression analysis in which gender was entered first (to hold those effects constant); followed by victim race, defendant race, prejudice level, and all interaction terms. There were no significant main effects of juror prejudice level (Wald = .04, $p = .84$), victim race (Wald = 1.80, $p = .22$), nor defendant race (Wald = .27, $p = .61$); nor were there significant interactions involving these variables (all Walds $\leq .87, ps \geq .35$), GFI overall model ($df = 226$) = 224.73, $p = .35$ (Table 2).

Table 2

Mean Case Judgments as a Function of Victim and Defendant Race (Collapsed Across Juror Prejudice Level): Experiment 2

Judgment type	Victim race			
	White		Black	
	White defendant	Black defendant	White defendant	Black defendant
Guilt ($n = 226$)	44%	33%	33%	43%
Degree of guilt ^a ($n = 226$)	10.49	8.63	8.65	10.21
Victim credibility ^b ($n = 228$)	4.25	3.77	4.13	3.92
Defendant credibility ($n = 227$)	3.17	3.43	3.27	3.33
Victim responsibility ^c ($n = 169$)	1.54	1.48	1.86	1.86
Defendant responsibility ^d ($n = 167$)	5.27	5.24	5.06	4.96

^aSignificant Victim Race \times Defendant Race interaction, $F(1, 217) = 3.81, p < .05$. ^bSignificant main effect of defendant race, $F(1, 219) = 4.42, p < .05$. ^cSignificant main effect of victim race, $F(1, 160) = 10.29, p < .01$. ^dSignificant main effect of victim race, $F(1, 166) = 4.96, p < .05$.

Degree-of-guilt judgments were entered into a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (Prejudice Level: High or Low \times Victim Race: Black or White \times Defendant Race: Black or White) between-subjects ANCOVA, controlling for gender. This revealed a significant Victim Race \times Defendant Race crossover interaction. As shown in Table 2, when the defendant and victim were of the same race, the defendant was assigned higher degree-of-guilt ratings ($M = 10.21$ for the Black defendant/Black victim condition; $M = 10.49$ for the White defendant/White victim condition) than when the defendant and victim were of different races ($M = 8.63$ for the Black defendant/White victim condition; $M = 8.65$ for the White defendant/Black victim condition). Simple effects analyses revealed nonsignificant trends for Black defendants ($M = 10.21$) to be assigned higher degree-of-guilt ratings than White defendants ($M = 8.65$) when the victim was Black, $F(1, 104) = 1.81, p = .18$; and for White defendants to be assigned higher degree-of-guilt ratings for the assault of White ($M = 10.49$) rather than Black ($M = 8.65$) victims, $F(1, 110) = 2.13, p = .15$. There were no other significant main effects or interactions ($F_s \leq .09$).

Credibility Judgments

We examined mean victim and defendant credibility judgments with separate $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (Prejudice Level \times Victim Race \times Defendant Race) ANCOVAs, controlling for gender. Contrary to expectations, when the defendant was White, victims were perceived to be more credible ($M = 4.19$) than when the defendant was Black ($M = 3.84$; Table 2). There were no other significant main effects or interactions for victim or defendant credibility ($F_s \leq 1.78$).

Responsibility Judgments

Similar ANCOVAs were used to examine mean victim and defendant responsibility scale scores. Replicating our findings from Experiment 1, Black victims ($M = 1.86$) were rated as significantly more responsible for the alleged sexual abuse than were White victims ($M = 1.51$), $F(1, 160) = 10.29, p < .01$ (Table 2). This was true regardless of defendant race. Further, as predicted, when the victim was White ($M = 5.25$), the defendant was rated as more responsible for the abuse than when the victim was Black ($M = 5.01$), $F(1, 166) = 4.96, p < .05$. There were no other significant main effects or interactions ($F_s \leq 1.96$).

