
[Content Types](#) [Subject Collections](#)
[Journal Article](#)

Institutional Login

Welcome!

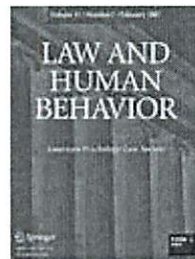
To use the personalized features of this site, please [log in](#) or [register](#).

If you have forgotten your username or password, we can [help](#).

My Menu

[Marked Items](#)
[Alerts](#)
[Order History](#)

Saved Items

[All](#)
[Favorites](#)


Jurors' Perceptions of Adolescent Sexual Assault Victims Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

Journal	Law and Human Behavior
Publisher	Springer Netherlands
ISSN	0147-7307 (Print) 1573-661X (Online)
Issue	Volume 27, Number 2 / April, 2003
DOI	10.1023/A:1022551314668
Pages	205-227
Subject Collection	Behavioral Science
SpringerLink Date	Monday, November 01, 2004

[PDF \(111.5 KB\)](#) [Free Preview](#)

Bette L. Bottoms¹ , Kari L. Nysse-Carris², Twana Harris³ and Kimberly Tyda⁴

- (1) Department of Psychology (m/c 285), The University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
- (2) National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
- (3) Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
- (4) River Oak Center for Children, Sacramento, California

Abstract Children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities are especially likely to be sexually abused. Even so, their claims are no likely to be heard in court, possibly because people assume that jurors will not believe them. We tested this assumption in a mock-trial study in which 160 men and women watched videotaped excerpts from an actual trial. As predicted, when the 16-year-old sexual assault victim was portrayed as “mildly mentally retarded” instead of as “having average intelligence,” jurors were more likely to vote guilty and had more confidence in the defendant's guilt; considered the victim to be more credible and the defendant to be less credible as witnesses; and rated the victim as more honest, less capable of fabricating the sexual abuse accusation, and less likely to have fabricated the sexual abuse accusation. Men and women were affected similarly by the disability manipulation, but women were generally more pro-prosecution in their case judgments and perceptions than were men. Finally, jurors who had more liberal views toward persons with disabilities were more likely than other jurors to make pro-prosecution judgments on measures of guilt. Implications for psychological theory and the law are discussed.

eyewitness testimony - children - adolescents - child sexual abuse - intellectual disability - juror decision making

✉ **Bette L. Bottoms**
Email: bbottoms@uic.edu

Fulltext Preview (Small, Large)

Law and Human Behavior, Vol. 27, No. 2, April 2003 (© 2003)

Jurors' Perceptions of Adolescent Sexual Assault Victims Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

Bette L. Bottoms,^{1,5} Kari L. Nysse-Carris,² Twana Harris,³ and Kimberly Tyda⁴

Children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities are especially likely to be sexually abused. Even so, their claims are not likely to be heard in court, possibly because people assume that jurors will not believe them. We tested this assumption in a mock-trial study in which 160 men and women watched videotaped excerpts from an actual trial. As predicted, when the 16-year-old sexual assault victim was portrayed as "mildly mentally retarded" instead of as "having average intelligence," jurors were more likely to vote guilty and had more confidence in the defendant's guilt; considered the victim to be more credible and the defendant to be less credible as witnesses, and rated the victim as more honest, less capable of fabricating the sexual abuse accusation, and less likely to have fabricated the sexual abuse accusation. Men and women were affected similarly by the disability manipulation, but women were generally more pro-prosecution in their case judgments and perceptions than were men. Finally, jurors who had more liberal views toward persons with disabilities were more likely than other jurors to make pro-prosecution judgments on measures of guilt. Implications for psychological theory and the law are discussed.

KEY WORDS: eyewitness testimony; children; adolescents; child sexual abuse; intellectual disability; juror decision making

INTRODUCTION

Physical evidence and corroborating witnesses are often unavailable in child and adolescent sexual assault trials, leaving jurors struggling to make decisions on the basis of little evidence other than an alleged victim's word (Myers, 1997, 1998). In such cases, jurors' judgments can be influenced by a number of extralegal factors

¹Department of Psychology (m/c 285), The University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

²National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

³Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁴River Oak Center for Children, Sacramento, California.

⁵To whom correspondence should be addressed at Department of Psychology (m/c 285), The University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 W. Harrison Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607-7137, e-mail: bbottoms@uic.edu.

the language of science

[Frequently asked questions](#) | [General information on journals and books](#) | [Send Contact](#)

© Springer. Part of Springer Science+Business Media

[Privacy, Disclaimer, Terms and Conditions](#), [© Copyright Information](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Remote Address: 75.166.43.90 • Server: mpweb04

HTTP User Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; SV1; GTB5)

Jurors' Perceptions of Adolescent Sexual Assault Victims Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

Bette L. Bottoms,^{1,5} Kari L. Nysse-Carris,² Twana Harris,³ and Kimberly Tyda⁴

Children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities are especially likely to be sexually abused. Even so, their claims are not likely to be heard in court, possibly because people assume that jurors will not believe them. We tested this assumption in a mock-trial study in which 160 men and women watched videotaped excerpts from an actual trial. As predicted, when the 16-year-old sexual assault victim was portrayed as "mildly mentally retarded" instead of as "having average intelligence," jurors were more likely to vote guilty and had more confidence in the defendant's guilt; considered the victim to be more credible and the defendant to be less credible as witnesses; and rated the victim as more honest, less capable of fabricating the sexual abuse accusation, and less likely to have fabricated the sexual abuse accusation. Men and women were affected similarly by the disability manipulation, but women were generally more pro-prosecution in their case judgments and perceptions than were men. Finally, jurors who had more liberal views toward persons with disabilities were more likely than other jurors to make pro-prosecution judgments on measures of guilt. Implications for psychological theory and the law are discussed.

KEY WORDS: eyewitness testimony; children; adolescents; child sexual abuse; intellectual disability; juror decision making.

INTRODUCTION

Physical evidence and corroborating witnesses are often unavailable in child and adolescent sexual assault trials, leaving jurors struggling to make decisions on the basis of little evidence other than an alleged victim's word (Myers, 1997, 1998). In such cases, jurors' judgments can be influenced by a number of extralegal factors

¹Department of Psychology (m/c 285), The University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

²National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

³Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁴River Oak Center for Children, Sacramento, California.

⁵To whom correspondence should be addressed at Department of Psychology (m/c 285), The University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 W. Harrison Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607-7137; e-mail: bbottoms@uic.edu.