Relations of Credibility and Responsibility Judgments to Guilt Judgments

As in Experiment 1, we performed a multiple regression analysis to test the ability of victim credibility, defendant credibility, victim responsibility, and defendant responsibility judgments to predict degree-of-guilt judgments. Both victim credibility ($B = .32$), $t(162) = 4.81, p < .001$, and defendant credibility ($B = -.47$), $t(162) = -7.31, p < .001$, were significant predictors of degree-of-guilt judgments, model $F(4, 162) = 41.19, p < .001$ ($R^2 = .50$). Neither victim responsibility ($B = -.01$), $t(162) = -0.18, p = .86$, nor defendant responsibility ($B = .07$), $t(162) = 0.97, p = .33$, were significant predictors of degree-of-guilt judgments.

We performed a logistic regression analysis to examine the ability of the same variables to predict dichotomous guilt judgments. Ratings of victim credibility (OR = 2.69, Wald = 14.42, $p < .001$) and defendant credibility (OR = 0.23, Wald = 29.48, $p < .001$) significantly predicted dichotomous verdicts, GFI overall model = 145.87, $LR\chi^2(4, N = 167) = 97.13, p < .001$, with 78% of cases correctly classified. Neither perceptions of victim responsibility (Wald = 0.30, $p = .58$) nor defendant responsibility (Wald = 0.16, $p = .69$) were significant predictors of verdicts.

Summary of Experiment 2 Results

In summary, as in Experiment 1, we found gender differences such that women made more pro-victim judgments in terms of ratings of defendant degree

of guilt, defendant credibility, victim credibility, and victim responsibility. Surprisingly, we found no significant effects associated with individual differences in juror prejudice level.

Experiment 2 revealed interesting effects associated with defendant and victim race. Replicating our findings from Experiment 1, Black victims were rated as more responsible for the alleged sexual abuse than were White victims, regardless of defendant race. Further, as expected, when the victim was White, the defendant was rated as more responsible for the abuse than when the victim was Black. Contrary to expectations, when the defendant was White, victims were perceived to be more credible than when the defendant was Black. Of particular interest, defendants in same-race abuse cases (Black defendant/Black victim and White defendant/White victim) were assigned more degree of guilt than were defendants in different-race abuse cases (Black defendant/White victim and White defendant/Black victim). Race did not significantly affect dichotomous verdicts.

Both victim credibility and defendant credibility, but neither victim responsibility nor defendant responsibility, were significant predictors of degree-of-guilt judgments and dichotomous verdicts.

Experiment 3

Analysis of degree-of-guilt judgments in Experiment 2 revealed that when the defendant and victim were of the same race, the defendant was assigned higher degree-of-guilt ratings than when the defendant and victim were of different races. Experiment 3 was a simple follow-up study conducted to aid in understanding this interaction. Specifically, we reasoned that jurors in Experiment 2 found intraracial assaults to be more plausible than interracial assaults. Unlike adult rape cases, perhaps child sexual assault is perceived to be a crime that is more likely to be perpetrated by a defendant who is the same race as the victim. This is one potential explanation for jurors' willingness to assign greater guilt to same-race abuse claims.

We asked a similar sample to estimate the percentage of child sexual abuse cases perpetrated by defendants who are of the same race as the victim, compared to those perpetrated by defendants who are of a different race than the victim. We predicted that participants would perceive same-race child sexual assaults to be more common than different-race assaults.

Method

Participants

Participants were 135 jury-eligible Introductory Psychology students (75 women, 60 men) who received course credit. Their mean age was 20 years ($Mdn = 19$ years), and all were White.

Materials and Procedure

Participants individually completed a one-page questionnaire during one class session of their Introductory Psychology course. The questionnaire contained several items assessing basic demographic information and one item asking participants to think about all actual child sexual abuse cases involving a teacher perpetrator and a student victim, and to estimate the percentage (out of 100%) of those cases involving a (a) Black defendant and Black victim, (b) Black defendant and White victim, (c) White defendant and White victim, and (d) White defendant and Black victim.

Results

We examined participants' estimates of the percentage of child sexual abuse cases involving each racial combination with a repeated-measures ANCOVA, controlling for juror gender effects. A statistically significant within-subjects effect of racial combination was found, $F(3, 402) = 80.52, p < .001$.

Planned comparisons revealed that participants attributed the highest prevalence estimates to intraracial offenses and the lowest estimates to interracial offenses. Specifically, participants rated the two interracial categories as equally likely ($M = 16.38\%$ for Black defendant/White victim, $M = 17.03\%$ for White defendant/Black victim), $F(1, 402) = 0.30, ns$. However, all other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant, $F(1, 402) \geq 77.36, ps < .05$. Participants rated the White defendant/White victim category ($M = 39.08\%$) as the most plausible racial composition for such cases, followed by the Black defendant/Black victim category ($M = 27.51\%$). Supporting our hypothesis, the two interracial combinations were considered less likely than the two intraracial combinations.

General Discussion

In three studies, we examined the effects of race on jurors' perceptions and decisions in simulated child sexual abuse cases. In Experiment 1, we found that mock jurors considered both Black and Hispanic child victims to be more responsible for their sexual abuse than White victims. In Experiment 2, which focused on perceptions of Black victims, this finding was replicated and the defendant was also rated as less responsible when the victim was Black than when she was White. In Experiment 2, defendant race was also varied, but no overall bias against minority defendants emerged. (In fact, victims were perceived to be more credible when the defendant was White than when the defendant was Black, a finding that is difficult to explain.) Of particular interest, more guilt was assigned to defendants in cases involving victims and perpetrators of the same race relative to cases involving victims and perpetrators of different

racers. Experiment 3 revealed that laypeople believe that same-race cases are more likely to occur than are different-race cases. Contrary to our expectations, Experiment 2 revealed that high-prejudiced White mock jurors were no more likely to make racially biased judgments than were low-prejudiced mock jurors. Post hoc analyses of data from Experiment 1 revealed evidence of a juror–victim racial similarity bias that deserves further attention in future studies.

We also found interesting effects associated with non-race-relevant variables. In Experiment 1, we replicated previous victim age effects, finding that older victims are blamed more for their abuse and are believed less than are younger victims and that, in turn, defendants accused of molesting older teenaged victims are perceived to be more credible and they are less likely to be convicted. Men were more sensitive to a child victim's age than were women: Whereas women's judgments did not differ as a function of victim age, men found 16-year-old victims to be less credible than 12-year-old victims, and men found defendants accused of abusing older victims to be guilty less often than defendants accused of abusing younger victims. Thus, jurors appear to consider 12-year-old children still naïve and credible, and men find them more credible relative to older adolescents. The upper limit at which such distinctions will be made might be 12 years of age; older children might be considered old enough to desire and consent to abuse, and thus are disadvantaged in terms of credibility.

Finally, in Experiments 1 and 2, we replicated effects of juror gender found in prior child-witness literature. Specifically, across cases involving minority and White victims, women were generally more pro-victim in their case judgments than were men. Because victim age and juror gender effects have been discussed at length in the literature we reviewed in our introduction, we focus the remainder of our discussion on effects associated with race.

Victim-Based Racial Bias in Child Sexual Abuse Cases

It is somewhat encouraging that racial biases did not emerge for verdicts, the most legally relevant of our measures. Even so, in Experiments 1 and 2, victim-based racial discrimination was evinced in judgments of responsibility for sexual assault. Minority victims were held more accountable for their own assaults than were White victims. This effect was found both for younger (12-year-old) and older (16-year-old) victims. In Experiment 2, defendants accused of assaulting Black victims were judged to be less responsible for the abuse than were defendants accused of abusing White victims. Our effect sizes were small, however ($\eta^2 = .00$ to $.06$).

Responsibility judgments are arguably the subtlest case judgments we measured. It might have been more natural for jurors to express their racial biases on these subtle measures, whereas they did not express racial bias on guilt judgments, which were more structured by the nature of the burden of proof. This is

consistent with modern racism theory's central tenet: that prejudicial decisions are made under ambiguous, subtle circumstances (McConahay, 1986). That is, modern racism theory holds that in today's society, social inhibitions preclude open displays of racism; thus, prejudicial acts occur most often when clear norms for behavior are lacking (McConahay, 1986). Participants might have felt that there are clearer social norms for guilt judgments than for responsibility judgments. They might have been more likely to identify rendering a guilty verdict against a Black defendant as a potentially racist action than making negative ratings on other measures (e.g., responsibility). In turn, they could have been more likely to monitor guilt judgments than other judgments.⁵ Finally, social desirability concerns (the desire to appear politically correct) might have manifested themselves more for guilt than for other subtler judgments.

Does our failure to find effects of victim or defendant race on verdicts suggest that race is a variable of little consequence for jurors' decisions in actual child sexual abuse trials? We think not. Responsibility judgments are important judgments in and of themselves. They reveal underlying biases that potentially could become expressed when guilt judgments are more closely related to jurors' opinions about the relative responsibility of victims and defendants (e.g., perhaps in cases with fact patterns that differ from our own).

Further, it is important to realize that legal relevance, especially in child sexual assault cases, is not limited to jury verdicts. Many child sexual abuse investigations never reach a courtroom (Myers, 1997). A crucial part of the processing of child abuse cases occurs prior to trial, when teachers, police officers, social workers, prosecuting attorneys, and others field children's reports of alleged abuse. Subtle bias against minority victims on the part of these professionals could affect the way child sexual abuse cases are investigated or selected for prosecution. In fact, our research suggests that Black and Hispanic children's reports of alleged sexual abuse might not be taken as seriously as White children's reports, because minority children might be perceived to have encouraged or consented to their own abuse. These results support Wyatt's (1990) argument that Black sexual assault victims sometimes encounter institutional racism when they report sexual abuse; that is, difficulty having their allegations taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and prosecuted. Archival research comparing records of police or social service investigations of sexual abuse alleged by Black and White child victims would be worthwhile. Specifically, the impact of victim, defendant, and investigator race on the likelihood that a child's allegation of abuse is investigated thoroughly would help clarify whether the biases we uncovered manifest themselves in the context of actual child sexual abuse investigations.

⁵In fact, our analyses exploring the ability of credibility and responsibility ratings to predict guilt ratings reveal that responsibility judgments were not significantly related to guilt judgments, suggesting that the judgments might be driven by somewhat different concerns.

Defendant Race and the Perceived Plausibility of Same- Versus Different-Race Abuse

In Experiment 2, we varied defendant race in addition to victim race, which Sommers and Ellsworth (2001) have called for in jury research concerned with race. We found no overall bias against Black defendants. In fact, contrary to predictions, victims were perceived to be more credible when the defendant was portrayed as White than when he was portrayed as Black. Perhaps this is because child sexual assault is perceived to be a crime perpetrated predominantly by Whites, in spite of negative sexual stereotypes that have been documented for Blacks (Devine, 1989; Powell et al., 1983; Weinberg & Williams, 1988; Wyatt, 1982). In fact, in a case vignette study, Jackson and Nuttall (1993) found that clinicians (race unspecified) perceived a White defendant as more likely to be a child sexual abuse perpetrator than a Black or Hispanic defendant.

It is also possible that the details of our particular child abuse case obscured defendant race effects that might emerge in other types of cases. Specifically, in our scenario, the defendant was a teacher, who might be viewed more favorably than would other types of Black defendants. Because of the honorable occupation, our jurors could have subtyped our Black teacher/defendant in a positive manner (e.g., Johnston & Hewstone, 1992; Maurer, Park, & Rothbart, 1995; Weber & Crocker, 1983). That is, compared to Blacks who hold less venerable jobs, Black teachers might be perceived as having positive qualities and characteristics that lessen their perceived likelihood of guilt (a shifting of standards; Biernat, Vescio, & Manis, 1998). Future research should include scenarios involving defendants of various occupations.

Varying defendant race as well as victim race allowed for the discovery of an interesting same-race versus different-race effect that differs from the pattern of racial biases found in adult rape cases. Specifically, defendants accused of assaulting same-race victims were assigned a higher degree of guilt than were defendants accused of assaulting different-race victims. This is similar to the pattern of results obtained from Black participants in the study by Foley and Chamblin (1982). Experiment 3 revealed that jurors believed (correctly) that child sexual abuse is more likely to occur between perpetrators and victims of the same race. This belief about the plausibility of same-race versus cross-race victimization might be one factor that explains the pattern of judgments that we found in Experiment 2. That is, our jurors could have assigned less guilt to a defendant accused of abusing a different-race child than a same-race child because the jurors did not believe that a different-race case was plausible. These plausibility beliefs might, in turn, be related to jurors' beliefs that abusers would not be attracted to other-race children, or that defendants of one race would not have easy access to children of a different race. This latter idea is rational: In today's United States society, which is still quite segregated (The Mumford

Center, 2001), potential child victims and potential abusers in close proximity to one another are likely to be of the same race.

We caution, however, that because we did not test any of these factors, including plausibility, with the participants from Experiment 2, we cannot know for sure which factors explained those cross-race effects. Future work should be designed to identify potential explanations.

Juror Prejudice and Case Judgments

Why were the judgments of high-prejudiced mock jurors no different than those of low-prejudiced mock jurors? Racism might not affect verdicts in cases of child sexual abuse, a conclusion that certainly would be comforting. Unfortunately, this conclusion also might be naïve in light of other possible explanations for our null findings. For example, although the Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986) is a well developed and reliable measure of general racial attitudes, it might not be the best measure of the components of racial attitudes that are related to child sexual abuse case decisions. It is possible that a more domain-specific measure is necessary; for example, a scale composed of items measuring participants' beliefs about the sexual promiscuity of minority and White populations or about the development of sexual interest and behaviors in minority children relative to White children. Social psychological research on attitudes has revealed that attitudes and behaviors are most consistent when attitude measures are specific to the behavioral domain being predicted (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Davidson & Jaccard, 1979; Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1994; Kraus, 1995).

Another possible explanation for null findings could be linked to the nature of our sample. Participants were White undergraduates from an urban, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse university where classrooms are highly integrated. Although the range of modern racism scores was wide, it is possible that this sample of mock jurors might have been particularly sensitive to racial manipulations. Social desirability concerns might have masked biased tendencies in guilt judgments. Replication of these results with other samples would be informative and could address this issue.

It is also possible that our jury instructions in Experiment 2 obscured the effects of preexisting racial biases on guilt judgments. Specifically, our instructions directed jurors not to let their verdicts be swayed by prejudice. According to modern racism theory, situations that are less ambiguous are not likely to produce racially biased actions. In fact, Pfeifer and Ogloff (1991) argued that jury instructions give jurors in otherwise ambiguous sexual assault cases a basis for decision making, creating a situation in which mock jurors' prejudicial attitudes should not affect their judgments. They found that prejudicial decisions in an adult sexual assault case were eliminated when jury instructions were

administered. Fein et al. (1997) found similar results when jurors were reminded of racial issues in their case. Consistent with modern racism theory, it is possible that our instructions reduced the extent to which mock jurors used racial biases when making guilt judgments. Yet, even if the instructions muted the expression of jurors' bias as measured by the Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986), the instructions did not preclude the expression of racial bias in our study, as revealed by the victim-based racial discrimination evinced in judgments of responsibility.

We believe that future research should extend our investigation of individual differences in jurors' perceptions of minority victims by using more specific measures of bias. We also believe that it would be interesting to explore the effects associated with racial differences among jurors. Our post hoc analyses of Experiment 1 data reveal a racial-similarity bias such that when the jurors and the victim were of the same race, jurors were less likely to find the defendant to be credible and were more likely to assign guilt to him. A fully crossed design with both minority and majority jurors, victims, and defendants would allow for further exploration of these effects.

Work by Sommers and Ellsworth (2001) has suggested that varying the salience of race in a case will affect the expression of racial bias in judgments (i.e., the less salient the issue, the more likely bias will be found), so this is another potentially interesting avenue for future research. Finally, bias among other key players in the legal system (e.g., social workers, police officers, attorneys, judges) should be investigated.

Limitations

We designed our study so that generalizations to the legal arena would be possible. For example, we chose a case scenario that included details from actual child sexual abuse cases. We tested a sample that was jury eligible: over 18 years of age and United States citizens. We impressed upon our mock jurors the seriousness of the research and the importance of taking the task seriously. In Experiment 2, we used the same jury instructions that would be used in a child sexual abuse case in Illinois.

Even so, there are reasons to be cautious in generalizing the results of laboratory research to actual cases. In the laboratory, one must always sacrifice some realism for experimental control. As a result, jury studies cannot fully duplicate the experience of serving on a real jury (Weiten & Diamond, 1980). For example, our jurors read a transcript, rather than watching live or videotaped witnesses. Prior research, however, has revealed few differences between mock jurors' decisions in studies using written scenarios versus more elaborate videotaped testimony (Goodman, Golding, & Haith, 1984; Goodman, Golding, Helgeson, Haith, & Michelli, 1987; Scheiner, 1988). Also, using videotaped trial stimuli to

examine the effects of victim or defendant race could have costly tradeoffs. That is, actors of various races could differ in many aspects, other than strictly race (e.g., attractiveness). Written scenario methodology allows for the experimental control necessary to draw cause-and-effect conclusions about variables such as race, before moving on to more elaborately staged research to pursue interesting patterns of results.

Another limitation is that our jurors were university undergraduates. Although the students at our urban, commuter university are somewhat older and more diverse in terms of ethnicity and SES than are students who participate in research at many universities, undergraduates might not render the same judgments (Foley & Pigott, 1997) nor possess the same racial attitudes as older community members. Even so, Sweeney and Haney (1992) found no differences in the way a race manipulation affected the decisions of college-student mock jurors versus other mock jurors. Also, a recent meta-analysis by Bornstein (1999) revealed few differences in the judgments of undergraduate and community member jurors (see also Cutler, Penrod, & Dexter, 1990). Research on perceptions of a child sexual abuse case in particular revealed some differences in judgments, but not in guilt judgments (Isquith, 1988).

Finally, our mock jurors did not deliberate before reaching a verdict, so their verdicts might not mirror decisions made by a jury in the same case (Diamond, 1997; Weiten & Diamond, 1979). Group discussion could cause jurors' extralegal biases to be publicly identified and attenuated (Shaw & Skolnick, 1995) or, through a process of attitude polarization (e.g., Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969; Myers & Bishop, 1970), deliberation might actually strengthen those biases.

In general, exploring mock jurors' decisions in a laboratory setting represents an important first step in a line of research designed to examine juror decision making (Diamond, 1997), but only the first step. Having established support for our basic theoretical assumptions and our hypotheses, it would be advisable to replicate this study with more realistic stimuli and community member participants who deliberate as a group. Such subsequent steps bring applied social psychological research closer to the realism of the courtroom and are necessary to determine the degree to which laboratory results are generalizable.

In conclusion, our research provides evidence for a unique pattern of racially biased perceptions and decisions in child sexual assault cases. Although racial biases were not found for guilt judgments, the subtle effects of a child victim's race on jurors' perceptions of her responsibility are troubling. These effects demonstrate the importance of determining if other actors in the legal system (e.g., lawyers, police officers) harbor biases that could affect decisions about whether or not to even pursue investigations and trials in cases involving minority victims. Understanding how people perceive child victims as a function of their race is important if courtrooms are to be places of fairness and justice. The findings of

research such as ours eventually could lead to a more educated courtroom, one where fact finders are aware of potential biases and ways to avoid them in making consequential judgments. It is also theoretically important, as specific instances of biased evaluations need to be understood from a general theory of racism.

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